“In Works of Hands or of the Wits of Men”:
The Elegies of Wim Wenders, Laurie Anderson and Alexander Sokurov

by

Morteza Dehghani

A thesis

presented to the University of Waterloo

in fulfillment of the

thesis requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2019

Examining Committee Membership

The following served on the Examining Committee for this thesis. The decision of the Examining Committee is by majority vote.

External Examiner	Angelica Fenner Associate Professor
Supervisors	Alice Kuzniar Professor
	Kevin McGuirk Associate Professor
Internal Members	David-Antoine Williams Associate Professor
	Ken Hirschkop Associate Professor
Internal-external Member	Élise Lepage Associate Professor

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This dissertation explores the concept of loss and the possibility of consolation in Wim Wenders's *The Salt of the Earth*, Laurie Anderson's *Heart of a Dog* and Alexander Sokurov's *Oriental Elegy* through a method that inter-reads the films with poetic elegies. Schiller's classic German elegy "*Der Spaziergang*" ("The Walk") and Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies* have been used in examining *The Salt of the Earth* and a late Hölderlin poem "*In lieblicher Bläue*" ("In Lovely Blue") is utilised in perusing *Oriental Elegy*. In *Heart of a Dog*, Rilke's "*Schwarze Katze*" ("Black Cat") and Derek Walcott's "Oddjob, a Bull Terrier," among others, shed light on the working of the elegiac. I have put these films in a conversation with poems to investigate how a filmic elegy can be informed by poetic elegies and how the two arts operate similarly while they are governed by varied sets of rules. While most studies on loss are informed by psychoanalytical theories, I have focused on the formal ways in which these films portray loss and consolation, using one art, poetry, as a guiding framework to illuminate the other art, film. I propose that in *The Salt of the Earth*, the movement of the elegiac benefits from Deleuzian montage as the film strides towards solace manifested in resuscitation of Amazonian forests and the art of photography. The technical montage and the thematic elegiac converge. *Heart of a Dog*, however, bases such a motion of elegy on the Buddhist concept of *Bardo,* where the narrator "decreates" and then *re-creates* her self through the remedy of love. Finally, *Oriental Elegy* operates within an apophatic discourse, proposing metaphor and poetic thinking as potential yet transitory sources of consolation. While these films grieve different object of loss, ranging from humans, animals, lands, and even abstract, philosophical concepts such as the meaning of life and happiness,

and whereas they introduce various remedies such as art, love, and metaphor, they function similarly formalistically. Taking its cue from Diana Fuss who revisits Freudian melancholia and benefitting from the idea that correlates loss and creativity or "figuration" as observed in Julia Kristeva and Peter Sacks, this dissertation shows how the grieving subjects are positioned in an in-between status which allows them to move forward in the face of loss. This in-betweenness, I have proposed, is manifested in an elliptical structure in the films. In their passage from sorrow, the bemoaning subjects resort to small sources of solace, loci amoeni, signified by different formal and technical elements in the films. Once analysed cinematically and placed in a dialogue with poetic elegies, the Epilogue brings all the films in one place, examining them in relation to Robert Hass's poem "Meditation at Lagunitas." Inter-reading the films with this poetic elegy reveals that the musing speaker in the poem and the narrators in the films face loss similarly. What defines loss is the distance between the subjects and their loved lost ones or things, a lacuna that cannot be filled and, hence, the bewailing subjects resort to a kataphatic expression, to naming, which is repetitive, open-ended, and *elliptical*.

Acknowledgements

I'm thankful to everyone who has supported me over the course of my PhD studies and during the writing of this dissertation. I would especially like to thank my supervisors Dr. Kevin McGuirk and Prof. Alice Kuzniar for their mentorship, guidance and support, for reading each chapter and giving me ample constructive feedback, and for helping me become a better writer along the way. It would have been impossible for me to overcome the challenges of this project without untiring help from them. Thank you, Alice, for the great opportunity of TAship in "Global Cinema," thanks for introducing German Romanticism, which started with an RAship from you, and for *Heart of a Dog* that I happily ended up working on in this study. Kevin, thanks for guiding me to Robert Hass. It was a pleasant surprise to see myself working on him in this project. And a further thank you for all the conversation about literature and arts and life, Kevin and Alice.

I'm very grateful to Dr. Angelica Fenner of the University of Toronto German Studies Department and Cinema Studies Institute who kindly agreed to be on my committee as the external examiner, for her generous comments on this dissertation and for all her suggestions. I should also like to extend a sincere thanks to Dr. Élise Lepage of the French Studies Department who joined my committee as the internal/external member.

I would also like to thank the members of my committee Dr. David-Antoine Williams and Dr. Ken Hirschkop for reading the dissertation and giving me feedback. Additional thanks go to Dr. Williams for supervising me in a directed reading course -- a wonderful experience -- and to Dr. Hirschkop who, along with Dr. Williams, supported my application to the PhD program during his term as Graduate Chair.

Special thanks also go the English Department, which offered me generous funding, a wonderful experience of teaching, an environment for intellectual growth and for encouraging my creative work right from the beginning. Chairs of English Department, Profs. Fraser Easton, Kate Lawson and Shelley Hulan have been especially instrumental and I thank them warmly. I'm also grateful to Graduate Chairs of English, Profs Randy Harris, and Marcel O'Gorman and Dr. Amie Morrison who helped us throughout this journey step by step. In addition, I should like to thank English Department's Drs. Frankie Condon and Heather Smyth for their support in the course of my studies.

I'm indebted to my previous committee, Drs. David-Antoine Williams, Tristanne Connolly and Sarah Tolmie who advised me during the process of proposal-writing and I thank them sincerely here. Dr. Connolly, I learned a lot from you and appreciate your conversation about poetry.

In addition to the Department of English, University of Waterloo Department of Drama and Speech Communication has been generously offering me one teaching position per year in the last three years, making it possible for me to register as a full-time student. I would like to thank Drs. Shannon Hartling, Tim Paci and Vershawn Young and Speech Communication program administrator Sylvia Hannigan.

My thanks also go to University of Waterloo Department of Fine Arts and particularly to Prof. Joan Coutu for the great opportunity of assistantship in her Art History course and to Jean Stevenson for purchasing the films that I needed for this project. A thank you is also due to the Centre for Teaching Excellence for their efforts to help me become a

better teacher, and in particular to Dr. Stephanie White whose words of wisdom helped me focus better on the writing process at emotionally hard times.

In addition, I'd like to extend a warm thank you to the English Department administrative staff Fiona McAllister, Margaret Ulbrick, and Maha Eid and special thanks to our graduate coordinator Tina Davidson for all her instructions during the days leading up to the defence.

I made many friends during these years at the University of Waterloo. I take this opportunity to remember and thank them for their friendship: Jessica Van de Kemp, Scott Giannakopoulos, Omid Ardakanian, Abbas Mehrabian, Marzieh Riahi, Keivan Bakhoda, Ebrahim Moradi, Milad Soroush and many others. Thank you Milad, for all the poems we read, and for sometimes-heated discussions, sometimes-light conversations about philosophy, film and life; thanks for being a true friend at challenging times, and for encouraging me during writing; I'm grateful to you for all your help.

And what can I say but words of love to my family who have unconditionally supported me at different stages of my life and studies, at home and away from it. As I'm writing these lines, a stream of memories is flooding in, of the times when, forced from home by war, my sister, Niloofar, taught me the first lessons in English through stories, my elder sister, Nahid, gave me further motivation and encouragement, and my eldest brother, Habib, made my entire education possible when mom was an amazing, self-sacrificing, angelic, only parent.

Dedication

To my family

With love

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

Prologue

In *The English Elegy*, American poet-critic Peter Sacks connects the genre of elegy back to its ancient origins, to myths, and explicates concepts of mourning and consolation in mythological stories such as Theocritus's "First Idyll." He even goes back to songs by Thyrsis before examining a long list of elegies written in English throughout different eras. Sacks keenly observes that elegies are "re-enactments of an entry into a preexisting language and code" (23). This connection means a merging of myths into poetry and points, more specifically, to creation of a new form in light of an old, mother form. Sacks unequivocally affirms that "elegists seem to submit, by quotation or translation, to the somehow echoing language of dead poets" (25). We know that, historically, the elegy has undergone transformations. According to Sacks "the elegy, a poem of mourning and consolation, has its roots in a dense matrix of rites and ceremonies," driving "from the Greek elegiac verses, traditionally accompanied by the flute." Therefore, Sacks is speaking of mutation at the heart of the elegy.

In *A Little Book on Form*, another American poet-critic, Robert Hass, addresses the question of elegy by "tracking Peter Sacks's reading of the poems in *The English Elegy*" (303). Hass affirms such transformations in both the form and subject matter of the elegy, writing that the form "was originally associated with the elegiac couplet, one line of hexameter and one of a pentameter, and the term passed into Latin meaning any poem using the elegiac distich." Hass, then states, "Donne's erotic poems in couplets are 'elegies'", adding "Hölderlin's "Bread and Wine" to the list of elegies, and continuing to name Spenser and Milton as belonging to the tradition of pastoral lament and indeed the start of the English elegy (296). In *The Classical*

German Elegy, Theodore Ziolkowski presents Schiller's "*Der Spaziergang*" ("The Walk") as a precursor of what he calls "classical German elegy." This poem, in which the speaker goes on a "meditative mountain-climbing," serves as a model for "German writers from Goethe, Hölderlin, and Platen down to Rilke, Trakl, and Bobrowski" (x).

The elegy has become manifest in different mediums and genres. For example, William Empson speaks of varied types of pastoral in his book *Some Versions of Pastoral*. Other critics and thinkers draw attention to the availability of the elegy in prose. For instance, John B. Vickery investigates the elegy in fiction in *Prose Elegy: An Exploration of Modern American and British Fiction*. The emergence of newer arts, such as photography, places the critics in a relationship with a different set of questions about the elegy, one which is visual. Josh Ellenbogen specifically addresses such a relationship in "On Photographic Elegy," in which he connects photography and death both historically and formalistically.

Subsequent to the invention of photography, the elegy found its way into the new way of artistic expression, cinema. Diana Fuss, one of the critics used throughout this dissertation, affirms, in her meditation on loss, that elegy is "a vital form in aesthetic transformation" (*Dying Modern* 3). With the creation of different arts, the new forms can be built on older ones. Photography and then fiction and nonfiction film express the concept of loss, benefitting from discussions that have long dominated poetry about loss. Some of these discussions include the relationship between the subject and object of loss, the possibility of consolation, and the presence of the absent loved one in the poem.

Taking its cue from such critics as Sacks and Fuss, this dissertation holds, as starting points, that, first, elegy has undergone changes and can transpire in different modes of artistic expression, and, second, one art can be read through the premises of another. In other words,

following the logic of transformation identified by Fuss and Sacks, photography and film can be explored in the light of poetic elegy, poems of mourning, consolation, and desire for the loved lost one.

This study explores the concepts of loss and the possibility of consolation in three films: *The Salt of the Earth* by the German auteur, Wim Wenders; *Heart of a Dog* by the American artist-storyteller, Laurie Anderson; and *Oriental Elegy* by the Russian filmmaker, Alexander Sokurov. The compound "elegiac cinema" points to two different art forms: to elegy, as a poetic, and then cinema, as a visual, medium. Another premise of this research is that while elegiac film is defined by the unique features of the film form -- camera movement, shot angle, sound, editing, etc. -- it is also informed by the older genre, the elegy. Carrying the word *elegy* at its heart, the elegiac film, as a rather new medium of visual expression, can be a perpetuation of the Western elegiac tradition, borrowing from "dead poets," as suggested by Fuss, and displaying elements of the mother art. As much as elegiac poetry and the myths of lament and mourning are connected, as shown by Sacks, contemporary elegiac film is informed by the older elegiac poetry.

Accordingly, I read the three elegiac films through conventions which have dominated the literature on poetic elegies but at the same time remain faithful to the unique features of the filmic medium. Attempts have been made to connect the "poetic," for all the ambiguity and imprecision of the word, and the nonfiction or documentary film in what has come to be known as "the poetic mode," theorized by film theorist and historian Bill Nichols. This is a mode of nonfiction film which seems to have very little connection with actual verse. Similarly, in "poetic" fiction films, little or no reference is made to poems. Instead, efforts to draw a link between poetry and film are mostly limited to films by independent filmmakers such as Joseph

Cornell, Lawrence Jordan, Stan Brakhage, Nathaniel Dorsky, and Jerome Hiler. Critics have explored these filmmakers in relation to the poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca, Robert Duncan, Gertrude Stein, John Ashberry, respectively. The connection between these filmmakers and poets is made, most notably, by the film critic P. Adams Sitney in *The Cinema of Poetry*. I will touch on some of these studies below, focusing mainly on two central figures who have coupled the poetic with the filmic: Sitney and Nichols.

What might explain the particular link between elegy as a poetic form and films, both fiction and nonfiction, about loss? It is in fact surprising why critics and film theorists writing on loss and mourning in cinema have turned a blind eye to the existence of the ancient art of poetic elegy, overlooking the abundance of elegies and the elegiac literature, and making little use of the elegy in interpreting films on mourning. Much of the literature on filmic elegy is disconnected from elements of the elegy. Instead, the available probes into the elegiac film mostly draw on psychoanalytic theories by the towering figures of Freud and Lacan, and do not engage elegy as a poetic form. There seems to be no appetite for such a connection, perhaps, because of the different coordinates that these two different art forms create and the different tenets they are governed by. As the great Russian filmmaker, Andrei Tarkovsky states in *Sculpting in Time, Reflections on the Cinema*, "every art form … is born and lives according to its particular laws" (60).[1]

This dissertation analyses film cinematically, benefitting from the discussions of the elegy. How can poetic elegies inform film? How, in analysing the film, can one cross-refer to

[1] Tarkovsky sees the similarity between literature and cinema as "the unique freedom enjoyed by practitioners in both fields to take what they want of what if offered by the real world, and to arrange it in sequence," adding, "this definition may appear too wide and general, but it seems to me to take in all that cinema and literature have in common." Tarkovsky then says, "beyond it lies irreconcilable differences, stemming from the essential disparity between word and screened image; for the basic difference is that literature uses words to describe the world, whereas film does not have to use words: it manifests itself to us directly (60-62).

elegies to enrich readings of the filmic medium? My conviction throughout this research has been that we can gain a fresh outlook about the workings of elegiac films, about the features and elements that dominate them, by inter-reading the films with poetic elegies. We know, for example, that some of the structures of "the lament entered drama" (Sacks 35).[2] This migration of trope from one art to another leads to cross-fertilization of forms and these old and defining elements have found their way through the film art, too.

In order to know what special features the elegiac films of this dissertation benefit from, I need to situate the films within both elegiac films and poetic elegy. Some of the questions which may be asked include: What is the elegiac film? What are the implications of reading an elegiac film in terms of an elegiac poem? Does or, indeed can, such a film act like a poetic elegy? Can elegy be visual? How does a visual form like film depict loss? What kind of affinity do these two different art forms, one verbal, one visual, have? In other words, can analysing a film about loss in the light of the discussions which have dominated poetic elegies be helpful? Is such a cross-referring fruitful? Do these two forms of elegy, that is, poetic and filmic, have a bearing on each other? What are the elements of elegy that can be traced in nonfiction film? How can film qua film, represent loss and consolation while it benefits from a poetic form? In what ways can the technical elements of the film, such techniques as camera movement, types of shots, music, colour, the verbal aspects, cinematography, among many others, heighten the elegiac elements? In what ways is the "poetic mode" of documentary introduced by Bill Nichols, different from the *elegiac mode* that I am trying to investigate?

Although not all these questions are addressed in this work, they certainly have been instrumental in my analysis of the films. This dissertation answers to some of these questions

[2] This trope is called Kommos "defined by Aristotle as a 'tragic lament in dialogue form between chorus and actors'" (Sacks 35).

through a detailed analysis of all the three films which are first examined cinematically and then read in the light of poetic elegies. In what follows in this introductory chapter, I will first discuss elegy as a poetic form, providing a brief account of the literature on loss and mourning. I will then proceed to the wider discussion of the different kinds of intersection between poetry and film and will then narrow down to the studies on poetic nonfiction film before focusing on elegiac nonfiction film that this dissertation is set to explore. After these sections, that is, discussion of elegy/mourning/loss and intersection of poetry with film, I will present my method, setting my thoughts against the available literature on both poetic elegy and elegiac film in order to examine elegiac films. Subsequently, I will lay out my methods of analysing the films, discussing my findings thereafter. However, perhaps before addressing how I am going to embark upon reading the films within an elegiac framework, it is useful to speak briefly about the approaches and theories that inform my method in examining these films from an elegiac perspective. Let me turn my attention to the first part of this compound, the elegiac film, and discuss elements of elegy for a moment. In other words, let's situate the work within the elegiac.

Elegy, Mourning and Melancholia

The elegy has not been exempt from formalistic upheavals and has, since its genesis, undergone transformations. An ancient form, the elegy portrays loss and consolation, however meandering its path has been throughout history. William Watkin points out such mutations in his book, *On Mourning: Theories of Loss in Modern Literature*, writing that the genre of elegy "moves over several thousand years from vegetation rites, through pastoral poetry, to pastoral poetry about loss, eventually ending up in the modern, post-Christian form," adding that the genre "shift[s] from pastoral to elegiac conventions" (68). Watkin, touching on Sacks, draws attention to "a

generic hybrid," suggesting that, in the genre, the pastoral and the elegiac have been amalgamated. Such a combination is what informs my work, as I have drawn on both the elegiac and conventions that govern the pastoral.

In the twentieth century, and with a resurgence of poetry about loss, elegies have been written in which no one is dead and no one thing or person is mourned. There is a different kind of grief in these elegies, one which is existential, addressing the question of man's existence in this world. The gloomy mood of the poems is a defining element of the elegiac. To this category belongs Wallace Stevens's poems and T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land." Whether mourning the death of loved ones, humans, animals or things, or whether grieving Man existentially, much of the discussion surrounding the elegy is on concepts of mourning and consolation, its avowal or disavowal. Many of the works written on the genre deal with whether or not elegy can be compensatory. Peter Sacks's book *The English Elegy* belongs to this group.

In addition, a good amount of elegiac literature addresses the ethics of mourning. Novelist-critic Clifton Spargo's work *The Ethics of Mourning: Grief and Responsibility in Elegiac Literature* is one such book. Spargo writes from a perspective which sees "ethical meaning to the elegy's resistances to elegiac convention, to social commemoration, and even to the mourner's own wishfulness" (13), believing in an "incomplete mourning," and holding that ethical mourning is one which "supposes an imaginative protection of the other who has already been lost." He argues at the same time that such a "protectiveness" is not possible. He, however, strongly supports "literature's fundamental capacity to include and advance ethical inquiry" (13). Diana Fuss, whose meditation on elegy I have found very inspiring, also reflects on the ethics of mourning, but I only utilise some of her theories and not those on ethics. Fuss's effort to transcend Freud's well-known mourning/melancholia dichotomy has been a guiding point for

me. Of course, my intention is not to say the Freudian distinction is or is not correct. However, I find the binary interpretively limiting and not relevant to my study of elegiac film as the films studied here do not show a clear-cut difference between the two concepts. Freud's terms and Fuss's revisiting them need to be addressed here.

I focus on Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" first. Freud writes, "mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (243). Freud moves on to enumerate "painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings" as features of both mourning and melancholia. He makes a distinction between the two, however, by arguing that melancholia is a reaction to "the loss of a loved object," adding "one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost." In melancholia, Freud clarifies further, the subject of loss "knows whom he has lost but not what he has lost in him" (245). Freud quintessentially makes a distinction between "mourning" and melancholia," arguing that while in the former "there is nothing about loss that is unconscious," in the latter the object-loss "is withdrawn from consciousness." In addition, whereas for the mourning subject "it is the world which has become poor and empty," for the melancholic "it is the ego itself." Mourning, Freud says, "overcomes the loss of the object," in a process that is gradual (255). In the words of Eng and Kazanjian, commenting on Freud's essay, the mourner "is able to declare the object dead and to move on to invent new objects" (3). In melancholia, Freud writes, "the relation to the object is no simple one … due to ambivalence" that exits between the subject and the object. Abraham and Torok, discussed below, interpret ambivalence in the melancholic, writing that "melancholia hovers between love and hate amid archaic unconscious representations that are unable to reach consciousness" (135).

This means that one difference between these two words, according to Freud, lies in whether or not one can express, utter or represent the lost object. In their commentary on Freud, Eng and Kazanjian note, melancholia is a "confrontation with loss through adamant refusal of closure" and "an enduring devotion on the part of the ego to the lost object" (3). This means, according to Eng and Kazanjian, that melancholia "results from the inability to resolve the grief and ambivalence precipitated by the loss of the loved object, place, or ideal." These scholars add that, "unlike mourning, in which the past is declared resolved, finished and dead, in melancholia the past remains steadfastly alive in the present" (3-4).

In the twentieth century, debates over loss and mourning are immensely influenced and informed by Freud's work and the study of elegy took a new turn after Freud. In the words of Ramazani, Freud's essay

> is the basis of most subsequent clinical and theoretical approaches to grief: psychoanalysts as varied as Karl Abraham, Melanie Klein, John Bowlby, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva have reinterpreted and reinvented its ideas, and literary critics and theorists have extended its terms into discussions of everything from literature of the Holocaust and AIDS to such genres as tragedy, elegy, and the novel. (28)

Julia Kristeva, Nicolas Abraham, and Mária Torok among psychoanalysts, and Jahan Ramazani and Peter Sacks, among critics, are some of the most notable examples. It seems these thinkers have resided in my mind, but transpired in different ways and translated into a different vocabulary in this dissertation. Let me briefly talk about some of these key figures.

Julia Kristeva's *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia,* is a leading work on the literature of loss, its disavowal and the possibility of consolation. Deeply drawn on Lacan and Freud, Kristeva's main preoccupation is to examine the ways in which grief, and more specifically "depression," is communicated through and in language and arts. In a chapter entitled "Beauty: The Depressive Other Realm," Kristeva connects aesthetics and loss. In the beginning of this chapter, Kristeva speaks of "naming suffering," and "exalting it" as "a way to curb mourning" (97). These words are important as I will refer to naming the objects of loss, later in my analysis, as a way to bring the deceased back to life, and thereby make a passage from mourning. Kristeva's effort to link mourning and beauty is well articulated when she says "that which *no longer* is," that is, the object of loss, allows the subject of loss to "remake nothingness." This "nothingness," the lost or absent thing or person, is brought back to life "within the unchanging harmony, here and now and forever." This "unchanging harmony" refers to an artifice, a work of art, or beauty, which, according to Kristeva, "replaces the ephemeral." The process of transforming the "depressive void" into "a sublime meaning" or "hypersign" is referred to as "sublimation" (99). In other words, a *replacement* takes place within the process of sublimation. In this way, Kristeva connects loss to creativity, refusing to see melancholia as "pathological," as Freud does. If for Freud melancholia is a destructive force, in Kristeva it is a creative one. This connection between mourning and art precipitated my thoughts about substitution. Engaged in a conversation with Kristeva as I was watching the films of this dissertation, I wondered if "the work of hand or of the wits of man," to quote from John Donne's "A Funeral Elegy," that is, art, photography, resuscitation of lost forests, abstract concepts such as love and metaphor-- the offered remedies in the films of this study-- could substitute for the lost object or person and, thereby console.

In *The Shell and the Kernel*, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok dissect the working of mourning and melancholia using their groundbreaking theory of "introjection" in a conversation with other major psychoanalysts of the field, mainly Freud. For Abraham and Torok, "introjection" is similar to Freud's idea of "the releasing of pent-up emotions," as Nicholas Rand says in the introduction to the book. Rand also likens introjection to Freud's "work of mourning," that is, "the gradual acceptance of loss and the withdrawal of the survivor's libidinal attachments from the lost object-of-love" (8). Rand's summary of Abraham and Torok's thoughts is very helpful and I cite him in some detail here. He writes:

> Introjection is the process of psychic nourishment, growth, and assimilation, encompassing our capacity to create through work, play, fantasy, thought, imagination, and language… . At the same time, introjection represents our ability to survive shock, trauma, or loss; it is the psychic process that allows human beings to continue to live harmoniously in spite of instability, devastation, war, and upheaval. In short, introjection coincides with life as it advances through an infinity of forms. (14)

These words about creating through "play, thought, imagination, and language," echo Kristeva's connection of loss and beauty. They are, at the same time, strategies for coping with loss, as the mourning subject is nourished and grows through them. Abraham and Torok trace introjection to "infancy." This is a time "when the mouth's emptiness is experienced alongside the mother's simultaneous presence. The emptiness is first experienced in the form of cries and sobs, delayed fullness, then as calling, ways of requesting presence, as language" (127). The authors add immediately that "the transition from a mouth filled with a breast to a mouth filled with words

occurs by virtue of the intervening experience of the empty mouth." These words indicate that emptiness and the void experienced by the infant are compensated by a resort to "sobs and cries," and then to "words." Abraham and Torok unequivocally assert such a connection, stating: "The absence of object and the empty mouth are transformed into words."

These psychoanalysts also speak of "remedy": "the wants of the original oral vacancy are remedied by being turned into a verbal relationship with the speaking community at large" (128), continuing, "language acts and makes up for absence by representing, by *giving figurative shape* to presence." Abraham and Torok's emphasis on how absence leads to representation and figural language resembles Kristeva's underscoring the connection between loss and sublimation. Abraham and Torok directly engage with Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" in their work. They are "struck," as they say, with "the recurrent image of an open wound" (135), a wound that the melancholic subject attempts to hide. This concealment of the wound of the loss, this refusal to represent it in language, is what distinguishes melancholia.

Jahan Ramazani's *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney*, drawing on Freud, gives a rather thorough account of poetic elegies written in English in the twentieth century. Ramazani observes that the elegy has been an experiment in transition, much like Sacks and Watkin: "modern poets reanimate the elegy not by slavishly adopting its conventions; instead, they violate its norms and transgress its limits… at times appropriating and resisting the traditional psychology, structure and imagery of the genre" (1). He believes that modern elegists were "anti-elegiac," "anti-consolatory and anti-encomiastic, anti-Romantic and anti-Victorian, anti-conventional and sometimes even anti-literary" (2). Ramazani uses a Freudian vocabulary, distinguishing between melancholia "that is unresolved, violent and ambivalent" (4), and "normative" mourning, holding that modern elegists tend to not submit to

redemption of loss but to "immersion" in loss. He adds, modern elegists do not resurrect "the dead in some substitute," but "practice losing farther, losing faster," borrowing the oft-quoted line from Elizabeth Bishop. Ramazani adds that "the modern elegy is not so much a suture as 'an open wound'" (4).

In my analysis, I have taken a rather different perspective, which allows me to oscillate between these two extremes of mourning and melancholia and indeed go beyond these two ends of the spectrum. I do not believe in the open wound. Each wound may be sutured but only partially, needing another "suture." Such a repetition creates an effect, which I have referred to as *ellipticity*, that can be seen in all the films dissected here. This elliptical process places the subjects of loss in an in-between status, between multiple yet small and brief moments of consolation which I have referred to as a *locus amoenus*, a visual arts term which means a pleasant spot. It is such an in-between state that allows for revisiting the mourning and melancholia binary.

Now let me focus on Fuss and her work, *Dying Modern*, in which she, too, seems to be revisiting Freud's Mourning/Melancholia distinction. Seeing elegy as "a vital form in aesthetic transformation" (3), Fuss writes that critics "tend to read modern elegy as a poetics of melancholia, a despondent and dispirited body of verse that refuses all forms of substitution, transcendence, or redemption," adding that such an "argument carries considerable moral weight" at a time when death has become ever more dehumanized …, compensations like nature, religion, and even art come up short" (4). Fuss, however, continues "even with the most despairing of modern elegies, we are never, in truth, entirely 'beyond consolation'" (4-5). "Beyond consolation," is, at the same time, a response to Ziegler's book *Beyond Consolation* in which Ziegler writes on elegies about the loss of AIDS and breast cancer victims. Fuss believes

that by writing elegy, the subject of mourning invests in "reparation, resuscitation, and reclamation," believing that writing elegy is ethical. She comments on what she means by "ethical": "in a very real sense ethics is elegy: speaking, acting, and surviving in the face of loss, no matter how irretrievable those losses may be" (7). Such an ethical outlook allows Fuss to go beyond mourning and melancholia distinction, for although she believes that there can be no consolation, she nonetheless deems it ethical to write. Fuss asks, "what, after all, could be more consoling than the knowledge that there can be no consolation?" and then continues, "melancholia has become the new consolation, relieving elegists of the burden of finding and providing emotional compensation, either for themselves or for their audience" (5). This way of looking at melancholia acknowledges the difficulty of finding solace in art and writing but clings to it nevertheless, and refuses to regard it an illness. In fact, melancholia becomes a mourning with the knowledge that consolation is not exactly possible. If there is any consolation, it is that the deceased is given a voice in poetry and is brought back to life in the poem. If the lost ones can't be brought back to life, they can at least be given a voice in elegy: "Even when elegy's rhetorical arts of resuscitation fail to console, as they often do, poetry is no less worthy, or less ethical, for the endeavor" (7). This refusal to read melancholia as an illness is in the spirit of Alice Kuzniar who treats melancholia not as a mental disease or disorder. Kuzniar believes that "to speak in terms of a redemption of loss through representation is to invoke a different tradition of melancholia in juxtaposition to the Freudian one that robs the depressed patient of consciousness of her loss and the ability to voice it" (11). These remarks by both Fuss and Kuzniar suggest their efforts to go beyond Freud and see melancholia in a different way. In Freud, the melancholic is not capable of voice, while in both Kuzniar and Fuss the melancholic is.

The effort to transcend this binary can also be observed in the work of Spargo on ethics, discussed briefly above. However, it's important to note from the outset, that this dissertation, while attempting to go beyond the oft-mentioned distinction, is not about how disparate losses should or should not be mourned or if they should be grieved differently. In the words of Lambert, discussing the pastoral elegy in *Placing Sorrow*, "a lament for a shepherd will not sound just like a lament for a king or one for an intimate friend; and neither of these last two will sound quite like one composed for a poetic mentor, who is at once both friend and father to the elegist" (xiii). This research is not on ethics, or on mourning and melancholia, or the way varied losses may or may not be lamented in different ways or varied intensities. It is rather, and specifically, on the ways in which film can be elegiac and how the literature used for a long time in poetic elegies can also be used in the analysis of filmic elegies. This dissertation is, in addition, about the structure of elegy and its workings, as it appears in films.

The preceding paragraphs mainly discussed elegy as a poetic form, giving an account of the literature on loss. However, my work is on filmic elegy. The use of two central terms in this compound *filmic elegy* or *elegiac film* demands situating this research within both elegy, as a poetic form, and film, as a visual art. Certainly any medium requires paying attention to the special structures that rule that medium. I have treated my elegies as films about loss. I am aware of the distinct characteristics of the film art and, hence, I have attempted a detailed analysis of films in the main chapters. In fact, one of the main premises of this research is to say how, despite being a new and different medium with its own distinct features, the elegiac film is informed by the older form.

With the emergence of new forms at the turn of the 20th century, and then the subsequent advent of the motion pictures, as I briefly argued in the prologue, the fusion of these new forms

and old ones is not a surprise. Let me for a moment give a brief account of how poetry and film have been in a conversation since the invention of motion pictures in order to locate the work within its filmic landscape, and portray a picture of the kind of affinity elegy has with film. But before I rush into this coupling, I need to highlight the ways in which film and poetry in general have interacted in the work of filmmakers and film critics. I'll then narrow down to the kinship between the nonfiction film and elegy before laying out a map of my method and the prism through which I have treated my filmic analysis.

Film, Poetry and the Poetic

Many attempts have been made to consider these two art forms together. However, within this broad field of study, few have brought nonfiction film and poetry together to investigate how they have informed each other and thereby open up new horizons in the artistic production of both genres. Of course, these endeavors have approached the intersection of these media differently. Some try to explore the multiple ways in which cinema has been influenced by poetry and some, conversely, explore how poets have been informed by the film art or by certain individual films. In addition, there have been trends to wed these in a sub-genre called poetry film and film poetry.

What is the meaning of "poetic" in cinema? In *Adventures of Perception*, Scott MacDonald touches on this complex debate and states, "the meaning of 'poetic' … refers neither to the act of writing poetry nor to particular poetic texts but to a human sensibility that can take a wide variety of forms" (105). The prominent Spanish filmmaker Buñuel, MacDonald says, attempted a definition of "poetic film," while delivering his much-cited talk, "Cinema as an

Instrument for Poetry," in Mexico in 1958. He defines "poetic" in cinema as "artistic expression or more concretely cinema as an instrument of poetry, with all that this later word holds of a sense of liberation, subversion of reality, a passage into the marvelous world of the subconscious, and the nonconformity to the restrictive society that surrounds us" (MacDonald 106). Even for Buñuel who is usually considered to be one of the poets of cinema, "poetic" has little to do with poetry.

