cinematic aided design

an everyday life
approach to architecture

françois penz

day 1

day 2

everyday life and circadian rhythms

ROUTLEDGE

'In *Cinematic Aided Design* François Penz has invented a kind of meta architecture, an imaginary Cinecitta where the production of architecture and film reflect and refract each other's gaze on the everyday. Penz casts Henri Lefebvre and Georges Perec to lead a purposely *in-disciplined* ensemble cast of film makers and architects to find our truths in the everyday space of our lives.'

– Tom Emerson, director, 6a architects, London & professor at the
Department of Architecture, ETH Zürich, Switzerland

'In *Cinematic Aided Design*, François Penz argues persuasively that narrative cinema offers a vast library of demonstrations of architecture in use. Exploring the everyday spaces of fiction films, he identifies the essential value of moving images for architects and architecture.'

– Patrick Keiller

'Francois Penz is interested in what happens to architecture once it is handed over to a client, and he sees film as an accidental archive that makes visible how we live, love, work and sleep in buildings. His fascinating book offers some sparkling insights into how architects can enrich the design process with mundane knowledge. More than that, it is the best account I have read of how cinema can help us to understand the everyday.'

– Joe Moran, Professor of English and Cultural History,
Liverpool John Moores University, UK

CINEMATIC AIDED DESIGN

Cinematic Aided Design: An Everyday Life Approach to Architecture provides architects, planners, designer practitioners, politicians and decision makers with a new awareness of the practice of everyday life through the medium of film. This novel approach will also appeal to film scholars and film practitioners with an interest in spatial and architectural issues as well as researchers from cultural studies in the field of everyday life.

The everyday life is one of the hardest things to uncover since by its very nature it remains overlooked and ignored. However, cinema has over the last 120 years represented, interpreted and portrayed hundreds of thousands of everyday life situations taking place in a wide range of dwellings, streets and cities. Film constitutes the most comprehensive lived in building data in existence. Cinema created a comprehensive encyclopedia of architectural spaces and building elements. It has exposed large fragments of our everyday life and everyday environment that this book is aiming to reveal and restitute.

Professor **François Penz** is the Head of the Department of Architecture at the University of Cambridge, a former Director of The Martin Centre for Architectural and Urban Studies and a Fellow of Darwin College. He directs the Digital Studio for Research in Design, Visualization and Communication. His current AHRC research project, 'A cinematic *musée imaginaire* of spatial cultural differences' (2017–2020), expands many of the ideas developed in this book to other cultures (China and Japan in particular), construing films of everyday life as a revelator of deep spatial cultural differences.

CINEMATIC AIDED DESIGN

An Everyday Life Approach to Architecture

François Penz

For Fabia

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I wish first to acknowledge the Department of Architecture and all my colleagues for having directly or indirectly supported this project over the last three years. My association with film studies dates from the early 1990s when I met Maureen Thomas, then Head of Screen Studies at the National Film and Television School. I am immensely grateful for her continuous intellectual support, encouragement and suggestions over such a sustained period. After the demise of Cambridge University Moving Image Studio and the loss of our MPhil in Architecture and the Moving Image in 2005, the start of the interdisciplinary Screen Media and Cultures (SMaC) MPhil in 2006 provided me with a new outlet for my cinematic spatial explorations. I would like here to express my gratitude to all my colleagues from the Faculty of Modern & Medieval Languages and the Faculty of English who have provided a new home for my teaching and research. Crucially this new strand allowed me to recruit several excellent doctoral students from different disciplines, who have all contributed to shaping my thoughts, together with my past and current PhD students.

More recently I started to teach on our two new Masters in Architecture and Urban Studies [MAUS] and in Architecture and Urban Design [MAUD], allowing me to mix the film students with our architecture students. Bringing together those two strands has provided me with a new dynamic. As a result I have been privileged to work with many outstanding students whose work has contributed to my thinking. I am particularly grateful to the SMaC and MAUS cohorts of 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 who bravely elected to follow my cinematic approach to everyday life seminars, providing me with endless insightful and enjoyable conversations.

Lectures and supervisions with second- and third-year Architecture undergraduates during the last three years have been equally rewarding. Among these I wish to single out Henry Jiao and Audrey Lejeune for their wonderful dissertations, respectively on *Exhibition* (Joanna Hogg, 2013) and *Amélie* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001) – in the process, Audrey almost managed

INTRODUCTION

'Everyday things represent the most overlooked knowledge. These names are vital to your progress. Quotidian things. If they weren't important, we wouldn't use such a gorgeous Latinate word. Say it,' he said.

'Quotidian.'

'An extraordinary word that suggests the depth and reach of the commonplace.'

Underworld *(DeLillo, 2011, p.542)*

Ah, que la vie est quotidienne…

Complainte sur certains ennuis *(Laforgue, 1885, p.79)*

On the eve of sabbatical leave in 2014, I attended a seminar on Georges Perec[1] at which *Les lieux d'une fugue* (Perec, 1978) [Scene of a flight] was screened. Although I had never seen this film, I had long worked on various aspects of Perec's work, in particular his observation techniques in *Espèces d'espaces* (Perec, 1974) that I used in various practise-based moving-image workshops (Penz, 2012). But during the course of this seminar it dawned on me that Perec could become one of the *fils conducteurs* for the book. It was not planned that way and this new course comprehensively derailed an earlier synopsis I had given to Routledge in 2012. However, I stuck with the original title, *Cinematic Aided Design*, but added the subtitle that defines what the book is about, *An Everyday Life Approach to Architecture*. The focus on the everyday was of course the novel element, and it was only later that I recognized that I had long circled around it without quite knowing it. Perhaps this is not surprising, as the everyday is in its very nature invisible, yet ever-present and overlooked; it is in the same league as what prose is to Molière's Monsieur Jourdain:[2] we all practise it without noticing it.

I also became aware with time that working on the everyday was not necessarily all that glamorous or fashionable, and that in the words of Joe Moran I would 'probably need to

develop a thick skin. Some people may accuse you of trying to rediscover what a certain strain of English pragmatism likes to call "the bleeding obvious"' (Moran, 2008, p.3). But I persisted, encouraged by a resurgence of interest in the everyday: the New York Tribeca 2015 Film Festival showcased movies about everyday life (Reaney, 2015), while it was central to several national pavilions at the 2016 Venice Biennale of Architecture. The British pavilion *Home Economics* focused on the changes in patterns of everyday life, the Taiwanese pavilion was named 'Everyday Architecture Re-made in Taiwan', while the 'Belgian pavilion triumphs once again with a show celebrating architecture of the everyday' (Wainwright, 2016). And in June 2016 the French *Ordre des Architectes* staged a series of national open days under the umbrella of everyday architecture (les architectes ouvrent leurs portes au grand public […] sous le signe de l'architecture du quotidien) (Muuuz Magazine, 2016).

  I also realized that I had previously neglected Perec's *le cinématographe*, the film-maker, a part of his oeuvre often unknown and overlooked. The importance of Perec is that he gave me both the cinematic as well as the everyday that are all contained in the opening sequence of *Les lieux d'une fugue* as the voice-over explains the motivations for the film: 'très vite j'ai décidé de me consacrer aux lieux seules de cette fugue…toucher les spectateurs en leur montrant un banc, un arbre, un cartable, un commissariat de police…est devenu pour moi l'essentiel' [very quickly I decided to focus solely on the places related to the running-away episode…to create an emotional bond with the audience by showing a bench, a tree, a satchel, a police station…this became the essential]. The focus of the film is in part on the banality of the everyday environment and everyday life,[3] and it certainly resonated with me. And so the writing of this book has been something of an adventure – or rather I allowed it to be. It started one way and ended up somewhere else. It is only while writing it that the shape of the book revealed itself. I merely became the secretary to my own intellectual bricolage. And it is not just Perec that I rediscovered, but in the process and to my surprise 'I discovered how important to me were, unknowingly, books I had never read, events and persons I did not know had existed' (Ginzburg, 1993, p.34), to which I should add, films that I had never come across before.

  But a cinematic approach to everyday life and architecture implies an interdisciplinary approach or, as I would rather think of it, a form of 'indiscipline', experiencing the turbulence or incoherence at the inner and outer boundaries of disciplines whereby a set of collective practices (technical, social, professional, etc.) triggers a moment of breakage or rupture, when the continuity is broken and the practice comes into question (Mitchell, 1995, p.541). The practice that comes into question in this case is architecture, but also my own field which explores the relation between cinema and architecture, a topic that is not clearly defined, its boundaries forever shifting. It remains an amorphous and elusive 'in-discipline'. Cinema and architecture is like a borderless infinite puzzle to which some of us add a piece from time to time, waiting for others to join or to put it another way, 'The amateur's way implies that cinema belongs to all those who have, one way or another, traveled within its system […] and

that everyone is authorized to trace one's own itinerary within this topography, adding to the cinema as world and to its knowledge' (Rancière, 2011, p.14).[4] Mitchell adds that his motto has been to 'get by with a little help from his friends'. I too rely on my 'friends' – and my friends are people, books, journals from a wide range of fields – film studies, philosophy, visual culture, psychocinematics, art history, and anthropology, amongst others. They have accompanied me all these years and the numbers grow with time to encompass also other cultures, a form of cultural indisciplinarity.[5] To name but just two, one of my oldest 'friends' is Jacques Tati, who turned everyday observations into a cinematic art form; a more recent acquaintance is Abraham Moles, a constant source of inspiration, with *Micropsychologie et vie quotidienne* [Micropsychology and everyday life] (Moles, 1976) amongst others.

However, I have also realized that no matter how interdisciplinary or indisciplinary my research might be, it remains firmly rooted in the world of architecture. And while I borrow from and venture into other fields, I naturally retreat back to the relative safety of my profession, but always enriched by my indisciplines. For architecture is a profession, not simply an academic discipline, and ultimately all that I produce is first and foremost conscious of architectural education, architectural research and the architecture profession.[6] Thus, from an architect's perspective, one of the key aims of this book is to address the question of post-occupancy, which is a real challenge to architecture. The connection with the cinematic of the everyday may not be at all obvious at first sight and needs some explanation. In turn I will consider the position of the architect followed by that of the film-maker.

We know that architects are good at designing buildings, but we also know that there is little research after a building has been handed over to the client. As a result, architects do not have much information as to how their buildings function after completion. One of the few books on the subject is Brand's *How buildings learn: what happens after they're built* (Brand, 1995). In an RIBA paper on 'Architects and research-based knowledge', Murray Fraser acknowledges that 'There is wide recognition from practitioners of the potential benefits of engaging with research, in particularly Post-Occupancy Evaluation, and its importance to the work of practices. However there is a rift between intention and practice […] Post-Occupancy Evaluation was identified as a key method to improve design quality and reduce the "performance gap", but there are a number of barriers' (Fraser, 2014, p.3). In other words, most buildings are reduced to mute objects as architects fail to interrogate them in any systematic way.[7]

On the other hand, as soon as the architects move out, having completed a building, the film-makers move in. Figure I.1 illustrates this process. For example, when the new Rolex building (Sanaa architects) in Lausanne was just completed, Wim Wenders started to film – see Plate 1. The resulting movie, *If Buildings Could Talk* (Wenders, 2010), is an interesting case in point as Wenders gave the building a voice, it was no longer silent.[8]

So over the last 120 years, film-makers have archived, expressed, characterized, interpreted and portrayed hundreds of thousands of buildings. Folded away and preserved in celluloid film
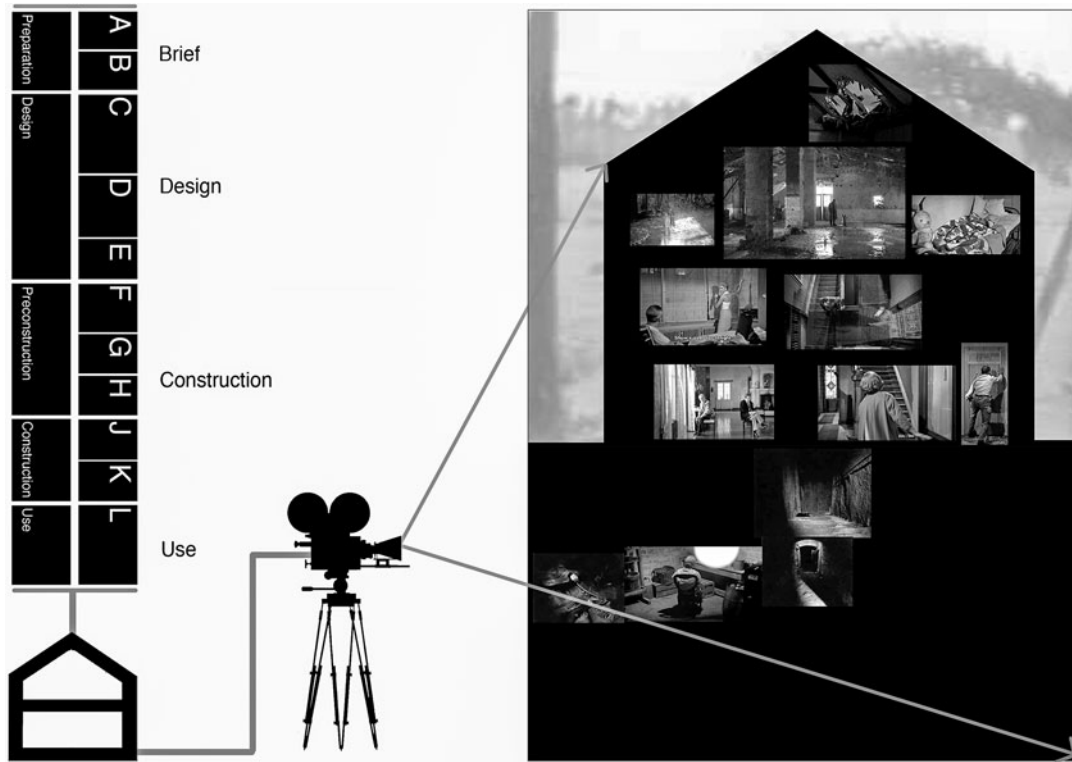
FIGURE I.1 Film as post-occupancy study (house image by Martha Rawlinson)

is a comprehensive encyclopaedia of architectural spaces and building elements and how to use them; doors and windows were opened and closed, stairs were descended, corridors were strolled along, lobbies were entered, walls were bumped into, cellars were visited, attics were inhabited, bedrooms were slept in etc.… the list is far too long to enumerate. And not only were all those spaces lived in, entered and exited but also lit, ventilated, heated, cooled, painted and decorated. Kitchens came in many different colours, shapes and sizes. Meals were cooked, people made love, sofas were sat on, baths were run and showers taken. Films have exposed precious everyday gestures and large fragments of our everyday life. It constitutes an extraordinary archive of lived and practised spaces, a formidable reservoir of post-occupancy studies. In other words, films constitute the most comprehensive lived-in building data in existence – a largely ignored and untapped resource that can be mined in many different ways, and this constitutes the central hypothesis of the book. I have already had the opportunity to exploit this remarkable archive as part of an AHRC research project on Battersea, where through a process of 'cinematic urban archaeology', we excavated the successive cinematic layers of a part of the urban fabric hovering invisibly over Battersea. It allowed us to trace the evolution of the fabric of the city across the twentieth century as well as understanding the social changes that took place at the time (Penz et al., 2017).

To Perec, I added Henri Lefebvre, *l'incontournable* in all matters of the *quotidien*, all the more so as I followed his seminars in 1971 (see Chapter 1). Lefebvre and Perec are spearheading **PART 1** 'An everyday life approach to architecture', consisting of a single chapter, **Chapter 1**, 'The case for everydayness', which is the foundation of this book. Perec is most relevant to architects, given his focus on everyday spaces, while Lefebvre provides us with infinite and lyrical variations on everyday life, a source of constant inspiration. The second part of this chapter deals with a historical perspective on how the everyday was re-interpreted in the US with *Learning from Las Vegas* (Venturi et al., 1972) and by Alison and Peter Smithson in England with the As Found movement. The last part of the chapter deals with the contemporary view of the everyday in the world of architecture, its modern interpretation in the UK in particular. It is also the opportunity to discuss the iconic versus the everyday environment as well as distinguish between everyday life and the everyday environment. Overall this chapter briefly traces the evolution of the notion of the everyday as interpreted then and now from the point of view of architecture. It sets the scene for an exploration of everyday life and architecture through film, which is the subject of the following chapters.

Following **PART 1**, the book is in three parts. **PART 2** elicits the mechanisms by which we can grasp everyday life through cinema. It is divided into five chapters: **Chapter 2** 'Introduction to everydayness and cinema' makes the link with Lefebvre's writing on film and opens the discussion on the link between everyday life and realism, for the two notions are inextricably linked. **Chapter 3** 'The value of fiction and the role of disruptions' is in praise of fiction films, which allow us to grasp a more approachable lived reality, providing an accelerated education in complex situations. The second part of Chapter 3 uncovers the mechanisms by which the everyday life 'baseline' is the necessary fertile ground from which drama will erupt. **Chapter 4** 'Georges Perec and Chantal Akerman' first examines Perec's *le cinématographe* of the everyday with a case study of *L'homme qui dort* (1973), followed by an account of Georges Perec and Chantal Akerman's parallel lives with *Jeanne Dielman* (Akerman, 1974) providing the backdrop for this case study. **Chapter 5** 'Rhythmanalysis' considers Lefebvre's last book, *Rhythmanalysis*, and adapts his way of understanding time and space through the cyclical and linear rhythms of everyday life to film by principally analysing Joanna Hogg's *Exhibition* (2013), a film that takes place in a modernist house. It is here that there is an opportunity to ponder on the relationship between modernism and everyday life. **Chapter 6** 'Cinematic typologies of the everyday' reflects on the possibility to observe and classify cinematic activities of everyday life with a view to creating typologies of inhabited, lived-in and practised architectural forms. However, such typologies could hardly be organized according to built form – as everyday life cannot be systematized in relation to building shapes alone. We have therefore to explore categories and types according to activities, functions, circadian cycles, rhythms, and many other variables.

PART 3 'An architectonic of cinema' is concerned with key building elements that pertain to architecture – windows, doors, walls, stairs – showing how their many functions are cinematically practised and revealed – throwing new light on building elements that are often taken for granted. It consists of five chapters: **Chapter 7** is the introduction to the whole architectonic of cinema concept, pointing first to Jeanne Dielman's kitchen scenes as having striking similarities with Neufert's Architects' data of prototypical kitchen layouts – thus constituting a textbook 'cinematic kitchen use of everydayness', if only such a thing existed. This introduces the idea of a cinematic encyclopaedia of architectural elements that parallels Rem Koolhaas's *Elements of Architecture* (Koolhaas et al., 2014), the latest offering in a long line of architectural standardization efforts. **Chapter 8** 'Windows' explores cinematic windows as communication, windows for dreaming, windows that separate or windows that unite, windows that interrogate, windows that hide, and many more that challenge or complement the humble everyday window. Windows are not just to let light in and prevent heat from escaping or a means of ventilation, there are a myriad of functions that often go unnoticed but that cinema reveals. **Chapter 9** 'Doors' makes the point that very often a door in a film is associated with a cut, implying and inviting a movement, unlike windows, which are associated with the gaze. Doors are not only an instrument of passage, they also reveal, and can be a contested space or a symbol of rejection while also signalling hope, protection and much more. The door is an active architectonic element imbued with affect, part of architecture as experience. **Chapter 10** 'Stairs' reviews the typology of stairs as presented by architectural historians of building technology but re-interpreted by film-makers such as Hitchcock, Godard and others. In particular it is found that the built-in elements of danger associated with stairs, abundantly documented in architectural treatises, has been more than adequately reflected in film. So far the chapters in Part 3 have concentrated on elements of architecture treated in isolation: windows, doors and stairs. But **Chapter 11** 'Joining the dots' brings the elements of architecture together as whole movie sequences. It is a two-part exploration. The first part considers the rise in scenes portraying lifts, especially in US films, reflecting the potential demise of the staircase as an architectural element. This observation demonstrates how entrances combined with lifts and corridors have become 'shorthand' for a building. The second part is a case study of the flat scene in Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963) that brings together windows, doors and stairs but also walls, corridors, corners, ceilings and floors – effectively 'joining the dots', something that film is particularly good at.

PART 4 'Cinematic aided design' is a single chapter that also acts as the conclusion and therefore closes the loop of Figure I.1. It essentially points to potential avenues for architects to exploit. Film-makers have 'taken' from architecture; it is time for architects to get something back from this process. Cinema has, mostly unwittingly, provided a formidable reservoir of post-occupancy studies. Closing the loop implies a process of restitution from film to architecture. However, this is not a book that provides recipes but rather a rationale for what

could be achieved. *Cinematic Aided Design*, being a play of words on *Computer Aided Design* (CAD), implies that we need this injection of cinematic intelligence to enrich the design process. The final section of Part 4 explores the concepts of *situations* and *atmospheres*, opening new insights in relation to the everyday. Regarding the first point, I posit that film provides us with a formidable array of interpretive human situations, and that it exposes hidden strata of everyday life that would otherwise be inaccessible to us. Film helps us to attain something like fragments or moments of atmospheres, pertaining to everyday life situations. But while there are many overlaps between a cinematic atmosphere and an architectural atmosphere, there are no easy ways to transfer from one to the other. This is a complex 'model', which opens potential new avenues yet to be investigated, and one that pertains to the world of cinematic-assisted imagination.

Notes

1 The seminar was entitled *Georges Perec's Scene of a Flight: Mnemotechnics on Screen* and the speaker was Dr Mark Goodall (University of Bradford) to whom I am grateful for having unwittingly fostered this change of direction.
2 Monsieur Jourdain is the main character in Molière's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670). He is rich, middle class and idle, and in his attempt to be accepted as an aristocrat he takes some philosophy lessons on language. To his delight, he learns that he has been speaking prose all his life without knowing it: *'Par ma foi ! il y a plus de quarante ans que je dis de la prose sans que j'en susse rien, et je vous suis le plus obligé du monde de m'avoir appris cela'.*
3 *Les Lieux d'une Fugue* (1978) is originally a text that Perec wrote in 1965 and which was adapted for the screen and shot in 1976 and first aired on television in 1978. Perec published the text for the first time in 1976. The story is autobiographical and deceptively simple: 'C'était le 11 mai 1947. Il avait 11 ans et 2 mois. Il venait de s'enfuir de chez lui, 18 rue de l 'Assomption, 16ème arrondissement'. In 1945, a young Perec ran away from the family home – uncle and ant – and played truand for a day and part of a night. He was later found by a man while attempting to sleep on a bench on the Champ Elysées, taken to a police station, and later collected by his uncle. However, Perec only remembered, and subsequently wrote that story some 20 years later, in 1965, while revisiting a key place of the 'fugue', 'le marché aux timbres', on the Champ Elysées. Indeed Perec used to collect stamps as a child and in the running away episode, he had hoped to sell some of his collection to make some pocket money.
4 My translation from the French 'La politique de l'amateur affirme que le cinéma appartient à tous ceux qui ont, d'une manière ou d'une autre, voyagé à l'intérieur du système d'écarts que son nom dispose et que chacun peut s'autoriser à tracer, entre tel ou tel point de cette topographie, un itinéraire singulier qui ajoute au cinéma comme monde et à sa connaissance' (Rancière, 2011, p.14).
5 I am referring here to my AHRC research project (2017–2020) entitled *A Cinematic Musée Imaginaire of Spatial Cultural Differences* – that endeavours to reveal and elicit spatial cultural differences, through the film medium, across different cultures, China/Japan v. Europe /US in particular.
6 I am also hoping that other disciplines, for example film studies and cultural studies, would also benefit from my explorations, thus making a contribution to a 'deep' interdisciplinary approach as opposed to a 'shallow' one.
7 However, this is gradually changing as the RIBA Plan of Work 2013 now incorporates Post-Occupancy Evaluation: 'Post-Occupancy Evaluation is not only an explicit part of the new Stage 7 (along with a review of project performance, project outcome and research and development) but the

review of the findings from previous projects is included in Stage 0, with the intention of closing the feedback loop, and binding research more tightly into project processes' (Fraser, 2014, p.7).

8   My transcript from a lecture that Wenders gave at the Venice Biennale in 2010: '[…] so I spent days and days in the building […] observing the people who were using the buildings […] I thought I understood the dialogue between the building and its users – and I understood its primary function which is to make people meet – an extraordinary place of communication – so I wrote the toughest dialogue I ever wrote for my movies – I wrote a monologue – and it was a great relief when I heard this beautiful voice and I thought Hei! the building is talking'.

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PART 1

An everyday life approach to architecture

1

THE CASE FOR EVERYDAYNESS

Il y a un siècle, qui aurait cru possible d'étudier avec le plus grand sérieux scientifique les balbutiements de l'enfant ou les rougeurs de l'adolescence ? Ou la forme des maisons ? Dans la mesure où la science de l'homme existe, elle trouve sa matière dans le banal, dans le quotidien. Et c'est elle, la connaissance, qui a frayé la voie à notre conscience. [Who would have thought it possible a century ago that the first hesitant words of infants or the blushes of adolescents – or the shape of houses – would become the objects of serious scientific study? In so far as the science of man exists, it finds its material in the banal, in the everyday. And it is the science of man – knowledge – which has blazed the trail for our consciousness.]

(Lefebvre, 1958, p.146)[1]

This first section is essentially concerned with providing an overview of the current position on the everyday that pertains to the world of architecture. However, in doing so I am not attempting to redefine what the everyday is. Rather, I am preparing the ground for what is, I believe, a new approach, that is to study the everyday through the medium of film with a view to provide not only architects, planners, designers, practitioners, but also politicians and decision-makers with a new awareness of the everyday. I suggest concentrating on how spaces are being used and practised by cinema, so the type of everydayness I am interested in is the daily use of our everyday spaces – the streets we use every day, the transport we take routinely to go to work, the workplaces we inhabit – but with an emphasis on the home, houses and dwellings in general. All of those spaces are used, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin, in a state of distraction (Benjamin, 2007, p.239), and therefore need to be constantly reassessed. I will therefore start by considering the everyday through my own lens, starting by 'clearing the ground', not through a comprehensive review of the field but by highlighting what is here relevant for my hypothesis, a necessary step towards establishing the conceptual basis for this book.

It would be difficult not to start with Henri Lefebvre, who devoted three large volumes to the study of the everyday, spanning over 30 years of his life: *Critique de la vie quotidienne* (1947, 1961 and 1981). In his 1961 second edition – *Critique de la vie quotidienne – Fondements d'une sociologie de la quotidienneté* [Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday], he states his objective as 'The object of our study is everyday life, with the idea, or rather the project (the programme), of transforming it' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.296). Paradoxically, while attempting to transform it, Lefebvre found it challenging to define precisely what everyday life is. Indeed a lot of the writing in the three volumes of *Critique de la vie quotidienne* (hereafter I will abbreviate the title to *Critique*) is devoted to successive refinement of the definition: 'How can everyday life be defined? It surrounds us, it besieges us, on all sides and from all directions' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.335), further acknowledging the difficulty of the project.

> In one sense there is nothing more simple and more obvious than everyday life. How do people live? The question may be difficult to answer, but that does not make it any the less clear. In another sense, nothing could be more superficial: it is banality, triviality, *repetitiveness*. And in yet another sense nothing could be more profound. It is existence and the 'lived', revealed as they are before speculative thought has transcribed them: what must be changed and what is the hardest of all to change.
>
> *(Lefebvre, 2014, p.341)*

As a result, many of his readers have acknowledged that 'Lefebvre's concept of everyday life is elusive, due in part to his intensely dialectical approach and his refusal of any static categorization' (Berke and Harris, 1997, p.13). Poignantly Lefebvre states that 'we are moving closer to a detailed and precise definition of everyday life' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.355), but in the last page of the last volume, *The Epilogue*, he states 'to finish this conclusion, which in no sense is definitive or conclusive' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.842), thus inferring that the project was indeed open ended. Lefebvre also clearly rejected the idea of establishing a 'closed system'.[2] I therefore construe *Critique* as an 'open system' from which we can borrow, pursue, expand and interpret. And by 'open system' I mean that there is such a richness of thinking in *Critique* that it is open to multiple interpretation. *Critique* operates like a 'fractal text': whenever one delves deeper into Lefebvre's writing, the same problems and complexity keep appearing, but reformulated in different ways.[3]

Particularly interesting in Lefebvre's project is the idea that the everyday has clear potential for creative inspiration: 'it is in everyday life and starting from everyday life that genuine creations are achieved', which stresses the potential for 'works of creativity' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.338). There is also a clear sense of optimism that indeed the everyday can contribute to changes: 'Vague images of the future and man's prospects are inadequate. These images allow for too many more-or-less technocratic or humanist interpretations. If we are to know and to judge, we must start with a precise criterion and a centre of reference: the everyday' (Lefebvre,

2014, p.340). I will take this as one of my starting points, that is to say that the everyday concept can be an agent of change and a work of creativity. *Critique de la vie quotidienne* accompanies this project on many different levels and throughout this book.

Other major influences pertaining to the elaboration of the concept of the everyday have to be acknowledged, as succinctly summarized by Sheringham:[4]

> Between 1960 and 1980 the evolving ideas of Lefebvre, Barthes, Perec, and Certeau fed into and drew on each of the others […] and made this a vital period in the emergence of the everyday as a paradigm. But one of the features that does make them different from one another (whilst enhancing the collective power of their contributions) is that these authors emerged from different intellectual traditions […]. In the broadest of terms, Lefebvre can be associated with humanist Marxism, Barthes with Structuralism and its evolution into post-structuralism and post-modernism, Certeau with history, anthropology, and psychoanalysis, and Perec with the literary experimentalism of the Oulipo group, inaugurated by Raymond Queneau.
>
> *(Sheringham, 2006, p.9)*

But aside from Lefebvre, the other towering figure of the everyday who is very prominent in this book is Georges Perec.

Lefebvre and Perec

If Lefebvre is *l'incontournable* who provides an infinite matrix of quotidian inspirations to which I will return time and time again, it is Perec who supplied me with *le fil conducteur* and the motivation for this book. There is a level of abstraction in Lefebvre that makes his work open to multiple interpretations, while Perec's prose is far more down to earth and yet poetic at the same time. Perec equips us with novel spatial methods of observations of the everyday, that in a later chapter I translate to film analysis. *Espèces d'espaces* [Species of Spaces] (1974) gave me the structure for analyzing 'the species of cinematic spaces'. And if this was not enough, Perec was also a film-maker and the inventor of *l'écriture-cinéma* (Peytard, 1997, pp.33–37). In other words, the difference between Lefebvre and Perec regarding the everyday is that Lefebvre theorizes it while Perec is 'doing it' and demonstrates how it works from the 'inside'.

In *Espèces d'espaces*, *le quotidien* is only mentioned three times in 183 pages [French edition] although it is completely central to the book as expressed by Perec in his very first words in the *prière d'insérer*:[5]

> The space of our life is neither continuous, nor infinite, neither homogeneous, nor isotropic. But do we really know where it shatters, where it curves, and where it assembles

itself? We feel a confused sensation of cracks, hiatus, points of friction, sometimes we have the vague impression that it is getting jammed somewhere, or that it is bursting, or colliding. We rarely try to know more about it and more often than not go from one place to another, from one space to another without trying to measure, to grasp, to consider these gaps in space. The issue is not to invent space, and even less to re-invent it (too many well-meaning people are responsible for thinking about our environment…), but to interrogate it, or to just read it; because what we call everydayness is not evidence but opacity: a form of blindness, a mode of anaesthesia. It's from those basic remarks that this book has developed, a diary of a user of space.[6]

(Perec, 1974)

Perec's writing is particularly attractive and relevant for architects, as it is about space and everyday spaces and how they are lived in and practised. Perec commits to the everyday, inhabits it, breathes it and adheres to it. The everyday is Perec's *matière brut*, his primary writing material, which figures at the very top of his list of preoccupations: 'La première de ces interrogations peut être qualifiée de 'sociologique': comme de regarder le quotidien; elle est au départ de textes comme *Les Choses, Espèces d'espaces, Tentative de description de quelques lieux parisiens'* [the first of these questions could be construed as 'sociological': as when observing the quotidian, it is the starting point for texts such as *Les Choses, Espèces d'espaces, Tentative de description de quelques lieux parisiens*] (Perec, 2003, p.10). Perec also alludes to the creation of new 'disciplines', *l'infra-ordinaire* and *l'endotique*.[7] He hints at a literary enterprise associated with an anthropology of proximity and a sociology of the everyday. Schilling rightly remarks that writing on the quotidian in the French context of the 1960s and 1970s is hardly innocent, and that with his new brand of 'sociologie de la quotidienneté' Perec was hinting at much more than he expressed and much less than he could have, given the abundance of literature on the topic of the everyday, in particular from Lefebvre (Schilling, 2006, p.19).

But it would be pointless to put Lefebvre and Perec in opposition, as they were not competing with each other in the way that, for example, Debord and Lefebvre did at some point.[8] Perec was not an academic and none of his work contains any traditional references or bibliographies – if anything, he was quite capable of inventing them, mixing the real with the imaginary, as if 'covering his tracks'. Yet his work has an extraordinary internal rigour that he drew from his association with the *L'OuLiPo*[9] group and working with self-imposed constraints [*les contraintes*],[10] a method of working that later appealed to Bernard Tschumi for the Parc de La Villette as he refers to Queneau and Perec for his use of *transformations oulipiennes* (Tschumi, 2004, p.124).

There is an obvious complementarity between Lefebvre and Perec, which is not surprising given the nature of their collaboration and friendship[11] in the 1950s and 1960s (Lefebvre, 2014, p.658). Both collaborated extensively with architects and schools of architecture. From 1968 onwards Lefebvre was very involved with architects and urbanists, from both a theoretical

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ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE FEDERALE DE LAUSANNE
DEPARTEMENT D'ARCHITECTURE                    MAI 1971.
FF/pem/8ème semestre.


HENRI   LEFEBVRE : bibliographie
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Le nationalisme contre les Nations          e.s.i. 1937

Hitler au pouvoir: bilan de 5 années de fascisme    Bureau d'edition 1938.
en Allemagne

Nietzsche                                   e.s.i. 1939

L'existentialisme                           ed.du Sagittaire 1946

Critique de la vie quotidienne      vol.1    Grasset 1946
                                             L'Arche 1958
                                    vol.2    L'Arche 1961

Le matérialisme dialectique                  Alcan 1939
                                             4ème éd. 1959

Marx et la liberté                           Genève 1947

Le marxisme                                  PUF 1948
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FIGURE 1.1 Extract from the bibliography from Henri Lefebvre's handout (1971)[12]

and a practical point of view. He lectured in numerous schools of architecture in France as well as abroad, in particular at the School of Architecture in Lausanne (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne) where I was studying. I was fortunate to follow his teaching in 1971, in my first year of architecture, and it is very clear from his bibliography that as students we were expected to familiarize ourselves not only with the first two volumes of *Critique* and his writing on cities, but also with Marxism and Leninism.

We were part of a generation that had been enormously influenced by May 1968, and were by and large politically engaged. It is therefore unsurprising that in his handout Lefebvre acknowledges, in front of the staff, that the school 'was not catering to the preoccupations and needs of the student and that therefore the students should take charge of their own teaching'… quite unthinkable nowadays, but part of the zeitgeist at the time, the spirit of *contestation* was still rife, even in Switzerland (see Figure 1.2 below).

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IL apparaît de plus en plus, et c'est vrai pour ce département d'architecture,
que les préoccupations des étudiants ne correspondent plus au cadre de l'ensei-
gnement proposé. Les étudiants sont amenés à prendre en main leur enseignement
et à le diriger selon leurs propres préoccupations.
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FIGURE 1.2 Extract from Henri Lefebvre's handout (1971)

He was also invited to judge prestigious architectural competitions and actively participated in urban projects – this has been well documented by Stanek[13] (Stanek, 2011) and need not be elaborated further. However, it is useful to note that Lefebvre gained international prominence essentially through his work on urban studies, with the publication of *Le droit à la ville* in 1968 and later *La production de l'espace* (1974), translated into English[14] in 1996 and 1991 respectively – but the everyday was always present in relation to his writing on the right to the city.[15]

As for Perec, his first contact with the world of architecture dates back to 1971–1972, when Jean Duvignaud launched *Cause Commune* with Paul Virilio, who at the time was the director of L'Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris (Roche, 2015, p.59). He was also often solicited to be part of *jurys de thèses*, and attended studio crits in schools of architecture (Roche, 2015, p.60) where he also gave conferences and participated in various colloquia.[16] However, he was also quite critical of modern architecture, most notably in his text *l'inhabitable* [the uninhabitable], which reads like an inventory of architectural failures: 'The uninhabitable […] foul cities. The uninhabitable: a showy architecture of contempt, the mediocre vainglory of towers and buildings, the thousands of rabbit hutches piled on top of another […] The uninhabitable: the slums, the fake cities' (Perec, 1974, p.176).[17] This has to be put in the context of the rapid housing developments that took place in post-WWII France. Over the years Perec's reputation has grown considerably in schools of architecture[18] and his *Species of Spaces* has been widely adopted as a key text on space, on a par with Bachelard's *La poétique de l'espace* [The Poetics of Space] (Bachelard, 1957).

The everyday and architecture – a historical perspective – from France to the US and the UK

The notion of everydayness has taken a while to reach the architectural shores. However, I have to first mention a curious book, dating from 1924 and entitled *Everyday Architecture*, that I believe to be the very first book containing those two words in the title. Its author, Manning Robertson, an architect,[19] had of course no inkling of the Lefebvre scholarship to come, instead, he noted that:

> If the average man were asked for his views on everyday architecture, he would probably reply, once his astonishment had subsided, that there is no such thing; and he would be perfectly right, in the sense that architecture is commonly associated only with cathedrals, town halls, monuments and such technicalities as dog-tooth mouldings and Corinthian capitals.
>
> *(Robertson, 1924, p.19)*[20]

It is difficult to blame the architecture profession, given the elusiveness of a subject that by its very nature is so hard to pin down and define. The everyday is a branch of cultural studies, philosophy and sociology, and its intangibility is by definition at odds with material culture, of which the world of architecture is part. How do we focus on what escapes us? Maurice Blanchot sums up this conundrum admirably:

> The Everyday is the hardest thing to uncover […] The everyday is human. The earth, the sea, forest, light, night, do not represent everydayness, which belongs first of all to the dense presence of great urban centers. We need these admirable deserts that are the world's cities for the experience of the everyday to begin to overtake us.
>
> *(Blanchot and Hanson, 1987, p.12)*

The everyday is associated with the built environment and all human activities, which makes it all the more poignant and necessary for the design professions to get a grasp on this notion… but how?

I would venture that the moment when the key protagonists of the everyday and the world of architecture finally came together in an 'official platform', was in 1981, on the occasion of *Construire pour Habiter* [Building homes], an exhibition in Paris and a publication that celebrated the tenth anniversary of the French *Plan Construction*. This was at the tail-end of a period in France of intense reflection on housing and urban issues, a major preoccupation of the *Trente Glorieuses* (1946–1975) and a fertile ground for *Le quotidien* and its association with dwellings: 'how profound is everything involving the house, the "home" and domesticity, and thus everyday life' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.516). Paul Delouvrier, in his introduction to the catalogue, states that '250 millions [francs] have been devoted to research in all aspects of the field of housing, including the "sociological": a key fact and one of the original characteristics of the Plan Construction' (Allain-Dupré Fabry and Lavalou, 1981).[21] And if we consult the list of contributors to *Construire pour Habiter*, we find an astonishing line-up of all the key players of the everyday; Lefebvre, Perec, de Certeau, Luce Giard,[22] Michel Maffesoli[23] as well as others, matched by key architects of the time, amongst whom were Paul Chemetov, Paul Virilio and Bernard Huet. *Construire pour Habiter*'s theme was not the everyday, although it was very present,[24] and the main initiators of the thinking regarding the *quotidien* had been conveyed to partake in a debate about the future of housing. While Perec wrote a characteristically poetic text entitled 'A few usages of the verb to inhabit' [*De quelques emplois du verbe habiter*] (Allain-Dupré Fabry and Lavalou, 1981, p.2), Lefebvre's short text 'To inhabit: the awakening of architectural thinking' [*Habiter : L'éveil et le réveil de la pensée architecturale*] starts by 'Talking to architects…' [*Parlant avec des architectes…*] (Allain-Dupré Fabry and Lavalou, 1981, p.18) and pursues a line of thinking about the conception of architectural and urban projects that clearly shows that he was well versed in conversing with architects.

The notion of the everyday in the US

While the notion of the everyday had started to enter architectural discourse in France and other francophone countries in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, this was not the case for Anglo-Saxon countries, due to a lack of English translations.[25] *Critique de la vie quotidienne – introduction* [1947] was first translated in 1991, 44 years later; *Critique de la vie quotidienne – Fondements d'une sociologie de la quotidienneté* [1961] was only translated 41 years later in 2002 – while the third volume published in French in 1981 became available in English in 2005. Curiously *La vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne* (1968) was available in English from 1971.[26] As a result, the concern for the everyday in American architectural circles in the 1960s took a different turn.[27]

However, one of the best documented attempts by architects to engage with the everyday in the US must be Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour's work, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Venturi et al., 1972). It is a work of great relevance to the everyday but also more broadly, within our context, is important for its methodological approach and its use of film as a mode of observation.[28] The systematic use of moving images for the analysis and representation of the city and urban form, by means of the so-called 'deadpan' method[29] – where a camera is mounted on the bonnet of a car – has been carefully documented by Stierli (Stierli, 2013, pp.149–189).

Learning from Las Vegas was followed in 1976 by *Signs of Life, Symbols in the American City*, an exhibition of everyday American building forms at the Smithsonian Institution. According to Deborah Fausch, *Signs of Life* was not a success and was 'of all their work, perhaps the least well understood' (Berke and Harris, 1997, p.78). In her attempt to understand the negative reactions to the exhibition, Fausch hypothesizes that Venturi and Scott Brown may have struggled to arrive at an intellectual and theoretical stance for thinking about the everyday that has ultimately detracted from their creation of an architecture of the everyday (Berke and Harris, 1997, p.98). Venturi had been interested in the everyday for some time, stating that '[…] it is perhaps from the everyday landscape, vulgar and disdained, that we can draw the complex and contradictory order that is valid and vital for our architecture as an urbanistic whole', adding the much-quoted '…is not Main Street almost all right?' [from *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966)].[30]

In that respect, Lefebvre is also particularly lyrical when considering the street, and would have unwittingly given credence to Venturi's study of the Las Vegas strip '…the street represents the everyday in our social life […] Like the everyday, the street is constantly changing and always repeats itself […] Almost an absolute spectacle, but not completely, it is an open book, or rather a newspaper: it has news, banalities, surprises, advertisements […] The street confronts us with a social text which is generally good, dense and legible. […] Through the interplay of objects offered and refused, the street becomes a place of dreams and imagination' (Lefebvre, 2014, pp.310–312). For Lefebvre, 'main street is definitely ok'!

In stating that 'Architects can no longer afford to be intimidated by the puritanically moral language of orthodox Modern architecture […] I am for messy vitality over obvious unity' [from

Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (1966)], Venturi rejected the modernist ideal in favour of the common, the ordinary and the everyday, a move that was seen as deeply controversial. A polemic ensued, in particular with Frampton: 'The dilemma for architects in the post-war period was that the forms that industrial society had arrived at on its own did not correspond to architects' views of how the new society ought to look and function' (Berke and Harris, 1997, p.89). Clearly Frampton thought architects had an obligation to propose something better. An architecture based on everydayness was therefore unacceptable to many and had its limitations for some, as summed up by Mcleod: 'Although the radical aesthetic programs of the Independent Group in the 1950s and of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown in the 1960s and '70s come closer to Lefebvre's vision of "the extraordinary in the ordinary," their critique rarely extended beyond the aesthetic sphere' (Berke and Harris, 1997, p.28).

Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour's thesis was based on an analysis of everyday urban forms that was in part inspired by the rise of photography and was concerned with the ordinary and the banal, in particular through the work of Ed Ruscha.[31] There were also some acknowledged influences from Alison and Peter Smithson[32] – see the discussion in the next section. However, my understanding is that there was no overlap at the time with the growing studies in *Le quotidien* taking place in France, partly because of the slowness at translating Lefebvre's work into English, as mentioned above.

The fact that on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1960s and 1970s there was a growing interest in the everyday without much overlap between the two can probably be attributed to some form of zeitgeist. Of course there were marked differences between the two approaches. Venturi and Scott Brown were essentially inspired by the transformations of the urban American landscape and promoted their ideas through publications and public exhibitions, while in France the interest in the everyday was essentially philosophical, political and theoretical. The French movement was attempting to grasp the immateriality of everyday life with a view to transforming it, while the American movement was steeped in the ordinary materiality of the urban environment as a source of inspiration. Bringing together the *quotidien* and 'pop art' might seem unusual, but there are clearly important points of contact relevant to this study, particularly in relation to architecture.

The notion of the everyday in the UK

The everyday in the UK, or rather in England, and its relevance to architecture, took yet another turn. 'Pop art' was not a major influence, but photography played a key role, especially Nigel Henderson's photographs of London's East End.[33]

These were a major influence on Alison and Peter Smithson, who used Henderson's work to present their views at the ninth CIAM, highlighting the connections between house–street–district–city, an important contribution to the formation of Team 10. There is no need to dwell

on this well-documented history, but I would like to single out one book, *As Found: The Discovery of the Ordinary*, edited by Lichtenstein and Schregenberger (2001), as it brings together previously unconnected strands under the umbrella of the As Found concept, connecting the ordinary with architecture, film and other art forms in England in the 1950s and 1960s. In particular they argue that:

> The designation *As Found* probably originated with the architects Alison and Peter Smithson. They only began to write about it, as far as we know, in 1990, but they had used it as a concept much earlier. It played a big role in a group of young and close-knit artists and architects, a system of axes in which all of the members were equal: the Smithsons, the artist Eduardo Paolozzi, the photographer Nigel Henderson and the journalist Reyner Banham.
>
> *(Lichtenstein and Schregenberger, 2001, p.8)*

Interestingly, the 'discovery of the ordinary' is attributed to architects – and there is no explicit connection to Lefebvre.[34] And it is well worth considering here the Smithsons' short statement about the ordinary and the banal:

> The ordinary and banal: The objective of architecture is the works of art that are lived in. The city is the largest and at present the worst of such works of art. Functionalism [to speak roughly of the heroic period of modern architecture] was a new dream exploiting a new source of geometric and organizational procedures, not a change of objective. […] That the architecture of the next step is in pursuit of the ordinary and the banal does not mean that it has lost sight of its objective. Ordinariness and banality are the art source for the new situation. The kinds of repetition and control that are now offered to building by industry can be edged towards a kind of dreaming neutrality – an urban equivalent of the Alsace of *Jules and Jim*.
>
> *(Lichtenstein and Schregenberger, 2001, p.141)*

As if pre-empting the sort of criticism Frampton would later level at Venturi et al., the Smithsons make the case for finding inspiration in the ordinary and the banal but without losing sight of their objective: 'a kind of dreaming neutrality – an urban equivalent of the Alsace of *Jules and Jim*'. The reference to Truffaut's film implies, I think, that a celebrated film of the French New Wave, shot amidst very ordinary architectural settings, achieved groundbreaking status, partly thanks to the contrasting banality of the Alsatian environment with the modernism of the cinematography, the dialogues, the use of found footage etc. The implication is that new forms of urban architecture can be invented out of banal settings.

Another characteristic of As Found as a method of working is that

it relies on the second glance. As Found is an approach that first neutralizes and then starts anew. Anything that is conventionally considered unfitting, banal or not worthy of mention can now be seen as entirely different: as fitting, fascinating and substantial […] As Found has to do with attentiveness, with concern for that which exists, with a passion for the task of making something from something. It is a technique of reaction […] Only the perception of reality launches the activities of designing or producing.

(Lichtenstein and Schregenberger, 2001, p.10)

As an English movement it is characteristically understated, there are no grand gestures or philosophical manifesto, yet it is broad and far-reaching and rooted in various overlapping artistic practices.

Crucially within our context is the link between the As Found movement and cinema. First 'Free Cinema' emerged, closely followed and associated with the so-called Kitchen Sink movement. Free Cinema was a successor to the British Documentary Movement and an important precursor to the British New Wave (Kuhn and Westwell, 2012). The Free Cinema group was founded in 1956 and comprised Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson and Lorenza Mazzetti. Central to their manifesto was 'a belief in freedom, in the importance of people and the significance of the everyday' (Lichtenstein and Schregenberger, 2001, p.257). The Free Cinema group came together in February 1956, when three of their films were screened at the National Film Theatre in London: Anderson's *O Dreamland* (1953), Karel Reisz and Richardson's *Momma Don't Allow* (1956) and Mazzetti's *Together* (1956). Mazzetti's film featured Eduardo Paolozzi as one of the two deaf-mute dockworkers navigating London's East End that had been comprehensively documented by Nigel Henderson. Paolozzi was therefore a crucial link between the Free Cinema group and the Smithsons. The Free Cinema movement has often been construed as Britain's equivalent of the French New Wave – but much more political:

> There were in fact hardly any everyday characters in British cinema. In British cinema realistic working-class figures like those of the 60s were something totally new. Before they had to be either comic or criminal. I think Free Cinema was more politicized in this sense than the Nouvelle Vague in France.
>
> *(Lichtenstein and Schregenberger, 2001, p.232)*

Later in the 1960s the ideals of the Free Cinema group became part of the Kitchen Sink movement, as most of its members – Anderson, Reisz and Richardson – became associated with the new trend.[35]

The Kitchen Sink movement was concerned with social and societal problems in a way that the French New Wave was not. There was a strong focus on realism and the characters usually came from the working classes with storylines that treated of ordinary subjects and everyday

events and drama such as abortions, slum clearance, the rise of youth violence etc. But there were other features in common with the French New Wave, as they shared several characteristic features of 'auteur cinema' including radically new methodology, afforded by new equipment and especially shooting on location as opposed to in the studio. Lightweight cameras and improved film stock allowed for much smaller and more mobile film crews (Lichtenstein and Schregenberger, 2001, pp.238–240). By associating architecture and cinema around the concern for the everyday and its creative potential, the As Found movement presents a unique characteristic that marks it out from the study of the everyday in France and the US.

The everyday and architecture – a contemporary view

> Between the houses of childhood and death, between those of play and work, stands the house of everyday life, which architects have called many things – residence, habitation, dwelling, etc. – as if life could develop in one place only.
>
> *(Rossi, 2010, p.55)*

As mentioned in the previous section, when I followed Lefebvre's seminars in 1971, the study of the everyday implied an attempt to change life, and it was a politically motivated ambition. In the decades that followed, Lefebvre's ideas on the everyday found favour mainly in Cultural Studies, while his work on the city – *Le droit à la ville* (Lefebvre, 2009) and *La production de l'espace* (Lefebvre, 1986) – became popular in urban studies circles. But what about the world of architecture post-Lefebvre, in the 1990s and beyond? By the mid-1990s, the big waves of the *quotidien* of the 1960s and 1970s had long subsided and the lapping was barely audible – in part, as argued by Upton, because 'For an enterprise that exalts the concrete, the study of everyday life is remarkably vague about its object […] […] The same vagueness about the nature of everyday life plagues architecture' (Upton, 2002, p.707). Indeed the everyday is eminently suited as a branch of philosophy, given its intangibility, but is clearly at odds with material culture. However, in the late 1990s and early 2000s there was a flurry of excitement in the shape of a couple of edited books (Berke and Harris, 1997; Read, 2000), special issues of *Architectural Design* (*AD*) (Wigglesworth and Till, 1998) and *Daidalos* (Confurius, 2000).

Yet it is clear to me that the everyday was not theorized any more; it is as if architects stumbled into it by trying to make sense of it. The spark had gone, partly because housing wasn't so much on the agenda as it was in the 1960s and 1970s, and we know from Lefebvre that the everyday is best expressed and understood in the domestic environment that so profoundly harbours and nurtures everyday life. The urgency had somewhat waned. And the study of everyday life, translated to architectural speak, concentrated on the 'everyday environment'. It became a different sort of preoccupation, perfectly expressed in Frank-Bertholt Raith's article 'Everyday architecture – in what style should we build?' (Raith, 2000, p.7) and

in which he rightly goes on to state that 'instead of asking about the relationship of architectural form to the everyday, we should enquire as to its role in everyday life. But how much do architects know about the everyday qualities of their buildings?' Raith asks all the right questions here regarding what might constitute an everyday architecture and how it might influence everyday life. At the same time he hints that after all, architects don't know much about how their buildings are used (due to the lack of post-occupancy studies, a point I already discussed in the introduction), making it nearly impossible to assess the role of the built environment on everyday life. It is precisely the challenge that film will be able to answer, as we will see in the next chapter.

Ben Highmore in the same journal asks germane questions – but steeped in an understanding of the everyday in cultural studies, his own field: 'the everyday might also require dwelling on as well as dwelling in. It might require a form of attention that can register the unremarkable, make noticeable the unnoticed' (Highmore, 2000, p.38), before reflecting that an

> architectural practice that is capable of responding to this intellectual tradition might not be one that merely attempts to fulfill the demands of the buildings' inhabitants, but one that can interrupt the logic that renders the everyday void. It might be a practice that allows the sensual and stubborn passions of the daily to be directed purposefully against the ideology of 'tradition'. A house of material memory opposed to the constructed memory of nation, for instance. It might be a practice that works to disrupt the commodification of time and space, or else makes such commodification unliveable. What would an architecture be like that would allow you to 'question your teaspoons' or ask 'what is there under your wallpaper'.
>
> *(Highmore, 2000, p.43)*

Ben Highmore knows not only his Lefebvre and Certeau but also his Perec, which he uses here to speculate on an architecture that would challenge our perceptions of everyday life by 'getting in the way' and making us notice ordinary things. Perec would probably have argued against such an approach, as his central thesis was based on observing the world around us '…not to invent space […] but to interrogate it'[36] (Perec, 1974).

Of course Highmore's speculation is ironical, but it has a serious side, and it could be argued that, for example, the work of architects Reversible Destiny / Shusaku Arakawa + Madeline Gins' 'architecture against death' (Arakawa and Gins, 1994) reflects some of this concern. Certainly their homes, with slopes and uneven floors, would make it difficult to stand up without great care, thus challenging the natural boredom that may arise out of a repetitive style of everydayness. And yet curiously, to the best of my knowledge, Arakawa and Gins were never associated or discussed in relation to the everyday, quite possibly because their architecture could be construed as just the opposite, an anti-everyday environment that

we can't help but notice. Highmore's tongue-in-cheek suggestion of a house that would 'disrupt the commodification of time and space, making such commodification unliveable' is a *fausse piste*. In other words, when Perec urges us to question our 'bricks, concrete, glass, our eating habits, our ustensils, our tools' (Perec, 2008, p.210), he doesn't ask for an architecture that gets in the way in order to be noticed. He pleads for a change of attitude towards questioning our everyday environment and our everyday life:

> It matters little to me that these questions should be fragmentary, barely indicative of a method, at most of a project. It matters a lot to me that they should seem trivial and futile: it's precisely what makes them just as essential, if not more, than many other questions through which we have tried in vain to capture our truth.
>
> *(Perec, 2008, p.211)*

By contrast to Arakawa and Gins, the Smithsons were firmly inducted in the 'everyday hall of fame' as alluded to in the previous section on As Found. For example, in Highmore's article on 'Patio and Pavilion', he posits that:

> The work of Alison and Peter Smithson has recently come in for renewed scrutiny, due in part to an upsurge of interest in the culture and politics of everyday life. Their association with the Independent Group in the 1950s, their critical interest in North American advertising, and their insistence that 'style' must be surrendered and swapped for a thorough engagement with the specificity of the architectural situation, have made them prime candidates for selection as the preeminent architects of the everyday.
>
> *(Highmore, 2006, p.271)*

Krucker's comments on the Smithsons' Upper Lawn house confirms this: 'The whole is rough, direct, and ordinary, but also highly sophisticated […] the achievement and relevance of the Smithsons lies in the return of architecture to questions of reality and life' (Krucker, 2000, p.49),[37] reflecting Alison Smithson's own words

> 'In the late forties and early fifties when we first started thinking about housing, lack of identity, lack of any pattern of association, we used to talk of objects as found and anything and everything can be raised by association to become the poetry of the ordinary'.[38]

So if Alison and Peter Smithson were indeed the 'preeminent architects of the everyday', or at least re-interpreted as such after their death, who are the new 'architects of the everyday'? I may venture here that architects Jonathan Sergison and Stephen Bates[39] would have a strong

claim to the title, together with 6A Architects – a self-proclaimed Practice of Everyday Life – unsurprising given Tom Emerson's enduring affection for Perec (Emerson, 2001). Difficult also not to mention 'Ordinary Architecture', founded in 2013 by Charles Holland and Elly Ward; the name of their practice refers to an interest in popular culture and an architecture that draws inspiration from the ordinary and the everyday.[40] And if Sergison Bates' architectural practice goes also some way to answer Frank-Bertholt Raith's question, 'Everyday architecture – in what style should we build?', I would suggest that Wigglesworth and Till's special issue of *AD* in 1998, *The Everyday and Architecture* provides an intellectual framework for architects to reflect on the everyday, in its post-Lefebvrian incarnation. In the introduction to *The Everyday and Architecture*, Wigglesworth and Till specify that they

> did not call the issue Architecture of the Everyday – because that would subsume the term into the canon of architecture and suggest that architecture can represent the everyday in a reified manner. The title *The Everyday and Architecture* is meant to provide a broader context in which to place the discussion and production of architecture.
>
> *(Wigglesworth and Till, 1998, p.7)*

This is a crucial point as it allows a much broader interpretation that covers both everyday life and the everyday environment, and their relationship, while Berke and Harris's book, *Architecture of the Everyday* (1997), is much more about the sort of question that was raised by Frank-Bertholt Raith. Wigglesworth and Till further point out that

> buildings, are inevitably involved in the vicissitudes of the everyday world. The problem arises when the actions of this world confront the isolated value system under which architecture is normally conceived – when repetitive practices occupy the one-off, when the humble street contains the monumental, when the minor event interrupts the grand narrative – when the kid with muddy boots drags herself across the pristine spaces of iconic modernism. Here the conceit is revealed. There is something inexorable about quotidian actions, which architecture is helpless to resist. Any discipline which denies the everyday will be denied everyday, and for this reason high architecture is unraveled by the habitual and banal events which mark the passage of time. There is a thudding disappointment as a gap opens up between the image of architecture and the reality of its making and occupation.
>
> *(Wigglesworth and Till, 1998, p.7)*

In the same *AD* issue, film-maker and architect Patrick Keiller writes on 'The Dilapidated Dwelling' and welcomes the revival of the notion of the everyday, in particular in relation to housing:

> The notion of 'the everyday' in architecture offers a welcome relief from conventional interpretations of architectural value, especially in a culture where most 'everyday' building is not produced with much architectural intention, but it seems to affirm the spatial quality and detail of architects' architecture where it exists.

and again

> For a long time, it had seemed that the spaces of everyday surroundings – the home, the high street and so on – were becoming more marginal in character, compared with other spaces that might be thought typically modern or postmodern – the airport, the office tower, the big museum and so on.
>
> *(Wigglesworth and Till, 1998, p.27)*

Wigglesworth and Till paved the way for a discussion on the iconic versus the banal – the minor event versus the grand narrative – and the gap opening up between high architecture and its banal counterpart. This would be taken up at a later stage by Paul Finch as he states that:

> Politicians should focus on the architecture of the everyday – and not on icons […] Because design is so ubiquitous, you sometimes feel that politicians only think they have a responsibility when something is special, rather than everyday. But it is the everyday experience which, in aggregate, has the greatest effect on all our lives. Understanding this would be a good starting point for any future political strategy towards architecture and the built environment.
>
> *(AJ 28 August, 2013)*

Finch might be stating the obvious, but it is a very seldom-expressed view, and he has the merit of bringing to the fore the urgency of the issue. Of course politicians could argue that the architectural press is equally guilty by featuring essentially iconic building projects.

