The Cinema of Gaspar Noé: A Poetics of Transgression

by

Imran Firdaus

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

under the supervision of Associate Professor Alex Munt

University of Technology Sydney
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

February 2023

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Imran Firdaus, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Technology Sydney, in the School of Communication, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution. This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

Signature:

Date: 29 July 2022

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COVID-19 IMPACT STATEMENT

I enrolled in the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) course in Spring 2018 before COVID-19 took the world by surprise, and indeed shock. In the first stage of this thesis, I developed a set of methods, including textual analysis, and interviews to be conducted with Gaspar Noé and French cinema industry figures. I had planned to undertake significant genetic criticism – in examining Noé's archival materials to articulate his poetics of transgression and its relationship to French industrial film production contexts. I had a fieldwork plan in Paris, supported by UTS. I applied for the ethics application (ETH19-4246) for the international fieldwork, which was approved on 18 March 2020 as low risk. I intended to do the archival fieldwork in Paris across April–May 2020 with scheduled interviews and review of archival material on Noé's screenwriting and creative filmmaking practices. The COVID-19 outbreak occurred across local and global scenarios, and my progress was directly impacted due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The prospect of going to Paris, meeting with correspondents, and conducting fieldwork was no longer viable. Based on these circumstances, which were beyond my control and directly related to my fieldwork and research project, I was required to revise my research plan, research question(s) and methodology to focus on a primarily textual analysis and case study-based investigation. I had to redesign the research plan and method in the midst of my PhD candidature. Nevertheless, I tirelessly scouted the internet and obtained authentic screenplay and archival materials, which helped me to theorise Noé's screen development and screenwriting poetics. Due to the disruption by COVID-19, the scope of conducting the interview and genetic criticism has not been evaded – but delayed. This thesis indicates a future research trajectory where I might consolidate and expand upon Noé's cinematic poetics of transgression.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ABSTRACT

This thesis builds on the scholarship devoted to French auteur filmmaker Gaspar Noé through investigating his dynamic body of work to date. This Argentine-born, French filmmaker is responsible for a highly distinctive body of work consisting of six feature films and numerous short films and music videos. While screen and film studies researchers have sought to capture aspects of his dynamic career, this thesis identifies a holistic architecture to Noé's *oeuvre* in the cinematic poetics of transgression evident across the work. It also examines how his creative screen development, screenwriting, and production practices align to produce these poetics. The industrial production contexts of French national cinema are also highlighted.

Noé's authorship is evident across creative screen development, screenwriting, production, post-production, sound design, and film titles design. This thesis draws on frameworks provided by David Bordwell on the poetics of cinema, Adrian Martin on the cinematic idea, Thomas Elsaesser on auteur studies, and Ian W. Macdonald on screenwriting research. The cross-fertilisation of Noé's creative filmmaking roles, ongoing collaborations with others, and industrial production contexts has contributed to his bold, distinctive, and often divisive poetics of transgression.

This thesis establishes the foundations of Noé's poetics of transgression in relation to his nonconformist upbringing by a family in exile, his cinephilia, and diverse influences drawn from American and European film auteurs, including Luis Buñuel, Stanley Kubrick, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder. It frames Noé's cinematic output via a creative, strategic, and sustainable matrix of production strategies which sustain his position as a leading figure, and 'branded' auteur, on the world stage. Taking a film practice

and production-focused approach, this thesis foregrounds a new area of investigation into the work of Noé through analyses of his approach to film narration and development of screen ideas, and their materialisation on screen through improvised screen performances, bold cinematography, the agile moving camera, and a sophisticated and intense approach to light, colour, and texture.

This research contributes to the appreciation of the work of Gaspar Noé and to the scholarship of film studies, auteur studies, and production studies. It will be of interest to creative practice-based researchers, filmmakers, and the wider network of European and international art-house screen-industry stakeholders.

Chapter 1
The Tunnel of Transgression:
Gaspar Noé in the French Film Ecosystem

> Political correctness is much more pervasive in the United States and in
> England than in France. I've made almost all my films by breaking and
> entering. (Gaspar Noé, quoted in Retailleau 2022, para. 25)

First Acquaintance

We sometimes shared a desktop PC as an alternative means of watching films
back in 2004 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. I would watch films voraciously, I still do.
One evening, I found a DVD lying on the computer table. I recognised it as an
imported French film that came via a friend's luggage. I checked the cover and
the back for a synopsis and only recognised Monica Bellucci from the cast
(because of the infamous *Malèna*[1] (2000)). I had no clue about the director,
Gaspar Noé, or the rest of the cast, or the cinematic experience I was going to
embark upon. Thus began the first of the many thoughts I had after viewing
Irréversible (2002). I cannot say the graphic violence and sonic shock waves did
not upset me. Rather, I was perplexed and bewildered by Noé's 'transgressive
film style and unconventional narration' (Rits-Volloch 2004, p. 140), which was
then an unknown quality to me.

At that time, I was a film society activist, so I turned to my peers and fellow
cinephiles with questions about Noé and *Irréversible*, and everybody replied
with a blank look; they had never heard of him. In the early 2000s, I did not
have much exposure to the contemporary global cinema due to limited
resources and access to the internet; I mostly depended on the cultural centers
of European countries. Due to the Bangladesh Film Club (Registration and
Regulation) Act in 1980, local film clubs and societies were barred from

---

[1] *Malèna* is an Italian coming of age romantic comedy drama, written and directed by Giuseppe
Tornatore. Monica Bellucci starred *Malèna* is a local hit among Bangladeshi urban cinephiles. In
early 2000 through pirated DVD, *Malèna* and Monica Bellucci become word of mouth in film
society circuit.

exhibiting a film without a censor's certificate from the Bangladesh film censor board. According to Article 7.2 of the 1980 Film Club Act,

> A registered film club may exhibit a film supplied by any foreign diplomatic mission in Bangladesh only if the request for supplying such film has been made to the mission with the prior approval of the authority. (Hoek 2019, para. 7)

Therefore, the film societies used that gap in the law and collaborated with European countries' cultural centres such as Alliance Française de Dhaka (France), Goethe-Institut Bangladesh (Germany), Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Dhaka (Russia) to watch European arthouse films in Dhaka. These foreign cultural centres played a significant role in providing access to world cinema to cinephiles from the 1960s to the mid-2000s. Later, access to pirated DVDs, cable channels, and the internet opened up new ways to experience the diversity of world cinema.

As a cinephile and organiser, I attempted to arrange a public film screening of *Irréversible* in Dhaka in 2007, yet I could not realise that. Due to *Irréversible*'s explicit contents, the Bangladesh censor board would not give a censor certificate for its public screening. Besides, my post-viewing experience led me to think the local audience would not appreciate the film for its content and unorthodox film style – its poetics. It was a new cinematic expression that I had never encountered before. Noé and *Irréversible* were on the periphery, if not totally outside, my viewing experience to date, as were the mechanics of the French film industry. However, I became set on exploring questions such as how does Noé make these films, how does he survive within a commercial industrial context, why do A-list actors agree to perform in his transgressive films, and how does he find supportive producers and distributors and gain exposure at the most prominent film festival in the world, Cannes?

To theorise Noé's nonconformist films and transgressive body of work, his oeuvre and to consider, articulate and represent his poetics of transgression (which I will define later in the chapter) in this thesis, I highlight *Irréversible*'s controversial premiere night at the 55th Cannes Film Festival as an entry point.

This introductory chapter unfolds in two parts: the first part provides the key research questions and details the theoretical framework I will employ to discover Noé's poetics of transgression. In the second part, I review the existing academic frameworks regarding Noé's films and examine the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animé's (CNC) role in the rise of New French Extreme films – which Noé is both a part of and stands outside. I frame the ways in which Noé has followed a pragmatic approach from the beginning of his career, functioning, and performing, as a 'branded auteur' (Elsaesser 1995). Here, I evaluate the ecosystem of contemporary French cinema, its socio-economic basis, and its film development and production contexts, which Noé trades upon to strategically deliver his transgressive screen ideas for national and international audiences, including in Bangladesh.

Irréversible at the 55th Cannes Film Festival: Spotlight on Noé's transgressive nature

In *Irrèversible*, Noé exploits form and content to reveal his cinematic nonconformity[2] and his film style. In terms of film narration, he explored the idea of reverse chronological order with scenes unfolding with intimidating, intense, violent, and acrobatic camera movements and nerve-wracking strobe lighting effects, in combination with an exaggerated blend of low-frequency sound and throbbing electronic music, to deliver a spatial cinematic experience that enfolds rape, sodomy, revenge, anxiety and cruelty. Amid these extreme aspects of the film, *Irréversible* conveys a triangular narrative of love and loss between Alex (Monica Bellucci), Marcus (Vincent Cassel) and Pierre (Albert Dupontel) (Figure 1.1). Typically, *Irréversible* has been critically analyzed for its cinematic excess, but much less discussed is the cycle of life (such as birth and death) through the central character of Alex.

---

[2] In film studies nonconformity indicates to those filmmakers who defy industrial norms of film production both form and content. They believe in their intuition with very particular sensibilities and auteur stylistic signatures such as Pier Paolo Pasolini, Marco Bellocchio, Andrzej Zulawski, Jerzy Skolimowski.

Figure 1.1 Alex, Marcus and Pierre talking inside the elevator in *Irréversible* (2002)

Irréversible was an official selection in the Palme d'Or competition segment of the 55th Cannes Film Festival, 2002, but it did not win. Before the premier, *Irréversible* was reported in newspapers, and the jury board was in a dilemma about the public screening of the work, asking the film festival organisers to arrange a private screening regarding the transgressive content (Dwyer 2002, para. 3). At that time, the newly appointed artistic director of Cannes Film Festival, Thierry Frémaux, threatened to resign because the selectors were set to exclude *Irréversible* from the Palme d'Or competition segment, particularly because of its 9-minute-long traumatic rape scene and its screen carnality (Willsher 2002). Frémaux said it was essential to accommodate the wild imagination and experimentation of the film for the sake of the film festival's historical tradition of upholding new auteur voices in world cinema (Frater 2002).

Figure 1.2 Post-screening press review of *Irréversible* (BBC 2002)

However, *Irréversible* was delayed until a midnight screening, the official screening of the film commencing at 12.30am. Next morning the BBC published a post-screening report about the premiere session (Figure 1.2). BBC (2002) headlined 'Cannes Film Sickens Audience' and reported that many members of the audience left the midnight screening; around 250 people had walked out, 20 people had fainted, and fire wardens were required to administer oxygen to audience members who had fainted because of the low-frequency background sound or been nauseated by the brutal depiction of blood-soaked revenge and the extended rape scene. On that night 'fire brigade spokesman Lieutenant Gerard Courtel said that in 25 years in his job he has never seen this at the Cannes festival' (BBC 2002, para. 8). The headline clearly defined the sentiment and judgment of the audience about this film and its maker, Gaspar Noé.

Monica Bellucci's, Vincent Cassel's and Albert Dupontels' instinctive and improvised performances simultaneously left the audience speechless and generated mixed reviews from critics. A. O. Scott (2002) of the *New York Times* dismissed the film as 'a violent, empty misogyny masquerading as sexual daring' (para. 6). Leading French daily *Le Monde*'s critic Samuel Blumenfeld compared Noé to 'a bad philosophy student' and 'noted that the film's gratuitous violence is proportionate to its intellectual laziness' (quoted in Scott

2002, para. 8). Lisa Nesselson of *Variety* believed *Irréversible* divided the audience into two parts, just as the Berlin wall had divided the Germany, but she did not find anything indecent in the film. Nesselson (2002) expressed, 'Except for the weak of stomach and the closed of mind, there's nothing scandalous here – just sometimes abrasive bravura film-making skilfully applied to subjects that matter' (para. 1). *The Irish Times*'s Michael Dwyer (2002) highlighted how Noé contrasted between consensual sex and sexual violence in his 'powerful but numbing' film:

> The brutality of the rape sequence is effectively contrasted with an earlier sequence of their tender lovemaking, to illustrate how intimate and loving sex can be compared with the violation of the sexual act in rape. (para. 16)

Noé told the press that his film portrayed the crime and sexual violence of real life by depicting screen violence through an illusion of real-time duration. He noted, 'There are lots of films today which feature murders, but very few really elicit an emotional response' (Frater 2002, para. 5). Eventually, the film morphed into a box-office hit in 2003 (Box Office Mojo 2019) and ran well in French and overseas film markets (Mottram 2010).

Today, Noé remains known as the 'walkout king', joining notorious contemporary peers Lars von Trier and Vincent Gallo (Fortune 2018, para. 17). Noé returned to Cannes subsequently with the psychedelic-drug fueled *Enter the Void* (2009), the 3D unsimulated, erotic film *Love* (2015), the LSD-spiked dance drama *Climax* (2018), a cinephile's essay *Lux Æterna* (2019), and his most recent feature *Vortex* (2021), which points to a new direction for his nonconformist, visceral, and transgressive poetics of cinema. Noé's history of controversy and walkouts at Cannes' premiere sessions started with *Irréversible* and continued until *Climax*. Audiences jeered during *Enter the Void*'s premiere in 2009. *Love 3D* faced similar reactions. *The New York Times* described that audiences walked out of *Love 3D*'s Cannes premiere 'due to scenes of penetration, mutual masturbation and a penis ejaculating in 3D toward the audience' (Donald 2015, para. 1). Noé was worried when he saw only six people had left *Climax*'s screening. He told the press that he expected at least 25 percent

of the audience would leave (Sharf 2018). Noé has today paused his reputation as 'walkout king' with *Vortex*, a split-screen depiction of an ageing couple with dementia and their story of survival. Nobody left the theatre. This thesis grapples with the evolution of Noé's poetics of transgression and asks, What's next?

Cannes Film Festival and New French Extreme

The Cannes Film Festival has a reputation for screening films with extreme violence and nudity. Stephen Frey, author of *Extreme Cinema: The Transgressive Rhetoric of Today's Art Film Culture* (2016), quoted Nick James (editor of *Sight and Sound*): 'If you go to Cannes these days, you know you will see at least one film designed to shake the complacency of the festival habitués' (pp. 46-47). New French Extreme established its position in the Cannes film program with Claire Denis's erotic horror film *Trouble Every Day* (2001) and followed it with Noé's *Irréversible*. Both films created controversy and prompted walkouts. In later years, the Cannes Film Festival would continue to accommodate extreme and visceral films in and out of competition, such as Vincent Gallo's *Brown Bunny* (2003), Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill: Volume 2* (2004), Michael Haneke's *Caché* (Hidden 2005), Julien Maury and Alexandre Bustillo's *À l'intérieur* (*Inside* 2007), Pascal Laugier's *Martyrs* (2008), and Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* (2009).

The Cannes Film Festival, as part of its film programming ethos, authenticates extreme films as an 'aesthetic form beyond exploitation' and establishes them as a successful systematic element of festival programming and business models (Frey 2016, p. 47). Noé's *Irréversible* and its infamous inauguration in Cannes has helped to foreshadow his project to deliver a calibrated cinematic poetics of transgression. Noé has strategically exploited the Cannes Film Festival's global exposure and inverted the controversy and criticism towards a branding project for himself. He did not do it to create a gimmick; rather, he consciously crafted a career path for a transgressive cinema that competes at an industrial level. Despite *Irréversible*'s critical and popular impact in regard to screen excess and extreme violence, it is evident that Noé knows what he wants and how he will achieve a mode of cinema-making rhetoric. As a producer and creator, he has been 'absolutely systematic, ruthlessly controlled' in relation to production strategy (Palmer 2015, p. 5). Noé destabilises the structure of formal elements of

a film and amalgamates the high- and low-art dichotomy in his films to brand himself as a transgressive auteur. As a filmmaker, he questions and challenges his film style to explore novel and effective ways to develop visual storytelling through the invalidation of traditional 'rules', and he contravenes the unwritten treaty with the audience by showing unwatchable, taboo activities in his films (Grønstad 2007, Beugnet 2008, Palmer 2011, Frey 2016).

The irrevocable debut of Noé and the trajectory of the New French Extreme are not unrelated. They are aligned with the strategic remit of the French film ecosystem. The making of *Irréversible* and the poetics Noé chooses to emphasise for his artistic branding are not merely acts of resistance against industrial norms or French film culture. Rather, Noé is part of the state funding mechanism, but he chooses to defy the industrial norms of filmmaking and produce ambivalent works that are noticeably 'French' but take a 'confrontational position with contemporary French cinema' (Bailey 2003, para. 8) in order to signify the missing link of the 'uniquely variegated national cinema' (Palmer 2015, p. 12).

Research Questions

In this thesis I describe the methods of textual analysis and case study evaluation I used to define and establish Noé's cinematic poetics of transgression as the foundation for his work. I also examine Noé's creative film practices in screen development and screen production to reveal the ways his screen poetics are generated. My research question is:

> What are the cinematic components of Gaspar Noé's film style, how are they formed, and in what ways do they combine to generate a distinctive screen poetics of transgression?

I also explore the key contexts for Noé's cinematic poetics, via his cultural background, his cinephilia, and diverse influences from the realms of experimental, avant-garde, and underground film cultures. I then proceed to locate his film poetics within the specificity of the industrial French film ecosystem and to evaluate his screenplay poetics, his approach to screen development, and his alternative screenwriting practices and forms, in

particular 'writing' *in* production. In order to establish Noé's poetics of transgression, I asked five interconnected questions:

1. How has Noé's Argentinian familial, cultural and artistic background provided a foundation for his screen poetics as an exile in Paris?
2. What role does the national French film ecology play as an industrial foundation for Noé's poetics?
3. How does Noé combine strategic economic pragmatism with a cultivated 'branded auteur' status in order to shape, and cultivate, his poetics?
4. What defines Noé's screenplay poetics in the creative process of developing cinematic screen ideas and exploring alternative screenwriting practices and forms?
5. How do Noé's poetics of transgression materialise as cinematic form, with reference to mise en scène, directing and staging for the camera, performance and choreography, and the materiality of the moving image's light, colour and texture?

Poetics and Transgression

In this thesis, I consider Noé's films from the vantage points of the poetics of cinema, auteur theory, industrial production contexts, and creative filmmaking practices. I examine his films as works generated by a European film auteur who works within the French film production context and produces films with a pragmatic outlook and with limited budgets. My aim is to articulate Noé's screen poetics in relation to cinematic transgression, which has been under-evaluated to date. To theorise Noé's poetics of transgression is to understand and explore the auteur's creative achievement within an industrial development and production context – one that is removed from that of many of his creative influences and their artisanal practices. In this thesis, poetics looks to Greek philosopher Artistotle's work on dramatic theory (Philoponus 2016). Poetics is a structural way of seeing any aesthetic choice through systematic study or explanation of its developmental processes. It also proposes a discourse or *doxa* of the creative process (Macdonald 2013). I apply the term transgression to explain an activity that defies a law or guideline. Transgression exemplifies the

enthusiasm 'to go beyond the bounds or limits set by a commandment or law or convention, it is to violate or infringe' boundaries and deals with taboo issues (Jenks, cited in Frey 2016, p. 19).

Film poetics is the core of this thesis. I use the notion of screen poetics to reveal how Noé's cinematic transgression is constructed through production strategy (e.g., recurrent patterns of thematic and stylistic elements) and how his feature films reveal and contain a network of avant-garde, cinephile influences and convey his nonconformist position within a French film production context. I look to David Bordwell (2008), who argues for a close reading of films based on a materialist approach, in contrast to the dominant culturalist and interpretative approach. Bordwell (2008) proposes a 'poetics of cinema' (drawn from Aristotelian *Poetics*) to examine the ways films share aesthetic choices that impact a film's form, style, and content.

Originating from Greek culture, the etymological meaning of poetics is 'creative or productive tasks.' Bordwell (2008) notes that 'poetics derives from the Greek word *poiesis*, or active making (p. 12). Aristotle (1997) proposed the *Poetics* to describe the essential logic behind the crafting of Greek tragedy. Aristotle's poetics provides a discourse on understanding a text and how the distinctive elements bonded by syntagmatic relation to produce the significant meaning of that text to create an effect on the receiver. This literary conceptualisation has gained space among aural-visual interpretations such as 'Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music*, Todorov's *Poetics of Prose*, a study of the *Poetics of Architecture*, and the Russian formalists' *Poetics of Cinema*' (Bordwell 2007, p. 12). Ian W. Macdonald (2013), from a screenwriting poetics point of view, notes:

> There is a range of terms being used in similar ways. Christine Gledhill used the phrase 'cultural poetics' to refer to the view of conventional film storytelling in 1920s Britain, where Andrew Higson refers to 'modes of narration'. Janet Staiger talks on modes of production, and David Bordwell talks on 'modes' and 'norms' in his narration in the fiction film,' to find out 'the fairly stable and consistent narrational principles employed in a historically defined group of films'. (p. 10)

For Bordwell (1989), 'film poetics is a systematising of theoretical inquiry into cinematic practices' (p. 378). A poetics of cinema examines a film from its denotative perspective to understand the patterns of composition and thematic style and to distinguish textual inspirations, execution and consequences (p. 373). As Bordwell (1989) explains, the poetics of cinema is also concerned to 'reconstruct the options facing a filmmaker at a given historical juncture, assuming that the filmmaker chooses an option in order to achieve some end' (p. 373), which implies a filmmaker takes clear decisions in their given production contexts to attain a significant effect. The aim of a poetics of cinema is not limited to explaining what a film means or represents; as an empirical analysis, it occupies a big space to describe, analyze, and explain the meaning of a film. However, the essential aspect of this framework is that it not only interprets films but also explains them (Bordwell 1989). 'A poetics of cinema does not prescribe how a film should be rather it describes about *how a film works* or is made' (Macdonald 2013, p. 3, my italics).

Film poetics foregrounds the significance of film texts through close textual analysis and privileges the film's aesthetic elements, cinematic form, composition, and architecture as a holistic work of art designed for an audience. Bordwell (2001), in *Transcultural Spaces: Toward a Poetics of Chinese Film*, uses a poetics to focus on 1) cinematic form, 2) stylistics, 3) viewing impact of film style, and 4) historical patterns (p. 9). Bordwell's approach also considers the coherence between a film's structure and narrative, the distinctiveness of the film's medium, and the filmmaker's production context in light of 'historical and institutional limitations' (Bettinson 2014, p. 18).

In this thesis I focus on cinematic form, stylistics, and artistic influences to identify and establish Noé's poetics of transgression across his *oeuvre*. I apply the poetics of film as an 'inductive' or 'bottom-up' approach from the film text, not 'top-down' from theoretical and interpretative paradigms and theories (Bettinson 2014, p. 18) to better comprehend Noé's six feature films. I elected to focus on his feature films only since this would allow me to examine, compare, and contrast Noé's production practices, techniques, modes, and styles in different film production contexts. Gary Bettinson (2014) explained this

approach in *Sensuous Cinema of Wong Kar-wai: Film Poetics and the Aesthetic of Disturbance*:

> As a conceptual framework, poetics works towards rigorous analysis of a film's architecture ... Bordwell's 'poetics of cinema' approach privileges the film text itself, demands a close and rigorous analysis in order to elucidate the composition of the work, ... This approach is a formalist, and materialist approach which serves to illuminate aspects of film style and structure. (p. 19)

In order to define and articulate Noé's poetics of transgression, I articulate questions of film style and mise en scène to link how transgressive screen poetics are materialised on screen through creative practices of screen development, screenwriting, and production. Here, I engage with the work of film theorist and critic Adrian Martin and his work on mise en scène and film style, extending this to Noé's body of work.

Adrian Martin (2013) prioritises two readings of mise en scène: 'an artistic or professional practice (i.e., something that filmmakers themselves do, even if not necessarily under this label) … [and] an idea, theory or approach (i.e., something conceptualised and debated by critics and theorists)' (para. 16). In contrast, film style refers to any designed, patterned, significant utilisation of methods of the film medium, including mise en scène, outlining, iconography, shot size, lighting, variety, altering, and sound. The film style is the overall output of any filmmaker's creative decisions made through different stages of the production (Kuhn & Westwell 2020). Martin (2013) also points out that the concept of mise en scène is borrowed from the theatre; it suggests the arranging or movement of bodies inside a set of a conventional proscenium. In film studies and criticism, mise en scène can be used to analyze any filmmaker's signatory film style through the filmmaker's choice to organise the cinematic elements, either for the manifestation of written scripts, theme, plot, and character's narrative goal, or to deploy the cinematic elements in reference to the camera position and movement (Martin 1992). Martin (2013) therefore suggests there are two types of mise en scène: expressive and excessive. The 'expressive' approach 'rests on a thematic premise: films, like literary or

theatrical works in a narrative-based tradition of drama or comedy, are seen to possess themes – distillations of ideas, questions or propositions' (para. 4). The 'excessive' approach is seen as

> a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture … formed more by storytelling habit, stylistic convention and the reigning cultural ideology than by any specific artistic intent. (para. 6)

Excessive mise en scène offers ways to destabilise the dominancy of mise en scène as a rigid concept and of the auteur or director as a central figure behind a film production. 'Melodrama, the musical, horror, thriller and action films' deploy the excessive approach to articulate the narrative world's anxiety, horror, tension, shock, self-examination, and terror through stylized camera work, light and shadow, colour, and music to convey sentimentality. The excessive approach incorporates a 'systematic ensemble of stylistic choices' in support of the formal or nonformal script (Martin 2013). Martin also discusses another form of mise en scène called social mise en scène, which relates to the 'kinesic' and 'proxemic' dimensions of any human society's social conventions (such as code of interaction, communication, and movement) beyond 'the abstraction of an auteur's sheer creativity' (para. 17). Through social mise en scène, a filmmaker can portray a realistic scenario on the screen.

Creative approaches to mise en scène and film style are responsible for a filmmaker's signature flair. Martin highlights an allied notion of the cinematic *dispositif* as an expansion and reconsideration of the questions of mise en scène. To consider the *dispositif* of a film is to consider a set of self-inflicted 'rules or strategies by which a film (or any audio-visual work) can be generated' unrestrictedly and that inspires to arrange and organise other cinematic tools (Martin 2013, para. 18).

Noé's oeuvre calls attention to his film practice or recurrent pattern of cinematic form and stylistics from a holistic and production-context perspective. Adrian Martin's readings on mise en scène, film style, and *dispositif* have supported my examination of Noé's poetics of transgression as an expansive and evolving structure of film practice. With the support of Martin's scholarship and

Bordwell's poetics of cinema, I have substantiated how Noé develops his aesthetic economy and assembles his screen productions without losing his transgressive reputation within the French commercial and narrative film industry. Bordwell's interpretative model of poetics of cinema has not been widely applied to locating Noé's transgressive work in contemporary French cinema scholarship. My consideration of Noé's mise en scène and film style in this thesis is grounded in the specifics of industrial production contexts and articulated via an examination of his creative filmmaking practices.

Auteur Theory

Auteur theory developed in the 1940s culture of French film criticism. Alexandre Astruc and André Bazin's film criticism framework has held an influential grip on an auteur-driven criticism model (Caughie 2013). In the 1950s, the work of André Bazin and François Truffaut in the magazine *Cahiers du Cinema* played a pivotal role in the discussion, and articulation, of the film auteur. Bazin suggested that filmmakers must have the vision to express both personal feelings and thoughts, as well as the wider world view (Chaudhuri 2013, p. 81). Truffaut advocated that a filmmaker cannot make a film under a controlled situation similar to the studio system. Making an authentic film is only possible when the filmmaker has flexible authorial control to realise a script according to their own creative choices (Elsaesser 1995, p.3).

According to auteur theory, a film should express the director's ideas. 'In contemporary usage, an 'author' is an individual who is exclusively responsible for the production of a unique, original work' (Donovan et al. 2008, p. 2). In film studies, 'author' indicates the person who relies on self-expression and has authorial control over the production. Demiray (2014) suggests that 'auteur has a specific meaning in contemporary film studies, that of the 'cinematic author' who can be recognised through their handwriting' or 'signature' on the body of work (p. 6). An auteur demonstrates an artistic bravura and evolving and iterative, creative 'stamp' on their filmography. Additionally, being an auteur confers celebrity status at times. The Cahiers du Cinema group emphasised 'the film-director as author (as opposed to the producer or the screenwriter)' and branded the film 'author' as an 'artist', securing the high prestige value of authorship traditionally afforded in Western culture (Elsaesser 1995, p. 4).

In *A Retrospect: The Film Director as Auteur – Artist, Brand Name or Engineer?* the late Thomas Elsaesser's (1995) theorised how the original auteur criticism model had advanced from its historical understanding towards a less romantic, pragmatic, artistic, entrepreneurial model for contemporary visionary filmmakers. Elsaesser proposed that over the course of time the auteur theory has transitioned from its original practice of praising classical American directors (such as Alfred Hitchcock, Sam Fuller, Howard Hawks, and Orson Welles) and European 'auteurs' (such as Jean Renoir, Roberto Rossellini, and Ingmar Bergman) to praising new wave, unorthodox filmmakers with artistic aspirations partly delivered through articulation of alternative production practices and approaches.

In the 1960s, the auteur model found a recalibrated version in the hands of young American graduate school filmmakers who had learnt about filmmaking practice alongside the study of film history and theory. Through the lens of auteur theory, those budding filmmakers found a new perspective of appreciating prior incarnations of Hollywood filmmaking. Together with the French New Wave auteurs, they also adopted father figures from the classical era, including as their models 'John Ford, Orson Welles, Sam Fuller, or the English directors Alfred Hitchcock and Michael Powell' (Elsaesser 1995, p. 8). Elsaesser extended the evolution of the film auteur model to the then upcoming generation of Hollywood's 'movie brats' consisting of Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Brian de Palma, Paul Schrader, Dennis Hopper, and Bob Rafelson (p. 8). These 'movie brats' also tried to emulate Jean-Luc Godard or Francois Truffaut. For Elsaesser (1995), the changes in contemporary sociocultural conditions created a new film auteur model:

> 'Auteur' in the 1980s makes a fascinating journey from critical category to brand-name and marketing-device, mainly because in the uncertain world of the cinema in the age of television, of blockbusters, mainstream cinema and independents, of art cinema and new waves, there are very few sign-posts and markers, and in the end, it is the market that demands labels and recognition-signs: whether they like it or not, directors cannot just be directors – they have to advertise themselves, promote themselves, create a brand identity for themselves: the

filmmaker as superstar and the filmmaker as cult director are some of the most familiar results of this process. It makes the term 'author' in one sense almost meaningless, and in another so indispensable that we hardly question its assumptions (p. 9).

Elsaesser (1995) pointed out that Coppola demonstrated an active role in redefining the auteur conception of the 'new' movie brats. Coppola, as an industrial entrepreneur, served to metamorphosise the meaning of romantic artist and classical artist by transforming them into a single idea. Elsaesser defined romantic artists as those who struggle outside of the system and defy the industrial rules and norms to express themselves through the films. On the other hand, classical artists work within the industry setup and know how to add signatory remarks or extra layer of stylistic expression to their films. Along with the transformation, Coppola eliminated the denial 'between self-expression' of romantic artists and the 'brand name seal of quality' of classical artists to take the role of an entrepreneur (p. 10).

Consistent with this reading, Noé makes films partly for self-indulgence and less to entertain viewers (Symonds 2015), which suggests Truffaut's concept of the auteur but also exceeds the initial criticism model. Noé's ownership of the production company les cinémas de la zone allows him to maintain artistic control over his works. In his film productions, he plays across the roles of screenwriter, producer, director, cinematographer, and editor, and he has a strong presence in his creative collaborations to translate his imagination in the mise en scène. However, Noé uses an auteur approach more to establish himself as a 'branded' auteur than to portray himself as a romantic artist (who disavows traditional forms, rules) or as a classical artist (who contextualises conventional forms with self-expression).

Noé demonstrates the historical transition of the film auteur – as industrial entrepreneur – who is required to advertise and promote himself, create a strong brand identity, and survive in a competitive industry independently. Here, Noé replicates an inverse method of auteur theory that combines both the attitude of a romantic artist (as idiosyncratic) and classical artist (who knows the traditional rules such as film graduates) to display the self-expression and

style as the brand name (seal of quality). Noé, as a nonconformist, transgressive filmmaker, positions himself in the common shared space of 'cult director' and auteur who offers a lens to view the censored reality that is not often available in the narrative of contemporary cinema, while also being a part of the French film ecosystem (Retailleau 2022).

Production Studies

According to Karl Heinrich Marx (1982), 'Man is not free to choose *his productive forces* – upon which his whole history is based – for every productive force is an acquired force, the product of previous activity' (para. 8). By this account, we can say a filmmaker's creation is not a discrete output; rather, a production's style and meaning are shaped by its specific environment and situation. In this thesis, production studies, as a theoretical framework, adds insight into how the national French cinema's production conditions and context sustain Noé's transgressive poetics of cinema. Miranda J. Banks's (2014) *How to Study Makers and Making* can be extended to Noé's film production scenarios.

Production studies suggest that any product is not the sole output of an individual; instead, it is a collective work of the creator or maker and other collaborators. Production studies provide academic tools to 'complicate' a filmmaker's or media creator's stories 'by locating them within larger cultural studies of discrete production communities, their material cultures, and their historical contexts' (Banks et al. 2015, p. ix). Production studies is grounded in the presumption that a distinctive and critical connection exists between a media product (such as film) and the development of that product and the 'industry' from which it was produced, as well as the governmental strategies, financial and social circumstances that were present during its 'historical moment of creation' (Banks 2014, p. 120). Banks, who surveys the television content-making process through the practitioners' involvement at each production level, has defined this approach to production as 'how to study the making of television using approaches that aim to reveal more nuanced, ideally more authentic representations of what happens behind the scenes and beyond the screen' (p. 117).

Banks (2014) points out that production studies, as an interdisciplinary critical discourse, takes perceptions from 'a wide variety of scholarly fields' from social science and cultural studies to media studies. According to Banks, David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson's (1985) scholarly book *Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production* is one of the defining texts that has shaped the interdisciplinary nature of production studies. For Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, film production is 'an artistic and economical mode of film practice' where 'cinematic style' and 'industrial conditions' are interrelated (Banks 2014, p. 119).

Banks (2014) suggests four common themes in production studies-oriented investigations: location; insider/outsider status; authorship; and self-theorisation. With these four themes, Banks proposes that it is possible to study production crews', collaborators', and performers' 'lived realities' in production and to enunciate strong tendencies. Here, location implies a broader sense of geographic location, such as 'nation, state, region, city', and 'district, studio, sound stage', implies the notion of an exclusive space. Insider/outsider status indicates the culture of the labour dynamics in production and the importance of a creative person with authority to make decisions within a specific production structure; 'The notion of authorship is both one of subjective identification and outsider objectification' (Banks et al. 2009, p. 7).

In production studies, authorship is not limited to an individual but to the collective labour of the production team. Self-theorisation provides a lens to critique the filmmaker's individual inventive and 'craft labour [or] in other words their reflexive expressions of identity, critique, ritual and routine' (Banks 2014, p. 126). In light of Banks' observations about production studies, I explored Noé's production practices, his relationships with creative and technical collaborators (including producers and distributors), and his use of the French *droit moral* to pursue branded auteur status and thus consolidate a cultivated poetics of transgression.

Gaspar Noé and the French Film Production Context

As I discussed earlier, to establish Noé's poetics of transgression, the relationship between production context and artistic engagement of

transgression in French film culture needs to be situated. In the following discussion I examine three specific research contexts:

1. National film production in France in the 1990s as an industrial catalyst for the New French Extreme;
2. Transgression and radicalism in New French Extreme cinema, and
3. The establishment of Noé's 'branded auteur' profile via a transgressive screen poetics engineered for the French film production context.

To understand the abovementioned perspective with Noé's 'branded auteur' status, poetics of transgression, and French film production condition, we need to comprehend the role of the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animé (CNC) in inciting French filmmakers to produce extreme and visceral films. Besides, I will investigate the French visual-cultural tradition of appreciating body horror and corporeal performance through the practices of Antonin Artaud's theatre of cruelty, rituals of grand guignol's sensational, provocative stage play, and the stylisation in Italian screen fiction of gory, erotic, mystery thrillers called giallo films. This brief encounter will help us to understand Noé's interest in the extreme visual representation of human nature and life and how he generates his 'branded' poetics of transgression by combining French industrial contexts and historical references embodying naturalistic, amoral, and dramatic horror.

Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animé (CNC)

The well-established French film industry is differentiated from Hollywood by its respect for the director as the auteur and primary creative source of a film. France demonstrates the most developed, and consistent, stand for the primacy of creative authorship. Elsaesser (1995) indicated that, 'the director had a special legal and creative status ever since the 1910s', which historically situates directors such as 'Abel Gance, Jean Epstein, René Clair, Jean Renoir, Marcel Carné as the creative centres of the French film-industry' (p. 2) of that era.

History, particularly war and conflict, intervenes in national cinemas. The outbreak of the second world war in France in 1939 and the capitulation of

France to Nazi Germany in 1940 created a pause in the French film industry (Ulff-Møller 2001) and throughout the war France faced an embargo on importing American films. The scenario changed when the war ended, with the embargo lifted on importing film from outside France. Liberation from Nazi occupation also came with several arrangements to eradicate France's debt to the USA. In 1946, France and USA signed a series of financial agreements known as The Blum–Byrnes Agreements, which allowed USA to export its products, particularly films, to the French market (Wall 1991, p. 116): 'A total of 182 American films were screened in France in 1946 and no less than 338 in the first six months of 1947' (Gimello-Mesplomb 2006, p. 143). French audiences were flooded with new American cinema, as well as films made during the war. The critics, the press, and the French film authorities found themselves struggling to categorise this sudden influx of American films.

Thomas Elsaesser (1995) called this situation a 'crisis of classification and attribution among the critics and the press' (p. 2). The French critics and the press were surprised by the newly imported US films, finding radical changes to film styles and genres, as well as the transition to colour film stock. New directors and actors were also on the 'scene' as part of America's glamourous celebrity culture, which the French audiences had been unfamiliar with before the war, and the distinct studio 'look' of industrial film productions from studios such as Warner Brothers, Paramount, and MGM.

> Critics started to think of ways of making sense of the films, and they came up, *inter alia*, with two new labels, both of which became highly influential: *film noir* (to classify the no-star, low-studio product of the B-feature category, making it thereby into an A-category), and the auteur theory, or, as it was originally known, 'la politique des auteurs'. (Elsaesser 1995, p.3)

In 1946, French authorities established the CNC as an agency to protect and promote French cinema culture in response to the invasion of US content. Initially, the CNC was attached to both the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the Ministry of Culture. Poet André Malraux, as Minister of Cultural Affairs, moved the CNC from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to the

Ministry of Culture in 1959. From its inception the CNC has worked as a legally and financially autonomous public administrative organisation to centrally monitor the French film industrial ecosystem (Jäckel 2007). The CNC is responsible for developing an 'innovative national production output', distributing national grants, and maintaining a network with filmmaking schools to ensure the quality of film literacy and advanced technical skill with France's emerging filmmakers (CNC 2019) (Figure 1.3).
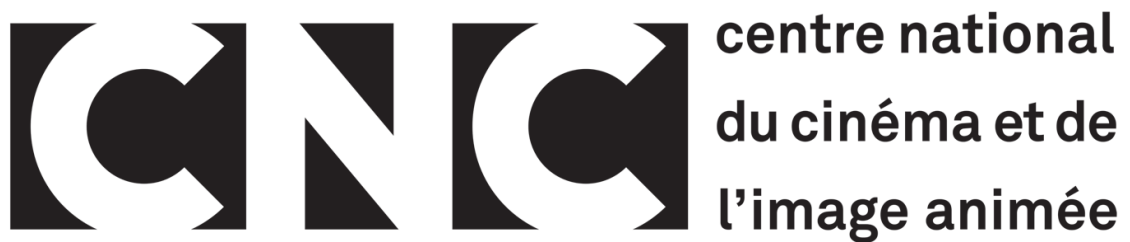
Figure 1.3 Emblem of Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animé (CNC)

The CNC not only monitors national film culture but also offers a strong example of resistance against Hollywood film productions to protect its own screen cultural industry (Marie 2009). The CNC is the key agency behind the creative, competitive, and progressive contemporary French film culture today. According to Creton and Jäckel (2004),

> French cinema owes its survival, both as a going concern and cultural force in the modern world, to a strong regulatory framework with a well-established support system covering the production, distribution and exhibition sectors. (p. 209)

Since 1959, the CNC has been managing a fund called *la taxe spéciale additionnelle* (TSA), or additional special tax, to sustain French film culture and supplement national cinema. Film scholar Isabelle Vanderschelden (2016) reported: 'The TSA corresponds to 10.72% of the total of French box-office receipts' (p. 91). The CNC deals with the state's budgetary help for the film and broadcast businesses, along with the awards granted by the Ministry of Culture

and Communication. It also oversees the financing instruments of the segment to do with tax relief (Moviementa 2016) and creates

> an annual slate of products suitable for export via the French Government's array of international outreach cultural divisions; to facilitate the passage of younger directors into the film industry quickly; to encourage a degree of diversity (in recent times, especially focused on gender parity) among its filmmakers; and, above all, to produce texts that proclaim their 'Frenchness' in reasonably regulated socio-politically and artistically acceptable terms, at times admitting avant-gardists. (Palmer 2015, p. 11)

As a national body, the CNC's goal is to sustain the French film ecosystem and to ensure that they constantly scrutinise the situation. In 2019, the CNC implemented a 2% video tax on the turnover of over-the-top (OTT) services (both free and paid) operating in France but financially registered abroad, such as Netflix, Apple, Google, and Amazon. The CNC spends this revenue to finance and promote French film and audio-visual contents (Scott 2019). Within the French film ecosystem, filmmakers, producers, distributors, film festivals, and other film professionals work together to form a spirit of 'Frenchness'. Palmer (2015) situates Noé as a dynamic participant in this ecosystem, highlighting that French film culture has an 'indigenous ecosystem of cinema, one of the most dynamic collective modes of film production yet devised, within which Noé is a high-profile participant' (Palmer 2011, pp. 13).

Tim Palmer (2015), in his book on Noé's *Irréversible*, has explained that one of the CNC's primary goals is promoting and showcasing young filmmakers as well as cine-literate graduates' debut productions, and that the French film ecosystem supports Noé as a branded auteur who has an avant-garde and experimental film ethos. As I mentioned earlier, the CNC also maintains connections with French film schools and premium film festivals such as the Cannes Film Festival. The inclusion of Noé's second feature, *Irréversible*, in the Cannes Film Festival program functioned as a springboard for controversy and notoriety in the realm of promoting a form of transgression aligned with

'Frenchness'. According to Palmer, this controversy was not just a stunt; rather, it was the output of a series of interconnected modalities.

As a long-time participant and active cinephile in the French film culture industry, Noé is attuned with how the film business works in local and international markets. He selected an inverse method for producing *Irréversible* with an international celebrity star cast, consistent with populist French cinema, yet infused with transgressive content and experimental formal approaches with respect to film style and mise en scène creative choices. However, it is important to note that Noé did not receive the CNC's *avance sur recettes*[3] (advances on receipts), an up-front financial support for artistically experimental projects by first- and second-time directors that is the reason 'the annual slate of French production is constantly infused by newcomers' (Palmer 2015, p. 17). Instead, he received funding from Canal+, which is also part of the CNC financial support scheme (Noé quoted in Bomb 2014). Noé knew the 'festival's double-edged nature' would provide 'cultural prestige' and be a productive site to exhibit his 'artistically adventurous' French film in front of world-class critics, audience, and film professionals. All the controversies and criticisms thus helped him establish and secure an iconoclastic, 'branded auteur' position that is simultaneously within, and at the periphery, of the French film cultural industry and its connections with experimental and underground, exploratory cinemas.

Cruelty, Violence and Sex in French Film Culture

In 1920, Paris experienced a theatrical production of visceral cruelty never before seen. French avant-garde dramatist, actor, director and poet Antonin Artaud established a new philosophy and discipline for the Parisian audience that was referred to as the 'theatre of cruelty' (Bermel 2008). His aim was to create a disruption in the relationship between audience and the performer.

---

[3] *Avance sur recettes* or advance on receipts was created in 1960. The advance on receipts aims to encourage the renewal of making by facilitating the production of first films and supporting an independent and auteur cinema concerning market standards that cannot find its balance without public and financial aid. The *avance sur recettes* scheme of advances furnishes the producer with 5% of the total expense of a film at the preproduction stage (CNC 2021; van Dijk 2002). It is vital for first films since each film hence is ensured a *soutien automatique*, which depends on the box office performance of the preceding film (Bey-Rozet 2021).

Artaud wanted to produce a sensory and corporeal theater production to antagonise the audience through shock treatment. He proposed a theatrical performance where spoken language was not the only medium for carrying the emotions and sensory feelings (Artaud 1958, pp. 84-86).

> [Artaud] believed gesture and movement to be more powerful than text. Sound and lighting could also be used as tools of sensory disruption. The audience, he argued, should be placed at the centre of a piece of performance. Theatre should be an act of 'organised anarchy'. (Tripney 2017, para. 3)

Artaud successfully produced the theatre of cruelty and assaulted the senses of the Parisian audience by displaying violent physical images with minimal emphasis on dialogue (Romney 2004). In addition, there was another example of strong and violent theatrical performances in Paris. Known as Grand Guignol, this theatrical show was developed in the Pigalle district of Paris. It started in 1897 and continued until 1962 and was an audience favourite because of its on-stage representations of amoral, pervasive horror, and transgressive acts (Figure 1.4). Due to censorship and technological limitations, there was no other outlet in Paris where the public could watch an unambiguous depiction of bloodshed, fatality, and sex. As Paul Maxa, one of the best-known performers of Grand Guignol, explained,

> In the cinema you have a series of images. Everything happens very quickly. But to see people in the flesh suffering and dying at the slow pace required by live performance, that is much more effective. It's a different thing altogether. (quoted in Hand & Wilson 2002, p. xi)

Figure 1.4 A scene from *Grand Guignol* (Meurisse Press Agency 1937)

Grand Guignol changed the concept of horror from a paranormal and incomprehensible narrative to an ultra-realistic event of life. The theatre incorporated the radical literary theory of naturalism (which was promoted by Émile Zola and Charles Baudelaire) by presenting daily-life horror in a naturalistic way through melodramatic and intensified acting performances. It 'unmasked the brutality of contemporary culture, rather than pandering with idealizations' (Hodge 1997, p. 9). Grand Guignol kept its popularity even after the film medium found its place in modern life. Grand Guignol's legacy paved the way for the structure and aesthetics of the modern horror genre by integrating special effects, shock value, and dark playfulness.

The popularity of Grand Guignol decreased when the Italian cinematic phenomenon of slasher, mystery, horror thrillers called giallo films gained attention among the Parisians between the 1960s and the 1990s. These films are the adaptions of giallo literature for the screen. Mikel J. Koven (2006) defined giallo literature in *La Dolce Morte: Vernacular Cinema and the Italian Giallo Film*:

> The word giallo simply means 'yellow' and is the metonymic term given to a series of mystery novels that the Milanese publisher Mondadori began producing in the late 1920s. These paperback novels, often translations of English-language novels by writers like Arthur Conan

Usually, giallo film stories revolve around mystery and crime and often include slasher, horror, and sexploitation. Aesthetically, giallo films include vivid colours, lurid orchestral background scores, splashes of blood, scenic urban spaces, conspiracies, female victims, and serial killers (Murray 2011). Dario Argento, Mario Bava, and Lucio Fulci are among the master giallo filmmakers (Figure 1.5). Through this sub-genre, Parisian audiences found a way to experience on-screen transgression. The genre eventually lost its appeal in France because of its repetitive storylines and clichéd treatments.

Figure 1.5 Still from Mario Bava's *The Girl Who Knew Too Much* (1963)

Although giallo films lost their demand among the French audience, American blockbuster films catered to their continuing demand to watch horror films. At this juncture, without CNC's direct financial support, comparatively young French filmmakers (who were born in 1960s and grew up watching and consuming American film and culture) got involved with making a distinct kind of horror film in parallel as a response to the growing popularity of American blockbuster productions, despite the substantial budget differences.

Critics and scholars recognise these films as the New French Extreme at the French domestic box office.

Emergence of the New French Extreme

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a band of French filmmakers made a slate of films that foregrounded transgressive representations of the body, blood, sex, pain, and torture. This New French Extreme was an unexpected phenomenon in the then contemporary French cinema. Conceptually and aesthetically, the New French Extreme connects with the legacy of theatre of cruelty, Grand Guignol and giallo by generating the essence and texture of assaulting the audience's senses, exhibiting carnality through intense body performance, and accommodating cinematic excess and psychological horror through melodrama. The Toronto-based film critic and film programmer James Quandt (2011) was the first to refer to these films as the 'New French Extremity' (p. 18). He coined this term for the French transgressive films that were frequently programmed for the 'Toronto Film Festival's Midnight Madness section' (Hatton 2016, para. 7). Quandt (2011) held reservations about this new transgressive direction, which contrasted with the established history of national French cinema's high art and poetic realism. He compared New French Extremity to

> Bava as much as Bataille, *Salò* no less than Sade seem the determinants of a cinema suddenly determined to break every taboo, to wade in rivers of viscera and spumes of sperm, to fill each frame with flesh, nubile or gnarled, and subject it to all manner of penetration, mutilation, and defilement. Images and subjects once the provenance of splatter films, exploitation flicks, and porn – gang rapes, bashings and slashings and blindings, hard-ons and vulvas, cannibalism, sadomasochism and incest, fucking and fisting, sluices of cum and gore – proliferate in the high-art environs of a national cinema whose provocations have historically been formal, political, or philosophical. (p. 18)

The New French Extreme films depict an immersive world of transgression and absurd poetic realism. In the context of contemporary cinema, they opened up a style of subversive and repressive expressions by showing reality in a hardcore way, thus creating tensions with the quality 'brand' of the well-established,

serious international art cinema. There is a debate about whether the New French Extreme is a genre or movement or just a short-lived trendy style. James Quandt (2004), Asbjørn Grønstad (2007), and Martine Beugnet (2007) suggest that the New French Extreme is not a genre; instead, it is a style or a movement. According to Alexandra West (2016), 'New French Extreme is a movement that sees art-house, and genre directors converge to meditate on the most horrific aspects of life and what remains after those social veneers are stripped away' (p. 10). Film critic Matt Armitage (2018) defines the trend:

> New French Extreme is more of an organic wave of deliberately transgressive cinema produced in France ... It's true nature is in an uneasy nexus between arthouse, body horror, slasher and exploitation films. It started as a movement more firmly rooted in arthouse sex and violence and has veered slowly into the horror arena over the years. (para. 2)

Horeck and Kendall (2011) argue that filmmakers of this style, 'often deconstruct a range of generic tropes rather than constituting one collectively' (p. 5). Nevertheless, they also suggest that the phrase 'new extremism' refers to a perspective that bridges newness and debt to the past, to a history of transgression and provocation that is revived and given a visceral urgency for the present. Grønstad (2007) also points out that these filmmakers do not show concern about breaching or transgressing the code of genres:

> The new wave of excess may not quite congeal into a movement, but it has probably become more than a mere tendency. While the centre of gravity for this cinema of transgression may be French, these films are inarguably part of a much wider trend that encompasses texts from the global circuit as well. (p. 163)

New French Extreme films reveal a return of the essence, and texture, of exploitation and body horror cinema within French film culture. Film scholars, cultural studies researchers, and film critics have classified radical art house New French Extreme filmmaking practices in different ways, such as new extremism (Horeck and Kendall 2011), cinéma du corps (Palmer 2015), cinema

of sensation (Beugnet 2012), and real sex films (Tulloch & Middleweek 2017; Middleweek 2019). For Horeck and Kendall (2011), 'Other scholarly work on this body of films has preferred cognate terms, such as a 'cinéma brut' [Russell 2010] or 'extreme realism' [Williams 2009]' (p. 3).

Palmer (2011) demarcated New French Extreme as cinéma du corps. According to Palmer (2011), the recent extreme 'French films that deal frankly and graphically with the body, and corporeal transgressions have provoked an international scrutiny at times nearing hysteria' (p. 57). He has described the several 'deliberately discomforting' features of cinéma du corps as

> dispassionate physical encounters involving filmed sex that is sometimes unsimulated; physical desire embodied by the performances of actors or nonprofessionals as harshly insular; intimacy itself depicted as fundamentally aggressive, devoid of romance, lacking a nurturing instinct or empathy of any kind; and social relationships that disintegrate in the face of such violent compulsions. (p. 58)

Palmer (2011) has also argued that New French Extreme is an avant-garde phenomenon and that due to their horror elements, these extreme films force the audience to become an active participant instead of being an onlooker and passive consumer. New French Extreme films excessively dissect the human body in regard to rape, unmotivated or unemotional sex, sex without attachment, and consensual sexual activity. Along with these traits, the presence of violence and shock makes these films potential exponents of cinéma du corps. As a part of the New French Extreme, Palmer (2015) categorises Noé's film (*Irréversible*) among the cinéma du corps, due to its corporality, brutal intimacy, and unconventional production approach.

Beugnet (2008) has identified the act of transgression in New French Extreme as the 'cinema of sensation' because it indicates

> an aesthetic of sensation, where the audiovisual force of the cinematic work tends to be given precedence over plot, dialogue and conventional narrative progression, and as such, pre-empts and determines the

function assigned to the medium as a narrative and representational construct, or as the articulation of an ideological discourse. (p. 175)

For Beugnet (2011), the images and sounds of these films carry motifs of sensation and shock and raise questions about the existential crisis in a globalised world and function to the challenge the dynamics of mechanical civilisation (p. 40). She has proposed that the so-called New French Extreme films not only sensitise an audience but also work to generate a 'shock to the system' by assimilating the 'formal possibilities of experimental films' and transgression to counter the 'cleansing power of the look' in favour of a 'tactile, haptic regime of the gaze' (p. 39).

John Tulloch and Belinda Middleweek (2017) have researched filmmaking through the lens of real sex and analyzed the brutal intimacy of the New French Extreme. They used interdisciplinary methods to comprehend the controversy, transgression, risk, desire, and intimacy of this set of films. In the contexts of both French and global extreme forms of cinema, they point to the productive benefit of screening simulated and unsimulated sex in films that negotiate cinematic intimacy, arguing that 'real sex films capture our changing relationship to sex': 'Revealing actual, graphic, and high impact sex gives us not only insight into the transformation of intimacy on our cinema screens – but also the transformation of intimacy both in our bedrooms and the global context' (Tulloch & Middleweek, 2018, para. 4).

For instance, the sexually explicit films of Catherine Breillat, Patrice Chéreau, Noé and the team of Virginie Despentes and Coralie Trinh Thi have generated debates from the vantage points of a deconstructive gender model and postmodernism. These filmmakers have sought to complicate, even break, existing cultural codes of sexual representation in order to denaturalise conservative views of gender by dislocating the ideology from the cinematic style. Their films challenge the audience's habitual ways of seeing and decoding the on-screen signifier of the sexual act (Downing 2004).

In any case, the New French Extreme proved a short-lived phenomenon in French film culture in the early 2000s. The term New French Extreme had been

proposed by the film festival programmers to collect all brutal, corporeal, intimate, and sensual body horror films under a single name. This style achieved prominence among audiences and film festivals, not because of any counter cultural aspirations but from the CNC-supported funds available through TV channels for making French transgressive films. Usually, in the history of film, a group of filmmakers would promote the new directions in cinema in relation to cultural forces, but in the case of New French Extreme, the CNC passively played the role of changemaker by making the TV channels participate in local film production as producers of transgressive films. Due to the CNC's policy, local TV channels provided financial support to films with extreme content due to the lack of giallo films and the popularity of the American horror genre with younger audiences.

In terms of production rules, the CNC protects the French film industry by insuring funds and investments from national television networks and pay-per-view broadcasters such as Canal+ (Palmer 2015). Hence, the financing of these movies by Canal+ is transparent. It is the CNC's support scheme to promote transgressive films with public tax. It is my view that the phenomenon of the New French Extreme was less a collective movement and more an opportunity to get finance for a transgressive film to deliver the return of investment to producers. Nevertheless, New French Extreme films also created resistance to the then conservative political attitudes and to the growing intolerance of immigrant, queer, and female identities on the screen. The production contexts of New French Extreme film are yet to be explored and negotiated in a scholarly context.

Transgression and Radicalism in New French Extreme Cinema: Locating Noé's Position

The New French Extreme represents a departure from the French horror and fantastique genres, yet it borrowed elements from each. Transgression represents a thick red line that separates New French Extreme films from the horror and fantastique genres. In the context of the New French Extreme movement, the word transgression bears a close relationship with the writings of French intellectual Georges Bataille, which encompass elements of eroticism, surrealism, mysticism, and transgression (Noys 2000). Bataille proposed the

term 'transgression' to describe the condition of modern life and an expression to escape repressive modern subjectivity (Bown 2012, p. 259). Frey (2006) refers to Susan Sontag's 'recuperation' of French erotic writing, *The Pornographic Imagination*, in which Sontag argued that Bataille and others did not produce pornography in its contemporary patriarchal, lowbrow understanding, but as sophisticated literature. With reference to a sublime, intellectual genealogy of pornography, Sontag redeems a tradition of French, avant-garde sex literature, describing it as 'the pornographic imagination' (Frey 2016, p. 22). Later, addressing an interviewer's question as to what distinguishes 'the pornographic imagination' from other iterations of erotic culture, Sontag claimed that the former 'treats sexuality as an extreme situation', meaning that 'what pornography depicts is in one obvious sense, quite unrealistic' (Frey 2016, p. 22). In addition to Bataille's idea, French philosopher Michel Foucault (1977) suggested that a spiral shape of transgression plays between the shadow and soul of the limit of extreme. For Foucault, transgression takes the spiral shape, and the transgressive act exists as long as it does not cross the line of extremism: 'Transgression incessantly crosses and recrosses a line which closes up behind it in a wave of extremely short duration, and thus it is made to return once more right to the horizon of the uncrossable' (p. 34).

Foucault (1997) clarified that a transgression cannot exist without a limit or boundary in place. For Tulloch and Middleweek (2017), 'Foucault's spiral articulates the ceaseless redrawing of boundaries on which transgression relies when limits are exceeded' (p. 305). Equally, Jenks (2003) reflected that transgression 'ensures stability by reaffirming the rule. Transgression is not the same as disorder; it opens-up chaos and reminds of the necessity of order' (p. 7). Scholar Amos Vogel argues transgression has an impact on portraying a 'cinematic moment of life' which transforms cinema into a subversive act (Tulloch & Middleweek 2017, p. 305) that defies established rules of cinematic art and confronts the existing social order, norms, authority, and power. Frey (2016) argues that the concept of transgression highlights the presence of 'innovation, taboo-breaking, and infection' and therefore anticipates extreme cinema culture's rhetorical tropes and artistic habitus' (p. 20). Julia Machado (2019) in her *Art Film and the Poetics of Transgression: A Practice-Based Investigation* affirms that 'excess' is not the primary element to understanding

the definition of transgression in art cinema, though we often judge any transgressive or subversive act as the account of its excess. She claims that 'excess is not an appropriate critical parameter for thinking of the creative and reflexive values of transgressions in art cinema, particularly today' (p. 2); rather, transgression is a poetic territory and a poetic force for storytelling which can add intimate reflexive dimensions in films (p. 3).

In my view, and core to the work of this thesis, transgression is best located as a personal and nonconformist act, where the person (in this instance a filmmaker) can work beyond genre, or ideology, and not be required to depend on excess in relation to their film production output. Transgression encompasses a specific sensitive tone – a pleasure in the depiction of suffering, an inclination to manifest sexual explicitness, and a subversion of nationalism – since it dismantles the conventional notions of the world in its representation. Transgression is fuelled by a poetics that delivers modes of defiance on screen that can be physical, psychological, and erotic, or a combination of these qualities. In the case of Noé, his body of work provides evidence of transgressive films that function at the limits of industrial norms.

The New French Extreme provokes the audience by incorporating explicit sex, art, exploitation, philosophy, and horror without any moral centre. It departs from the French film aesthetic by incorporating the exploitation of cinematic codes and conventions, using simulated and unsimulated sex within the established structure of the art-house film. It shows torture and pain, gore and blood, sex and fetishism along with candid stories of endearment and deprivation. To take an example, one of the latest additions to the evolution of the New French Extreme style is the body horror film *Grave* (*Raw* 2016) by Julia Ducournau. Like *Irréversible*, *Grave* created controversy at its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2016. Some viewers were said to have fainted during the screening, which featured graphic gore scenes (Siegel 2016). Ducournau visualises the body horror and cannibalism in *Grave* by using pubescent metaphors, but she also meticulously controls the excess and develops a critical story of a coming-of-age female who is a lifelong vegetarian and 'begins craving human flesh around the same time she develops an infatuation' with her gay roommate (Chang 2017, para. 7). It is conceivable that

New French Extreme films do rely on brutality and extremity, yet they use them rhetorically to engage with a sentimental and distressful human perspective on the world.

Before the New French Extreme, three different styles of French cinema proliferated between 1980 and 2000: cinéma du look, le jeune cinéma, and cinémas de banlieue (Nicodemo 2013; Vincendeau 2005). Screen industry journalists, film critics, and scholars frequently apply or use these industrial terms or labels to catagorise French films that contain 'excess' in relation to narrative, form, and materiality and thus subvert the CNC-developed standard of 'auteur' or art house film. The definition and appropriation of industry terms like cinéma du look, le jeune cinéma, and cinémas de banlieue in film scholarship are used mostly for descriptive purpose than close, critical analysis. In this thesis I am using these terms in a provisional sense to portray how these labels, as film styles or trends, overlap stylistic boundaries and have a permeable sharing of thematic interests. Besides, the corresponding filmmakers' film practices have been driven by their conceptual concerns about why and how they might show or actualise an urban reality on the screen that will transgress conventional 'Frenchness'. In this thesis, I substantiate the ways Noé's films may be broadly considered as a part of New French Extreme, but historically also a part of le jeune cinéma and cinéma de banlieue. Keeping these facts in mind, I also theorise how Noé's films look like they belong to these mentioned industrial categories and how he has transgressed the boundary with his 'idiosyncratic' screenwriting process since the 1980s. This research demonstrates that this easy 'fit' has been too simple for journalists, critics, and scholars to apply to Noé's work. This thesis reveals that it is more complicated and convoluted. I also suggest that Noé, by his nature, does not conform to part of being a member of any group, and that this is part of his commitment to cinematic transgression.

In cinéma du look, the 'total look' or style of the film was deemed as equally significant as the narrative at hand. French critic Raphaël Bassan (2016) was the first to label the films of Luc Besson, Jean-Jacques Beineix, and Leos Carax as illustrative examples of the cinéma du look film style. Beineix and Besson had experience in the production of big-budget television commercials. They

infused the motto of the advertising industry ('style over substance') in their films (Austin 1996, p. 121). Cinéma du look can be described as a mode of poetic realism mixed with highly stylised graphics and visuals, edgy electro background scores by Éric Serra and others, and eccentrically blended evocative references to Marcel Carné's pessimistic dramas and Jean Vigo's lyrical yet cynical, anarchic approach of life (Semlyen et al. 2016). Beineix's *Diva* (1981), Besson's *Subway* (1985), and Carax's *Boy Meets Girl* (1984) are three definitive films of cinéma du look. Dazzling neon lights, metro subway tunnels, underground culture, nihilistic conceptions of family, ruined relationships, and alienated youth are vital ingredients of this body of films. Cinéma du look also provided a cynical view of the French state and its agents, such as the police. As Nicodemo (2012) has suggested, the reason behind the focus on overall quintessence of hopelessness was a 'gradual shift in political terms from Socialist hopes at the beginning of the decade to the gradual loss of those hopes as [French President François] Mitterrand's government moved to the right' (p. 9). This trio of filmmakers showed a transition from the French Nouvelle Vague (French New Wave). They deliberately broke away from the clichéd cinematic cues of social realism.

Le jeune cinéma (young French cinema) harboured in French cinema culture in the 1990s. French film critic and FIPRESCI jury member Claude-Marie Trémois defined eight characteristics of le jeune cinéma: 'urgency, topicality, tight chronology, wandering characters/cameras, improvisation, long sequences, open endings, and a non-judgemental presentation of the protagonists' (Austin 2019, para. 1). Films of this movement portray the desolate socio-political scenario of French society in a raw and naturalistic way through the documentary aesthetic. Arnaud Desplechin (b. 1961), Laurent Cantet (b. 1961), Éric Rochant (b. 1961), and Cédric Klapisch (b. 1961), Dominique Cabrera (b. 1962), Gaspar Noé (b. 1963), Mathieu Kassovitz (b. 1967) and François Ozon (b. 1967) are considered representatives of le jeune cinéma, all making their feature debuts in the 1990s (Vincendeau 2005). Their films depart from the typical Parisian urban locale and emphasise socially oriented issues and marginalised social groups. Vincendeau (2005) has suggested this set of filmmakers sought to make visually stunning, transgressive films with prominent casting to attract a broader, younger audience yet have mainstream and therefore commercial

appeal (p. 34). Film scholar Guy Austin (2008) suggested in his book chapter *Le jeune cinema and the new realism* that Eric Zonca's *La Vie rêvée des anges* (*The Dreamlife of Angels* 1998) and Laurent Cantet's *Ressources humaines* (*Human Resources* 1999) encountered 'significant popular and critical success' and were appreciated for offering a 'new realism' or 'the return of the real' as a part of le jeune cinema (p. 223). *La Vie rêvée des anges* is a comprehensive and somewhat schematic examination of capitalism, social exclusion, gender politics, and interpersonal relationships. Similarly, *Ressources humaines* focuses on a factory job and themes of class identification and labour relations.

In the 1990s, young French filmmakers also engaged with the *banlieues* (peripheral suburbs) to give voice to marginalised youth. Films made on or about the *banlieue* are referred to as Cinémas de banlieue. The word *banlieue* indicates an underdeveloped area or ghetto in the city where most of the population are immigrants and the younger generation is unemployed and deprived of the privileges of the youth living in the city proper. Garreau (1996) described the *banlieue*'s representation on screen:

> French cinema had long neglected the banlieue; turning away from the populist tradition of the thirties, it had in effect kept the working class invisible (except during the highly politicised post-'68 years). For, unlike its American counterpart, the banlieue is a dumping ground for the working poor. In the past decades, politics and real estate have conspired to exclude the workers and their neighbourhoods from representation (para. 4).

Around this time Noé came across like-minded young, angry, and active cinephiles like Mathieu Kassovitz, Jan Kounen, and Nicolas Boukhrief. They were in their late 20s and had the ambition to shake up the French cinema by focusing the lens on the under privileged *banlieue* reality populated by African immigrants (Vincendeau 2005, p. 34; Garreau 1996, para. 4). They realised there was a representational gap in French film culture about the underdeveloped Parisian *banlieues* where most immigrant populations live, often without essential utilities. Noé and his friends used this less discussed urban location to create a cinematic and cultural resistance against French auteur cinema's 'over-

intellectual' and 'boring topics' (Vincedeau 2015, p. 34). Hence, these young filmmakers chose to portray the desolate socio-political scenario of the *banlieues* in raw and naturalistic approaches through the documentary aesthetic, the American neo-noir outlook, and anti-hero characters influenced by Martin Scorsese's character Travis Bickle of *Taxi Driver* (1976) (Noé, cited in Symonds 2015, para. 6). Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* (1995), which creatively narrates the story of multi-ethnic French youth's outrage, anxiety, and powerlessness, is arguably the most successful example of this film movement.

At that time, the CNC was providing funding to auteur filmmakers for a first or second feature film. Although scripts focused on *banlieues* were not successful, Kassovitz made *La Haine*, Kounen made *Dobermann* (1997), and Boukhrief made *Va Mourire* (1995) with support from their producers. Young actor Vincent Cassel had his major breakthrough with *La Haine*, and he would appear again in Noé's *Irréversible* with Monica Bellucci, who also performed in *Dobermann* along with Noé.

All three film movements and New French Extreme used the *banlieues* (or peripheral suburbs) of Paris as their primary narrative locales. They involved marginalised characters, themes of young love, and dramatic generational conflicts played out in peripheral urban settings. In addition, most of the filmmakers within these three film movements have diasporic backgrounds in France. They are outsiders to the French culture; for example, Leo Carax (of cinéma du look) has an American–French background, Mathieu Kassovitz's (of le jeune cinéma, cinémas de banlieue) father is a Hungarian Jew, and Gaspar Noé (of le jeune cinéma, cinémas de banlieue) came to France from Argentina with his politically exiled parents.

In my understanding, the New French Extreme is an evolving output of French filmmakers who wanted to make certain screen narratives filled with lowbrow film tropes, horror, and eros located in *banlieue* yet reflect their 'Frenchness' as a response to the growing popularity of Hollywood blockbuster films. Apart from being a vehicle for horror and thriller elements, the New French Extreme films became critiques of contemporary French society and morality regarding immigrants and misogyny via the body horror and psychological horror

narrative (see Chapter 4). Moreover, to achieve this, these filmmakers crossed the boundary or moral limit of French art film concerning the displaying of viscerality, excess and melodrama without getting any direct production support (such as *avance sur recettes*) from CNC. They exploited sadistic, nihilistic, and haptic modes of cinema to create immersive worlds of love, respect, loss, and hate. This haptic-based cinema encouraged a 'closer form of looking, which tends to move over the surface of its object rather than plunge into illusionist depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture' (Totaro 2002, para. 9).

The New French Extreme films stand apart from their predecessors in terms of both form and content. However, these films, and their successors, were derived from a particular historical and political perspective, and they traded on prior film styles. From the cinéma du look, the New French Extreme takes the dazzling pop look (such as use of lurid colours, electro music, mise en scène); from le jeune Cinéma, it processes idiosyncrasy (each filmmaker of New French Extreme has their signatory transgressive film style in order to portray contemporary reality); and from cinémas de banlieue, it marks a territory for its narratives. While Noé as an adaptable or flexible independent filmmaker in the French film production context exploited this opportunity to even transgress the New French Extreme films spectrum of transgression through his critically acclaimed medium-length film *Carne* (1991), followed by *Seul contre tous* (*I Stand Alone* 1998) and *Irréversible*.

As already discussed, the New French Extreme filmmakers established their identities as radical, genre-bending, boundary-breaking artists by using their films, the media, and film festival attendances to raise their profiles. They situated their works in French film culture from artistic and historical points of view. On the festival circuit, they participated in professional conversations with experts. They also frequently appeared in the media (newspapers, magazines, talk shows, and online forums) to share and promote their works (Palmer 2015). Noé's fame as a 'walkout king' among contemporary filmmakers helped him identify himself as a 'branded auteur' (Elsaesser 1995) across the premium film festival network to niche cinephile-oriented film festivals. So far, Noé has set a pattern of premiering his films with the Cannes film festival,

which happens in the second quarter of each year. He travels to film festivals through the rest of the year. His eloquent and expressive discussions about ideation and the production process with press journalists and film critics during the film festival season supports his being the centre of industrial and critical discussion.

Nevertheless, scholars claim the New French Extreme films are the cinema of 'transgression'. Regardless of tracing any experimental exploration from a material perspective, existing scholarship has attached the idea of transgression with these films. From the stylistic nature and tendency of this group of films we can see it follows the normative style of storytelling but includes the horror genre code and carnality to transgress generic treatments of screen narration. Noé's *Irréversible* frequently also finds space here, particularly for its brutal rape scene. Nevertheless, this broad reflection overlooks the point of Noé's proclivity about 'amateurism' and creative experimentation. Noé's film practice shows that he is not only interested in the extreme narrative but also has the enthusiasm to incorporate tropes from experimental and avant-garde film practice as a material ingredient of his 'poetics of transgression' to produce transgressive films. Here, Noé looks at filmmaking history and practice with the eye of an amateur who has both an ardent curiosity about the film medium and a compulsive erudition and is driven by curatorial tenderness and an insatiable desire to participate in creative cinematic expression (see Chapters 2, 3, and 7). Through his amateurism and advanced cinephilia, Noé creates a cinematic resort of practising freedom of taking references from his contemporary film trends to transgress the trend and industrial expectation to articulate the story he wanted to tell. Noé creates a cinematic resort with his amateurism and advanced cinephilia for himself and his artistic collaborators. So that within the safe space of the resort, he and his associates can have the liberty of improvisation and taking textual and material references from history and contemporary times to generate a transgressive expression that will subvert the industrial expectations and work as a medium for the story he wanted to share as he visioned it.

To understand this mechanism, the production context of *Seul contre tous*, Noé's first written, directed, and produced feature film, is informative. It can help us

understand why scholars and critics consider Noé as a part of New French Extreme, whereas I argue that, based on his position in the French film ecosystem, relationship with the industry and as a pragmatic, branded auteur, his core identity is not as a New French Extreme filmmaker. Noé's works frequently connect with New French Extreme style due to their cinematic excesses and sensational elements, but *Seul contre tous*'s content and style also share the stylistics territory of le jeune cinéma and Cinémas de banlieue. For example, it is set in a *banlieue* of Paris, and is the story of a nameless butcher facing rejection, loneliness, and unemployment. The themes are embedded in the title of the film, as it explicates 'similar sense of solitude, despair, and abandonment through its protagonist, The Butcher' (Collins 2013, p. 9). The finance and economic aspects are crucial contexts, for all film production. Tellingly, Noé started this production independently from his production house les cinéma de la zone and later managed to get an initial budget from a Canal+ fund. The production ran over two years due to budget constraints, but the fashion designer Agnès B's financial support helped Noé to complete the film (Bailey 2003). Such financial crises continued until *Irréversible*.

In *Seul contre tous*, Noé documented the *banlieue*'s social dynamics by visualising migrant issues and racism through the subtext of Arab migrants. In various scenes he showed Arab migrant characters facing discrimination. *Seul contre tous* is also an example of an enthralling 'sociological study of discontent, isolation, violence, and the underclass' (MoMa 2019, para. 1). From the point of view of New French Extreme, the young Noé designed the production with a monologue voice-over and minimal dialogue, and he abandoned classical storytelling narration. He created cinematic thrills by juxtaposing a collection of shocking images, instinctive use of camera crash-zooms (which is a staple of horror genre), static shots, abrupt, fast camera movements, an eerie soundtrack with orchestral compositions of Thierry Durbet and Phil Davis, and his use of Godardian intertitles, including similar typographies.

From his debut feature, Noé's desire has been to shake the audience, 'like being electrified, like an epileptic seizure' (Bailey 2003, p. 9). Noé's nameless butcher follows the path of Travis Bickle of *Taxi Driver*, who talks with himself inside his head but does not reveal his impulses. Noé frankly displays sex and

violence like it happens in *Salò* to show the 'perverse dynamics of desire' of human as a being (Smith 1998, p. 154). *Seul contre tous* won the International Critics' Week Award at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival but also faced harsh criticism from critics and the press.

Scholars and critics have found the texture of the Grand Guignol's gore tradition, as well as Euro-pulp horror, in Noé's films and have thus treated him as a member of New French Extreme. Noé undeniably wants to shake his audiences' consciences and not simply 'shock' them (Romney 2004, para. 10). He uses the film to challenge and confront an audience's perception of reality. However, to date, these scholars and critics have not shed enough light on how Noé's transgressive films hold their position between 'French high-art cinéma d'auteur' and more extreme films. To understand this strange bridging position, one needs to account for Noé's specific approach to film production contexts. Noé is not interested in creating transgressive films either for the sake of a trend or for being a part of the New French Extreme. Rather, he can be seen as a clever, and strategic, opportunistic independent filmmaker who pursues all existing available options to make the films he wants to make.

In any case, the New French Extreme proved a short-lived phenomenon in French film culture in the early 2000s. The term New French Extreme proposed by the film festival programmers was to collect all brutal, corporeal, intimate and sensual body horror films under a single name. This style achieved prominence among audiences and film festivals, not because of any counter cultural aspirations but from the CNC-supported funds available through TV channels for making French transgressive films. Usually, in the history of film, a group of filmmakers would promote the new directions in cinema in relation to cultural forces, but in the case of New French Extreme, the CNC passively played the role of changemaker by making the TV channels participate in local film production as producers of transgressive films. Due to the CNC's policy, local TV channels provide financial support to films with extreme content due

to the lack of giallo films and the popularity of the American horror genre with younger audiences.