MacDonald writes that during the development of the avant-garde cinema in the 1920s, Germaine Dulac, Man Ray, and Salvador Dali made films which were seen as a medium for artistic experimentation, incorporating Dadaism and Surrealism, into cinematic form. These filmmakers sought to find whatever artistic means they could in their experimentation and poetry, arguably the oldest art, was given a special place. For example, *Manhatta* (1921), jointly directed by photographer Paul Strand and painter Charles Sheeler, was a combination of text and image, using Walt Whitman's poetry.

In the 1940s, the use of poetic images with sound tracks included readings of poems -- a sort of precursor to a genre which has come to be known as "film poetry," according to MacDonald. In the 1950s, the symposium "Poetry and the Film" was organized by Cinema 16, a New-York based film association, based on the idea that, as MacDonald remarks, "poetry and avant-garde were closely related" (107). At a notable event in 1953, Dylan Thomas, Maya Deren, Arthur Miller, Willard Maas, discussed the relationship between cinema and poetry. In the 1960s and 1970s, the idea of filmmaker as poet was less of an issue than it was in the earlier decades. The most important figure in this period, as pointed out by MacDonald, was Jonas Mekas who continued to include "poetry in his films, in the form of intertitles and spoken in voice-over" (110).

P. Adams Sitney is among the few scholars who have conjoined poetry and film. In almost all his books, he attempts to wed the two forms. Sometimes he inter-reads[3] films with poetry, using the latter to illuminate the former. Stan Brakhage, who called his own films poetic does not cite poems in any conspicuous way. Although a visual rendering of poems is one of the most interesting novelties which Brakhage brought into his art, his *oeuvre* is devoid of actual poems. Despite this lack of poems in Brakhage's work, Sitney attempts to read the filmmaker's art in the light of poetry. Sitney, as an eminent film scholar, needs special attention in this introduction as my method is similarly heuristic. However, while Sitney rarely uses actual lines from poems, I have attempted to use elegies whenever possible to analyse the films. In other words, whereas Sitney mostly focuses on critical literature about poetry and on the poets' visions as delineated in their prose, I have employed actual poetry to speak about film.

In *Eyes Upside Down*, Sitney explores the genealogy of American avant garde cinema and connects it back to Emerson, saying "American artists -- poets, composers, painters, filmmakers -- have largely perpetuated Emerson's transformation of the homiletic tradition in their polemical position papers" (3). In this book, he devotes one complete chapter to the ways in which Brakhage's autobiographical films, as a "cinematic sequence," can be compared with and indeed act like "the major poetic sequences or minor epics produced by Americans in the twentieth century in similar organic patterns," mentioning Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Crane's *The Bridge*, Pound's *The Cantos* and Williams's *Patterson* as examples (82), although Sitney does not cite actual lines from these poems.

In the same book, Sitney, in addition, focuses on Brakhage's "Meditative Cinema," discussing the filmmaker and Gertrude Stein and Walt Whitman together, quoting the filmmaker as writing: "I have made my 'Visions in Meditations' an homage to Gertrude Stein's whole

[3] I first came across this word in Jahan Ramazani's *Poetry of Mourning*.

meditative oeuvre epitomized by her Stanzas in Meditation" (330). Sitney attempts to indicate how poetry can inform the film in different ways, ranging from the use of metaphor to a photographic adaptation of a poem, and even the fragmentary use of verse in a film. In one seemingly far-fetched comparison, Sitney discusses the ways in which Brakhage's autobiographical *Sincerity/Duplicity* series is consistent with Charles Olson's "poetics in which the triad 'Topos/Tropes/Typos' constitutes the generative matrix of poetry" (77).[4] Sitney observes that *The Book of Family* as part of the series "would find its 'topos' in Lump Gulch (Rollinsville, Colorado), as *The Maximus Poems* do in Gloucester, Massachusetts. However, such a connection remains a bit vague in Sitney as he does not compare actual verse with single films or parts of a film. Let's see other ways in which this scholar reads film and poetry together and interconnects them.

Sitney refers to Tarkovsky's film, *The Mirror*, in which poetry by the filmmaker's father is used as parts of the film's script and we hear the poet's voice in the film. He argues that Brakhage's first part of the *Visions in Meditations* "shares several loci" with Walt Whitman's poem "Proto-Leaf" -- the sea, Canadian woods, and Niagara Falls -- all "commonplaces of the North American sublime" (335). But does *Visions in Meditation* incorporate any poems? While the answer is no, Sitney, constantly quotes from the poetry and also from prose of both Stein and Whitman in order to comment on the filmmaker's deeply meditative and experimental style as if experimentation with the filmic art can be demystified through the poetic art.

Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde similarly makes a connection between British Romantic poetry and particular filmmakers such as Brakhage, Maya Deren, Sidney

[4] In "Visual strategies and the mapping of space in Charles Olson's poetry" Christian Moraru writes, "Olson's 'field composition' is a continuous celebration of this textual trinity. It integrates, as we shall see in the following, poetic topography (spatial imagination, the theme of space), poetic typography (formal, typographic strategies of suggesting space) and the figuration of space at the level of tropes (especially metaphors and symbols)" (255).

Peterson, Kenneth Anger, and Gregory Markopoulos, by "virtue of their creation of expansive, imaginative visions of the place of poetry and the poet, in this case the filmmaker-poet, within modern society" (108). In a chapter called "The Lyrical Film," he specifically connects Brakhage's film *Anticipation of the Night* to English Romanticism and especially to Wordsworth's insights. Sitney finally decides that "in his aesthetics Brakhage has arrived and revised the Romantic dialectics of sight and imagination which had been refocused in American Abstract Expressionistic painting and American poetry (particularly in the work of Wallace Stevens) during the film-maker's intellectual formation" (166). In these two books, Sitney uses poetry on rare occasions and mostly relies on the prose by poets and filmmakers to highlight similarities.

In *The Cinema of Poetry*, maybe his most widely read book, Sitney specifically theorizes a kind of filmic perusal which is based on a cross-referencing to and inter-reading with either poems, when possible, or poetics. In the introduction to *The Cinema of Poetry* -- the title is taken from an article by the Italian filmmaker and theorist Pier Paolo Pasolini[5] -- Sitney states "my work has always been centered on the interpretation of specific films and texts" (5), adding, elsewhere, that "I repeatedly isolated cinematic rhetoric -- shot-counter-shot, camera movements, superimpositions, etc. -- as the key to the filmmaker's style and its evolution" (257). In this work, on a few occasions, he brings single films and different poems together to say how a filmmaker might have been informed by a poem in making a film. For example, he gives an account of the films by the avant garde filmmaker, Gregory Markopoulos, connecting his films with the work of Goethe, Schiller and Hölderlin. Sitney states that in David Constantine's *Hölderlin*, Markopoulos "disregard[s] context to read himself in to the text" (245), adding,

[5] "The Cinema of Poetry" by Pier Paolo Pasolini in *Movies and Methods* edited by Bill Nichols, University of California Press, 1976. 542-558. Pasolini first presented this text in the first New Cinema Festival at Pesaro.

"Markopoulos saw his own cinematic practices anticipated in Hölderlin's poetic strategies." He points to the editing process of Markopoulos's *Eniaiaos* -- a silent film of 80 hours and 22 cycles-- drawing an analogy between Hölderlin's poetic practices and Markopoulos's editing style. Sitney quotes the filmmaker as writing, "For it was Hölderlin's practice … not to erase but rather to leave first versions and their expansions or replacements standing as long as possible" (245).

While still on the subject of Markopoulos, Sitney speaks in great detail about Hölderlin, not tangentially, as one might expect since the focus is film, but in great depth. However, and surprisingly, the scholar does not refer to Hölderlin's actual poems or to scenes from the *Eniaiaos* or any other film. He attempts to explore the ways in which the filmmaker's and Hölderlin's practices and their outlook are similar. It is important to note here that, although my method is like Sitney's -- heuristic and exploratory and guided by the analysis of filmic techniques -- I have used, unlike Sitney, verse or poetic elegies in my analysis whenever they can help me explore the films from an elegiac perspective.

Sitney is not the only person who, in the last few decades, has attempted to join together the two arts. Poet-critic Susan McCabe's method has similarities. However, she reads poetry in terms of cinema and her approach allows her to close-read films or parts of them and lines from poems. In *Cinematic Modernism*, she explores "direct historical links between modern poetry and film where and when they can be established" (3). Although her focus is on poetry, her interrogative approach, like the method deployed by Sitney, allows her to look "where and when" connections can be made between the two arts, that is, the relationship between them is explored heuristically. In the following chapters my method allows me to do just the same; however, I have attempted to delimit the scope to poems which are considered elegies by critics.

McCabe explores the ways in which modern poetry, like film, can be "fragmented," looking for "dissociated corporeality, most notable the hysteric and mechanical body" (4), characteristic of modern films which she discovers in modernist poems. The following chapters, notwithstanding their subject matter which is about mourning and loss, does not show a tendency towards fragmentation, that is, the chapters are not concerned with fragmentation.

McCabe also examines "the more literal collaborations" between filmmakers and poets in the first three decades of the twentieth century, for example, between poet Robert Desnos who inspired "Man Ray's *L'Etoile de Mer*" (8). She explores how poets were informed and inspired by the filmic medium and tried to "write cinematically" (13), believing that H. D., W. C. Williams, Marianne Moore, and Gertrude Stein were "shaped by cinema" and "represent a 'tradition' of openness to cinematic possibilities for enacting new forms of embodiment" (17). We also read in McCabe's book that W. C. Williams "would see in the medium a match for his own anti-narrative impulse to break with 'banality of sequence' and 'the paralyzing vulgarity of logic'" (9). I choose to reverse the phrase "open to cinematic possibilities" in poetry to *poetic possibilities* which can be observed in film in my following chapters.

Stephanie Sandler, similarly, studies poetry and film together[6] in her article "On Grief and Reason, On Poetry and Film: Elena Shvarts, Joseph Brodsky, Andrei Tarkovsky," where elegies of Brodsky and Shvarts are studied in the light of Tarkovsky's *The Mirror*. Although Sandler's essay bears resemblances to my work in that she talks about poetic elegies and film, her method is in fact the opposite. In the introduction of her essay, she writes that *The Mirror* "provides an apt counterweight to the discussion of these two poetic examples."[7] She turns to

[6] Sandler uses the word "converge," saying "Poems and films converge, in fact, in surprising ways" (649).
[7] Sandler advances her arguments through a close reading of Shvarts's "A Minor Ode on Happiness," and "Smoky Stars," and Brodsky's "August Rain," and "In Memoriam." Sandler points to Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Mirror*, which includes four poems by the filmmaker's father Arseny Tarkovsky.

film, in her words, "both for its own representation of grief, and for its ability to clarify how poems work through the losses and gains of grief" (648). Such a use of the filmic medium to shed light on the poetic form is the converse of what I seek to do in this research. I employ poetic elegies to enrich my analysis of the films. Of course, Sandler's method is fruitful in other ways. She further elaborates on "juxtaposing poetry to film," asserting, "I believe that poetry is done no favors by always viewing it in isolation from other art forms. She then adds "we will benefit greatly if we allow ourselves the luxury of other contexts," emphasising again that she creates "cinematic context for reading poetry" (649). I would likewise believe that analysis of the elegiac film by deploying the elegiac poems augments the depth of analysis.[8]

Famous for being the poet of cinema, the Russian auteur, Andrei Tarkovsky, employs poetry in his cinematic work and speaks about it in his prose, although he clearly admits, as a filmmaker, he is "chary of making comparisons with other art forms" (67). In his precious

---

Sandler, in the beginning of this essay, mentions a "Lacanian approach to loss," and how "theorists of mental process" and "identity formation," try to "bind loss to psychic development and in artistic texts dependent on language" (647). My understanding is that Sandler's discussion of loss is Kristevean, as Sandler speaks about how mourning in poems leads to an "act" of "self-creation." She refers to Richard Stamelman's discussion of elegiac poetry: '"we try to overcome loss by naming it … we invent objects, icons, talismans, memories, and phantasms to mediate the loss. … That lost object or being … becomes part of the of the lack that loss establishes; it is swallowed up by the 'hole in the real,' as Jacques Lacan calls it, the gaping void, which death, exile, and loss create'" (664). "Naming," of course, has been discussed by Peter Sacks, Derrida, Diana Fuss, and Robert Hass, scholars that I discuss in the following chapters.

Sandler cites Paul de Man's essay "Autobiography as De-facement," speaking of how poetry "completes the act of 'self-restoration'" that de Man "would teach us to expect from an 'autobiographical moment'" (661). Her arguments in her essay revolve around this "'self-restoration'" of the self that she refers to as "self-creation." I have used a similar word *re-creation of the self* in the chapter on *Heart of a Dog*; however, I have been inspired by Simone Weil's mystical notion of "decreation." While Sandler's use of the word "self-creation" seems to have informed by de Man's "de-facement," my reference to re-creation of the self is informed by Weil's "decreation," which allows me to discuss the Buddhist concept of "*Bardo*" in which the self takes a new form. In fact, *Bardo* allows, first, "decreation," and then *re-creation* of the self.

[8] I disagree with Sandler's conviction that poetry will be "done no favors" if we read it in isolation. While I agree with her in that cross-reading arts and creating a conversation between them is beneficial, I also believe in the purity of forms and reading poetry qua poetry, as it has been studied for many centuries, is in itself rewarding and enriching.

Sculpting in Time, his reflections on the cinema, Tarkovsky addresses the intersection between the two arts, writing, "poetic cinema as a rule gives birth to symbols, allegories and other such figures – that is, to things that have nothing to do with the imagery natural to cinema" (66). Tarkovsky makes repeated references to actual verse and especially to Japanese haikus in this book, arguing how poetry and cinema share similarities. For example, he quotes a few haikus by Bashō one of which is: "The old pond was still / A frog jumped in the water / And a splash was heard" (106). Tarkovsky states this is an example of "how simply and accurately life is observed" (107), adding these "three lines of observation," resemble cinema in the way "observation" as "the first principle of the image" takes a central place in this art. At the same time, Tarkovsky repeatedly alludes to poetry especially by his poet father while reflecting on his own films, *Stalker* and *Mirror*.

As much as the four great modern poets' work, as explored by McCabe, can be analysed in a discourse that engages cinema, but not particular scenes or shots from cinema, nonfiction films about loss, can be put in a conversation with poetic elegies. Similarly, if Sitney can incorporate prose about poetry and, to a lesser degree, specific poems in his analytic system, I take up the task of using poetic elegies in perusing elegiac nonfiction films. By the same token, if in the work of Markopoulos, perceptions can be compared with Hölderlin's, that is, the poet's visions can be decoded in the filmmaker's practices and thoughts, and if Brakhage in his commitment to the filmic adopts poetry and adapts it to suit his purpose, then elements guiding the poetic elegy can serve to illuminate films about loss and mourning.[9]

[9] Among other scholars who have explored the affinity between poetry and film, one can mention Sarah Keller "'As Regarding Rhythm': Rhythm in Modern Poetry and Cinema" and *We Saw the Light; Conversations between New American Cinema and Poetry* by Daniel Kane.

Nonfiction Film and Poetry

The work of the American film theorist and historian Bill Nichols represents the most notable study to conjoin poetry and documentary film. In the art of documentary, there is a poetic mode, which includes films about loss. That is, elegiac films have been explored under the umbrella category "poetic mode." In *Introduction to Documentary,* Nichols describes a "poetic mode" in cinema as emphasising "visual associations, tonal or rhythmic qualities, descriptive passages, and formal organization" (33). Arising "largely from the cross-fertilization between cinema and the various modernist avant-gardes of the twentieth century" (88), this "poetic experimentation" points to poetic modalities where "comments hint and suggest rather than declare or explain" (48). Nichols argues that these documentaries "resemble fragments of the world poetically" with their chief characteristics being "lack of specificity" and the fact that they are "too abstract" (138).

"The poetic mode" begins in tandem with modernism as a way of representing reality as a series of fragments, subjective impressions, incoherent acts, and loose associations, concepts that McCabe considers central to the study of poetic as well as cinematic modernism. Nichols, in addition, writes, "breaking up time and space into multiple perspectives, denying coherence to personalities vulnerable to eruptions from the unconscious and refusing to provide solutions to insurmountable problems" are some of the features of the poetic documentary (103). Elsewhere in this book, Nichols maintains that all facets of the poetic mode emphasise the ways in which "the filmmaker's voice gives fragments of the historical world a formal, aesthetic integrity peculiar to the film itself" (105).

In a similar method, Susanna Helke, in "Vérité in the Eastern European Tradition," points to "philosophical lyricism" as a defining feature of poetic documentary, believing that "the

primary concern of cinema of poetry is not to tell a story based on a plot structure but to create a fabric of visions and observations" (247). Nichols also argues that "stress on fragmentation and ambiguity remains a prominent feature in many poetic documentaries" (104). These words on fragmentation echo Susan McCabe's words about the connection between modern poetry and modern cinema.

Examples of early films which are given the adjective "poetic" include Joris Ivens's *Rain* (1929) and Laszlo Moholy Nagy's *Lightplay: Black, White, Grey* (1926). These films are silent, not using any words, but they are in agreement with Nichols's definition of the poetic mode in their "poetic experimentation," in reflecting the "fragments of the world poetically," in lacking "specificity," and in being "too abstract" (138). Examples from "poetic mode," seem to be "breaking up time and space into multiple perspectives," which Nichols adds as a feature of this mode (103). None of the examples of the mode presented by Nichols uses poetry in them. Scott MacDonald critiques Nichols's description of the "Poetic Mode," saying "poetic documentary is a slippery term that is often used more broadly to other kinds of film" (*Adventures of Perception* 105).

While I have certainly been inspired and informed by the works of these critics and artists in their efforts to bring together poetry and the film art, my objective is different in a few ways. First, I have used poetic elegies in order to analyse elegiac films. Secondly, I endeavor to explore the ways in which elements of the old form can be seen in the new art. While Sitney draws mostly on the prose written by poets, conjoining the poets and filmmakers in their overarching perspectives, and sometimes in the way a filmmaker has been directly influenced by a poet, my work specifically focuses on individual poems, inter-reading films with poetry, when possible, or on a few occasions, reading the film in relation to elegies. In other words, the problematic here in

this dissertation is not influence, of one over the other, but rather it is about conjoining, about inter-reading and about perusing one, in terms of conventions of the other, here film in terms of elegy, in order to enrich my analysis of the film.

In addition, while the afore-mentioned critics do not give a complete analysis of films they mention in their explorations, I analyse the three films thoroughly using cinematic terms, and examining the movement of elegy from loss to consolation. A focus on loss and delimiting my work to individual films, as well as single poetic elegies, allows me to remain committed to the cinematic medium while making numerous references to the poetic form. Moreover, while most of the work on such a bringing together leads to a fragmented methodology, which is of course heuristic, and by all means fruitful, my dissertation is attempting to demonstrate how films about loss can share similar features. These common characteristics, put together, can place the films under the same category called the *elegiac film*. They include: first, continued process of consolation, an ellipticity in the process of solace which is resulted from the repetition of loss, which places the loss subject in an in-between position, second, a search for a small locus amoenus which can be portrayed in the form of a resort to naming or *kataphasis*, after loss and, third, the impossibility of filling the gap or distance between the subject and the lost object.[10]

For the purpose of this research I would like to focus on the path less traveled; that is, how nonfiction cinema can be read in the light of poetry in an exploratory fashion. *The Salt of the Earth* is read along with Schiller's "The Walk" and "Eighth Elegy" in Rilke's *Duino Elegies*. *Oriental Elegy* is analysed in relation to Hölderlin's "In Lovely Blue," and in *Heart of a Dog*, Derek Walcott's poem "Oddjob, a Bull Terrier" follows a perusal of the film, serving as a

[10] I deploy the word *kataphasis*, which resembles Kristeva's "naming," to emphasise the formal, and rhetorical thrust of this dissertation.

recapitulation of the workings of the elegiac in this film. I have also used other poems by the filmmaker and "Black Cat" by Rilke in my reading of *Heart of a Dog.*

The link between film art and poetry has been drawn by these scholars and critics. The most famous of these studies are Adam Sitney and Bill Nichols, the former on poetry and film and the latter on poetry and nonfiction film. In the preceding paragraphs, I tried to discuss briefly the different ways poetry and film, then poetry and nonfiction film, have been studied together by filmmakers and critics to indicate, first, the ways in which my approach here on the elegiac film is different from theirs, and secondly, how my elegiac films are structurally different from "the poetic mode," theorised by Nichols.

Elegiac Films

In delineating my method in this research, I should indicate my awareness of the importance of all the thinkers I have studied, especially Freud and Kristeva whose footprints are visible throughout the literature on mourning and loss. Indeed, what I argue can be traced back to these psychoanalysts, but I make my arguments with a different terminology. For example, I take my cue from Freud in his inclusive view of loss: he speaks of a loss of "a loved person," "some abstraction," "liberty," even "an ideal" and "one's country." Diana Fuss speaks of a similar notion when she, in defining the genre of elegy, writes: "In the dance of eros and thanatos that defines the genre from its inception, elegiac utterances were provoked by the loss of what one desired and the desire of what one lost" (6). According to Fuss, "elegies were always about more than the death of a person." Based on such an inclusive view of loss, I have selected three films, each of which portrays a different kind of lament. *The Salt of the Earth*, I argue, depicts loss of land, and persons who are both known and anonymous to the narrator. *Heart of a Dog* focuses

mainly on the loss of the narrator's rat terrier and her husband and, along the way, it also laments the death of the narrator's mother and a friend. The main source of grief in *Oriental Elegy* seems to be the gap between the film's subject and answers to the questions about the meaning of life and happiness that elude him.

At the same time, all three films tend to display the loss of certain meanings and all of them, in an intricate matrix of relationships, bring together all the losses they mourn. They take on more than the particular lost objects, considering larger problems and losses. For example, *The Salt of the Earth*, laments the discontinuity between man and nature while mourning the lost objects. *Heart of a Dog* shows a similar grief over the complete disconnection between the human and animal realms. The choice of different films portraying various objects of grief ranging from humans to animal beings, to abstract ideas and forests are based on this inclusive understanding of loss, which goes back to the beginnings of the genre and continues to the present times. I have benefitted from Freud and Sacks in such an inclusive perspective of loss. I have also profited from Kristeva's thought that melancholia drives creativity and artistic representation. In all the three films, the subjects of mourning engage in meaning-making and creation as a response to their experiences of loss.[11] In the study of elegy and loss, my

[11] Reading these words in Freud, "a loved person," "some abstraction," "one's country," "liberty," and even "an ideal" in the context of mourning and melancholia made me start thinking about the ways in which different objects are mourned. I wanted to know in what ways a film about loss portrays these different objects of loss. After spending some time on picking and choosing, I eventually decided on three elegiac films in which different objects of loss are portrayed. One of the films, *The Salt of the Earth*, is about farms and forests, one the one hand, and loss of persons, on the other. The second film, *Heart of a Dog*, depicts the loss of a dog and, along the way, some abstract ideas about our kinship with animals and how such an affinity seems to be ignored. But, at the same time, this film also attempts to remind us of how animals are stripped of their gaze, which I discuss as another loss. The third film, *Oriental Elegy*, shows how Man seems to be incapable of acquiring a knowledge about the meaning of life and happiness. This evasion of meanings constitutes another loss, "an abstraction." How do the films, I asked, portray these different losses and, what common features do the films have if that they are about loss in some ways. Another question that occurred to me was whether in an analytic work on elegiac films, one can speak with a different terminology than that offered by Freud, Kristeva, and Abraham and Torok. I also wanted to know if, these films, carrying the word *elegiac* in them had anything to do with elegy. Are they

understanding and perusal of the films is, however, more in line with the readings of Sacks and Fuss who have studied the poetry of mourning from a more formalist perspective, relying less, very little indeed, on giant thinkers like Freud and Kristeva and following a close reading methodology.

I follow Fuss, discussed earlier, who believes in some sort of solace, although my proposed consolation puts the mourner in a special place. I refer to this place as *in-betweenness*. Any analysis of film should look at formal, structural elements, trying to indicate how *techne* in the film engages with and heightens meaning. For example, in *The Salt of the Earth*, I show that Deleuze's notion of montage can be used to illuminate a wholeness, an interconnectedness observed in the film. Montage in Deleuze is achieved through the movement of different filmic elements and the unity these elements effect. What distinguishes Deleuze's montage is how even light and colour are seen as constituents of movement. These elements are pieced together in a way that shows the disparate objects of loss eventually converge, or meet at a particular point. The movement of the elegiac from mourning, to disavowal and then to an elliptical consolation is achieved by montage.

In *Heart of a Dog*, the Buddhist concept of *Bardo* is the macro structure of the film and the elegiac takes place within this scaffolding. The film acts like a metaphorical bardo in which the subject of mourning enters to effectively come out as a new subject. As in the Buddhist *Bardo*, the dead are given a new form by erasing their past one, here in the entire film, the narrator engages in re-writing her past. Anderson's elegy is her bardo.

---

elegiac simply, I asked, because they have a sorrowful tone? I realized that a film about loss, rightly called elegiac, can be related to the ancient genre of poetic elegy and I thought these films, as they are elegies, could be studied and scrutinised with the same critical vocabulary with which poetic elegy has been studied.

Finally, in *Oriental Elegy*, an apophatic discourse has been deployed which is in line with the ineffability of the film's questions. Apophasis is a Greek term which means denial but was used by theologians as a rhetorical device to speak about the inexpressibility of God and transcendence. I have employed the term to speak about the difficulty the subject of *Oriental Elegy* faces in finding the meaning of life, happiness, and the reasons behind sorrow in poetry.

One notable scholar who has specifically addressed the question of the elegy in film is Paul Coates who, in "Moving Pictures at the Edge of Stasis: Elegy and the Elegiac in Film," observes that there are "very few films classifiable generically as elegies" (587). While I agree with this observation, I disagree with the reasons for his proposition. He states that "whereas most films are narrative, elegy is not a narrative form," adding also that "the meditativeness of ... elegiac moments dampens the congenital filmic immediacy" (588). This "immediacy," he comments, refers to "the suspenseful action that has been central to so much cinema." Of course, elegy can be observed in narrative elegiac films and all three films in this work follow a narrative line which, however hard it is to observe in the first watching or even in the second, can eventually be elicited. The elegiac in the nonfiction film can be a narrative. It is true that "meditativeness" of elegies can lessen such elements as suspense which can be created by flashbacks and flashforwards that the audience is not aware of, but there seems to be no formulaic correlation between this lack of "filmic immediacy" and generic definition of elegy.

Coates moves on to propose that "elegy disrupts the forward impulsion of suspenseful narrative." However true that the subject of mourning in films "is turned backwards," as Coates rightly observes, all the subjects in the films analysed here stand in-between past grief and future prospects, between lamenting and consolation. This in-between propels the narrative forward. Elegy "disrupts the forward impulsion of suspenseful narrative," but it also leads to a propulsion

of the narrative line in the process of consolation. I challenge Coates's "particular attention to films whose relationship to temporal succession is a disturbed one" (589).

Coates analyses a few films about the horrors of the world wars including Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985), and Alan Renais's earlier *Night and Fog* (1955), focusing on the concept of silence. He writes, Shoah "is replete with lengthy silences in which the camera circles the green, overgrown sites of the camps, as if silence were the only possible response to the horror of such eyewitness accounts as that of Filip Muller" (594). While silence is inevitable in the face of mourning, it eventually, in a conversation with different elements in the film, leads to a consolation in a continued process. Coates's words about the disturbance of "temporal succession," recall McCabe's words about fragmentation in modern film and cinema and echo Nichols's defining features of "the poetic mode." None of the films that I have perused here follow a merely fragmented pattern. On the contrary, they move towards an interconnectedness of elements -- as opposed to fragmentation of elements -- that coincides and heightens the sense of solace, however brief that remedy might be. This unity also makes clear narrative lines. These few points, presented by Coates, as defining features of the elegiac in the film are exactly what I seek to argue against in the films under study in this dissertation. Of course, many of the films which are famous for being elegiac can follow the pattern suggested by Coates, most remarkably, *Shoah* and *Night and Fog*. Indeed, filmmakers and film criticism about loss usually believe these films are made in a fragmentary way.

While critics and scholars seem to think that poetic film has little to do with poetry and the elegiac film little to do with the elegy as a poetic form, I have attempted to argue that elegiac film is especially close to the poetic traditions of elegy. What I will do is show how these films are similar in form and content to poetic elegies. I will read the films through the premises that

have long been discussed in contexts pertaining to poetic elegies only. And what are these defining elements? Elegy, a lyrical form about a loss, is also about the presence of the deceased, the absent ones in the poem. This simultaneous "affirmation and negation," to use a binary proposed by Watkin (54), the main subject of discussions of elegy, leads the question of whether or not elegy can console. Elegy, by definition, places the mourning subject between the past, indicating the absent one, and the future, a tendency to move on and make a passage from mourning. Studying these elements in film can provide a different, novel way of reading elegiac films which are mostly studied within Nichols's "poetic mode," a mode that has little to do with poetry. This is a form that focuses on abstraction and free association, creating the elegiac through fragmentation of images, not using poetic elegies.

The three films selected from three different filmmakers represent disparate geographies and varied kinds of loss. Wim Wenders's *The Salt of the Earth* is about loss of people. At the same time, this film also laments the disappearance of huge swathes of Amazonian forests which were once home to the subject's childhood dreams. By contrast, Laurie Anderson's *Heart of a Dog*, is mainly about the subject's canine companion, the narrator's rat terrier and also her husband, the renowned American singer Lou Reed. In a completely different atmosphere, Alexander Sokurov's *Oriental Elegy* grieves the loss of fleeting time and the evasion of meanings from human grasp. At the same time, these films, in their multidimensionality, also exhibit other types of loss which are more abstract. For example, when Anderson mourns the death of her canine companion, she also meditates on the concept of animal gaze and the gap between humans and animals. Similarly, Wim Wenders speaks of the suffering that man and animals and plants share on this planet, lamenting a discontinuity between man and nature. In both of these films, the discontinuity between humans and the environment is emphasised.

Oriental Elegy, however, broaches philosophical and abstract concepts such as "the meaning of life and happiness," which the film seems to show, are ungraspable. Notwithstanding these differences, the films share similar features, namely, the subject's method of mourning the absent, the presence of the lost ones in the work, the possibility of consolation, the subject's position between the past and the future.

If, for example, Theocritus, Virgil, Spenser, and Milton can be said to be pastoral elegists, as Lambert argues, because, they "share a certain outlook as well as certain formal similarities" (xiii), these films can be assembled under the same category to form a new mode or convention. This mode is certainly incompatible with Nichols's "poetic mode." According to Lambert, "'Convention,' as Harry Levin has reminded us, means a 'coming together.'" This dissertation maintains that these films are examples of a mode which, when grouped together, can form a new convention of elegiac film. A subset of the poetic mode, these films can be similar to poetic elegies, they surpass the mourning/melancholia binary by showing a continuous elliptical form of mourning, which is revealed through the structure of the film and its elements, both verbal and visual. As a suggestion for a later study, I propose that *the elegiac film* can be situated under an independent category recognized by its similarity to poetic elegies and, hence, potentially lending themselves to being analysed through the discussions which dominate those of poetic elegy, although as films they must be looked at qua films and, therefore, explicated with a cinematic vocabulary. Such a study needs to be more inclusive and larger in scope than the current dissertation.

The aim of reading these different films together is to talk about the ways in which loss, in its many facets, can be mourned in nonfiction film and how lament in my selected number of elegiac films can be read in the light of poetic elegies. The objective is, additionally, to

reconsider the ways in which mourning is looked at, which is mostly through a clear-cut distinction between avowal and disavowal of loss, and to propose, instead, a status which allows transcending the mourning and melancholia distinction.

How is then consolation treated in the following chapters? Different kinds of loss can be consoled by way of various remedies. We know that "pastoral elegists, writing over an extended period of time, describe various kinds of losses and propose varied remedies to the problems of death and mourning" (Lambert xii). I have introduced different kinds of consolation, including art, love, and metaphor, with this last one sometimes referred to as poetical thinking, following Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin. I propose that in these films, consolation is not a one-time act which happens once and remains unchanged for long periods of time. Solace is, rather, continuous and happens over time. There is not a final closure in any of the films.