But in the eyes of Shigeru Ban, architects are equally responsible, as he argued on receiving the 2014 Pritzker Prize: 'I was quite disappointed when I became an architect, because mostly we are working for privileged people who have money and power and we are hired to visualize their power and money with monumental architecture' (archdaily 2014). The same critique is levelled by McLeod against

> […] the escapism, heroicism, and machismo of so much contemporary architectural thought. From the perspective of everyday life, such neo-avant-garde strategies as 'folding,' 'disjunction,' and 'bigness' deny the energy, humanity, and creativity embodied in the humble, prosaic details of daily existence. Architecture's 'star system' validates

novelty and arrogance (even as big-name architects have become standardized and repetitive commodities), at the expense of what Lefebvre saw as the initial value of modernity: its relentless questioning of social life.

(Berke and Harris, 1997, p.27)

And given this context and background, one can only applaud the publication of the Farrell review of *Architecture + the Built Environment* (Farrell, 2014), a crucial document that was published in 2014[41] and for which Ed Vaizey, the Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, praised Farrell's recommendations, citing 'a commitment to improving the everyday built environment and "making the ordinary better"' (Farrell, 2014, p.3). Unprecedentedly, the Farrell review 'champions the everyday above the one-off' (Farrell, 2014, p.128). While this may sound like grist to my mill as well as answering Paul Finch's prayers, there is only one mention of how it would affect people's lives:

With a new focus on everyday design, the media can begin to communicate to the public the potential positive impact of design decisions on daily life and help people better understand changes to the buildings and spaces with which they interact daily, such as their houses, high streets and parks.

(Farrell, 2014, p.54)

Unsurprisingly the review contains ample reference to the everyday, but to the everyday environment as opposed to everyday life. Still, it is a huge step forward and one suspects that it has been triggered by the housing crisis, in London in particular, and as remarked before the everyday and dwellings go hand in hand.

And improving the everyday built environment is a huge challenge, as our built environment is the product of innumerable forces:

Accidents […] some happy, some not […] clashes of scale and material, municipal idiocies and corporate boasts […] these are some of the more salient determinants of our urban and suburban and extra-urban environments. Buildings are, of course, the major component of these environments. Some of those buildings will be the work of architects.

(Meades, 2012)

But the majority won't have been 'designed', resulting in a rather uninspiring environment according to Bishop

> Place yourself in almost any urban setting outside of central London or the historic cores
> of many cities today and spin through 360 degrees: taking in the paving, the landscape,
> buildings, materials, positioning, planning, street furniture, streetscape and so on. Ask
> yourself: is there anything at all that isn't mediocre?
>
> *(Farrell, 2014, p.70)*

This view doesn't concur with Venturi's opinion for whom 'main street was almost ok'!

The Farrell review and most architects writing about the everyday mean the everyday environment – but there is a need to focus on both forms of everyday, our environment and our life within it, as it is difficult to dissociate them since 'architecture's materiality makes it a natural conduit to the specificity of everyday life' (Upton, 2002, p.707). One is material, made of bricks, concrete and glass, while the other is immaterial and hard to define. The way around this conundrum is, for Upton, to derive a bodily approach to everyday life to 'arrive at a more concrete sense of the everyday, in every sense of the word. One definition of everyday life might be 'The nexus of spaces and times that repeatedly trigger bodily habits and cultural memories – the habitus' (Upton, 2002, p.720), the *habitus* being the concept defined by Bourdieu.[42]

Overall in this section we have traced the evolution of the notion of everyday life and noted that from the end of the 1990s onwards, the study of the everyday has shifted towards an interest in everyday architecture and everyday environment – as opposed to everyday life – boosted by the resurgence in housing, and with which the everyday is most strongly associated.

My own take is to study everyday life – once again not with a view to changing it – but to understand its relationship to architecture. Consequently I am not approaching 'everyday life through architecture' (Upton, 2002, p.707) but quite the reverse, as I am proposing to study architecture through the lens of everyday life. In other words, I am interested in examining everyday life in architecture as opposed to investigating architecture in everyday life. It would not make sense either to propose new forms of 'architecture of the everyday', although it is clearly an important field and relates to my own investigation, as this is the domain of practising architects. I am proposing here a new methodological approach by putting forward the idea that everyday life can be studied through the medium of film, and that doing so will throw new light on how we use architectural spaces – a much needed task given the lack of post-occupancy studies – helping to formulate new spatial understanding as well as to reveal new design possibilities.

Let us conclude this section with Lefebvre, for whom everyday space

> [D]iffers from geometric space in that it has four dimensions, which are in a two-by-two
> opposition: 'right/left–high/low'. Similarly, everyday time has four dimensions which
> differ from dimensions as mathematicians and physicists would define them, namely the

accomplished, the foreseen, the uncertain and the unforeseeable (or again: the past, the present, the short-term future and the long-term future).

(Lefebvre, 2014, p.525)

For Lefebvre this defines the social space, in which 'subjectively, social space is the environment of the group and of the individual within the group […] Social space is made up of a relatively dense fabric of networks and channels. This fabric is an integral part of the everyday' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.525). Lefebvre's quasi-phenomenological definition of the relationship between everyday space and everyday time as subjective social space affords many permutations – a myriad of different forms of everyday life unravel within a multitude of combination of time and space. Those mechanisms are precisely at the heart of the film medium and are the subject of the next section.

Notes

1 Whenever I can I will be quoting from Lefebvre's *Critique of everyday life* in its three-volume text published by Verso in 2014. However for reasons of translation, I occasionally quote from the original French text of *Critique de la vie quotidienne* published in three separate volumes, in which case the translation will always be mine unless stated otherwise.

2 'In our opinion it is possible to formulate axioms in the social sciences and especially in sociology, but impossible to build any particular science using deductive theories (in other words, to establish a closed system by "saturating" that set of axioms)' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.394).

3 It should also be noted that Lefebvre did not regard the third volume of *Critique* as his last: 'in 1982, in an interview with Oliver Corpet and Thierry Paquot […] Lefebvre indicated that he was planning to pursue this line of inquiry with a work on rhythms, revolving around the concept of "rhythm analysis" (Lefebvre, 2014, p.879). The project was realized only after his death, with the publication of *Elements de rythmanalyse. Introduction à la connaissance des rhythmes* (Lefebvre, 1992).

4 Michael Sheringham was one the finest commentators of the *quotidien* in the Anglo-Saxon world and his book is a key reading for anybody interested in the field (Sheringham, 2006).

5 French for please-insert or book summary or blurb, stuck at the very beginning of the book – almost as an afterthought.

6 My translation – original French text: *L'espace de notre vie n'est ni continu, ni infini, ni homogène, ni isotrope. Mais sait-on précisément où il se brise, où il se courbe, où il se déconnecte et où il se rassemble? On sent confusément des fissures, des hiatus, des points de friction, on a parfois la vague impression que ça coince quelque part, ou que ça éclate, ou que ça se cogne. Nous cherchons rarement à en savoir davantage et le plus souvent nous passons d'un endroit à l'autre, d'un espace à l'autre sans songer à mesurer, à prendre en charge, à prendre en compte ces laps d'espace. Le problème n'est pas d'inventer l'espace, encore moins de le ré-inventer (trop de gens bien intentionnés sont là aujourd'hui pour penser notre environnement…), mais de l'interroger, ou, plus simplement encore de le lire; car ce que nous appelons quotidienneté n'est pas évidence mais opacité: une forme de cécité, une manière d'anesthésie. C'est à partir de ces constatations élémentaires que s'est développé ce livre, journal d'un usager de l'espace* (Perec, 1974).

7 'Ce qui se passe vraiment, ce que nous vivons, le reste, tout le reste, où est il ? Ce qui se passe chaque jour et qui revient chaque jour, le banal, le quotidien, l'évident, le commun, l'ordinaire, l'infra-ordinaire, le bruit de fond, l'habituel, comment en rendre compte, comment l'interroger, comment le décrire? […] Peut-être s'agit-il de fonder enfin notre propre anthropologie: celle qui parlera de nous,

qui ira chercher en nous ce que nous avons si longtemps pillé chez les autres. Non plus l'exotique, mais l'endotique' (Perec, 1989, pp.11–12).

8 For more information see Kristin Ross' interview with Henri Lefebvre in 1983 on his relationship with the situationists (Ross and Lefebvre, 1997).

9 *L'Ouvroir de littérature potentielle* (Oulipo), was founded in 1960 by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais, and aimed to discover, propose and invent literary *contraintes* as an aid to potential new forms of writing. Amongst the members of l'Oulipo were Italo Calvino, Jacques Roubaud, Raymond Queneau, and Georges Perec – for further information see James, 2006.

10 Perec on *la contrainte*: '*Contrainte et liberté sont des fonctions indissociables de l'oeuvre : la contrainte n'est pas ce qui interdit la liberté, la liberté n'est pas ce qui n'est pas contrainte ; au contraire, la contrainte est ce qui permet la liberté, la liberté est ce qui surgit de la contrainte*' (Perec, 1993).

11 In the preface to the third volume of *Critique*, Michel Trebitsch summarizes the relationship between the two men as follows: 'According to Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, having established contact through the New Left milieu in 1958 with the young Georges Perec, who at the time was doing his military service, Lefebvre employed him on various studies in Normandy and the Oise. A friendship was born out of this and Perec subsequently stayed on several occasions at Navarrenx, Lefebvre's house in the Pyrenees, which is where he probably became fully committed to becoming a writer'. Hence this was a significant encounter for both men, as Perec's biographer David Bellos has emphasized, involving mutual influence, as demonstrated by recent work in the context of the seminar of the Georges Perec association at the University of Paris VII. Thus, in his *Introduction to Modernity* (1962), Lefebvre draws a parallel between Ligne générale, a small avant-garde group to which Perec belonged, and the Situationist group as one of the spearheads of a 'new romanticism' that was revolutionary in character. Above all, he refers to Perec's oeuvre, especially *Les Choses* (1965), several times in *Everyday Life in the Modern World*. As for Perec, the influence of *Critique of Everyday Life* and, more generally, of Lefebvre's thinking on alienation, on the cult of objects and commodities, on the banal, and on the 'infra-ordinary', finds numerous echoes not only in *Les Choses*, but also in *Un homme qui dort* (1967), and even *Espèces d'espaces* (1974) (Lefebvre, 2014, p.658).

12 I had long lost my own handouts but I am most grateful for Giles Leresche to have retrieved the notes that our mutual friend Jean-Pierre Courtillot had left with him all those years!

13 For more information, the section on 'Lefebvre and the Architects' is extremely informative and well documented (see pp.27–48).

14 *Le droit à la ville* was translated and edited by Kofman and Lebas as *Writing on Cities* (Lefebvre, 1996).

15 In *Le droit à la ville*, Lefebvre states that '*Le droit à la ville ne peut se concevoir comme un simple droit de visite ou de retour vers les villes traditionnelles. Il ne peut se formuler que comme droit à la vie urbaine, transformée, renouvelée*'. […] He goes on to berate '*la nouvelle aristocratie bourgeoise* […] *ils fascinent les gens plongés dans le quotidien; ils transcendent la quotidienné* […]*'*. Lefebvre argues that '*les olympiens*' live in the centre, while the working class has been shifted to the periphery: '*Il suffit d'ouvrir les yeux pour comprendre la vie quotidienne de celui qui court de son logement à la gare proche ou lointaine, au métro bondé, au bureau ou à l'usine, pour reprendre le soir ce même chemin, et venir chez lui récupérer la force de recommencer le lendemain*' (Lefebvre, 2009, p.108).

Lefebvre sees the city and *Le droit à la ville* as the social space from which to radically reinvent the everyday for the working class, so that they too would have a right to the city as opposed to living in the suburbs – we also have to note that *Le droit à la ville* was published in March 1968, and it has been suggested that it had an influence on the May 1968 events: '*L'impact du* Droit à la ville *peut difficilement être évalué dans le déclenchement de cet évènement [i.e May 68]. Il a tout de même largement participé à la prise de conscience que la vie quotidienne était loin d'être déterminée par le travail, car elle se situait « ailleurs » dans la ville. Ces thèmes ont été repris lors des manifestations ; les slogans du type « métro, boulot, dodo », « HLM blêmes » reprenaient sa dénonciation de la fabrication de l'anti-ville. Ces évènements marquaient, selon lui, l'appropriation de l'espace par les*

masses populaires à travers l'action des étudiants qui a servi de « catalyseur, d'analyseur révélateur ». Cet enthousiasme reposait sur l'idée ou l'illusion (?) que l'on assistait alors, concrètement, à la réalisation de l'implication de la classe ouvrière comme avant-garde qui investit le terrain des luttes urbaines et qui, enfin, allait préparer et garantir, par son action, le droit à la ville' (Costes, 2010, p.182).

16 In 1981 Perec gave a conference in Albi entitled 'A propos de la description' [regarding the description] as part of a colloquium on *Espace et representation* (20–24 July 1981), organized by Alain Renier (président du Laboratoire d'architecture no 1 de l'Unité pédagogique d'architecture n°6 in Paris). This seminar was later transcribed and published (Bertelli and Ribière, 2003, pp.227–243).

17 'L'inhabitable [...] les villes nauséabondes. L'inhabitable : l'architecture du mépris et de la frime, la gloriole médiocre des tours et des buildings, les milliers de cagibis entassés les uns au-dessus des autres [...] L'inhabitable : les bidonvilles, les villes bidon [...]'

18 A summary of current trends and experiments in architecture, geography and urban studies, based on Perec's *l'architexteur,* can be found in *Espèces d'Espace Perecquiens*, the twelfth volume of the Cahiers Georges Perec (Constantin, Danielle et al., 2015). I have myself used Perec's methods of urban observation in various studio contexts using film (Penz, 2012).

19 Manning Durdin Robertson was an Irish town planner, architect and writer – and when I first borrowed his book from the Cambridge University Library, I discovered that I was the first to consult it since 1924...such was the interest in everyday architecture!

20 The true purpose of Robertson's book, which is not irrelevant here, was intended 'principally for those who so far have not interested themselves in the beauty or ugliness of their surroundings, in the hope that it may set up a train of thought in the mind of the ordinary practical individual that will help to reintroduce into everyday life some of the interest and beauty we will all associate with the traditional architecture of the old English village and cathedral city, but which we neither expect nor find in our modern towns and suburbs' (Robertson, 1924, p.13). In other words, Manning Robertson produced one of the first books about the appreciation of vernacular architecture but also became interested in more modern developments such as The White Hart Lane Estate – masterminded by G. Topham Forrest and in effect London County Council's first 'garden suburb' – and in which he saw a pioneering housing scheme that might 'secure our release from monotonous and depressing surroundings' (Robertson, 1924, p.23). He was probably a 'closet modernist', hoping for a better everyday English suburban architecture – in that sense he was himself a pioneer whom the Smithsons might have approved of or have been inspired by, although history does not relate.

21 My translation from the French: *250 millions ont été consacrés à la recherche dans tous les domaines de l'habitat, y compris le "sociologique": fait capital et caractéristique originale du Plan Construction.*

22 Luce Giard was a close collaborator of de Certeau and edited Vols 1 and 2 of *L'invention du quotidien* (De Certeau, 1990).

23 Maffesoli had published a year before de Certeau *La conquête du present: pour une sociologie de la vie quotidienne* (1979).

24 According to Sheringham, '*Construire pour habiter* acknowledges the everyday, but just as importantly it recognizes that by this point in French cultural history, the turn of the 1980s, a body of ideas and a set of discourses on the *quotidien*, associated with Perec, Lefebvre, Certeau and others, were available to articulate and inspire new insights into everyday life' (Sheringham, 2006, p.2).

25 On the issue of translation, Sheringham further commented that 'In all cases the hazards of translation impact on reception, leading, in Lefebvre's case, to a serious distortion of his thinking on the everyday. The English translation of the first volume of the *Critique de la vie quotidienne* did not appear until 1991, prior to which the main source was the less representative synthesis Lefebvre wrote in 1968, *La vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne*, immediately translated as *Everyday Life in the Modern World*', further adding that 'the absence, until 2002, of an English translation of the second, 1961, volume of Lefebvre's *Critique* means that the full flowering of his thoughts on the *quotidien* has been

ignored by "cultural studies", impeding understanding of its true relation to the work of Certeau' (Sheringham, 2006, p.7).

26 We also have to note that Lefebvre's urban studies work is in general better known in the anglo-saxon world than his work on the everyday as highlighted by Claire Revol, see (Revol, 2012, p.105–106).

27 It is useful to acknowledge that in 1987, a special issue on Everyday Life was published in the journal of Yale French Studies (ed. Ross, Kristin and Alice Kaplan), in which Lefebvre wrote *The Everyday and Everydayness* (Lefebvre and Levich, 1987), which was a translation of *Quotidien et Quotidienneté* that Lefebvre had written for the Encyclopedia Universalis.

28 Stierli remarks in his excellent book, *Las Vegas in the Rearview Mirror,* that 'it is an important milestone in contemporary architectural history and that the methods of urban analysis systematically presented in the work for the first time continue to exert a defining influence on architectural and urbanist thinking to this day. In this respect Scott Brown recently observed that "Las Vegas is not a standard for future growth. It is a standard for conceptual analysis"' (Stierli, 2013, p.19).

29 Stierli also co-curated the *Las Vegas* exhibition at the 2015 *Les Rencontres d'Arles* (Stadler and Stierli, 2015), a photographic exhibition which I was able to visit and where I saw first hand all the *deadpan* films.

30 Fausch further reminds us that '"Concrete, direct observation and notation of ordinary, everyday experience" played an important part in Venturi and Scott Brown's program of investigation. Reiterating Le Corbusier's diatribe against "eyes which do not see" the beauties of vernacular and standardized industrial construction, *Learning from Las Vegas* emphasized the need to "question how we look at things" in an "open-minded and nonjudgmental investigation," and to use both old and new techniques for documenting the details of the new urban forms' (Berke and Harris, 1997, p.95).

31 'Denise discovered Ed Ruscha when she taught at UCLA in the mid-1960s and we both had been learning from the Pop artists and their appreciation of the everyday from the late 1950s on' (Stierli, 2013, p.147).

32 According to Fausch: 'The connections between Venturi and Scott Brown's theoretical work during this period and that of the Smithsons have often been noted. Along with the Smithsons, Independent Group members Nigel and Judith Henderson's sociological and photographic observations questioned the premises of (upper-middle-class) socialist architecture after World War II. Reyner Banham's discussions of popular culture, and especially Los Angeles, also arose out of this milieu. Although Peter Smithson was not yet teaching at the Architectural Association when Scott Brown was a student there, she has described her relationships with student groups who held points of view similar to those being propounded by the Independent Group in its exhibits Parallel of Life and Art and This is Tomorrow. Scott Brown also used Peter Smithson as an informal critic for her thesis' (Berke and Harris, 1997, p.95).

33 In 1945 the Hendersons moved to Bethnal Green because Judith Henderson was the anthropologist in charge of the *Discover Your Neighbour* project. While her research was broadly in keeping with the Mass Observation movement, it consisted of a series of in-depth case studies in which she observed and recorded the lives of neighbouring families. Judith Henderson's anthropological approach and her corresponding perspective were a decisive influence on her husband's photographic activities. Self-taught as a photographer, he documented Bethnal Green from 1947 to 1952 (Lichtenstein and Schregenberger, 2001, p.84). Stierli also points out Henderson's influence on Denise Scott Brown, who 'paid particular attention to the everyday dwellings and environment of regular people. In this regard, she could draw upon Nigel Henderson's photographs of London's East End, which were familiar to her from her time "studying in London"' (Stierli, 2013, p.110).

34 At a push one can fathom a tenuous link by means of the Mass Observation movement, through Henderson in the first place, and for which Hubble posits that 'there are strong reasons for considering Mass Observation within the growing sub-discipline of "Everyday Life" Studies' (Hubble, 2006, p.11).

35 Interesting to note that Lefebvre mentions in the section on young workers and factory life 'the excellent film *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*' (Reisz, 1960) – footnote 22 – (Lefebvre, 2014, p.869).

36 My translation from the French in *le prière d'insérer*: '*Le problème n'est pas d'inventer l'espace, encore moins de le ré-inventer (trop de gens bien intentionnés sont là aujourd'hui pour penser notre environnement…), mais de l'interroger, ou, plus simplement encore de le lire*'.

37 In fact there are no less than two articles in *Daidalos* – out of 13 – about the Smithsons – the other one being by Irénée Scalbert.

38 A quote from Alison Smithson in a BBC documentary *The Smithsons on Housing* (1970), made by B.S. Johnson, in which both Alison and Peter Smithson are interviewed.

39 They wrote an article in the special issue of *Daidalos* on The Everyday (Sergison and Bates, 2000) and in 2003 in a special issue of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* dedicated to the Smithsons, they contributed a section entitled 'Six lessons learnt from Alison and Peter Smithson' in which there is a part on the *As found* – one of the six lessons, stating that 'The essence of *as found* as a concept lies in the acceptance of the value of the everyday […] The concept of *as found* has encouraged us to open our eyes to all that lies around us' (Sergison and Bates, 2003, p.81). Sergison went on to write a piece entitled 'Reflections on the house and the city', in a special issue of *Block* entitled 'The Modest', making the point that 'In our work in the field of housing we have always resisted the pressure to be spectacular. On the contrary our work is often accused of being "quiet". While we do not take this as a compliment we hold a strong conviction that housing should be decent and carefully considered but have a gentle relationship to the normative. We argue that the image we give a building should not impose pressure on future inhabitants to perform according to the designer's social projections. This is why we try and employ an architectural language that we hope will seem familiar' (Sergison, 2010, p.16). There is no doubt that Sergison and Bates have inherited from the Smithsons the *as found/everyday* mantle – most evident in their public housing projects – a building type which is the natural milieu for the everyday to flourish in. While there could be a tendency for architects 'to try to incorporate the everyday into their work, the results tend to be embarrassingly literal and decorative' (Upton, 2002, p.73), this is not the case with Sergison Bates, as they have rediscovered and re-interpreted the *as found* in a subtle and effective way.

40 The following extract from their website defines further their position: 'What is ordinary architecture? For us it means a number of things. Architecture itself is profoundly ordinary. Unlike most art forms, architecture is encountered in the everyday, in a "blur of habit". We use buildings all the time without necessarily appreciating their aesthetic or formal qualities, at least not overtly. Architecture is mostly a backdrop to everyday life rather than its focus' [www.ordinaryarchitecture.co.uk/writing-a-life-more-ordinary/4590281652].

41 Farrell recalls in its introduction 'In January 2013 Ed Vaizey, Minister for Culture, Communications and the Creative Industries, asked me to undertake a national review of architecture and the built environment. I have undertaken this Review independently with my team at Farrells and advised by a panel of 11 industry leaders with a breadth of experience that covers education, outreach, urbanism, architecture, property and philosophy'.

42 Upton elaborates further that 'The anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu saw this clearly. Everyday life is not a system of representations or performances, he wrote, but a "system of structured, structuring dispositions … which is constituted in practice and is always oriented toward practical functions." He called this system the *habitus*, or practical sense' (Upton, 2002, p.719).

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PART 2

Everydayness and cinema

2

INTRODUCTION TO EVERYDAYNESS AND CINEMA

> The implied claim is that film, the latest of the great arts, shows philosophy to be the often invisible accompaniment of the ordinary lives that film is so apt to capture.
>
> *Stanley Cavell (2005, p.6)*

Having concluded the last section with Lefebvre's remarks on space and time, let us restart with some of his thinking on cinema. In the second volume of *Critique*, Lefebvre writes:

> Let us emphasize yet again the efforts which literature, cinema and even some specialists in the social sciences have made to get closer to the 'lived', to eliminate the arbitrary transpositions of the everyday, to grasp 'what is extraordinary within the ordinary', and 'the significance of the insignificant'. Questions of the value of this or that novel or film or aesthetic theory apart, all this proves the validity of a critical study of everyday life.
>
> *(Lefebvre, 2014, p.298)*

Lefebvre cites here as an example *Chronique d'un été,* directed by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin in 1962 (Lefebvre, 2014, p.358). It was a key film that attempted to uncover the everyday, alongside Debord's own efforts, using a documentary style known as *cinema-verité*. As McDonough remarks,

> *Chronique d'un été* was a film, then, whose subject was everyday life itself, that rather unformed, amorphous daily existence and its imbrication with (or disjunction from) the broader world and the forces of history. And as such, it was by no means unique: at the same moment when *Chronique* was being filmed in Paris, Guy Debord was shooting his

> short film, *Critique de la séparation* (Critique of Separation) […] he, too, was concerned with investigating everyday life.
>
> *(McDonough, 2007, p.7)*

Some of the DNA of this film movement can be traced back to Soviet film-maker Dziga-Vertov, as *cinema-verité is a direct translation of* Vertov's *kino-pravda* (film-truth) – but there are marked differences.[1]

Lefebvre's writing on film is minimal but nevertheless encouraging, and the idea that cinema may get us closer to the 'lived' experience is helpful in this context. Cultural studies scholars of Lefebvre have further commented on film's validity as a tool in the study of everyday life. For example, Sheringham draws on a range of films by Godard, Akerman, Rouch & Morin, arguing that they provide 'the relational, performative aspects of the *quotidien* – a dimension that emerges through the act of being apprehended – are enacted in the way a film, a play or artwork "stages" an interaction between human subject and social structure' (Sheringham, 2006, p.334).[2] Similarly Kristin Ross states that

> If I return throughout the book to the films of Jacques Tati, it is because they make palpable a daily life that increasingly appeared to unfold in a space where objects tended to dictate to people their gestures and movements – gestures that had not yet congealed into any degree of rote familiarity, and that for the most part had to be learned from watching American films.
>
> *(Ross, 1996, p.11)*

But while Lefebvre, Sheringham and Ross appear to give credibility to part of my initial hypothesis, they do not specifically consider the everydayness of the built environment but everyday life in general. And they only use cinema in restricted parts of their studies. On the other hand, Patrick Keiller, coming from a tradition of filmmaking and architecture, suggests an interesting connection:

> For anyone in pursuit of, let's say, the improvement of everyday life, a medium which offers a heightened awareness of architecture – the medium of film – might be thought at least as compelling as an actually existing architecture of heightened awareness – an ecstatic architecture, whatever that might be.
>
> *(Keiller, 2013, p.84)*

Similarly, Peter Halley remarks on the everyday found in

> …the progressive American cinema of *The Last Picture Show, Midnight Cowboy*, and *Badlands*. It is the everyday of sunlight, of the periphery, of the unnoticed […] at which

time seems to slow down, daily concerns dissipate, and our senses become receptive to sight and sound.

(Berke and Harris, 1997, p.191)

Certainly Keiller is going further than I had originally anticipated as he suggests linking cinema with an 'improvement' of daily life, not unlike Lefebvre's project seeking to change the everyday. But I also start from the premise of an observation of the world around me – in all its everydayness, and I would situate this work within the methodological line traced by Kevin Lynch (Lynch, 1960), William Holly Whyte (Whyte, 2001), Venturi and Scott Brown (Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour, 1972). As to the question – does the study and observation of films, once removed from the 'real', make us 'passive observers' as opposed to 'active participants'? – one should construe this as a phase, part of a much wider creative process, enriched by this practice. It isn't an end in itself. This is where both Lefebvre's and Keiller's remarks about changing everydayness start to make sense. For Keiller 'the improvement of everyday life through the medium' of film happens on at least two levels: he sees in the film medium the opportunity to not only observe but also make suggestions. For example, his film *The Dilapidated Dwelling* (2000) contributes to the debate on housing, but also the images themselves, through the framing, choice of location and camera set-up, constitute a potentially powerful visual analysis of the city. In the same way as Venturi learned from Las Vegas, we can also 'learn from London' through Keiller's film *London* (1994). In other words, cinema contains large chunks of everydayness of the type that we do not pay much attention to in our own daily life but which may be useful to designers. Cinema is a form of spatial practice, for example of domestic situations, and while not all films are useful to study, most contain a large amount of information that can be drawn from them.

The everyday and the realism argument

Architects don't invent anything, they transform reality.

Alvaro Siza (Slessor, 2015)

My films are like wine, or bread. It's all real. But during the process of winemaking or breadmaking, the original materials get transformed into something else. So I extract little fragments of reality and I make something different out of them.

(Mekas, 2010, p.15)[3]

This process of transformation evoked by Mekas – and Siza – makes the issue of realism[4] in film a complex subject, and although it is not central to my argument, it is useful here to air it in relation to everyday life – and how it connects to cinema. For this we must turn yet again to

Lefebvre who raises, particularly in Volume 1 of *Critique*, some interesting issues in relation to realism. 'The display of luxury to be seen in so many films, most of them mediocre,[5] takes on an almost fascinating character, and the spectator is uprooted from his everyday world by an everyday world other than his own'. Importantly Lefebvre acknowledges here the recreation in film of another everyday world, one that the spectators are invited to enter and that differs from their own everyday reality – he refers to it as *l'étrangeté familière du rêve* – the strange familiarity of dreams (Lefebvre, 1958, p.16).

Further, in the section devoted to Charlie Chaplin and Bertolt Brecht,[6] and moving away from 'mediocre' films, Lefebvre notes that 'Happily, contemporary cinema and theatre have other works to offer which reveal a truth about everyday life' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.32). Here Lefebvre implies that film can provide some sort of revelation concerning everyday life, and he chooses Chaplin as an example to illustrate his thinking: 'Chaplin's first films may be seen as offering a critique of everyday life: a critique in action, a basically optimistic critique, with the living, human unity of its two faces, the negative and the positive. Hence its "success"' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.33). While still referring to Chaplin, he sees that his films present us with '[…] an image of everyday reality, taken in its totality or as a fragment, reflecting that reality in all its depth through people, ideas and things which are apparently quite different from everyday experience and therefore exceptional, deviant, abnormal' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.33).

In other words, Lefebvre comes to the conclusion that although Chaplin's films may at first appear to be offering a valid critique of everyday life, in the end they portray a different reality from ordinary life – precisely because the character portrayed by Chaplin, typically the tramp (*l'homme aberrant*), stands outside of everyday life[7] and therefore belongs to the 'exceptional' category. Thus his films reverse what Lefebvre originally valued in cinema by eliciting 'what is ordinary within the extraordinary'. For Lefebvre, Chaplin's films present us with a 'reverse image' of reality.[8] While it might appear that Lefebvre is using a counterexample, he is in fact opposing Chaplin and Brecht over the reverse image, through two forms of representation of everyday life, and particular ones at that, and favours Brecht's anti-realist[9] approach, despite having some reservations[10] (Lefebvre, 2014, p.45). Lefebvre is also critical of so-called 'realist' authors and film and theatre directors[11] who, being incapable of extracting the extraordinary out of the ordinary, concentrate instead on trying to make ordinary and banal events interesting, in effect colouring *la grisaille* of people's lives.[12]

But Lefebvre ventures a way forward.[13] He hypothesizes how the banal could be taken out of its ordinary setting – *dégagé de son contexte* – and he takes the example of the humble plant or weed which, extracted from the earth and considered closely, acquires a new meaning and becomes a marvel (*une merveille*). Lefebvre acknowledges the difficulty of creating a convincing montage of such images, as they would need to be extracted out of their everyday life context, while at the same time being quintessentially representative of their quotidian milieu, but concluded that this is a possible approach for an everyday realism – putting forward as

successful examples (Lefebvre, 2014, p.36) of such an approach, Fellini's *La Strada* (1954) and *Salt of the Earth*[14] (Biberman, 1954).

In doing so, Lefebvre appears to have rediscovered the lessons of Fernand Léger:

> 80% of the elements and objects that help us to live are only perceived by us in our everyday lives, while 20% are actually seen [and taken notice of]. From this, I deduce the cinematographic revolution is to make us see everything that has been merely caught sight of… The dog that goes by in the street is only perceived. Projected on the screen, it is seen, so much so that the whole audience reacts as if it discovered the dog for the first time […] that's the value of framing an image judiciously. Bear this in mind – this is the crux of this new art form.
>
> *(Léger, 1922)*[15]

The two examples of the plant and the dog intimate that as the camera frames reality it reveals and makes us 'see' what is otherwise overlooked. So in a curious way, if we accept what Léger states, film simplifies reality – it makes us notice things, it directs our gaze. So within the realm of everyday life, film helps us to notice and grasp a 'reality' to which we are otherwise blind. Indeed, life itself is hard to grasp and discern in what Lukács called 'the chiaroscuro of everyday life'[16] where 'Life is an anarchy of light and dark' (Lukács, 1974, pp.152,153). On the other hand, cinema makes a complex reality more accessible to us – because of the framing but also the editing and the montage. It draws our attention to what we would normally not pay attention to. It has our undivided attention, which is particularly true when we experience it in the cinema, allowing us to concentrate fully on 'the big picture', the action or drama, whatever that might be, as well as cinephiliac moments, marginal filmic details.[17] But we also know that in order to study the everyday life component of a film, if we want to appreciate fiction films for their documentary revelations about the quotidian, several viewings will be necessary, clearly not all taking place in a cinema.

And yet there are clear difficulties ahead in grasping the everyday in film. Adorno warns that

> If the film were to give itself up to the blind representation of everyday life, following the precepts of, say, Zola, as would indeed be practicable with moving photography and sound recording, the result would be a construction alien to the visual habits of the audience, diffuse, unarticulated outwards. Radical naturalism, to which the technique of film lends itself, would dissolve all surface coherence of meaning and finish up as the antithesis of familiar[18] realism.
>
> *(Adorno, 2005, pp.141–142)*

Adorno here rejoins Lefebvre (and Brecht) in shunning movies depicting bland and ordinary everyday life with no extraordinary elements within it. Adorno argues that the habit of the

viewer tends towards a form of 'familiar realism', say for example an average Hollywood movie, familiar to us all, while 'radical naturalism' would be disturbing for an audience.[19]

David Trotter's own reading of Lukács[20] confirms that naturalism moves away from narrative as 'Narrative binds event to event, as cause to effect, and so produces meaning. Description unbinds. Lukács enables us to understand Naturalism[21] as a formal lowering, from narrative into description' (Trotter, 2008, p.153).

However, the close association of the everyday with naturalist films (Kuhn and Westwell, 2012) is far from obvious for Andrew Klevan, in his excellent and rather unique study of the everyday in film[22] – *Disclosure of the everyday: The undramatic achievements in Narrative film* (Klevan, 1996), as he posits that

> Naturalistic films might achieve a more authentic affinity to aspects of reality, but not necessarily with regard to those features associated with the uneventful which I have taken to be characteristic of the everyday […] the pursuit of the 'more real', the seeking of styles and scenarios with a more natural resemblance to life (which has taken a variety of forms), has often produced varieties of anomalous melodrama rather than led to more accurate depictions of the everyday.
>
> *(Klevan, 1996, p.47)*

Klevan identifies the uneventful to be the main characteristic of the everyday, which is very close to the Perecquian project and to my own way of thinking. However, Klevan is relying almost solely on Stanley Cavell's[23] take on the everyday – or rather the 'ordinary' as Cavell refers to it (1994) – while Lefebvre does not get a mention.[24] In his conclusion, Klevan recognizes that while film is a suitable medium for revealing uneventful activities, those can be few and far between, even in undramatic movies. Having studied some of the key proponents of the everyday, Rohmer and Ozu amongst others, he concedes that their films invariably contain dramatic events, which, while playing a role, do not derail the overarching quotidian narrative stance. Klevan further posits that film's 'melodramatic tendencies are closely related to a flight from the everyday and ordinary' – a conundrum that Lawry sums up as follows: 'The movies are "onto something" too. They understand that what is needed is a heightened sense of reality which can overcome the everydayness […] But the non-everydayness of the movies must somehow resemble the everydayness of ordinary life too' (Lawry, 1980, pp.554–555).

Realism, everyday life, the ordinary – and film

Klevan rightly noted that 'in ordinary language we are all prone to slippage, confusing aspects of realism(s) with the everyday' (Klevan, 1996, p.47). On the other hand, Lefebvre asks

What does the word 'real' mean today? It is the given, the sensible and practical, the actual, the perceptible surface. As for daily life, the general opinion is that it forms part of reality. But does it coincide with it? No, for it contains something more, something less, and something else: lived experience, fleeting subjectivity – emotions, affects, habits, and forms of behaviour.

(Lefebvre, 2014, p.681)

He makes the point that everyday life 'forms part of reality', implying that reality is larger than daily life. Indeed we can construe reality as encompassing the humdrum, the banal, the ordinary but also the exceptional – and much more. But for Lefebvre the key difference is the 'subjective' part of everyday life, in other words the 'human' dimension in all its emotional states, the affect, which comes on top of – or is part of – the mechanical unravelling of the daily routine. It differs from the 'real' that encompasses a much broader ensemble – of which everyday environment and architecture are part. That broader reality is objective and factual, and it does not involve affects or emotions. Buildings and streets don't have feelings, while users do. However, we must complement and extend Lefebvre's attempt at defining everyday life in relation to reality. Lefebvre is correct to point out that the two overlap but do not coincide. But we also need to differentiate between the everyday and the ordinary and consider the following distinction proposed by Lorraine Sim:

While the 'everyday' is the term most commonly employed in cultural studies and cultural theory at the present time, [Virginia] Woolf uses the word 'ordinary' with much more frequency […] Furthermore, while the everyday in cultural studies tends to centre upon the sphere of human activities – particularly patterns of work, leisure and consumption – Woolf's preoccupation with the ordinary signals her keen interest in things (material objects both natural and human-made), in addition to daily experiences and behaviours. Also, the everyday implies a degree of repetition and, potentially, monotony which is not an implicit aspect of the ordinary. Something can be ordinary without being everyday. For example, illness, celebrations and falling in love are a part of ordinary experience and life but are not typically a part of everybody's everyday life. Such subtle differences between the terms 'everyday' and 'ordinary' are important ones, and because of this the two are not viewed as synonymous, although they do, of course, overlap in many ways.

(Sim, 2013, pp.2–3)

Sim, in my opinion, accurately differentiates between the ordinary and the everyday, in the sense that they are not synonymous, although they are very close concepts. They are synonymous in terms of our everyday vocabulary, but need to be differentiated when it comes to everyday life studies. As noted previously, Cavell almost invariably uses the term 'ordinary' – while

Lefebvre, Perec and de Certeau do not appear to make a distinction. It may prove useful to differentiate between the two, especially when it comes to material things, such as objects in the home, furniture etc., as part of the 'ordinary', as well as 'ordinary events' that do not necessarily occur on a daily basis. 'Ordinary' – as in the *as found* concept – was also the term used by Alison and Peter Smithson[25] (see previous section).

When it comes to film, however, Torben Grodal makes the following point regarding the everyday and realism:

> Historically, realism has been associated with the representation of scenes from everyday life, especially the life of the middle and lower classes. Thus many critics regard De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* as the prototypical realist film because it portrays everyday problems encountered by ordinary working-class people. Clearly, brushing your teeth is a more ordinary and therefore a more typical event than having a heart attack, winning a million dollars, or being raped. However, confining realism to the depiction only of the most statistically common actions would go counter to the general understanding of the concept among both viewers and critics. Thus, scenes of intense activity in critical situations, such as an emergency room or a workers' strike – as, for example, in Biberman's *Salt of the Earth* – may be perceived as realistic.
>
> *(Grodal, 2009, p.257)*

Grodal here makes a very useful point that helps us to hone in further on defining and distinguishing between the everyday, the ordinary and realism in film. He rightly puts forward the idea that restricting realism to the everyday is not a viable concept. In that sense he agrees with Lefebvre's idea that the two notions overlap but do not coincide. Indeed there are films or film scenes that might be considered realistic – say, for example, the battle scenes in Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) – but they can't be construed as part of everyday life. Neither are they ordinary. They are to be considered as exceptional, and belong to the 'once in a lifetime' type of situation. They go well beyond the ordinary disruption of the everyday. On the other hand, for example Noriko's wedding in Ozu's *Late Spring* (1949) or the act of selling the house in Hogg's *Exhibition* (2013) are both part of ordinary life – admittedly they are major events but well within the norm of ordinary lives, and eventually get absorbed by the relentlessness of everyday life. I am mainly interested in considering films that are within the range of the everyday and the ordinary – although the exceptional may also occasionally contain some useful nugget. However, in order to understand the mechanisms related to the cinematic everyday life and the ordinary, we must also consider how it can be revealed through disruptions, the subject of the next section.

Notes

1 An interesting discussion on the overlaps and differences between Rouch & Morin with Vertov's approach can be found in McDonough, 2007, p.12 – also McDonough highlights key divergences between Debord and Rouch & Morin's approach – see pp.17–18.

2 He further argues that this operates 'at the level of énonciation' whereby 'the enunciative situation created by the "crossing" of genres and media reflects a fusion of theory and practice that demonstrate how change is not simply an objective fact but above all something that is lived through, in a continuous process of alienation and appropriation' (Sheringham, 2006, p.334).

3 Avant-garde film-maker Jonas Mekas, commenting on his approach to his *365-day Project*, goes on to say '…during the *365 Day Project*, I became interested in how to eliminate that transformation. The challenge is how to record moments of real life and catch the essence of the moment in one unbroken take. No editing. One take, one shot. It sounds easy, but it's not. You have to be able to wait patiently for that moment. I continue to face the most difficult challenge: being really individual while taping real life situations. I think I am coming closer to succeeding, but it takes a total submersion of my own identity; it's a meeting of trance and madness'.

4 Realism in real life is just as complex and the whole notion of what's real or not has occupied philosophers of mind for some time – see, for example, Sellars' well known example of the coloured tie argument, where a tie may appear blue inside a shop under electric light but green in daylight (Sellars, 1997, pp.142–143). It also links to the issue of points of view in film – as well as real life. Take, for example, Tarantino's *Jackie Brown* (1997), the scene in the mall where Max and Melanie observe Jackie just before picking up the bag in the changing booth – the same scene is played twice – from Jackie's point of view and then from Max and Melanie's. And both times we may notice different things…which one is real?

5 When Lefebvre wrote those lines in 1958, it was a time when *La Nouvelle Vague* was about to erupt and he was most likely referring here to Hollywood movies of the 1950s shot in the studio with lavish sets and costumes, as well as French films of the so-called *qualité française* that was fiercely criticized by Truffaut and others for being essentially mediocre and unambitious.

6 For Lefebvre, Brecht's theatre has 'magnificently understood the epic content of everyday life' [*Brecht a magnifiquement discerné le contenu épique de la vie quotidienne*] (Lefebvre, 1958, p.27).

7 Le monde bourgeois, aussi nécessairement qu'il produit des machines et des hommes-machines, produit l'homme aberrant. Il produit le Vagabond, *son image inverse* (Lefebvre, 1958, p.18).

8 Lefebvre articulates this idea at some length: 'Here for the first time we encounter a complex problem, both aesthetic and ethical, that of the *reverse image*: an image of everyday reality, taken in its totality or as a fragment, reflecting that reality in all its depth through people, ideas and things which are apparently quite different from everyday experience, and therefore exceptional, deviant, abnormal […] Chaplin gave us a genuine reverse image of modern times: its image seen through a living man, through his sufferings, his tribulations, his victories. We are now entering the vast domain of the illusory reverse image. What we find is a false world: firstly because it is not a world, and because it presents itself as true, and because it mimics real life closely in order to replace the real by its opposite; by replacing real unhappiness by fictions of happiness, for example – by offering a fiction in response to the real need for happiness – and so on. This is the 'world' of most films, most of the press, the theatre, the music hall: of a large sector of leisure activities. How strange the split between the real world and its reverse image is' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.34).

9 'Marxist playwright Bertold Brecht called for a rejection of realism in favour of texts that employed distanciation. According to the Brechtian view, it is only via this active refusal of realism, or anti-realism (as seen, for example, in some avant-garde film, countercinema, and Third Cinema), that the dialectical complexity of the world could be properly apprehended' (Kuhn and Westwell, 2012).

10 'Brecht breaks with the theatre of illusions as it does with the (Naturalist) theatre which imitates life. It does not purify the everyday; and yet it clarifies its contradictions. In its own way, it filters it. It

throws its weak part away: the magical part. Thus the Brechtian dramatic image differs from what we called the reverse image in Chaplin. Brecht aims (and he has said so) at an image which will master the facts' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.45).

11 Overall very few films appear to find Lefebvre's favour and he mentions only a handful throughout the three volumes but, for example, speaks enthusiastically of Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) in relation to the ordinary life of young factory workers – to which he refers to (in a footnote) as 'an excellent film' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.869).

12 'Trop souvent, les écrivains, auteurs ou metteurs en scène « réalistes» accomplissent l'opération contraire. Au lieu de dégager l'extraordinaire de l'ordinaire, ils prennent l'ordinaire comme tel (les actes moyens d'un homme comme les autres, les événements moyens d'un jour comme les autres) et ils s'efforcent maladroitement de les rendre intéressants en les "montant en épingle", en les grossissant : en déclarant qu'ils sont très intéressants. Alors qu'ils ont seulement bariolé de couleurs fausses la grisaille de la vie prolétarienne, paysanne ou petite-bourgeoise. Comme le disait Brecht, ces « réalistes» répètent obstinément que la pluie tombe de haut en bas' (Lefebvre, 1958, p.21).

13 'Le plus extraordinaire, c'est aussi le plus quotidien ; le plus étrange, c'est souvent le plus banal, et la notion de « mythique », aujourd'hui, transcrit illusoirement cette constatation. Dégagé de son contexte, c'est-à-dire de ses interprétations, et de ce qui l'aggrave mais aussi le rend supportable – présenté dans sa banalité, c'est-à-dire dans ce qui le fait banal, étouffant, accablant – le banal devient l'extraordinaire et l'habituel devient "mythique". De même, une humble plante dégagée de la terre et des autres herbes, vue de près, devient une merveille. Mais alors il devient très difficile d'enchaîner de telles images, d'abord dégagées de leur contexte quotidien, pour les présenter dans leur quotidienneté essentielle. C'est le secret du talent de Fellini (*La Strada*) ou des réalisateurs du *Sel de la terre*, et c'est là (peut-être) une possibilité du réalisme' (Lefebvre, 1958, pp.20,21).

14 I have assumed here that it is Biberman's *Salt of the Earth* that Lefebvre refers to, although he doesn't mention either the director or the year.

15 '80% *des éléments et des objects qui nous aident à vivre ne sont qu'aperçus par nous dans la vie courante, tandis que 20% sont vus. J'en déduis que le cinématographe fait cette révolution de nous faire voir tout ce qui n'a été qu'aperçu. Le chien qui passe dans la rue n'est qu'entrevu. Projeté à l'écran il est vu et tellement que toute la salle réagit comme si elle découvrait le chien. Le seul fait de projeter l'image qualifie déjà l'objet, il devient spectacle. Une image judicieusement cadrée vaut déjà par ce fait. Ne quittez pas ce point de vue. Là est le pivot, la base de ce nouvel art*' (Léger, 1922).

16 Interestingly Lefebvre refers to this well known statement at the same time as Husserl's comment on the 'formlessness of the lived' in Volume 2 under 'the theory of moments' section (Lefebvre, 2014, p.650).

17 For more on cinephilia, see Keathley's book on the subject (Keathley, 2006) and as an example, we can refer to the scene when Amélie, in *Amélie* (Jeunet, 2001), is at the movies and spots a fly on the screen in *Jules et Jim* (Truffaut, 1962).

18 The concept of familiarity is briefly evoked by Lefebvre, who sees it as a *masque de connaissance* that veils the everyday reality – the Hegelian concept of 'What is familiar is not understood precisely because it is familiar' (Lefebvre, 1958, p.22).

19 As Adorno doesn't give any film example, we have to turn to Paula Amad who cites the Albert Kahn archive as an example of radical naturalism, venturing that 'the entire Kahn project inherited the excessive traits of Zola's literary naturalism, while also magnifying them because of the even more wayward filmic contingencies of what Theodor Adorno called, in reference to the medium's Zola-esque potential, an aesthetic of "radical naturalism" […] the stubbornly unedited Kahn footage tipped the balance in their films away from narrative order to descriptive disorder' (Amad, 2010, p.95). Amad's book presents an excellent analysis of the Albert Kahn archive, where the everyday in early cinema is thoroughly investigated, in particular through the writings of Bergson, Kracauer and many others. Albert Kahn founded *Les Archives de la Planète* and from 1908 until 1931 his cameramen collected moving images from forty-eight countries across the globe.

20 'Narration establishes proportions', Lukács maintained, 'description merely levels'. Where there is proportion — one person understood in relation to another, person and environment conceived as foreground and background — there can be meaning. Where there is meaning, there can be value (moral, social, political). All these things Lukács found in Walter Scott and Balzac. Description, by contrast, merely levels. 'It accumulates useless and more often than not inelegant detail. It omits to sort the significant from the insignificant. It declassifies' (Trotter, 2008, p.152).

21 Trotter further defines literary naturalism as follows: 'Naturalist fiction envisaged instead a rapid physical rise to the moment of reproduction in the twenties, then a long redundancy accelerated by the emergence of some innate physical or moral flaw. What is left, after reproduction, and sometimes as a result of reproduction, is waste. In his Rougon-Macquart novels (1871–93), which describe the effects of heredity and environment on the members of a single family, tracing the passage of a genetic flaw down the legitimate line of the Rougons and the illegitimate line of the Macquarts, Emile Zola figured this long redundancy as a gradual, horrifying extrusion of dirt and disorder' (Trotter, 2008, p.150). Trotter further gives another account of what is a naturalist film by using a fiction film example: '*Ratcatcher* is a Naturalist film. The dustmen's strike has turned the housing estate into a "place of deterioration", as Ramsay puts it. James's destiny is "written", she notes, in the harshness of his surroundings. Zola himself could not have made it clearer that there is no hope for this young boy immured in dirt and disorder. The heuristic advantage of determinism (a far greater one than historians of either literature or film have been prepared to acknowledge) is that it opens up the chain of causes and effects to minute inspection. We know roughly what is going to happen, and can concentrate instead on the how and why. How is it, exactly, that one thing leads to another, and why?' (Trotter, 2008, p.151).

22 Klevan's book is to my knowledge the only scholarly work devoted to the subject of fiction films and everyday life.

23 As a philosopher Cavell has written at length on film – see for example Cavell, 1981 and Cavell, 1979. Scepticism is central to his take on cinema – see for example two films of the comedies of remarriage genre – *The Awful Truth* (Leo McCarey, 1937) and the melodrama of the unknown woman, *Blonde Venus* (Josef von Sternberg, 1932).

24 De Certeau is briefly mentioned in a footnote.

25 It might also be tempting to speculate that the term 'ordinary' is particularly used in England and stands for the everyday.

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3

THE VALUE OF FICTION AND THE ROLE OF DISRUPTIONS

In order to understand today's world, we need cinema, literally. It's only in cinema that we get that crucial dimension we are not ready to confront in our reality. If you are looking for what is in reality more real than reality itself, look into the cinematic fiction.[1]

Slavoj Žižek (2006)[2]

How can we fail to believe in the marvellous, the strange, the bizarre, when there are people who lead marvellous (or seemingly marvellous) lives full of departures and incessant changes of scenery, lives which we see carefully reflected in the cinema and the theatre and novels?

Henri Lefebvre (2014, p.141)

This section builds from the previous section on realism and pertains to the discussion on the 'disruption of the everyday', the next section. It essentially charts some of the facets of the value of fiction films within the parameters of this research, and is by no means claiming to be exhaustive. In the process I attempt here to address some key questions to clarify the position as to the value of fiction films in relation to everyday life.

As discussed in the previous section, Klevan seems to mourn the fact that melodramatic events and actions are getting in the way of the uneventful films. Not so, I contend. Everyday life is the base from which events emerge – without it there would be nothing to disturb; likewise the everyday is enhanced and reinforced by exceptional events. There is indeed no point in stating time and again that *la pluie tombe de haut en bas*[3] [rain falls from the sky], there is no value in promoting an everyday that states the obvious. Lefebvre reminds us that exceptional activities always have to be verified and validated by the everyday life that measures and embodies the changes (Lefebvre, 2014, p.339). Likewise in film, everyday life needs the

disturbance and vice-versa; they are two sides of the same coin, they feed from each other, authenticate one another and are enhanced by each other's presence.

But what type of films are suitable for the study of everyday life?[4] The everyday is present in all films, including the most action-packed. It is simply that the relative proportion of drama/action to everyday life may vary greatly from one film to another – between nothing happening and the high-octane car chase, there are many shades of grey in the chiaroscuro of the everyday. The 'everyday by stealth' is always there, lurking in the background. For example, in *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972), not a film reputed for its ordinariness, there is an unexpected kitchen scene where Pete (Richard Castellano) teaches Michael (Al Pacino) how to make a pasta sauce.[5]

There are always loopholes for the everyday to emerge or re-emerge, for it is an irrepressible force. However tiny, such scenes plant the everyday seed in the mind of the spectator. It is the great leveller that allows the audience to find their bearings. It is 'the everyday by synecdoche' – a small part standing for a much larger whole. Even a small particle of 'everyday DNA' in a film is worth having and can help to reconstruct a much larger ensemble of everydays. Using a cognitivist approach, Carroll and Seeley suggest that the everyday routine is a way of explaining our 'natural' comprehension of movies – that our day-to-day activities involving a constant shifting of positions, moving around, create a cadence, a rhythm, not unlike the cuts at the movies.[6] They perceive movies just as we perceive ordinary events in everyday contexts. Rejecting both the illusion thesis – that film amounts to an illusion of reality – and the film language metaphor, they propose a brand of cognitivism that 'lies both between and outside film realism and the film language hypothesis' (Carroll and

FIGURE 3.1 The kitchen scene in *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972)

Seeley, 2013, p.58), partly based on an everyday schema of visual routines.[7] But Grodal, also adopting a cognitivist approach, goes a step further by proclaiming that film 'does not possess a semblance of reality; it is not an illusion, as has been claimed by numerous scholars and film critics; on the contrary, *film is part of reality'* (Grodal, 1997, p.11),[8] a statement that is in line with Hochberg's own observation 'perceiving the world and perceiving pictures of it may not be all that different, once you grasp how to look and what to ignore' (Peterson et al., 2007, p.402). In other words, the value of studying everyday life in film is that it closely coincides with real-life situations, if only we know what to look for and what to ignore – and don't expect the two to coincide, as noted in the last chapter.

Films, especially films shot on location, provide a large amount of documentation, from daily life in streets and buildings to 'items so small they would be otherwise imperceptible' (Hughes, 1976, p.52), often recorded unwittingly. In that sense, film is 'overflowed by its contents […] we may call it "film museum", a museum of objects and gestures, of attitudes and social behaviour which often elude the intention of the director' (Ferro, 1976, p.81). But how do fiction films compare to documentaries? On this topic, Ferro states that

> the social reality contained in a fiction film is not of the same kind as that which is proffered by a piece of reporting, by newsreels. It needs to be observed that there are nevertheless areas of overlap between these two types of film […] certain films of Jean-Luc Godard, for instance *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, are as much documentaries as works of fiction.[9]

Overlaps and differences between fiction films and documentaries have been explored at length by film-studies scholars and historians, and there is no need for me to dwell on them further. However, I postulate here that we must turn to fiction in order to study everyday life – films make us focus on a more approachable type of reality, lived situations. Film is a leveller of intellect and situations – it feeds our imagination with the sort of 'mental food' that we can easily assimilate. It facilitates the acquisition of previously unattainable knowledge and it promotes the cultivation of what we previously lacked. It expands our horizons, as suggested by Kracauer:

> Films tend to explore this texture of everyday life, whose composition varies according to place, people, and time. So they help us not only to appreciate our given material environment but to extend it in all directions. They virtually make the world our home.
>
> *(Kracauer, 1960, p.304)*

For example, much as I like Jonathan Meades' documentary on Brutalism (BBC4, 2014), a better introduction to the topic, and to a discussion, might be *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971) or *Fahrenheit 451* (François Truffaut, 1966). Both films are a form of everyday life practice of brutalism, while Meades simply talks about it, admittedly most eloquently. But

the fiction 'does it' while the documentary 'shows it' – it is the difference between narration and description, between lived space and an account of space, between being in the space or standing outside it. When Hulot is in the Arpels' kitchen in *Mon Oncle* (1958), he does not talk to the camera, explaining how the modern kitchen works. No, he simply tries just about every possible utensil, for our enjoyment and with mixed results; in other words he 'practises' it and shows how the future might work out – or not, in this case.