In terms of production rules, the CNC protects the French film industry by insuring funds and investments from national television networks and pay-per-view broadcasters such as Canal+ (Palmer 2015). Hence, the financing of these movies by Canal+ is transparent. It is part of CNC's support scheme to promote transgressive films with public tax. It is my view that the phenomenon of the New French Extreme was less a collective movement and more an opportunity to get finance for a transgressive film to deliver the return of investment to producers. Nevertheless, New French Extreme films also created resistance to the then conservative political attitudes and to the growing intolerance of immigrant, queer, and female identities on the screen. The production contexts of New French Extreme film are yet to be explored and negotiated in a scholarly context.

As will be explored in Chapters 5 and 6, Noé defies mainstream storytelling through a personal commitment, the rejection of industry 'template' narrative structures, and the use of improvised dialogue which serves to imitate a 'real-life' conversation mode for the screen. He explores physical, psychological, and erotic modes of cinematic transgression tailored to the story – and its cinematic potential – rather than simply exploiting violence, brutality, or sex as a revenue-generating element. For Noé, transgression is a poetic terrain, a *tour de force* which he can cultivate via a sophisticated poetics of transgression, as is evident from his creative practice in screen development, screenwriting, and screen production.

Gaspar Noé's Transgressive Film Poetics

The phrase '*Un Film de Gaspar Noé*' (a film by Gaspar Noé) on the black screen with reversed letters is now sufficient to convey to the audience that they are about to be submerged into an unpredictable journey of vibrant colours, mesmerising cinematography, thought-provoking mise en scène, sensual music, and emotional narrative. From his first entry to the Cannes film festival, with *Seul contre tous*, to his latest entry, *Vortex*, the Argentinian-born, French-speaking Noé has created controversy with every production. Noé intentionally

incites his audiences with an unambiguous warning to leave the theatre. For example, the final act of *Seul contre tous* comes with the cautionary message, 'ATTENTION! YOU HAVE 30 SECONDS TO LEAVE THE SCREENING OF THIS FILM' with a real-time, 30-seconds countdown followed by the flashing text 'DANGER'. When journalists asked about the intention behind this motif, Noé affirmed that he was happy to see the audience leave the theatre during the film (Frey 2016, p. 25). While certain observers, including those enmeshed within the formal national cinema industry, support him as a significant auteur in contemporary cinema, others relegate him to being just a provocateur. Yet, 'his work is less a childish provocation than a shock treatment, meant to reawaken the senses rather than desensitise' (Lazic 2019, para. 3). Spencer (1999) suggests 'Noé's goal in making the film was to create a film so confrontational and in opposition with contemporary French cinema that it would be universally despised – a film to 'dishonour France'' (para. 8). This suggests that Noé's films rally against international arthouse brand of 'Frenchness' and instead provoke the audiences to examine the obnoxious elements of this mode of safe 'Frenchness'. Noé has claimed that film is a 'weapon' and his enemies are 'concepts or social structures' as well as the 'rancid collaborationist French' (Frey 2016, p. 25). The anomaly is that he has received, and sustains, a wide level of support from the industry he critiques. In this sense, he can be framed as a successor to Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who made a career from 'biting the hand that feeds him' as he advanced the New German Cinema.

Figure 1.6 Gaspar Noé likes to include his influences in film; all these posters used in *Love* are from his collection

Anthony Julius (2002) reviewed the perception of transgression in visual arts from the 19th century to contemporary time. He proposed four distinctive features of transgressive arts:

> the denying of doctrinal truths; rule-breaking, including the violating of principles, conventions, pieties or taboos; giving of serious offences; and the exceeding, erasing or disordering of physical or conceptual boundaries. (cited in Angelo 2012, p. 163)

In his discussion, Julius did not specifically look into French cinema's transgressive tendency, but the primary significances he found through analysis can also be applied to establishing Noé's poetics of transgression. In terms of industrial filmmaking, Noé plays a tyrannical role in that he disavows screenwriting norms. He made *Irréversible* from a three-page script, and he does not follow the formula of the character development arc; instead, he allows his performers to improvise character and dialogue to capture the spontaneity of the moment. He stands opposite the norm of showing adult human characters in the film as 'psychologically transparent' beings who learn from their wrong doings; rather, his characters are instinctive and ruthless. He is keener to show

perverse nature of human beings, so the characters find themselves between damned life and daily life (Palmer 2011, p. 71).

When Noé does not portray physical violence, he exploits psychological violence. Consequently, Nicodemo (2012) has described Noé's works as *hyper-transgressive.* He suggests Noé creates this by amalgamating 'a variety of visual and aural techniques, borrowing from both the traditions of the avant-garde and "mainstream" narrative cinema, with which Noé uses to construct a visceral "attack" upon the viewer' (p. 41).

For Noé, real-life departs from the mainstream conception of cinematic narration; most people are not satisfied with their lives. This informs his preoccupation with representations of the world as a dystopian reality. It also situates Noé apart from other contemporary French filmmakers such as Mathieu Kassovitz, Claire Denis, and Bruno Dumont within the French film system – and from the New French Extreme movement.

Noé's films display intimacy, love and loss, relationships, alienation, exploitation, and troubled masculinity and femininity as recurring thematic motifs. His characters are fragile, confused and living in denial. In his early films (*Carne*, *Seul contre tous*, *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void*), as well as in his most recent works (*Love*, *Climax*), the male characters are conflicted and uncertain about their futures. At the end of the films, they find themselves as losers, rather than as the 'heroes' of mainstream protagonist narratives, which rely on the dubious concept of transformation of character and the achievement of goals though conflict. Noé's male characters try to escape the vicious circle of reality, but the situation gets out of their hands (Grierson 2019). These characters also remind me of filmmaker Stanley Kubrick's (whom Noé mentioned as one of his major influences) male characters 'masculinity from the perspective of highly problematic post-patriarchal' (Elsaesser 2020, p. 8) perspective such as, Jack Torrance from *The Shining* (1980), the title character of *Barry Lyndon* (1975), and Dr William 'Bill' Harford from *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). On the other hand, for Noé, the female characters (Alex in *Irréversible*, Linda in *Enter the Void*, Electra in *Love*) are comparatively stronger and 'far more intelligent' (Noé, quoted in Kohn 2016, para. 7) than the male characters.

Nevertheless, in his films the female characters face the violence and sexual assaults and bear the wounds. Natalism is the feature that recurrently emerges within the nihilistic plot through the female characters' desires and dialogues in *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void*, *Love*, and *Climax*. In the current cultural moment, it is interesting to speculate on how Noé's work might shift regarding the representation of women and women's stories on screen. This lies beyond the scope of this thesis but is a question relevant to the discussions of his works from *Irréversible* to *Vortex*.

Figure 1.7 Emmanuelle talks to her young son Tito in *Climax*

Noé and other contemporary transgressive filmmakers have relied on 'an ingeniously crafted barrage of visual and aural techniques' (Palmer 2011, p. 59) to transgress the production norms of filmmaking. Noé experiments with technical aspects to transgress normative modes of production. He opted to shoot *Love* in 3D. Just one year earlier, Jean-Luc Godard had used a 3D camera rig to shoot *Adieu au langage* (*Goodbye to Language* 2014), which also premiered in Cannes alongside *Love*. Noé's long-time collaborator cinematographer Benoît Debie advised him to use the 3D camera, although as a producer/filmmaker, Noé was concerned about the budget and expense. Ultimately, he learned that the French government would give funds to make the 3D film; this is evidence of his strategic pragmatism. Like Godard with Fabrice Aragano, Noé and Debie experimented with the stereoscopic camera to explore a new visual language. For example, the camera in *Love* is more sober and static than the disorienting camera in *Enter the Void*. Noé and Debie said they wanted to 'occupy the space like in a photograph, and the 3D all combine to give the feeling of painting in

relief' (Debie 2015a, para. 2). Along with this, John Carpenter's theme music from *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976) (Sargeant 2019) adds a creepy undertone to the Parisian orgy club sex scene, demonstrating Noé's aesthetics of disturbance through a film score.

Critics have often tagged Noé's explicit portrayal of real sex as 'intimacy as pornography', instead of considering those acts as an erotic transgression. The word 'pornography' symbolises sexually explicit material that is 'a commercial product in the form of fictional drama designed to elicit or enhance sexual arousal' (Mosher 1988, p. 67), and '(intentional) pornography is a communication material provided for the purpose of sexually arousing or gratifying a user in isolation from others' (Pope et al. 2007, p. 5). Ashton et al. (2019) suggests that pornography in the digital age needs to be consensual as well; it is a 'material deemed sexual, given the context, that has the primary intention of sexually arousing the consumer, and is produced and distributed with the consent of all persons involved' (p. 163).

Noé distinguishes his films from pornography. He shows full-frontal nudity in the interests of portraying the natural reflex of a relationship. He uses erotic depictions as a tool of interaction between the objective and subjective territory of the films. His displays of anti-normative sexuality and non-binary gender relations mark him as an early engager with notions of non-binary characters. His narratives recurrently visit a gay club (*Irréversible*), and trans-gender parties and orgies (*Love*, *Climax*). However, critics and scholars have argued that Noé's portrayal of anti-normative sexuality and non-binary gender relations are problematic. For example, film critic David Edelstein (2003) labelled *Irréversible* 'the most homophobic movie ever made' (para. 6), and film critic Jessica Kiang (2015) has pointed that the inclusion of the transgender character in *Love* is 'un-casually transphobic' (para. 2). The critics' remarks about *Irréversible*'s homophobia and *Love*'s transphobia are questionable because Noé transgressed the contemporary practice of representing queer and transgender characters with empathy via the screen narrative. For example, Noé did not choose to limit the possibilities of queer representation (or transgressing the boundary) with the gay character Le Tenia as a rapist in *Irréversible* or Murphy as a transphobic in *Love*; he also cast trans activist Claude-Emmanuelle Gajan-Maull as a single

mother named Emmanuelle in *Climax* too. Besides the critics, Noé films form a threat to governments not because those sexual treatments uphold a queer vision but also demonstrate a chaotic display of dynamism that signifies a notion of the disappearance of class consciousness between the characters and subtly exhibits the utopia of class-less society.

For instance, after the theatre release of *Love*, French conservatives managed to re-rate the film from 16 to 18 for the intimate sexual subject matter (Richford 2015, para. 1; Barnes 2016, para. 3). Russian Ministry of Culture outrightly banned the film and denounced giving the exhibition license because the authority believes the film is as dangerous as *Mein Kampf* for their youth (Kozlov 2015, para. 2). In East Europe, Ukraine conceived a particular rating category 20+ (when the age of consent is 16) and ran the film only in one theatre (Berman 2015, para. 10; Manning 2015). From this perspective, Noé's films also serve as a political tool for freedom of expression and a tactic of critiquing the state's conformist cultural policy that violates artistic nonconformity.

As a transgressive filmmaker, Noé often crosses the extreme point of social, moral, or cultural values of body, sex, and intimacy. His aim is not to sexually arouse the audience; rather, he is keen to explore sentimental eroticism. For Noé, sentimental eroticism is a part of the natural reflex of a human relationship:

> When people are attracted to each other, it's natural to procreate or simulate the act of procreation. It's a simple, happy, positive thing. When it comes to the portrayal of this act, people start shaking. (quoted in Kramer 2015, para. 5)

In the age of collective auto-censorship, Noé has come up with a radical aural and visual treatment to agitate the stereotypical notions and representations of sex on screen (Kramer 2015). He deploys a concept of transgression that is not limited to visualising erotic tension or to forcing the audience to face real sex and taboos on screen. Noé systematically utilises extreme scenes and rhetoric to breach the conventional limits of filmmaking and propose an alternative, authoritative style of self-expressive film. As Noé has said in interviews,

producing shock is not his goal, it is a medium to unsettle audiences' moral and ethical frameworks (Frey 2016, p. 25). He does this to represent things that are not available on screen for commercial reasons. Noé believes that the dominant modes of film classification actually facilitate the film business to sustain a conformist outlook about exhibiting natural sexual intimacy on screen:

> In most societies, whether they're western or not, people want to control sexual behaviour or to organise it in a precise context. Sex is like a danger zone. Sometimes class barriers fall down, and it scares a lot of people. It's about states controlling their systems, like religion. (Noé, quoted in Barlow 2015, para. 28)

Noé frequently associates himself with auteur and cult filmmakers like Alan Clarke, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and Luis Buñuel to legitimise his poetics of transgression and to situate himself in the historical realm of film forms. Across more than three decades, Noé has developed a nonconformist discursive approach to filmmaking, formalised a distinctive poetics of transgression, and advanced (and shifted) his transgressive poetics with each film. It is the work of this thesis to elucidate this.

When considering the arguments and observations about transgression and radicalism of New French Extreme, film scholars have focused on aspects such as excess and sex as the determiners of the extreme narrative and examined the cultural representation of extremity as a radical character of the trend. In this thesis, I locate Gaspar Noé outside these formal trends, including New French Extreme. Through establishing Noé's poetics of transgression, I aim to better identify Noé as a contemporary artist who works across, and between, defined boundaries and film movements. Rather than consider cinematic transgression from a distance, I have attempted to define and locate Noé's poetics of transgression through a close, materialist reading of his feature film output, and perhaps more significantly, I have situated these poetics in the context of

established creative practices in screen development, screenwriting, and screen production.

Thesis Structure

This dissertation has eight chapters. In Chapter 1, I explain the theoretical foundation of the thesis, linking the theories related to Noé's transgressive film practices, as moulded by the production contexts of his work. A contextual review situates his work within French film culture and the national cinema production context. I discuss the role of the CNC in supporting transgressive auteur films that deal with excessive and screen stories.

Three qualitative approaches contextualise this thesis: close textual analysis of Noé's feature films; case study analysis in relation to Noé's creative film practice and production; and archival research I completed online to collect screen materials and provide evidence for Noé's poetics as a generative process. I had hoped to visit Gaspar Noé's archives and undertake genetic criticism, but this did not eventuate due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. I was, however, fortunate to track down authentic screen development and screenwriting documents available online. As a Bangladeshi film society activist, I also discuss my transgressive experience of discovering Noé's screen world through a bootleg DVD of *Irréversible*.

Chapter 2 offers the foundation of Noé's poetics of transgression. I explain how his nonconformist and politically conscious cultural upbringing with his Argentine artist and activist family in exile remains a touchpoint of his transgressive outlook. I show how Noé's emigration as a child from Argentina to France to 'survive' from political oppression represents as a literal transgression that has played a role in generating and progressing his poetics of transgression as an outsider in French culture. I elucidate this development by discussing his film school journey, his collaboration with fellow French filmmaker and partner Lucile Hadžihalilović, his early short films and sex-education videos, and his award-winning, medium-feature narrative *Carne*.

To link with Noé's nonconformist background and early development as a transgressive filmmaker, Chapter 3 addresses his advanced cinephilia and

French cine-literacy. Noé's philosophical, visual art and cinematic influences are explored as a form of premeditated groundwork for envisioning a nihilistic, chaotic, and transgressive screen world. I suggest that Noé's creative influence plays the role of a matrix to sustain his poetics of transgression, which strives to eliminate the boundary between or within art and film practices and see film as a holistic enterprise. I demonstrate how Luis Buñuel, R. W. Fassbinder, Kenneth Anger, Stanley Kubrick, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and American structural filmmakers' film styles informed the contextual aesthetic architecture of Noé's transgressive poetics.

In Chapter 4, I survey the process through which Noé's poetics of transgression finds form on screen as a film narration pattern. I suggest that Noé's 'blended' approach of 'melodramatic-horror' narration follows a revised pattern of art-film narration as part of his poetics of transgression. I examine how the branded auteur's cultural resistance to the CNC-supported 'auteur' films transgresses the conventional parameters of art film as high culture. That is, Noé chooses the melodrama and horror genres since they occupy a relegated status in French film culture and represent his cinephilic obsession. I reveal the contribution of Noé's transgressive film practice and le jeune cinéma to the making of CNC-backed, auteur-made, body horror films like Julia Ducournau's *Grave* and *Titane* (2021).

In Chapter 5, I draw on Adrian Martin (2014) to define Noé's screenwriting poetics as the DNA of his poetics of transgression. I also describe Noé's 'screen ideas' via Ian W. Macdonald (2013) and show how the cinematic idea drives Noé's alternative screenwriting practice, which forms the basis for the materiality of his on-screen transgressive poetics. I highlight how French legal and moral rights have encouraged Noé to explore nonconventional screenwriting approaches such as going to a film location without a written script (Maras 2009). I substantiate Noé's screenwriting poetics through his tendency to write, or script, with the camera and to collaborate with actors to develop dialogue through improvisation processes.

To explicate Noé's screenplay forms, Chapter 6 concentrates on Noé's preference for an alternative form of screenplay, such as the treatment, outline,

and synopsis. I suggest that Noé, being a practitioner of self-reflexivity and instinctive energy, locates artistic freedom when he has more scope for imagination and improvisation. In addition, Noé's production context of limited budgets and limited timeframes for shooting has also encouraged him to explore naturality within restricted situations.

In Chapter 7, via Adrian Martin (1992, 2013), I demonstrate that Noé's poetics of transgression finds a cinematic form as moving image production through an excessive mise en scène, establishing a 'zone' to direct camera work, deploying mobile cameras, and generating materiality via light, colour, and texture. I posit that Noé's production of moving images reflects his personal lyricism along with inspirations from film amateurism and experimental, structural, and avant-garde cinema forms. I document the significant collaboration and contribution of cinematographer Benoît Debie to the production of Noé's moving images, including 'scripting' with the camera.

In Chapter 8, the final chapter, I deliver my concluding remarks and suggest future research into Noé's poetics of transgression. In particular, I acknowledge that research into the poetics of post-production is another frontier that I or others might conduct.

Chapter 2
Gaspar Noé: Rebel Parents, Migration, Cinephilia and Transgression

> Everyone who enjoys thinks that the principal thing to the tree is
> the fruit, but in point of fact the principal thing to it is the seed…
>
> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1919, p. 997)

The foreground of this thesis details critical arguments and observations about Gaspar Noé's films. In relation to the more significant argument about Noé's poetics through the lens of a case study, and to document his transgressive film practice, it is essential to understand his personal and historical context. Furthermore, as with paintings, a compelling backdrop helps the connoisseur to experience the exquisiteness of the artwork and to visually relate to its foreground elements. Here, Noé's biographical background and key life events will offer insights to the systematic investigations about the formative years of his transgressive outlook within a real-world context. Included are the impact of Noé's parent's artistic and intellectual resistance against the Argentine military dictatorship; their exiled life in Paris, their constant scrutinisation of nonconformist aspect of existence, and their passion for cinema.

Noé was born and brought up in a cultural and artistic atmosphere, surrounded by politically active parents and their artist friends. He was 'foundationally exposed to art, and non-traditional forms of mise en scène', artistic subversion and counterculture from the start of his life (Palmer 2015, p. 55). The idea of transgression and violence bloomed in his childhood mind when his family had to escape their ancestral land under the pressure of a military dictatorship. Noé knew from that moment that 'violence' is not just an act of enjoinment or tyranny; the very idea of violence is accompanied by the perception of power, hierarchy, anxiety and self-defence regarding which side (victim or offender) a person belongs. Exiled to France with his artist and activist family as victims of fascist oppression, Noé learned how to bury an old self by becoming socially and culturally submerged in his new Parisian lifestyle. Rhetorically, this can be compared with being raped; the assault was carried out without the consent of the victim, and it left a permanent impression of vulnerability.

Emblematically, the act of rape has become one of Noé's core topics. It is not only the ultimate violence against women and men, but it also suggests a vulgar display of power against oppressed people. Like his artist father, Luis Felipe Noé, Gaspar Noé utilises 'chaos' to unveil hidden veracity by astonishing viewers. He believes that if anyone makes a film with a rape scene, they must picturise that rape in a powerful and 'disgusting way' to 'help people to avoid that kind of situation' (Noé quoted in Macnab 2002, para. 7). As an outsider (or immigrant) in French society, Noé observed the Parisian urban reality from a different angle while growing up as a cinephile and avid fan of psychological horror, disaster, catastrophic, zombie and giallo genres. His parents also ignited in his mind the fire of transgression and a nonconformist attitude.

In this chapter, I focus on how Noé's upbringing in Paris with his Argentine artist and activist family and friends in exile played a cultural and artistic role in developing and expanding his poetics of transgression. I will unfold this discussion in two parts. Part 1 specifies why Noé is regarded as an outsider in French culture and the national film industry, and part two describes his upbringing as a nonconformist and his path to becoming a transgressive auteur filmmaker. To do this, I will examine his early short films, medium-feature narrative *Carne*, and sex education videos.

Part 1: Noé as an Outsider

Born and brought up

Born on 27 December 1963 in Buenos Aires, Gaspar Julio Noé Murphy (also known as Gaspar Noé) descends from a cultural–political family. His mother, Nora Ofelia Murphy, was a social worker. His father, Luis Felipe Noé, is an essential character of Argentine art history who played a leading part in the formation of the Nueva Figuración (New Figurative Imagining) movement in 1960s to articulate the social struggle under the volatile national political climate (Bianco 2009, p. 20). The family nurtured an artistic and socially aware environment for the future cineaste. As Noé often says, 'my dad inspired me humanly and artistically' (Noé, quoted in Boghossian 2019, para. 13). He also mentions his mother's contribution in developing a cinephile impulse in

childhood (Mottram 2010, para. 9; Weston 2015, para. 7). These influences shaped the young Noé's worldview and provided him with an intellectual foundation allied with anti-establishment views and counter-cultural politics, thrusting him towards experimentation in his early work as a screenwriter and director across short- and medium-length projects. Figure 2.1 shows him with his mother, father and sister.

At the age of 6, Noé's parents took him to the cinema to watch Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), which would prove a transformative experience in terms of the possibilities of cinematic expression and remain a key influence in the development of his creative vision and voice as a filmmaker. Noé described the experience of watching *2001: A Space Odyssey* as the first psychedelic trip he ever had (Mottram 2010, para. 7). The film left a permanent impression on the young Noé's mind, and traces of it remain across his oeuvre. His mother also took him to Rainer Werner Fassbinder's and Pier Paolo Pasolini's films at a young age. Noé also has memories of watching Federico Fellini's films with his father (Boghossian 2019, para. 15). I will dissect those influences in Chapter 3.

While Noé was in elementary school, his best friend's grandfather and uncle were ticket agents at the Teatro Gran Rex and Cinema Lavalle[4] in Buenos Aires (Boghossian 2019, para. 15). Consequently, Noé and his friend got free passes to the cinemas to see any film. They also gained opportunities to have the age restriction waived and to watch films not suitable for minors.

---

[4] Both of the theatres built in Art Deco style, but the Teatro Gran Rex is famous as one of the largest cinemas, and Cinema Lavalle is recognized as one of the classical cinemas in Buenos Aires (Teatro Gran Rex 2021; Cines Multiplex 2021).

Figure 2.1 Gaspar Noé with his mother Nora Murphy, father Luis Felipe Noé, and sister Paula Noé Murphy (Clarin 2018)

Young Noé became obsessed with cinema and developed a fascination with horror and catastrophic genre films such as *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972) and *The Towering Inferno* (1974) (Suzanne-Mayer 2019, para. 31), as well as psychological horror-thrillers like *Peeping Tom* (1960). In response to this growing obsession with horror and catastrophic genre cinema, Noé's mother took him to a psychoanalyst for assessment of his psychological wellbeing. As Noé recalled, the session went well and the psychoanalyst assessed that there was no sign of psychological imbalance (Le Temps Détruit Tout 2021, para. 1). With this diagnosis Noé was able to persist with his passion for genre films.

By the age of 16, Noé's growing obsession with horror and catastrophic genre films included a diverse array of influences such as David Cronenberg's venereal horrors, David Lynch's surreal, disturbing yet mind-bending films, Roman Polański's psychological horrors, Tod Browning's grotesque revenge dramas, Andrzej Żuławski's hysterical art-house horror films, as well as Italian giallo films and American zombie films. Nevertheless, Noé cites the impact of John Guillermin's academy award-nominated disaster film *The Towering Inferno* – which he watched 'seven consecutive days in the week' at the age of 10 (Noé quoted in Crump 2019, para. 19). As Noé asserts:

I used to consume a lot of horror movies as a teenager, and some impressed me more than other ones. I would watch Romero's movies, Dario Argento's movies, *Eraserhead* (1977) over and over. *Possession* (1981), *Repulsion* (1965), *Freaks* (1932). I was obsessed with the Masters of Horror cinema as much as I was obsessed with directors like Kubrick, Fassbinder and Pasolini. (quoted in Mortimer 2018, para. 9)

Young Noé was mesmerised by the horror narratives' nonconformity and dramatic tension. In the horror genre, the idea of anxiety plays an integral part in the narrative. 'Anxiety' has a historical connection with the genre, as film scholar Paul Wells (2000) affirms: 'The history of the horror film is essentially a history of anxiety in the twentieth century' (p. 3). If we look back at the 1960s or 1970s, when young Noé was growing up, the world was also going through the tension and anxiety of the Cold War. Simultaneously, there was a tendency in the horror genre to focus on the cultural moments of social isolation and to represent psychological horror.

Through horror and catastrophic genre films, Noé realised that the most appealing point of a screen narrative is when a perfect world collapses without any prior notice and the psychological horror affects the characters (Noé quoted in Brady 2018, para. 10). For instance, the horror or catastrophic film starts with everything in order, people are sure about their future, and life is running predictably; yet some unexpected event then happens, which ruins everything. For example, in David Cronenberg's *Shivers* (1975) the occupants of an uptown skyscraper apartment complex are having a regular routine life without any anxiety of being attacked by outsiders. Meanwhile, they are being contaminated by a strain of parasites that transforms them into careless, sex-frenzied devils out to taint others through the smallest sexual contact. This parasitic outbreak ruins their control over their lives and puts them in a zombie-like condition.

It is this model of (psychological) horror screen narrative that is the foundation of Noé's poetics of transgression. He has infused the horror of uncertainty and anxiety into his works, from *Seul contre tous* to *Vortex*. Monica Bellucci is raped in the tunnel in *Irréversible*, Nathaniel Brown is killed by police in *Enter the Void*, and Karl Glusman unexpectedly finds Klara Kristin pregnant in *Love*. His latest

mid-length feature, *Lux Æterna,* similarly unfolds with a familiar, panic-free situation suddenly falling apart without any warning and involvement of the characters, all of whom find themselves in chaos and despair. Needless to say, Noè's films do contain psychological horror tropes, although they do not follow the narrative texture of 'Tower of Babel' falling down. Rather, he represents the inner struggle of the characters in a more sophisticated style. The element of surprise in such narratives draws the line between what happened before and after the disaster.

Migration

Noé's parents are from a multicultural background. Luis Felipe Noé is of Spanish, Italian, and French-Basque descent (Dar 2020, para. 3) and Nora Ofelia Murphy was born in Argentina to an Irish émigré father (Barlow 2015, para. 34). Apart from an interest in urban culture, Noé has incorporated representations of multi-ethnicity and migrants in his films with a sense of empathy that is aligned with the current debates on diversity and screen representation in the industry. In this capacity he has proved to be ahead of the curve. In each of his feature films, Noé includes migrant characters in the settings of Paris (*Seul contre tous*; *Irrèversible*; *Love*; *Climax*; *Vortex*) and Tokyo (*Enter the Void*). He credits his social conscience and nonconformism to the situation of his own family as 'outsiders' in France (Le-Tan 2009, para. 4) – a situation mirrored in Noé's status as an outsider in the French cinema ecosystem.

Noé spent his early childhood between Buenos Aires and New York. In 1964, when he was just a few months old, his family moved to New York City for Luis Felipe Noé's Guggenheim fellowship and the opportunity to exhibit works. Nora Murphy, having taught English in Buenos Aires, was able to transition to New York. The family stayed there for five years. At that time, in the late 1960s, American youth were embracing the countercultural movement and the flower-power era, which included experimenting with psychedelic drugs, such as LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) – which Noé would later incorporate into his films. When his parents found out their friends' children were exploring recreational drugs they panicked and moved back Buenos Aires to safeguard their children's future (Le-Tan 2009, para. 4).

Argentina's national political climate was going through a volatile period at that time, with a coup in 1966. When Noé's family moved back to Buenos Aires, Argentina had become a 'bureaucratic – authoritarian state' under the military junta regime (O'Donnell 1978, p. 6). Realising the surrounding world had gone beyond all 'symbolical possibilities' and directing his attention to participating in the 'mechanism of political-cultural change', Luis Felipe Noé would abandon painting for the next decade, until the asphyxiating political reality led him to take refuge in painting once more (Bianco 2009, p. 25). Nora Murphy became a 'politically engaged social worker' (Noé, quoted in Le-Tan 2009, para. 4).

In 1976, after the coup d'état against President Isabel Peron,

> Systematic and organised repression was instituted against wide sectors of society: political and trade union militants, workers, university students, artists, intellectuals, and all of those associated with a certain political challenge became victims of political persecution. (Franco 2007, p. 52)

Noé's parents' friends were locked up in torture camps because of their left-leaning political status. After the military forces raided their house to arrest Luis Felipe, the Noé family once again decided to leave Argentina to escape the oppressive military dictatorship (Boghossian 2019, para. 8). Luis Felipe Noé emigrated to Paris on 1 June 1976 as an artist in exile, and after some time Nora Murphy with their children Gaspar and Paula Noé Murphy followed him. Noé recalled:

> Because when my father had to run away, faster than my mom, it was more risky for him than for my mother. And also, because my mother had to put things together. You don't leave your apartment just like that. You have to prepare, put your stuff somewhere in a basement, and then go. So we stayed for nine months, and then we took a boat to France. (quoted in Rupe 2010, p. 379)

In Paris, Luis Felipe Noé resumed painting, and at the age of 89 still lives in France as an artist (Noè 2021, para. 38; Boghossian 2019, para. 2). Noé was 12

when he permanently relocated to Paris with his family. Teenager Noé discovered an 'open' France under the presidency of centre-right politician Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who is 'credited with transforming and encouraging European integration' in post-Second World War France. During his office from 1974 to 1981, Giscard took a more liberal approach, reforming immigration policy, changing the laws on divorce, and decriminalising abortion (Shenton 1976, p. 749). Giscard died in 2020 at the age of 94 due to 'complications linked to COVID-19' (Willsher 2020, para. 1).

In Paris, two new elements that would inform Noé's filmmaking made an impression on him: he found comic books (Aguilar 2019, para. 4) and he discovered that he could watch films uncensored, which was impossible in Argentina (Boghossian 2019, para. 9). David Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977) had 'such a strong impact' on him that he thinks the hybrid impression of it and *2001: A Space Odyssey* propelled him to film school (quoted in Lordygan 2015, para. 4). As an outsider in French culture, he understood quickly that he would not have to repress or censor his thoughts or his imagination, and that he should not take freedom of expression for granted.

Film School and the French Film Ecosystem

In the French film ecosystem, film schools are noted for producing young cine literates through 'advanced pedagogy' (Palmer 2015, p. 15). Among the film schools, La Fémis (L'École Nationale Supérieure des Métiers de l'Image et du Son, formerly known as the L'Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques, IDHEC), and L'École Nationale Supérieure Louis-Lumière (ENS Louis-Lumière) have historically played distinguished roles in developing and producing emerging French filmmakers and film mentors.

La Fémis

In 1986, La Fémis took the place of IDHEC, which was established in 1944. La Fémis is renowned for its highly competitive pedagogy and analytical study of film history, philosophy and aesthetics. It offers an advanced and innovative method to teach the craft of filmmaking and it encourages students to search for better approaches for engaging and communicating with the audience. Some

notable alumni are Lucile Emina Hadžihalilović, Claire Denis, Marina de Van, Noémie Lvovsky, and François Ozon. Hadžihalilović (b. 1961) would become both a personal and a professional partner with Noé and establish with him the film production house, les cinémas de la zone, from which they have so far produced 11 titles, including short- and feature-length films.

École Nationale Supérieure Louis-Lumière

The ENS Louis-Lumière, which was established in 1926 by Louis Lumière (who invented the cinematograph with his brother Auguste Lumière) and Léon Gaumont (pioneer of the motion picture industry in France). This institute is a pioneer in film and photography education and is renowned as a 'pure technical trade school' focusing on 'commercialist ideology' (Palmer 2015, p. 15). To enhance its applied and technical vision the ENS Louis-Lumière transferred to new locations in the Cité du Cinéma complex in Saint-Denis, Paris in 2012. This film studio complex is an initiative supported by the 'film school reject' filmmaker and producer Luc Besson (Deburg 2017, para. 1) to build a state-of-the-art film production and distribution facility under one roof.

Enter the Film School

In the early 1980s, at the age of 17, the young cinephile Noé was accepted into the ENS Louis-Lumière to study cinema and photography. During this rigorous and intensive program, he received the professional training that allowed him to start making short films. He graduated in 1982. Film scholar Tim Palmer (2015) considers the film school played a vital role in Noé's career, noting his ambition:

> Noé in 1982 – move quite rapidly into the profession, promoted on its credentials, often with a completed student sample of work in hand, underlining how much France conflates advanced film instruction with a healthy film trade, expecting its filmmakers to be good students and, later, good teachers too. (p. 15)

However, Noé did not join the film industry immediately. As a new graduate, he was expected to start working, but instead he joined Université Paris 1

Panthéon-Sorbonne to study philosophy as a non-fee-paying auditor. For a year and a half, Noé studied there and discovered German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. This laid the foundation for his artistic development and was a key influence on the development of his poetics of transgression. I will discuss this in Chapter 3.

Part 2: Being a Nonconformist

Nonconformity is a key characteristic of Noé's approach, and it has offered him the confidence to experiment with ideas and the courage to break traditional rules and transgress the limits of expectation (Bullock, quoted in Popova 2016, para. 2). This relates to his father's role as an artist with political insight who believed in, and had experienced, chaos as order rather than as a dysfunctional entity (Ivanchevich 2017, para. 4). As well, Noé's mother was a feminist and a politically active opponent of oppression and female harassment (Le-Tan 2009, para. 4).

Noé's relationship to women in his films has proved contentious and reveals a complex scenario. I will explore in this thesis the current cultural moment of the #metoo movement. In addition, the young cinephile Noé would embrace horror, catastrophic and disaster genre films as screen narratives that reject the notion of conformity in relation to the characters, incidents and structures of his films. For Noé, nonconformity represents a point of attraction in his life and is a foundation in the development of his poetics of transgression. Juvenile Noé devoured American noir (*The Lady in the Lake* (1947)), psychedelic experimental (*Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954)) and technically astonishing (*Soy Cuba* (*I Am Cuba* 1964)) films through the Parisian revival circuit (Palmer 2015, p. 56). These films had a nonconformist and experimental outlook, and in interviews to promote his films Noé frequently mentions them as a staple of his creative inspirations. The fact that Noé was raised as an atheist has also proved a catalyst to his developing a nonconformist and transgressive approach to cinema and creative production.

A nonconformist view on social reality and the advance of poetic realism occurred in 1980s French film culture with the emergence of cinéma du look. This set of filmmakers would become 'cult directors' in the wave of the French

Nouvelle Vague. Using poetic realism, they viewed French reality through the lens of the commodity culture that defined the decade at large. As Allmer (2004) points out, 'Cinéma du look indeed adopts the discourse of the spectacle but in order to subvert and undermine it – fighting the spectacle with its very own weapons' (p. 1). It was during this time that Noé graduated from ENS Louis-Lumière. He saw the development of cinéma du look as a production model this young band of filmmakers could embrace to become prominent players in the industry with a distinct voice and auteur-vision.

In 1985, Noé started working as an assistant director. His first production was with exiled Argentine filmmaker Fernando Ezequiel Solanas's *El Exilio de Gardel: Tangos* (Tangos, the Exile of Gardel 1985), which won the Special Grand Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1985. Solanas was renowned for his political manifesto 'Toward a Third Cinema', which he co-wrote with fellow Argentine filmmaker Octavio Getino (Solanas & Getino 1970). According to the manifesto, a cinema must resist the Hollywood film's bourgeois values, reject the European art film's auteur politiques (of self-expression), give voice to the masses, and represent the truth to fight against oppression. This notion had a lasting impact on Noé's sensibility, allowing him to draw a narrative on urban marginalised peoples' lives and defy conventional film production rules and expectations. Noé took film crew jobs as his source of daily income, but with the ambition to establish his production house and to make films.

Establishing a Film Production Company

Les Productions Nocturnes

Noé's first production company was formed in 1985 under the name Les Productions Nocturnes, which denotes his drive to explore dark realities or nightmares and his passion as a particular brand of filmmaker. Noé was also looking out for an effective production strategy to implement his nonconformist and transgressive drives and to experiment with character, narrative shape and a mise en scène delivered through shock and excess. This exposure and interest in genre and cult films, along with a diverse array of American and European auteur films, would become the materials he has drawn on across his career.

As a fresh film school graduate Noé started to produce short films that functioned as a 'calling card' to gain potential producers' attention for feature films and to develop a career in the highly competitive and closely guarded French film industry. In *Aesthetics of Intimacy*, scholar Conn Holohan (2010) suggests both short films and art-house films share almost the same 'mode of production' and 'conditions of reception' and include an 'intimate' connection between film auteur and audience (p. 8). Noé's short films have demonstrated his dexterity in film craft and his art-house sensibilities, revealing his idiosyncratic approach, technical prowess, and creativity. His formative works artistically and pragmatically reflected Holohan's observation and served the purpose of establishing himself as an emerging auteur.

Under Les Productions Nocturnes, Noé took an auteurist approach, assuming screen credits for writing, producing, directing and editing his short films. His first production was *Tintarella di luna*[5] (1985), which he wrote, produced, directed and edited (see Figure 2.2).

Tintarella di luna was shot on 35mm both in black and white and in colour. Noé juxtaposed a parallel world in this short film. It is set in a village at the end of the world, affected by a volcano, famine and plague, and with all the surviving villagers trapped in a confined zone. Charlotte (Cécile Ricard) is one of the survivors. The film tells her story as she travels on the road back to her home after meeting her lover before being raped and murdered by a psychotic killer played by Noé's father, Luis Felipe Noé. The end of the film shifts to colour and moves to an industrial factory of the modern-day world. A worker is looking down into a giant structure that looks like a cardboard baler machine. In that machine, he finds Charlotte's dead body in the form of a shrunken doll; he puts this in his pocket and walks away. The 'DNA' of this film represents key themes that have since underpinned Noé's oeuvre.

---

[5] The title of the short film is taken from Italian phantom diva Mina Mazzini's famous song *Tintarella di luna* (1959).

Figure 2.2 Charlotte with her husband in *Tintarella di luna* (1985)

The film takes an absurd story of a natural disaster as a primary plot device and uses technical experimentation and an epistemological approach to deal with the narrative's realistic possibilities, the nature of the characters, the source of the ongoing horrors, and insatiable carnal compulsion. Noé used intertitles to structure narrative episodes, and he still uses this device today. *Tintarella di luna* was also inspired by Jean-Luc Godard, linear narrative, minimal dialogue, experimentation with different film stocks, inventive use of Johann Sebastian Bach's music, and a sound design of discreet background noise contrasted with pop music by Egyptian singer Bob Azzam's cover version of *Tintarella di luna* during the end credit titles. Noé embraced what has become his signatory cinematic wide 2.35:1 ratio, which allows him to articulate multi-layered and expansive compositions; he 'immerses the audience in the fictional world in nearly every shot' (Mccullagh 2019, para. 7). This short film reveals Noé's fascination and playfulness with credit sequences. Palmer's (2015) observation reflects how *Tintarella di luna* would lay the foundations of Noé's career:

> Noé's first creative micro-statement – a diegetic snapshot of deep-seated predatory sexual urges, women encircled and aggressed by men, an oddly anti-realist world, with little or no relationship to contemporary France, cheerless backwaters erupting in the heart of modern urban society, situations laced with stringent black humour. (p. 57)

Noé unfolds *Tintarella di luna*'s story as a fable with the texture of a dreamy parable. This film can be considered an example of a patchwork of the deviances, nihilism, and phantasm that have subsequently become Noé's signatory themes. It is also a unique example of mise-en-abyme that bears the influence of David Lynch's *Eraserhead* through grainy black-and-white film stock with the effect of contrasted light and shadow to create the disquiet of the narrative. Noé's treatment of melodrama in *Tintarella di luna* is reminiscent of Luis Buñuel's subtle depiction of poverty and melodrama in his Mexican film *Los Olvidados* (1950). Subsequently, Noé began to scrutinise the human being's ability to make decisions in complex and extreme situations. This scrutiny has continued in his feature films too.

As a novice filmmaker, Noé made *Tintarella di luna* with a shoestring budget and ensured its distribution through film festivals. Being an opportunist auteur, he knew that the recently established French premium broadcasting house CANAL+[6] was scouting for short films to broadcast with a feature film bundle for its audiences. Noé (2003) recounted:

> I think it was one of the first shorts purchased by CANAL+. It was aired just before *Eraserhead*, which was for me a consecration. This success of esteem in any case made me want to continue. (quoted in Polizine 2003, para. 3)

However, Noé's first short film was not only an eye-opening work from an emerging filmmaker, it was appealing enough to demonstrate that an enfant terrible was in the making. It showed that Noé was prepared to experiment with film form and style by contrasting shocking and visceral elements and diffusing those in the underlying narrative of love and loss of ordinary peoples' lives. It is also worth noting that starting with this first (short) film Noé chose rape as one of his core topics. Although *Irréversible* is famous for its 9-minute-long brutal rape scene, Noé's representation of rape and sheer brutality against women (and humanity) began with Charlotte's character in *Tintarella di Luna*.

---

[6] CANAL+ launched in 1984.

Les cinémas de la zone: Joining Forces with Lucile Hadžihalilović

Noé met cinema auteur, director, editor, writer, and actress Lucile Hadžihalilović while organising resources for his first short film *Tintarella di luna*, during his film school days. Hadzihalilović was born in Lyon and grew up in Morocco. Like Noé, she was an immigrant, and her family had migrated to France from Bosnia (Rège 2010, p. 490). Hadžihalilović first caught the attention of critics and film connoisseurs as an arthouse auteur for her short film *La Bouche de Jean-Pierre* (1996). Although she was unestablished as a filmmaker, she won the annual Bronshästen (Bronze Horse) award for the best film at Stockholm International Film Festival for her first feature film, *Innocence* (2004). She was the first female filmmaker to win this top award (Desert News 2004, para. 1). *Innocence*'s narrative was inspired by Frank Wedekind's novella *Mine-Haha, or On the Bodily Education of Young Girls*. Film scholar and critic Adrian Martin (2005) considers *Innocence* a 'poetic and horrific modern classic' and 'an inspired blend of surrealism, shock-tactics, elegant perversity, social critique and the fractured fairy tales of the Female Gothic' (para. 1-2). Since *Innocence*, Hadžihalilović has made three feature films and four short films. Her latest production *Earwig* (2021) won Special Prize of the Jury at the 69th San Sebastián International Film Festival 2021.

Both in their formative years, Noé and Hadžihalilović soon realised they were searching for a new language of expression in film. From their shared desire as filmmakers pursuing greater creative freedom, they formed les cinémas de la zone in 1987 (see Figure 2.3). Noé and Hadžihalilović chose the word 'zone' to signify their cinematic, politic and cultural resonance. For instance, 'zone' relates to their favourite film *Stalker*'s (1979) impracticable no-go area 'where magic things happen, the unexpected', 'zone' also reminds Noé about 1970s counter-cultural happening spot named La Zona before he left Buenos Aires, and above all zone in French society reminds the geographical border of city of lights (Paris) and signifies that whoever lives in the periphery is nothing but a 'second class citizen' (Palmer 2022, para. 4). Therefore, les cinémas de la zone produces films that evoke the sense of fantasy and transgression and represents the less discussed or marginal realities. Besides making films, they wanted to be entrepreneurs. As Noé told the press:

> We decided together to create our own society, Les Cinémas de la zone,
> in order to finance our projects. Beyond all the major disadvantages of
> self-production, and we enjoy greater creative freedom. We produce our
> movies as we want without worrying if they will sell or not. Even if we
> pay the consequences in our daily lives. (quoted in Le Temps Détruit
> Tout 2019, para. 7)

It was a natural artistic and creative response from both of these independent
and early career filmmakers to produce each other's films. Like Noé,
Hadžihalilović's applied cinephilia associates her straightforwardly with
'historical antecedents', and her cinema aims to radicalise the habitual reality, to
subvert the 'generic or conventional' values (Palmer 2015, p. 24). Nevertheless,
Hadžihalilović's films take a contrasting position to Noé's regarding narrative,
use of dialogue, camerawork and music, although they have the mutual goal of
producing transgressive films. As Hadžihalilović has expressed, she and Noé
have 'many references, tastes and enemies in common' despite having a
different perception about life (quoted in Wood 2005, para. 11). Under the
banner of les cinémas de la zone, Hadžihalilović shared the screenplay writing
credit with Noé' for his *Enter the Void*. She also edited and produced his *Carne,
Seul contre tous*, *Lux Æterna* and *Vortex*. After Noé's *Irréversible* and
Hadžihalilović's *Innocence,* with their financial hardship mostly over and both
getting producers and an adequate budget to hire crews, they were no longer
forced to work with each other's productions.
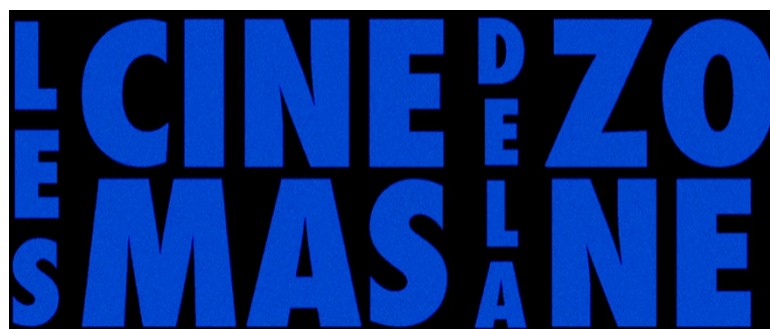
Figure 2.3 The emblem of company les cinémas de la zone from the title
sequence of *Enter the Void*

Noé and Hadžihalilović's first production under the banner of les cinémas de la
zone was *Pulpe amère* (1987), which was written, directed and edited by Noé.

His (Argentine) childhood friend and photographer Maxim Ruiz did the camera work. Noé shot the film with 1.37:1 ratio to allow the audience to immerse themselves more deeply into the film through wider and larger screens. The scenario is simple: 'A guy tries to rape his housekeeper while a radio drama describes the thoughts of a man caught in a passionate love' (Le Temps Detruit Tout 2021b, para. 1) as if the rapist is trying to convince himself of this for the immoral act.

In this self-funded production, Noé took a minimalist approach, set the story in a bedroom with two characters and completed the shooting in 24 hours. Noé used his network to organise all the required resources; for example, Hector Malamud played the role of a man who tries to abuse his housekeeper. Norma Guevara portrayed the housekeeper character. Noé knew both of them from *El exilio de Gardel: Tangos*, where he worked as an assistant director. Noé turned his friend's photography studio into the housekeeper's bedroom. That friend also helped Noé by providing a 16 mm camera and colour filmstock (Le Temps Detruit Tout 2021c, para. 4). As with *Tintarella di luna*, in *Pulpe amère* Noé juxtaposes sound against the image to create 'perceptual instants.' He visualises the vile act of raping from the rapist's point of view instead of the victim's. He critiques civilised society's repressive inner self through this film. Within the short duration of this 6-minute film, Noé intricately exposes how the privileged class treats the lower classes.

I discussed earlier Noé's intention of utilising his short films as his business card to make contact with potential producers. Noé toured local and international film festivals with short films to exhibit his films and to network with film professionals. Among the local film festivals, Noé kept participating in the Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival, which is famous for its short film program and for being 'the genre par excellence which enables' potential producers 'to discover real talents' (Rocca, quoted in Vincendeau 2005, p. 8). Noé's contemporaries Éric Rochant, Cédric Klapisch and Mathieu Kassovitz met the producers of their first or second features at the Clermont-Ferrand festival in the 1990s. At the 1985 festival, Noé's *Tintarella di luna* was selected in the national competition. He again participated in 1987 with *Puple Amère* (1987).

Apart from producing and making short films, Noé collaborated with Hadžihalilović as a cinematographer in her graduation film *La Première Mort de Nono* (1987), which was also exhibited at the 1987 Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival. The following year, Noé joined as an assistant director in Fernando Solanas's film *Sur* (1988), which won the Best Director award at the 41st Cannes Film Festival 1988.

Straight from the Banlieue

By the time Noé reached his 20s many things had started happening in France. Along with changes in France's political scenario, cinéma du look had celebrated its 10th anniversary and cinémas de banlieue had begun to arise. Within the 10 years since its inception, cinéma du look had broken away from the French Nouvelle Vague's (new wave) portrayal of Paris as symbol of the nation to 'a Paris that could hardly be more glossy or unreal'; that symbol was replaced by the films of cinémas de banlieue's 'gritty realism' (Greene 2004, p. 251).

Around the same time, France had a gradual political shift from socialism to conservatism. In 1995, the socialist president François Mitterrand was defeated by the right-wing Jacques Chirac (who was the mayor of Paris from 1977 to 1995). During the electoral campaign, Chirac and his political party, Le Rassemblement pour la République (RPR), repeatedly focused on social exclusion and divide ('fracture sociale'), targeting people under the poverty line or socially excluded from benefits. Large numbers had come from former African colonies and were living in the suburbs or *banlieues* (which can be compared with modern-day ghettos) (Greene 2004, p. 254). Chirac's electoral campaign emphasised the approximately six million impoverished French population (particularly youth) as a part of its 'global politics against exclusion' manifesto (Vincendeau 2005, p. 16). Academic Vincendeau (2005) explained the politics of *banlieue* and how French authority treats the space:

> Until the Second World War the Parisian *banlieue* evoked a semi-rural environment of small houses with gardens. This changed sharply in the post-war period… The architects of the 1960s went for concrete gigantism in the building of the so-called grands ensembles, evidence of

what Keith Reader calls 'cut-price modernist vision'… At that point in the 1960s the *banlieue* began to acquire its narrow sense and sinister image of bad housing and social deprivation, despite the fact that there are middle-class *banlieues*, especially to the west of the city, and that the working-class banlieues themselves are far from being uniform in population or architecture. (p. 17)

Figure 2.4 Philippe Nahon as nameless butcher in *Carne*

Around this time, Noé wrote and directed his first mid-feature narrative *Carne*, which, along with *Seul contre tous* would become part of 'diptych' (Kandiashvili 2018, p. 6) focused on a middle-aged nameless, jobless horse butcher from a Parisian *banlieue*. His long-time collaborator, the late Philippe Nahon, played the central role of the nameless butcher in both films. Noé developed his idiosyncratic style and distinguishable, unnerving visual world through *Carne*, which was seamlessly produced and edited by Lucile Hadžihalilović. Noé started writing the script right after *Pulpe Amère*, focusing on showing the other side of urban life through the marginal classes of the underdeveloped *banlieues* instead of through the clichéd lives of the French bourgeoisie. The butcher character is a 'psychopathological' extension of the male character from *Puple Amère* (Noé, quoted in Le Temps Detruit Tout 2021b, para. 5) who struggles to express his masculinity in an apathetic world and justifies his activities through monologue.

Set in a Parisian *banlieue*, *Carne* tells the story of 'a horse butcher who takes revenge on a man he mistakenly believes to have raped his autistic daughter' (Bailey 2003, para. 3). The butcher's life becomes complicated when his

daughter steps into puberty, her body begins to change, and what was once a simple act of bathing and drying his daughter suddenly becomes complicated when the father realises an awkward, inevitable desire for his own daughter. When she starts menstruating as an adolescent, the butcher misunderstands that an Arab worker has raped her. He stabs an innocent Arab man and consequently goes to prison and has to sell his property and business.

Noé wanted to recreate 1970s France in *Carne*. To evoke a nostalgic feeling for old France – the France he first met in the 1970s – and to actualise the narrative's timeline in relation to the mise en scène, Noé had to 'search around all the Parisian *banlieues* to find areas that were not spoiled by graffiti, satellite dishes, or guys with baseball hats' (Le-Tan 2009, para. 23). With that comforting background Noé created an uncomfortable cinematic tale of contemporary society, which is based on the idea of isolation, where existence is synonymous with nightmare, and relationships (personal, conjugal or domestic) mean nothing but a fragile experience of failure and breakup. Noé showed his ability to transgress conformist social values by opening up a dialogue about rape, incest, and paedophilia. He intervened in French society's dominant morality by accommodating so-called taboo topics that were barely discussed in traditional social settings or in the news. In *Carne*, Noé sustained a more detailed look at carnality and violence than in his previous two works.

Carne was shot in 35mm colour (with 2.35:1 ratio) by cinematographer Dominique Colin, who also worked in *La Haine*. *Carne* is an actual example of the alchemy between montage and sonic properties in Noé's poetics of transgression. Forty minutes long, *Carne* carries the divergent use of sound over the image and minimal space for the dialogue-driven script. Noé utilised silence in a meaningful way to sensitise the tension in *Carne*, and he played with contrastive images by placing one after another. The film begins with the brutal image of slaughtering a horse followed by the birth of a baby while the camera is staged from the point of view (shot) of the doctors, displaying the detail from the inside of the mother's birth canal.

Carne is the early signifier of Noé's transgressive film style, and in time it would reveal his auteur side. If we observe the narrative structure of *Carne*, we can see

Noé's deliberate amalgamation of 'disruption' and 'shock' elements to create an uncomfortable and active cinematic experience for the audience, which goes against with the consumerist and passive approach of conventional genre films. As a medium of disruption, Noé used 'on-screen textual warnings, epigrams, and notes into the filmic narrative', and to provoke the shock value he used 'gunshot sound effects, loud martial chords on the soundtrack, and rapid editing' accompanied by 'dark humour' (Bailey 2003, para. 3). Newspapers reported that 'Quentin Tarantino insisted on sampling a horsemeat burger after seeing *Carne*' (Nesselson 1999, para. 2).

Noé's film's title is also shared with an earlier Argentine film with a different note. Armando Bó made a sexploitation film called *Carne* (1968) with actress and glamour girl Isabel Sarli in 1968. One of Bó and Sarli's most emblematic productions, this story revolves around a female worker in a meat-packing factory where she is kidnapped by the fellow workers and raped in a meat truck. It holds the most-viewed film record on an opening day in that year (Barredo 2016, p. 3). Noé's *Carne* similarly contains meat factory, butcher and rape, but with a different background story. Both filmmakers are from Argentina and used the Spanish word for meat in the title. However, Noé has never mentioned whether Bó's *Carne* has any connection with his *Carne*.

Noé gained instant recognition for *Carne*. Local and international critics appreciated his take on the marginal, alienated Parisian butcher's life through raw and disturbing visualisation. *Carne* was exhibited in several film festivals, including the Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival in 1991, where Philippe Nahon received the best acting award. The film also won the Critics' Week Award and was mentioned at the Youth Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1991; these were followed by the Georges Sadoul Prize and the coveted Prix Tres Special. It also paved the way for the theatrical distribution trend in France of medium-length films (Nesselson 1999, para. 2). *Carne* was distributed by Action Gitanes, which has a track record of distributing the productions of auteur filmmakers such as Stanley Kubrick, Alfred Hitchcock, James Ivory, and Jean Luc-Godard.

After this recognition, Noé thought it would be easy for him to get a potential producer for his first feature film. However, that expectation turned into distress when people refused to show interest in his transgressive content and started to tell him to make a 'normal' film, because '*Carne* was too violent.' They advised Noé, 'Now you have to calm down, you have to grow up. Why don't you do a genre film' (Bailey 2003, para. 4). Nevertheless, it took seven years for Noé to manage, finance, produce and finish his first feature film, *Seul contre tous*, with alternate funding sources. I discussed this in Chapter 1.

The Debré Law

In the 1990s, while young filmmakers like Noé, Kassovitz, Kounen and Boukhrief were producing films that projected the reality of the *banlieues* on screen, the then right-wing French government issued the 'Debré law' against illegal immigrants (who live in France without legal documents or papers) in 1996/1997. This law mandated that French citizens must not support or house illegal immigrants, and they were required to report anyone without papers ('sans papiers') to the authorities; otherwise, the French citizen could be prosecuted. 'Sans papiers', or the anti-immigration movement, was mobilised and organised by immigrants from African countries without legal papers. It is important to note that the protestors were from former French colonies, mainly from West-African countries such as Mali, Senegal, Guinea and Mauritania and from the Arab Maghreb countries such as Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria (Raissiguier 2010). Film scholar Guy Austin (2008) has argued that during this period young filmmakers, as well as established filmmakers, 'were prime movers in the movement to support illegal immigrants ("sans papiers")' (p. 223–224), and for the first time in French intellectual and political history, filmmakers were at the forefront of mobilising this movement. The French filmmakers' solidarity with the sans papiers also marked the departure from the political, ideological narrative to a post-ideological narrative in which filmmakers engaged with 'individual cases and humanitarian causes'. As Vincendeau (2005) suggested, the young filmmaker's films 'may be said to exist in a "post-ideology" era, in which traditional politics are replaced by individual – often violent – revolt, or a retreat into the family, friendship or fantasy' (p. 35).

On 11 February 1997, Noé joined 66 filmmakers (including Mathieu Kassovitz, Cédric Klapisch, and Jan Kounen) in signing a petition denouncing this anti-immigrant law and calling for civil disobedience. They stated that they had housed illegal immigrants and would not report them to the authorities:

> We are guilty, each of us, of having recently hosted -— for personal or professional reasons – foreigners in an irregular situation. We have not denounced our foreign friends. And we will continue to harbor, not to denounce, to sympathize and to work without checking the papers of our colleagues and friends… Finally, we call on our fellow citizens to disobey and not submit to inhuman laws. We refuse to have our freedoms restricted in this way. (Manifeste des 66 n.d., para. 4)

As a filmmaker, Noé deploys his passive rebellious notions through his screen-works. Politically conscious and a member of an artist-in-exile family, he represents the lives of the oppressed, the immigrants, and the socially marginalised on the screen and stands with them in his personal life. Noé has inherited this rebellious outlook from his politically aware parents. Since the 1990s, besides making short films and developing an independent production pathway, he has participated in political activism. For instance, to express his critique of French bourgeoise elitism, Noé neither participates in the French Republic elections as a voter nor attends the national film award ceremony, the César Awards (which is the French equivalent of the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Awards). Taking these stands has given Noé opportunities to reside in the margins of high and low art and to maintain control over his imagination, artistry, and visualisations (Hamadi 2016, para. 1).

Part-Time Sex Educator

To survive financially, Noé usually agrees to participate in commercials, music videos, and public awareness TV spots as director and camera person. In 1998, the French Ministry of Health, in association with the advertising network EURO RSC (now Havas Worldwide) and broadcast platform Canal+, took an initiative to raise awareness of AIDS and promote safe condom use under the title *A coups sûrs*. The advertisements for *A coups sûrs* were scheduled to be broadcast on the weekend (each Saturday) in April 1998 in between a weekly

news show on French pornography called *Le Journal du Hard* and the porn film of the week (Le Temps Detruit Tout 2021a).

Under this program, five young filmmakers (most of them from le jeune cinéma trend) – Marc Caro, Cédric Klapisch, Jacques Audiard, Noé, and Lucile Hadžihalilović – were invited with an offer of independently choosing one of five topics set up by the French Committee for Health Education (CFES) and using the available resources (colour film stock and camera) as much as they wanted. The topics were anal and vaginal penetration, fellatio, masturbation, and the use of sex toys. Noé made *Sodomites* (1998) (see Figure 2.5) and Hadžihalilović made *Good Boys Use Condoms* (1998) as a part of the series (Le Temps Detruit Tout 2021a).

Noé broke the dichotomy between the so-called 'pornography' and 'film' forms in his production. He chose the most difficult of the topics, anal penetration, because he thought it might give him more opportunity to experiment, both aesthetically and technically (Noé, quoted in Rupe 2010, p. 398). *Sodomites* was shot on 35mm colour filmstock with 2.35:1 ratio. Noé teamed up with cinematographer Dominique Colin again and collaborated with prominent French director and pornographic film producer John B. Root to cast the award-winning porn actress and writer Coralie Trinh-Thi, accompanied by Philippe Nahon and singer Mano Solo.

Palmer (2015) described the narrative as a surreal event 'which stages grotesque tableaux of bikers, before whom a wolf-masked wrestler appears, who then applies a condom and lube and begins anal sex with a complicit recumbent woman' (p. 57-58).

Figure 2.5 Production still from *Sodomites*

With *Sodomites*, Noé staged a graphic heterosexual reprise of Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* (1963) with disorienting, fast-paced camera movements, zooming, and dark humour. Noé produced a transgressive visual palate by infusing the look of real cinema with underground film vibes: an ecstatic cacophony with a gunshot's sound, people's roaring and orgasmic moaning, metallic sounds, and the noise of a motorbike gear shifting to represent the primal side of desire. Noé harmonised this cacophony with the visuals by using rapid jump-cutting. As a storyteller, he frequently avoids dialogues, substituting them with sound, image and silence. Noé used relatively longer takes for explicating the purpose of the TV advert. For instance, he frequently focused on condoms and lubricants that had an 'NF' emblem. 'NF' means 'norme Françoise', the French manufacturing standard. Therefore, Noé was suggesting the normality of having sexual intimacy). Noé used his signatory style to uphold the importance of using condoms and lubricants to experience safe sex within a barbarous mise en scène. *Sodomites* contains hardcore sexually explicit images; hence it ends with the moral 'protect yourself'. However, as with the other CFES productions, *Sodomites* was censored by the Canal+ authority and Noé was required to tone down the transgressive nature of the TV spots.

Noé also worked as a camera operator and cinematographer on Hadžihalilović's *Good Boys Use Condoms*. Hadžihalilović chose a more natural scenario for her production and focused on the sensual and erotic aspect of sexual intimacy. She visualised a short story of a threesome between a young

man and twin sisters and the importance of changing condoms when changing a sexual partner. In his cinematography, Noé employed an 'amplification-disintegration tactic' to create an optic crescendo by speeding up the movement's pace and reversing directions. This tactic would be utilised again in *Irréversible*.

The biographical observation and factual information about Noé's upbringing in a culturally artistic and politically radical environment without facing any authorial pressure from his parents signify that it is crucial to know Noé's complex and multi-layered empirical reality as a 'branded auteur'. In addition, these historical accounts simultaneously establish the framework for Noé's transgression and instil his idiosyncratic origins with an ambience. His upbringing with rebel parents and his migration to Paris for political reasons reveals that without transgression, there is no freedom from despotism or the normative culture. The insights and perceptiveness that Noé adheres to motivates him to crystalise his poetics of transgression by finding critical metaphysical, creative and cinematic influences from the history of philosophy, art, photography and film. This will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3
Creative Influences: Foundations for a Poetics of Transgression

> The filmgoers develop a different way of reading stories. But the man
> who writes the stories is a filmgoer too. (Bertolt Brecht 1964, p. 47)

Gaspar Noé's inclination towards transgression is not a discreet phenomenon. It is connected with his lived experiences and his preference for creative influences. As links between Noé's self-expression and self-representation, his nonconformist idols and creative influences provide a foundation for his flourishing as a transgressive auteur and for a certain kind of poetics of transgression in the French film production context. During his film school years in Paris, Noé developed a particular interest in filmmakers and film characters who had a record of practising surrealism, occultism, subversion, and eroticism combined with the predominant incredulity in materialism, and he still treats them as influencers when locating himself in the history of film. Included here are Luis Buñuel, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Stanley Kubrick, Kenneth Anger, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Kōji Wakamatsu and Travis Bickle. Noé is attracted to this group of visionaries because of the intricacy and magnificence of their lives, works, and exterior and interior experiences, in addition to their demonstrated methods of self-expression and representation.

In the next section, I will show that Noé's creative influences and their lives and oeuvres function as foundation for his poetics of transgression, which this thesis seeks to elucidate. Included among these are auteurs, nonconformists, and transgressors defined by tendencies that are erotic, nihilistic, queer, surreal, traumatic, vengeful, tragic, horrific, psychedelic, and hysterical. Noé desires to channel their influences in his screen narratives, discover and re-stage a non-traditional film production process, and develop a distinctive style that inserts him into a film history defined by transgression, nonconformity, and resistance. He incontrovertibly includes traces of these artistic influences and borrows their methods to generate his self-expression.

I will examine that Noé's creativity, self-expression and representation act as living links between his poetics of transgression and production contexts, and

thus brand him as an auteur. I will also substantiate that he has utilised cinematic transgression's conceptual base of rebelling against the conventional norm by foregrounding Luis Buñuel as his father figure and Rainer Werner Fassbinder as his melodramatic hero for the poetics of his films. In the competitive French film culture, Noé also adopted the styles, aesthetics, and approaches of Kenneth Anger, Stanley Kubrick, and Pier Paolo Pasolini for his transgressive production strategies.

Through this chapter my goal is to identify the multiple layers of the transgressive aesthetic system in Noé's oeuvre and the extent to which they played the role of rubric in his poetics of transgression, acted as a system in his production contexts, and contributed to his being branded a self-expressive and representative auteur in French film culture. I will compartmentalise this discussion into three segments: philosophical, visual art, and cinematic influences. These intersecting influences are mapped out here in detail and will provide a foundation for further discussion of Noé's poetics of transgression.

Philosophical Influences

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844–1900)

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche had a profound impact on Noé in relation to existentialism, but this has not explored much in academic discussions about Noé. Nietzsche's work and the philosopher-theologian Georges Morel's lecture on Nietzsche assisted the young Noé to understand the world rationally and provided him with a base for developing poetics of transgression (Delrome 2020). To scrutinise contemporary French morality, Noé cinematically interprets Nietzsche's nihilistic point of view as a 'public form of psychotherapy' (Riding 1999, para. 2). I will now describe how Noé encountered Nietzsche's philosophy and how he has contextualised it in his film practice.

As a fresh film school graduate, 19-year-old Noé decided to take a break before professionally embarking on a filmmaking career, even though he had a short film in hand and had garnered experience as an assistant director. Young and dazed, he realised he had cynical views of life and death, morality, values, and

the power of individualism. In the 1980s, to untangle his misanthropic state of mind and continue the further study, Noé joined Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University (locally known as Tolbiac) to study philosophy as a free auditor (Schmerkin 2009, p. 6). It was easy for him to make that choice because his house was right in front of the Tolbiac. During his two years at Tolbiac, Noé discovered Nietzsche's work and Morel's lecture about Nietzsche and time (Delrome 2020, para. 14). This is apparent in his fascination with treating time as space rather than a temporal phenomenon through film titles, inter-titles and narrative. However, Noé disclaimed himself as a philosophy student because he never sat for the final exam and eventually eliminated himself from the course.

Nietzsche's nihilism strongly informed Noé's understanding of existentialism, and it is the basis of his poetics of transgression. He read all of Nietzsche's works, and he retains them as a favoured resource for his own experiential quest as a filmmaker (Han 2019). His filmography displays how he constructs film narratives with a nihilistic attitude. Nietzsche's philosophy also informs Noé's unpacking of human despair and of hedonistic behaviour as a key premise of socio-political reality. Noé shows the existential repulsion of people and finds creative ways to portray 'technicolour emotions', romantic mayhem, and intimate moments for the screen. He seeks to create a screen atmosphere of doubt and contradiction by employing a Nietzschean philosophical basis to illustrate that the rules made by society are not fundamental; rather, they are relative, subjective, and dependent on the situation at hand.

Instead of seeking ontological resolutions from French existentialists' texts, Noé has used Nietzsche's works to fuel his expressive and excessive style and subjectivity and to instigate his screen ideas, thus paving the way for controversy and reaction during his career. In another sense, with this strategy Noé has sets 'tasks' for the potential audiences of his films to turn them from passive consumers into active agents. He reinforces nihilism using contrasting transgressive audio-visual treatments and polemics. The result has been that film critics have come to regard Noé's film narratives as extreme, violent, brutal, overly sexually intimate, and governed by horror (see Chapter 4).

I have observed that Noé's body of work, which this thesis evaluates, builds upon the Nietzschean narrative structure of tragedy, impressions of 'eternal recurrence' and '*amor fati*' (love of fate). According to Nietzsche's *The Birth of a Tragedy* (1872), tragedy is a form of play that belongs to the intellectual and irreconcilable difference and fusion between the Dionysian and the Apollonian tropes (p. 22). The Apollonian epitomises 'dreamland' by containing accord, growth, precision, logic and norms of individualism, and the Dionysian represents 'darkness' by embodying chaos, transgression, intoxication, passion and harmony. Likewise, Noé composes his cinematic narratives through assimilating the Dionysian and the Apollonian heteronormative forces to create a protagonist's existential struggle. His film narratives are driven by their male characters' poor judgments and wrongdoings pushed by ego and intoxication, which symbolise the characters' Dionysian states of mind. However, representing their Apollonian states of mind, these individuals hold a passionate dream of a comforting and safe future with their loved ones. Here, to illustrate the transgressive and nonconformist perspective of day-to-day experiences, Noé constructs the narrative with lucid dreams and nightmare sequences that are cursed by the unending horror of reality.

In Noé's films, the Nietzschean concepts of 'eternal recurrence' and '*amor fati*' are ever present; they dominate Noé's psychedelic and morbid melodrama *Enter the Void*. In the light of *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Noé explores Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence, conveying the notion that there is no destroying or decay of the human soul; instead, it drifts eternally in emptiness and keeps returning to the universe through the various forms of reincarnation.

Nietzsche's concept of *amor fati* describes the psychological attitude of seeing everything in life – one's suffering, happiness, good or bad – at a glance, and accepting it without agony. *Amor fati* surfaces in *Enter the Void* via the dysfunctional and luminous astral journey from the perspective of deceased Oscar's (Nathaniel Brown) departed soul: it hovers in the sky over Tokyo and visits his past life's reality without wishing to reject any event.

Noé purposefully uses the allusion of his favourite film posters, book titles and film titles in the mise en scène to attain Nietzschean sensibilities through their

intertextuality. He cites Nietzsche's nihilism in his films through the titles (*Seul contre tous*, *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void*, *Climax*), inter-titles and mise en scène (Oscar's room's interior decoration in *Enter the Void* or Murphy's in *Love*). In these ways, Noé sends a signal to the audience to closely observe the screen to gather the 'hidden and innate meanings' from the film's scenes. For example, in *Climax*'s opening sequence, a female dancer quotes Nietzsche's 'Anything that does not kill you makes you stronger', which echoes Noé's nonconformist position about exploring life and defying the formulaic strategy of living a life (Noé, quoted in Han 2019, para. 26).

Nietzsche's philosophy assists Noé to gather courage and, inspired by the subversive history of art and culture, raise his spirits to stand apart from his contemporaries. For instance, Noé has appeared in his films in cameo roles as a gay man masturbating in a queer club (in *Irrèversible*) and as an art gallery owner and ex-lover (of Electra, in *Love*). A scene where he was having sex with Electra (Aomi Muyock) shows that he not only represents the denunciation of inhibition through the characters, he also takes part as a character to uphold the spontaneity himself.

Nietzsche's erudition has provided Noé with a path for developing controlled chaos by deliberately defying the normative culture and reinforced values and ethos of contemporary society and authority. This is Noé's poetics of transgression at work. Noé contextualises Nietzsche's philosophical morality as a shield of resistance against existing monolithic morality. He treats the film medium as an instrument to redefine moralistic ideas and as a vehicle to complicate the threshold between high and low art. Noé legitimises his implication of transgressive visual stylistics and narrative structures to create a space for telling the story of suffering and manifesting the inherent emptiness of life, in contrast to the rigorous displays of woken-up reality or 'meaningful things of life' in conventional film narratives.

Visual Art Influences

Noé's film practice has a symbiotic relationship with visual arts. He contextualises his preferred visual art influences to create an atmosphere on the screen filled with colour and composition to evoke feelings. Visual imageries

and dialogues equally occupy collaborative spaces in Noé's poetics of transgression. Like a visual artist, he uses the screen as a canvas to paint with light, shadow, and human body. He references and takes inspiration from modern art history of the South American art movement to design a film narrative's reality through mise en scène.

Noé also takes artistic inspiration from radical visual artists to brand his films' mise en scènes as nonconforming, experimental, and transgressive. His father, Luis Felipe Noé, and Jorge Luis de la Vega – both crucial figures of Argentina's Nueva Figuración (New Figurative Imagining) movement – act as perpetual resources for Noé's creative process. He collects nonconformist artistic hints from countercultural art practices to articulate the eccentric part of reality, and he pushes the limit of creativity and experimentation by contextualising the colours, tones, tunes, and harmonies of the visual arts. He also frequently mentions cartoonist and humourist Le Professeur Choron as his source of sleazy and dark humour (Symonds 2015). French surrealist painter, fetishist, and photographer Pierre Molinier's free-spirited works have also helped Noé realise the importance of 'sexual pulsion' and the necessity of upholding this organic feeling in storytelling (Noé 2018, para. 6).

In the following sections I explore how Noé combines elements from these artistic sources, along with other cinematic sources, to generate his poetics of transgression.

Luis Felipe Noé (b. 1933)

As the son of the respected Argentine multimedia artist, painter, and intellectual Luis Felipe Noé, Gaspar Noé spent his youth immersed in art, debate, and politics. Noé senior is a constant resource of inspiration to his son, who grew up watching his father painting, engaging in national politics through art, theorising, and promoting contemporary art practices. Luis Felipe Noé's expressionistic zeal connects artistic and social realms, his creative practice substantiates him as a significant visual artist, and he is frequently involved in activities that influence the next generations of artists in Argentina and Europe. The artistic career of Luis Felipe Noé is significant in the

development of Gaspar Noé's visual style and the visual architecture of his transgressive aesthetics.

As a protagonist of the Nueva Figuración movement in the 1960s, Luis Felipe Noé was a key figure in Argentine art history. He and his Argentine painter friends (Rómulo Macció, Ernesto Deira, and Jorge de la Vega) produced 'violent and disturbing' works as a part of Nueva Figuración with their first exhibition Otra Figuración (Another Figurative Imagining) in 1961 in Buenos Aires to articulate freedom of expression without any cultural strictures and constructs. They considered 'chaos' their vehicle and focused on 'process over technique' in making their artworks convey the reality of the social struggle during the unstable Argentine national political situation. Writing on Gaspar Noé, Palmer (2015) pointed out the impact of Otra Figuración:

> This group embraces heavily saturated and abstract frames, condensed with texture and mass, in which the human body still registers as a lingering repository or after-echo; a fascinating fusion or composite, in other words, between non-figurative avant-garde modernism and more conventional representational art. (p. 31)

This set of artists wanted to stimulate the viewer's mind without imitative representation of the human body in order to go beyond the binary idea of abstract versus figurative. To do this, they engaged with artistic expression to reject the decorative aspect of 'traditional Renaissance perspective'. With this ambition and through 'multiple oppositions and dialectical syntheses ... the figure was opened up and rendered through the lyrical transcription of the states of the soul' (Casanegra, quoted in Palmer 2015, p. 131).

Luis Felipe Noé is also renowned for an Argentinian version of chaos theory. In his book *Antiestética* (Anti-Aesthetics 1965), he expressed the need to embrace chaos, not in opposition to order, but as a new dynamic for the functioning of a world in permanent flux. In pace with scientific thought, he subsequently included chaos in his theory and practice.

In Gaspar Noé's cinematic oeuvre, the Nueva Figuración's tension between abstract and figurative representations plays an integral role. I suggest that his transgressive tendencies in film manifest from the familial trajectory inspired by Noé senior's works and as an iteration of chaos theory (applied to the cinema) such as the display of unconventional visual and aural compositions, non-linear narrative structure, use of bright and neon colours to paint the frame, representation of attuned human bodies and 'embracing psychedelic and psychotropic imagery in his film-making' (Palmer 2015, p. 55).

In Noé senior's work with Nueva Figuración in the 1960s, the human body and face appear in abstract, de-structured figurations with traces of despair, anguish, and hope. For instance, Luis Felipe Noé drew *Cerrado por Brujería* (Closed for Witchcraft) (Figure 3.1) in 1963 to protest a controversial law that relegated the Catholic Church as capable of rating plays and movies for the Argentinian public. The red cross here is a questionable image, offering solace to the estranged 'while enforcing through censorship officially sanctioned Western and Christian values' (Blanton Museum of Art Collections n.d.). Here he situated the Catholic prelate above the trapped talking heads to show how Catholicism, as Argentina's official religion, controlled socio-cultural morality.

Figure 3.1 *Cerrado por Brujería* (*Closed for Witchcraft*) (Luis Felipe Noé 1963) (Blanton Museum of Art Collections n.d.)