In addition, replacement does not take place, as the object of loss is irreplaceable. Sacks in his introduction to *The English Elegy* quotes Freud who states "'No matter what fills the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else'" (7). Ramazani makes a similar point, stating "Freud admitted in letters and other writings that mourners typically remain inconsolable, never filling the gap of loss" (29). Sacks also refers to this impossibility, writing, "Apollo and Pan embrace, respectively, the laurel and the reeds, according them the passion meant for the nymphs. Yet even in this moment, they recognize that they are embracing 'something else'" (29).

Art or love or metaphor are things the subject of loss resorts to not as substitutes for the objects lost. The subjects of sorrow stand always in between a desire to stay and a tendency to move forward and in this way, they come and pass by different loci amoeni, different and brief sources of solace. The word Locus amoenus, of course, invokes the idea of moment, a brief

epiphany, which is important to lyric poetry, and indicates transience, and the fleeting nature of solace.

One of the reasons why the films I discuss move beyond fragmentation, as discussed by McCabe, is that their subjects of loss are consoled by this brief locus amoenus. I have borrowed the term from painting and the pastoral convention, meaning a pleasant spot in the vast landscape of sorrow they are traversing. However, as the films reveal, any loss and the subsequent consolatory remedies are temporary and, therefore, the mourning subjects are in-between the past loss and the future ones. In searching for such a locus amoenus, they resort to naming. In the distance or gap that is created between the subject and object of lament, only the power of imagination, language, or arts, can be summoned to function as brief spots in which the mourner can stay before moving on to the next loss.

Such a resort to language and imagination is certainly Kristevean. In the beginning of "Beauty: The Depressive's Other Realm," Kristeva writes, "Naming suffering, exalting it… is doubtless a way to curb mourning," adding later that art can "secure for the artist and the connoisseur a sublimatory hold over the lost Thing" (97). In *The Salt of the Earth*, the loss of people as well as forests cannot be compensated by the resuscitation of those forests and nature photography that the subject turns to after a long career in social and war photography. In *Heart of a Dog* the proposed remedy, love, cannot "turn the time around," as the film repeats in the end. In *Oriental Elegy*, finally, the loss of meanings can only be consoled by the availability of numerous metaphors the subject can make in his effort to grasp the meanings of life. However, this metaphor-making and seeing the lost meanings through the lens of this trope is the closest he can get to the lost object. A belief in the impossibility of substitution does not contradict creation of art, as imagination and language are the only things the grief subjects have at their disposal.

My idea of elliptical structure, closely connected to the repetition of elements in the film, recalls Sacks's words. He writes: "just as each loss recapitulates a prior loss and each turn to consolation repeats an earlier deflection of desire, our experiences of loss fold upon themselves in gathers, creating the highly stratified 'occasion' that each elegy 'begins again' or enters 'yet once more'" (18). It is on the basis of such a logic that in the films of this study, the proposed consolation is not a final one, making it elliptical and continuous. Remedies to loss are not acts, but processes of finding small spots in the landscape of grief. Sacks, while speaking of the metaphor of "weaving" for consolation, affirms that consolation is, indeed, a process. He says "to speak of waving a consolation … emphasizes mourning is an action, a process of work" (19), indicating that consolation happens not instantaneously but is rather a process. Even the ancient, and familiar motif of death and rebirth observed in many studies of the elegiac tradition and considered to be the ritual origin of the elegiac tradition, points to an ellipticity and to the repetitive nature of loss. Sacks is aware of such an origin. He states: "As for the content and direction of its ritual movement, the elegy follows the ancient rites in the basic passage through grief or darkness to consolation and renewal" (20). Sacks later comments: "the ritual origins of the genre, is marked by a significant use of repetitions," adding, elegy is "conventionally repetitive" (23). Such a repetition, in addition to the ways it can be seen in the final act of open-ended consolation towards or at the end of each film, can also be discerned in the process of mourning throughout the films. In the words of Sacks, "repetition takes several forms" (23).

Film as a visual medium and the object text of this study reveals this passage and this repetition. *The Salt of the Earth* portrays many deaths, human and natural, but ends, ultimately, in the rain and renewal and moves from black and white photography to colour after oscillating between still and moving images. In its consolatory note, too, the film is repetitive as it admits

that true restoration of forests is multi-generational. *Heart of a Dog,* similarly, shows different losses, indicating how these various losses end in a love which is repeated a few times. In *Oriental Elegy*, the metaphor offered as remedy cannot be the final one and the speaker has to be constantly in search of further metaphors if he seeks further discoveries. In this film, we are led from the dark and misty atmosphere to a coloured ambience and the metaphor of the tree. In all the three films, there is a contrast between when the loss is portrayed and when remedy is given. In all of them, the remedy is magnified through a contrast. Varied as these sources of consolation are in their form, there seems to be a similar pattern, a form of repetition. Repetition also suggests that the offered consolation is not the end. Another small source of solace, a small locus amoenus can lie on the horizon, a small pleasant spot which acts like an oasis, and continues to the end of life. According to Sacks, "loss recapitulates a prior loss" and elegies tend to "begin again or to commence with a 'yet once more'" (23). In *The Work of Mourning*, Derrida, writing on the death of Roland Barthes, was "concerned about the singularity of death and its inevitable repetition," according to Brault and Naas (2).

This small temporary consolation, I shall argue in the epilogue of this study, acts through both verbal and visual elements. Sacks briefly touches on this "mediating fabric of language, a tissue of substitution that may cover a preceding lack." He says that elegy creates "a fabric in the place of void" (18). Such a fabric, the small consolation which is portrayed as a locus amoenus, comes to materialization in varied forms in these films as the sources of consolation differ in them. In *The Salt of the Earth*, we see an overlapping or superimposition, as a new picture is sown on the ashes of the old one. We learn that the source of solace in this film is a new photographic collection and restoration of lost forests. Similarly, in *Heart of a Dog*, an image, showing love, acts as this "pleasant place," and finally in *Oriental Elegy*, the void in meaning, is

filled with the metaphor of a tree, the ultimate source of solace for the subject of the film who is in search of answers to such questions as the meaning of life and definition of happiness.

Accordingly, the focus of this dissertation is not the ubiquitous mourning/melancholia distinction but is, rather, on the process of consolation and its ellipticity and on the delicacy of the source of solace which acts like a pastoral "pleasant spot," and is, therefore, fleeting and transitory. My scrutiny of the three films of this research shows that such an inter-reading of the nonfiction film, and indeed any film, with poetic elegies does not jeopardize the independence and uniqueness of the visual art but, on the contrary, enriches it and opens horizons for further unfolding of the highly multilayered and stratified form of film art.

While the three films are connected structurally and share similar features, each of the films resonates with me personally. When I was three, a devastating war broke out in the Middle East that lasted eight years. We were first to be internally displaced, as my hometown is right on the border with the invading neighbour. There was not a single day that passed without the sound of sirens and the sight of coffins. And I always think about the many who were killed on the other side of the conflict. Millions suffered and hundreds of thousands perished! Then I was a migrant in my own country, and returning home at the end of the war, the sense of loss ate into my soul. Later, as an immigrant to another country, thousands of miles away, I experienced another loss which was further intensified as, with environmental and ecological disasters, rivers were drying out and little woods wiping off the maps. When I watched *The Salt of the Earth* for the first time, I thought of how close the film was to me. Similarly, I found *Heart of a Dog* very intimate. I lost two brothers, one when I was a child, mourning his death many years later when I became, heart and soul, familiar with the concept of loss, and when I could think about mourning. I lost another brother just recently, a loss that brought all the griefs of the past only in

a different unique way, making me think about how singular each loss is. The film's "grandmother" reminded me of my own whose sagacious sayings were often quoted as the saviour when we were children. I lost her, too. Finally, *Oriental Elegy* provided me with ample food for thought about the meaning of life, my life, and whether or not there could be a solace in my continued effort to write poems and if these poems, these acts of metaphor-making, could be any help delving into the complex web of meanings of life.

Wim Wenders and *The Salt of the Earth*:

Montage, Elegy and the Solace of Art

Overture

The Salt of the Earth is a 2014 elegiac film about the Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado co-directed by Wim Wenders and Juliano Ribeiro Salgado. Throughout his artistic career, three major trends can be observed in Wenders's cinema. Wenders has made elegiac films; he has produced films focusing on other arts, especially film and filmmaking; and he has also cooperated with other artists. For example, in *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999), Wenders portrays the famous Cuban music ensemble of the same name. *A Trick of the Light (*1995) is about the life of the Skladanowsky brothers, who built Bioscop, a movie projector, in Germany and the start of cinema there, while in *Tokyo-Ga* (1985) Wenders pays an homage to the Japanese auteur and legendary filmmaker Yasujirō Ozu. Similarly, *Lightning Over Water* (1980) is a film in which Wenders pays tribute to the American director Nicholas Ray. *If Buildings Could Talk* (2010) and *The State of Things* (1982) are about architecture and film production respectively. All of these films are clearly instances in which Wenders treats filmmaking and/or filmmakers; and all are documentaries with the exception of *The State of Things*, showing the extent to which the medium as subject matter occupies a central position in Wenders's *oeuvre*.

In addition, Wenders has collaborated with other artists either in directing or writing films; his collaborations, for example, with Peter Handke in *Wings of Desire* (1987) and with Peter Carey, the Australian novelist, in *Until the End of the World* (1991), are among the most widely known. Wenders also worked with Sam Shepard in his *Paris, Texas* (1984). Meanwhile, *Lighting Over Water, Tokyo-Ga* and *Pina* (2011) are elegiac films, paeans of praise to some of

the artists he admired, intimating a predilection in Wenders's films to pay homage and to commemorate.

The Salt of the Earth is a documentary in which these three proclivities, that is, collaboration with other artists, portraying and incorporating another art, and commemorating another person's life and work, converge. Wenders collaborates with another filmmaker, Juliano Ribeiro Salgado, reflects on the art of photography, tells the life story of another artist, namely Sebastião Salgado, while lamenting the death of people and destruction of forests Salgado is portraying. In so doing, Wenders reflects on some of the fundamental concepts of life, such as loss and consolation. Incorporation of another *medium* in this film and its *elegiac* nature necessitate treatment of those other arts in this chapter. *The Salt of the Earth* portrays the life and career of an artist who narrates his story through his art.

The Salt of the Earth presents a series of black and white photo collections shot by Salgado over a few decades of artistic production and put together by Wenders. These photo collections are interspersed with moving images, and there is a dialogue between moving pictures and still photos. Wenders incorporates many freeze frames: Salgado's pictures, of humans, non-human animals and plants in disparate geographies and at different times. Throughout, the three artists, that is, Salgado the photographer, Wenders, and Salgado Jr., who joins them in a number of their ventures, take turns and narrate over both still and moving images.

The objective of this chapter is to read *The Salt of the Earth* as an elegy. To this end, I demonstrate that *The Salt of the Earth* portrays loss of nature, including land, animals and plants, and people, including those familiar to Salgado and those who are not, those who are named and those who are anonymous, unifying all lost objects. I suggest that the film portrays those deaths

to specifically lament a universal loss, which is the discontinuity between man and nature. Moreover, I want to propose that the film deals with both private and public losses and in this sense, too, the film unifies themes at the end. This unification takes place on both thematic and technical levels. Salgado, Wenders shows, grieves personal losses of land and of his child, while at the same time he laments the destruction of public Amazonian rainforests and the deaths and suffering of people, especially in Africa and Europe, that he depicts in his photo collections. In other words, the film fuses the public and the personal, on the one hand, and man and nature, on the other, thereby creating a constellation of losses which are interconnected. Such an interconnection is made possible through montage. The film laments the particulars yet ultimately grieves on a global scale. But what is this interconnection, this universality, and what is its import? Wenders attempts to portray loss on human, animal and plant levels while, at the same time, it depicts disparate geographies. In this sense, the film is about the planet earth, and the ways in which degrading the environment is closely connected with a disregard for human life. This global scale is spatial as the film represents a multiplicity of lands and temporal as, we learn towards the end of the film, the scars inflicted on the face of the planet, by deforestation and degradation of lands, can only be recuperated after multiple generations' attempts. Wenders seems to be trying to draw an affinity between man and his environment, a kinship, a continuity which has been forgotten.

I also propose the film makes an attempt to move towards consolation, which, as I will show, is of two types. One remedy is production of a new photographic collection called *Genesis*, a change from Salgado's typical collections which are social, political, in which he portrays people living *in extremis.* Another solace is restoration of Amazonian forests, home to Salgado's childhood dreams. The photographer, having witnessed the atrocities committed in

different parts of the world and having seen huge swathes of green lands destroyed, decides to resuscitate them. Inspired by his wife, he spends a decade in this cause. I propose that just as the objects of loss are inextricably bound together, these two consolatory sources are interconnected. Both the process of reforestation of barren lands and the new photographic collection, *Genesis,* seek to state the continuity between man and nature and both of them have the power to console. It is this reconciliation between man and the environment which can offer solace. Moreover, I suggest that this consolation, this acknowledgment of the kinship between man and the earth, is only attempted and, although only a necessary first step, as the film affirms in the final moments, takes generations to complete and is, hence, *elliptical*. I have used this word, to refer to a sense of ellipsis but the term, at the same time, alludes to something that is missing, and here in this film, it is the continuity of the consolatory source. The film clearly suggests, at the end, that true and sustainable life can return to the restored forests only after generations. This multi-generational effort heightens the sense of ellipsis, making the source of solace in the film elliptical.

Cinematically, the film's movement and interconnectedness of elements of loss, on the one hand, and overlapping and merging of sources of consolation into one, on the other, rely substantially on and are achieved through different elements of montage. Montage -- the art of editing and piecing together different elements to achieve a whole -- gives structure to the elegiac in the film and *The Salt of the Earth* functions through it. The art of montage makes the movement of elegy possible. Similarly, the elegiac is a movement from lament and mourning to consolation. The film is based on an amalgamation of photo collections and moving pictures. I demonstrate that movement in the film is constituted of, first, the parallel between black/white and colour images, which alternate at different intervals. While the former represents bleak

realities, violence, wars, and the deaths, the latter generally signifies more hopeful segments of the film. Secondly, the film moves forwards by playing on the contrast between still and moving images. These two are, in fact, ineluctably bound together and constitute the structural and thematic foundation of the film. Whereas the stills display Salgado's photos, the moving parts are shots by Wenders. The moving and the still, as part of montage, overlap with the elegiac. Lament indicates a desire to keep the dead, while the moving intimates passage from mourning. In addition, the film's forward movement relies on the contrast between light and dark and/or shadows. Moreover, dark interstices, which happen in the film in the form of fading as well as black stills contribute to the movement in the film. Finally, the absent and the present, the lost ones, and the ways in which they are given a voice through the rhetorical figure of *prosopopoeia,* constitute another important element in the film. I demonstrate all these constitutive elements of montage make movement of elegy, from mourning to consolation, possible and it is the structural motion in the film that facilitates the thematic movement of elegy. In other words, if montage allows the matrix of images (still and moving, colour and black/white, light and dark) to move towards the end, thereby constituting a whole, the elegiac permits a movement from mourning to discovering a remedy, thereby attempting to bring mourning to a closure. The two thematic, and structural motions not only coincide but enhance each other. I have used the word convergence to allude to such an imbrication, as converge can indicate a merging together.

In this dissertation, as I attempt to show how the filmic elegy can be informed by poetry, I demonstrate how *The Salt of the Earth* resembles Schiller's classic elegy "*Der Spaziergang*" ("The Walk"), especially in form, while it draws on Rilke's *Duino Elegie*s and the eighth elegy in content, particularly towards the end of the film in the consolatory part. My reading of "The Walk" and *Duino Elegies* is informed by Theodore Ziolkowski and his *The Classical German*

Elegy 1795-1950. I also exploit Heidegger's thoughts on *Duino Elegies* as delineated in *Poetry, Language, Thought.* My allusion to Rilke as explored by Heidegger is mainly based on the views of the poet and the philosopher about the interconnection, or lack thereof, between man and nature signified in the concept of "open" introduced in the eighth elegy.[12]

In the following pages, I will first lay out a methodological map. My perusal of the film focuses on objects of loss and will then address the technical methods that Wenders deploys to converge actions and effect a whole, not only as an aesthetic value but as part of the elegiac in this film. In fact, this *whole* is especially important as in most elegiac films, there seems to be a fragmentation resulting from a subject's inability to mourn and express his/her grief and I have argued against such a fragmentation. In other words, in this film a *wholeness* is achieved which allows for the final consolation. I would now discuss the ways in which the film grieves, and start by focusing on the key methodological terms. As I indicated, my discussions are based on the movement of, first, montage and second, the elegiac. I will start with montage.

Montage: Change, the Whole, the Open

To open this section maybe it would serve me well to begin at the end, in the concept of the whole. It's also useful to elucidate how montage works, and what the formal and dynamic features of montage do for or to elegy and its movement. *The Salt of the Earth* portrays an interconnection between different objects of loss, on the one hand, and the sources of consolation, on the other. The film grieves the loss of man, animals, plants and the discontinuity among these species, fusing these different elements together. A similar interconnectedness can be observed in the different kinds of consolation the film seems to be offering. The sources of

[12] Similarly, Wenders's *Wings of Desire* (1987) has allusions to Rilke's *Duino Elegies*.

solace include the new photo project entitled *Genesis*, which interestingly, invokes change and also recuperation of dead lands. In other words, in both loss and consolation, the film is unifying elements to create a whole. On the other hand, the movement of *The Salt of the Earth* from loss to consolation evinces a change, which results from the interaction between the multitudes of elements at play with each other in the film. That is to say, the change happens in the whole. This whole, this complete system, however, is not a closed system and is rather open at its end. In other words, this change from loss to consolation, this movement from mourning to avowal of loss, the passage from lament to consolation, is open-ended and elliptical.

In order to speak about the passage from loss, the interconnectedness the film is picturing, and the open-ended nature of consolation, I draw on Deleuze's concepts of "change," "the whole," "the open," investigated in *Cinema I.*[13] Deleuze writes, "if one had to define the whole, it would be defined by Relation" (10), saying that "whole is not closed, it is open." Deleuze also brings "change" into the equation and states, "movement … is change in duration or in the whole" (10), and repeats again "movement expresses a change in … the whole." Deleuze believes that because the whole is open, "its nature is to change" (9).[14] But why Deleuze? Apart from the fact that Deleuze's thoughts on cinema are largely based on the overarching and binding technique of montage, the three pivotal Deleuzian terms in montage, namely, "the open," "the whole," and "change," enable me to discuss the elegiac and the transition to solace. The movement of elegy from loss to an open-ended consolation is made possible through a transformation that I see as Deleuzian "change." Investigation of the elliptical character of consolation in this film can benefit from the concept of "the open," while the interconnection between different filmic and elegiac elements can be explored through "the

[13] I have put these three words in quotations marks as I have borrowed them from Deleuze.
[14] In discussing all these terms, Deleuze is drawing on Bergsonian philosophy on the concept of time.

whole." In *Deleuze and Cinema: The Film Concepts*, Felicity Coleman rightly affirms that montage "is movement, whether mechanical activity … or movement within perceptual processes" (58). Deleuze similarly notes, "The whole is not a closed system, but on the contrary that by virtue of which the set is never absolutely closed, never completely sheltered, that which keeps it open..." (10).

The particulars in the film, such as photo collections lead to a whole. In *The Salt of the Earth*, each photo, is a closed system which is connected to the next still through editing and sometimes through black gaps which allow the "change" to take place.[15] Moreover, there is an overarching interaction between movement and stillness and one changes to the other, allowing the motion of the film. In the course of this process, some things change. However, the apotheosis of this change is best exemplified in a superimposition of a photo taken at the end of the lamentation period and a photo belonging to the consolatory period.

In *The Salt of the Earth,* images engage in a dialogue with each other that lead to a whole that Wenders is trying to achieve. Collections are from different times but sit next to one another in a montage or in "Benjaminian constellations of images" (qtd. in Rascaroli 60). As Rascaroli remarks, dialectical montage[16] "highlights resemblances by linking together temporally divergent moments that are thus allowed to enter communication" (53). In *The Salt of the Earth* there is a conversation between the elegiac, which moves from mourning to solace, and the filmic elements. Divergent elements converge not only temporally but also conceptually. More

[15] In the first chapter of Cinema 1, Deleuze writes "movement is a mobile section of duration, that is, of the Whole, or of a whole. Which implies that movement expresses something more profound, which is change in duration or in the whole. To say that duration is change is part of its definition: it changes and does not stop changing." He then adds "movement always relates to a change." (8).

[16] "Dialectical Montage" is a kind of montage that allows the audience to infer something, like an abstract concept, which cannot be shown directly. "While a concept cannot be directly represented in an image, tensions and discord between juxtaposed images could stimulate an audience to grasp a conceptual connection by inference" (*A Dictionary of Media and Communication*).

specifically, the unity achieved in the elegiac corresponds to the whole made possible through montage. Deleuze mentions three types of montage; however, only one of them he calls montage of "convergent actions" (31). It is this type of montage that brings together things to create a whole that I am drawing on in my analysis.

Elegiacally speaking, different elements of loss, people, animals, plants, constitute a whole, as they are interconnected and the film is an elegy to "the whole earth."[17] This elegy will ultimately undergo a transformation, making a transition towards consolation, a movement which can be seen in poetic elegies but not in filmic ones as they are mostly fractured into segments which are hard to piece together. However, and importantly, this consolation is "open," which I would refer to as *ellipsis*. Let me explain why this "open" is important in my analysis of *The Salt of the Earth* as an elegiac film.

The whole is only made possible through the interaction of elements and their movement. These elements open up to connect to the next elements. In the words of Deleuze, "the open" is like a "thread which traverses sets and gives each one the possibility … of communicating with another, to infinity." (*Cinema I*, 17) "Change," by contrast, indicates transitions from shot to another or from one part to the next. The open points to an ellipsis that is part and parcel of *The Salt of the Earth,* and "change" indicates the motion in this film from grief to a period of artistic suspension onto a consolation which is open-ended. "Open" connects, in the film, photo collections with each other and facilitates the film's wholeness, while "change" points to

[17] Wenders is giving an image of the whole world in this film. He is portraying our world which is grappling with wars, violence, annihilation of lands. The whole earth evokes A. R. Ammons's *Sphere* discussed in Kevin McGuirk's "A. R. Ammons and the Whole Earth." Ammons's "a world picture," referred to as "the whole earth image" by McGuirk, is one which Wenders is attempting to portray. However different Wenders's image of whole earth in this film and Ammons's "the whole earth" might be, I think they both are, in McGuirk's words, "symbolization of our destructive power." In a way Ammons's visionary image of the whole earth is, in fact, Wenders's declining earth. This global scale, the planet earth, can also be observed in a conversation between John Berger and Salgado titled "A Tragedy the Size of the Planet."

transitions of a moving image to a still, and of colour to black and white, and finally, from dark to light. These three are the main elements of movement in the film. Deleuze states "Through movement the whole is divided up into objects, and the objects are re-united in the whole, and indeed between the two 'the whole' changes." Deleuze states: "montage is the determination of the whole … . Eisenstein continually reminds us that montage is the whole of the film, *the Idea*" [Italics is mine]. He asks "why *should* the whole be the object of montage?" and immediately responds "Between the beginning and the end of a film, something changes, something has changed" (29). In further clarification, he writes "montage is the operation which bears on the movement-image to release the whole from them." The corollary is that montage acts through movement. Deleuze states that movement in film "has two facets ... it is the relationship between parts and it is the state of the whole" (19). A bit later in his discussion of movement in film, Deleuze refers to "shot" and defines it as "movement-image," because "it relates movement to a whole, which changes" (22). Now another question is what causes this change? The answer lies in the different modes of movement in the film.

I take my cue from Deleuze and exploit any technique of movement, including colour, light, the binary of still and moving images, that can aid me in making a connection between the movement of elegy -- passage from mourning -- and montage in the film, both of which are based on the concepts of change, the whole, and the open.[18] Why should such an emphasis on different types and facets of movement matter? The answer lies in the centrality of the movement of the elegiac, from mourning to the open-ended and continuous process of consolation.

[18] Deleuze introduces four different types of montage, including American organic montage, the Russian dialectical montage, "the quantitative-psychic montage of the French school" and finally "the intensive-spiritual montage of the German school," adding, however, "the only generality about montage is that it puts the cinematographic image into a relationship with the whole; that is, with time conceived as the Open," as open-ended and having the potential to continue (55).

The transition from collection to collection is made possible through gap, an interstice, which also helps the elegy move forward. The movement of elegy is made possible through this transition from still to still, and from collection to collection. Transitions eventually take us to the final collections which is made during the process of consolation and ultimately the film leaves us with the three dots, an ellipsis, the open.

What the Film Laments

> "With each dying person, a piece of everyone else dies"
>
> "I saw unfolding before me the history of mankind"
>
> "What was left for him after Rwanda?"
>
> (from *The Salt of the Earth*)

> "We have transferred our own mortality onto the forests in our destruction of them. They have become as mortal as we are, and their life or death now depends mostly on us" (Robert Pogue Harrison, "Deforestation in a Civilized World")

The Salt of the Earth laments the loss of the whole earth, on two levels of private and public. The film is gradual in depicting the losses Salgado mourns, which range from personal to public and entails both human and non-human. In other words, in its portrayal of loss, *The Salt of the Earth* is aptly inclusive. It is an elegy for the people lost and/or killed, while at the same time, it is a lament for the natural environment and the gradually disappearing flora and fauna. The film is an

elegy for the planet which is despoiled on a widespread, global scale.[19] But the film is also about the ways in which the fate of those living on the earth is bound together. The film's inclusivity is not limited to only its losses. It is global in the sense that it addresses the known and the unknown (Salgado portrays people that he knows and those he doesn't), the public and the private, the animal, the plant and the human, in many corners of the world. Such a universality, similarly, results from the temporal and spatial scales within which the film functions.

Salgado's losses, forming the backbone of this elegy include his family farm and his family members while he, at the same time, laments the loss of other natural environments as he strives to resuscitate, towards the end, the forests. The coupling of the personal and the collective, and binding man and nature together, sustained throughout the documentary is no surprise as, in the beginning, Salgado's preoccupation with the "history of mankind" attests to this tendency. The public and private binary, in one layer, and the man and nature couple, in another layer, move forward in parallel with each other to the end of the film, forming a thematic interconnectedness.

We witness the first instance of loss, of both the earth and man, when the film displays an array of pictures of "Babel," a wide shot of a gold mine, "a huge hole," we are told, where, "500,000 people worked." We observe these shots immediately after the idyllic scenes in what seems to be an attempt to point to what man has done to the earth. There are always two sides to nature in *The Salt of the Earth*, that is, the barren is juxtaposed to the lush and the green. Except for medium photo shots, the shots in the mine, all taken in black and white, are mostly long and wide, acting as a general prelude which will lead into more specific names, geographies, and

[19] In a chapter in *Understanding a Photograph* titled "A Tragedy the Size of the Planet," John Berger sits with Salgado for a brief conversation about the Brazilian photographer's work. Salgado speaks about some of his travels including Rwanda. The title of this conversation indicates the magnitude of Salgado's work which is global.

characters. Here, for instance, we are given the image, in the foreground, of a man in a freeze-frame leaning on what appears to be a dead tall tree trunk while in the background hundreds of labourers are busy searching for gold at the mine. This is the first instance of exhausting and, hence, destroying the earth and its resources, observed for the rest of an hour and fifty minutes. We hear the voice-over reflecting "all this earth had to be removed." Apart from disappearance of nature, one further cause of grief is that it is, in fact, man who is doing horrendous things to fellow men and to nature. This is an image over which Salgado comments, stating, "I saw before me, in a split second, the history of mankind." Right from the outset, Salgado speaks of the plights and pains of people and also about exhaustion of the earth and, in this sense, he is massively inclusive. The stills portray a few nameless characters. Salgado's reference to "the history of mankind" foreshadows the universal scale of the film. But how? First, this long-duration shot foreshadows how man exhausts the earth's resources, destroying the forests, and secondly, it presages how people live in hard man-made conditions, *in extremis* (Fig. 1-2).

Figure 1. The Salt of the Earth" Image 1

Figure 2. The Salt of the Earth: Image 2

Such an inclusivity can equally be illustrated in a collection of photos, the first of Salgado's, of Brazil, in which we see loss of private lands. We witness the same fate to Salgado's family land the same way that the earth suffered at the hands of man in the "Babel."

Later, when the Salgados return to Brazil thanks to ten and a half years of political upheavals in their country, he is shocked by massive changes that had swept across Brazil, including Salgado's hometown. In *Brazil 1981-1983,* a collection entirely in black and white, Salgado exhibits the first instance of human death in the film: infant mortality. Salgado reveals to us that "infant mortality was very high," showing pictures of children who "died before they were baptized." This is immediately followed by another sad reality: the drying up of vast swathes of land, causing huge amount of internal displacement. This tragedy also affected Salgado's family farm which fell victim to drought, leaving no trace of "the paradise he remembered as a child." The losses of man and nature move forward in parallel with each other, that is, from the outset to the end, the film focuses, at certain intervals, on both man and environment and this is the way these things are presented in this film.

Salgado's earliest memories are those of forests, and the loss of those lands leaves a devastating and enduring effect on him. He mourns the lost lands of his childhood. Later again after the devastating work in Rwanda, Salgado returns once more to Brazil only to witness yet another sad reality; he faces "a barren land," where all living things are gone; "the birds, the alligators, the majestic forests were gone, all childhood memories."

We witness examples of the parallel between man and nature in an early collection which portrays the African continent. *Nigeria 1973*, a collection in black and white, captured at a time when Nigeria was grappling with a massive drought, is a more sombre collection compared with the previous *Brazil*. Similarly, in *Sahel; The End of the Road 1984-1986*, Salgado speaks of a widespread famine caused by man's reluctance to share resources. The photographer again puts this human tragedy next to natural disasters, saying "a large part of humanity was suffering from great distress … and not just a natural disaster." In Mali, upon seeing the afflicting drought and

the ensuing suffering destroying every living thing, Salgado can't help but compare the dying man with a dying tree, saying “the skin becomes like a tree bark… like a tree marked by desert wind” (Fig. 4).

The loss of animals is an important public loss in the film. Animals figure prominently throughout, when they are used by man to exhaust the earth and when they die because of man’s actions. For example, when the three men, the co-directors and the photographer, have a journey to the Arctic Ocean, to “photograph the last big congregations of walruses,” portraying a species which seems to be disappearing, we see the first instance of death in the film: a dead walrus on the shore here, heightening the sense of extinction. *The Salt of the Earth* portrays this death even before the countless human losses it depicts. Even in *Brazil* when Salgado’s loss of family lands, and public rainforests is predominant, we hear him lamenting, “there were a lot of cattle here but they are all gone now,” adding “this land was so plentiful, there were lots of birds, canaries, and ticoticoes, blackbirds.” In Africa, similarly, animals are shown to suffer and perish along with their human companions. In one profoundly revealing picture, a small child is shown to be facing the same fate as his dog. We hear Salgado speaking with a wire of grief in his voice about the child who, having a guitar in his hand, is milling the desert “with his dog” (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. The Salt of the Earth: Image 3

Figure 4. The Salt of the Earth: Image 4

Similarly, in a collection called *Workers* where the film pays "homage to men and women who built the world around us," we witness the suffering animals undergo. The one group of photos Wenders focuses on here is *Kuwait* where we observe the destruction of birds, animals, trees and green farms. *Workers*, shot during the first Persian Gulf War, shows a land "ruined by war," as we hear Salgado narrate. Salgado comments that there were lots of "horses, thoroughbreds that had gone completely, desperately insane," adding "animals are the first to flee a catastrophe when they are free to leave, but here they weren't. There were birds there too… . Birds couldn't fly anymore as their feathers were stuck together" (Fig. 5).