Fiction and documentaries clearly complement each other, and one does not exclude the other. Let's take another example: *Home* (Ursula Meier, 2008) is a good introduction to a situation when a home is no longer a home because the environmental conditions have changed drastically, as the motorway in front of their house re-opens. It is a carefully observed situation from the point of view of Marthe (Isabelle Huppert), the mother, who hangs on to some sort of sanity through repetitive everyday practices in the face of the gradual erosion of the world around her. It is a form of ecocinema, addressing crucial issues of sustainability, pollution and changes in environmental conditions and how these affect a family in its daily routine.

Similarly, *Fish Tank* (Andrea Arnold, 2009) is the story of Mia (Katie Jarvis), a fifteen-year-old girl, a first-person point of view of illusions, aspirations, and nightmares in the classic vein of British social realism, shot on the Mardyke Estate (just across the Thames Estuary from

FIGURE 3.2 Hulot in *Mon Oncle* (Jacques Tati, 1958)

Dartford). It pretty much summarises all we would want to know about contemporary youth culture in the geographical area around the Thames Estuary…and not something that one would easily gather from sociological reports and government statistics.

Cinema, as a popular medium, also furnishes us with a keen reflection of popular attitudes,[10] often tackling complex issues. For example, *Amour* (Michael Haneke, 2012) confronts the theme of how to deal with the end of life, a touchy and topical societal theme given the increasingly ageing population. But how do we deal with this issue? How do architects know what it's like and what are the options and the implications? How do we start researching such complex topics?

Turning to *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980), everything is familiar to start with – but as we know the everyday is the perfect cover for the germination of the uncanny.[11] Uncanny familiar figures gradually return from repression, and Jack's repressed violence and alcoholism are finally rising to the surface in the most disturbing way. Pallasmaa reminds us that 'Suppressed emotions, however, seek their object and exposure. Anxiety and alienation, hardly hidden by surface rationalization, are often the emotional contents of today's everyday settings'. The dimension of the *heimlich* hides its opposite, the *unheimlich*, always ready to enter the scene. Pallasmaa goes on,

> Even real architecture is an exchange of experiential feelings and meanings between the space constructed of matter and the mental space of the subject. It is evident that the art of cinema can sensitize the architectural profession itself for the subtleties of this interaction. The architecture of cinema utilizes the entire range of emotions, and the touching architecture of Tarkovsky's films, for instance, should encourage architects to expand the emotional contents of their spaces, designed to be actually dwelled and lived in. Construction in our time has normalized emotions into the service of the social situations of life and has, at the same time, censored the extremes of the scale of human emotions: darkness and fear, dreams and reverie, elation and ecstasy.
>
> *(Pallasmaa, 2007, p.35)*

Being able to 'experience' vicariously a full range of emotions is one of the benefits of fiction films, says Pallasmaa, in order to deconstruct the current normalizations of emotions and feelings.

Films can be construed as a form of 'equipment for living' (Young, 2000). They provide an accelerated education in lived and practised situations – film simplifies complex realities and makes them more accessible. They are not, and neither do we want them to be, objective representations of reality. Paraphrasing Raban, I consider the 'soft' film world of illusion, myth, aspiration, and nightmare to be as real, maybe more real, than the 'hard' one located on maps, in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture (Raban, 1974, p.10). Ferro also remarks that a fiction film is often dismissed because it 'dispenses only a dream, as if the dream formed no part of reality, as though the imaginary were not one of the driving forces of human activity' (Ferro, 1976, p.81). Indeed, the poetic and soft side of film is a crucial complement to 'reality', whatever this might be.

The everyday in film and its disruption

> What is drama after all, but life with the dull bits cut out.
>
> *Alfred Hitchcock (Truffaut et al., 1986, p.103)*

Hitchcock's explanation of how suspense functions throws some light on the balance between drama and the everyday.[12] Essentially, Hitchcock makes the point that ordinary situations are the necessary foundations from which to build up suspense. The story of the bomb is being told against a background of trivial conversation between two characters, and Hitchcock needs those fifteen minutes of everydayness as a contrast to the drama ahead. Suspense is of course a particular type of situation, but I postulate here that we need to disrupt the everyday, and not necessarily with a bomb, in order to notice it. Films tend to present a routine by establishing some parameters, gradually building a world that then gets disturbed so that we can detect the difference from the everyday – or rather, from the film-maker's point of view, that dramatic events are staged in contrast to a 'baseline'.[13] The idea of disruption is of course central to the classical Aristotelian five-stage narrative arc[14] and has been part of cinema since its inception. We only have to refer to *L'Arroseur Arosé* (Louis Lumière, 1895) – the moment when the young boy mischievously steps on the watering hose constitutes the first cinematic disruption of a plot equilibrium. It is this contrast that keeps the spectators interested in the unfolding narrative on the screen, and it has been shown that high-octane films with no respite from constant action tend to be less effective at emotionally engaging the viewers.[15] A similar point was made by Cavell regarding literature:

> A familiar form of narrative opens by laying out a time and place in which a character or characters in whom we are to take an interest are described as carrying on a way of life, and then the plot proper, as it were, begins with an element of change or interruption breaking into this world. An obvious instance is Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, where the interruption of the ordinary days of this little world is the unheralded appearance in it of a pair of rich and handsome bachelors.
>
> *(Cavell, 2005, p.8)*

In *La Piscine* (Deray, 1969) we can observe different degrees of interruption of the everyday. The opening image shows the credits gently rolling over the shimmering swimming pool water, to reveal an idle Jean-Paul (Alain Delon) lying by the side of the pool. The camera glides over the pool to frame Jean-Paul finishing his drink while a distant voice calls him, though he does not answer. This initial shot lasts just under a minute and establishes an atmosphere pertaining to a holiday scene. After that, Jean-Paul's summer rêverie is disrupted by Marianne (Romy Schneider) diving into the pool and splashing him. Marianne splashing Jean-Paul is a form of disruption of an everyday routine – sunbathing in this case – but has no dramatic impact on the course of the film. It's a very minor blip on the everyday landscape. Following a similar

FIGURE 3.3 The moment of disruption in *La Piscine* (Jacques Deray, 1969)

pattern as in *Pride and Prejudice,* the real step change occurs when Harry (Maurice Ronet), Marianne's former lover, and his daughter Pénélope (Jane Birkin) drop in on them for a visit.

Harry and Pénélope's arrival breaks into Jean-Paul and Marianne's baseline routine. However, the change brought about by new arrivals is quickly absorbed and a new everydayness emerges as everybody settles into summer activities à quatre instead of à deux. The real dramatic change occurs when Jean-Paul drowns Harry. After that there is no more everyday – everything is different from the previous days – even the weather turns: it's the end of the summer and of the film. This briefly exemplifies what Lefebvre calls the 'double dimension of the everyday', which is made of 'platitude and profoundness, banality and drama. And yet it is in the everyday that human dramas ravel and unravel, or remain unravelled' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.359).

Most films start by establishing a baseline of everydayness, creating a climate and an atmosphere of ordinariness for viewers to ease themselves in. Let's consider the opening sequence of *Blue Velvet* (Lynch, 1986) where in ten montage-style shots, Lynch paints, at least on the surface, a portrait of ideal small-town America, but one that Kael identified as an uncanny form of everydayness

three minutes into the film […] you recognize that this peaceful, enchanted, white-picket-fence community, where the eighties look like the fifties, is the creepiest sleepy city you've

> ever seen […] you're seeing every detail of the architecture, the layout of homes…furnishings and potted plants, the women's dresses […] meticulously bright and sharp-edged

and yet

> It's so hyperfamiliar, it's scary.

(Kael, 1990, p.203)

Indeed the idyllic everyday of the first few shots is rapidly eroded, first by the showing of a gun on the television screen inside the house, followed by the man who is watering his garden having a stroke.

At that point the everyday, always rampant, takes over briefly again as a small dog and a toddler play with the running water hose while the man is unconscious on the ground: life goes on. The everyday is finally thoroughly shattered when the camera penetrates under the family lawn, revealing a world of creepy crawlies, announcing the dark underbelly of Lumberton. At that point the uncanny has taken over, we are entering 'the anarchy and the chiaroscuro of everyday life'. However fleetingly brief this opening shot is, it is crucial to the creation of Lynch's film world.[16]

But in cinema, as in real life, the everyday is not enough. Lefebvre was adamant that we couldn't consider the everyday simply as 'the petty side of life, its humble and sordid element […] it would be easy to make a critique of it, but not very meaningful: it would revert to old-fashioned populism' (Lefebvre, 2014, pp.336–337). The value of film is that it contributes to highlighting the everyday by contrasting it with the extraordinary and the dramatic. We need to assess the extraordinary against the banality of Perec's *infra-ordinaire* or, as remarked by Lefebvre, 'When a feeling or a passion avoids being tried and tested by the everyday, it demonstrates ipso facto its inauthenticity' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.359).[17] Pure action films may

FIGURE 3.4 Disruption of the everyday in *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, 1986)
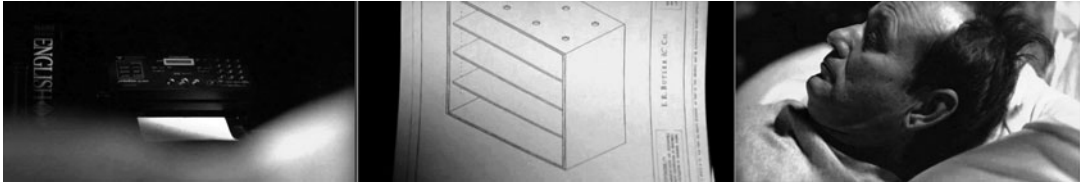
FIGURE 3.5 The intrusion of the fax in *Lost in Translation* (Sofia Coppola, 2003)

therefore lack in authenticity, as they need to be measured up against the everyday just as background needs foreground and vice-versa. And most film-makers follow this principle: even in films where one wouldn't expect it, there are moments of everydayness. For example in the scene of *Kill Bill 1* (Quentin Tarantino, 2003) when The Bride (Uma Thurman) visits the home of Vernita Green (Vivica A. Fox), one of the 'assassins' seeking revenge. As soon as she opens the door to her suburban home, a fierce battle ensues between the two rivals. Blood and sweat drip off their faces when a four-year-old girl appears carrying a lunch box: 'Mommy, I'm home!' The fight stops and the two women repair to the kitchen and proceed to have a cup of coffee while Vernita fixes some cereal for her daughter. But as she puts her hand in the 'Kaboom' cereal box, she fires a gun that shatters The Bride's coffee cup and she in return, throws a knife across the kitchen, killing Vernita. In this scene we have in quick succession the entrance [ordinariness], the fight [action], the little girl's entrance [ordinariness], the kitchen coffee and the cereal-fixing scene [ordinariness] followed by Vernita's killing [action]. Both moments of action and ordinariness are embroiled in a 'reactivated circuit' where they feed into each other. Ordinariness provides some form of respite and normality that allows the viewer to regroup and reconnect to a familiar sense of reality, making the ensuing actions all the more effective.

But there are of course much subtler forms of disruption of the everyday. Let's take for example the scene in *Lost in Translation* (Sofia Coppola, 2003) when jet-lagged Bob (Bill Murray), stranded in his hotel room in Tokyo and unable to sleep, receives a fax at 4:20am from his Californian wife, asking him to make decisions about the shelves in his study. The fax stuttering through is like a slice of everyday life being made visible as it blurts out of the fax machine…a rare case of an invasion of everydayness in the middle of an heterotopia.

There is also of course the amusing scene in *Amélie* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001), where Amélie has subtly altered some elements in Collignon's flat, as well as advancing the alarm clock to 4am. Getting up like a zombie, Collignon approaches the bathroom door but misses the knob, as it has been switched around, and nearly loses his balance as a result. This shows that subtle alterations to our everyday routine and environment can indeed be very disruptive – and is a neat example of muscle memory being tricked and how it is completely integrated in our everyday gestures.[18]

Another little-discussed form of disruption is boredom, as identified by Blanchot: 'Boredom, is the everyday becoming visible – or rising to the surface – having therefore lost its primary trait – that of being overlooked' (Blanchot, 1969, p.361).[19] Of course, in the everyday, the

FIGURE 3.6 Parallel universes in *Stunned Man* (Julian Rosefeldt, 2004)

repetitive nature of the same actions may induce boredom, which might in turn lead to more disruption. This is amply visible in Julian Rosefeld's *Stunned Man* (2004), a film shot on two screens side-by-side with mirrored flats on each side. The same actor in each flat goes about his everyday activities in exactly the same way, but not at the same time. It exposes the routines, stereotypes, and absurdities of everyday life in minute detail over 32 minutes. It is shot in real time, with a very mobile camera following the actors. Ordinary routines are painstakingly observed: making coffee, working at a computer screen, reading the papers, checking the fridge, tidying up, going to the bathroom etc. The characters are pretty restless and do not settle on a task for a long time. But at some point the character on the right kicks his bookshelf, which collapses. Unperturbed, he carries on preparing a bowl of noodles but drops it on the floor. He starts to clean up with a broom, but rapidly uses the broomstick as a weapon, and in a display of martial art-cum-slapstick, he destroys just about everything in the flat, the equivalent of a domestic road rage. Later he settles and gradually puts things back in order, while the character on the left, having by that time also dropped his bowl of noodles, proceeds to systematically trash his flat in a similar fashion. It is a case of boredom having risen to the surface and acting as a disturbance of the everyday life routine…and crucially we can witness it building up in real time. As for the dropping of the bowl, it is a classic form of domestic accident acting as a disturbance. And the destruction of the flat, followed by the tidying-up phase, exposes the various mechanisms of disruptions of the everyday up to the point where it eventually gets re-established and the equilibrium is restored, and in the process it also highlights the link between entropy and the everyday.[20] *Stunned Man* is an exemplary film to demonstrate the concept, especially as disruption and everydayness are eerily displayed asynchronously side-by-side over the two screens.

Indeed, we need this repetitive reactivation between both states in order to be able to taste the difference. This necessity is, in effect, what we rely on to uncover the everyday in film. If it was all action, there would be no quotidian for us to study – the extraordinary 'only makes sense when its brilliance lights up the sad hinterland of everyday dullness' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.650) and the corollary is also true: if it was all about the quotidian, the everyday would be

reduced to 'empty moments […] unable to grasp the exciting risks moments propose' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.650). We need to grasp the extraordinary that shines through the ordinary, the extra-quotidian that breaks up daily life as well as appreciating the hidden layers of infra-ordinary that colonize popular culture. We have to learn to tease out such precious moments – almost as if taking advantage of moments when film-makers are off-guard. In just about every movie, such nuggets are there for the picking.

Notes

1 Žižek adds: 'Our fundamental delusion today is not to believe in what is only a fiction, to take fictions too seriously. It's, on the contrary, not to take fictions seriously enough. You think it's just a game? It's reality. It's more real than it appears to you […] Cinema is the art of appearances, it tells us something about reality itself. It tells us something about how reality constitutes itself'.

2 *The pervert's guide to cinema by Slavoj Žižek* (Sophie Fiennes, 2006).

3 Lefebvre quoting Brecht – see previous chapter.

4 Regarding the type of everyday films, Grodal argues that 'Representations of the private lives of film stars or millionaires may be just as realistic as "kitchen sink" representations of the lives of ordinary people, but the latter will often be considered more typical and therefore more realistic than the former' (Grodal, 2009, p.252).

5 Pete, addressing Michael: 'come over here, kid, learn something, you never know, you might have to cook for 20 guys someday. You see, you start out with a little bit of oil…then you fry some garlic…then you throw in some tomatoes, tomato paste, you fry it…ya make sure it doesn't stick…you get it to a boil…you shove in all your sausage and your meatballs…and a little bit of wine…and a little bit of sugar…that's my trick'…at which point Sonny (James Caan) interrupts 'why don't you cut the crap…how's Paulie?' to which Pete answers 'you won't see him no more', the reason being that Paulie had been gunned down by Pete and an accomplice in the preceding scene. Sonny's interruption signals the end of that particular everyday moment and the return to action.

6 'The shot/sequence structure of scenes […] stand-in for the visual routines that keep our attention fixed to diagnostic features in ordinary contexts – they map to the visual routines that would putatively govern our patterns of attention if we were present in the depicted actions. The frequency of such scenes helps explain the widespread accessibility of movies as well as why they feel so real – sequences constructed on the interested observer mimic the structure and cadence of those patterns of attention constitutive of the everyday perceptual experiences that they depict' (Carroll and Seeley, 2013, p.66).

7 'The use of variable framing within many (but scarcely all) cinematic sequences approximates the structure and pacing of the visual routines that govern perception in everyday behavior […] in the ordinary context of everyday activities we do not scan the environment searching for what we need […] However, the bulk of each day is taken up with commonplace activities like dialing a telephone, operating machinery, writing at a desk, or getting lunch at the cafeteria. A significant proportion of the rest of what we do involves smooth coping with the environment, which involves the same kinds of stereotyped behaviors (e.g., turning door knobs, navigating hallways, and sitting down or getting up from desks or workstations). This entails that the cadence of ordinary conscious experience is, by and large, dictated by the cadence of those patterns of attention associated with those visual routines that govern these everyday activities. Likewise, the camera typically doesn't smoothly track actors or actions across the global development of a cinematic sequence. It jumps from one salient feature to the next, mimicking visual routines, building up the content of the depicted action or event out of a set of associated shots' (Carroll and Seeley, 2013, p.64).

8 Grodal explains further 'Mark Johnson (1987) has clearly shown the way in which images directly serve as the basis for establishing a cognitive relation between man and the world. The images are not

something else, but a kind of software which establishes and grounds our knowledge in the world [...] From this point of view, narrative structures or schemata are not in principle imposed from without, for instance on images, emotions or memories, but are related to the synthetic–functional processes by which our different mental faculties and different aspects of the world are connected. [...] Imagination, consisting of hypothetical simulations of possible relations and processes, is a central aspect of everyday life; the difference between art and everyday imagination is not of kind but of degree, of direct 'interestedness', and of 'art' understood as superior know-how (Grodal, 1997, p.11).

9 On the topic of *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1967), Godard concurs with Ferro: 'It is not a story, but hopefully a document to a degree where I think Paul Delouvrier himself should have commissioned the film. Actually, if I have a secret ambition, it is to be put in charge of the French newsreel services. All my films have been reports on the state of the nation; they are newsreel documents, treated in a personal manner perhaps, but in terms of contemporary actuality' (Godard, 1972, p.239).

10 On the issue regarding whether film is a good indicator of popular culture, Hughes argues that 'Though this commercialised self-consciousness deprives films of the innocent or naive spontaneity of folk culture, it does not render film unacceptable as a source for popular attitudes [...] Our concern as historians using film sources should be whether these hypotheses about popular attitudes are accurate ones. One of the virtues of this particular source is that the public's choices at the box-office provide a crude measure of the accuracy of film-makers' hypotheses about popular values [...] A film which accurately reflects their attitudes can fail (perhaps because of poor advertising and distribution, poor plot, bad casting, even general economic conditions), but a film which does not share some of the audience's fundamental orientations will not often succeed. In using feature films to gauge popular attitudes there is some basis, then, for working with successful films, particularly genre films. In addition, it is best to base our estimates of popular attitudes on a wide sample of films from a given period. As a check on the accuracy of our findings we can compare the results of our film analyses with studies of popular attitudes reflected in other forms of popular culture from the same period, and we can relate our findings to contemporaneous sociological studies of norms and values. For example, the vast literature on the nature and evolution of the American national character provides an extensive and intensive charting of American values over an extended period of time, against which we can compare the values and attitudes we detect in popular American films' (Hughes, 1976, pp.70–71).

11 'In his essay on the uncanny, *Das Unheimliche*, Freud said that the uncanny is the only feeling which is more powerfully experienced in art than in life. If the genre required any justification, I should think this alone would serve as its credentials', Stanley Kubrick (Pereira et al., 2013, p.252).

12 'Let's suppose that there is a bomb underneath this table between us. Nothing happens, and then all of a sudden, "Boom!" There is an explosion. The public is surprised, but prior to this surprise, it has seen an absolutely ordinary scene, of no special consequence. Now, let us take a suspense situation. The bomb is underneath the table and the public knows it, probably because they have seen the anarchist place it there. The public is aware the bomb is going to explode at one o'clock and there is a clock in the decor. The public can see that it is a quarter to one. In these conditions, the same innocuous conversation becomes fascinating because the public is participating in the scene. The audience is longing to warn the characters on the screen: "You shouldn't be talking about such trivial matters. There is a bomb beneath you and it is about to explode!" In the first case we have given the public fifteen seconds of surprise at the moment of the explosion. In the second case we have provided them with fifteen minutes of suspense. The conclusion is that whenever possible the public must be informed' (Truffaut et al., 1986, p.73).

13 The term 'baseline' is borrowed from my environmental and thermal modelling past, where an average baseline was needed in order to measure up variations from it. For example, we would refer to a typical year of weather data (Kew 1967 is often chosen, or at least was at the time). See Penz, 1983, p.319.

14 This is summarized by Maureen Thomas as follows: 'Tzvetan Todorov argues that narrative in its most basic form is a causal transformation of a situation through five stages:
- a state of equilibrium at the outset
- a disruption of the equilibrium by some action
- a recognition that there has been a disruption
- an attempt to repair the disruption
- a reinstatement of the initial equilibrium.

These changes of state are not random but are produced according to principles of cause and effect (e.g. principles that describe possibility, probability, impossibility, and necessity among the actions that occur) […] this emergent form, or transformation, is a necessary feature of narrative […]' (Thomas, 2012, p.287).

15 See More4 TV programme: 'What makes a masterpiece? Stories and Film', 2012.

16 'All my movies are about strange worlds that you can't go into unless you build them and film them. That's what's so important about film to me. I just like going into strange worlds. To give a sense of place, to me, is a thrilling thing. And a sense of place is made up of details. And so the details are incredibly important. If they're wrong, then it throws you out of the mood. And so the sound and music and color and shape and texture, if all those things are correct and a woman looks a certain way with a certain kind of light and says the right word, you are gone, you are in heaven. But it's all the little details' (http://www.thecityofabsurdity.com/quotecollection/place.html).

17 Adding 'Although the drama of love may well consist in it being "smashed against everyday life", in the words of Maiakovsky, the boat must brave the current or stay at its moorings' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.359).

18 Our spatial practices that we completely take for granted are shaped by the force of habit and our muscle memory, synonymous with motor learning. I was reminded of this by the conversation between two of my friends. C and D started a discussion on their everyday life and habits and C proceeded to explain how he prepares his slippers when going to bed, i.e by carefully placing them by the bed in such a way that, when waking up, he would sit on the edge of the bed, rotate and, without even opening his eyes, he would gently ease his still sleepy feet into the slippers…C told this story to D, mentioning that he had only found one other person who had the same routine…at which point D exclaimed, 'I do the same'. They nearly embraced – a real-life example that echoes the scene with Collignon.

19 My translation: 'L'ennui c'est le quotidien devenu manifeste : par conséquent ayant perdu son trait essential – constitutif – d'être *inaperçu*. Le quotidien nous renvoie donc toujours à cette part d'existence inapparente et cependant non caché, insignifiante parce que toujours en-deçà de ce qu'il signifie, silencieuse, mais d'un silence qui s'est déjà dissipé, lorsque nous nous taisons pour l'entendre et que nous écoutons mieux en bavardant, dans cette parole non parlante qui est le doux bruissement humain en nous, autour de nous' (Blanchot, 1969, p.361).

20 The second law of thermodynamics introduces the notion of entropy that can be equated to a measure of the disorder or messiness of a room that will only increase with time. In the case of *Stunned Man* we start with the equilibrium state – the everyday – that gets more and more disturbed by the destructive actions, towards a state of entropy, chaos.

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4

GEORGES PEREC AND CHANTAL AKERMAN

Perec, *cinématographe* of the everyday

> *C'est une petite boîte noire. On met la pellicule à l'intérieur. On remonte le ressort, comme si c'était un réveille-matin. Au lieu de prendre une photographie, on va en prendre plusieurs à la suite, assez vite pour donner l'illusion du mouvement, de la vie. C'est ça le cinéma. C'est aussi simple que ça.* [It's a little black box. The film goes inside. We wind up the spring mechanism as if it were an alarm clock. Instead of taking one photograph, we'll take a few in quick succession to give the illusion of movement, of life. That's what cinema is about. It's as simple as that.]
>
> *Georges Perec* La Vie Filmée des Français *(de Bary, 2006, p.75)*

In Chapter 1 on Lefebvre and Perec, I examined Perec's role and link within the world of architecture. In this section I consider Perec the film-maker, and how his writing on the everyday translates into moving images. Perec is not widely known for his work with film, although he was actively involved in various roles. The filmography of Perec includes 13 titles (de Bary, 2006, pp.298–299), but the key films of relevance here are, in chronological order:

- *Un homme qui dort* (Bernard Queysanne and Perec, 1974), which is an adaptation from his novel of the same name published in 1967.[1]
- *La Vie Filmée des Français*, produced by Michel Pamart and Claude Ventura in 1975, for which he both wrote the commentary and read his text.
- *Les Lieux d'une Fugue* (Perec, 1978), the only film for which he is credited as the director. Produced by l'INA (Institut National de l'Audiovisuel).
- *Récits d'Ellis Island* (Bober and Perec, 1979), produced by l'INA.
- *Série noire* (Alain Corneau, 1979), a fiction film for which he was the scriptwriter.

Perec was also an occasional cinema critic and published some 20 articles in newspapers and journals between 1960 and 1981 (de Bary, 2006, pp.294–296). Moreover he collaborated, mainly as a scriptwriter, on 15 unfinished or unrealized film projects. Perec had therefore plenty of opportunities to engage with the moving image and reflect on how to work with the medium of film. He also went frequently to the cinema, and Eisenstein's *La Ligne Générale*[2] (1929) and Resnais's *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) were lasting influences on him (Bellos, 1993, p.216).

We know from Perec's key manifesto *Approches de quoi* [Approaches to what] (Perec, 2008, p.209) – that the prime mode of investigation to interrogate *le banal, le quotidien, l'évident, le commun, l'ordinaire, l'infra-ordinaire, le bruit de fond, l'habituel* [the banal, the everyday, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the usual] is description and enumeration: *Décrivez votre rue. Décrivez-en une autre [...] Questionnez vos petites cuillers. Qu'y a-t-il sous votre papier peint?* [Describe your street. Describe another [...] Interrogate your small spoons. What is underneath your wallpaper?]. He acknowledges the triviality of his interrogations that are barely indicative of a method, which is precisely what renders them all the more essential, given the failures of other investigations in search of grasping the truth[3] (*notre vérité*). But how did Perec *le cinématographe* use description and enumeration? How did they translate onto the screen and how effective was this form of interrogation in uncovering the quotidian? Some of Perec's most interesting texts on cinema can be found in *La Vie Filmée des Français*,[4] where he is commenting on early cinema images, silent amateur and actualité short films from 1930 to 1934:

> *Sur la femme à la passerelle* [About the woman on a footbridge]
> *C'est alors peut-être que se produit le miracle de l'image; sous la gaucherie du mouvement, sous l'imprécision de l'anecdote, quelque chose d'irremplaçable nous est restitué [...] l'attention portée à un être, à un événement dérisoire, à un geste oublié, à une quotidienneté enfouie sous les fracas de la grande Histoire, et qui resurgit soudain, intacte, merveilleuse* [It is perhaps at that moment that the miracle of the image takes place; despite the awkwardness of the movement and the imprecision of the anecdote, it restitutes something irreplaceable [...] the focus on a person, an anecdotal event, a forgotten gesture, a daily life buried under history with a capital H, and which suddenly reappears, intact, marvellous].
>
> *(de Bary, 2006, p.77)*

Perec reads in this short clip of a woman on a footbridge the miraculous reenactment of an everyday long buried under the weight of history – and with the passing years the celluloid becomes memory.

He goes on, commenting on a picnic scene by the sea as follows:

Sur le pique-nique [About the picnic]

On connaissait ce qui dure, ce dont on fait mémoire ou archives […] Mais pas les gestes, pas ce temps intact immortalisé dans ce qu'il a de plus fluide, de plus inconsistant : ce qui n'aurait pas laissé de trace, ce dont on ne se saurait jamais souvenu : un homme qui se trémousse en imitant un chef d'orchestre ; une femme qui rectifie une mayonnaise ; deux hommes qui allument des cigarettes ; une journée à la mer, une belle journée où il a fait bien chaud [We knew what lasts, what becomes memory or archive […] but not the gestures, not the untouched time immortalized in what is most fluid and inconsistent: what would have left no trace, which one would never remember: a man who wiggles while imitating an orchestra conductor; a woman who adjusts a mayonnaise; two men who light a cigarette; a day by the sea, a beautiful day when it was hot].

(de Bary, 2006, p.77)

In this scene, Perec's commentary is a list of disconnected micro-stories, the sum of its parts amounting to *une belle journée,* not just because of the weather, but a beautiful day in the sense of a perfect day that combines a nice warm day by the sea with gestures and scenes pertaining to the everyday but a particular type of everyday: leisure activities. And as we know from Lefebvre, leisure activities are an integral part of the everyday, together with work and family life, and where on holidays 'everyday life in its entirety becomes play' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.55). But there is no sense that Perec provided a critical comment on the everyday as leisure time.[5] Perec's description is characteristically neutral and factual – the enumeration is strangely disjointed[6] to the point where one isn't sure if the woman with the mayonnaise is in the same group as the two men with the cigarettes. It is a form of cinematic montage.

Looking back at the discussion on realism in Chapter 2, Perec's attitude to reality is obvious here, unsurprising since his entire project is steeped in realism.[7] Indeed, as James reminds us,

The term *infra-ordinaire* first appears in Perec's work in the 1970s. Perec's early writings on the novel insist instead on the notion of the 'real' and argue for a form of literary realism that leaves little room for chance. Echoing Lukacs's *Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, Perec argues in 'Pour une litterature réaliste' (1962; 'For a Realist Literature') that realism requires the selection of relevant details from the mass of inessential ones.

(James, 2009, p.193)

But we must now turn to cinema's influence on Perec's writing. In an interview regarding his script for *Série noire* (Alain Corneau, 1979), Perec recognizes the influence of cinema on his writing – he refers to the idea of tracking shots[8] in *La vie mode d'emploi* (Perec, 1978). At the same time Peytard coins the term écriture-cinéma.[9] If that is indeed the case, how does his écriture-cinéma translate onto the screen? Is Perec's writing already ready-made for film, as a

succession of shot lists? To understand how it works we must consider one of his films, *Un homme qui dort* (Bernard Queysanne and Perec, 1974).

Un homme qui dort

Un homme qui dort, produced in 1973, was a collaboration between Georges Perec and Bernard Queysanne. It is based on Perec's book of the same name, published in 1967 (Perec, 1967). The storyline is deceptively simple: a young man (Jacques Spiesser), the only character in the film, one day doesn't attend his exams and gradually falls into a state of indifference, cutting all links with society, friends and family alike. He spends most days and nights either sleeping or walking in the city. He lives in a tiny attic bedsit – *une chambre de bonne* – and goes through various stages of indifference over one year. At the end of the film he seems to be coming out of this state, and we have a sense that he might return to life.

It is partly autobiographical, something that happened to him in 1956, and he only wrote the book ten years later. And while he claimed that this was the most 'visual' of his books, he was well aware of the challenge of making a 'long métrage alors qu'il n'y a qu'un seul personnage, aucune histoire, aucune péripétie, aucun dialogue, mais seulement un texte lu par une voix-off' [a full-length fiction film with only one character, no storyline, no dialogue, only a voice-over] (Perec, 2007, p.44). The first challenge[10] he and Queysanne faced was to substantially cut the text, as it was far too long for a short film. The book alternates between action chapters and reflective chapters. The solution was to remove every other chapter, keeping only the action parts (Perec, 2007, p.47), and there was no rewrite from Perec.

The structure of the film is yet another attempt by Perec to work with an Oulipian constraint, the sestina.[11] Bellos records that,

> Unlike the novel, the film version of *Un homme qui dort* has a mathematical construction. After the prologue (part 0, so to speak) there are six sections, which Perec and Queysanne called, for ease of reference in the shooting and editing, l'apprentissage, le bonheur, l'inquiétude, les monstres, la destruction et le retour [Rupture, Apprenticeship, Happiness, Anguish, Monsters, and Return]. The six sections are interchangeable in the sense that the same objects, places, and movements are shown in each, but they are all filmed from different angles and edited in a different order, in line with the permutations of the sestina. The text and the music are similarly organised in six-part permutations, and then edited and mixed so that the words are out of phase with the image except at apparently random moments, the last of which – the closing sequence – is not random at all, but endowed with an overwhelming sense of necessity.
>
> *(Bellos, 1993, p.540)*

The six parts are also a departure from the book and they do not appear in the film as such; there are no headings. However, they are easily noticed by viewers, while the use of the sestina is pretty difficult to detect. It was probably very useful for Perec as a way of structuring the work, as part of the process, especially as it was his first film, and he would have been keen to hang on to a world of constraints as a means of providing some sort of guidance and rationality.

Everydayness

Un homme qui dort could be construed as a study of everydayness, of a particular type, that of a young man engaged in representative activities – or non-activities – although he might be living an atypical life. We are far from *métro-boulot-dodo*,[12] and yet there are useful moments that would be fairly universal and pertain to life in a tight space, a study in confined domesticity and how, on a daily basis, to live in a 'galetas long de deux mètres quatre vingt-douze, large d'un mètre soixante-treize, soit un tout petit peu plus de cinq mètres carrés' [a garret 2.92 metres long by 1.73 metres wide, so just over five square metres] (Perec, 2007, p.10).

Repeated gestures of everydayness are observed: plugging in the kettle, switching on the kettle, putting some Nescafé in a bowl, pouring the water into the bowl, drinking the coffee – on the bed, standing up or on the window ledge – recurrent shots of this type are observed throughout the film. Brushing his teeth, reading or not reading, washing his socks or observing his socks soaking in a plastic bowl, shaving at the basin. A particular representative sequence lasting over 90 seconds sees him entering the bedsit, making his bed, reading *Le Monde* on his bed, washing himself at the basin, preparing some toast, eating it on his windowsill and filling a bucket with water to wash some clothes.[13]

There is a whole panoply of movements and gestures on how to negotiate body postures on a small and narrow bed. We see him idling on his bed, smoking or just letting his gaze follow

FIGURE 4.1 *Un homme qui dort* (Bernard Queysanne, 1974): everyday life in a small place

a crack in the ceiling 'tu restes étendu sur ta banquette étroite, les bras derrière la nuque, les genoux haut' [you remain lying down on your narrow berth, arms behind your head, knees up] (Perec, 2007, p.9). This of course echoes Perec's own writing, in *Espèces d'espaces*, claiming his fondness for ceilings observed from his bed.[14]

There are long tracking shots where the camera eye lingers in close-up on shelves, on books, on objects on the shelves, on posters, on cracks in the door and on the basin tap. It is a tiny space and we could probably piece together every square inch of it gleaned across the film. Along the same lines Montfrans comments on the use of space by the character

> *qui construit et déconstruit son indifférence à partir des perceptions des objets qui l'entourent, obstinés dans leur nature d'objets, banaux, présents jusque dans ses expériences oniriques, d'abord rétifs, durs, indifférents, ensuite empreints d'angoisse'* [who constructs and deconstructs his indifference from the perception of objects around him, obstinate in their nature, ordinary objects, present even in his dreamlike experiences, at first reticent, hard, indifferent, then full of anguish].
>
> *(Montfrans, 1999, p.103)*

It is not only about the perception of objects but also their questioning, a very Perecquian concern, when he urges us to 'Questionnez vos petites cuillers. Qu'y a-t-il sous votre papier peint?', previously evoked.

At the level of the city there are also several moments of everydayness, especially in bars where the young man eats his regular steak frites, invariably seated on a high stool at the bar. There are at least three such scenes in the film, which could be read as a small ethnomethodological study in how to serve a client steak frites at a bar, with a glass of wine. Some of those scenes are relatively long and uninterrupted, with elements of continuity editing, as in the first one that lasts 1'10". Every time, the gestures are familiar and repetitive with only slight variations, in the space, in the shape of the glass, the type of stool, the people around. Similarly the film offers an intriguing array of scenes, showing him entering a cinema, putting out his cigarette and being shown to his seat by an usher with a torch. Some of those gestures, moments and practices have long gone, and this is where the film, unwittingly, also has an archival value.

But coming back to my original question, if it is indeed the case that we can detect in Perec an écriture-cinéma, how did it in turn translate onto the screen, and how effective was his approach in uncovering *le quotidien* through the medium of film? Perec's *le cinématographe* made full use of his formidable écriture-cinéma skills by using various techniques of description and enumeration as well as inventing numerous visual and other punning techniques. But above all he created and experimented with a new form of *cinema*-écriture, to uncover *l'endotique* and *l'infra-ordinaire* of *Un homme qui dort*. It is a unique experiment that reveals

FIGURE 4.2 *Un homme qui dort* (Bernard Queysanne, 1974): everyday scene in a Parisian bar

how his particular brand of *cinema*-écriture uncovered *le quotidien* of one man over one year, both in a domestic situation, in *la chambre de bonne*, as well as the day-to-day life of the city.

The case of Perec and Akerman

This section further elaborates on the use of film as a mode of investigation of the everyday, and for this purpose I am suggesting that several of Chantal Akerman's films have a similar interest to Perec's brand of everydayness and constitute a sort of parallel 'universe' to *Espèces d'espaces*. This is perhaps not surprising, given that Akerman's films are of the same period as Perec's writing, and the publication of *Espèces d'espaces* in 1974 pretty much coincides with Akerman's key film *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (*Jeanne Dielman* hereafter) in 1975. Both are key texts on the notion of the everyday, although *Jeanne Dielman* has usually been analysed for 'its thematic concern with women and the everyday […] a reference in any discussion of feminist and women's film' (Margulies, 1996, pp.4–5).

   To my knowledge, there is no evidence that Perec and Akerman either influenced or even knew each other, nor is there any comparative study of Perec and Akerman, scholarly or otherwise. As far as I am aware, they are never mentioned in the same breath – and yet they have a lot in common.[15] Moreover, Babette Mangolte, who was one of Perec's oldest and longest-lasting friends (Bellos, 1993, p.282), was director of photography on several of Akerman's films, including *Jeanne Dielman*.[16] There is therefore no doubt that they would

have been aware of each other's existence through Mangolte. Akerman had much in common with Perec, aside from Mangolte, and in some ways she does with a camera what he does in writing. *La Chambre* (1972), *Hotel Monterey* (1972) and *Jeanne Dielman* (1975) contain several aspects of species of spaces relevant to this study. For this purpose, I hypothesize here that filmic everydayness is most prevalent in the home, and that it is possible to establish an architectonic of everydayness in films, concentrating on the home.

Perec's spatial analysis in *Espèces d'espaces* provides us here with our starting point for this investigation. He systematically explores spaces of increasing scale, from the page, the bed, the room…the flat, the building, the street…right up to the universe. Perec starts with the page as, for a writer, this is where the notion of space takes form:

> J'écris : j'habite ma feuille de papier, je l'investis, je la parcours. Je suscite des *blancs*, des *espaces* […] L'espace commence ainsi, avec seulement des mots, des signes tracés sur la page blanche. Décrire l'espace : le nommer, le tracer […].[17]
>
> *(Perec, 1974, pp.23,26)*

He carries on with the bed, his bed, which is a source of further spatial exploration: 'J'aime mon lit. J'aime rester étendu sur mon lit et regarder le plafond d'un oeil placide […] J'aime les plafonds, j'aime les moulures et les rosaces : elles me tiennent souvent lieu de muse'[18] (Perec, 1974, pp.35–36).

Perec continues his spatial investigation by asking a series of questions to define what a bedroom is and how we inhabit it:

> What does it mean, to live in a room? Is to live in a place to take possession of it? What does taking possession of a place mean? As from when does somewhere become truly yours? Is it when you've put your three pairs of socks to soak in a pink plastic bowl? Is it when you've heated up your spaghetti over a camping-gaz? Is it when you've used up all the non-matching hangers in the cupboard? Is it when you've drawing-pinned to the wall an old postcard showing Carpaccio's 'Dream of St Ursula'? Is it when you've experienced there the throes of anticipation, or the exaltations of passion, or the torments of a toothache? Is it when you've hung suitable curtains up on the windows, and put up the wallpaper, and sanded the parquet flooring?
>
> *(Perec, 2008, p.24)*

As it happens, Akerman too shows a fondness for beds, in *La Chambre* (1972), a short, where she is lying on a bed eating an apple, and in *Je tu il elle* (1972), her first feature-length film, where two long 'bed' scenes book-end the film. *La Chambre* is a particularly interesting film from a spatial point of view and the camera movements (shot by Mangolte). It is a filmic

FIGURE 4.3 *La Chambre* (Chantal Akerman, 1972) – stills

exploration of a very ordinary room by a camera centrally placed on a tripod, which rotates anti-clockwise three times, stops at minute seven (out of eleven minutes) and restarts rotating clockwise. The clockwise camera rotation stops again and goes back anti-clockwise a couple more times before the end of the film. The last camera movements are like a pendulum effect, centring on Akerman eating an apple while lying in bed, looking at the camera.

The constant rotation around the room produces the sort of effect that Perec would regard as a form of *dépaysement* [defamiliarization] – making the familiar space an almost abstract space through repetitive techniques of spatial description 'Carry on [making notes] until the scene becomes improbable […] until the whole place becomes strange, and you no longer even know that this is what is called a town, a street, buildings, pavements' (Perec, 2008, p.53). This would be a way of making us rediscover the quotidian in its most banal form and unit: a bedroom. It could also be assimilated to a 'sectional film': as the camera rotates, it slices through the bedroom wall and creates a 'ribbon' effect, or an 'inverted' zoetrope. In *La Chambre*, the everyday in terms of action consists of a woman lying in bed who at some point eats an apple, looking straight at the camera, a rather contemplative act, a singular occurrence in the panoply of domestic routines. But on the other hand the camera invites us to observe around the room a whole range of implied everyday activities pertaining to living in a bedsit. There are dishes in a sink, evidence of food on a table, a kitchen stove with a kettle on it, a writing desk, a cupboard etc. It is a filmed, lived space with the occupant at its centre. It is a succession of a series of moving still lifes. The camera rotations create a room inventory, a visual list of the world in this room. There are no cuts. It's an enumeration of potential everyday activities captured in one single take.

By contrast, in Perec's film *Un homme qui dort* (1974), there are multiple and repeated scenes of everyday life in a tight space (see previous analysis) edited over the space of a year and intercut with city moments. Perec's film constitutes a clinically-observed taxonomy of everydayness, while Akerman's is a rather singular occurrence. Both present different but valuable approaches to film-making everydayness in a single space. Yet another equally useful example of the 'bedroom film' genre is shown in Godard's short, *Charlotte et son Jules* (1958). It's a dialogue – almost a monologue – between a young woman and her former

lover (played by Belmondo). She has come back to his bedsit to pick up her toothbrush, and over the course of 12 minutes, Jules lectures her on the errors of her ways. Respecting the unity of time and space, *Charlotte et son Jules* is a light-hearted humorous comedy with a fast-paced dialogue matched by quick cuts. The shooting and editing strategy allows the room to be thoroughly spatially practised by the two protagonists, lying on the bed, sitting on it, sitting at the desk typing, using the sink, opening the French window onto the small street balcony etc. In a short span of time, Godard's film essentially 'speaks' the full vocabulary of the practice of everydayness in that bedroom. There isn't much more that a user of space would be able to demonstrate over and above what's already in this film – the same could also be said of *Un homme qui dort*.

Going up the spatial scale, Perec considers the flat in the following terms:

1   Every apartment consists of a variable, but finite, number of rooms.
2   Each room has a particular function. Apartments are built by architects who have very precise ideas of what an entrance-hall, a sitting-room (living-room, reception room), a parents' bedroom, a child's room, a maid's room, a circulation space, a kitchen, and a bathroom ought to be like. To start with, however, all rooms are alike, more or less, and it is no good their trying to impress us with stuff about modules and other nonsense: they're never anything more than a sort of cube, or let's say rectangular parallelepiped.

(Perec, 2008, p.28)

On the film side, we would struggle to find a better visual text to accompany Perec's writing than *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*. It stands as a towering giant in the everyday film genre and takes place in an unremarkable series of rectangular parallelepiped volumes.

FIGURE 4.4 *Charlotte et son Jules* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1958) – stills

The case of *Jeanne Dielman*

The film depicts three days in the life of a middle-aged woman living in a flat in Brussels with her son. She is a widow and supplements her income by prostituting herself at home every afternoon between 5 and 5:30pm. She follows a strict domestic routine that could go on forever if it wasn't for unexpectedly burning the potatoes on the kitchen stove at the end of day two. Entering the flat and finding her in the kitchen, the boy remarks, '*maman tu es toute décoiffée*'. She replies, '*j'ai trop laissé cuire les pommes de terre*'. What seems to be a minor incident turns out to be a major disruption in a reassuring sea of everydayness. Her implacable and yet at the same time comforting routine having been disrupted, she is unhinged and on the third day she kills her client in the bedroom.

The film lasts three hours and twenty minutes and comprises a series of long continuous scenes, often lasting three to four minutes, where actions are taking place in real time. But instead of inducing boredom, this 'gradually increases our attention to their construction and its significance' (Bergstrom, 1977, p.116).

Gilles Deleuze, who assigned some crucial function to the depiction of the everyday in films,[19] commenting on *Jeanne Dielman*, stated that 'Chantal Akerman wants to show "gestures in their fullness"' (Deleuze, 1989, p.196). Indeed the cinematic everyday situation is a key component of the Deleuzian concept of the 'time-image' that emerged principally with the Italian neo-realist movement at the end of WWII, in particular with *Umberto D* (Vittorio De Sica, 1952), a film of relevance to *Jeanne Dielman,* the two having often been studied side by side (Margulies, 1996, p.8), particularly given the importance of the kitchen scenes.[20]

But crucially here, Deleuze suggests that the everyday in films is a necessary state, to contrast with potential disturbances, and that the more banal the situation is, the greater the potential to introduce the brutal and the nightmarish.[21] This argument applies to *Jeanne Dielman* where the potatoes incident brings about a brutal murder. Deleuze further opposes the everyday to limit-situations (extreme situations): 'In fact, the most banal or everyday situations release accumulated 'dead forces' equal to the life force of a limit-situation'[22] (Deleuze, 1989, p.7). Deleuze hints here at the duality, and complementarity, between everyday situations and 'limit-situations' – murder in the case of *Jeanne Dielman* – the latter having to be understood as action situations, in contrast with periods of idleness that only make sense in relation to former dramatic situations or events. What is suggested here is that everydayness is not shown on the screen for itself, but rather as a primer or context to limit situations. This is very germane to my argument in Chapter 3 regarding the close and necessary relationship between the everyday and disruptions. Given the relentlessness of the everyday over nearly 3 hours, the murder provides indeed both the spectators and *Jeanne Dielman* with the necessary release of accumulated 'dead forces'.

Jeanne Dielman*'s cinematography*

Most striking is the cinematography, essentially composed of straight-on long shots, explained by Akerman in the following terms:

> it was the only way to shoot that scene and to shoot that film to avoid cutting the woman into a hundred pieces, to avoid cutting the action in a hundred places, to look carefully and to be respectful. The framing was meant to respect the space, her, and her gestures within it […] We didn't have a lot of choice about where to put the camera because I didn't want angle shots. I wanted them all to be straight, as much as possible.
>
> *(Bergstrom, 1977, p.119)*

As a result, Delphine Seyrig, who plays Jeanne Dielman, is always bang in the middle of the frame, with the camera either facing her or at the side. Over three days the camera is sited in the same positions in the kitchen, the corridor, the bedroom, the bathroom and the dining room, weaving over time a careful network of daily gestures. *Jeanne Dielman* is a film that gives a lot of space to space – the camera often lingers for a few seconds after a character has left a space, the sort of spaces one never normally pays attention to: the corridor, the kitchen, the dining room, and in this case, spaces of no architectural significance or merit, drab spaces that are as anonymous and unnoticed as Delphine Seyrig's gestures when she peels her potatoes.

> I give space to things which were never, almost never, shown in that way, like the daily gestures of a woman. They are the lowest in the hierarchy of film images. A kiss or a car crash come higher, and I don't think that's an accident. It's because these are women's gestures that they count for so little. That's one reason I think it's a feminist film. But more than the content, it's because of the style. If you choose to show a woman's gestures so precisely, it's because you love them.
>
> *(Bergstrom, 1977, p.118)*

FIGURE 4.5 *Jeanne Dielman* (Chantal Akerman, 1974) – kitchen planimetric shots

Over three days the actions and tasks performed by Jeanne are like a carefully catalogued study in domestic everydayness. It remarkably matches Perec's own analysis of the various functions performed in an apartment on a daily basis:

> I don't know, and don't want to know, where functionality begins or ends. It seems to me, in any case, that in the ideal dividing-up of today's apartments functionality functions in accordance with a procedure that is unequivocal, sequential and nycthemeral. The activities of the day correspond to slices of time, and to each slice of time there corresponds one room of the apartment. The following model is hardly a caricature.

> *(Perec, 2008, p.28)*

Perec proceeds to list a generic flat's functionality in relation to the different rooms, from morning to evening. In the table below I have matched Jeanne's actions to Perec's list for the first part of the day.

Perec's list [until 10:30am only]		JD's list of actions until around 10:30am
7:00	The mother gets up and goes to get breakfast in the kitchen	Jeanne wakes up, goes to the bathroom
7:15	The child gets up and goes into the bathroom	the son is asleep – she puts the gas heater on in the room – she prepares his clothes – goes to the kitchen, puts the kettle on and polishes his shoes
7:30	The father gets up and goes into the bathroom	she prepares the coffee – she wakes him up
7:45	The father and the child have their breakfast in the kitchen	the son is having breakfast [she is getting dressed, ellipsed]
8:00	The child takes his coat from the entrance hall and goes off to school	[the son gets dressed, ellipsed] the son has his coat on – she adjusts his scarf – he asks for extra pocket money – she kisses him – he goes out
8:15	The father takes his coat from the entrance-hall and goes off to his office	
8:30	The mother performs her toilet in the bathroom	

8:45	The mother takes the vacuum cleaner from the broom closet and does the housework (she then goes through all the rooms of the apartment but I forbear from listing them)	Jeanne tidies up the sitting room, her bedroom and does the breakfast dishes
9:30	The mother fetches her shopping basket from the kitchen and her coat from the entrance hall and goes to do the shopping	she grabs some money to go out – first to the post office – then she does the shopping
10:30	The mother returns from shopping and puts her coat back in the entrance-hall	Jeanne comes back, puts the shopping on the kitchen table, takes her coat off, puts away the shopping and makes a note of her shopping on the kitchen table

But for the missing father in *Jeanne Dielman*, the comparison shows a remarkable correspondence. Perec's is a list and *Jeanne Dielman* is a visual list, a moving-image visualization of a daily routine.

The flat's dreariness could be described as an 'espace quelconque', as in 'any old space' as opposed to the Deleuzian sense of any-space-whatever. The studio-reconstructed flat is oozing in carefully staged gloominess and, for a film shot in 1975, it is untouched by the advent of modernism. There is no TV, only the radio, emphasizing the 'stuck in the past' lifestyle. The layout is simple and yet the rooms are like distinct cells, disconnected by moments of darkness as, at night, *Jeanne Dielman* is systematically switching off and on the light as she leaves and enters a room. It is a form of compartmentalized living with no open plan, no vista.[23] Day in and day out, Jeanne and her son connect from one 'cell' to another, the perfect visualization of Perec's 'Vivre, c'est passer d'un espace à un autre, en essayant le plus possible de ne pas se cogner' [To live is to move from one space to another, whilst trying your best not to bump yourself] (Perec, 1974).

The only sign of contemporariness is the flickering bluish glow emanating from the street signs at night and reflecting in the dining-cum-sitting-room. The flat has some passing resemblance to the depiction of the 'old'-style mode of living in Richter's *Die Neue Wohnung* (1930). In particular the dining-cum-sitting-room has the sort of furnishing and decoration seen in the drawing room flat shown at the beginning of *Die Neue Wohnung* and where 'the decorative furniture known as *vertiko*, which was popular at the end of the nineteenth century onwards and featured a space on top for all sorts of bric-a-brac, is the focus of ridicule' (Janser et al., 2001, p.45). Similar bric-a-brac features prominently in *Jeanne Dielman*, displayed in a glass cabinet situated in the dining room part, and shot face on, with its central mullion invariably in the middle of the frame. And in a similar scene to *Die Neue Wohnung*, we see *Jeanne Dielman*, on day three, dusting the china dolls and pots in the glass

FIGURE 4.6 Similarities between *Jeanne Dielman* (Chantal Akerman, 1974) and *Die Neue Wohnung* (Hans Richter, 1930)

cabinet (see Figure 4.6). However, the meaning is different: Richter aimed to ridicule, while Akerman wished to redeem everyday gestures, which participate in the poignancy of the slowly unfolding drama.

The space of the flat, built in the studio, is not neutral, it has been designed to fully participate and accompany the drama. Interestingly, in 'The Idea of the Home' Douglas hints at the active role of space over events:

> […] we should focus on the home as an organization of space over time. This reveals a distinctive characteristic of the idea of home. Each kind of building has a distinctive capacity for memory or anticipation. Memory institutionalized is capable of anticipating future events.
>
> *(Douglas, 1991, p.294)*

In that sense, Akerman may have had the intuition that the flat itself, in all its dreariness, already contained the unfolding drama. But if the flat is painstakingly unmodern, the cinematography is, I would argue, thoroughly 'modern'. Each space is meticulously framed by Babette Mangolte, always from the same camera height. There is great attention to symmetry in the frame. There is a very strict orthogonal method of filming, with no diagonal shots. Across cuts, the camera shifts position by 90 degrees, each time facing a wall straight on. So in the dining-cum-sitting-room, the largest space in the flat, we see all four walls in 90-degree rotation.

For a smaller space such as the kitchen we only have two points of view at right angles from each other, from the door looking in and from the side wall looking towards the sink and the kitchen hob. As a result the views become a cross between an elevation and a sectional cut. This cinematographic 'purism' in all its systematicity, and orthogonality[24] anticipates the cinematography of later film-makers such as Wes Anderson in *The Grand Budapest*

FIGURE 4.7 *Jeanne Dielman* (Chantal Akerman, 1974) – dining room planimetric shots

Hotel (2014). In that sense Akerman proposes a novel approach to filming a domestic architectural space that can be construed as 'modern' as it breaks away from former continuity editing models – with no point-of-view shots, no shot and reverse shots.

Intriguingly, the kitchen scenes are studied and portrayed in such a systematic way that they constitute a textbook 'cinematic kitchen use of everydayness', if this existed. However, what does exist and relates to it, are a number of architectural volumes, such as the Neufert, that provide 'architects and designers with a concise source of core information needed to form a framework for the detailed planning of any building project' (Neufert et al., 2000, p.1). And we can arrive at a striking comparison between the *Jeanne Dielman* kitchen scenes and a sample from Neufert's Architects' data prototypical kitchen layouts (Neufert et al., 2000, p.251).

The flat, in all its unfashionable commonness, participates in the description of very ordinary lives, lived by millions. The tedium of the everyday routine is unravelling almost in real time and its 'perfect depiction of the horror of the everyday world – a world predominantly conducted behind closed doors, and rarely projected large on the big screen – is spellbinding' (Chamarette, 2013). A domestic routine is everyone's safety net and we can all identify with that. Akerman asks us to confront the everydayness, which we would normally never question or reflect on. Even the upset in the routine – we can all be partly temporarily disturbed by having performed certain acts in a different order, although clearly not to the point of committing a murder. *Jeanne Dielman* illustrates perfectly Douglas's analysis of the home and the role of the mother:

> The very regularity of home's processes is both inexorable and absurd […] those committed to the idea of home exert continual vigilance in its behalf […] The vigilance focuses upon common presence at fixed points in the day, the week, the year, on elaborate coordination of movements […] The persons who devote vigilance to the maintenance of the home apparently believe that they personally have a lot to lose if it were to collapse.
>
> *(Douglas, 1991, p.287)*
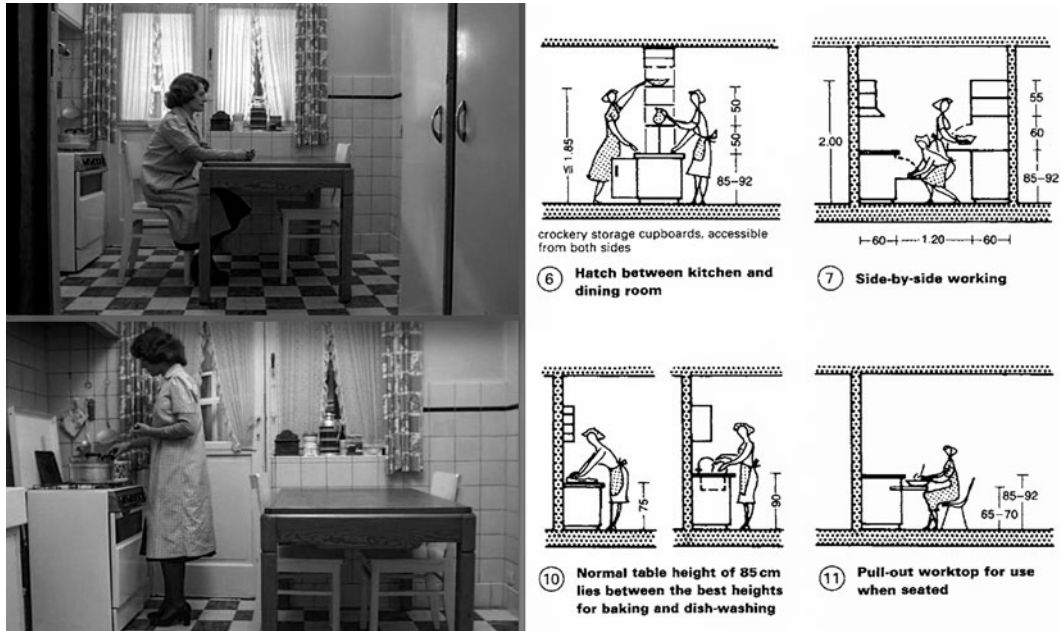
FIGURE 4.8 *Jeanne Dielman* (left) (Chantal Akerman, 1974) versus *Neufert's Architects' Data* (right © Courtesy of Neufert-Stiftung, Germany)

And indeed the disruption in Jeanne's routine leads to her world collapsing.