Gaspar Noé also delves into corporal excess with the ambition for his films to transgress the conventional idea of realistic representations. In his filmic output, he employs a non-linear narrative and techniques of intensifying cinematic features to break down the screen reality into atomic moments. He uses vivid cinematography and low-frequency sound, not to simply shock his audience but rather as a calculated and analytical decision – a creative engagement with a model of cinematic 'chaos' to examine reality from a transgressive point of view. For his psychedelic drug-energised *Enter the Void*, Noé commissioned his father to do a series of paintings with bright fluorescent colours that was utilised for the mise en scène (Le-Tan 2009, para. 9) (Figure 3.2). Luis Felipe Noé's paintings are also present on the walls of Alex and Marcus's Paris apartment in *Irréversible*.

Figure 3.2 Psychedelic paintings by Luis Felipe Noé surround Alex's (Cyril Roy) artist friend's Tito's (Nobu Imai) apartment (*Enter the Void* 2009)

Jorge Luis de la Vega (1930–1971)

Jorge Luis de la Vega was a multi-talented, self-taught Argentine artist who passed away aged 41 years at Buenos Aires. He started his career as an architect before diversifying as a painter, comic book author, singer-songwriter, and pop artist. De la Vega is a celebrated transgressor in Argentina's modern art history. Through his life and multi-faceted artworks, he metaphysically articulated that to locate oneself artistically one must defy the conventional norms to express and liberate the inner self from society's attributive role (Gallagher 2010). This attitude led him to participate in the Nueva Figuración movement with his long-time close friend Luis Felipe Noé.

De la Vega was close to the Noé family and became Gaspar Noé's godfather. As a child, Gaspar idealised de la Vega and saw him as his guardian angel (Symonds 2015, para. 8). De la Vega did not limit himself to one painting style, however; he demonstrated his creativity in complex formations and geometric compositions, Otra Figuración, collage, assemblage, and pop art to display an improvised idiosyncratic visual dialect (Pacheco 2021). Luis Felipe Noé (1971) declared his friend 'a lyricist of the absurd and chaos' (p. 123). For example, de la Vega's creation of *Untitled* (see Figure 3.3) indicates his artistic phase where he assimilated the pop and psychedelic texture in black and white instead of using vivid colours. He radicalised the use of the real-life human body in

advertising media through the 'fragmentation and distortion of bodies' (Chatruc 2019, para. 8).

Figure 3.3 *Untitled* (Jorge Luis de la Vega) (MCMC Galeria n.d.)

In the 1960s, de la Vega was regarded as one of the principal figures and advocates of Argentinian avant-garde art practice by his heralding of artistic freedom and (anti-)aesthetic, which embodied the countercultural movement in the local scenario (McEwen 2012, para 5). As de la Vega stated in a conversation with critic Hugo Parpagnoli in 1963, he wanted to confront the audience with his work 'with the same intensity with which all its part clash with one another, no matter how small' (Verlichak 2004, p. 117-18). Gaspar Noé's (1999) comment that he would be happy if some people were to leave the theatre during the screening of *Seul contre tous* (para. 1) seems to reflect his godfather de la Vegas' aesthetic.

De la Vega worked in the pop art tradition with his sense of duplicating, reproducing, overlaying, combining, and arranging endless visual elements with distorted human faces and figures and the use of the primary colours yellow, red and blue – which are also evident from Noé's film graphics and title sequences. Noé paid tribute to de la Vega in the production design of *Irréversible* by using his paintings in a mise en scène that references the pop art tradition of the late 1960s (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 Alex and Marcus in front of Jorge Luis de la Vega's acrylic panels on canvas artwork (*Irréversible 2002*)

I suggest that like de la Vega, filmmaker Noé has a whimsical proclivity for transforming one thing into another based on 'transformation and anamorphosis' and by relying on on-location improvisation to 'develop a new artistic syntax' to transgress the existing code and convention of visual storytelling (McEwen 2012, para 5). This tendency is evident in Noé's feature film narratives when he transforms a story of love and loss into a rape-revenge (*Irréversible*), life after death (*Enter the Void*), a sentimental eroticism (*Love*), and a horror dance drama (*Climax*). These juxtapositions and collages of the storyline will be further analysed in Chapter 5 as a narrative architecture for his poetics of transgression.

Le Professeur Choron (1929–2005)

What is the visual source of Noé's dark humour? One answer is Georges Bernier, aka Le Professeur Choron, the French humorist and founder of *Hara-Kiri* magazine (see Figure 3.5) and regular contributor to the French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo*. *Hara-Kiri* can be compared to the American humor magazines *National Lampoon*, and *Mad*, although it was substantially more extreme, explicit, and transgressive than these publications.

Figure 3.5 Le Professeur Choron (*Hara-Kiri* 1968, issue 80)

Le Professeur Choron is Noé's French idol and was the first reason he fell in love with France when he arrived as a 12-year-old in the 1970s. The free-spirited Le Professeur Choron's 'hardcore, funny and anarchist' attitude to political and social issues, along with his graphic and comic artwork, influenced the young Noé to see the world differently by showing him the first light of freedom of expression and a world without self-censorship (Symonds 2015, para. 6). It was an important revelation for young Noé, whose artist-activist family had immigrated to escape from the oppressive regime of Argentina's military junta.

Le Professeur Choron's artistic creations and insights motivated Noé to find pleasure in transgression and to understand that, as a medium, 'film' need not be fainthearted when showing issues like sex, class violence or gender oppression. An example is his 2015 film *Love*, a sentimental love story in which sexual intimacy plays an integral role in the visual narrative. At that time, it was the obsolete codes of the film industry and the decision-making authorities that decided how to represent everyday life on the screen (Champenois 2015, para. 5). This conforming attitude took from filmmakers any opportunities to show

ordinary and enjoyable things in life realistically on screen, such as intimate lovemaking scenes.

Le Professeur Choron's works have encouraged Noé to direct his screen performers to improvise their dialogues and use the crudest terms 'to make people laugh,' regardless of the depravity of the situation (Noé, quoted in Fitoussi 2018, para. 2). It is important to note that Noé finds his ethical lens of nonconformism and transgression through Le Professeur Choron's creativity, irreverence, and inexhaustible madness (Gonzague 2015, para. 10), and he has used Choron's visual artworks to satirise and critique the Western film culture's conformative morality, sordidness, and atrocities (Champenois 2015).

As a former philosophy student, Noé infuses his film narratives with his learning about nihilism and existential crisis by using dark humour to highlight cruelty, bitterness, and despair and to shock or awaken viewers to the absurdity existing in the surrounding world. This approach to taboo issues has defined him as an extreme filmmaker and branded him as a transgressive auteur. With the subversive use of dark humour, Noé opts for provocative frameworks in narratives that pivot around rape, sexuality, violence, discrimination, trauma, and death, and immerse the audience within these scenarios. For instance, he displayed a cynical use of dark humour in *Climax* through the sleazy improvised dialogues of the African-origin, French dancer named Serpent (see Figure 3.6).
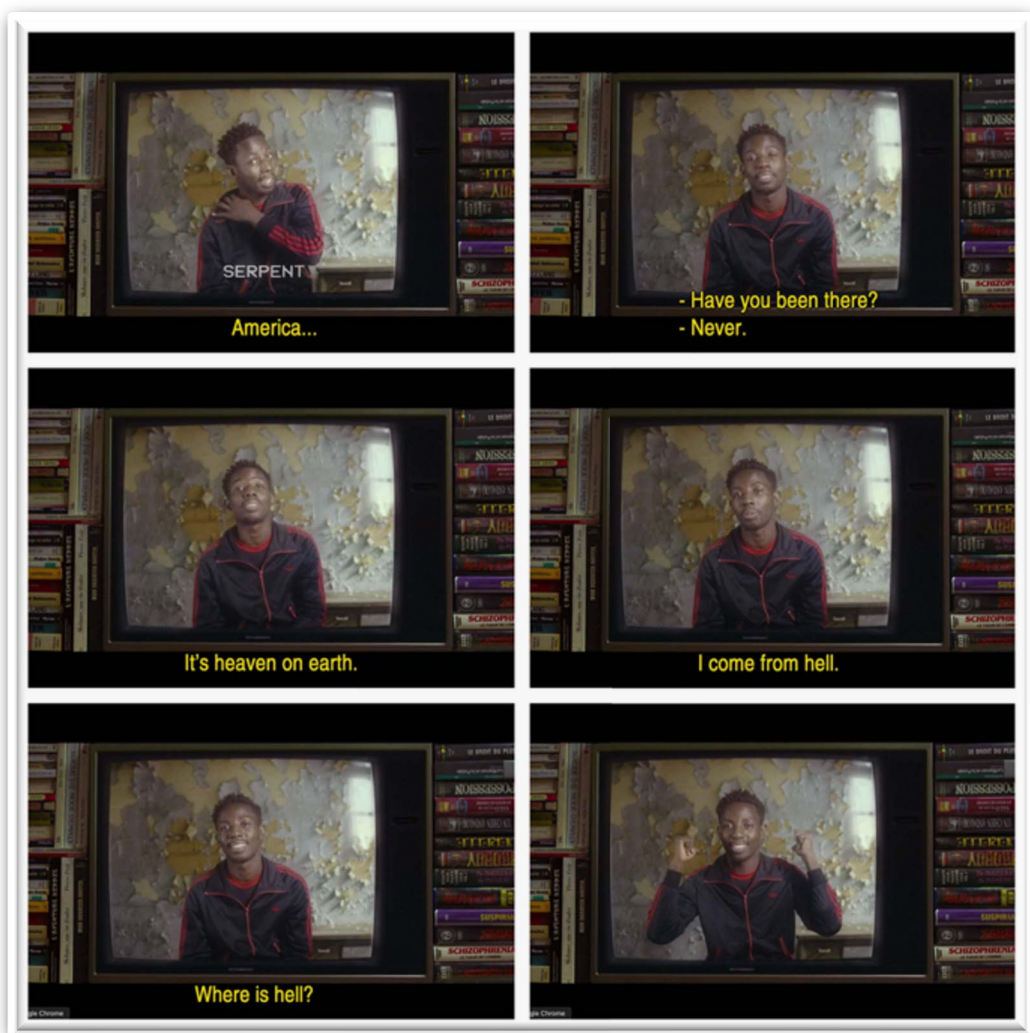
Figure 3.6 Serpent's audition scene (in *Climax* 2018)

In the audition sequence, Serpent is asked by the interviewer what America means to him. In reply, Serpent says America is heaven on the earth, but he has never been there because he is from hell. By indicating his background, Serpent implicates France's treatment of their former African colonies. With this hint of dark humour Noé exemplifies the actual situation of marginalised youth in the French culture and how they believe America is a land of freedom and opportunity.

Noé allows his audience to laugh at dire states of discomfort such as in *Lux Æterna*, which fiercely satirises the egocentrism among a film production unit that wants to produce an art-house film led by Béatrice Dalle, with Charlotte Gainsbourg playing the lead role. In the opening sequence, Noé includes an improvised conversation between Dalle and Gainsbourg. They humorously

share religious views and awkward experiences previously caused by malevolent (male) collaborators. Considering the religious view, Noé put sarcasm on the screen through Dalle's dialogue: she asserts that she believes in Jesus and has been doing deals with Jesus all her life. This stance of making humour with a 'serious' issue resonates with the perspective of Charlie Chaplin (2003), who noted, 'We must laugh in the face of our helplessness against the forces of nature – or go insane' (p. 95). Similarly, as an audience member, Noé would laugh at the sadistic scenes in Lars von Trier's ultraviolent, serial-killer film *The House That Jack Built* (2018) – laughing because all the seriousness in those scenes seemed funny and less realistic to him (Buchanan 2018, para. 9). *The House That Jack Built* was shown along with *Climax* at the 71st Cannes Film Festival in 2018.

Pierre Molinier (1900–1976)

As a transgressive and erotic filmmaker interested in the margins of history, Noé has acknowledged French artist Pierre Molinier's work as a compelling source of inspiration, coupled with a queer lens, for his seeing the universe beyond conventional gender binary terms. Molinier started his career as a painter and later focussed on erotic sadomasochistic photography and photomontage. He took his own life in very playful manner in 1976, the same year Noé arrived at Paris with his artist-in-exile family. As a fetishist artist, Molinier's sexually transgressive works were little known to the world until a series of exhibitions[7] in the latter part of the 2000s. His early works integrated him into a surrealist commune where he was welcomed by the leading surrealist figure Andre Breton, although Molinier thought himself a magician (Lemons 2011, para. 10). Eventually, he was isolated from the surrealist group because he was both gay and a transvestite (Sritharan 2015, para. 1) (see Figure 3.7).

---

[7] Gaspar Noé (2015a) introduced the Pierre Molinier / Vertigo exhibition with a tribute text in 2018 at galerie Christophe Gaillard, Paris.

Figure 3.7 *Sans Titre* (*série l'oeuvre, le peintre et son fétiche*) (Kamel Mennour n.d.)

With his visual artworks, Pierre Molinier, augmented the visual modality of the human body. He applied artistic, creative techniques in photography such as collages and montages, and instigated new ways of discussing and investigating androgyny and trans-identities. Considered by later generations as both godfather and precursor of body art and eroticism (Chéné 2020, para. 6), he used his body as a model for self-portraits and viscerally investigated the possibility of fetishism and a queer self.

Noé has described Molinier as 'a crazy, crazy, crazy photographer who wanted to be part of the French surrealist movement, but who always scared them all' (quoted in Symonds 2015, para. 3). Driven by his 'feminine alter ego,' Molinier's transgressive 'autoerotic self-portraits and photomontages' broke the barriers between lust and desire, pain and pleasure, and in order to discover authentic

erotic sensibility and spiritual freedom he created a space through his artistic work where society, identity, and reality were revealed to be illusory (Seal 1993, para. 8). Molinier's works inspired Noé to find ways to depict lurid dreams and hallucinogenic veracity on screen.

As an artist, Molinier infused life with his artworks; the objects he created through photomontage or painting are extensions of his existence (Roland cited in Darfay 2013, para. 6). I suggest that Noé has followed the same pattern: his films are not an individual project; rather they are an interwoven quilt where the characters take their names from Noé's family members and friends and even use his own life stories and observations as plots for the film narratives (for example, *Love*). For Noé (2018), the essential aspect of Molinier's life was the 'unique and almighty' power of true sexual pulsion that is never compromised by any socio-cultural constructions (para. 6). Similarly, Noé uses violence and sexual obsession as a vehicle of transgression through narrative structure and the actor's body's performance to shake the dominating morality. Through paintings and photographs, Molinier took charge of himself to become himself (Petit, cited in Chéné 2020, para. 9). It is in this sense I argue that Noé's dark and heteronormative-gendered cinematic world has been nourished by the photographic fantasies of Pierre Molinier. The fetishist and intimate displays and representations of the hands and legs of Noé's female and male film characters via his transcendental camerawork reflect Molinier's vertical, symmetrical and centrifugal formations of 'seamless unreal realities' (Artnet 2021, para. 1), and his fetishist obsession with 'legs, stockings and hermaphroditism' (Ubu Gallery 1996, para. 1). With the recent cultural focus and dialogue on non-binary identity, Noé can be seen as an early explorer of this domain.

Cinematic Influences

From his early career to the present day, Noé has had a penchant for creating challenging cinematic experiences, his oeuvre a nod to his favourite films and makers. Each of his works is a projection of his fantasy of re-contextualising his favourite films' aspects by adding his transgressive, idiosyncratic aesthetics and rigorous research across the visual arts and the history of the moving image and

film. Noé gathers his necessary artistic imaginations across time and situates himself in the narratives of artistic transgression.

As an advanced cinephile, Noé frequently cites certain filmmakers and particular films as influences on his poetics of transgression. He has developed his oeuvre and aligned it to key cinematic influences, and his intertextual references have become integrated within the mise en scènes of his films, where book titles and film posters bear traces of these influences (see Appendices A and B). This material evidence points to Noé's artistic drive and connotes the characteristics of his narratives, highlighting his 'concern with the treatment of race, gender, and sexuality in contemporary French society' (Nicodemo 2013, p. 1). Noé's oeuvre exemplifies his ongoing obsession with a 'distinct' set of films, including *Salò* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Chodorov & Szaniawski 2018, para. 9). In addition, he frequently cites the films *Angst* (1983) and *Possession* (1981) and the fictional character Travis Bickle from *Taxi Driver* as inspirations for his transgressive body of work. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Noé also speaks about his 'fascination with certain filmmakers'; this manifests in his eclectic fascination with global but transgressive filmmakers (Symonds 2015; Han 2019). Noé's poetics of transgression also draw on a wide range of North American, international art house, experimental, and transgressive cinema traditions and personalities, including the structural film artists Tony Conrad, Paul Sharits and Stan Brakhage. The incorporation of such influences into his films presents a puzzle for the cinephile viewer to disentangle (see Appendix A).

After his father, Luis Felipe Noé, Noé's body of works has been heavily shaped by Luis Buñuel. This Spanish cineaste's filmography, aesthetics, production strategies, and integrity led Noé from being just another conventional and money-making filmmaker to a critical examination of his role as an auteur in the competitive French film industry. I suggest that Noé takes subversive motivation from norm-bending filmmakers like Buñuel to inform his transgressive film practice in this age of regressive political correctness, which allows filmmakers to display and consume wars, bombings and the killing of civilians in news or films, but not erotic and sensual displays of bodies and sexualities. Buñuel also showed Noé that it is crucial to position the camera

towards powerless and weak characters to uncover the reasons for their systematic oppression by the powerful ones. Besides Buñuel, Fassbinder has profoundly impacted Noé's film practice by portraying melodrama and everyday sentimentality through the screen narrative. Noé's cultural and creative proximity to Buñuel and Fassbinder will be analysed later as a particularly significant node of influence.

In the following segment, I demonstrate why and how Noé has recurrently contextualised certain films' aesthetics and specific filmmakers' styles and production practices throughout his oeuvre to create the foundation for his poetics of transgression. I first discuss the more influential films and filmmakers. The order of their discussion follows the extent of their impact on Noé rather than a linear timeline. Each entry unfolds in two parts: the first part offers a broad understanding of the cinematic influences, and the second part shows how Noé has creatively curated these influences within his film practice.

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)

Noé frequently mentions North American filmmaker Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* in his media interviews. He first saw it at the age of 6 and has described it as his first mind-altering trip:

> My parents brought me to see *2001: A Space Odyssey*. I felt like I was on drugs. I was overwhelmed. I was mind-possessed … And again, and again, each time I see the movie. It made me want to take control of those kinds of mind-possessions by recreating the same situation with other people. (quoted in Mottram 2011, para. 9)

In 1968, when *2001: A Space Odyssey* was released, North American youth were experiencing the peak of the psychedelic culture and summer love movement through rock music, language, art, literature, and philosophy. Through the 1960s, Americans were also witnessing the bourgeoning innovations in space voyaging, the Cold War, anti-Vietnam war protests, and the civil rights movement. Many young people were using mind-altering drugs as a means of escaping from reality and exploring the possibilities of where the mind can travel. At that juncture of cultural history, *2001: A Space Odyssey* offered a vision

of 'what a psychedelic trip could be, where life came from, and how it was conceived. The origin of life' (Noé, quoted in Nordine 2018, para. 2).

Kubrick's film would leave an indelible mark on Noé's mind. Its impression is visible in his third feature, *Enter the Void*, through his adoption of a psychedelic colour palette and experimental filmmaking techniques. Noé's film is explicitly indexed to *2001: A Space Odyssey* by its hallucinogenic representations of the narrative scenario based on psychedelic drugs, and the creative filmic potential of integrating experimental filmmaking techniques within conventional film norms. In *Enter the Void*, Noé juxtaposes more mainstream narrative models of story and character with avant-garde and underground film practices. He aimed to create images that would work upon the mind with 'mental' special effects integrated within 'to reproduce altered states of consciousness using cinematographic means and to get as close as possible to reproducing human perception, even during sleep' (Noé, quoted in Schmerkin 2009, p. 10). Noé implicated the 'quasi-perceptual experience' of perceiving reality without the presence of active and suitable 'external stimuli' with the idea of mental imagery (Thomas 2021, para. 1). For *Enter the Void*, he developed this idea to generate a corpus of visual references of short films, video clips, books, and paintings to re-visit the psycho-somatic experience of *2001: A Space Odyssey.* For example, he returned to Steven Lisberger's *Tron* (1982), Peter Tscherkassky's 'out-of-space' avant-garde short films, the brothers James and John Whitney's hypnotic abstract films, and Jordan Belson's astral imageries to create the moving, sensorial feeling of voidness (Schmerkin 2009, p. 10). It is essential to note that this filmic 'research' process is a defining feature of Noé's creative process and it is sustained as a trace within the films themselves, where intertextual references are designed within the mise en scènes.

Noé's transgressive cinema can be traced back to Kubrick's approach to the narrative of the camera. As a filmmaker and camera operator, Noé explores the possibilities of visual storytelling through content and technological advancement. Aligning with Kubrick's interest in the camera's technological development and moving camera aesthetics (Sunderland 2013, p. 58), Noé uses inventive and unique camera movement, vivid yet dark colour palettes,

framings, and manifestations of his characters' internal conflicts examined from different perspectives.

As a trained cinematographer, Noé's camera movement aesthetic also follows the curve of Kubrick's cinematic expression and his relationship with available advanced camera technologies. Noé does most of the cinematography himself. Having a particular liking for moving shots and immersive camera movement, he consciously chooses the camera technology for each project. For example, he used the Minima Super16mm camera for *Irréversible* and *Enter the Void* to display a remarkable vision and use of special effects. *Love* exhibited a relief painting-like, visually mesmerising, calm static photography shot with a 3D camera (Barbier 2015, para. 1). And in *Climax*, he used autonomous Steadicam to show the agitated shots of a horrific incident based on an actual event. Noé's inclination toward lightweight cameras and technology will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

Noé also has an interest in *2001: A Space Odyssey*'s paratexts. Here, paratext implies a notion of other texts (such as poster, trailers, interviews) related to film (main text) that facilitate the audience's understanding as they watch the film. Noé believes that he has 'the largest collection of *2001: A Space Odyssey* posters and publicity paraphernalia in the world' (Noé, quoted in Chodorov & Szaniawski 2018, para. 7; Lordygan 2015, para. 3). As a reference to Kubrick's film, Noé put one of these posters in *Irréversible,* and in *Love* he had the aspiring filmmaker Murphy's dialogue include it as one of his favourite films.

It has been noted that Kubrick and Noé both experiment with time in their cinematic ventures. This provides Noé's 'oeuvre with a real sense of continuity, not unlike the continuity, from film to film, found in Kubrick's' works (Szaniawski 2020, p. 109). I suggest this tendency can be explored with the motif of the star child in Noé's films. In the mise en scène of *Irréversible*, he used *2001: A Space Odyssey*'s poster with an image of a fetus (star child) to mark the year of production of the film and as a metaphor to convey the message that Alex (Monica Bellucci) conceived a new life. The same star child re-appeared in his next film, *Enter the Void*, through Oscar's life after death. *Climax*'s star child is a

terrified kid named Tito who got locked in an electric room and was trapped in the real world's nightmarish reality.

Noé has remarked that apart from *2001: A Space Odyssey* he is not fascinated by Kubrick's more comprehensive filmography. Instead, considering how sombre a filmmaker Kubrick was, he regards himself the opposite of Kubrick (Chodorov & Szaniawski 2018, para. 9).

Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom (1975)

Salò is a 'cinematographic transposition' of Marquis de Sade's erotic novel *120 Days of Sodom* (1785) (Pasolini 2006, para. 1). Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini adapted this 18th-century novel to visualise the intolerable reality of human beings and how the powerholders of society 'reduce the human body to a saleable commodity' (Pasolini, quoted in Gallaher 2012).

Noé's mother, Nora Murphy, accompanied him to watch *Salò* on his 18th birthday[8]. Noé told the press that his mother was keen to show the film for its authentic portrayal of human cruelty:

> Maybe because my parents escaped Argentina during the dictatorship to avoid ending up in a torture camp like their friends ended up, she had a particular concern about the portrayal of human cruelty and torture. So, she said, 'You want to know how bad life can turn? Come with me and see this film'. (quoted in Lordygan 2015, para. 7)

Pasolini's disturbing visuals and 'unflinching, violent portrayal of sexual cruelty' in *Salò* (Indiana 2000) shocked the young Noé. He could not re-watch the film until he was around 30 years old; nevertheless, he remained 'obsessed' with it (Weston 2015, para. 7). Through the sodomy and violence on screen, it instructed him to question social stigma and moral beliefs. He uses *Salò* as a constant reference in his filmography to expose the corporal brutality of powerful versus powerless human beings. Traces of *Salò* are discoverable in the

---

[8] In another conversion with Hillary Weston (2015), Noé said he watched the film with his mother at 15 years of age (para. 7).

mise en scène and narrative elements of *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void*, *Love,* and *Climax*. Pasolini and Noé both portray their narratives via 'bruteness and harshness' to depict the unspoken aspects of Italian and French social reality (Dwyer 2002, para. 10).

As a filmmaker, Pasolini emerged in the second wave of neo-realist filmmakers in the 1960s who wanted to see film as a way of 'writing with the reality that would produce a 'cinema of poetry' (Moliterno 2002, para. 3). In addition to cinema, Pasolini showed his artistic excellence in various creative artistic fields as a poet, novelist, playwright, and actor. He was an influential intellectual and anti-capitalist political activist in post-second world war Italy. Born into a Catholic family, he later became an atheist and a communist, although he was expelled from the Communist Party for his gay sexuality. Pasolini was famous for using violence and cruelty to explore the human capability of sanity, although, ironically, he was heartlessly assassinated in Rome in 1975.

Having learned the craft of filmmaking without any formal training, Pasolini claimed an autonomous space within it, producing a reality that had not been seen previously. He said:

> In neorealistic film, day-to-day reality is seen from crepuscular, intimistic, credulous, and above all naturalistic point of view… In neorealism, things are described with a certain detachment, with human warmth, mixed with irony – characteristics which I do not have. Compared with neorealism, I think I have introduced a certain realism, but it would be hard to define it exactly (Passolini, quoted in Oswald 1970, p. 109).

Pasolini was interested in telling the suffering and tragic reality of people. To chronicle this, he adapted stories from classical novels and plays. Nonconformism, violence, cruelty, despair, and sex were his tools to generate a new kind of realism that would take the side of oppressed humanity and stand against powerful people or fascist authority. Film scholar Pasquale Iannone (2015) has discussed five signature aspects of Pasolini's filmmaking style: the use of the landscape, a strong preference for 'frontal medium close-ups', post-

synchronised sound as a stylistic tool, the music, and the rhythm and editing. He also hired untrained actors and improvised considerably during post-production.

Noé, in contrast, entered the French filmmaking circuit with formal training from a film school and a vision of representing the unseen or unavailable reality of the French people and their cultures and *banlieues*. He took opportunities to work with like-minded people and produced *Carne* and *Seul contre tous*, both of which focused on life in an underdeveloped French suburb, and *Irréversible*, which was dedicated to the Parisian bourgeoisie class. Noé has shown how the different classes can equally be ruthless when seeking vengeance and face tragedy at the end of life. I suggest that with his poetics of transgression, Noé has followed the cineaste Pasolini's path to generate a new reality on the screen. His unique filmmaking approach also uses brutality, taboo sexual topics, queer culture and identity, shock and tragedy, along with immersive camera movement, non-professional and trained performers, improvised acting, experimentation with sound and music, and intense post-production processes. Also, like Pasolini, Noé's moving images are intertextually connected with paintings and other visual arts. Traces of Pasolini's filmmaking craft are discoverable in Noé's later features too.

Noé's *Irréversible* can be associated with *Salò* by comparing the amount of discomfort both films produce among the audience after watching them. Noé refers to *Salò* in *Enter the Void* when Alex describes to Oscar the queer drug dealer character Bruno's new fetish with human excrement. In *Love*, as a part of the mise en scène, Noé puts a *Salò* theatrical poster (from his own archive) on the wall of the main character Murphy's bedroom; it displays the warning: 'a disturbing motion picture for a mature audience who are prepared to view it.' As a self-reflexive strategy, this message similarly alerts the audience to the aesthetics of disturbance, nihilism, and transgression they will experience in *Love* (Hjelm 2019, p. 30). Through *Climax*, Noé candidly acknowledges his reverence for *Salò* in the video interview sequence by highlighting how the VHS copy of it was one his classic and formative influences.

Noé believes that *Salò*'s despair, excess, primal rage, and gruelling violence has not been superseded since its theatrical release. He maintains it is one of the 'extremely daring' films that demonstrate the impact of cinema on the broader culture and consciousness of a period. *Salò* precisely describes the relation between masters and victims without taking either side. It also documents why people are so desperate to have power, even though they are not aware of what to do with that power or of how it can control people's motivation to humiliate those they subjugate.

Noé's *Climax* and Pasolini's *Salò* were a double feature in the 'Revivals' section of the 58th New York Film Festival 2020. The session was introduced by transgressive filmmaker John Waters with the title 'John Waters Presents: Art Movie Hell at the Drive-In.' Waters subsequently curated *Climax* and *Salò* together to show how the idea of 'nightmare' bound together Noé's R-rated vision of 'chronicling social devolution in extreme situations' and Pasolini's un-rated exhibition of 'shocking and grotesque experiment with the limits of human cruelty (and pleasure)' while breaking the barrier of moral conformism (Waters 2020, para. 4-5).

It is worth mentioning that while the press and media frequently tag Noé as a provocateur, he considers Pasolini to be film history's ultimate provocateur. Noé humbly rejected attempts by critics and others to frame himself as a 'provocateur' by situating the *Salò* poster in the *Love* mise en scène (Lordygan 2015, para. 7). He does not allow himself the conventional norms of identity that would limit his presence as a filmmaker. He does not want to be identified as either a provocateur or an artist because every identity comes with a specific socio-cultural role and responsibilities. Furthermore, Noé defies these monikers as a part of his transgressive attitude.

Angst (1983) and *Possession (1981)*

Gerald Kargl's *Angst* and Andrzej Zulawski's *Possession* have played crucial roles in developing Noé's poetics of transgression through their filmic use of mobile camera movements, visceral screen performances and monologues. Austrian filmmaker Kargl's home invasion film *Angst* was banned theatrically and severely censored due to its 'explicit content,' an attribute that Noé has

carried across his career (Lefebvre 2012, p. 85). Centred on a psychopath, *Angst* contains an erratic view of the visual imagination. This film was Noé's primary point of reference while shooting *Seul contre tous*, although thematically his films depart from those of Kargl. According to Noé, *Angst* displays 'the most amazing camera work in the history of cinema' (Lordygan 2015, para. 9). For Noé, 'the creative use of the camera, the moody lighting, the synthpop score' (Chirico 2019, para. 7), the voice-over and cruelty contributed to an obsession with *Angst*. He explained:

> You can tell that I was inspired by *Angst* when I did *Seul contre tous* because there's a relentless voice-over, and in *Climax*, because there are camera movements that you can relate to *Angst* (quoted in Pack 2019, para. 12).

Noé had already finished *Carne* by the time he first found out about the VHS copy of *Angst* in French titled *Schizophreniai* in the 1990s, but it still shocked him (Noé 2018a, para. 1). *Angst* has since had a phenomenal influence on his storytelling style and filmmaking approach. This can be seen in his obsessive and excessive use of monologue[9] in his films as a window to investigate the psychotic male characters' anxious, grim, and dark personal thoughts, and in his charismatic use of body mount rig as a portal to visualise the agitated and hysterical state of the antagonised inner self and the voidness of the characters (McClanahan 2015, para. 9).

Another cult psychological horror film, Andrzej Zulawski's *Possession*, also consolidated Noé's poetics of transgression. Both *Enter the Void* and *Climax* demonstrate *Possession'*s 'ferociously primal performances, hyperkinetic camera movement, relentless intellectual curiosity and bruising emotional violence' (Palmer 2010, para. 3). Noé has praised *Possession'*s narrative framework and ambition to present reality in a less binary arrangement – the characters occupy a place between sanity and insanity – in lieu of a more conventional representation of 'normal' and 'abnormal' characters (Noé, quoted in Mortimer 2018, para. 12). This treatment has allowed him to form characters with a

---

[9] Noé also expresses his debt to *Taxi Driver*'s Travis Bickle as reference point of employing monolog or voiceover as a key tool of his story unpacking device.

deliberate instability in the mise en scènes of his films. In addition, *Climax* covers a similar theme as *Possession*, such as infidelity, deceit, and pregnancy-related trauma. Sofia Boutella's LSD-punched nightmare performance as Selva in the second half of *Climax* portrays a tension and anxiety similar to that played by Isabelle Adjani as Ana in *Possession*'s illustrious and well-choreographed grocery-smashing miscarriage scene set in an underground subway tunnel. That specific scene inspired Boutella, a trained dancer, to enact a frantic and fragile psychological state as she gave her euphoric, out-of-body performance in *Climax* (Boutella, quoted in Monique 2019, para. 5). In *Climax*'s audition sequence, Noé audaciously shows how both *Angst* and *Possession* influenced him by including both in a stack of old books and VHS tapes.

Travis Bickle

In their American neo-noir *Taxi Driver*, director Martin Scorsese and screenwriter Paul Schrader created Hollywood's archetypal anti-hero in Travis Bickle. For Noé, Travis Bickle signifies a 'solitary, cool, psychotic' person (Symonds 2015, para. 5; Han 2019). I suggest that Travis Bickel is one of the primary reference points behind Noé's male characters' representations and everyday life activities. Noé has said that if he ever had the opportunity to become any film character, he would be either 'David Bowman, the astronaut of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, or Travis Bickle, Robert De Niro's character in *Taxi Driver*' (Han 2019, para. 41). He believes wearing his M65 jacket (the same as Travis Bickle wore in *Taxi Driver*) gives him more self-confidence when he goes out at night (Symonds 2015, para. 5), which references 'all the animals come out at night' (*Taxi Driver* 1976). For Noé, the character of Bickle, while socially alienated and rebellious, remains 'the most sympathetic' man of North American screen-culture.

Honourably discharged from the armed forces, 26-year-old ex-marine Travis Bickle's story unfolds in the backdrop of the mid-1970s in the climate of a morally decaying and bankrupt New York City. *Taxi Driver* provides a psychological mapping of Bickle's traumatic past, sleep disorder, drinking problem and dependency on pharmaceutical drugs. He is a 'God's lonely man' who spends his sleepless nights on the streets and mornings alone in porn theatres. His loneliness is exemplified by the following line of dialogue in the

film: 'Loneliness has followed me my whole life, everywhere. In bars, in cars, sidewalks, stores, everywhere. There's no escape' (*Taxi Driver* 1976).

Depressed and socially alienated, Bickle struggles to assimilate into civilian life after serving in Vietnam. He opts for the 12-hour-long graveyard shift as a taxi driver as a respite from his insomnia. His depression, despair and lack of empathy marks him as a nihilist and his panic-stricken, aggressive-compulsive behaviour moves him to the verge of insanity. Travis Bickle confronts an existential crisis, engulfed by contradiction and confusion about reality, desire, and the morality of contemporary society. Inspired by *Taxi Driver*, the male characters of Noé's films also reflect troubled masculinity: the nameless butcher from *Carne* and *Seul contre tous*; Marcus from *Irrèversible*, Oscar from *Enter the Void*; and Murphy from *Love*. This suite of male characters conveys repression, sexual fetish, violence, hatred, desolation, nihilism in the vein of a psychotic Travis Bickle from *Taxi Driver*.

Noé's fictional male characters – the nameless butcher, Marcus, Oscar, and Murphy – are isolated from society's mainstream social interactions and are reduced to a deserted mental space. They express their hate and disgust through voiceover monologues reminiscent of Travis Bickle's. Noé composed these characters to have a fragile psychological resistance, rather than representing bold and self-assured male characters. Noé explicitly shows this side of human identity to portray the nonconformist aspects of character: confusion, denial, and contradiction. He challenges the bourgeois psychology of controlling expectations. His characters rely on alcohol and drugs to explore alternate modes of reality. Under the influence of these substances, they lose their rationality as they transition towards primal desires for revenge. These male protagonists' eccentric impersonations of reality show they are not entirely fictious or like conventional film characters who, by the end of the film, live happily ever after.

Throughout each of these films, Noé demonstrates the male lead's anti-hero potentials by showing their lack of progress with their ongoing problems and anxieties. For instance, the nameless butcher, Oscar, Marcus, and Murphy all want to return and set things straight – to present themselves as heroes rather

than abject failures. As with Travis Bickle, these male protagonists possess a love-hate relationship with the female characters. In the post-patriarchal era, Noé sends his male characters to porn theatres (*Carne*, *Seul contre tous*), a gay club (*Irrèversible*), a strip dance joint (*Enter the Vo*id) and an orgy party (*Love*) to face their inner homophobic or misogynistic demons. For *Enter the Void*, Noé deployed the 'free-flowing camera' movement, hovering above the location, inspired by *Taxi Driver* (Villiers 2010, para. 13). I also suggest that mirrors and confined locations are additional intertextual references to his recreations of the Travis Bickle character. These male characters are located in generic, confined spaces such as hotel rooms or apartments. They stare into the mirror and express their antipathy to themselves in futile attempts to find the hero within. Noé, as a collector of paratextual references, uses the film poster of *Taxi Driver* and Travis Bickle's M65 jacket (worn by Murphy) in various scenes in *Love's* diegetic world.

Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1945–1982)

As a nonconformist auteur and an openly bi-sexual identity, Fassbinder's works have been another creative influence on Noé. They have energised him to visually portray the gritty reality of powerless urban characters defined by economic struggle, cultural change, and crumbling social moralities. As with Fassbender, Noé exploits screen narratives fuelled by male existential crises, sadism, class struggles, the absence of hope, the urge for longing, and delusions about human social and romantic relationships.

Fassbinder represents an inventive, politically radical, and operatic film style that is connected to his theatre background. Drama school facilitated his amplified aesthetic, thematic and emotional expression, as well as his narrative structure. He was the most controversial of the New German cineastes, 'a rebel whose life and art were marked by gross contradiction' (Cohn 2021, para. 1). The notion of contradiction is one of the vital forces in Fassbinder's film style. With a political will to authenticate the socially and culturally oppressed within society, he generated his cinematic bravura by juxtaposing new wave formalism and Hollywood classicism to create an auteur outlook at the crossroads of these opposing genres.

Fassbinder gained his reputation though his cinematic focus on West Germans' daily urban lives. Similarly, Noé has used a critical lens trained on the *banlieue* suburban experience, and his examinations of the dynamics of love and loss in human relationships are inspired by how Fassbinder explored entities such as the state or the lover and how they manipulate others in struggles of power. For Fassbinder,

> The one who loves or loves more is obviously the inferior one in the relationship… This is to do with the fact that the one who loves less has more power, obviously. Dealing with this fact – accepting an emotion, or love, or a need – requires a greatness, which most people don't possess. That's why things usually get very nasty. (quoted in Kaufman 2017, para. 10)

In Noé's films, female protagonists find themselves victims of their male counterparts' inferior love. As discussed earlier, the male characters in his films face the consequences of their misplaced agendas and thus unintentionally jeopardise their lover's life. These male characters claim that they love more than their female partners do, but at the same time they act deficiently as victims of their own ego, rage, and lack of common sense.

I have noticed that Noé borrows insights from Fassbinder on how to verbally envisage human cruelty intensely without showing blood or physical violence (Bomb 2014, para. 62). This might sound contradictory given the extreme violence Noé visually displays in his films, such as the gut-wrenching scene in *Seul contre tous* where the nameless butcher was physically violent with his 7-months pregnant wife, or the way Pierre bashed the head of a gay man for the sake of revenge in *Irréversible*. The same attributes can be seen in Fassbinder's *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* (In a Year of Thirteen Moons 1978), where he layered Volker Spengler's disastrous romantic story with the moving images of slaughtering cows into pieces to show the epiphany of the moment (Oyarzun 2015, para. 34). Nevertheless, Fassbinder faced allegations of physical abuse of his female actors, muses, and creative collaborators (Gilbey 2017, para. 1).

While producing *Climax*, Noé used Fassbinder's slimy language in *Querelle* (1982) as a point of reference for two of the African French dancers so that they could improvise their dialogue on the set (Han 2019, para. 7). In addition, Noé explored 'Fassbinder' types of psychological cruelty in *Love* through Murphy's (Karl Glusman) existential crisis and in *Climax* through Selva's (Sofia Boutella) frantic, paranoid state of mind.

For both Noé and Fassbinder, we can say that shock is not the goal of this extreme corporeality. Rather, it is a medium for admitting the dark, horrible side of existence. Noé relies on shock to transgress the existing ideas of representing the 'civilised' side of the human being in French film culture and of showing the primal instinct and animalistic attitude (survival, revenge, dominance) of politically correct but appropriately behaving human beings. Shock allows Noé to contradict the very ethos of French poetic realism and take a particular side of history that is governed by nightmare, gore, sexual intimacy, and psychological and social class–based cruelty. He has questioned the collective morality of not showing violence and misery:

> Europe is cruel. Life is cruel. However, French cinema rarely deals with social cruelty. Alan Clarke [the director of *Scum*] did. So did Fassbinder. As for me, my life was too full of joy, and however cruel I try to be, it ends up, for the most part, funny. (Noé 1999, para. 10)

So, for Noé, it is evident that transgression is not a decorative treatment in his poetics of film. Instead, it inspires him to go beyond his comfort zone and explore the uncharted terrain of feelings and agony as a human and filmmaker.

Both Noé and Fassbinder have an in-depth apprehension of the media industry. Like Fassbinder, who did theatrical plays and TV series in addition to films, Noé tried different media forms such music videos, TV spots, fashion house promos, short films with artistic versatility and precise knowledge of those specific media. Noé expressed his admiration for Fassbinder by displaying a VHS copy of Fassbinder's *Faustrecht der Freiheit*'s (Fox and his Friends 1975) in the mise en scène of the opening sequence of *Climax*. Fassbinder's impact as one of the cinematic forefathers of Noé's poetics of transgression is again

acknowledged in Noé's *Lux Æterna* through the quotation 'when the pressure gets too strong, I turn into a filmmaker' appearing on an intertitle and later the t-shirt of a pushy young director (Karl Glusman).

Kōji Wakamatsu (1936–2012)

Relatively unknown to the global cinema audience, the Japanese independent filmmaker Kōji Wakamatsu also finds a place in Noé's list of key filmic influences. Wakamatsu had a prolific career as an ex-Yakuza, a location manager of films shot in Tokyo's red-light district area, and later a leading figure of Japanese 'pink cinema' in the 1960s and 1970s. In his 50-year career, Wakamatsu produced-directed more than a hundred films and was also responsible for producing a handful of films for fellow filmmakers as a part of the Japanese New Wave movement. For instance, he produced Nagisa Oshima's *Ai no korîda* (In the Realm of the Senses 1976), which is 'famous for its explicit unsimulated sex scenes which led to censorship and banned across the world' (Humfrey 2019, para. 38). Before that success, the international film festival circuit had recognised Wakamatsu through *Kabe no naka no himegoto* (Secret Acts Behind Walls, 1965) when it was selected for exhibition at the 15th Berlin International Film Festival 1965. *Kabe no naka no himegoto* was one of the early productions from Wakamatsu's production house established in 1965. As an unofficial submission from Japan, it managed to reach an international audience without having the no-objection certificate from the Motion Pictures Association of Japan (Eirin) (Sharp 2014, para. 7).

Wakamatsu's filmography distinguished him as a rebel and romantic transgressor from other filmmakers. In addition to defying the social norms, infusing cultural anarchy within his work, Wakamatsu developed a powerful cinematic manifestation by amalgamating eros and violence to scrutiny the political role of the state across his career. He believed that a true filmmaker must make films from the perspective of the weak, not from the point of view of authority (cited in Mes 2007, para. 23). Politically close to the extreme left, Wakamatsu was famous as the visionary of daring, political and 'embarrassing soft-core psychodramas' filmed and around the Shinjuku area of Tokyo (Neech 2010). As an auteur, his signature style contains themes of female oppression, fighting against exploitation, and toxic masculinity. He tended to deploy erotic

plots to adhere to political subtexts and would break away from conventional cinematic forms regarding montage, cinematography, and the use of sounds.

Although they lived on different continents, Wakamatsu's guerrilla filmmaking techniques were similar to Fassbinder's in that both knew how to resource a film with a low budget and limited time. However, their production contexts were quite different, with Fassbinder the recipient of state funding and Wakamatsu producing his works independently. Wakamatsu died in Tokyo on 17 October 2012. The cause of the death was being hit by a taxi in his very known Shinjuku area five days earlier. As a big fan of his films, Noé wrote a eulogy for the filmmaker that was published in 2012 on a Facebook page titled *In Memory of Koji Wakamatsu*:

> Koji Wakamatsu is an ideal. An ideal of independence. A life as full as his works are full of life. Films where everything is intense, complex, violent, sentimental and natural at the same time. Of all the living directors, he was the one who exerted the greatest fascination on me. I had the chance to know him and to meet him several times. I would have loved to spend a lot more time with him to learn more about his incredible existence.

Noé has followed Wakamatsu's ambition to produce work with a limited budget and timeline and to assume multiple creative production roles. And in both *Enter the Void* and *Love*, he adopted Wakamatsu's approach of infusing experimental techniques and body-politics disguised as erotic narratives to reflect his vision and complications with respect to human relationships (Symonds 2015, para. 4). Like Wakamatsu, Noé also frequently uses sexual violence or rape as a trope to allegorically present the tyranny of powerholders over the vulnerable. Wakamatsu's works energise Noé's cinematic vision to exhibit violent and confrontational situations with brutal directness and by defying self-censorial prohibition to provoke the audience with unforeseen imageries and treatments. Wakamatsu's presence in Noé's creative journey adds the significance of being consistent with the theme, style, and experimentation with cinematic devices. In brief, Wakamatsu's films influenced Noé to transgress conventional storytelling techniques, reflect his passion for

directorial vision, and transform film as a means of expressing intimate and radical insights.

Kenneth Anger (b. 1927)

Kenneth Wilbur Anglemyer, also known as Kenneth Anger, is a seminal cult, experimental, and psychedelic filmmaker who has witnessed, participated in, and defined the post-second world war counter-cultural movement through his work. Anger's films dazzle viewers through their poetic energy, illusion, dream-like imagery, psychedelic aesthetics, focus on depicting society's margins, homosexuality, and nudity. Anger's cinematic bravura is underpinned by occult and religious imagery, particularly of the English occultist Alister Crowley, jukebox soundtracks, and experimental editing techniques such as superimposition, strobe lighting, fast cutting, and vibrant colour palettes integrated with costumes, sets and lighting (Imdb 2021, para. 4).

Inspired by a fascination with myth, ritual and magic, Anger started making films with his family's 16 mm camera. In 1947, aged 20, he made *Fireworks*, his first homoerotic-psychedelic film. French film critic and historian Georges Sadoul has cited Anger as one of the key pioneers in the evolution of New American Cinema, along with Maya Deren (Rowe 1974). According to Sadoul, 'after several evocative works in Europe, [Anger] created the obsessive *Scorpio Rising* (1963), a societal poem' (quoted in Georgaris 2021, para. 4). From the outset, Anger located himself as 'an artist who works outside of the (Hollywood) system' (Israel 2016, para. 11), with a preference for do-it-yourself and guerrilla filmmaking, and for taking on multiple creative roles such as writing, producing, directing, editing and cinematography.

Anger has had a profound impact on the New American film movement. Filmmakers such as David Lynch, Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, and William Fredkin's have been inspired by Anger's occult influence, visual chaos, and innovative use of the pop music soundtracks (Ramasseul 2012, para. 3). Pop songs in Anger's films have played the dual role of structuring and delivering screen narratives without relying on dialogue. The songs provide lyrics as a narrative layer to the work. Creatively using music to forward story-based screen narratives is par for the course today, partly

because Anger pioneered a new short screen genre called music video (Lachman 2011, p. 13). His *Scorpio Rising* marks a departure point in Hollywood's conventional film sense and form because of its soundtrack, which encompasses 'thirteen distinct segments scored to hit songs of the years 1961 to 1963' (Suarez 2002, p. 115), along with other sound effects, but no dialogue. Not only were those songs used as a non-diegetic source of sounds, but the lyrics also added meaning to the visuals as paradoxical annotations to a narrative that 'ostensibly follows a group of young motorcycle aficionados as they prepare for a night on the town' (Carr 2015, para. 2) in a kaleidoscopic display of occultism, queer machoism, leather-attired biker culture, Catholicism, and Nazi symbols. Filmmaker Maximilian Le Cain (2003) pointed out that *Scorpio Rising* 'prefigured such films as *Mean Streets* (Martin Scorsese, 1973) and *American Graffiti* (George Lucas, 1973) that paved the way for wide use of "found" soundtracks' (para. 9).

Among the New American filmmakers, Martin Scorsese has talked about his creative debt to Kenneth Anger. Scorsese authored the introduction of the booklet accompanying the *Films of Kenneth Anger Volume One*, a box set published by Fantoma Films in 2007. He inscribed that he was captivated by the formidable impression of *Scorpio Rising* and entranced by the magic of crafting music together with character, and the novel treatment of music as a character, which had never been seen previously (Everleth 2010, para. 12). Anger also modestly confirmed: 'Martin Scorsese learned about soundtracks from me' (Onstad 2006, para. 3).

Along with the New American filmmakers, Anger's astonishing audio-visual treatments, use of pop music, and displays of queer culture also inspired the New German filmmaker Fassbinder to develop his filmic excesses. According to Shattuc (1993), '[the] visceral appeal of pop iconography and violence in Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* played a significant function' (p. 50) in Fassbinder's film style. Anger's films also taught and influenced American cult filmmaker and champion of queer culture John Waters to cast non-traditional actors, infuse pop music to create the ironical aspects of reality with the lurid sensibility, and transgress the obscenity laws of the film industry (de Voogd 2009, para. 5). Among the New Queer Cinema wave, Gregg Araki's radical

films have also shown historical and visual connections with Anger's *Scorpio Rising* and *Invocation of My Demon Brother* (1969) by recontextualising Anger's romanticism with pop culture, music and sense of alienation and isolation to critique the American view about queer cultural reality (Davis 2004, p. 61; Guez 2015, para. 9).

It is important to note that Noé's dominant cinematic influencers, Scorsese (*Taxi Driver*) and Fassbinder, also share an intimate connection with Anger's narrative models, which are 'constructed through a comparative analysis of myths, religions and rituals and their associations external to their respective systems' (Rowe 1974, p. 26). Noé credits Anger with being one of the most important psychedelic filmmakers and for constantly inspiring him to create mystical screen experiences that cross the line between reality and dreams in his own filmic oeuvre. As a self-described fan, Noé interviewed Anger in 2010. He asked:

> What is the essence of cinema for you? Is it reproducing the language of dreams, or creating a shamanistic trance?

Anger replied:

> I think it's basically quite different from dreams… Films are very constructed – they're like architecture. (Noé 2010, para. 13)

Complementing this, Noé's own poetics of transgression are heavily influenced by Anger's formal elements, transgressive content, and creative filmmaking process. Noé's films reside in the no-man's land at the threshold of dreams and reality, located between industrial and experimental film. Like Anger, Noé takes on multiple production roles to protect his creative independence and authenticity from interference by other producers or financiers. This strategy allows him to hold creative control and optimise his tenacity as a filmmaker. However, Noé never claims himself as an artist like Anger; rather, he follows the ethos and aesthetics of an artist to make industrial films for wide audiences informed by, and with reference to, avant-garde and experimental screen

history and culture. Noé enthusiastically borrows strobe lighting[10], vibrant pop music, fast cutting, and vibrant colour palettes from Anger's oeuvre.

Besides influencing Noé's film aesthetics, Anger's visual and aural impressions are also present in Noé's music video productions. As a result, Noé's music videos hold the spirit of Anger's use of music and visuals in a harmonising and constructive manner. By juxtaposing the visuals in contrast with the music, Noé creates an oxymoronic sensation and temperament for the audience. In a conversation with Brian Reitzell at the Red Bull Music Academy, Noé (2016b) explained the reason behind the treatment: 'It's very nice when you're in a movie, you have something very soft to your ears while you have something very hard to your eyes. Because it makes things more acceptable' (para. 72). For instance, when Noé joined with Nick Cave and the Bad Seed to direct the music video for the song 'We Know Who U R' (2013), he produced contemplative, evocative and obscure visuals of a shadow roaming around in the dark forest in the night to portray the minimalistic and vividly haunted texture of the song. Noé's visual treatment of obscurity, nihilism, and disparagement are in line with the song's ominous lyrics, and he employs intimate cinematography through long takes and a handheld camera to imply subjectivity. Through the points of view of the shots, he momentarily upholds the voyeuristic tension of the chorus line: 'We know who you are, and we know where you live, and we know there's no need to forgive' (Collins 2013, p. 13).

Noé has applied Anger's music video aesthetic strategy to his films as well, such as in the opening title sequence of *Enter the Void*, where he put RGB strobe lights, fast cutting titles, and Japanese arcade culture–influenced typography with a visceral rave track of British electronic music group LFO's 'Freak' pumped with the reflex of acid house synthesiser and ascetic beats of techno drum side by side. An interesting fact is that 'Freak' contains only one line, 'This is going to make you freak,' which works as a caution for the audience about what are they going to experience through the portal of Noé's psychedelic melodrama, which also relates Kenneth Anger's innovative aesthetic strategy of music and visual collaboration on the screen.

---

[10] Noé is also influenced by the American structural film artists idiomatic expressions of strobing light effects.

According to Anger, colours have different properties beyond their contribution to mise en scène; hence his filmmaking approach is intertwined with occultism. As a follower of Aleister Crowley's 'Thelema' religion, Anger's psychedelic colour palette is derived from his study of Crowley's theories. Anger believed that colours are transformed through magic: a deep and concentrated colour implies masculinity, contrary to mild and less diluted colours, which denote femininity (Israel 2011, para. 25) (this gender reading would prove simplistic today with the modernising of sexual and gender identities). For Noé, the colour spectrums of his films are dominated by red, green, orange, and neon colours, which exemplify his characters' psychological tensions. In addition, Noé prefers screen soundtracks (copyright-protected) over original background scores. Similarly, Anger uses the 'found-music technique' (Freeman 2016, para. 28) as an influential and iconic style in his films and treats popular music as an active agent to narrate the story and generate the emotions for an audience. Also, improvisation is another influential Anger trademark that is visible in Noé's filmmaking method. Both filmmakers feel more comfortable working with a screenplay treatment, and Noé often shares with the press that he prefers to work with a treatment than a detailed script, which saves him from self-censoring explicit dialogues and transgressive content that may agitate producers or commissioning broadcasting companies.

Noé (2012) has claimed that *Scorpio Rising* is 'a film as unique as it is perfect... A great aesthetic experience that can only be compared to Anger's other masterpiece, *The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*' (para. 3). For instance, Noé's *Sodomites* is like a 'more graphic heterosexual encore of Anger's *Scorpio Rising*' (Palmer 2015, p. 58); and *Irréversible*'s gay club 'Rectum' traces back to Anger's visual display of homoeroticism in *Scorpio Rising*. Noé's *Climax* also holds a firm reference to Anger's LSD-stimulated film *The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (Chirico 2019, para. 9). In *Climax*, Noé merged psychedelic reality with misogyny, incest, libido, paranoia, love, and loss subsumed with brutality and suspicion. Inspired by Anger's vision, Noé transgresses the normative structure of the dance film and transforms it into the genre of psychological horror using vivid cinematography, obscure lighting, temporal editing, and popular music soundtracks.

Anger also tended to blend documentary aspects with narrative and fiction filmmaking and then reshape a reality according to experiential knowledge and imagination. For *Scorpio Rising*, he hired 'real people, not actors' (Lack 2013, para. 23). In fact, the motorcycle gang correlates to Noé's *Climax* ensemble cast of a group of real-life Parisian dancers who did not possess prior acting experience. Anger's vision functions as a conduit between Noé's experimental manifesto and expansive attitude.

American Structural Film

American structural film emerged from the American experimental and avant-garde film movement during the 1960s and 1970s. Film historian P. Adams Sitney first coined the term 'structural film' after observing certain characteristics and divergences in the then-contemporary experimental films, such as breaking away from complexity and obtaining a simplistic outlook. Structuralist filmmakers were interested in the confrontational and chaotic aspects of the film form. In another sense, they were keen on 'disruption of abstract art' and 'ideosensory phenomena' (Stern 2013, p. 8) which also sounds similar to the 1960s Nueva Figuración movement that happened in Argentina and was led by Luis Felipe Noé and his friends as I indicated earlier. Likewise, structural filmmakers are also indebted to Andy Warhol for adding the 'anti-romantic' or confrontational layer in their works. Sitney (2002) suggests Warhol was 'major precursor' not only of structural film but of all the essential features also present in his works (p. 350), although psychologically Warhol's works stand opposite from the structural filmmakers' ethos.

Nevertheless, with their poetic and dreamy attributiveness, experimentation with temporal aspects, and creation of transcendental yet confrontational series of moving images, American structural filmmakers such as Michael Snow, Hollis Frampton, Paul Sharits, Tony Conrad, Peter Kubelka, Stan Brakhage[11], Gene Curtis Harrington, and Gregory Markopoulos have a connection with the work of Kenneth Anger's contemporary, the visionary filmmaker Maya Deren (Rowe 1974, Stieny 2002). Like Anger, Deren has a strong association with

---

[11] Stan Brakhage had a bonding of friendship and admiration with Kenneth Anger (Miller 2020, para. 1).

occultism, although in different way. Film critic Carel Rowe (1974) suggested that Deren immersed herself in occultism as a 'classicist, interested in recombing its ritual orders within a system' (p. 3), while, in contrast, Anger being a romantic fantasist, regarded occultism as a 'source of hermetic knowledge' (p. 3).

Influenced by the wider history of experimental and avant-garde moving image trajectories, Noé refines his tapestry of images and fosters the hallucinogenic visual impressions with the intuition of the moving image experimentation of American structural film practitioners. He transgresses the idea of deploying narrative content-oriented moving images by integrating historical references to American structural films where not only content but also shape is a primary focus. Structural films encompass four characteristics: 'fixed camera position and frame from the viewer's perspective', 'the flicker effect', 'loop printing,' and 're-photography off the screen' (Sitney 2002, p. 348). All four characteristics might not be present at the same time in Noé's films, but they frequently appear in his screen productions and play crucial roles in navigating his cinematic narrations.

For example, *Irréversible*'s 9-minute-long rape scene was shot with a fixed tripod from the viewer's perspective to show the brutality and viscerality of the act; this is the only fixed-frame shot among the acrobatic camera movements in the rest of the film. Noé's other key creative takeaway from 1960s American structural filmmaking is his featuring of flickering and strobing light effects. Works such as Tony Conrad's *The Flicker* (1965) and Paul Sharits's short 'flicker' films *Ray Gun Viru*s (1966), *N:O:T:H:I:N:G* (1968) and *T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G* (1968), and those of Hollis Frampton and Michael Snow, create a dialectical distance from conventional filmmaking (Collins 2013, p. 17; Burkart & Palmer 2011, p. 76). Noé's edgy, confronting, flickering effects also recall the work of Stan Brakhage's *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959). Noé utilised this reference in the childbirth scene in *Carne* (see Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8 Childbirth Scene Collage

Window Water Baby Moving (above) and *Carne* (below)

In 2013, Noé collaborated with the American experimental rock band *Animal Collective* to produce the music video for 'Applesauce' (Minsker 2013, para. 1). He tackled the song's sonic spirit visually by grounding the moving images on the structure of Paul Sharit's flicker short film *N:O:T:H:I:N:G* while in the foreground a woman (performed by American fashion model Lindsey Wixson) is eating a ripe fruit in silhouette with a subtle erotic vibe. In the music video, Noé contrasts the song's upbeat rhythm pattern with two layers. On the centre stage, he composes the screen with a long take, static shot (like *Irréversible*'s rape scene), and an extreme closeup of Wixon's sensual performance of eating the fruit in slow motion. At the same time, the pulsing red, green, blue, yellow, and neon colours produce a neon-noir effect on the backdrop, which connotes the sublime emotion and nostalgic feelings of the song.

However, by assimilating American structural filmmaking aesthetics into his film style, Noé has combined the artistic and creative influence of Anger's symbol, myth, occultism, and ritual; Deren's trans-temporal perspective; and Warhol's pragmatic and sensible stance. Conversely, American structural films are mostly grounded in museums, art galleries and other notionally high art

spaces, the characteristics of which Noé uses to attack or confront the bourgeoisie through his films.

Luis Buñuel (1900–1983)

Irrèversible's infamous on-screen, head-smashing scene at the Rectum nightclub has left a cultural trail for cinephiles and cineastes. In Danish filmmaker Nicolas Winding Refn's neo-noir, crime thriller *Drive* (2011), the scene in the elevator is contextualised as a climacteric node in the narrative. We see the protagonist Driver (Ryan Gosling) with his lover Irene (Carey Mulligan) enter the elevator, the hitman already there waiting for them. To distract the hitman and hide the fact that Driver was already alerted by the presence of the hitman, he kissed Irene. Driver then unleashes brutal and visceral action to neutralise the hitman and beat him to death by insanely kicking and smashing his head. This rage-induced primal and instinctive action sequence was inspired by *Irréversible*, where Pierre (Albert Dupontel) hits the wrong person's head with a fire extinguisher. Refn took advice from Noé about constructing the cinematic special effects and teamed up with Noé's long-term collaborator, cinematographer Benoît Debie (Jagernauth 2012).

The legacy for these visceral cinematic moments can be traced to Spanish filmmaker Luis Buñuel and his staging of violence from *Los Olvidados*. In this film El Jaibo, with Pedro's help, tracks down Julián, whom El Jaibo thought responsible for sending him to a juvenile detention centre. Although Julián rejects the allegation and attempts to walk away, the malevolent El Jaibo violently beats him on the head with wood, ultimately killing him. The shot composition and temperament of the scene relates strongly to Noé's *Irréversible* and his contemporary Jan Kounen *Dobermann*'s head smashing scene. However, despite this line of influence, in my current research I have found little discussion of the relationship between Noé and Buñuel. A stronger connection has been documented between Noé's stylistic approach and the Kubrickian tradition (Szaniawski 2020). However, Noé has contested this:

> I just am the opposite of Kubrick… I am incapable of doing anything serious… even if I wanted to do a serious documentary or psychological drama… I can film people getting beaten to a pulp and it's always

derisive in the end, it ends up being funny one way or another. What I make will always be closer to a Buñuel than a Kubrick film (quoted in Chodorov & Szaniawski 2018, para. 9).

In addition to Buñuel's filmmaking artistry, Noé has also been stimulated by the maestro's life: 'There are many directors whose films inspire envy, but in the case of Buñuel, it's also his life that does it. More of a cry of happiness than a call to murder' (Noé 2012, para. 2). Buñuel's influence and cinematic craftsmanship are omnipresent in Noé's cinematic creations, and in interviews with the media he frequently mentions the Spaniard's influences on his career.

Buñuel is renowned for his innovative filmmaking, artistic eye, poetic structure, and shocking, surprising, and unusual elements derived from the tradition of surrealism. He lived a conventional life, and while his films bear Spanish (Catholic) sensibilities, they are critical examples of repression, fetish (about hands and feet), and the oedipal complex. They focus on the stories and representations of an underprivileged, impoverish social class (underpinned by leftist political beliefs) as a cinematic way of questioning the privileged classes' double standards. In addition, Buñuel's films hold an open interpretation for the auctorial treatment of dream, daydream, hallucination, and reality by obscuring the boundaries between them.

Buñuel and surrealism coexist. Buñuel embraced surrealism from a disgust with bourgeois society, in addition to a symbolic and cinematic remit to inspire social change. By poetically exploring the idiom of nonconformity in *Un Chien Andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog* 1929) with artist Salvador Dalí, Buñuel occupies a critical space in film history for introducing a language of dreams and nightmares through surrealism. *Un Chien Andalou's* 'anti-plastic, anti-artistic' illustration of reality introduced surrealism in the film medium and transgressed the existing conventional, rational filmmaking methods. Besides challenging the logical representation of reality, Buñuel had an intention to shock the intellectual bourgeoisie of his era, whom he found to be patronising of the 'avant garde cine' culture. Historically, *Un Chien Andalou* manifested an intense reaction that was directed exclusively

> …to the artistic sensibility and to the reason of the spectator, with its play of light and shadow, its photographic effects, its pre-occupation with rhythmic montage and technical research, and at time in the direction of the display of a perfectly conventional and reasonable mood. (Buñuel 2006, p. 101)

Furthermore, from the beginning, Buñuel exploited cinema as a tool to provoke audiences against conformist culture and conservative morality. To achieve this goal, he relied upon uncanny visionaries to purposely unsettle the audience's state of mind. He was held accountable for this tendency when he embraced life in exile because of his anti-Franco position. He left Spain and then had to leave employment at the New York Museum of Modern Arts for being an outward atheist (Buñuel 1983, p. 182). Buñuel then took refuge in Mexico and produced low-budget commercial, yet influential films formed with a leftist view of class struggle and a savage critique of the bourgeoisie. Films including *Los Olvidados*, *Él* (1953), *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1954), *Nazarin* (1959) helped reinstate Buñuel to an auteur position and situated him again on the international film festival circuit. Buñuel later returned to Paris and continued making films there until the end of his life.

From my point of view, Noé and Buñuel share not only a geographical (and linguistical) proximity, but also the spirit of artistic protest and agitation against normative, conformist culture via cinematic transgression. This has allowed them to substantiate reality by reiterating it through the lenses of extreme and excess. Buñuel and Noé share a personal history of subversion, transgression (practically and metaphysically) and trauma. They have respectively experienced adverse political situations across different eras of the 21st century: Buñuel faced the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and Noé the harsh realities of the 1976 coup d'état in Argentina. While Buñuel mourned for poet and close friend Federico García Lorca (1898–1936), who was killed by the national militia during the Spanish Civil War, he rarely shared his trauma with family or press (Ehrlich 2009, para. 5). Noé had the distress of migrating to France with his family to flee the military junta's oppression. Atheism is another bond between Noé and Buñuel that is signified in their philosophical inclinations towards nonconformity. And in both cases, the filmmakers' mothers played vital roles in

their filmic visions. For example, Buñuel's mother María Portolés Cerezuela assisted him financially to make *Un Chien Andalou* in 1929 (Russell 2005, para. 11) and Noé's mother Nora Murphy actively fuelled his dynamic cinephile outlook.

Noé asserts that his films and filmmaking craft are closely connected with Buñuel, as is his production logic. His first short film, *Tintarella de Luna* (1985), carries the dreamy, yet delirious, impression of *Un Chien Andalou*. He considers Buñuel a critical filmmaker who foregrounded the language of dreams and nightmares on the screen to explore the subconscious mind and dream worlds and to represent the unfolding opaqueness of the mystery of life (Symonds 2015, para. 5).

Noé was inspired by Buñuel to make films for a pleasurable, transgressive experience, not for financial profit or career advancement, and this has allowed him to indulge in exploring the psychological limits of his film narratives (Bond & Hallard 2007, para. 3). Like Buñuel, Noé retains his freedom as a producer to hold the creative authority of his work and prefers to work with familiar casts and crews to accelerate his productions' dynamics and economy. In addition, both have reputations for economical production design. For example, Buñuel's production duration oscillates between 14 and 28 days, and Noé filmed *Climax* in an abandoned school in Paris's outskirts over 15 days with a modest budget (Morgan 2018, para. 3). Noé also follows the path of 'the maestro' by working consistently with artistic collaborators such as cinematographer Benoit Debie, producers Vincent Maraval and Lucile Hadžihalilović, music composer Thomas Bangalter, and graphic designer Tom Kan.

Like Buñuel's, Noé's directing style is strongly styled by art direction, with a refined mise en scène and instinctual use of non-diegetic music. The use of repetition is another poetic device in Buñuel's cinematic narrative that Noé deploys 'as an analogy between characters, or between situations, events, spaces, or other mimetic components' (Shaham 2014, p. 438) to add a 'fabula' archetype in the narrative. Repetition also plays an intrinsic role to remind the audience that reality is a loop of (unfulfilled) expectations and promises; for example, in the *Enter the Void* through the dialogue of Oscar and Linda, the

audience recurrently encounters the destiny of their failed promise to not get detached. When Oscar dies, Linda realises that staying together is nothing but an eternal promise, which can only be a fantasy for a mortal human being.

It can be seen that Noé has been inspired by Buñuel's intellectual use of cinema to construct and privilege sensorial experience, over story or narrative. He generates a haptic and sensory experience by using lower decibel audible sounds, visceral images, and vortex-like camera movements to generate a physical experience for the audience. Noé and Buñuel share an affinity for telling stories of *amour fou* (mad love) with absurd conclusions (Han 2019, para. 11). In most cases, the male characters have good intentions yet end up in a dismal position. In Buñuel's works, doubt and contradiction play vital roles in unfolding human behaviour in realistic, documentary-like, locations. Buñuel used these driving forces to progress conceptions of human history on screen. Elements of contradiction and doubt permitted him to visually display the invisible existence of nonconformity in people's social lives. In contrast, Noé uses this same dichotomy as a critical element of self-expression to represent the psychological horror residing behind the surfaces of human existence. Both use cinema as a lens to critique the bourgeois mindset and social reality. It is important to note that while Buñuel's films are appreciated and critically examined for their narratological dynamism, Noé has preferred to explore the 'sensory immersion' aspects of Buñuel's films to generate his own version of dreamlike cinematic narration.

In short, as a filmmaker, Noé affirms his proximity to the films and cultures of the 1970s and 1980s, since this period offers less conformist and more radical narrative experiences, erotic expositions, and trips to uncharted terrains of the psyche – 'the subconscious life of dreams and nightmares' – that are not far from real life (Suzanne-Mayer 2019, para. 27). Noé carries this torch of the past, related to the culture he grew up in and consistently exhibited a vestige of experimentation, freedom of imagination and resistance. He inherited the influence of earlier period to diminish the social constructs of 'class, education, religion, heritage, and hierarchy' to disparage the modern society's social and cultural cruelty (Noé 1999, para. 4).

Chapter 4
Poetics of Melodramatic-Horror Narration:
Resistance Through Excess

> I want to make movies out of blood, sperm, and tears. This is like the essence of life. I think movies should contain that, perhaps should be made of that. (*Love* 2015)

Gaspar Noé's film characters often express their passion for sentimental drama or melodrama; for instance, in *Love*, Karl Glusman as Murphy (which is also Noé's official last name) is a young American cinephile, an aspiring filmmaker living in Paris, in love with his alluring girlfriend Electra (Aomi Muyock). While walking through the Parc des Buttes, Murphy explicitly describes to Electra in the words quoted above his enthusiastic dream about the films he wants to make.

This statement also echoes the German filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder's homage to his favourite filmmaker Douglas Sirk. Fassbinder wrote about Sirk's melodramas (in German) in his 1971 essay *Imitation of Life: On the Films of Douglas Sirk* (first translated into English in 1972):

> Sirk has said: 'cinema is blood, is tears, violence, hate, death, and love'. And Sirk has made films with blood, with tears, with violence, hate – films with death and films with love (p. 95).

This reference serves two concerns: first, it unambiguously defines Noé's creative position about melodrama and his affinity with creative predecessor Fassbinder (see Chapter 3). Second, it shapes the crux of Noé's penultimate dream of making a film that 'truly depicts sentimental sexuality' through *Love*. Nevertheless, how Noé's fascinations and production practices shape melodrama as a narrational device is a less discussed topic in film scholarship. However, the press, film critics, and Noé himself repeatedly tag his films as brutal (*Irréversible*), psychedelic (*Enter the Void*), erotic (*Love*), or hallucinogenic (*Climax*) 'melodramas' to draw attention to the role of melodrama within his film poetics (Krautheim 2008; Bradshaw 2010; Shoukri 2015; Crump 2019).

Noé contravenes the dominant contemporary form of poetic, realistic and straightforward storytelling style (with an optimistic end) and creates a transgression by using (retroactive) melodrama as a narrational mode to provoke viewers and to make them aware and take charge of their lives in ways that can change their stagnant realities. He keeps accommodating that framework of resistance, film after film, without any reticence. It is as if Noé is following in the footsteps of Fassbinder and striving to prove that behind his pessimistic worldview there are specific reasons, and 'if a film ends pessimistically but exposes certain mechanisms clearly enough to show people how they work, and the ultimate effect is not pessimistic' (Fassbinder, cited in Cottingham 2020, p. 13).

Noé has developed an idiosyncratic mode of cinematic narration that collides his fascination with horror narrative and character-driven melodrama to establish his identity as an artist filmmaker or 'branded auteur' (Elsaesser 1995; see Chapter 1). The horror-induced melodramatic narratives of *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void*, *Love*, and *Climax* structurally and thematically offer Noé a space to exhibit and experiment with taboo issues, sexuality, gender, psychedelic states of mind, and emotional excesses. Noé's practice mode of melodramatic-horror narration has subverted the 'auteur vs. genre' binarism in French film culture and paved the way for the current generation of filmmakers such as Julia Ducournau to make 'auteur horror' films with financial sponsorship from CNC. Even though CNC frequently disregarded genre film production for *avance sur recettes* in the 1990s to mid-2000s, those horror films also generated political resistance to the then-conservative political system.

In this chapter, I propose that Noé's poetics of transgression is embedded in the blended approach of his melodramatic horror narration, and I reveal how he enfolds melodramatic and horror narration by modifying the arthouse film narration mode. I explore this by examining the theoretical claims that Noé's narrational pattern is a blend of horror (genre) film, melodrama and auteurism with reference to David Bordwell's framework on film narration, specifically the narrative form of international art house cinema. In addition, I examine Noé's production context and present the atypical meeting points of the genre and recurring narrative structures, key issues, philosophical background, and

how each production is connected to his next film, which offers the audience a patchwork quilt of visual narrative as a form of a continuous journey towards eternity. Each of Noé's films thus forms a patch in his wider project of the poetics of transgression, all of them bound together by the repetitive cycle of thematic aspects.

I also discuss how Noé has enfolded melodrama within his wider poetics of transgression – as it relates to film narration. This reveals the chapter's principal motivation: to convey how Noé's poetics of transgression is located within the narratological shape of his films by exploring the narrative principles, functions, and effects in this context. Finally, I reflect on the transition of Noé's shift away from horror-narration in his late period.

This chapter has four sections, each respectively focusing on melodrama, horror, a case study, and how Noé employs melodramatic-horror narration to inscribe his contribution in contemporary French film culture. In the first section, I explain why Noé confronts the dominant art film narration via a transgressive, recurrent melodramatic cinematic narration (of horror-melodrama) that has acclimatised visceral excess within the French film production context.

In the second section, I explain from a material viewpoint why Noé prefers horror stories and how he contextualises Italian giallo film conditions into his cinematic horror framework to present transgressive and nihilist narratives as a mode of cinematic resistance concerning the dominant trait of French auteur films and the legacy of CNC's policies. In the third section, I analyse Noé's psychedelic-melodrama *Enter the Void* as a case study to point out how his cinematic narration demonstrates that his feature films formally, thematically, and comprehensively represent melodrama as a quilt of moving image screen narratives and transgress the traditional expectation of the 'auteurist point of view' in 'art film'. In the fourth section, I discuss how Noé and his contemporaries from le jeune cinéma (as they were labelled by the critics and scholars, although Noé's oeuvre exists across industrial label such as le jeune cinéma and Cinémas de banlieue; see Chapter 1) laid the foundation for the

recent success of CNC-backed 'auteur made genre films' in the name of 'non-binary and fluid cinema'.

Recurring Melodrama and Catastrophic Narrative

Historically, melodrama occupies a fair share of the French film culture. Film scholar Vicki Callahan (2004) discussed the political, cultural, and economic correlation between melodrama and the French film industry in her book chapter 'Mutability and Fixity in Early French Cinema'. During the First World War, due to the censorship of French crime films, the conservative political attitudes, to avert potential collapse of French film industry, and to create resistance in the face of imported American films, French filmmakers shifted their focus towards 'increasingly melodramatic modes of narrative and representation' (p. 71). This political-economic measure changed the on-screen personas of the fiery, femme-fatales of crime films into law-abiding, conservative female characters whose lives revolved around motherhood and the family.