Figure 5. The Salt of the Earth: Image 5

Nowhere in the documentary does sorrow over loss of men figure more prominently than in the collection, *Exodus 1993-1999*, where we are left agape with incredulity at brutal atrocities, wars and violence in Africa, especially Rwanda and, similarly, at the heart of Europe in former Yugoslavia. It is in this collection, in the main, that Salgado mourns the death of common people, almost all of them anonymous, bemoaning the loss of those who died and memorializing the pain and suffering of those who survived wars. This collection was devastating to Salgado who, deeply sad, laments "the number of dead bodies I saw on that road…" adding "it was 150 kilometers of dead bodies," grieving not only the dead but also the mere fact that such an

unspeakable tragedy was perpetrated by man to man: “those not killed by grenade were killed with machete.” In Yugoslavia, similarly, Salgado gives an account of human-inflicted death and suffering, creating an indescribable human catastrophe in Europe. Salgado mourns through his pictures countless men and women who died in a continent where “people had a standard of living, a European standard of living, a European intellectual level, a European infrastructure.” By juxtaposing Rwanda and Yugoslavia, Salgado emphasises how man can inflict death and destruction on man regardless of where he is, expressing extreme sorrow over inhuman deeds of man. Salgado laments, “I was ill, my body was very sick, I didn’t have any infectious disease, but my soul was sick,” admitting, “I no longer believed in anything, in any salvation for the human species. You couldn’t survive such a thing. We didn’t deserve to live. No one deserves to live. How many times I [laid] my cameras down to cry over what I’d seen?” Such an unutterable tragedy, especially in Rwanda, takes place in the last collection in which Salgado grieves loss of human beings. Wenders in his sad voice-over says, “Salgado had seen into the heart of darkness” (Fig. 10). This human loss at such a huge magnitude, a public loss, immediately segues into a private one of the paradise Salgado once had as a child. This is the zenith of elegy, the most intense moment in *The Salt of the Earth* when the narrator laments not only both the private and the public but at the same time grieves the loss of human life and nature. “Sick in soul” of the immensity of human loss, Salgado goes to Brazil where the family farm “was nothing but a wasteland. The birds, the alligators, and the majestic forests were gone,” and, Wenders reflects, “there was nothing left from Sebastião’s childhood memories.”

Salgado, bearing witness to the disappearance of animals, plants, and mourning the death of people in different parts of the world, now encounters a further personal sorrow. However, there are two other lost objects here which need to be addressed. First, is the near loss of a belief

about the value of the art of photography as he begins to think about the futility of photography, indicated in Wenders's comments that Salgado "deeply questioned his work as a social photographer." Secondly, the loss of childhood memories. These two abstract or conceptual objects of loss, at the worst of times when Salgado is experiencing woes resulting from personal and private losses of both human beings and nature, mark the end of the griefs Wenders portrays. Observing the collections and reflecting on the multitude of deaths and suffering they illustrate, one realizes that the scale of the film is indeed global, not only in terms of the objects of lamentation and remembrance which include people, lands, animals, but also with respect to the geographies covered.

However, by speaking about all these disparate acts of mourning, the film uncovers another important conceptual loss, the most important of which is arguably the discontinuity between man and nature. All the losses in *The Salt of the Earth*, private and public, as well as man and nature converge to lead to this gathering point. By the most important, I mean the most consequential, to man and to the planet as it is such a discontinuity that is the cause of disregard for nature. In *The Salt of the Earth*, his discontinuity is manifested in the ways Salgado's childhood forests are lost in parallel with the destruction of human lives, that is, the fate of the two are bound. As I will demonstrate soon, both Salgado and Wenders believe that saving the forests is tantamount to saving the humanity. Such a separation between man and environment is also evinced throughout the film in the way man despoils nature, including the plants and animals demonstrated in pictures such as those of Kuwait, Mali, Brazil and gold mines of Latin America discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

This discontinuity is, moreover, represented in the way Salgado moves away from an idyllic childhood, distancing from forests and then returning to and re-uniting with them at the

end. Such a rift is also displayed in how shots and sequences of natural scenes, green spaces and forests have been separated from those in which we see man. Robert Pogue Harrison complains about the current discontinuity between the two in *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*. Harrison laments that "the forest remains a margin of exteriority with respect to civilization," writing

> we have found that the word itself, *foresta*, means literally outside. The entire history … could be seen as the story of human outsideness. Because we exist first and foremost outside of ourselves, forests becoming something like an ancient and enduring correlate of our transcendence. (201)

The disconnect is clear here in these words, which seem to be drawing a line between the forest as the transcendent and us humans who live outside that transcendence, not only physically but as beings belonging to different realms. The transcendence is, of course, ours but we paradoxically live outside ourselves in that transcendence. However, we tend to take our secondary selves as really us, and forget where we live 'first and foremost' – in that transcendence which is figured by forests.

In each single collection Salgado continues to grieve the objects of loss, including man and the environment, until his final decision to undertake restoring vast swathes of Amazonian forests, which can be seen as an effort to overcome lamentation, to make a passage from mourning to move towards new possibilities after his state of melancholia in which he thinks about foregoing photography. The film as just discussed also grieved such conceptual losses as that of memories, the discontinuity between man and nature as well as losing faith in the power of art.

How the Film Laments

> "Photography is inherently elegiac" (Josh Ellenbogen, "On Photographic Elegy")
>
> "The truth inhabits the middle space" (Goethe, qtd. in *How the Essay Film Thinks*)

The film operates through montage. In fact, the presence of photos is so prominent that one is tempted to use the word photomontage as these images appear one after another to speak of a particular loss. I analyse the film in terms of disparate elements it exploits and conjoins from small to large, and from still to moving. These elements in their movements converge in order to create the whole. The film itself, *The Salt of the Earth*, is an elegy and, hence, montage, this cinematic whole and elegy converge. It is this interaction between these multiple elements that allows the movement of elegy from memorializing and mourning to the passage from grief to open-ended consolation.

Let me begin by perusing the small element first. A photo is an elegiac element because it makes the absent come to presence. Photos bring the dead back to memory and give a voice to the dead. The focus on the art of photography and a photographer's *oeuvre* as the subject of *The Salt of the Earth* is no accident. "Photography is inherently elegiac," asserts Josh Ellenbogen, who broaches the notion that there is a "kinship between the medium and elegy" in "On Photographic Elegy." Such an affinity between photography and elegy has also caught the attention of Robert Pogue Harrison who touches on the Latin word *imago* which means "the ancestor's death mask." The *imago "*was an image … the dead person lived on once the disembodiment process was realized" (*Dominion of the Dead* 148). Another Latin word defined

by Harrison includes *persona*, meaning "the actor's mask," which "family members sometimes don during burial ceremonies." Harrison extrapolates from this definition to the art of photography and concludes that "to this day the photograph retains the essential links to its ancestral origins in the death mask, if only it allows a person's likeness to survive his or her demise, to say nothing of the photograph similar ceremonial role as ancestral portrait in the family album… ." Harrison immediately draws attention to the technical aspect of *imago* and its relation to death, maintaining "whether cast in wax, painted in oil, or exposed on celluloid film, *the image is essentially mortuary*" [my italics] (148). In other words, the image, or a photograph, is an elegy to what it represents. Such a perspective is especially supported in the film as we see lots of images of the dead in coffins, themselves mortuaries, which can be seen in many collections but most prominently in *Otras Americas*. This relation between the signifier, the image, and the signified, the deceased, echoes a line from an elegy titled "Meditation at Lagunitas," written by contemporary American poet, Robert Hass, who writes "a word is an elegy to what it signifies." That photos of the loved ones are always present with the grieving person is no surprise. The image of the dead is always with the mourner and, therefore, photography is the modern *imago*. Wenders takes the arts of photography as captured by Salgado back to its roots.

The use of photography as a means of lament is further heightened by a special technique used by Wenders. This technique needs a small introduction. In their study of Wenders's *oeuvre*, Kolker and Beicken quote the filmmaker as saying, "I was also aware of myself as the observer … I was not reflecting upon movies. I was reflecting them, period" (92). The use of the word "reflect" needs to be addressed, as it is directly related to the film's voice-over, and how the voice grieves through photography. *The Salt of the Earth* portrays a photographer who appears,

through Wenders's editing technique, on the photos he has taken, is superimposed on those photos, and meditates on them in a way that both the image and the photographer's face are evident. Salgado is not only reflecting on photographs by commenting on select number of stills or freeze-frames but is, at the same time, "reflecting" the photographs in his work. One can say the photos are "reflections" of reality, a homonym signifying two concepts: reflecting upon things, and reflecting things. In other words, the images reflect realities and then the image-maker contemplates his images. Wenders mentions "reflecting movies" as a filmmaker and here we have Salgado who, as a photographer is reflecting photographs. What I'm suggesting is that the boundary between the artists and their work, the demarcating borderline, disappears, and the artist and the art become one. This is a method used by Wenders to allow the objects of loss to speak through the voice of the mourning subject.

In a similar reflection on his paintings, Paul Cezanne seems to be affirming such an interconnection. In the last few pages of her study of "gaze" in a concluding, suggestive chapter called "letting the landscape speak itself in us," Kaja Silverman analyses Cezanne's thought. Silverman, who is in fact contemplating the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty's "Cezanne's Doubt," quotes the painter as saying "the landscape thinks itself in me and I am its consciousness" *(World Spectators* 143). Let me go to the source itself. Merleau-Ponty quotes Cezanne as musing, "I am… the medium through which the things of the world paint themselves." Cezanne's reflection reveals a similar conviction that the film holds vis-à-vis elegy. Wenders dissolves the discontinuity of "*persona*" and "*imago*" by using a technique where these two are superimposed, and Salgado's face is placed literally on the image (Fig. 6-7). If we concede that the image is a mortuary, as suggested by Harrison above, and if again a photograph "allows a person's likeness to survive," then having this technique, that is, the photographer

speaking through and in the images, reveals more than simply the affinity between the present voice and the absent subject. Having these photographs speak in the way they do can in fact be a kind of "prosopopoeia," a rhetorical figure in which the absent is given voice to, allowing these images to speak with the voice of their photographer and also allowing the subjects of these photographs, that is, the objects of loss, to speak through a living voice, as if the film is indeed bringing the ghost of the dead back. Harrison, while discussing the poem, "La Feuille," by Antoine-Vincent Arnault, refers to this technique saying it's a medium "through which the *eidolon* in Hades become loquacious" (*Dominion of the Dead* 152). The *eidelon* in *The Salt of the Earth* is the voice of absent people from different parts of the world whose wraith is present through their photos. Harrison is aware that "it is not only poets who lend and borrow voice through the medium of prosopopoeia" (153). The technique of prosopopoeia and giving voice to the voiceless, the absent and the dead is what the film does. In her meditation on elegy, *Dying Modern*, Diana Fuss affirms that elegies deploy "the powers of figurative language, like prosopopoeia, not merely to recognize the dead but also to bring them back to life" (7).

The "persona" and "the image" in *The Salt of the Earth* merge. The persona and the image are the same as the boundary between them dissolves through the technique employed by Wenders. This oneness is reminiscent of Yeats's poem "Among School Children," in which it is hard finally to tell "the dancer from the dance." Wenders employs the technique right from the beginning, shortly after the opening credits when Salgado's face is montaged on the photos of the gold mine and workers (Fig. 6-7). This wide shot is followed by another long shot on top or through which Salgado's full face, addressing the camera directly, is superimposed, allowing us to see both the image and Salgado's face at the same time. In the collection *Nigeria*, however,

the pattern becomes more prominent, suggesting that the technique is mostly used to first talk about the past and second speak of a loss.

In each of the photo collections in the film where Salgado mainly reminisces about the lost ones, the photographer is seen gazing directly into the camera, either with a photo in what appears to be background and commenting on that photo or he gazes at the camera over a thoroughly black background. Salgado speaks over images and into the camera during the mourning and memorializing phase as he is bringing the absent ones back to life through his words and photos. However, when he despairs, when he is "sick" at what he sees, and when he reaches a point where he questions his role as a social photographer, the background is pitch dark because no photos can bespeak the magnitude of the tragedy and because he seems to be losing faith in his art. Salgado is shown looking directly into the camera in a close-up saying "we didn't deserve to live, no one deserves to live," remaining silent for a few seconds that fade into dark. The screen is total dark but we hear Salgado's voice: "how many times did I lay my camera down to cry over what I'd seen?" All this is said over the dark screen and this sense of darkness is further heightened when Wenders comments, "Sebastião had seen into the heart of darkness…," with Salgado's head right in the heart of darkness, the black background. This darkness takes ten seconds overall (Fig. 8-10). However, it should be noted that the most heartbreaking and tragic photos speak for themselves as Salgado never in the course of *The Salt of the Earth* speaks while the pictures of the dead are shown. He let the image speak for the dead as his words cannot communicate the magnitude of the tragedy.

Figure 6. The Salt of the Earth: Image 6

Figure 7. The Salt of the Earth: Image 7

Figure 8. The Salt of the Earth: Image 8

Figure 9. The Salt of the Earth: Image 9

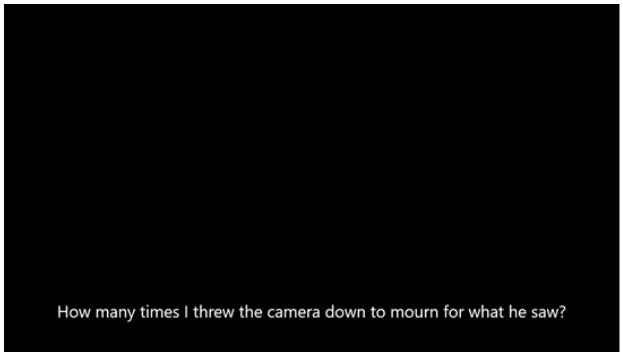

Figure 10. The Salt of the Earth: Image 10

Capturing moments and frozen within frames, a photo is a closed system which gives voice to the absent -- it is the montage that allows them to interconnect and be a part of an open system. This voice-giving is what prosopopoeia does. The closed system of photos is especially

conspicuous when Salgado and Wenders discuss the photos, when we see the framed images. We see the photos as stills, each standing independently from others. These frames only heighten the sense of enclosure. Deleuze defines frames as "determination of a closed system, a relatively closed system which includes everything which is present in the image" (12). In the film these frames, presented to us as shots, are interconnected, forming a continuum. Framing, of course, implies a choice that Wenders makes, attempting to create a whole. Such a choice is almost exclusively limited to portrayal of objects of loss. All the photos in different collections are framed in a way as to foreground and magnify the absent ones, whether human or nonhuman, give them a voice and lament their absence. By cutting, instead of dissolving or fading, the film gives tribute to the lost ones separately, one at a time, as every single loss should be remembered individually. However, as the film brings together all types of loss, converging everything, these closed systems of photos separated through cuts, effectively interconnect with each other. In the photos Salgado shows, the objects of loss, whether land, people, animals or plants, are foregrounded; however, in order to create a whole, these separate and closed systems should be sitting next to each other.

This process of transition from shot to shot and from frame to frame is movement, carried out not only by cuts that separate photos in each collection but by dint of other elements including dark spaces between collections. For example, the last opening credit is segued into a completely black shot lasting for a few seconds in which Wenders, the first person to be heard, gives the definition of photography, taking it back to its Greek roots: "to draw with light." This is done where everything seen on the screen is pitch dark and as soon as the word "light" is heard, light appears onto the screen. Wenders then defines a photographer as "a person who literally

draws with light," a photographer is a person "who writes and rewrites the world with light and shadow."

Dissolving into dark, the black gaps at the end of each collection not only make the movement, a link into next section possible, hence allowing the gradual interconnection between sections, but suggest at the same time a silence paid as an homage to the lost ones. In a way, elegy, while operating through image and words, resides in these dark interstices, in these black gaps between collections, allowing the film to move from one act of mourning to the next, hence allowing the movement of elegy. Goethe's dictum, quoted in *How the Essay Film Thinks*, on the presence of truth in between spaces, "the truth inhabits the middle space" (12), is true for *The Salt of the Earth* in which black spaces draw demarcating lines between collections[20]. These repeated dark spaces also signify the undercurrent ellipsis in the film magnified by the many cuts and fades into dark at the end of each collection. At the end of each book of photos in the film there is a black space, a trend that continues to the end. The longest dark space appears after Rwanda photos. This elliptical movement becomes conspicuous in the end as part of the consolatory section to which I devote a complete section below.

Another factor of movement in *The Salt of the Earth* is the binary of still and moving images. The alternating move-forward of the film and its progression is a pattern of pause and move. Such a binary serves two purposes. First, it propels the film forward and, second, it creates a discontinuity that the film bemoans. This discontinuity implies movement of elegy. In other words, montage in the film is done in a way that formal discontinuity intimates thematic discontinuity. In "Taking Steps Beyond Elegy: Poetry, Philosophy, Lineation and Death," William Watkin, argues that in elegy there is an oscillation between "*pas,*" and "its negation"

[20] Rascaroli quotes Goethe in Dimitrios S. Latsis's essay "Genealogy of the Image in histoire(s) du Cinéma: Godard, Warburg and the iconology of the interstice." Latsis, in turn, quotes Goethe from Warburg's *Mnemosyne*.

(*Textual Practice*, 1021). "*Pas*" in French means a step, while "*ne pas*" is used to formulate negations. Agamben, according to Watkin, compares prosody in poetry to "walking." As I shall argue later in this chapter, *The Salt of the Earth* acts like a poem, "*Der Spaziergang*" (The Walk) by Schiller and, drawing on the metaphor of "walk," we can make another analogy, proposing the film is a "*pas,*" meaning "step and negation" at the same time, with the photos signifying the "stressed" and the moving images "the unstressed." In *The Salt of the Earth* the photo is the stress and the film the unstressed, and not the other way, as it is the images and stills which are foregrounded. Besides, they are the subject of *The Salt of the Earth* and capture the most important part of the elegiac, grieving the lost ones and at the same time showing the subject of the film mourning. In addition, these photos "reflect" in the sense I discussed earlier. This process of repetition, the "*pas*" and its "negation" which Watkin characterises as the defining element of elegy, continues to the end. On a different layer, the photo collections captured by the photographer stress the woes of people in different parts of the world while the moving images shot by Wenders mostly narrate an episode from the life of the photographer.

In addition, colour palette in the film both reinforces the sense of discontinuity and contributes to movement. The black-and-white and colour binary and the contrast between light and shadows intensify the pattern in the same way that the difference between still and moving images enhances such an effect. In the film, colour is part of movement. The contrast between light and shadows, a defining component of photography that Wenders specifically alludes to in the beginning is one of the elements of montage. Deleuze states that in the French school of film[21] "everything is for movement, even light" (44). Elsewhere he remarks that "the French

[21] In Cinema 1, In a chapter called "Montage," Deleuze explores different styles of montage, which include the Soviet school, the pre-war French school, German expressionist and finally the American school. The French school, according to him breaks "with the principles of organic composition" (41), and adheres to a "mechanical composition of movement-image." Although I'm not arguing *The Salt of the*

school's luminous grey is already like a movement-colour." This contrast, Deleuze affirms, is not "the result of a violent struggle between light and darkness or of an embrace of light and dark. Grey, or light as movement, is alternating movement" (49). Similarly, in his explication of German Expressionism, Deleuze argues that in this movement light is a "potent movement of intensity, intensive movement par excellence," adding "of course light is movement, and the movement-image and the light-image are two facets of one and the same appearing." Deleuze's statement can shed light on how even colour, and the contrast between light and dark, is an element of movement.

Deleuze discusses the contrast between light and darkness in German Expressionism:

> the infinite force of light is opposed to darkness as an equally infinite force without which it would not be able to manifest itself… . It is an infinite opposition as it appears in Goethe and the Romantics: light would be nothing, or at least nothing manifest, without the opaque to which it is opposed and which makes it visible. (49)

Deleuze believes that in the German school, montage is "intensive-spiritual." This intensity as discussed is achieved through the play on light and darkness and through colours.

In the preceding paragraphs I argued how the twin binaries of moving/still images and black-and-white/colour images are montaged in such a way as to facilitate the movement forward of elegy. However, these two pairs are engaged in a dialogic relationship. What I propose is that the still photos and moving pictures are in a rather consistent correlation with colour scheme. The dominating pattern in the entire film is that many of the photos which evoke

---

Earth belongs to any particular category, and for all the fact that Deleuze's thought seems abstract and philosophical rather than concrete, the techniques and styles of each category delineated by Deleuze can be used in this analysis to shed further light on the workings of montage in this film.

loss and grief are in black-and-white while those that intimate hope are mostly in colour. Whereas stills mostly bespeak a sense of sorrow, motion images are about Salgado's life and are suggestive of the hope and movement in the photographer's life. We know that etymologically the word *photograph,* composed of "photo" and "graph," connotes *stasis*, as Nora Alter affirms, while the word cinema, "goes back to the Greek word for movement" ("Sound Scores: Musical Armature in Displaced Person" in Skoller's *Postwar: The Films of Daniel Eisenberg* 61). The rainforests, as part of the moving images captured by Wenders are in colour, while Salgado's childhood forests destroyed by drought are in black and white.

Moving images are, mainly, in colour and stills are mostly in black and white. In addition, in between black and white photo collections there are colour intervals which mostly exhibit an aspect of environment, suggesting that the artists are reflecting and mourning simultaneously the loss and/or suffering of humans and that of nature. Moreover, they appear to be vacillating between sheer lamentation and a desire to move forward and open up to possibilities; the former represented by the black-and-white photography and the latter manifested in colour, and at times, by moving images which are mostly on the environment. In other words, *The Salt of the Earth* portrays artists who oscillate between still photography and moving images, from the *stasis* of photography to the dynamism of cinematography. This vacillation has also been materialized in the ways in which Salgado's photos, especially his freeze frames, seek to stop the time, focus on the objects of lament, while Wenders's moving images seek to make them move towards new possibilities. In other words, while photographs in the film commemorate, moving pictures in the film redress and compensate, and it is the interrelationship between these two that creates the elegy, as the subject constantly is in a vacillating status, between avowal and disavowal of mourning, which ultimately ends in a

passage from mourning. In cinematic terms, montage in the film is convergent. This is to say while the film unifies or merges the objects of loss, different elements of montage similarly come together to create the whole, which happens to coincide with the end of the mourning process.

The binaries of colour and black-and-white and the coupling of moving and still pictures reach an apotheosis, indeed a climactic point, when the film places harrowing pictures from Rwanda, still and black-and-white next to, or just before, moving and colour images of the Salgado's family farm, "turned into a wasteland," as part of the Brazilian rainforests. These two calamities are separated by ten seconds of total dark. This juxtaposition on one level is that of private and public and on another level that of man and nature. The film converges everything, however, not only technically but also thematically in this quintessentially elegiac part of the film. In addition, the presence of two voices in the film helps the convergence to take place more smoothly. We know there are at least two clear voices in the film: one is the photographer's and another is the filmmaker's. Wenders has the god's voice in *The Salt of the Earth.* In other words, Wenders can be like a poet whose poem has an internal voice or a narrator. The voices complement each other. For example, when Salgado, profoundly sad, becomes silent, it is Wenders's voice which comes to the fore and comments. In this part, the filmmaker's voice-over acts like a sound bridge, linking sections before and after the black space to each other, helping the film to carry forward. Sound bridge, as the name implies, is a bridge between two scenes: sound from a previous scene carries over to the next scene or sound from the next scene can be heard before a scene ends.

The kind of relationship between Salgado and Wenders resembles the ancient Greek laments which showed, according to Peter Sacks, "a divided voice structure." (35) Sacks touches on "the use of division between or within mourning voices," as a "convention" in elegy, adding

that this duality of voices could be found in "Greek *threnos*, a formal chant performed by professional mourners, in conjunction with the *goos*, the less formal wailing of the bereaved. An antiphony would result, the voices of the bereaved coming to chime with the refrains of the paid singers." Later when this tradition transferred to Greek drama, Sacks continues, "the lament would have to include the semblance of another voice as stage director, introducing and spotlighting apparently other voices or choruses." The double voices in the film can contribute to the movement forward of elegy in the film. Sacks writes "A separation of voices [thus] reflects and carries forward the necessarily dialectical movement of the work of mourning" (36).

The binary of movement and stasis, similarly, is manifested in music. Just like colour, light, contrasts, and voice, music, too, is inextricably bound with movement in the film. In other words, the vacillation between lingering in lament and moving forward, as much as in photography, can also be traced in music. In "Sound Scores; Musical Armatures," Nora Alter states that "music, like time, must move forward in order to exist. There is no freeze frame for music, no still photography or still life" (61). This suggests that while photographs want to stop the time, the film invites us to move forward. This moving forward, as it were, is made possible by the music score that Wenders mounts on still images. More than heightening the emotions, the music is associated with movement in this film. The score helps the film move more smoothly forward, allowing the film progression because, as Alter affirms, "the movement of music, like that of history is inexorable, it cannot be frozen or stilled." Salgado's stills seek to freeze the frame to mourn the losses but music seems to be pushing ahead, not because music is not on the lamentation side but because there are other losses. Music is indeed a bridging factor between stills which are separated by cuts and it is, hence, a converging element. In the words of Alter "if the fragmentary nature of image track breaks time and space, music just does the

opposite… it [music] becomes the acoustic mortar in which the visual mosaic is set and which holds the whole together" (61).

However, music plays multiple roles in this film and montage in *The Salt of the Earth* benefits from music in a different way. It is usually said the ineffable is expressed through the language of music or maybe that only the ineffable can be articulated through music. German poet Heinrich Heine, for example, in an oft-quoted statement reflects, "music begins where words end." The film employs music at the same time on all the dark interstices, acting sometimes as a sound bridge: the music starts on an image but segues into the black screen where the music reaches a height. Music, of course, enhances the elegiac mood, reinforcing the effects of the photographs and voice-over. However, the score also acts contrapuntally. In "Workers," for example, the tone of the narration becomes more somber and the tempo turns slower moving towards grave -- a term which refers to a slow and solemn tempo -- in which chime-like sounds, reminiscent of choral music, can be heard. The chorale in this part heightens the effect of the voice-over and serves as a converging element which connects seeing and hearing. The film is edited in a way that the layer of sound, in the form of voice-over and music accompany the photos, reinforcing its elegiac effect. Kolker and Beicken in *The Films of Wim Wenders* argue that "music authenticates the visual experience; the eros of seeing and the eros of hearing merge and create an infatuated union and perception and being" (13). Now that I have attempted a formal analysis of the film, let me take a look at its overall structure through interreading the film with a poem.

Schiller's "The Walk"

I discussed the structure and the movement of the film above. Let me turn to the ways in which this film can be read in the light of a poetic elegy such as Schiller's "*Der Spaziergang*" ("The Walk"). Examination of the film with cross-referring to the poem can shed more light on the structure of the film. Both *The Salt of the Earth* and Schiller's elegy are exploratory and spiral. In his interpretation of Schiller's widely-read elegy, Theodore Ziolkowski surveys traditional interpretations of the poem, which tend to see it as circular, arguing, instead, for a movement which is more spiral than circular. Ziolkowski's reading can mainly be beneficial in illuminating the ways in which *The Salt of the Earth* opens and ends with reference to scenes of nature and native peoples, which encircle the film. Much like this scenario in the film, Schiller, as explained by Ziolkowski, meditates over "the countryside, farms, villages, towns and cities successively exposed to his view" (3). Ziolkowski then states that this meditation is a "well-organized essay on the rise and fall of Western civilization," moving from "natural man" to 'modern man" (4). The word "civilization" bespeaks a large magnitude, a universality that can be seen in the film too. Furthermore, both *The Salt of the Earth* and "The Walk" run between "scenic descriptions" and this structure is especially prominent in the earlier version of the poem titled "*Elegie.*" Another analogy between these two works is the way they magnify the importance of "seeing." Ziolkowski believes that "The Walk" emphasises "the act of seeing" (11). *The Salt of the Earth*, similarly, accentuates seeing and then lamenting by foregrounding the photos.

The beginning and the end of the film at the opening and closing credits are like Schiller's work. We are taken in the beginning, subsequent to the appearance of the title and then right at the very end, to Native peoples of Indochina in Indonesia and the Amazonian forests in Brazil. This is suggestive of a continuity on the surface of the earth, signified in these tribes and their natural dwellings, places in which man and nature are at one, and there seems to be an

idyllic kinship between man and his environment, a continuity that is lost in between the two ends of the film. There's one scene in which the indigenous people in the outset start dancing and their cheers are lost into music. The duplicate of this scene would be employed at the end over the closing credits in which the voice of the native dancers blends into non-diegetic music, attesting to the film's effort to speak of an interconnectedness, an affinity with nature represented by these peoples. It's important to note that these opening and closing sections are both moving images shot in colour, symbolising hope.

Salgado talks about a "cycle" when he says "this land is extremely important to us. We are completing a cycle with this land. Within this cycle, we have spent our lives" (1:43:28-1:44:02). This circular movement becomes more conspicuous when Salgado, speaking of his childhood land, states that "it formed my childhood, and accompanies my old age. And when I die, this forest will once again be like when I was born. And the cycle will be complete. It's the story of my life." Just as the film's beginning and ending show the continuity represented in green, so too Salgado's childhood farms that he refers to as "paradise" in the film can be seen in the opening and the ending.

The Salt of the Earth ends with Salgado's meditation on the cycle of life while we see pictures of green lands and clouds -- cloud is a regenerative symbol -- and hear the sound of rain, also signifying regeneration, and reminiscent of death-birth imagery. Accordingly, the film shows different parts of the world by exhibiting Salgado's photos through the art of montage, makes a full circle and eventually returns to the artist's birthplace. Just as Wenders's film starts in Salgado's home, so too Salgado's first major collection starts in his own home continent, in countries like Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia and Mexico, places where he "dreamed of seeing mountains."

Schiller's poem, according to Ziolkowski, commences with "scenic descriptions," moves on to "meditation" about "natural man," onto other meditations on "diversified civilizations" and finally, towards the end, speaks of "decline of civilization." Scenic descriptions in the beginning of the poem are lengthy:

Free the meadow receives me with carpet widespread in the distance,
Through its affable green coils the rustical path,
Round me hum the industrious bees, on pinions uncertain
Flits the butterfly by over the clover red-hued,
Glowing strike me the sun's bright rays, the Westwind rests silent.
Just the song of the lark trills in the genial air.
Now it roars in the bushes nearby, the crowns of the alders
Bend deeply, and the wind waves through the silvery grass.
Night ambros'al closes me round: in sweet-smelling freshness
O'er me the shadowy birch join in sumptuous roof.

These few lines of the poem bear resemblances to the beginning of the film when Salgado is rejoicing in the beauties of nature, taking photographs of the native peoples. In the film, the first shots are immediately followed by the title and the subtitle and we see Salgado start recounting his photographic journey, one which gives a bleak image of the world. In the poem, similarly, we realize such a change when the speaker asks

But who now robs me so suddenly of this fair prospect? A foreign

Spirit spreads quickly out over the foreign terrain.
Brittly separates out what was just lovingly blended.

Subsequent to this point, the poem meditates on the status of Man and civilization and, as Ziolkowsky points out, “decline of civilizations.” However, the poem, eventually, ends in another “scenic description” (9) at the end, when the speaker is back to nature: “… Nature, again, ah! and it was but a dream, / Which did shuddering seize me with life depicted so frightful, / With the fall of the vale fell too the darkness away.” Interestingly, Schiller mentions nature as having the power to fend off “the darkness.” At end of the film, we learn, it is nature in the form of restoration of farms and landscape photography that brings hope to the life of the photographer. The poem ends with

'Neath the same azure sky, on the self-same growing green.
Wander the near and united the distant do wander,
And see! Homer's fair sun, also is shining on us.

The poem is now back to under the same sky and in the same green land it started from. This resembles the end of the film when the photographer speaks of “generations” of people who are benefitting from the resuscitated forests.

The poem’s structure provides a clear guideline of the ways in which the film moves from picturesque lands in the beginning to portrayals of “natural man,” strikingly similar to “natural man” of the “The Walk,” then onto how man destroys nature and is hence destroying man. The film at the same time proclaims disappointment with “humanity” -- a word which

recalls the poem's "civilization" -- as it portrays brutal atrocities and countless deaths in Rwanda and Yugoslavia.

Salgado's walk, his journey, elevates his vision and at the same time leads to the resuscitation of his family farm. However, he is cognizant of the fact that such a recovery takes "generations," as he states, and is, hence, continuous and open-ended. Salgado's journey as shown by Wenders is reminiscent of Schiller's climb of the mount in "The Walk." Ziolkowski believes that the poem is "topographically, historically, and psychologically" spiral and not circular. Let me quote him in detail here as his words encapsulate the form of *The Salt of the Earth*:

> First, the poet's walk leads him up the mountain, and at the end his gaze is directed farther up, to the eagle and the sun beyond- not back down toward his own house. Second, the history depicted in the poem is clearly progressive and irreversible, not cyclical: there is no suggestion of a return to a Golden Age; the poet's present action fulfills the historical past. Finally, the poet specifically does not return spiritually to some earlier and more primitive state of mind. His 'return to nature' is no naive naturism; it is marked by a higher level of consciousness that clearly sets him apart from the 'happy people of the field' and the happy warriors of the heroic culture. (13)

In the film, the photographer has a vertical, climbing movement. This elevation is manifested in the film, literally, in how the photographer treads the hills and mountains in the beginning and the end. He even gazes "farther up," beyond the hills and looking at the skies when he is standing on top of hills in the recovered forests. Salgado, at the same time, comes to the understanding that a continuity between man and nature takes a long time to emerge. It is the photographer's

"present action that fulfills the historical past," to repeat from the quote above. Even the concept of home, Salgado's "*omphalos*" in Brazil, a place where "young Sebastião grew up playing on the banks of the *Rio Doce* rivers," as Wenders comments, has undergone a transformation and no longer exists. The "*omphalos*" the film turns or re-turns to at the end is a totally different place than in the beginning. In addition, on a deeper level, the film raises Salgado's cognizance about his art and about the fate of humanity, which is shown to be interconnected with that of the environment. These three converging factors, which are elevating in direction, at the same time highlight the importance of closure. Just as the poem is "progressive" in its being spiral, which intimates the sense of open-endedness and continuity, so too is the film elliptical and open at the highest point of the spire because not only is there no end to the efforts man can make towards bettering the environment but also because the consolation resulted from such a contiguity is continuous and is achieved over time.