But more pertinently for architects, *Jeanne Dielman* shows a spatial practice of everydayness, a universal domesticity. In fact the hyperrealism[25] of *Jeanne Dielman* is such that it veers towards surrealism in the sense that the repetition is such that it gradually induces a sense of de-familiarization – a technique advocated by Perec – and akin to Aragon in the *Paysan de Paris* (Aragon, 2004) – and in which the ordinary becomes extraordinary. It is a film which makes us reflect on our own everydayness, it uncovers this reality that we try so hard to ignore, it fully participates in uncovering the Perecquian notion of the *infra-ordinaire*.

Notes

1 It won 'le prix Jean Vigo' in 1974.
2 His engagement with film dates back to the 1950s at a time when he was a most avid cinemagoer and had started to write articles and film reviews. He much admired Eisenstein's *La Ligne Générale*, which he saw in 1959 (Bellos, 1993, p.216). In fact he was so impressed by the film that he suggested to his group of friends to name their up-and-coming literary review 'La Ligne Générale' after the film.
3 'Il m'importe peu que ces questions soient, ici, fragmentaires, à peine indicatives d'une méthode, tout au plus d'un projet. Il m'importe beaucoup qu'elles semblent triviales et futiles: c'est précisément ce qui les rend tout aussi, sinon plus, essentielles que tant d'autres au travers desquelles nous avons vainement tenté de capter notre vérité' (Perec, 1989, p.13).

4 An FR3 1975 television series for which Perec was hired to write and read the commentary over amateur films shot with the popular 'Pathé-Baby' camera (de Bary, 2006, p.73).

5 According to Lefebvre, leisure activities have a special status as a critique of everyday life: 'And yet, be he an author or not, the man of our times carries out in his own way, spontaneously, the critique of his everyday life. And this critique of the everyday plays an integral part in the everyday: it is achieved in and by leisure activities' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.51).

6 I am referring here to his literary description as of course, since he is commenting over the images, the relationship between the different 'actors' would have been made clear.

7 This aspect has been discussed at length elsewhere and there is no need for me to revisit it here. Suffice it to remind readers of the influence exercised by Lukács (Wuillème, 2004) and the discussion regarding issues of realism and *Les Lieux* in particular (de Bary, 2005; Montfrans, 1999). Perec, commenting in an interview on *La Tentative de description de quelques lieux parisiens,* further qualifies his position: '…j'ai commencé à suivre cette relation avec l'autobiographie, j'ai écrit des morceaux d'autobiographie qui étaient sans cesse déviés. Ce n'était pas: «J'ai pensé telle et telle chose», mais l'envie d'écrire une histoire de mes vêtements ou de mes chats! ou des récits de rêve. […] Pour moi, c'est cela le véritable réalisme: s'appuyer sur une description de la réalité débarrassée de toutes présomptions' (de Bary, 2005, p.482). For more information on Perec's early position on realism, and his link to Lukács, his paper at the Warwick conference is essential reading: « Pouvoirs et limites du romancier français contemporain », 5 May 1967, Warwick University (Wuillème, 2004).

8 Perec stated that 'Le roman, les livres sont une forme qui doit nécessairement être informé par le travail cinématographique…dans *La vie mode d'emploi* par exemple je sais qu'il y a un phénomène d'écriture qui est un peu analogue à celui du travelling ; c'est a dire qu'on s'approche et qu'on décrit des objets et de temps en temps on s'approche en gros plan d'un des objets…on le décrit plus abondamment, on rentre dedans…ça c'est quelque chose qui vient, je crois que ça vient d'une sensibilité cinématographique qui est très forte à notre époque' (INA, 8 April 1979).

9 'Je fais le constat-hypothèse que le film est déjà dans l'écriture, au travail d'iconisation et j'en viens au seuil d'une écriture-cinéma. N'est-ce pas que l'écriture-cinéma, par la pluralité des codes dont elle se construit, au-delà du dessin, de la gravure, du tableau, par ses images-mouvements ou ses images-temps est un lieu de transcodage, surcodage, de déconstruction-reconstruction, tel que Perec en montrait l'usage révolutionnaire, par l'imagination de tant de mode d'emplois de combinaisons calculées?' (Peytard, 1997, p.37).

10 An even bigger challenge was, on the one hand, how to handle a text that uses the second person singular '*tu*' [you], a most unusual literary form found only in some passages of Kafka and a handful of other writers and, on the other, what images to shoot without falling into the trap of a simple illustrative or literal adaptation. For example: 'Tu ne revois pas tes amis. Tu n'ouvres pas ta porte. Tu ne descends pas chercher ton courrier. Tu ne rends pas les livres que tu as empruntés à la bibliothèque de l'institut pédagogique. Tu n'écris pas à tes parents' (Perec, 2007, p.11). In addition, a third layer of complexity was introduced, a music track; as recalled by Queysanne 'l'idée du triple récit, c'est-à-dire celle d'un décalage entre le texte et l'image, en y ajoutant un travail sur le son et la musique. L'intervention de Philippe Drogoz et Eugénie Kuffer, qui s'étaient appelés "Ensemble 010", sur la musique de la bande-son fut très précieuse car, en faisant intervenir les bruits de façon musicale et non narrative, ils allaient dans le même sens que nous' (Perec, 2007, p.48).

11 A sestina is a poem with six stanzas of six lines and a final triplet, all stanzas having the same six words at the line ends in six different sequences.

12 *Métro-boulot-dodo,* meaning to commute (by métro), to work, and to sleep – is an expression that became popular in the 1960s and that describes the daily grind of the Parisians.

13 While the voice-over goes 'le temps passe, mais tu ne sais jamais l'heure. Il est dix heures, ou peut-être onze, il est tard, il est tôt, le jour naît, la nuit tombe, les bruits ne cessent jamais tout à fait, le temps ne s'arrête jamais totalement, même s'il n'est plus qu'une minuscule brèche dans le mur du silence, murmure ralenti, oublié du goutte à goutte, presque confondu avec les battements de ton coeur'

(Perec, 2007, p.15), constituting a poignant comment on time, time measured in the daily gestures of the everyday, circadian rhythms computing the time passing.

14 'J'aime rester étendu sur mon lit et regarder le plafond d'un oeil placide. J'y consacrerais volontiers l'essentiel de mon temps (et principalement de mes matinées) si des occupations réputées plus urgentes (…) ne m'en empêchaient si souvent. J'aime les plafonds, j'aime les moulures et les rosaces : elles me tiennent souvent lieu de muse et l'enchevêtrement des fioritures de stuc me renvoie sans peine à ces autres labyrinthes que tissent les fantasmes, les idées et les mots' (Perec, 1974, p.36).

15 Both Perec and Akerman are of Polish Jewish descent, lost parents in Auschwitz, and have explored their Jewish identity through their work.

16 She moved to New York in 1970.

17 My translation from the French: 'I write: I inhabit my sheet of paper, I occupy it, I travel across it. I call upon *blanks, spaces* […] Space starts just like that, with words only, signs drawn across a white page. To describe space; to name it, to trace it […]'.

18 My translation from the French: 'I like my bed. I like to stretch out on my bed and to gaze at the ceiling with a tranquil eye […] I like ceilings, I like mouldings and ceiling roses. They often serve me as a muse'.

19 'In everyday banality, the action-image and even the movement-image tend to disappear in favour of pure optical situations, but these reveal connections of a new type, which are no longer sensory-motor and which bring the emancipated senses into direct relation with time and thought. This is the very special extension of the opsign: to make time and thought perceptible, to make them visible and of sound' (Deleuze, 1989, pp.17–18).

20 'And in *Umberto D*, De Sica constructs the famous sequence quoted as an example by Bazin: the young maid going into the kitchen in the morning, making a series of mechanical, weary gestures, cleaning a bit, driving the ants away from a water fountain, picking up the coffee grinder, stretching out her foot to close the door with her toe. And her eyes meet her pregnant woman's belly, and it is as though all the misery in the world were going to be born. This is how, in an ordinary or everyday situation in the course of a series of gestures, which are insignificant but all the more obedient to simple sensory-motor schemata, what has suddenly been brought about in *pure optical situation* to which the little maid has no response or reaction. The eyes, the belly, that is what an encounter is … of course, encounters can take very different forms, even achieving the exceptional, but they follow the same formula' (Deleuze, 1989, p.1). In other words, the everyday in all its banality makes the maid's situation all the more poignant, a feeling conveyed through a purely visual situation without recourse to the movement-image or action-image in Deleuzian terms. The everyday gestures of the maid are part of her daily routine and participate in establishing an atmosphere of domesticity of which Umberto, sitting in a corner of the kitchen, is part. Even the way she breaks the news to Umberto, in a very matter of fact way, triggers Umberto to blurt out 'Goodness, how can you say it like that', to which she responds 'how do you want me to say it', before carrying on with her domestic tasks. The kitchen scene lasts for around three and a half minutes, and we need this length of time for the everyday to set in and to absorb the drama of the pregnancy announcement. The unrelenting daily routines anticipates her life ahead, there will be no escape as noted by Deleuze.

21 '[…] if everyday banality is so important, it is because, being subject to sensory-motor schemata which are automatic and pre-established, it is all the more liable, on the least disturbance of equilibrium between stimulus and response (as in the scene with the little maid in *Umberto D*), suddenly to free itself from the laws of this schema and reveal itself in a visual and sound nakedness, crudeness and brutality which make it unbearable, giving it the pace of a dream or a nightmare' (Deleuze, 1989, p.3).

22 Deleuze goes on '(thus, in De Sica's *Umberto D*, the sequence where the old man examines himself and thinks he has fever). In addition, the idle periods in Antonioni do not merely show the banalities of daily life. They reap the consequences or the effect of a remarkable event which is reported only through itself without being explained (the break-up of a couple, the sudden disappearance of a woman …)' (Deleuze, 1989, p.7).

23 I recall an experiment in 2008 with some of my Masters students when I asked them to make a plan of the flat – it proved in fact difficult for them to get their heads around the layout – possibly because it was a studio set – and the results were very mixed, despite having watched the film for over three hours!

24 It may also remind us of some of the principles of modernism, found in Le Corbusier's writings such as 'Le Poème de l'angle droit' (Corbusier, 2012). The camera framing generates the space in the same way as, for Le Corbusier, 'the plan is the generator' [of space] (Le Corbusier and Etchells, 1986, p.180).

25 Akerman's work 'gains its force from its hyperrealist understanding of the lack of distinction between image and reality' (Margulies, 1996, p.10), blurring the line between realism and its representation, in particular through the long scenes shot in real time.

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5
RHYTHMANALYSIS

Rhythmanalysis, a new science that is in the process of being constituted, studies these highly complex processes. It may be that it will complement or supplant psychoanalysis. It situates itself at the juxtaposition of the physical, the physiological and the social, at the heart of daily life.

(Lefebvre, 2014, p.802)

But in deciding the relative distances of the various objects, he has discovered rhythms, rhythms apparent to the eye and clear in their relations with one another. And these rhythms are at the very root of human activities. They resound in man by an organic inevitability […]

(Le Corbusier, 1986, p.72)

Defining Rhythmanalysis

The notion of Rhythmanalysis is first mentioned in Volume 2 of Lefebvre's *Critique* but is only formulated as a potential new science in Volume 3. Subsequently Lefebvre indicated in an interview in 1982 (Lefebvre, 2014, p.879) that he was planning to pursue this line of inquiry with a work on rhythms, revolving around the concept of 'rhythmanalysis'. The project was realized only after his death, with the publication by Catherine Regulier of *Elements de rythmanalyse. Introduction à la connaissance des rhythmes* (Lefebvre, 1992), and the book first appeared in English in 2004. It can be construed as the last volume of *Critique*. Lefebvre further defines Rhythmanalysis as follows:

The rhythmanalytical study […] integrates itself into that of everyday life. It even deepens certain aspects of it. Everyday life is modeled on abstract, quantitative time, the time of

> watches and clocks [...] everyday life remains shot through and traversed by great cosmic and vital rhythms: day and night, the months and the seasons, and still more precisely biological rhythms. In the everyday, this results in the perpetual interaction of these rhythms with repetitive processes linked to homogeneous time.
>
> *(Lefebvre, 2004, p.73)*

Rhythmanalysis[1] is a way of understanding time and space through the study of the cyclical and the linear, and how they exert a reciprocal action, further defining the cyclical as dictated by the cosmic rhythms, but also including body and biological rhythms, while the linear is the repetitive everyday.[2] The cyclical cosmic rhythms are the 'given', part of nature, while the everyday is different for everybody. In effect it is a way of making the study of everyday life more comprehensive by acknowledging the cosmic rhythms. But it is also the attempt to get us to think about space and time differently, and to think about them together. Lefebvre conceives the analysis of rhythms as a way of complementing his work on *The Production of Space* with *Critique,* but it is also an extension of his work on cities and the urban.

In order to enlighten his readers, Lefebvre proposes a couple of rhythmanalytical case studies, both concerned with the urban environment: *Seen from the Window*[3] and *Attempt at the Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities.* At the heart of the project is the human body, acting as 'métronome' of the rhythmanalysis – the body being itself constituted of complex internal biological rhythms – and yet Lefebvre is keen to distinguish it from a phenomenological approach.[4] However, Lefebvre warns that

> The rhythmanalytical project applied to the urban can seem disparate, because it appeals to, in order to bring together, notions and aspects that analysis too often keeps separate: time and space [...] it can seem abstract, because it appeals to very general concepts.
>
> *(Lefebvre, 2004, p.100)*

But its abstractness, and its appeal to general concepts, is here an attraction and a cue for expanding the rhythmanalytical concept to film analysis – and all the more so as Lefebvre specifically proposed a new approach to the space and time relationship, which is of course at the very heart of cinema. Not unlike Lefebvre leaning out of the window of his Parisian flat to grasp the fleeting city rhythms, we will be gazing into the cinema screen as our window onto the world.

The case of *Jeanne Dielman*

Let us restart with *Jeanne Dielman*, which was studied together with Perec[5] in the previous section. What could constitute the cyclical and the linear in this case? And how could it help

us grasp better the phenomena of everyday life in film? First we must consider the activities that take place over the three days.

The film reveals an astonishing regularity in the everyday pattern on three consecutive weekdays – and we can only speculate that a different pattern would take place at weekends. The vast majority of the activities are part of what Lefebvre would term the linear pattern of everyday life. Set activities are always taking place in the same spaces – they always eat dinner at the same time, sitting on the same chair – and ditto for breakfast. It shows the interrelation of space and time in the understanding of everyday life. The everyday establishes itself, creating hourly demands, and repetitive organization – the underlying rhythms – and

> all rhythms imply the relation of a time to a space, a localised time […] a temporalised space. Rhythm is always linked to such and such a place, to its place, be that the heart, the fluttering of the eyelids, the movement in a street or the tempo of a waltz. This does not prevent it from being a time, which is to say an aspect of a movement or of a becoming.
>
> *(Lefebvre, 2004, p.89)*

The rhythmanalyst, Lefebvre tells us, has to observe a crowd in a square attentively to discern patterns of rhythms in the apparent disorder. In the case of *Jeanne Dielman*, the task is made easier by the ability to play a scene or scenes over and over again – compared to a live observation in a city piazza – but still we must be attentive so as not to let our senses be dulled by the apparent humdrumness of the scenes. The broad patterns of rhythms are all the same, but each one is slightly different from every other one. The rhythms in Day 2 and especially Day 3 accelerate – through the process of space–time ellipsis.

What we notice is what's different from the baseline. On Day 2, having had to go out again to buy some more potatoes in the afternoon, Jeanne checks the letterbox as if it was the morning – although this time she doesn't open it – but nearly does. On Day 3 she gets up an hour too early and finds the post office closed. This is also the scene when she goes to the café but finds her usual table already occupied. Her daily routine has been disturbed and 'We are only conscious of most of our rhythms when we begin to suffer from some irregularity' (Lefebvre, 2004, p.77). In *Jeanne Dielman* the rhythms of Jeanne's activities belong essentially to what Lefebvre refers to as the 'basic functions – eating, sleeping etc. – in standardized daily life' as opposed to the 'so-called higher functions (reading, writing, judging and appreciating, conceiving, managing, etc.), and their programmed distribution in time' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.759). As such, they are the linear everyday life. However, the cosmic and the cyclical are present in the clearly indicated day and night patterns – taking place over three days[6] – and would be accounted for and measured differently compared to the linear rhythms.

We should also briefly reflect on the sexual acts in *Jeanne Dielman* in relation to rhythmanalysis. If it was sex between partners, it would be a straightforward 'moment' that Lefebvre defines as follows:

> the 'moment' is *the attempt to achieve total realization of a possibility*. […] it exhausts itself in the act of being lived. […] the moment is born of the everyday and within the everyday […] everyday life is the native soil in which the moment germinates and takes root.
>
> *(Lefebvre, 2014, p.651)*

and to be more precise 'among moments, we may include love, play, rest, knowledge, etc.'[7] In that sense, making love is a 'moment' in the everyday life pattern – but at the same time distinct from it. However, the act of prostitution makes it different, as sex becomes a commodity. In the post-1968 era, Lefebvre felt obliged to state that

> the critique of everyday life in no way excluded sexuality, but it did not accept its vulgarization[8] […] The underlying project, doubtless incompletely formulated but inherent in the approach, involved the permeation of the sexual into everydayness, but not as commodity.
>
> *(Lefebvre, 2014, p.751)*

Essentially for Jeanne Dielman it is part of her 'work' pattern – taking place every afternoon – while for the client it is a 'moment' – hence the need to construe it as an asymmetrical pattern.

Exhibition

Our next and main rhythmanalysis case study is Joanna Hogg's *Exhibition* (2013). It seems a fitting combination with *Jeanne Dielman* since Hogg co-curated over two years a major retrospective of the work of Akerman, a film-maker she greatly admires.[9] Both films are also very clearly structured around days passing by – three in the case of *Jeanne Dielman* – and ten for *Exhibition*. However, the two homes are very different. One is a flat while the other is a detached house, but most crucially, with *Exhibition* we have the unravelling of everyday life in a modernist house that was built in 1969 in the well-to-do London area around Kensington Gardens. We therefore have to first ask the question as to the influence of modernism on everyday life. Does a modernist space influence our perception of daily life? How different is it from the drab apartment in *Jeanne Dielman*, and does this matter? Lefebvre had much to say about the issue of modernity – including modernism and post-modernism within an architectural

context[10] – but suffice to remember here that for him 'The everyday is covered by a surface: that of modernity […] Modernity and everydayness constitute a deep structure that a critical analysis can work to uncover' (Lefebvre and Levich, 1987, pp.10–11) and to a certain extent this section contributes to revealing those links.

According to Philip Morton Shand, modernism is a 'scenario for human drama'[11] (Shand, 1934, p.9), a comment on modernism that I am only too happy to adopt here, as architecture in general is indeed a vessel for human drama – in real life but also in cinema, as all films take place in spaces that are deliberately accentuated and dramatized. In *Exhibition* the powerful presence of the house induces actions and reactions, it is both a commentary on modernism and on everyday life in a modern house. The house gets a credit at the end of the film by acknowledging the architect, James Melvin, it is clearly the third character in the film,[12] and together with the central characters, D (Viv Albertine) and H (Liam Gillick), they constitute an unusual *ménage à trois*.

The film is the encounter of two worlds: the modernist world and the film world. The Melvin house is the container in which the drama takes place, but the architecture itself, through its modernist vision, already creates its own fiction and vision. Stanford Anderson argues convincingly that to reduce modernism to functionalism is erroneous and that it constructed a fiction out of function. Commenting on Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, Anderson posits that the spirit of L'Esprit Nouveau is present not only in the spatial ingenuity but also in the celebrated photographs exemplifying a new way of life, 'a vision of certain eternal goods: the loaf of

FIGURE 5.1 The Melvin house © François Penz

bread, the can of milk, the bottle of wine, light and air, access to the earth and the sky, physical health' (Anderson, 1987, p.24). Anderson further suggests that

> To the extent that the Villa Savoye permits that we live according to that vision, it does something more. It 'makes a world' that does not determine, but does allow us to live and think differently than if it did not exist. If this fiction can only exist, precariously, in the Villa Savoye, it may indeed be 'merely' a fiction, as valuable to us as other great stories. If its vision or principles can be generalized, we may have a literal grasp on a world that could not have been ours without the originating fiction.
>
> *(Anderson, 1987, p.29)*

This is a poignant comment in relation to *Exhibition*, as the Melvin house, the third character, is directly inspired by Le Corbusier's vision, as pointed out by John Partridge, who detects in his appraisal 'a spatial attitude that seems to hark back to early Corbusian days of the modern movement' (Partridge, 1971, p.90). It is also as if Partridge had anticipated Hogg's film as he refers to 'the house as a stage set coming alive at night'. In other words, the Melvin house as it stands is already embodying its own fiction.

Exhibition therefore presents us with a 'double fiction', that of the Melvin house onto which Hogg was able to project her own vision for a human drama. She creates a carefully constructed 'film world' that, as defined by Yacavone, is 'a complex object-experiences with both symbolic/cognitive and affective dimensions' (Yacavone, 2009, p.83). And as spectators we are invited to be immersed into this 'world' and to believe in it, but to do so requires careful consideration, as expressed by David Lynch:

> once you start down a road to make a film you enter a certain world. And certain things can happen in that world, and certain things can't…so you begin to know these rules for your world, and you've got to be true to those rules.
>
> *(Yacavone, 2015, p.vi)*

Part of the rules invoked by Lynch are, in the case of *Exhibition,* about carefully constructing and elaborating the rhythms of everyday life – they become the skeleton on which the drama can be fleshed out.

> Film can bring something to our explicit attention within the framed image, and within the represented and fictional reality of a work, that would not normally be selected (i.e. noticed, emphasized, or otherwise accorded special importance) in everyday life experience.
>
> *(Yacavone, 2015, p.93)*

And in this case, what comes through explicitly is the steady pulse of everyday life gently unfolding in the fiction of the Melvin house. Rhythms become an important part in creating *Exhibition*'s world – an atmosphere is gradually established over the first two days in the sense formulated by Cronenberg, 'Each movie generates its own little biosphere and has its own little ecology and its climate, and you're attuned to that more than anything else' (Cronenberg, 2009). In this biosphere that carries its own rules, within which D and H evolve, seemingly nothing much happens at first. But this is precisely the point; Hogg establishes from the outset a crucial characteristic into which we, the spectators ease ourselves, we are entering a world, the world of *Exhibition*.

Day 1 and Day 2 are the equivalent of a prolonged establishing shot of the everyday – they establish the baseline against which all future actions will be gauged. Crucial to our rhythmanalysis study is Hogg's insistence on marking the start and the end of each day (see Figure 5.2). The clear morning-to-night structure constitutes the main cyclical pattern over the ten days. We identified a similar pattern in *Jeanne Dielman*, but the cosmic rhythm of daily life is more insistent and visible in *Exhibition* due to its prolonged exposure over a much longer time span. Contrary to *Jeanne Dielman*, where events occur over three consecutive days, the unravelling of the days in *Exhibition* is not consecutive and the time ellipsis is uncertain, but we can assume, judging by the vegetation, that it spans a summer season.

Within the cyclical patterning of the dawn to dusk structure, the linear everyday rhythm is situated in space and time. Over the course of the film we can observe repetitive actions taking place in rooms at pretty much fixed times – reinforced by similar camera set-ups, recurring shots with similar angles; D at her desk, H in his office, the view of the bed, the skyline in the morning, views of the kitchen, shots of the staircase. This contributes to establishing the film's biosphere; it anchors and creates the baseline and its tempo. And within this beat, the rhythm of everyday life evolves and subtly varies from day to day. During the course of Day 1, D and H have lunch, D is seen working in her study, at night H reads to D in bed. Day 2 starts as a bright day and they go to the park; at night the only sign of food is when D is seen cleaning the kitchen, and the last scene of Day 2 is D in bed recording herself while H is asleep. D and

FIGURE 5.2 *Exhibition* (Joanna Hogg, 2013): Start and end of Day 2

H being artists essentially working from home, their everyday life is a far cry from the *métro-boulot-dodo* schema that shaped Lefebvre's *Critique* – although as mentioned before, it is starting from everyday life that genuine creations are achieved (Lefebvre, 2014, p.338).

So far nothing much has happened, but on Day 3 the arrival of the estate agents touring the house is the key dramatic disruption of D and H's everyday life rhythm. In *Jeanne Dielman* the disruption was the burning of the potatoes that unsettled her. This initial disruption of the everyday was the trigger for an exceptional disruption of the quotidian, a murder, exemplifying 'the age-old conflict between the everyday and tragedy' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.652). In *Exhibition*, we have a disruption, the sale of the house, that is, going back to the distinction between the ordinary and the everyday, well within the boundaries of the ordinary, although it is clearly not an everyday occurrence.

The cosmic part of the rhythmanalysis is essentially marked by the visibility of the night and day pattern, but D and H's sexual activities are also part of the cyclical, as discussed earlier with *Jeanne Dielman* – suffice it here to remind ourselves that it is part of what Lefebvre calls 'moments' that are 'born of the everyday and within the everyday' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.645). The only extra complexity introduced in *Exhibition* is that D and H have asynchronous sexual patterns. This is brought to our attention on Day 5, with a failed attempt by H to seduce a reluctant D in their bedroom during the daytime, while later that night D is clearly sexually aroused while H sleeps. Only on Day 9 will they make love on the couch downstairs, the night before the house-leaving party. There are also other small disruptions of the everyday, such as H leaving for a day and a night and the argument with the man who parked on their drive, but the key trigger from which all dramatic actions will ensue is the house being sold.

FIGURE 5.3 *Exhibition* (Joanna Hogg, 2013): the visit of the estate agents

Out of the first five days, we could easily fashion an idealized day (Figures 5.2 and 5.4), a fiction of a modernist vision – a homage to *L'Esprit Nouveau*: it would start with a bright morning [start of Day 2], breakfast would follow [Day 4], H would be working in his study [Day 3], while D settles in hers [Day 1]. A light lunch would be had [Day 1] followed by a promenade in the park [Day 2]. D would settle with a yoga session [Day 1] while H fiddles with the boiler [Day 4]. Friends would come for dinner [Day 3] before D and H retire to bed, reading a book [end of Day 1]. An unadventurous account of everyday life, a fictional reconstruction of a fiction, the repurposing of cinematic metadata, the sort of exercise that Christian Marclay[13] has familiarized us with. It would constitute an idealized tranche of rhythmanalysis, where both the cyclical and the linear patterns are in evidence.

The potential sale of the house creates an interesting dynamic between the couple. H is pretty convinced that this is a good thing, and argues at breakfast on Day 3 that 'we can do something, we can build something, there are possibilities, we should do it while we can […] we can do what we want'. To which D remains silent, shot head-on, a planimetric camera set up that pins her against the wall, indicating a no-escape situation.

D is living in a state of uncertainty, but as Lefebvre argues, not a bad place to find oneself: 'Uncertainty is not without its charm or interest; it can never last long. It maintains ambiguity, keeping what is possible in a state of possibility' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.40). He concludes that: 'To put it more clearly or more abstractly, ambiguity is a category of everyday life, and perhaps an essential category. It never exhausts its reality; from the ambiguity of consciousness and situations spring forth actions, events, results, without warning'. Ambiguity and uncertainty

FIGURE 5.4 *Exhibition* (Joanna Hogg, 2013): D 'pinned' against the wall

being a category of everyday life – not quite on the same level as a disruption – they are more a state of mind. But they are related and, in D's case, it is the disruption caused by the prospect of the sale of the house that causes the uncertainty.

But there is also another form of ambiguity that we should consider, that of spatial ambiguity in *Exhibition*. In 'the production of daily life […] which includes the production of everyday space and time' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.806), what happens when some of the spaces are hidden? And I am referring here to all the unshown parts of the filmic rendition of the Melvin house, the missing bits, the parts of the house edited out – both inside and outside, of which there are quite a few: part of the top floor is 'missing', the swimming pool is absent (apart from an overhead shot of D floating in a context-less pool), and the house façades are kept to a few glimpses. How do we mentally reconstruct a house from parts standing for a whole, a form of synecdoche puzzle? And might it affect our viewing? Perhaps it does not matter and may after all be only a typical architect's concern, but I would propose that this constitutes a form of 'spatial ambiguity of consciousness' – paraphrasing Lefebvre – another category in the production of everyday space and time, and one that may unwittingly influence our perception of the Melvin house.

Related to this concept is Perec's idea of *un espace sans fonction*, the space without function that he defines as follows:

> I have several times tried to think of an apartment in which there would be a useless room, absolutely and intentionally useless. It wouldn't be a junkroom, it wouldn't be an extra bedroom, or a corridor, or a cubby-hole, or a corner. It would be a functionless space. It would serve for nothing, relate to nothing.[14]
>
> *(Perec, 2008, p.33)*

In filmic terms, *un espace sans fonction* [a space without function] could be interpreted as a space edited out – a space that might have been used but wasn't, for whatever reason, a space that had a real function in real life but which had been discarded and edited out by the film-maker – as are some of the spaces mentioned above in the Melvin house. Since Perec never quite cracked what it could be in practice, this could be one way of answering his quest. *L'espace sans fonction* can be construed as an absent filmic space, an expression of spatial blindness, but one that may well unconsciously weigh on our spatial perception.[15]

'Spaces are produced by narrating them. The everyday evolves in spaces that are conceivable only through narration. Only narration can transmit the quality of the everyday', posits Fischer-Nebmaier (Fischer-Nebmaier, 2015, p.33). In *Exhibition,* spaces are gently unfolded by the film's narration as the body travels from room to room, linking places and stitching them together. As 3D spaces become represented on the 2D screen, they become a form of origami in reverse.[16] *Exhibition* is a film that leaves plenty of space to space. Examples abound

FIGURE 5.5 *Exhibition* (Joanna Hogg, 2013): empty space

right from the very start of the film: as D exits the frame, the camera lingers on the empty windowsill where she was lying before, cutting to the empty spiral staircase that had been waiting for D's descent and then again left to its own devices for a second or two. Highlighting the permanence of the space versus the insubstantiality of its inhabitation, it points to rhythms, to on/off patterns of occupations.

Places are pregnant with expectations, waiting to be filled, or as Lefebvre puts it: 'Every space is already in place before the appearance in it of actors' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.57). And when we exit, they carry on, spaces have a life of their own. That view which the camera lingers on in the opening shot (Figure 5.5) goes on to exist. Spaces are occupied sporadically in our everyday life, but they also imply an architecture that endures and survives us and will always be there to serve future generations. This is the ultimate cosmic cycle. The on/off rhythms allow Hogg to play at the edges of the continuity-editing tradition, which is respected but somewhat delayed in this mode of operation. Often, a space yet to be filled follows an emptied one. 'Ce qui est beau au cinéma, ce sont les raccords, c'est par les joints que pénètre la poésie' postulated Bresson [The cuts are where the magic of cinema resides, where poetry penetrates between the cracks] (Bresson, 1983). And it is in the crack between two adjacent frames that the invisible body is travelling, in the in-betweenness. Hogg's film starts to make us understand what Godard meant when Belmondo in *Pierrot Le Fou* (1965) says, 'Not to describe people's lives anymore, but just life – life itself. What lies in between people: space, sound, and colour'.[17] We get the sense in *Exhibition* that life in the Melvin house is always present, even when it is not visible.

FIGURE 5.6 *Exhibition* (Joanna Hogg, 2013): the free plan

Till puts forward the concept of 'thick time' that encompasses the past, present and future: 'Everyday time is thus thick time, a temporal space that critically gathers the past and also projects the future' (Till, 2009, p.98). In thick time, the everyday, subject to constant repetitions and cycles, is made of countless repetitive practices that harness everyday time, as a form of temporal space that evokes the past and anticipates the future. And for Till, you will find the idea of thick time or lived time, 'in the streets, […] in the everyday. You will find the best understanding of lived time in your own, human, experience of it' (Till, 2009, p.96). You can also find 'thick time' in Hogg's film. It is replete with stratigraphic times; it conveys Le Corbusier's ideals that go back to the 1920s, the five points, in particular, are there.

For 'the eyes that can see', this would be the past. It says something about the present, in particular it demonstrates the absorption of a modernist space within an everyday context in the twenty-first century, and it is anticipating a future – the house being potentially sold.[18] It amounts to a 'filmic thick time' that comprises a series of narrative layers that comprise the ghosts of Le Corbusier and James Melvin, as well as Hogg's own memories of the house inhabited by the Melvin family, whom she knew well. All are permeating the film. A 'filmic thick time' encompasses the haunting from the past to not only inform the dialogues of the present, but also to enlighten the future. In that sense the concept of 'filmic thick time' allows for a departure from the museification of the modern movement. The value of *Exhibition* is also to show that modernism is alive and well, as lived and practised in everyday spaces. Bodily practices and the everyday – the everyday and the 'habitus' – demystify modernism and reconcile 'high' and 'low' architecture, Architecture and architecture. Consideration of everyday life in the Melvin house

may serve as a critical political construct representing an attempt to suggest an architecture resistant to this commodification/consumption paradigm – as it becomes 'lived architecture'.

Notes

1 In a footnote Lefebvre acknowledges that he borrowed the term *rythmanalyse* from Gaston Bachelard (Lefebvre, 2014, p.874).

2 He also adds another element, 'la mesure' or the tempo, the beat, although this remained an underdeveloped notion and will not be used here.

3 Lefebvre takes his own window in Paris – on rue Rambuteau in front of the Pompidou Centre – as a site of observation of the rhythms of the city: 'He who walks down the street, over there, is immersed in the multiplicity of noises, murmurs, rhythms […] By contrast, from the window, the noises distinguish themselves, the flows separate out, rhythms respond to one another […] In order to grasp the rhythms, a bit of time, a sort of meditation on time, the city, people, is required. Other, less lively, slower rhythms superimpose themselves on this inexorable rhythm, which hardly dies down at night: children leaving for school, some very noisy, even piercing screams of morning recognition […] Then towards half past nine it's the arrival of the shoppers, followed shortly by the tourists, in accordance, with exceptions (storms or advertising promotions), with a timetable that is almost always the same; the flows and conglomerations succeed one another: they get fatter or thinner but always agglomerate at the corners in order subsequently to clear a path, tangle and disentangle themselves amongst the cars. These last rhythms (schoolchildren, shoppers, tourists) would be more cyclical, of large and simple intervals, at the heart of livelier, alternating rhythms, at brief intervals, cars, regulars, employees, bistro clients. The interaction of diverse, repetitive and different rhythms animates, as one says, the street and the neighbourhood. The linear, which is to say, in short, succession, consists of journeys to and fro: it combines with the cyclical, the movements of long intervals. The cyclical is social organization manifesting itself. The linear is the daily grind, the routine, therefore the perpetual, made up of chance and encounters' (Lefebvre, 2004, pp.28–30).

4 'A philosopher could ask here: "Are you not simply embarking on a description of horizons, phenomenology from your window, from the standpoint of an all-too-conscious ego, a phenomenology stretching up to the ends of the road, as far as the Intelligibles: the Bank, the Forum, the Hotel de Ville, the embankments, Paris, etc.?" Yes, and yet no! This vaguely existential (a slightly heavy technical term) phenomenology (ditto) of which you speak, and of which you accuse these pages, passes over that which quite rightly connects space, time and the energies that unfold here and there – namely rhythms. It would be no more than a more or less well used tool. In other words, a discourse that ordains these horizons as existence, as being. Now the study of rhythms covers an immense area: from the most natural (physiological, biological) to the most sophisticated. The analysis consists in understanding that which comes to it from nature and that which is acquired, conventional, even sophisticated, by trying to isolate particular rhythms. It is a difficult type of analysis, one for which there are possible ethical, which is to say practical, implications. In other words, knowledge of the lived would modify, metamorphose, the lived without knowing it. Here we find, approached in a different way, but the same, the thought of metamorphosis' (Lefebvre, 2004, p.18).

5 It has to be noted that Perec also contributed to rhythmanalysis with typical Oulipian logic by re-imagining the functions of an apartment's rooms in relation to activities based 'no longer on circadian, but on heptadian rhythms. This would give us apartments of seven rooms, known respectively as the Mondayery, Tuesdayery, Wednesdayery, Thursdayery, Fridayery, Saturdayery, and Sundayery' (Perec, 2008, p.32). Perec added that 'A habitat based on a circa-annual rhythm exists among a few of the "happy few" who are sufficiently well endowed with residences to be able to attempt to reconcile their sense of values, their liking for travel, climatic conditions and cultural imperatives. They are to be found, for example, in Mexico in January, in Switzerland in February, in Venice in March, in Marrakesh in

April, in Paris in May, in Cyprus in June, in Bayreuth in July, in the Dordogne in August, in Scotland in September, in Rome in October, on the Cote d'Azur in November, and in London in December'. Not short of spatial imagination – and humour – he also imagined 'an apartment whose layout was based on the functioning of the senses. We can imagine well enough what a gustatorium might be, or an auditory, but one might wonder what a seeery might look like, or a smellery or a feelery' (Perec, 2008, p.31).

6 'Cyclical repetition is easily understood if one considers days and nights – hours and months – the seasons and years. And tides! The cyclical is generally of cosmic origin; it is not measured in the same way as the linear' (Lefebvre, 2004, p.90).

7 We cannot draw up a complete list of them, because there is nothing to prevent the invention of new moments.

8 'The years following 1968 witnessed a renewal of daily life by sex and sexuality, which proved illusory and rapidly lapsed into vulgarity' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.751).

9 'Over two years, *A Nos Amours* (curators Adam Roberts and Joanna Hogg) have presented the most exhaustive retrospective ever given of the filmmaker and artist Chantal Akerman's film and video works: more than 40 films in 25 screenings. Many of the films were translated and subtitled for English-speaking audiences for the first time anywhere. The director herself attended a number of screenings to answer questions and meet audiences'. See: https://www.ica.org.uk/whats-on/seasons/nos-amours-chantal-akerman-retrospective.

10 Venturi and Scott Brown, by rejecting the modernist ideal in favour of the ordinary and the everyday, have been seen as 'inventing' post-modernism…and in the process raised the issue of whether the everyday is part of modernity or not. Is everyday life modern or post-modern? Or neither? Interestingly, by the early 1980s Lefebvre was well aware of the post-modern movement but sceptical: 'Today, another question is on the agenda: the end of modernity. This was noisily proclaimed as the 1980s approached […] It was unquestionably in architecture that the announcement caused the greatest stir. Common to technology, art, social practice and everyday life, the architectural is a domain that should not be underestimated or regarded as subsidiary. Developments in architecture always have a symptomatic significance initially, and a causal one subsequently. The Venice Biennale of 1980 was devoted to postmodernity in architecture – a slogan launched in the USA two or three years earlier. In what, according to its promoters, did it consist? In a return to monuments, a neo-monumentalism freed from the grip and imprint of political power, whereas monuments were, historically, expressions, tools and sites of the reigning powers. One ought (argued Ricardo Bofill) to go so far as to invert symbols'. He then concluded that 'the alternative – modernity or postmodernity – was a false' hypothesis and that in the '…meanwhile, daily life goes on' (Lefebvre, 2014, pp.719–720).

11 Philip Morton Shand, an eccentric architecture buff and wine merchant, wrote a series of articles all entitled 'Scenario for human drama' that appeared in *The Architectural Review* in 1934–35. His articles are some of the most readable accounts of the rise of modern architecture at the time – much admired by Reyner Banham – but beyond the title he never explains or refers to the scenario for human drama.

12 There are very few films that credit houses or buildings – Lovell House.

13 See, for example, *The Clock* (2010), which is a 24-hour film with clock scenes from fiction films, corresponding to the real time of the day.

14 'J'ai plusieurs fois essayé de penser à un appartement dans lequel il y aurait une pièce inutile, absolument et délibérément inutile. Ça n'aurait pas été un débarras, ça n'aurait pas été une chambre supplémentaire, ni un couloir, ni un cagibi, ni un recoin. Ç'aurait été un espace sans fonction. Ça n'aurait servi à rien, ça n'aurait renvoyé à rien' (Perec, 1974, pp.66–67).

15 For example the swimming pool in *Exhibition* is an extraordinary space that we only see in 'plan' when D floats in it – as we don't see the edge of it, it stands for the infinite pool as Lewis Carroll's map of the ocean.

16 In the sense that origami starts as a 2D sheet to become a 3D shape – while film represent 3D spaces onto a two-dimensional screen space.

17 'Ne plus décrire la vie des gens, mais seulement la vie, la vie toute seule, ce qu'il y a entre les gens… L'espace, le son et les couleurs' Godard – Belmondo's dialogue in *Pierrot le Fou*.

18 This is in fact what happened: the house was sold – The *Daily Mail* online published photographs of the house on 20 February 2015 with the following headlines: 'Would you spend £8m on this? Brutalist three-bedroom central London is offered for sale for huge sum because it has two car spaces (plus a swimming pool and sauna)'. www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2961535/Brutalist-three-bedroom-central-London-home-offered-sale-8MILLION-two-parking-spaces-plus-swimming-pool-sauna.html

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6

CINEMATIC TYPOLOGIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE AND ARCHITECTURE

The typology is made up of prototypes […] some films are more central to a given prototype than others. The types can further be combined in many different ways […]

(Grodal, 1997, p.6)

To raise the question of typology in architecture is to raise a question of the nature of the architectural work itself. […] This in turn requires the establishment of a theory, whose first question must be, what kind of object is a work of architecture? This question ultimately has to return to the concept of type.

(Moneo, 1978, p.23)

The case for cinematic typologies of everyday life and architecture

Kitchen Stories (Hamer, 2003) could be read as a metaphor for what I am trying to achieve with this book. Set in the 1950s, it is the story of Swedish efficiency researchers coming to Norway for a study of Norwegian men, with a view to optimizing the use of their kitchens. Folke Nilsson (Tomas Norström) is assigned to study the habits of Isak Bjørvik (Joachim Calmeyer). By the rules of the research institute, Folke has to sit in what looks like a tennis umpire's chair in the corner of Isak's kitchen – and from there observe him. Isak pretty much stops using his kitchen and in turn observes Folke through a hole in the ceiling.

And by studying films closely as we have done in previous chapters, we too are in the umpire's chair observing Isak, D & H, Jeanne Dielman and many others, in their natural everyday environment.[1] By doing so we can turn cinematic scenes into data and compile statistics out of drama for the purpose of analysing the everyday. In other words, I am suggesting the exploitation of the content of film for a purpose it was not intended for, as we can't leave cinema to be mere entertainment, it contains far too precious archival material of all sorts to

FIGURE 6.1 Observing the observed in *Kitchen Stories* (Bent Hamer, 2003)

leave it at that. It involves considering film with renewed interest and new eyes, we 'have to become pure, look and observe…what? Everyday life and first and foremost the lives of others'[2] (Lefebvre, 1961, p.352).

Each film mentioned and studied so far has served this very purpose of furnishing us with an analysis of everyday life within a spatial and architectural context. According to Laura Mulvey, there are three modes of looking associated with film,[3] but here we are only interested in the first two forms of observations. The camera has recorded and observed scenes, and in turn we have observed the observed. Film provides us with a comprehensive architectural user's manual of lived space. That's part of the value of fiction films: they are instructions for living, we learn by example. They provide an accelerated education in lived and practised situations – they are a form of practice of everyday life. The framing of the human form in its architectural surroundings is central to the anthropomorphic nature of film – and here lies its attraction.

Our observations on the cinematic everyday constitute a form of taxonomy[4] – we have observed the observed – it is an empirical way of proceeding based on closely scrutinizing film material (Bailey, 1994, p.6). But out of this taxonomic approach can we explore the formulation of a cinematic typology of everyday life and architecture? I use the term typology here in a

conceptual sense in contrast to the taxonomy mentioned earlier, which is empirical.[5] The history and theory of architecture is not short of attempts at formulating typologies, most famously with the work of Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand and his *Précis* (Durand, 1823), a typological systematization of architectural knowledge whereby architectural 'types' emerged through a 'process of reducing a complex of formal variants to a common root form' (Madrazo, 1994, p.18). This tradition lasted well into the twentieth century, motivated by the fact that

> classification in architecture, beyond historical description and scientific analysis, lies in the hope that out of an ordering of the variety of buildings of the past will come theoretical principles, which may be applied in designing new buildings, of new forms, to answer new programmes and new circumstances.
>
> *(Steadman, 1979, p.29)*

Indeed, typologies have been construed as a way of supplementing traditional intuitive methods of design, favoured by the modernists, providing tools of analysis and classification, to help designers not to 'fall back on previous examples for the solution of new problems' (Colquhoun, 1969, p.71).

What I am suggesting here is that it might be possible to observe and classify cinematic activities of everyday life with a view to creating a typology of inhabited, lived-in and practised architectural forms. However, such a typology could hardly be organized as Durand's *Précis* – essentially a classification according to building shapes – as everyday life cannot be systematized in relation to building shapes alone, although this may have a bearing, as it is a far more elusive and multi-dimensional notion. We have to invent and explore categories and types according to activities, functions, circadian cycles, rhythms, and many other variables. However, a typology of everyday life has never been proposed by Lefebvre and others, let alone a cinematic one, although Lefebvre does briefly evoke systems of representations of the everyday in the form of a typology based on empirical case studies.[6] The idea of a cinematic typology of everyday life and architecture can therefore only provide an initial framework, a context from within which designers might operate, or find inspiration. It is not a tool for providing ready-made solutions to a given problem. It will not fulfil Steadman's, but might contribute to new programmes and new circumstances.

While there are no such precedent studies to refer to, we can point to works that present some similarities. For example, on the architecture side, *Fundamental Concepts of Architecture: The Vocabulary of Spatial Situations* is a compendium that 'contains no scientific definitions and does not offer the kind of information normally found in reference books; instead, the reader is invited to examine architecture from an experiential perspective' (Janson and Tigges, 2014, p.6). It constitutes a new phenomenological approach to architectural vocabulary and

> although the terms 'roof', 'base' and 'wall' do appear in this volume, the individual concepts do not refer primarily to constructive contexts […] the concrete architectural

phenomenon is foremost; description concentrates on the situative contents of the respective term in close connection with concrete structural-spatial form.

(Janson and Tigges, 2014, p.6)

And although there is no reference to film as such, the idea of interpreting architecture as a series of situations experienced through movement and active participation (Janson and Tigges, 2014, p.285) is germane to my own take in construing the experience of everyday life in buildings through cinema – and is also a useful model for the next section, the architectonic of cinema.

In a previous section on 'the disruption of the everyday', I made the point that we need the establishment of an everyday as a necessary baseline from which dramatic events will emerge. The scene in *Pulp Fiction* where Butch (Bruce Willis) is making toast while Vincent (John Travolta) is reading on the loo could hardly be more mundane, but it's the confluence of the two that is lethal to Vincent, as he gets shot down by Butch as he comes out of the toilet. And key to this scene is the toast jumping off the rack, triggering Butch into a cause-and-effect reflex action. Who could have thought that toasters could be so deadly?

Drama emerged out of the native soil of two everyday routines, and it's the contrasting dull bits that make the scene interesting; in that sense I am here nuancing Hitchcock's quip, 'Drama is life with the dull bits taken out' (Page and Thomas, 2011, p.58). Of course cinema is about drama, but the dull bits are the necessary 'glue' that keeps the film going. The point here is that the formation of cinematic typologies of everyday life and architecture necessarily involve a focus on the baseline, the routine and the mundane, with which we have already established that film is replete, allowing us to potentially construct valuable catalogues of lived and practised spaces.

Architectural typologies are also a form of baseline – they necessarily flatten and are blunt instruments. By analogy, they too keep the dull bits in and take the drama out. We know, for example, that Durand

consciously modified some of the plans to make them appear more regular and geometric than they actually were […] It can be asserted that what Durand was intending with the simplification and regularization of the drawings was to use the individual buildings to illustrate some generic principles of architecture. This is the reason he found it necessary to eliminate individual or accidental traits by subjecting the representations of buildings to a process of regularization.

(Madrazo, 1994, p.13)
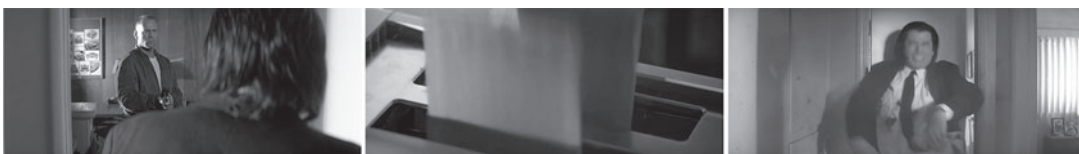
FIGURE 6.2 Toast shooting scene in *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994)

Durand subjected buildings to a process of adjustment in order for them to fit the typological mould. Similarly, the creation of cinematic typologies of everyday life and architecture implies a degree of simplification.

A cinematic typology according to rhythmanalysis

There are so few books that contain the words 'cinema and everyday space' in their title, that *Cinema, Gender, and Everyday Space: Comedy, Italian Style* (Fullwood, 2015) is of interest here. It is a form of cataloguing of everyday cinematic spaces, albeit of a very confined type, of comedies produced in Italy from 1958 to 1970, as explained by the author:

> In this book, I look at spaces that I have termed 'everyday' spaces: the beach, the nightclub, the office, the car, and the kitchen. I use the term 'everyday' primarily to signal scale. Rather than the larger, macro spaces of continent, nation, region, or city, I am concerned with the smaller-scale spaces of everyday experiences. The spaces I discuss are those which occur most frequently across the breadth of Comedy, Italian Style.[7]
>
> *(Fullwood, 2015, p.6)*

The book can be interpreted as a form of cinematic typology of everyday life,[8] and for example, the chapter devoted to the 'modern' kitchen, a symbol of the evolution of Italian domestic space in the 1960s, echoes some of my own studies in *Dielman* and *Exhibition*. Fullwood's study also resonates with Moran's book *Queuing for Beginners: The Story of Daily Life from Breakfast to Bedtime* (Moran, 2008) – this time an everyday life account, told from a cultural studies perspective, of a typical British day, from breakfast to bedtime, a form of city symphony partly inspired by Perec's notion of the infra-ordinary.[9] Both books point towards possible ways of organizing typologically the cinematic metadata of the everyday according to spaces and function. Borrowing from Moran's dawn-to-dusk structure, Fullwood's study could, at a push, be re-organized in that way – the beach, the nightclub, the office, the car, and the kitchen – becoming 'kitchen, car, office, beach and finally nightclub'.

This points to a typology that would contain elements of Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis – the passage of time over a day, or a succession of days, which is the cosmic element, while the everyday goes on in a linear fashion day after day – with the two types of repetition, the cyclical and the linear being indissociable (Lefebvre, 1992). So for the sake of our study, some films could be re-organized as a single day – taken from various situations and moments, as I demonstrated with *Exhibition*, re-constituting and creating a 'model' day made out of several days. But of course not all films would lend themselves to this re-purposing, and we can create typical days out of several films. Using, for example, Tarantino's films, we could imagine having breakfast in a Los Angeles diner with Mr Blonde and co. (*Reservoir Dogs*,

1992), watching daytime TV on the couch with Melanie and Louis in a Hermosa Beach condominium (*Jackie Brown*, 1997), next we could have a burger with Jackie Brown in the Del Amo Fashion Center mall, and round off the day by joining Mia and Vincent at Jack Rabbit Slim's restaurant (*Pulp Fiction*, 1994). And this all within the city of Los Angeles.

We could of course mix films and film-makers, and in a globalized world there might be some interest in creating 'study days' across time zones and cultures, for which Jarmusch's *Night on Earth* (1991) has already shown the way. The film comprises five sections, each concerning a taxi journey, taking place in five different cities: Los Angeles, New York, Paris, Rome and Helsinki. The five taxi journeys are slices of everyday life[10] in five countries across the globe that all start with a 90-second montage of the city – from the sunny early morning in Los Angeles to the small hours in snow-covered Helsinki. The five sections as a whole constitute a unique form of rhythmanalysis as they mix both the everyday taxi rides and the cosmic passage of life on Earth, from day to night.

Cinematic typologies according to housing types

The oneiric house

This clears the ground for further investigations. We started with typologies that involved rhythmanalysis, and there are many other possible forms that we need to explore. Let's restart with the home, so vividly evoked by Bachelard, and where everyday life flourishes. There are many different types of homes, but as pointed out by Lefebvre, the Bachelardian ideal is almost gone: 'the magic place of childhood, the home as womb and shell, with its loft and its cellar full of dreams' and has been replaced by 'dwellings'.[11] And yet Bachelard's ideal home is cinematically revived and studied in the *Spaces of the cinematic home*[12] (Andrews et al., 2016), a book that proposes an investigation, which 'comprises fourteen chapters which chart its structure from cellar to garret, as well as extending beyond the interior to consider the garden and the land as an extension of the house' (Andrews et al., 2016, p.13).

Other studies of the cinematic detached house comprise Rawlinson's thesis,[13] the oneiric house mainly concentrating on Hitchcock (*Psycho, The Birds*) and Tarkovsky (*The Sacrifice, Nostalghia*), thus recreating a fictional house made of many cinematic parts, vividly expressed in Figure 6.3.

For any one of those images in Figure 6.3 we could think of many other films. It is a picture of the fundamental idea of the home rather than of a house type – for a 'home is not the same as a house […] Does a home need to be anything built at all, any fabric? I think not' (Rykwert, 1991, p.51) – it is a home made of dreams, illusions, nightmares and memories. It is about

FIGURE 6.3 The oneiric house © Martha Rawlinson

what the idea of home may mean to any one of us, irrespective of whether we live in a terraced house, a bungalow or a tower block. Yet the construction of a dream home is not so straightforward, as it involves choices:

> If I were the architect of an oneiric house, I should hesitate between a three-story house and one with four. A three-story house, which is the simplest as regards essential height, has a cellar, a ground floor and an attic; while a four-story house puts a floor between the ground floor and the attic. One floor more, and our dreams become blurred. In the oneiric house, topo-analysis only knows how to count to three or four.
>
> *(Bachelard, 1964, p.25)*

Whatever the number of floors, there is certainly a place for such an imaginary home or homes, and there is a need to study how such emotionally charged images act as a revelator of the nature of the dwelling they represent. In terms of typology, it belongs to a cinematic typology of the imagination within which everyday life unravels in a fictional architecture, where each cell is a mind space. It is a house without a façade – not unlike Doisneau's image of *Les Locataires* (1962). It is the cinematic equivalent of Saul Steinberg's drawing that inspired Perec's *Life, a User's Manual* (La Vie mode d'emploi): 'I imagine a Parisian apartment building whose façade has been removed'.[14] Cinema affords the creation of multiple oneiric houses within which everyday life can be infinitely composed and recomposed.

But if we consider housing typologies, the detached house, complete with garden, cellar and attic, represents a relatively small percentage of the housing stock, 17.4 per cent in England (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010, p.9).[15] Moran argues that

> Bachelard's insistence that this dream house is a cultural universal, […] belongs to a very particular political economy. His house has 'space around it', its ultimate embodiment being the thatched cottage or hermit's hut first encountered as a distant glimmer of light on a dark night […] This clearly excludes certain sorts of house, such as the urban terrace or the high-rise flat, which have a much more visible relationship with a collectively experienced everyday life.
>
> *(Moran, 2004, p.624)*

A cinematic typology of terraced and semi-detached houses

This points to a broadening of our cinematic typology of everyday life according to a range of housing types. Moran's study focused on 'three of the most common types of housing in contemporary Britain, which are all based on a serial repetition and collectivity which is often denied: urban terraces, high-rise flats and suburban housing estates'. In particular, he accurately captures the significance of the image of the terraced house:

> The monolithic sameness of the terraced house has become part of the iconography of the everyday in contemporary Britain. A good example is the opening titles of the popular

> British soap opera, *Coronation Street*, with its panning shots of parallel terraced streets and back alleys, and its final homing in on the eponymous, soot-stained terraced street with a pub and corner shop at either end. Ever since the terraces were built, photographers and filmmakers have exploited the capacity for panoramic immensity in the long, repetitive rows.
>
> *(Moran, 2004, p.609)*

Indeed, British films abound with images of terraced houses, not surprisingly, since they represent nearly 30 per cent of the housing stock,[16] and perhaps most prominently in the so-called 'Kitchen Sink' films where everyday life unfolds in ordinary, often run-down, terraced-house settings. For Battersea alone, the subject of a large research project,[17] *Poor Cow* (Loach, 1967), *This is My Street* (Hayers, 1964), *Up the Junction* (Collinson, 1967), *The Optimists of Nine Elms* (Simmons, 1973), *Brannigan* (Hickox, 1975), *Cosh Boy* (1953), *Melody* (1971), *Mix Me a Person* (1964), *Villain* (1971), and many more, all have prominent scenes in and around Victorian terraced houses. And many of the terraced houses seen in *This is My Street, Poor Cow* and *Up the Junction* did not survive the slum clearances of the 1960s. There lies a landscape of memory of post-war British housing developments, a form of *Lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) after Pierre Nora (Nora, 1989).

FIGURE 6.4 Terraced houses in *This is My Street* (Sidney Hayers, 1964)

However, if terraced houses have been generously represented on the silver screen, that is not the case for semi-detached houses, which is curious as they represent a sizeable 26 per cent of the English housing stock (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010, p.9). 'Symbol of middle-class aspiration, conservatism and compromised individualism, the semi-detached house is England's modern domestic type par excellence' (Wilkinson, 2015, p.2) and has come to be symbolic of the English suburbs. Graham Greene wrote about the semi-detached that 'these houses represented something worse than the meanness of poverty, the meanness of the spirit' (Greene, 2001, p.40). George Orwell and others were not much kinder,[18] and this 'bad press' may account for the semi's lack of screen appeal. The 'meanness' is quite evident in *Family Life* (Ken Loach, 1971) where a suburban semi-detached, complete with Crittall windows, is the ideal life setting for the dull and conservative parents of Janice (Sandy Ratcliff), set in their ways and their ordinary lives, and who will be gradually pushing their daughter to the edge of sanity. Mike Leigh's *Bleak Moments* (1971) and *Abigail's Party* (1977), both staged in semi-detached homes, didn't help the cause, and nor did *Billy Liar* (John Schlesinger, 1963) where great care was taken to

> ensure that the interiors supported the feeling of hollow social progress […] The semi-detached house was designed to suggest the assuredness of Fisher senior (Wilfred Pickles), a self-employed TV engineer, who exemplified the emergent lower middle class. The somewhat garish dwelling […] was designed as an ugly pre-war 'desirable residence', the living room of which was furnished with ghastly chainstore furniture – uncut mocquette suite, plaster ornaments, half-moon hearth rug, flashy cocktail cabinet, tiled fireplace.
>
> *(Ede, 2010, pp.109–110)*

We should also mention *All The Way Up* (James MacTaggart, 1970) with Warren Mitchell, a comedy based on David Turner's aptly named play *Semi-Detached* (1962), but overall there is a distinct paucity of examples. In other words, the cinematic incarnation of the semi-detached has come to be shorthand for a mild dystopian suburban environment, 'ugly desirable', yet home to nearly a third of the UK population.