As a result, family and romance became focal topics and melodrama became the chosen narrative premise for conventional and avant-garde filmmakers. In 1923, French narrative avant-garde filmmaker and impressionist Jean Epstein made a melodrama titled *Coeur fidele* (*Faithful Heart* 1923), which focused on a heterosexual *ménage a trois* relationship. Although concluding the film with a happy ending, Epstein included the tragic murder of one of the male characters. He used the photogenic process mixed with 'high melodrama, a gritty realist setting and experimental editing techniques' to portray the characters, layout their psychological schemas, and visualise the social conditions of the time (Callahan 2004, p. 72).

Epstein's contemporaries, Germaine Dulac, Charles Vanel Dans, René Clair, Augusto Genina, and Jean Renoir, also produced melodramas showing the 'ambivalent representation of heterosexual romance and marriage'. Subsequently, due to the chaotic political situation and changing social dynamics, this stream of melodramas portrayed a 'negative image of the new woman' (Callahan 2004) as deceptive and frivolous to signify the cultural anxieties and confusions regarding the 'changing social identity of women in

modern France and their as yet undetermined position in that society' (Callahan 2004, p. 72). This treatment put the limelight on women and centred the narratives on female characters and their desires. Through that 'negative image of the new woman', filmmakers introduced the characteristics of liberated women on screen.

Nonetheless, in the 1960s, melodrama as a narrational format faced harsh criticism and rejection from the French Nouvelle Vague (French New Wave) filmmakers, and their critical supporter Cahiers du Cinéma. Ironically, Cahiers du Cinéma's founder, film theorist Andre Bazin, took inspiration from Italian neo-realist films to explain the philosophy behind his book *What Is Cinema* (1971), but he ignored melodrama, which occupies a massive space in Italian opera and theatre (Baymen 2014). Bazin (1971) wanted the Italian filmmakers to exclude the 'demon of melodrama' to focus on the 'dramatic necessity on strictly foreseeable events' (p. 31). He expressed his despair by critiquing Vittorio De Sica's neo-realist classical *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thief* 1948), venting that 'admittedly the Italians like the Russians, are the most naturally theatrical of people' (p. 55).

In contemporary French film culture, there is a strong lineage of family dramas and comedies engaging French viewers with melodramatic narratives. Those titles are not as familiar to or popular with non-European viewers as the auteurist films. In 2021, the film *Adieu les cons* (*Bye Bye Morons* 2020) won the 46th César Awards for the Best Film, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, Best Cinematography, Best Production Design, and Best Supporting Actor (Roxborough 2021). *Adieu les cons* was written and directed by Albert Dupontel (who portrayed Pierre in *Irréversible*). It tells the story of three characters: a terminally ill, 43-year-old salon owner, Madam Suze Trappet (Virginie Efira); Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Cuchas (Albert Dupontel), a burnt-out IT specialist dealing with a crisis in his fifties; and an overenthusiastic, blind archivist Monsieur Serge Blin (Nicolas Marié). They cross each other's path when Madam Suze decided to find out about her child, whom she was forced to abandon almost thirty years before as a teenage mother. In 2022, Xavier Giannoli's period piece, *Illusions perdues* (*Lost Illusions* 2021), an adaption of French writer Honoré de Balzac's novel of the same name, won the 47th César

Best Film award (Roxborough 2022), with Giannoli and Jacques Fieschi securing the Best-Adapted Screenplay honour. Balzac's novels and plays are famous for establishing and manifesting realism in European literature, although he 'created fiction using the rhetoric and excess of melodrama' (Brooks 1976).

Noé has said, 'In general, I tend to be interested in anything that is prohibited' (quoted in Francois 2002, para. 8). His interest in anything impermissible explains his interest in melodramatic narration. In the rational and realistic world of screenwork, melodrama signifies a pejorative term that implies exaggeration, hyper-emotionalism, absence of elusiveness, and underdeveloped characters (Brooks 1995, p. xv). Despite these limitations, Noé has revised the characteristics of melodrama and used its structures to explore improvisation, emotions, carnality, and excess. His film narrative approach stands in opposition to classical film narratives and Hollywood cinematic representations. The discrepancy between cause-and-effect logic and episodic storyline generates a narrative that pitches its action through psychologically amorphous characters. Noé established his poetics of transgression as a distinct group of governing rubrics bearing the resonance of film history, formal conventions, and implicit viewing procedures that sets itself 'explicitly against the classical narrative mode and especially against the cause-effect linkage of events where the linkages become looser, more tenuous' (Bordwell 2008, pp. 151-152). We also see that as a branded auteur, Noé uses realism, authorial expressivity, and ambiguity to loosen the cause-and-effect logic in his films, establish their realism, and confirm their narrative place in screen discourse as realistic films; he realistically represents how psychologically complex characters deal with real-life problems (such as alienation, communication problem, disruption) at real locations.

Within Noé's poetics of transgression, the concept of nonconformity determines his film's characters' traits; for example, they do not have consistent reasoning patterns to reach the end goal, lest they question themselves about the goals. Structurally, Noé's film characters appear to not follow any confirmative life goals, but their 'current' ambition (in the screen world) is stimulated by the desire of revenge. Most of the time they find themselves in denial and frustration because they cannot deal with the loss of control over their life

choices, or they want to lose control and break the loop of their daily existence. The screen world unfolds the whole action as a catastrophe through episodic narrative structure, which often represents a lack of clear-cut resolution. Although his protagonists' lack of objectivity passively pushes them from one interruption to another disruption, Noé does not imply they lack subtle form as they journey through the narrative.

As film theorist David Bordwell (2008) suggests, 'All sorts of narrative have an appetite for assimilation' (p. 87). Noé's melodramatic narratives also assimilate with the protagonist's psychological narration and with the horror-based cinematic narration, which reflects characters' changing attitudes or temperaments with the development of the narrative through the film. In the process of changing, Noé's protagonists display alterations in their personalities that represent the abstract structure of the episodic events by embodying the spirit of the characters' psyches through visceral body language.

Noé's mode of cinematic narration follows the Aristotelian model of *peripeteia*, which proposes a reversal of fortune or situations in the narrative, such as from bad to good or the other way around (Aristotle 1997, p. 87). For instance, *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void*, *Love* and *Climax* have an architecture of contrasting narratives that transparently shows the blameless, cruel circumstances of the story world and narrates the 'inciting incident' (Gulino 2013) and the agent of the narrative that caused the characters to have bad luck and psychotic situations. Noé frequently uses the traditional screenwriting device such as the 'inciting incident' or point of attack to set the protagonists in motion and to embark on the excursion that will seize them all through the storyline. Naturally, this incident destabilises the protagonist's life and forces them to respond to alleviate the situation or resist the adversity.

Through this assimilation process, Noé also defies the inherent superiority of art films' character-driven stories, and he amalgamates the narrative with low-brow films' suspense, excitement, and unexpected twists. In Noé's sensorial screen-reality and sentimental narrative, ambiguity works in a less complicated manner. Instead, he makes the story world more ambiguous by experimenting with formal features that stand against the classical norm of art films' open-

ended and arbitrary narrations. Noé's melodramatic narration stimulates the viewer to assemble the thematic content of the narrative based on how the story is structured and on its recurrent stylistic patterns.

Noé carries this vitality through his works. He inherited the melodramatic storytelling approach from two of his creative influencers, Luis Buñuel (who worked as an assistant of Jean Epstein) and Rainer Werner Fassbinder (an avid follower of Douglas Sirk). Buñuel had done commercial melodrama and comedy films while he was making films in Mexico in the 1950s (Connelly & Lynd 2001; Russell 2005; Kinder 2009). From among his own contemporaries, Noé was touched by Todd Hayne's 'dark film' *Safe* (1995) (Criterion Collection 2015), which comprises the elements of 'social satire, women's melodrama, queer metaphor, or horror' (Lim 2014) and 'a beautiful synth score' (Noé 2016b). Noé (2016b) has often acknowledged Haynes's other short film, *Superstar* (1988) (made with Barbie dolls about anorexia), for Haynes's non-concern for the legalities of using licensed music or the moral obligation of asking permission from Karen Carpenter's family or the Barbie Doll company, Mattel, Inc.

Noé has developed an idiosyncratic cinematic narration that has collided with his fascination with horror narratives and character-driven melodramas to establish his identity as an artist filmmaker or branded auteur. He has improvised the structure of melodrama to depict realism with cultural veracity and to deploy it as a system that accommodates the tragedy, conflict, confrontation, and anxiety that generate 'tension' as a central theme of the female-centric but male character-driven narratives. Noé developed his melodramatic narrational system as a 'highly adaptable normative system'[12] that has the flexibility to contain physical and psychological excess (Vasudevan 2011). Melodrama has allowed Noé to transgress the boundary of conventional norms. According to Bayman (2014), 'Melodrama does not exist beyond any of the confines that it sets up within itself; it is the border itself, the line at which excess pulls with restriction, formal expressivity with representation, and art with reality' (p. 7).

---

[12] Film scholar Ravi Vasudevan (2011) defines this as a 'modified melodrama system' (p. 23).

Noé has redefined the horror genre norm with authorial expressivity. Furthermore, his psychological and psychedelic episodic[13] horror stories work as the foreground of his films catastrophic narrative (which is loosely governed by cause-and-effect logic). He has used melodrama as a narrative premise instead of poetic realism, and he has generated the essence of reality by situating the narrative in real locations (e.g., Paris, Tokyo or Canada). The quintessential features of Noé's melodramas as modes of narration (without falling into the trope of domestic melodrama) are relationships, three-character arcs, female protagonists and their despair, troubled masculinity, powerlessness, misery, pathos, moral denial, and formal and thematic transgression. *Ménages á trois*, love-loss, birth-death, and the horror of existence also emerge as recurrent storylines. Identity, memories, dreams/nightmares, and mind-altering substance-induced psychedelic states are also frequent elements reinforced by his critical philosophical understanding (immortality, nonconformity, transgression, chaos) of Nietzsche (see Chapter 1).

With the aid of melodramatic narration, Noé on the one hand rejects the traditional liberal, authorial view of narrative where filmmakers primarily focus on life, struggle, existential crisis and psychosis from their perspective and project those realisations onto the characters. On the other hand, he accepts the straightforward and unswerving ways heightened dramas address the social rigidity and cultural inflexibility of ordinary urban people's everyday lives through nihilistic and pessimistic screen-realities and improvised dialogues.

Cinematic-Psychological-Horror: A Conceptual Transgression in Genre

Ego, fear, anxiety, and trauma are not only the seeds of Noé's screen narratives, they are also core topics in the horror genre. Besides his cinephile preference for horror, disaster, and catastrophic films, Noé also cites his affinity for Italian giallo or pulp horror film, a blend of crime, horror, mystery, eroticism, and psychological thriller (see Chapter 1). Instead of having steadfast rules like Hollywood horror films, giallo films also play with the forms and styles of conventional horror genres and subcategories without being moralistic. Giallo's

---

[13] Episodic storytelling is one of the features of art cinema narration mode that contrasts with classical Hollywood narration.

stylistics and sensibilities are conceptually relatable and discoverable in Noé's oeuvre; his film productions also feature sadistic and brutal violence, eroticism, and psychological horror. As a conceptual category with highly moveable and permeable boundaries that shift around from year to year (Needham 2002, see Chapter 1), giallo gives Noé the freedom to defy the dominant American model of horror genre in French film conditions. Noé's narration style is not only dominated by the shared conventions of horror or giallo, it also represents a hybrid model of 'an overlapping and evolving' set of 'conceptual categories' that are in a constant state of flux' (Cherry 2009, p. 3). Also, as film theorist Patricia MacCormack (2008) showed in her analysis *Cinesexuality,* horror as mode of narration offers space for excess by default, but 'this quality can actually be found in all cinemas: in all images we can find … residue and excess' (cited in Austin 2015, p. 278).

While Noé's film narratives roam around within the umbrella term of horror genre, his films have been put in subcategories such as exploitation or rape-revenge (*Irréversible*), psychedelic horror (*Enter the Void*, *Climax*), and psychological horror (*Love*), and they bear marks of crossover between stories of love and loss, hallucination, or dance-drama that imitate 'real life and reality'. The connection between Noé's body of work and giallo horror raises another question: Why does Noé have a primary inclination to the horror genre in his production practice and context?

In his oeuvre to date, Noé has exhibited formal and thematic innovations through shock methods or provocative storytelling to achieve his functional goal and display 'cinematic horror'[14] to perplex, scare, or repulse viewers (Cherry 2009, p. 4). These contribute to his transgressing or pushing the boundaries of conventional norms and clichéd horrific moments to arouse the viewers' emotions and thus offer a new angle aligned with his branded auteur status. Early on, Noé established his authorial expressivity and developed the mode of cinematic narration now expected of him, one that embraces an unusual position on the borderline between mainstream cinema and art cinema (as a classical narrative structure but not a commercial one) through the giallo-

---

[14] Steven Schneider (2004) suggests the term 'cinematic horror' to define the films that employ horror elements in the narrative but do not represent horror film aesthetics. (p. 146)

imbued narrational mode of cinematic horror. Horror-and giallo-genre tropes help him to engage his narrative space in every sector of the industry (mainstream, independent, low-budget, and cult film) and turn it into a potential selling point in the marketing and exhibition circuit.

Before Noé, cinéma du look established the foundation of making films with self-reflexive style, focusing on the subversive (or anti-establishment) culture and marginalised youth, and usefully blending high culture and pop culture. Noé innovated this cinematic horror-production approach and altered the representation by infusing cinematic horror and maintaining the cult status within the French film ecosystem. He has candidly exposed how he contextualises the underground or experimental attitude within the structure of commercial or horror film and keeps his integrity and honesty intact. In the light of Brigid Cherry's *Horror* (2009), we can say that Noé's visually exquisite cinematic horror films did not turn out as a 'superhit' or highly profitable element like horror genre films (pp. 8-13). Nevertheless, Noé's cinematic horror films are considered lucrative economic units for production and distribution houses because of their intense and poignant narrations.

Narrative stimulated by 'cinematic horror' offers Noé flexibility and adaptability to embody the contemporary cultural moment and allows him to encode the ongoing horror of socio-cultural issues, turmoil, and anxieties with a straightforward outlook. Horror filmmakers have never faced a scarcity of materials because horror films encode the cultural moment's anxieties and decode its apprehensions through the narratives (Cherry 2009). Noé's films deal on an unconscious level with fears of violence by depicting acts of violence, thus reflecting on the cultural moment. Often, branded auteurs like Noé become specialised in the horror genre due to its concern with taboo issues and provoking negative emotions, along with its cult status. As Cherry (2009) stated, 'Horror films are aimed at the 18–24-year-old demographic' (p. 7). Noé's *Love* also supports this point by having been placed on Netflix's top 10 list in 2020 and staying there for months because of a TikTok challenge based on the opening sequence of the film, initiated by that same demographic (Motamayor 2020).

Furthermore, Noé is more interested in showing the chaos of life through the concept of psychological horror in two ways. First, it works as a quilt that enfolds the recurring specificity of experiences of love and loss, birth and death, psychedelia, and the hedonist aspects of the characters, appearing in the uneven shape of a trip, a search, an idyll, a meta-film (Bordwell 2008). Second, psychological horror, as a container of sensuality and sensorial atmospheres, helps Noé bypass the desperate need to visualise graphic violence as an inseparable element of horror convention. Noé (1999) said that overconsumption of explicit and intense violence (in for example, *The Exorcist* 1973) has lost its referential reliability and acceptance by audiences. Therefore, to create any 'emotional impact' or deliver shock therapy to viewers, it is better if filmmakers can extend the intensity of the horror more than they have seen in other films (such as in *Deliverance* 1972).

Noé manipulates anxiety to show human characters' inner demons, rather than have anxiety from outside be the issue. Noé's protagonists face denials and contradictions for their life choices, with anxiety arising from excessive fears, regrets, and powerlessness. For instance, from *Irréversible* to *Climax*, Noé's cinematic narration is encapsulated by the fear and anxiety of being raped anally, and Noé demonstrates the frightful situation from the victim's (not from the subjective point of view of the assailant) perspective to establish the horror and brutality of the act. In *Irréversible*, Alex (Monica Bellucci) is anally raped by the Le Tenia (Jo Prestia), and Marcus (Vincent Cassel) was subject to sodomy at the Rectum Club. In contrast, Marcus expressed a desire to 'fuck' Alex in 'the ass', which Alex immediately disallowed because it seemed emotionless, unromantic, and humiliating to her.

In *Enter the Void*, Oscar's (Nathaniel Brown) junkie friend Alex (Cyril Roy) gives him an admonition about not taking any drink from the queer drug dealer Bruno (Ed Spear) (an allusion to the Rectum Club of *Irréversible*). Bruno has erectile dysfunction and to turn himself on he puts his finger into his own anus and wipes his finger on the back of any boy's head who has passed out at Bruno's place. In *Love*, Murphy (Karl Glusman) confronts his real fear or transphobia as a cisgender male when Electra (Aomi Muyock) puts him with a 'tranny' (as Electra said) or transgender sex-worker. References to anal sex and

sexual assault appear again in *Climax* through Cyborg (Alexandre Moreau) and Rocco (Naab), who were casually bragging about having anal sex with fellow dancer Lou (Souheila Yacoub), as well as verbally abusing other female dancers. The portrayal of Rocco's character as emotionless and revealing toxic masculinity suggests two connections in the French and European screen environments. The first is Alain Delon's portrayal of French gangster Roch Siffredi in *Borsalino* (1970) (written by Jean-Claude Carrière et al. and directed by Jacques Deray); and the second is Italian director, producer, and hardcore adult film star (famous for on-screen sodomy) Rocco Siffredi (who also appropriated his screen surname from the film *Borsalino* (1970) (Van Hoeij 2016).

Besides these examples, we also realise that from *Irréversible* to *Climax*, Noé cyclically unfolded a simple story (guided by giallo, disaster film and psychological horror aesthetics) about horror and fear of conceiving and aborting human life, such as in *Irréversible* when Alex got pregnant and presumably lost her child after being brutally raped in the subway tunnel. However, his narration leads to the question, where has the spirit of that unborn child gone? We see that spirit come alive in *Enter the Void* as Oscar, who has a friend named Alex. Oscar dies and is reborn from his sister Linda's (Paz de la Huerta) womb. In *Love*, Murphy (which, as mentioned earlier is also Noé's official last name) has an 18-month-old boy named Gaspar (Ugo Fox) with Omi (Klara Kristin) resulting from their casual intercourse (which Murphy regrets now).

Climax introduces the dance troupe manager, single mother Emmanuelle's (Claude Gajan Maull) young son Tito. Emmanuelle locks Tito in the electric room during the panic attack on the dancefloor, the narrative heavily implying that he might be dead there from electric shock. Unable to bear the pain and beset by grief, Emmanuelle kills herself with a knife. This film indicates how the cycle of the birth-death, fear-horror in Noé's story-world reached its apex and became part of eternity with the demise of the creator (mother) and creation (child), as also happened in *Irréversible* almost two decades prior. Noé visualises the moment of salvation in both *Irréversible* and *Climax* with the arrival of police at dawn with the presence of the 'glorious morning sun' (Dmitriev 2018).

Noé's approach to cinematic horror narrative effusively conveys and actualises the specific situations, emotions and feelings connected with human existence, rather than chronicling a story with a particular destination, like the art house, independent, or classical Hollywood film. To achieve this texture through the narration, Noé deploys an oxymoronic practice of structurally juxtaposing constructive crafts or concepts within his poetics of transgression to represent and reveal the paradoxes, apparent absurdities, and fantastic aspects of the ongoing reality. For example, to actualise the cerebral feeling and realise the duration of the vortex of anxiety, paranoia, fear, depression, and detachment, Noé puts his restless, chaotic moving imageries next to the 'therapeutic' perspective of slow cinema as a genre of art cinema (Bordwell 2008, p. 153). As Humfrey (2020) has observed, the underlying connection between these two opposite entities (chaotic vs. therapeutic) imparts a distinctive quality of 'empathy', an empathy that asks the viewers to put their feet in the characters' shoes or feel their inner psychological upheaval by producing a state of distress and uneasiness in the viewing experience.

In the aesthetics of slow cinema and art cinema, minimalism, stillness, patience, and experiential observation reflect the tones of contemplation and transcendentalism to render the presence of emptiness through the impressions of boredom, sorrow, and loss. In contrast, Noé takes the routes of excess and chaos (where life events happen randomly, and deterministic laws govern the output of any act or doing) to exaggerate the on-screen representation of how the characters experience their anxieties and deal with their difficulties while impatiently going through their pain. The aim is to create an uncomfortable and enduring experience of actuality and thereby transgress the viewers' habitual limit of tolerating such a state of mind (in everyday life) and to force them to experience it and thus carry them closer to the narrative. Anxiety is therefore the critical element of Noé's manifestation of cinematic horror and excess, where fear works as a driving force.

Why fear? In his *Poetics,* Aristotle (1997) proposed that the emotions of fear and pity are essential to tragedy because they intuitively stir viewers' responses to tragic narratives. Through the tragic character, the audience can identify with the character's misfortune (fear) and sufferings (pity) and recognise that their

destiny or fate is also governed by the same universal law; through catharsis, individuals purge' fear and pity from their existence. However, unlike such tragedies, Noé's nihilistic and catastrophic narratives neither offer a passage to catharsis nor invoke sympathy at the films' endings. Although the tragic events in the narratives generate sympathetic moments, these are nothing but restorations of certain aspects of real life universally dominated by collective belief.

Besides, as a sensation, fear is a primitive, unpretentious and organic emotion that the brain focuses on first. Fear has a universal expression. Mobbs et al. (2019) suggested that neurologically fear looks like a tyrant that makes any remaining cerebral processes (from cognitive to breathing) its slave. For instance, sentiments or feelings connected with fear, like 'horror or terror', are intellectually collected originations of one's circumstance, rather than 'preformed, innate mental states inherited from animals' (p. 1205). Intriguingly, Noé's film *Irréversible* also received consideration from neuroscientists who used a clip from it containing scenes with 'extreme, aggressive behaviour and violence' as an element in the 'neurocinematics' method to analyse stress levels in the human brain (Hermans et al. 2011; Qin et al. 2012; Wang et al. 2021).

The common aim of slow cinema's narrative is manifesting 'stillness' by focusing on experiencing relief from everlasting sorrow at a lethargic pace and paying attention to the banal or everyday aspects of life captured with mobile camera movement and durational shots. Conversely, Noé's characters fight to rid themselves of the devastating and crushing experience of anxiety, given that they have no control over their ongoing horror. Noé's fragile protagonists are anxious about dying (literally and rhetorically), not just because they are afraid of dying, but because the act of waiting to reach the end of the tunnel of anxiety weighs heavily on their existence. Consequently, instead of being hopeful, they become living zombies haunted by the fear that their horrible moments will never end.

Noé uses stillness to observe and generate the resonance of violence, examples being *Irréversible*'s rape scene in the tunnel, *Enter the Void*'s immersiveness, or *Love*'s opening sequence of peacefulness through the depiction of time. Noé's

body of works does not belong to 'slow cinema', although it portrays the concept of 'slowness' by using *temps morts* (dead time or departed time) to justify the manipulation of screen reality and time to establish his observation about a specific experience (Bordwell 2008). Noé destabilises the basic features of slow cinema and the use of slowness by filling up the space of *temps morts* with an excess of emotions, violence, fear, and angst and by replacing the slowness with restlessness to sustain the outline of melodramatic narration and cinematic horror enclosed by his poetics of transgression.

Enter the Void: A Psychedelic-Melodramatic Narration

> I also am attracted by dramas, because a good melodrama or drama is so full of emotions. It's all about life, death, reproduction. (Gaspar Noé, quoted in Crump 2019, para. 15).

In this section I conduct an intensive and systematic case study of Noé's third feature film, *Enter the Void*, to show how he devised melodramatic narration, cinematic horror, and psychedelia to produce out-of-body and mind-altering experiences in the French cinema context. I indicate how Noé uses a set of narratological features to illuminate perceptions of anxiety, fear, and time as space and, above all, to actively offer viewers a passive experience of hallucination by seeing and hearing things that either do not exist in actual life or are distorted versions of reality rooted in their dreams and personal experiences. I also use *Enter the Void's* written screenplay in the next chapter to explore Noé's screen idea and screenwriting practices. The screenplay I use for this analysis is Noé's original screenplay (sixth draft) located at *Le Temps Détruit Tout* archive (https://kupdf.net/download/gaspar-no-enter-the-void-screenplay_5912dccadc0d60b76f959ee3_pdf).

As Alejandro Jodorowsky (1971) said in an interview regarding the expectation from a film and psychedelic drugs (as a symbol of counterculture and defiant nonconformity), the difference between them is 'that when one creates a psychedelic film, he need not create a film that shows the visions of a person who has taken a pill; rather, he needs to manufacture the pill' (p. 72). In *Enter the Void*, Noé generated psychedelic abstraction using a formal composition of kinetic camera movements and cyberpunk neon-coloured decorated spaces to

magnify the altered states of mind that are reminiscent of the drug culture films of Roger Corman (*The Trip* 1967) and Ken Russell (*Altered States* 1980). Nonetheless, Noé built the aesthetic architecture of *Enter the Void*'s psychedelic melodrama with mind-expanding mise en scène, improvised dialogues and performances, and an extensive mix of electronic, pop, western classical, and techno music.

Noé received €12.38 million to produce *Enter the Void* (Lemercier 2009, para. 2), and he shot it in Tokyo and Montreal with VFX imageries. The production logic and context of *Enter the Void* are based on the literary reference of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the moving image orientation of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and his personal experience of psychedelic trips. Except for *Enter the Void*, Noé's other feature films were made with low or modest budgets[15] and without a full master script-style screenplay. But like his other feature films, which were primarily produced in confined spaces (like chamber films), most of *Enter the Void*'s narrative happens in an interior setup with a fair amount of exterior surrounding, which gave Noé extra leverage to demonstrate controlled chaos on screen. However, Noé's goal was to reproduce a kaleidoscope of vivid mental images to signify the liminal space between life and life after death, and to replicate the moment of hallucinating due to the massive secretion of DMT (Dimethyltryptamine) in the brain while someone is about to die. Noé being an atheist, wanted to explore life after death psychologically, so he made *Enter the Void* about a character who wanted to reassure himself by believing in some kind of after world, as if he needed to embark on one last spiritual voyage, projecting his obsessions, desires and fears along the post-mortem path described in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Schmerkin 2009).

Enter the Void narrates the melodramatic, traumatic story of a family torn apart due to a fatal car accident. Noé represented the story with an outlook of a psychedelic horror film with a shamanic vibe rooted in an Amazonian rainforest. The featured family is similar to Noé's own: there are four members, including a sister. Relationships, the idea of family, a house, and (having) children play integral roles in this dramatic narrative. Similar to a family

---

15 *Irrèversible*: €4.6 million; *Love*: €2.55 million; *Climax*: $2.6 million; *Vortex*: €3.3 million (Palmer 2015; Lemercier 2015; Imdb 2021; Raup 2021).

melodrama, *Enter the Void* revolves around the maternal and paternal characters. Besides, 'in the horror genre, however, the family group, and, in particular, issues of conception, birthing, and maternity, are crucial' (Austin 2015, p. 279).

Enter the Void was made after the surprise box-office hit of the reverse-chronological tale of *Irréversible*. However, Noé did not deploy *Irréversible*'s non-linear narrative structure in *Enter the Void*; on the contrary, he unfolded *Enter the Void*'s storyline with the climax of the film (which happened in the first 25 minutes of the 161 minutes-long film) and rolled backwards and forwards the departed life of the protagonist Oscar. Within the opening sequence, Noé introduced the two main characters, Linda and Oscar, as siblings. Linda, Oscar and the inter-changeable presence of characters Alex and Mario realised the requirement of the three-character arc as a staple feature of the psychedelic melodrama.

Noé set the narrative premise with mise en scéne by showing a copy of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and describing the general idea of the book, which Oscar has borrowed from his junkie friend Alex. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, or in Tibetan language *Bardo Thodol*, is a *terma text*[16] (Figure 4.1). At different moments in the narrative, Oscar, Linda, and Alex recurrently talk about dreams, nightmares, and death. Through the descriptive and improvised dialogues of Alex in the first act, Noé justifies the rational background and narrational structure of the film (Gibson 2016, para. 16; fig. 1). Alex summarises the *terma text*:

> Basically, when you die your spirit leaves your body, actually at first you can see all your life, like reflected in a magic mirror. Then you start floating like a ghost, you can see anything happening around you, you can hear everything, but you can't communicate. Then you see lights, lights of all different colours, these lights are the doors that pull you into other planes of existence, but most people actually like this world so much, that they don't want to be taken away, so the whole thing turns

---

[16] *Terma texts* comprise Buddhist wisdoms for distressed times as a wellspring of revitalised sagacity and endowments (Gayley 2018).

into a bad trip, and the only way out is to get reincarnated. (*Enter the Void* 2009)

I lean up against the door and look through the spy-hole:
I see the distorted figure of a man wearing a fabulous "plebe-pop" shirt with a pointed collar.
I open the door.
Me - Alex...
Alex comes in and glances at the mess in the room. He is about ten years older than me.
I close the door behind him and finish drying my face.
Alex - I just ran into your sister...
Me - Yeah... she left ten minutes ago.
Alex - She was with... what's his name... Mario?
Me - Oh Jesus! That creep gets on my nerves! You know what I'd like to do? Blast his brains out... By the way, what time is it?
Alex (smiling) - Ten after ten... What have you got against the guy? Your sister's hot shit, it's normal he's running after her. I like her too, you know...
Me (annoyed by this conversation) - Anyway, she doesn't give a shit about men. She was always going with girls at the home.
Alex snickers, a dreamy look on his face.
Me - Right, Victor's waiting for me at the bar... You coming with me?
Alex hesitates then nods. He sits down in an old beat-up armchair, picks up a book off the top of a pile and flicks through it.
I pick my shirt up off the chair and put it on.
Alex (OS) - Have you read it then?
I turn round to see which book he's talking about. On the cover, printed with a pretty colored mandala, I read the title: "The Tibetan Book of the Dead".
Me - Yeah... but can I keep it another week?
Alex - Sure.
Me - It's like a maze, I want to re-read it...
Alex flicks through the book while I finish dressing.
Alex - It's one of the greatest theories on the next world I know of... especially the passage with the colored lights that want to carry you off to a higher plane... and the bit about reincarnation being seen as a failure of the spirit...

13

Figure 4.6 Excerpt of Scene 4 – Subjective Vision from *Enter the Void*'s screenplay draft

In *Enter the Void*, we see Oscar and Linda as young siblings who had a house, a tender childhood, and loving parents. They lost their parents in a brutal car accident. Having been in that car, they have become each other's support and strength while dealing with the misery and trauma of growing up without parents. As children, they were sent to separate foster homes; even so, they kept reminding each other about their eternal longing to live together as they made a promise to 'never leave each other'. Eventually, Oscar brings Linda to Tokyo as soon as he saved enough money from selling drugs. One evening, Oscar is trapped in a police bust and shot. As he lies dying, his soul, which is dedicated

to the promise he made his sister that he could never leave her, will not forsake the universe of the living. Oscar's soul meanders through the city, and his nightmare of being dead is becoming more contorted, more horrible. Past, present, and future converge in a hallucinatory vortex. Oscar's untimely death shows that the eternal longing of a mortal human being is only a fantasy or state of mind, which signifies the transgressive side of human psychology to counter the fact that everything has an expiry date in this world. Noé employed that melodramatic premise in *Enter the Void* by changing the motivation of the conventional family melodrama and replacing it with psychedelic melodrama and integrating maternal spirits through the sibling characters' promises not to leave each other's side.

Noé conducts his inquiry into human relationships through Oscar and Linda and their associations with other characters. Noé infuses an affectionate, obsessive relationship between Oscar and Linda that transgresses the conventional norms of brother and sister relationships; for example, he shows that Linda is comfortable being bare-breasted in front of Oscar. Some critics remarked that this gesture of openness and the existential dependency between siblings were excesses on the screen (Brunette 2009; Schmerkin 2009; Bradshaw 2010; Dargis 2010; Cipolla 2019). In comparison, Noé, through flashbacks, displays the childhood Oscar and Linda where they were bathing together with their mother. For instance, Noé shows Oscar and Linda lying on their Tokyo apartment bedroom accompanied by a match cut; viewers see them as children lying on the bed in a similar situation (Figure 4.2). This is an attempt to replicate a model of innocence, regardless of the siblings' ages.

Figure 4.7 Oscar and Linda before and after growing up

Likewise, when Oscar tries to stop Linda mingling with Mario, it seems like he is doing that out of jealousy, but when seen from the perspective of an elder brother who has a blood oath to save his younger sister, the natural tension of their on-screen relationship is diffused. However, this reading of Oscar's innocent love and care turns ambiguous when he sniffs Linda's discarded lingerie (Figure 4.3). Noé as a transgressor, adds a twist in the narration with Oscar's action by extending the limit and behaviour of the social and cultural code to one's access to personal space and belonging. As well, Oscar's soul roams around and into the bodies of Linda's partners when she has sexual intercourse.

> ## 79 - FLASHBACK
> ### (EXTERIOR NIGHTCLUB, NIGHT)
>
> Another evening, I'm in front of the "Power" with Max. I'm arguing with the bouncer.
> me - Listen... My sister's dancing tonight.
> **Bouncer** - Yeah well nobody told me nothing. I can't let you in...
> **Me** - Can't you get her for me?... or... or Mario?
> **Bouncer** (harder) - Watch my lips: NO. If you wanna come in you have to pay. Otherwise get out of here...
>
> ## 80 - FLASHBACK
> ### (INTERIOR STUDIO, NIGHT)
>
> Later on, at home. It's the middle of the night. The apartment is empty. I open the fridge and take out a tupperware where I stashed the bag of E. I take one out, pop it, and but the tupperware back in the freezer compartment.
> Then I start pacing round the dark room. The wind is blowing in through the open window, carrying the sounds of a TV series that one of my neighbors must be watching.
> TV.(OS) - ... Under this skin, this flesh, flows the same blood that flows in my veins. And it will make you into a woman one day. A real woman. With my flesh and my blood...
> I sit on my sister's bed and go through her things lying all over the bed. Underwear and bodystockings. I pick up a pair of white panties and press them up against my face...
>
> ## 66 B - FLASHBACK
> ### (INTERIOR OSCAR'S CHILDHOOD ROOM, RAINY EVENING)
>
> Lying on the bedspread of my childhood bed, Moira and I hug each other passionately in our white underwear. We are 4 and 6.

Figure 4.8 Excerpt of Scene 80 – Flashback from *Enter the Void*'s screenplay draft

At one point, Oscar travels through his sister's vagina, which adds another layer of unease and shock and gives the impression that Oscar treats Linda as his mother throughout the narrative (Figures 4.4 and 4.5). Although the narrative suggests that the reason behind their brimming and intense sibling relationship is that they think of each other as 'two sides of a single entity, especially since they are close in age… Even though they're not twins, there is an existential dependence between them (Noé, quoted in Schmerkin 2009, p. 16), Noé raised the bar of the individual and societal pattern of judgement with his authorial expressivity within the periphery of melodrama.

Figure 4.9 Oscar's spirit travelling through Linda's vagina

down, unbuttons his pants and, sliding my sisters' panties
easily to one side, enters her.
I am drawn towards them...
For the sake of convenience, they slide down to the floor
where, still wearing their clothes, they start tenderly
making love.
The lighting in the room gradually gets more purple along
the walls and more orange in the middle.
I come closer to the two of them.
Alex is kissing Moira passionately. Still crying, she
buries her head in his neck. She bites him gently, as
though to stifle her trembling mouth and heavy breathing.
Moira - Tell me he isn't dead...
I try to show my presence again. But I am powerless.
Once again my vision goes through everything I try to
touch, including the flesh of their two bodies. My vision
then settles again, but everything seems slightly double
and a kind of halo has formed around their bodies. An
orange glow seeping out from between their bodies turns
to yellow and starts to pulsate. Repulsive organic and
liquid sounds flood over me. A kind of barely perceptible
transparent and totally hazy ectoplasm materializes from
the top of the room. It descends spasmodically towards
them and seems to want to slide like an umbilical tentacle
between Alex's legs towards the vagina of my sister
whose eyes now seem to be looking at me. This beautiful
and slightly organic image disturbs me. My vision backs
off nervously while a kind of light-colored substance
seems to flow through the ectoplasm towards my sister's
body.
Suddenly, a sharp sound screeches out, louder and
louder, and my vision pans. I discover the high-pitched
buzzing is coming from the naked light bulb of a lamp
standing right next to me which is giving off an
increasingly harsh bright white light...

Figure 4.5 Excerpt of Scene 2 – Out of Body Vision from *Enter the Void*'s screenplay draft

The visual recollections of Oscar as a child looking at his mother's breast and watching his parent's physical intimacy during intercourse signify his oedipal attraction to his deceased mother and jealousy of his father. Oscar's father is absent in the narrative, and we do not see much of his interaction with the children in flashbacks, which reminds the viewer of Oscar's relationship with Alex, who appears as a father figure or guide to Oscar by suggesting he quit dealing in drugs – advice that Oscar often ignores.

In melodrama, misery is the silent performer that appears throughout a production to represent the limitations and powerlessness of ordinary people's daily lives. Misery leads the story towards the tragic outlook of the narrative to fulfil the desire of showcasing the close-to-life struggles, loves and losses, and high passions. For instance, *Enter the Void*'s melodramatic progression is

subdued into the characters' miserable conditions. This psychedelic-melodrama dives into the 'private intimacy of emotion' to propose an unconstrained, uninhibited method of seeing things (Bayman 2014, p. 3) through the lens of sorrow. Noé uses his authorial expressivity to represent a certain kind of misery, which escalates in a cyclic order within the characters' dissimilar but ordinary routine realities. Linda, Oscar, and Alex, as the protagonists of the film, are entrapped by the boundaries of their own existence. They feel pity for themselves but have no visible means to escape from the vicious cycle of powerlessness.

The narrative of *Enter the Void* is presented from the first-person point of view of Oscar [17], yet the story pivots around his sister Linda's helplessness and despondency after losing Oscar in a city like Tokyo, where she has no one else close to her. Linda does not like working as a stripper in the nightclub called Sex, Money, Power, but she cannot gather enough courage to leave the job. Linda is a victim in the narrative who suffers from her brother's careless act. Earlier, when Linda asks him whether he wants to find a real job, Oscar, a nihilist and egoist, tries to tell himself that 'everybody who has a job is just a slave'. Alex, who wants to make a difference to his and Oscar's lifestyle, says, 'You know, there is a big difference – between taking psychedelic and being a dealer, you know? I am not a dealer.' Noé suggestively remarks on the screen that sex-money-power, which neither of them has, is the currency that will rid them of this ongoing misery. So, Oscar and Alex, and occasionally Linda, take psychedelics to escape from the drama of daily life and embark on a fantasy journey.

Nonetheless, this fantasy ride has a limited warranty and eventually they find themselves with double the amount of misery and suffering. Each of the young characters in *Enter the Void* has either a traumatic childhood or comes from a troubled family (such as Victor), and all of them try to avail themselves of moments of refuge and quarantine in their respective sensations. Apart from the birth-death-reincarnation cycle of Oscar, Noé delicately exposes the reincarnating cycle of pathos or the tragedy of being powerless and weak,

---

[17] *Enter the Void*'s (2009) screenplay is also written and prescribed in the first-person point of view by Gaspar Noé.

which none of them can transgress to reach the next level of sanity and happiness, regardless their gender or sexuality. In Noé's melodramatic world, the myths of control freak and dominant masculinity appear as fallible characteristics. This troubled masculinity is torn between agony and tension, which can only be accessed under the wings of the lost 'mother'.

Conventionally and aesthetically, European auteur films embody three types of heroes: quest heroes (Odysseus), wanderers (Parsifal), and epic or brave heroes (Orpheus). All 'are often prepared enough' to sacrifice loved ones before returning to their mother (Elsaesser 2005, p. 49). According to Elsaesser (2005), American cinema bears a 'sharp contrast' to European auteur films by being compulsively and inexorably Oedipal; the hero has an antagonistic relationship with the father, always wanting to defeat the paternal figure and ultimately sleep (symbolically) with the maternal figure, who is also his best friend. In *Enter the Void*, Noé transgresses the hero norms of European auteur films by portraying Oscar as neither questing, wandering, nor brave. Instead, he portrays Oscar as being under the shadow of archetypical tragic hero Oedipus. Oscar was aware of his father's presence but still made a fatal mistake. With this treatment, Noé amalgamates the French melodrama with his creative influence of American film narration style and produces an individualistic form of cinematic narration.

David Bordwell (2010a) suggests that 'melodrama depends on mistakes, and they must be corrected' (para. 8). A mistake or an imprudent or wrong judgment plays the role of villain in Noé's melodramatic screen reality. In *Enter the Void*, Oscar, as a protagonist, makes a mistake and does not get an opportunity to rectify it. Oscar did choose a risky way of earning his living in Tokyo, and he would cautiously store his stash of drugs in a fake soda can in the fridge to hide it from the police. Oscar was on the winning side of the melodrama as he sponsored Linda's trip to Tokyo. They were dreaming of a new start after all the trauma they went through in their childhood.

Oscar was safe and well when he was intelligently navigating his life in the underbelly of Tokyo. The moment he was driven by his libido, the safety net around him started to crumble. As a troubled masculine character, Oscar falls

into the hole of the oedipal complex and later finds himself having physical relation with Suzie, the mother of his friend and customer Victor (Olly Alexander). Oscar does not hide or suppress his infatuation with Suzie, and eventually Victor becomes aware of their relationship. The enraged Victor decides to turn Oscar to the police as an act of revenge. Noé thus demonstrates that the actual reason for Oscar being shot by police was not the drug dealing but his libidinous thirst for transgressive sexual relations that challenge the conventional social norms. Oscar pays the highest price for this mistake, with no opportunity to redeem himself. His soul hovers over the city, wanting to reincarnate world and resolve the errors of his past life.

In Noé's narrative domain, any tragic event can work as a primary melodramatic event to remind his viewers that life is a cycle of interruption and disruption. In *Carne*, the nameless butcher's whole world turns around when he stabs an Arab migrant worker due to the misunderstanding that Arab raped his daughter; in *Irréversible*, an evening of fun, dance, and love transforms into violence and madness when the female protagonist is brutally raped by an anonymous man; and in *Enter the Void*, a happy family suddenly falls into misfortune because of a car accident.

Another recurring melodramatic device in Noé's narratives is the horrible panic and fear of losing something or someone: a child (*Carne*), a loved one (*Irréversible*, *Love*), parents (*Enter the Void*), consciousness (*Climax*), or memory (*Vortex*) (Noé, quoted in Schmerkin 2009, p. 13). The roots of all the trauma are the fear, anxiety, loss, and trauma resulting from such horrible experiences.

Noé acclimatises the psychological horror of the trauma, isolation, and psychosis trope in *Enter the Void* to develop its open-ended, tragic, yet optimistic epilogue. Oscar and Linda's losing their parents in an accident is an important and psychologically cruel event that shapes the traumatic realm of the children's senses; they become so hopeless and frightened that they make an impossible promise to safeguard each other even after death. Death is a disguise for the void and nightmare in Noé's intricate narrative structure. In addition to the *Tibetan book of the Dead*, Linda experiences a nightmare in which she craves that whatever was happening regarding the death of Oscar was not

true and was just a dream. Linda wishes that Oscar would return to life; at that point, Oscar enters Linda's head and encounters her fantasy when he awakens at the mortuary, from which his body is taken to be incinerated. To represent the eternal resonance of the void, Noé employed time to generate a 'sense of immediacy' of events and feelings of simultaneity (Collins 2013, p. 9). With the aid of tools like POV and flashbacks, Noé dilutes the sense of temporality to offer a space where past, present and future exist on the same horizontal surface.

Forging His History in the French Film Culture with Cinematic Horror and Melodrama

Gaspar Noé transgressed the French auteurist art cinema code by recurrently engaging with melodrama and horror (until *Vortex*), and he contravened the CNC-prescribed module of *art de haute qualité* by enforcing the auteurist model. His screen works 'occupy a strange bridging position between French high-art cinéma d'auteur and Euro-pulp horror' (Romney 2004, para. 8). Melodrama and horror allegorically often tackle similar concerns or anxieties in literal or metaphorical ways. They allow Noé to narrate a drama through improvisation, scripting with the camera, and using special effects to realise his screen idea into the final output as a film (which I will analyse in subsequent chapters). Noé's nonconformist and quasi-anti-establishment attitude worked with his creative control when, not being able to attain financial support from the CNC, he had to arrange financiers and producers for his productions. This arrangement also gave him complete freedom of inventive cinematic expression to produce branded auteur films in the competitive French film culture.

Noé was not alone in examining this method of cinematic narration. In the 1990s, melodrama and horror became frameworks of resistance against the hegemonic cultural dominance of auteur, intellectual, and materialistic French films in the hands of a group of young filmmakers labelled le jeune cinéma (see Chapter 1). Along with Noé, filmmakers from le jeune cinéma set an example of the distinctive ethos of blended (auteurism and genre) narration. They work with the leading production, sales, and distribution companies within the French film ecosystem, are motivated to connect with (youthful) viewers, enjoy formal experimentation, and show no reservations about their cinephile

interests in rape-revenge, horror, American neo-noir, comic books, graphic violence, and simulated sex.

Applying melodrama is prevalent in the productions of Noé's fellow filmmakers from le jeune cinéma, such as Marc Caro (*La cité des enfants perdus* (*The City of Lost Children* 1995)), Mathieu Kassovitz (*La Haine*), Nicolas Boukhrief (*Va Mourire* 1995), and Jan Kounen (*Dobermann*). Each has used melodrama rooted in reality as a narrational format to unpack the life stories of the marginal classes and youth. Furthermore, they made genre-oriented, 'more spectacular, violent, and potentially mainstream films, which appeal to a broader young audience', and they exercised the narrational mode as resistance against 'over-intellectual' and 'boring' French auteur cinema in the 1990s (Vincendeau 2005, p. 34). For le jeune cinéma, these were sources of cultural and artistic *joie de vivre*. Le jeune cinéma was following in the cultural footsteps of Salon des Refusés in Paris, for which 'aesthetic assault was the founding gesture of the avant-garde, which had been insulting the bourgeoisie' since 1863 (Kipnis 2020, p. 25).

In the period before Noé produced the esoteric, psychedelic-horror *Enter the Void* (with English-speaking screen performers) his fellow filmmakers were also working along similar lines: Mathieu Kassovitz made the horror-mystical-science fiction film *Gothika* in 2003 in Hollywood, and in 2004 Jan Kounen presented his trippy-acid-western *Blueberry* (*Renegade* 2004) with a collaboration of American and French celebrities among the cast.

While Noé was in constant flux between auteurism and horror conventions through the melodramatic mode of excess on the fringe of the French film ecosystem in the 2000s, CNC had a different vision for the French 'seventh art' or cinema. CNC, as an autonomous body, manifested a rigid predisposition to employing Cahiers du cinéma's *la politique des auteurs* as a critical French discourse to affirm any film as art and differentiate it from commercial or genre film, particularly American film productions. CNC and French film critics also like poetic realism in drama and dislike melodrama because it contains 'staginess', which is not ideal for upholding realism and dramatic storytelling. Similarly, CNC has an acute cultural distaste for the horror genre. However,

there is an indispensable and timeworn debate about the prospect and possibility of horror genre film productions in French film culture because the American horror film occupies that space.

Moreover, statistical data shows that French 'quality film' productions could not have competed with American 'genre' or 'horror' films in the last 20 years (see Appendix D). For example, the American horror film *Conjuring 3* (2021) is one of the top-grossing films (ranked 10) at the French domestic box office, which had 1,887,284 admissions in 2021 (JP's Box Office 2021). More than 50 per cent of these viewers were aged 15 to 24 years (CNC 2021b, p. 30). These statistics reveal a critical and complex scenario in the production of horror films in the French context in the 2000s.

Film scholar Guy Austin (2015) points out that state sponsors like CNC also promote the auteurist approach by advising filmmakers to 'go beyond codes and conventions' and promote the need to generate original, artistic film expression. Hence in the French film culture, critics and connoisseurs have a detachment about the (auteur) films that use 'horror as a trope or a code borrowed from popular genre cinema, that informs – and is almost always transcended or subverted by – the work of auteurs'. Instead, they show a constructive attitude towards films that actively pursue art cinema conventions and passively address genre cinema tropes (pp. 275-276). Without these potentialities, it was not easy to get special funds or *avance sur recettes* from CNC for the early-career and independent filmmakers, which also signifies the zero chance of the horror genre film getting state funds in the early 2000s. Filmmakers and producers of generic horror films even restrained themselves from applying for *avance sur recettes*, although the number of horror films doubled from 51 films in the period 1989–1999 to 125 films in 2000–2010 (Gimello-Mesplomb 2012; Austin 2015; Bey-Rozet 2021).

Instead, from 2000 to 2015, French film producers and TV channels came forward to support low-budget French horror productions to tap into the cultural moment of the New French Extremity and French viewers' thirst for visceral horror films. The first attempt was Bee Movies, through which Olivier Delbosc and Marc Missionier of Fidelité Productions took the initiative to

support pay-tv channel Canal+ concern Canal+Ecriture and Wild Bunch (van Dijk 2002) to produce *slasher à la française* or horror genre films (Marchisio 2014). This film development laboratory comprised some of Noé's collaborators, including film production, distirubutoion and sales companies like Wild Bunch and Eskwad. When French producer Richard Grandpierre of Eskwad recalled his time with the film laboratory, he remembered that the film production initiative provided financial support to genre films and 'also become the crossroads of new generation filmmakers' like Gaspar Noé, Albert Dupontel, Jean-François Richet, Christophe Gans, Mathieu Kassovitz and Jan Kounen (Marchisio 2014). Grandpierre had been a producer of Noé's *Irréversible* and *Climax*, in addition to Christophe Gans's period horror film *Le Pacte des loups* (*Brotherhood of the Wolf* 2001), Nicolas Boukhrief's action thriller *Le Convoyeur* (*Cash Truck* 2004), Pascal Laugier's horror film *Saint Ange* (*House of Voices* 2004), and *Martyrs*. Nevertheless, Bee Movies' initiative was in vain due to box office failures in the domestic circuit.

Author Benoit Marchisio (2014) discussed another attempt to promote French horror film outside of CNC in his article 'Autopsie du cinéma d'horreur Français' (Autopsy of French horror cinema). This attempt was led by Canal+ in 2007 and was active till 2011. Canal+ wanted to produce French Scary (la French Frayeur) films in resonance with American and UK horror film productions, such as Zack Snyder's action-horror *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), James Wan's torture-horror *Saw* (2004), and Neil Marshall's horror-thriller *The Descent* (2005) (Rauger & Regnier 2007). Worth mentioning are the attention-grabbing titles from this Canal+ scheme *Frontière(s)* (2007) by Xavier Gens; the 'realistic slasher' *À l'intérieur* by Julien Maury and Alexandre Bustillo; the psychological horror *Martyrs* by Pascal Laugier; and the 'gangster zombie flick' *La Horde* (2009) by Yannick Dahan and Benjamin Rocher. These films also had a strong and successful presence on the international film festival circuit.

While CNC and film critics were arguing that French horror films were a contagion on 'the body of work of an auteur' (Beugnet 2011), they were ignoring the intriguing output of those horror productions. French horror films such as *Sheitan* (2006), *À l'intérieur*, *Frontière(s)*, and *La Meute* (*The Pack* 2010) revealed the contemporary political apprehension and White French anxiety

concerning the win of conservative President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007 and the republic's debates on 'cultural assimilation and integration of immigrant populace' (Bryan 2021). These so-called 'commercial' French horror film built a resistance against xenophobia at that critical political-cultural moment. CNC took the unusual stand of financially supporting horror genre films for the first time when it supported the horror auteur film production of Marina de Van's *Dans ma peau* (*In My Skin* 2002) with *avance sur recettes*. De Van is an alumna of the premium French institution for film education, La Fémis.[18] In 2016, CNC also awarded *avance sur recettes* to the cannibalism-themed, coming-of-age debut film *Raw* of La Fémis graduate filmmaker Julia Ducournau. She received a second *avance sur recettes* in 2019 for her next feature narrative *Titane*, which was embedded in body horror. *Titane* won the Palme d'Or at the 74th Cannes Film Festival 2021 and was shortlisted for an Oscar in 2021. It is necessary to point out that, among the national film schools, La Fémis and CNC have a reciprocal relationship aimed at sustaining the tradition of an artistic, auteurist approach and the sense of the French republic's socio-cultural distinctiveness of on-screen business. Film research expert Brigitte Rollet (2015) observed:

> [Most women] who have received a grant since the 1990s from the *avance sur recettes*, put in place by the Centre National du Cinéma (CNC), have been graduates from la Fémis/IDHEC. Predictably, the *avance* generally assists auteur films. (p. 401)

CNC supported Ducournau's 'horror' screen works, which were engaged around two prominent narrative spaces of French film tradition – family drama and body horror – which are shared narratological spaces of melodrama. She wrapped those two narrative spaces with 'well-engineered' screen aggression

---

[18] As a premium French institution for film education, *La Fémis* has a reputation for cultivating pragmatic cinephilia, supporting the nation's cultural identity through the 'expression of a national sensibility, including language, accent, voice, values, cultural legacy, social dilemmas, humour'. It played an important role, initiating reproductions in the scope of European states and other places in the globe, comprising the United States and even Australia, where the AFTRS (Australian Film, Television, and Radio School) curriculum mirrored a 'similar kind of mission' (Alistair Fox et al. 2015, p. 2; Palmer 2015, p. 15). In the 1960s and early 1970s, those new film schools became femme-sage to develop New Wave film culture such as 'New Hollywood' (Petrie 2010, p. 38).

and shock within the tradition of creating moral panic, assimilating violence, body, and horror (set by the La Fémis predecessors Claire Denis, Lucile Hadžihalilović, and Céline Sciamma) and an existential philosophical overview to question current understandings about primal ravenousness, queer identity, and transphobia. The character Justine (*Grave*) inherited cannibalism from her mother, who had the cannibalistic propensity from her undergraduate years; and Alexia's (*Titane*) uncanny sexual performance and impulsive behaviour were rooted in the abusive and traumatic relationship with her father.

In 2018, CNC launched a new funding program, Le fantastique et l'épouvante (fantasy, sci-fi and horror film), to promote genre films, even though their aversion toward fantasy and horror films was widely known. CNC appointed Julia Ducournau as the president of the special committee and bestowed funding (500,000 euros each) to three fantasy, sci-fi, and horror film projects. In her official statement as the president of the board, Ducournau (2018) highlighted the principles of 'gender parity [and] fluidity' and expressed the need to decompartmentalise genre film to offer more diversity within French cinema culture and to the viewers of French landscape. In this way, Ducournau proposed that it is time for the French 'auteur' filmmakers to associate or blend with the 'genre' aesthetics by putting aside the 'auteur films/genre films dichotomy':

> An auteur is a person who has a vision, who knows how to express it in his art, whatever the grammar … Added to the question of diversity is that of mixing, of the porosity of the genres between them. I believe in a non-binary and fluid cinema, in its genres, its forms, its characters and its points of view. (para. 2)

In the years following 2000, CNC has employed the cinematic model of cultural resistance (as happened in the 1990s and early 2000s during the conservative French government period) by financially supporting horror and excess films (with artistic ambitions) to promote its 'politically correct French horror cinema' and to position itself in regard to the female body, queer identity, visibility, and violence against women. Through Le fantastique et l'épouvante scheme, CNC is publicising that they are welcoming film productions blended with body horror

and extreme and critical outlooks to local and global viewers. Internationally, one of the critically highlighted and festival favourite French films of 2021 was the horror-drama *Titane*. Commercially marked as 'drama', *Titane* could not liquidate France's American horror film market. According to the aggregate site, *Titane* had 303,610 viewers in French theatres and ranked 69th that year (JP's Box Office 2021). CNC continued to promote body horror films focusing on female gender and sexuality, even when #metoo stories shook the French film world and there was pressure to ensure equal opportunities for women as directors (Schofield 2019; Brauer 2020).

In light of this discussion, I claim that Noé's steady visual style and film practice have impacted the visual and narrational formats of the revival of French body horror/extreme film productions in the 2010s and 2020s. At the same time, Noé has diverged from the studio-oriented, typical, safe, and secure path of film production bounded by a script-heavy approach. He has been producing transgressive short-, medium-, and feature-length films by metamorphosising auteurism and genre cinema since 1991. In this context, it is essential to mention that Noé received neither *avance sur recettes* nor *avance sur recettes après réalisation* (advance on receipts after production) until his latest 'psychedelic-horror-dance-melodrama' *Climax*. By contrast, his contemporaries Claire Denis, Olivier Assayas, Leos Carax, François Ozon (*La Fémis*), and Bruno Dumont received *avance sur recettes* several times after the financial support for fantasy and horror films was introduced in 2016. Moreover, Noé, being Noé, has displayed a broad spectrum of people of colour, ethnicity, male, female, queer and trans persons in a dance troupe and exhibited the French nationality with a title card declaring 'A French film and proud of it', which passively questioned the dominant definitions of French film and Frenchness.

The infusion of the film stylistics of trade film schools and intellectual film schools is not a novel phenomenon in French film culture. Scholar Tim Palmer (2015) wrote about these collaborative ventures and the blended approaches of Noé (trade film school, obsessed with horror films) and Hadžihalilović (intellectual film school, practising horror film within the tradition of French women directors) through their production company Les Cinémas de la zone:

> [Noé and Hadžihalilović] once again, attend carefully to hereditary French film protocols but infuse them with their own assertively cinematic methods, often pursuing drastic perceptual experimentation as much as stable diegetic worlds inhabited by plausible human beings. (p. 24)

Noé as a producer, director and screenwriter, has been drawing inspiration from personal life (*Enter the Void*; *Love*; *Vortex*) and surrounding reality (*Carne*; *Seul contre tous*; *Climax*) for his on-screen representation of cinematic horror since the launch of his filmmaking career. However, he does not see himself in the giallo tradition because these genres are frequently coupled with shock value. For Noé, horror is intended to reflect cultural moments and to encode the social anxieties, fears, and insecurities, while the aesthetics of giallo are intended to send signals that shake the subconscious of the viewer by representing existential crises and the tragedy of life and death. His transgressive films function as conceptual schema, distillations of observations and experiences of real-life condensed into the two-dimensional frames of moving images.

When comparing the recent upsurge of auteurism-motivated horror films and Noé's melodramatic-horror narrations, the primary difference is how they comprehend the socio-cultural problems of modern French society. Noé does not fixate on the father figure from the protagonist's viewpoint. Instead, he turns the father figure into the confused male protagonist and tries to investigate how the roots of the problem are identical to prevailing patriarchy and male chauvinism. In place of focusing on the 'mommy issue', Noé points the camera to natalism – the horror of maternity and the body – and the trauma in pregnancy of the female protagonists who will or who have become mothers.

As the 'new Hollywood' filmmaker Brian De Palma (2016) (whom Noé also follows for cinematic inspiration) said in a conversation with Jake Paltrow and Noah Baumbach, whenever a filmmaker goes against the fashion of the day or transgresses the conventional practice and treatment, that filmmaker will face criticism from the production system and culture. However, with time,

'everybody forgets about that when the fashion changes and the production culture assimilate those notions for which one faced criticism'.

A generation ago, the mode of cinematic horror-melodrama narration practised by Noé and other filmmakers worked as a tool of cultural critique and resistance against the country's queerphobia, transphobia, and xenophobia. By the end of 2020, that phenomenon had lost the sharp virulence of its practical, anti-establishment, and nonconformist perspective when the formalist CNC endorsed it. Even so, with the creative diversity and the destabilising of the screen-reality, auteur horror films could not contravene the auteurist approach's dominancy in the French arthouse film production industry. The phenomenon also signifies that CNC-sponsored 'horror' film productions with the 'auteur's point of view' not only determine the 'Frenchness' of the horror film but also mirror the CNC's unfaltering position on the 'old binarism' (Bey-Rozet 2021, p. 3).

Gaspar Noé has rephrased the conventional notions of melodramatic narration across his body of work. He has blended psychedelic-psychological horror as a genre, catastrophe or disaster as a narrative, chaos as a method, and transgression as a critical philosophical condition with recurrent patterns of love and loss, death and birth, and control versus powerlessness. Noé's calculated selections of melodramatic narrations were clever and insightful strategies within the competitive national cinema industry in France. Crucially, they represented his obsession with freedom or the desire to fathom the possibilities and potentialities of transgression within the French film ecosystem. His blended mode of cinematic narration has, to a degree, created resistance to both auteur-quality and slow cinema trends within art cinema as a mode of narration, while striving to reach genre film audiences.

To create a sensational and sensorial physical experience on screen, Noé emphasises the human body to foreground emotions (horror) over plot development (melodrama), which helps him bypass the normative production practice of developing a character arc throughout the narrative. With this recurring thematic model of film narration and positioning of the human body at the core, Noé also explores eroticism and fetishism to display the individual's

eternal longing to own a person or anything related to them sexually. For instance, Noé's film characters frequently express the desire of everlasting relationships and making babies as their mark of posterity. Nevertheless, in recent years Noé has taken an unusual turn from his melodramatic-horror narration to a simple narrative structure. He is no longer interested in the familiar and immersive visual world of moving images and the chromatic reality of melodramatic horror; as soon as this film practice gained acceptance from the dominant authority, the CNC, it stopped working as an act of transgression.

I have observed an inversion of Noé's approach to film narration in his most recent film, *Vortex*, for which he received his first *avance sur recettes* (CNC 2021a). This film does not deal with cinematic horror (like his previous five feature films) but instead exposes it. *Vortex* chronicles a (psychological horror) story of a woman who suffers from severe dementia and lives with her film critic husband in their Paris apartment. *Vortex*'s narrative unfolds straightforwardly, devoid of Noé's trademark nerve-wracking, shocking moment, stimulated sex, and dark comedy. Instead, it demonstrates a mix of 'melancholic drama' and suspense, together with a *cinema verité* approach featuring complex screen language.

Noé has made films that embrace youth culture for over 30 years. Perhaps, at 58 years of age, he is now entering a latent period of adulthood, looking forward developing a new model of film narration to assault 'adult viewers' sensory systems' (Noé 2021). Regardless of the changes in his mode of film narration, Noé remains non-normative (in terms of script-based film production), non-conforming, and transgressive in his screenwriting poetics and practice via scripting with the camera, collaboration-improvisation and ever-creative executions of his screen ideas. I will critically analyse these in the following chapters.

Chapter 5
Screenwriting Poetics:
Scripting, Collaboration, and Improvisation

> Your instinct is much brighter than your brain cells.
>
> Gaspar Noé (quoted in Smith 2011, para. 10)

A screen idea enlightened by a cinematic idea, developed with a *micro scénario d'origine* (original micro-scenario) or treatment, written or scripted through collaboration with cast and crews, improvised, and having a modest budget, is what drives Gaspar Noé's motion pictures and generates his poetics of transgression. Creative freedom provides the essential fuel to take the desired film's expression as close as possible to the language of dreams and nightmares, or to state of bewilderment produced by the amalgamation of mood-altering, hallucinogenic substances.

French national cinema, as his primary film production site, plays an integral role in Noé's recurrent screenwriting practices. The French *droit moral* or legal, moral right gives him the ethical encouragement to protect his cinematic attitude and the freedom to explore and transgress the normative culture and produce thought-provoking films that will be screened in film festivals and theatres. This is a privilege that offers Noé (as a branded auteur) an incredible amount of creative freedom and artistic liberty to deliver a more expansive approach to 'writing for the screen' (Maras 2009; Millard 2014) in the form of screen aesthetics, with light, camera, sound, music, special effects, and bodies as vehicles to envision the screen idea (Pinto & Long 2021, para. 30). Noé's poetics of transgression indeed rely upon the freedom and flexibility in his creative practice process, from script to screen.

In this chapter, I propose that Noé's distinctive screenwriting and scripting practices evolved from the inception of his screen ideas and their industrial production context. In this sense, the screenwriting and development process – which bleeds from development into screen production – plays an essential role in generating his poetics of transgression. Noé's screen ideas contain the DNA of these poetics, which reside in the screenplay and his unconventional

approach to writing for the screen during production via collaboration and improvisation. With reference to international screenwriting research focused on cinematic ideas, screen ideas, scripting, psychodrama, and improvisation, I will interpret the idiosyncratic aspects of Noé's creative screenwriting process that are the core elements of his poetics of transgression. In this context, how does Noé embed the filmic transgression in the screen idea, his screenwriting practice? In which ways does the screen idea find its final form as a film through this screenplay developmental process?

I investigate Noé's screenwriting poetics by focusing on how he accommodates his poetics of transgression in his destabilisation of conventional screenwriting norms and how this has led to more unconventional and exploratory cinematic forms in his latest work. In this consolidation of his poetics of transgression, I will elucidate how his current cinematic forms are more transgressive than those of his early career. I will also discuss Noé's preference in his later career for screenplays that are less conventional.

The Screenwriting Poetics of Gaspar Noé

Screen Idea and Cinematic Idea

Noé's screenwriting poetics are governed by the screen idea. Correspondingly, his screen ideas are the projection of cinematic ideas that are intimate and have long persevered in his mind or in an archival box and matured with personal (but not autobiographical) experience, cinephilia, and real-life events. According to screenwriting scholar Ian W. Macdonald (2013) in *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea*, the 'screen idea' is a plain term, label, or notion for a film that a filmmaker is producing regardless of the production stage. Macdonald used the concept of the screen ide' to elucidate the screenwriting methods, texts, and arguments that contribute to understanding the creative development processes of a film by focusing on both industrial norms and departures. The concept of the screen idea investigates the origins and advancements of moving image screen narratives and the various ways screenplays are delivered. For Macdonald (2013),

[The screen idea] is the focus of the practice of screenwriting, whether mainstream or not. It is what you, as the writer, think you're writing, but of course it does not exist except as an imaginary concept. It is a term which names what is being striven for, even while that goal cannot be seen or shared exactly. The goal of the concrete never arrives – as the screenwork develops, each draft script becomes one more fixed version of the screen idea. The final film – the screenwork – is another such version. (p. 4)

Under the umbrella of the screen idea, Macdonald (2013) developed a screenwriting poetics based on film scholar David Bordwell's understanding of the poetics of film. He extended Bordwell's empirically probed evaluation of film-texts and screen narration to the creative screenwriting process and the screenplay. As a screenwriting term 'screen idea' is not only a means of writing within production. Noé also interweaves it into the screen development (writing) and execution (production) processes. Through screenwriting poetics, one not only focuses on the set of principles, but also seeks to learn the grounds screenwriters consider acceptable in principle and how they use them.

Film scholar and critic Adrian Martin (2014) probes the question 'where do cinematic ideas come from' in his essay of the same title. He asks, 'How is an idea (once it exists) articulated, expressed, nurtured, developed' in order to comprehend the evolution of a cinematic idea? (p. 17). He suggests that a cinematic idea is not a rigid assembly or blueprint of a film; instead, it is a matrix or the prevailing conditions of an intended film that offer a logical and stable structure about that film's narrative shape, formal aspects, and issues (p. 10). Hence, cinematic ideas are not essentially aimed at fulfilling the conventional anticipations of a screenplay, such as plot arcs and the psychological backgrounds of the characters; rather,

Cinematic ideas are ideas about form – if we take form not in some narrow, reductive sense of 'formalism' (whatever that is), but in an expanded sense of the cinematic event, which can take place (as we shall see) on micro as well as macro levels, in fictional and non-fictional film alike. (p. 19)

This insistence on form connects screenplay development more closely to the visual arts and iterative processes of artists and designers. If I were to restate Martin's (2014) question as 'Where do Gaspar Noé's cinematic ideas come from?', I would find it a hard question to answer. Rather, as Martin proposed, we can 'observe, chart and study: how is an idea (once it exists) articulated, expressed, nurtured, developed' (pp. 16-17). From that point of view, I find that Noé's cinematic ideas surface through a generative process. Being an advanced cinephile, Noé uses films as sources for generating cinematic ideas about film forms and the palettes of feelings, emotions, expressions, and cinematic realities that he has not seen in his favourite films by other filmmakers (Francois 2002). Besides, as a part of his screenwriting process, Noé spends time researching and organising cinematic references, and he shares those ideas by using images and intertextualities with the cast and crew to develop a collective notion about the production. I will discuss this aspect regarding the screenplay developments of *Irréversible* and *Enter the Void* in Chapter 6.

Like his creative influences (see Chapter 3), Noé's cinematic idea development and production practices also share the trait of being located in significant social or political occurrences, historical events, literature, plays, comic books, or personal experiences. These motivations act as bases for his reiterative, generative approach to his cinematic idea and provide a formal shape for melodramatic narration. For instance, Noé has an artistic penchant for German expressionist filmmaker Fritz Lang, who was an 'attentive' reader of local and international newspapers and used those sites as archival sources for his cinematic studies of 'humankind' in his films (Lang, quoted in Gandert 1963, p. 33).

Noé follows in the footsteps of Lang in that he maintains archival boxes to document news cuttings of whatever interests him or has the potential to generate screen ideas. He said, 'when you re-open the boxes, you know that there's one or two still in your mind after 13 years, because they're very representative of things to you' (Noé, quoted in Crump 2019, para. 11). The cinematic idea of *Climax* was taken from an 'unsolved', 'catastrophic' real event in 1996 that he read about in a newspaper (Crump 2019). Noé did an open

adaptation of this mysterious story based on his obsession with horror films and fascination with vogue dancing.

Like Spanish cineaste Luis Buñuel, Noé manipulates dreams and fantasy as a source of cinematic ideas. *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (The Bardo Thodol) represents a 'collective dream [that] deserved to be portrayed on the screen' (Noé, quoted in Wigon 2010b). As a result, he made *Enter the Void* based on the structure of *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Noé also strives to express dream through his films, with his characters often talking about premonition dreams. In *Irréversible*, Alex (Monica Bellucci) expresses to Marcus her memory of a premonition dream about walking through a 'red tunnel'. Later, in *Love* (2015), Electra's (Aomi Muyock) fantasy about having a threesome with Murphy (Karl Glusman) becomes real when they discover Omi (Klara Kristin) as their neighbour.

Drug-induced states of mind have also played a significant role in developing Noé's oeuvre: the texture of a mushroom trip shaped *Irréversible*'s tumultuous and agitated vision and narration; *Enter the Void*'s narration was governed by the ecstatic feel of DMT; *Love* shows how opium can slow down time for a depressed lover, as well as work as a pain killer; and *Climax* projects the psychological horror of a bad LSD trip (Curry 2002; Schmerkin 2009; Malekpour 2021). Equally, cinematic sources such as particular films, personas and genres have been implicit in the development and production of Noé's transgressive melodramas (see Chapter 4).

While cinematic ideas provide a narrative's shape or form, screen ideas simultaneously structure Noé's illusory cinematic conceptions and mental images. Through producing a film, Noé journeys towards a collision between his obsessive desire to adopt aspects of chosen films and his fetishism about materialising the missing value inherent in his production. Noé's screen ideas for cinematic horror and sensational film narratives bear connection with other films and reflect the then contemporary cultural moments of the production contexts. Except for their themes, Noé does not keep the same aesthetic, subject, or style from film to film. His screen ideas are accompanied by a central theme, such as the life cycle (birth and death) and the non-physical essence of life (love and loss). His screen idea contains formal and thematic devices from horror and

melodramatic narratives and from his peers' filmmaking practices and cultures. Regarding the taking of resources from the aesthetic history and culture of film, Noé adopts the traits of genre films that have socio-political perspectives.

In the next section, I will discuss the backgrounds and conceptualisation processes of Noé's screen ideas for *Seul contre tous*, *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void*, and *Vortex* (2021).

Screen Ideas: *Seul contre tous*, *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void*, and *Vortex*

> Maybe it was the fact of being rejected. I felt attacked because people rejected me. They didn't say 'we can give you money to do something else if you want,' they just said 'no, this movie cannot be done' and I said 'okay, so I'll do it!' (Noé quoted in Davis 2002, p. 122)

Seul contre tous is Noé's first feature-length narrative. Behind the screen idea of this film, humiliation and rejection from the financiers and producers in the then xenophobic French social and political climate act as context. In addition, Noé (1998) wrote that he had specifically aimed to produce a melodramatic film that would mirror his longing to show France the way he encountered it through day-to-day existence and has similarity with the writings of Victor Hugo, Émile Zola, and Henri Charrière or any narrative on Vichy France. Noé (1998) wanted to confront the urbane, 'cultivated auteur films' that attack his TV during prime time (p. 9). For the film, Noé chose as the lead protagonist a nameless, jobless, and hopeless French butcher who is confused about the surrounding reality and paranoid about Arab migrants. During the conception of the project (1993 to 1995), France was led by Prime Minister Edouard Balladur's right-wing government, which introduced xenophobic laws and stimulated racism in French society.

Noé (1998) wanted the lead character's profession to be a butcher because that profession signifies the primitive connection of revenge between humans and animals, which manifests in civilised society through the tradition of slaughtering, cutting, and eating animals. This profession also refers to an archaic model of a socially accepted business constructed on violence. The nameless butcher follows the path of Travis Bickle from *Taxi Driver* (1967), who

talks with himself inside his head; however, the butcher doesn't reveal his motivations. The butcher has a daughter whom he wants to protect, just as Travis Bickle was obsessed with protecting the 12-year-old prostitute Iris Steensma in *Taxi Driver*.

Seul contre tous not only chronicles the butcher's story of hatred and desire for revenge, its screen idea also contains the then young and aspiring Noé's personal yearning for revenge against the conventional film business's model and tradition of producing normative narrative and self-censorship. Noé (1998) expressed this frustration by pointing out that conventional producers have a tendency to develop a corroborative script to secure the production budget through pre-sell to the TV channels. By this standard, any screen idea or script that containing a 'sulphurous' theme and content like that of *Seul contre tous* would face harsh rejection because the responsible employee would not want to take responsibility or blame. Since producers are likewise scared of imperilling their relationships with financiers by submitting 'embarrassing scenarios' to them, it thus becomes the responsibility of the filmmaker to take charge of the production. From his own experience of rejection, Noé thus realised that the 'French screen business is exceptionally conservative, similar to the nineteenth-century salons, an exclusive hangout where six individuals decide which films should and should not be made' (Smith 1998). Film critic Matt Bailey (2003) suggested that *Seul contre tous* was contrary to not just conventional French film but to all French film, even the 'festival-oriented cinema' in which Noé also took part.

Eventually, Noé realised the irony that the French producers and financiers were agile in their praise of the New Hollywood cult movie, Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*, but not enthusiastic enough to fund the 'French Taxi Driver', *Seul contre tous*. They rejected his film project, which had 'a psychotic, paranoid, and nonconformist nameless butcher like Travis Bickle, on the grounds of violence and excess, although French official censorship [had] the option of R-rated for explicit and adult content' (Noé quoted in Tracks-Arte n.d.). As revenge, he decided to produce films independently, beginning with 'small funds from his friends in charge of the short films program of Canal+ to do the sequel as a separate short *Seul contre tous'* (Davis 2002). Noé took a stand against the

cultural politics of promoting a 'stylish, artistic, petit-bourgeois, aristocratic' (Bailey 2003) image of France through arthouse and normative films and produced *Seul contre tous* to crush the egalitarian parables of France with an unwelcoming representation of desolation and poverty on the screen.

Along with the misanthropic novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline, several films inspired the screen idea of *Seul contre tous*: Fassbinder's *Faustrecht der Freiheit*, Buñuel's *Los Olvidados*, Pasolini's *Salo*, Sam Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs* (1971), and Kargl's *Angst*. *Seul contre tous* practically and metaphorically transformed Noé's 'psychological state of paranoia', 'transgression against the statuesque' and 'desperateness of organising finance' (for the production) through the butcher character (Noé 1998, p. 11). Unlike the nameless butcher, however, Noé took on the responsibility of envisioning a production that transgressed the Parisian film production culture, thus instilling a thrilling and risk-taking vigour in his film.