A Turning Point, a Change after a Hiatus: Consolation and Art

The end of Salgado's experiences in Rwanda and Yugoslavia marks a new beginning in the photographer's life and in the film. His profound grief after seeing and recording those lost or living *in extremis,* "the human condition," in short, as Wenders states, brings him to a point where, according to Wenders, Salgado "deeply questioned his role as a social photographer." Having "witnessed to the human condition" in different geographies at various time frames and having mourned the destruction of life through photography, Salgado, "sick" of human brutality and also bemoaning human suffering, decides that "this is my last trip, that disastrous time in Rwanda," believing "there is no hope in salvation of human [species], while looking directly at the camera (1:19:24). He adds a bit later, "how many times … I mourned what I saw," feeling

struck by a profound sense of melancholia. Mourning, as discussed above, is repeated through different photo collections, but the sense of grief is so profound that he is made to admit to something deeper, a sense of melancholia. As explained in the introductory chapter, according to Freud, the impossibility of leaving mourning behind is the characteristic of melancholia. Although repetition, the many times Salgado grieves the losses through photography, is reminiscent of Freudian mourning, the question he asks after Rwandan atrocities reinforces the impossibility, the difficulty of a passage from mourning. Wenders here asks a crucial question, the answer to which can be seen in the rest of the film: "what was left for him to do after Rwanda?" (Fig. 10) This deep sorrow was further intensified as Salgado returned to his family farm in Brazil, but much to his further grief, the farm "was nothing but a wasteland." This is to say the wider wasteland out in the world is now coupled with a private wasteland at home.

There is a turning point here, as the tone of the film turns less sombre, however. The photography and cinematography become colour. Salgado, having lost a son, all childhood memories, and his fellow humans, now embarks on a new project to resuscitate the green forests. This is done at a time when the process of loss seems to be irreversible yet possibilities exist and Salgado cannot afford to miss them. The voice-over here says, "Do the plants take roots?" Nature seems to offer a solace, a compensation, to use a Kristevean term, to the losses or a solution to the hiatus in which he is deeply entrenched. This compensation becomes most evident when Wenders comments, "the land was the solution, the land healed Sebastião's despair" (1:27:40-1:27:51). This "solution" helps Salgado re-turn to photography, as Wenders explains, "jump-starting Sebastião's calling as a photographer once more," allowing him to move towards the future.

Salgado turns to landscape photography and in a sense compensates for his losses through, first, actual growth of green forests and also through memorializing them in his colour photography. This resulted in a collection appositely titled *Genesis*, which according to Salgado, was "a tribute to the planet." This is what connects the two sources of solace, converging them in one point. In fact, Wenders muses that Salgado's collections were a "love letter." The word *tribute*, like homage, points to the elegiac nature of the project, indicating that as much as the film speaks of the whole earth in the loss section, it believes in such an inclusivity in the consolatory part, too. Having witnessed the destruction of the paradise he remembered as a child, Salgado now attempts to find a replacement for that idyll. This collection, portraying humans, animals and plants, took Salgado eight years to complete, almost the same amount of time it took them to recover the barren forests. These are exactly the things he laments on in his previous collections. The consolatory sense and a passage from mourning becomes all the more vivid when we hear Wenders saying, "the land was the remedy to Sebastião's despair." Just as the photographer lamented the loss of humans, and nature in general, the consolatory part, that is, the new photographic collection captures both humans and nature.

There is, however, one revelation that needs to be addressed here. A return to nature or landscape photography and a turn to revival of nature is suggested as being a long, continuous, multi-generational feat, pointing to the ellipticity of such a consolation which is, at the same time, signified by the gradual growth of plants. This affinity between the consolation and the growth of plants can be inferred by "what's wonderful is that an idea can develop and grow," as Salgado states immediately after we hear his reflections about the growth of trees.

Forests are central civilizational assets. Robert Harrison argues in *Forests: The Shadow of Civilizations* that the importance of forests lies in the emergence of civilizations. Just as the

photographer saw prospects of hope in reforestation, there's the prospect of hope for the wider world, too. Wenders clearly articulates that "the land healed Sebastião's despair." In other words, the task of saving has been assigned to nature and to land, intimating a continuity between humanity and nature. If the main loss seemed to be such a discontinuity as discussed above, then consolation can be found in removing the separating "dis." Man's kinship with and his distance from nature can be summarised in these few words by Harrison: "we have transferred our own mortality onto the forests in our destruction of them. They have become as mortal as we are, and their life or death now depends mostly on us" ("Deforestation in a Civilized World"). The dissolution of this discontinuity is manifest in the end when the art of *Genesis* meets the art of forestry, both human artifacts, and in this sense, there is kinship between nature and man. Interestingly and probably wittingly on the part of Wenders, this coincides with a movement towards the future and getting past the profound grief. Harrison notes, "the forest has always represented regeneration in a way that contrasted with the mortality of humans," continuing, "forests are places of redemption" ("Deforestation in a Civilized World"). Although the film does not attempt to suggest any redemption as a definitive, final consolation, the word approximates the mind to a solacing possibility this continuity can offer, one which is shown to be multi-generational.

Towards the end, Salgado clearly admits the interconnectedness of all species and things; Salgado, upon looking at an iguana's paws, meditates: "I cannot help thinking in the hand of a knight in the Middle Ages with those metallic scales to protect him. Looking at the paw's bone structure, I see that iguana is also my cousin. That we came from the same cell" (1:25:55). I argued that in addition to all the losses of people and nature, one further loss was the discontinuity between the two and, in addition, despair over the things that man does to man and

to nature. I propose here that, in addition to the solace that the art of photography and bringing forests back to life offer, there is a further conceptual comfort which can be found in the revelation about the continuity between man and environment. All these three facets of consolation are offered in the continuous consolatory part of the film, that is, right after the superimposition of drought-stricken lands with recovered lands, thirty minutes of emphasis on such an affinity warrants an elaboration given, especially, that this interconnectedness is in itself a comfort. I peruse such a unity through inter-reading the film and the eighth elegy in Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, as delineated by Heidegger.

As a visual elegy, this film bears resemblance in this interconnection to a poetic elegy written by Rilke, whom Heidegger in "What Are Poets For?" sees as "a poet in a destitute time," a line from Hölderlin's poem "*Brot und Wein*" ("Bread and Wine")[22]. Heidegger unequivocally asserts that in Rilke

> The different things, plant, beast on the one hand and man on the other, are identical in that they come to unite within the same. This same is the relation which they have, as beings, to their ground. The ground of beings is Nature. The ground of man is not only of a kind identical with that of plant and beast. The ground is the same for both. It is Nature, as 'full nature.' (*Poetry, language, Thought* 100)

Towards the end of the film everything seems to be connected. Salgado admits, "I'm as much part of nature as a turtle, or a tree… or a pebble" (1:27:05). As Salgado is showing the pictures of *Genesis* to Wim Wenders, and the two artists are conversing about the pictures and continuity

[22] In line 14 of section 7 of "*Brot und Wein*," Hölderlin asks "*und wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit*?" Heidegger refer to this question in his discussion of the poets Rilke and Hölderlin.

with nature, they focus on the image of a gorilla. The camera first shows the beast in a wide shot and cuts to a close-up and finally shows the animal from different angles (Fig. 11-12). We see both the low and the high angle shot of the beast. We hear at the same time Salgado's voice-over which I bring here in full:

> amazing how he looks at us, indeed. There is depth in there. He was coming closer. I was photographing him, his hands in his mouth. He was seeing himself in the mirror for the first time, the front of the lens. He was taking his finger out, putting it back, realizing that it was him. He was becoming aware of his image and I sensed total identification." (1:28:25-1:20:06)

This is where the idea of continuity culminates. The word "identification" is central as it heightens what we hear in the voice-over about nature being our home and belonging to all of us, that "we are as much part of nature as a turtle is." The gorilla is ensconced among trees and the whole image is framed such that, especially in the close-up, it is saturated and "you can no longer even distinguish between the principle and the secondary," to use words from Deleuze speaking about frames. (*Cinema I* 12).

Figure 11. The Salt of the Earth: Image 11

Figure 12. The Salt of the Earth: Image 12

Discussing Rilke's *Duino Elegies* in "What Are Poets For," Heidegger refers to Rilke's idea of "The Open"[23] which he defines as "something that does not block off. It does not block off because it does not set bounds. It does not set bounds because it is in itself without all bounds." Heidegger continues: beings "fuse with the boundless, the infinite. They do not dissolve into void nothingness, but they redeem themselves into the whole Open" (106). Nature, contrary to man, is open and connected or interconnected with infinity, as Rilke says:

> We've never possessed, not for a day
> the clear space in front of us, in which flowers
> constantly open

Heidegger reminds us that Rilke, in a letter to a Russian reader, explicates "the open," arguing, based on Rilke's words, "plant and animal are admitted into the Open" (Heidegger 108). Why Open? Let me go to the poem and cite directly from there, using Heidegger where necessary. In the beginning of the eighth elegy Rilke says, "Animals see the world before them / with their whole eyes. Only our eyes are turned inward." These lines bespeak a difference between animal, as part of nature, and us, humans. Not only "animal" but also "flower" is different from us as even plants, a flower "constantly open." Let me quote a stanza from the section in full to show how Rilke's animal is fully connected with nature and is thus "Open," while humans are not. They see the Open, but we do not and the little we know, "What really exist out there we can tell only / from an animal's face."

[23] Rilke's "open" is different from Deleuze's, which is a technical aspect of montage, and "the whole."

But if our kind of awareness existed
in the confident animal moving towards us
from the other direction -, his knowledge
would drag us behind him. But the creature
knows itself unknown, not understood, blind
to its own state, complete and pure as its gaze.
Where we see the future only, it sees everything
and itself in everything, eternally healed and whole. (47)

This is a very suggestive stanza, indeed, and completely in line with the shot of the gorilla just discussed. Man's lack of cognizance about the continuity with nature is behind the beast's. The animal, as part of nature, is not understood, he remains "unknown" to man who is blind to its "gaze" and the meaning of that gaze. This is exactly the discontinuity that the film complains about, a separation that Salgado seems to be overcoming through a revelation. And "the creature" has an awareness that he is "unknown" and "not understood." This lack of intuition on the part of man about nature's animals, which are "healed and whole" through an immediate intuition, is indeed part of the lamentation in *The Salt of the Earth*. The eighth elegy elsewhere reads,

... an animal
lifts its calm and silent eyes and looks through us.
That's what fate is: to be opposite.

The gorilla gazing directing at the camera from the "opposite" further suggests how distant the man and nature are from each other, coming from different and in fact opposite directions. Salgado's use of "identification" tells of the intuition the photographer has succeeded in acquiring. The gorilla, gazing at Salgado's camera, is said to have an awareness of his image. By placing the man face to face with the animal, the film suggests how little we know and care about such an affinity: In the words of Rilke, "to be face to face / and nothing but that and always opposite." In other words, while animals and humans are connected, man is not aware of such a kinship and destroys the very earth he is a part of.

The knowledge attributed to nonhuman creatures is not limited to the gorilla of the film. In a similar example, we hear Salgado comparing man to a cicada who "sings and dies" and a termite who "builds," suggesting an affinity between man and other creatures in our mortality. As Rilke writes "Close to death … / One stares ahead, with an animal's huge gaze, perhaps," suggesting we are one in death. A theme he returns to later as the eighth elegy meditates on such an affinity

> O, the felicity of a *tiny* creature
> living forever in the womb that carries it;
> the joy of the gnat, still able to leap inside the womb,
> even on its wedding day; for the womb is everything. (47)

And before these lines, Rilke beautifully yet in a deeply elegiac tone reflects on how animals are sad, indeed melancholic, because of such an awareness of mortality and the end, something

humans and animals share and this shared knowledge constitutes another connection between the two. Let's hear his words in full:

> Yet there sits inside the warm, alert beast
> the weight and care of an enormous sadness.
> Something of that melancholy, which often burdens us
> remain with him: almost a memory,
> a vagueness, that the things we struggle for
> were nearer once, faithful to us, infinitely tender
> in their attachment to us. Everything is distance now,
> then all is infinite as breath.

Despite the mentioned kinship, we have a lack of awareness of such a relationship as we are simply "spectators," as Rilke says towards the end of the eighth elegy. We look at everything, he says, but we are "never part of anything." Rilke sadly muses how we, humans, simply look at things, but don't feel we are part of anything in nature, adding "We organize it. It falls apart. / We organized it again, and we fall apart." These lines indicate a tendency of man who, being simply a "spectator," tries to organize nature but eventually falls apart. The following lines reveal man's breakdown as a result of bad treatment of the outside nature and exhausting its resources as though he transcends all and everything in nature:

> And we, onlookers, always, everywhere,
> turned toward everything and never from!

We are surfeited. We set it in order. It breaks.

We put it in order again and break down ourselves. (tr. C. F. MacIntyre)

The last few lines of the eighth elegy bears striking resemblance to the ending of *The Salt of the Earth*, speaking of man who, having lived in this world and seen the world destroyed, comes to the end, to death:

Who has twisted us like this, so that -

no matter what we do - we have the bearing

of a man going away? As on the last hill

that shows him all his valley, for the last time,

he turns, stands still, and lingers, so we live,

forever saying farewell. (tr. C. F. MacIntyre)

If we concede that both our artists, Wenders and Salgado, believe in the connection of everything in this world including plants, animals, humans, a question we need to ask is whether or not "everything" does also include themselves, the lamenters, as well. In other words, is the film ultimately and equally a self-lamentation? In *Dominion of the Dead,* Harrison, asserts that we have a "cognizance of the fact that the living share the mortal fate of the dead" (70). To put it in Heideggerian terms, we have a knowledge of our "being-towards-death," an awareness which Heidegger denies animals. In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, he states, "Our thesis, on the other hand, asserts that the animal is poor in the world" (192), believing that "man is world-forming" (193), putting man on a superior sphere. These words from Heidegger can

indicate the extent to which Heidegger's words stand in contrast to what both *The Salt of the Earth* and Rilke's poem seem to be doing, that is, speaking of and critiquing a discontinuity between man and nature (animals and plants). Let's hear Heidegger: "The animal is poor in the world, it somehow possesses less. But of what? Less in respect to what is accessible to it, of whatever as animals it can deal with, of whatever it can be affected by as an animal, of whatever it can relate to as a living being." He continues-- and these are more important in the context of the film and the poem-- that "Less as against more, namely as against the richness of all the relationships that the human Dasein has at its disposal" (193). "Dasein" is a word used to refer to existence and is usually closely discussed in relation to death, as man's existence places him on a path towards death. The poverty Heidegger speaks about here can be extended to death as he clearly uses the word "Dasein," which makes little sense without a knowledge of death. In other words, Heidegger denies the animal even such a knowledge while the film and the eighth elegy both clearly speak of a shared understanding of death. In addition, while Heidegger speaks of the poverty of other creatures, "the bee, the frog and the chaffinch," meaning their poverty in "accessibility of things," the film and the Rilke poem attribute such a knowledge to animals.

But this knowledge in humans can only be acquired through the death of others, "a lesson that only the death of others can teach," as Harrison contends. Harrison also touches briefly on Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem, an elegy titled "Spring and Fall," in which the child in the poem "grieves 'over Goldengrove unleaving"' but ultimately, "learns that all grieving has a self-referential dimension and that in the end 'it is Margaret you mourn for.'" Harrison continues: "in the other's grief I hear and see my own, for mortality makes brothers and sisters of us all" (*Dominion of the Dead* 70). The identification that Salgado speaks of upon looking at the gorilla's gaze can similarly be extended to our shared mortality. In other words, if Salgado

rejoices in the revelation of kinship with nature, this also includes the intuition about human mortality and if he mourns the loss of others, he is at the same time reflecting on his own mortality.

This interconnectedness is achieved through montage. Let's recall that Deleuze defined montage as "the whole" in which "a change" takes place. In non-Deleuzian terms, this whole is the interplay of all the elements in the film including shots, scenes, collections from Salgado and moving images which produce a whole at the end. Change, on the other hand, refers transitions, to cuts, to sound bridges which allow the film to move forward and, as I said, this cinematic "change" coincides with the elegiac transformation from mourning to consolation. Let's also remember that the film's mode of montage is convergent yet "open." Cinematically, the film reaches the height of montage in a move that unifies or, to use a word by Deleuze, "converges" in the form of a superimposition. Technically, the zenith of an attempt at offering solace, manifested in the resuscitated forests and the new landscape photos of *Genesis*, takes place with the aid of a photographic revelation, by superimposing the green image of the restored lush forests on the black-and-white image of the old deforested lands during the drought (Fig. 13-16).

Figure 13. The Salt of the Earth: Image 13

Figure 14. The Salt of the Earth: Image 14

Figure 15. The Salt of the Earth: Image 15

Figure 16. The Salt of the Earth: Image 16

In elegiac terms, there is an attempt at replacement, an effort to substitute the old barren represented in black-and-white with the new green pictured in colour. Such a dissolve into luscious green, as the montage does through superimposition, is indeed a kind of replacement, one which takes place gradually with the tinges of green becoming increasingly visible, indicating the gradual process of recovery. Accordingly, cinematic replacement represents elegiac substitution and indeed the two overlap. However, this source of solace, this restoration takes place not at the end of the film but rather an hour and twenty minutes into the film when there is still another 27 minutes left to the end, a half hour in which the narrator and the filmmaker take turns contemplating the affinity between man and nature and at the same time reflecting on the open-endedness of their endeavor. They unequivocally articulate that it takes generations for the "destruction" to "be reversed." Salgado points out that "the destruction can be reversed" (1:40:13). He, of course, does not believe *it will be* but rather "can be." This possibility, this consolation is "open" and elliptical, and according to the film, can take generations.

Let me for a moment focus on the mechanism of "change," from loss to consolation encapsulated in the moment of superimposition of green over black-and-white. In a conversation with Mary Zournazi, American philosopher Alphonso Lingis asserts that hope is a kind of birth,

and that "it does not come out of what went before, it comes out of in spite of what went before. Abruptly there's a break and there's an upsurge of hope, something turned to the future. Like the birth of anything new" (*Hope: New Philosophies for Change* 24). The element of hope is essential to the definition of consolatory elegy and classical elegy in which, as Kristeva argues, substitution or compensation takes place.[24] The despairing Salgado would not have been able to embark on a new photographic journey after the horrors he witnessed had it not been for the hope that "land" gave him in an abrupt moment of *anagnorisis* which lead to the possibility of moving towards the future; this becoming is, in fact, despite the past losses. Interestingly, Salgado mourns through his art while at the same time is given consolation through that very art.[25]

Substitution operates through and within representation in the film. According to Jahan Ramazani, Peter M. Sacks "uses … the widely held view that compensatory mourning is the psychic basis of elegy." He continues explaining Sacks's views and writes that, according to Sacks "the poet redresses loss and overcomes grief by installing a substitute for the lost person…" (*Poetry of Mourning* xi). Let me go to Sacks's *The English Elegy*. In the opening of this book Sacks states that this "redress" happens because of "the structural relation between loss and figuration" (1). Salgado's *Genesis*, the remedy to his grief, and Wenders's use of superposition of green farms on the barren farms, as a converging element of montage are

[24] In *Black Sun* Kristeva maintains that "sublimation alone withstands death" (100). Kristeva expands on "sublimation's dynamics," suggesting "it weaves a *hypersign ar*ound and with the depressive void. This is allegory … which regains for myself a higher meaning because I am able to remake nothingness … for the sake of someone else. Artifice, as sublime meaning for and on behalf and the underlying, implicit nonbeing, replaces the ephemeral. Beauty is consubstantial with it" (99).

[25] In the Kristevean terms, art can be a substitute for loss. The depressive knows, of course, that he is only deceiving himself into such a belief in consolation because sublimation is a form of repression. In my analysis of the film, such a sublimation, to use a Kristevean word, is only temporary and this temporariness is, in fact, the reason why the subject of loss is inbetween and always moving on. No consolation, that is, can be ultimate and one should be followed by another as loss is also repetitive.

figural. This is to say that in the film art and its figuration substitutes mourning. In *The Salt of the Earth*, the repeated public and private losses the photographer bemoans finally, after a period of "despair," find a voice in the representational device or art *Genesis*. Figuration intimates a relationship; something stands for or points to something else. The film, however, replaces and substitutes through montage and in this particular case of "change" from loss to consolation, through a superimposition. A similar conviction about the relationship between loss and substitution through figuration is held by Harrison in *Dominion of the Dead*, where he argues how figuration helps the lamenter overcome grief. Harrison devotes one whole chapter to "The Voice of Grief," discussing the "purpose of ritual lament," which for him "is not to honor the dead, not to mechanically discharge emotion, but to master grief by submitting destructive impulse to objective symbolization" (65-7). Similarly, Sacks argues that "the origin of architecture, sculpture and even dance are essentially funerary" (2). It was argued above that "photography is elegiac" as suggested by Harrison and Ellenbogen and as illustrated in many of the photos in *The Salt of the Earth*, which is funerary not just because it gives voice to the dead -- we see the film is replete with corpses and the presence of coffins is salient -- but because, at the same time, the film commemorates and this remembrance helps the mourner overcome grief. Commemoration in the film is ritualistic and is further heightened by tribal rituals at the two ends of the film.

The Salt of the Title

The title of the film references a famous passage in *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* 5:13-16. What does the title refer to? Who are the salt of the earth? Initially Wenders states that "people are the salt of the earth, after all," which seems to be in line with the usual understanding

of the word: the poor, the downtrodden. According to Eduard Schweizer, the Jewish "Laws" were commonly referred to as "the *salt* and *light* of the world" (*The Good News According to Matthew 101*). The Laws refer to the five books of the Hebrew Bible, or the Torah, two parts of which constitute Salgado's work: *Exodus* and *Genesis*. In fact, these two pivotal collections constitute the backbone of *The Salt of the Earth*, with one, *Exodus,* connected to the act of lamentation and the other, *Genesis,* associated with consolation and/or compensation, which marks the end of the filmic elegy and a passage from lament.

Therefore, I propose that the salt of the earth in the title can refer to the photography, which, records and preserves with and through "light." Schweizer also states that "In Matthew, the "earth" (vs 13) and the "world" (vs 14) simply refer to the totality of mankind (vs 16). In addition, the salt as preservatives reminds that Salgado helped preserve the earth, resuscitating the forests. In this literal sense, the salt can also be said to refer to this photographer in this film. The corollary, in relation to the biblical use of both "salt" and "light," is that the former may refer to the man or men, while the latter can be connected to the domain of art. We know the dissolution of the boundary between photographer and his work is also accentuated by Wenders's cinematographic technique in which the photographer and the photography merge.

The photographer here in this film can be compared to a "poet in a destitute time." In Hölderlin's poem "*Brot und Wein*" ("Bread and Wine"), it is asked "what are poets for in a destitute time?"[26] The answer is important. The poet's answer is they are "like the holy priests of

[26] "B*rot und Wein*" is an elegy written in elegiac hexameter distich. In *The Classical German Elegy*, Ziolkowski writes, the poem "has been exhaustively interpreted by various scholars," adding, "the poem consists of a personal framework embracing a meditative core. In the opening half of the framework the poetic persona is driven by his elegiac despair at living in an age of deprivation, a nocturnal period of god-remoteness." Ziolkowski then adds, the "central meditation brings him to the realization that he has come too late: Greek antiquity has irrevocably disappeared." Yet we learn that "the poet's own crisis is resolved," as he moves from "darkness to light." The poet, according to Ziolkowski "sees the justification

the wine-god / Moving from land to land" at a time when "The Father turned his face from people, / And great sorrow began, as it must, to spread upon the earth." We learn from Heidegger, who notes "to be a poet in a destitute time means to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods" (*Poetry, Language, Thought 94*), moving on to conclude that "poets in a destitute time must especially gather in poetry the nature of poetry." We can extend this to photography to propose that the photographer should especially gather in photography the nature of photography, which, according to Wenders, is to show light, in both a literal and a metaphorical way. By literal I seek to point to the sense that photography is about light as affirmed in the beginning of *The Salt of the Earth* and by metaphorical, I mean light, that is, hope or rather a solace can always exist and it is on the artists to record it and show it. That the film is about the life of a photographer also makes such an interpretation of the title all the more meaningful. The subtitle of the film is "a journey with Sebastião Salgado."

In addition to the photographer who works with light and darkness and can be said to be the salt of the earth, there is a subtler reference to the art of filmmaking "in a destitute time." The passage of our photographer from mourning and his stride towards the future, subsequent to the revelation that solace is possible and indeed achievable is heightened by Wenders's unique way of editing the film, which ends in rainforests. This ending signifies another interconnection, bespeaking "cinema as redemption" and in this sense, in a self-referential move, film can be a preservative, a recorder, a writer with light and shadow, and hence, the salt of the earth. *The Films of Wim Wenders* explores this notion in Wenders's art, attributing the power of film to "redemption" and speaking of "the filmmaker as redeemer" (4), contending that Wenders desired the camera to "engage in a great rescue mission, arresting, recording and memorializing what

---

of his own 'Hesperian' society as the new site to which the gods will return when mankind has proved itself to be ready" (129).

otherwise continually vanishes into the visible realm." Demonstrating a desire to "redeem the transient state of things," Wenders, according to Koker and Beicken, alludes to Paul Cezanne who "lamented the disappearance of things" (4). The word "redeem," in addition to "saving," can mean "to compensate," to "redress," which for our artists here has been done through their consolatory, compensatory art offered as a substitute for things lost and lamented.

However, we cannot disregard Wenders's unequivocal statement that "after all, people are the salt of the earth" when he is looking at a picture of a Tuareg woman (Fig. 17), taken by Salgado, a picture that precipitated this whole cinematic project, *The Salt of the Earth* (Fig. 17). If, indeed the photographer and his art are one and the same as the film seeks to communicate to us, and if the lost ones are given a voice through the photographer, then it would make little difference to make a distinction between the two because ultimately "people are the salt of the earth." (Fig. 17-18)

Figure 17. The Salt of the Earth: Image 17

Figure 18. The Salt of the Earth: Image 18

The central premise in *The Salt of the Earth* is that photography and film are each a means of memorializing the absent ones and are, hence, elegiac. The film converges and brings together to the point of imbrication, different objects of loss which include man and nature and their separation from each other. The film, similarly, offers a solace in the form of art and nature and the possibility of the continuity between man and nature. Montage provides a vehicle for the

progression of elegy, creating “a whole” in which all elements, thematic and stylistic, are interconnected, offering a consolation which is “open” and elliptical as the process of resuscitation is continuous and multi-generational in a film whose scale is global and because reversing the process of destruction “can” be possible but is not an absolute certainty. Salgado, after seeing all the death and destruction, finally manages to re-write the world in a new collection *Genesis*, fashioning a different world and a new beginning. There can only be beginnings.

Laurie Anderson's *Heart of a Dog:*

The *Bardo* as Elegy and the Consolation of Love

> As an artist, I have always tried to connect two worlds. The so-called real world and the other world, an alternate world of possibility and chance: a dream world. (Laurie Anderson, *Laurie Anderson*)
>
> You should learn how to feel sad without being sad (Anderson's Buddhist mentor qtd. in *Heart of a Dog*)
>
> Life can only be understood backwards but it must be lived forwards (Kierkegaard qtd. in *Heart of a Dog*)
>
> To live in the gap, between the moment that is expiring, and the one that is arising (Laurie Anderson, *Heart of a Dog*)
>
> Every love story is a ghost story (David Foster Wallace qtd in *Heart of a Dog*)
>
> The Purpose of death is the release of love (Laurie Anderson, *Heart of a Dog*)

Prelude

Laurie Anderson's 2015 essayistic, lyrical, philosophical film *Heart of a Dog* is a 75-minute meditation on life, love, and loss. In this chapter, I focus on *Heart of a Dog* to explore the ways in which Anderson captures those topics, paying a tribute to four characters in her life: her rat terrier, Lolabelle; her husband, Lou Reed; an artist friend, Gordon Matta-Clark; and her mother. As she writes an elegy for these four beloveds, Anderson presents love as the panacea for a passage from mourning which allows her, as her Buddhist mentor contemplates, to "feel sad

without being sad," after she attempts to re-write her life story, being convinced, following Kierkegaard, that "life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards."

It's hard to define Laurie Anderson. She has been described as a multimedia and a performance artist, blending sound and image. Listing all the works by Anderson in this introductory section is not possible. This short introduction only serves as an overture to a detailed analysis of her elegiac film, *Heart of a Dog*.

Anderson has written poetry and has composed lyrics for her musical works. In fact, she says her first influence was the poetry of Vito Acconci "who had begun creating performances out of his confessional obsessions" (Howell 20). Interestingly, her sound installation *Handphone Table* (1976) is based on George Herbert's *Divine Poem*. Her musical works, produced by Warner Brothers Records, include the 1981 *O Superman* and the 1984 *Mister Heartbreak*. She is also a visual artist, creating drawings and sketches. *Night Life* (2006), colour drawings of her dreams, is an example which "capture[s] the main action in the dream." In a short note called "The Dreaming Body" at the end of this collection following all the paintings, Anderson presents her theories of dream, which she eventually returns to in *Heart of a Dog*.[27] At the same time, she has made some of the most thought-provoking art installations such as *Your Fortune One $* (1996), *Handphone Table*, and *Tilt* (1994). She has made short videos and photographs that have been used in her installations and documentaries like *Heart of a Dog*.

While her work engages with the lyrical and the philosophical, she is also deeply social and political. She turned to social issues as early as 1989 when she performed *Empty Places: A Performance* (1992), which "features her alone on stage, telling tales, and singing songs" (Howell 27). This work is the story of pain and suffering and loneliness in America. Like many

[27] This book of paintings does not have page numbers and instead on top of each page the dates on which the paintings were drawn are given. "The Dreaming Body" as a short note comes after all the paintings and has no page number. I will return to this note later in my discussion of dream.

of her other works in which animals perform on the stage along with Anderson, in *Empty Places* there is a section called "Duet with Dogs." Her work exhibits more political themes with another performance *Voices from the Beyond*, a monologue, "a reaction to the Gulf War," as she puts it, accompanied with only three songs and one image (Howell 29).

Anderson's massive *oeuvre* attests to another salient feature -- the pervasive presence of nonhumans, which include objects like a phone in *Telephone* (1996) or a pillow in *Talking Pillow* (1985). Nonhuman animals also feature in her work. Examples include a dog, which can be seen in a section called "Touring with Animals" in her anthology *Stories from the Nerve Bible; A Retrospective 1972-1992* (1994) and a parrot, as in the sound installation *Your Fortune One $*. Whether in the visual or musical arts, she always displays a tendency to blend forms. However, she prefers to be called "a storyteller": "I don't think of my work as avant-garde. I'm just a story-teller," she says (Howell 26). Her story-telling is especially reflected in *Nothing in My Pocket* (edited by Dis Voir books 2009), originally "a sound diary," which was later turned into a print book with the same title. This work also includes the artist's photographs and drawings -- a work in which animals feature as well. *Stories from the Nerve Bible, A Retrospective 1972-1992,* according to Anderson, is "a widely free-form anthology of stories on tape which included fragments of songs, letters, theories about motion, history, and vision" (6). This book contains, as the title implies, the artist's photos, her typographical/graphic art, her installations, and performances prior to 1992.

Anderson's documentary work is relatively small; she has made around four or five documentary films, depending on how the word documentary is defined. These include *Home of the Brave* (1986), "a concert documentary film," about which Anderson reflects "I should never have directed it" because it seemed not a "primary experience" (Howell 26) and another

documentary *Dearreader* (1974), "about sex in the 40s" but also "about how time gets compressed and expanded" ("The Big Picture"). Although her documentary films are independent works of art, they should and can be seen in the light of her other artistic productions.