But it is not just about the memories of past architecture. Film contains precious social mores and everyday gestures that have been folded away and preserved in the celluloid. For example, *This is My Street* is awash with moments of ordinariness that we can't fail to notice, partly because of the contrast with our own contemporary life: it's Margery's mother repeatedly sweeping the pavement in front of the house, it's the old neighbour reading the papers sitting on a chair in the street; it's the kids freely roaming the streets; it's the back gardens with all the washing lines; it's the tea and meal rituals, the scenes in the pubs and dance halls; it's the house keys on a string that everybody pulls out of the letter box to open the front door – to name just a few. In *Poor Cow*, as Joy moves across various abodes to suit the vagaries of her unpredictable

FIGURE 6.5 Semi-detached houses in *All the Way Up* (James MacTaggart, 1970)

social condition, we are treated to a whole typology of dwellings, including scenes of everyday life in a Victorian tenement when she finds refuge with her aunt Emma while Dave, her boyfriend, is in prison. We see her living in cramped quarters, a shared water-tap on the landing and a tin bath before the fire, complete with communal courtyard scenes where little Jonny, her son, plays.

This is not about revelling in some kind of kitchen-sink-drama nostalgia[19] but rather a way to nuance, inform, and complement any history of housing with lived and practised 'data' of everyday life, for example as a companion to architecture of the post-war period in Britain (see for example: Bullock, 2002 and Wall, 2013) or cultural or sociological studies pertaining to the same period, like Moran (2004)), or as a commentary alongside Penny Woolcock's documentary of slum clearance, *Out of the Rubble* (BFI, 2016). Carrying on with the terraced house, a cinematic typology of everyday life according to that particular housing type would need to include what Moran calls 'the refurbished terrace', and here a good example would be the London home of Tom (Jim Broadbent) and Gerri (Ruth Sheen) in *Another Year* (Leigh, 2010), a rather substantial specimen complete with conservatory and large garden. Many examples would need to be added, across several decades, to constitute a longitudinal cinematic archaeology[20] of everyday life in British terraced houses. Semi-detached houses,[21] tower blocks and flats can all be included in creating such a typology. This would constitute a new typology, charting the evolution of ordinary life over time, according to housing types.

While examples abound, we should not underestimate the task of producing such meaningful studies, requiring research into large archives – a task which is beyond the scope of the present study.[22]

Everyday environment versus everyday life

However, a number of other forms of potential cinematic typologies of everyday life and architecture have emerged in the course of this research. They are worth noting, but first we should clarify the issue of everyday environment and everyday life, for there are differences worth highlighting. We have seen in an earlier chapter that when it came to discussing the everyday, the Farrell review of *Architecture and the Built Environment* (2014) was essentially devoted to the improvement of the everyday environment by 'making the ordinary better', while there was scant reference to everyday life. So, is there a confusion between everyday life and everyday environment? Aren't they the same? There is, of course, a considerable overlap between the two, but they are markedly different as one is the container of the other, for 'Architecture is inescapably concrete and it forms the fabric and the setting of everyday life' (Upton, 2002, p.707), while for Lefebvre 'The production of daily life […] includes the production of everyday space and time'[23] (Lefebvre, 2014, p.806).

We must therefore make a distinction in our analysis – or at least be aware of the differences – in order to work with both notions. There are films that portray both everyday environment and everyday life. Typically the kitchen-sink films mentioned above – everyday life in terraced houses – would squarely fit into this category. Venturing to France, *Amélie* (Jeunet, 2001) similarly presents us with a rather ordinary life: she works as a waitress in a café and lives in an ordinary one-bedroom flat in Montmartre. Most, if not all, of Mike Leigh's films also depict ordinary lives in ordinary settings (Watson, 2004) – a key characteristic of the so-called film realism tradition. The same applies to the cinema of the Dardenne brothers 'in which the material world offers up images and moments of everyday life that both drive and exceed the narrative in whose service they have been photographed' (Mosley, 2012, p.3). The Dardennes' films have even been construed as

> indirectly expressing the ideas of Henri Lefebvre and the Situationists after him: on everyday life and city spaces; on the relations between work and money; and on the loss of a fundamental social bond in the phenomenon of alienated labour.
>
> *(Mosley, 2012, p.19)*

We must also cite Jacques Tati, whose 'film-making innovation was to turn everyday life into an art form' (Bellos, 1999), an approach equally praised by Toubiana:

> Tati has filmed something essential in the course of the 20th century: he filmed the
> countryside, the everyday life in the countryside (*Jour de fête*), then he filmed 'la vie
> pavillonnaire' (*Mon Oncle*) […] he especially filmed and captured in an ultra-sensitive
> manner, not unlike a genial seismographe, the passage from the countryside to the city,
> this epic migration of man and objects from an ancient world towards the modern world.[24]
>
> *(Makeieff et al., 2009, p.7)*

In other words, over 20 years, from *Jour de Fête* (1947) to *Playtime* (1967), Tati has charted
just about the entire spectrum of French everyday life within its fast-evolving quotidian
environment.

It would also be hard not to mention Eric Rohmer who, as suggested by Cavell, is one of the
great proponents of the everyday: 'Rohmer's great subject is the miraculousness of the everyday'
(Cavell, 2005, p.419). Indeed, Rohmer was able 'to magic the wondrous out of the quotidian'
[faire surgir le merveilleux à l'intérieur du quotidien] (de Baecque and Herpe, 2016, p.335),
both from within everyday life but also through working with the most banal and ordinary
everyday environment:

> It is clear that it was not only out of thriftiness that Rohmer moved into already existing
> settings, in the provinces, in the suburbs of Paris, and in Paris itself […] More than ever,
> he decided to conceal himself in the fabric of everyday life, as trivial and banal as possible,
> with its tasteless wallpapers, the gray drabness of mass transit, and the special meals
> people grant themselves because it's Sunday.[25]
>
> *(de Baecque and Herpe, 2016, p.453)*

Rohmer's cinema is pure everyday life deployed within very ordinary settings. Jean-Luc Godard
is in the same league, stating:

> All my films have been reports on the state of the nation; they are newsreel documents,
> treated in a personal manner perhaps, but in terms of contemporary actuality […] During
> the course of the film – in its discourse, its discontinuous course, that is – I want to
> include everything, sport, politics, even groceries.
>
> *(Godard, 1972, p.239)*

And unsurprisingly he has been the object of everyday studies – see for example *Reinventing
the everyday in the age of spectacle: Jean-Luc Godard's artistic and political response to
modernity in his early works* (Süner, 2015). Following in the French New Wave's footsteps,
Jim Jarmusch has also been continuously exploring aspects of everydayness in just about all
his films. He does it most systematically in *Paterson* (Jim Jarmusch, 2016), an invitation

FIGURE 6.6 Paterson with his dog in front of his house in *Paterson* (Jim Jarmusch, 2016)

to partake, through the characters of Paterson (Adam Driver) and his wife, in a celebration of daily patterns over seven days, mixing rhythmanalysis and the poetics of everyday life, a form of mindfulness at play. In a different category, but equally precious for its high content of everydayness, is *The Strange Little Cat* (Ramon Zürcher, 2013), a slow-paced study of everyday life in a Berlin flat over a single day, a clear homage to *Jeanne Dielman.*

But we must leave the masters of everyday life and the everyday environment and explore the champions of the non-everyday life within the everyday environment – and by non-everyday life, I mean here films that contain so much drama that it would be hard to classify them as a cinema of everyday life. The way Hitchcock explains how suspense functions, as already explored in Chapter 3, throws some light on the balance between drama and the everyday – essentially making the point that ordinary situations are the necessary foundations from which to build up the suspense. So for example, *Rear Window* (1953) could, at the start, be interpreted as an everyday life study of a New York Greenwich Village courtyard. It is a cinema of observation, of an intensive observation – a form of cinematic laboratory of everydayness. And this enclosed system could tick on forever, but of course it gradually turns to drama as Jeff (James Stewart) starts to take a keen interest in the couple in front of his windows.

So, to clarify, what I call films of everyday life and everyday environment are movies where there might be some elements of drama, but it remains well within the confines of ordinary life, to come back to this distinction between ordinary and everyday. Hogg's cinema would typically

fall within this category, as the sale of the house in *Exhibition* is completely within the ordinary range – but the murders in Hitchcock films are not. Tarantino's films are hardly about everyday lives, but that doesn't stop Jules and Vincent from having very mundane conversations – for example the often-quoted dialogue about 'royal with cheese'[26] which takes place while on their way to a double killing. But the environment in Tarantino's films is very ordinary, more often than not shot on location – for example, South Bay in Los Angeles for *Jackie Brown*. Exceptional circumstances are tamed by incredibly humdrum dialogues[27] and banal settings – like the suburban house at the start of *Kill Bill 1* – we are even treated to an unusual overhead plan shot of the kitchen and dining room while the voice-over informs us of the characters' past relationship.[28]

So the next possible permutation, out of four, are films of everyday life taking place in non-everyday environment. For this purpose I interpret non-everyday environment to be what Foucault calls heterotopia, i.e. other spaces, *Des espaces autres,* and defined thus:

> Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias […] As for the heterotopias as such, how can they be described? What meaning do they have? We might imagine a sort of systematic description […] of these different spaces, of these other places. As a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live, this description could be called heterotopology.[29]

(Foucault, 1986)

FIGURE 6.7 *Jackie Brown* (Quentin Tarantino, 1997): a non-everyday life in an everyday environment

As part of such 'other spaces', Foucault identifies, amongst others, the museum, the library, prisons, cemeteries, retirement homes – amongst others – all spaces that are in effect outside of our daily routine. However, within each of those institutions, there are people for whom going to work in a hospital or a museum is part of their everyday life, although for the majority of people it would be a rarely visited institution. I do not make a distinction between architecture – with a small 'a' – and Architecture with a capital 'A'. Everyday life unravels in both in just the same way – as Upton concedes: 'The idea of the everyday forces us to acknowledge that Architecture is part of architecture, that designers are a part of the everyday world, not explorers from a more civilized society or detached doers for clients and to cities' (Upton, 2002, p.711). In that sense, Foucault's concept of heterotopia is relevant to the environment part, but much less to everyday life. For example, *Museum Hours* (Jem Cohen, 2012) is an excellent study of everydayness in a museum environment, the life of a museum attendant, Johann (Bobby Sommer), in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. The world constructed by Cohen constitutes a remarkable example of everyday life within a heterotopia.[30] And given that the narrative of *Museum Hours* is well within the norms of ordinariness, it fully qualifies under the banner of a movie of everyday life that takes place in a non-everyday environment.

As for films of non-everyday life taking place in non-everyday environments, most prison films and war movies, for example, would qualify. They provide examples of exceptional events taking place in heterotopic spaces. In that sense they are probably less relevant for this study that concentrates on the everyday. However, it is worth mentioning that some films, such

FIGURE 6.8 *Museum Hours* (Jem Cohen, 2012): everyday life in a non-everyday environment

as *Bringing Out the Dead* (Scorsese, 1999) may prove extremely useful in gaining a fast-track insight into the workings of an accident and emergency (A&E) department. Following the life of an ambulance driver (Nicolas Cage), it gives us access to complex situations, with the hospital architecture being a container of human drama, acting as an amplifier to dense emotional states. Stars glamorize the most banal of settings, Peter von Bagh in *Helsinki, Forever* (2008) tells us, and conversely stars, and actors in general, can make the grandest of settings and the most heterotopic of spaces seem ordinary. In *Museum Hours*, the Kunsthistorisches Museum becomes an ordinary setting by habituation as we, the spectator, repeatedly have access to it from the point of view of Johann, a museum attendant – as opposed to being a very occasional visitor for whom the museum environment is indeed alien and outside our daily routine. Through a process of banalization, heterotopic spaces in film become more approachable, understandable and habitable, it is one of the great values of fiction.

In this chapter we have already identified a number of potential cinematic typologies of everyday life and architecture according to circadian and linear rhythms, spaces of imagination (oneiric house) and dwelling types. Finally, we have also considered the four possible permutations between everyday life and everyday environment, non-everyday life and everyday environment, everyday life and non-everyday environment, and as non-everyday life and non-everyday environment.

Several more typologies come to mind and are briefly listed below, awaiting further exploration. Some films provide us with rare opportunities for a **longitudinal study of everyday life and everyday environment**. Filmed over a period of nearly 12 years, *Boyhood* (Richard Linklater, 2013) charts the everyday life of a not-untypical American family, concentrating on Mason (Ellar Coltrane), his elder sister Samantha (Lorelei Linklater) and his estranged parents, Olivia (Patricia Arquete) and Mason Senior (Ethan Hawke). It is not only a longitudinal study of everyday life representative of a certain American way of life at the start of the twenty-first century, but it also offers a rich sampling of everyday environment, dwelling types, school environments, neighbourhoods etc. Along the same vein, *The Tree of Life* (Malick, USA, 2011), provides a rapid longitudinal study of children growing up in 1950s small-town America.

In a very different register, *Divine Intervention* (Suleiman, 2002) is representative of a particular type of everyday, **the politics of the everyday**. Situated in Nazareth, it is a fine observation of everyday neighbourhood scenes that builds an atmosphere of claustrophobia, a place of no hope, where people are depressed and behave almost mechanically, entering and exiting frames in very matter-of-fact ways. An almost silent film in parts, it is a subtle interpretation of how the Palestinian–Israeli conflict affects people in their daily lives and everyday situations. By contrast *The Girl Chewing Gum* (John Smith, 1976) is a rare example of **the everyday as fiction**. It consists almost entirely of a single continuous shot of Stamford Road in Dalston Junction, East London, where a voice-over appears to direct the passers-by. This approach turns the ordinary everyday spaces and everyday lives into a work of fiction by

a simple directorial artifice. Smith anticipates the numerous efforts at considering **the everyday as an art form,** as for example explored by Eric Hattan, at the FRAC (Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain), Marseille in April 2014. Hattan's *habiter l'inhabituel* exhibition is a play on words on Perec's *interroger l'habituel*, and challenged visitors' sense of observation as shown in Plate 3. This brief additional list of cinematic typologies of everyday life is by no means exhaustive, and no doubt readers will be able to think of many others.

Notes

1 Aside from *Kitchen Stories*, we could also add the example of *Chevalier* (Tsangari, 2016) as a mode of filmic self-observation – six men aboard a yacht compete to determine who will be the 'best in general' and in the process observe each other closely, studiously making notes of their colleagues' everyday activities, from sleeping to walking – a form of endotic study that Perec would have approved of.

2 My translation from the French: 'se constituer en pur regard [...] regardez avec clairvoyance (quoi? La vie quotidienne, et d'abord celle des autres) [...] Le regard, comme fait pratique et social, comme organe sensoriel important [...] on devient regard pur, et clair, et clairvoyance : voyant et voyeur. D'une extériorité par rapport à ce qui intéresse les gens de la vie quotidienne, on tire force et intérêt' (Lefebvre, 1961, p.352).

3 'There are three different looks associated with cinema: that of the camera as it records the pro-filmic event, that of the audience as it watches the final product, and that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion [...] This complex interaction of looks is specific to film' (Mulvey, 1975, pp.17–18).

4 According to Bailey, 'we will reserve the term taxonomy for a classification of empirical entities. The basic difference, then, is that a typology is conceptual while a taxonomy is empirical' (Bailey, 1994, p.6).

5 This is a loose distinction, a taxonomy being very similar to a typology, and in some cases I will use the two terms interchangeably – but undoubtedly the term typology is much more prevalent in architecture.

6 'Nous découvrons plutôt des systèmes, très relatifs et assez fragiles malgré leur ténacité, de *représentations*, qui assure à la quotidienneté quelque chose de stable. (ces considérations analytiques correspondent à des faits empiriques constatables, à des cas et des situations qui peuvent se classer et donner lieu à une typologie)'. (Lefebvre, 1961, pp.65–66).

7 Fullwood goes on to add: 'It is no coincidence that they were all also iconic spaces of everyday life associated with the economic miracle, which were being heavily mediated in other spheres as well. The fact that the comedies represent the "beach" as a routine part of characters' lives, a holiday space perhaps more readily associated with a break from the everyday, gives a sense of the kind of consumerist lifestyle the genre represents. They are also spaces that take on particular gendered inflections across the genre. While the leisure spaces of beaches and nightclubs and the domestic space of the kitchen are particularly associated with femininity, the spaces of the office and the car are the primary sites that the genre uses in its construction of masculinity' (Fullwood, 2015, p.6).

8 Interestingly, in her book Fullwood does not refer to Lefebvre's theory of everyday life but instead focuses on *Production of Space* (Lefebvre, 1991).

9 'This book is also about the "infra-ordinary" – the unremarkable and unremarked upon aspects of our lives. I should begin by warning you that, if you profess an interest in this overlooked research area (which to a certain extent you have already done by picking up this book), you will probably need to develop a thick skin. Some people may accuse you of trying to rediscover what a certain strain of English pragmatism likes to call "the bleeding obvious". I am often asked, with benevolent

bemusement, why I study such obscure topics as the symbolism of the lunch break, the history of crossing the road or the politics of sitting on sofas' (Moran, 2008, p.3).

10 For a comprehensive analysis of *Night on Earth*, consult Andrew Otway's chapter, as he makes interesting connections between urban wayfinding and that of everyday life, arguing that 'the very act of taking a taxi ride, which can also involve wayfinding, are both practices of everyday life' (Otway, 2012, p.173).

11 The home 'confronted with functional housing, constructed according to technological dictates, inhabited by users in homogeneous, shattered space, it sinks and fades into the past. With this rupture – that is the substitution of functional housing for "dwellings", of buildings for edifices and monuments – what are known as modern town planning and architecture abandoned the historic town' (Lefebvre, 2014).

12 This is one of the very few studies of the spaces of the cinematic home, with an excellent summary introduction to the topic, and although it doesn't focus on the everyday, some of the chapters, for example on the kitchen, the stairs and the dining room, are very relevant to my study.

13 See Martha Rawlinson's third-year dissertation *The House that Image Built: Cinema's Phenomenology of the Home* (2012) that I supervised – deposited in the Faculty of Architecture and History of Art Library, University of Cambridge.

14 'This project has more than one source. One is a drawing by Saul Steinberg that appeared in *The Art of Living* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1952) and shows a rooming-house (you can tell it's a rooming-house because next to the door there is a notice bearing the words No Vacancy) part of the façade of which has been removed, allowing you to see the interior of some twenty-three rooms (I say 'some' because you can also see through into some of the back rooms). The mere inventory – and it could never be exhaustive – of the items of furniture and the actions represented has something truly vertiginous about it' (Perec, 2008, pp.40–41).

15 It's difficult to tell if the cinematic portrayal of detached houses is over-represented, but in *Spaces of the cinematic home*, the chapters on the basement and the attic refer primarily to US film examples – unsurprising as the proportion of detached dwellings, with basement and attic, is much higher in America than in Europe.

16 The vast majority of the terraced houses were built in Victorian times: 'One in five (21%) dwellings were built before 1919 although three quarters of these older dwellings have been subject to at least some major alterations since they were built and 43% have had extensions or loft conversions added' (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010, p.13). This situation regarding the age of the housing stock is well captured in *The Dilapidated Dwelling* (Patrick Keiller, 2000).

17 See the AHRC research project entitled Cinematic Geographies of Battersea: www.cam.ac.uk/research/features/cinematic-geographies-of-battersea

18 In *Coming up for air*, George Orwell wrote: 'You know how these streets fester all over the inner-outer suburbs. Always the same long, long rows of little semi-detached houses – the numbers in Ellesmere Road run to 212 and ours is 191 – as much alike as council houses and generally uglier. The stucco front, the creosoted gate, the privet hedge, the green front door, The Laurels, The Myrtles, The Hawthorns, Mon Abri, Mon Repos, Belle Vue. At perhaps one house in fifty some anti-social type who'll probably end in the workhouse has painted his front door blue instead of green' (Orwell, 2001, p.9). Manfred Mann's lyrics in 'Semi Detached Suburban Mr. James' (1966) didn't bring much hope for suburban man either:

> 'Do you think you will be happy, giving up your friends
> For your semi-detached suburban Mr. James […]
> So you think you will be happy, taking doggie for a walk
> With your semi-detached suburban Mr. James.'

19 That would be the opposite of the 'Downtonising' tendency (from the ITV series *Downton Abbey*, 2010–2015) 'To Downtonise the past is to rid a book or film or TV drama of the things that some in the audience might dislike about the present – black people, uppity proles, uppity Poles, women who

PLATE 1 Wim Wenders talking to Sanaa Architects – a production still from *If Buildings Could Talk* © 2010 Neue Road Movies, photograph by Donata Wenders. The crew while shooting listed from left to right: Stereographer Alain Derobe – 1st Assistant Camera Thierry Pouffary – DoP Jörg Widmer – Architect Ryue Nishizawa – Director Wim Wenders – Architect Kazuyo Sejima.

PLATE 2 Performing domestic tasks in *Home* (Ursula Meier, 2009)

PLATE 3 *Habiter l'inhabituel*, exhibition by Eric Hattan (2014). An extra line of columns has been inserted in the exhibition hall and is revealed by the presence of a jacket underneath one of the columns (© François Penz)

PLATE 4 The Elements of Architecture Venice Biennale 2014: windows (© Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia – Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee. Photo by Francesco Galli)

PLATE 5 The right to light in *L'Homme d'à coté* (Gastón Duprat and Mariano Cohn, 2009)
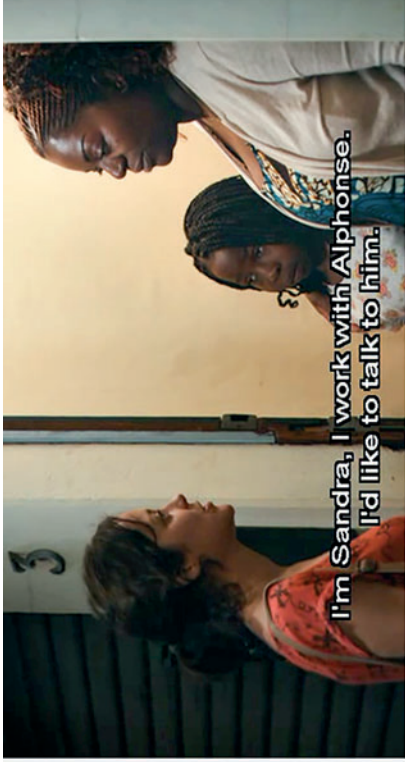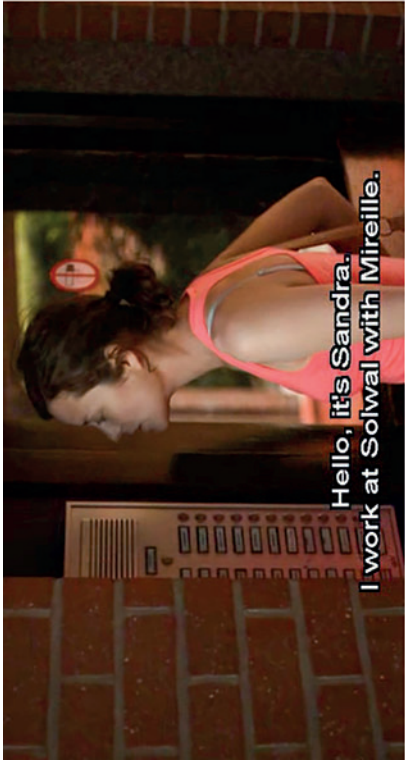
PLATE 6 *Two Days One Night:* the doors of hope and expectations (Dardenne brothers, 2014)

PLATE 7 Shorthand for architecture in *Drive* (Nicolas Winding Refn, 2011)

PLATE 7 continued

don't know their place, kids who have exchanged their right to graze their knees outdoors for the right to contract carpal tunnel syndrome indoors. The tendency to reverse backwards into the future is a particularly British phenomenon […] Britain is obsessed with a past that never existed' (Jeffries, 2016).

20 This builds on a process dubbed 'cinematic urban archaeology' developed for the Battersea AHRC project (Penz et al., 2017) and whereby we excavated the successive cinematic strata accumulated over the urban fabric of Battersea, making visible the emergence of the modern city and its subsequent transformations since the year 1895. It is an approach that charts the changes in the urban fabric, but it is also about human behaviour and social practices and conditions – and it is suggested here that this form of longitudinal study can be extended to the practice of everyday life by housing types over time, across the twentieth century for example.

21 There is no doubt that the remarkable *The Tina Trilogy* by Penny Woolcock would provide a rich terrain for a study of everyday life taking place in the semi-detached housing estates in Leeds.

22 Beyond British examples – it could be envisioned to create such typological studies by country, France, Italy, Germany, USA, Japan etc. come to mind.

23 For Lefebvre, the everyday environment is in part the equivalent of the social space – in the physical sense 'there exist social time or social time scales which are distinct from biological, physiological and physical time scales. There is a social space which is distinct from geometric, biological, geographic and economic space. Everyday space differs from geometric space in that it has four dimensions, which are in a two-by-two opposition: "right/left–high/low"'. Everyday space is therefore lived space. Lefebvre also adds: 'Similarly, everyday time has four dimensions which differ from dimensions as mathematicians and physicists would define them, namely the accomplished, the foreseen, the uncertain and the unforeseeable (or again: the past, the present, the short-term future and the long-term future)' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.525). For Lefebvre, everyday life, the topic that had engaged his attention for so long, became reinterpreted against the background of a changing production of space post-1968, with the publication in 1974 of *La production de l'espace,* published in English in 1991 (Lefebvre, 1991) but he doesn't refer to the everyday environment, and never clearly defines the relationship between the everyday environment and everyday life, except in a few instances: 'The specific spatial competence and performance of every society member can only be evaluated empirically. "Modern" spatial practice might thus be defined – to take an extreme but significant case – by the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.38).

24 My own translation from the French 'Tati a filmé quelque chose d'essentiel au cours du 20eme siècle: il a filmé la campagne, la vie à la campagne (période *Jour de fête*), puis il a filmé la vie pavillonnaire (*Mon Oncle*), [l'aspiration au confort petit-bourgeois de l'après-guerre et la découverte du formica], et il a surtout filmé et capté de manière ultrasensible, tel un sismographe de génie, le passage de la campagne à la ville, cette grande transhumance des hommes et des objets, d'un monde ancien vers un monde moderne' (Makeieff et al., 2009, p.7).

25 'Ce n'est pas seulement par économie que le cinéaste investit des décors déjà existants, en province, en banlieue parisienne ou à Paris […] Plus que jamais, il a décidé de se cacher dans le tissu du quotidien, aussi trivial et banal que possible. Avec ses papiers peints de mauvais goût, avec la grisaille des transports en commun et les menus plaisirs qu'on s'accorde parce que c'est dimanche'.

26 The French equivalent of a McDonald's 'quarter pounder' burger.

27 As when Mr Wolf (Harvey Keitel), in the process of helping to clean the mess in Jules and Vincent's car from having blown out Marvin's brain, asks in the bedroom, 'are you an oak man, Jimmy?'

28 'This Pasadena homemaker's name is Jeanne Bell. Her husband is Dr. Lawrence Bell. But back when we were acquainted, four years ago, her name was Vernita Green. Her code name was copper head… mine was black mamba'.

29 'Ces lieux, parce qu'ils sont absolument autres que tous les emplacements qu'ils reflètent et dont ils parlent, je les appellerai, par opposition aux utopies, les hétérotopies […] Quant aux hétérotopies

proprement dites, comment pourrait-on les décrire, quel sens ont-elles ? On pourrait supposer […] une sorte de description systématique […] de ces espaces différents, ces autres lieux, une espèce de contestation à la fois mythique et réelle de l'espace où nous vivons; cette description pourrait s'appeler l'hétérotopologie'

30 At the risk of binary thinking, the opposite of heterotopia, i.e. the spaces of our daily life, would result in 'homotopia'.

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PART 3

An architectonic of cinema

7

INTRODUCTION TO AN ARCHITECTONIC OF CINEMA

> If anything is described by an architectural plan, it is the nature of human relationships, since the elements whose trace it records – walls, doors, windows and stairs – are employed first to divide and then selectively reunite inhabited space. But what is generally absent in even the most elaborately illustrated building is the way human figures will occupy it.
>
> *(Robin Evans 1997, p.56)*

My interpretation of Neufert meets *Jeanne Dielman* at the end of Chapter 4 recalls early attempts at standardization centred around the kitchen – famously in the example of the Frankfurter Küche [the Frankfurt Kitchen] in the 1920s, where intriguingly the use of films proved a crucial part of the process (Bullock, 1984). In 1927 the city of Frankfurt commissioned three short films by the Frankfurt film-maker and photographer Paul Wolff. The sequences on the use of the minimal multifunctional spaces in one of the films, *Die Frankfurter Küche*, are reminiscent of the motion studies in Frank B. Gilbreth's book *Primer of Scientific Management* (Gilbreth, 1912). The architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky was inspired by this book when designing the Frankfurter Küche, and while Gilbreth recommended the use of films to improve the efficiency of industrial production, she used the film to prove the efficiency of the kitchen that had already been improved according to the 'principles of scientific management of the home' (Janser et al., 2001, p.38).

The use of film to improve efficiency in the kitchen was furthered by Frank B. Gilbreth's wife, Lillian Gilbreth,[1] as in '1926 she began to carry out her own sophisticated motion study experiments on household tasks such as making a bed, setting a table, washing dishes, and baking' (Graham, 1999, pp.651–652). By observing the observed, Lillian Gilbreth was a precursor of the use of film, doing with documentaries what I have come to advocate for fiction

films, i.e. turning cinematic scenes into data and compiling statistics out of drama. Slightly later, Ernst Neufert's Bauentwurfslehre (Architect's data) played a central role in normalizing the use of architectural standards – but without the use of film. First published in 1936, this book remains a first port of call for most designers who rely on the metric system; it is still listed as a bestseller in architecture books and has been through numerous revised editions (Vossoughian, 2014, p.36). As is evident in the kitchen example with *Jeanne Dielman*, Neufert's breakthrough was not only in the idea of architectural standardization but also in the graphic style of presentation, inspired by the new typography, which would be key to its success.[2] Over the years there have been other architectural standards on offer, such as the *Metric Handbook* (Adler, 1999), and I would argue that the latest offering, in a long line of architectural standardization efforts, is the Rem Koolhaas exhibition and publication of the *Elements of Architecture* (Koolhaas et al., 2014), exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 2014.[3]

The publication of the *Elements of Architecture* comprises 15 volumes that include the floor, the wall, the ceiling, the roof, the door, the window, the façade, the balcony, the corridor, the fireplace, the toilet, the stair, the escalator, the elevator and the ramp. Koolhaas identified them as recurrent and fundamental elements of architecture and that

> the number of these elements remains stubbornly the same. The fact that elements change independently according to different cycles and economies, and for different reasons, turns building into a collage of smoothness and bricolage – a complexity revealed in its full extent only by looking under a microscope at its constituent parts – the elements.[4]
>
> *(Caution and Koolhaas, 2014, p.193)*

What Koolhaas hoped for with this publication and exhibition was to bring about a 'modernisation of the core of architecture and architectural thinking itself'.[5] The attraction of Koolhaas's approach in relation to this book is that it focuses on the humble elements – doors, windows etc. – that make the fabric of architecture. To come back to the discussion on the nature of everyday architecture, it is architecture with a small 'a'. It is not the grand gesture, the iconic or the 'star architect'. It is an examination of what passes unnoticed in our everyday life – floors, walls, toilets, stairs etc.

Following from that, my main hypothesis is that an architectonic of cinema has the capacity to extend our understanding of our everyday environment, and cinema is replete with examples, as most films are architectonic in the sense that they invariably include doors, windows etc. with a few exceptions such as landscape films. Joanna Hogg's *Exhibition* (2013), studied in a previous chapter, is a very good example, as it explicitly visualizes all the key architectonic elements in the Melvin house. But as we will see, some movies are more architectonic than others, it is a matter of degree. An architectonic of cinema is concerned with the key building elements that pertain to architecture, but more modestly, compared to Koolhaas, I will be

FIGURE 7.1 The Elements of Architecture Venice Biennale 2014: doors (© Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia – Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee. Photo by Francesco Galli)

concentrating on three elements rather than 15: windows, doors and stairs – but with remarks on corridors, walls and even corners. My aim is to show how their many functions are 'cinematically practised and revealed'. It will essentially throw new light on building elements that are often taken for granted. Benjamin had already noted that 'Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction' (Benjamin, 1999, p.232), but hinting that cinema had the capacity to reveal overlooked architectural elements

> By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives.
>
> *(Benjamin, 1999, p.229)*

In other words, my approach could be perceived as complementing Koolhaas's *Elements of Architecture* (and vice versa). The overlap is also evident in two instances: films are occasionally mentioned in the publications,[6] and at the Biennale in 2014 there was a screen projection made of hundreds of clips selected from different fiction films featuring elements of architecture.[7]

But it is difficult to discuss an 'architectonic of cinema' without briefly going back to the idea of 'tectonic' in architecture, which can be defined very simply as 'the art of joining'. And an architecture that 'wears its tectonic on its sleeve' makes construction details explicit and does not aim to hide, on the contrary.

Frampton further elaborates:

> The full tectonic potential of any building stems from its capacity to articulate both the poetic and the cognitive aspects of its substance […]. Thus the tectonic stands in opposition to the current tendency to deprecate detailing in favor of the overall image.
>
> *(Frampton, 1996, p.26)*

This issue has been keenly debated amongst architectural theoreticians of architecture, but at stake is an architecture of image versus a tectonic architecture that reveals. To give an example, Frank Gehry's architecture is generally regarded as tectonically obscure, as the art of joining has disappeared in favour of a sculptural and imagistic approach.[8] In that sense, to rethink architecture focusing on basic elements of architecture, door, windows, stairs etc, as Koolhaas proposed, constitutes a tectonic approach.

A historically significant example that reveals the tectonic nature of architecture is Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye sequence in Pierre Chenal's *Architectures d'Aujourd'hui* (1931). This cinematic sequence is the translation of Le Corbusier's Five Points – pilotis, garden roof, free plan, ribbon window and free façade – elaborated in 1927 (Oechslin and Wang, 1987, p.86). The five points are part of Le Corbusier's fundamental vocabulary of architecture, in itself a form of tectonic, and the Villa Savoye sequence is an illustrated reading of Le Corbusier's text where the camera underlines the five points one by one. At some point the camera pans over the windows of the free façade and then glides vertically over a column on the ground floor to situate us inside the villa.
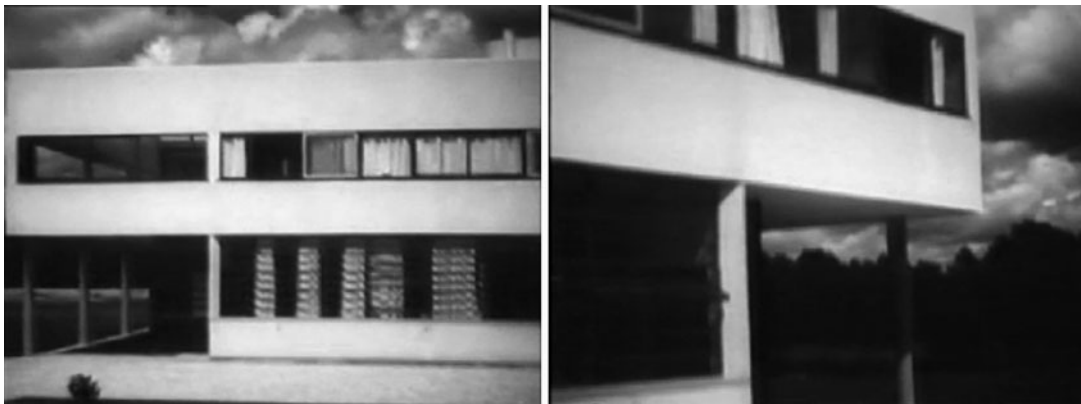
FIGURE 7.2 *Architectures d'Aujourd'hui* (Pierre Chenal, 1931): the Villa Savoye's façade

The film stresses one by one the five points; it is the transformation of Le Corbusier's writings, mediated by the screen language – see also Penz, 2013. Another example is Charles and Ray Eames's film *House After Five Years of Living* (1955). The film, composed entirely of photographic stills, explicitly shows the passage between a world of architectural tectonics details – the steel frame, the use of the transparent panels, the windows, the stairs – to an embodied poetic approach that transcends the techniques that the Eameses clearly aimed to elicit. Through the use of light, shadows and reflections, the film reconciles on the screen the art and the science, the poetic and the technique, succeeding in striking a balance between the two.

Beyond those clear historical examples, we should also note that Michael Tawa's writing on film and architecture is germane to my approach, as is evident in the reference to tectonics in his introduction:[9]

> The main purpose of this book is to help inform and enrich the spatial and tectonic dimensions of architectural design. The intent is to discern within cinema those qualities, conditions and techniques that might be useful for design strategies, tactics and practices.
>
> *(Tawa, 2010, p.1)*[10]

FIGURE 7.3 *House after Five Years of Living* (Charles and Ray Eames, 1955): tectonic elements

Overall, Koolhaas's *Elements of Architecture*, as well as Tawa's approach, are all a very useful basis for my way of thinking. It is an approach that has also been occasionally touched upon in film studies, for example in Elsaesser and Hagener's chapters focusing on 'Cinema as window and frame and Cinema as door – screen and threshold' (Elsaesser and Hagener, 2010).[11]

I will be extending the approach of Chenal/Le Corbusier and the Eameses to fiction films. Exploiting the value of fiction films in relation to everyday life in Part 2 proved very fruitful and a similar approach will be used, but for single architectural elements. Instead of regarding the architectural elements as passive nouns – doors, windows, corridors – they will be viewed in the active role of verbs and actions that embodies affects and carries emotions. As rightly remarked by Pallasmaa, 'The act of passing through a door is an authentic architectural experience, not the door itself. Looking through the window is an authentic architectural experience, not the window itself as a visual unit' (Pallasmaa, 2000, p.8). The hypothesis that film can help us to go from a strict architectonic approach to an embodied and poetic architectonic vision will be tested in the next four chapters. To enrich our understanding of the elements of architecture with affect and lived experience is an attempt to address Robin Evans' remark on the absence of the way human figures occupy 'even the most elaborately illustrated buildings'.

Notes

1 In an interview, Gilbreth described her research process as follows: 'First, a motion picture is made of the individual at work. The picture is taken to a laboratory and studied at leisure. Then a chart is drawn up to show every stage of the process. From this chart it can be seen whether or not some of these processes may not be cut out altogether' (Graham, 1999, pp.651–652).

2 'Individual drawings are numbered sequentially in the interest of guiding the reader's eye, as well as assuring narrative coherence. Words are interspersed with pictorial signs in order to reduce sentence lengths and hence also accelerate the transmission of meaning. Illustrations resemble comic book-style caricatures, probably to make reading less taxing. Plans and elevations are of uniform dimensions (though not necessarily at uniform scale), which facilitates comparative analysis. Column widths are short, which minimizes eye movement. Graphic conventions (for drawings and page layouts both) are kept constant, assuring consistency. Human figures are included in many of the drawings to communicate scale and proportion. The drawings are all monochromatic, thus easing the reading of line weights. The entire text appears in a sans serif font, which, according to the prevailing wisdom of the time, was supposed to improve legibility' (Vossoughian, 2014, p.42).

3 And not surprisingly, Koolhaas refers to Neufert in his opening statement (this text was inscribed on the façade of the central pavilion of the Elements of Architecture at the Giardini in Venice in 2014): 'Architecture is a profession trained to put things together, not to take them apart. But no architect in their right mind would dare to write today an "Elements of Architecture" that intended to describe both what the components of architecture are and how they should be put together [...] Architects now have dropped proportion in favor of dimension. Neufert is our pedantic Vitruvius, with his Bauentwurfslehre, published in Nazi Germany in 1936, now gone global' – and Koolhaas goes on to add: 'That impulse, once so strong and confident in all cultures that gods, deities, rulers, emperors, popes, and princes were addressed for thousands of years in grandiose dedications by the confident

authors of architectural treatises has been weakening gradually over the last few centuries and is now extinct. Le Corbusier's dedication 'à l'autorité' in his La Ville Radieuse (1935) was perhaps the last one, and saddled him with the lifelong accusation of authoritarianism'.

4 Koolhaas adds: 'In this exhibition – and in its catalogue – we examine micro-narratives revealed by focusing on the scale of the fragment: *Elements of Architecture* looks at the fundamentals of our buildings, used by any architect, anywhere, anytime. We do not uncover a single, unified history of architecture, but the multiple histories, origins, contaminations, similarities and differences of these very ancient elements and how they evolved into their current versions through technological advances, regulatory requirements, and new digital regimes'.

5 'My obsession with *Elements* is to assert that elements such as the elevator or the escalator have never really been incorporated into either the ideology or the theory of architecture', he says. 'Now, with new digital intersections, digital hybrids, digital combinations, the risk is that architecture is simply incapable of thinking of its entire repertoire'. See online www.dezeen.com/2014/06/06/rem-koolhaas-elements-of-architecture-exhibition-movie-venice-biennale-2014/

6 For example in the volume on Doors, the idea of the 'farcical door' is illustrated by an image from *A Night at the Opera* (Marx Brothers, 1935) – showing how 'the door is the ultimate comic element of architecture, building up and foiling expectations, and facilitating frantic passages on and off stage' (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p.520).

7 This compilation, which was only available during the Biennale, was the work of Davide Rapp, who writes '*Elements* [the title of the compilation] is a film about space, a film as a set of spaces. It incorporates scenes from different movie genres, merging the clips one into the other in a continuous flow of images, sounds, and actions. A movie montage is an editing technique in which shots are composed in a fast-paced fashion that compresses time and conveys a lot of information in a relatively short period. The simple act of juxtaposing separate shots of corridors, stairs, or facades evokes connections that cannot be found in a single shot. The various spaces of fiction exist simultaneously in a continuous dynamic. *Elements* is a film without any plot, story, or characters. Architecture in movies appears frequently as a background of the action and it can be represented in many ways: top views, one-point perspectives, frontal planes, long takes, and close-ups. The framing highlights the proportions and the geometries of the elements, while the presence, or the absence of sounds, noises, and scores unveils their prerogatives and materialities. Elements asks the viewer to focus on the fifteen elements through the fast transitions between the clips, revealing contrasts and affinities, lines and shapes, recurring patterns and motives, movements and rhythms. In this framework each scene, cut out from the original movies, gets a new meaning and unveils the close and ambivalent connections between cinema and architecture' (Caution and Koolhaas, 2014, p.201).

8 'This brings up the difficult question of the limits of sculpture versus architecture: where does structural expressivity lie between sculpture on the one hand and architecture on the other? How can one demonstrate this difference by example, or, more precisely, how can one demonstrate the limits of the sculptural versus the tectonic within architecture? For me this is a point at which one may discriminate between Frank Gehry and Enric Miralles, say. In almost all of Miralles's work the tectonic element is closely integrated with the sculptural. In Gehry's case, apart from his very early work, there's no interest whatsoever in the tectonic. He's only interested in plasticity, and whatever makes it stand up will do – he couldn't care less. That's very evident in Bilbao' (Frampton et al., 2003, p.51).

9 Tawa's book specifically refers to tectonics in its title: *Agencies of the Frame: Tectonic Strategies in Cinema and Architecture* (Tawa, 2010).

10 Tawa adds: 'I come to a film, or more often to a scene or sequence in that film, with a view to developing its usefulness for the architectural design process. Even then, the scope is limited to tectonic and formal concerns of spatial organisation, volumetric composition, tempo and duration, materiality, spatial experience and the phenomenological condition of architecture – in short, to a concern for the way the film has been "made" and constructed' (Tawa, 2010, p.20).

11 A window in cinema 'keeps the spectator visually at arm's length while nonetheless drawing him/her in emotionally, by deploying window and frame as mutually regulating conceptual metaphors for looking at a separated reality that nonetheless exists for our benefit' adding that doors 'by contrast, deal with the different ways the spectator enters into this world, physically as well as metaphorically' (Elsaesser and Hagener, 2010, p.37).

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8

WINDOWS

The window offers views that are more than spectacles; mentally prolonged spaces. In such a way that the implication in the spectacle entails the explication of this spectacle. Familiarity preserves it; it disappears and is reborn, with the everydayness of both the inside and the outside world.

(Lefebvre, 2004, p.33)

Je crois que notre fonction c'est d'ouvrir des fenêtres […] dans ce travail d'ouverture de fenêtre qu'est le notre, il faut choisir les paysages que nous montrerons […] Ce serait merveilleux de pouvoir ouvrir des fenêtres sur des paysages absolument inattendus, inconnus, invraisemblables, mais ça, c'est très difficile. L'homme est un animal d'habitudes […] Alors il faut des fenêtres et ces fenêtres vont dévoiler, vont faire dire aux gens: tiens mais c'est vrai.

Jean Renoir[1] (Reboul, 1995, pp.129–130)

Introduction

Let us start with Perec's *Un homme qui dort*, which was studied in a previous chapter for its relentless portrayal of the everyday in the life of a young Parisian student. The main space in the film is the young man's bedroom, an attic *chambre de bonne*, a very cramped space. Most relevant here is the dormer window leading onto the roof, and how it is handled. Given the barely five-square-metre bedroom, the window is a godsend, a breathing and recreational space, without which life in such a constrained space would be even more miserable.[2]

   Over many varied sequences the film shows the modes of practising the window and the activities that it affords. The dormer window isn't just a means for ventilation and lighting, but

FIGURE 8.1 *Un homme qui dort* (Bernard Queysanne, 1974): practising the dormer window

provides a perch on the inside for reading and eating a sandwich, a seating space on the outside for smoking and reflecting, a place for looking out during the day or looking in at night. The full gamut of using a dormer window is explored (see Figure 8.1). But the overall impression is one of freedom, that it affords a space outside, a bowl of oxygen, an extension of a room, a place for the mind to expand, a liberty associated with exploring an outdoor roof space, probably something that he does without permission, making it even more delicious, a world yet untouched by health and safety regulations. However small an aperture, it expands one's horizon precisely because it is possible to step outside. And inside it is the focus of one's gaze. 'A roof', Bachelard reminds us, 'tells its *raison d'être* right away: it gives mankind shelter from the rain and sun he fears […] We "understand" the slant of a roof. Even a dreamer dreams rationally; for him, a pointed roof averts rain clouds' (Bachelard, 1964, p.18). And although Perec's young man's dream state turns to nightmare, his everyday practice of the attic dormer window elicits the potency of Bachelard's oneiric attraction to the attic space.

As a spectator we can't fail to notice the window in *Un homme qui dort*. However, we may or we may not notice the basin or the broken mirror. Similarly in my analysis of *Jeanne Dielman*, the flat's windows are regularly seen and used. But they do not play any particular role in the slowly unfolding drama, they are thoroughly unmemorable and yet essential to the practice of everydayness. We know from Bazin's study of the décor of Jean Gabin's room in Carné's *Le Jour se Lève* (1939) that viewers have a very selective memory. Bazin carried out a series of surveys following screenings of *Le Jour se Lève*, and found that people forgot around 30 per cent of the furniture from Gabin's bedroom, including some large pieces of furniture such as a chest of drawers with a marble top, the sink and the bedside table (Bazin, 1998, p.87). Bazin offered a simple explanation: spectators hadn't noticed those items because there was no reason to, they had no dramatic function in the film. He added that 'Le cinéma doit traiter le décor en acteur du drame' [Cinema must treat the décor as an actor in the drama] if it is to be noticed. But when it comes to the world of architecture, Bernard Tschumi suggested,

over an image of a woman pushing a man out of a window, that 'To really appreciate architecture, you may even need to commit a murder' (Tschumi, 2012, p.46).[3] No doubt Tschumi's rather extreme suggestion would go some way to getting that window noticed.

Cinema, on the other hand, regularly uses windows to dramatic effect – this is what I would call the **cinematographic window,** the window that lets itself be penetrated by the camera, which unwittingly lets the camera in. We see it at the beginning of *Rear Window* (Hitchcock, 1953), where the roving camera sweeps across the courtyard before penetrating James Stewart's flat through the window while he is asleep in his wheelchair. Hitchcock does it again at the start of *Psycho* (1960) as the camera zooms onto the hotel window and penetrates the intimacy of the couple. It is at its most spectacular again at the start of de Scola's *A Giornata Particulare* (1977), where the camera climbs daringly along the inner façade of the Palazzo Federici in Rome before sliding through the open window into Antonietta's (Sophia Loren) kitchen, following her throughout the flat. In *Le Plaisir* (Ophüls, 1952), less spectacular but equally compelling is the camera movement outside the house of the local brothel, peering delicately at each window at night, leering at the women entertaining the locals, and as noted by Ropars 'Ophüls déjà, dans *Le Plaisir,* redessinait ainsi l'espace avec le temps […] avec les mouvements libres de sa caméra, calqués sur les hésitations de son propre regard' [In *Le Plaisir*, Ophüls was already redesigning space with time […] its free camera movements closely translating his own hesitations] (Ropars-Wuilleumier, 1970, p.230).

The daring of such cinematographic moves reached its pinnacle with *I am Cuba* (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1964), in the scene where the camera gets inside a cigar factory, entering from one

FIGURE 8.2 The voyeuristic window in *Le Plaisir* (Max Ophüls, 1952)

window and exiting through another at the other side of the building, in one uninterrupted sequence shot. An adjunct to the cinematographic window is the **mythical cinematographic window,** such as the penultimate scene in Antonioni's *The Passenger* (1975) or the pan in Renoir's *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (1936). All have required extraordinary technical feats and have become celebrated cinematic window scenes. In the category of **spectacular cinematographic window,** who could forget the scene in *The Hudsucker Proxy* (Coen Brothers, 1994) where Waring Hudsucker commits suicide by jumping through the window of a skyscraper? Not that one would remember that particular window and what it looked like in detail, but the idea that one could 'fly' through a window makes us think of a glazed opening in a different way.

Much more subtle is Béla Tarr's exploration of the **liminal condition** between the two states on either side of a window: the indoor and the outdoor, as remarked by Rancière,

> *Le personnage typique de Béla Tarr, c'est désormais l'homme à la fenêtre, l'homme qui regarde les choses venir vers lui. Et les regarder, c'est se laisser envahir par elles, se soustraire au trajet normal qui convertit les sollicitations du dehors en impulsions pour agir.* [Béla Tarr's typical character is nowadays the man at the window, the man who observes things coming towards him. And to watch them is to allow them to invade him, to refrain from the normal course of action which transforms outside forces into an impetus to act.]
>
> *(Rancière, 2011, p.37)*

Béla Tarr is particularly fond of showing the motivated gaze of an observer looking out or in – as if feeling the distance between two situations. In an interview, Béla Tarr confessed to

> liking to see the inside and the outside within the same shot – we feel better the space and the distance between the two scenes – you are inside you feel as if you are outside – you are outside you feel you are inside.[4]

The two spaces conjoin and fuse, as in the opening shot of *Damnation* (1988).[5]

Tarr explores here the passage between two states, and as the camera reverses it is as if the bleak outdoors was penetrating inside through the window and into the body of the man gazing out. We have gone from an unmotivated camera movement to a subjective point of view. The mesmerizing bleakness of this scene anticipates the rest of the film. The slow backward camera movement that lasts four minutes is the opposite of the seven minutes of the penultimate shot in Antonioni's *The Passenger*, where the camera slowly leaves Locke's room in a forward movement and escapes cowardly through the window, leaving him to his fate.[6] In *Damnation* we are joining Karrer's fate (Miklós Székely B.). Fittingly, both camera moves explore the threshold condition in reverse directions corresponding to a beginning and an

FIGURE 8.3 The man at the window in *Damnation* (Béla Tarr, 1988)

ending – in *Damnation* it is the opening scene and the world is 'penetrating' us, while in *The Passenger* we are leaving the scene. Bachelard commented:

> Outside and inside are both intimate – they are always ready to be reversed, to exchange their hostility. If there exists a border-line surface between such an inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides […] In this drama of intimate geometry, where should one live?
>
> *(Bachelard, 1964, pp.217–218)*

Renoir and windows

Many film-makers conceive windows as a form of escape, in particular Jean Renoir who, as Douchet noted, has a poetic vision: 'la fenêtre a pour mission naturelle d'ouvrir sur le paysage, vers le dehors, et finalement d'ouvrir au monde […] La fenêtre invite à un mouvement mental' (Douchet, 1997, p.111). Douchet proceeds to quote what he justly regards as the most famous example in Renoir's cinema, *Une Partie de Campagne* (1936) 'au moment où les deux jeunes canotiers ouvrent les volets de l'auberge dans laquelle ils déjeunent et que soudain apparaissent, comme dans un tableau impressionniste, les femmes à la balançoire'

(Douchet, 1997, p.112). It is an extraordinarily evocative shot. The sudden appearance of the women on the swing is a projection of desires and dreams; those two men from the countryside haven't just opened a window, but expanded their horizon onto a new life, a new dream, a means to escape their everyday reality – in this case the prospect of seducing women from a different world, from a different class, a window of possibilities, a window of opportunity.

The notion of a 'window onto the world' brings us naturally to consider Alberti's often quoted and misquoted aphorism on the subject. Friedberg reminds us that 'Alberti's 1435 metaphor for the painting (pictura) as an "open window" (*aperta finestra*) remains a pivotal trope in debates about the origins, practices, and traditions of perspective, debates that continue to pose key questions about visual representation itself' (Friedberg, 2006, p.26). But Friedberg makes a crucial distinction between Alberti's window as a painting device versus windows in a building:

> Alberti's metaphoric 'window' was a framing device for the geometrics of his perspective formula. While it implied a fixed position for the viewer of single-point perspective, it did not assume or imply that the 'subject to be painted' should be the exact view of what one would see out of an architectural window onto the natural world, as in a 'window on the world'.
>
> *(Friedberg, 2006, p.32)*

This is a poignant consideration for Renoir's window scene mentioned above, in *La Partie de Campagne*. The shutters opening in *La Partie de Campagne* are also a tribute from the world of cinema to impressionism – a tribute from Jean Renoir to his father Auguste Renoir. It marks the passage from one mode of representation to another. In that sense this scene is both cinema and painting together, architecture and the representation of the world outside the window. It

FIGURE 8.4 The window of opportunities: *La Partie de Campagne* (Jean Renoir, 1936)

can be construed as a rare example of the reconciliation, in one single scene, of Alberti's window as *pictura* with his architectural concept of the 'open window' *aperta finestra*.

Douchet further elaborates on the issue of depth of field:

> Cette dialectique du près et du loin, si fine qu'on ne la remarque qu'en y prêtant la plus grande attention tant ses effets sont gommés, caractérise à mes yeux le secret de la mise en scène de Renoir. Elle a, en revanche, une conséquence dont la visibilité n'échappe à personne : *la profondeur de champ* […] et pourtant elle découle du mouvement d'ouverture de la fenêtre […] Dès lors, la profondeur de champ exige son élargissement. Le monde est un. Affirmation que Renoir ne cesse de répéter dans ses écrits, ses interviews, et surtout qu'il ne cesse de filmer. La vision fermée par le cadre de la fenêtre limite le champ mais elle n'arrête pas le monde.
>
> *(Douchet, 1997, p.113)*

The world is one, affirms Renoir, meaning that from the position of the spectator on the inside of the window, we are reconciled with the outdoor contained within the frame, thanks to the use of a great depth of field, one of Renoir's trademarks. Douchet ventures further and suggests that for Renoir the world extends way beyond the window frame and that 'le off renoirien couvre toute l'étendue du monde. Il submerge la caméra' [for Renoir, the off-screen extends to the rest of the world – it transcends the camera]. Renoir uses the off-screen camera or *hors champs* to good effect through sound in particular, but he had a remarkable intuition in suggesting that our vision and imagination go way beyond the visible, the edge of the window frame.

Decades later this same type of preoccupation has been the subject of research amongst cognitive psychologists.[7] Science eventually vindicated Renoir's intuition that 'the world is one' by demonstrating that when we look at a window, in real life or in films, we know that there is a world beyond the frame, a world that we can imagine quite accurately.

The architect's viewpoint: Perret and Le Corbusier

But we must return once more to Douchet's analysis of the role of the window in Renoir's films:

> *Etant donné la force symbolique que Renoir attribue à cet élément usuel, il convient d'examiner d'un peu plus près cette figure. Repensons donc son dessin. Il s'agit généralement, dans l'architecture française, d'un rectangle plus haut que large, constitué de deux parallèles reliées entre elles à chacune de leurs extrémités par deux verticales plus longues. Cette proportion n'est pourtant pas fixe. En changeant de proportion, la fenêtre change de nom mais pas de fonction. Au départ elle est une découpe, un espace d'ouverture dans un mur fermé qui draine la vision et la dirige vers l'espace du monde. Elle est comme*

un canal par lequel s'échappe l'imaginaire, l'appétit de vivre, le besoin d'exister. Renoir rêve la fenêtre à l'inverse de la définition qu'en donne le dictionnaire. Ce dernier dit : 'Ouverture faite dans un mur, une paroi, pour laisser pénétrer l'air et la lumière.' Renoir rectifie et filme une 'ouverture … pour répondre à l'appel d'air, pour s'évader vers la lumière'. [Given the symbolic force that Renoir attributes to this ordinary element, it is necessary to examine it a little more closely. Let us therefore reconsider his reasoning. In French architecture, it is generally a rectangle taller than wide, consisting of two parallel lines connected at each end by two longer verticals. However, this proportion is not fixed. By changing the proportion, the window may be named differently, but its function remains the same. Initially it is a cutout, an opening in a blank wall that channels the vision and directs it towards the outside world. It is like a channel through which escapes the imaginary, the appetite for life, the need to exist. The way Renoir dreams of windows, turns on its head the dictionary's definition. The latter states: 'Opening made in a wall in order to let the air and the light penetrate'. On the contrary, Renoir films an 'opening … to respond to the call for air, to escape towards the light'.