> 'Everybody copies everybody else now,' says Noé. His starting point was a 'rape and revenge movie, told backwards' … That was the concept that was sold to the people who financed the movie. (Pendreigh 2002, para. 11)

This quotation sums up Noé's inspiration for screen ideas and the cinematic narration form of *Irréversible*. However, Noé developed this film as a sequential output of the erstwhile French film-culture reality. To understand this, we need to look back to a couple of years earlier. Noé was aware that in 2000 another of his friends, the writer and first-time director Virginie Despentes, teamed up with former adult film actor and director Coralie Trinh Thi to make *Baise-moi* (2000) based on her 'cult and trendy', feminist French novel of the same title, I which they portray a rape-revenge film from the perspective of two female protagonists. The narrative structure intentionally resembles Ridley Scott's *Thelma and Louise* (1991) (Despentes n.d., para. 4). *Baise-moi* exhibits a narrative that rejoices in nihilism instead of self-pity and embodies a story about resistance against male masochism through graphic violence and explicit sex scenes. It faced harsh criticism from the French far right and was banned in

France, which was an extraordinary suggestion 'given the French censorship board's reputation as the most lenient in the world' (Phillipson 2020, para. 8).

At that cultural moment[19], Noé also had an erotica script called *Danger* (later produced as *Love* in 2015). He wanted to produce a film similar to Japanese filmmaker Nagisa Ōshima's *Ai no korîda* with real-life celebrity couple Monica Bellucci and Vincent Cassel as the lead protagonists, but they refused to take part because of excess nudity and an unsimulated sex scene (The Ion Pack 2019; Smith 2014, para. 3). As Noé had producers and financiers on board for the *Danger* project, he proposed the actors and producers make a rape-revenge film like American productions *Straw Dogs*, *Deliverance*, *Death Wish* (1974), and *I Spit on Your Grave* (1974) (François 2002; Magill 2002; Roberts 2020). For the casting, Noé was motivated by Stanley Kubrick's erotic mystery drama *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), which featured real-life celebrity couple Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. Similarly, in *Irréversible* Noé featured Bellucci and Cassel (Eyny & Zubatov 2004, para. 8).

Around that time, Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000) took the film world by surprise for its nonlinear or reverse-order narrative. Noé capitalised on that film as a selling point for *Irréversible* (Kohn 2016, para. 3), although he said his reverse order storytelling was inspired by Harold Pinter's play *Betrayal* (1978) (Ebert 2003, para. 3). Noé has an affinity with the surreal state of consciousness and altered state of mind such as during a psychedelic trip. The psychedelic trope also worked as a source of the screen idea for *Irréversible* to transgress the visual narration format of a rape-revenge film. So he transgressed the normative form of screenwriting by inducing the fuzzy texture of a terrible mushroom trip, which initiated a nightmare but ended with a happy ending (Curry 2002, p. 9). Film scholar Tim Palmer (2015) reflected on *Irréversible*'s

---

[19] The next year in 2001, the Cannes film festival screened Claire Denis extreme and gore depiction about a couple's brutal intimacy and gender roles *in Trouble Every Day* (2001), and naturally, it stirred up the audience and critics reaction. There was a series of sensational, extreme, gore and horror films happening in French film culture. Followed by the ban and controversy regarding *Baise-Moi* (2000) and the extreme, original films of Catherine Breillat, François Ozon, Bruno Dumont, Marc Caro, Jacques Audiard opened a new pathway for the French film industry to use the notion of shock as a significant resort to move 'the world's attention away from Hollywood' (James 2003, p. 20).

narrative and stylistic design: 'When Noé destroys, he deconstructs norms, so as to instantiate new techniques drawn from a plethora of sources' (p. 69). Noé's screen idea of the episodic, nonlinear narrative technique operates on two levels. First, thematically he uses accessibility as a 'flashy glitch' in conventional screenplay style to show how the presentation of the chronological idea of time creates a 'flawed perception of reality (Froehlich n.d., para. 4), and second, he considers time as a space or location instead of a dimension, as did modern auteur Stanley Kubrick in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Szaniawski 2020, p. 12).

Noé also designed the production of *Irréversible* with its sex and excess in a way that would serve two purposes. First, it challenges the dichotomy of humanising a victim's perspective when we see both male characters, regardless of their subjective positions, exercise violence and brutality to display their power and dominance in the name of revenge, and when two innocent people (Monica Bellucci as Alex and Mick Gondolin as Mick) find themselves in a ruthlessly inhuman situation. Second, *Irréversible* transgresses the stereotypical expectation and endurance of melodramatic narrative form but offers a retrospective look at the nuances of the rape-revenge or exploitation genre. Besides, Noé questioned the viewers or industry's demonic fear about the on-screen representation of rape and sexual violence:

> I don't believe in any kind of life after death. But I liked the idea of making a film about a character who wanted to reassure himself by believing in some kind of afterworld. As if he needed to embark on one last spiritual voyage, projecting his obsessions, desires and fears along the post-mortem path described in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Noé quoted in Schmerkin 2009, p. 6).

As a screen idea, *Enter the Void* germinated in Noé's brain before he made *Carne* and *Seul contre tous* (Schmerkin 2009). He developed *Enter the Void* through 20 years of thinking and imagining the project. Its screen idea is closely connected with the adolescent Noé's growing up in an atheist family environment where no one participated in religious faith. Towards the end of his teen years, Noé's curious mind experienced deep metaphysical queries such as, 'Is death the end of consciousness? Is it true that the death of a body means the demise of an

individual?' (Jones 2019) His metaphysical probes led him to think about the existence of reincarnation, which then led him to read *Life After life* (1975) by psychiatrist Raymond Moody, who surveyed more than a hundred people who had near-death experiences. As Noé said, he had 'this whole crazy idea of what could happen to him when he dies' (quoted in Schmerkin 2009). Noé's initial obsession and fantasy about mortality planted the seed for his future cinematic transgression project, where he wanted to visualise the final journey or 'what happens after the death of the main character' (Rupe 2010).

Later at the age of 23, Noé had two critical experiences. For the first time, he watched Robert Montgomery's debut film, *The Lady in the Lake*, which Montgomery adapted from Raymond Chandler's (1943) eponymous detective novel. *The Lady in the Lake* is a murder-mystery noir film shot exclusively from the central character's point of view or subjective vision. While Noé was watching that noir film with subtitles on TV in his house, he was on a psychedelic trip of psilocybin (Erickson 2010, para. 5). In this hallucinogenic state, Noé experienced a mind-altering voyage into the main character's head through the cinematographic artifice used in that film. Moreover, that was the moment Noé decided that he would produce a film about the afterworld from the point of view of the main protagonist.

Noé's 'mental research' about life after death and the moment of death[20] continued until he made *Enter the Void*. To reach the true essence of that moment, he persisted in trying different psychedelics as a part of the research of his 'imaginary concept' of producing a psychogenic film. From time to time, Noé experienced LSD (which was later projected in *Climax*) and smoked DMT[21] (Rose 2010, para. 6). DMT is considered a mind-altering substance that can mimic a near-death experience. In *Enter the Void*, when Oscar got shot by the police, lying on the bathroom floor he experienced the rush of DMT in his brain. Ironically, en route to that scene, Oscar's junkie friend Alex was explaining,

---

[20] Recently, in 2020, Noé had a brain stroke which practically gave him a near-death experience (Kohn 2021); prior to that, he used synthetic and organic sources to comprehend the moment.
[21] Clinical research attested that those near-death experiences (NDEs) are perplexing abstract encounters, which have been recently connected with the hallucinogenic experience and more explicitly with the experience incited by the strong serotonergic N-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT) (Timmermann et al. 2018). This molecule is a substance in the brain that is the source of dreams.

'DMT only lasts for six minutes, but it really seems like an eternity. It releases the same chemical your brain receives when you die. It's a little like dying would be the "ultimate trip"' (*Enter the Void* 2009).

Another crucial experience occurred around 2000. Noé went to the Peruvian jungle with his filmmaking fraternity, guided by another writer-filmmaker friend, Jan Kounen, to experience an *ayahuasca* ceremony led by an experienced shaman to comprehend the near-death experience both corporally and spiritually (Kounen 2011, p. 112). Ayahuasca is a psychoactive brew that contains the same psychedelic compound found in DMT (Therrien 2018). Noé depicted the trip with a metaphor from film culture: he had visions 'which looked like the movie *Tron* (1982)' (Dennis 2010, para. 11). Noé experienced the trip as if he was in Ken Russell's film *Altered States*'s ayahuasca ceremony, but he embraced the teaching in his own style (Kounen 2011, p. 111). *Enter the Void*'s metaphysical discussion about life–death–reincarnation, hallucinogenic visuals, colour schemes, and cinematography are informed by *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kasman 2009) and Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954).

The screen idea of *Vortex* came to fruition during the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 when Noé's producer asked him if he had any feasible (screen) idea that could be produced within a confinement situation in Paris with two to three characters and a single location.

> My producers asked me, 'Do you have an idea for a film project that we could film during the confinement in Paris with just one single location and just two or three characters?' and I said 'Yes, I have one idea, it's about an old couple, the woman has dementia, and the husband has to take care of her with the help of their son.' I said to them, 'It's a very simple story, but I would like it to look like a psychological horror movie,' and that's how the whole thing started. (Pedrero-Setzer 2022)

Noé manipulated the contemporary reality of isolation raised due to COVID-19 and expressed the screen idea of making an uncomplicated film with the texture of 'psychological horror' about a psychiatrist who is suffering from

dementia, and surrounded by her aged husband, 45-year-old junkie son and a toddler grandson. Noé developed this screen idea from his personal experience of seeing how his grandparents and later his mother had to survive a situation similar to the 'Mother' character (Françoise Lebrun) of *Vortex*. Consequently, in his screen idea behind *Vortex*, he 'imagined a film with an extremely simple narrative, with one person in a state of mental deterioration losing the use of language and her grandson who has not yet mastered it, as two extremes of this brief experience that is human life' (Noé 2021, p. 3). As a transgressor and branded auteur, Noé has contravened the theatricality and empathetic representation of a senior citizen's life and realistically inscribed this banal story to nonchalantly document the dark side of reality. He looks through the lens of a documentary filmmaker who intimately observes the day-to-day sufferings of a person who does not become aware of the deterioration of her cognitive skill and ability to think and how her husband and son are constantly trying to save her within 'very complicated survival mechanisms' (Khaldi 2021).

In early 2020, Noé suffered a sudden brain haemorrhage and then encountered the COVID-19 lockdown when he returned home after being discharged from hospital in Paris. During the lockdown period, he discovered the excellent melodramatic productions of Japanese filmmakers such as Kenji Mizoguchi (1898–1956), Mikio Naruse (1905–1969) and Keisuke Kinoshita (1912–1998). Kinoshita is famous in Japanese film history for chronicling the daily life stories of Japanese society and for his intimate and powerful representations of homosexual leanings between male characters (Kubo 2016).

As Noé excavated the history of film's lesser-known genres, he found the 'unjustly forgotten Kinoshita, whose melancholy, cruelty and aesthetic inventiveness' and unpretentiousness worked as a cinematic motivation for him to transgress his own branded representation of screen carnality violence, excess and psychedelia (Noé 2021). Kinoshita's melodrama, *Narayama bushikô* (*The Ballad of Narayama* 1958), inspired Noé to realise *Vortex*'s narrative sphere (Reitzer 2021). Produced in the post-World War II era and inspired by Kabuki, *Narayama bushikô*'s narrative premise explores the Japanese folk legend of Ubasute or the senicide of a mother (with matriarch characteristics) named Orin (Kinuyo Tanaka) in a remote mountain village where food is scarce. According

to legend, parents over 70 years old must be taken to the top of Mount Narayama by their child and left there to die. The narrative stem for *Vortex* came from Noé's aspiration for making a film on and with elderly persons and how 'old age' and 'complex survival issues' such as loss of memory, language, critical thinking, and other reasoning obstruct their day-to-day existence. In the evening of their lives, the senior citizen's mind went back to a cerebral state similar to early childhood (Pedrero-Setzer 2022).

From *Seul contre tous* to *Vortex*, Noé has been examining the unbroken cycle of birth and death. Regardless of the sudden loss of a loved one in *Irréversible*, the journey to the void of near-death experience in *Enter the Void*, the LSD-ridden diabolic carnival of *Climax*, or the slow but steady erosion of memories through *Vortex*, someone's death and another's birth are omnipresent in Noé's oeuvre. With *Vortex*, Noé also marked his departure from the trademark grandiloquent vision of transgression to a straightforward visualisation of life as slowly decaying existence.

Scripting

Noé's screen ideas also dominate the dynamics and composition of his 'scripting'. He uses them to germinate collages of visuals, moving images, sounds, screen performances, and choreography. This is not unlike a painter who starts with a blank canvas and fills it with imagination, although single-handedly and not through collaborative labour. His instantly recognisable screenwriting poetics is not the after-effect of keeping a solid hold on artistic control or creative mechanisms; it is 'surrendering to circumstance, chance, and the collaborative, lived experience of producing a film' (Jacobson 2018, para. 8).

Noé and his contemporary auteurs Leos Carax, Michael Winterbottom, Olivier Assayas, Gus Van Sant, and Wong Kar-wai, among others, engage in alternative screenwriting practices by amalgamating the conventional screenplay and inventive execution processes with a more 'open approach' through a playful shifting between written script material and creative choices during production (Aaltonen 2017, p. 57). The openness and conjugation between traditional norms and alternative approaches signify that 'media change as an accretive, gradual process, always a mix of tradition and innovation, in which emerging

and established systems interact, shift, and collude with each other' (Thorburn and Jenkins 2004, p. x). Filmmaker and theorist Kathryn Millard (2014) identifies this mediative momentum with the rise, access, mobility, and possibilities of digital technology, which bring filmmakers opportunities for increased experimentation. The oft-cited allegory of Alexandre Astruc's camera-stylo (camera-pen), which Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami referred to as a 'drafting pen', represents a historicisation of a more fluid approach to contemporary screenwriting (Millard 2014, p. 147; Munt 2006). An 'open' filmmaking process allows filmmakers to understate the dominance of plot and written dialogue and to foreground improvising on location to find the shape of the story and the dramatic purposes of scenes.

We can connect this screenwriting process to the idea of 'scripting' proposed by Australian screen theorist and scholar Steven Maras (2009) in *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice*, where 'cinematographer, editor, or actor may have equivalent standing to the "writer"' (p. 2). Scripting, as an idea, expands the discursive field of screenwriting by dint of accommodating 'non-normative' ways of writing for screen and bridging the divergence between the narrative (dramatic) and alternative (experimental or documentary) approaches of screenwriting. According to Maras (2009), the concept of 'scripting' unfolds the opportunity of writing on the screen 'beyond the container of the page' where the filmmaker focuses on 'writerly input' through the camera (as a writer and director) or 'collaboration across the different areas of production' (p. 2). In relation to the Noé's production practice, we see 'writing' is not limited to happening on paper; rather it is minimal and mostly occurs through the open approach. Consequently, in addition to taking the roles of producer and director, Noé writes the script not only as a literal writer but also as a camera operator and editor. This explains, in part, his predilection for expanding the screenwriting process beyond the page (the written word) to writing with cameras, lights, and bodies.

Artist and scholar Cedric Van Eenoo (2018) suggests that Maras's (2009) proposed methodology stemmed from the creative process of independent film directors who 'came from a background other than cinematographic' (p. 45) and whose works can be integrated with those of 'painters, sculptors, or

improvisation music performers' (p. 182). Prior to joining film school Noé 'wanted to do comic books … as a comic book artist, as an illustrator' (Davis 2002), but he realised he was not good enough at drawing or illustration to pursue that artistic goal. However, he developed his compelling compositional sense as a juvenile through visiting art exhibitions with his father, reading art books, listening to debates, going to movies with his mother, and watching his father teach young painters at home (see Chapter 2).

Graphical or visual composition plays a crucial role in Noé's scripting process. In relation to compositional perspective, he deploys a mix of graphic, chromatic, and realistic visuals to navigate the viewer's attention to the screen. These experiences helped Noé develop a sense of composition and to understand how to point the viewer's eye where he wanted them to look. Besides, his father's understanding of 'chaos as a structure' informed junior Noé's transgressions of traditional aesthetics, beliefs, and moral values and offered him the viability of constructively contextualising the new patterns of aesthetics by not pursuing conventional film production structures. Chaos as a structure showed him a way of composing novelties with the concept of 'unity'. Chaos theory also showed him how to formulate the essence of 'order' from an 'open order' or 'disorder' in a film that comprises a chaotic attitude and transgressive poetics. This exposition about the disorder of things has allowed Noé to question what is accepted as order, look at the existing order with new perspectives, rearrange the known surrounding environment with unusual perceptions, and 'assume chaos as a way of structuring open order' (Kohn 2017, p. 49). These notions also signify that Noé treats the screen space as a canvas and shooting film as a painting, because it 'presents a flat array of colours and shapes in a 'three-dimensional space' and mise en scène offers many cues for guiding our attention and emphasising elements in the frame' (Bordwell & Thompson 2013, p. 143).

The aesthetic architecture of a film and the concept of the screenplay can now be seen more comprehensively. Screen theorists are proposing that the screenwriting process runs through the production until the release of the film. In *Screenwriting in a Digital Era*, Kathryn Millard (2014) suggests that a film's life and destiny are not bound within the orthographical space of manuscript;

rather a film continues to be made through the entire process, from its beginning to its completion. With Steven Maras, Millard also emphasises the scope of improvisation in the filmmaking process. She takes a cue from jazz music performance and indicates that improvisation holds an important place in the open filmmaking process, which leads the screenwriting process to be free from being a controlled performative act. For Millard (2014), jazz ensembles have challenged the idea of a screenplay as a master plan and proposed an unorthodox paradigm:

> Jazz players invent 'novel responses without a pre-scripted plan and without certainty of outcomes; discovering the future that their action creates as it unfolds'… The jazz metaphor provides one significant alternative model to the notion of the screenplay as a blueprint. (p. 85)

According to filmmaker and screen theorist J. J. Murphy (2019), improvisation and psychodrama allow independent narrative filmmakers to move away from the regimented reality of scripted instruction and to explore the screen idea through the lens of on-site performance. Improvisation leads the filmmaker to a cinematic space framed as psychodrama. Romanian–American psychiatrist and psychologist Jacob Levy Moreno developed this theatre- and performance-based term as an action method for group psychotherapy based on participants' personal experiences (Kellermann 1992, p. 11). As clinical psychologist and psychodrama trainer Peter Felix Kellermann (1992) noted, these individual experiences incorporate 'memories of specific happenings in the past, unfinished situations, inner dramas, fantasies, dreams, preparations for future risk-taking situations, or unrehearsed expressions of mental states in the here and now' (p. 20). Zerka Moreno (collaborator and life partner of Moreno) has simplified the definition of this method: '[Psychodrama is a] form of improvisational theatre of your own life' (quoted in Murphy 2019, p. 28).

Improvisation and psychodrama are two essential aspects of Noé's poetics of screenwriting. Improvisation contains the opportunity for Noé and his actors to explore the screen reality in more impulsive forms of acting and performance that unpack the subtle details of the given characters when they rehearse, perform in front of the camera, or both during production. This practice leads

the actors to reconnoitre the rigid and stereotyped impressions of the fictitious characters and propose alternative versions of how the characters can be interpreted. Hence, Noé only casts professional or amateur actors who can spontaneously act, improvise, and discover their creative selves on the set. Psychodrama found space in Noé's screenwriting poetics as a recurrent approach of low-budget cinema in the 2000s.

Improvisation and Collaboration at Work

Noé's screenwriting practice is known for his spontaneous direction and the organic interactions on set between performers and technical collaborators. Improvisation and collaboration allow Noé to move away from a strictly normative, controlled industrial approach to screenwriting and provide the space for him to situate the narrative within the film production context. Instead of taking 'the script out of its production context and potentially reinforc[ing] a fracture between conception and execution' (Maras 2005, p. 5), Noé focuses on the balance between his creativity and expression and fidelity to his screen idea. His non-normative screenwriting poetics revels in psychodrama, and his cinephile experiences, dreams, quasi biography and archive of comic books, rare books, film posters, banned VHSs and DVDs act as fuel for it. As Millard (2014) has argued, improvisation is a methodologically 'creative' approach that is 'process-orientated' and offers freedom to the filmmaker to collaborate with a creative, and where the screen idea is shared via a 'loosely prepared structure' such as a treatment or an outline without needing the screenplay as the blueprint for the film production (p. 99).

With his reputation for synergic collaboration and spontaneous improvisation, Noé has developed a 'visual dialogue' with the film crews and actors that cultivates a 'natural' and 'actual' texture on the screen. To represent his idea on screen, Noé does not make demands on co-workers; rather, he aims to generate a temporary Bergsonian 'open society'[22] within the production unit through this egalitarian approach. Nevertheless, he works surrounded by the French commercial screen production culture that follows the hierarchical film

---

[22] French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941) proposed the term 'open society' to signify a pluralist society that is not defined by authoritarian values, open to alternative views and where freedom and human rights work as a basis of the society (Kohn 2017, p. 48).

production model and division of labour. In this French model of film production, the film producer, director, or auteur plays an autonomous role and singlehandedly takes creative decisions.

Noé transgresses these unilateral, independent norms. His egalitarian conduct of coexistence signifies that by emphasising collaborative practice he opens the space for the collaborators to develop the transgressive architecture of his film poetics with their alternative opinions. It also augments the film production's artistic possibilities and potentialities by offering an unorthodox way of understanding ownership and authorship beyond the dominant French film production culture. This collaborative practice also provides opportunities for improvisation. Noé devised the spontaneous act of improvisation as a breathing space to animate inclusiveness, inventiveness, and freedom of open society in his production units. Artistic collaborators' technical and creative suggestions help him achieve his desired on-screen vision while retaining his branded cinematic transgressions and idiosyncratic customs.

At the beginning of his career, Noé used to write and follow traditional scripts containing dialogue, but he was always uncomfortable with this process. Being a realist and naturalist practitioner, he prefers raw, not predetermined dialogues. According to the lead actor of *Seul contre tous*, the late Philippe Nahon (1938–2020), who played the nameless butcher, Noé sent him the script and asked him to not read the script line by line but instead to improvise his performance based on the synopsis (Davis 2002). Noé suggested to Frankye Pain, who performed as the nameless butcher's mistress, to 'think, search, measure and draw to get in tune with' the character and the story world of the narrative from the 'few pages of each sequence' (quoted in Lowinsky 2004).

As his career progressed, Noé came to the view that conventionally written dialogue lent artificiality to films. His screenplay developmental process reflects an oxymoronic creative process. Noé finds visionary objectivity through submitting himself to the filming location and 'prepar[ing] nothing in advance and allowing the dramatic tension of the film to be drawn, as much as possible, from what's happening in front of him' (Jacobson 2018, para. 8). So, to inscribe the exact value of the narrative, he chooses to work with a treatment as a

guideline and to brief the actors about the situation and let them improvise the dialogues.

For *Irrèversible*, Noé had an outline but no written dialogue when the principal photography commenced. Conversely, for his next feature, *Enter the Void*, he had a lengthy script; however, the dialogue was improvised on set. This incident is evidence that Noé is comfortable producing a film with a treatment and a more fully written script, but with space for improvisation. In Noé's contemporary period he produced three more feature films (*Love*; *Climax*; *Vortex*) without providing any written dialogue or structured script to the performers, creative collaborators or financiers – beyond the minimal screenwriting documents discussed above.

From the production process of his diptych (*Carne* and *Seul contre tous*), Noé has also kept two recurrent cinematic tools in his filmmaking: the use of voice-overs or monologues, and mixed casting of professional and non-professional actors. Although Noé's restless temperament appears to privilege screen production over writing, he took these cinematic cues from one of his much-loved and frequently sighted Austrian films, *Angst*, which unpacks a 'whirlwind in the head of a psychopath' (Noé 1998).

The male protagonists of Noé's feature films often compulsively talk inside their heads, which appear as voiceovers through the films. Noé uses voiceover and monologue for identification with the protagonists of his films and to offer inside looks at the troubled masculine characters' existential defining moments. Those monologues have the characteristics of a collection of existentialist maxims (the confined, troubling reality of the butcher in *Seul contre tous*), agony and distress (Oscar, a young drug dealer with childhood trauma, in *Enter the Void*) and reminiscences of lost love and self-pity (Murphy, who is lost in guilt and frustration in *Love*). In each case, the voiceover or monologue of each character removes a layer to expose their horrible scenarios and manifest the dire straits of their existences. Noé consumes the therapeutic feature of psychodrama through monologue or logorrhoea to psychologically connect with audience members who have experienced the similar critical situations. Although they are experiencing a fictive reality, the monologue blurs the fact

that it is improvised by the actors and not their genuine experience. On another level, the use of voiceover or monologue in the scripting squeezes the liminal space for the audience to rationalise or evaluate the characters' on-screen activities. Noé uses this cinematic tool as 'hypnoses' to create a trance-like state to heighten viewers mental awareness and converge the focus by keeping the viewers in the 'moment'.

As Hollywood screenwriter and filmmaker Philip Dunne suggests, 'acting' is inscribing 'in invisible ink directly on the film' (quoted in Maras 2009, p. 2). Similarly, Noé collaborates, manipulates, and invokes his performers to improvise their dialogues and take part in the scripting process. Paul Schrader, the screenwriter of one of Noé's favourite films, *Taxi Driver*, thinks 'casting is destiny' for any film production because a film's intended goal depends on casting the right person for a role since it is one of the things that cannot be altered in post-production (quoted in Weintraub 2021, para. 10). Noé frequently casts professional and non-professional actors to express personal stories rooted in the depth of the self and to create a realistic portrayal of the characters. By choosing non-professional actors, Noé methodically adds a stream of naturalism because they live on their instincts.

Noé also renders Pier Paolo Pasolini's exposition of casting 'real people' instead of actors (Stack 2018) by casting professional actors who also have real-life experiences that match the description of the characters. For instance, Noé valued the way professional actor Phillipe Nahon was able to change his own human quality of being a 'sweetest father' to undertake a transgressive role as an incestuous father. Frankye Pain taught an educational program 'with autistic children or those with deficient forms close to autism and suffering from incest consequences' before joining *Seul contre tous* (Lowinski 2004). Noé followed this method in *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void*, *Love*, and *Climax*. When casting kickboxer turned actor Joe Prestia as a pimp and rapist named Le Tenia in *Irréversible*, Noé considered Prestia's previous acting experience and performance as a rapist in Eric Zonca's César Award–winning best film *La vie rêvée des ange* (*The Dreamlife of Angels* 1998) (Peary 2002, para. 7). In *Climax* Noé also cast Algerian actor and dancer Sofia Boutella after considering Algerian-descendent French actor and singer Isabelle Yasmina Adjani's performance in *Possession* (Monique 2019).

In his most recent feature, *Vortex*, Noé cast screen performers from Italian- and French-speaking backgrounds who were experienced in improvisation. In the original micro script, there were dialogues written to convey the essence of the film to the financer and producer without any intention to repeat them the production. In this case, veteran film director Dario Argento, acting under the direction of Noé, took charge to direct himself. Argento (2021) recorded that as he 'struggles with French', the requirement to follow 'a real script, with dialogues' would have been much harder for him; instead, improvisation allowed him to follow his feelings to find 'the truth in the depths of himself'.

Noé liked Françoise Lebrun's iconic performance in Jean Eustache's *La maman et la putain* (*The Mother and the Whore* 1973), for which she had to precisely learn dialogues and perform according to the script. In the case of *Vortex*, Noé's primary suggestion to Lebrun was to stammer and improvise the dialogues. Although Noé asked her if she wanted to read the script, Lebrun (2021) refused because she knew they would be collaborating in the production. Through this co-authored screenwriting process and by avoiding the conventional practice of imposed dialogues, Noé transgresses the artificiality of fiction or feature filmmaking practice in order to 'arrive perhaps at a certain degree of naturalism' (Noé quoted in Reitzer 2021, para. 9). French actor and director Alex Lutz (as the son of the Lebrun-Argento couple in *Vortex*) also had experience of making film with improvised dialogs. Lutz directed and portrayed 73-year-old French pop singer Guy Jamet in a film called *Guy* (2018) based on a 10-page script.

The industrial format of film production emphasises the need for a planned and choreographed vision of reality before going to production as a risk minimisation tool that encourages the production unit to follow the screenplay as a blueprint. However, Noé's screenwriting process represents the transgression of his films. There are several reasons for his specific creative approach. Noé being a filmmaker, does not want to impose the responsibility of a writer, who holds the power to assign reality and destiny, onto the characters or to decide their fate. In addition, to make a scene meaningful, with cinematic naturalism, it is important for Noé to elude on-screen artificiality by de-emphasising the screenwriting-driven 'written words' and focusing on finding

the actors' 'own words to express the scene' (Davis 2002). Noé defines his role as a film director as finding the shooting location, selecting costumes or wardrobes for the characters, conducting the casting, and choosing the right persons for different production roles (Wallace 2015). His auteur responsibility extends across the various developments, production, and post-production of his films.

Furthermore, Noé's strategy to reach his desired vision is not by exploiting his auteur role but by manipulating his collaborators as the production team leader. An example is the breakup sequence in *Love* (2015; 18:38 minute) between Murphy (Karl Glusman) and Electra (Aomi Muyock), which happens at Murphy's best friend and drug dealer Julio's (Juan Saavedra) place. After the breakup, Julio has sex with Electra, which makes Murphy crazy. Neither Karl Glusman nor Juan Saavedra was aware of each other's existence before the day of the shooting. Noé separately called both to meet him in the morning at a local café to see their synergy (Glusman quoted in Kenber 2016; Saavedra quoted in Derrien 2015). Before reaching the café, Glusman only had the idea that Noé wanted some else to meet him. By contrast, Noé asked Saavedra (who is also Noé's friend) to join him to meet the actors because he wanted to know what Saavedra thought of them. After the initial introduction and conversation, Glusman sent a positive signal about Saavedra, and Noé immediately asked Saavedra if he could come to the set that day for a screen test. When Saavedra showed up for the audition, Noé instantly set up the scenario and put the actors in position. Saavedra was not aware of that treatment because, until that moment, he had not signed the non-disclosure agreement or officially confirmed the role. Karl Glusman shared the experience with Ben Kenber (2016):

> It was like that the whole time. We wouldn't have an actor cast and he'd say we gotta go find an actor, and we would go out that night and go trolling the bars looking for someone who might be able to play the police commissioner and then we would run it through Vincent Maraval, our producer at *Wild Bunch.* Gaspar would tell them, 'Hey you should be in the movie' and they were like 'nah, nah, nah.' And Gaspar was like, 'No, no, no, you should show up tomorrow.' And that's how it was.

Gaspar would have friends show up on set and make cameos, and it was all very, very improvised, very in the moment, very immediate. (para. 6)

Just as Noé's films surprise the viewers through fear and unexpected moments, when shooting on location he also surprises his casts, creative and technical collaborators, and himself. It is common in Noé's productions that neither Noé nor his director of photography knows how they are going to shoot the sequence on that day. It is as if Noé wants to catch his own and his colleagues' inhibitions off guard and churn out the 'real' self of that immediate reality. In a simple sense, through the unplanned design (which is a targeted reality for Noé), he invites the sense of uncertainty and feelings of danger onto the set but maintains a supporting and nurturing ambience so that no one finds themselves trapped in psychosis or paranoia. Noé maintains an authorial emblem or an auteur model by working closely and collaboratively with his long-time creative collaborators. In this context his screenwriting poetics are consistent. Serge Catoire, line producer of *Climax*, explained the film's on-site scenario to *Filmmaker* magazine's Genevieve Jacobson (2018):

Producing a movie under such parameters is a risky business. You have to have complete confidence in Gaspar and trust his process if you're going to let him wait until the very last minute to make these key decisions. (para. 11)

What does Noé want to gain through this transgressive screenwriting process? My research suggests that in his neorealist and documentary style screen works he aims to create a recipe of psychological, philosophical, and pscyhodramatic qualities based on a commitment to authenticity and naturalism.

Regardless of its status as fiction or non-fiction, the reality Noé depicts in a film is a reproduction of a real-life event that looks real but exists far from reality. Unscripted dialogues, nonprofessional actors, real world places, and improvisational processes provide an organic tapestry that adds believability to the imitation of life on the screen, unlocks unchartered existential perspectives, and captures the viewer's attention. By diminishing the line separating fact from fiction, Noé renders or gives back to life the elements he borrowed from it.

Through this chapter, I have aimed to explain Gaspar Noé's screenwriting practices and how the screen idea works as genetic material for his poetics of transgression. To represent the naturality of reality, Noé peruses each production as an open process through the screen idea. Being a transgressor, he consciously avoids the production norms, customs, and ethics of classical films (Shaffer 2022). Similarly, he keeps himself away from all the industrial norms, conventional rules, and established grammars of filmmaking taught by film schools. Instead, he merges that formal knowledge with his informal artistic education to generate an individual screenwriting expression that reflects the distressed characters' survival and endurance capacities to show how the meaning of love and morality remarkably fluctuates in chaotic settings or tumultuous situations. Noé's screenwriting poetics thrives upon the presence of scripting, collaboration, and improvisation. These crucial elements facilitate his turning of screen ideas into screen works within the range of limited budgets. Through collaboration and improvisation with the performers and technical collaborators, Noé treats cinema as a therapeutic agency for tormented psyches by describing and re-enacting troubling episodes from the characters' lives in a fictional setting alongside a neo-realist authenticity.

Chapter 6
Screenplay Forms: Script, Treatment, Synopsis

> My greatest pleasures lie in having written and prepared nothing in advance, and as much as possible allowing situations to happen in front of me, as in a documentary. (Gaspar Noé 2018b, p. 3)

In screenwriting practice, a treatment is considered as a task-based output. A screenwriter develops a treatment as a part of the feature film screenplay in which they summarise the narrative, 'typically delivered in "Master-Scene" format – with slug lines and numbered scenes, with scene description and dialogue' (Munt 2016, para. 18). A film treatment is a 10- to 20-page document that describes how the screenwriter wants to utilise 'dramatic' and 'cinematic' techniques to unfold the film narrative's 'story, plot, or character ideas' (Screen Australia 2009, p. 7). It does not include dialogues; rather, it offers a mental image of the screenplay's narrative for the user or reader without confining the characters to a limited or specific space and location where things happen. Treatment is different from synopsis because synopses of either a sentence or a paragraph provide the 'most concentrated version possible of the story, or at least its key events … whose story it is (the protagonist), what his or her problem is, what they do about it and the outcome' (p. 3). Similarly, outlines demonstrate only the 'cause and effect and show the flow of the narrative as it will be told on screen' in three to eight pages, which is less detailed than a treatment (p. 5).

The treatment is also associated with French auteurs. According to filmmaker and screen theorist Alex Munt (2016), French New Wave auteur Jean-Luc Godard 'has displayed a fondness for the Treatment form over time and long been sceptical of the feature screenplay as both a financial and creative document' (para. 17). Munt has proposed that the film treatment works 'as a more poetic, malleable and open screenplay document than a feature-length screenplay' (para. 3).

French national film culture has a tradition of screenwriting practice whereby the treatment form can secure finance for film production. By contrast, in the

UK, the USA and Australia production funding is typically triggered by submission of the full screenplay. Besides, in France, legally and traditionally the film culture bestows the *droit moral* or moral right to filmmakers as auteurs to present their edited versions of the finished film, which are typically the last instances of the 'screen idea'. According to the French Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques (SACD, Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers), under French law *Article L113-7*,

> An audio-visual work is considered as a work of collaboration, i.e. a work that several authors have contributed towards to create. Natural persons who have created the work as joint authors are recognized as authors: script, dialog, adaptation, soundtrack, adaptation of a pre-existing work and film direction. (SACD n.d.)

According to Dominique Giocanti (1975), moral rights refer to the natural person as the author, while the film director holds the author's right as a person because 'moral rights are not only personal', they are also incontrovertible (p. 629). The difference between the notion of authors' rights (France) and copyright (USA) is in the French legal interpretation that rights belong to a natural author, whereas in the American context, from the beginning of a film's production the producer owns all rights through the copyright law – a scenario also applicable to UK and Australian filmmaking. The French *droit moral* 'allows the director to decide the final version of a film shown in cinemas – as an integral part of their moral rights' (Jewell n.d., para. 13).

Gaspar Noé's proclivity to use the brevity of the film treatment as a production guideline is reminiscent of Jean-Luc Godard's penchant for using film treatment and improvising dialogues on the location. Noé's affinity for using a treatment or *micro scénario d'origine* (a term he used in an interview with Juliet Reitzer (2021)) as a guideline instead of a complete, tightly written script in conjunction with improvisation on the set defies the convention. A treatment allows Noé to script with both camera and creativeness. It works as the underlying structure of his poetics of transgression.

This affinity or tendency towards producing and directing a film based on treatment advantages Noé's production strategy in three ways. First, treatment works as a direct note giving a material idea about the production to sales agents, producers, and distributors. French film culture gives Noé the freedom to develop his artistic identity rather than push him into more commercial aspects concerning filmmaking, which is why Noé did not make any film with the American film production system (Noé quoted in Pinto & Long 2021). As a branded auteur with a proven track record, Noé usually convinces financers and producers to fund his films without a full screenplay. Second, a treatment saves the time and labour of pre-production (e.g., writing a script) and allows shooting to begin as soon as funding is locked in. Third, in Noé's alternative screenwriting practice, treatment gives him more opportunities to play with the narrative and continue writing the script in post-production.

The French legal-moral system widens the space for Noé to present improvised, organic narrations that fill the visual cortex with psychological horror-melodrama under the themes of love and loss, and birth and death without him having bitter experiences with the financiers and producers. As discussed in Chapter 1, Noé can be categorised as a branded auteur who uses his authorial independence to transgress the (American) industrial norms of screenplay-based conceptual production activity. Hence, he often uses a minimalist treatment as a written, pragmatic document to share his screen idea with financiers, producers, actors and crew collaborators (Munt 2016). This aligns with the alternative screenwriting tradition of Godard and with Kenneth Anger's practice of basing a film on a general theme without 'a tight script' yet informed by the moving image artists' experimental and creative processes.

In experimental film, underground cinema, and moving image artists' sites of screen production outside the industrial screen production process, it is common for projects to have no script at all. Noé is a hybrid in this respect, participating in both worlds as a professional filmmaker and a nonconformist, using his brand identification to his advantage. Noé candidly links his film narratives to different film styles and genres as reference points when promoting and discussing them on festival circuits or sharing them with the press. Similarly, in contrast to American film production conditions, the

creative freedom found in the French film culture is related to the financial risks of the projects. Thus, Noé feels secure when any potential financer or producer says to him: 'You have this small budget, but you have carte blanche' (quoted in Grosset 2020, para. 8). In this sense, he can be seen as having strategic and pragmatic approaches to his cinema work. Whilst the poetics of transgression is identifiable across his oeuvre, he refines and recalibrates his poetics in relation to the means at hand.

Ian W. Macdonald (2013) has recommended that to understand the structure of the screenwriting process we need change the focus of inquiry from 'how [to] why has it been done this way; a question that raises yet more questions' (p. 4). In the case study that follows, I describe how I methodologically investigated Noé's poetics of transgression – as it relates to and is informed by his screenwriting practice and use of alternative screenplay forms – using his idiosyncratic screenplay writing practices in films ranging from *Seul contre tous* to *Vortex*. I focused on what Noé considers acceptable or unacceptable as a set of principles for using screenwriting poetics. In contrast to conventional methods of film studies, I also searched archival materials related to *Carne*, *Seul contre tous*, *Irréversible*, and *Enter the Void* to gather primary documents related to Noé's films and filmmaking processes, particularly his development of screen ideas and how those ideas change in the making of a film.

Case Study

The screen idea plays a vital role in determining the narrative architecture of Noé's screenwriting process and thus the narration pattern. With the aid of screen ideas, it is feasible to link Noé's idiosyncrasies, his screenwriting practices, and his films as texts within the primary approaches of screenwriting study. I aim to establish that Noé's screenplay development process is coupled with a variable production context grounded on available finance and technological access, which is why he takes the impromptu route. In relation to contemporary screenwriting scholars' theoretical propositions, I imply that treatment works as a container for Noé's screenwriting poetics, a visible vehicle of his invisible screen idea that expresses his desired mental images to his performers and (long-term) collaborators, all of whom have confidence in Noé's instant decision-making ability on the set. Besides, Noé also used a detailed

screenplay for *Enter the Void* to retain the integrity of the 'visual project'. The next section discusses Noé's mutable use of screenplay forms through his filmmaking journey from an early production (*Seul contre tous*) to his latest (*Vortex*). Based on archival materials related to *Irréversible*'s treatment and *Enter the Void*'s screenplay, I examine the screenplay forms to destabilise the textual criticisms of Noé as a provocateur and establish his poetics of transgression as a personal, signatory film statement.

Noé's Journey from Seul contre tous to Vortex

As mentioned in Chapter 2, in their early careers, Noé and fellow filmmaker and producer Lucile Hadžihalilović collaborated to write scripts for medium-length and feature narratives and to independently produce films from their production house les cinémas de la zone. From the beginning, neither was interested in following the ritual of the normative screenplay. They regarded script as a bare and lean structure of the story world on which one can construct a 'visual and aural world' (Wood 2005). For Hadžihalilović, a screen idea changes its shape during different production levels until it finds its place at the theatre. As a narrative structure, the script shifts away from the intended goals during location scouting and casting due to the difference between what the filmmaker has on hand and what they are looking for. Hence, the filmmaker must reorganise the script to keep intact the ingenuity of the screen idea. Then, 'shooting breaks the puzzle again and then editing and, at the end, what's left from the original script is probably what makes the heart of it' (Hadžihalilović quoted in Wood 2005, para. 3).

Prior to *Irréversible*, Noé followed the tradition of the manuscript-based screenplay in the production processes of his medium-length narrative *Carne* and feature-length film *Seul contre tous*. For example, *Carne* had a storyboard in addition to the screenplay (Figure 6.1). This describes its opening and subsequent sequences along with the camera position and shot design. During filming, Noé moved away from the storyboard and scripted the film with the camera.
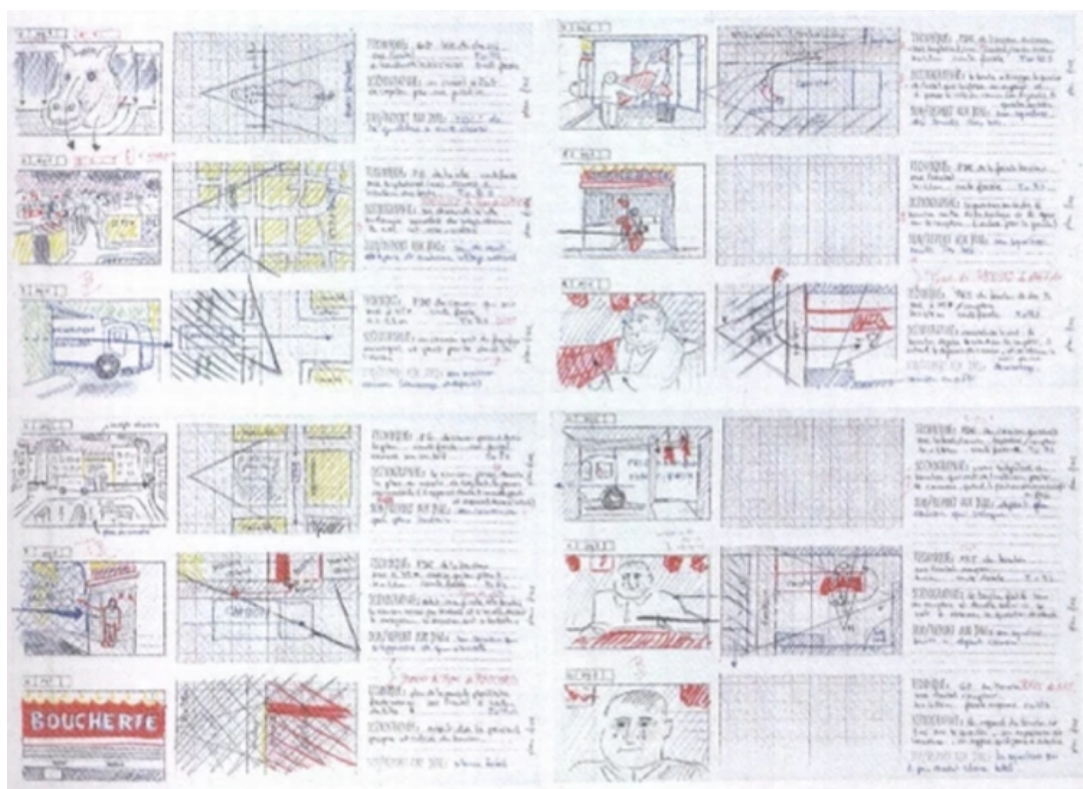
Figure 6.1 Storyboard of *Carne* (Le Temps Détruit Tou (n.d))

In the following years Noé envisioned *Seul contre tous* as a feature version of *Carne* until he wrote the first draft of the script and had to wait quite a long time to organise the finance for the sequel (Duane 1999). As a result, Noé moved to producing *Seul contre tous* as a distinct film, not a sequel. He wrote the *Seul contre tous*'s script with Hadžihalilović (Figure 6.3).
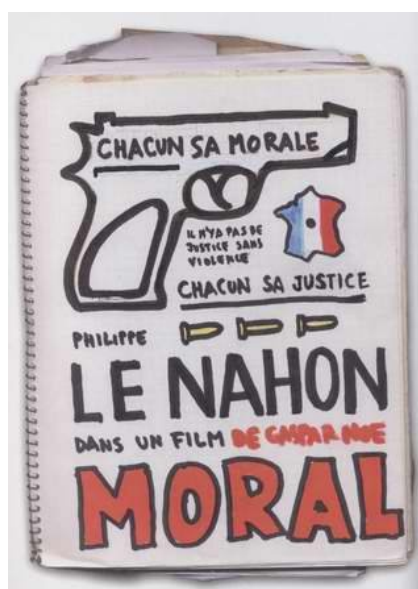
Figure 6.2 Screenplay of *Seul contre tous*

Figure 6.3 Lucile Hadžihalilović and Gaspar Noé on the set of *Seul contre tous* (*Le Temps Détruit Tou* (n.d))

This production started with the working title *Moral* (Figure 6.2), which Noé later transformed to *Seul contre tous* because he wanted to portray its screen idea as a psychological-adventure-thriller film about a lonely, desperate butcher to reflect the psychodramatic aspects of loneliness as a collective feeling. He also wanted to show the extent to which paranoia can turn a person into a desperate creature who blames others for their misfortune instead of taking responsibility for their own adversity. The 30 days of filming ran from 1995 to 1998. Hadžihalilović was doing the continuity script, and due to budget constraints[23] and a disruptive shooting schedule, it was hard to follow the screenplay chronologically (Tracks-Arte n.d.). In conversation with writer-director Paul Duane (1999), Noé asserted that he never wrote a 'real script' for *Seul contre tous* because the dialogues and voiceovers were all unplanned. The written document was close to a treatment with descriptions:

---

[23] None of the production crew got paid, including Philippe Nahon, although Noé managed to work with the same units throughout the production in *Seul contre tous* (Tracks-Arte n.d.).

So, the end was just described – 'The butcher doesn't kill his daughter; he says, "I love you."' When I saw the movie on the editing table, I decided I should add this voiceover at the end, to make things more clear. (quoted in Duane 1999, para. 8)

Noé has been producing films with a preference for the screenwriting treatment since *Irréversible*, grounded on the simple impulse that he can make a feature film based on a three-page outline (Suzanne-Mayer 2019, para. 10). He completed his three-page treatment (as a form of the screenplay), which contained 13 scenes and storylines happening one night in Paris in reverse chronological order, along with filming, in five-and-a-half weeks.

For *Enter the Void*, the screenwriting document took an uneven turn towards the more conventional form, reflecting the trajectory of Noé's approach to screenwriting forms and practice. Noé shared the writing credit with filmmaker Hadžihalilović (Grey 2010), but unlike Noé's other feature films, *Enter the Void* had a 100-page detailed description of storyline progressions and visual remarks without strictly maintaining the standard scriptwriting format. It took more than six months to complete the significant filming between two locations (Tokyo and Montreal). Its running time of 160 minutes is longer than other projects.

Noé shot the erotic melodrama *Love* in 2015, completing a five-page treatment and filming in five weeks (Suzanne-Mayer 2019). In this low-budget (US dollars two million) narrative film Noé wanted to portray the 'ecstatic, painful, addictive' side of love as he had experienced it in life (Graham 2015). He produced the film without pre-written dialogue, storyboard, or professional actors. Performers improvised the dialogues and sex scenes once Noé put them in position. Noé altered the chronological order in post-production; for example, in the treatment the opening scene was slated for somewhere in the middle of the film, but he decided to put it at the beginning (Kramer 2015). In addition to developing *Love* with a brief treatment, Noé maintained a nominal approach at industrial trade events, such as writing a minimal and enigmatic description for the teaser poster (Figure 6.4).
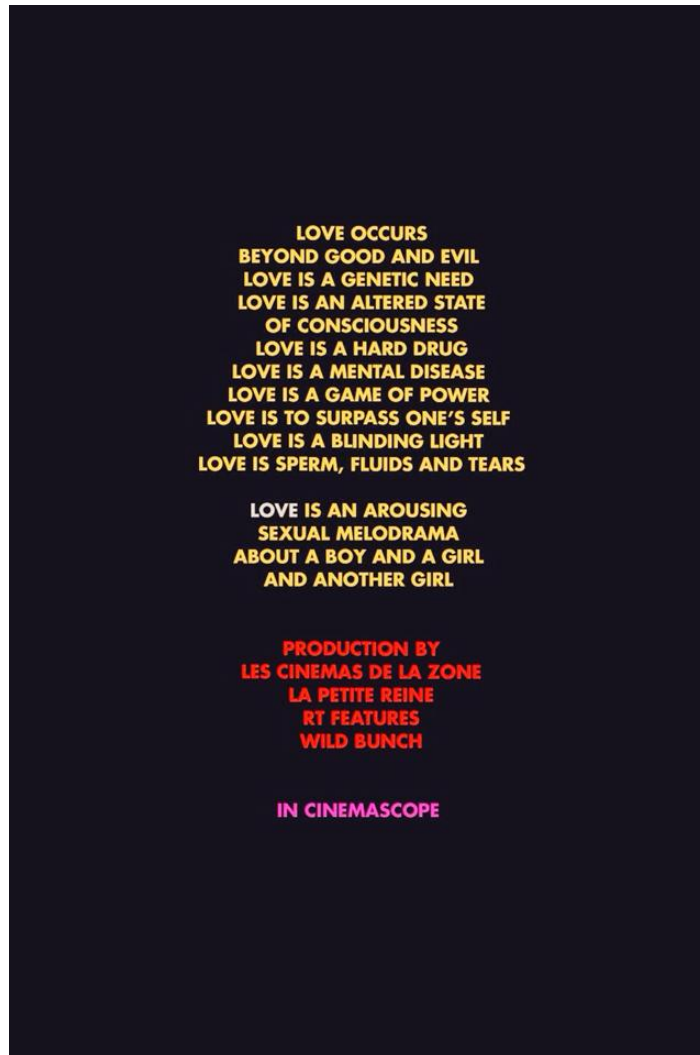
Figure 6.4 Teaser poster for *Love*

Wild Bunch, the producer and distributor of Noé's films, designed a one-page document[24] for *Love* as a teaser poster before going into production. At the Cannes Film Market in 2014, the teaser contained the initial first plot details for prospective investors, distributors and international sellers.[25] As per the teaser poster, these plot details represented the Manichean or dualistic nature and

---

[24] As per the source, *Love*'s teaser poster was written by Gaspar Noé (2022, pers. comm., 17 May).

[25] Image of *Moral* (*Seul contre tous*'s working screenplay), *Love*'s teaser poster and corresponding information are supplied and confirmed via email by *Le Temps Détruit Tout* (pers. comm., 28 April 2022).

sensational perspective of the film project in Cinemascope (not in 3D), but the potential representations of real sex in the film were withheld:

> Love occurs beyond good and evil. Love is a genetic need. Love is an altered state of consciousness. Love is a hard drug. Love is a mental disease. Love is a game of power. Love is to surpass one's self. love is a blinding light. Love is sperm, fluids and tears. Love is an arousing sexual melodrama about a boy and a girl and another girl. (See Figure 6.4)

For Noé's dance-horror-melodrama *Climax*, his approach to screenwriting was even further reduced to a one-page outline without any written dialogues. As an instructive document, the outline conveyed the strategic planning of the production, such as the introduction, apogee, and conclusion. The filming was completed in chronological order. Subtleties of characters and details and facts of the story were determined through the lived experience at the filming location. For instance, Noé set a policy of doing a 'little workshop' during shooting where he re-viewed each take with the dancers on a giant television and asked for their opinions or feedback to 'motivate and inspire' the performers for the next scene. Noé even asked them, 'Who wants to kiss who? Who wants to sleep with who? Who wants to fight who?' (quoted in Jacobson 2018). Except for the beginning dance sequence, the remaining dance scenes were improvised on the set. Nina McNeely choreographed the scene where the dance group rehearses their performance. Of the 20 dancers, only Sofia Boutella and Souheila Yacoub had acting and dancing backgrounds. In addition, none of the dancers had any personal experience of hallucinogens, so to prepare them McNeely compiled several short video clips of people on PCP (phencyclidine) and Flakka (α-Pyrrolidinopentiophenone) to give her dance crew an impression of these controlled substances' main impacts (Crucchiola 2019).

Noé wrote a 10-page *micro scénario d'origine* for his most recent split-screen feature, *Vortex*. He had to extend it to 14 pages with descriptions of the characters as a part of the requirement to submit the scenario to CNC for *avance sur recettes* (advance on receipts) (Noé 2021). The *scénario d'origine* did not contain any written dialogues; these were improvised on the set. In the absence of scripted dialogues and depictions of characters' moods, Noé guided his

performers with realistic suggestions, such as 'an emptier look, wiggle your fingers, mumble' (Lebrun 2021, p. 5). He refined the improvised dialogues 'take after take'. He wrote that he would 'probably use a split-screen during a part, or the full-length, of the movie' (Pedrero-Setzer 2022, para. 31). Noé completed the shooting in around 25 five days whilst simultaneously editing the materials on the set every evening and weekend. During the editing, Noé realised the potential of using a split screen to manifest the shared loneliness of the protagonists. This intensive approach to production intermingled with post-production followed in the footsteps of Rainer Werner Fassbinder and the great 'Japanese directors in the 60s' (Noé 2021, p. 3).

This method of scripting and filming signifies that Noé is not only fascinated with representing cinematic chaos, anarchy, and pace on the screen, he also adheres to the ethos of transgression and uses non-normative screen production practices. As Noé (2021) shared, 'Why do slowly what you can do quickly' (p. 3).

Archival Research

Irréversible

Noé did not write a conventional screenplay for *Irréversible*. To understand Noé's poetics of screenplay, I will examine the film's treatment in reverse to elucidate how Noé's screen idea connects his production context and practice.

The production version of *Irréversible*'s treatment is not available, but a sample version was included in a booklet in the French collector DVD package, which I found in the *Le Temps Détruit Tout* archive (Figure 6.5). *Le Temps Détruit Tout* is a French bilingual, unofficial, and extensive website dedicated to Noé and his films since 2003. I follow the machine-translated English version, which contains 12 scenes in three pages (see Appendix C).

Noé puts together his screen idea according to the production context. In the case of *Irréversible,* he had time constraints, with six weeks to prepare for the production and writing the outline and another six weeks for filming in 2001.

Due to the unavailability of Monica Bellucci in Paris because of her involvement in *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003), Noé had to complete the shooting in August 2001. I discussed in Chapter 4 that through their interest in trust in Noé, the Bellucci-Cassel couple was onboard with Noé to make an erotic film, without knowing the title and without reading the script.

This celebrity couple was the film's capital, and the producers of *Irréversible*, Christophe Rossignon (*La Haine*) and Richard Granpierre (*Le Pacte des Loups)*, went to TV channels and managed to organise finance because of the names of this star cast. Noé developed a screen idea narrated with 12 master shots chronicled backwards. Instead of making erotica with a real couple, Noé changed the theme to rape-revenge in light of the 1970s iconic rape-revenge productions of American filmmakers such as Meir Zarchi, John Boorman and Sam Peckinpah.

At the beginning of *Irréversible*'s production, Noé had freedom of creativity, imagination, and expression. Without a traditional screenplay, he kept the scripting process open and followed his organic and improvisational reflexes during shooting. *Irréversible* is Noé's intuitive and transgressive response to the conformist form of 'brainiac movie' (Curry 2002). Time limitation was not the sole reason for avoiding the task of writing script, however; Noé was invested in exploring the freedom it afforded him. He used that freedom to compose the narrative as non-linear and to transgress the conventional norm of unfolding the storyline in chronological order. Noé had made *Carne* and *Seul contre tous* with linear storylines, but to explore his creative imagination in *Irréversible*, he chose to defy the traditional film culture and add a layer of 'chronological disorder' to make the film 'more melodramatic' and 'mental' (Sterritt 2007).

Figure 6.5 First page of *Irréversible*'s treatment

In a conversation with Hannah Magill (2002) when promoting *Irréversible* at the National Film Theatre, London, Noé shared a similar point of view to screen theorist Kathryn Millard (2014) about his filmmaking practice. Noé likens producing a film to composing music and orchestrating a concert. Noé envisioned his screen idea thorough treatment as a musical curve with a chaotic

introduction, an identical interlude, and a flat-line ending. To sustain the harmony and melody of *Irréversible* Noé corresponded with the actors regularly, observed their performative endurance, and accommodated their proposals to bring out alternative forms of the screen reality experience. This phenomenon makes room available for improvisation. Improvisation also signifies that Noé does not want to control the production; instead, he is comfortable with the uncertainty and nonconformist reality of the process.

By contrast, improvisation can also add an elusive momentum of challenge and rush to a production, along with the latent anxiety that things might get out of control. As Jean-Luc Godard (1968) said: 'He who jumps into the void owes no explanation to those who stand and watch' (p. 75). Through improvisation, screenwriter Noé breaks down the domination of a director or auteur on the set and switches to the role of guide, navigator and fellow traveller to visualise his screen idea in the production scenario.

On the film set of *Irréversible*, Noé asked the actors to improvise the dialogue corresponding to the description of the treatment. *Irréversible* is less verbal and much more visual than *Seul contre tous*. Noé kept following the open process and scripting while filming the treatment. He fixed the camera position, organised the mise en scène, and let the actors dive deep into their sub-conscious to develop their characters and dialogue. This was more of a discursive, collaborative approach where the actors 'never knew who would do what, and that made it full of life' (Noé, quoted in Cline 2002, p. 12). For example, the spontaneous improvisation contributed to breaking away from self-censorship, such as in scene 10 where Pierre asks Marcus how he makes Alex orgasm. That dialogue was not in the scene description (see Appendix C), and it caused a natural, awkward moment for the on-screen couple Alex and Marcus, who are also a real-life couple. As well, on the train, Alex's telling Pierre 'It is not the women who can't cum but the men who cannot fuck' is a bold critique of French masculinity that Pierre aligned with intellectually.

Noé employs collaboration through improvisation to write the script, but his actors also contribute their ideas. Nonetheless, as a screenwriter, Noé helps them realistically enact the proposed screen reality. For instance, in *Irréversible*

201

Noé left the glitches of improvisation in the final version to make the production more humane than a neat-and-tidy, near-perfect version of conventional film practice. An example is the party scene, when Cassel interrupts the dancing of Alex (Monica Bellucci) and two unnamed females and introduces himself with his real name Vincent instead of the character's name Marcus. Later in the same sequence, being drunk and high, Marcus tells Alex that his name is Jean-François. Cassel later admitted that he had stage fright every day because of the uncertainty and psychodrama of the on-set reality, yet he acknowledged it helped him appreciate his capability as an actor (Cassel, quoted in Magill 2002, p. 19).

Noé, along with his technical team and actors, progresses the production with the mind of an explorer rather than following production blueprints at the expense of organic interactions. He improvises with cinematography to visualise his screen idea. In *Irréversible*, Noé took on the duty of camera operator, which gave him the space or 'zone' on the set to improvise the screenplay with camerawork. He set the film's tone in the beginning with acrobatic and shaky camerawork and then persuasively used a Steadicam to realise fluid camerawork. This shift of camerawork also contributed to emphasising moods and emotions. *Irréversible* opens with dark colours like red, black, and brown, and gradually shifts towards vivid colours like green, yellow, and blue.

Contrarily, Noé had no idea about the duration of each scene. He 'didn't know if the scenes would last for 15 minutes or 3 minutes on paper, they all look the same length' (Curry 2002). He improvised the sequences between six and 20 times. His only limitation was the length of the film reel. *Irréversible* was shot on a super16 camera, which can contain 300 meters of film or continuously shoot up to 21 minutes at a time. So, he had to articulate the scene so that it was possible to complete filming it in one take within 21 minutes.

In relation to the screen idea and treatment, I will now analyse the rape scene (scene no. 8) from *Irréversible*, which shows the alternative and blended nature of Noé's screenplay poetics.

Rape Scene (scene no. 8 from the actual treatment of *Irréversible*)

> A little earlier: Alex, radiant in "disco-roman" outfit, says goodbye to a friend at the bottom of a building where a party is taking place. She has just taken the lead with her boyfriend, too weak when he drinks. She then finds herself along the ring road, looking for a taxi. Advised by young prostitutes sitting on car hoods, she takes an underground passage that crosses the boulevard. Inside, a couple is arguing. The man is none other than the one who will be next to the "false" Le Tenia when the latter is to be put to death. He starts hitting Concha. She calls for help Alex who takes her defence and then attracts the fury of the Le Tenia. Concha fled, spilling the contents of his bag in his haste. Left alone with Alex, Le Tenia threatens her with a cutter and ends up violently violating her. Taking advantage of a moment when he relaxes, Alex tries to escape. But Le Tenia catches up with her and kicks and punches against her.

When Noé was brainstorming the rape scene and thinking of a proper way to express the sadistic emotions and brutality to affect the viewers' consciousness he revisited his teenage days of watching Sam Peckinpah's psychological thriller film *Straw Dogs*. Seventeen-year-old Noé had to walk out from the show during the visceral and lengthy rape scene of the female protagonist Susan George (Amy Sumner) because it appeared 'too heavy to handle' (Sterritt 2007; Macnab 2002). *Straw Dogs* worked as a reference point for the rape sequence of *Irréversible,* where Noé wanted to visualise the pain, horror, and brutality of rape. Noé intended to regenerate the emotional sensation of violence in the screen reality. He also wanted to defy the screen culture of passing information about violence like rape to attack the audience cerebrally but in a desensitised mode. He shot the nine-minute rape sequence in one continuous shot (by putting together 60 little bits from a 20-minute continuous shot) with an invisible cut referencing the opening scene of *Snake Eyes* (1998) by Brian De Palma.

Noé improvised the sequence in the final output and moved the sign-off part from the party to the end of the next scene (the party scene), except that he

followed the outline as it was written for the film. The scene description does not contain remarks about the camerawork, lighting, or choreography. Even Noé did not have any prior idea about the extent of the scene. Besides, he replaced Alex's 'disco-roman' outfit (suggested in the treatment) with a party dress replicated from Monica Bellucci's closet by one of Yves Saint Laurent's designers. The silk dress added a sensual and corporeal perspective to the character Alex (Tang 2003).

Monica Bellucci as Alex and Jo Prestia as Le Tenia (or Tapeworm) played an essential role in setting the scene's tone and attitude. Noé did the camera for the rape scene, shooting the scene six times over two days and finding 'the results were great the first day but even more perfect on the second' (Macnab 2002). Both actors became more comfortable and confident over time, which helped them dig deeper into their characters and the scene. Bellucci dominated the scene as the rape victim, and Prestia as the assaulter had to follow her lead to complete the filming. Noé, as a director-producer, offered Bellucci total freedom to decide how long and how much she wanted to improvise the scene with solid and truthful acting. She prepared herself for the scene using visual references from *Deliverance* and the *Accused* (1988).

Prior *to Irréversible*, Monia Bellucci had performed in the title role of *Malèna* (2000), directed by Giuseppe Tornatore and set in the small Sicilian town of Castelcuto during the Second World War. In *Malèna*, Bellucci executed a scene where she faced pitiless sexual harassment by the women of the town. Malèna had established relations with German soldiers to survive wartime poverty as a beautiful single woman whose husband was assumed dead in the warzone. At the end of the film, the Germans were leaving, and American soldiers were entering the town, welcomed by the happy faces of the citizens. The envious women storm the hotel where Malèna was staying with the Germans and dragged her onto the street, ripping off her garments, beating her, and trimming her hair. Once they were done, defenceless and bloodied, Maléna shouted out in agony and embarrassment before the women cast her out of the town. Bellucci has acknowledged that from the experience of *Maléna* she learned that acting is not delivering dialogues but rather speaking with the body without uttering a single word (Mottram 2014, para. 3). This experience of

making sounds of moaning, crying, and humiliation helped her physical performance of pain and humiliation as the rape victim in *Irréversible*.

In both *Irréversible* and *Malèna* the female lead had to face a brutal and horrific reality because of her beauty. As we see in the rape scene, Le Tenia verbally assaults and threatens Alex with a knife while swearing at her. Most of these dialogues were less improvised and more the result of the collaborative discussions between Noé, Bellucci, and Prestia before the filming in the tunnel. Noé gave hints and suggestions to the actors about the dialogues, such as instinctively asking Prestia to say 'Call me Daddy' to Bellucci to make the rape scene more shocking and male dominant, as well as to damage Alex psychologically. Throughout the scene, Le Tenia calls Alex a 'high-class bitch', 'little whore', and 'cunt' and wants to rape her anally because she has a 'nice, tight, fag' ass. In the provided treatment, there is no indication that Alex would be raped anally. Noé improvised the scene (from vaginal rape to anal rape) the day before shooting with consent from Bellucci (Smith 2011).

Noé later revised the scene in post-production by adding blood to Monica Bellucci's face and the rapist's penis through special effects (Peary 2002). By drawing the rapist character as gay, Noé transgresses the heteronormative convention of the rape-revenge film. Le Tenia's character also defies the rules of same-sex attraction and demonstrates a vulgar display of power and domination. Jo Prestia's previous experience as a rapist character also helped him collaborate with Bellucci to make the artificial and simulated rape a credible event. Besides improvisation and collaborative authoring, Noé intentionally added some dialogue, which later generated a circular shape of the narrative in the film's final version.

As Noé shot *Irréversible* in chronological order, when filming Alex's and Marcus's bedroom scene, neither he nor the actors knew that Alex would be anally raped in the rape scene. However, in scene 11, we do see Marcus whispering in Alex's ear, 'I want to fuck you in the ass' (1:22:23). In a conversation with film critic David Sterritt (2007), Noé shared that he intentionally asked Marcus (Vincent Cassel) (with prior consent from Monica Bellucci) to say that to Alex. So, when the viewers experience the horrible,

traumatising anal rape scene earlier in the film and encounter the references to anal sex again later, but this time whimsically in a domestic, romantic, and secure setup, it exhibits a contrastive shade of male gender roles with a fetishist and sodomist perspective.

Enter the Void

I found *Enter the Void*'s early draft (sixth draft) screenplay from *Le Temps Détruit Tout* archive. It was included in the French collector DVD and Blu-rays, which is out of stock now. A copy of the draft is currently available on the e-book and audiobook subscription site *scribd.com*.

The screenplay of *Enter the Void* evolved in form and concept over the years and through different productions. Noé considers the deployment of the flying camera and long takes in *Irréversible* were a pragmatic trial run to determine the effectiveness of those filmic tools for *Enter the Void*. Technically, Noé had the screen idea of *Enter the Void* before he made *Carne* and *Seul contre tous*. He started drafting the script for *Enter the Void* in the 1990s (Noé, quoted in Le Vern 2009, para. 1). It took him around 15 years and several drafts to reach the shooting draft for the production. This was a more detailed screenplay with a description of the scene and dialogues. Noé also described the intended visual effects in detail to convey to the creative collaborators his mental imagination as a director. Along with the screenplay, Noé appended a 'graphic booklet' containing generous reference materials such as 'paintings, photographs, excerpts from films and music videos' to provide even more explanation (Dennis 2010). Noé put serious effort to develop that graphic booklet:

> I did a lot of research watching films. I watched a ton of shorts, clips, read books and looked at paintings, put together a whole visual file and a very complete collection of excerpts (from *Tron* to *2001* or Peter Tscherkassky's short films, for example), that gave an idea of the type of film I wanted to make. After we filmed the shots, we gave them to graphic design artists and animators and tried to recreate the desired effect with the real images. (Noé, quoted in Schmerkin 2009, p. 10).

The first draft of *Enter the Void* had a chronological timeline and linear narrative. After the rigorous drafting phase, Noé wrote a 'much more abstract and euphoric' screenplay (Noé, quoted in Schmerkin 2009, p. 6). In the meantime, *Irréversible* received finance, which also paved the way for Noé to do a 'trial run' for *Enter the Void*, where he 'tested ideas with flying cameras and long takes' (p. 9).

Noé left hints for his next project at the end of *Irréversible*. In scene 12, a poster of *2001: A Space Odyssey* is significant for two reasons. Being a cinephile, Noé liked to introduce his male protagonists as cinephiles who had lived experience of using drugs. In *Irréversible,* the poster symbolises Marcus's film appreciation and his interest in stimulant drugs such as cocaine. The second reason connects Alex's pregnancy to the picture of the child on the *2001: A Space Odyssey*'s poster to connotatively announce that she is expecting a baby. This is followed by a bombardment of stroboscopic light with white-and-black flashes. Thematically, Noé initiated *Enter the Void* at the point where *Irréversible* ended.

Noé provided no details about where the narrative would occur in the first script of *Enter the Void*. He only knew that it could be a big city anywhere in the world. In the early days of writing and brainstorming, Noé initially set the narrative in the Andes Mountains of South America. Then he shifted it to France in the second version. Noé wrote another version set in New York City before locking in Tokyo as the destination for the production.

Noé started to develop the story when he was 25 years old and ultimately produced the film when he was 47 (Rose 2010). In between, he completed more than six drafts of *Enter the Void*'s screenplay. It is evident that every change of location had a cultural connection to Noé's personal growth and maturation. For instance, his early choice was the Andes, which is the world's longest continental mountain range and the land of shamanism that forms a border with his ancestral land Argentina (Mount Aconcagua) and the other Andean states Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela (Adventure Alternative n.d.). France was where Noé grew up as a migrant during the 1970s and he had closely observed its socio-cultural dynamics. Besides, Noé wanted to have English-speaking characters, which made New York City a strong

contender. He had also lived there with his family in the 1970s, from three months old to five years old. For him, New York was his 'first perception of what a city was' and at that time it had a vibrant psychedelic drug scene. With the eventual disappearance of psychedelic drugs, Noé decided not to film in New York (Harris 2010, para. 12).

Noé's award-winning short film *Carne* and critic award-winning debut feature *Seul contre tous* had been distributed in Tokyo, the former in 1994 and the latter in 2000 (IMDb n.d.). Noé had been to Tokyo for promote these films before he selected the city as one of the significant locations for *Enter the Void*. Neon-lit, cyberpunk Tokyo won Noé's heart because it would align well with the film's phantasmagorical, dreamlike sequences and vibrant colours. In addition, historically it is not unusual to show American expats in Japan.

Furthermore, Japan and France have a long history of exchanging film cultures, beginning with the invention of the cinematograph by the Lumière brothers (Philips & Stringer 2007, p. 3). The significant number of famous and notable French films imported to and distributed in Japan had prompted numerous Japanese to become entranced with France and French film through to the post-war period (Modern Japan and France 2014, para. 1). Hence, Noé silently achieved two goals by setting the narrative in Tokyo: first, Buddhism has a significant influence on Japanese culture and society, which would connect with the premise of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*; and second, having an established audience for the film would reassure the producers that their investment was safe.

Noé always had total freedom concerning his creative expression and experimental aspects. The French *droit moral* and the affirmative support of his producers encouraged him to 'make the film as strange as possible' as long as he did not exceed the production budget (Cannes Film Festival 2009, para. 4). Initially Noé faced difficulty and had 'several false starts' with different producers; for example, in 2005, Pathé Renn Productions announced their involvement with *Enter the Void*, but production did not progress. Later however, Wild Bunch showed interest and joined the production (Harris 2009, 17; Polizine & Veille 2021).

Screenplay at practice

Noé interprets his screen idea through script, cinematography, and digital post-production. He does not follow the script as a blueprint for the production. For *Enter the Void*, he aimed to use a screenplay to represent 'deformation of perception' and reproduce 'human perception, even during sleep, pain' (Schmerkin 2009, p. 10). The purpose of drafting the screenplay was to use the script as a detailed and descriptive outline or creative document for achieving his aural and visual intentions. For this discussion, I will investigate the structure of *Enter the Void*'s screenplay.

While Noé did not follow the industrial format and norms of screenwriting for *Enter the Void*'s screenplay, it does contain conventional elements such as scene heading, scene number, transition, character, action, dialogues, and shot type but in a compact form, all explained within the description of the scene (see Figure 6.6). Noé broke down and numbered the scenes in chronological order. He branched out the story scene after scene from the title sequence until the end and left room for improvisation. He also followed a hybrid mode of screenwriting called 'scriptment', which is 'written in the style of a treatment (it includes "zinger" lines of dialogue) and is presented within the architecture of a scene-breakdown' (Munt 2008, para. 50). Noé wrote the prose summary of the film's story with necessary technical and thematic explanations, which transgresses the conventional incentive of using scriptment as a 'lean document activated for (micro-budget digital) production' (Munt 2008, para. 73). Instead, he used this alternative format for big-budget films like *Enter the Void*.

Figure 6.6 *Enter the Void*, excerpt scene 1 – Subjective Vision

Noé envisioned the film as a person (Wigon 2010a) and treated the character Oscar as his extended self, as if the film was unfolding in Oscar's brain. He wrote the screenplay and Oscar's dialogue in the first person. In the director's note, he gave a disclaimer about writing in the first person:

> In order to transmit this cinematic bias, the screenplay has been written in the first person, as the use of 'I' is better for describing the actions of the characters as perceived by Oscar, thus the spectator. (Noé n.d.)

If we look at the first act of the script, which contains nine scenes, we can see that Noé (during this draft) was primarily focused on dialogue, using psychotropic and other mental images as complementary elements. He wrote the script as a form of an uninterrupted story through the scenes. On paper,

210

Noé described the scenes from the perspective of 'what is happening', whenever necessary explaining in the director's note how he wanted to visualise that image. He was particular with the colour spectrum. For example, in scene one after the word 'Enter' appeared on the screen, Noé intended to generate a colour scheme of 'heavy orange, white and purple hazed clouds' over a 'bright red sky', which shows that he knew this script would be written in the postproduction table. Having an objective of writing the script in as much detailed as possible, in scene 2 (Figure 6.7) Noé also mentioned the chaotic mix of sounds from the surroundings of Oscar's flat in Tokyo:

> Street sounds breeze in through the window. People talking. A song in the distance. A truck rumbling by. Steam outlets blech out sweaty puffs against the wall of my room. And from somewhere further off come the droning vibrations of the neighbouring dressmaking workshops.

2 - SUBJECTIVE VISION
(INTERIOR STUDIO, DUSK)

Moira picks up a white cardigan and some sexy clothes from one of the two single beds and puts them into a bag. The room is littered with both our belongings.

9

Moira puts her cardigan on and checks the time on the alarm clock. Then she picks up her bag and hurries over to the door.
Moira - See you later.
She turns round in the doorway and smiles at me. But my eardrums suddenly block and the sounds all disappear. Silence. We look at each other.
Then the sounds come back.
I snap to and look away.
Me - See ya.
The door closes behind Moira.
I go over to my bed and sit down.
I look for a stub of a joint in an ashtray I swiped from a bar.
I light it.
I stretch out and smoke it, staring at the ceiling.
A few seconds later I stub the filter out in the ashtray.
Then my hand gropes for the light switch on the wall and flicks it.
The light goes out.
Blackness.
Street sounds breeze in through the window. People talking. A song in the distance. A truck rumbling by. Steam outlets belch out sweaty puffs against the wall of my room. And from somewhere further off come the droning vibrations of the neighboring dressmaking workshops.
The sounds slowly disappear...

Figure 6.7 *Enter the Void,* excerpt scene 2 – Subjective Vision

Noé reinterpreted the *Taxi Driver*'s mirror scene ('Are you talking to me?') for a second time since *Seul contre tous* to reveal the Oscar's face in scene 4 in *Enter the Void*. In his draft, Noé wrote about the presence of people of color on Tokyo's Street, such as in scene 6 when he mentioned through the perspective of Alex that 'further down the street some cops are inspecting the IDs of two black guys'. Noé also imagined the streets of Tokyo as shabby. These remarks show the substantial difference between the Tokyo Noé visualised while he was writing the script and the version he presented in *Enter the Void*'s final production. Throughout the first act Noé specifically explained the characters' body language, gestures, and performativity in relation to the storyline.