Heart of a Dog is a documentary that blends many of these forms and techniques, employing them in order to talk about the lost beloveds. Anderson utilises her old home videos, her paintings, her photographs, her musical performances, and even typographic arts, to mourn the absence of her loved ones. Photos and videos sit next to each other and both are interspersed with Anderson's drawings and even animation art and finally her musical scores. From the outset the film's narration, entirely Anderson's voice-over, has a reflective tone, that is, Anderson's lyrical script muses over life, death, and ultimately love, enhancing the personal atmosphere of the film. The whole film seems to be like a surrealistic dream, where she remembers her past and understands it, or writes it backwards. The film seems to display a parallel movement that shifts the focus from one beloved to another, engaging at the same time with both the private losses, and a public lament for victims of the Twin Tower attacks. *Heart of a Dog* is an elegy which portrays death and offers a consolation at the end in a very unique way by giving the stage to one of the absent loves it bewails -- Lou Reed. In addition to grieving the absence of loved ones, the film bemoans a "lost look," a look that acknowledges the kinship between man and animals and treats them similarly in death and love.

Let me, first, turn my attention to my method in this chapter and explain a few of the key terms I use in my examination of Anderson's film. *Heart of a Dog* is an elegiac film. To refresh our mind first, I should say one of my arguments in this dissertation is that the subject of lament, in his/her search for solace, looks for some sort of meaning-making, the nature of which is

continuous and elliptical. I use this word as an adjective of ellipsis. The process of searching for a meaning can be the creation of a form of art, or a philosophizing of sorts about death of beloveds. The three main sources of consolation which constitute my discussions and explorations include art (*The Salt of the Earth*), metaphor (*Oriental Elegy*) and love, as I propose, in *Heart of a Dog*. However, consolation, whether of art, metaphor or love, is a process, not an act and is, hence, continuous. Here in this chapter on Anderson's film, the solace that love gives the narrator, the subject of mourning, cannot and does not stop once a temporary passage from grief is made. Consolation is only temporary as loss never vanishes and only moves from one form to another. In other words, there cannot be a final one-time relief from grief. The subjects of lament may, in the course of their life, constantly think about the lost loved ones, and such a process of consolation is made more complicated when there are multiple losses experienced.

In *Heart of a Dog*, the narrator experiences and speaks about four deceased loves. The finality of consolation is just an illusion, something of a *trompe l'oeil*, and a matter of perspective. The narrator, the filmmaker in *Heart of a Dog*, embarks on a journey that helps her find love as solace. Such a continuous process of consolation, I intend to show, is directly related to and effects another process: a re-creation that the narrator undergoes. Such a re-creating and effectively the continuous, elliptical process of consolation is made possible through the *Bardo*, which points to "a state" after death in which all sentient beings dissolve in order to take new forms, according to Buddhist tenets. The film makes references to the process of re-writing through narrating stories, and *Heart of a Dog* serves the purpose of re-writing the narrator's life. I take re-writing as an equivalent to what happens in the *Bardo*. A Buddhist term, *Bardo,* this limbo-like phase or, indeed, space after death, signifies an in-between state at the end of which a

new form is created. Therefore, elegy, in which re-writing takes place and the *Bardo* in which re-shaping occurs are taken to be one and the same in this analysis. In other words, the elegiac and the *Bardo* merge in the film and are one and the same. In fact, it is the act of re-writing, which facilitates re-creation of the narrator's self.

Self re-creating through consolation of different types is comparable to the process of replacement and compensation that Kristeva espouses, especially in her influential work *Black Sun,* where she talks about art as compensation for loss. Re-creating of the self through consolation recalls works by other literary scholars of the field such as Peter Sacks and Jahan Ramazani whose insights on elegy, drawing on "Mourning and Melancholia" by Freud, have been key texts in the study of elegy. To refresh our mind, mourning, Jahan Ramazani contends, following Freud, connotes a passage from lament and has solace at its core, while melancholia, especially characteristic of Modern poetry, suggests a deep state of grief in which the bewailing subject does not want a consolation. Yet, following Diana Fuss,[28] I wish to carve a space for consolation; a space that is open-ended and similar to an ellipsis. It is this continuous process of solace that leads to re-creation of the self and it is within such a perspective that re-creation makes sense. In other words, loss becomes an occasion for re-creating the self. It is based on such a form- or life-changing logic in the intermediary period or process of the *Bardo* that I employ the idea of *re-creation of the self* because the subject of lament, the narrator who makes the film as a *bardo,* comes out of it eventually as a new self.

[28] Fuss states: "Even when elegy's rhetorical arts of resuscitation fail to console, as they often do, poetry is no less worthy, or less ethical, for the endeavor." This refusal to read melancholia as an illness is in the spirit of Kuzniar who treats melancholia not as a mental disease or disorder. Kuzniar believes "to speak in terms of a redemption of loss through representation is to invoke a different tradition of melancholia in juxtaposition to the Freudian one that robs the depressed patient of consciousness of her loss and the ability to voice it" (11). These remarks by both Fuss and Kuzniar suggest their efforts to go beyond Freud and see melancholia in a different way. In Freud, the melancholic is not capable to voice, while in both Kuzniar and Fuss, the melancholic is.

In *Heart of a Dog*, the elegiac and the process of re-creation of the self operates through the concept of the *Bardo*. The term was originally used in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* or the *B*ardo *Thödol*. According to C. G. Jung, the book can be said to be "instructions for the dead and dying" and "a guide for the dead man during the period of his *Bardo* existence" (*The Tibetan Book of the Dead* xxxv). The concept refers to "that state of existence which continues for 49 days after death until the next incarnation" (xxxviii). In this process, there is erasure of the self, and emerging or creation of a new form or self. I demonstrate how the literal use of the word, which can be seen in the film as referring to periods after the death of the narrator's loved ones is coupled with a metaphorical or artistic *bardo,* which is the diaries the narrator keeps, starting in the middle of the film.[29] The aim of such a diary-keeping is re-writing. The film as well follows the logic of the *Bardo* -- to experience transformation. Everything, formal and thematic, in the film emanates from the centrality of this concept.

In *Heart of a Dog*, we know the narrator, well cognizant of the impossibility of replacing the lost ones, ends her film with "love," through giving voice and the stage to a loved lost one, Lou Reed. Consolation is possible through the imaginative presence of the lost one in elegy, a ventriloquial technique that brings the object of lament back to the mourning subject's life. However, the object of loss is not replaced by the source of consolation, that is, by love. In *Heart of a Dog*, the wraith, the spirit, or the memory of the objects of love dominates the work, and the presence of the lost ones in the work of art seems to be the actual act of mourning, as the subject, mourning their deaths, names them and gives them voice. To put it in a different way,

[29] In this chapter, I have used the definite article "the" before *Bardo* as a noun. I have followed *The Tibetan Book of the Dead or The After-Death Experiences on the Bardo Plane, according to Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup's English Rendering*, with a commentary by C. G. Jung. However, I have taken the liberty to use "a" before *bardo* when I refer to film as *bardo*, a metaphorical *bardo* that Laurie Anderson enters through her film. In addition, when the term refers to the period after death, it is written in capital B while the word is written in small b when it denotes metaphorical *bardo*.

ventriloquism serves the elegiac. It is the appearance of the lost loved ones that is the source of consolation. Anderson bewails the four deaths by giving voice to the dead through the figurative device of ventriloquism.

Such a technique, used in lamentation, should come as no surprise. Diana Fuss discusses the presence of the lost loved ones in elegiac poetry, maintaining that "prosopopoeia" and "ventriloquism" are used to give voice to the departed ones and "bring them back to life" (7). Fuss's deployment of "prosopopoeia" as a rhetorical figure is used in her "meditation" on poetic elegies and specifically in what she calls the "corpse poem," where she discusses the ways in which such an elegy revives corpses.[30] Similarly, she utilises "ventriloquism" as a figurative device to especially explore what she calls "the surviving lover poem," (78) in which elegies "have also been powerful mediums of surviving." However, I exploit the technique to demonstrate how the film removes the boundaries between different voices including the survivor's voice, that is, the narrator's, in addition to providing a means of giving the absent beloveds a voice. For example, Laurie Anderson's voice mingles with her rat terrier's and a similar merging of voices seems to exist between Anderson and Lou Reed. Ventriloquist techniques have long been used by Anderson in her installations and musical performances as suggested above. In *Fortune One $* (1996) "a life-size" and "animatronic parrot" named Uncle Bob is used "who can turn its head and talk by moving its beak." The parrot is a "double," or a "surrogate speaker," who "perform[s] with Anderson onstage" and can have different forms including human or animal (Li and Lai 350). Li and Lai define ventriloquism as "the act or the art of speaking or uttering sounds in such a manner that the voice (or sound) appears to come from a source other than the speaker," continuing that the technique "implies the separation of voice and speaker, creating a double existence where the ventriloquist throws his or her voice on

[30] I employed the term in my discussion of *The Salt of the Earth*.

the dummy" (351). In this chapter, I explore the ways in which, cinematically, the lost loved ones are given a voice and a stage in the film by the narrator in a process which is akin to ventriloquism. Fuss, of course, employs the term to "help death be heard once more" (5). She states that in what she calls "last-word poems," the poet assumes "dying personas in order to imagine their own final moments on earth (13). I have used the term differently to speak about how Anderson gives voice to her dog and how she and her rat terrier can embody each other. I address such a technique later in the discussion of voice.[31]

Finally, as in other chapters, I inter-read my filmic elegy with a poetic elegy. The chapter broaches a poem that intersects, in form and content, with the film, treating subjects that the film reflects on. The poem is Derek Walcott's "Oddjob, a Bull Terrier," which is akin to the film in the way it bewails different love objects, the human and the animal, and in the ways in which it removes any demarcations between these objects of lamentation. The poem portrays different deaths and attempts to offer consolation to the sorrows the speaker experiences. This poem follows the cinematic analysis of *Heart of a Dog* as it serves as a recapitulation of the main points discussed in the film.

Formal Parallelism and Thematic Analogy

[31] I first began thinking about the use of ventriloquial technique in poetry in a course on Seamus Heaney and later learned the technique, mainly and originally a dramatic technique, is used in other arts. Diana Fuss's elaboration of the term in her poetic meditation on elegy was instrumental in convincing me the term can be used in *Heart of a Dog*. I was further convinced the term can be used here upon reading "Voice, Object and Listening in the Sound Installations of Laurie Anderson." The article, makes references to the term while discussing the use of nonhuman voices of both animals and objects in Anderson's installation arts. I believe that the film art, as a form which is closest to dramatic arts, makes the use of ventriloquism all the more pertinent.

At the center of Anderson's techniques lies a parallelism, which holds the whole film together. One can find many examples where the film makes progression through analogy. In fact, the underlying technique of *Heart of a Dog* is analogy. What is the *parallelism* and the *analogy* I am alluding to here? Anderson tends to move from man to animal and from things human to things animal, thereby blurring the border between the two, that is, between Lolabelle and Lou Reed, who constitute the narrator's lost loved ones. In addition, the film deploys an analogy between the private and the public, moving so that the two domains engage in a dialogic relationship with one another. Let me briefly clarify these two words constantly used in this chapter. While the two terms are closely interconnected, with one evoking the other, I use the word *parallelism* to refer to the relationship between formal features of the film while the word *analogy* alludes to the thematics. Scenes from 9/11 and those from the narrator's personal life are shown alternately. The film's representational and cinematic techniques seem to work through this parallelism. On the other hand, I utilise the word *analogy* and its derivatives to point to a thematic similarity and the ways in which the objects of elegising, that is, humans, and the only animal of the film are compared.

Anderson treats her loved ones, whether husband, canine companion, friend, or mother with the same logic. It is this shared logic of grief on the part of Anderson that allows such an analogy to be possible and it is, in fact, such a similar treatment of absent beloveds that finds, ultimately, a consolation in love of both man and animal. The analogy is extrapolated to the concept of love in Anderson's film, which is offered not only as source of solace in the end but is, at the same time, something that binds all together. Love is something that brings humans in the film and its only canine together. The film shows how "loving" is shared by Man and the animals.

Let me for a moment concentrate on the formal and technical ways in which the film moves along through switching from man to animals and vice versa. In the following few paragraphs I refer to certain scenes from the film and risk being descriptive as, first, I want to show how parallelism functions and, then, I seek to elicit a linear line of movement in a film which might otherwise seem fragmented. In a section which resembles a prologue to the film, the narrator shows her "dream body,"[32] taking us to a hospital where she gives birth to her rat terrier, Lolabelle. The scene is surreal as we hear the narrator in her mesmerizing voice say, "I had arranged to have Lolabelle sewn into my stomach so that I could give birth to her. Lolabelle wasn't a puppy. She was a full-grown dog" (Fig. 19-20). As the scene from the hospital comes to a close with the foreshadowing phrase, "I *love* you forever," we are immediately catapulted, through a cut, to another place, very different from the birth scene. We know the narrator is on her mother's deathbed when we hear her saying, "I'm standing in the room where she was dying." This shift from birth to death, and from her rat terrier to her mother, is very sudden. A bit later, around eight minutes into the film, the viewer is taken, through a cut, to the tragic events of 9/11 and the collapse of the Twin Towers. This switch also represents a change from the personal and familial to public and social. That is to say, *Heart of Dog* is functioning on multiple levels. This shift also juxtaposes birth and death. The juxtaposition of shots invites us to view the scenes analogically or metaphorically. As the different scenes are on different planes, we read them analogically. The hospital scene is important as it presages, first, the dreamlike atmosphere of the film, and second, towards the end we learn, retrospectively, it has been an important part of the narrator's bardo.

[32] In *Night Life*, a collection of paintings, Anderson speaks about "Dreaming Body," saying "Maybe dreams are the secret language of the body. The body which has been silent all the day talk to us all night in the private language of images, puns, gossip, memories, dire predictions, fables and stories."

Figure 19. Heart of a Dog: Image 1

Figure 20. Heart of a Dog: Image 2

In another equally abrupt shift of focus we are hurled back again to Lolabelle who is taken, by Anderson, to Northern California where the narrator intends to "do a kind of experiment" with language. However, instead of focusing on the experiment Anderson initially plans to do, the narrator and her rat terrier go on a long stroll in which Lolabelle is nearly caught by a hawk. The film returns to this experimentation with language and dispensing with it later. According to Anderson, in this scene, the expression on Lolabelle's face bespeaks a "realization that she was prey and these birds had come to kill her," and more importantly, "the realization that they could come from the air." Such an eye-opening knowledge cuts to the thrusting of giant planes into the Twin Towers, that is, a dog's cognition of the danger from the air comes after, in time and order, the human equivalent of Lolabelle's realization, the danger the planes from "the air" posed to Man. The response, Anderson comments, to this danger is the same for both the film's canine and humans. Anderson wonders, "where have I seen this look before," only to remember that "it was the same look on the faces of my neighbours in New York." A central word or rather "the" central word here is the "same." This sameness, as part of the film's analogy, which intimates not so much a likeness, not so much an identity between the species as a similar response to things, here natural reaction to threats from the air, pervades the entire film.

We witness the moments of Lolabelle's death rather early, albeit briefly; fifteen minutes into *Heart of Dog*, much like the scene of Anderson's mother, which is introduced early into the film. As we move forward, we are oriented to the film's rhythm and the pattern through which it operates. The film tells the story of Lolabelle's life along with episodes from Anderson's mother's life. Anderson narrates the death of Lolabelle along with that of the narrator's good artist/sculptor friend, Gordon Matta-Clark, and her mother. The documentary captures moments of the narrator's love for her husband, Lou Reed, and her dog, Lolabelle. Accordingly, Lolabelle pervades the film, and her presence, whether in life, death or love can be felt whenever Anderson is talking about the life and death of her other lost loved ones. Lolabelle is given a central, binding position in the film as her life, narrated in parallel with the life of other characters in the film, is connected with love, a concept the narrator re-discovers as a possible solace for her multiple losses. And it is the dog who, we hear later, "taught us how to love," whether this third person plural pronoun refers to Anderson and her husband Lou, or Anderson and her mother.[33]

Anderson merges, in another parallelism, "the Jewish immigrants who arrived with nothing," suddenly with Lolabelle's migration: "she was bought by a couple who were in the middle of a divorce." Lola, landed in America subsequent to spending some time in Canada "where she spent a month of camping and crying" and "where she learned the great skill of empathy." Jewish immigration and Lolabelle's migration are another point where movement between man and animals is done in parallel; a shift much like a jump cut, sudden and abrupt.

[33] The question as to why Lolabelle has this position in the film instead of, say, a human person or thing may be raised. This question is not within the scope of this chapter and is, indeed, not part of its focus. Marjorie Garber and Alice Kuzniar have addressed dog love and dog loss in their work. Marjorie Garber's in *Dog Love* argues that dogs have the capacity "to offer us a way to mourn for our own lost beginnings," continuing this ability "is doubled by the dog's capacity to take upon himself or herself our present and future griefs as well. The loss of a dog may bring back other losses, at the same time that it is itself a profoundly painful event" (247). Garber also refers to the uninhibited emotions of mourning at a dog's death, writing, "the degree of naked sentiment could perhaps be exhibited in tribute to the death of a pet," adding, "yet the real object of nostalgia, unsurprisingly, is the author's former self."

This episode in the film is important as it points, first, to the personal and public binary that Anderson seeks to magnify and, secondly, to the ways in which the film moves from human to canine being. The parallelism oscillates from the public to the private and from human to animal. Immigration of the Jews, signified by the ships shown in a long shot cuts to the long shots of large dog cages where so many dogs are kept. The ship, signifying a collective exodus of the Jews under Nazi persecution, narrows down to a particular person's ID with a photo. Similarly, we see that the shot of dogs in the cage under hard conditions of captivity narrows down to a particular dog, Lolabelle.

In another example of parallelism, we hear Anderson pondering the space between life and death, musing on "the real city." She imagines or tells us to imagine "falling through your mind in glittering pieces and when you close your eyes, what do you see? Nothing? Now open them." The words "now open them" are dissolved into another episode in Lolabelle's life, to her blindness, which lasts for two years, a long two years between life with open eyes and death. In this part, Anderson plays on her own seeing and unseeing, juxtaposing them with Lolabelle's. Such an analogy between Anderson and her canine companion can be seen throughout the film. We know that Lolabelle's life and death are portrayed in parallel with Lou Reed's, Anderson's mother's, and Gordon Matta-Clark's and, thematically, analogous to theirs. However, a specific similarity exists between the filmmaker and her dog. Lola is shown as an artist and the film presents her as making paintings and sculptures, playing music and, at the same time, recording things with her eyes. These arts are, in fact, exactly the arts which form a part of Anderson's own career. The shift from the human being to the animal being is best exemplified in such a close bond between the filmmaker artist and her canine artist companion.

Perhaps the most important part of *Heart of a Dog*, as far as the pervading analogic technique is concerned, can be said to be the moving moments when Anderson reflects on suffering before death, a view that the film strongly believes that man and animals are one in suffering and it portrays such an affinity clearly.

> When Lolabelle got very sick, we took her to the hospital. We spent a lot of time with vets, and they always wanted to give you this speech they'd prepared about pain, which was 'of course you don't want her to be in pain. And so, we just give her a shot and put her to sleep and then another shot, and she stops breathing.' … I was really worried about this so I called our Buddhist teacher, and he said 'animals are like people. They approach death, and then they back away, and it's a process, and you don't have the right to take that from them'. Pretty much exactly what your Jewish grandmother would say… . So, we went to the hospital and we took Lolabelle home. We stayed with her for three days and her breath slowed and then stopped. We had learned to love Lola as she loved us, with a tenderness we didn't know we had. (36:08-38:04)

These few lines from Anderson's voice-over, narrated tenderly, bespeak a kinship between humans, "people," and animals, here Lolabelle, vis-à-vis pain and suffering. Both "our Buddhist teacher," and "your Jewish grandmother" maintain "animals are like people," not just in their experience of suffering as sentient beings but in how they undergo the "process" of death, approaching it, and backing away from it until the moment arrives. Moreover, the last two sentences intimate a revelation, indeed an epiphany that is pronounced after Lolabelle's death: "we had learned to love Lola as she loved us," which evinces the love that these two beings

share. Anderson sees her human and canine companions similarly in love and in loss. Anderson moves on to say "with a tenderness we didn't know we had." These words indicate that it was Lolabelle who opened "our" eyes to this "tenderness," to the love "we" had. Indeed, Lolabelle and the "we" of the sentence, stand face to face, holding a mirror to each other. It is here that we remember the word "tender" was heard once before, very early in the film, when Anderson's mother thanks her for "being part of the experiment" with animals as she was dying. We hear Anderson's voice: "when my mother died, she was talking to the animals that had gathered on the ceiling. She spoke to them tenderly."

The long quotation cited above encapsulates the three key words of the film: pain, death, and love; the three words that bind human beings and the canine being of the film together and the three words that constitute the film's main subjects. Later we also learn that "the purpose of death is the release of love." This part, in which the film dwells on the affinity between humans and animals in suffering, is concretized immediately through juxtaposition of Lolabelle's "final hours" with the final hours of Anderson's sculptor friend, Gordon. A "minimalist" artist, Gordon is surrounded by his friends when he had "only 24 hours left to live." The spatial proximity of Lolabelle's and Gordon's deaths is not the first one. Previously, Lolabelle's final hours were briefly juxtaposed with the narrator's mother's final hours. As I suggested before, *Heart of Dog* constantly cuts from its humans to Lolabelle and vice versa. The elegiac film mourns the deaths of these four figures and, death, like life, constitutes a binding factor. In elegies, the subject speaks about both the life and the loss of his beloved.

The *Bardo* and Decreation: Towards Re-creation of the Self

Once Anderson speaks about Lolabelle's and Gordon's death, we hear, for the first time in the film, the name of *The Book of the Dead*. We are introduced to the tenets of Buddhism, its conception of the afterlife and such notions as "new form of life" and "new consciousness," in what appears to be an initiation process. Immediately after Gordon's and Lolabelle's death we witness a ritualistic ceremony, a Buddhist funeral, the only instance of actual funerary mourning in the film, which seems to have been done for both of these deceased, the dog and the sculptor. The nondiegetic sound of chimes over which we hear the word "recognize this" calls to mind a Buddhist funeral. "Recognize this" is repeated six times, giving us a sense that *Heart of a Dog* is in fact enacting a Buddhist funeral, one in aural form. The funeral is aural in the sense that we only hear it. This emphasis on "hearing" is further reinforced as we learn that in the Buddhist tradition, "recognize this" is chanted into the ears of the dead, because hearing is the last sense that dies, according to *The Book of the Dead*.[34] Gordon's and Lolabelle's deaths are marked by a few seconds of total darkness. The screen is dark and it is here that we hear Anderson say, "and the next thing you see is your next life."

Following this realization, the presence of a series of images, some of them repetitions from previous images in the film appearing in a quick sometimes jolting, sometimes slow motion, makes us wonder why all these images are being repeated. The answer, we conclude, lies in memory. Anderson is making flashbacks to the past; however, we suddenly learn that it is the memories of Lolabelle which are being shown as we hear Anderson state, "you are not alone in leaving this world and first you don't realize you're dead but continue doing things you used to do, looking for things you've lost." As we hear these words, we observe Lolabelle playing the

[34] This chanting into the ears of the dead can also be observed in some Islamic traditions. While the deceased is being interred and before the last goodbye, someone from among the dead person's relatives present at the burial reads verses from the Quran and other sacred words into the ears of the dead so that, maybe, the deceased remember them in the hereafter.

piano. Lola, dead and now in the *Bardo*, is dreaming about her past. We also see the boat she was on while she was in Canada. The outing in Northern California is also briefly repeated. The camera shows Lolabelle's head looking sideways in a way that the camera angle and the angle through which the dog is looking are the same. Most of these images are Lola's memories. An old photograph showing Anderson's childhood signifies Anderson's memories, not Lola's. There seems to be a sudden shift from the narrator to her dog recalling things. Anderson, through her art, allows the dog to reminisce about her past life while the dog is in the *Bardo* and hears the word "recognize this." These dream-like images -- dream in the sense that they are blurry and cut into each other in quick successions -- signify the *Bardo*. It is the dog's process of transformation into a new form.

All of these images are photographs taken and videos captured by the narrator. These shots and images appear to us from behind what seems to be a pane under the rain. Raindrops flow down the pane. Lola's dreams of her past life, all her memories while she in the *Bardo*, are seen from behind this rain-battered glass. This is a technique used by Anderson to portray the inside of Lolabelle's *Bardo*. In these moments inside the dog's *Bardo*, we constantly see close-ups of Lolabelle with her large glistening eyes in the focus. There is an instant in the film when Goya's dog in his painting dissolves into Anderson's dog and the two become one, suggesting the fears and concerns of Lolabelle. The superimposition of the painting's dog on the dog of the film heightens the latter's concerns. The camera zooms on the eyes of the painting's dog, after tilting on the whole art, and then we see Lolabelle's large eyes gazing at the camera (Fig. 21-24).

Figure 21. Heart of a Dog: Image 3

Figure 22. Heart of a Dog: Image 4

Figure 23. Heart of a Dog: Image 5

Figure 24. Heart of a Dog: Image 6

The only instance when Lou Reed, another lost beloved, appears in the film, is through the eyes of Lolabelle in the *Bardo*. While we see all the memories and dreams, the film continues its funeral chimes and the last memory, that of Lola, Anderson and Lou Reed on the beach, fades into the sea and waves and the sound of chimes gives way to the sound of waves. It is exactly after this last memory where chimes are replaced by the sound of waves fused with very few seconds of a music in which Anderson is heard singing. It is here that the waves fade into the blurry rainy pane and the image of the pane, in turn, cuts to typewriter keys, marking the end of Lolabelle's presence in the in-between realm of the *Bardo*.

Anderson's *bardo* is part of the elegy she writes for her losses and, as in the *Bardo*, the self dissolves and takes a new form, Anderson walks back her life, that is, remembers and narrates her past life, in order to form a new self. It is such an erasure that allows the narrator to

"live her life forwards" while she tries to "understand her life backwards," as Anderson quotes the Danish philosopher, Kierkegaard's dictum that "life can only be understood backwards but it must be lived forwards." She is writing her "self" and she is engaged in the act of re-creation of self and finding a meaning in the past to be able to live forwards.

After experiencing these losses, Anderson starts writing her elegy, signified by the extreme close-up of the typewriter keys, entering a process which is tantamount to the *Bardo.* In this process, she engages in re-writing her past life, thereby re-creating her self. It is after the ritualistic ceremony and Lola's presence in the *Bardo* that Anderson embarks on her particular *bardo*. Giving an account of her real-world diary, mostly concerning the aftermath of 9/11, Anderson says, "I spent the next 49 days keeping a kind of double diary, keeping track of what was going on in real world and what was going on in the *Bardo*." This real diary is followed by her theory of dream. In keeping this "double diary," Anderson is active in two domains of the public and the private again; a diary-keeping takes place after the death of Lolabelle, a private grief, and one after 9/11, a public lament.

Strange as it may sound, Anderson at the same time explores what "was going on in the *Bardo*" for 49 days, the number of days the dead lodge in it, according to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The moment we learn about Anderson's intent to keep such as diary, we realize the beginning of the film is, in fact, when Anderson is in the *Bardo* dreaming about giving birth to Lolabelle. This is to suggest that Anderson's metaphorical *bardo* is the same as her dream. In other words, it is here that we learn Anderson is recalling in order to re-write. The *Bardo* for the dead, according to *Book of the Dead*, takes place after life but apparently, as Anderson reveals, the living can experience it through dream. When Anderson writes a double diary, she writes a *bardo* for herself, one for Lolabelle through paintings, and another for American society after

9/11. In fact, Anderson writes and unifies a public *bardo* after 9/11 and a private *bardo* of the narrator and of her rat terrier. *Heart of Dog* from the beginning moves these two spheres in parallel. We witness that the narrator speaks about her personal grief while at the same time she conspicuously memorializes those lost in a national tragedy. The narrator addresses both the public and the private in her diary because, as a sentient being can experience the *Bardo* after death, a society too, Anderson wants to say, can experience a *bardo*. To put it differently, as much a person can recover from the loss of a beloved, society, too, can recuperate from a public calamity. However, recuperation is a process, not an act.

A figure as central to the film and a term as pivotal to the definition of elegy as the *Bardo* needs further elaboration. Anderson remarks that according to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, *Bardo* "isn't a place, it's more like a process that lasts 49 days as the mind dissolves and … the consciousness, or let's say, the energy, prepares to take another life form." *The Book of the Dead*, Anderson maintains, writes that after the *Bardo* "the next thing you see is your next life. A slow awakening to this world or another world. Now you have another form, without a body." It is based on such a change in the person's life, that the idea of re-creation of the self makes sense. If the *Bardo* is literally "the process" after death when the dead take "another life form," then metaphorically, the narrator who is keeping a "double diary" as a *bardo*, is engaged in taking a new form and is, hence, re-creating her self. In order for this re-creation to happen, her past self needs to be erased.

From the moment that Anderson proclaims her plan to keep a "double diary," we encounter a narrator who is constantly reminiscing about her childhood memories, talking about two near-death or death-like experiences. She recalls a childhood incident, in which in a swimming pool she wants to "do a flip from the high board." She decides to "somersault and

straighten out" before hitting the water. But she misses the pool and hits the ground after which she spends a few weeks in the hospital where, in retrospect, she "remembered the missing part" of the hospital experience: "it was the way the ward sounded at night. It was the sounds of all the children crying and screaming. It was the sounds that children make when they're dying." These moments of recalling and going back to the past is part of what she, following Kierkegaard, refers to as writing the life "backwards" and is in fact part of Anderson's *bardo*. She is telling this story because she has come to intuit the importance of erasure by recalling stories and telling them. But how? It is exactly as a footnote to the childhood hospital incident that she discovers the importance of stories in erasure:

> There was always something weird about telling this story that made me very uneasy, like something was missing. Then one day, when I was in the middle of telling it, I'd cleaned it up, just like the way nurses had. That's what I think is the creepiest thing about stories. You try to get to the point you're making usually about yourself or something you learned and you get your story and you hold on to it and every time you tell it, you forget it. (57:31-59-13)

Anderson knows that to forget she needs to write, that is, she needs to make this film. In fact, the whole film seems to be like a surrealistic dream, as if events are happening in a *bardo*, as if Anderson is writing the film in her *bardo* where she remembers her past and understands it backwards in order to erase it and, exiting her *bardo*, complete the process of re-creation of the self. The import of the concept of erasure becomes all the more evident as we learn the narrator wants to forget. Her keeping a "double diary," an act of spending time in the postmortem

process, is in keeping with such a re-creation of the self,[35] as in the *Bardo* all the memories dissolve and a new form is created.

In sum, Anderson has a firm faith in Kierkegaard's insight and she seems to be combining it with her Buddhist teachings about the process of erasure in the *Bardo*. In fact, the *Bardo* is important in the film because it's exactly about an erasure that leads to and is followed by a new birth. When Anderson muses, "to live in the gap between the moment that is expiring and the one that is arising, luminous and empty," she is reflecting on the *Bardo* which is between past life "expiring" and future life "arising."

There are two events or episodes in *Heart of a Dog* that summarise the importance of this erasure in leading to birth, highlighting erasure as a prerequisite to birth.[36] First, Anderson, while keeping her diary, connects human dreams to forgetting. She speaks about newborns who suddenly stop breathing, "when dreams of the past are the most intense." These dreams are mostly "from before the baby was born, before the baby began to breathe and the dreams are so real the baby gets lost in them and just stops breathing." This is called SIDS or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome also known as crib death. The womb is a *bardo* for a fetus to forget its life in the womb before birth, in the same way the *Bardo* after death is a spatial and temporal station where the newly-deceased erase their memories in order to be born again. The dead must forget in order to be able to take this new form after the *Bardo*, as we hear the film reflects.

---

[35] Let's reflect back on Sandler's "On Grief and Reason, On Poetry and Film: Elena Shvarts, Joseph Brodsky, Andrei Tarkovsky," where she discusses the speaker in Brodsky's poem, "August Rain." Sandler refers to the poet's "self-creation," as the re-creation" of his 'parents' world. Speaking about grief in Brodsky's poem "August Rain," Sandler refers to "the act of mourning" as "an act of "self-creation" (662), adding "The project of recovery is potentially infinite" (663).

[36] Anderson talks about "The Dreaming Body" at the end of her book of drawings, *Night Life*, a collection of drawings which shows her real dreams. She writes "Another theory about the body and dreams suggests an explanation for SID - sudden infant death syndrome. According to this theory, sudden death occurs during the deepest level of REM sleep and is caused by the infant's pre-natal dream. The body is dreaming of life before birth, before breath. And the dream is so vivid that the infant stops breathing (*Night Life*).