(Douchet, 1997, pp.111–112)

Douchet touches here on a number of key points relevant to this section. He challenges, through Renoir, a very basic architectural definition of what a window is, and goes on to propose his own rather poetic definition as a 'channel of our dreams', while Renoir's own quote reaffirms this idea of freedom and escape towards the light. But Palladio was clear in his definition of what a window should achieve:

Make sure when making windows that they do not let in too much or too little light and that they are not more spread out or closer together than necessary. One should therefore take great care over the size of the rooms which will receive light from them because it is obvious that a larger room needs much more light to make it luminous and bright than a small one; and if the windows are made smaller and less numerous than necessary they will be made gloomy; and if they are made too large the rooms are practically uninhabitable because, since cold and hot air can get in they will be extremely hot or cold depending on the seasons of the year.

(Palladio, 1997, p.60)

Jacques Tati would certainly have approved of this definition, and *Playtime* (1967) could be read as an illustration of Palladio's principle that too much glazing can only lead to puzzlement, ambiguity and confusion.

In general, architects have longed debated what a window was. For example, Le Corbusier reported that 'Loos told me one day: A cultivated man does not look out of the window; his

window is a ground glass; it is there only to let the light in, not to let the gaze pass through' (Colomina, 1992, p.74). Loos was clearly advocating a rather introverted interior with no Renoirien means of visual escape. And according to Colomina: 'Whereas Loos' window had split sight from light, Le Corbusier's splits breathing from these two forms of light. 'A window is to give light, not to ventilate! To ventilate we use machines; it is mechanics, it is physics' (Colomina, 1992, p.121). But the real debate amongst architects was that between Perret and Le Corbusier about the window's shape, which Douchet conceives as being of an oblong configuration 'd'un rectangle plus haut que large'. Colomina evokes the debate between both architects in the following terms:

> Perret maintained that the vertical window, *la porte fenêtre*, 'reproduces an impression of complete space' because it permits a view of the street, the garden, and the sky, while the horizontal window, *la fenêtre en longueur*, diminishes 'one's perception and correct appreciation of the landscape'. She adds that 'What the horizontal window cuts from the cone of vision is the strip of the sky and the strip of the foreground that sustains the illusion of perspectival depth. Perret's *porte fenêtre* corresponds to the space of perspective. Le Corbusier's *fenêtre en longueur* to the space of photography.
>
> *(Colomina, 1992, p.112)*

Of La Villa Savoye (1929), Le Corbusier said 'The house is a box in the air, pierced all around, without interruption, by a *fenêtre en longueur*' (Colomina, 1992, p.114). Le Corbusier had long anticipated the role of film as an effective means of communication and made his intentions perfectly clear in *Architectures d'Aujourd'hui* (Pierre Chenal, 1931).[8] The section featuring La Villa Savoye starts with an establishing shot of the 'box in the air' followed by a continuous camera movement, panning over the *fenêtres en longueur*. The windows are again prominent in the interior shot, a pan from left to right, seemingly traversing the glass to briefly hover above the outside garden, before cutting to the base of the ramp. The camera movements and the cuts aren't motivated by movements or actions. There are no characters except for a woman climbing the ramp at some point. The space is the main and only character and it has been suggested that in itself it contains its own drama, functioning as a film: 'This kind of spatial system has been called cinematic because of the sense of an unfolding suspense, rendered palpable as previously withheld but anticipated spaces come into view and into availability for use' (Tawa, 2010, p.119), thus echoing Colomina's remark, 'The house is no more than a series of views choreographed by the visitor, the way a filmmaker effects the montage of a film' (Colomina, 1992, p.114). In that sense the scene of La Villa Savoye in *Architectures d'Aujourd'hui* constitutes a film of the film, a form of *mise en abyme*, where the sweeping of the camera over the *fenêtres en longueur* further reminds us of the unwinding of celluloid film frames.[9]

The case of *la porte fenêtre* and *la fenêtre en longueur* in film

Intriguingly, the battle of the windows between Le Corbusier and Perret would be given a new twist thanks to two films – *L'homme d'à coté* (Gastón Duprat and Mariano Cohn, 2009) and *38 Témoins* (Lucas Belvaux, 2012). Both are fiction films staged in buildings designed by the two architects; *L'homme d'à coté* is staged in a Le Corbusier villa in Argentina, while *38 Témoins* takes place in a block of flats designed by Perret in Le Havre – and in both cases a key component of the film revolves around windows. Unwittingly, the film-makers have allowed the conversation between *la porte fenêtre* and *la fenêtre en longueur* to last well into the twenty-first century.

L'homme d'à coté is, as far as I know, the only fiction film staged in a building by Le Corbusier. It takes place in the only house built by Le Corbusier in South America, La Maison Curutchet in La Plata, Argentina (Lapunzina, 1997). The house itself has an interesting history and is not a typical villa on the model of La Villa Savoye, as it is situated on an urban site, shoehorned by 'three existing party walls, a ready available box, which Le Corbusier filled with a masterful display of his architectural elements and principles, as well as with the whole drama of his spatial poetry' (Lapunzina, 1995, p.131). In the film the house is occupied by Leonardo (Rafael Spregelburd) and his family. He is an internationally renowned designer who works from home and so does his wife, a yoga teacher – and except for the fact that they have a daughter, the set-up is very reminiscent of Hogg's *Exhibition*, artists/creatives spending most of their time in a modernist house. This makes La Maison Curutchet one of the main protagonists of the film and central to the plot. The film starts with Leonardo being woken up one morning by heavy hammering sounds. In search of the noise source, he walks around the house, taking the viewers on a comprehensive tour of the house, a cinematic architectural promenade. As Leonardo goes down the ramp we can fully appreciate the various levels of transparency of the house, produced by the columns, the brise-soleils and the *fenêtre en longueur* – providing a complex play of light and shade. The noise comes from the wall of a neighbour who wants to pierce a window in a blank wall, to Leonardo's horror, as it overlooks one of La Maison Curutchet's internal courtyards and living quarters.

L'homme d'à coté is the tale of the need for sunlight through a window, and it becomes a battleground between the two neighbours. Leonardo, who lives in a house replete with *fenêtres en longueur*, in line with Le Corbusier's principles, is unmoved by Victor's (Daniel Araoz) request. There ensues between Victor and Leonardo a series of amusing dialogues as to the nature of windows. Victor does not seem to understand Leonardo's objection and attempts to explain that he 'needs of a little the sunlight that he [Leonardo] has too much of'. Indeed, Le Corbusier had to deploy some impressive brise-soleil to counteract the effect of the sun. It turns out that it is as much a battle of social classes as for the right to light, as the sophisticated bourgeois-bohemian Leonardo is having to negotiate with Victor, a larger-than-life, plain-speaking, working-class, secondhand car salesman. *L'homme d'à coté* makes a valuable

contribution to the debate on windows – *fenêtres en longueur* – while also being a good introduction to the nature of windows in terms of the right to light and sunlight – as well as its implications within a social, societal and architectural context through a lived experience.

Turning to *38 Témoins*, Perret's *portes fenêtres* are equally central to the plot. The film takes place in an area of celebrated apartment blocks built by Perret in 1946 as part of the reconstruction of Le Havre. Situated in the rue de Paris, the flats are part of a vast ensemble of the post-WWII reconstructed city and are now a UNESCO heritage site. Perret's project used a concrete system 'poteau dalle' that expresses the structure, and the flats are stilted on a series of striking colonnades that often feature in fiction films, symbolizing the quintessential modernist city (Etienne-Steiner, 1999). Essentially, the plot revolves around the fact that a woman has been murdered one night in the street and that there are potentially 38 witnesses according to the layout of the flats and the positions of *les portes fenêtres*. But nobody wants to come forward as a witness. The windows remain 'silent witnesses'.

Only *les portes fenêtres* know the truth. The film creates a claustrophobic atmosphere with too many windows and too much light, something that Palladio had warned about. People live furtive lives with their curtains drawn. Paradoxically, with so much fenestration, the characters are gasping for air. Of course the witnesses have not only heard the woman screaming but could, from their windows, have a full view of the street. *38 Témoins* is another classic case of modern architecture associated with dystopia in films, and an invaluable companion to *L'homme d'à coté* in the discussion regarding Perret and Le Corbusier over the right fenestration for modern architecture. *L'homme d'à coté* raises the issue of the right to light, while *38 Témoins* grapples with the right to see – and not tell. And both make valuable contributions to the nature of windows of the type that is not easily grasped or aired in any architectural compendium – from 'elements of architecture' they have become 'elements for living'.

FIGURE 8.5 A world of *portes fenêtres* in *38 Témoins* (Lucas Belvaux, 2012)

In the debate over the window ratio, film-makers never interfered or took sides. They simply used the windows that best served the film's narrative. Cinematic windows are never in it for themselves, but for what they stand for in dramatic terms.

The case of *L'Eclisse* (Antonioni, 1962)

Renoir rejects the idea of showing an unexpected landscape through a window, in favour of the familiar, arguing that framing the familiar will make viewers notice and ask questions (see Renoir's quote at the start of this chapter). In the opening scene of *L'Eclisse* (1962), taking place in Riccardo's flat, Vittoria (Monica Vitti), opens the sitting-room curtain to reveal the EUR water tower. It's early morning and they have been up all night arguing. The grey mushroom-shaped water tower looming over a bare and liminal suburban landscape has an eerie quality that adds to the unnerving atmosphere surrounding the end of their relationship. Although this would have been a familiar site to people living in the EUR,[10] this landscape would have been verging on the unexpected for many spectators. The window through which Vittoria contemplates the water tower is a ribbon-type window favoured by Le Corbusier. This isn't surprising, given that the EUR is a twentieth-century modernist development. Vittoria's own flat is also situated in the EUR residential district and during the course of the film she regularly visits her mother and her newly acquired boyfriend, Piero (Alain Delon), who both live and work in the heart of Rome, in the medieval part of the city. Vittoria goes back and forth between the old and the new districts and in the process is frequently looking out of windows – there are at least ten such sequences. *L'Eclisse* could therefore be conceived as a tale of two

FIGURE 8.6 *L'Eclisse* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1962): Vittoria lost in window space

windows – *les fenêtres en longueur* versus *les portes fenêtres*. Antonioni is not taking sides for either Perret or Le Corbusier, and Vittoria's gaze is invariably lost in space, irrespective of the shape of the window.

However, there is one particular occurrence that in my view holds the clue to her window gazing. At 25 minutes into the film, the camera is situated in the street outside Vittoria's block of flats, and only the ground-floor entrance is illuminated. Suddenly, in the dark façade two windows are lit above the entrance. Vittoria has just come home, has opened the flat's door and has switched on a corridor light. From the same fixed camera position, we follow her silhouette progressing in the flat from the larger window on the left to a smaller one on the right. Across a cut, the camera zooms to a black part of the façade. Then a light is switched on and for a couple of seconds we see an open window with a poster at the back. The poster is a drawing of a woman looking towards a window. The frame – and the window – is empty for a few seconds, a rather typical occurrence in Antonioni's films, leaving plenty of space to space where 'le cinéma antonionien n'a cessé de dessiner et de décliner une architecture ou une topologie du vide' [Antonioni's cinema never ceased to design and enumerate an architecture or topographical vacuum] (Moure, 2001, p.14). Then Vittoria enters the frame from the left and leans forward to deposit a package lower down. She turns her back to the camera to exit the frame on the left again. Across a cut we find her inside her brightly-lit sitting room.

The significance of the scene resides in the poster at the back of the room. It is just about possible to make out the text situated at the bottom: *Il Disegno Francese, da Fouquet a Toulouse-Lautrec*. It is the poster of the exhibition that took place in Rome at the Palazzo di Venezia between December 1959 and February 1960. The woman on the poster is easily identifiable as a pencil drawing by Paul Signac entitled 'Étude pour un dimanche : femme debout de dos devant une fenêtre' [known in English as 'Study for "Sunday": Woman at the

FIGURE 8.7 *L'Eclisse* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1962): poster by Signac in the background

Window', 1888–89]. The original drawing is 24 cm × 16 cm and has clearly been blown up to poster size – as a result, she and Vittoria are of comparable size. Signac's 'Woman at the Window' turns her back to Vittoria.

They could be construed as a sort of mirror image of each other. It is hard to tell what Signac's woman is doing. Her right arm is raised against the glass, she doesn't seem to be engaged in any particular activity apart from looking outside. She could be contemplating a landscape, a street, a garden, we simply do not know, as all we can see is a white/grey blur. She might have been there for a while, daydreaming. I hypothesize here that Vittoria emulates Signac's 'Woman at the Window'. Indeed, throughout the film, Vittoria is herself mysteriously looking out of windows. **The contemplative window, the dreamy window, the window as escape,** are all contained in Signac's drawing and throughout the film. From the first scene in Riccardo's flat, when Vittoria opens the curtains and looks out onto the water tower, she simply stays there. She later looks out of the window again, standing in the middle of the room. She stops talking to Riccardo, simply gazes out. Later, when she is at her flat, she goes towards the window, looking up, gazing out. These are unmotivated gazes outside any action, outside a fiction.

But *L'Eclisse* reveals more conventional moments of window practices; for example when Vittoria's neighbour Anita comes to visit, another neighbour, Marta, calls on the phone and invites them to her apartment nearby. For a while we see them pursuing their telephone dialogue, as well as having visual contact, waving at each other from their respective illuminated windows in the night. This is an example of a **window as communication** and a far cry from

FIGURE 8.8 A typology of windows and affects in *L'Eclisse* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1962)

FIGURE 8.9 *L'Eclisse* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1962): window across the courtyard

those pure dream moments evoked earlier. There are **windows that hide**, as when Riccardo calls Vittoria from the street outside her flat at night. Standing in the dark, she can see him but he can't see her. She does the same when Piero comes by, but this time she shows up at the window and engages with him. And there are **windows that separate and unite** at the same time – as when Vittoria and Piero kiss across the glass pane of the French window in Piero's office. Vittoria is outside on the balcony side, and Piero on the inside. They performed a similar scene in Piero's flat, kissing across a glass-doored cabinet, and Vittoria never seems happier than when embracing through a glass pane.[11]

There are **windows that interrogate**, as in the scene when Vittoria first visits Piero's parents' flat. First the camera stands in front of a half-open window, which frames an open window across a courtyard. The intense sunlight illuminates the wall, turning the window into a black hole. As often in Antonioni's films, for a second or two we are left with a space of expectation, two windows facing each other, pregnant with anticipation. Then a woman appears in the window across the courtyard (see Figure 8.9) – she stands by the window's edge in full sunlight, looking towards the camera. She is wearing a short-sleeved dress and rests her left hand on the window. She is middle-aged, buxom, with her brown hair in a bun. It is a vision of a painting, framed not unlike an Antonello da Messina portrait on a black background. Vittoria gazes at her from behind the glass of the half-open window. Two windows and two women are facing each other: two lives, two destinies. No acknowledgment, no nodding, no smile, pure gazing for about two seconds, in total silence. Then the woman is reabsorbed by the black hole as she slides backwards, still holding Vittoria's gaze. Her footsteps break the stillness. One can't help

wondering, who was she? Did she know Piero's parents? What was she thinking when looking at Vittoria? The whole scene lasts no more than six seconds; the window returns to its black-hole status, Vittoria moves on and the Aristotelian equilibrium is restored.

This is one of the more poignant window moments in *L'Eclisse*, a celebration of an ephemeral moment of everydayness that sums up Antonioni's take on the notion of realism: 'J'éprouve le besoin d'exprimer la réalité dans des termes qui ne sont pas tout à fait réalistes' – I feel the need to express reality in terms that are not completely realistic (Antonioni, 2008, p.293). *L'Eclisse*, like all his films, breaks in and out of a conventional narrative flow, slowed down by empty spaces that 'appear to multiply while at the same time fragmenting' (l'espace semble se multiplier en se morcelant) (Ropars-Wuilleumier, 1970, p.79).

Vittoria is disconnected from the world – those are pure moments of idleness – and Deleuze argues that those moments of idleness disconnected from the movement-image are key to the elaboration of the time-image:

> Antonioni's art will continue to evolve in two directions: an astonishing development of the idle periods of everyday banality; then, starting with *The Eclipse*, a treatment of limit-situations which pushes them to the point of dehumanized landscapes, of emptied spaces that might be seen as having absorbed characters and actions, retaining only a geophysical description, an abstract inventory of them.
>
> *(Deleuze, 1989, p.5)*[12]

Along similar lines, Ropars remarks that in Antonioni's films

> l'espace immédiatement perçu enferme l'image cinématographique dans l'éternel présent qui caractérise une présentation dramatique; aussi faut-il, pour que le temps devienne perceptible dans sa réalité sensible, estomper la présence de cet espace; à quoi s'est efforcé tout le cinéma moderne, jusqu'à atteindre un pouvoir d'abstraction. [The immediately perceived space encloses the cinematographic image in the eternal present that characterizes a dramatic presentation. It is therefore necessary to erase the presence of space in order for time to become perceptible in a discernible reality. This is what modern cinema has endeavoured to do, until it reaches a power of abstraction.]
>
> *(Ropars-Wuilleumier, 1970, p.228)*

And by modern cinema, we should understand the Deleuzian concept of time-image. Ropars pursues that in *L'Eclisse*, Antonioni manages to use 'l'espace pour exprimer le temps, parvient à exprimer l'espace sans supprimer le temps, même si celui-ci n'apparaît qu'en creux et comme un manque' [space to express time, manages to express space without suppressing time, even if it only appears in negative as a lack] (Ropars-Wuilleumier, 1970, p.89). Ropars suggests here

that space takes over to the detriment of time. But space is not 'in it for itself' but as a series of signs, indicators of alienation. From the deserted and incomplete streets of the EUR to the large pillar of the borsa that splits Vittoria and Piero, all the spaces in the film anticipate the doomed relationship. Vittoria is its agent of destruction, living in a world situated 'à la frontière d'une mort spirituelle, toute l'existence du film est dans ce passage à la mort, dans la naissance mouvementée de l'arrêt du mouvement' (Ropars-Wuilleumier, 1970, p.89). And all of Vittoria's contemplative gazing through windows is part of this process.

Ropars further suggests that

> le temps se réduit à une succession extérieure d'incidents, qui demeurent impuissants à susciter dans l'âme de Vittoria une résurrection. Le temps n'a plus de prise sur elle, comme elle n'a plus de prise sur les êtres, équivalents des choses, qui peu à peu les remplacent au lieu de les exprimer. [time is reduced to an external succession of incidents, which remain incapable of arousing a resurrection in Vittoria's soul. Time has no hold over her, and she too no longer has a hold on other beings, equivalents of things, which little by little replace them instead of expressing them.]
>
> *(Ropars-Wuilleumier, 1970, p.85)*

I have already suggested that Vittoria, in view of her love of clouds, shares some characteristics with Baudelaire's *l'étranger* (see endnote 11). I will also venture that she has some passing resemblance to Perec's young man in *Un homme qui dort*. He too stands outside time and he too is lost in the world,[13] his only salvation residing in incessant loitering in the city. Vittoria is not *un homme qui dort* but *une femme qui rêve*!

Deleuze referred to *L'Eclisse*'s 'idle periods of everyday banality', and I have already demonstrated that there are equally interesting 'idle periods of everyday banality' in *Un homme qui dort* in Chapter 4. It is useful here to come back to the notion that everydayness as an architectonic of cinema is aiming to uncover and reveal in films what isn't normally noticed in cinema, precisely because it is banal. The spaces and windows in *L'Eclisse* are very common and very banal – but the way they are used and practised makes them particularly interesting to study.

Along similar lines, Tawa mobilized the tectonics of cinema and architecture 'for reading, producing, mapping and implementing new configurations of thought, figures of speech, states of being, gestures, trajectories, geometries, strategies, tactics, techniques and technologies' (Tawa, 2010, p.14). In doing so Tawa proposes 'to work at the very materiality of architecture in an elemental and substantial way. It is to work with, to work and *put to work* all the themes, tropes and components of architecture-static and dynamic geometric order;' adding that

> There is a rarely explored and interminable resource for foundational inquiry and radical tectonic investigation into these architectural fundaments, in this basic tectonic lexicon

– for example, that the door *reveals*; that passage under the lintel is a sublime and liminal *experience*; that the window is an eye to the wind; that door and death are cognate figures; that the scotia harbours an articulating darkness.

(Tawa, 2010, pp.117–118)

As an illustration to his approach, Tawa analyses *L'Avventura* (Antonioni, 1960), the scene at the beginning of the film where Claudia (Monica Vitti) waits outside while her friend Anna (Lea Massari) is having a private moment, reconnecting with her boyfriend, Sandro (Gabriele Ferzetti).

It is a scene revolving around a window that visually links Claudia, standing outside, with Anna and Sandro inside, on the first floor.

Sandro is embracing his fiancée Anna, while her close friend Claudia waits for them in the town square. Claudia is framed looking up at the apartment through a partially opened window in the corner of the screen. The geometry and spatial dynamics of the scene are critical. Through the window, the horizon is occluded by thick trees so that the room, while clearly a private domestic realm or interiority, also reads as an exterior which extends the civic square. The way Antonioni frames the scene, inside and outside exchange their normal status: the public realm becomes a subset of the private, while the private world of the couple becomes exposed to an outside that is normally occluded.

(Tawa, 2010, p.272)[14]

FIGURE 8.10 Window onto the street in *L'Avventura* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1960)

Clearly this is a key scene and Antonioni is deftly using the window frame and the depth of field.[15] Claudia, filmed with great depth of field in the square below, is effectively situated in-between the couple. This window scene already anticipates events to come.

But Tawa seizes here the opportunity to highlight some of the possibilities offered by cinema:

> Antonioni's use of space has evident implications for tectonic practice in architecture. The disposition of several geometric systems, overlaid by multiple dynamic trajectories, develops potential energies and tensional interactions within a spatial field. These can be used to create specific relationships between spaces of different kinds, to stabilise and amplify their connections or to unsettle and destabilise them.
>
> *(Tawa, 2010, p.273)*[16]

Tawa hints at how an architectonic of cinema might open numerous possibilities to which I will return in the last chapter of the book.

Aldo Rossi had already noted that

> in architecture every window is the window both of the artist and of anybody at all, the window children write about in letters: 'Tell me what you see from your window'. In reality, a window is an aperture like any other, which perhaps opens out on a simple native village; or it is simply any opening from which one can lean out. Moreover, the window, like the coffin, presents an incredible history. Of course, from the point of view of construction, the window and the coffin resemble one another; and the window and coffin, like the palace, like everything else, anticipate events which have already happened, somewhere, here or some other place.
>
> *(Rossi, 1981, p.45)*

Rossi also talks of 'old photographs' that grow on him 'like a sentiment, which over time accumulated many things'. He is inspired by melancholic images that he collects, such as the one of a window opening onto a balcony, a palm tree and the sea (Rossi, 1981, p.63). For Rossi, buildings are containers of past and future events; they are full of narrative possibilities; some of them have already been explored in the movies; the spaces contained between buildings, walls, doors and windows, have for Rossi in-built capacity for a wide range of scenarios, and windows have 'seen it all'. Similarly, an architectonic of cinema should be a guide to future events – as architecture is always about anticipating the future…even when restoring the past. In that sense *L'Eclisse* opens new horizons as to what the practice of a window might be, and it could be construed as the cinematographic equivalent to Delaunay's project, *Les Fenêtres simultanées sur la ville* (1912), a continuous exploration of the window. Delaunay's project inspired Guillaume Apollinaire to compose a poem appropriately named *Les Fenêtres*, of which an extract is below:

[…]
Tu soulèveras le rideau
Et maintenant voilà que s'ouvre la fenêtre
[…]
La fenêtre s'ouvre comme une orange
Le beau fruit de la lumière.

(Apollinaire, 1918, p.18)[17]

The last verse is a tribute to Delaunay, for whom colour was the 'fruit' of light. And in the poem, *la fenêtre* opens onto a world imagined by Apollinaire. The poet attempts here to match with words what Delaunay was doing with colours. An architectonic of cinema has to somehow translate, interpret and render, in and with design, what Antonioni, and other film-makers, are doing with moving images. It's the confrontation of two art forms, the assimilation and overlap from one to another, and vice versa.

Notes

1 My translation from the French: 'I believe that our duty is to open windows […] in this job of window opening that is ours, we must choose which landscape to show […] it would be wonderful to be able to open windows on totally unexpected, unknown and unbelievable landscapes, but it's very difficult, Man is a creature of habits […] and so we have to open windows and those windows will reveal, and people will say: but of course…' (Reboul, 1995, pp.129–130).

2 In the book, the room is described in one paragraph: 'Ta chambre est le centre du monde. Cet antre, ce galetas en soupente qui garde à jamais ton odeur, ce lit où tu te glisses seul, cette étagère, ce linoléum, ce plafond dont tu as compté cent mille fois les fissures, les écailles, les taches, les reliefs, ce lavabo si petit qu'il ressemble à un meuble de poupées, cette bassine, cette fenêtre, ce papier dont tu connais chaque fleur, ces journaux que tu as lus et relus, que tu liras et reliras encore, cette glace fêlée qui n'a jamais réfléchi que ton visage morcelé en trois portions de surfaces inégales, ces livres rangés : ainsi commence et finit ton royaume' (Perec, 1967, pp.49–50).

3 Adding that 'Architecture is defined by the actions it witnesses as much as by the enclosure of its walls. Murder in the Street differs from the Murder in the Cathedral in the same way as love in the street differs from the Street of Love'.

4 "The Turin Horse" : Détail – Béla Tarr, éléments de: Bertrand Loutte et Tom Weichenhain (Arte, 10 February 2011).

5 'Une longue ligne de pylônes sous un ciel gris. On n'en voit ni le départ ni l'arrivée. Des bennes y circulent. […] la pure image d'un espace et d'un temps uniformes. Quelque chose pourtant se passe : tandis que les bennes avancent sans fin, la caméra, elle, a commencé à reculer. Une bande verticale noire apparaît : l'encadrement d'une fenêtre. Puis une masse noire obstrue l'écran. […]un homme est là, derrière la fenêtre, immobile […] le long chapelet uniforme sous le ciel gris, c'est ce qu'il voit de sa fenêtre. Ce plan-séquence qui ouvre *Damnation*, c'est comme la signature du style de Béla Tarr' (Rancière, 2011, p.31).

6 In this shot we are rejoining a world of ordinariness where an old man is sitting against a wall, a learner driver in a Fiat 500 is circling around the piazza and a woman passes by running – gradually everydayness is taking over as the drama unfolds.

7 Julian Hochberg, according to Intraub, 'describes a situation in which the camera sweeps across a scene. If it sweeps to the right, layout shifts across the screen toward the left and disappears beyond the left-hand edge. Yet, he points out, 'in most situations there is a compelling perception of space, in which an extent has been traversed and about which the viewer has a clear visual knowledge. That extent is larger than the screen and exists nowhere but in the mind of the viewer' (Intraub, 2007, p.454). 'The viewer's representation beyond the screen is palpable—creating the sense of continuous, complex spaces that in reality do not exist (e.g., interiors of starships, old western towns)'. Intraub carried on this research on boundary extension and showed conclusively that 'similar to aperture viewing and cinematic communication, scene representation essentially "ignores" the spurious boundaries of a given view. Whether exploring the world through vision or touch, we sample it only a part at a time and yet experience a coherent representation of a continuous world' (Intraub, 2007, p.464).

8 *Architectures d'Aujourd'hui* is part of a trilogy together with *Bâtir* and *Trois Chantiers*. All three were a collaboration between film-maker Pierre Chenal and Le Corbusier. It constitutes Le Corbusier's first and most tangible foray into film-making. While scholars have tended to concentrate on Le Corbusier, not much was known about Pierre Chenal. In 2006, I published a paper that examined Pierre Chenal's early cinematic career and went on to consider the origin of Le Corbusier's interest and attitude to Cinema before examining the nature of their collaboration. Following an analysis of both *Bâtir* and *Architectures d'Aujourd'hui,* I suggested that while *Bâtir* was undeniably directed and edited by Chenal, it appeared as though *Architectures d'Aujourd'hui* was very much under Le Corbusier's influence (Penz, 2006).

9 Strangely, Le Corbusier never seems to have made a rapprochement between the *fenêtres en longueur* with the cinema screen ratio, which over the twentieth century became more and more like the ribbon window shape.

10 EUR in Rome was originally chosen by Mussolini in the 1930s as the site for the 1942 World's Fair – the letters EUR standing for Esposizione Universale Roma – to celebrate 20 years of Fascism. EUR is now a residential and business district in Rome.

11 Another moment Vittoria becomes excited and joyous is when she is looking through the cockpit of the plane taking them to Verona. She points excitedly towards the clouds. Vittoria is like *l'étranger* [the stranger] in Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*: 'Eh ! qu'aimes-tu donc, extraordinaire étranger ? – J'aime les nuages…les nuages qui passent…là-bas…là-bas…les merveilleux nuages !' (Baudelaire, 2016, p.6). She is *l'étranger*, a stranger to life who only likes clouds. And no wonder Delon felt also like a stranger when finding himself in the EUR.

12 Adding, referring to the dehumanized landscapes of the EUR district: '[…] a purely optical or sound situation becomes established in what we might call "any-space-whatever", whether disconnected, or emptied (we find the passage from one to the other in *The Eclipse*, where the disconnected bits of space lived by the heroine – stock exchange, Africa, air terminal – are reunited at the end in an empty space, which blends into the white surface)' (Deleuze, 1989, p.5).

13 As is obvious from the voice-over: 'Dans le silence de ta chambre, le temps ne pénètre plus, il est alentour, bain permanent, obsédant, faussé, un peu suspect : le temps passe, mais tu ne sais jamais l'heure. Il est dix heures, ou peut-être onze, il est tard, il est tôt, le jour naît, la nuit tombe, les bruits ne cessent jamais tout à fait, le temps ne s'arrête jamais totalement, même s'il n'est plus qu'une minuscule brèche dans le mur du silence, murmure ralenti, oublié du goutte à goutte, presque confondu avec les battements de ton cœur'.

14 Tawa goes on to state that 'The scene is clearly an assemblage of spatial geometries and tensions, calibrated to the psychological tensions of the narrative and mobilised for dramatic ends. The agency of the assemblage drives the general themes of contempt and recklessness characterising the individuals' relationships with each other and their environment. Spatial order and dynamics are manipulated to convey states of psychological and subjective crisis, together with their moral and ethical implications.

They condense the chronological temporality and dynamics of the narrative into a single a-chronic spatial figure which stands-in for the entire film' (Tawa, 2010, p.273).

15 This shot could be conceived as an homage to Gregg Toland's cinematography in Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941) that first attracted attention for its use of deep-focus shots.

16 Adding 'They can stretch and dilate relationships, converting them from tenuous static associations into lines of deterritorialisation and flight. They can reinforce the dominance of a spatial system or produce fractures, modulations and variations within it. They can convey certain relationships between interior spaces, between interior and exterior spaces, between private and public domains, between the various zones of a building or environment or between components and materials of a building's technical assembly. There are also implications for a consideration of architectural space not in terms of distinctive form or aesthetic value, but in terms of the dynamic interactions that are mapped out, registered and promoted in the character of its fabric and the programmatic opportunities it affords' (Tawa, 2010, p.273).

17 My translation from the French:
'You will lift the curtain
And now here is the window opening
The window opens like an orange […]
The beautiful fruit of light'

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9

DOORS

I am from the 'Man Comes Through a Door How?' school of dramaturgy. Suppose a man comes into a room, just walks in. Another chap is there. Then the small talk. 'How are you?' 'I'm fine.' That sort of thing. The second man says to the new arrival, 'Please put the doorknob back,' and we see that throughout the small talk the visitor had the doorknob in his hand. First we laugh, then we begin to wonder why the man was so distracted that he didn't notice he'd taken the doorknob with him. And we're into our scene.

Alfred Hitchcock (Freeman, 1985, p.49)

It is pleasurable to press a door handle shining from the thousands of hands that have entered the door before us; the clean shimmer of ageless wear has turned into an image of welcome and hospitality. The door handle is the handshake of the building. The tactile sense connects us with time and tradition: through impressions of touch we shake the hands of countless generations.

(Pallasmaa, 2007, p.56)

Referring to Hitchcock's films and his penchant for focusing on architectural details, Jacobs coins the expression '**door-knob cinema**'[1] (Jacobs, 2007, p.28), which would not have particularly embarrassed Hitchcock, given his fondness for door-knob anecdotes. There are indeed plenty of 'door-knob' scenes in classical cinema, almost invariably associated with suspense. Suffice here to mention the scene in *Rebecca* (Hitchcock, 1940), when the young Mrs de Winter (Joan Fontaine) approaches by the stairs the bedroom of her husband's late wife, hesitates, looks behind her and in front; the camera proceeds to zoom first on the 'castle-size' bedroom door, then cut to a close-up of the door-knob, where her hand is seen sliding onto

and turning the knob slowly. At the next cut the camera is in the bedroom, her shadow being projected into the room. Hitchcock could have made the 'door-knob' moment last longer. Indeed, it is reported in the door section of the *Elements of Architecture* that 'the apparently simple task of opening a door involves a sequence of at least 20 instantaneous sub-decisions and calculations, each with implications for ergonomics and safety' (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p.509).[2] Bruce Block's own analysis of breaking down the filming of a hand opening a door is more modestly whittled down to seven sub-events (although that doesn't involve closing the door): (1) The hand reaches for the doorknob (2) The hand grasps the knob (3) The hand turns the knob (4) The door latch moves (5) The door begins to open (6) The hand releases the knob (7) The door completely opens (Block, 2007, p.211).

Doors involve relatively complex mechanisms and modes of operation to which we have typically become blind in our everyday life – operating them in a state of near-anaesthesia. And although they are far less dangerous than stairs, as we'll see in the next section, it pays to approach them with some caution, as there are 300,000 door-related accidents per year in the US alone (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p.509). Film has, of course, exploited the accident potential of doors, and we only have to remind ourselves of the slapstick scenes in *The Rink* (Chaplin, 1916)*,* and the chaos that ensues as Chaplin slaloms through the 'in' and 'out' doors of the kitchen restaurant in an attempt to escape the head waiter. Naturally, films are replete with doors, and so is real life. In fact, we physically interact more with doors than with any other architectural elements – apart from floors. There are the doors of our homes, the doors of our

FIGURE 9.1 Tor struggling through doors in *Ed Wood* (Tim Burton, 1994)

workplaces and offices, public places and public transport. Our everyday life is crammed with doors of different shapes and sizes, that we push and pull hundreds of times a week without ever thinking about it. But if we were to put our minds to it, we might remember doors better than windows because we practise them so much. Often, the way cinema engages with doors reveals characteristics and potential that we would normally overlook, and brings a new take on this humble architectural element. To quote just a few examples, in *Prénom Carmen* (Godard, 1983), lovers interact with each other by flinging doors and windows open and shut in an empty flat. In *Ed Wood* (Tim Burton, 1994), Tor (George Steele) is so large and clumsy that he nearly brings the whole set down by knocking on the side of a door frame.

In *Dogville* (Lars von Trier, 2003), the town houses consist of white outlines painted onto a sound stage, and when Chuck (Stellan Skarsgård) enters his house, the absence of a door is made up by realistic opening and closing entrance sounds. And towards the end of *Amélie* (Jeunet, 2001), when Nino (Mathieu Kassovitz) comes up to Amélie's flat, they are both tensely listening on the other side of the same door – as put by Simmel '*the door represents […] how separating and connecting are only two sides of precisely the same act*' (Simmel, 1997, p.65).

Unsurprisingly, few fiction films,[3] to my knowledge, have doors as the main subject – except for one, *Les convoyeurs attendent* (Benoît Mariage, 1999). Given our focus, it is difficult to not at least mention it. In a bid to enter *The Guinness Book of Records*, Roger (Benoît Poelvoorde) trains his son to open and close a door 40,000 times in 24 hours. There ensues a series of humorous scenes where the door is decontextualized, either on a stage or in the middle of a garden. As the door is repeatedly opened and closed in quick succession, the repetitive actions induce in the viewer a process of defamiliarization – a key surrealist strategy. We may start to

FIGURE 9.2 Doors that unite and separate in *Amélie* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001)

FIGURE 9.3 Doors as mental state in *Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1945)

ponder the nature of doors as in, what is a door? Or why doors? What about the ergonomics of the door? And so on.

In movies, doors are not just physical doors but passages into worlds of fantasy: 'You unlock this door with the key of imagination' says the narrator of *The Twilight Zone* (Rod Sterling, 1959), and as Dorothy (Judy Garland) opens the door in *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939) a world in sepia turns to colour. Doors can convey mental states; in *Spellbound* (Hitchcock, 1945), when Constance Petersen (Ingrid Bergman) and Anthony Edwardes (Gregory Peck) kiss for the first time, Hitchcock uses the dissolve to a symbolic shot of multiple doors opening, a reference to Bergman's psychological and sexual awakening.

There are also multiple film versions of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* – complete with rabbit holes and door scenes. All have become famous and have contributed to shaping our collective imagination about doors in a metaphysical sense. But in a physical sense, the nature of doors has evolved markedly over the centuries

> … a traditional element once invested with physical heft and iconography has turned into a dematerialized zone, a gradual transition between conditions registered by ephemeral technologies (biometric detectors, body scanners) rather than physical barriers. The transformation took place concurrently with a transformation in society: whereas

isolation was once the desired condition, our professed aspirations now are for movement, flow, transparency, accessibility – while maintaining the utmost security…a paradox that the door is charged with resolving…

(Koolhaas et al., 2014)

Both in film and as architectural elements, the nature and use of doors varies tremendously and keeps evolving, thus providing a rich interplay for our investigation.

Unlike doors, windows, which we studied in the last chapter, do not imply a movement; a gaze, yes, but very few characters actually go through windows, apart from the likes of Waring Hudsucker, or if it is a *porte-fenêtre*, which combines both door and window qualities. Doors, on the other hand, imply a movement through them. In film terms, doors are more likely to be linked to the Deleuzian notion of the movement-image than the time-image associated with windows. We only have to consider the chase between Bodhi (Patrick Swayze) and Utah (Keanu Reeves) through a row of houses in *Point Break* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1991) to realize what an obstacle doors are to smooth running. Doors tend to lead somewhere, they are an entrance or an exit, usually a combination of both. Compared to windows, doors appear to have proved less attractive to poets and writers in general, apart from Musset,[4] but Simmel makes the following point in comparing windows with doors:

the teleological emotion with respect to the window is directed almost exclusively from inside to outside: it is there for looking out, not for looking in. It creates the connection between the inner and the outer chronically and continually, as it were, by virtue of its transparency; but the one-sided direction in which this connection runs […] gives to the window only a part of the deeper and more fundamental significance of the door.

(Simmel, 1997, p.66)

With the concept of 'the **door, a spatial tool with a variable topology**' – (*La porte, outil d'un espace à topologie variable*), Abraham Moles goes further than Simmel and assigns to doors important functions as they regulate time and space and are a mode of spatio-temporal appropriation, part of Moles's psychosociology of space approach.[5] 'The invention of the term "variable topological spaces", a scholarly term to designate the idea of the door, complements the concept of the appropriation of space by the wall. The door, or movable wall changes the topology of the accessible and the inaccessible, which changes from one moment to the other the idea of inside and outside' (Moles and Rohmer, 1998, pp.61–62).[6]

Moles construes the door as an architectural element with movement built into it. 'La paroi mobile' has also a built-in variable geometry – it can or should be opened or closed, according to Musset; it is a permanent invitation to experience movement. The door as a 'paroi mobile à topologie variable' is most in evidence in a sequence from a short movie, *Traces* (Ches Hardy,
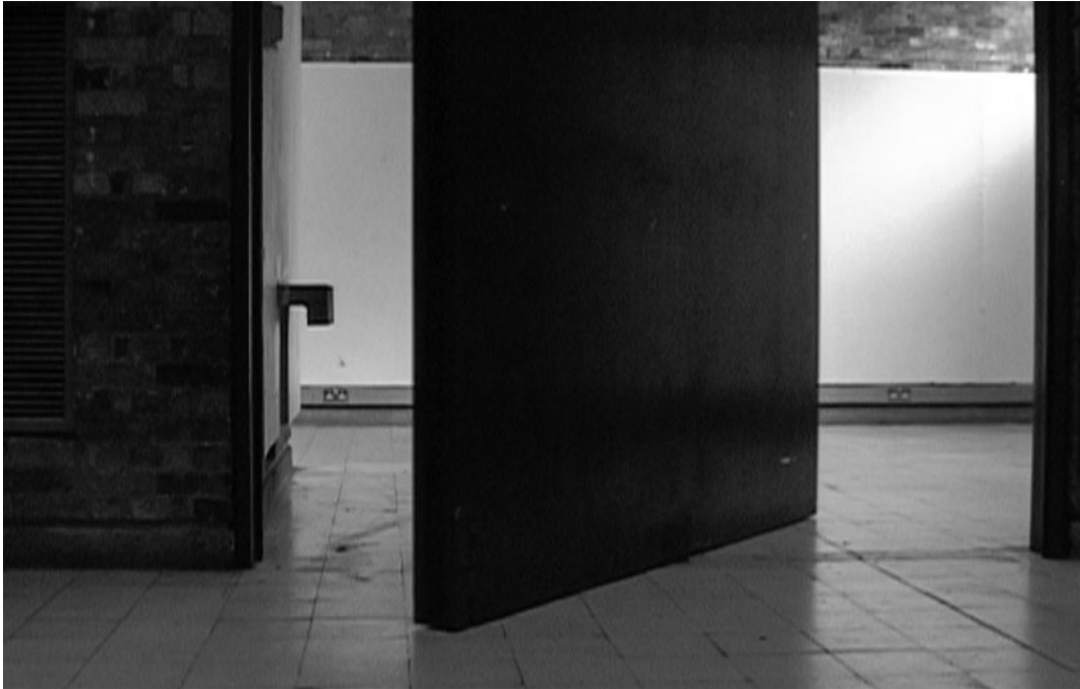
FIGURE 9.4 Revolving door in *Traces* (Ches Hardy et al, 2008)

2008), that features one of the two revolving doors leading into the lecture room of the extension designed by Sandy Wilson at Scroope Terrace (Department of Architecture, Cambridge University). It is a door that most users would have long stopped paying attention to. And yet the film reveals the extraordinary within the ordinary – it is as if a chunk of wall was slowly starting to revolve around a central axis under its own steam – the perfect illustration of Moles's concept.

Another example of a 'paroi mobile', this time in a fiction film, includes a scene in *L'Avventura* (Antonioni, 1960), when Claudia, waiting for Anna, stands at the threshold of Sandro's flat, first peering through the open door before slowly and hesitantly closing it – in the process the camera (and the viewer), situated inside the corridor, experience the whole gamut of light, from bright to shades of grey to darkness.

Moles also introduces another element, that of exploring spatio-temporal passages:

> **the door is a time-dependent system** – 'note main door closes at 4pm' indicates various institutions […] It introduces a new dimension of space, it necessarily offers a space–time experience. There will be appropriation of this space–time dimension only to the extent that we have a cognitive perception of this space–time topology, that is to say regarding the opening and closing of the variable geometric spaces on offer the doors that separate or join areas of space, constitute elements of a labyrinth, both in terms of space and time:

the opening hours of the doors […] the knowledge of the city, is the knowledge of this space–time maze, wherein the open spaces vary from one moment to another according to certain rules known to the locals: banks close at 4pm […] and it is this knowledge that gives us a space–time mastery, which brings us the notion of spatial appropriation.

(Moles and Rohmer, 1998, p.12)

In *Helsinki, Forever* (Peter von Bagh, 2008), the narrator, commenting over images of characters running across the city, through doors and passages, asks the question 'What are the corridors and passages in Helsinki?'[7] Moles makes the point that local knowledge is paramount in order to be able to navigate the labyrinths of the city – in a world controlled by time-dependent door systems, a homegrown cognitive perception of the space–time topology can be a life-saver. This is manifest in *Drive* (Nicolas Winding Refn, 2011), where the driver's (Ryan Gosling) unparalleled knowledge of the routes and passages of downtown Los Angeles is at the heart of the film:

you give me a time and a place, I give you a five-minute window. Anything happens in that five minutes and I'm yours. No matter what. Anything happens a minute either side of that and you're on your own. Do you understand?

(the driver – aka Ryan Gosling in Drive, *2011)*

Similarly in *Birdman* (Alejandro G. Iñárritu, 2014), the scene where Riggan (Michael Keaton) accidentally locks himself outside the theatre's fire door, forcing him to walk back in his

FIGURE 9.5 Riggan stuck in a door in *Birdman* (Alejandro G. Iñárritu, 2014)

underwear through Times Square to re-enter the theatre by the main door – also explores the hazardous labyrinthine nature of our cities.

Noël Burch, this time adopting a film theory standpoint, explored the different spatial-temporal permutations between two diegetic spaces separated by a door and explains it as follows:

> If shot A shows someone coming up to a door, putting his hand on the doorknob, turning it, then starting to open the door, shot B, perhaps taken from the other side of the door, can pick up the action at the precise point where the previous shot left off and show the rest of the action as it would have 'actually' occurred, with the person coming through the door and so on. This action could even conceivably be filmed by two cameras simultaneously, resulting in two shots that, taken together, are an absolute continuity of action seen from two different angles. To obtain as complete a continuity in the edited film, all we would have to do is cut the tail of shot A into the head of shot B on the editing table.
>
> *(Burch, 1981, p.5)*

In this example, the absolute continuity of action referred to implies an almost real-time cut across the door. We can think of numerous film scenes that illustrate Burch's point, for example in *The Servant* (Losey, 1963), the first time Barrett (Dirk Bogarde) enters Tony's house (James Fox), the back-to-back shots between outdoor and indoor create a sense of a real-time continuity of action.

Burch[8] subsequently proposes that there are altogether three ways of relating two consecutive shots, shot A and shot B in terms of space: first, the cut between two shots pertaining to the space with elements of visual continuity across the cut. In other words, we move across the same space as in *The Servant* example. Second, there is the case where there is no visual continuity across the cut but we are likely to be within the same flat/house or a similar type of space. And finally, there could be no visual continuity across the cut and we are in a completely

FIGURE 9.6 The door as a cut: *The Servant* (Joseph Losey, 1963)

FIGURE 9.7 Doors linking time and space across the city in *Ed Wood* (Tim Burton, 1994)

different type of space. In other words, a door can act **as an accelerator and condenser of space–time** situations, such as in the scene in *Ed Wood* (Tim Burton, 1994) when Ed Wood (Johnny Depp) watches Bela Lugosi (Martin Landau) closing his front door and almost simultaneously opens his own front door, some time after that and several miles away – a form of time travel across two doors.

So if a **door is often identified with a cut** in films, what is the implication for 'real-life' situations? Do we experience going through doors as an experience akin to a cut? Perec, during a visit to a Frank Lloyd Wright house, implies that he experienced a form of real-life dissolve between indoor and outdoor:

It's hard obviously to imagine a house which doesn't have a door. I saw one one day, several years ago, in Lansing, Michigan. lt had been built by Frank Lloyd Wright. You began by following a gently winding path to the left of which there rose up, very gradually, with an extreme nonchalance even, a slight declivity that was oblique to start with but which slowly approached the vertical. Bit by bit, as if by chance, without thinking, without your having any right at any given moment to declare that you had remarked anything like a transition, an interruption, a passage, a break in continuity, the path became stony […] Then there appeared something like an open-work roof that was practically indissociable from the vegetation that had invaded it. In actual fact, it was already too late to know whether you were indoors or out.

(Perec, 2008, p.37)

If a door is a spatio-temporal tool in the architectural panoply, it implies that we not only experience a spatial passage between two rooms, but that we must also be cognitively aware of the time dimension and its implication (after Moles). Otherwise we will be in the same position as noted by Perec – unaware of the threshold between indoor and outdoor, having the strange experience of a dissolve. Perec's experience, Moles's unconventional approach and Burch's taxonomy start to build a profile of what a door might be in terms of an architectonic of cinema, opening new avenues.

But let us pursue our investigation, restarting with Jean Renoir. Douchet remarked that for Renoir a door wasn't

une porte à la Lubitsch, instrument de surprises, de hasards et d'imprévus. Pas une porte à la Hitchcock dont il faut dangereusement chercher la clé, ou à la Lang, derrière laquelle se cachent de lourds secrets. Non, la porte, chez Renoir, ne demande qu'à s'ouvrir et, surtout, qu'à livrer passage. C'est pour cette fonction circulatoire qu'elle l'intéresse fondamentalement […] la porte, fondamentalement, ferme, mais qu'il préfère l'utiliser pour les entrées, pour faire entrer […] Puisque le mouvement de la vie ne s'arrête jamais chez Renoir, la porte figure la nécessité du passage, nécessité d'un changement permanent. Elle illustre par son dessin et sa fonction une pensée générale, un imaginaire cosmique qui sous-tend la mise-en-scène du cinéaste. [A Lubitsch-type door, an instrument of surprises, hazards and unforeseen events. Not a Hitchcock door to which one must dangerously seek the key, or a Lang door, behind which hang heavy secrets. No, in Renoir, doors only ask to be opened and, above all, to give way. He is fundamentally interested in this circulatory function […] the door basically closes, but he much prefers to use it for entries, to allow entry … Since the movement of life never stops with Renoir, the door symbolizes the necessity of passage, the necessity of a permanent change. By design and function, the door

illustrates a general philosophy, a cosmic imaginary that underlies Renoir's mise-en-scène.]

(Douchet, 1997, p.111)

Douchet mentions Lubitsch, renowned for his playfulness with doors,[9] and he could have also mentioned Keaton and Chaplin, already mentioned, as doors always played an important role in silent cinema.[10]

For Renoir a **door is an instrument of passage**, not just for circulating from A to B, but it has also a more metaphorical dimension: it symbolizes the vitality of life and its constant changes. But interestingly, Douchet notes that Renoir uses a door mainly as an entrance. Of course, in practice we must be using a door in both directions, so that it is as much an exit as it is an entrance. A one-way door is most unusual. My own rapid recollections of movies confirm this impression – a door in the movies is mainly for entering a space. It is the way into the main space where often the action will take place. Pursuing the example of *The Servant*, the outdoors is the street on which the house is situated. The street has no particular dramatic function except for grounding it in London. The vast majority of the action takes place in Tony's house, and we therefore see many more entrances than exits. But exits can be very dramatic and memorable, as in *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) when, towards the end of the film, Rhett (Clark Gable) leaves Tara. He opens the door to a landscape shrouded in fog and utters 'Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn' in response to Scarlett O'Hara's (Vivien Leigh) tearful question: 'Where shall I go? What shall I do?'

Privileging the entrance, as Renoir does in his films, is also reflected in the architectural vocabulary – we refer to the entrance hall and not the exit hall; the same applies in French, which refers to 'un hall d'entrée' as opposed to 'un sortoir'. Bachelard further comforts us in the understanding of a door as an entrance,

> For the door is an entire cosmos of the half-open. In fact, it is one of its primal images, the very origin of a daydream that accumulates desires and temptations: the temptation to open up the ultimate depths of being, and the desire to conquer all reticent beings […] Is there one of us who hasn't in his memories a Bluebeard chamber that should not have been opened, even half-way?
>
> *(Bachelard, 1964, pp.222–224)*

The door is a temptress; it lures us into opening it, to discover an unknown. Many films use the 'Bluebeard temptation syndrome' to good effect, as for example in *Rebecca* (Hitchcock, 1940), mentioned earlier.

In the process of being opened, the **door acts as a revelator**. In *The Servant*, Tony, who has become infatuated with Vera, goes upstairs at night, knocking on her door from the half

FIGURE 9.8 The 'Bluebeard' door in *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940)

landing. She peers through the door, then closes it again. As Tony goes down the stairs to wait for her, she reopens the door, this time wide open, revealing Barrett smoking a cigarette in her bed while reading the paper. Since we had so far assumed that he was Vera's brother, the door reveals the true nature of their relationship. In this case, the door doesn't assume a circulatory function and presents us with a different form of spatio-temporal attribute. Vera exits, but not over a cut, as the camera stays in the same position throughout the scene. And yet the fact that the door is thrown wide open to reveal Barrett is a good illustration of Moles's idea of the variable-geometry mobile partition 'la paroi mobile à geométrie variable'. There is a second scene in *The Servant* that demonstrates the door as a revelator. Tony and his girlfriend come back unexpectedly at night to find Tony's bedroom lit, occupied by Vera and Barrett who are unaware of their early return. Tony creeps up the stairs. His bedroom door is ajar, producing a play of light and shadow on the staircase wall. At some point, Barrett, made aware of some noise in the house, ventures onto the first floor landing by throwing open the bedroom door. His projected shadow reveals unequivocally his nudity. Tony looks up at Barrett, who takes a puff of smoke leaning on the banister. We never see Barrett, only his shadow. Tony, stunned, is unable to react and hangs on to the banister. The earlier door revelation of the true nature of Vera and Barrett's relationship was for the eyes of the spectators only. This time it is for

FIGURE 9.9 The door that reveals in *The Servant* (Joseph Losey, 1963)

Tony's benefit. And for the second time the 'truth revelator' is a door being thrown wide open – but the second time it is an indirect revelation, through a play of light and shadows… vindicating Bachelard's remark 'And what of all the doors of mere curiosity, that have tempted us […] for an unknown that is not even imagined!' (Bachelard, 1964, p.224).

But a door is also a threshold that divides two zones, two worlds. In Antonioni's films we often see characters 'inhabiting' the **threshold** between outside and inside. It is Vittoria in *L'Eclisse*, leaning against the wall at the café door in Verona airport, neither in nor out, looking at the barmaid. It is Claudia in *L'Avventura* at the threshold of Sandro's flat, as previously mentioned, hesitantly closing the door. Typical time-image moments made even more awkward because of the nature of the threshold as the viewer expects an action-movement from a door opening. The inherent sensory motricity built into the door wills the character to enter – but Vittoria remains propping up the door. She has been stripped of motor capacities on all sides, and this makes her see and hear what is no longer subject to the rules of a response or an action, she records rather than reacts (Deleuze, 1989, p.3). On the nature of doors, Zumthor asks 'Maybe you know a tall slim door that makes everyone who comes through look great?' (Zumthor, 2006, p.51). In the case of Monica Vitti standing on thresholds, the reverse applies – she glamorizes those very ordinary doors, we not only notice them, it is she who makes them look great. Bachelard has much to say about the relationship between inside and outside:[11] 'The opposition of outside and inside ceases to have as coefficient its geometrical evidence […] Inside and outside are not abandoned to their geometrical opposition' (Bachelard,

FIGURE 9.10 Inhabiting the threshold in *L'Eclisse* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1962)

1964, p.230). Indeed, by inhabiting the threshold, Vittoria makes obvious the potential of inhabiting a threshold – the door is not just a passive element of architecture or an active verb as suggested by Pallasmaa;[12] it is also a space that can be colonized.

But we must return to Béla Tarr, the film-maker of the threshold, if there is such a thing, and already encountered in the windows chapter. In his films the dialectics of the threshold, of the inside and outside, offer countless diversified nuances and permutations. There is a scene in *Damnation* (1988) where Karrer attempts to enter the home of the nightclub singer (Vali Kerekes). She is inside her flat, the door ajar but secured by a chain as he stands just outside, on the threshold. We, the spectators, are situated on Karrer's side – an over-his-shoulder shot. He occasionally tries to push in, but the chain resists. The door, **the threshold, is the contested space**. It is an intimate scene that gains its power from being acted out on either side of the door. She emerges out of a black background; her arm above her head holding onto the side of the door and the chain across her neck attractively frames her face. They stand very close to each other and although he is occasionally trying to muscle in, she is not frightened; she tells him that she loves him, as well as to go away, before slamming the door shut. Given the spatial configuration in this intimate scene, the inside and outside appear to waver at times, we are both inside and outside, experiencing a 'sudden doubt as to the certainty of inside and the distinctness of outside […] in this ambiguous space, the mind has lost its geometrical homeland and the spirit is drifting' (Bachelard, 1964, p.218). There is also much wavering and hesitation in the scene between Mary (Lesley Manville) knocking on the door of Tom and Ruth's home, with Ronnie

(David Bradley), Tom's brother, unsure whether to let her in, in *Another Year* (Mike Leigh, 2010).

A variation on the 'threshold as contested space' is **the door of rejection** deployed by the Dardenne brothers in *Two Days One Night* (2014). As often with the Dardenne brothers, the plot is deceptively simple. Sandra (Marion Cotillard), wife and mother of two, has had to take time off from work after a nervous breakdown. She works for a solar panel company and while she was away her colleagues managed to cover for her by working slightly longer hours. Subsequently the management proposes a €1,000 bonus to all staff if they agree to make Sandra redundant. Sandra's fate is resting in the hands of her 16 colleagues and she decides to visit each of them over the course of a weekend (hence the title) in an attempt to keep her job – this would mean that the majority of her co-workers would have to forego their bonus. There is a crucial vote to be staged on the Monday morning, and Sandra is racing against time to contact them all. In the course of the film she goes from one house to another, from one block of flats to another. Like most of the Dardenne films it is shot in Seraing, an industrial town near Liège, and is a rapid portrayal of everyday working-class environment, from the centre to the periphery. Every encounter entails Sandra knocking at a door, ringing a doorbell or speaking into an intercom.