Noé originally intended to have nine characters in *Enter the Void*: Oscar, Moira (Oscar's sister), Alex, Tito, Victor, Mario, Nelly, Suzy, and Oscar's parents (Figure 6.8). Later, he dropped the character Nelly and changed the character Tito from Oscar's cousin to Alex's friend. Noé wrote the main characters, Oscar and Moira, as being in their twenties and lost. Oscar and his friends are junkies. Oscar and Moira both have interests in older people; Oscar had physical relation with 47-year-old Suzy (Victor's mother), and Moira's lover Mario is 38 years old, which suggests both characters are looking out for maternal or paternal figures. Oscar's close friend Alex is 30 years old and trying to guide Oscar. The common thread linking Alex, Victor, Oscar, and Moira is that they are all traumatised by their pasts and are nihilistic, yet they have passionate souls.

With subjective vision, Noé wanted to mimic the visual experience of eyes through blinks and panoramic movement. He had another intention when shooting the scenes from the first minute until scene 9, where Oscar gets shot and his soul departs his body: to capture the transcendental and contemplative texture, there were to be no 'ellipses' and no changes of shooting speed and focal length. Noé asserted:

> In fact, if today the film is longer than two hours, it's because the sequences happen in natural time. If we try to accelerate this natural time; we get results that are too informative and situations that fail to fully communicate the desired effect, (Schmerkin 2009, p. 9)

Noé is a trained camera operator, and that background is reflected in his scriptwriting practice. Instead of describing the location and time of the day as a scene heading, he uses subjective vision, shot type, flashback or temporal devices as scene headings to describe times and places parenthetically. Noé did not mention the transitions between scenes in the screenplay of *Enter the Void*, but he heavily emphasised the director's note before or after every scene from the beginning until scene 14. According to Millard (2014), 'Writing a film does not begin and end with a written document but continues through every phase of the production' (p. 140).

Noé structured the screenplay of *Enter the Void* by transgressing conventional rules, and he built upon his internal logic of representation through abstract moving images inspired by the transcendental and cosmological films of Jordan Belson and the 'absolute films' of James and John Whitney (Moritz 1999; Ebiris 2010). Noé wrote the screenplay with images, sounds, and narratives based on his idea of astral projection using film language that was governed by his rules rather than using conventional film language. From that point of view, *Enter the Void*'s screenwriting process can be broken down into three parts that deal with three interlinked narrative systems to produce mental images: screenplay, cinematographic means, and special effects (Figure 6.9).

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Oscar: The main character, 22 years old, Moira's brother. Brown hair, thin, nervous, with no fixed profession. Like most of his friends, he likes psychotropic drugs. Orphaned at the age of six, he is a loner. The arrival of his sister turns his life upside down. He would like to restore the special relationship he had with her but doesn't manage to. He gets very jealous when Moira starts having lovers.

Moira: Oscar's sister, 20 years old. Brown hair, beautiful and hardened. She is stronger than Oscar whom she does not seem to hold in very high esteem. She is very independent and possibly even selfish. The reasons behind her actions will never be clear. Right after she arrives in her brother's studio apartment, she takes a job as a sexy dancer in a techno nightclub.

Alex: A friend of Oscar's, 30 years old. Tall, bony, calm and intelligent. He lets people come to him. Nobody noes how he earns a living but he sculpts stone objects and shares a loft with Tito, Oscar's cousin. He is the only person Oscar admires, due to his pseudo scientific and esoteric knowledge.

Tito: Oscar and Moira's cousin, friend of Alex, 20 years old. Transparent and cheerful, he has very simple relationships with the people around him, including Oscar, whom he likes but doesn't really understand. He paints very colorful paintings.

144

Victor: School friend of Oscar's, 22 years old. Fat, shy and weak, he has violent feelings towards Oscar who holds him somewhat in contempt. Feeling betrayed by Oscar, Victor will in turn betray him.

Mario: Moira's lover, 38 years old, barman at the "Power", the club where Moira dances. Stocky and dark-skinned, he is honest but rigid in his relationships with people. Moira loves him for his reassuring masculine strength. He is indifferent to Oscar's jealousy.

Nelly: Tito's young girlfriend, 16 years old, fresh-faced, gentle and quiet. She is blond with a milky complexion and rounded features. Tito loves her a lot. She doesn't know Oscar very well but admires Moira's character.

Suzy: Victor's mother, 47 years old, beautiful, flirtatious and physically confident. She seduces Oscar, more out of a wish to be desired than love for him. Her relationship with her son is pretty complicated.

Oscar's parents: They die in their thirties when Oscar is a child. Very tender with their children, we catch only fleeting glimpses of them during Oscar's memory flashbacks, but their marriage seems to be generally free of conflict.

Figure 6.8 Excerpt of *Enter the Void* list of Characters

214

3 - DREAM
(INTERIOR DREAM TOILET STALL, NIGHT)

An image with a dark, badly-defined outline forms...*
I open a door and go into a recess with peeling walls. A
slab in the middle with a hole bored in it evokes a squat-
down toilet. The slab is splattered with purplish stains
and dribbles. I step back towards the door but it has
disappeared, now replaced by a smooth wall. The stains
seep outwards, as though absorbed by the walls. My eyes
are drawn back to the hole in the middle of the slab. It
has grown.
Above me, a white light bulb starts vibrating, as does the
whole room. This phenomenon is accompanied by a loud
whistling sound.
I fall down on the ground with my head at the edge of the
hole. Looking down it I suddenly see the foundations of
the building receding further and further away, as though
a strange force had abruptly wrenched the room away
from the building it was in. It's like the room is soaring
vertically at great speed. The lights of the city disappear
dizzily beneath my eyes. The axis of the room starts to
tilt. I suddenly look away: two hands grab me by the feet
and pull me towards the door that has reappeared and is
now open...
A phone rings loudly somewhere.
The dream dissolves...

* Director's Note: During this dream sequence, Oscar will, like in most
dreams, perceive the silhouette of his own body in the foreground, dark
and blurred, within a kind of semi-subjective vision. The corners of the
image will be darkened.

11

Figure 6.9 *Enter the Void*, excerpt scene 3 – Dream

Being a collaborator-director, Noé finds improvisation a formidable aspect in
his poetics of transgression. According to Murphy (2019), Noé's 'emphasis on
spontaneity and improvisation formed a subversive discourse' against the
overall rigid perspective of film production culture (p. 38). In the case of *Enter
the Void*, he followed the hybrid conduit of impulsive and structured
improvisation (Murphy 2007, 2019). This approach allowed him to work with
'non-traditional performers', and he 'invited the actors to add their own
dialogue and actions'. In addition, Noé preferred not to rehearse before
shooting, instead putting the actors on the set and asking them to 'do the scene
as they consider doing it naturally', which allowed him to retain the naturalness

of the performance and find the right spot to set his camera to capture the action (Harris 2010, para. 20).

Similar to *Irréversible*, Noé compares his improvisation practice to a concert. Nevertheless, different from *Irréversible* because it was like 'improvising a concert without ever having been the conductor of the orchestra, or ever having played an instrument (Schmerkin 2009, p. 10). VFX occupies a fair share in *Enter the Void*'s narrative dynamics, and Noé depends on Buff Compagnie to achieve the desired visual narration of a near-death experience and psychedelic trip. Noé set a 'certain musical taste' (concerning the concert metaphor) at the production's initiation, although the players of the instrument or the VFX team took the production to the next level (Schmerkin 2009).

Noé was open to spontaneous suggestions from his VFX team. He candidly attested that without the cooperative support of VFX artistic director Pierre Buffin and his teams, the 'mental special effects' captured the experimental and avant-garde moving image practice in *Enter the Void* would not have been possible to visualise (Schmerkin 2009). The VFX supervisor, Geoffrey Niquet, said of Noé's production practice:

> Working with Gaspar was much more of a collaboration than being a vendor. Even if he did have an idea of the precise effect he wanted, he always left room for another interpretation in the search for new ideas. (quoted in Failes 2010, para. 3-17)

Gaspar Noé's filmography manifests a persistent and elusive stylistic signature of cinematic transgressions. Between *Seul contre tous* and *Vortex*, a 23-year feature filmmaking career, Noé's screenwriting documents have become more informal. He has continuously examined the essentialities of written screenplays, pre-conceived dialogues, and scripts to produce films with celebrity casts, big production houses, and sellable futures. With his screen ideas and open-ended, organic, nonconformist, and non-linear screenwriting practice, Noé treats the cinematic frame like a painting filled with episodic situations and methodically composed with sentimental, melodramatic, and melancholic visuals, instead of telling a 'story' of a hero or an achievement. This

transition demonstrates how these different screenwriting forms work as primary containers of his transgressive and creative vision to fuse the conventional contrast between fiction and documentary film. As Noé evolves with his productions, his movement towards informal screenplay signifies that he wishes to fulfil the fantasy of producing an 'epic movie' as an intense documentary without a script and of finding or convincing people to perform in it but 'with all the tools that cinema can offer' (Noé 2021; Kohn 2021).

Chapter 7
Moving Image Poetics: In the Zone with Gaspar Noé

> Creating new images is always far more rewarding than copying your idols. Try to achieve the films you dream of seeing, not the ones you've already seen. (Gaspar Noé, 2015b)

Gaspar Noé graduated from a 'pure technical trade school', the École Nationale Supérieure Louis-Lumière, with a major in cinema and photography (Palmer 2015, p. 15; see Chapter 2). The formal and material concerns of the moving image thus hold an essential place in Noé's visual poetics. His moving image poetics is generated by an exploratory approach inspired by both independent cinema and the practices of non-narrative, avant-garde, and experimental contexts. Through the moving image, Noé explores the sub-conscious mind and opaqueness of the mystery of life with the intention to blur the boundaries between dream, daydream, hallucination, and reality. He also creates a zone by occupying the space with lighting in which he, his camera and his performers can roam freely to create a sense of playfulness through spatiality.

Noé's cinematography has been viewed as chaotic, hysterical, vertiginous, or immersive by film critics and scholars. John Christopher (2003) of *The Times* observed that Noé's transgressive visual style has 'forced the entire film industry to rethink yet again just what is, or is not, permissible' (para. 4). Noé employs unorthodox camerawork to represent a 'definitive story following *cause and effect* aesthetics' (Terenzoni 2019, p. 8, italics in the original). His innovative camerawork and visual style echo video art specialist and curator Barbara London's (2021) observation that 'something new does not emerge out of anywhere, there are roots and connections' (para. 4). For Noé, there are two primary roots. The first lies with his committed cinephilia, of which he says, 'I care much more about what film I'm watching in a day than what food I'm eating' (quoted in Peacock 2020, para. 7). The second is his preoccupation with the chaos theory, which which asserts 'chaos is not a disorder but the actual order of things in a permanent state of mobility' (Galenson 2016, para. 7). Film scholar Tim Palmer (2015) has suggested that Noé's 'French cineliteracy' helped

his 'artfully combining methods traditionally at odds with one another', such as fusing horror genre stylistics with 'certain devices of experimental film' (p. xv).

In the case of Noé's poetics of transgression, creative collaboration and improvisation-based filmmaking are not limited to the screenplay with the performers only (see Chapters 5 and 6). They extend to the screen production process in which Noé operates the camera, has a rigorous collaboration on film lighting and colour with the cinematographer, provides direction to his assistant camera operators, and orchestrates kinetic camera movements to render an immersive view of time, space, and reality. His inclination towards technical improvisation offers space for co-operation between creative persons to augment the 'fictional' story by recording 'moments of truth and expression' through the reflexive and spontaneous decisions taken on-site (Noé, quoted in York 2018).

Improvisation and collaboration are crucial for Noé to generate layers of realism to reproduce tangible and haptic textuality through moving images (Nicodemo 2013). As academic Tanya Krzywinska (2006) and film scholar Mattias Frey (2016) have observed, Noé's 'improvisation', as a core mode of practice, has the dual purpose. The first is combining realism with the 'rawer and more disturbing' (Krzywinska 2006, p. 42) production of moving images to channel psychological horror carried from the actor to the audience, and the second one is to perceive the representation of transgression with a realism that will generate raw shock value.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Noé's use of melodramatic film narration through a representation of sentimentality, excess and heightened reality, along with his affection for melodrama, drives the composition, materiality, and texture of his cinematic moving images. Noé combines the dramatic and sensuous impacts of the story world with an artisanal painter-like approach when composing the frame, augmented through considered layers of shadow, colour, darkness, and light to create an innate horror of the character's psychology. He strives to deliver 'sentimentality through music' (Noé, quoted in Vice 2015).

In this chapter, I demonstrate that Noé's poetics of the moving image is governed by four qualities: an ethos of amateurism; the embodiment of excessive, baroque or mannerist cinema; experimental, avant-garde filmmaking practice; and a code and commitment of collaboration that empowers his poetics of transgression. His moving image poetics also carries a *dispositif* where he manifests the respective screen idea and cinematic idea (of each project) in the production of the moving images. Noé works with the *dispositif* to transgress the filmic fiction's logic of consequence and to take the viewers as near as possible to the language of dream, nightmare and hallucination and pragmatic vision of survival. Noé's restless exploratory approach to moving image poetics – composition, light, colour, materiality – is essential for the shaping of his transgressive narratives, as discussed in Chapter 4.

In this chapter I survey how Noé's practices of conceptualising and combining different sources of artistic inspiration from film and moving image history generate his poetics of transgression. I also suggest that notions of amateurism in film practice inform his poetics of the moving image, including camera movement, use of natural light, and neon-noir colour palettes for film lighting. I seek to show how Noé has developed an idiosyncratic poetics of the moving image and explores aesthetic economy at work in his production of cinematic images. Reflecting on Chapter 5 also articulates how Noé's approach to film style and mise en scène serves to destabilise notions of the 'branded auteur' in French national cinema.

I aim to elucidate the influence of amateurism inspired by non-industrial models of film production, such as the experimental, structural, and avant-garde cinema forms, in Noé's construction and assembly of moving images. I also explore the effect of Noé's specific production praxis, such as his collaboration with the cinematographer and his 'scripting' (or writing) with the camera to generate a Technicolor, polychromatic style of film materiality and texture. I also explain how these phenomena have contributed to Noé's personal lyricism and film style by developing bold, demanding, and intoxicating poetics of the moving image across his oeuvre.

Gaspar Noé's Personal Cinema

The octogenarian independent filmmaker and artist Kenneth Anger has been one of the key influences for Noé's fascination with multi-hued, psychedelic moving images (see Chapter 3). Anger has always disregarded himself as a part of any Hollywood industry; instead, he deems himself an 'artist who works outside of the system' (Israel 2011). Anger says that 'film is a craft that can be compared with weaving tapestry, a tapestry of personal lyricism and visual modality' (quoted in Noé 2011). Anger championed the necessity of personal lyricism through 'personal cinema' in 'Modesty and the Art of Film' published in *Cahiers du Cinema* in 1951, later republished in 2004 in Alice L. Hutchison's archival book *Kenneth Anger*. In that article, Anger (2004) argued that the Hollywood blockbuster and other normative films have a fixation with the grand, epic, and enormous scale production, as if the producers believe 'the bigger is better' (p. 62). For Anger, the manufactured production of Hollywood films has betrayed the freedom and impulsiveness of the screen medium. By forging the production process, it lost the aura of 'capturing the immediate moment' and 'the initial value as drama, the power of catharsis' (Anger 2004, p. 63). To reinstate that lost aura, freedom, spontaneity, and unpretentiousness of the medium, Anger suggests that 'personal cinema' can be the vehicle of the intimate view of the filmmaker, and to achieve that view a filmmaker needs to renovate the 'persuasive poetics of lyrical image' and know how to shape the reality to attain the mental picture. As an occultist, Anger (2004) precisely conveyed:

> I wanted my personal cinema to transmute the dance of my interior being into a poetry of moving images that would create a new climate of spiritual revelation where the spectator, forgetting that he or she was looking at a work of art. (p. 63)

In 1959, experimental and amateur filmmaker Maya Deren wrote an article, 'Amateur vs Professional', in *Movie Makers Annual*, the official publication of the Amateur Cinema League, which later compiled in a book titled *Essential Deren* in 2005, along with her other writings on film practice, artistry, and inventiveness. Through her writings, Deren meticulously re-examined cinematic techniques, philosophy, and ethics, and advocated the possibilities

and potentialities of working with non-narrative form as an alternative to the conventional method of filmmaking. Deren (2005) implied that an amateur filmmaker must have the economic freedom in the production budget to afford 'failure' because without having failed, it is not possible to create 'original and creative work' (p. 158). With the idea of amateurism, she proposed a model of artistic and physical freedom: freedom from the expectation of generating revenue, freedom from the configuration of conformist narrative structure of telling a story, and freedom from tripod or liberty of 'physical mobility (p. 18). Models of film practice based on notions of amateurism offer opportunities for filmmakers for idiosyncratic intention, that is, to display their curiosity in innovative technology, theme, or style without emphasising commercialism. For Deren (2005),

> Instead of envying the script and dialogue writers, the trained actors, the elaborate staffs and sets, the enormous production budgets of the professional film, the amateur should make use of the one great advantage which all professionals envy him, namely *freedom*– both artistic and physical. (p. 17)

Filmmaker Alain Cavalier is one of Noé's select cinematic advisers and film companions in Paris (The Ion Pack 2019, para. 8). The 90-year-old veteran filmmaker is recognised for his 'open screenplay process'.[26] Cavalier's film style journey has followed the opposite route of his own filmmaking career. Film theorist and critic Adrian Martin (2001) observed the paradigm shift in Alain Cavalier's career:

> Cavalier's trajectory, relatively late in his life and career, has been fascinating: from commercial cinema in the '60s through to the Bressonian minimalism of *Thérèse* (1986), then to full-blown independence as artist and self-distributor (the astonishing *Libera Me* [1993]), and from there to explorations of the digital feature form, beginning with his intimate diary *Le Rencontre* (1996). (para. 1)

---

[26] The open screenplay process is an open-ended and permeable screenwriting structure (Munt 2010).

As an autobiographical, personal and diary filmmaker, Cavalier freed himself from the conventional requirement of scripts and professional actors. He treats himself as a screen-labourer dependent on technological development. His filmmaking and narration style have been directly affected by the technical metamorphoses of his tool, the camera. Over the years, Cavalier has moved from celluloid camera (industrial technology) to digital camcorder (consumer technology). He visually records the surroundings not as a director but as a medium to bring together 'the process of filming with the process of living' (Clark 2010). Cavalier states, 'Only if his tool is transformed, his thinking becomes transformed too' (quoted in Hinojosa 2014). The camera becomes an intimate observer of Cavalier's model of 'chamber cinema', capturing a pictorial essence and materiality akin to the still-life painterly form. In conversation with French academic and literary critic Jean-Louis Jeannelle (2009), Cavalier said that 'to hold a camera is to be an instrumentalist' (p. 11) and filming is sending a desire towards a person who sends it back, transformed, to the camera (p. 6). His first-person, autobiographical film practice 'worked as a double movement, both interior, turned towards him, and exterior, directed towards the world' (Hée 2019, para. 2).

Noé's conceptualisation of the camera as an extension of his body derives from a strong desire to deliver a cinematic vision to his audience that is accrued from cinephile encounters, dreams, phantasms, and psychedelic experiences. He treats the tool not as a *caméra-stylo* or camera-pen (as defined by French writer-filmmaker Alexandre Astruc) but rather as a 'sculpting tool' (Tarkovsky 1987). In other words, with the camera, Noé performs like an artisanal sculptor to shape, and curve cinematic reality, time, space, rhythm, and melodic pattern. His moving image praxis follows an 'open' process that is in flux and draws form and shape through the dialogue between himself and his regular set of creative collaborators. This affords him a freedom of choice in relation to using mobile or static cameras, fluidity, movement, lighting, and experimental colour palate renditions. This open process augments a layer of uncertainty and ambiguity within what is, for many, the constricted reality of industrial film practice.

The human body and psyche are core to Noé's moving image poetics. He creatively uses 'actuality'[27] or generates a deep sense of the 'real' with long takes and close-ups to describe his characters' trauma, love, loss, agony and, above all, the yearning of survival. Noé's non-realist, swirling, wobbling, and kinetic camerawork embodies the 'visceral' aspect of physiological movement and suggest the volatile immersion of the psyche, materialised in the form a 'personal lyricism'[28] that connects the medium to sensuality. To understand Noé's approach to the camera is to trace his education back to the École Nationale Supérieure Louis-Lumière, which prepared him more as a potential camera assistant, cameraman or chief camera operator for the French film industry than as an auteur screenwriter and director.

In summary, the three sources of Noé's screen poetics of the cinematic moving image: the personal cinema advocated by Kenneth Anger, the productive amateurism espoused by Maya Deren, and the instrumentalist approach emphasised by Alain Cavalier. While on the one hand Noé practices within a mode of industrial cinema, his transgressive 'voice' is given by a commitment to outsider, non-industrial modes of moving image production. It is this balance that few filmmakers have been able to achieve – working within the system while retaining their vision and voice inspired by an eclectic and radical film history.

In the Zone: Excessive Mise en scène and *Dispositif*

Regarding Noé's poetics of transgression, his mise en scène is not limited to the organisation or staging of filmic space with characters and objects, but is driven by camerawork, lighting and the choreography of performers in relation to camera movement. As film scholar Adrian Martin (1992) has pointed out:

> In truth, there is never a discrete 'theatrical' level in the actual practice of
> filmmaking: everything that is staged (and lit) is done so with a

---

[27] According to Aristotelian scheme, actuality signifies a motion, alteration, or activity which is happening at present and converges the potentiality of an action to make it real in the deepest sense (Polansky 2007; Sachs n.d.)

[28] Kenneth Anger (2004) suggested the term personal lyricism as a contrasting idea of impersonal stylisation to define certain creative freedom, which provides power to capture 'stimulating real experience' and an 'intimate view' through the lens of the camera (p. 63-64).

particular vantage point, a particular angle – or rather, a concatenation of various perspectives and angles – in mind. (p. 92)

Noé's strategy in relation to mise en scène then raises questions about what type of mise en scène approach he follows. According to Martin (1992, 2013), two dominant approaches of mise en scène historically exist in film discussion and criticism: expressive and excessive approaches. Martin suggested and used these approaches to mark the differences between the existing schools of interpretative film criticism. Here, I employ Martin's terminologies to demonstrate Noé's mise en scène, in film practice, which is distinct from the way Martin used the terms concerning the discussion in a film criticism sense. The expressive approach signifies the classical norm of expressing and embodying the theme of the narrative (drama or comedy) through 'the scripted properties of plot and character, and then, more decisively, the integrated, systematic ensemble of stylistic choices made by the director'. Exemplars of expressive approach are Max Ophuls, Nicholas Ray, Jean Renoir, Kenji Mizoguchi, and Clint Eastwood (Martin 2013, para. 4).

The excessive approach, which gained attention and theoretical foundation in the 1960s and 1970s, is linked with the rise of the systematic study of culture, human relationship, signs, psychoanalysis, and neo-Marxism. This approach is therefore theoretically associated with the post-structuralist intellectual movement. An excessive approach to mise-en-scene marks cinema as a 'heterogenous' text and prioritsies the surface of a film which serves to highlight the materiality of the medium (Martin 2013). The film is treated as a text 'formed more by storytelling habit, stylistic convention and the reigning cultural ideology than by any specific, artistic intent' (para. 6). Filmmakers allied with the excessive approach are Jean-Luc Godard, Federico Fellini, Raúl Ruiz, Pedro Almodóvar, and Vincente Minnelli (Martin 2013).

The excessive approach treats style or form as an autonomous aspect of the film that is not bound to serve the thematic purpose, as happens in the expressive norm. Instead of sitting at the deep level of the expressive, implied meaning and style occupy the forefront of a film and perform as a material gateway to the narrative. Here, materiality works at two levels; it connotes that the film is a

'constructed, composed work', and it produces both effects and emotional affects 'such as shock, surprise, delight, anxiety, arousal, contemplation, and introspection' (Martin 2013, para. 8).

Concerning the relationship of the form (or style) to content, or mise en scène, in Noé's poetics of transgression, I claim that he favours the excessive approach. I observe that Noé's narrative preferences, such as melodrama and horror, stylistically fall into the trope of excessive mise en scène due to their exaggerated dramatic nature (see Chapter 4). His inclination to melodrama paves his way to produce an extreme, agitated and hysterical exemplification of body, uncontrollable emotions, along with other elements such as chaotic camera work, stroboscopic lighting, and infrasonic sound within the zone. Film scholar Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has suggested:

> In the melodrama, where there is always material which cannot be expressed in discourse or in the actions of the characters furthering the designs of the plot, a conversion can take place into the body of the text. (quoted in Martin 1992, pp. 113-114)

Because leaning toward the excessive approach had helped him, Noé took creative motifs from the lost tradition of baroque cinema, early cinema, and the avant-gardes, in addition to melodrama and horror. His excessive approach builds upon the notion of enthusiasm, excess, chance, uncertainty, and risk of getting failed. To support his viewpoint, he frequently refers to the works of Kenneth Anger, Stanley Kubrick, John Boorman, Sam Peckinpah, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Andrzej Żuławski, and Brian de Palma.

Noé also creates a zone (or space) for the camera in which he sets up the scene, arranges the props and organises supplementary dimensions of mise en scène as an entity (which also adds meaning to the narrative) according to his desired camera position. Noé depends less on the tripod and prefers to work with a handheld camera, a Steadicam and a crane to generate an unruly rhythm that would represent the inner psychological turmoil of the characters through the melodramatic-horror narrative.

Nevertheless, what does Noé want to achieve with excessive mise en scène? As Martin (2013) has highlighted, through materiality as a 'screen phenomenon' the excessive approach surpasses the classical liability of interpreting the theme by attempting to a reach a realm of conceit 'akin to what Alfred Hitchcock, Brian De Palma and other directors have described as pure film' (para. 8). Noé prioritises 'camera' in the mise en scène and emphasises technical aspects like colour, lighting, VFX, graphics, and soundtrack, as well as understating the industrial custom of working with known faces or star casts, written dialogues, and architecture sets. This formal stance of Noé implies a vision close to the idea of pure cinema (with impure actions). For example, in his desire to make a chaotic or catastrophic cinema that will look like reality, the characters will appear as part of the ongoing reality and will be thrilling and emotionally impactful. This is similar to Brian De Palma, who makes 'pure cinema' by exploiting the possibilities of the medium and creates 'movement, spectacle, action, intrigue, suspense, catastrophe … a constant, finely balanced dance between the opposing energies of chaos and control' (López & Martin 2018, para. 4).

For film scholar David Bordwell (2010b), the German expressionist filmmakers of the 1910s to 1920s pushed the 'American model of visual storytelling' towards idiosyncratic directions to portray the character's 'inner experience' or psychological state of mind. To reinvent the American model of cinematic storytelling, these filmmakers reinvigorated and distorted the formal aspects of mise en scène (e.g., acting, dramatisation, situation, lighting, costume, make-up) but followed the traditional approach of camerawork and editing to subjectivise the character's inner world and make the 'external world reflect the characters' psychic turmoil'.

Around the 1920s, French impressionist filmmakers such as Abel Gance, Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein, and Jean Renoir contextualised French melodrama and took a different stance on augmenting subjective reality on the screen with the camera (see Chapter 4). To these avant-gardists, 'framings, angles, distorting lenses, changes of focus, slow-motion, and other cinematographic techniques [like] split-screen' became the primary tool to convey the 'optical and mental point of view' (Bordwell 2010b, para. 8) of the

character instead of articulating the psyche of the character through mise en scène predominantly.

Noé's poetics of the moving image are situated within the national cinema context where French impressionist filmmakers were bolder in their drive to create an emotional and existential experience through the language and materiality of film, with a preference for mood, temperament and impression over plot – the drivers of classical Hollywood narratives. This tendency of overshadowing the plot re-emerged again in the French film culture during the 1980s and 1990s through the cinéma du look movement, which 'favours style over substance and spectacle over narrative' (Pillet 2020). Bordwell (2010) also highlighted that late-1920s Soviet filmmakers used montage or editing techniques, in preference to mise en scène or camerawork, as a striking feature of their narrational approach. With this salient trait, the Soviet filmmakers emphasised the consequence of 'graphic and rhythmic montage, as well as cuts that sacrificed spatial and temporal continuity to eye-smiting impact'. If, as Martin (1992) highlighted, we look at these developments through a 'holistic lens', it is possible to say that mise en scène, camerawork and montage are indispensable elements in producing the critical, exact moment of creation. Martin (2014) cites Jean-Luc Godard's observation regarding 'the early intuition of a possible rapprochement' between mise en scène and montage:

> If to direct is a glance, to edit is a beating of the heart. To anticipate is the characteristic of both. But what one seeks to foresee in space, the other seeks in time. ... Editing, therefore, at the same time that it denies, announces and prepares the way for directing; they are interdependent on each other. To direct is to plot, and one speaks of a plot as well- or poorly knit. (p. 95)

Being a producer, director, camera operator, editor and cinephile, Noé is familiar with the debate about 'direction and mise en scène', as well as the contrasting conceptions between montage and mise en scène being crucial elements in shaping the meaning of a narrative. These multiple roles allow Noé to develop a personal lyricism and be playful with the script across different production phases to achieve the intended dramatic impression. With this

dexterity he can shape his mise en scène as a rhythm of film narration. Here, Noé transgresses the orthodox perspectives and synthesises formal aspects of mise en scène, camera operations and montage to embed the 'sensual revelation' in the narrative by re-establishing the 'primacy of the moving image' for an intense audience experience. Noé holds the authority to revise the mise en scène, alter the camera position at the location, and rearrange the rhythm of the narrative at the editing table to generate 'an experience which gives rise to emotions that would lead audiences to underlying truths' by evoking 'characters' psychological states' (Leskosky 2016), rather than re-telling a general truth about an existential crisis.

Eventually, Noé's practice of excessive mise en scène led to the expansion of mise en scène as *dispositif*, a concept that alludes to a stylistic game-like methodology that frequently includes the 'canny invention'and 'imposition of constraints' (Martin 2013). According to Martin (2011),

> A *dispositif* is not a writing or painting from a formless real; nor is it something arrived at, on the set, spontaneously, intuitively or mystically. It is a preconceived, or organically developed, work of form. In this sense, the idea of *dispositif* allows us to conceive of cinema in the holistic way that mise en scène analysis once promised, but failed to deliver: it is about the integrated arrangement of form and content elements at all levels, from first conception to final mixing and grading. (para. 55)

Martin considers *dispositif* a concept that reflects a formal setting with spontaneity and playfulness. This is similar to what David Bordwell (2008) suggests as 'parametric narration', which is 'a rule-bound form of cinematic presentation that can be found in the contemporary cinema or art pieces of Chantal Akerman, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, or Tsai Ming-liang' (Paulus 2015). Engagement and practice with *dispositif* are also traceable in the works of Robert Bresson and Yasujiro Ozu, whose individual aesthetics are the consequence of 'self-imposed restrictions' such as deliberately impassive acting, the avoidance of 'shot/reverse shot structure,' or nominal camerawork (Martin 2011).

The camera not only occupies a crucial space in Noé's excessive mise en scène, it also acts as a pivotal entity in the *dispositif*, with the primary aim of framing transgressive moving images. In his poetics of transgression and moving image poetics, *dispositif* plays a critical role, and for each production, he deploys a different *dispositif* to add a distinctive pattern to the film. With the camera, Noé concurrently frames visceral and extreme moving images and invites an approach of what I would interpret as 'internal transgression' within his production team by imposing formal restrictions on camera position, movement, and lighting. This internal transgression also pushes him and his collaborators to go further or transgress the individual limit to create a precise moving image with certain visuals that they would not produce in a conventional and normative film production context. *Dispositif* allows Noé to be the architect of the excessive mise en scène more comprehensively and holistically in reference to his cinematic ideas. In turn, these cinematic ideas provide a conceptual and aesthetic guide to the *dispositif* for designing the lighting, placing the performers, creating mood and colour, positioning his camera, as well as insights about post-production. I will discuss Noé's use of *dispositif* in this chapter's segment on the mobile camera.

Amateurism and Personal Lyricism at Work

Noé flirts with the boundary of international art cinema practice, his interest in film practice defined by a wilful amateurism, personal lyricism, and technological invention. For him, amateurism and personal lyricism appear to be interchangeable concepts. Amateurism provides him with the vigour to look beyond industry norms of visual style and production of cinematic moving images. In Maya Deren's (2005) article *Amateur vs Professional*, mentioned earlier, amateur filmmakers are portrayed as advanced cinephiles and passionate lovers of the medium who do 'something for the love of the things rather than for economic reasons or necessity' (p. 17). This provides the space for the amateur filmmaker to be playful when making a film or crafting visual images. Although Noé works within industrial cinema – which contributes to his livelihood – he uses the mask of amateurism to generate a creative space to explore transgression within the confines of the industrial modes of film production. In the following sections, I will discuss how Noé uses zone,

lightweight cameras, mobile cameras and fluidity as part of the screen poetics of his moving image production.

Zone

Noé's poetics of moving images is associated with the 'zone' or space he is filming. Noé wants to create a temporary autonomous zone to generate a spatial experience for the audience through translating his instinctive visions. To alter the perception of the zone or space and create spatiality, such as the red tunnel in *Irréversible*, the love hotel in *Enter the Void*, the bedrooms in *Love*, the abandoned school auditorium in *Climax*, and the tiny apartment in *Vortex*, Noé deploys lighting to illuminate the space, not the performers (Grosset 2018). Before Noé opens the camera lens to play with movement, he occupies the zone's architecture by playing with colours and lighting because human perceptions, experiences and observations about any space depend on how that space is lit and how or what the colour of the light signifies.

Noé aims to create a zone (as in the title of his production company les cinémas de la zone) where he can play with his instinctive camera movements and enable the performers to roam spontaneously. Serge Catoire, line producer of *Climax*, described Noé's need to have a free zone within the set:

> It was crucial that I managed the production in such a way that shooting was on task without compromising Gaspar's vision. I needed to construct a square, inside which Gaspar could be free. (Jacobson 2018, para. 11)

It is evident that Noé finds joy in his playful approach to the camera as a tool to shape mise en scène with fluid and immersive movements. On the one hand, he looks to the excessive, structural, experimental or amateur film practice precedents in the works of the artist-filmmakers he admires, such as Kenneth Anger, Tony Conrad, Paul Sharits, Jordan Belson and Maya Deren, but on the other hand, he situates these influences within commercial, genre and international art house screen production. In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I framed Noé as a professional filmmaker in the form of a 'branded auteur' (Elsaesser

1995) who situates himself in the French commercial industry, where entities fund a film venture with the intention of making a profit. Noé has also acknowledged that despite *droit moral* (see Chapter 5 and 6), the French film culture allows French narrative filmmakers insufficient freedom to do whatever they like with the medium (Kohn 2016). Therefore, with his limited autonomy, Noé opts to transgress the 'official' boundaries of film style by amalgamating the creative tropes of amateur, artistic and mannerist films within the French structure of commercial and professional filmmaking.

For Noé, the zone is the blank canvas upon which to invite chaos and identify the open order regarding each production; hence, he plays with spatiality to create emotions that transgress the typical conceptions and moods of the setting and offer an architectural experience built on the interactive correlation between light, camera movement, and space. Occupying the zone with light and shadow is also an essential factor for Noé because, without the presence of light, it would not be possible to display his cinematographic idiosyncrasies. The impacts of diverse patterns of colourful lighting and shaded space, coupled with playful cinematography enhance the viewing experience of the zone.

Lightweight Cameras

The camera is my toy. (Gaspar Noé, quoted in Dietrich 2010, para. 4)

Noé is obsessed with cameras and related technologies. He can stand behind or around the camera for an eight-hour shift and play with 'lightning and framing' (Hammond 2019). Like Maya Deren, Noé has echoed the significance of accommodating amateurism in his poetics of moving image: 'You are just doing something that you think is funny and playful, but inside the context of a commercial industry' (quoted in Pedrero-Setzer 2022, para. 13). Strategically, playfulness and exuberance with the filmmaking task is more important to Noé than making profit. He treats the camera as a toy to infuse the 'artistic and physical' freedom of amateurism with professional industrial practice to achieve the technical challenge he sets for himself in each film production. He therefore likes to work with lightweight cameras so he can spontaneously hold it or mount it on a crane.

Noé used the favourite camera of amateur movie makers – a Bolex – to shoot the live-birth event at a clinic for *Carne* (Shoukri 2015). For *Seul contre tous*, he picked up an Aaton XTR Prod Lightweight, which was famous among documentary filmmakers in the in the 1970s for being designed to use both on the shoulder and in the hand. Noé shot numerous master shots in the continuous shot of *Irréversible* with the smallest existing widescreen camera, the Minima Super16mm (Palmer 2011, p. 64). He continued to work with an Aaton XTR Prod to shoot Oscar's spiritual expedition in *Enter the Void*, adding the smallest and lightest sync sound camera, the Arricam LT, to film in low light.

As an avid connoisseur of 'the colours and the grain of negative film stock', Noé had a prognosis in 2010 that soon cinematography would shift to high-definition (HD) cameras and 'be able to get exactly the grain and the contrast of the negative film stock' (quoted in Perez 2010). This eventually become available. From the perspective of aesthetics, economics and formal purposes, HD technology allows Noé to minimise the cost of filming because he does not have to develop the negative stock. He can also watch the footage as soon as shooting is done and, if necessary, start editing the same day, which reduces the production timeline.

Noé switched from celluloid to digital motion picture cameras in *Love* and has since combined handheld camera movements and static shots. The idea of switching from 2D to 3D[29] occupied Noé's thoughts after he had filmed the death of his mother, Nora Murphy, in his native Argentina with a recently bought handheld 3D camera and looked at that footage upon returning to France. He decided then to capture *Love* in 3D (Graham 2015). Noé shared this revelation with Eliza Berman (2015):

> I thought they were really emotional, because I felt, with the glasses on, that she was really behind the screen – almost like a puppet in a puppet theatre (para. 5).

---

4 A 2D camera captures an image in height and width or two dimensions. On the other hand, a 3D camera creates an image in three dimensions by creating the perception of depth along with width and height.

After *Love*, Noé went back to 2D cameras. For *Climax*'s (2018) vertiginous camera movement and to represent the LSD-soaked feverish state of mind of the dance troupe, he chose the lightweight ARRI Alexa Mini because its 'symmetrical design permits filming in any orientation, including upside-down and in portrait mode, while multiple accessory points enable highly creative mounting solutions' (Arri n.d.). Noé used a large-format ARRI Alexa Mini LF camera for filming claustrophobic drama in *Vortex*'s (tale of a psychiatrist who is losing cognitive function. This camera is appreciated for low-light and Steadicam cinematography (Arri n.d.). And instead of using a 3D camera to generate certain emotive reality, Noé shot *Vortex* with two cameras to show the fragmented version of the reality with split screen.

By deploying the split screen in his poetics of moving image, Noé also re-contextualised the impact of COVID-19 on remote video-communication technology software such as Zoom (Noé, quoted in Shaffer 2022) (Figure 7.1). To contrast with the Zoom-screen reality, Noé put the characters in *Vortex* on a horizontal line to maintain the 180-degree rule in cinematography (Figure 7.2). Dario Argento (as the father) is on the left screen and Françoise Lebrun (as the mother) and Alex Lutz (as the son) are on the right screen. Noé was not alone utilising the pandemic reality: in 2021 independent filmmaker Andrew Bujalski produced a feature titled *There There* (2022) with a split screen, based on the experience of using Zoom in the lockdown period (Rizov 2022). British filmmaker Rob Savage also made a horror film called *Host* (2020) with Zoom during lockdown in 2020.

Figure 7.1 Zoom meeting (Eric Baker 2020)

Figure 7.2 Still image from *Vortex*
(Rectangle Productions – Wild Bunch International 2021)

Similar to Alain Cavalier, Noé has also explored different innovative advancements in camera technology. In 2011, he chose the Cannon EOS 5D Mark II dslr camera to shoot *Ritual* (2012) in a 'semi-improvised manner' as a part of omnibus film called *7 Days in Havana* (2012) 'with an ultra-reduced crew' (Polizine & Veille 2021). In 2014, he filmed *Love* with a 3D camera. Before starting that production, he participated in an omnibus film titled *Short Plays* (2014) with a short film *Shoot* (on the occasion of 2014 FIFA World Cup), for which he used six GoPro cameras joined to a football to capture the action of

the players and surroundings from the football's point of view. In 2017, immersive experience and virtual reality film production company Atlas V announced that they had joined with Noé to make an experimental VR film (Keslassy 2017).

Mobile Cameras and Fluidity

> Also, in my case some people say, 'The filmmaking is pretentious because you move your camera and use cranes.' Why not? Should you always put the camera on the same level and shoot flat? (Gaspar Noé, quoted in Sterritt 2007, p. 313)

Noé's idiosyncratic visual style of moving and fluid images is driven by his motivation to mirror dreamlike reality using modern camera technologies and eclectic, energetic, and restless roaming camera techniques. The camera appears as a 'character' or 'performer' in his poetics of transgression. In particular, mobile cameras for fluidity[30] and movement occupy a substantial space in his poetics of moving images. Herb A. Lightman, the editor of *American Cinematographer*, wrote an article in 1946 titled *The Fluid Camera*, in which he implied that the camera is the 'eye' of the viewer, and the audience perceives the screen reality as the camera sees it. According to Lightman's (1946) hypothesis, assuming the observer were 'really' present in the circumstance portrayed upon the screen, they would not simply remain in one spot and control their eyes from moving about with an end goal to follow the activity. Rather,

> The camera, as his [sic] cinematic eye, has a right to follow the same course of movement – drawing in, pulling back, narrowing down to some significant segment of the scene. It is as natural for the camera to move as it is for a character in the scene to move about the set. (p. 82)

---

[30] I will use the term fluidity or mobile camera in the nonexclusive sense to integrate all handheld, Steadicam, and crane movements which denotatively signify and suggest that cameras are not bound to a fixed point of view; instead, the camera is travelling through space to portray the materiality of the narrative.

Concerning Noé's poetics of transgression, we observe that his relentless camera movements and stationary shots play the roles of eyes that blink (in *Enter the Void*), follow (in *Seul contre tous*), and hover above (in *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void*, *Climax*, *Irréversible*, and *Love*). Noé transgresses the anthropocentric and classical model of filmic visual storytelling through his style of mixing mobile camera movements, such as handheld shots, Steadicam, and crane shots, to create an immersive visual experience. By amalgamating different sorts of mobile camera movements and long (continuous or unbroken) takes, Noé questions the 'official' norm of positioning the performers according to the camera position and reiterates the values of amateurism and documentary film style, where his camera follows the characters and their surroundings to capture an essence of reality.

In terms of working with his collaborative team, Noé often does not follow a storyboard on the set[31], which means the camera's positions and movements are not pre-set, but somewhat open-ended and fluid. He prefers to lead by instinct and takes the final decision about camera movement, framing, angles or positioning the casts at the last minute. Noé prefers to enter the set like 'the documentary directors go to location', not knowing what he will get from the location and the subjects but predicting they are 'going to scratch the surface to see which essential things can be captured by the camera' (quoted in Shaffer 2022, para. 14). As Noé works with a non-conventional script in the shape of an outline that becomes a guide for the improvised actions of performers and collaborators (see Chapter 6), he has the freedom to 'write the script' with the camera to generate a fluid movement on the screen that portrays the inner mental chaos of the characters in the outer world (Maras 2009).

Screen academic and researcher Jakob Isak Nielsen (2007) has distinguished between narrative motivation and compositional (or practical) motivation: 'When filmmakers speak about camera movement, they generally focus on motivation and not function' (p. 11). Narrative motivation means that 'a

---

[31] While Noé was producing and making *Enter the Void*, he did not have any storyboard but a detailed and descriptive script with a bit of dialogue. *Enter the Void* is a visual-heavy project, and to convey the treatment of the visuality and avoid confusion, Noé described the visual scape in as much detail as possible with elaborate camera movements (Schmerkin 2009).

particular camera movement must occur because of its contribution to 'the telling of the story' (p. 11), and compositional (or practical) motivation denotes meticulous mobile camerawork that validates the movement regarding the cause-and-effect logic. This remark about narrative motivation also applies to Noé's motivation behind his unsettling and thought-provoking poetics of moving images. For him, portraying the experiential journey of the psychologically distraught character's inner world through the outer world works as a narrative motivation. Also, the inner world's chaotic journey authenticates Noé's compositional (or practical) motivation. For instance, as a film school graduate who majored in cinematography, Noé knows that for traditional camera operators and cinematographers the storyboard is essential for first 'assembling' the frame, followed by the lighting around the settings.

Compared to more stable forms of screen production, Noé transgresses the traditional requirements of industrial filmmaking since his narrative motivation demands that the characters should be able to 'roam freely around the space' rather than illuminate the 'zone' with a traditional lighting setup that occupies space. He keeps the spotlights 'out of the way' (quoted in Shawhan 2019). Noé's stance of keeping space for the performers and the camera movement resonances with Charlie Chaplin's (2003) suggestion that his camera setup is

> based on facilitating choreography for the actor's movements. When a camera is placed on the floor or moves about the player's nostrils, it is the camera that is giving the performance and not the actor. The camera should not intrude. (p. 434)

In relation to compositional motivation, Noé's major priority or obsession is finding the right person as a 'key grip', not finding the perfect cast. He looks out for a key grip who can realise the technical and complex demands of mounting the camera on the crane, construct the frameworks, and set up the rigs for the gaffer department and the cinematographer to meet the narrative motivation of the fluid camerawork. While he was in Tokyo preparing for *Enter the Void* (which contains intricate camera movements and continues hovering shots through the wall), his biggest concern was 'getting someone who would be talented enough to figure out various ways of attaching the camera to the

crane' (quoted in Schmerkin 2019). In addition to that 'impossible technical feat', Noé had to design the production to be partly realised on the location and partly in the studio (which would limit the fluidity range).

Noé does not feel comfortable on the set with much equipment, which could 'prevent' him from rotating or rolling the camera freely and disrupt his narrative motivation of moving the camera to unpack the layers of the narrative. Japanese technician Akira Kanno's addition as a key grip resolved the 'nightmares where the crane got stuck' that Noé had during *Enter the Void*'s filming session (Schmerkin 2019). Here, Noé's moving image poetics relied on technical elements to deliver a complex mise en scène to the project.

Through camera movement and fluidity, Noé aspires to attain an immersivity that portrays or imitates the alluring and hypnotic side of psychological realism, which contains sensorial movements such as fear, anxiety, and trauma. Through cinematic immersivity or immersive experiences, Noé designs a vivid encounter for the audience. Immersivity allows viewers the 'suspension of disbelief' (Aristotle 1997) so that they can believe and enjoy the fictional world of Noé's screen reality without critically probing it. Whereas suspension of disbelief comes with an opportunity for a cathartic experience or chance to release tension through the dramatic work, Noé reduces that option by putting the viewers face to face with his cinematic work and into a confronting position with their own inner consciences (see Chapter 4).

Noé's immersive movement represents a virtual reality with a representative objective world view. His fluid camerawork reflects the French impressionist filmmaker Jean Renoir's perspective about reproducing immersivity and maintaining coherence between reality and screen-reality. Renoir suggested that the camera must follow the casts like a 'newsreel cameraman' to record the event as it is 'actually' happened (Bazin 2014, p. 171). Noé also follows this path to reduce the distance between fact and fiction and to create an immersive journey. Depending on the needs of the narration, he positions his camera on a shoulder, a Steadicam, or a crane so that it can 'drift in' and 'float back' by dint of fluid movement, flexibility, and freedom. It is as if Noé's camera is playing

the role of a traveling actuality that not only records reality as it is, but also takes a sentimental expedition to the core of psychology across the movement.

Noé's transgressive moving images highlight the strategic obliviousness of the untainted portrayal of the psychological and physical struggles of industrial film production practice. Noé inherited the mechanism of pure representation of reality from avant-garde manifestos and experimental filmmakers (Angelo 2012). He also borrows formal tropes (such as occultism, flicker film aesthetic, and stroboscopic light) from the avant-garde films of Kenneth Anger, Stan Brakhage, and Tony Conrad, Hollis Frampton, and Paul Sharits. Through the representation of reality informed by avant-garde and experimental films, Noé deliberately represses 'what everyone remembers' and remembers 'what most forget' (Harris 2007). What Noé represses and remembers is also connected with his cinematic idea-driven *dispositif*.

Noé's *dispositif* for each film production delivers a fantasy or fetish for reproducing favourite films or filmmaker's visual styles (Francois 2002). Like the stances of repressing and remembering, he chooses cinematic references from the trove of film history. He picks films that have 'provoked the extreme reactions of adoration or disgust since [their] release' (Connolly 2019, para. 2) and do not hold mythical or legendary status as traditional or arthouse films. Even so, they have niche followings for their artistic taste and confidence in defying traditional principle of image-making.

I will now discuss how cinematic ideas (see Chapter 5) have shaped the *dispositif* in relation to *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void*, and *Vortex*. The cinematic idea and *dispositif* of *Irréversible* were inspired by Mikhail Kalatozov's *Soy Cuba*, Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, John Boorman's *Deliverance*, and Sam Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs*. *Soy Cuba* defines *Irréversible*'s drive of forming kinetic moving-image bravura and master shots based 'work of form'; *2001: A Space Odyssey* sets up the narrative ground of travelling through time; and *Deliverance* and *Straw Dogs* provide the moving image style of the rape scene. Nevertheless, the screen idea of narrating a rape-revenge-tragedy backwards is taken from Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000) (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Noé has set a rule of not using artificial light, but he notably showed interest in doing *Irréversible*'s gay nightclub scene in red colour. He delimited the production strategy to 12 master shots because he had a preconfigured outline of only 12 scenes before the filming. In the beginning, the camera rotates 360 degrees but becomes more stable as the setting progresses in reverse from a restless night to an orderly daytime. Noé's camera unblinkingly witnesses Alex's rape but becomes unstable when Marcus and Pierre run through Paris to find and kill the rapist and then reach the Rectum Club. By keeping the camera on the ground and stable during the rape scene, Noé's shares the hostage situation with Alex. Like Alex, the camera also becomes numb. Previously in the film, from the scene in Alex and Marcus's bedroom until they meet Pierre at the station, Noé used Steadicam to make the camera movement unobtrusive. As soon as the narrative approaches the violent segment and the character starts acting like crazy for revenge, Noé' switches from Steadicam to a handheld camera. Thus, the handheld camera also becomes a senseless mirror of Marcus and Pierre's futile point of view. On-screen, the story unfolds in reverse, although Noé shot the film chronologically, which allowed him to 'manipulate the camera's emotional breakdown' (Davis 2021). Noé defied the typical tendency to exhibit rape as erotic or provocative, and revenge as a moral duty; instead, through the moving image, he visualised how an unexpected event suddenly makes everyone futile and fearless enough to take brutal actions.

Enter the Void is a synthesis of cinematic ideas taken from diverse sources: the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Robert Montgomery's *The Lady in the Lake*, Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*, Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the euphoric sensation of DMT, and analyses of Noé's perceptions of his own dreams (see Chapter 5). As *dispositif* for the project, Noé precluded the colour blue because he does not see blue in his dreams. Rather, he chose neon colours because those colours do not need much manipulation to produce a vision of a trippy, hallucinating experience or to expose those colours on celluloid under low light. According to Benjamin B (2020), Noé planned the camera design with a mix of handheld, Steadicam and aerial shots to shoot *Enter the Void* as 'one-shot scenes' because he 'wanted the whole trip to look like one continuous movement of the mind'. Also, before *Enter the Void* he filmed

Irréversible as a test run of camera movement and VFX with 'uninterrupted scenes'. In that sense, he tested the workability of the *dispositif*.

Enter the Void unfolds Oscar's near-death experience and his relationship with his sister Linda. Noé did not forget to show the intense affection between the siblings, which touches the normative limit of incest. Instead, he developed a complex visual narration with the story of the sibling's traumatic childhood and Oscar's desire to reincarnate as a Linda's child. *Enter the Void* offers a wide array of luminous moving images taken from the point of view of a floating camera (as 'astral hovering') and an aerial shot (of Tokyo), flying over the walls and juxtaposed with flashbacks. *Enter the Void*'s moving image suggests how reality is constructed from a relative point of view. Noé operates the camera and Technocrane as part of his *dispositif* because it gives him a holistic sense of the production and creative control at the editing table.

Enter the Void's hovering camera serves the role of Oscar after he was shot by police. Instead of observing the screen reality, Noé opts to show the reality from the perspective of the physically dead Oscar, whose soul has not yet departed the real world. With the colourful abstract image taken from structural and experimental cinema practice, Noé generates a transcendental aesthetic within the film and shows a vision of what life after death (arguably) might look like. Noé combines the neon-coloured moving images with blurry images to create 'mental film' resonance like Philippe Grandrieux's *Sombre* (1998) (Ursula 2010). Noé's *dispositif* for *Enter the Void* displays a hysteric, surreal, and immaculate display of aesthetics of disturbance and a metaphorical use of vivid colours to represent the character's mind-space (feelings, emotions, sentimentality, cynicism).

Noé's most recent production, *Vortex* (2021), thematically alludes to Brian De Palma's films, Andy Warhol's experimental film *Chelsea Girls* (1966), the melodramas of Japanese filmmaker Keisuke Kinoshita, and the use of the split screens in Paul Morrissey's *Forty Deuce* (New York 42nd Street 1982) and Richard Fleischer's *The Boston Strangler* (1968). Among these titles, Paul Morrissey's film was an adaptation of a theatre play with two cameras (Aguilar 2022). Noé watched *Forty Deuce* (1982) as a film school student. Since then, he

wanted to make a 'more powerful' feature film with a split screen from beginning to end. Before realising that ambition with *Vortex*, he made two fashion films with split screen: *Lux Æterna* and *Summer of '21* (2020). As with *Irréversible* and *Enter the Void*, Noé tested the potentiality of the *dispositif* he also applied to *Vortex*.

Vortex's screen idea was to produce a film with elderly people to represent their survival issues in their old age and to portray the overwhelming situations arising from their mental deterioration. Nevertheless, Noé wanted to make the film a psychological horror with 'melancholy, cruelty, and aesthetic inventiveness' (Noé 2021). The least physically violent but most psychologically intense of his films, *Vortex* involuntarily sets the parameter for his *dispositif*. Because he was shooting the film during the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited the presence of large teams, the switching between several zones and the setting up Technocrane, Noé recalibrated his moving image style by using a small team of creative-technical collaborators and casting only four characters to make a psychological horror with the split screen without excess. Using the split screen, Noé showed the disconnection between a person gradually losing her memory and the people taking care of her and surviving the situation in the 'intertwined tunnels' (called life) under one roof.

Noé also stood aside from operating the camera alone and shared the task with cinematographer Benoit Debie, who had another camera. Both framed and recorded each character's point of view individually, and they shot with the natural light source, not electric lighting. To avoid mishaps and to match the action in the split screen, they shot one character at a time with precise timing. Through *Vortex*, Noé has shown a vision of old age, progressive diseases like Alzheimer's, and psychological conditions like dementia, all of which conventional films seldom represent on screen. Rather than repress this issue, Noé has drawn from his personal experience to remind the audience of the psychotic horror and real terror of losing control over cognitive skills, and of how others feel when seeing someone close dying slowly in front of their eyes.

Through 'designed chaos', Noé explores or searches for a parallel world of possibilities and happenings by living in the moment to transgress the

normative visual style of film production. While Noé follows this golden rule of fluidity in his film production practice, it also animates an underlying notion of a shamanistic mix between the immaterial essence of emotions and the non-physical but material presence of moving image and sound, which creates the materiality of his poetics of moving image. Noé's poetics of moving image reminds us that film scholar Adrian Martin (1992) emphasised, '[Film is] at once mysterious and materialistic in matters of style' (p. 131). Noé transgresses the normative filmmaking practice by evolving his moving image poetics through constructing and deconstructing what he knows and desires to exhibit on the screen. He represses the dominant practice of conformity and champions instinct through his poetics of transgression.

Creative Collaboration: Between Benoît Debie and Gaspar Noé

> In cinema, it is essential. In general, the director and the cinematographer are a symbiosis, where you're a bit like the director's right arm. You also put in image his mind, his idea, his script. And yes, it is important. I always try to serve a director's film above all else … I do research, I think about how I could take the film visually, and I build it like that. (Benoît Debie 2015b)

In terms of the materiality of the moving image with regard to light, shadow, darkness, and colour, it is Noé's collaboration with Belgian cinematographer Benoît Debie that has developed and consolidated his poetics of moving image production. Alex Munt (AASA 2021) has proposed that contemporary cinema conveys an 'anxiety about light' as soon as cinema as a medium 'becomes less about capturing real moments, authentic moments and more about recreating imagined ones in virtual light not in sunlight'. I will now examine how Debie and Noé's creative collaboration navigates against the industrial practice of accommodating artificial light sources in the production zone and, most of the time, works with natural light sources or creatively employs 'anxiety about light' to reproduce authentic reality. To visualise Noé's interest in the cinematic perception of dreaming, I will frame the tripping on drugs, the eroticism, terror, semiconsciousness, and erosion of consciousness in technicolour in relation to the creative contribution of Debie. The play of vivid, neon colours, impenetrable

blackness, dark shadows, and opaque lights defines Noé's collaboration with Debie, the cinematographer of each feature film since *Irréversible*.

After graduating from L'Institut des Arts de Diffusion (IAD) with a major in 'Image', Debie worked as an apprentice with Jean-Pierre Dardenne and Luc Dardenne's (as the Dardenne brothers) film *Je pense à vous* (*I'm Thinking of You* 1992) (Feuillère 2006b). Debie started his career in visual media as a camera person at Belgian television station RTL-TVI, where he eventually became director of photography. During his 10 years at RTL-TVI, Debie played and manipulated studio lights, feels, and colours (Ligammari 2015) to write visceral, sensual, and shimmering stories. Debie's instantly recognisable touch resides in his skill with vivid colours, tints, and dynamic scenes. His exclusive style is a balanced mix of conventional norms and progressive techniques, which allow him to stretch the colours to the edges to fit the film's narrative mood and visual tone.

Being adroit with the lighting of characters from the dorsal and lateral perspectives and having a tendency to experiment with 'offbeat gels' have also led to Debie becoming a methodical collaborator with other filmmakers such as Lucile Hadžihalilović, Wim Wenders, Dario Argento, Harmony Korine, and Jacques Audiard, all of whom have a keen interest in developing a 'self-conscious style' to defy classical modes of image making using frontality and to experiment with dorsality or non-frontality (Baker 2016; Colvin 2017). After advanced cinephile Hadžihalilović discovered Debie's creative skill with luminous light in *Irréversible*, he then worked on her debut feature, coming-of-age, genre-bending *Innocence* (2004), which she turned into an 'insidious sense of repressed trauma' (Palmer 2015). Debie illuminated the frame of *Innocence* with sunlight 'by using reflectors, mirrors, in order to direct it where' they 'needed it' (Feuillère 2006a).

Noé first came across Debie's organic approach to film lighting in the short film by Belgian director and screenwriter Fabrice Du Welz titled *Quand on est amoureux c'est merveilleux* (*A Wonderful Love* 1999) at a film festival in Brussels in 1999. Noé was presenting his first feature, *Seul contre tous*, at that festival and Welz's short film was programmed to screen prior to it. Noé remembered

Welz's short because of its 'deadly image' of fantastic bright colours married with an intense shade of black. Debie did the lighting without projector light, and 'the decor was lit with just a bare bulb' (Grosset 2018) (Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3 Debie's colourful and dark lighting in *Quand on est amoureux c'est merveilleux* (*A Wonderful Love* 1999)

In 2001, when Noé understood that his regular cinematographer Dominique Colin was not available for *Irréversible* he needed to find other collaborators. Unlike most French cinematographers, who prefer the directional (spotlight), Noé prefers to work with a wider source light to keep the naturalness of the scene. He also has a phobia of using spotlights because that equipment occupies space on the set and can interfere with the freedom of moving around and with camera flexibly (B 2010). As previously discussed, Noé creates a 'zone' for camera and actor choreography, where improvisation is key; therefore, the lighting needs to serve this idea. Noé's phobia of conventional directional film lighting hails from his days at film school where students were trained on how to light 'low-sensitivity' film that technically requires many lamps, which generate heat and sweat on the set, requiring makeup artists to stand by for frequent touch-ups to the actors (Noé 2016a). As Noé's primary concern is freedom of creativity and flexibility for the collaborators on the set, he does not conform to the industrial norms of film lighting.

Noé saw a kindred spirit with Debie's approach to film lighting. He contacted Debie for *Irréversible*, which would become Debie's first feature film project as a cinematographer. Noé and Debie are united in their ambition to push limits, experiment with film technology, and critique the normative practices of industrial filmmaking. Debie contributes to Noé's 'artistic approach of a painter who builds his canvas and refines it by adding several layers' (Chaos Reign n.d.). For Noé, Debie has a fantastic sense of 'colours and shadow' and knows how to pop colour, light the location with the 'bare minimum resources', and treat 'black' as colour if he needs to leave entire areas in shadow or image in total darkness (Chaos Reign n.d).

Besides the primary requirement of bare lighting, as for *Irréversible*, and working with available light, Noé is also interested in coloured light sources such as the use of red colour bulbs in the camera field to achieve two opposite dimensions like bright and dark colours simultaneously. As already discussed, Noé's choreography of the camera and performers is to generate dynamic movement of elements and mise en scène, where the narrative fiction film shares with the unplanned movements of documentary film space. Debie (2015b) remembers that he had only light bulbs in his gear truck, not the more conventional industry style lamps, to illuminate the Rectum Club's fight scene (Figure 7.4). Because of the low-sensitivity film, he had to spray paint the white bulbs with red colour because the available red bulbs were too dim to expose the film. Debie used newspapers to block the outside light. Interior scenes of *Enter the Void* (Figures 7.5) and *Love* were also done with this technique. For exterior shooting, Noé frequently uses rim lighting techniques to hide the subjects' features in shadow with backlighting, and vari-colour filters to give outdoor scenes a dream-like feeling. Noé's film poetics are driven by this intersection between verité documentary indexes and psychologically unnerving interior spaces of the mind.

Figure 7.4 A scene inside the Rectum Club (*Irréversible* 2002)

Figure 7.5 The use of a vari-colour filter in *Enter the Void*

In relation to colour and tone, Debie (2015b) believes that 'each colour has a connotation', and he finds artistic and chromatic inspiration from the photography of Brazilian photographer Sebastiao Salgado (famous for documenting disempowered people and landscape) and of Australian photographer Bill Henson (recently infamous due to criticism of photography of teenage subjects). Both are recognised for their superb composition and striking use of black and white. During the production of *Enter the Void*, Debie and Noé had a rigorous discussion about Bill Henson's photography because black occupies eighty per cent of his photographs, compared to other colours,

and they also wanted to achieve that tone and colour in their neon-colour drenched *Enter the Void* (Grosset 2018) (Figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6 Inside Love Hotel, from *Enter the Void*

Noé and Debie's collaborative working strategy has been established on instinct, mutual trust, patience, and a tendency to critique industrial norms and experiment with limited resources and new filmic technologies. Unlike industrial practice, where each day has a different shooting setup, scene breakdown and goal of shooting a scene, which could take up to an hour, Noé and Debie prefer to work in a more artisanal way. They assess the set design and colour of the room before they open the camera's lens. Debie communicates with the production designer 'on the colours of every room, and the film as a whole' (Hammond 2019). As Debie shared with Caleb Hammond (2019) of *Moviemaker* magazine,

> If your production designer can deliver a set with gorgeous walls that are shiny or matte and in any colour scheme, it is as if the work has already been done for you when it is time to set up your lighting (para. 8).

Noé thinks visually prior to situating the actors in front of the camera. His obsession with the camera informing mise en scène leads him to spend eight-hour shifts composing the frame and experimenting with lighting if he is not convinced about the settings (Debie 2019). He also likes to 'shoot one long take per day, and these long takes can be anywhere from five to 15 minutes, so he takes the time we need to shoot them' (Hammond 2019). So, in contrast to the standard film production set where the producer, director, and cinematographer try to follow the script and fulfil each day's task and goal, Noé feels comfortable taking time and spending the whole day to set the mood, organise the choreography, and synchronise the temperament and lighting of the location for the scene. While shooting *Irréversible* and *Enter the Void*, the idiosyncratic Noé did not hesitate to change the colour of a room or a wall to red, yellow or green, regardless of the disruption to the schedule, since he prefers to work instinctively, understanding that 'the colour of that wall is the colour of the film' (Hammond 2019). Ernesto Giolitti, who worked as a gaffer in *Climax*, also verified that anything can happen naturally in Noé's set: 'Basically, we are very far from the "we rehearse, we set up and shoot as rehearsed" way but closer to the "we rehearse, and everything can be changed at the last minute on the fly"' mode of film practice – which relies upon trust and historical collaborations for the set not to fall apart (Reumont 2018, para. 4).

Eternal Stroboscopic Light

> You are all in a good health, but you cannot imagine the supreme happiness an epileptic feels in the moment before a fit. I would give perhaps my whole life in exchange for a few second of that felicity. (Fyodor Dostoevsky, in *Lux Æterna,* 2019)

In addition to using light bulbs and film lamps as sources of light and strictly avoiding any directional spotlight on the set, Noé works with erratic and strobing lighting. He included the quotation (above) from Dostoevsky at the beginning of *Lux Æterna*, which contains a 'throbbing nightmare of strobing light and sound' (Welsh 2022). Instead of giving a statutory warning, Noé whimsically invites the viewers to dive into the field of rapid flashing lights to brutally attack their senses. Noé borrowed this trope from the practice and production of 1960s flicker films by American structural film artists Tony

Conrad (*The Flicker* 1966) and Paul Sharits (*Ray Gun Virus* 1966, *N:O:T:H:I:N:G* 1968, *T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G,* 1968) (see Chapter 3). Collins (2013) suggested that Noé's body of work contains an identical remake of American structural film aesthetics but lacks the primary motivation of 'dismantling of or violence upon the filmic apparatus' (p. 21). Instead, Noé's use of flicker film focuses more on manipulating or 'dismantling' the audience's experiences of reality through the sensation of the 'flicker' to portray 'altered states of consciousness' (Macnab 2009). In his feature-length films from *Irréversible* to *Climax* and his medium-length film *Lux Æterna*, Noé recurrently toyed with strobe lighting effects as part of a collective hypnosis[32] to play with the viewers 'borders of perception' and to 'create heightened states of awareness and push them to embark on an emotional rollercoaster without consuming illegal drugs' (Péron 2010, para. 6).

Film critic Carlos Aguilar (2022) asked Noé how the strobe lighting effect became part of his screen poetics. Noé replied that one of his favourite books is about 'how to get stoned without using illegal drugs in five hundred ways', which he reads repeatedly. He said he understood there are many legal ways to alter people's 'state of mind or perception':

> There were many ideas involving strobe lights, and it's true that strobe lights put you in a bizarre state of mind. I bought strobe lights when I was a teenager. I would play with them, and I could get stoned in a very legal way. And if in a movie you put very strong, colour strobe lights, you can also induce an altered state of mind in the audience. And that's what I tried to do at the very end of the movie [*Irréversible*]. (quoted in Aguilar 2022, para. 24)

To fulfil his aim of making the audience feel out of their minds, Noé first used stroboscopic light for a feature film in *Irréversible*. At the end of *Irréversible*, Noé juxtaposed a harsh, visual, 120-second bombardment to produce an experience of 'seizures in epileptics' (Frey 2012, p. 93). He had wanted to keep the erratic

---

[32] Noé's first attempt to alter the viewers' conditions of awareness through projecting colours is demonstrated with the short film *Une expèrience d'hypnose télévisuelle* (*A hypnosis television Experiment* 1995), which was broadcast on Canal+ in 1995. In the film, a red curtain behind the character Dr Pierre Carnac subtly changes colours from violet and yellow to purple throughout the duration (Collins 2013).

visual until viewers overdosed, but in the end, he calmed the speed of the flashes a little to avoid spectators' wrath. At theatrical screenings, Noé, ever the branded auteur, achieved his desired effect – with audience walk-outs and fainting in the cinema.

According to Debie, adding the 'flicker effect' in *Irréversible* was a rehearsal before launching into *Enter the Void* with excessive strobe effects (Chaos Reign n.d.). However, for the latter film they made an exception and brought professional movie lights to generate the strobing light in the nightclub. To create the psychedelic and intoxicating mood in the strip club scene (Figure 7.7), Debie used powerful wash lights such as Mac 700s and Mac 2000s. These automatic concert projectors have features like 'strobing', 'beam sweeps' and 'colour changes', which come with a programmer to 'control both the speed and the length of the flash' (B 2010). He added LEDs and small bulbs that are controllable with a dimmer along with the Mac 700s and Mac 2000s to light the dreamlike scene of Love Hotel. Debie also disclosed that at the end of the day, after non-stop shooting with 'fluorescent red strobes', their heads were spinning like a whirlpool (Ligammari 2015)

Figure 7.7 Stroboscopic lighting in *Enter the Void's* nightclub scene
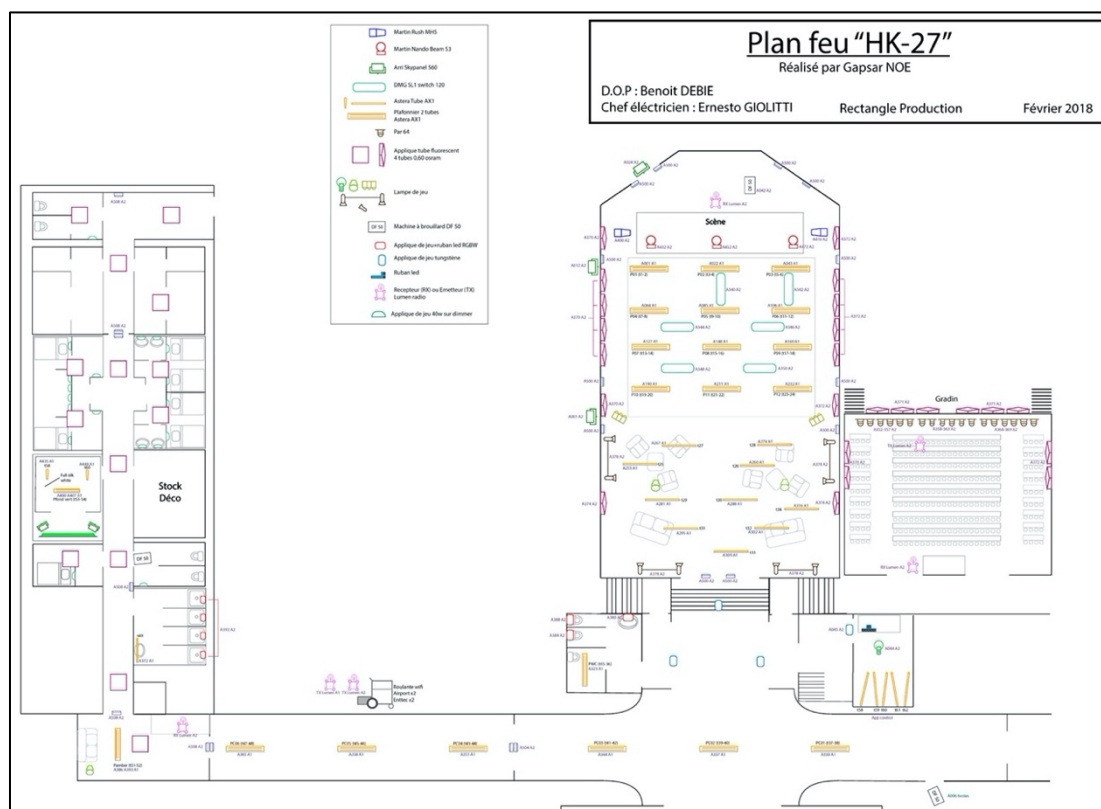
Figure 7.8 Astera LED lighting plan for *Climax* (AFC 2018)

In *Climax*, Noé and Debie found more control in regulating the strobe light with the aid of new digital lighting technology called Astera LED (Figure 7.8). Debie discovered Astera LED during his work with Harmony Korine in the set of the *Beach Bum* (2019). With the addition of the Astera LED in *Climax*, Noé finally achieved the goal of making moving images in the camera, which means they need less time in post-production to grade the colour, except for some minor tweaks, since they strive to directly capture the colour they want to see 'in camera'. Since *Irréversible*, the duo has been experimenting with various technologies to reach that ambition. Astera LED is 'specialised tube-shaped LED lights and which colours change from green to red to blue or purple, during or in between takes—all controlled via iPad' and it meets Noé's requirement of lighting a scene within the frame with practical lights and being able to 'shoot 360 degrees' (Reumont 2018). This contextualisation of stroboscope effect in Noé's narrative films to doze off the audience also signifies his aim of representing the concept of chaos and how people lose control when they found themselves in the vortex of the chaos.

Through flicker films, Noé pays tribute to experimental and avant-garde moving image artists for their contribution to his narrational system and moving image poetics to mentally indispose his viewers. Noé considers there are two types of filmmakers: those who make experimental films outside the narrative film industry, and those who make narrative films inside the commercial industry:

> If you're not making experimental movies like Kenneth Anger did, Paul Sharits did, Jordan Belson did or Maya Deren did, you're inside an industry that puts money into a project where the people who financed the project want to get their money back. It's all very commercial. (Noé, quoted in Pedrero-Setzer 2022)

Noé manifests psychological stress through flicker as a 'self-reflexive gesture'. His cinematic representation of esoteric or astral journeying mirrors the cinematic form of Jordan Belson's mystical, abstract cinematic films. To create a celluloid-like texture in a film with either digital or film cameras, Noé adds grain to create visual noise and generate a low-lighting effect that recalls Andy Warhol's fondness for using grain in his early work (Suárez 2014). Noé's moving poetics transgress the industrial norms and forms of moving image by transposing avant-garde, experimental and structural film practices.

From *Irréversible* to *Vortex*: Eyes Wide Split

> What I like about making movies in France is that I make them with producers and distributors that give me a lot of freedom. They offer less money, but I get to have more fun in the little playhouse they make for me. (Gaspar Noé, quoted in Peacock 2020)

As a trained cinematographer who has retained his role as a camera operator, Noé has developed a moving image poetics that he commands and is open to key collaborators, particularly Debie. His cinephilia, his commitment to the spirt of amateurism and open production processes, disavows industrial norms. His creative practice, production aesthetics, and poetics of the moving image are enabled by the creative freedom he is afforded by the French film production context and his modest budgets for projects. Noé (2019) frequently

254

shares with the press and critics that he does not make films for commercial success or wealth, but because he values the artistic freedom that comes from the ethics of the French film culture. His alternative screenwriting governs the economic calculations, which in turn are interlinked with his approach to dynamic mise en scène, scripting with the camera, casting non-professional actors, and improvised processes.

Noé privileges designing productions that preference indoor locations and opts for a minimalist approach to outdoor shooting. These factors offer him creative openings to experiment with the camera, camerawork, lights, technology, and orchestrating other things for the camera (Noé 2016a). Within the given 'aesthetic economy[33],' his priority is to reproduce the same 'hypnotic fascination in the viewers as he faced through the works of psychological horror, cult and banned' films (Noé 1998). In summary, Noé looks to the fringes of moving image production – the avant-garde, experimental filmmakers, artist filmmakers – and brings their transgressive spirits into the industrial realm.

While Noé works with a limited budget, he obtains his desired heightened audience experience. After the medium-length fiction *Carne* and feature-length narrative *Seul contre tous*, Noé shifted his focus of 'directorial screen language' from a linear to a non-linear narrative pattern in *Irréversible*. This change also impacted the personal lyricism and screen poetics of his moving images. He switched to the mobile camera with a subtle fluidity layered with immersive movement and changed his deployment of primarily static shots to long takes with invisible cuts. Thus began a new form of narration driven by the recurrent appearance of unstable moving images.

'Aesthetic economy' governs Noé's personal lyricism and his poetics of moving images, which stand upon consistent issues like whimsical rhythm and the use of lightweight, handheld cameras. Noé's camera treats a film as a chaotic-poetic narrative, where everything constantly moves in an unruly rhythm within a pattern to represent the subjective view of each character's psychology.