The second episode is Anderson's keeping a journal like a *bardo*. In writing her diary, Anderson, in search of some intense moments, remembers all her past memories, including her childhood memories. She searches for those moments because they may help her forget and form a new self. She keeps a journal to understand her life "backwards" and "live it forwards" in the hope of a new birth or re-creation of the self. The making of the film is part of this process. The images of the child, seen in extreme close-up, are followed by Anderson's past memories. The reference to the "crib death" is made as a metaphor for Anderson's effort to forget in order to take a new self. Keeping a double diary, both private and public, is also to this end. We see old videos of the aftermaths of the Twin Tower attacks and then paintings of Lolabelle's *Bardo*, suggesting that on both personal and private levels, erasure can happen.

Anderson continues remembering as part of her quest in the *Bardo* and as part of her search for meaning after losing her beloveds. Apart from childhood memories, which highlight the importance of telling stories in forgetting, she jumps to the near, very near, past and once again relates stories about Lolabelle and about her mother. On Lolabelle, Anderson contemplates, "one of the things I did to try to remember her was make huge paintings, imagining her 49 days in the *Bardo*. Most of the paintings were full of wind and noise and chaos and half-remembered songs."

Figure 25. Heart of a Dog: Image 7

Figure 26. Heart of a Dog: Image 8

Figure 27. Heart of a Dog: Image 9

Figure 28. Heart of a Dog: Image 10

These paintings are in black-and-white and follow one another in freeze frames. Lolabelle can be seen everywhere in different states and sizes. In one shot, we can see Lola at the piano on the left while another Lola can be seen on the right gazing at the left Lola. Two other images of the dog can be observed in this frame: one showing Lola's back and another focusing on her larger-than-life hind legs only. The paintings, and the ways Lola appears in them are reminiscent of the impressionistic world of dreams (Fig. 25-28). We know that Anderson paints her dreams; her book *Night Life* is an attempt to reflect her real dreams in visual form. Anderson is there in her paintings of the *Bardo* not only in the visual form, but we hear Anderson singing about her dog. This blending of visual and aural effects in which the narrator and the dog meet, in what resembles a reunion, is an act of intense remembrance. Music and painting, both Anderson's works of art, are coupled to reinforce the intensity because forgetting, as we were told during the "crib death" metaphor, happens at the most intense moments. The visual effect of the pane with the rain is back again here, heightening the sense of the *Bardo* in dream. There seems to be a play on the homophones *pane* and *pain*. While the pane reflects Anderson's pain, the visual effects on the former lead to the disappearance of the latter through Anderson's *bardo* in which she does painting.

Something of utmost importance takes place when the last painting cuts to moving image of trees in the rain and the subduing music blends into the sound of thunder. The music is suddenly cut and, while only the sound of thunder can be heard, Anderson relates her dream. However, this dream is not narrated in voice-over but is typed in white on the dark, rather hazy and rainy screen in what appears to be intertitles, and in what resembles writings on celluloid. Anderson has a long experience of working with typography and her installations as well as performances show a deployment of the technique. Here's the dream. As they appear as separate lines with one line per shot, I bring the lines as a poem here:

I dreamed I was a dog
in a dog show.
And my father came to the dog show
and he said
That's a really good dog
I like that dog[37] (1:03:30-1:03:45)

The last line can be seen while the shot cuts to a moving image showing a snow-covered road in the woods. It is still snowing. The *Bardo* of the dog as portrayed in Anderson's paintings and animated by her film and music, is an act of remembrance, an intense moment, remembered in the hope of forgetting. The dream, where we witness the unity between the narrator and her dog, takes place in the most intense moment. The narrator, having lost her canine companion, dreams

[37] In *Stories from the Nerve Bible*, Anderson gives a full version of this poem. The rest of the poem reads: I like that dog. / And then all my friends came and I was thinking: / No one had ever looked at me / like this for so long. / No one had ever stared at me like this / for so long / for such a long time / for so long. (72)
In *Night Life* we read "I'm / screaming. / Big hollow / shuddering / animal /sounds" (4.14.05).

of being at one with her beloved. Once this unity takes place, the *Bardo* comes to an end and the rain, signifying the *Bardo*, gives way to snow, which symbolises erasure.

There is a contrasting structure at work here. While rain signifies the *Bardo* and its dream world, snow intimates real life. Rain is replaced by snow the same way dream is replaced by reality. The transformation of rain into snow, interestingly, recalls the emergence of a new form that marks the end of the *Bardo*. In addition, while rain means remembering the past, the snow points to erasure. At the most intense moment, the reassuring moment of the affinity between the object and the subject of grief, snow descends, covering the road, the trees, in the whiteness of erasure. As we hear Anderson, having just come out of the dream of the *Bardo*, and driving in the snow, the camera lens, showing the snow-covered road through the windscreen, slowly and gradually becomes white and hazy. The snow totally covers the windscreen, that is, it veils the camera lens, which is in fact Anderson's eyes. In other words, the narrator's eyes, the windscreen and the camera all overlap and all are covered by snow, this symbol of forgetfulness in the film. The last moment of snow-covered windscreen fades into another important episode of remembering, this time about Anderson's mother.

Reminiscence of Lolabelle in the (form of) *Bardo* is followed by remembrance of her mother. This part of the film is immensely significant and I quote these lines in detail here because not only does it allow me to connect *Heart of a Dog* to the concept of "love" but it is directly interconnected with the Buddhist tenets of the film. When she hears her mother is passing, Anderson goes to a Christian priest, Father Pierre, confiding, "Listen, I have a really big problem. I'm going to see my mother, and she's dying, but I don't love her." Father Pierre suggests that she buy some flowers, that she simply "tell her you've always cared for her." Anderson concedes but when she goes to her mother's house, it's too late as her mother is

apparently being taken to hospital where she subsequently passes away. It is important to note in all these moments, snow is still falling and the wiper blades are constantly moving to and fro, creating a rhythm which suggests a movement between remembering and forgetting. This episode in which Anderson's mother is dying is narrated while Anderson is driving through the snow; the screen, which acts as the camera and Anderson's eyes through which the outside world is seen, is hazy throughout. It is again at this point that Anderson resorts to teachings of Buddhism and initiates a series of meditation exercises called "the mother meditation," which can be used when, in her words, "you can't feel anything."

What does "the mother meditation" entail? And why are the Buddhist priest's words important? The answer lies in the ways these meditations start to help Anderson find a moment of love. Anderson states that "you try to find a single moment when your mother truly loved you without a single reservation. And you focus on that moment. And then you imagine that you've been everyone's mother and they've been yours." Anderson is on the search; she is a mind on the go looking for clues. Anderson's inability to find a moment is signified, cinematically, by the use of old photographs, showing her as a child, which are made to look even older. This effect might have been achieved through superimposition of scratches on top of old family photographs or, alternatively, a scratched filter might have been used during the photography. Anderson meditates and looks "for that moment" but to no avail until a past memory does come to the rescue. She recalls, in a childhood incident that she recounts, when in a winter she "was pushing her little brothers, Craig and Phil in a stroller" but as they were standing on the lake the ice breaks, the stroller sinks in "dark water." Anderson remembers how she manages to pull the twins up and even bring back the stroller from under water. Upon returning home, Anderson reminisces, she tells the whole story. Anderson moves on to say, "she [her mother] stood there

and said, ‘what a wonderful swimmer you are. And ‘I didn’t know you were such a good diver.’” Anderson, in a moment of epiphany rejoices, “I realized that was the moment I had been trying to remember.”

The significance of these memories is that we learn that Anderson finally discovers love for her mother in one of these incidents from childhood. There seems to an internal conflict in Anderson and this conflict is heightened by a thin layer of haze, in the form of a darkening filter through which old family photos are shot. This conflict needs to be resolved and as soon as Anderson thinks of the memory of saving her brothers’ lives and winning the admiration of her mother, these stills with tears and spots on them give way to transparent moving images. It is in fact Anderson’s memory which is full of scratches and tears. These tears act like gaps in memory which make it hard for the narrator to find the moment of love she is looking for. In fact, all the family photographs used in the film, with no exception, have such a feel to them. The film is edited in a way that photos seem to be flashbacks, suggesting recalling. It is these photos, old with scratches, that allow for a renewal of the self. We know that at the end of the film, when the final love is shown through the presence of Lou Reed and Lolabelle in a single photo, the black-and-white photograph of the two absent loves are flawless, transparent, and without the slightest tear or spot. I will further analyse this photo later. Love is the ultimate answer, without the love of her mother the other loves would have been incomplete, and that is why this love before death was of such importance to her. It is not so much the mother’s response as Anderson’s reaction to that response that suggests love. Anderson looks for the tiniest of pieces of evidence to cling to and resuscitate a lost love, and she ultimately succeeds in discovering it in the lake episode.

How does this re-discovered love offer consolation and how does the *bardo* help Anderson engage, in practice, in the act of re-creating the self? What Anderson does in her

b*ardo*, and this is one of the characteristics of this process, is to erase her past self, "decreating it," in order to create a new self. Anderson's reminiscences in the film and indeed the very *Heart of a Dog* can be said to act like the *bardo* where she is engaged in writing backwards. That is why this film is, throughout, like a surreal dream, and moves along through free associations, and cuts from memory to memory, blending and merging. The film is dreamlike because the film is part of the filmmaker's *bardo* in which Anderson recalls her past memories, things, beings she loved, her losses. Anderson starts with a dream: "this is my dream body" is what we hear right from the beginning. The oneiric quality is what connects the *Bardo* after death and *Heart of a Dog* as a means through which the process of self-re-creation can begin. Otherwise, the use of the *Bardo* and emphasis on its significance would have made little sense.

This re-creating of the self, as part of the process of lamentation, made possible through Anderson's personal *bardo* in the form of writing back, can be better explained through Simone Weil's concept of "decreation." Weil introduces the notion in a very brief section of *Gravity and Grace*, defining it as that which makes "something created pass into the uncreated" (Weil 33). Although originally used to explain spiritual exercises of the soul and the soul's unity with "the creator," the term can shed light on Anderson's process of re-writing in the *bardo*. Weil comments tersely on "decreation," and states, "we participate in the creation of the world by creating ourselves" and, hence, "we are co-creators." The meaning of the term "decreation" becomes more intelligible as she further reflects on it, succinctly musing, "To re-establish order is to undo the creature in us" (Weil 34). She elaborates further, yet again laconically, that the status of decreation

> demands that we should pass through anguish equivalent to that which would be caused in reality by the absence of all loved beings and all possessions, including our faculties and attainments in the order of intelligence and character, our opinions, beliefs concerning what is good, what is stable, etc. (36)

Anderson's grief after her losses and her inability to find love for her mother are the "creatures" that should be undone.

> The cities, the mountains, the rooms, the trees, the trains … optical illusions. Not there. Like dreams made of nothing. Things you loved as living things move with a different speed. They disappear. Echo. Repeat. Anger turned to liberation, earth into water, water into fire, fire into air, air into consciousness. (44:54)

These lines bespeak the process of transformation. All memories get erased and a new "consciousness," a new form of life is given to the deceased. The dog's *Bardo* is depicted in detail in the film. In the *Bardo*, the dog dreams and remembers all her past life.

Both the narrator and her rat terrier experience *bardos* and both of them need to forget in order to "wake up" to a new form. The word "wake up," heard at the end of Lolabelle's *Bardo* suggests Anderson and her dog wake up to a new "consciousness" after coming out of *Bardo* in which they dream their past lives. If they do not undo the "creature" in them, that is, their past selves, and if they do not "decreate," then they will not be able to take a new form. Even anger is erased and "turned into liberation." For Anderson, this "anger" or apathy felt towards her mother turns into "liberation" only through love. The self, the consciousness is "fluid" until the new

form of life is created. But as we know all this new form is told about the dead and not the living. All this transformation is made possible through love because “the connection between love and death and the “purpose of death is the release of love,” as the film contemplates.

That *Heart of a Dog* is part of Anderson's *bardo* where she finally discovers love is also reinforced by the fact that the film is dedicated to Lou Reed, who articulates the most ardent words about the power of love in the film; love is so powerful that it can “turn the time around,” as we hear in the final song of the film. Once the life and death of all these characters are pictured, the narrator in her grief only finds solace when she discovers or re-discovers love. One can also say that Anderson approaches a nearly completed process of consolation the moment she turns or re-turns to love. This is why the final sequence in the film, Anderson, reminiscing about the moment she found love for her mother, is segued into the closing credits and as they roll, we hear a song from the deceased Lou Reed. There is no gap or distance between the moment Anderson discovers love for her mother and the final love song of the film. There could not be a more appropriate ending to the elegy since this song bespeaks the power of love in “turning the time around.”

These few final words of *Heart of a Dog*, which repeat many times, in what appears to be ending in an ellipsis, are heard at a time when Anderson shows a still of Lou Reed lying and holding Lolabelle in his arms. The camera, panning very slowly from left to right, zooms on the faces of both characters, in what seems to be an extreme close-up, showing the two characters gazing at each other’s eyes closely, a shot which intimates profound sense of love and affection. Unlike other stills in the film which contain spots and look hazy, this shot is spotless and pristine. It seems that the griefs in Anderson, reflected in the form of free associations, surrealistic images and scratchy photos, seen in the entire film, finally find a transparency in the

last photo of the film (Fig. 29-32). In elegiac terms, the song speaking of love coupled with the photo illustrating love offers solace. However, even if we concede that love can indeed "turn the time around," it would still be irreplaceable, for nothing can compensate for any of those losses.


Figure 29. Heart of a Dog: Image 11


Figure 30. Heart of a Dog: Image 12


Figure 31. Heart of a Dog: Image 13


Figure 32. Heart of a Dog: Image 14

It is based on such an irreplaceability that I use the word *(dis)consolation*. Such a concept points to an initial denial of mourning but ends in its avowal. However, the echoing "love will turn the time around" heightens the sense of ellipsis: a continuous and echoing figure that such a consolation has at its core. The echoing consolation of love, in the form of "turning time around" is something of a (dis)consolation, by which I seek to emphasise the continuous nature of consolation. Love consoles, but it will not turn the time around. We can't but submit to the resonance of such an imaginative expression, which gives voice to the dead. The absence of Lou

Reed and Lolabelle cannot be compensated but they can be given a voice on the stage. It is, at the same time, such a strong presence in imagination that offers solace.

And What the Title Encapsulates

The title of the film is identical to a 1925 novella by the Russian Mikhail Bulgakov; however, one should not be deceived into believing that the two have anything in common except that a dog character features in both. In fact, the two can be said to be so different as to make them oppositional, and it is, indeed, this disparity that Anderson wants to embolden in order to disrupt and undermine the image of heart of a dog given to us by a novelist, thereby depicting what she believes to be the true image of the heart of a dog. But the question is what exactly does *heart of a dog* signify?

The film's opening credits show us the title of the film, *Heart of a Dog* and the film's closing credits quite appositely and in keeping with the philosophy of this film, comment on love and the power it has in "turning the time around." The 75 minutes of the essay-film run between two loved ones, Lolabelle and Lou Reed. Anderson's narration resembles a love letter to Lou Reed to whom the film, we finally learn, is dedicated: "dedicated to the magnificent spirit of my husband Lou Reed," as the very ultimate shot of the film shows in an intertitle. This is evident as we constantly hear pronouns "we," and "you" and also "our" and "your" in the course of the film. These are not general pronouns referring to general we's and you's but rather particular ones which point to specific persons. This is the way in which the film beckons the viewers to fasten their belt for a journey of love, between the beginning title in which Lola can be seen and the ending intertitle in which Lou is observed. In addition, visually, the film opens with

Lolabelle, the first lost love we see in the film, while it ends with both Lolabelle and Lou Reed. *Heart of a Dog* begins and ends with love.

There is, however and more importantly, another reason why the film decides to take refuge in the heart of a dog for its title and that is related to the profundity and uniqueness of the dog's love which is famously, in popular culture and technical literature alike, unconditional.[38] In the film we hear from Anderson that Lolabelle loved "with such a tenderness," telling us how Lolabelle taught them or awakened in them the awareness of love with "such tenderness." The film is not entitled *Heart of a Dog* solely and simply to pay a tribute to the narrator's rat terrier. Besides and because of that, the film offers ample reasons to indicate that it was the dog's heart that loved unconditionally and taught how to love without condition.

A Look Long Lost

Apart from the narrator's conspicuous effort to portray the life and death of the four absent characters, the film also laments a lost look. Such a concept is inextricably intertwined with the discussion of life, loss, love, on the one hand, and the private and public binary, on the other. I argued that the film is a private elegy on the death of the narrator's loved ones. At the same time, I suggested that the film has a public aspect, which is addressing the tragedy of 9/11. However, the film also seeks to draw attention to a lost perspective about animals, disrupting a thought that draws a dividing line between human and animal beings. *Heart of a Dog* also bewails the lost animal gaze. In this section, utilising such thinkers as Ziolkowski, Berger and Derrida, and coordinating their thoughts, I demonstrate that Anderson, in *Heart of a Dog* exhibits such a "lost

[38] Marjorie Garber's *Dog Love* has a chapter titled "Unconditional Lovers," in which the writer explores pet love in popular culture mostly. Kuzniar has discussed dog love in her book *Melancholia's Dog*, especially in a chapter on "Intimacy."

look" and acts against it. The "lost look" is a phrase by John Berger, and alludes to the kinship between man and animals, which has been ignored and forgotten in society. From the outset, I need to clarify that this lost look, the beliefs about the relationship or lack thereof between animals and humans, constitutes the backbone of Anderson's film. The "look," a word used to mean perspective, which has been lost, regards animals as sentient beings. Not only does Anderson portray, and thereby lament, that lost perspective by using the ubiquitous parallelism between man and beast but, at the same time, she acts subversively against an outlook that separates these two beings.

In an essay titled "Why Look at Animals?" John Berger writes, "Animals are born, are sentient and are mortal. In these they resemble man. In their superficial anatomy - less in their deep anatomy - in their habits, in their time, in their physical capacities, they differ from man. They are both like and unlike" (4). A bit later in this essay, Berger continues, "just because of this distinction, an animal's life, never to be confused with a man's, can be seen to run *parallel* to his. Only in death do the two *parallel* lines converge and after death, perhaps, cross over to become *parallel* again: hence the widespread belief in the transmigration of souls" (6) [all italics mine]. Throughout *Heart of a Dog,* episodes from Lolabelle's life are juxtaposed next to episodes, or sections about -- for the sake of parallelism among other things -- Anderson's mother. In fact, right from the beginning of the film the scenes from the life and death of Lolabelle follow or are followed by those from the life of Anderson's mother or Gordon's. It is the deaths of the two loved ones, one an animal and the other a human, Gordon, which leads to the only funeral of the film and, more importantly, to the ways in which Anderson begins thinking about keeping a double diary and write her *bardo*. Yet, Anderson's dream of being a

dog, and similarly Lolabelle's birth in the beginning invoke something akin to transmigration of souls that Berger speaks of.

Berger refers to the Cartesian duality of soul-body being mapped onto human-animal divide and writes, "In dividing absolutely body from soul, he bequeathed the body to the laws of the physics and mechanics, and, since animals were soulless, the animal was reduced to the model of a machine" (11). Although it could prove very hard to support the claim that animals are "soulless," and in fact there are philosophers, secular and religious,[39] who have argued otherwise, Berger's emphasis, the substance of his words, is how animals are treated like machines. When animals are reduced to mere machines as a result of the Cartesian duality that separates soul from body, making any parallels between humans and animals causes shame. Anderson, by grieving the death of humans, her mother, husband, and friend, along with a canid, Lolabelle, perplexes the common perception that differentiates the two species.

There are clear examples illustrating a treatment of animals as soulless machines. In one instance, in a medium high-angle shot, large cages are shown where many dogs are kept "in batches." The word "batch" suggests mass production, especially of things, indicating an object-oriented treatment of animals bred in large numbers. "Batch" is further evoked later when the film, immediately following Lolabelle's move to America, speaks of citizens' information collected in huge amounts. We observe rows of data storage computers which recall animal cages and recall the word "batch." By exploiting such a word, mainly used in compounds like data batch, the film seeks to show how dogs are reduced to soulless things. In addition, as in data computers, the stories relating to different individuals "get mixed up," as the film says, keeping

[39] Descartes believed that animals were soulless, reducing them to machines.
In Islam, in contrast, there are many references to animals' soul and transcendence.

these dogs in large cages bred in "high-speech puppy mills" strips the animals of their individuality and reduces them to mere machines.

Nowhere in *Heart of a Dog* is this demarcation more clearly removed than the time when the Jewish grandmother's words echoed the Buddhist mentor who emphasises that "animals are like people, they approach death and then they back away." However, they are similar in the way they suffer, too. Anderson, who takes Lolabelle to hospital for treatment, does not yield to the widespread ways in which animal euthanasia is practiced. Berger, likewise, complains about such a divide when he says, "In the Judeo-Christian tradition, Noah's ark was the first ordered assembly of animals and man. The assembly is now over" (19). One of the reasons why I am dwelling on this argument is that Anderson is also lamenting such a deeply-ingrained perception of animals and is determined to disrupt such an outlook in her film. For instance, by juxtaposing man's emigration from Europe to America and Lola's migration from Canada, at a time when both beings are shown to be experiencing hardships, the film brings the similarity between man and animal to the fore.

This erroneous perception, the lost affinity between the two species, which Anderson seems to be critiquing, whether in the animal hospital or in dog breeders, is also touched on by Berger who, at the final words of "Why Look at Animals?" closes with an observation on the function of zoos and expresses his dissatisfaction with a "look" regarding the relations between animals and man which has been lost, and "which may have played a crucial role in the development of human society. … Looking at each animal, the unaccompanied zoo visitor is alone. As for the crowds, they belong to a species which has at last been isolated" (28). Berger's comment summarises the current perception of animals which are only gazed at without being able to return the gaze. He aptly alludes to such a one-way gaze as a "historical loss." It was such

a manifest sadness on this lost perspective that prompted me to contemplate the views shared by Anderson and Berger.

By contrast, Lolabelle's eyes and her deep gaze are given a prominent position in the film. For instance, in Manhattan, where Lolabelle is first introduced to the neighborhood, dogs look intently back at the video camera. More importantly, it is in here that we see the streets of Manhattan through Lola's perspective as the camera is filming very close to the ground. It is as if the camera is indeed mounted on the dog's head as it is shaky and showing the low angle shot of the people she meets. In Northern California, where the narrator and her dog spend time together away from the aftermath of 9/11 attacks, when a hawk swoops down to capture Lolabelle, the camera shows a high angle shot of Lola while she gazes back at the camera "with a brand-new expression," as Anderson observes. Similarly, when the dog trainer Elizabeth teaches Lola how to play the piano, she looks closely at the dog while the camera – Lola's eyes – gazes back at her in a close-up. This is to say that Anderson's video camera and the dog's eyes are one and the same. Such a disappearance of a demarcation line between the animal's eyes and the human camera can be observed in Manhattan where streets are seen through Lolabelle's eyes with Anderson's camera. The vision of Lola is blurry, however, as this is a time that the dog is going blind. This canine gaze is best exemplified at the very end of the film when Lou and Lola are gazing at each other's eyes. Interestingly, in this shot, which pans on the photo, the upper bodies of both characters, is white while their heads are similarly black. The colour of Lou's shirt is the same as that of Lola's torso. Lou's black hair is the same colour as the dog's head[40] (Fig- 29-32).

[40] Poets have talked about animal gaze. Baudelaire ("The Cat") and Rilke ("Black Cat") are examples. Ziolkowski writes "Few poets have been more preoccupied with dogs than Rainer Maria Rilke. In one of his letters to Benvenuta... Rilke speculated how sublime it would be to 'look into' a dog – 'to let oneself into the dog precisely in his center, at the point where he is most dog, the place within him where God might have seated himself for a moment when the dog was created... to see ...that he could not have been made better" (*Varieties of Literary Thematics* 94).

The exchange of gaze observed between Lolabelle and humans in the film is comparable to the ways in which Rilke's "Black Cat" portrays this reciprocity. The last two stanzas of this four-stanza poem are especially suggestive of not only the deep animal gaze but the shock with which, we humans, encounter the possibility of such a feline power as the poem disrupts the common man-to-animal gaze, giving prominence to the animal:

> She seems to hide all looks that have ever fallen
> into her, so that, like an audience,
> she can look them over, menacing and sullen,
> and curl to sleep with them. But all at once
>
> as if awakened, she turns her face to yours;
> and with a shock, you see yourself, tiny,
> inside the golden amber of her eyeballs
> suspended, like a prehistoric fly. (tr. by Stephen Mitchel)

The "you" that sees his "tiny" image in the cat's "eyeballs" is left astounded at how the animal can gaze. Initially, the cat is like an audience, a word which suggests the cat does not have a centrality as the center is the subject looking at it. But this feline suddenly "turns her face to yours," and actively engages in a reciprocal exchange of looks. The cat image we observe is given prominence as it brings the "shock" to man. The poem, in effecting such a change of perception, is comparable to the film, which attempts to change our perception about the animal gaze and about the ways in which gaze has been the domain of man. Anderson displays a parallelism between animals, canine and human, in order to lament the lost look of animals and

such an absence is, in fact, only one of the things that *Heart of a Dog* portrays and bemoans. By using parallelism between Lolabelle and others, Anderson draws attention to, while bewailing, at the same time, the ways in which man reduces animals to soulless machines devoid of any power or capability to gaze back.[41]

The perception of animals that has been modified throughout history and in philosophy, culture and religions is not limited to a reductionist attitude towards animal gaze. Animal language has long been discussed by philosophers and creative writers/artists alike. Animals have been reduced to things like "mute," "silent" and the like, and sometimes, humans strip all animals of the power to utilise a language. Just as my discussion of gaze benefited from parallel movement, a focus on communication operates through the undercurrent parallelism that pervades the film. That human tongue and canine language are different seems self-evident; however, what Anderson does in this film seems to be initially downplaying the importance of such a difference when we hear she totally forgets the experiments with Lolabelle in Northern California. The experiment, Anderson states, is "to see if I could learn to talk with her." However, what binds the narrator and her rat terrier is not language but something deeper. In fact, the love between them makes language only a peripheral subject because communication takes place in the profoundest of forms without the existence of an identical language between Anderson and Lolabelle. Instead of getting down to an investigation about language, Anderson takes long strolls with her canine companion, which leads to her contemplation about the "danger coming from the sky," an observation which segues into 9/11 events which, in turn,

[41] This dividing line between man and animals has not taken place overnight; it has been at work for many centuries. In fact, the way animals in literature, (pop) culture and cinema have been depicted has undergone a tremendous transformation and writers and thinkers like Ziolkowski, Kuzniar, Berger, Derrida draw attention to such a slow, gradual loss; one of perception, of look, of how we as humans see animals.

provides the narrator with another means to draw an analogy between human beings and animals. For man and beast to connect with each other, human language plays a less significant role than we are led to believe. It is, in fact, the connection without language between Anderson and her rat terrier that opens Anderson's eyes to the similarity with which humans and the dog respond to danger.

In her discussion of language, Anderson touches on the philosopher of language, Wittgenstein, and without initially quoting him directly alludes to his work, musing, "his books are full of cryptic sentences about logic and about how language has the power to actually create the world," while a picture of the philosopher appears on the screen among cryptic signs. The picture of the philosopher fades out slowly and is replaced by these words: "The limits of my language are the limits of my world." Anderson, in what seems to be a dismissive rejoinder, quotes the philosopher, indirectly, as saying, "if you can't talk about it … it doesn't exist," echoing the previous oft-quoted statement by Wittgenstein, which fades in and out quickly. Why would Wittgenstein, especially these two statements, matter in the film? The answer lies in the importance the philosopher attaches to human language. Anderson, using her typographic art form,[42] refers to such statements later in the form of a question: "where is all the brilliant philosophy?" This question is asked, first, after we hear the statements by Wittgenstein. The words appear in intertitles, saying,

> And on the dark side of me, all the places I hid they came together and the ways that I pretended I was so clever seemed like nothing and I was left standing there smiling like an idiot. Where is all the brilliant philosophy? Where was this heart of mine? (26:24-26:45)

[42] Typography and found texts can be found in other works by Anderson. For example, "Typewritten texts were inserted in the gallery objects of the late seventies, and in United States digital letters moved horizontally in both directions across a large screen" (Howell 127).

The second time the question is asked is immediately after Anderson recounts her dream about being a dog and then when read, again as typed words on title cards:

> they came together
> and the ways that I pretended
> where is all the brilliant philosophy
> is lived inside
> me now
> the brilliant and small
> my heart so
> suspicious.
> and the way
> many things I
> had never
> delivered. (1:01:22-1:01:35)

Although it would be extremely difficult to interpret these words, which like the images throughout the film seem to be disarranged and surrealistic, the word "love" catches attention as it appears in both intertitles and in response to "the brilliant philosophy" question. Interestingly, the word "heart," which appeared in the first intertitle, gives way to the word "love," in the second. By using what seems to resemble found texts, Anderson also speaks of her sorrow which cannot be expressed through language. Anderson's retort to Wittgenstein's dictum on language

can be also be extrapolated to "grief," which exists but seems hard to talk about. Such a Wittgensteinian emphasis on the relationship between human language and the world seems to be disrupted here by the way in which Anderson stresses the possibility of a relationship, indeed a unity with her dog. The question can be suggestive and rhetorical: "where is all the brilliant philosophy?" asked to suggest that there is a profound bond without the need for human language, a connection that does exist although it would be very hard to talk about philosophically. This question rhetorically dismisses the Wittgensteinian maxim "if you can't talk about it, it doesn't exist." By treating human-animal communication in this unique way which relies less on human language than on the extra-linguistic bond, Anderson questions and undermines the common perception of animals vis-à-vis language, manifested in the Wittgensteinian statements.

In *Melancholia's Dog*, Kuzniar reminds us that in Wittgenstein's thought "only language gives us access to certain concepts and … if we do not share the same linguistic system with, say, a lion or horse, we cannot know such things about them as, for instance, their state of being" (31). Kuzniar quotes Vicki Hearne,[43] who as a writer, scholar and animal trainer, responds to our philosopher, writing, "Wittgenstein fails to 'consider that the lion does not talk to us because he knows we could not understand him'" (32). Cary Wolfe, similarly, cites Hearne on this same subject, stating that the lion's silence "'is not the reticence of absence, absence of consciousness, say, or knowledge, but rather of tremendous presence'", adding that by this presence Hearne means "'all consciousness that is beyond ours'" (2).[44] Anderson clearly thinks that she and her

[43] A different dictum by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations* has drawn the attention of critics and scholars. The statement is "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him" (qtd in Wolfe 1). Hearne discusses and critiques Wittgenstein and Kuzniar and Wolfe's readings of Wittgenstein are based on Hearne.

[44] Kuzniar and Wolfe base their arguments on Vicki Hearne's *Adam's Task*. Kuzniar's *Melancholia's Dog* and Wolfe's extensive introduction to *Zoontologies* (ed.) and his chapter on "The Wittgenstein

canine companion can understand each other and her film attempts to show such a bond in relation to love, sympathy and loss. After all, our understanding and knowledge of language "rests upon very shaky foundations," as Cavell believes (qtd in Wolfe 4).

The erroneous perspective on man-animal communication can also be observed in how man separates animal and human death. When the narrator takes her rat terrier to the hospital, the doctor advises she let the dog be put down, something her husband's grandmother as well as her Buddhist mentor advise against because, according to them, "animals suffer like humans do." Anderson's conviction that animals and humans are similar in the face of suffering and death seems to be the apex of the film's technique of analogy, indicating that death is a certain final event shared by us all, in fact, by all sentient beings. So is debilitation and potentially suffering before that final certain event. Indeed, we are all together in this life's finale and "you are not alone in leaving this world," as Anderson meditates in a comment the addressee to which seems to be nebulous; it's either Gordon or Lolabelle.