Two Days One Night could be interpreted as a film about doors, the nature of doors, although no doubt this is not what the Dardenne brothers had in mind. She visits 12 of her colleagues and every encounter is different. And tellingly, none of her co-workers ever invite her in; all the conversation always take place on doorsteps, entrance halls or through intercoms. The pattern is always the same: Sandra arrives at a door, mustering enough courage to ring or knock, and as such it is the perfect illustration of Janson and Tigges's analysis:

> A particularly complex situation is opened up by the door of a private house or an apartment by virtue of the manifold modulations of invitation or defence, of orientation, communication and control. Before a stranger's door, the individual – who stands either outside or in a kind of transition space, on a doormat, entrance grating, beneath a porch or in a protective door niche – signals his or her desire to enter by knocking or ringing a bell. The visitor is then perhaps observed or interviewed, through a crack in the door, window, a spy hole, or an intercom system, before the door is opened hesitantly and distrustfully, or flung open joyfully.
>
> *(Janson and Tigges, 2014, p.93)*

All 12 doors are different – wooden, part-glass part-metal or just plain and unmemorable – and none are joyfully flung open; rather it is a variation on the same theme of reluctance, rejection and sadness: 'I am not voting against you but I really need my bonus', is the most common reply. It is also a study in what we do when we are waiting for an answer after having

FIGURE 9.11 Opening onto a private world in *Two Days One Night* (Dardenne brothers, 2014)

rung a bell or knocked on a door. Sandra looks at the door with some intensity as if she has never looked at a door before – but she doesn't notice the door – she is gazing through it, willing it to open. So before it is a door of rejection, it is a **door of expectation and hope**.

She might start to look to the side or upstairs, as we all do in such situations. If it takes too long she may give signs of slight annoyance. And every situation is different – sometimes a child answers the door, or a wife with a small baby – some doors were opened wider than others and most would keep an arm or a hand on the door frame as if to block or to prevent further intrusion. The camera invariably stays outside the homes, but we briefly peer into the interiors; doors are mediators between two worlds: the public and social stage and the intimacy of domesticity. *Two Days One Night* provides a unique taxonomy of door situations, from expectation to rejection, and varied insights into how we behave in front of doors and inhabit thresholds.

For Perec, a **door is first and foremost a protection** from the outside:

> We protect ourselves, we barricade ourselves in. Doors stop and separate. The door breaks space in two, splits it, prevents osmosis, imposes a partition. On one side, me and my place, the private, the domestic […] on the other side, other people, the world, the public, politics. You can't simply let yourself slide from one into the other, can't pass from one to the other, neither in one direction nor in the other. You have to have the password, have to cross the threshold, have to show your credentials, have to communicate, just as the prisoner communicates with the world outside.
>
> *(Perec, 2008, p.37)*

FIGURE 9.12 'Honey, I'm home' in *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980)

But in films the notion of protection from doors is often challenged. In *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980), Perec's principles don't apply as Jack (Jack Nicholson) is forcibly breaking down his wife's hotel room door with an axe – and for Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem) in *No Country for Old Men* (Cohen brothers, 2007), closed doors offer little protection for his trademark captive bolt pistol.

Moving on with our investigation, David Trotter and Louis Seguin propose yet another level of understanding of the nature of doors by commenting on the spatial organization of Renoir's *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (1936). The film is set in a 'door-rich' complex labyrinthine type of space. Trotter uses the notion of 'deep and shallow' spaces – after Hillier and Hanson[13] – in order to make sense of the spatial organization between the interior and exterior of a building:

> a 'deep' space within a building attainable only by passage through other spaces, and thereby adapted for its owner's exclusive use, as sanctuary or shrine; and the 'shallow' spaces (neutral, inclusive, open-ended) through which the visitor must pass in order to attain it.
>
> *(Trotter, 2013, p.184)*

He further argues that

> The film makes an exact distinction between deep and shallow spaces […] When Batala arrives in the morning […] Two lengthy high-angle panning shots, one from each end of the shop, conduct him in leisurely fashion across semi public shallow space to the door

of his office […] When Valentine in turn leaves, we look in the opposite direction, from deep space, out through the open door down the length of the composing shop's activity and casual friendliness, into shallow space.

(Trotter, 2013, pp.193–194)

What Trotter's analysis suggests is that doors are the key to the passage from shallow and deep spaces, from private to public spaces. Seguin, on the other hand, gives the following account:

Le Crime de Monsieur Lange begins with the establishment of a double assemblage, specifically, by opening two doors. The first, before the arrival of the Delage driven by Henri Guisol (Meunier's son), is the door of the sordid 'Café-Hôtel de la Frontière' where René Lefèvre (Amédée Ange) and Florelle (Valentine Cardès) will rest and spend the night before crossing the Belgian border. The door even repeats itself three times: first a barrier, then the door of the house, finally the bedroom door, as if to push deeper the narrative inside the drama.

(Seguin, 1999, p.49)[14]

Seguin's remark about the film being a series *d'emboîtement* evokes scenes organized as a series of layers, reminiscent of Russian dolls. This is in effect quite close to Trotter's own use of the notion of the **deep and shallow spaces**, those passages are controlled by doors, the passages from one zone to another. Both invoke an analysis of filmic space that lends itself to imagining a plan of the set and, as Trotter also noted,

So complex was the set of *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*, built in its entirety in the studios at Billancourt, and so clearly integral to the film's dramatic effect, that André Bazin felt moved to include a diagram in his discussion of the rigor of the camera movements that expose it to view.

(Trotter, 2013, p.194)

Trotter, Seguin and Bazin have (re)discovered the importance of the architectural plan for spatial film analysis. Robin Evans had long understood its importance in relation to other art forms – paintings and literature in particular – and on this subject recommended to

Take the portrayal of human figures and take house plans from a given time and place: look at them together as evidence of a way of life, and the coupling between everyday conduct and architectural organisation may become more lucid.

(Evans, 1997, p.57)[15]

This is what we have done here – we have looked closely at the human figure in relation to its architectural interaction with the unassuming door. Films give us an insight into how doors are used in everyday situations – it makes us notice their multiple usage – something of which we have often become unaware in our everyday practice. The door, this most anodyne element of the architectural vocabulary, looked at through the camera lens, with the help of others, allows for different modes of assemblage, hopefully opening new horizons, pointing towards new aptitudes, capacity and potential.

We evoked the so-called door-knob cinema with Hitchcock, the variable topology door and the door as a time-dependent system with Moles, the door as a cut with Burch and the door as accelerator of space–time. For Renoir, the door is an instrument of passage: it is also a revelator, a threshold and a contested space. We should also remember the door of rejection, the door of expectation and hope, the doors of deep and shallow spaces and, of course, the door as protection. This constitutes a short attempt at revealing the door's cinematic architectonic potential, many more examples would spring to mind, but 'if one were to give an account of all the doors one has closed and opened, of all the doors one would like to re-open, one would have to tell the story of one's entire life' (Bachelard, 1994, p.224).

Notes

1 This is in relation to Bazin's derogatory mention of 'la mise-en-scène genre bouton de porte' in an article on Italian neo-realism (Bazin, 1985, p.282).

2 This is typical of a Hierarchical Task Analysis (HTA), which is a core ergonomics approach.

3 In this context it is worth mentioning *The London Story* (Sally Potter, 1986), a short fiction film involving a woman (Jacky Lansley) who recruits a cabinet minister (Arthur Fincham) and a cabinet doorman (George Antoni) in a plot to expose governmental wrongdoings. The film features a curious scene where the doorman repeatedly practises the art of opening doors – not as straightforward as one may think! He is also interviewed and gives this account:
Doorman: '*When I left school I was 15 – I went to straight to work for a hotel opening doors there – I got very good references and moved on to other doors which led to the position I am in now*'.
Interviewer: '*What is your current position?*'
Doorman: '*I am often required to open doors for members of the cabinet*'.
Interviewer: '*Do you have access to all the important doors?*'
Doorman: '*More or less…*'
Interviewer: '*What do you think of the people you are letting in and out?*'…
Doorman: '*I just open the doors…I am not paid to have an opinion…*'
Interviewer: '*Do you have any hobbies?*'
Doorman: '*…Well yes…door opening…*'

4 The title of a play by Alfred de Musset, published in 1845, *Une porte doit être ouverte ou fermée* (Musset, 1904) – a door must be opened or closed.

5 Moles was 'un exceptionnel passeur transdisciplinaire' (Devèze, 2004, p.189) and a broad thinker who considered space as 'une denrée consommée par l'homme pour l'ensemble de ses actes' (Moles and Rohmer, 1998, p.82). His studies on the 'consumption' of space led him to create an interdisciplinary field involving aspects of psychology and sociology but also architecture, urbanism, geography and phenomenology as well as structuralism. 'Héritier de Bachelard dont il avait suivi l'enseignement, Moles reprend à son compte les thèmes classiques de la poétique de l'espace

(l'opposition dedans/dehors, la porte, etc.). L'un et l'autre analysent la dualité fondatrice de l'approche phénoménologique –poétique, opposant l'homme raisonnable à l'être de l'expérience immédiate. L'analyse poétique suppose la mise entre parenthèses de la rationalité, l'abandonnant provisoirement aux géomètres, pour cerner les composantes les plus sensibles' (Moles and Rohmer, 1998, p.12).

6 The original French quote: 'La porte, outil d'un espace à topologie variable : Le mur accompagne l'évolution humaine depuis la paroi de la caverne ou le rempart de la hutte. L'invention d'espaces à topologie variable, terme savant pour désigner l'idée de porte, vient compléter la notion d'appropriation de l'espace par la paroi. La porte, paroi mobile qui change la topologie de l'accessible et de l'inaccessible, qui modifie d'un instant à l'autre l'idée de dedans et de dehors, la porte, comme nous le rappelle à la fois l'électronique (gating) et la poésie (Musset) est un système dépendant du temps. « Nos portes ferment à 18 heures », dit le magasin ou le bureau. Elle introduit une nouvelle dimension de l'espace, elle propose nécessairement l'expérience d'un espace-temps. Il n'y aura appropriation de l'espace-temps que dans la mesure où l'homme a une perception cognitive de la topologie de cet espace-temps, c'est-à-dire de l'ouverture ou de la fermeture des espaces géométriques qui lui sont offerts. Ainsi les portes qui séparent ou joignent des domaines de l'espace, constituent les éléments d'un labyrinthe, à la fois dans l'espace : les domaines, à la fois dans le temps : les heures où l'on peut s'y trouver. Si celles-ci sont régulières et connaissables, elles créent un jeu de contraintes objectivables. La connaissance de la ville, c'est la connaissance de ce labyrinthe spatio-temporel, dans lequel les espaces ouverts varient d'un moment à un autre selon certaines règles connues de l'habitant : les banques ferment à 16 heures. Les espaces que je puis explorer et où je peux agir, ceux qui me sont ouverts ou qui me sont fermés, varient à un rythme, sinon régulier, tout au moins connaissable, et c'est cette connaissance qui me donne la maîtrise de l'espace-temps qui m'est offert, qui m'apporte par là l'idée d'une appropriation'.

7 We can all think of examples in our own city – the Cambridge University library offers a good example: 'the open stack shelves doors will close at 6.45pm but the reading room will remain open until 7pm – the main doors of the library will close at 7.15pm' – regularly announced on the library tannoy system gradually restricts the movement of readers. Also, each Cambridge College will have its own way of controlling access: 'main gates will be shut after 11pm but the small gate on the west side will remain open until midnight' and around midnight there will be a rush for the little gate!

8 Pursuing his analysis of time and space, Burch arrives at 15 basic possible permutations (five for time and three for space) for moving from one space to another. Burch also acknowledges that there could be 'an infinite number of permutations, determined not only by the extent of the time ellipsis or reversal but also, and more importantly, by another parameter that is capable of undergoing an almost infinite number of variations too: the changes in camera angle and camera–subject distance (not to mention deliberate discrepancies in eye-line angles or matching trajectories, which are less easy to control but almost as important)' [p.12]. He concludes that 'although camera movements, entrances into and exits from frame, composition, and so on can all function as devices aiding in the organization of the film object, I feel that the shot transition will remain the basic element in the infinitely more complex structures of the future' [p.12] adding that his study is the basis for a 'truly consistent relationship between a film's spatial and temporal articulations and its narrative content, formal structure determining narrative structure as much as vice versa. It also implies giving as important a place to the viewer's disorientation as to his orientation. And these are but two of the possible multiple dialectics that will form the very substance of the cinema of the future, a cinema in which découpage in the limited sense of breaking down a narrative into scenes will no longer be meaningful to the real film-maker and découpage as defined here will cease to be experimental and purely theoretical and come into its own in actual film practice' [p.15]. While Burch's study was essentially carried out from a purely theoretical viewpoint, his typology can more widely contribute to the vast enterprise of digital editing and movie-making tools informed by the history and theory of film-making, something he alludes to when referring to 'the cinema of the future', and an interest shared by many others, such as cognitive psychologist Julian Hochberg: 'Today moving pictures raise questions that must concern

cognitive psychologists and neurophysiologists and some of the answers to those questions should help the computer scientists who work at automating movie making' (Peterson et al., 2007, p.396).

9 A good example would be *Ninotchka* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1939), the corridor scene where maids and butlers go back and forth through a door from which we can only hear and gather what's happening inside – a scene entirely from the point of view of a door.

10 Chaplin's *The Pilgrim* (1923) is a fine representative of that tradition, with wonderful slapstick door scenes.

11 'First of all, it must be noted that the two terms "outside" and "inside" pose problems of metaphysical anthropology that are not symmetrical. To make inside concrete and outside vast is the first task, the first problem, it would seem, of an anthropology of the imagination. But between concrete and vast, the opposition is not a true one. At the slightest touch, asymmetry appears' (Bachelard, 1964, p.215).

12 'The act of passing through a door is an authentic architectural experience, not the door itself' (Pallasmaa, 2000, p.8).

13 Trotter takes here an original approach by extending Hillier and Hanson's 'The social logic of space', a new theory of space, to film analysis (Hillier and Hanson, 1984).

14 My translation from the French: '*Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* commence par la mise en place d'un double emboîtement, plus précisément, par l'ouverture de deux portes. La première, avant l'arrivée de la Delage conduite par Henri Guisol (le fils Meunier), est la porte du sordide *Café-Hôtel de la Frontière* où René Lefèvre (Amédée Ange) et Florelle (Valentine Cardès) vont se reposer et passer la nuit avant de passer la frontière belge. La porte se répète même trois fois : d'abord une barrière, puis la porte de la maison, enfin la porte de la chambre, comme pour mieux enfoncer le récit dans son drame' (Seguin, 1999, p.49).

15 On the subject of doors – to which he devotes a whole section in his essay – Evans notes that 'In sixteenth-century Italy a convenient room had many doors; in nineteenth-century England a convenient room had but one. The change was important not only because it necessitated a rearrangement of the entire house, but also because it radically recast the pattern of domestic life' (Evans, 1997, p.64).

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10

STAIRS

The invention of cinematic scalalogy

We don't think enough about staircases. Nothing was more beautiful in old houses than the staircases. Nothing is uglier, colder, more hostile, meaner, in today's apartment buildings. We should learn to live more on staircases. But how?

(Perec, 2008, p.38)

l'escalier excède la fonction qui lui est ordinairement assignée : non réductible à un lieu de passage, il pourrait être le lieu du passage, c'est-à-dire du changement […] De quels étranges pouvoirs l'escalier est-il détenteur ? De quelle nature sont les relations qu'il entretient avec l'espace ? L'univers troublant des gravures de Piranèse soulève la remise en question complète de la fonction articulatrice de l'escalier.[1]

(Decobert, 2012, p.16)

…so let's talk stairs and be guided first by Friedrich Mielke, who has spent a lifetime studying them.[2] He proposes that

Scalalogy is the science of the interactions between humans and stairs, between foot and step. Since no one could possibly climb a stair without having contact with its steps, an interdependency is created, between the claims made by the living, and the reflection of such claims by the material.

(Koolhaas et al., 2014, p.1241)

Cinematic scalalogy, if such a thing exists, could therefore be interpreted as the art of observing the interactions between humans and stairs through the medium of film. Mielke proposes a

broad classification of German stairs and identifies three types: spiral, winding and straight – to which he also adds an exterior 'free' stair (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p.1300).

Interestingly, Lydie Decobert, a 'Hitchcockian scalalogist', also proposes three types of cinematic staircases, broadly equivalent to Mielke's, but based on *Number Seventeen* (Hitchcock, 1932)

> On peut répertorier dans ce film trois types d'escaliers très différents qui revêtiront par la suite de multiples aspects : les escaliers à retours, en vis et droit […] L'escalier à retours, avec son étagement en voles tournantes, ses paliers, sa rampe sinueuse jouxtant des balustres ouvragés, est ici le plus emprunté (comme il le sera dans la majorité des films) ; l'escalier en vis enroulé autour d'un noyau, par son exiguïté et son retrait implique le secret : quatre ans plus tard un escalier similaire conduit au message caché dans la boite de chocolats de *Secret Agent*. Quant à l'escalier droit, rigide et monumental, imposant, voire écrasant, il sera la structure idéale dans des films comme *Spellbound*, *Strangers on a Train*, ou *I Confess*. [In this film we can list three very different types of staircase that will eventually take on multiple aspects: dog-leg, spiral and straight stairs [...] The dog-leg staircase with its turning steps, its half-landings, its sinuous handrail adjoining the crafted balustrade, is here the most used (as it will be in the majority of films). The spiral staircase, by its narrowness and its discretion, implies a secret: four years later a similar staircase leads to the message hidden in *Secret Agent*'s box of chocolates. As for the straight staircase, rigid and monumental, imposing, even crushingly so, it will be the ideal structure in films like *Spellbound, Strangers on a Train*, or *I Confess*.]
>
> *(Decobert, 2008, p.18)*

So what might designers learn from a cinematic architectonic approach to scalalogy? What can we gain from Decobert and others? Certainly there have been some efforts and studies focusing on staircases in film, mainly coming from film studies – for example Eleanor Andrews, in the *Spaces of the Cinematic Home*, has a chapter on the staircase that sets out 'to discern, whether there is any consistency in meanings of the upward and downward movement via the staircase in film, and seeks to discover what these might be' (Andrews et al., 2016, p.137). In the process Andrews does a close analysis of the stair scenes in *The Servant* (Joseph Losey, 1963) – where staircases occupy no less than a quarter of the film's duration, as noted by Tobe in her careful study of Losey's film, from an architectural point of view (Tobe, 2007). But the majority of the writing on stairs in film concentrates on Hitchcock (Jacobs, 2007; and also Brill, 1983), which is not surprising as Douchet notes that

> *Le cinéaste au monde qui accorde le plus d'importance à l'escalier est sans conteste Hitchcock. Je ne connais pas de film de Hitchcock sans une utilisation extrêmement féconde*

> *de l'escalier, au sens où la plupart de ses escaliers réservent de la part de son créateur une invention à chaque fois renouvelée et toujours étonnante.* [Hitchcock is the film-maker who attaches the most importance to the staircase. I do not know of a Hitchcock film without an extremely fertile use of the staircase, in the sense that most staircases provide him with an endless source of invention, always renewed and always astonishing.]
>
> *(Douchet, 2000, p.40)*

Indeed, Hitchcock's mastery and attention to detail were second to none.[3]

Pallasmaa would not disagree, as he too has carefully considered Hitchcock's stairs,[4] but as an architect he notes that 'Besides the door, the stair is the element of architecture which is encountered most concretely and directly with the body' (Pallasmaa, 2007, p.32). This never more so than in *Exhibition* when D is hugging the top of the spiral staircase (Figure 10.1) – an unusual image, and one that reminds us of how little we are in direct physical contact with our architectural surroundings as furniture and objects act as mediators.

Our feet, mainly the soles of our shoes, are our main point of contact with buildings, apart from our hands in relation to openings, without forgetting stair ramps and handrails, which are an essential component of stairs. In fact, details of handrails, complete with hands clasping them, are often included in architectural chapters on stairs (see Figure 10.2). But paradoxically, the image of a hand grasping a handrail in film, especially in close-up, usually implies that all health and safety regulations are about to be violated. It signals the build-up of suspense and

FIGURE 10.1 D hugging the staircase in *Exhibition* (Joanna Hogg, 2013)
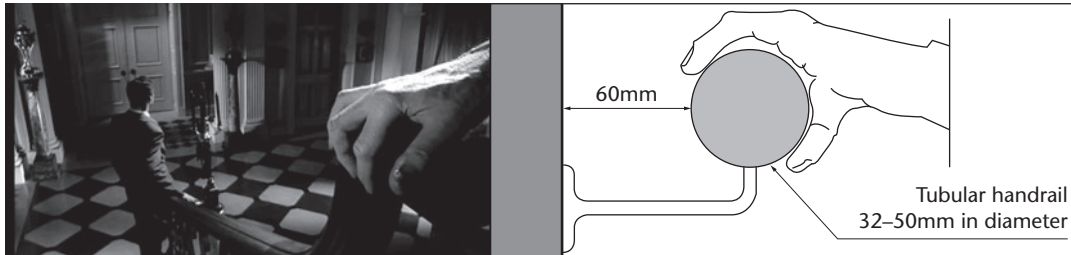
FIGURE 10.2 Handrails in *Night of the Demon* (Jacques Tourneur, 1957) [left] – and technical detail in Campbell et al., 2014, p.252

that the hand invariably belongs to a villain. It is extraordinary how, on the surface, similar visual conventions of an architectural element can have a totally different meaning.

The dangerous stairs

This points to the built-in element of danger associated with stairs – abundantly documented in film but also in architectural treatises. So are stairs dangerous? Probably more than we think, as according to Templer

> Using stairs involves risks that are greater than walking on the level because the consequences of a fall are likely to be more serious. Using a stair, however, should be no more dangerous than running, driving, riding a bicycle, or playing football. Nevertheless, we learn quite early to use stairs with appropriate caution. Most of us know that stairs are more dangerous than level floors, but this does not dissuade us from using them. One might conclude that stairs are somewhat dangerous but not to an unacceptable degree, and certainly not to the extent that we might consider avoiding them completely […] The U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (1987) estimates that in 1986, 1,464,224 people were treated in hospital emergency rooms, and 6,200 died, after being injured as a result of falls on floors, landings, stairs, and ramps in the home, where more than half of all falls occur.
>
> *(Templer, 1992, p.4)*

Unsurprisingly, the majority of deaths are amongst the elderly, although the unmarried aged 40–49, a category also prone to alcohol consumption and substance abuse, are over-represented (Templer, 1992, p.5).

But if real-life stairs are potentially hazardous, what about their cinematic incarnation? It would depend greatly on the film-maker. Deaths attributable to falls – including stairs – account for 10 per cent of the death toll in Hitchcock films, while being shot accounts for 33 per cent (Frost

FIGURE 10.3 Detective Arbogast falling backwards down a straight staircase in *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)

and Vasiliev, 2013). Most famously imprinted in our collective imagination is the death of the detective Arbogast (Martin Balsam) in *Psycho* (1960). As Arbogast enters the house

> he looks up the stairs. This exchange creates the Hitchcockian tension between the subject's look and the stairs themselves, or rather the void on the top of the stairs returning the gaze, emanating some kind of a weird unfathomable threat. The camera then provides a kind of a geometrically clear God's point of view shot image of the entire scene.
>
> *(Fiennes, 2006)*

At the point of the overhead shot, Arbogast cautiously reaches the top of the stairs, still holding his hat in his right hand, when Mother suddenly appears from a room on the right of the landing; she slashes his face with a large knife, Arbogast falls backwards all the way down, followed by Mother, who stabs him repeatedly while on the floor.

A typology of cinematic stairs

This is a classic backwards fall on a **straight stair**. Campbell had warned:

> Detailed studies have shown that most accidents happen on the top three steps […] The danger from long flights is that if an accident does occur it can be more serious […]

significantly more accidents happen on straight flights of stairs than spiral stairs, dog-leg stairs or those with winders, and more serious injuries also result.

(Campbell et al., 2014, p.250)

Clearly Hitchcock had done his homework. But help is at hand and 'the setting out of most staircases is not complicated, but does require some basic skills in geometry and arithmetic'. For instance, the opening pages of the *Elements on Stairs* are devoted to eliciting the ratio between the step height (riser) and the step width (tread) and may be summarized as follows:

> François Blondel (1618–1686) is likely to have been the first to measure the human step and use it as a base for his formula, which is still being used today. He postulated that two steps (riser height = R) and one tread (tread depth = T), should together make the length of 65cm. Blondel's formula 2R + T = 65cm is also useful for stair research as a tool for comparing time-related and people-related idiosyncrasies and deviations.
>
> *(Koolhaas et al., 2014, p.1204)*

It would take another idiosyncratic Frenchman, Jacques Tati, to challenge Blondel's approach in a short film, *Cours du Soir par Jacques Tati* (Nicolas Rybowski, 1967), that demonstrates, in front of an attentive class, the art of hitting a stair nosing at a precise angle with the foot, so as to lose one's balance but in a controlled manner, i.e without falling. However, achieving the desired effect of losing one's balance is proving difficult for Tati's pupils and requires a more scientific approach calling on simple geometry and arithmetic as explained on the blackboard by Hilaire.[5]

Tati's demonstration is the perfect companion to Blondel's formula and stairs literature in general. It makes abundantly clear that on the one hand 'short flights are just as dangerous and

FIGURE 10.4 Tati challenging Blondel's formula in *Cours du Soir par Jacques Tati* (Nicolas Rybowski, 1967)

very short flights (1–3 steps) are particularly so', and on the other that 'People tripping on the way up usually fall forwards and catch themselves' (Campbell et al., 2014, p.250).

Also intriguing and counterintuitive is the little-known fact that **spiral stairs** are in fact safer: 'when people do trip on spiral or dog-leg stairs they are more likely to be able to break their fall against the walls or the balustrade before they have fallen very far' (Campbell et al., 2014, p.250). Indeed, no falls or deaths occur on any of Godard's *Alphaville* (1966) spiral staircases, of which there are several.

In fact, the repeated and insistent use of spiral stairs is unique and particular to *Alphaville*. It forms a unique typology, which could be construed as the beginning of a 'stair museum', spiral ones to start with, a project dear to Mielke,[6] albeit a Malrucian *musée imaginaire*. The first one, in the dilapidated Red Star hotel, is more akin to a medieval spiral staircase and allows for an intimate scene, snugly wrapping around the bodies of Lemmy Caution (Eddie Constantine), disguised as Ivan Johnson, and former spy Henry Dickson (Akim Tamiroff). On the way up to his garret, Dickson wheezes, collapses and sits along the slow climb of his personal and tortuous stations of the cross. The old-fashioned staircase echoes Dickson's inability to adapt to the futuristic environment of Alphaville. The upward spiral brings him closer to heaven, as he dies shortly after that.

The second, third, fourth and fifth spiral staircases are variations on the theme of the modernist interpretation of stairs, associated with the dystopian atmosphere of the film. As such, spiral stairs participate in the creation of a broad motif and atmosphere of circularity, present in the signage of flashing neon discs, as well as in the dialogue: 'time', says Alpha 60, 'is an endless circle'. The circle has been interpreted as the ubiquitous symbol of Alphaville and associated with 'evil, the tyranny of the computer and the permanent technocratic present tense' (Darke, 2005, p.61). But the second stair in particular must retain our attention. It is a most elegant staircase situated in L'Institut de Sémantique Générale and, thanks to Raoul Coutard's sympathetic cinematography, we are treated to several ascents and descents in real

FIGURE 10.5 Spiral staircases in *Alphaville* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1966)

FIGURE 10.6 'L'ai-je bien descendu?' in *Alphaville* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1966)

time, by Lemmy Caution and Natasha von Braun (Anna Karina). The image of Anna Karina coming down is endearing in two ways (Figure 10.6). It first confirms Mielke's statement that the spiral staircase is the best staircase in the world, for its comfort and safety (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p.1329), but also the way she descends it, with great poise and grace, we almost expect her to ask Lemmy Caution, watching her at the bottom of the stairs, 'L'ai-je bien descendu?' – 'did I descend it well?' This ultra famous French one-liner pronounced in 1933 by Cécile Sorel as she reached the foot of the grand stair of the Dorian du Casino de Paris, is something that all French people will at some point declaim while walking down a staircase – a peculiar form of popular culture turned collective memory and associated with stairs.

Our cinematic scalalogy demands that we also consider the winding and the straight stairs as identified by Decobert and Mielke. Let us restart with the straight stair, already evoked with *Psycho,* and identified as the most dangerous of all. In *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980), everything is familiar to start with; but the everyday is the perfect cover from which the uncanny can germinate – familiar figures gradually return from repression. Jack's (Jack Nicholson) repressed violence and alcoholism are finally rising to the surface – and the setting, the grand staircase in the Overall Hotel, is the ideal setting for it. His wife Wendy (Shelley Duvall) is gradually walking backwards, managing to keep Jack at bay with a bat. On the way up we keep switching viewpoints between Jack and Wendy – and as we near the top of the stairs, more and more of the grand hall of the Overall Hotel is revealed. As we have established, stairs are intrinsically dangerous, but playing dangerous games on them becomes doubly dangerous. The scene becomes quite terrifying as Jack ascends close to her, baiting her repeatedly: 'I'm not gonna hurt you. I'm just gonna bash your brains in'. Not a scene one would expect in a public space, but as Pallasmaa remarks,

> Construction in our time has normalized emotions into the service of the social situations of life and has, at the same time, censored the extremes of the scale of human emotions: darkness and fear, dreams and reverie, elation and ecstasy. Suppressed emotions, however, seek their object and exposure. Anxiety and alienation, hardly hidden by surface rationalization, are often the emotional contents of today's everyday settings. The dimension of the heimlich hides its opposite, the unheimlich, always ready to enter the scene.

> *(Pallasmaa, 2007, p.35)*

Jack's emotional state worsens with every step, as if ascending the stair was gradually ramping up his anger. Normally the grand hall below would be filled with people milling around – and one wouldn't expect such a scene on a public staircase – but the cavernous hotel hall is eerily empty and the scene becomes an intimate scene of pure domestic violence despite the grand space around them. The promised terrifying violence rises to the level of the amazing spectacle that they are offering to no one, but as if played out to a crowd of thousands. The scene reaches its climax when Jack lunges forward to grab the bat and Wendy manages to hit him on the head. Jack tumbles backwards all the way down the stairs. Campbell, Templer and others had warned of the danger of straight stairs.

But they are nowhere more lethal than on the monumental Odessa steps in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), where the troops of Tsar Nicholas II relentlessly massacre the civilians as they advance from the top of the stairs towards the harbour. Lasting nearly ten minutes, this must count for the longest continuous cinematic stairs scene, and provides plenty of evidence to corroborate the statistics on the danger of straight stairs, as we see a great many people falling over as they hurry down the steps in an attempt to escape the advancing troops and reach the harbour. We know that there was a mutiny on the Battleship *Potemkin* in 1905, but we also know that the brutal repression did not take place on the steps, but in other parts of the city, including the harbour. This is fiction standing in for real events.[7]

Much has been written about this film that invented a new form of screen language: montage. But the key interest in relation to this section is that those steps are still with us today – and still serve their original purpose of linking Odessa, built on the plateau, with the harbour below. Those images have become part of our worldwide collective imagination, as the Odessa steps have become what Pierre Nora calls des *lieux de mémoires* – sites of memories (Nora, 1989). *Potemkin* is part of the immaterial fabric of the city – and Eisenstein's images are still there hovering above the steps, stuck to them like invisible glue. As Eisenstein rightly said, 'Absolute realism is by no means the correct form of perception' (Fabe, 2014, p.197). In other words verisimilitude is not what matters here, but the feeling about what it might have been like – a sentiment, an emotion. If one was trying to make a documentary, it would probably be just as subjective, while at the same time everybody would be able to point out all the

FIGURE 10.7 The Odessa steps in *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)

inaccurate details. But in creating a fiction, the need for historical accuracy evaporates, and in this case it became even more real than the reality – and is still impacting on the city of Odessa today, as both a real landmark and a cinematic one have coincided over a fiction, now spatially rooted in those steps.

On the subject of straight stairs it would be difficult not to mention Keaton's *The Cameraman* – and his acrobatic descents of the three flights of stairs separating his bedroom from the communal telephone downstairs. This is an astonishing example of an 'animated staircase section' – and a far cry from his retired approach to another straight staircase, in Beckett's *Film* (1965), as his character 'O' is being 'camera-shy', a curiously architectonic film essay on the subject of *esse est percipi,* 'to be is to be perceived' (Deleuze, 1986, pp.66–67). As for **the winding staircase**, the so-called dog-leg stair and other variations, an essential component of our stair *musée imaginaire*, we can turn once again to Tati and the house where Hulot resides in *Mon Oncle* (1958). In one particular scene we witness him ascending the stairs towards his attic home, and while doing so, at every step of the way, we see part of his body being framed by a disparate range of windows and openings – clearly a metaphor for a human-scale

architecture (Figure 10.8). It is a climb composed of many types of stairs, although they are in part hidden from view but fully visible to our mind's eye. We, as spectators, have a clear articulation of a building structure organized around staircases and being deployed in front of our eyes, in all its intricacies, levels and openings. It is an object lesson in a practised and lived *promenade architecturale,* a new interpretation of Le Corbusier's concept whereby each successive framing of Hulot's body by a window constitutes a form of cinematic montage, edited in the camera.

Tati creates something novel out of vernacular architecture, something cinematically modern out of a traditional building, making us notice and value our everyday environment, however banal. This would fall within the category of the everyday stairs or the staircase of our everyday life. Hulot would go up this staircase every day, probably more than once, and its oneiric value is also in the ascent, a sort of picturesque scenic climbing, culminating in the opening of the window and the play of light onto the canary singing. Lasting a minute, it is a real-time stair ascent shot as an elevation, a rarity in cinema. As a scene it is precious and contrasts with most staircase scenes in cinema, for example in Hitchcock's films, which have much more of a

FIGURE 10.8 Hulot's climb in *Mon Oncle* (Jacques Tati, 1958)

dramatic value than an everyday one. A typology of stairs of the everyday is also visible in *Le Samourai* (1967) in a long scene where we follow Jeff Costello (Alain Delon) going up and down a variety of stairs in a number of Parisian and suburban locations. Over 1 minute and 40 seconds we have a quick succession of straight, dog-leg and winding staircases, a prime example for our *musée imaginaire* of stairs. But unlike the scene in *Mon Oncle*, these are not the stairs of Jeff Costello's everyday life and, although they are completely ordinary stairs encountered in any city, it is the sheer accumulation and diversity of stairs in one long scene – 1 minute and 40 seconds is long at the movies – that makes it remarkable. Jeff Costello is on his way to a dangerous meeting, his life on the line. The twisting, turning, descending and climbing are an expression of the turmoil in his life – a case of spatially organized narrative with the stairs as the perfect match for his mood – and the sheer length of the scene adds to the suspense.

The stairs of our everyday

Film has also the capacity of making us revisit the stairs of our everyday life that are typically overlooked. I am thinking here of a short movie (1 minute 10 seconds), *Vertical Promenade* (Miguel Santa Clara, 2008), centring around a concrete staircase in the Scroope Terrace extension built by Colin 'Sandy' Wilson in 1959. It is a space that I use almost daily, and yet it was through the cinematography of the elasticized vertical promenade that I was able to fully appreciate the remarkable aesthetic of this staircase, in all its details. But one of the most arresting images of stairs of everyday life can be found in Fernand Léger's *Ballet Mécanique* (1924). In the course of this short film we see the image of a washerwoman (*laveuse de linge*) climbing a flight of outdoor stone stairs, straight stairs, with a laundry bag on her right shoulder. The scene would be banal and unnoticed if it wasn't for the fact that she never reaches the top of the stairs. She keeps climbing the same four steps and keeps going back to where she starts. The stairs scene comes back three times in quick succession – the first time the washerwoman goes up seven times, then ten times, and then five. Dudley Murphy, the cinematographer, argued that the scene expressed the futility of life because she never got to the top (Dixon, 2011, p.14–15). The fact that the washerwoman on the fourth step raises her left arm, as if to shrug, looking straight at the camera, smiling and talking as if to say 'well that's life, what can we do?', reinforces Murphy's point, but it also highlights the repetitive nature of her daily life, her daily grind. We can only imagine that those are the steps of her everyday life, that she would have been using day in, day out for most of her adult life. This is a poignant scene, stairs as an expression of the futility of life, stairs as resignation, the stairs that hurt and wear you out, stairs in an everyday life context, circa 1924.

Climbing stairs can indeed be hard work, and in *Kiss Me Deadly* (Robert Aldrich, 1955), we catch Mike Hammer climbing a seemingly infinitely long and straight public stairway, on the side of Bunker Hill in Los Angeles, to reach the aptly named Hillcrest Hotel. Out of breath, he

FIGURE 10.9 *Ballet Mécanique* (Fernand Léger, 1924): the steps of everyday life

walks into the lobby and approaches the landlady, who is sorting the mail: 'A guy could get a heart attack walking up here'. She responds: 'Who invited you?' Hammer asks, 'Carmen Trivago, what room?' The landlady replies, 'Follow your ear'. And knowing that 'Climbing stairs takes on average seven times as much energy as walking on the flat' (Neufert et al., 2000, p.192), no wonder Hammer felt tired. I am not sure how accurate the Neuferts' assessment is, but modern digital technology and GPS tracking devices can now be used to account accurately for our daily use of stairs.[8]

Stairs' directionality

As Diderot remarked, *l'esprit d'escalier*[9] – 'staircase wit' – the clever remark thought of too late as one goes down the stairs on the way home – implies that the downward trajectory aids the reflective thinking process: stairs as an aid to thinking. But how do we think about stairs when we think about them? Do we see ourselves climbing or descending them? In French we say 'emprunter un escalier' – meaning you 'borrow a stair', i.e. you don't own it, thus reinforcing its transitory nature; but in this expression it remains 'direction' neutral. Pallasmaa posits that 'The staircases of cinema reveal the innate asymmetry of the stair, rarely thought about by architects. Rising stairs end in Heaven, whereas descending stairs eventually lead down to the Underworld', adding that 'Stairs are most often photographed upwards from below, and consequently, an ascending person is seen from behind and a descending character from the front'[10] (Pallasmaa, 2007, p.32–33). But Douchet is quite categorical that, in Hitchcock's films, the asymmetry of the stair is revealed and that stairs are usually descended:

> Bien sûr qu'il y a des montées chez Hitchcock, mais l'essentiel est la descente. Elle est ce à quoi normalement la raison, la morale, la religion, la société, les bonnes moeurs, le côté victorien s'opposent : il ne faut pas se laisser aller. Or chez Hitchcock on a besoin de se laisser aller. La descente est chez lui à la fois refus, mais aussi abandon, et souvent,

lorsque la descente est assumée, qu'on accepte ce par quoi l'on est attiré, à ce moment-là la descente devient salut. C'est le sens de l'utilisation de l'escalier ou de la notion de descente dans *Notorious*. [Of course there are stairs being climbed in Hitchcock, but the majority are descended. The descent is what reason, morality, religion, society, Victorian values usually oppose: we must not let ourselves go. But in Hitchcock's films, we need to let go. The descent is at once a negation, but also an abandonment, and often, once the descent is consented, an acceptance by attraction, at that point it becomes a salvation. This is the meaning of the use of the staircase or the notion of the descent in *Notorious*.]

(Douchet, 2000, p.40)

If film-makers may by and large favour showing stairs being descended for added dramatic purposes, we often climb stairs in romantic scenes – in *This is My Street* (Sidney Hayers, 1964) when Margery (June Ritchie) and Harry (Ian Hendry) first kiss on a small, steep and narrow staircase in a Victorian terraced house. Much more disturbing is the violent love scene in *A History of Violence* (David Cronenberg, 2005) between Edie (Maria Bello) and Tom (Viggo Mortensen) on their way upstairs – without forgetting the celebrated scene, see Figure 10.10, when Rhett (Clark Gable) carries Scarlett (Vivien Leigh) up Tara's grand stairs in *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939). And finally, it's hard not to mention a man ascending a

FIGURE 10.10 Staircase scene in *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939)

free-standing staircase in the middle of the woods in *Fahrenheit 451* (François Truffaut, 1966) – a striking and poetic moment, the pure expression of gratuitous stairs as an element of architecture!

I hypothesize here that architects tend to think of stairs as going up, simply because of the universal drawing convention that shows stairs in plan with an arrow pointing upwards, indicating the ascent. And unsurprisingly the staircase section of *The Vocabulary of Spatial Situations* only refers to climbing:

> The act of climbing a staircase, for example, can be transformed by a constructive arrangement according to dramaturgical considerations into a scenic experience, so that we follow our own movements through space like a performance […] In a way that is analogous to the actions of an actor on a stage, which generate a second reality through the production of a play, the reality of the purely functional act of 'ascending stairs' […] In architectural design, pure functionality is transformed into an experiential reality, one that thematizes the function itself. The function of level changes can be staged by an expressive gesture; a purely functional movement can be invested with a certain rhythm; the effort of ascending can be transformed into a dramatic sequence; perception and orientation are enriched by a characteristic atmosphere. Between the dark grotto below and the floating platform above in Balthasar Neumann's Bruchsal Staircase, I see myself climb directly from the extremes of the gloomy depths below into the bright expanse above.
>
> *(Janson and Tigges, 2014, p.273)*

Here Janson and Tigges appear to imbue the stair with the capacity to deliver a scenic experience as one climbs, which reminds us of Auguste Choisy's remarks (Choisy, 1899, pp.409–422) regarding the placement of buildings on the Acropolis to be appreciated by a mobile spectator on his way up to the Parthenon. The picturesque promenade is to be enjoyed climbing, and there is no mention of the descending return journey. Similarly, the ramp scene of La Villa Savoye in Chenal and Le Corbusier's film, *Architectures d'Aujourd'hui* (1931), only shows the woman ascending it (Penz, 2013). Likewise when Vesely describes the experience of the Würzburg residence ceremonial staircase, it is always on the way up:

> As we ascend to the first landing and turn, the staircase becomes part of the structure of the room […] In the Würzburg residence we can recognize the presence of architectonics immediately in the tension between the ascending movement of the steps and the upper part of the hall.
>
> *(Vesely, 2006, p.93)*

But, once climbed, stairs have to be descended too. We are up and can only come down, there is a double dynamic specific to stairs that implies that '*l'escalier contient sa propre force de dépassement, invisible de prime abord* – stairs contain their own invading force, invisible at first.

(Decobert, 2012, p.19)

Poignantly, Philippe Garrel's *Le Révélateur* (1968) presents us with a rare staircase scene that contains the innate asymmetry and ambiguity of stairs by playing with our perception. A woman (Bernadette Lafont) is moving very slowly on straight stairs, holding the handrail with both hands. The conundrum for the spectator is that it is at first impossible to know whether she is going up or down. Most unusually, it could be either way. The revelation comes when her husband (Laurent Terzieff) is seen emerging out of the shadow at the top of the stairs. It suddenly makes sense: the woman is coming down the stairs and we are witnessing her descent through a low-angle shot. Complementing this scene is Marcel Marceau's short film where he communicates admirably through mime the climbing and descending of an imaginary stair – eliciting the marked differences involved in both directions through the bodily gestures (Ina.fr, 1959).

FIGURE 10.11 The ambiguous stairs in *Le Révélateur* (Philippe Garrel, 1968)

Bachelard, on the other hand, as the architect of the oneiric house,[11] was very clear in articulating the directionality of stairs in relation to the various spaces of the home:

> we always go down the one that leads to the cellar, and it is this going down that we remember, that characterizes its oneirism. But we go both up and down the stairway that leads to the bed-chamber. It is more commonly used; we are familiar with it […] Lastly, we always go up the attic stairs, which are steeper and more primitive. For they bear the mark of ascension to a more tranquil solitude. When I return to dream in the attics of yester-year, I never go down again.
>
> *(Bachelard, 1964, p.26)*

But Bachelard also warns that the cellar is 'foremost the dark entity of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces […] becomes buried madness, walled-in tragedy'[12] (Bachelard, 1964, pp.18–20). Stories of criminal cellars leave indelible marks on our memory – and nowhere is this better expressed than in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), where in the last scene, Lila Crane (Vera Miles) slowly descends the cellar stairs towards the horrific discovery of the mummified corpse of Mother.

Overall in cinema,

> the connotations vary according to the use and context of this setting within the narrative […] Whatever may be found at the top or bottom of the staircase, whether it be familiar, anticipated, dreaded, or unknown, will dictate the tenor of the ascent or descent.
>
> *(Andrews et al., 2016, p.150)*

FIGURE 10.12 Going down in *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)

And the staircases of cinema, if studied carefully, may inform designers that a stair is not only a way to connect two levels within a building, but a way to understand that there is a field of relationships not always visible and obvious, but permanently available, something more complex and enigmatic (Vesely, 2006, p.77).[13] We have to keep re-imagining stairs as complex and active elements – as verbs as opposed to static elements – as architectural experience as opposed to passive nouns. The act of climbing a staircase is an authentic architectural encounter, not the staircase itself – and is transformed by events that take place – and as we see in films, stairs acquire different meanings according to situations – they become alive with action, they are a receptacle and conduit for human drama.

Notes

1 My translation: 'The staircase exceeds the function usually assigned to it: not reducible to a passage, it could be the place of passage, that is to say of change […] What strange powers do staircases possess? What is the nature of its relations with space? The eerie universe of Piranesi's engravings raises the fundamental articulating function of the staircase'.

2 The vast majority of the 'Elements' volume is devoted to Mielke's work.

3 http://boards.straightdope.com/sdmb/archive/index.php/t-334810.html 'Hitchcock was concerned with those little touches. I heard him speak and met him once. He was talking about the filming of *Psycho*, the scene where Martin Balsam (the detective) goes into the Bates house and up the stairs. He let Saul Bass (the wonderful title designer) direct that sequence for suspense, and Saul Bass shot Balsam's foot on the stair, hand on the rail, full body going up a stair, foot on the next stair, etc.

   Hitch said he rejected the footage, because having so many cuts made Balsam appear to be guilty of something – he becomes an invader, an outsider. Hitchcock wanted Balsam to be innocent and the object of audience sympathy (and to investigate what the audience wants him to investigate). He reshot the sequence, leaving the camera static, and just watching Balsam go up the stairs…where, of course, Mother is waiting.

   Interestingly enough, a few years after I heard him tell this anecdote, he made *Frenzy*. Towards the end, when Jon Finch has escaped from jail, has a steel bar in his hand, and is going up the stairs to murder the person who framed him…and it's shot in many cuts: hand on railing, foot on stair, hand carrying steel bar, etc. Finch is, in fact, an invader, an intruder; he (and the audience) think that he's going to do murder. So, Hitch paid attention to such details'.

4 'Why are Hitchcock's stairways invariably to the right from the entrance as seen by the viewer? Is it because the staircase stands for the heart of the house?' (Pallasmaa, 2007, p.33).

5 Hilaire: '…sachant qu'un homme fait de longueur de jambe environ 1 mètre et qu'il fait normalement un angle de 30 degrés lorsque qu'il se met à marcher, nous avons à calculer la longueur de son enjambée ou de sa foulée et nous voyons qu'elle est égale ici à la tangente, soit environ 60 centimètres… comme nous savons d'autre part que la distance du point A au point d'arrivée B, c'est à dire le contact pied-marche est égale à 1.80m, nous voyons assez simplement que le nombres de foulées nécessaires pour arriver à la marche est égale à 1.80 sur 60 centimètres, ça fait trois enjambées…'

6 Mielke devotes a page to the idea of a stair museum: 'my ideal stair museum consists of a central building like the Palazzo Valmarana in Vincenza with a multiple-combined spiral staircase' (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p.1273).

7 'The wonderful irony of *Potemkin*'s place in film history is that even though Eisenstein did not strive to create a mimetic illusion of reality, his film was nevertheless experienced as stunningly real. Jay Leyda in *Kino*, his history of Russian and Soviet film, writes that "One of the curious effects of the film has been to replace the facts of the Potemkin Mutiny with the film's artistic 'revision' of those

events, in all subsequent references, even by historians, to this episode." "Absolute realism," Eisenstein wrote, "is by no means the correct form of perception." His films teach us that a film can come across as even more authentic when a director departs from the conventions of realistic representation' (Fabe, 2014, p.36).

8 Having myself experimented with an activity watch that records stair climbing in my everyday life and environment, I was surprised to find an average daily count of 22 stair climbs – and almost double if I was to visit the University of Cambridge library – unsurprising with the architecture collection on its sixth floor!

9 'Sedaine, immobile et froid, me regarde et me dit : « Ah ! Monsieur Diderot, que vous êtes beau ! » Voilà l'observateur et l'homme de génie. Ce fait, je le racontais un jour à table, chez un homme que ses talents supérieurs destinaient à occuper la place la plus importante de l'État, chez M. Necker ; il y avait un assez grand nombre de gens de lettres, entre lesquels Marmontel, que j'aime et à qui je suis cher. Celui-ci me dit ironiquement : « Vous verrez que lorsque Voltaire se désole au simple récit d'un trait pathétique et que Sedaine garde son sang-froid à la vue d'un ami qui fond en larmes, c'est Voltaire qui est l'homme ordinaire et Sedaine l'homme de génie ! » Cette apostrophe me déconcerte et me réduit au silence, parce que l'homme sensible, comme moi, tout entier à ce qu'on lui objecte, perd la tête et ne se retrouve qu'au bas de l'escalier' (Diderot, 2000, p.28).

10 Pallasmaa goes on to add: 'Stairs photographed from above express vertigo, falling or panicked escape. The preference of showing staircases from below has its natural technical reasons – a stairway photographed from above seems to escape the picture – but this very fact reveals the psychological difference between ascending and descending movements. The staircase is the most important organ of the house. The stairs are responsible for the vertical circulation of the house in the same way that the heart keeps pumping blood up and down the body. The regular rhythm of the stairs echoes the beating of the heart and the rhythm of breathing.' [33]

11 'If I were the architect of an oneiric house, I should hesitate between a three-story house and one with four. A three-story house, which is the simplest as regards essential height, has a cellar, a ground floor and an attic; while a four-story house puts a floor between the ground floor and the attic. One floor more, and our dreams become blurred. In the oneiric house, topoanalysis only knows how to count to three or four' (Bachelard, 1964, p.25).

12 *La cave est alors de la folie enterrée, des drames murés.*

13 Vesely's full quote on stairs: 'Consider a staircase and its space, designed for efficient movement between two levels of a building. What is in one sense a pure object, intended to serve a clearly defined purpose, is at the same time a field of relationships – not always visible and obvious, but permanently available. These relationships are available in all our preliminary design decisions, including those about the staircase's general character and overall spatial arrangement. When we speak about the character of the staircase as being domestic or public, simple or monumental, we have in mind a quite precise relationship between the space, the light, the size and material of the staircase, and the movement that occurs on it. There is a striking contrast between the inexhaustible richness of possible interpretations and the limited number of plausible or optimal solutions. This limitation is even more puzzling in more complex designs such as those of residences, libraries, theaters, and concert halls. Most spatial situations show a remarkable level of identity that cannot be derived from simple characteristics alone; it is something more complex and enigmatic (Vesely, 2006, p.77).

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11

JOINING THE DOTS

In the shops we come across innumerable works devoted to everyday acts: housework, cookery, dressing, sleep, sexuality, and so on. We can even buy 'encyclopaedias' that attempt to assemble these particular aspects. But what is missing in such works is the whole, the sequence. Everyday acts are repeated (reproduced) by dint of this sequence and what it involves.

(Lefebvre, 2014, p.678)

Lefebvre provides us with our starting point for this section. We have so far concentrated on the isolated fundamental elements of the architecture of our everyday life and environment, namely windows, doors and stairs. But, to paraphrase Lefebvre, what is missing is the whole, the sequence that assembles the elements of architecture, and this is what film is particularly good at: assembling sequences that have windows, doors and stairs, amongst others – in other words, we need here to join the dots. This chapter is in two parts: the first considers specifically the position of stairs, the central spine of the house which entrances, landings, corridors and doors feed from and into. The second part is a case study of a sequence in Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963), where all the elements are thrown together in joining even more dots. And let us come back to Robin Evans's quote that opened Part 3 as he rightly remarks that 'If anything is described by an architectural plan, it is the nature of human relationships, since the elements whose trace it records – walls, doors, windows and stairs – are employed first to divide and then selectively reunite inhabited space' (Evans, 1997, p.56). Having selectively studied the elements in the previous sections, it is now time to reunite them.

The staircase, which controls all the vertical movements, is the most important organ of a block of flats:

FIGURE 11.1 Inhabiting staircases in *Delicatessen* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, 1991)

> For all that passes, passes by the stairs, and all that comes, comes by the stairs: letters, announcements of births, marriages, and deaths, furniture brought in or taken out by removers, the doctor called in an emergency, the traveller returning from a long voyage. It's because of that that the staircase remains an anonymous, cold, and almost hostile place.
>
> *(Perec, 1996, p.3)*

However, communal staircases are not only a passing place but can also be places for interactions. A good example is the scene in *Delicatessen* (Jeunet and Caro, 1991) where Louison (Dominique Pinon) is making soap bubbles on the landing just outside his flat door – to entertain the two children sitting on the steps.

At the same time, Robert (Rufus) is observing the whole scene from the landing above, and so is Julie (Marie-Laure Dougnac) as she climbs the stairs. In just over a minute a staircase becomes a place of encounter for Louison and Julie (they have never met before), entertainment and observation (the neighbours above and below). The landing has temporarily been turned into a stage, with spectators watching from the wings, while the steps provide a natural seating arrangement (Figure 11.1). Stairs are not only about connecting levels, but can also be inhabited, have a social function, and be far from hostile, provide indeed an endless field of potential relationships, as remarked by Vesely (Vesely, 2006, p.77).

The end of stairs?

But the poignant aspect of this scene is that it may well become a thing of the past; not so much because inhabiting staircases is an eccentric idea in breach of health and safety regulations, but because stairs themselves are gradually becoming obsolete. This is what Koolhaas has to say on the matter:

> The diktat of the fifteenth-century architectural theorist Leon Battista Alberti 'The fewer staircases that are in a house, and the less room they take up, the more convenient they are esteem'd' has proved to be a prophesy for the contemporary condition. The staircase is considered dangerous – safety requirements limit architects' ambitions – and is possibly endangered, only still in existence in order to fulfil the requirement of having an exit strategy, though the stair may be making something of a comeback as an aid to fitness.
>
> *(Caution and Koolhaas, 2014, p.275)*

Staircases have indeed become an endangered species and have been replaced by lifts and elevators, although they survive mainly as escape staircases.

Koolhaas's suggestion that stairs may make a 'comeback as an aid to fitness' was made plain by former New York Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, who in 2013 issued 'an executive order requiring city agencies to promote the use of stairs. The Center for Active Design, a new non-profit organization, hopes to increase visibility and access to at least one staircase in all new buildings in the city' (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p.1237). The promotional material showed a poster with 'burn calories, not electricity – walking up the stairs just two minutes a day helps prevent weight gain. It also helps the environment' (Koolhaas et al., 2014, p.1237). Clearly stairs are not going to disappear any time soon, but my own analysis, which is by no means exhaustive, shows that there are a lot fewer stair scenes in film, in particular in the more recent decades, especially in American movies. This would seem to tally with Koolhaas's observation – not entirely surprising since we know that film shows with some accuracy the visible side of a society and an epoch. In other words, if stairs are used less and less by a society, this would be reflected in films. Films record and communicate with unique immediacy how people in different cultures and cities live in domestic buildings and communal spaces. Therefore film is a faithful translator not only of the evolution of the fabric of the city but also of social changes.

This raises another important issue, that of cultural differences – indeed when it comes to stairs, I would hypothesize that while they are commonly represented in European cinema, their appearance in US movies seems to be dwindling as stairs – apart from the odd fire-escape scene[1] – are replaced by elevators. This is perhaps not surprising as American architecture is not particularly known for its stairs and staircases. The stair book in *Elements of Architecture* is almost entirely devoted to European examples – compiled by Friedrich Mielke – bar six pages, out of 308, devoted to US fire escapes and New York boutique stairs (Koolhaas et al., 2014,

pp.1202–1508). As a result, some of the great cinematic stair scenes are European – Eisenstein's Odessa steps being the most famous of all – or by European film directors, Hitchcock in particular, who continued to exploit the in-built dramatic qualities of stairs throughout his Hollywood films (see the Stairs chapter). And some of the great stair scenes in American cinema are a product of imported European-style architecture – for example, the house in *Gone with the Wind*, Tara, is of Greek Revival style, typical of the antebellum houses of the nineteenth-century Southern United States. There are obvious exceptions, such as the celebrated stair scene in *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950) and numerous scenes in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (1989) taking place on the brownstone stoops of Brooklyn townhouses.

The rise of the lift

So if stairs are gone or at least more sparse, what of lifts and elevators? Let us restart with a key scene *in Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino, 1994). We are driving along downtown Los Angeles with Vince and Jules.[2] They park the car and grab their guns. They walk along the street towards the entrance of what looks like a hacienda-style Hollywood block of flats, continuously talking. They cross the entrance hall towards the lift – an old-fashioned lift with a brownish metal door.

They get into the lift and carry on talking about foot massage[3] throughout the duration of the lift ride. So far the scene is in real time or near real time – as there are two cuts that correspond to the entrance door to the apartment block and the lift door. A third cut occurs when they come out of the lift, as the camera is situated in the corridor. The rest of the scene is in real time, shot in Steadycam in front of Jules and Vince. It lasts around three minutes, with continuous dialogue, up to the point when they are about to knock on the door of the flat they are looking for.