---

[33] The term 'aesthetic economy' suggested by the scholar Joanne Entwistle (2002) informs that a particular product's aesthetic concern and production within a specific industry, organisation or firm is linked with the 'economic calculations of that setting' (p. 321).

Through the disarrayed rhythm, Noé's camera reaches out to an apex of hyperbole which defies the normative expectations of the viewers and induces them to experience love, loss, hatred, grief, and joy in the same the way the characters are suffering in the film. Noé's preference for handheld camerawork is evident in his filmography; it provides an opening to make complicated panoramic pans, which are not achievable with a camera on a tripod or with dolly tracks.

The kinetic camera work in *Irréversible*, *Enter the Void*, and *Climax* displays a narrative where the characters' steady lives suddenly turn upside down through an unexpected event because the characters were deliberately on drugs (*Irréversible* and *Enter the Void*) or had unintentionally consumed an LSD-spiked drink (*Climax*). Either way, they lost their ability to make strategic decisions. Regarding the melodramatic-horror narrative context of these three films, Noé internalised the chaotic rhythm of his handheld camerawork to expressively and animatedly display the characters' inner agitation, such as fear of losing control or falling into the vortex of misfortune. Noé allocates budget for the different cranes, aerial cameras, and Steadicam to exhibit his innovative features and artistic emotions to generate a transgressive visual outlet. However, Noé's kinetic camera takes a break when the narrative motivation of a project demands it. His gyroscopic camera became stationary in *Love* and later in *Vortex*. With *Love*, Noé initiated another operational phase by employing two cameras on the set.

Due to the 'aesthetic, economic' reason, Noé wanted to shoot *Love* in two 3D cameras without any crew because of its explicit, erotic nature and limited production budget. However, cinematographer Debie reminded him that they would need at least a dozen people for sound, grip, and makeup. Also, Noé realised that most of the film consists of amatory intercourse and actors would be naked, so he would not need a crew for 'costume design and the wardrobe'. As a result, Noé set a rule that crews 'must leave the set when the love scenes are to be shot, for it will then be restricted to the director, the cinematographer and the actors' (Mertens 2018). This incident signifies that Noé's aesthetic economy behind *Love* was determined by both his narrative desire and the economic calculations of that setting.

The late period of Noé reveals a transformation in his established poetics of moving images and suggests a direction of new research. *Vortex*'s moving image *dispositif* is linked with Noé's vision of making an intimate film within the walls of an apartment and the confined reality of the pandemic. With typical pragmatism, Noé dropped the kinetic feature from his poetics of moving image (which requires the involvement of a specific number of crews) but deployed two cameras mixed with handheld camerawork to project the screen-reality on a split screen.

In *Vortex*, Noé not only paid tribute to Brian de Palma (Peacock 2020) through split-screen but also reprocessed the cinematic tool to document two lives in parallel under one roof. Noé's primary concern was creating havoc in the viewers' perception with shock values to conduct a retinal operation, just as Spanish cineaste Luis Buñuel dreamt of the visceral experience of a 'knife cutting an eye' in *Un Chien Andalou* (Perspective 2021). Earlier, Noé wanted to do parapsychological acts such as hypnosis by directing the viewers to focus on one central image filled with chaotic camera movement and eternal colourful light (Millieroux 2022). With the split-screen, he fragmented the focus into two images.

Noé defies the primacy of deploying a single image on one screen and plays a mental game with the viewers by keeping them busy with rapid eye movements to comprehend the on-screen reality. Metaphorically, he inverses the mechanism of perception, which occupies both left and right hemispheres, by taking different information to generate a unified image of reality with the split-screen. This cinematic technique also helped him to fold a four-hour narrative into two hours through two screens. As Noé said,

> Making a film that lasts two hours, where your eyes sweep from right to left, puts you in a particular mental disposition. You are doing puzzle-like moving memories. It is not sorcery or anything, but a different mental work takes place than the simpler one of analysing a central image where your eyes are not constantly scanning the screen. (quoted in Millieroux 2022, para. 10)

Noé has constantly handled taboo subjects like birth and death throughout his oeuvre, and in his post-*Climax* career he has chosen to deal with other universal social taboos like dementia and aging parents dying, about which people talk little and suffer a lot. With *Vortex*, he has joined the slowly, but steadily growing list of films made on dementia that began with Michael Haneke's commercially successful and Palme d'Or-winning *Amour* (2012) (Newland 2022). While making *Vortex*, the one film that supplied constant motivation was Vittoria De Sica's crucial but commercially unsuccessful neo-realist *Umberto D* (1952), which chronicles an aged pensioner's tale (Denney 2022). Noé, a keen observer of the narrative film trend, noticed that in 2020 at least four films on dementia, old age and aging parents caught the attention of critics and viewers: Viggo Mortensen's directorial debut feature *Falling* (2020), Kirsten Johnson's 'buoyant' documentary *Dick Johnson Is Dead* (2020), Florian Zeller's psychological drama *The Father* (2020), and Natalie Erika James's psychological horror *Relic* (2020).

Gaspar Noé has a feverish obsession with being authentic to his visual modality, artistic integrity, and primary aspiration to construct a taboo-breaking, norm-defying and moral-meandering tapestry of the transgressive moving image among the filmmakers of his generation. As a postmodern combiner, he merges references to intertextuality and self-referentiality taken from various genres, practices and past forms to transgress and destabilise industrial practices of moving-image making. Moreover, he distorts or subverts these practices until they are barely decipherable. Informed by his cinematic influences, Noé's moving images unapologetically reflect his unnerving dynamism and fervour as a conceptual innovator. His visual poetics is a mélange of his personal imagination and the fictional reality of watching, dreaming, and practicing film. Through screenwork, he articulates and exhibits his mental images by turning them into realistic images with fluidity, immersive movement, colour, and light. Transgressive filmmaker Noé uses the film medium to portray the unseen vision and film craft within the normative French film production culture to resist the conventional understanding of generating 'moving' images of psychedelic mood, cinematic reality, and out-of-body experiences. Noé's recent work suggests that this new direction for the

evolution of his poetics of transgression will be an exciting space to watch as an extension of current research.

Chapter 8
Shuttle of Illusion: Contemporary Transgression

> Some directors make their best movies at the very end of their careers.
> You have to lose the fear of not topping yourself. (Gaspar Noé, quoted in
> Peacock 2020, para. 6)

The Findings and Contributions of This Research

In this research I investigated Gaspar Noé's cinematic poetics of transgression
across his oeuvre to date and articulated how its evolution has manifested in his
most recent films. I explored the ways in which his personal, familial, and
cultural history, together with his cinephilia, provides the foundations for his
poetics. Taking a production-focused approach, I propose that these
foundational contexts, together with French national cinema contexts, were the
primary generators of Noé, the branded auteur, and his idiosyncratic and
pragmatic approach to funding and other film opportunities.

With these contexts in place, I further investigated the ways in which Noé's
creative film practices – across screen development, alternative screenwriting,
and production practices – are sites for the materialisation of his screen poetics
as a rich and evolving tapestry of moving images and sounds that underpin
how the poetics are transposed to confront an audience. In each aspect of Noé's
creative filmmaking journey, for diverse projects and ambitions, the cinematic
idea drives the films and generates the *dispositif*. I have revealed the ways in
which Noé has combined and manoeuvred between the positions of the auteur
and the open, generous collaborator with key allies and screen performers as a
film production condition. Noé's poetics of transgression are identified within
his mise en scène, which reveals signs of both continuity and rupture, as seen
more recently with his split-screen film *Vortex*.

In this thesis I have explored the question: What are the cinematic components
of Noé's film style, his approach to mise en scène, and how do they serve the
wider architecture in the poetics across his oeuvre to date? I addressed this

primary question through a set of five research questions, which together have provided the contexts, materialisation, and expansion of Noé's decisive, ambitious poetics of transgression.

The first research question focused on the impact of Noé's personal history and cinephilia: How did Noé's Argentine familial, cultural, and artistic background provide a foundation for his screen poetics as an exile in Paris? The second question examined the production conditions for Noé's poetics, asking: What role does the French film ecology of industrial screen production play? Noé's ability to establish and maintain a poetics of cinematic transgression would not be feasible outside the cultural factors affecting screen production in France. The third question asked: How does Noé combine strategic economic pragmatism with a cultivated 'branded auteur' status to shape his career and the opportunities to develop his screen poetics (of transgression)? The fourth question explored Noé's screen development process and screenwriting practices as an alternative screenwriting poetics, asking: What defines Noé's screenplay poetics in the creative process of developing cinematic screen ideas and exploring alternative screenwriting practices and forms? I argue that his screen ideas are shaped in relation to exploratory screenwriting processes, with words and images as 'scripted' works (Maras 2009). In his late career, the traditional expectations of the screenplay have been discarded for more open, improvised approaches. The fifth research question, How does Noé's poetics of transgression materialise as a cinematic form?, explored the production contexts Noé instigates for his creative collaborators, in front of and behind the camera – part artisanal approach, part industrial.

Having drawn on scholarly research on mise en scène, screen poetics, auteur theory, production studies, and international screenwriting research, I argue that Noé's poetics of transgression was established through a sustained, nonconformist commitment, a politically conscious cultural upbringing, and experimental film and avant-garde creative influences combined with a fiscally pragmatic purview of industrial screen production. David Bordwell's (2008) materialist approach to studying cinema provides a strong foundation for this argument, as does Adrian Martin's (1992, 2011, 2013, 2014) work on mise en

scène film style and *dispositif,* as well as how filmmakers conceptualise, develop and execute 'cinematic ideas'.

To consider the poetics of cinema via Bordwell (2008) is to embrace (specific) historical contexts, which determine film style. Bordwell's style framework led to the broader consideration of Noé's oeuvre and screen poetics via auteur studies and his identity as a branded auteur in the French national film context. It also extended Thomas Elsaesser's (1995) approach to auteur theory to the realm of Noé. Elsaesser (1995) showed that in contemporary times, an auteur takes the role of an entrepreneur by combining the romantic filmmaker's urge to 'defy the rules' and the classical filmmaker's 'seal of quality' to make unique and transgressive, or genre-defying, films within the conventional narrative film industry.

Noé's poetics of transgression continues to be sustained and informed by a deliberative, branded auteur status that is complicated through ongoing collaborative and improvised film practices in a delicate balance of authorship. For example, Noé envisaged *Vortex* as 'something almost documentary, without written dialogue, and on a single set, as realistic as possible', but he decided to use split-screen as an 'aesthetic position' because he wanted to avoid 'artificial tv movie language that almost everyone uses to portray the reality' (Noé 2021, p. 4). Miranda J. Banks's (2014) understanding of production studies also provided a pragmatic and methodical lens with which to examine Noé's 'processes of production', 'intricate web of collaboration' with cast and crew, and, where the film is also 'written' – or 'scripted' – during production by the camera, the bodies, the lights, the choreography, and the performances. In these ways, he has defied the traditional boundaries between development and production.

Noé's spirit of transgression, his identity as a branded auteur, and the French production context are three strands that run through this thesis. Noé's transgressive body of work has not previously been examined extensively through a 'film style, and film production' model. This thesis makes a decisive contribution to the scholarship of Noé through its consideration of screen poetics and the background circumstances and interweaving factors that

generate it. This focus on his formalist and materialist approaches is intended to be read in conjunction with existing scholarship from film studies and cultural studies contexts, and with consideration of his audience's reception of the films (Beugnet 2007; Barker 2011; Horeck & Kendall 2011; Palmer 2015; Tulloch & Middleweek 2017).

On the surface, Noé's films convey excess, brutality, corporeality and psychosis through psychedelic imagery and an idiosyncratic film style. However, in this thesis I explored the deeper structures in Noé's work – the architectures of melodrama and psychological horror film narration deployed with neon colour, infrasound, techno music, and episodic modes of narrative, all of which serve to counter and subdue the normative aspects of melodrama.

This thesis has three themes. The first theme relates to how Noé's approach to film narration contaminates the melodramatic with catastrophic narration via the suffering of his characters, the erosion of time, and erotic desire offset by moments of dark comedy. Noé's poetics of transgression is based upon his idiosyncratic fusion of melodrama and horror film codes. He aims to deliver a carnal view of human existence as melodrama that foregrounds the predominance and endurance of nature or the survival instinct, including sexuality and reproduction, via catastrophic representations of reality. Noé's oeuvre conveys an ongoing interest in the cycles of life, birth, and death, as well as the traumatic effect and fear of losing control. Regarding the portrayal of losing control in the form of psychosis, Noé has illustrated this through female characters from around the time the #metoo movement started in 2017, for example, in *Climax*. Since then, he has produced a medium-length narrative, *Lux Æterna*, which shows how a male-dominated production team behaves during a production led by a female, and how this causes psychosis for the director and generates chaos on the set. In *Vortex*, the narrative revolves around the female protagonist's deteriorating dementia.

The second theme of this thesis considers Noé as a 'branded auteur' and his transgressive aesthetics as a 'seal of quality' (Elsaesser 1995). I theorise Noé's films as the polished, thought-provoking, and delicate cinematic works of someone who is both an artist and a branded auteur. Noé has redefined and

expanded the traditional idea of an auteur by combining an artisanal approach to filmmaking while manoeuvring as a screen entrepreneur (his role as producer) and occupying multiple key roles in the production. In addition, Noé has complicated the notion of the auteur by combining the cinematic excesses of 1970s European and American films with diverse kinds of experimental, independent, and avant-garde film practices.

Noé frequently disapproves of the label 'auteur' or 'artist', and he rejects the moniker of *enfant terrible* or provocateur offered by mainstream screen critics and film academics. He also defies the conventional understanding of filmmaking as an industrial or professional pursuit in his commitment to implementing a 'living in the moment' experience through the prism of instinct. In this sense, his creative process aligns with the idea of French film critic, screenwriter, and filmmaker Olivier Assayas (2020) that each film project can be considered a Debordian situation[34]. As a transgressive filmmaker, Noé is in the unusual position of having the support and trust of French industrial producers and distributors who allow him the freedom to explore his creativity while also getting audiences to his films.

This balance between transgressive spirit and industrial cinema is not typical in the experimental and avant-garde film cultures Noé draws inspiration from. Noé thus benefits from the traditions of French film culture, which supports filmmakers with legal and moral rights to hold the intellectual authority of the works. For this reason, during thirty years of a filmmaking career, he has remained secure within French national cinema territory. Notably, he elected not to work in the American film production system, unlike many of his French contemporaries. In this thesis I have articulated how Noé, as a branded auteur, offers a framework for retaining independence and not compromising on his career-long project to deliver a poetics of cinematic transgression.

The third theme of this thesis is the significance of the production contexts and conditions that allow, and in fact generate, Noé's poetics of transgression. I

---

[34] Debordian situation refers to the idea of the 'situation' suggested by radical French filmmaker and Marxist-theorist Guy Debord. Debordian situation signifies a development of 'situation', in other words, the substantial development of transitory ambiences of life and their change into an overall passional quality (Debord 1957, para. 50).

found that while Noé's poetics of transgression is a holistic career project in relation to its formal materialisation, it is flexible enough to be differentiated from production to production by exploiting pragmatic financial contexts and by being aligned with the ever-changing cultural moment. Noé (as an auteur) does not maintain a conformist or rigid mindset about the film artist's role. He works 'behind the scenes' and even 'beyond the screen', rallying against the authoritarian cliché of a film auteur by inviting cast and crew to explore instinctive, even impulsive, screen performances and improvisations as though the film production, or zone, is a living organism. He privileges collaboration and improvisation in an open filmmaking process that foregrounds collective labour. Noé transgresses conventional film production practices that regard the set as a factory. In contrast, in all of his productions he takes the roles of producer, screenwriter, director, camera operator, and editor to hold his economic and artistic freedom intact, since artistic liberty is crucial for his cinematic creativity and central to his poetics of transgression.

This thesis also highlights Noé's predilection to treat narrative film production as non-fiction or documentary production to eliminate the inherent artificiality and conformity of fiction filmmaking. This relates to Noé's emphasis on working instinctively and in the moment. He invites the terror (and horror) of losing control of a situation by preparing little in advance or, when in production, transforming the mise en scène at the last moment. While he creates his fiction films, he also strategically creates an atmosphere of near-documentary conditions as part of his commitment to nonconformity. This thesis describes a 'zone' that contains a production in a space that can allow experimentation. Noé's poetics of transgression manifests through a combination of control, surrendering to the possibility of collaboration and accidents, and surviving the journey of making a film. Noé's poetics of transgression is only possible through the creative juxtaposition of limitations and uncertainty.

In consideration of Noé's oeuvre to date, it has been essential to also consider the evolution of his poetics of transgression and its flexibility to address the cultural moment. This thesis also shows how these poetics have adapted to changing socio-historical contexts. Since 2019, Noé has transitioned from literal

and graphical cinematic excess to psychological excess. This includes the shift in recent years from melodrama-horror narratives to melancholic-psychological horror narratives. Noé used graphical excess to break the taboo of homophobia, racism, and incest in *Seul contre tous*, violence against women in *Irréversible*, visualisation of life after death in *Enter the Void*, the portrayal of real sex in *Love*, and the survival instinct in *Climax*.

As seen in *Vortex*, Noé replaced graphical excess with psychological excess to depict the less-represented scenario of losing control over cognition and physical strength in old age. Here, Noé marks a departure from a psychedelic, technicolor and polychromatic world to the mundane story of an aged couple dealing with dementia; this also reflects a shift from a primarily youth audience to a more mature audience. He demonstrates his dexterity and poetics with this shift from making striking images to providing a more existential mode of philosophical insight. However, this does not represent a turning away from his poetics of transgression; rather, it represents an iterative dimension to the poetics.

In regard to Noé's earlier work, in 2022 the CNC recognised his cultural and formal input of 'heritage cinematographic works' by awarding him financial support to digitise *Carne* and *Seul contre tous* (in 2K/4K resolution), both of which once faced harsh criticism for their raw shock value and representation of France as a rancid society (CNC 2022). This will allow archiving of projects that define Noé's poetics of transgression.

Suggestions for Further Research

Gaspar Noé has been experiencing a revival of sorts since his survival from a brain haemorrhage in 2021, which found representation in the themes of ageing and death in *Vortex*. He has transgressed from his familiar zone of the neon-lit, love-sex-drug-powered narrative world to a gloomy and nostalgic zone of existence. For Noé, this represents a journey towards a more cerebral poetics of transgression that has a maturer texture of claustrophobia and psychological horror. Possible future research on cinematic elements that form part of his consistent transgressive film poetics could include his post-production poetics, including his use of sound and music and title sequences involving typography.

This thesis conveys a matrix of factors that have contributed to Noé's sustained poetics. These include melodrama, psychological and psychedelic horror, scripting, writing with the camera, working with a treatment or outline, mobile cameras, zoning or creating a temporary autonomous zone, excessive mise en scène, immersive camera movement, stroboscopic light, and his use of the *dispositif*, all of which play are crucial for aligning his poetics with industrial production contexts. As a branded auteur, Noé plays with these diverse experimental and avant-garde creative influences. He follows cinema like a religion, and when it comes to making a film, he dutifully submits himself to it and all its uncertainties. The core concept of his poetics is to bring naturality to the screen and discard pretentiousness. His idea of transgression is rooted in experiencing and accessing freedom, in excess and without restrictions.

In pursuit of his poetics of transgression, Noé repeatedly foregrounds a key theme: the story of survival and the fear of losing control. His screen stories convey characters who seemingly drown in human misery yet are horrified at the prospect of death. This central premise binds his poetics of transgression. For Noé, transgression simultaneously declares the end of something and the beginning of another thing; he perceives this process as a tunnel of change and evolution. As if he were a character in one of his films, Noé defines a set of limited resources and self-imposed restrictions to generate project-specific poetics (of transgression) energised through specific production conditions and budget limitations. This includes working with non-professional casts, inventive camera work, non-conventional lighting, and a sharp focus on the screen idea to amplify the poetics of transgression materialised on the screen. With his recent trilogy of films – *Lux Æterna*, *Saint Laurent – Summer of '21* (2020), and *Vortex* – Noé has demonstrated that he has reached the apex of filmmaking culture in France through his pursuit of an ever-evolving poetics of transgression.

References

Aaltonen, J. 2017, 'Script as a hypothesis: Scriptwriting for documentary film', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 55-65.

AASA 2021, *Visualisation in Architecture and Beyond Part 3 - Applications in the Profession*, videorecording, YouTube, viewed 26 June 2022, <https://youtu.be/cyeDZCHa7yU>.

Adieu au Langage 2014, motion picture, Canal+, Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée, France.

Adventure Alternative n.d. *Andes Mountains Facts*, Adventure Alternative, viewed 21 January 2022, <https://www.adventurealternative.com/about-the-andes/>.

Adventure Alternative n.d. *Andes Mountains Facts*, Adventure Alternative, viewed 21 January 2022, <https://www.adventurealternative.com/about-the-andes/>.

AFC 2018, *Plan lumière de "Climax"*, viewed 29 June 2022, <https://www.afcinema.com/Entretien-avec-le-directeur-de-la-photo-Benoit-Debie-SBC-a-propos-de-son-travail-sur-Climax-de-Gaspar-Noe.html?lang=fr>.

Aguilar, C. 2019, 'Argentine-Born Director Gaspar Noé Is Known for His Edgy French Films, But Wants to Make a Movie in Spanish', Remzcla, viewed 18 January 2021, <https://remezcla.com/features/film/gasper-noé-climax-interview>.

Aguilar, C. 2022, 'Of the Same Matter: Gaspar Noé on Vortex and Lux Aeterna', *RogerEbert.com*, 11 May, viewed 01 July 2022, <https://www.rogerebert.com/interviews/gaspar-noe-vortex-lux-aeterna-irreversible-interview-2022>.

Allmer, P. 2004, '"Window shopping"? -- Aesthetics of the Spectacular and Cinéma du look', Scope, vol. 1, viewed 19 January 2021, <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/scope/documents/2004/february-2004/allmer.pdf>.

Angelo, A. 2012, 'From Spectacle to Affect: Contextualizing Transgression in French Cinema at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century', *Irish Journal of French Studies*, Vol.12, pp. 157-178.

Anger, K. 2004, 'Modesty and the Art of Film', in A. L. Hutchinson (ed.), *Kenneth Anger*, Black Dog Publishing Limited, London.

Animal Collective 2013, *Applesauce*, video recording, YouTube, viewed 9 July 2021, < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIbtYzjLuMo>.

Argento, D. 2021, 'Interview with Dario Argento', *Vortex*, press kit, p. 6, Wild Bunch International: Paris.

Aristotle. 1997, *Aristotle's Poetics*, trans. George Whalley, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal.

Aristotle., Whalley, G., Baxter, J., & Atherton, P. 1997, *Aristotle's Poetics*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal.

Armitage, M. 2018, 'Method Behind the Madness: New French Extreme', *25YL*, viewed 10 November 2019, <https://25yearslatersite.com/2018/11/02/method-behind-the-madness-new-french-extremity/>.

Arri n.d. *ALEXA Mini LF*, viewed 20 June 2022, <https://www.arri.com/en/camera-systems/cameras/alexa-mini-lf>.

Arri n.d. *ALEXA Mini*, viewed 20 June 2022, <https://www.arri.com/en/camera-systems/cameras/alexa-mini>.

Artaud, A. 1958, *The theater and its double*, Grove Press: New York.

Arte-Track n.d. *Gaspar Noé & Philippe Nahon: they stand alone (1998) ¬ TRACKS | ARTE*, videorecording, YouTube, viewed 29 April 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFEV9SRhAvE&t=644s>.

Artnet, 2021, *Pierre Molinier (French, 1900–1976)*, viewed 10 May 2021, <http://www.artnet.com/artists/pierre-molinier>.

Ashton, S. McDonald, K & Kirkman, M. 2019, "What does 'pornography' mean in the digital age? Revisiting a definition for social science researchers", *Porn Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 144-168.

Assayas, O. 2020, 'State of Cinema 2020: Cinema in the Present Tense', trans. S. Matthé, *Sabzian*, 26 June, viewed 22 July 2022, <https://www.sabzian.be/text/state-of-cinema-2020>.

Austin, G. 1996, *Contemporary French Cinema: An Introduction*, Manchester University Press, United Kingdom.

Austin, G. 2008, *Contemporary French Cinema*, 2nd edn, Manchester University Press, Manchester.

Austin, G. 2015, 'Contemporary French Horror Cinema: From Absence to Embodied Presence', in Fox, A. Marie, M. Moine, M. & Radner, H. (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary French Cinema*, Wiley-Blackwell, New Jersey, pp. 275-288.

Austin, G. 2019, 'Le jeune cinéma and the new realism', *Contemporary French cinema*, viewed 30 October 2020, <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526141286.00014>.

B, B. 2010, 'Contemplating a Colourful Afterlife', *American Cinematographer*, vol. 91, no. 10, p. 18-22.

Bailey, M. 2003, 'Noé, Gaspar', *Sense of Cinema*, vol. 28, viewed 18 May 2019, <http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/great-directors/noe/>.

Baker, E. 2020, *Zoom meeting*, Flickr, 03 April, viewed 21 June 2022, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/57673765@N00/49734624846>.

Baker, L. 2106, 'Cinematographers Who Establish an Instantly Recognizable Look', *The Beat*, viewed 01 July 2022, <https://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/cinematographers-with-recognizable-look/>.

Banks, J. M. 2014, 'How to Study Makers and Making', in M. Alvarado, M. Buonanno, H. Gray, T., Miller (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Television Studies*, Sage Publications, London.

Banks, M., Conor, B., & Mayer, V. (eds.) 2015, *Production Studies, The Sequel!: Cultural Studies of Global Media Industries*, Routledge, New York.

Barbier, B. 2015, 'Le directeur de la photographie Benoît Debie, SBC, parle de son travail sur 'Love', de Gaspar Noé', *AFC*, viewed 10 May 2021, <https://www.afcinema.com/Le-directeur-de-la-photographie-Benoit-Debie-SBC-parle-de-son-travail-sur-Love-de-Gaspar-Noe.html?lang=fr>.

Barker, M. 2011, 'Watching Rape, Enjoying Watching Rape . . .: How Does a Study of Audience Cha(lle)nge Mainstream Film Studies Approaches?', in T. Horeck & T. Kendall (eds.), *The New Extremism in Cinema: From France to Europe*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 105-116.

Barlow, H. 2015, 'Director Gaspar Noé explains why real sex scenes were filmed for Love movie', *Irish Examiner*, viewed 20 September 2021, <https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/arid-20370409.html>.

Barnes, H. 2016, 'French film classification system to be overhauled after rightwing attacks', *The Guardian*, viewed 18 May 2021,

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/mar/01/french-film-classification-system-overhauled-right-wing-attacks>.

Barredo, T. M. 2016, '¿Cosificación o uso político? Carne de Armando Bo-Isabel Sarli', *Imagofagia*, no. 14, pp. 1-27.

Bassan, R. 2006, 'The French neo-baroques directors: Beineix, Besson, Carax from Diva to le Grand BleuI', in S. Hayward & P. Powrie (eds), *The Films of Luc Besson: Master of Spectacle,* 1st edn, Manchester University Press, Manchester, pp. 11-23.

Bayman, L. 2014, *The Operatic and the Everyday in Post-war Italian Film Melodrama*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Bazin, A. 1971, *What is Cinema*, vol. 2, trans. H. Gray, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angles.

BBC 2002, *Cannes film sickens audience*, BBC, viewed 10 November 2019, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/2008796.stm>.

Bell, J. S. 2004, *Write Great Fiction - Plot & Structure*. F+W Media, Ukraine.

Berman, E. 2015, 'The Director of the Year's Most Sexually Explicit Movie Is on a Quest to Redefine Love', *Time*, viewed 18 May 2021, <https://time.com/4093000/love-gaspar-noe-interview/>.

Bermel, A. 2008, *Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London.

Bettinson, G. 2014, *The Sensuous Cinema of Wong Kar-wai: Film Poetics and the Aesthetic of Disturbance*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong.

Beugnet, M. 2007, *Cinema and Sensation: French Film and the Art of Transgression*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Beugnet, M. 2008, 'Cinema and Sensation: Contemporary French Film and Cinematic Corporeality', *Paragraph*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 173–188.

Beugnet, M. 2011, 'The Wounded Screen', in T. Horeck & T. Kendall (eds.), *The New Extremism in Cinema: From France to Europe*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 29-42.

Bey-Rozet, M. 2021, 'Cycles of death and rebirth in twenty-first century French horror', French Screen Studies, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 191–203.

Bianco, A. 2009, 'Luis Felipe Noe: Chaos as structure: by applying unconventional procedures and methods, this Argentine artist has developed a unique style between energised aesthetic and political

avant-garde. (Biography)', *Americas* (English Edition), vol. 61, no. 3, pp. 20–27.

Billy Rowe 2014, *Alan Watts - Overcome Social Anxiety*, video recording, YouTube, viewed 20 January 2022, <https://youtu.be/5NK3oe5eQmQ>.

Blanc, N. 2022, '"¡Otra vez me arruinaste el dibujo!" Obras a cuatro manos en un diálogo visual entre artistas', La Nacion, 23 March, viewed 21 April 2022, <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/cultura/otra-vez-me-arruinaste-el-dibujo-obras-a-cuatro-manos-en-un-dialogo-visual-entre-artistas-nid23032022>.

Blanton Museum of Art Collections n.d. *Cerrado por brujería [Closed for Witchcraft*, viewed 25 July 2022, <http://utw10658.utweb.utexas.edu/items/show/2700>.

Boghossian, C. 2019, 'Luis Felipe y Gaspar Noé: "En lo cultural nos parecemos mucho. En lo ideológico no', Gente, viewed 11 January 2021, <https://www.infobae.com/gente/personajes/2019/02/17/luis-felipe-y-gaspar-noé-en-lo-cultural-nos-parecemos-mucho-en-lo-ideologico-no/>.

Bomb 2014, 'Matthew Barney and Gaspar Noé', *Bomb*, viewed 20 May 2019, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/matthew-barney-and-gaspar-no%C3%A9-1/>.

Bond, M. & Hallard, J. 2007, 'L'Arche De Noé', *Dedicate Digital*, viewed 31 January 2021, <https://dedicatedigital.com/larche-de-Noé_gaspar/>.

Bordwell, D. & Thompson, K. 2013, *Film art: an introduction*, 10th edn, McGraw-Hill, New York.

Bordwell, D. 1989, 'Historical Poetics of Cinema', in R. Barton Palmer (ed.), *The Cinematic Text: Methods and Approaches*, AMS Press, New York, pp. 369-398.

Bordwell, D. 2001, 'Transcultural Spaces: Toward A Poetics of Chinese Film', *PostScript*, vol. 20, no. 2/3, pp. 9-24.

Bordwell, D. 2008, *Poetics of Cinema*, Routledge, New York.

Bordwell, D. 2010a, 'Scorsese, 'pressionist', *Observation on Film Art*, 21 April, viewed 22 June 2022, <https://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2010/04/21/scorsese-pressionist/>.

Bordwell, D. 2010b, 'Seduced by structure', *David Bordwell's website on Cinema*, 11 October, viewed 10 January 2022, <https://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2010/10/11/seduced-by-structure/>.

Box Office Mojo 2019, *Irréversible* (2002), viewed 10 November 2019, <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/releasegroup/gr1074876933/?ref_=bo_rl_su>.

Bradshaw, P. 2010, 'Enter the Void', *The Guardian*, 24 September, viewed 3 December 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/sep/23/enter-the-void-review>.

Brady, T. 2018, 'Gaspar Noé: 'I'm annoyed by a culture in which death is always considered something bad'', *The Irish Times*, viewed 14 January 2021, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/film/gaspar-no%C3%A9-i-m-annoyed-by-a-culture-in-which-death-is-always-considered-something-bad-1.3625826>.

Brauer, S. 2020, 'Pushing for power and gender parity in France's film industry', *RFI*, 08 March, viewed 17 March 2022, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20200307-france-5050-collective-women-cinema-power-film-industry-international-womens-day>.

Brecht, B. 1964, *Brecht on theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willett, Hill & Young, New York.

Brooks, P. 1995, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut.

Brunette, P. 2009, 'Enter the Void — Film Review', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 22 May, viewed 5 January 2022, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-reviews/enter-void-film-review-93217/>.

Bryan, A. H. 2021, 'Inhospitable landscapes: contemporary French horror cinema, immigration and identity', *French Screen Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 224-238.

Buchanan, K. 2018, 'Gaspar Noé Can't Believe Everyone Loves His New Film *Climax*', *Vulture*, viewed 6 May 2021, <https://www.vulture.com/2018/05/gaspar-no-cant-believe-everyone-loves-his-new-film-climax.html>.

Buñuel, L. 1983, *My Last Breath*, Fontana Paperbacks, Glasgow.

Buñuel, L. 2006, 'Notes on the Making of *Un Chien Andalou*', in Macdonald, S. (ed), *Art in Cinema: documents toward a history of the film society*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 101-102.

Burkart, P. & Palmer, T. 2011, 'The Cinéma du Corps', *Brutal Intimacy: Analyzing Contemporary French Cinema*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown.

Callahan, V. 2004, 'Mutability and Fixity in Early French Cinema', in Temple. M. & Witt, M (ed.), *The French Cinema Book*, BFI Publishing, London, pp. 65-73.

Cannes Film Festival 2009, *Press Conference: Director Gaspar Noé Plunges into 'Void'*, Press Release, Cannes Film Festival, 22 may, viewed 22 January 2022, <https://www.festival-cannes.com/en/74-editions/retrospective/2009/actualites/articles/press-conference-director-gaspar-noe-plunges-into-void>.

Canudo, R. 1923, 'Manifeste Des Sept Arts', *La gazette des sept arts*, no. 2, pp. 2-5.

Carne 1968, motion picture, Sociedad Independiente Filmadora Argentina (SIFA), Argentina.

Carne 1991, motion picture, Les Cinémas de la zone, France.

Carr, J. 2015, 'Scorpio Rising', *Sense of Cinema*, viewed 7 July 2021, <sensesofcinema.com/2015/cteq/scorpio-rising/>.

Carter, S. 2015, 'Gaspar Noé Talks Love, Filming 3-D SexScenes, and What's Next', *Vanity Fair*, 02 November, viewed 30 June 2022, <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2015/11/gaspar-noe-love-movie-interview>.

Cavalier, A. 1987, 'Portraits of Alain Cavalier', *Film-Documentaire.FR*, viewed 7 March 2022, <http://www.film-documentaire.fr/4DACTION/w_fiche_film/3507_0>.

Champenois, S. 2015, 'Gaspar Noé, Foutre Sentimental', *Libération*, viewed 29 January 2021, <https://next.liberation.fr/cinema/2015/05/22/gaspar-Noé-realisateur-de-love-foutre-sentimental_1314813>.

Chang, J, 2017, 'Review: Delectable cannibal thriller 'Raw' fleshes out the mystery of female desire', *Los Angeles Times*, viewed 31 October 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-raw-review-20170309-story.html>.

Chaos Reign n.d., 'Interview Benoît Debie (Enter the Void)', viewed 01 July
    2022, <https://www.chaosreign.fr/interview-benoit-debie-enter-the-
    void/>.

Chaplin, C. 2003, *My Autobiography*, Penguin Books Limited, London.

Chaudhuri, A. 2013, 'Auteur Theory and its implications', *International Journal of
    Advancements in Research & Technology*, Volume 2, Issue 11, pp. 77-89.

Cherry, B. 2009, 'The Horror Genre: Form and Function', *Horror*, Routledge,
    London.

Christopher, J. 2003, 'Irreversible', *The Times* (United Kingdom), 01 February,
    viewed 18 February 2022, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/new-
    film-releases-pqc6sd22089>.

Chutrac, C. 2019, 'El misterio del De la Vega, la obra más cara de arteBA que se
    vendió por más de un millón de dólares', *La Nacion*, 11 April, viewed 25
    July 2022, <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/cultura/el-misterio-del-
    mural-de-vega-obra-nid2237380/>.

Cines Multiplex 2021, Multiplex Lavallei, viewed 13 January 2021,
    <https://www.multiplex.com.ar/complejos/multiplex-lavalle/>.

Clark, J. 2010, 'Private Lives: The Films of Alain Cavalier', *Berkeley Art Museum
    and Pacific Film Archive*, viewed 07 March 2022,
    <https://bampfa.org/program/private-lives-films-alain-cavalier>.

Climax 2018, motion picture, Rectangle Productions, Wild Bunch, France.

Cline, R. 2002, 'Interview with Gaspar Noé, Monica Bellucci & Vincent Cassel:
    Standing up to Censorship', *Irréversible*, press kit, pp. 10-12, Accent Film
    Entertainment, Melbourne.

Cloarec, G. 2016, 'La Vie très secrète de Pierre Molinier', *Vice*, viewd 31 January
    2021, <https://www.vice.com/fr/article/nnx5yb/pierre-molinier>.

CNC 2019, *CNC missions*, viewed 10 October 2020, <https://www.cnc.fr/a-
    propos-du-cnc/missions>.

CNC 2021a, 'Avance sur recettes avant réalisation' *CNC*, viewed 16 March 2022,
    <https://www.cnc.fr/professionnels/aides-et-
    financements/cinema/production/avance-sur-recettes-avant-
    realisation_191260>.

CNC 2021b, *Géographie du Cinéma 2020*, viewed 17 March 2022,
    <https://www.cnc.fr/professionnels/etudes-et-rapports/etudes-
    prospectives/geographie-du-cinema-

2020_1535710#:~:text=A%20l'occasion%20du%2076%C3%A8me,par%20a
gglom%C3%A9ration%20et%20par%20commune.>.

CNC 2022, *Aide sélective à la numérisation des œuvres cinématographiques du patrimoine: résultats du 15 avril 2022*, 15 April, viewed 20 July 2022, <https://www.cnc.fr/professionnels/aides-et-financements/resultats-commissions/aide-selective-a-la-numerisation-des-oeuvres-cinematographiques-du-patrimoine--resultats-du-15-avril-2022_1695187>.

Cohn, S. 2021, 'Rainer Werner Fassbinder', *IMDb*, viewed 10 March 2021, <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001202/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm>

Collins, B. W. 2013, 'De(con)structive Time: Visual Style and Temporal Simultaneity in the Works of Gaspar Noé', Master thesis, The University of Central Oklahoma, Oklahoma.

Colvin, J. B. 2017, 'The other side of frontality: dorsality in European art cinema', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 191-210.

Connelly, C. & Lynd, J. 2001, 'Virgins, brides and devils in disguise: Buñuel does Mexican Melodrama', *Quarterly Review of Film & Video*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 235-256.

Cottingham, L. 2020, *Fear Eats the Soul (Angst Essen Seele Auf)*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London.

Creton, L. & Jäckel, A. 2004, 'Business: A Certain Idea of the Film Industry', in Temple. M. & Witt, M (ed.), *The French Cinema Book*, BFI Publishing, London, pp. 209-221.

Criterion Collection 2015, *Gaspar Noé's DVD Picks*, videorecording, YouTube, viewed 30 March 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_2R7T4-78E&t=3s>.

Crucchiola, J. 2019, 'The *Climax* Choreographer Explains Its Two Most Hellish Dance Scenes', *Vulture*, 14 May, viewed 25 May 2022, <https://www.vulture.com/2019/05/climax-choreographer-explains-its-most-hellish-dance-scenes.html?regwall-newsletter-signup=true>.

Crump, A. 2019, 'Gaspar Noe on Climax, Accidental Allegories, Catastrophe Movies and More', *Rogerebert.com*, 28 February, viewed 3 December 2021, <https://www.rogerebert.com/interviews/gaspar-noe-on-climax-accidental-allegories-catastrophe-movies-and-more>.

Curry, W. 2009, 'Interview with Gaspar Noé & Monica Bellucci', *Irréversible*, Àccent Film Entertainment, pp. 8-10.

Dar 2020, 'Gaspar Noé', Ethnicity of Celebs | What Nationality Ancestry Race, viewed 14 January 2021, <https://ethnicelebs.com/gaspar-noé>.

Darfay, C. 2013, 'L'artiste bordelais Pierre Molinier réinventé par un film', *SudOest*, viewed 9 May 2021, <https://www.sudouest.fr/2013/01/23/molinier-reinvente-par-le-film-943014-2780.php?nic>.

Dargis, M. 2010, 'Astral Plane Trip', *The New York Times*, 23 September, viewed 5 January 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/24/movies/24enter.html>.

Davis, B. 2021, 'Crime and Punishment', *Irréversible by Noé*, B. Roberts (ed.), Indicator, London.

Davis, G. 2004, 'Camp and Queer and the New Queer Director: Case Study - Gregg Araki', in M. Aaron (ed), *New Queer Cinema a Critical Reader*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.

Davis, J. 2017, 'The History and Legacy of Melodrama', *Elephant*, 17 July, viewed 9 December 2021, <https://www.elephantmelodrama.com/elephant-melodrama-blog/the-history-and-legacy-of-melodrama>.

Davis, M. 2002, 'Living is a selfish act: an interview with Gaspar Noe', *Post Script*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 122-130.

De Celis, S. R. 2011, 'The Man with the Video Camera: an interview with Alain Cavalier', *FilmInt.*, 04 December, viewed 10 March 2022, <https://filmint.nu/3579/>.

De la Vega, J. 1967, *Untitled*, Jorge de la Vega, viewed 17 May 2021, <https://www.jorgedelavega.com/jorgedelavega-pop-1966-1971.html>.

De Palma 2016, motion picture, A24, New York.

de Voogd, B. n.d. 'Things That Should Be Illegal', *The Flashback Files*, viewed 4 July 2021, <https://www.flashbackfiles.com/john-waters-interview>.

Debie, B. 2010, 'Interview Benoît Debie (Enter the Void)', *Chaos Reign*, 11 June, viewed 25 February 2022, <https://www.chaosreign.fr/interview-benoit-debie-enter-the-void>.

Debie, B. 2015a, 'Cinematographer Benoît Debie, SBC, discusses his work on Gaspard Noé's film "Love"', *AFC*, viewed 7 August 2019,

<https://www.afcinema.com/Cinematographer-Benoit-Debie-SBC-
discusses-his-work-on-Gaspard-Noe-s-film-Love.html?lang=fr>.

Debie, B. 2015b, 'Les pros du ciné le parcours des Belges: Benoît Debie', *Le
Suricate*, viewed 01 July 2022, <https://www.lesuricate.org/wp-
content/uploads/2015/02/benoit-debie-interview.pdf>.

Debord, G. 1957, 'Report on the Construction of Situations and on the
International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and
Action', *Situational International Online*, trans. K. Knabb, viewed 22 July
2022, <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html>.

Debruge, P. 2017, 'Luc Besson Nurtures French Filmmakers at Ecole De La
Cite', *Variety*, viewed 18 January 2021,
<https://variety.com/2017/film/spotlight/luc-besson-nurtures-french-
filmmakers-ecole-de-la-cite-1202399725/>.

Delrome, G. 2020, '[Gaspar Noe] Interview Elbisreverri', *Chaos*, viewed 20 May
2021, <http://www.chaosreign.fr/gaspar-noe-interview-elbisreverri/>.

Demiray, B. G. 2014, 'Authorship in Cinema: Author & Reader', *CINEJ Cinema
Journal*, vol. 4, no.1, pp. 5-19.

Denny, A. 2022, 'Gaspar Noé and Françoise Lebrun on Their Dementia
Psychodrama, Vortex', *Another Mag*, viewed 16 July 2022,
<https://www.anothermag.com/design-living/14093/gaspar-noe-
francoise-lebrun-vortex-interview>.

Deren, M. 2005, *Essential Deren: collected writings on film by Maya Deren*, B. R.
McPherson (ed.), Documentext, New York.

Derrien, A. 2015, 'Juan Saavedra interview from Free issue 2', *Free Skateboard
Magazine*, 02 November, viewed 25 April 2022,
<https://www.freeskatemag.com/2015/11/02/juan-saavedra-
interview-from-free-issue-2/>.

Desert News 2004, 'Director is first woman to win a Bronze Horse', viewed 1
March 2021, <https://www.deseret.com/2004/12/2/19864488/director-
is-first-woman-to-win-a-bronze-horse>.

Despentes, V. n.d. '"Baise-Moi" ("Rape Me") by Virginie Despentes (Andrew)',
Poetry New York, viewed 24 November 2021,
<https://archives.evergreen.edu/webpages/curricular/2007-
2008/poetryny/baise-moi-rape-me-by-virginie-despentes-andrew.html>.

Dietrich, J. 2010, 'The Video Q | Gaspar Noé on "Enter the Void"', *T-Magazine*, 17 September, viewed 14 June 2022, <https://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/09/17/the-video-q-gaspar-noe-on-enter-the-void>.

Dmitriev, N. 2018, 'Between the Berghain and Versailles: Gaspar Noé's Climax', *Port*, 8 October, viewed 28 March 2022, <https://www.port-magazine.com/film/between-berghain-and-versailles-gaspar-noes-climax/>.

Dobermann 1997, motion picture, PolyGram Film Distribution, France.

Donald, R. 2015, 'Sexually Explicit 3-D Film Inspires Pans and Walkouts at Cannes', *The New York Times*, viewed 26 October 2020, <https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/05/21/sexually-explicit-3-d-film-inspires-pans-and-walkouts-at-cannes/>.

Donovan, S., Zadworna-Fjellestad, D., & Lundén, R. (eds) 2008, *Authority Matters: Rethinking the Theory and Practice of Authorship*, Rodopi, Amsterdam.

Downing, L. 2004, 'French Cinema's New 'Sexual Revolution': Postmodern Porn and Troubled Genre', *French Cultural Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 265-280.

Ducournau, J. 2018, 'L'avenir du cinéma en France ne pourra pas se départir d'un travail de fond sur la notion de genres, au pluriel', *CNC*, 17 May, viewed 17 March 2022, <https://www.cnc.fr/cinema/actualites/julia-ducournau%2014lavenir-du-cinema-en-france-ne-pourra-pas-se-departir-dun-travail-de-fond-sur-la-notion-de%2013genres%2013au-pluriel_877070>.

Dwyer, M. 2002, 'Cannes plays safe', *The Irish Times*, viewed 26 October 2020, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/cannes-plays-safe-1.1058794>.

Ebert, R. 2003, 'Irreversible', *RogerEbert.com*, viewed 26 October 2020, <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/irreversible-2003>.

Ebiri, 2010, 'Gaspar Noé on Why Enter the Void Is Avatar for the Art Crowd: Both Are 'Like Taking Drugs'', *Vulture magazine*, 27 September, viewed 22 January 2022, <https://www.vulture.com/2010/09/gaspar_noe_on_why_enter_the_vo.html>.

Edelstein, D. 2003, 'Irreversible Errors: Gaspar Noé's cinematic rape', *Slate*, 07 March, viewed 05 December 2022, <https://slate.com/culture/2003/03/irreversible-a-cinematic-rape.html>.

Ehrlich, L. C. 2009, 'A Buñuel Scrapbook: The Last Script: Remembering Luis Buñuel (1) and Calanda: 40 Years Later', *Sense of Cinema*, viewed 22 March 2021, <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2009/feature-articles/last-script-bunuel-calanda/>.

Elsaesser, T. 1995, *A Retrospect: The Film Director as Auteur - Artist, Brand name or Engineer?*, viewed 17 June 2020, <http://www.thomas-elsaesser.com/images/stories/pdf/elsaesser_the_author_a_retrospect.pdf>.

Elsaesser, T. 2020, 'Stanley Kubrick's Prototypes: The Author as World- Maker', in Jeremi Szaniawski (ed), *After Kubrick: A Filmmaker's Legacy*, Bloomsbury Academic, New York.

Enter the Void 2009, motion picture, Fidélité Productions, Wild Bunch, France.

Entwistle, J. 2002, 'The Aesthetic Economy: The production of value in the field of fashion modelling', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 317–339.

Ericson, S. 2004, ''Enter the Void' Director Gaspar Noe Talks Sex, Drugs and Narrative Cinema', *The Wall Street Journal*, 24 September, viewed 20 January 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-SEB-46231>.

Everleth, M. 2010, 'Martin Scorsese: Champion of The Underground', *Underground Film Journal*, viewed 4 July 2021, <https://www.undergroundfilmjournal.com/martin-scorsese-champion-of-the-underground/>.

Eyny, Y. & Zubatov, A. 2004, 'In the Garden of Earthly Delights: *Irreversible*', *Sense of Cinema*, vol. 31, viewed 26 October 2020, <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2004/feature-articles/irreversible/>.

Failes, I. 2010, 'Enter the Void made by fx' 28 December, *fxguide*, viewed 22 January 2022, <https://www.fxguide.com/fxfeatured/enter_the_void_made_by_fx/>.

Fassbinder, R. W. 1972, 'Six Films by Douglas Sirk', in L. Mulvey & J. Halliday (eds), *Douglas Sirk*, Edinburgh Film Festival, Edinburgh, pp. 95-107.

Feuillère, A. 2006a, 'Benoît Debie- Director of Photography: Success story of a genius fascinated by light', *Cineuropa*, 26 April, viewed 15 July 2022, <https://cineuropa.org/en/interview/64056>.

Feuillère, A. 2006b, 'Benoît Debie, directeur photo', *Cinergie.be*, 05 May, viewed 14 July 2022, <https://www.cinergie.be/actualites/benoit-debie-directeur-photo>.

Fitoussi, K. 2018, 'Gaspar Noé: 'Climax est un film sur notre part psychotique'', *Paris Match*, 29 January 2021, <https://www.parismatch.com/Culture/Cinema/Gaspar-Noé-Climax-est-un-film-sur-notre-part-psychotique-1575406>.

Forehlich n.d. 'Irreversible', *The Harvard Crimson*, viewed 30 November 2021, <https://dev.thecrimson.com/article/2003/3/14/film-preview-irreversibleplions-gate-filmspafter-a/>.

Fortune, D., 2018, 'The 25 Most Memorable Movie Walkouts', *Vulture*, viewed 31 August 2020, <https://www.vulture.com/2018/11/the-25-most-memorable-movie-walkouts.html#:~:text=For%20good%20measure%2C%20director%20Gaspar,Cannes%20and%20Sundance%20walked%20out.&text=%E2%80%9C They%20had%20900%20in%20the,Good%20on%20ya%2C%20Gaspar!>.

Foucault, M. 1977, 'Transgression', in D. F. Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, Cornell University Press, New York.

Fox, A. Marie, M. Moine, R. & Radner, H. (eds) 2015, 'Introduction: Contemporary French Cinema – Continuity and Change in a Global Context', *A Companion to Contemporary French Cinema*, Wiley-Blackwell, New Jersey, pp. 1-13.

Franco, M. 2007, 'Between Urgency and Strategy: Argentine Exiles in Paris, 1976–1983', *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 50–67.

Francois, E. T. 2002, 'Gaspar Noé, L'Affranchi', *Chro*, viewed 16 November 2021, <https://www.chronicart.com/digital/gaspar-noe-l-affranchi/>.

Frater, P. 2002, 'Irreversible wins shock value but no awards', *Screen Daily*, viewed 7 May 2019, <https://screendaily.com/irreversible-wins-shock-value-but-no-awards/409423.article>.

Freeman, N. 2016, 'The Devil in the Details: Kenneth Anger, the Inventor of a Celluloid Avant-Garde, nears 90', *Artnews*, viewed 16 March 2021,

<https://www.artnews.com/art-news/artists/the-devil-in-the-details-kenneth-anger-the-inventor-of-a-celluloid-avant-garde-nears-90-5880/>.

French, S. M. 1986, 'Contract Law: Film Directors and Editing Rights for Television', *Loyola of Los Angeles Entertainment Law Review*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 95-113.

Frey, M. 2012, 'Tuning out, Turning in and Walking off: The Film Spectator in Pain', in A. Grønstad & H. Gustafsson (eds.), *Ethics and Images of Pain*, Taylor & Francis, United Kingdom.

Frey, M. 2016. *Extreme Cinema: The Transgressive Rhetoric of Today's Art Film Culture*, Rutgers University Press, New Jersy.

fundacionnoe 2022, 'Otra Vez… ¡Me Arruinaste El Dibujo!', Instagram, 12 April, viewed 12 April 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/tv/CcNyDS1FEIY/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet>.

Gale, I. 1993, 'Pierre Molinier, the forgotten Surrealist', *The Independent*, viewed 31 January 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/pierre-molinier-forgotten-surrealist-1502015.html>.

Gallagher, R. 2010, 'El Renacimiento de la Otra Figuracion: Jackie Tynes on Jorge de la Vega', *Sites Google*, viewed 6 May 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/gallagheronart/el-renacimiento-de-la-otra-figuracion-jackie-tynes-on-jorge-de-la-vega>.

Gallaher, P. 2012, 'Pier Paolo Pasolini: a rare interview on the set of 'Salò, or the 120 days of sodom', *Dangerous Mind*, viewed 10 May 2021, <https://dangerousminds.net/comments/pier_paolo_pasolini_a_rare_interview_on_the_set_of_salo_or_the_120_days_of>.

Garaham, A. 2015, 'Five Things We Learned about Gaspar Noé's "Love" in 3d', *Autre*, 05 November, viewd 14 June 2022, <https://autre.love/this-and-that-main/2015/11/5/five-things-we-learned-about-gaspar-nos-love-in-3d>.

Garett, S. 2019, 'How Gaspar Noé Shot His Ambitious Dance Movie, 'Climax,' With Only a One-Page Outline', *The Observer*, 03 January, viewed 25 April, <https://observer.com/2019/03/gaspar-noe-interview-climax-director-made-his-movie-with-only-an-outline/>.

Garreau, J. E. L. 1996, La banlieue: ses films et son hybridité, viewed 25 May 2019, <http://faculty.uml.edu/jgarreau/50.574/banlieuefilms.htm>.

Gayley, H. 2018, 'What is Terma?', Shambhala Times, 18 November, viewed 30 May 2022, <https://shambhalatimes.org/2018/11/18/what-is-terma/>.

Georgaris, B. 2021, 'Kenneth Anger', *TSPDT*, viewed 16 March 2021, <https://www.theyshootpictures.com/angerkenneth.htm>.

Gibson, W. 2016, 'Death Tripping Tibetan Style with Gaspar Noé's "Enter the Void"', Pop Matters, 25 March, viewed 5 January 2022, <https://www.popmatters.com/death-tripping-enter-the-void-2495442900.html>.

Gilbey, R. 2017, 'The muse and the monster: Fassbinder's favourite star on surviving his abuse', *The Guardian*, viewed 11 March 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/mar/27/rainer-werner-fassbinder-bfi-season-hanna-schygulla-interview>.

Gimello-Mesplomb, F. 2006, 'The economy of 1950s popular French cinema', *Studies in French Cinema*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 141–50.

Gimello-Mesplomb, F. 2012, 'Produire un film de genre fantastique en France, entre hétréotopie artistique et quête de légitimité: Analyse d'une tension identitaire dans le champ de la création", in F. Gimello-Mesplomb (ed.), *Les cinéastes Français à l'épreuve du genre fantastique: Socioanalyse d'une production artistique*, L'Harmattan: Paris, pp. 9–69.

Giocanti, D. 1975, 'Moral Rights: Authors' Protection and Business Needs', *Journal of International Law and Economics*, vol. 10, no. 2-3, pp. 627-644.

Gleason, D. 2016, 'Beauty from Chaos', *Facts & Arts*, 06 September, viewed 18 February 2022, <https://www.factsandarts.com/essays/beauty-chaos>.

Godard, J. L. 1972, *Godard on Godard: critical writings*, J. Narboni & T. Milne (eds), Secker and Warburg, London.

Goi, L. 2021, 'The Current Debate: The Transgressiveness of Julia Ducournau's "Titane"', *Mubi*, 07 October, viewed 18 November 2021, <https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/the-current-debate-the-transgressiveness-of-julia-ducournau-s-titane>.

Graham, A. 2015, 'Five Things We Learned about Gaspar Noé's "Love" in 3d', *Autre*, 05 November, viewed 25 May 2022, <https://autre.love/this-and-that-main/2015/11/5/five-things-we-learned-about-gaspar-nos-love-in-3d>.

Greene, N. 2004, 'Representations 1960-2004: Paris and National Transformations', in M. Temple & M. Witt (eds.), *The French Cinema Book*, BFI Publishing, London, pp. 247-255.

Grey, T. 2010, 'Gaspar Noé's 'Enter the Void'', *Financial Times*, 25 September 2022, viewed 10 May 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/4ca5375a-c76a-11df-aeb1-00144feab49a>.

Grierson, T. 2019, 'Climax' Is the Rare Gaspar Noé Film that's Actually Getting Everyone Off', *MelBeta*, viewed 3 September 2019, <https://melmagazine.com/en-us/story/climax-is-the-rare-gaspar-noe-film-thats-actually-getting-everyone-off>.

Grønstad, A. 2007, 'Abject desire: *Anatomie de l'enfer* and the unwatchable', *Studies in French Cinema*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 161-169.

Grosset, Q. 2018, 'Gaspar Noé et Benoît Debie: fluo dads', *Troiscouleurs*, 04 September, viewed 01 July 2022, <https://www.troiscouleurs.fr/article/gaspar-noe-et-benoit-debie-fluo-dads>.

Grosset, Q. 2020, 'Mots croisés — Gaspar Noé: «J'aime bien quand un film se rapproche du langage des rêves»', *Troiscouleurs*, 09 April, viewed 19 April 2022, <https://www.troiscouleurs.fr/article/mots-croises-gaspar-noe-jaime-bien-quand-un-film-se-rapproche-du-langage-des-reves>.

Gulino, P. J. 2013, *Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach*, Bloomsbury Publishing, United Kingdom.

Hamedi, R. 2-16, 'Gaspar Noé: "Je suis désengagé politiquement, je n'ai jamais voté de ma vie"', *Yard*, viewed 16 August 2021, <https://yard.media/gaspar-noé-interview>.

Hammond, C. 2019, 'Coloring Outside the Lines: DP Benoît Debie Shakes it Up with Gaspar Noé, Harmony Korine, and Jacques Audiard', *Moviemaker*, 27 February, viewed 01 July 2022, <https://www.moviemaker.com/coloring-outside-the-lines-benoit-debie/>.

Han, K. 2019, 'Gaspar Noé on the Easter eggs hidden in plain sight in Climax', *Polygon*, viewed 10 July 2019, <https://www.polygon.com/2019/3/15/18267732/climax-gaspar-noe-film-easter-eggs>.

Hand, R. J. & Wilson, M. 2002, *Grand-Guignol: The French Theatre of Horror*, University of Exeter Press, Exeter.

Handler, R. 2021, 'Julia Ducournau lets us in on the years of fury, angst, and comedy that fueled the Palme d'Or–winning, genre-smashing *Titane*', *Vulture*, 05 October, viewed 22 March 2022, <https://www.vulture.com/2021/10/julia-ducournau-on-writing-titane-2021s-boldest-film.html>.

Hara-Kiri 1968, *Cover design*, Harakiri-Choron, viewed 17 May 2021, <https://www.harakiri-choron.com/articles.php?lng=fr&pg=100&mnuid=605&tconfig=0>.

Harries, M. 2007, *Forgetting Lot's Wife: On Destructive Spectatorship*, Fordham University Press, New York.

Harris, B, 2010, 'The Trip', 20 July, *Filmmaker Magazine*, viewed 21 January 2022, <https://filmmakermagazine.com/11207-the-trip-2/#.YeoVxPVBzDJ>.

Hatton, L. 2016, 'Films of The New French Extremity: Visceral Horror and National Identity [Book Review]', *Modern Horrors*, viewed at 28 October 2020, <https://modernhorrors.com/films-new-french-extremity-visceral-horror-national-identity-book-review/>.

Hée, A. 2019, 'Alain Cavalier, Ross McElwee: auto-portraits', *Centre Pompidou*, viewed 07 March 2022, <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/program/calendar/event/cEga4Lj>.

Hermans, E., van Marle, H., Ossewaarde, L., Henckens, M., Qin, S., van Kesteren, M., Schoots, V., Cousijn, H., Rijpkema, M., Oostenveld, R. and Fernandez, G. 2011, 'Stress-Related Noradrenergic Activity Prompts Large-Scale Neural Network Reconfiguration', *Science*, vol. 334, no. 6059, pp. 1151-1153.

Hinsoja, J. S. 2014, 'On Hi-8/Digital and The Intimate: The Film Diaries of Alain Cavalier', 08 July, *Desist Film*, viewed 07 March 2022, <https://desistfilm.com/on-analoguedigital-and-the-intimate-the-film-diaries-of-alain-cavalier/>.

Hjelm, Z. L. 2019, 'Blood, Sperm, And Tears in Extreme Cinema: A phenomenological study in hegemonic masculinity through Gaspar Noé's *Love* from a psychoanalytic perspective', Master thesis, Linköpings Universitet, Linköping.

Hodge, M. V. 1997, 'Forging the Visual Language of Horror: The Graphics of the Grand Guignol', Master thesis, University of Louisville, Louisville.

Hoek, L. 2019, 'Censoring cinematic culture through the Bangladesh Film Club Act', *Terrain*, vol. 72, viewed 26 October 2020, <http://journals.openedition.org/terrain/19361>.

Holohan, C. 2010, 'Aesthetics of Intimacy', *Short Film Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 87–90.

Horeck, T. & Kendall, T. (eds) 2011, 'Introduction', *New Extremism in Cinema: From France to Europe: From France to Europe*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 1-17.

Humfrey, J. 2019, '10 Great Movies to Watch If You Like Gaspar Noé', *Taste of Cinema*, viewed 01 February 2021, <https://www.tasteofcinema.com/2019/10-great-movies-to-watch-if-you-like-gaspar-Noé/2>.

Humfrey, J. 2020, 'Understanding Slowness Through the Cinema of Gaspar Noé', *First Impressions*, 29 April, viewed 30 March 2022, <https://notesonfilm1.com/2020/04/29/joe-humfrey-understanding-slowness-through-the-cinema-of-gaspar-noe/>.

Iannone, P. 2015, '5 ways to recognise a Pasolini film', *BFI*, viewed 10 May 2021, <https://www.bfi.org.uk/features/5-ways-recognise-pasolini-film>.

Imdb 2021, *Climax*, viewed 02 January, <imdb.com/title/tt8359848/>.

Imdb n.d. *Carne (1991) Release Info*, viewed 21 January 2022, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0218871/releaseinfo>.

Imdb n.d. *I Stand Alone (1998) Release Info*, viewed 21 January 2022, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0157016/releaseinfo>.

IMDb. 2020, *Irreversible (2002)*, viewed 31 August 2020, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0290673/trivia>.

In Memory of Koji Wakamatsu, 'From Mr. Gaspar Noé', Facebook, 22 October, viewed 10 July 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/155973801212350/posts/157267497749647/>.

Indiana, G. 2000, *Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom*, British Film Institute, London.

Irréversible 2002, motion picture, Les Cinémas de la zone, StudioCanal, France.

Israel, A. 2011, 'Kenneth Anger', *Purple*, viewed 09 March 2022, <https://purple.fr/magazine/fw-2011-issue-16/kenneth-anger/>.

Ivanchevich, C. 2017, 'Luis Felipe Noé. Mirada prospectiva', Bellas Artes, viewed 20 January 2021, <https://www.bellasartes.gob.ar/en/exhibitions/luis-felipe-noé.-mirada-prospectiva/#:~:text=In%201965%2C%20in%20his%20book,in%20his%20theory%20and%20practice.>.

Jäckel, A. 2007, 'The Inter/Nationalism of French Film Policy', *Modern & Contemporary France*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 21–36.

Jacobson, G, 2018, 'Victims of the Dance: Gaspar Noé Breaks Down a Scene from Climax', *Filmmaker*, viewed 26 October 2021, <https://filmmakermagazine.com/106549-victims-of-the-dance-gaspar-noe-breaks-down-a-scene-from-climax/>.

Jagernauth, K. 2012, 'What Is Gaspar Noe Up to on the Set of Nicolas Winding Refn's 'Only God Forgives'? Venice Premiere in The Works?', *Indiewire*, 27 March, viewed 26 December 2022, <https://www.indiewire.com/2012/03/what-is-gaspar-noe-up-to-on-the-set-of-nicolas-winding-refns-only-god-forgives-venice-premiere-in-the-works-253006/>.

Jeannelle, Jean-L. 2009, 'Alain Cavalier: le filmeur, la caméra et le spectateur', *Itinéraires*, no. 4, pp. 175-191.

Jeffries, S. 2003, 'It shows us the animal inside us', *The Guardian*, viewed 31 January 31, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2003/jan/31/2003inreview.features>.

Jenks, C. 2003, *Transgression*, Routledg: London.

Jewell, C., n.d. 'From Script to Screen: What Role for Intellectual Property?', *World Intellectual Property Organization*, viewed 26 October 2021, <https://www.wipo.int/pressroom/en/stories/ip_and_film.html>.

Jodorowsky, A. 1971, *El Topo: The Book of the Film*, Douglas Book Corporation: New York.

Jones, M. 2019, '10 Metaphysical Films for Philosophy Students', *Philosophy in Film*, 8 December, 19 January 2022, <https://philosophyinfilm.com/2019/12/08/10-metaphysical-films-for-philosophy-students/>.

JP's Box-Office 2021, *Les Entrees en France*, viewed 17 March 2022,
<http://jpbox-
office.com/charts_france.php?view=&filtre=datefr&limite=0&infla=0&v
ariable=2021&tri=champ0&order=DESC&limit5=0>.

JP's Box-Office 2022, *Les entrees en France: Genre: Horreur*, viewed 17 March 2022,
<http://www.jpbox-
office.com/v9_charts_total.php?view=2&filtre=genre&infla=0&variable=
13>.

Julius, A. 2002, *Transgressions: The Offences of Art*, University of Chicago Press,
Chicago.

Kamel Mennour n.d. *Sans Titre (série "l'oeuvre, le peintre et son fétiche")*, viewed
25 July 2022, <https://kamelmennour.com/artists/pierre-
molinier/sans-titre-s-rie-l-oeuvre-le-peintre-et-son-f-tiche>.

Kandiashvili, T. 2018, 'Let There Be Meat: Deterioration of Love in Gaspar
Noé's Carne (1991), I Stand Alone (1998), Irreversible (2002) and Love
(2015)', Honours Dissertation, The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.

Kasman, D. 2009, 'Cannes 2009: A Time and Space Odyssey ("Enter the Void,"
Noé)', *Mubi*, 22 May, 22 January 2022,
<https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/cannes-2009-a-time-and-space-
odyssey-enter-the-void-noe>.

Kellermann, P. F. 1992, *Focus on Psychodrama: The Therapeutic Aspects of
Psychodrama*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers: Philadelphia.

Kenber, B. 2016, 'Exclusive Interview with Karl Glusman about Gaspar Noe's
'Love 3D'', *The Ultimate Rabbit*, 12 September, viewed 25 April 2022,
<https://theultimaterabbit.com/2016/09/12/exclusive-interview-with-
karl-glusman-about-gaspar-noes-love-3d/>.

Kermode, M. & James, N. 2003, 'Horror movie', *Sight & Sound*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp.
20-22.

Keslassy, E. 2016, 'French Culture Minister Vows to Reform Movie Ratings
System', *Variety*, 29 February, viewed 3 December 2021,
<https://variety.com/2016/film/news/french-culture-minister-vows-
to-reform-ratings-system-1201718138/>.

Keslassy, E. 2017, 'European VR Pioneers Join Forces to Launch New Venture
(Exclusive)', *Variety*, 07 December, viewed 13 June 2022,

<https://variety.com/2017/digital/news/european-vr-pioneers-launch-atlas-v-sundance-new-frontier-1202632490/>.

Khaldi, T. 2021, 'Vortex: an interview with Gaspar Noé', *Festival de Cannes*, 16 July, viewed 13 May 2022, <https://www.festival-cannes.com/en/74-editions/retrospective/2021/actualites/articles/vortex-an-interview-with-gaspar-noe>.

Kiang, J. 2015, 'Cannes Review: Gaspar Noé's Hardcore and Softhearted 'Love'', *Indiewire*, 21 May, viewed 05 December 2022, <https://www.indiewire.com/2015/05/cannes-review-gaspar-noes-hardcore-and-softhearted-love-263585/>.

Kinder, M. 2009, 'The Exterminating Angel: Exterminating Civilization', *The Criterion Collection*, 09 February, viewed 30 March 2022, <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1012-the-exterminating-angel-exterminating-civilization>.

Kipnis, L. 2020, 'Transgression, An Elegy', *Liberties*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 24-46.

Kohn, D. 2017, 'Possible roles and advantages of free improvisation in an academic context', Master thesis, Hochschule für Musik Basel, Zürich.

Kohn, E. 2016, 'Gaspar Noé Says All Directors Are 'Sucking D*cks For Financing' And Women Enjoyed 'Love' More Than Men', *Indiewire*, 06 August, viewed 25 November 2021, <https://www.indiewire.com/2016/08/gaspar-noe-all-directors-suck-dick-for-financing-locarno-film-festival-love-women-1201713990/>.

Kohn, E. 2021, 'Gaspar Noé Almost Died, Got Sober, and Made His Most Personal Film', *IndieWire*, 18 July, viewed 21 January 2022, <https://www.indiewire.com/2021/07/gaspar-noe-almost-died-vortex-1234651945/>.

Kounen, J. 2011, *Visionary Ayahuasca: a manual for therapeutic and spiritual journeys*, trans. J. Cain, Park Street Press, Rochester.

Kovács, A. B. 2007, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, 1950– 1980*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Koven, M. J. 2006, *La Dolce Morte: Vernacular Cinema and the Italian Giallo Film*, Scarecrow Press, Inc., Maryland.

Kozlov, V. 2015, 'Russian Legislator Compares Gaspar Noe's 'Love' to Hitler's 'Mein Kampf'', *The Hollywood Reporter*, viewed 18 May 2021,

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/love-compared-mein-kampf-by-825892/>.

Kramer, G. 2015, 'Interview: Gaspar Noé on Love, Sex, Masturbation, and More', *Slant Magazine*, viewed 11 October 2020, <https://www.slantmagazine.com/film/interview-gaspar-noe/>.

Krautheim, G. 2008, 'Aspiring to the Void: The Collapse of Genre and Erasure of Body in Gaspar Noé's *Irreversible*', *Cinephile*, vol. 4, no. 1. pp. 13-17.

Krzywinska, T. 2006, *Sex and the Cinema*, Wallflower, London.

Kubo, Y. 2016 'Queering Film Location and the Byakkotai: Kinoshita Keisuke's Queer Sensibility and Sekishunchō (1959)', *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture*, vol. 16, no. 2.

Kuhn, A., & Westwell, G. 2020, 'film style', *A Dictionary of Film* Studies, viewed 23 July 2022, <https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/view/10.1093/acref/9780198832096.001.0001/acref-9780198832096-e-0298>.

La Haine 1995, motion picture, Lazennec & Associates, France.

Lachman, G. 2011, 'Kenneth Anger: The Crowned and Conquered Child', *Anger: Magick Lantern Cycle DVD booklet*, British Film Institute, London.

Lack, H. 2013, 'The avant-garde mythmaker on suicide, black magick and Hollywood Babylon', *Dazed*, viewed 16 March 2021, <https://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/17824/1/kenneth-anger>.

Lazic, E. 2019, 'Where to begin with Gaspar Noé', *British Film Institute*, viewed 10 November 2019, <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/where-begin-gaspar-noe>.

Le Cain, M. 2003, 'Anger, Kenneth', *Sense of Cinema*, viewed 4 July 2021, <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2003/great-directors/anger/>.

Le CNC 2021, 'Quels films ont bénéficié de l'avance sur recettes depuis sa création?', *CNC*, 10 August, viewed 16 March 2022, <https://www.cnc.fr/a-propos-du-cnc/quels-films-ont-beneficie-de-l-avance-sur-recettes-depuis-sa-creation>.

Le Temps Détruit Tou n.d. *Carne* (1991), viewed 29 April 2022, <https://www.letempsdetruittout.net/filmographie/carne>.

Le Temps Detruit Tout 2021a, 'About', Sodomites, viewed 26 January 2021, < https://www.letempsdetruittout.net/sodomites-en>.

Le Temps Detruit Tout 2021b, 'Plot', Pulpe Amère, viewed 13 January 2021,
    <https://www.letempsdetruittout.net/pulpe-amere-en>.

Le Temps Détruit Tout 2021c, Biography, viewed 13 January 2021,
    <https://en.letempsdetruittout.net/biography>.

Le Vern, R. 2009, 'Interview Gaspar Noe (Suddenly the Emptiness)', *Daftworld*,
    24 September, viewed 21 January 2022, <http://daftworld.over-
    blog.com/article-36820075.html>.

Le-Tan, O. 2009, 'Gaspar Noé', *Purple*, viewed 14 January 2021,
    <https://purple.fr/magazine/ss-2009-issue-11/gaspar-Noé/>.

Lebrun, F. 2021, 'Interview with Françoise Lebrun', *Vortex*, press kit, p. 5, Wild
    Bunch International: Paris.

Lefebvre, S. 2012, 'The Films of Gaspar Noé', in M. White (ed), *Cashiers du
    Cinemart 17*, lulu.com, pp. 84-88.

Lemercier, F. 2009, 'France driving force of international auteur film', *Cineuropa*,
    27 April, viewed 02 January,
    <https://cineuropa.org/en/newsdetail/108192/>.

Lemons, S. 2001, 'That old black magic called self-love: Sorcerer of the lens
    Pierre Molinier's self-portraiture is the stuff nightmares are made of',
    Salon, viewed 8 May 2021,
    <https://www.salon.com/2001/08/23/molinier/>.

Leskosky, R. 2016, 'French Impressionist Cinema', *Routledge Encyclopedia of
    Modernism*, viewed 22 June 2022,
    <https://www.rem.routledge.com/articles/french-impressionist-
    cinema>. doi:10.4324/0123456789-REM1799-1>.

Liese, S. 1999, 'Cinema to dishonour France', *Independent*, 14 January, viewed 22
    November 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-
    entertainment/cinema-to-dishonour-france-1046932.html>.

Ligammari, R. 2015, 'Benoit Debie: Interview du Plus Brillant des Chefs Op'',
    Gonzai, 22 July, viewed 01 July 2022, <https://gonzai.com/benoit-debie-
    interview-integrale-du-plus-brillant-des-chefs-operateurs/>.

Lightman, Herb A. 1946, 'The Fluid Camera', *America Cinematographer*, vol. 3,
    no. 82, pp. 102-3.

Lim, D. 2014, 'Safe: Nowhere to Hide', *The Criterion Collection*, 10 December,
    viewed 30 March 2022,

<https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/3394-safe-nowhere-to-hide>.

London, B. 2021, 'INTERVIEW: Barbara London on the birth of video art', *Phaidon*, viewed 7 February 2022, <https://www.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2020/january/20/interview-barbara-london-on-the-birth-of-video-art>.

López, C. A. & Martin, A. 2018, 'De Palma, Pure and Impure', *Film Critic: Adrian Martin*, viewed 14 July 2022, <https://www.filmcritic.com.au/essays/depalma.html>.

Lordygan, K. 2015, 'Gaspar Noé's Five Favorite Films', *Rotten Tomatoes*, viewed 2 March 2021, <https://editorial.rottentomatoes.com/article/gaspar-Noés-five-favorite-films/>.

Love 2015, motion picture, Les Cinémas de La zone, Rectangle Productions, Wild Bunch, RT Pictures, France.

Lowinsky, P. 2004, 'Interview with Frankie Pain — Part One', *Le Temps Detruit Tout*, 11 November, viewed 2 May 2022, <http://www.letempsdetruittout.net/interviews/frankie-pain-(partie-1)>.

Lux Æterna 2019, motion picture, UFO Distributions, Potemkine Films, France.

MacCormack, P. 2008, *Cinesexuality*, Routledge, Abingdon.

Macdonald, I. W. 2013, *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, London.

Machado, J. 2019, 'Art Film and the Poetics of transgression: A Practice-Based Investigation', PhD Thesis, Aarhus Universitet, viewed 15 September 2019, <http://phd.arts.au.dk/fileadmin/grads.au.dk/AR/PhD_dissertations/Julia_Machado_-_phd_folder_-2019_-_CAS.pdf>.

Macnab, G. 2002, ''The rape had to be disgusting to be useful'', *The Guardian*, viewed 3 February 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2002/aug/02/artsfeatures.festivals>.

Magill, H. 2002, 'With Gaspar Noé & Vincent Cassel', *Irréversible*, press kit, pp. 12-19, Accent Film Entertainment, Melbourne.

Malekpour, M. 2021, 'The Psychological Horror and Consequences of an LSD-spiked Sangria in Gaspar Noé's Climax (2018)', *Diabolique Magazine*, 02

September, viewed 20 April 2022,
<https://diaboliquemagazine.com/gaspar-noes-climax-2018>.

Malèna 2000, motion picture, Medusa Film, Miramax, Pacific Pictures, Tele+.

Malkames, K. 1974, 'To Zoom or Not to Zoom', *American Cinematographer*, vol. 55, no. 6, pp. 712-713.

Manifeste des 66, n.d. 'L'appel des 66 cinéastes', viewed 12 December 2022, <https://www.bok.net/pajol/manifeste66.html>.

Manning, E. 2015, 'how 'kids' and 'blue is the warmest color' influenced gaspar noé's 'love'', *i-D*, viewed 18 May 2021, <https://i-d.vice.com/en_us/article/59bjyd/how-kids-and-blue-is-the-warmest-color-influenced-gaspar-nos-love>.

Maras, S. (2009), *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice*, Wallflower Press, London.

Marchisio, B. 2014, 'Autopsie du cinéma d'horreur français', *Ulyces*, 27 August, viewed 17 March 2022, <https://www.ulyces. co/benoit-marchisio/autopsie-cinema-horreur-francais-aja-gans-laugier/>.

Marie, M. 2009, 'French Cinema in the New Century', *Yale French Studies*, no. 115, pp. 9–30.

Martin, A. 1992, 'Mise en scene is dead, or the expressive, the excessive, the technical and the stylish', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 87-140.

Martin, A. 2001, 'Vies (Alain Cavalier, France, 2000)', *Film Critic: Adrian Martin*, viewed 07 March 2022, <https://filmcritic.com.au/reviews/v/vies.html>.

Martin, A. 2005, 'Innocence (Lucile Hadzihalilovic, Belgium/France/UK, 2004)', *Film Critic: Adrian Martin*, viewed 14 July 2022, <https://www.filmcritic.com.au/reviews/i/innocence_04.html>.

Martin, A. 2006, 'Kind of a Revolution, and Kind of Not: Digital Low-Budget Cinema in Australia Today', *SCAN*, vol. 3, no. 2, 19 October, viewed 23 May 2022, <http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal_id=76>.

Martin, A. 2011, 'Turn the Page: From Mise en scène to Dispositif', *Screening the Past*, no. 31, viewed 12 July 2022, <https://www.screeningthepast.com/issue-31-first-release/turn-the-page-from-mise-en-scene-to-dispositif>.

Martin, A. 2013, 'What is Mise en scène? Entry for a Film Theory Encyclopedia',
	Film Critic: Adrian Martin, viewed 14 July 2022,
	<https://www.filmcritic.com.au/essays/miseenscene.html>.

Martin, A. 2014, 'Where do the cinematic ideas come from', *Journal of
	Screenwriting*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 9-26.

Marx, K. 1982, *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: Collected Works, vol. 38, Marx and
	Engels: 1844-1851: 36: Marx to Pavel Vasilyevich Annenkov*, International
	Publishers, New York.

Mccullagh, J. F. 2019, 'Choosing Aspect Ratio: A Guide to Everything You Need
	to Know', *Premium Beat by Shutterstock*, viewed 20 January 2021,
	<https://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/filmmaking-guide-choosing-
	aspect-ratio/>.

McEwen, A. 2012, 'Jorge de la Vega (Argentinian 1930-1971)', *Christie's*, viewed
	6 May 2021, <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5561745>.

MCMC Galeria n.d. *Untitled, 1967*, viewed 25 July 2022,
	<https://mcmcgaleria.com/en/artist/jorge-luis-de-la-vega-2>.

Mean, S. 2016, *GASPAR NOE as an Auteur*, viewed 20 July 2019,
	<https://www.academia.edu/24237854/GASPAR_NOE_as_an_Auteur
	>.

Merriam-Webster. n.d., 'Melodrama', *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*, viewed 09
	December 2021, <https://www.merriam-
	webster.com/dictionary/melodrama>.

Mes, T. 2007, 'Koji Wakamatsu', *Midnight Eye*, viewed 10 July 2021,
	<http://www.midnighteye.com/interviews/koji-wakamatsu/>.

Meurisse Press Agency 1937, *A Scene From Grand Guignol*, viewed 31 October
	2020, <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand-
	Guignol#/media/Fichier:Grand-Guignol-Sc%C3%A8ne-1937_(2).jpg>.

Millard, K. 2014, *Screenwriting in a Digital Era*, Palgrave Macmillan UK,
	London.

Miller, J. 2020, 'Rabbit's Moon: A Brief but Consequential Correspondence
	Between Brakhage And Anger', *Desist Film*, viewed 16 March 2021,
	<https://desistfilm.com/rabbits-moon-a-brief-but-consequential-
	correspondence-between-stan-brakhage-and-kenneth-anger/>.

Millieroux, A. 2022, 'Gaspar Noé, au coeur du Vortex', *Fais Pas Genre*, 21 April, viewed 04 July 2022, <https://faispasgenre.com/2022/04/gaspar-noe-interview-entretien-vortex>.

Minsker, E. 2013, 'Turn Off the Lights and Watch Animal Collective's Gaspar Noé-Directed 'Applesauce' Video', *Pitchfork*, viewed 9 July 2021, <https://pitchfork.com/news/49342-turn-off-the-lights-and-watch-animal-collectives-gaspar-noe-directed-applesauce-video/>.

Misek, R. 2006, 'European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood by Thomas Elsaesser', *Senses of Cinema*. viewed 12 November 2021, <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2006/book-reviews/european-cinema-elsaesser/>.

Mobbs, D., Adolphs, R., Fanselow, M.S., Lisa, F.B., LeDoux, J.E., Ressler, K. & Tye, K.M. 2019, 'Viewpoints: Approaches to defining and investigating fear', *Nature neuroscience*, vol. 22, no. 8, pp. 1205-1216.

Modern Japan and France 2014, *Section 3: Movies*, viewed 21 January 2022, <https://www.ndl.go.jp/france/en/column/s2_3.html>.

Molinier, P. n.d. *Sans Titre (série l'oeuvre, le peintre et son fétiche)*, Kamel Mennour, viewed 18 May 2021, <https://kamelmennour.com/artists/pierre-molinier/sans-titre-s-rie-l-oeuvre-le-peintre-et-son-f-tiche>.

MoMa 2019, 'Seul contre tous (I Stand Alone).1998. Directed by Gaspar Noé', *Museum of Modern Arts*, viewed 10 November 2019, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/events/5913>.

Monique, J. 2019, 'Sofia Boutella Discusses Climax, Gaspar Noé and the Power of Non-Reckless Abandon', *Paste*, viewed 12 May 2021, <https://www.pastemagazine.com/movies/sofia-boutella/sofia-boutella-discusses-climax-gaspar-noe-and-the/>.

Morgan, M. 2018, 'Gaspar Noé: The master of provocation on his trippy dance masterpiece, Climax', *Wonderland*, viewed 23 March 2021, <https://www.wonderlandmagazine.com/2018/09/20/gaspar-Noé-climax-interview/>.

Moritz, W. 1999, 'The Absolute Film', *Centre for Visual Music*, viewed 11 July 2022, <centerforvisualmusic.org/library/WMAbsoluteFilm.htm>.

Mortimer, B. 2018, 'Gaspar Noé interview: 'American horror movies are more moralistic'', *Den of Geek*, viewed 13 January 2021,

<https://www.denofgeek.com/movies/gaspar-Noé-interview-american-horror-movies-are-more-moralistic/>.

Motamayor, R. 2002, 'TikTok Users Boosted Gaspar Noé's Erotic Film 'Love' Into Netflix's Top 10', *The Playlist*, 05 July, viewed 23 November 2021, <https://theplaylist.net/tiktok-netflix-love-top-10-20200705/>.

Mottram, J. 2004, 'Monica Bellucci: Malena interviewed by James Mottram', *BBC*, 24 September, viewed 19 January 2022, <bbc.co.uk/films/2001/03/13/monica_bellucci_malena_130301_intervie w.shtml>.

Mottram, J. 2010, 'Gaspar Noé - The shock of the Noé as an enfant terrible returns', *Independent*, 10 September, viewed 23 April 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/gaspar-no-the-shock-of-the-no-as-an-enfant-terrible-returns-2075142.html>.

Mottram, J. 2014, 'Monica Bellucci: Malena interviewed by James Mottram', *BBC*, 24 September, viewed 19 January 2022, <bbc.co.uk/films/2001/03/13/monica_bellucci_malena_130301_intervie w.shtml>.

Moviementa 2016, *The French Model of Cinema*, viewed 10 October 2020, <https://www.movimenta.fr/en/french-model-of-cinema/>.

Munt, A, 2016, 'Film Socialisme & the Screenplay Poetics of Late Godard', *Screening the Past*, viewed 26 October 2021, <http://www.screeningthepast.com/issue-41-late-godard-dossier/film-socialisme-and-the-screenplay-poetics-of-late-godard/>.

Munt, A. 2006, 'Digital Kiarostami & The Open Screenplay', *Scan: Journal of Media Arts Culture*, viewed 04 November 2021, <http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal_id=74>.

Munt, A. 2008, '"Am I crazy to make a film for only $100,000 or am I crazy not to?" Kriv Stenders goes Micro-budget Digital for Boxing Day', *Sense of Cinema*, viewed 22 January 2022, <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2008/australian-cinema-46/kriv-stenders-boxing-day/#16>.

Murphy, J. J. 2007, *Me and You and Memento and Fargo: How Independent Screenplays Work*, Continuum, New York-London.

Murphy, J. J. 2019, *Rewriting Indie Cinema*: *Improvisation, Psychodrama, and the Screenplay*, Columbia University Press, New York.

Murray, N. 2011, 'Gateways to Geekery: Giallo', *AV Club*, viewed 26 October 2020, <https://film.avclub.com/giallo-1798228207>.

Neech, D. 2010, 'Koji Wakamatsu The Rebellious Auteur', *EIGAGOGO*, viewed 17 May 2019, <http://eigagogo.free.fr/en/koji-wakamatsu-the-rebellious-auteur.php>.

Needham, G. 2002, 'Playing with genre: An introduction to the Italian giallo', *Kinoeye*, vol. 2, no. 11, 10 June, viewed 23 November 2021, <https://www.kinoeye.org/02/11/needham11.php>.

Nesselson, L. 1999, 'Gaspar Noé', *Variety*, viewed 25 February 2020, <https://variety.com/1999/film/news/gaspar-noé-1117793183/>.

Newland, C. 2022, 'Vortex director Gaspar Noé: 'Covid killed three different men who were second fathers to me'', *inews.co.uk*, 11 May, viewed 16 July 2022, <https://inews.co.uk/culture/film/vortex-director-gaspar-noe-interview-covid-killed-three-different-men-who-were-second-fathers-to-me-1622386>.

Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds 2013, *We Know Who U R*, video recording, YouTube, viewed 7 July 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjF57zEbxpI>.

Nicodemo, J. T. 2013, 'The New French Extreme: Bruno Dumont and Gaspar Noé, France's contemporary zeitgeist', Master thesis, The University of Western Ontario, Ontario.

Nielsen, J. I. 2007, 'Camera Movement in Narrative Cinema -Towards a Taxonomy of Functions', PhD thesis, Aarhus University, Aarhus.

Nietzsche, F. 1910, *The Birth of Tragedy or Hellenism And Pessimism*, Trans. WM. A. Haussmann, Ph.D., George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London.

Nietzsche, F. W. 1919, 'Friedrich Wilhem Nietzsche. 1844-1900.', in John Bartlett (comp.) Familiar Quotations, 10th edn, p. 997, Little Brown, Boston.

Noé, G. 1998, 'Gaspar Noe's Explique', *Seul Contre Tous*, press kit, p. 9, Les Cinémas de la zone, Paris.

Noé, G. 1999, 'I'm happy some people walk out during my film. It makes the ones who stay feel strong', *The Guardian*, 13 March, viewed 26 November 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/1999/mar/12/features3>.

Noé, G. 2010, 'Gaspar Noé and Kenneth Anger, in the Void Together', *Interview*, viewed 1 February 2021, <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/film/web-exclusive-gaspar-Noé-kenneth-anger>.

Noé, G. 2011, 'Kenneth Anger', *Interview Magazine*, 19 October, viewed 09 March 2022, <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/film/dream-dialogue-gaspar-noe-kenneth-anger>.

Noé, G. 2012, 'Gaspar Noé', *British Film Institute*, viewed 10 November 2019, <https://www.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/sightandsoundpoll2012/voter/953>.

Noé, G. 2015a, 'Pierre Molinier / Vertigo', *Camille Morin*, viewed 31 January 2021, <https://files.cargocollective.com/c166553/vertigo-PR-fin.pdf>.

Noé, G. 2015b, 'Things I've Learned as a Moviemaker: Gaspar Noé', *Moviemaker Magazine*, 06 November, viewed 3 March 2022, <https://www.moviemaker.com/gaspar-noe/>.

Noé, G. 2016a, 'Gaspar Noé, Alone against the world', *Lumière 2016 Grand Lyon Film Festival*, 13 October, viewed 4 March 2022, <https://2016.festival-lumiere.org/en/lecture-zen/gaspar-noe-alone-against-the-world.html>.

Noé, G. 2016b, 'Gaspar Noé', *Red Bull Music Academy*, viewed 30 March 2022, <https://www.redbullmusicacademy.com/lectures/gaspar-noe>.

Noé, G. 2018a, '[Gaspar Noé] how he was dazzled by Schizophrenia', *Chaos*, viewed 12 May 2021, < http://www.chaosreign.fr/gaspar-noe-schizophrenia-fascination/>.

Noé, G. 2018b, 'HOW?', *Climax*, press kit, p. 3, Wild Bunch International, Paris.

Noé, G. 2019, 'Interview Gaspar Noé', *International Film Festival Rotterdam*, 07 February, viewed 3 March 2022, <https://iffr.com/en/blog/interview-gaspar-noe>.

Noé, G. 2021, 'Interview with Gaspar Noé', *Vortex*, press kit, pp. 3-4, Wild Bunch International, Paris.

Noé, G. n.d. *Enter the Void: Screenplay*, viewed 21 January 2022, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/87750049/Gaspar-No-Enter-the-Void-Screenplay>.

Noé, L. F. 1963, *Cerrado por brujería* (Closed for Witchcraft), Blanton Museum of Art, viewed 16 May 2021, < https://collection.blantonmuseum.org/objects-1/info/13908?sort=0>.

Noé, L. F. 2003, 'Jorge Nos Tenía Acostumbrados a las Mutaciones...', in Jorge de la Vega Obras 1961-1971, *Museum of Latin American Art of Buenos Aires - Colección Costantin*i, Buneos Aires.

Noé, L. F. 2021, 'Chronology', *Luis Felipe Noé*, viewed 3 February 2021, <https://www.luisfelipenoé.com/cronologia/en/>.

Nordine, M. 2018, 'Gaspar Noé Is 'Not Fascinated' by Stanley Kubrick's Work as a Whole, but Calls '2001: A Space Odyssey' 'Utterly Majestic'', *IndieWire*, viewed 10 May 2021, <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/07/gaspar-noe-2001-a-space-odyssey-stanley-kubrick-1201980252>.

Noys, B. 2000, *Georges Bataille : a critical introduction*, Pluto, London.

O'Donnell, G. 1978, 'Reflections on the Patterns of Change in the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State', *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 3-38.

Onstad, K. 2006, 'A life of Anger', *The Guardian*, viewed 4 July 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2006/oct/27/londonfilmfestival2006.londonfilmfestival>.

Oyarzun, H. 2015, '10 Great Films Influenced by The Cinema of Rainer Werner Fassbinder', *Taste of Cinema*, viewed Aug 6, 2019, <http://www.tasteofcinema.com/2015/10-great-films-influenced-by-the-cinema-of-rainer-werner-fassbinder/>.

Pacheco, M. E. 2021, 'Biographical Chronology', *Jorge de la Vega*, viewed 20 January 2021, <https://www.jorgedelavega.com/jorgedelavega-autor.html>.

Palmer, T. 2011, *Brutal intimacy*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut.

Palmer, T. 2015, *Irreversible*, Macmillan Education/Palgrave, London.

Palmer, T. 2022, 'Outside In: Lucile Hadžihalilović and Gaspar Noé's Les Cinémas de la zone', *Senses of Cinema*, viewed 23 December 2022, <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2022/the-natural-models-of-lucile-hadzihalilovic/outside-in-lucile-hadzihalilovic-and-gaspar-noes-les-cinemas-de-la-zone/>.

Pasolini, P. P, 2006, 'A Mad Dream', *BFI*, viewed 8 May 2021, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070629093253/http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/salo/foreword.html>.

Patin, M. 2018, 'Top 12 des films d'horreur européens de Gaspar Noé', *Premier*, 31 October, viewed 23 November 2021, <premiere.fr/Cinema/News-Cinema/Top-12-des-films-d-horreur-europeens-de-Gaspar-Noe>.

Paulus, T. 2015, 'Between Style and Specter: Figuring Mise en Scène', 21 May, *Photogénie*, viewed 14 July 2022, <https://photogenie.be/between-style-and-specter-figuring-mise-en-scene>.

Peacock, G. 2020, 'Gaspar Noé - Crafting the modern cult cinema', *Metal*, 24 November, viewed 02 July 2022, <https://metalmagazine.eu/en/post/interview/gaspar-noe>.

Peary, G. 2002, 'Gaspar Noé', *Gerald Peary*, viewed 26 November 2021, <geraldpeary.com/interviews/mno/noe.html>.

Pedrero-Setzer, N. 2022, 'Q&A: Filmmaker Gaspar Noé knows he won't be remembered and doesn't care', *Washington Square News*, 02 May, viewed 8 May 2022, <https://nyunews.com/arts/film/2022/05/02/gaspar-noe-vortex-interview/>.

Pendreigh, B. 2002, 'Irreversible Director Gasper Noe "Delighted" By Audience Response', *iofilm*, 08 August, viewed 12 January 2022, <https://iofilm.com/filmmaking/directing/2002-08-08-726-irreversible-director-gasper-noe-delighted-by-audience-response>.

Péron, D. 2013, 'Un film de défonce fait par des gens clean', *Libération*, 5 May 2010, viewed 01 July 2022, <https://www.liberation.fr/cinema/2010/05/05/un-film-de-defonce-fait-par-des-gens-clean_624236/>.

Perspective 2021, *Buñuel: The father of cinematic Surrealism | Perspective*, videorecording, YouTube, viewed 23 February 2022, <youtube.com/watch?v=CrjSNLUU44I&t=940s>.

Petrie, D. 2010, 'Theory, Practice, and the Significance of Film Schools', *Scandia*, vol. 76, no. 2, pp. 31-46.

Phillips, A. & Stringer, J. (eds) 2007, *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts*, Routledge, London.

Phillipson, D. 2020, 'Looking beyond the violence of Baise-moi', *Little White Lies*, 20 June, viewed 24 November 2021, <https://lwlies.com/articles/baise-moi-sexual-violence-new-french-extreme/>.

Philoponus, J. 2016, 'Rhetoric and poetics', *Encyclopædia Britannica*, viewed 26 October 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Philoponus>.

Piller, L. 2020, 'A Brief History of Cinéma du look', *Nowness*, 15 September, viewed 22 June 2022, <https://www.nowness.com/story/a-brief-history-of-cinema-du-look#:~:text=Celebrated%20directors%20Luc%20Besson%2C%20Jean,a%20focus%20on%20alienated%20characters.>.

Pinkerton, N. 2017, 'Raw', *Sight & Sound*, vol. 27, no. 5, pp. 88–89.

Pinto, R. & Long, C. 2021, 'Gaspar Noé: An Exclusive Interview on Creativity and Life', *HoneySuckle Magazine,* viewed 26 October 2021, <https://honeysucklemag.com/gaspar-noe-exclusive-interview-creativity/>.

Polizine & Veille 2021, 'Biography', *Le Temps Détruit Tout*, viewed 22 January 2022, <https://en.letempsdetruittout.net/biographie>.

Pope, N., Voges, E., Kevin, K. K., Bloxsome, E. (2007), 'Pornography and Erotica: Definitions and Prevalence', *Social Entrepreneurship, Social Change and Sustainability*, viewed 1 September 2019, <https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/bitstream/handle/10072/16980/47292_1.pdf>

Popova, M. 2016, 'On Nonconformity: Artist Ben Shahn's Spirited Defense of Nonconformists as Society's Engine of Growth and Greatness', *Brainpickings*, viewed 18 January 2021, <https://www.brainpickings.org/2016/11/08/ben-shahn-the-shape-of-content-norton-nonconformity>.

Pulpe Amére 1987, motion picture, Les Cinémas De La zone, France.

Qin, S., Hermans, E. J., van Marle, H. J. F. & Fernández, G. 2012, 'Understanding Low Reliability of Memories for Neutral Information Encoded under Stress: Alterations in Memory-Related Activation in the Hippocampus and Midbrain', *Journal of Neuroscience*, vol. 32, no. 12, pp. 4032-4041.

Quandt, J. 2011, 'Flesh and Blood: Sex and Violence in Recent French Cinema', in T. Horeck & T. Kendall (eds.), *The New Extremism in Cinema: From France to Europe*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 18-25.

Ramasseul, D. 2012, 'Kenneth Anger, Hollywood's Cursed Mage', *Paris Match*, viewed 5 July 2021,

<https://www.parismatch.com/Culture/Cinema/Kenneth-Anger-le-mage-de-Hollywood-161295>.

Rauger, J-F., & Reigner, I. 2007, 'Émergence de l'horreur à la française', *Le Monde*, 12 June, viewed 17 March 2022, <https://www.lemonde.fr/cinema/article/2007/06/12/emergence-de-l-horreur-a-la-francaise_922352_3476.html>.

Raup, J. 2021, 'First Look at Gaspar Noé's Vortex, Among Additions to Cannes 2021 Lineup', *The Film Stage*, 10 June, viewed 2 January 2022, <https://thefilmstage.com/first-look-at-gaspar-noes-vortex-among-additions-to-cannes-2021-lineup/>.

Rectangle Productions – Wild Bunch International, 2021, *Vortex*, Wild Bunch, viewed 21 June 2022, <https://www.wildbunch.biz/movie/vortex/>.

Rège, P. 2010, 'Hadžihalilović, Lucile', Encyclopedia of French Film Directors, Scarecrow Press, Maryland.

Reitzer, J. 2021, 'Gaspar Noé: «À l'intérieur d'une famille, on ne sait pas qui est celui qui va attraper un cancer, qui va passer 10 ans à perdre complètement le contrôle sur la réalité… c'est la roulette russe»', *Troiscouleurs*, 16 July, viewed 19 April 2022, <https://www.troiscouleurs.fr/article/gaspar-noe-vortex-interview>.

Retailleau, M. 2022, 'Gaspar Noé: I've Made Almost All My Films by Breaking and Entering', *Antidote*, trans. R. Valinsky, 09 May, viewed 22 July 2022, <https://magazineantidote.com/culture/gaspar-noe-interview/>.

Reumont, F. 2018, 'Cinematographer Benoît Debie, SBC, talks about his work on "Climax", by Gaspar Noé, followed by an interview with Ernesto Giolitti, gaffer', *AFC*, 3 October, viewed 01 July 2022, <https://www.afcinema.com/Cinematographer-Benoit-Debie-SBC-talks-about-his-work-on-Climax-by-Gaspar-Noe.html?lang=fr>.

Richford, R. 2016, 'Gaspar Noe's 'Love' Receives 16 Rating in France Following Controversy', *The Hollywood Reporter*, viewed 18 May 2021, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/gaspar-noes-love-receives-16-806495/>.

Riding, A. 1999, 'Nihilism Gets a Butcher's Face, France A Jolt of Realism', *New York Times*, viewed 2 February 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/03/14/movies/film-nihilsm-gets-a-butcher-s-face-france-a-jolt-of-realism.html>.

Rits-Volloch, R. 2004, 'Visual Viscerality in the Experience of Contemporary Cinema', PhD thesis, King's College, London.

Rizov, V. 2022, '"A Giant Greenscreen Marvel Movie, Except We Couldn't Afford the Greenscreens": Andrew Bujalski on *There There*', *Filmmaker*, 17 Jun, viewed 22 June 2022, <https://filmmakermagazine.com/115116-interview-andrew-bujalski-there-there/#.YsPu4-xBxmr>.

Roberts, A. 2020, 'Why is 'Irreversible' still shocking 15 years later?', *Film Daily*, 27 January, viewed 26 November 2021, <https://filmdaily.co/obsessions/irreversible-shocking-15-years-later/>.

Romney, J. 2004,'Le sex and violence', *Independent*, 12 September, viewed 20 May 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/le-sex-and-violence-546083.html>.

Romney, J. 2021, 'Film-maker Julia Ducournau: 'Women kicked serious ass this year'', *The Guardian*, 22 November, viewed 22 March 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/nov/21/julia-ducournau-titane-interview-raw>.

Rose, S. 2010, 'Gaspar Noé: 'What's the problem?'', *The Guardian*, 17 September, viewed 22 January 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/sep/16/gaspar-noe-enter-the-void>.

Rosello, M. 1999, 'Fortress Europe and its Metaphors: Immigration and the Law', *Working Paper Series in European Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, viewed 22 November 2021, <http://aei.pitt.edu/8996/1/rosello.pdf>.

Rowe, C. 1974, 'Illuminating Lucifer', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 24–33.

Roxborough, S. 2021, ''Bye Bye Morons' Wins French Cesar for Best Film', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 12 March, viewed 01 April 2022, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/cesar-awards-2021-french-film-4145801/>.

Roxborough, S. 2022, ''Lost Illusions' Wins Best Film at France's Cesar Awards', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 25 February, viewed 01 April 2022, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/cesar-awards-2021-french-film-4145801/>.

Rupe, S. 2010, *Dark Star Rising*, Headpress, Manchester.

Russel, D. 2005, 'Buñuel, Luis', *Sense of Cinema*, viewed 22 March 2021,
    <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2005/great-directors/bunuel/>.

SACD n.d. *Authors' rights vs. Copyright*, viewed 26 October 2021,
    <https://www.sacd.fr/en/authors-rights-vs-copyright >.

Sargeant, J. 2019, 'Scenes: Gaspar Noé's Love', *Diabolique Magazine*, viewed 17
    September 2019, <https://diaboliquemagazine.com/scenes-gaspar-noes-
    love/>.

Schmerkin, N. 2009, 'Interview Gaspar Noé', *Enter the Void a Film by Gaspar Noé*,
    Wild Bunch, Paris.

Schneider, S. J. 2004, ''Toward an Aesthetics of Cinematic Horror', in S. Prince
    (ed.), *The Horror Film*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.

Schofield, H. 2019, 'Adèle Haenel MeToo moment shocks French cinema', *BBC*,
    7 November, viewed 17 March 2022,
    <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50322452>.

Schwartz, D. 2019, 'The Most Disastrous Cannes Walkouts of All Time,
    Ranked', *Vice*, viewed 26 October 2020,
    <https://www.vice.com/en/article/xwnvpz/worst-cannes-walkouts-
    ever-ranked-mektoub-my-love-intermezzo-abdellatif-kechiche-
    reactions>.

Scott, A. O. 2002, 'Critic's Notebook; Top Prize to Polanski At Cannes Festival',
    The New York Times, viewed 10 November 2019,
    <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/05/27/movies/critic-s-notebook-
    top-prize-to-polanski-at-cannes-festival.html>.

Scott, S, 2019, 'New Video Tax in France for Netflix and Amazon Helps Finance
    French Cinema', *Forbes*, viewed 26 October 2020,
    <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sheenascott/2019/03/12/new-video-
    tax-in-france-for-netflix-and-amazon-helps-finance-french-
    cinema/#254a65783289>.

Screen Australia 2009, *What is a Synopsis? An Outline? A Treatment?*, viewed 10
    November 2021,
    <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/getmedia/ae5708a4-05d9-4db0-
    b5fb-4f999fdfed57/What-is-a-synopsis.pdf>.

Searle, A. 2015, 'Pioneer of perversity: Pierre Molinier's extreme exposures', *The
    Guardian*, viewed 31 January 2021,

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/aug/25/pioneer-of-perversity-pierre-molinier-extreme-exposures>.

Semlyen, P. De, Freer, I. Wybrew, A. 2016, 'Movie movements that defined cinema: Cinéma du look', *Empire*, viewed 25 May 2019, <https://www.empireonline.com/movies/features/cinema-du-look-movie-era/>.

Seul contre tous 1998, motion picture, Canal+, Les Cinémas de la zone, Love Streams Productions, Procirep, Paris.

Shaffer, M. 2022, 'Interview: Gaspar Noé on the Split-Screen Spectacles of *Lux Æterna* and *Vortex*', *Slant Magazine*, 07 May, viewed 10 May 2022, <https://www.slantmagazine.com/film/gaspar-noe-interview-lux-aeterna-vortex/>.

Shaham, I. 2014, 'The Structure of Repetition in the Cinema: Three Hollywood Genres', *Poetics Today*, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 437-517.

Sharf, Z. 2018, 'Gaspar Noé Isn't Angry 'Climax' Didn't Compete at Cannes, Says Jury Was Too 'Moralistic' to Give Him an Award Anyways', *IndieWire*, viewed 26 October 2020, <indiewire.com/2018/05/gaspar-noe-cannes-climax-palme-dor-snub-jury-1201967476/>.

Sharp, J. 2014, 'Wakamatsu Kôji, 1936-2012', *BFI*, viewed 10 July 2021, <https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news/obituary-wakamatsu-koji>.

Shattuc, J. 1993, ''Contra' Brecht: R. W. Fassbinder and Pop Culture in the Sixties', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 35–54.

Shawhan, J. 2019, 'Talking to Climax Director Gaspar Noé About Cameras, Disaster Films and More', *Nashville Scene*, 13 March, viewed 21 June 2022, <https://www.nashvillescene.com/arts_culture/film_tv/talking-to-i-climax-i-director-gaspar-no-about-cameras-disaster-films-and-more/article_92909c38-3484-50e6-9c62-57e9b83632a8.html>.

Shenton, G. 1976, "The Advancement of Women in Giscard D'Estaing's 'Advanced Liberal Society'", *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 743–762, viewed 16 August 2021, <www.jstor.org/stable/25088694>.

Shivers 1975, motion picture, CFDC, Canada.

Shoukri, T. 2015, 'Why Gaspar Noé Directed on Cocaine, Masturbated in His Own Film and Shot a Live Birth', *Indiewire*, 29 October, viewed 3 December 2021, <https://www.indiewire.com/2015/10/why-gaspar-

noe-directed-on-cocaine-masturbated-in-his-own-film-and-shot-a-live-birth-55975/>.

Siegel, T. 2016, 'Toronto: Multiple Moviegoers Pass Out During Screening of Cannibal Movie 'Raw'', *The Hollywood Reporter*, viewed 31 October 2020, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/toronto-multiple-moviegoers-pass-screening-cannibal-movie-raw-928431#:~:text=%22The%20film%20became%20too%20much,members%20who%20had%20passed%20out.>.

Sitney, P. A. 2002, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943-2000*, 3rd edn, Oxford University Press, New York.

Smith, G. 1998, 'Meat is Murder', *The Village Voice*, vol. 43, no. 23, p. 154.

Smith, N. 2014, 'Interview with Gaspar Noé', *BBC*, 24 September, viewed 12 January 2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2003/01/22/gaspar_noe_irreversible_interview.shtml>.

Smith, N. M. 2011, 'From the iW Vaults | Gaspar Noe Talks "Irreversible"', *Indiewire*, 12 July, viewed 26 April 2022, <https://www.indiewire.com/2011/07/from-the-iw-vaults-gaspar-noe-talks-irreversible-53317/>.

Sodomites 1998, motion picture, Les Cinémas de La zone, France.

Solanas, F. & Getino, O. 1970, 'Toward A Third Cinema', *Cinéaste*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 1-10.

Sparrow, N., & Fassbinder, R. W. 1977, 'I LET THE AUDIENCE FEEL AND THINK': An Interview with Rainer Werner Fassbinder', *Cinéaste*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 20–21.

Sritharan, B. 2015, 'The sexually transgressive work of Pierre Molinier, the forgotten Surrealist', *1854*, viewed 31 January 2021, <https://www.1854.photography/2015/11/pierre-molinier-paris-photo/>.

Stack, O. 1969, *Pasolini on Pasolini: Interviews with Oswald Stack*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and London.

Stack, O. 2018, 'The Cinema as Heresy, or the Passion of Pasolini: An Interview with Pier Paolo Pasolini – By Oswald Stack', *Scraps from the Loft*, 07 February, viewed 02 May 2022,

<https://scrapsfromtheloft.com/movies/interview-pier-paolo-pasolini-oswald-stack/>.

Stern, J. 2013, 'Tracing the influence of non-narrative film and expanded cinema sound on experimental music', Master thesis, Queensland University of Technology, Queensland.

Sterritt, D. 2007, 'Time Destroys All Things: An Interview with Gaspar Noé', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 307-316.

Suarez, J. A. 2002, ''Pop, Queer, or Fascist? The Ambiguity of Mass Culture in Kenneth Anger's Scorpio Rising', in W.W. Dixon & G.A. Foster (eds), *Experimental Cinema: The Film Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 115-138.

Suárez, J. A. 2014, 'Warhol's 1960s' Films, Amphetamine, and Queer Materiality', *Criticism*, vol. 56, no. 3, pp. 623–52.

Sunderland, P. 2013, 'The autonomous camera in Stanley Kubrick's 'The Shining'', *Sydney Studies in English*, vol. 39, pp. 58–85.

Suzanne-Mayer, D. 2019, 'Climax Director Gaspar Noé on Modern Cinema and Why He Skips Star Wars for Documentaries', *Consequence*, viewed 18 May 2021, <https://consequence.net/2019/03/gaspar-noe-climax-interview/>.

Symonds, A. 2015, 'Seven Things That Inspire Gaspar Noé', *The New York Times Style Magazine*, viewed 28 August 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/16/t-magazine/seven-things-that-inspire-gaspar-noe.html>.

Szaniawski, J. (ed.) 2020, *After Kubrick: A Filmmaker's Legacy*, Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, New York.

Tang, J. 2003, ''There are no bad deeds, just deeds''', *Salon*, 27 April, viewed 24 February 2022, <https://www.salon.com/2003/03/12/noe/>.

Tarkovsky, A. 1987, *Sculpting in Time*, trans. K. Hunter-Blair, University of Texas Press, Austin.

Taxi Driver 1976, motion picture, Columbia Pictures, Bill-Phillips, Italo-Judeo Productions, United States.

Taylor, A. L. 2020, 'Beyond Provocative: Gaspar Noé in the 2010s', *Split Tooth*, 29 April, viewed 22 March 2021, <https://www.splittoothmedia.com/gaspar-Noé/>.

Teatro Gran Rex 2021, History, viewed 13 January 2021, <https://teatro-granrex.com.ar/historia/#.X_5IU2QzZ8Y>.

Terenzoni, C. 2019, '"A Shock to Thought": The Value of Extremism in Cinema', Master Thesis, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam.

Thanouli, E. 2009, 'Art Cinema' Narration: Breaking Down a Wayward Paradigm', *Post-Classical Cinema: An International Poetics of Film Narration, Scope: An Online Journal of Film and Television Studies*, viewed 11 November 2021, <www.nottingham.ac.uk/scope/documents/2009/june-2009/thanouli.pdf>.

The Columbia Film Language Glossary 2015, *180-Degree Rule*, viewed 11 October 2020, < https://filmglossary.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/term/180-degree-rule/>.

The Film Clubs (Registration and Regulation) Act 1980 (Bangladesh).

The Girl Who Knew Too Much 1963, motion picture, Warner Bros., Italy.

The Ion Pack 2019, 'Gaspar Noé Offers Us Advice on Getting High and How to Watch His Sometimes Gruesome Films', *Interview*, 11 March, viewed 18 November 2021, <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/film/gaspar-noe-on-offers-us-advice-on-getting-high-and-how-to-watch-his-gruesome-film-climax>.

The Modern School of Film 2012, *My Films Are Not Art: The Modern School of Film in Session with Gaspar Noé*, video recording, Vimeo, viewed 01 November 2021, <https://vimeo.com/36622286>.

Therrien, P. 2018, 'Effects of psychedelic DMT 'similar to near-death experiences'', *BBC*, 15 August, viewed 20 January 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-45181770>.

Thomas, N. J. T. 2021, 'Mental Imagery', in E. N. Zalta (ed), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, viewed 22 March 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/mental-imagery/>.

Thorburn, D. & Jenkins, H. 2004, *Rethinking media change: the aesthetics of transition*, MIT Press, Cambridge.

Timmermann C., Roseman L., Williams L., Erritzoe D., Martial C., Cassol H., Laureys S., Nutt D. & Carhart-Harris, R. 2018, 'DMT Models the Near-Death Experience', *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 9, no. 1424, pp. 1-12.

Tintarella di luna 1985, motion picture, Les Productions Nocturnes, France.

Tonner-Connolly, B. 2019, 'Aesthetic Confidences: On Andrzej Zulawski and Meeting Possession Screenwriter Frederic Tuten', *Filmmaker Magazine*, 04 September, viewed 25 February 2022, <https://filmmakermagazine.com/108110-aesthetic-confidences/#.YhgmsBNBzDI>.

Totaro, D. 2002. 'Deleuzian Film Analysis: The Skin of the Film', *Offscreen*, vol. 6, no. 6, viewed 3 September 2019, <https://offscreen.com/view/skin_of_film>.

Tripney, N. 2017, 'Antonin Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty', *The British Library*, viewed 14 November 2019, <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/antonin-artaud-and-the-theatre-of-cruelty>.

Tulloch, J. & Middleweek, B. 2017, *Real Sex Films: The New Intimacy and Risk in Cinema*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Tulloch, J. & Middleweek, B. 2018, 'Real sex films capture our changing relationship to sex', *OUPblog*, viewed 13 November 2019, <https://blog.oup.com/2018/06/real-sex-films-relationship/>.

Ubu Gallery, 1996, *Pierre Molinier: Fetish Performance Photographs, Collages, Photomontages*, viewed 10 May 2021, <https://www.ubugallery.com/exhibitions/pierre-molinier-fetish/#>.

UFO Distribution 2020, *Lux Æterna*, viewed 31 Ocotber 2020, <ufo-distribution.com/movie/lux-aeterna-2>.

Ulff-Møller, J. 2001, *Hollywood's film wars with France: film-trade diplomacy and the emergence of the French film quota policy*, Woodbridg, New York.

Ursula 2010, 'GASPAR NOÉ: INTERVIEW L'arche en frêle esquisse', *Gonzaï*, viewed 14 July 2022, <https://gonzai.com/gaspar-no-interview-larche-en-frle-esquisse/>.

van Dijk, M. 2002, 'Return of the Repressed: The Resurgence of the French B-Movie', *Bright Lights Film Journal*, 01 January, viewed 16 March 2022, <https://brightlightsfilm.com/return-repressed-resurgence-french-b-

van Eenoo, C. 2018, 'Storytelling: time, space, intervals', PhD thesis, University of Technology Sydney.

Van Hoeij, B. 2016, ''Rocco': Film Review | Venice 2016', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 07 September, viewed 30 May 2022,

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-reviews/rocco-926205/>.

Vanderschelden, I. 2016, 'The French film industry: funding, policies, Debates', *Studies in French Cinema*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 89-94.

Vasudevan, R. 2011, *The Melodramatic Public*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Verlichak, V. 2004, 'Jorge de la Vega', *Art Nexus*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 117–118, viewed 6 May 2021,

<https://www.artnexus.com/en/magazines/see/5d61ad40eb5c0578bce c42c5/53>.

Vice 2015, *Gaspar Noé Talks Love, 3D Sex, Drugs, and Intimacy*, videorecording, YouTube, 12 November, viewed 24 February 2022,

<youtube.com/watch?v=LgPdWOVfjDI>.

Villiers, J. 2010, 'Exclusive interview: Gaspar Noé', *Prospect*, viewed 9 March 2021, <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/exclusive-interview-gaspar-Noé>.

Vincendeau, G. 2005, *La Haine (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995)*, I.B. Tauris, London.

Wall, I., M. 1991, *The United States and the Making of Postwsar France, 1945-1954*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Wallace, C. 2015, 'Gaspar Noé', *Interview Magazine*, 19 October, viewed 25 April 2022, <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/film/gaspar-noe>.

Wang, H., van Leeuwen, J. M. C., de Voogd, L. D., Verkes, R.-J., Roozendaal, B., Fernández, G., & Hermans, E. J. 2021, 'Mild early-life stress exaggerates the impact of acute stress on corticolimbic resting-state functional connectivity', *European Journal of Neuroscience*, 22 November, viewed 1 April 2022, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejn.15538>.

Waters, J. 2020, 'John Waters Presents: Art Movie Hell at the Drive-In', *58th New York Film Festival*, viewed 18 May 2021,

<https://www.filmlinc.org/nyff2020/films/john-waters-presents-art-movie-hell-at-the-drive-in>.

Weintraub, S. 2021, 'Paul Schrader on 'The Card Counter' and Why He Doesn't Want to Make Big Budget Films', *Collider*, 09 September, viewed 29 November 2021, <https://collider.com/paul-schrader-the-card-counter-interview/>.

Wells, P. 2000, *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch*, Wallflower, London.

Welsh, O. 2022, 'Lux Æterna is an art-film freakout — and a designer fashion ad: Controversial director Gaspar Noé is at it again', *Polygon*, 05 May, viewed 01 July 2022, <https://www.polygon.com/reviews/23057390/lux-aeterna-review-gaspar-noe-saint-laurent>.

Weston, H. 2015, 'Gaspar Noé's Movie Mania', *The Criterion Collection*, viewed 19 January 2019, <https://films.criterionchannel.com/current/posts/3802-gaspar-no-s-movie-mania>.

Wigon, Z. 2010a, 'A Movie is Like a Person: *Enter the Void*', 15 October, *Filmmaker magazine*, viewed 21 January 2022, <https://filmmakermagazine.com/14327-a-movie-is-like-a-person-enter-the-void/#.Ye34PvVBzDJ>.

Wigon, Z. 2010b, 'Enter the Void: Gaspar Noé', *Tribeca News*, 19 September, viewed 9 May 2022, <https://tribecafilm.com/news/512bffbd1c7d76d9a9000102-enter-the-void-gaspar-noe>.

Willsher, K. 2002, 'Cannes festival issues warning over brutal nine-minute scene', *The Telegraph,* viewed 10 November 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/1394705/Cannes-festival-issues-warning-over-brutal-nine-minute-scene.html>.

Willsher, K. 2020, 'Valéry Giscard d'Estaing dies from Covid-19 complications', The Guardian, viewed 16 August 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/02/former-french-president-valery-giscard-destaing-dies-aged-94>.

Wood, J. 2005, 'Song of Innocence and Experience', *Vert!go*, vol. 2, no. 9, viewed 24 May 2022, <https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/volume-2-issue-9-autumn-winter-2005/song-of-innocence-and-experience/>.

Woodward, A. 2015, 'Gaspar Noé: The porn I grew up with was much closer to real life', *Little White Lies*, viewed 3 September 2019, < https://lwlies.com/interviews/gaspar-noe/>.

Wright, E. & Kerr, A. (eds.) 2015, 'Nonconformity', *A dictionary of world history*, viewed 24 September 2020, <https://www-oxfordreference-

com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/view/10.1093/acref/9780199685691.001.000
1/acref-9780199685691-e-2634>.

York, K. 2018, 'Climax sees cinema shock jock Gaspar Noé take on the dance
film, with demented results', *ABC News*, 07 December, viewed 24
February 2022, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-07/climax-
review-gaspar-noe-take-on-dance-film-is-hellish-nightmare/10587642>.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Cinematic influences in Gaspar Noé's films

Film	Cinematic Influences	Annotations
I Stand Alone (1998)	*Angst* (1983)	*Angst* (1983) The prologue showing the butcher's life up until the film starts, shown in various stills is a direct homage. Also, both films consist almost entirely of a disturbed man's inner thoughts.
Irreversible (2002)	*Scorpio Rising* (1963) *Soy Cuba* (1964) *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) *Invocation of My Demon Brother* (1969) *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) *The Straw Dogs* (1971) *Deliverance* (1972) *I Spit on your Grave* (1978) *Possession* (1981) *Angst* (1983) *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)	*Scorpio Rising* (1963) Helps Noé to visualize the homoeroticism in the gay club *Rectum* in *Irréversible*. *Soy Cuba* (1964) One of the primary resources of creativeness for the long sequence and acrobatic camera movement in *Irréversible*. *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) Poster seen in Alex's bedroom. *Invocation of My Demon Brother* (1969) During the Rectum-scene, the looping drone-like score is very similar to the music used in *Invocation of my Demon Brother*. *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) This film is reminiscent of the 'ultra-violence' in *A Clockwork Orange*. *Deliverance* (1972), *The Straw Dogs* (1971) and *I Spit on your Grave* (1978)

Film	Cinematic Influences	Annotations
		Play a critical role in developing the performance in the rape scenes at the tunnel and rectum.
		Possession (1981)
		Tunnel scene.
		Angst (1983)
		Tunnel scene.
		Eyes Wide Shut (1999)
		In both films the director selected a real-life couple to play the parts of the love interest.
Enter the Void (2009)	*Lady in the Lake* (1946) *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954) *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) *Taxi Driver* (1976)	*Lady in the Lake* (1946) This American noir thriller works as perpetual reference for *Enter the Void*'s subjective camera aesthetics and storyline.
		Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome (1954) Gaspar Noé referred to this Kenneth Anger film as one of the primary impressions for *Enter the Void*. It was also the very first film to document people tripping on acid.
		2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) *Enter the Void* structurally contextualizes *2001: A Space Odyssey*'s theme, form, and content. Besides, the visuals of Oscar's trip are an homage to Kubrick's 'star gate' sequence from *2001: A Space Odyssey*.
		Taxi Driver (1976)

Film	Cinematic Influences	Annotations
		Noé takes the free-flowing camera movement from *Taxi Driver*.
Love (2015)	*Emmanuelle* (1964) *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) *Fear Eats the Soul* (1974) *Taxi Driver* (1976) *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976) *Kids* (1995) *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (2013)	*Emmanuelle* (1964) 1970s softcore erotic films are Noé's reference point for *Love*. Noé particularly mention Emmanuelle as his visual-experience reference. *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) Murphy considers this movie as the best he's ever seen. *Fear Eats the Soul* (1974) The line 'Fear eats the soul' can be heard. It's a reference of this film title, Gaspar Noé is a huge fan of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's work. *Deep Red* (1975) The lullaby used in *Love* is from the Dario Argento's film. *Taxi Driver* (1976) Murphy wears the M65 jacket as Travis Bickle has in *Taxi driver*. *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976) Music in one of the club scenes is the main track by John Carpenter. He's also credited in the end credits. *Kids* (1995) *Kids* inspires Noé about how to compose sexual images in *Love.* *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (2013)

Film	Cinematic Influences	Annotations
		Noé mentioned this film in interviews as a source of visualizing of intimate kissing scenes.
Climax (2018*)*	*Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975) *Suspiria* (1977) *Possession* (1981) *Christiane F. – Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (1981) *Querelle* (1982) *Rize* (2005)	*Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975) *Climax* shows the nightmare of a group of people in a frantic situation as *Salò* tells the story of a captured people and their hell like experience. *Suspiria* (1977) *Climax* follows a group of dancers as *Suspiria* with a treatment of neon colours and horror. *Possession* (1981) Climax directly references the infamous subway scene in Possession with Selva breaking out into a similar reaction. VHS cover visible at the beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts). *Christiane F. – Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (1981) Noé situates *Climax* in the cult film legacy by mentioning German filmmaker Uli Edel's *Christiane F. – Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (1981) in an interview.; which depicts the story of German urban teenagers' search for self and self-destruction through drugs. The dancer in Climax who spiked the during with LSD also from Germany. *Querelle* (1982)

Film	Cinematic Influences	Annotations
		The dialog and characters impression influenced by Fassbinder's *Querelle* (1982)
		Rize (2005) David LaChapelle's film on clowning and crumping acted as reference when Noé decided to make a film with French dance troupe.

Appendix B

Paratextual references (film posters, VHS tapes, and promotional materials used) in the mise en scène

Film	Cinematic References	Annotations
Love (2015)	*The Birth of a Nation* (1915)	*The Birth of a Nation* (1915) Poster seen.
	M (1931)	
	Freaks (1932)	*M* (1931) Poster seen in Murphy's room.
	Baby Doll (1956)	
	Peeping Tom (1960)	
	Jason and the Argonauts (1963)	*Freaks* (1932) Promotional photos seen in Murphy's room.
	The Bible: In the Beginning... (1966)	
	The Honeymoon Killers (1970)	*Baby Doll* (1956) A poster is visible during a party scene.
	A Clockwork Orange (1971)	
	F for Fake (1973)	*Peeping Tom* (1960) A French poster for the film hangs in Murphy's room.
	Flesh for Frankenstein (1973)	
	The Defiance of Good (1975)	
	Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom (1975)	*Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf.
	Taxi Driver (1976)	
	Emanuelle in America (1977)	
	Eraserhead (1977)	
	Guyana: Cult of the Damned (1979)	*The Bible: In the Beginning...* (1966) Photo of the tower of Babel from the film seen in Murphy's room.
	Cannibal Holocaust (1980)	
	Angst (1983)	
	The Vanishing (1988)	
	Crumb (1994)	

Film	Cinematic References	Annotations
	I Stand Alone (1998)	*The Honeymoon Killers* (1970) A photo of the two leads of 'The Honeymoon Killers' is on the wall in Murphy's room.
	Guyana: Cult of the Damned (1979)	
	Ocean's Eleven (2001)	
	Irreversible (2002)	
	8 Mile (2002)	
	Crash (2004)	*A Clockwork Orange* (1971) Book seen in Murphy's room.
	Sin City (2005)	
	Black Book (2006)	
	Cloverfield (2008)	
	Moon (2009)	
	Enter the Void (2009)	*F for Fake* (1973) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf.
	The Box (2009)	
	2012 (2009)	
	Blue Valentine (2010)	
	Moneyball (2011)	
	Blue Is the Warmest Colour (2013)	*Flesh for Frankenstein* (1973) Poster seen in Murphy's room.
		The Defiance of Good (1975) Poster seen in Murphy's room.
		Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom (1975) Poster seen in Murphy's room.
		Taxi Driver (1976) Poster seen in Murphy's room.

Film	Cinematic References	Annotations
		Emanuelle in America (1977) A still with Laura Gemser seen on the wall.
		Eraserhead (1977) Murphy owns a VHS of this film.
		Guyana: Cult of the Damned (1979) Poster seen in Murphy's room.
		Cannibal Holocaust (1980) A picture of the movie's poster is seen in Murphy's room.
		Angst (1983) Murphy owns a VHS of this film with the French title 'Schizophrenia'.
		The Vanishing (1988) At the police station, the infamous 'have you seen her' poster from *The Vanishing* can be seen on the wall.
		Crumb (1994) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf.

Film	Cinematic References	Annotations
		I Stand Alone (1998) Murphy stores his opium in a VHS case of this movie.
		Guyana: Cult of the Damned (1979) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf.
		Ocean's Eleven (2001) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf.
		Irreversible (2002) The infamous controversial rape scene is referenced in this film.
		8 Mile (2002) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf.
		Crash (2004) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf.
		Sin City (2005) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf.

Film	Cinematic References	Annotations
		Black Book (2006) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf. *Cloverfield* (2008) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf. *Moon* (2009) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf. *Enter the Void* (2009) Murphy keeps a model of the Love Hotel from Enter the Void in his bedroom. *The Box* (2009) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf. *2012* (2009) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf. *Blue Valentine* (2010) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf.

Film	Cinematic References	Annotations
		Moneyball (2011) A copy of the film is visible on Murphy's shelf.
Climax (2018)	*An Andalusian Dog (1929)* *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome (1954)* *The Mother and the Whore (1973)* *Fox and His Friends (1975)* *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom (1975)* *Suspiria (1977)* *Eraserhead (1977)* *Zombie Flesh Eaters (1979)* *Possession (1981)* *Querelle (1982)* *Angst (1983)* *Vibroboy (1994) (Short)* *Irreversible (2002)* *Frostbitten (2006)*	*An Andalusian Dog* (1929) VHS cover visible at the beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts). *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954) VHS cover visible at the beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts). *The Mother and the Whore* (1973) VHS cover visible at the beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts). *Fox and His Friends* (1975) VHS cover visible at the beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts), under its French title. *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975) VHS cover visible at the

Film	Cinematic References	Annotations
		beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts), under its French title.
		Suspiria (1977) VHS cover visible at the beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts).
		Eraserhead (1977) VHS cover visible at the beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts), as 'Labyrinth Man'.
		Zombie Flesh Eaters (1979) VHS cover visible at the beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts).
		Possession (1981) Climax directly references the infamous subway scene in Possession with Selva breaking out into a similar reaction. VHS cover visible at the beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts).

Film	Cinematic References	Annotations
		Querelle (1982) VHS cover visible at the beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts).

Angst (1983) VHS cover visible at the beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts).

Vibroboy (1994) VHS cover visible at the beginning of the movie (during the casting excerpts). *Irreversible* (2002) Red hallways are presented to signify danger, a similar visual cue utilized for the same purpose in Irreversible (2002).

Frostbitten (2006) Drugs secretly put in sangria causes mayhem |

Irrèversible (2002) treatment translated from French

1. On a ticking background, a unique and succinct credits, such as those of old films of the 50s, precedes the title which appears on a black background: IRREVERSIBLE then a box: Time destroys everything

2. It is the first rays of dawn. The police chief walks towards the entrance of a dead end at the bottom of which is a gay club, named "Rectum". Police officers are massed in front, obviously ready for an intervention. The police chief issues his orders and they invest the box from which they take out Pierre, handcuffed and covered in blood, and Marcus lying on a stretcher and just as bloody. Then the chief of police in turn enters the box.

3. A little earlier: Pierre and Marcus, still unharmed but their eyes injected with hatred, burst into the darkness of the box in search of one of the regulars of the place called the "Ténia", of whom they only know that ' he has a scar on his face. In these arenas of coitus, the atmosphere is in full swing. Investigating among customers, Marcus ends up finding someone who claims to be the "Tapeworm" in the toilets of the club, speeded by the high. He immediately accuses her of having raped Alex, but the answer is the Tapeworm laughs and insults him. Uncontaining himself, Marcus attacks him with a bottle but very quickly his arm is broken under the excited cries of the "leathers". As the Tapeworm tries to defrock Marcus, Pierre finally appears and smashes the man's head with a fire extinguisher, screaming that he is going to pay for what he did to Alex. The agony of the Tapeworm lasts two minutes. When he finally dies, Pierre, ecstatic with adrenaline, brandishes the extinguisher.

4. A little earlier: Pierre and Marcus get in a taxi and ask to go to the "Rectum", the gay club. The driver, annoyed by the hysterical tone of his two customers, demands more details which they are unable to give. The taxi driver gets angry, so do the other two. The man ends up refusing to drive them anywhere and lets them get off under an interchange on the ring road. Then follows a violent verbal exchange during which Marcus utters all kinds of racist insults and the driver of homophobes. The

driver, at the end of his rope, gets out of his taxi, a tear gas canister in his hand which he is about to spray them. Pierre succeeds in grabbing it, and Marcus, snatching it from him in turn, empties it on the driver's face. While the man, suffocating, collapses on the side, Pierre and Marcus, whose rage has still not subsided, seize the taxi. A little further, they accost young homosexual drug addicts who tap on the side of the road, and question them. After endless lascivious jokes related to the name of the box, one of them finally shows them the way.

5. A little earlier: On the ring road, Marcus and Pierre question the transvestites in search of a certain Guillermo Nuñez. These send them back to the beautiful Concha, better able to inform them. After some civilized exchanges, Marcus, unable to hold back any longer, threatens to disfigure her if she does not agree to give them information about this Guillermo who had raped Alex. Terrified, Concha ends up confessing that Guillermo is her, but she never raped anyone. She nevertheless seems perfectly aware of the attack and says that it is "the Tapeworm", her former protector, who is the author. Then, still under threat, Concha lets them know the name of a box, the "Rectum" where they will most likely be able to find it. At that moment the other travesits who noticed the situation arm themselves with stones and sticks and begin to stone the two "aggressors".

6. Earlier: Pierre and Marcus end up being questioned in a police van as if they were possible suspects in the victim's assault. Victim with Marcus being the boyfriend, and Pierre her husband. Marcus, unable to take it anymore, asks if they can leave. After having them sign the statement, the cops nod and the two men go out into the street. Once outside, Marcus grabs a piece of rusty metal and looking Pierre straight in the eye whispers, like a madman: "This Nuñez, we are going to find him, the queer, we are going to bleed him, believe me". Pierre doesn't answer but clenches his jaws.

7. A little earlier: Pierre and Marcus, a little drunk, walk along the little belt. Marcus complains about Alex's character and Peter laughs at him: "Whether you like it or not, she's the one carrying the dick." As they pass an ambulance and police cars piled up on the edge of the ring road, they

overhear a conversation between two police officers about the affairs of a man named Guillermo Nuñez lying in the tunnel, near the victim. This Nuñez would have already been "fined" by the cops hitting behind the cemetery of Batignolles. Marcus suddenly nervous, tries to find out more. Apparently a woman was assaulted in the underpass. Raped and disfigured by the beatings, she would be in a coma. Pierre and Marcus, immediately sobered, look at each other in growing anguish. Marcus' heart begins to beat. No longer holding on, he takes advantage of a moment of inattention from the cops to jump the barrier and slip into the underground. Pierre is waiting outside. Onlookers assume that the victim must be one of the neighborhood whores. Suddenly, howls of despair resound from the underground: it's Marcus. Pierre immediately guesses everything and rushes into the passage in his turn, despite the cordon of the agents who try to hold him back. He arrives as far as Marcus who is crying out loud, on his knees in front of the stretcher on which Alex (andra) lies in a coma and disfigured. The perimeter of the assault was carefully demarcated and the silhouette of the victim drawn in chalk among the trails of blood.

8. A little earlier: Alex, radiant in "disco-roman" outfit, says goodbye to a friend at the bottom of a building where a party is taking place. She has just taken the lead with her boyfriend, too weak when he drinks. She then finds herself along the ring road, looking for a taxi. Advised by young prostitutes sitting on car hoods, she takes an underground passage that crosses the boulevard. Inside, a couple is arguing. The man is none other than the one who will be next to the "false" Tapeworm when the latter is to be put to death. He starts hitting Concha. She calls for help Alex who takes her defense and then attracts the fury of the Tapeworm. Concha fled, spilling the contents of his bag in his haste. Left alone with Alex, the Tapeworm threatens her with a cutter and ends up violently violating her. Taking advantage of a moment when he relaxes, Alex tries to escape. But the Tapeworm catches up with her and kicks and punches against her.

9. A little earlier: Alex dances, euphoric in the middle of a beautiful party. Not far from her, Pierre and a small group listen with laughter to Romain's gritty jokes. The latter follows abruptly on the story of a clown

who had his head flattened in a circus with a hammer. The song ends. Alex, refusing Marcus ecstasies because she has to work the next day, goes to get a drink and notices a pregnant friend, starts talking to her. Pierre joins them, soon followed by Marcus, and all three listen to the girl describe the joys of pregnancy. When she walks away, Marcus launches into a critique of Alex's girlfriend who, given her life without direction, would have been better off with an abortion. A little stupidly, he adds more. Alex gets angry with him violently. The tone rises and she threatens to leave the party. Pierre holds her back a little longer, telling her that age makes her more beautiful every time.

10. A little earlier: At nightfall, Alex, Pierre and Marcus are walking along a park. Pierre, very talkative, talks about the behavior of humans, which he compares to that, very close, of monkeys or mice. Then he moves on to the superiority of man, capable of reasoning with his natural instincts. Although his words are interesting, they seem to get drunk Alex who interrupts him. After a silence, Marcus finally said, looking at Pierre: "In any case, I'm glad we made peace". Pierre, casually, replies that if Alex left him, it was all natural selection and he can't blame either Marcus or Alex. And then, he's already halfway through his life, he's not going to waste the rest ruminating on his frustrations. Alex then moves on to the subject of time and the ultra fragmentary perception of it in man. She tells them at length about a book she is reading, written by a scientist who believed in premonitions and who, writing down her dreams every morning, had ended up discovering glaring analogies with what was happening to her during the day. .

11. A little earlier: The phone rings, waking Alex and Marcus, entwined on their bed half-naked, as if after an act of love. Pierre leaves a message saying he will be home in 40 minutes then hangs up. Alex then tells Marcus to have had a super weird dream with an all red tunnel breaking in two, dream perhaps due to the fact, she adds jokingly, that her period is late. Without paying attention to his words, Marcus affirms that he is happy to see his old friend Pierre again this evening, from whom he would have stung his wife. Alex, a little shocked to be seen as an object, replies that he didn't sting anything at all. It was she who decided, after years of intellectual relationships, that she needed a little more

fleshiness. Marcus, in turn a little annoyed, asks her if she takes him for a cock. To which she responds with a laugh: "for a sperm tank". They both laugh and he tickles her. Then the radio playing catchy music, they dance to it. Marcus, happy to live, asks her if she does not find their new home too beautiful. Then he wants to know if she's still up for Brazil. Alex fears that it is too violent and proposes instead Tahiti. The song ends, she leaves for a shower while Marcus puts on his clothes and yells at her to come down and get some bottles for the party. In the bathroom, Alex opens the box of a pregnancy test and after reading the directions, walks to the toilet bowl and pisses on the test as instructed. Then she waits for the result, counting thirty seconds: the color appears, indicating that she is pregnant. Heart pounding, she leaves the bathroom and walks to the living room window. Ultra-sentimental music is playing on the radio. While staring at the park that stretches in front of their apartment, Alex lets tears of joy flow.

12. A little earlier: On the lawn, in the park in front of Alex's apartment, two two-year-old girls, naked, play in a small inflatable pool filled with water and splash each other. Next to them, a teenage girl, certainly their babysitter shyly tans in her bikini. Alex, in summer and flowery clothes, is lying on the grass a little further away. She watches the children for a moment, fascinated. It's a balmy sunny afternoon. The birds sing. The flowers shine in a thousand colors. Then, taking a deep breath of the fresh park air, Alex resumes reading his book, "An experiment with time" by J.W. Dunne.

13. Then a box: Time reveals everything.

Original French version

Sur un fond de tic-tac, un générique unique et succinct, tel ceux des vieux films des années 50, précède le titre qui apparaît sur fond noir : IRREVERSIBLE puis un carton : Le temps détruit tout

C'est les premiers rayons de l'aube. Le chef de la police se dirige vers l'entrée d'une impasse au fond de laquelle se trouve un club homo, nommé "Rectum". Des policiers sont massés devant, visiblement prêts à une intervention. Le chef

de la police lance ses ordres et ceux-ci investissent la boôte d'où ils sortent Pierre, menotté et couvert de sang, et Marcus étendu sur une civière et tout aussi ensanglanté. Puis le chef de la police entre à son tour dans la boîte.

Un peu plus tôt : Pierre et Marcus, encore indemnes mais les yeux injectés par la haine, font irruption dans l'obscurité de la boîte à la recherche d'un des habitués du lieu dénommé le "Ténia", dont ils savent seulement qu'il a une cicatrice au visage. Dans ces arènes du coït, l'ambiance bat son plein. Enquêtant auprès des clients, Marcus finit par trouver quelqu'un qui affirme être le "Ténia" dans les toilettes de la boîte, speedé par la défonce. Il l'accuse aussitôt d'avoir violé Alex mais pour toute réponse, le Ténia rit et l'insulte. Ne se contenant plus, Marcus l'attaque à coup de bouteille mais très vite se fait casser le bras sous les cris excités des "cuirsers". Alors que le Ténia tente de défroquer Marcus, Pierre surgit enfin et défonce la tête de l'homme à coups d'extincteur, hurlant qu'il va payer pour ce qu'il a fait à Alex. L'agonie du Ténia dure deux minutes. Lorsqu'il meurt enfin, Pierre, extasié par l'adrénaline, brandit l'extincteur.

Un peu plus tôt : Pierre et Marcus montent dans un taxi et demandent à aller au "Rectum", la boîte homo. Le chauffeur, énervé par le ton hystérique de ses deux clients, exige plus de précisions qu'ils sont incapables de donner. Le chauffeur de taxi s'énerve, les deux autres aussi. L'homme finit par refuser de les conduire où que ce soit et les fait descendre sous un échangeur du périphérique. S'ensuit alors un violent échange verbal au cours duquel Marcus profère toutes sortes d'insultes racistes et le chauffeur des homophobes. Le chauffeur, à bout de nerf, sort de son taxi, une bombe lacrymo à la main dont il s'apprête à les arroser. Pierre réussit à s'en emparer, et Marcus, la lui arrachant à son tour, la vide sur le visage du chauffeur. Tandis que l'homme, suffoquant, s'effondre sur le bas-côté, Pierre et Marcus dont la rage ne s'est toujours pas calmée, s'emparent du taxi. Un peu plus loin, ils accostent des jeunes toxicos homosexuels qui tapinent sur le bord de la route, et les interrogent. Après des plaisanteries lascives sans fin liées au nom de la boîte, l'un d'eux finit enfin par leur indiquer le chemin.

Un peu plus tôt : Sur le boulevard périphérique, Marcus et Pierre questionnent les travestis à la recherche d'un certain Guillermo Nuñez. Celles-ci les renvoient la belle Concha, plus apte à les renseigner. Après quelques échanges civilisés, Marcus, incapable de se retenir plus longtemps, menace de la défigurer si elle n'accepte pas de leur donner des informations sur ce Guillermo qui aruait violé

Alex. Terrifiée, Concha finit par avouer que Guillermo, c'est elle, mais elle n'a jamais violé personne. Elle semble néanmois parfaitement au courant de l'agression et affirme que c'est "le Ténia", son ancien protecteur, qui en est l'auteur. Puis, toujours sous la menace, Concha leur lâche le nom d'une boîte, le "Rectum" où ils pourront très probablement le trouver. A ce moment là les autres travesits qui se sont aperçus de la situation s'arment de pierres et bâtons et commencent à lapider les deux "agresseurs".

Un peu plus tôt : Pierre et Marcus finissent de se faire interroger dans une camionnette de police comme s'ils étaient des suspects possibles dans l'agression de la victime. Victime dont Marcus être le copain, et Pierre son mari. Marcus n'en pouvant plus, demande s'ils peuvent partir. Après leur avoir fait signer la déposition, les flics acquiescent et les deux hommes sortent dans la rue. Une fois dehors, Marcus attrape un bout de métal rouillé et regardant Pierre droit dans les yeux murmure, tel un fou : "Ce Nuñez, on va le trouver, le pédé, on va le saigner, crois-moi". Pierre ne répond rien mais serre les mâchoires.

Un peu plus tôt : Pierre et Marcus, un peu ivres, marchent le long de la petite ceinture. Marcus se plaint du caractère d'Alex et Pierre se moque de lui : "Que tu le veuilles ou non, c'est elle qui porte la bite". Alors qu'ils passent devant une ambulance et des voitures de police amassées au bord du boulevard périphérique, ils surprennent une conversation entre deux policeiers au sujet des affaires d'un dénommé Guillermo Nuñez qui traînaient dans le tunnel, près de la victime. Ce Nuñez aurait déjà été "verbalisé" par les flics en train de tapiner derrière le cimetière des Batignolles. Marcus soudain nerveux, essaye de se renseigner davantage. Apparemment, une femme a été agressée dans le passage souterrain. Violée et défigurée par les coups, elle serait dans le coma. Pierre et Marcus, immédiatement déssoûlés, se regardent dans une angoisse grandissant. Le cœur de Marcus se met à battre. N'y tenant plus, il profite d'un moment d'inattention des flics pour sauter la barrière et se glisser dans le souterrain. Pierre, lui, attend dehors. Des badauds supposent que la victime doit être une des putes du quartier. Soudain, des hurlements de désespoir retentissent provenant du souterrain : c'est Marcus. Aussitôt, Pierre devine tout et se rue à son tour dans le passage, malgré le cordon des agents qui tentent de le retenir. Il parvient jusqu'à Marcus qui pleure à gorge déployée, à genoux devant la civière sur laquelle gît Alex(andra) dans le coma et défigurée. Le

périmètre de l'agression a été soigneusement délimité et la silhouette de la
victime dessinée à la craie parmi les traînées de sang.

Un peu plus tôt : Alex, rayonnante en tenu "disco-romaine", dit au revoir à une
amie au bas d'un immeuble où a lieu une fête. Elle vient de se prendre la tête
avec son copain, trop nase lorsqu'il boit. Elle se retrouve alors le long du
boulevard périphérique, à chercher un taxi. Conseillée par de jeunes prostituées
assises sur des capots de voiture, elle emprunte un passage souterrain qui
traverse le boulevard. A l'intérieur, un couple est en train de se disputer.
L'homme n'est autre que celui qui se trouvera à côté du "faux" Ténia au moment
de la future mise à mort de ce dernier. Il se met à frapper Concha. Celle-ci
appelle à l'aide Alex qui prend sa défense et s'attire alors la fureur du Ténia.
Concha s'enfuit, renversant le contenu de son sac dans sa précipitation. Resté
seul avec Alex, le Ténia la menace d'un cutter et finit par la violer sauvagement.
Profitant d'un moment iù il se relâche, Alex tente de s'enfuir. Mais le Ténia la
rattrappe et s'acharne sur elle à coups de pieds et de poings.

Un peu plus tôt : Alex danse, euphorique au milieu d'une belle fête. Non loin
d'elle, Pierre et un petit groupe écoutent, pliés de rire, les blagues graveleuses
de Romain. Ce dernier enchaîne abruptement sur l'histoire d'un clown qui s'est
fait aplatir la tête dans un cirque à coups de marteau. La chanson se termine.
Alex, refusant des ecstasies à Marcus parce qu'elle doit travailler le lendemain,
va chercher à boire et avisant une amie enceinte, se met à discuter avec elle.
Pierre les rejoint, bientôt suivi de Marcus, et tous trois écoutent la fille décrire
les joies de la grossesse. Quand elle s'éloigne, Marcus se lance dans une critique
de la copine de Alex qui, au vu de sa vie sans direction, aurait mieux fait
d'avorter. Un peu bêtement, il en rajoute. Alex s'énerve violemment contre lui.
Le ton monte et elle menace de quitter la fête. Pierre la retient encore un peu, lui
disant que l'âge la rend chaque fois plus belle.

Un peu plus tôt : A la tombée de la nuit, Alex, Pierre et Marcus marchent le
long d'un parc. Pierre, très bavard, parle du comportement des humains qu'il
compare à celui, très proche, des singes ou des souris. Puis il enchaîne sur la
superiorité de l'homme, capable de raisonner ses instincts naturels. Bien que ses
propos soient intéressants, ils semblent saouler Alex qui l'interrompt. Après un
silence, Marcus finit par dire en regardant Pierre : "En tout cas, je suis content
qu'on fasse la paix". Pierre, sur un ton détaché, répond que si Alex l'a quitté, il

s'est agi que de sélection naturelle et qu'il ne peut en vouloir ni à Marcus, ni à Alex. Et puis, il en est déjà à la moitié de sa vie, il ne va pas gâcher le reste à ruminer ses frustrations. Alex enchaîne alors sur le sujet du temps et de la perception ultra fragmentaire qu'en a l'homme. Elle leur parle longuement d'un livre qu'elle est en train de lire, écrit par un scientifique qui croyait aux prémonitions et qui, notant ses rêves tous les matins, avait fini par découvrir des analogies flagrantes avec ce qui lui arrivait dans la journée.

Un peu plus tôt : Le téléphone sonne, réveillant Alex et Marcus, enlacés sur leur lit à moitié nus, comme après un acte amoureux. Pierre laisse un message disant qu'il sera chez eux dans 40 minutes puis raccroche. Alex raconte alors à Marcus avoir fait un rêve super bizarre avec un tunnel tout rouge qui se cassait en deux, rêve peut-être dû au fait, ajoute-t-elle en plaisantant, que ses règles ont du retard. Sans prêter attention à ses propos, Marcus affirme qu'il est content de revoir ce soir son ancien ami Pierre à qui il aurait piqué sa femme. Alex, un peu choquée d'être considéré comme un objet, répond qu'il n'a rien piqué du tout. C'est elle qui a décidé, après des années de rapports intellectuels, qu'elle avait besoin d'un peu plus de charnel. Marcus, à son tour un peu vexé, lui demande si elle le prend pour une bite. A quoi elle répond en riant : "pour un réservoir à sperme". Ils rigolent tous les deux et il la chatouille. Puis la radio émettant une musique entraînante, ils se mettent à danser dessus. Marcus, heureux de vivre, lui demande si elle ne trouve pas leur nouvelle maison trop belle. Puis il veut savoir si elle est toujours partante pour le Brésil. Alex craint que ce soit trop violent et propose à la place Tahiti. Le morceau finit, elle part se doucher tandis que Marcus enfile ses vêtements et lui crie qu'il descend chercher des bouteilles pour la fête. Dans la salle de bain, Alex ouvre la boîte d'un test de grossesse et après avoir lu les indications, se dirige vers la cuvette des toilettes et pisse sur le test comme il est indiqué. Puis elle attend le résultat, comptant trente secondes : la couleur apparaît, indiquant qu'elle est enceinte. Le cœur battant, elle sort de la salle de bains et se dirige vers la fenêtre du living. Une musique ultra-sentimentale passe à la radio. Tout en fixant le parc qui s'étend en face de leur appartement, Alex laisse couler des larmes de joie.

Un peu plus tôt : Sur le gazon, dans le parc en face de l'appartement d'Alex, deux petites filles de deux ans, nues, jouent dans un petit bassin gonflable rempli d'eau et s'éclaboussent. Près d'elles, une adolescente, certainement leur baby sitter bronze timidement dans son bikini. Alex, en tenue estivale et fleurie,

est couchée dans l'herbe un peu plus loin. Elle observe un moment les enfants, fascinée. C'est un doux après-midi ensoleillé. Les oiseaux chantent. Les fleurs brillent de mille couleurs. Puis, respirant profondément 'air frais du parc, Alex se remet à lire son livre, intitulé : "An experiment with time" de J.W. Dunne.

Puis un carton : Le temps révèle tout.

Appendix D

Top ten horror films at French box-office according to JP's Box-Office (2022)

no.	Title	Director	Year	Country	Admission
1	*The Exorcist*	William Friedkin	1974	USA	5 397 450
2	*Scream 3*	Wes Craven	2000	USA	2 654 418
3	*It*	Andrés Muschietti	2017	USA	2 223 006
4	*Scream*	Wes Craven	1997	USA	2 207 347
5	*Scream 2*	Wes Craven	1998	USA	2,153,587
6	*The Conjuring 3*	Michael Chaves	2021	USA	1 887 284
7	*Annabelle*	John R. Leonetti	2014	USA	1 538 114
8	*The Faculty*	Robert Rodriguez	1999	USA	1 522 329
9	*It: Chapter Two*	Andrés Muschietti	2019	USA	1 496 163
10	*The Conjuring 2*	James Wan	2016	USA	1 470 179

LIST OF CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND LECTURES

Presented a conference paper on *Title Sequence and Typography of Enter the Void (2009): The Portal to Gaspar Noé's Transgressive World* at UTS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) HDR Annual Conference 2018 organized by UTS FASS at University of Technology Sydney, 15-16 November 2018, Sydney.

Delivered presentation on *Poetics of Gaspar Noé's films*, organized by Department of Media and Communication, School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Independent University, Bangladesh, 25 February 2019, Dhaka.

Delivered lecture on the *Gaspar Noe's Poetics of Love (2015) and Politics of Sexuality*, organized by Dhaka University Film Society, 04 February 2019, Dhaka.

Presented a conference paper on *Gaspar Noé's Neon-Noir: A Poetics of Transgression* at Dial S for Screen Studies 2019 organized by the Sydney Screen Studies Network, 28-29 November 2019, University of New South Wales, Sydney.

Delivered lecture on *Gaspar Noé: The Man Who Makes Films with Blood, Sweat and Sperm*, organized by Loghu-Guru, February 2020, Dhaka.