FIGURE 11.2 The lift in *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994)

Corridors

The lift provides the crucial link that joins entrance, two doors and the upper-floor corridor. What is of particular interest here is the corridor scene – all the more so since it is an element of architecture that has not been alluded to so far. Evans make the point that 'The history of the corridor as a device for removing traffic from rooms has yet to be written' (Evans, 1997, p.70).[4] Indeed, the literature on corridors is still very sparse, almost non-existent, and the corridor volume in *Elements of Architecture* must be one of the very few books on the subject and sheds some welcome light on the topic. Film, on the other hand, has long celebrated corridors in all shapes and sizes – suffice to mention just two: Hulot in *Playtime* (Tati, 1967) patiently waiting for Giffard to go down an impossibly long and echoing corridor, and in *The Shining* (Kubrick, 1980), Danny's eerie tricycle ride along the desolate corridors of the Overlook Hotel.[5]

Pulp Fiction provides us with yet another classic corridor scene, and one that benefits from being read in conjunction with Steven Connor's essay on corridors – 'A love letter to an unloved place' (Connor, 2004). The scene is long, or is perceived as such due to the endless corridors and twisting and turning, a typical hostel architecture with endless doors leading off the corridor:

> Corridors are institutional, associated not with private homes, but with schools, hospitals, hotels, town halls, office buildings, police stations, radio stations and barracks. The fundamental unhomeliness of corridors is suggested by the fact that the rooms to which they give access are nearly always numbered, in a way that rooms in a private house, however massive, could never be.
>
> *(Connor, 2004)*

Indeed, Vince and Jules are looking for a particular door, identified by its number. They finally find the door, but they are a touch too early so they have to linger around, still pursuing the same endless conversation…

> corridors are retarders rather than accelerators of movement. In this lies much of their strangeness. Corridors are dilatory, displacing, and distempering. They are for dallying, lingering, hovering, and, most of all, for waiting. As one moves through or along a corridor, which in theory is there to provide quick and direct access to different locations on one floor of a building, the persons one meets in the corridor are usually waiting.
>
> *(Connor, 2004)*

The *Pulp Fiction* corridor is definitely a 'retarder' – it allows Vince and Jules to fully engage in their pseudo-philosophical conversation; it is an important scene in the build-up of their characters.

FIGURE 11.3 The corridor as 'retarder' in *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994)

They are not just brutal killers after all, and they can argue their points well. But above all the long scene is building the tension towards the killing scene which is to follow. It is a form of suspense as defined by Hitchcock. We know what's going to happen, and as spectators we are almost willing them to get on with the action, which is being delayed. When they reach the right door and walk away because it's too early, the camera does not follow them but remains static as if waiting for them in front of the marked door – the rest of the conversation is shown from a distance – 'corridors are places of dangerous irresolution, and uncertain purpose […] They are vectors, hesitations, zones of passage, architectural prepositions' (Connor, 2004).

But we must briefly mention here Godard's *Alphaville* (1966), a film that features at least two seminal corridor and elevator scenes – as well as many spiral staircases, as mentioned in the previous chapter. In the opening section of the film, Lemmy Caution's (Eddie Constantine) arrival at his hotel is shot as a single unedited sequence that depicts him walking through the hotel's revolving doors, checking in, riding a glass-door elevator, followed by a backward tracking shot along the many twisting and turning corridors where Lemmy is accompanied by Natasha, the seductress, to his hotel room. No mention of foot massage, but the ancestry of the *Pulp Fiction* scene is very clear. Of relevance here is the notion of non-place – after Augé[6] – which started to be used in film theory by Wollen in particular (Wollen, 2002) and was reprised in Drake for his analysis of *Alphaville* (Godard, 1966):

> *Alphaville* is almost entirely made up of architectural non-places: the city is a patchwork of transitional zones – corridors, staircases, offices, hotel rooms – liberally interspersed with their characteristic signage – arrows, numbers, neon.

Corridors are non-places, spaces of transit. But as Wollen notes, 'Architecture in film is never just itself' (Wollen, 2002, p.199) and in both scenes – *Alphaville* and *Pulp Fiction* – the

never-ending corridors with their many twists and turns, their drab and repetitive nature, are a metaphor for the vicissitudes of the lives of Lemmy Caution and Jules and Vince. Jules and Vince are in a funnel and a tunnel; they are in it together, there is no choice, no dithering, they are killers joined at the hip on a mission. For Jules and Vince and Lemmy Caution, the corridor scene anticipates the tribulations ahead. Their troubled life is expressed by the tortuous paths of non-places, a prime example of a spatially organized narrative.

Drive (Nicolas Winding Refn, 2011) provides us with yet another level of resolution in our 'joining the dots' investigation. Three scenes in quick succession need to be briefly analyzed. All involve the same set-up, the basement car park, the lift, the corridor and the apartment doors. In scene 1, driver (Ryan Gosling) parks his car in the apartment block basement and first encounters Irene (Carey Mulligan) as she comes up the lift. The next shot is a reverse shot from driver's point of view, showing Irene walking to her car as the lift door slowly closes. This is followed by driver coming out of the lift in the corridor. He is next in his flat contemplating downtown Los Angeles from his window, in the dark. A major difference compared to the *Pulp Fiction* scene is how quickly he gets from the basement to his flat – just over 20 seconds, quite an ellipsis in time and space. His flat is reduced to a corridor – a lift – flat interior – and the car basement. The lift is the crucial link between the flat and the garage, but we never see the outside of the block of flats. It's an assembly of a kit of parts, typical of the way film-makers negotiate the passage between the city and the interiors. It is a visual shorthand for architecture in the city. Except for an unusual 'worm's-eye view' establishing shot of the building exterior, a similar assembly of shots can be seen in *Limits of Control* (Jim Jarmusch, 2009) when Lone Man (Isaach de Bankolé) first arrives at his apartment in the Torres Blancas tower, Madrid. And in this case, Jarmusch's cinematography lingers over the architectural details as he is a fan of the building – therefore Lone Man's journey to his flat takes a minute, three times longer than for driver.

In *Drive*'s second scene, Irene, carrying a laundry basket, joins driver in the lift – he asks for her floor, they exchange brief glances and smiles while the lift goes up. It cuts to the lift door opening as she comes out; he is following her in the corridor. They both open their front doors without a word and enter. The first scene established the apartment-block configuration and that Irene and driver passed each other in the basement. The second scene, lasting 40 seconds, places Irene and driver in the same lift space and establishes that they are neighbours, two doors from each other along the same corridor. In the third scene, Irene's car has broken down in the car park of the local supermarket – driver, who happens to be around, helps her. From the supermarket car park we cut to the lift and, in the next shot, Irene is opening her apartment front door, making way for driver, who carries her grocery bags. The longest part of this scene is in the lift, with her son staring at driver. In this third scene, the shorthand is getting shorter and there are fewer and fewer dots to join – the time–space ellipsis has squeezed out the basement and the corridor. The architecture gets reduced to the very minimum, simply because scenes 1 and 2 allow the viewers to orientate themselves.

But we needed this spatial and social priming to understand scene 3. Film cuts the dull bits from our environment and does without the parts that have already served their purpose – but isn't that what we ourselves do without noticing it, as we go about our everyday life? Perec taught us that the spaces of our everyday life are neither continuous nor homogeneous, and that we don't really know where and how it assembles itself, precisely because everydayness is not evidence but opacity: a form of blindness. Therefore, isn't this cinematic spatial and temporal shorthand a reflection of how we perceive our environment? Or might it be that film further influences us in this process?

The lift and the corridor carry on being crucial to the film, and key scenes take place in them. In this downtown Los Angeles apartment block they are places of encounters, some good, some bad, and with no stairs in sight, for all that passes, passes by the corridors and the lift, and all that comes, comes through the corridors and the lift. There is no escape. Connor rightly makes the point that

> It is surprising how often corridors are scenes of violence. It is very hard for makers of gangster films or thrillers to resist the temptation of shoot-outs in corridors. In how many films does the heroine flee down a corridor from her assailant, hair flying and strappy shoes clacking? How many times have we seen the shotgun barrel appear round the corner at the end of the corridor, turning it into a shooting range, turning it into the barrel of a gun?'
>
> *(Connor, 2004)*

But corridors are also 'lieux de parole et de rencontres' – they are non-places that don't belong to anybody in particular. Their semi-private, semi-public nature can be liberating and a fertile ground for communication[7] – as in the scene when Irene's husband Standard (Oscar Isaac), freshly out of prison, is able to meet driver, thanking him for having helped his wife – a potentially tense situation. Film-makers often recognize the mental ground of architectural impact more subtly than an architect (Pallasmaa, 2007, p.33), and film may help us to identify complex situations that would otherwise escape us.

But let us conclude this section with Aldo Rossi, who reflects on architecture, and corridors, as a matrix of possible scenarios for human drama:

> In the project there is a long, narrow corridor sealed off at either end by a glass door: the first opens onto a narrow street; the second, onto the lake from where the blue of the water and the sky enters the villa. Of course, whether a corridor or a room, it is inevitably a place in which someone will say sooner or later, 'Must we talk about all this?' or 'See how things have changed!' and other things that seem to be taken from some screenplay or drama. The long afternoons and the children's shouts and the time spent with the

family also are inevitable, because the architect had foreseen that the continuity of the house depended on its corridor – and not just in terms of its plan.

(Rossi, 2010, p.34)

Rossi's analysis points to an approach that exploits the potential of the corridor in our everyday life and everyday environment. He hints at a narrative expressive space approach, whereby the film (screenplay) within the architecture can articulate the spatial quality of a space, that can be rediscovered as a place as opposed to a non-place. It is an invitation to explore a matrix of situations where space becomes the receptacle of future events and experience.

An architectonic reading of Godard's apartment scene in *Le Mépris* (1966)

The second part of this chapter rounds up the architectonic of cinema through the architectural vocabulary at play in the apartment scene in Godard's *Le Mépris*. It is an opportunity to evoke other elements of architecture not mentioned in the previous chapters, namely walls, ceilings, corners and objects. The scene analysis acts as a vehicle for a summary discussion on the subject, which is by no means exhaustive. It is a way of bringing together the dialectics of the architectonic of cinema into one coherent scene, which has the length and density necessary to justify a thorough spatial examination. All the spaces and rooms in the flat are used, and there is a complete unity of time and space. The scene lasts 30 minutes, about a third of the film, and is shot in real time or near real time.

The flat scene is pivotal to the whole story in the film. It opens when Camille (Brigitte Bardot) and Paul (Michel Piccoli) enter the flat. They arrive in their apartment as a couple and leave it 'decoupled', as if the flat's front door had had some supernatural properties. Certainly the flat itself is central to their discussion; it quickly becomes a contested space. As it becomes more and more obvious to Paul that Camille may have ceased to love him, he implies that they would have to sell the flat: while he works on his script in the study, she asks 'what would you do if I stopped loving you?' Paul's answer 'I wouldn't do the script and we would sell the flat'. At this point she answers that she would prefer to keep the flat, but later on, in their last discussion in front of the window, she says 'sell the flat, see if I care'. So the flat itself as a piece of real estate is central to their argument, but Godard also uses it in a most interesting way to dramatically express the unfolding narrative.

Objects

The flat is in an unfinished state, the assumption is that they have recently moved in. As soon as they enter, Camille pauses and blurts out 'When will you call your friends about the curtains…I've just about had it', adding 'Red velvet…it's that or nothing'. This scene sums up

Camille's state of mind, she probably resents having to live with doors waiting to be hung, propped up against the walls, and light bulbs popping out of walls.

But of course the state of the flat is a reflection of the state of their relationship. Of particular interest are the objects and the furniture that are contained and dotted in space. While they are not listed as part of 'elements of architecture', objects and furniture nevertheless play a key role in our spatial perception. De Certeau et al. poignantly remarked that

> A place inhabited by the same person for a certain duration draws a portrait that resembles this person based on objects (present or absent) and the habits that they imply. The game of exclusions and preferences, the arrangement of the furniture, the choice of materials, the range of forms and colors, the light sources, the reflection of a mirror, an open book, a newspaper lying around, a racquet, ashtrays, order and disorder, visible and invisible, harmony and discord, austerity or elegance, care or negligence, the reign of convention, a few exotic touches, and even more so the manner of organizing the available space, however cramped it may be, and distributing throughout the different daily functions (meals, dressing, receiving guests, cleaning, study, leisure, rest) – all of this already composes a 'life narrative' before the master of the house has said the slightest word.
>
> *(De Certeau, 1990, p.145)*

In this case the objects and furnishing openly confess Camille and Paul's 'life narrative' in the sense that they are faithful indicators of Godard's narrative intentions. In particular the absence[8] of anything personal, expresses the lack of intimacy and stands for the hollowness of their relationship. They have made no effort to personalize the spaces apart from a full-size

FIGURE 11.4 *Le Mépris* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963): the unfinished flat

Because you're an ass.

FIGURE 11.5 The statue in *Le Mépris* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963)

statue[9] in the sitting room – the sorry witness of their first fight, she seems to hang her head in shame (see Figure 11.5). Colours are also symbolic: white walls and primary colours, blue, red and yellow, and recur throughout the film from the opening credits onwards. They spend time together on the red couch (love) and their final fight takes places on the blue chairs (discord). There is also a strange and rather incoherent mix of furniture – a designer couch and armchairs, while the dining-room table and chairs look rather anonymous. It speaks for a state of confusion. However sparse, the objects and furniture are useful pointers in the panoply of the film-maker, fully expressing the narrative stance. They fully participate in the formation of the film world and the dramatic atmosphere.

Interestingly, the flat is a real place, as opposed to a studio, in what seems to be a relatively new neighbourhood somewhere in Rome. The style is modern and points to a recent construction. It is a large flat, which consists of a long sitting room with a dining room at one end and a few steps leading to what seems to be a terrace on the other side. There is a kitchen by the dining room and a corridor leading to a study, bathroom and bedroom, conceived as a separate unit as it has its own door and small lobby. Their bedroom is off the main corridor entrance with its own separate bathroom.[10] It has the appearance of what one would call a large and comfortable place.

Walls

The first scene is a long sequence shot [1'51"] where the camera is situated by the entrance (see Figure 11.6). The camera pans and rotates, and in this first shot we get a 360-degree vision of the flat. It is a form of establishing shot. After that, viewers can orientate themselves. All the other zones, the deeper spaces, bedrooms and bathrooms, are hinted at. But crucially, what we note is that it is an architecture of walls and holes in walls. The upper horizon of the film frame

FIGURE 11.6 Doors as gaps between walls in *Le Mépris* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963)

is level with the upper part of the door frame. It shows that a door is not a door, it is a gap between two walls. The lack of a complete framing – as the upper part is cut on most doors – denies its status of what Lefebvre calls 'the door as an object' that frames itself and reverts to the status of hole in the wall.[11]

As a result, a large proportion of the image is made up of walls – and are walls important? Do we notice walls? Should we notice walls? Certainly this film sequence raises such questions. The gaps between walls become spatial discontinuities. It is the triumph of walls.

So one possibility would be to read this scene as a reflection on walls – at least we can start in this way to get a different angle on this scene. Titled *Walls Have Feelings* (2000), Katherine Shonfield's book is an obvious reference for this section, especially her excellent analysis of *Repulsion* (Polanski, 1965) and *Rosemary's Baby* (Polanski, 1968) that unusually mixes filmic considerations in parallel with extracts from building catalogues and technical specifications:

> In the course of the film [*Repulsion*], the surfaces of the flat start to crack, and can no longer hold back the outside. At its climax, the walls begin literally to smear the edge between Deneuve and themselves […] In *Repulsion*, Carol's fears are concentrated on the questionable integrity of the walls of her flat. These walls – unsponsored by either the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, or Architects – are nevertheless remarkable in that they explicitly demonstrate three types of constructional failure, attendant on contemporary changes in building practice in post-war London. Damp penetration, cracking of internal surfaces, and failure of mastic sealants all come under the microscopic eye of Carol's technical inspection.
>
> *(Shonfield, 2000, pp.55–56)*[12]

The cinematic walls in Polanski's world of the 1960s present, unusually, a menace to their occupiers. They no longer protect but aggress. There is no such threat in *Le Mépris*, no damp patches or cracks in sight. However, the walls fulfil a different narrative function that we'll interpret here through Moles's own take, which throws new light on how we might perceive the humble wall with the idea of a 'wall as condenser of distance'[13] (Moles and Rohmer, 1998, pp.58–59). In this case we should read that walls can also separate emotionally and become 'condensers of emotions'. In other words, a wall as a condenser of distance, implies that if two people are miles apart they do not hear or see each other – the same as if they are on each side of a common wall, hence the idea of 'condensing distances'. But in the case of Paul and Camille the walls and the gaps that consistently separate them, in isolated frames (Figure 11.7), have the same effect – it is as if they were miles apart, the walls having condensed their emotions towards a state of incommunicability.

As part of the state of being unfinished, the walls are also completely bare. A couple of paintings are propped on the floor, waiting to be hung. There is, however, one painting hanging on the wall behind Paul's desk, a theatrical print. We particularly notice it as the camera frames it on its own for a few seconds. It is hard to fathom what the meaning of this shot is, but certainly Perec has plenty to say on the nature of walls and their relationship to paintings:

> I put a picture up on a wall. Then I forget there is a wall. I no longer know what there is behind this wall, I no longer know there is a wall, I no longer know this wall is a wall, I no longer know what a wall is. I no longer know that in my apartment there are walls, and that if there weren't any walls, there would be no apartment.
>
> *(Perec, 2008, p.39)*[14]
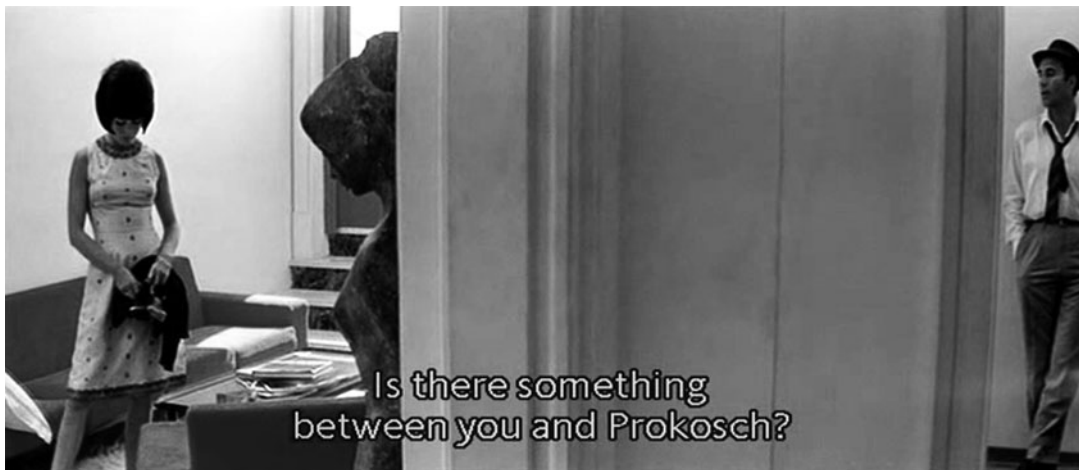
FIGURE 11.7 Walls as 'emotional condensers' in *Le Mépris* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963)

FIGURE 11.8 The door with no middle in *Le Mépris* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963)

Perhaps Godard is trying to answer Perec's plea that we shouldn't forget that there is a picture on the wall and that behind the picture there is the wall – a shot dedicated to combating our natural propensity not to notice our everyday environment.

As mentioned previously, the doors have lost their function. Not the front door and not the bathroom doors. But the others have. And yet one door is of particular interest. The door leading to the study. It is unfinished and the middle glass pane hasn't yet been mounted. As a result both Paul and Camille 'practise' that door either by turning its handle and opening it or by stepping across the missing glass portion in the middle. Their use of the door undermines its very purpose, but it also reconnects with a slapstick cinema tradition with which Godard was familiar.[15] The result is vaguely comic, but more importantly it makes us notice that particular door, questioning its function and validity.

Parts of the flat are simply not shown: parts of the kitchen, part of their bedroom. We only get a glimpse of the second bedroom when Camille skirts around the decorator's ladder, most of the second bathroom is unknown and finally Paul's study is shown only from one side. The outside world is nearly absent, or rather ignored, the windows have only one function in the film: to provide light, although we can occasionally get a glimpse of the views past the protagonists – but they have no narrative function as such. The other usual window functions, ventilation and view, are not practised, the couple having withdrawn into themselves. Ventilation is mentioned, but not shown, as Camille finds it difficult to sleep with the window open at night – she uses this as a pretext for sleeping on the sitting room couch. Paul doesn't glance once at a window (Camille briefly looks out from the sitting room window), but he does mention the outside world when he asks Camille if she has noticed the ugly building going up in front.

Corners

Ceilings are part of what has been ignored or simply not there,[16] due to the style of framing that cuts across the top of the doors. But floors are well represented throughout the scene. Apart from the kitchen and the two bathrooms that are tiled, there is a wooden parquet floor throughout the flat, with the addition of a couple of white shaggy rugs in the sitting room. But of all the spaces in a house or a flat, corners are probably the most neglected and rarely figure in films – or rather corners are always present, by default, but have no narrative function, and a chapter on the architectonic of corners would no doubt be a very slim one. We must therefore be grateful to Godard for having shot a scene where Camille takes refuge in the corner of the bathroom, sitting on the toilet and having a cigarette. Literature on corners is equally sparse,[17] except of course for Bachelard who devotes a chapter to them, stating that

> The point of departure of my reflections is the following: every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination; that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house […] that most sordid of all havens, the corner, deserves to be examined.
>
> *(Bachelard, 1994, p.136)*

Of course, what most viewers would have noticed is Camille sitting on the toilet – not so much the corner. True, toilets tend to be in corners, partly because bathrooms are small by nature. Nevertheless, this is a corner scene of some narrative significance, since Camille is getting away from Paul who has just slapped her face in the sitting room. Adding insult to injury, he quipped 'why did I marry a 28-year-old typist?' Moving to a corner of a bathroom is indeed the most intimate part of a flat or a house and, however disreputable a refuge, to paraphrase Bachelard, it deserves our attention.[18]

A corner, adds Bachelard, is 'a sort of half-box, part walls, part door […] An imaginary room rises up around our bodies, which think that they are well hidden when we take refuge in a corner'. Camille is hoping for some respite from the argument, the first of three. The narrative implication is that she probably feels cornered as 'it is not easy to efface the factors of place'. She is sitting, pensive, withdrawn into her corner, as the expression goes, and Paul appearing at the door of the bathroom and questioning her further 'why the thoughtful air?', is a clear invasion of her privacy. He is peering over the half-box wall of her corner 'construct'.

Finally, the last element of cinematic architectonic to mention is the stairs. In fact, this is the first and the last space we see in the scene, as it corresponds to entering and exiting the flat. But its reappearance in the final scene is of great dramatic importance as, following their third fight, it is on the staircase that Camille pronounces the words 'je te méprise', twice, 'I despise you'. The scene picks up on the hostility and coldness inherent to communal stairs. It is a form of

FIGURE 11.9 Inhabiting corners in *Le Mépris* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963)

FIGURE 11.10 Camille going down the staircase in *Le Mépris* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963)

abandonment and the stairs are an appropriate place for such a statement as it implies going down, running away, exiting the flat and the relationship.

This flat scene is visualizing a portion of everydayness, it is a full demonstration of how to use the space, as a near-complete panoply of activities is performed in a very short space of time. It is an ideal vehicle for studying some of the elements of architecture in a single scene – where each of them is linked to the next one, not as a single element, but as part of a continuous space where the whole amounts to contributing to the joining of the dots.

Over the course of Part 3 we have redefined the elements of architecture as an 'architectonic of cinema', not so much in terms of their physical construct but in terms of the way they are

experienced. The aim was to demonstrate that an architectonic of cinema was made up of the elements of architecture plus affect and emotions. We considered here windows, doors and stairs and evoked corridors, lift, walls, corners and objects. Clearly this is a brief and partial analysis and by no means exhaustive. Each chapter is replete with cinematic examples and for every one of those, readers could think of many more. The hope is to have proposed a novel and complementary approach to our understanding of architectural elements.

Notes

1 New York-based films in particular, as fire staircases often populate the sides of apartment block façades. Naturally cinema has occasionally exploited this dramatic potential: the practice of sleeping on fire escapes on a hot summer's night can be observed in Alfred Hitchcock's 1954 movie *Rear Window*; in *West Side Story* (Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, 1961), Tony (Richard Beymer) serenades Maria (Natalie Wood), not from a balcony, but on a New York fire escape; in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Blake Edwards, 1961), Holly (Audrey Hepburn) and Paul (George Peppard) escape from the party via the fire escape; and more recently in *Frances Ha* (Noah Baumbach, 2012), Sophie (Mickey Sumner) and Frances (Greta Gerwig) bask in the outdoor splendour of their fire escape staircase.

2 This is the often-quoted conversation on naming hamburgers in the US versus France: 'quarter pounder with cheese, the metric system and le royal with cheese'.

3 The conversation is related to one of Marcellus' acolytes who gave his wife Mia a foot massage and ended up with a speech impediment, having been thrown from the fourth floor of his apartment block. Vince and Jules ponder over Marcellus' action and the severity of the punishment in relation to the foot massage. It is intense and bordering on the metaphysical.

4 Adding, 'From the little evidence I have so far managed to glean, it makes its first recorded appearance in England at Beaufort House, Chelsea, designed around 1597 by John Thorpe. While evidently still something of a curiosity, its power was beginning to be recognised, for on the plan was written "A long Entry through all". And as an Italianate architecture became established in England so, ironically enough, did the central corridor, while at the same time staircases began to be attached to the corridors and no longer terminated in rooms'.

5 There is a good analysis of this scene in the corridor volume in *Elements of Architecture* (Koolhaas et al., 2014, pp.998–1005).

6 We know from Augé that the concept of 'non-place' designates spaces associated with transport, transit, commerce, leisure (Augé, 1995, p.94) and that they are the real measure of our time potentially quantifiable by totalling all the air, rail and motorway routes, the mobile cabins called 'means of transport' (aircraft, trains and road vehicles) (Augé, 1995, p.79). For Augé, non-places are a product of supermodernity: 'If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which, unlike Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of "places of memory", and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position' (Augé, 1995, pp.77–78).

7 During a group supervision with my Year 2 students, one of them described the potential of corridors in a student hostel situation – she talked about 'corridor-time' when they all come out of their room for a chat, sitting down in the corridor: 'it's informal…two start chatting and a third one comes and says "are we having a corridor-time?" and starts knocking on all the doors…about 12 doors…and often as many as 10 students come out'.

8 Lefebvre sees in the absence of objects an important meaning: 'If objects form a system – something we can accept in the case of functional objects, such as utensils and furniture – its meaning is to be found not in what it declares, but in what it dissimulates, which extends from the tragic to the mode of production via the malaise of daily life. The production of daily life, which is opposed to daily life as oeuvre, thus includes the production of everyday space and time, as well as the objects that fill up the everyday, the mass of objects intended to fill time and space. This mass is likewise simultaneously homogeneous and fragmented, and hierarchically organized' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.806).

9 Ancient statues are present throughout the film, as if recalling the Homeric odyssey experienced by the couple.

10 For an accurate plan of the flat, see McGrath, 2016, p.96.

11 In Lefebvre's *Production of Space*, there is a chapter on Spatial architectonics where he asks us to consider a door: 'Is it simply an aperture in the wall? No. It is framed (in the broadest sense of the term). A door without a frame would fulfill one function and one function only, that of allowing passage. And it would fulfill that function poorly, for something would be missing. Function calls for something other, something more, something better than functionality alone. Its surround makes a door into an object' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.209). Original French quote: 'voici une porte. Trou dans le mur ? Non, elle s'encadre. Sans encadrement, la porte accomplirait une fonction : permettre le passage; elle l'accomplirait mal. Il lui manquerait quelque chose. La fonction veut quelque chose d'autre, de plus, de mieux, que le fonctionnel. L'encadrement fait de la porte un objet'.

12 Shonfield adds: 'Even more insidiously than in *Repulsion*, the apparently innocent walls have swallowed up Rosemary's physical and architectural integrity. She becomes the embodiment of her own violated interior: a zone without borders. There is no longer an edge between Rosemary and her witchy neighbours, and it is only a matter of time before she fulfills her own twisted version of the Madonna role: by bearing the Devil's own son' (Shonfield, 2000, p.56).

13 'le mur est une condensation de la distance dans la mesure où la distance affaiblit, réduit, élimine, interdit, sépare. Le mur matériel, à l'abri duquel s'est formé notre moi profond, est une accumulation d'atomes lourds dans un petit espace, milieu de propagation des impulsions sensorielles […] L'atténuation des phénomènes physiques est, en d'autres termes, liée au nombre d'atomes du milieu intermédiaire : plus ceux-ci sont nombreux, plus faible est le phénomène ; plus il est « lointain » dans ses apparences de l'autre côté de la paroi ; le mur condense donc bien l'espace. La personne qui est située de l'autre côté de mon mur mitoyen est d'autant plus éloignée psychologiquement – savoir dans ses effets, et dans les témoignages de sa présence – que ce mur est plus épais, qu'il compte plus d'atomes au mètre cube'. Moles goes on to add: 'Le mur est l'expérience la plus concrète que l'homme ait de la paroi ; le mur est physiquement la synthèse des propriétés de la paroi, il en est aussi historiquement l'archétype et ce n'est qu'une réflexion fonctionnelle qui en dissocie les propriétés. Jusqu'à ce jour, la seule analyse psychologique qu'on ait faite du mur a été une psychanalyse de l'habituel : épais, lourd ou mince, humide ou chaud, opaque, pâle ou ensoleillé, le mur était un substrat de l'habitation que l'architecte dotait de perfectionnements au gré d'une technologie dévorante. Il a fallu la rigueur fonctionnaliste du Bauhaus pour saisir dans les faits, et imposer dans les réalisations, la possibilité de dissocier les fonctions du mur sous l'angle perceptif au lieu de les accepter comme un composé de propriétés solidaires, évoquées par exemple par Bachelard'.

14 Perec adds that 'The wall is no longer what delimits and defines the place where I live, that which separates it from the other places where other people live, it is nothing more than a support for the picture. But I also forget the picture, I no longer look at it, I no longer know how to look at it. I have put the picture on the wall so as to forget there was a wall, but in forgetting the wall, I forget the picture, too. There are pictures because there are walls. We have to be able to forget there are walls, and have found no better way to do that than pictures. Pictures efface walls. But walls kill pictures. So we need continually to be changing, either the wall or the picture, to be forever putting other pictures up on the walls, or else constantly moving the picture from one wall to another'.

15 See for example the flat scene in *Prénom Carmen* (Godard, 1983) where the two characters playfully hit each other with doors and window frames as a prelude to a love scene.

16 Ceilings are barely mentioned in Bachelard but mentioned in Moles as part of 'la cloture visuelle', pondering 'dans l'espace de l'appartement le problème du jeu dialectique entre le plafond comme Ersatz de ciel et le plafond comme Couverture' (Moles and Rohmer, 1998, p.73). But they are celebrated in Perec: 'I like ceilings, I like mouldings and ceiling roses. They often serve me instead of a Muse and the intricate embellishments in the plasterwork· put me readily in mind of those other labyrinths, woven from phantasms, ideas and words', adding scornfully, 'But people no longer pay any attention to ceilings. They are made dispiritingly rectilinear or, worse still, done up with so-called exposed beams' (Perec, 2008, p.18).

17 As for Perec, his own fondness for ceilings, walls, doors and stairs did not stretch to corners, except for this quote listed under Placid small thought no 1: 'Any cat-owner will rightly tell you that cats inhabit houses much better than people do. Even in the most dreadfully square spaces, they know how to find favourable corners' (Perec, 2008, p.24).

18 We shouldn't be too 'down' on corners as in everyday language they are also associated with expressions such as 'this is a nice corner of the world' which has a French equivalent 'c'est un joli coin', meaning 'this is a nice place'.

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PART 4

CINEMATIC AIDED DESIGN

12

TOWARDS A CINEMATIC APPROACH TO EVERYDAY LIFE AND ARCHITECTURE
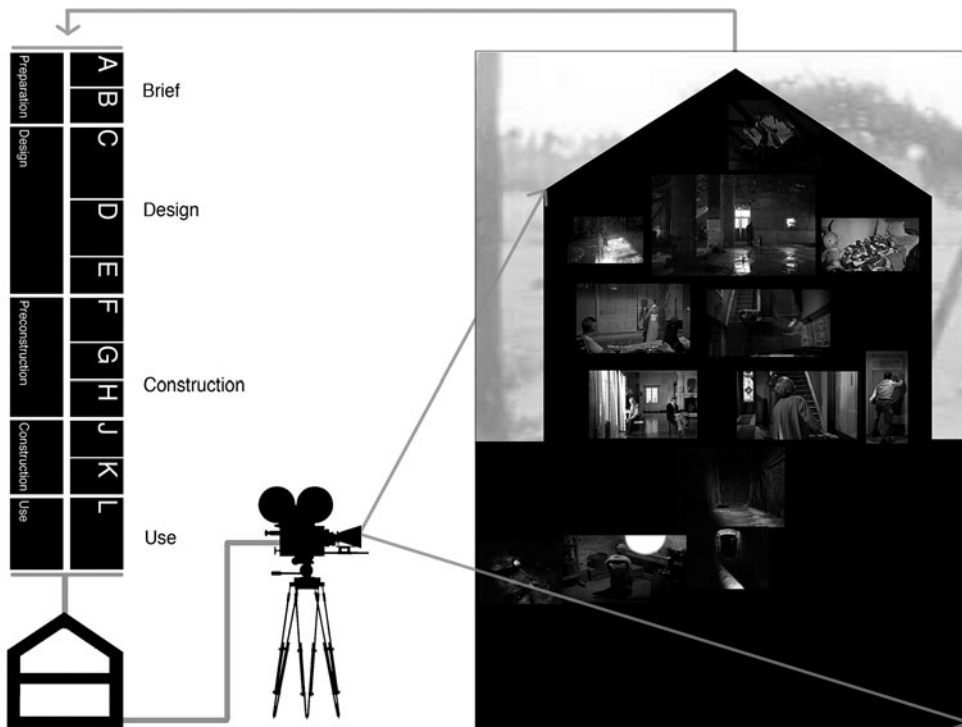
FIGURE 12.1 Closing the loop (house image by Martha Rawlinson)

The purpose of this concluding chapter is essentially to 'close the loop' opened up in the introduction (see Figure 12.1). Over decades, film-makers have used, expressed and characterized

large portions of our built environment that constitute a formidable reservoir of post-occupancy studies. I referred to it as the most comprehensive lived-in building data in existence. While we could exploit this formidable archive in several different ways, one of the most promising avenues explored here is the uncovering of everyday life and how it relates to the built environment. The process of closing the loop implies eliciting potential avenues for the post-occupancy studies of everyday life in architecture. This book has modest design-orientated goals, as I am well aware of the pitfalls associated with an instrumental approach that could only lead to tautological considerations – as noted by Keiller.[1] The aim in this last section is therefore to show potential directions for the future, as opposed to guidelines or formulae.

The term Cinematic Aided Design is of course a play on words on Computer Aided Design (CAD). It implies an alternative to the current proliferation of CAD tools available to the design profession – or rather it is an approach that would complement it and be an attempt at a genuine aid to design. More accurately, it should be construed as injecting a form of cinematic intelligence at various stages of the design process. Images of cinema have shaped our collective imagination,[2] but there have been only very timid forays in the use of what I define as cinematic aided design (see Keiller's quote). Even the ubiquitous computer animated fly-throughs have not taken advantage of the last 120 years of screen language rhetoric.[3] In my view, CAD tools have failed creative architects, because they do not incorporate new artistic thinking, rooted in scenographic and cinematic practice, into architectural design, visualization and communication. And in a small way the Cinematic Aided Design approach is an attempt to address this lack.

Architecture straddles science and the humanities, and we need to inject some cinematic intelligence into architectural digital technology thinking if we are to maintain cultural diversity, individual creativity and human-centredness. And yet despite major advances in the design of virtual environments for 3D games and cinema, led by the need for human-centred, experience-based engagement, there has been no fundamental review of the principles on which Autocad, the dominant CAD software, is based since its release decades ago.[4] Lawson, Koolhaas and others have long raised concerns,[5] while *The Architectural Review* launched a campaign, with the concept of 'Notopia', denouncing the effect of the digital world on our built environment: 'The digital world is one of sensory deprivation: there is nothing to touch, taste or smell, a realm bereft of delight and intimacy of the most human kind' (Murray, 2016a), adding that

> by the end of the century our world will consist of isolated oases of glassy monuments surrounded by a limbo of shacks and beige constructions, and we will be unable to distinguish any one global city from another […] its symptom (which one can observe without even leaving London) is that the edge of Mumbai will look like the beginning of Shenzhen, and the center of Singapore will look like downtown Dallas.
>
> *(Murray, 2016b)*

To a certain extent, cinema had anticipated this dystopic tendency; we only have to think of Tati's city in *Playtime* (1967), made of a seemingly infinite number of identical glazed urban blocks, cloned from the Esso office building erected at La Défense in 1963, itself inspired by the Lever House building by SOM (1952). And in *Her* (Spike Jonze, 2013), the city, a seamless collage of location shots from both Los Angeles and Shanghai, goes some way to affirm Murray's intuition.

However, we have to recognize that the CAD industry, BIM (Eastman, 2011) and parametricism (Schumacher, 2010), are here to stay and no doubt prosper. The thorny question of how architecture can overcome the hindrance to creative, diverse architecture represented by generic software, is somewhat linked to my own preoccupation, but I have no desire here to dwell any further on the shape of the digital future and its impact on buildings, only to note that there is much research and debate taking place, see for example: Cardoso Llach, 2015; Carpo, 2013; Spiller and Clear, 2014 to mention just a few.

My key concern remains that aspects of cinematics – centred on everyday life – can be combined with architectural culture and practice, to potentially catalyse a conceptual paradigm shift in architectural design process – or at the very least contribute to a new awareness. And to pursue this line of thinking we must turn briefly to Nicholas Negroponte, founder of the MIT media lab and one of the key pioneers of Computer Aided Design. He posits in *The Architecture Machine* (Negroponte, 1970, pp.46–47) that thanks to a simulation model

> a designer or a machine can observe the performance of an environment, a specific context. Someday, designers will be able to subject their projects to the simulations of an entire day or week or year of such events as use patterns and fast time changes in activity allocations.[6]

He further comments on a photographic record of a busy crossroads in a city: 'In this case the simulation is the real world, the best model but the most expensive. Similar displays will soon be manageable by computers' (Negroponte, 1970, p.46). Negroponte raises here a number of useful issues in relation to this chapter, and I interpret the moving-image camera as the 'machine' that can observe the performance of an everyday environment.

But the key question posed here is: in what way does a movie constitute a model of the world? Philip Steadman arrived at the same conclusion as Negroponte, by acknowledging 'the difficulty in experimenting with buildings in general […] they are too big, too expensive, and it takes too long', hence the need for simulation in order to run 'the model faster than the world' (Steadman, 1975, p.33), and proposes a very useful definition of what a model is:

> The word 'model' is used here in the broadest sense, to mean any kind of representation, image or simulacrum of some object or phenomenon. In the present context the reference

> is of course specifically to models or representations of buildings and other artefacts, and to models of the functional environments for which these buildings or designed objects are intended.
>
> *(Steadman, 1975, p.29)*[7]

Mitchell also reminds us of the history of a general systematic framework for the comparative analysis of the forms of things that goes from Aristotle to Durand and beyond (Mitchell, 1975, p.53). Ultimately, computer models have gradually replaced hand calculations and the use of physical scale models in order to compare patterns of behaviour, for example, patterns of urban activities in the context of complex spatial environments, or to simulate human behaviour or daily routines (Steadman, 2016, p.294). Generally, models try first to replicate the existing patterns of the real-life environment and – following a phase of adjustment and calibration against the existing – can start to simulate the effects of changes from the exiting pattern in the near future (Steadman, 2016, p.295). All models of that type are about predicting the future.

So when Negroponte asserts that the real world is the 'best simulation model', we can construe that films, which do portray the 'real world'[8] (especially when shot on location), are modelling the world in the sense that they are a moving-image representation or a simulacrum. But the world they represent is only real in the sense that the streets and buildings are the existing ones, but the patterns of behaviour observed would have been directed by the film-maker. The modification of typical behavioural everyday routines can be observed in film when the baseline is disturbed, as discussed in a previous chapter. Such modifications constitute a form of modelling from the existing pattern, and we can further study systematic everyday behaviour patterns, for example according to building types as discussed in Chapter 6, with a view to establishing a general framework for the sake of comparative analysis.

The idea of films as model is clearly a loose, fuzzy and informal concept, although its potential has long been recognized:

> Stories, whether told orally, presented on the stage, read in a book, or seen in a film, are also simulations: ones that run on conscious minds. They were the very first artificially created simulations, designed long before computers were invented […] All our visual experience is based on our models of the world, on simulations.
>
> *(Oatley, 2013, p.272)*

Film simulates and models everyday life worlds using spatially organized narratives. However, film does also present some unique and distinct features that are lacking in conventional models, namely the social, societal and human dimension, which is notoriously hard to compute. Sociologists such as Becker have argued that fiction films have often meant to 'analyze and comment on the societies they present, many times those in which they are made. Examples

range from Gillo Pontecorvo's pseudo-documentary *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) to classic Hollywood fare like Elia Kazan's 1947 *Gentleman's Agreement*' (Becker, 2007, p.8). And historian Mark Ferro has claimed that 'As agents and products of history, films and the world of films stand in a complex relationship with the audience, with money and with the state, and this relationship is one of the axes of its history' (Ferro, 1983, p.358).

Film not only models the deep structure of everyday life in the form of architecturally expressed narratives, but can also reveal social practices where social relations are spatially organized. It is an approach that

> entails a critical analysis of the design process to ensure that the primacy of experience is not lost to the complexities or scale of the development; to failures of communication; to the imperatives of capital development, or to the lure of geometry as an end in itself.
>
> *(Dovey, 1993, p.267)*

In other words, we should resist the temptation to rely solely on the increasing availability of building and urban computer models that remain severely limited in their ability to comprehend the experiential, the social and the emotional dimensions of the lived and practised everyday spaces.

Situations

I advocate here a human-centred approach in order to better understand the communicative nature of architecture interpreted through situations as represented in film. A cinematic approach to everyday life and architecture implies a focus on everyday environmental experiences and situations of people in the built environment. The notion of situations is therefore critical.

The previous chapters have dealt with the exploration of lived spaces – as well as elements of architecture – that constitutes a filmic description of a series of phenomena, referring to experiencing daily situations. In all of those cases, cinema takes from the building reality while at the same time transforming and reinterpreting even the most basic of architectural elements. It gives something back to the environment from which it has been taken, and questions fundamental notions that are often taken for granted. Hence the iterative loop, expressed in Figure 12.1, between the *house that cinema built* and the *house that the architect will build*. This cross-over is made possible because of the notion of lived experience and embodied cognition. Pallasmaa noted:

> Lived space is always a combination of external space and inner mental space, actuality and mental projection. In experiencing lived space, memory and dream, fear and desire,

value and meaning, fuse with the actual perception…The modes of experiencing architecture and cinema become identical in this mental space, which meanders without fixed boundaries.

(Pallasmaa, 2001)

This form of 'mental meandering' is crucial to our understanding of architectural situations elicited through film by its performative character. Vesely points out that

when we are looking at a photograph, a drawing, or a model of the same building […] we are to some extent prisoners of an abstracted and mediated view. True, we can focus differently and see things precisely, but only with the help of our imagination as the main source of concreteness and embodiment. It is only in perceptual experience that we can freely and fully observe, explore, and move around the building.

(Vesely, 2006, p.60)

That is true of photography, drawings and physical models, but cinema affords a different experience much closer to the lived space as argued by Pallasmaa:

A film is viewed with the muscles and skin as much as by the eyes. Both architecture and cinema imply a kinesthetic way of experiencing space, and images stored in our memory are embodied and haptic as much as retinal pictures […] Both art forms define frames of life situations of human interaction and horizon of understanding the world.

(Pallasmaa, 2007, p.18)

This is a commonly held phenomenological view of film that has been explored extensively – see for example: Trotter, 2008; Marks, 2000 and Sobchack, 1991 – amongst others.

Film provides us with a formidable array of interpretive human situations,[9] events and experiences of everyday life. The concept of situations is relevant here as 'We experience architecture in the form of situations […] We experience a situation as architectural by virtue of the way in which it noticeably shapes the spatial conditions of our movements and activities' (Janson and Tigges, 2014, p.284). Lefebvre also referred to situations in relation to the everyday and the theory of 'moments' as he explored the relationship between the special ('la fête') and the ordinary ('la banalité') – a concept already explored in the chapter on rhythmanalysis. However, for Lefebvre, the moment creates situations, although they do not coincide, and while he acknowledges its spatial dimension, it is essentially a temporal concept:

Like time, the moment reorganizes surrounding space: affective space – a space inhabited by symbols which have been retained and changed into adopted themes (by love, by play,

by knowledge, etc.). The space of the moment, like time, is closed off by constitutive decisions.

(Lefebvre, 2014, p.647)

In other words, moments in time create situations that get interwoven into the fabric of everyday life that change our spatial perception as our daily environment turns into an 'affective space'. But more useful here is Vesely's use of situations:

> The best place to start is in the sphere of typical situations close to everyday existence. Because we always live somewhere, the situations most familiar to us are those related to the place of our dwelling […] What gives such situations a very high degree of stability is their repetitive nature originating in the daily cycle of human life, which has its ultimate source in primary cosmic conditions and movements. It is on this level that the identity (sameness) of morning, of evening, and of the seasons is most conspicuously manifested.
>
> *(Vesely, 2006, pp.376–377)*

From Vesely's point of view, the nature of situations is associated not only with daily human activities but also with the very nature of its settings and environment.[10] However, he also warns that 'the surprising degree of integrity in the character of well-established situations, preserved under changing conditions and in different places, resists full explanation'[11] (Vesely, 2006, p.382), partly because of the difficulty that we have of being objective when we are immersed within a situation. By way of exploring the 'character of well established situations' Vesely refers to the example of the French café as follows:

> If we look closely at a concrete example – a French café, for instance – it is obvious that its essential nature is only partly revealed in its visible appearance; for the most part that essence is hidden in the field of references to the social and cultural life related to the place. Any attempt to understand its character, identity, or meaning and its spatial setting that uses conventional typologies, relying solely on appearance, is futile. Its representational, ontological structure can be grasped through a preunderstanding that is based on our familiarity with what is being studied and with the segment of world to which it belongs. Preunderstanding in this case is a layered experience of the world, acquired through our involvement in the events of everyday life. The identity of the French café is to a great extent defined by the café's institutional nature, rooted in the habits, customs, and rituals of French life. Its identity is formed in a long process during which the invisible aspects of culture and the way of life are embodied in the café's visible fabric, as if they were a language conveyed in written text. The visible 'text' of the café reveals certain common, deep characteristics, such as its location, its relation to the life

of the street, its transparency of enclosure, a certain degree of theatricality (the need both to see the life of the outside world and to be seen in it, as if the café-goer were an actor), an ambiguity of inside and outside expressed not only in the transparency of enclosure but also in the café's typical furniture, and so on. These are only some of the characteristics that contribute to the identity and meaning of the French café as a culturally distinct typical situation.

(Vesely, 2006, pp.77–79)

This is a very useful example as this is where film can, I believe, help in eliciting such deep structures involving complex social, cultural, anthropological features amongst others – yet at the same time in a very banal and ordinary setting, a place that Lefebvre construes as 'an extra-familial and extra-professional meeting place […] a place where the regulars can find a certain luxury, if only on the surface; where they can speak freely […] where they play' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.63) – a place that can be associated with 'moments' as well as everyday banality.

Pursuing the same theme, the film-maker who comes to mind to reveal the identity of the French café as practised and lived space, is Eric Rohmer (Jean-Luc Godard would also be a contender). There isn't a film by Rohmer without one or even several café scenes, apart of course from his costume films. Perhaps this is not surprising as we know that, for most of his life, Rohmer used Parisian cafés for meetings, for writing and for observing situations that would later make their way into his films (de Baecque and Herpe, 2016). Three very different scenes come to mind. In the first one, *La Femme de l'Aviateur* (1981), Anne (Marie Rivière) and a girl friend enter a café-brasserie, Le Chaillot. They want to have a quick lunch and at first have to stand as no tables are free.

This quite long scene (six minutes) is shot on location. The crowded and noisy lunchtime café-brasserie is conveyed in all its detail: the hunt for a table, the difficulty in calling the

FIGURE 12.2 Café scene in *The Aviator's Wife* (Eric Rohmer, 1981)

waitress, ordering the food, while at the same time eliciting the special intimacy that the two women enjoy despite, or rather because of, a busy café environment (translated by Rohmer's use of close-ups). The second film with several café scenes is *Les nuits de la pleine lune* (*Full Moon in Paris*, 1984). In the first scene of interest here, Octave (Fabrice Luchini) meets Louise (Pascale Ogier). They are old friends but Octave is in love with her, and throughout the film he is attempting to woo her without much success. It's a long scene, eight minutes, taking place in the afternoon, involving two characters essentially talking and flirting – but also visiting the basement bathroom and observing others around them.

The second scene shows a typical 'moment' outside their daily life, as they are both engaged in other relationships, that turns the anonymous, and almost empty, café environment into an affective and private space. The last scene captures yet another dimension; it takes place very early in the morning (it's still dark), and sees Louise entering a very small local café. She orders

FIGURE 12.3 Café scene (1) in *Full Moon in Paris* (Eric Rohmer, 1984)

FIGURE 12.4 Café scene (2) in *Full Moon in Paris* (Eric Rohmer, 1984)

a coffee and sits in a corner next to a man drawing (László Szabó). She reluctantly engages in a conversation with a stranger, as may happen in any public place, but warms to his story and his children's drawings. Again this is a long scene that speaks of the poetic of the café, the men standing at the bar, the conversation with a stranger.

Rohmer carefully exposes the strata of everyday life in a French café and allows us to experience this particular world in all its intimacy. As spectators we become involved in events and situations that would be otherwise inaccessible to us.

Atmosphere

In search of the 'Magic of the Real', Zumthor too marvels at an everyday life scene in a café: 'Café at a students' hostel, a thirties picture by Baumgartner. Men just sitting around – and they're enjoying themselves too. And I ask myself: can I achieve that as an architect – an atmosphere like that, its intensity, its mood' (Zumthor, 2006, p.19). In his quest for atmosphere, Zumthor is marvelling at a photograph, but later he also refers to film: 'A place of great learning for me in this respect is the cinema. Of course the camera team and directors assemble sequences in the same way. I try that out in my buildings' (Zumthor, 2006, p.45). Architecture generates spatial atmospheres that are linked to the notion of situations: 'An atmosphere is the expressive force through which a situation that has been engendered by architecture seizes us in affective terms all at once and as a totality' (Janson and Tigges, 2014, p.26). It is a holistic measure that is hard to define, and yet it pervades a space and is haptically perceived: 'How do people design things with such a beautiful natural presence, things that move me every single time. One word for it is atmosphere. […] the task of creating architectural atmosphere also comes down to craft and graft' (Zumthor, 2006, p.11).

Film helps us to attain something like fragments or moments of atmospheres, pertaining to everyday life situations.[12] The notion of atmosphere is 'skin deep', in the sense of tactile and haptic, which doesn't mean that it is shallow, but it is based on first impressions. The atmosphere of the situation is the tip of a very large iceberg, which lurks under the surface. Getting underneath the surface implies plunging into the political, the socio-economical, the anthropological, the historical and many more layers. The film stays at the surface, and yet it embodies some of the invisible deep strata of everyday life. It is interloping between the atmosphere and the situation.

The film-maker has constructed a world that we are invited to enter and share with other viewers in the same way we would enter a café, a home, a museum or a hospital. We can be fully immersed in its atmosphere and climate without necessarily grasping the essential nature of the situation, which is only partly revealed in its visible appearance, as argued by Vesely. But we get something extra: the affective dimension of film that often reveals hidden dimensions between the perceptual and the affect. In real life we experience space perceptually but not necessarily

emotionally. But as the story unfolds in a film, the affective dimension derives from the people, the actors, who are carefully deployed in a spatially organized fashion. And, as shown in Chapter 2, film simplifies reality through spatial and emotional characterization. In real life our minds may wander, not notice, we may dream of an elsewhere, but in film our attention is being directed. Merleau-Ponty argues that our 'perceptual field is infinite and deployed across the horizon. And whatever object one may focus on, it always stands out from the completeness of the world'[13] (Zernik, 2006, pp.104–105). But through the cinematic framing our horizon is restricted, we are made to focus on what matters to the construction of the film's world.

In particular we start to participate in the everyday life of others that so often eludes us. It ranges in scale from large scenes to smaller details, as any

> given film can bring something to our explicit attention within the framed image, and within the represented and fictional reality of a work, that would not normally be selected […] in everyday life experience or, indeed in other films. […] bubbles forming in a cup of coffee in a Parisian café (in Godard's *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*).
>
> *(Yacavone, 2015, p.177)*

Part 1 considered the various aspects of everyday life in relation to everyday environment with an emphasis on the dwelling, while Part 3 dealt specifically with a selection of the elements of architecture. But no straight transmission from film to architectural design was offered, only a series of observations on lived spaces. There are no possible literal translations; we cannot leave it to the raw filmic pictures to do the job of 'transference', as indeed 'while I am looking at an object I cannot imagine it' (Wittgenstein, 1981, p.108). We must therefore somehow evoke the power of images and bring 'the image to the very limit of what he is able to imagine' (Bachelard, 1964, p.227). We must find ways of transforming the unsolicited moving pictures into ephemeral oneiric images, we cannot simply follow what we see on the screen; that can only be a departure point. This is a complex and yet simple 'model', which opens new avenues, and one that pertains to the world of cinematic-assisted imagination. Or to put it another way, we may need to consider and 'restore the subjectivity of images and to measure their fullness, their strength and their transsubjectivity' (Bachelard, 1964, p.xix). The purpose of this book is to open new horizons, state novel problems and propose innovative conceptual tools. The consideration of what Lefebvre referred to as the 'minor magic of everyday life' will hopefully open up the path to an innovative reflection on the complexity of architecture as experience and the need for a more humanistic-based approach.

Notes

1 We have to be wary of Keiller's remark: 'Critically significant architects such as Jean Nouvel and Bernard Tschumi have produced buildings informed by their readings of cinematic space, which seem

to draw mainly on the idea of cinematic montage. In these, film space was considered as a model for architectural space, but more recently much of the discussion of film in architectural circles appears to have declined into an exploration of influences that the imageries of architecture and cinema exert on one another' (Keiller, 2013, pp.141–142).

2 Wenders rightly reminds us that 'Our contemporary life as it is would be completely different if the 20th century had happened without the cinema […] life now in the early 21st century is completely formed by the fact that the 20th century was the century of the moving image – the moving image changed our way of thinking, moving around and seeing things (Wim Wenders in Conversation on *Wings of Desire* Axiom Films DVD Bonus 2003).

3 In the high-profile digitally-animated renderings for rebuilding Ground Zero/the World Trade Center, McGrath and Gardner noted that 'The great outpouring of digitally animated renderings for the rebuilding of Ground Zero and the World Trade Center Memorial Competition showed dramatically that digital modelling and animation have entered the public sphere and imagination. In spite of the enormous expense, labour as well as technologies and talents involved, these presentations were uniformly boring and non-communicative. It is remarkable that the elaborate presentations lacked any depth of contact with either the robust history of architectural language representation techniques, or the power of moving cinematic images, the most universal of contemporary communicative languages' (McGrath and Gardner, 2007, p.8).

4 'AutoCad', first released in 1982, is still the dominant software package in architecture, engineering and construction, with an 85 per cent market share and over 8 million users worldwide: (www.wikinvest.com/stock/Autodesk (ADSK)).

5 Lawson notes that 'Increasingly, architects are using generic software that can address form only as abstract geometry' (Lawson, 2002, p.331), while Koolhaas remarks that 'Representation is more and more homogenous through the computer, which removes any part of authenticity'; […] 'if we don't do anything, we will be living in a virtual space – but built' (Koolhaas, 2008).

6 It is as if Negroponte was anticipating Deb Roy's research to come 40 years on: 'Imagine if you could record your life – everything you said, everything you did, available in a perfect memory store at your fingertips, so you could go back and find memorable moments and relive them, or sift through traces of time and discover patterns in your own life that previously had gone undiscovered. Well that's exactly the journey that my wife and collaborator Rupal and my family began five and a half years ago. It began on the day that we walked into the house with our first child, our beautiful baby boy. And we walked into a house with a very special home video recording system' (Roy, 2012).

7 Steadman added that '"Models in the material world" would thus be representations of buildings or artefacts in drawings, diagrams, photographs, in written or otherwise encoded marks on pieces of paper, or as solid material models made out of cardboard or wood; and "models in our heads" would of course be mental images or pictures of these same buildings and objects'.

8 See Chapter 2 for a discussion on film and realism.

9 Neuroscientists and psychologists have demonstrated that there was a deep cognitive engagement with film, thanks to our mirror neuron activities (Shimamura, 2013, p.20) that helps us to identify with the characters on the screen – a phenomenon often referred to as 'empathy'. Konigsberg in particular remarks that 'Most of the experiments on mirror neurons must, by necessity, require the subject to perceive the action or emotion in a picture, which is likely to produce some major distinctions from seeing an action or emotion on someone's face in actuality. Crucial differences also exist between looking at an image in a test situation and sitting in a movie theater watching the image on a large screen. And there are also the distinctions between my own emotional sensitivity and history and those of a person next to me […] part of the brain responsible for our sense of self shuts down when we are experiencing something like a film. I don't think we ever lose the sense of "me" when watching a film but our sense of self is certainly diminished and the barrier around us removed, allowing us at times an astonishing intimacy with the world and faces on the screen. Neuroscience in its study of the brain gives us insight into our most intimate moments in the theater' (Konigsberg,

2007, p.17). Phenomenology and cognitivism now share some common ground, as acknowledged by Hochberg: 'The theoretical proposal that perceptual experience be thought of as expectancies about sensorimotor contingencies, rather than as expressions of mental representations, is endorsed' (O'Regan and Noë, 2001, p.986).

10 Vesely adds that 'Practical situations are usually formed spontaneously. On the deeper level, they are shaped not only by our exploration of new situational possibilities, individual preferences, intentions, and desires but also by the given conditions of everyday life' (Vesely, 2006, p.375).

11 He continues as follows: 'The reasons for that resistance are not difficult to find, as Gadamer points out: "The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it. We are always within the situation, and to throw light on it is a task that is never entirely completed. This is true also of the situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition that we are trying to understand"' (Vesely, 2006, p.382).

12 For an analysis of Zumthor's notion of atmosphere applied to film, I have attempted to apply his criteria to Deray's *La Piscine* (1969) – see Penz, 2014.

13 My translation from the French: 'Pour Merleau-Ponty, le champ perceptif est infini, car il s'inscrit sur fond de déploiement d'un horizon. Quel que soit l'objet que je fixe, c'est toujours sur la complétude du monde qu'il se détache'.

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