The final certitude, this finitude that we, as humans, share with animals is tellingly illuminated by Derrida's contemplation on mortality when he observes, "mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals" ("The Animal That Therefore I Am" 396). The film's movement from stories about human beings to Lolabelle's life story, her adventures, her migration, and her art blend with each other and ultimately come to a zenith in the form of suffering shared by animals and man. Analogy in the film, in other words, is best exemplified by "suffering." The question of suffering and the affinity between man and animals in it, so conspicuously captured in Anderson's film, can be observed in Derrida's deliberation on Bentham: "The question is not to know whether the animal can

---

Lion," engage with such philosophers as Kant, Descartes, Levinas, Wittgenstein, and Derrida, among others. Wolfe also refers to *Animal Happiness* and engages with Hearne, Wittgenstein and Cavell in order to explore the question of the animal.

think, reason, or talk, something we still pretend to be asking ourselves… . The *first* and *decisive* question will rather be to know whether animals *can suffer*" [italics Derrida's] ("The Animal That Therefore I Am" 395-6). Anderson's response to this question, which Bentham asks "simply yet profoundly," is indeed affirmative. She emphasises of course they do, pronounced in the film candidly by the grandmother of the narrator's husband and her mentor. *Heart of a Dog* presents a philosophical question, treats it as an imperative, and responds to it; a question that philosophy, according to Derrida, has ventured to ask but failed to respond to because, "before the *undeniable* of this response 'yes, they suffer, like us who suffer for them and with them', before this response that precedes all other questions, the problematic changes ground and base" (397). The centrality of the question is lost in many other philosophical questions that might arise along the way, and the problematic loses its resonance. What best connects all us living creatures is the pain and suffering we all experience as a result of being sentient beings. This is in fact the lost look I am talking about. That animals suffer, and experience pain, and can love too, is all forgotten.

Anderson de-centers man and animals at the same time and puts both on an equal footing (in love and death), thereby puzzling the audience, yet/and making a loud pronouncement that, we, as humans, don't care about suffering, pain and even daily life of animals. By lamenting this lost "look," to use a word from Berger, through a paean to Lolabelle's life and death, alongside those of three human beings, Anderson gives us a different perspective especially at a time when philosophising about "home animals" appears to be facetious to many, and not taken seriously.

To argue for a parallel movement in *Heart of a Dog* and to state that Anderson is blurring the boundaries is not to say that she intends to talk about the similarities between the two or strip the two of their unique features. Nor is it a belief in a Darwinian evolution, namely, that one has

evolved from the other and, therefore, they share an affinity. On the contrary, Anderson is aware of the differences and is only bringing the lives of the two together in her portrait of those she has loved and lost. Her look is much like Derrida's, who, in "The Animal That Therefore I Am," stipulates, "I have never believed in some homologous continuity between what calls itself man and what he calls the animal" (398). Derrida, however, at the end of this seminal work, speaks of a mirror that *animot* and the human are holding to each other, both looking at each other only to see themselves (418). The context of this argument in Derrida is "gaze" and the possibility of animal gaze, of course. It is this mirror metaphor that Anderson is investing in, constantly altering, throughout the film, the camera's gaze from Lolabelle to humans and vice versa, to look from the animal to man and the other way around. This is a mirror, which reflects our affinity as humans with animals mainly in suffering and death. It is this mirror metaphor that stops the film from clinging to a center because embracing any one center would render other things only periphery. My use of the word *mirror* is metaphorical here. Just as humans look in the mirror to get an image of themselves, Anderson gets an image of herself by looking at her dog and her suffering, her empathy, her love. The way human beings and the canine of the film reflect each other can be traced in the way they both suffer, and die, and love. We should not forget that, according to Anderson, Lola taught them "how to love with tenderness."

That neither the animal nor the human occupies the center seems to be part of Anderson's strategy. This process of merging of the two, we are shown, acts from the beginning when we hear Lolabelle realizes, for the first time, that danger can come from the air, from the sky, as from other directions. This revelation, to Lolabelle, shifts immediately in an overwhelming fashion, to us humans although we are already aware of it, that danger can indeed, as it does, come from sky. One might believe that this example of analogy might set a precedent and we

will have a pattern to the end of the film whereby Lolabelle's life is used to comment on human life. However, we come to realize that this is by no means a pattern and we can see the opposite, that is, we hear a story about a human first and, subsequent to that, the dog's life is depicted. This is in fact the function of mirror. The person and the image reflect each other.[45]

By introducing this analogous structure in the film through which actions, feelings and lives of a canine being and human beings are spoken of as corresponding to each other or as commenting on each other, the film throws into disarray the old convention of using "the philosophical dog to make a comment on human civilization as a whole" (Ziolkowski 118). In *Heart of a Dog*, all objects of mourning, man and animal act to comment on each other analogously in such a way as to make it fuzzy and nebulous which is commenting on which.

The film is dominated by a propinquity to discuss the two senses of hearing and seeing and some of the fundamental feelings of sentient animals (mostly attributed to humans by most humans) like empathy, pain, happiness and loss. The discussions for each of these emotions as well as for the two aural and visual senses are done in relation to both the dog and humans. Accordingly, Anderson also uses a parallelism in relation to these feelings which are shared by human beings and non-human animals. The apogee of such a parallelism in the film is the point at which the narrator unequivocally asserts, "animals are like people, they approach death and they back away," a note which is rhetorically more convincing for the audience since it simply uses the word "people," simpler and more intimate, rather than "humans" or other cognates.

---

[45] Ziolkowski also explores the conventions of a genre in which a talking dog "uses his experiences as the basis for observations about human society" (106). Ziolkowski believes that making the dog make "observations on the foibles of human nature...has been the dog's role since Plato" (114).

Memorial of the Saints by the famous Persian Sufi poet Attar abounds with image of animals including dogs.

Anderson's dream in the overture, which is a harbinger of the intimate relation between the narrator and her rat terrier and foreshadows the importance of dreams in the film, also presages a Buddhist vein, which runs through the body of the film, feeding it. The narrator's dream, although clearly Buddhist, is not unlike an account told by Ziolkowski, of St. Bernard's mother, who "dreamed of a whelp barking in her womb. When she recounted this dream to a priest he prophesied: 'Thou will be the mother of a very good little dog, which will be the guardian of the house of God, and will pursue its enemies with loud barking'" (92). Of course, the dog of the film and the dog the priest speaks about here are different; however, regardless of such a difference the use of a dog metaphor to refer so evidently to one of the most pristine and influential of Christian saints can shed light on Anderson's giving birth to a dog and her dog's central place in the film.

One subtle way in which especially dogs and humans are made to run simultaneously with each other is through film's prominent focus on "seeing." Seeing is an ability which is shared by man and dogs but the ways in which the film brings such a similarity into focus is unique. We are told, in the course of the narration, that dogs "see only a few colors." This fact about dogs is immediately followed by human ways of seeing and, more specifically, the camera's; we observe everything in a sea of green, thinking it is Lolabelle who is seeing. But it soon becomes clear that no, it is a surveillance video camera and not Lolabelle's vision. We are also led to look through only a single colour in the spectrum, much like how dogs see in unicolor. This is far from anthropomorphism. It is in fact an antidote to the anthropomorphic view, for in this particular sequence, the green gaze of the dog segues into the human construct, the camera.

Another conspicuous analogy between Anderson and her dog revolves around music and the use of musical instruments. Lola is shown to learn to play the piano and we hear Anderson lightheartedly state that "Lolabelle played the same kind of music that I play," which is experimental music. Lola is given the stage and the camera zooms on her while she hits the keys, playing music. We even hear Anderson speaking about Lola "doing a lot of benefit concerts," something which is reminiscent of Anderson's own performances. In addition, we see that the dog created paintings and pieces of sculpture. In fact, Anderson says, the dog began "making several paintings everyday, bright-red abstract works." Lolabelle also made "small sculptures by pressing her paws into lumps of plasticine," which Anderson uses as "snack trays" or "little clogs" that "dogs might wear in the rain." The use of camera/video-camera, music instruments and visual arts are important in the ways the film seeks to blur the boundaries between the filmmaker and her rat terrier and, indeed, this is another way in which the two reach a union.

Finally, there is another sorrow which seems to be subtle and hidden: a public grief over the death of people in 9/11 attack. This is another example of removing the boundary and sudden shifts from the personal to the public. This public/personal distinction can also be said to have materialized in the way Lolabelle's migration, a personal one, is positioned next to the immigration of the Jews from Europe to America. Similarly, in keeping a "double diary" when she entered the *Bardo*, Anderson keeps a public diary, that is, writes a *bardo* for society, while at the same time records a private diary, her personal *bardo*, and finally even the *Bardo* for Lolabelle. Moreover, "the loss of a look" constitutes another public lament.

Mourning and Ventriloquism

However, in addition to the two elements of parallelism and analogy found throughout *Heart of a Dog* to bring together man and animal, on the one hand, and the private and the public, on the other, in an attempt to mourn the absences of the film, there seems to be another technique, namely, ventriloquism. This is a device the film employs in order to bring the narrator and her dog together. The import of this dramatic technique lies mainly in the fact that we find it hard to comprehend who speaks. If the film attempts to blur the boundaries between the narrator and her canine companion, then it would be pertinent to ask whose voice is it that we hear? Who is speaking? In other words, ventriloquial method serves the film's undercurrent parallelism as well the unity between the narrator and her dog. Given that the technique has been used by Anderson in her stage and performances,[46] it would come as no surprise to see her deploy the same *modus operandi* in this elegiac film.

Examples of the use of the ventriloquial trope are many. Anderson speaks for the dog, using the pronoun "I." In the beginning of the film, when the dog learns that danger can come from above, we hear: "I never thought of that! A whole 180 more degrees that I'm responsible for. It's not the stuff down here… the dirt, the paths, the roots, the trees, but all this too." These words are uttered by Anderson; however, we know they are Lolabelle's. Anderson, however, immediately following these words, speaks in a tone which would make it hard to make a distinction between the two. Elsewhere, when Lola and Anderson are in the filmmaker's music studio, Anderson suggests, "hey let's listen to that cello track for the 70th time" and then ventriloquizes her companion who agrees, "great idea, let's do that." Interestingly, in her ventriloquial approach, Anderson impersonates voices as well, speaking for other dogs of the

[46] As I said in the introductory paragraphs of this chapter in *Fortune One $* (1996), a parrot named Uncle Bob is used as a "double," or a "surrogate speaker," and "perform[s] with Anderson onstage" (Li and Lai).

In a section titled "Touring with Animals," Anderson states "I tour with digital animals, sampled barks and howls, which I play on the computer violin" (*Stories from the Nerve Bible 70*).

film. Anderson does a German Shepard's voice, saying "right boss. No problem, consider it done" and then she projects a voice for a poodle who says, "please love me. I'll do anything if you just love me." Anderson, finally, does her rat terrier's voice. Anderson uses different tones and voices while the camera shows an extreme close-up of each dog as they talk.

Similarly, after Lolabelle's death and her entrance into the *Bardo*, Anderson alternates between explaining the process of the *Bardo* and shouting into the ears of her dog, "recognize this" and "wake up." Amid all the surrealistic images and the visual chaos of the *Bardo*, when the dog is overwhelmed by the deluge of memories, and Anderson is busy with her role as the narrator and the survivor of loss, she also speaks for her dog, ventriloquizing, "could I have done this? Could I have said this?"

In elegiac terms, the art of ventriloquism is utilised in the film to give a stage to the departed loved ones and animate them. Indeed, the ventriloquist art is an important element in elegiac poems, as Diana Fuss affirms in *Dying Modern, a Meditation on Elegy*. Fuss remarks that "postmortem elegies," deploy "literary ventriloquism" in order to "speak not about the dead but in the voice of the dead" (5). The absent beloved is incorporated in "an act of mourning" (Fuss 108). This device gives the absent beloved a voice, much like prosopopoeia which personifies and animates. In addition, the use of such a technique in the film allows the unity between the narrator and her absent loves, thereby making consolation possible because, in the words of Fuss, "Voice, in the end, is all that remains" (108). Lolabelle's voice is heard through Anderson's ventriloquial method in many different parts of the film while Lou Reed is given a stage at the end of the film. While the film is Anderson's elegy and is associated with her voice as the narrator, we hear Reed's voice in the end and as Anderson and her dog seem to be reaching a oneness through ventriloquism as well as through the ubiquitous dreams, the narrator's voice and

her absent husband's voice, or presence, merge in the end and the two absent loves, shown in the finale photo of the film are given and speak through one voice. Giving voice to the absent loves through the ventriloquial art is an act of mourning.

In a way *Heart of a Dog* takes the meaning of the elegiac to its origin, to the Greek love elegy in which love features prominently. According to George Luck, "The earliest Greek elegies deal with a variety of themes: war, politics, the pleasures and pains of life in general, love, friendship, death" (11), adding a bit later that "during the Augustan Age at Rome the elegy becomes the preferred medium of love-poetry" (12). Of course, elegies mourn the loss of the beloved and the lost friends and Anderson's film shows this connection beautifully. In the words of Barthes, "love is elegy" (qtd. in Fuss 83). In *Mourning Diary*, which is Barthes's personal reflections on the death of his mother, Barthes makes a connection between elegy and love, saying "struck by the abstract nature of absence; yet it's so painful, lacerating. Which allows me to understand *abstraction* somewhat better: it is absence and pain, the pain of absence - perhaps therefore love?" (42) In fact, the Barthes' statement "love is elegy" suggests how the subject of love right from the beginning of love is anticipating its loss. Conversely, it is only apt that the film, as an elegy, ends in love.

We should, at the same time, remember that such a faith in love becomes only possible after Anderson experiences the *bardo* where she undergoes the dream-like process of erasure in order to arrive at a new status, which I called *re-creation of the self*. However, this love offered as a solace to the losses of the film creates an ambivalence effected through the repetition of the "turning time around," repeated nine times at the end of the song. This line closes only through a gradual diminuendo. This repetition intimates a sense of ellipsis as if the subject of mourning, offered love as solace, is still transient. Such an in-betweenness allows for consolation and at the

same time precludes completion of the process of consolation. An instantaneous consolation, a complete passage from grief contradicts love. The subject needs to be constantly forward-looking because life "must be lived forwards," as Anderson quotes Kierkegaard. This in-betweenness is also consistent with the metaphorical process of the *bardo,* which operates within the film.

Thinking concerning the animal … derives from poetry

> "For thinking concerning the animal, if there is such a thing, derives from poetry" Derrida in "The Animal That Therefore I Am."

Animals have figured in poetry and philosophy and there is no scarcity of poems in which animals have been elegized. Romantic-era poetry abounds with examples, be it in the work of John Clare or Wordsworth, Coleridge or Keats. Similarly, Modernist poetry also is full of animal imagery. T. S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* and Ted Hughes's crow poems are just two examples. The poem I discuss below has been chosen because it is, first and in the main, an animal elegy which, in some way, addresses the questions *Heart of a Dog* does. Secondly, the poem seems to disrupt the clear boundaries between man and animals, between the senses, and between the personal and the public, motifs that feed the veins of *Heart of a Dog*. Finally, analysing a poetic elegy at this point in the chapter allows me to summarise and reiterate the main points argued and proposed in the preceding perusal of the film and, therefore, the poem illuminates the film.

One of my main arguments has been that Anderson removes or blurs the boundaries using a merging technique that results in cherishing the lives of both the narrator's dog and her human companions, grieving their deaths and eventually proposing that only love can be a solace, however fleeting, for absence of the loved ones. Such an inclusive treatment of loss and love can be seen in Derek Walcott's elegy "Oddjob, a Bull Terrier." Let me focus for a moment on this rather short poem and explain the ways in which the tenets and techniques observed in *Heart of a Dog* are similarly employed in this poem. The first lines of the poems read,

> You prepare for one sorrow,
> but another comes.
> It is not like the weather,
> you cannot brace yourself,
> the unreadiness is all.
> Your companion, the woman,
> the friend next to you,
> the child at your side,
> and the dog… (201)

Walcott, in these opening lines, captures what the film portrays in its entirety: that one sorrow is followed by another. True, these lines evince the speaker's "unreadiness" for disparate objects of lament, including a "companion, a child and a dog," but the rest of the poem focuses on the loss and love of a Bull Terrier called "Oddjob," who seems to be dying and whose death sends shock waves stronger than a "thunder." In the speaker's words, in the face of a "thunder," "the

readiness is all" while confronting the passing of "Oddjob" and his human companions, "the unreadiness is all." The poem makes a deeply moving remark about the dog: "what follows at your feet / is trying to tell you / the silence is all." It is the dog who is reminding the speaker, a human, that the end is inevitable and silence is the eventual event. Oddjob's prominence and his role in "telling" of the certitude of mortality is analogous to Lolabelle's prominence in the film. The poem then moves on to comment further on this silence, stating:

> The silence
> is stronger than thunder,
> we are stricken dumb and deep
> as the animals who never utter love
> as we do, except
> it becomes unutterable
> and must be said,
> in a whimper,
> in tears…

These few lines denote the loves expressed by both humans and animals, bringing the two species together by the act of love. Animals articulate their love differently than humans who, "stricken by love," fall silent like their animal companions. However, this love is so intense that it can only be expressed "in a whimper." The expression of the inexpressible, the "unutterable," to use a word from the poem, or the ineffable, however paradoxical it might sound, is only possible through this "whimper." We inexorably resort to interjections at moments of profound

love and sorrow. The reference to silence in the poem seems to be deliberately ambiguous, indicating both the silence of love and that of death. These few lines suggest that the speaker shares the silence of his dog and also the beast's "whimper."

The poem, at the end, returns to whence it commenced to make a further final statement about the sadness resulting from the death of the speaker's companions, whether a dog, a woman, a child: "the silence of the dead / the silence of the deepest buried love is / the one silence." Finally, in these last words, the same effect that the absence of these figures create in the speaker could not have been more manifest:

> and whether we bear it for the beast,
> for child, for woman, or friend,
> it is the one love, it is the same, (202)

Because in love humans and animals becomes silent, a silence which is stronger and more shouting than thunder, and if the absence of all of them create the same kind of grief, the poem concludes that such love "...is blest / deepest by loss / it is blest, it is blest."

What is apparent in this poem is a symmetry, a dichotomy of man and beast, which turns into a unity in the form of love, binding all the lost loved ones together; this love is "blest," a solace, and a comfort. Yet the poem also demonstrates that such a blessing is only temporary, as it indicates, in the beginning, we are caught by surprise at the "unreadiness" of one death after another. It is this realization about love and silence that leads to a revelation about the recurring nature of loss in the speaker's life and consequently to a knowledge on the fleeting status of his "blest" consolation.

The poem sketches its love for disparate species, its sorrow for their death, and the silence either as a result of death or as a response to love, all by overcoming the demarcation between human and canine beings. The pivotal words here in this poem are "the same" and "the one," much in the same way that *Heart of a Dog* is built on the foundation of affinity. The background, a rainy day on which the speaker makes his observations, provides him with the means of meditation in the same way that *Heart of a Dog* mediates on death and love by free association and going back and forth to events from daily life especially 9/11-related events. In other words, the poem and the film seem to be operating in a similar dream-like milieu, while both rely, for their progression, on a symmetrical movement.

The ending of the poem, and the echoing "it is blest," repeated three times, is akin to the film's closing when the decrescendo, "turning the time around," is repeated. The pronoun "it" in "it is blessed" and the subject of the sentence "turning time around" is "love." Similarly, the object of love in both the poem and the film includes man and beast. The poem seems to act, in the meantime, similarly to the parallel technique of representation that this elegiac film experiments with.

The final lines, which repeat in a refrain, as the nondiegetic sound of the music dwindles, not only intimate a recurrence but at the same time create a regression effect, regression in the sense that love, as the song states, can "turn the time around." However, this question remains: can it really? The circle never closes in one's life, despite one's attempts. Anderson bewails the lost beloveds, that is, she writes an elegy, and with each loss undergoes an open-ended and elliptical process of re-creation. This ellipsis allows the grieving subject to be in-between a complete passage from mourning and a desire to disavow it altogether. In-betweenness allows for gradual, continuous re-creation. The process that the self experiences is represented in the

film through the re-writing of the *bardo*. If there are four deaths in *Heart of a Dog* and if love for each one can be a solace, the corollary is that life, as imagined by Anderson in this film, is in fact full of temporary moments of consolation. One death is followed by another and with each, there comes sorrow. In the words of Walcott, "you prepare for one sorrow, / but another comes / It is not like the weather / you cannot brace yourself / the unreadiness is all." However, love, in its continuity and ellipticity can "turn the time around," as Lou Reed meditates, although the absent one is not substituted and remains only a voice, in memory, in the elegiac imagination. It is the imaginal vision that is always in the making. The bemoaning subject uncovers future possibilities and re-creates not only further arts but the self as well.

Alexander Sokurov's *Oriental Elegy*:

Loss of Meaning and Remedy of Metaphorical Thinking

> ... ephemeralities / ever recurring. There are numerous / things you can't speak or think
> …
> Mourning my meaning is what I meant to say ("On the Reality of the Symbol," Geoffrey Hill in *Without Title*)
>
> The world's darkening never reaches / to the light of being. ("The Thinker as Poet," Heidegger)
> ….
> Singing and thinking are the stems / neighbor to poetry. / They grow out of Being and reach into its truth. ("The Thinker as Poet," Heidegger)

Prologue

Alexander Sokurov has made both fiction films and documentaries. All his films show an auteur who is profoundly engrossed in literature and other arts. For example, *Faust* (2011) is based on Goethe's masterpiece and *Days of Eclipse* (1988) is an adaptation of the novel *A Billion Years to the End of the World* by the Strugatsky Brothers. *The Lonely Voice of Man* (edited 1978, released 1987), Sokurov's first feature-length film and dedicated to his mentor Andrei Tarkovsky, is based on the Andrei Platonoc's story *The River Potudan*. In many of his works, Sokurov makes references to European paintings and Oriental themes. In *Elegy of a Voyage* (2001), for instance, the filmmaker constantly focuses on European paintings, engaging in a dialogue with them at a museum. Similarly, *Russian Ark* (2002) attempts to bring the art of Sokurov's home country into light and the setting is the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. This film, considered a masterpiece by critics, was shot in one take, and there are no cuts throughout.

Sokurov's films portrays the life of simple people as well as that of dictators and kings. *Elegy of the Land* (1977) and *Maria (Peasant Elegy)* (1988), among documentaries, and *Mother and Son* (1997), and *Father and Son* (2003), in fiction, all portray the lives of ordinary people. In contrast, *The Moloch: A Demon in the Shape of Man* (1999), on the life of Hitler and *Soviet Elegy* (1989), the pictures of Russian leaders up to Yeltsin, are portraits of dictators and despots. Elegy and the elegiac figure prominently from the beginning of Sokurov's career, as early as *The Lonely Voice of Man.* The word "elegy" in fact appears in the titles of some of his documentaries, such as *A Simple Elegy* (1990), *Moscow Elegy* (1988), *Soviet Elegy* (1990), and *Petersburg Elegy* (1990). They sketch the life of politician Vytautas Lansbergis, filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, President Boris Yeltsin, and artist Fedor Chaliapin, respectively. Eva Binder, in "Sokurov's Film Portraits," writes, "Sokurov's film portraits draw significantly on the European tradition of elegiac poetry" (30). Fredric Jameson also touches on the ubiquitous grief in Sokurov's oeuvre, mentioning "the dead in boy, in his first documentary, *Maria* (1988) ... the dead father of *The Second Circle* [1990] or the dying mother of *Mother and Son*" (7-8) as examples. Jameson, exploring "history and elegy" and the relation of the two in Sokurov's films, writes that the elegiac in Sokurov's documentaries are manifested in "the decay of whole generations of individuals," "hardships of the peasant," adding to the list "the flight abroad of the Russian artists (Fyodor Chaliapin)," and "the suffering of Russia in World War II (And Nothing More)," and finally "the passing of the Soviet Union itself (the Yeltsin documentary Soviet Elegy)" (3).

Moscow Elegy (1988) is perhaps one of the most widely-know elegiac documentaries by Sokurov. Sokurov made the film as a tribute to his mentor/friend/fellow filmmaker, Andrei Tarkovsky and in his art, after the death of the Russian auteur and the creator of some of the best

films made in the history of cinema such as *The Stalker*, *Mirror*, and *The Sacrifice.* Sokurov's *Elegy of a Life*, similarly, is a portrait of two artists, "opera singer Galina Vishnevskaya and cellist Mstislav Rostropovich (Binder 29). Among Sokurov's elegies, which mourn no one's death, are the Japanese series, namely, *A Humble Life* (1997), about the life of a simple woman in a solitary house, *Dolce* (2000), on the life of the Japanese writer Toshio Shimao's widow, and *Oriental Elegy* (1996), the focus of this chapter. Cinematically, many, if not most, of Sokurov's films, fiction and nonfiction, share features. In the words of Fredric Jameson, Sokurov's films "embody tendencies of the modernist art cinema, such as the long take, slow-motion narratives, a web of allusions, and morbid subject matter" (2). *Oriental Elegy* certainly manifests such tendencies.

It would serve me well, right from the outset, to give a brief account of what the film entails. A narrator, Sokurov, sets foot on an unknown island at an unknown time and, while the camera shows little of the setting, we see that he steps in a house where he converses with a woman. The narrator, is then shown to go to another house where he engages in a conversation with two other characters, a man and a woman. The subject of the conversation between the narrator and his interlocutors, for all the difficulty facing the viewer in eliciting an intelligible line of narration, is the meaning of life and happiness, and why poetry should be sad, put to the three characters in the form of a series of questions by the narrator, who takes the time, at different intervals, to comment on them in a monologue. Much of *Oriental Elegy* takes place within these houses and the only instances where we see the outside seem to be the beginning and the end. However, while the beginning is nearly totally dark, the closure is brightened with a modest light to which the speaker turns while he is leaning on a sliding door of one of the houses, looking out.

The objective of this chapter is to explore the ways in which *Oriental Elegy* deals with loss and consolation. My focus will be on what constitutes loss in the film when no one's death is mourned. One of my arguments is that there are different layers of loss in this film. First of all, the film's overall atmosphere is misty and dark. The hazy space of the film coupled with the narrator's slow voice create a gloomy *mood*, one which continues to the end, providing a background for the other layers. Secondly, the film grieves in unison with the interviewees who figure in it, three characters whose past life Sokurov attempts to portray and lament. It's hard to tell if this past refers to previous years in the life of these persons or, indeed, to their former life in this world. Regardless of this difficulty, the three characters who appear in the film speak of the life they had behind them as a loss; they are evidently not happy about the life they led, and seem to be lamenting it. The narrator, Sokurov, provides a space in which these characters reflect on their life, their dreams, their regrets. This layer is rhetorical as the narrator is in fact empathising with the characters he is portraying and grieving with them. The sorrowful mood of the first layer is an apposite environment for this second one.

Moreover, on a profounder level, I propose that *Oriental Elegy* indeed captures an actual loss which, as I will show, is *meaning*, an evasion of answers to overarching questions of our life. I argue that answers to these questions scaffolding that meaningful life, elude the narrator, and to a certain extent, the three main and only personages in the film. In my perusal of the film, I show, through analysis of verbal and visual elements, how the narrator is aware of an existential loss, the result of our existence in this world.

Of course, all these layers are intertwined and one does not negate the other. On the contrary, the presence of one not only presages the existence of other layers, it also heightens them. In fact, the mood is forlorn because of the unhappiness the characters have experienced,

and part of this experience of grief and regret results from the difficulty they encountered in defining the meaning of life and happiness. In *The Modern Elegiac Temper*, John B. Vickery discusses the "philosophical elegy" and states that a

> group of texts moves away from the individual expression of grief for a person's death to a consideration of the various universal implications linked with such *topoi.* In doing so, they contribute to the modern tendency to broaden the elegy's focus from death itself as a starkly unique and personal phenomenon to the almost infinite range of losses sufferable in life. (192)

I have addressed these different sets of losses in other chapters. To flashback to previous films, my desire to read *Heart of a Dog* as, among other things, "loss of a look" stems from this inclusive understanding of loss. Similarly, in my exploration of *The Salt of the Earth*, one of the main foci of my arguments is the loss of land and that of the continuity between man and environment. Losing is an ineluctable part of being a sentient being. Elizabeth Bishop's "lose something every day" as expressed imperatively in her poem "One Art," speaks of such a ubiquitous loss. This inclusivity should not surprise and, unlike Vickery, I do not believe it's specifically and exclusively a tenet of "modern tendency," something which is exclusively the characteristic of twentieth century and contemporary elegies. We know that some of the most widely-read Western elegies, interestingly touched on by Vickery himself, such as *Lycidas* and *Adonais,* "generate broader social or philosophical considerations. Reflections on time, mortality, self, mass destruction of war, religion or spiritual faith … are inextricably intertwined with the lamentations for the death of the central subject" (192). In the following pages, I probe the

existential loss, which I identify as *loss of meaning* and *evasion of meaning*, exploring the film in relation to an *elusion* of ultimate answers to fundamental questions about life and happiness, and arguing, eventually, that meanings elude the narrator.

I need to say a few words about how *Oriental Elegy* is structured. The narration of the film and its structure are based on a series of questions that the narrator puts to these characters, his interviewees. These questions include the most challenging of all: "what is life?" and "what is happiness?" There is, however, one that binds all these questions and, at the same time, the film together. That question is "Why is poetry sad?" Why do we write a poetry full of melancholy, or elegy? The answer, in relation to this film, might lie in the inexpressibility of these answers, because definite, ultimate meaning is beyond our grasp. There are things we can't speak, as Hill's poem "On the Reality of the Symbol," in *Without Title* states. This question about poetry is asked towards the end of the film adjacent to "what is life?" and what is happiness?" This spatial and temporal contiguity is due to the sorrow the subject experiences as he becomes all the more convinced that there can be no answers to his challenges. Therefore, he asks rhetorically, "why is poetry sad?" This question, of course, invokes the word elegy, which interestingly, is part of the film's title. "Why is poetry so sad," in fact, gives this chapter a doorway, a focus, enabling me to ground my arguments about the ineffability of life's questions. This question evinces the elegiac by taking the grief in poetry as its tenet. Elegiac poems and here this elegiac film, bespeak a loss of time, and an awareness that even poetry might not be an ultimate consolation.

On a quest towards dis-covering or de-mystifying answers to his questions, the narrator resorts to poetry and poetic thinking. One question leads to further ones, resulting in a continuous process of contemplation on the part of the narrator. *Oriental Elegy* offers solace

through a metaphor, a green tree with red fruits. In the face of an inability to know what life and happiness are and how they are defined in this world, the film uses the technique of "seeing-as," which is a definition of metaphor given by Jan Zwicky in the beginning of *Wisdom and Metaphor* (1 Left). Metaphor, according to Zwicky, "is a species of understanding, a form of seeing as" (4 Left), an "analogical thinking" (5 Left). "Seeing-as" is what Kenneth Burke refers to as "a device for seeing something in terms of something else." Metaphor, according to Burke, "brings out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this" ("Four Master Tropes" 421-22). But there might be paradoxes in metaphor as answer. Is metaphorical thinking a one-time act and does it indeed provide a remedy? Does it bestow upon us consoling answers to the questions that life and time lift and drop on our plate, to borrow from T. S. Eliot?[47] If the film offers the metaphor of a tree as the answer to the riddles of "what is life" and "what is happiness," would a tree satisfy the subject of the questions? Or is life simply a never-ending effort on the part of exploring minds in search of meaning? Does one question not lead to another question? How is this paradox reflected in technical elements of this film? These are the question I will be addressing in my investigation of loss and consolation in *Oriental Elegy*.

If the characters in the film tend to believe that they can't comprehend life and there can't be an objective definition of it, they do hold that there might be an answer in seeing that life "as"

[47] In "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Eliot writes:
And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

a tree. Once the narrator finds a subjective answer to the question through a metaphor, another layer is revealed to him and he effectively needs to find another subjective, poetic metaphor and this process continues. The proposed metaphorical thinking provides the necessary means for further poetic thinking. Put differently, when there is no fixed, final answer, metaphor allows for poetic thinking, and each metaphor might be replaced by another. Between metaphor, as "seeing-things-as," and the thing itself there is always a gap. Metaphor provides a space for knowing a thing but does not define that thing. Zwicky refers to this gap as an "implicit not," stating, "The implied 'is not' in a metaphor points to a gap in language through which we glimpse the world" (10 Left).[48] My reading of *Oriental Elegy* is in this spirit, believing that metaphor only is a temporary, subjective avenue to knowing the answers the film poses. And this is only one of the reasons why poetry is melancholic, as we learn later in the film. One metaphor is followed by another, a repetition that I refer to as *elliptical poetic thinking*.[49]

---

[48] This seems to be platonic in essence, reminding the Plato's forms and the allegory of the cave in which the things of the outside world are reflected through their shadows in the cave but no one in the cave can see the things themselves.

I have talked about "gap" as a defining element of the elegiac in other chapters too, most clearly, in the Epilogue, where I read Robert Hass's "Meditation at Lagunitas," in which we read "a word is elegy to what it signifies."

[49] Eva Binder, states, "The elegy is, of course, above all a literary form, which relies on the juxtaposition of two worlds - transience and permanence, loss and its contemplation, (remembered) past and (lived-in) present" (29). Binder, surprisingly makes a reference to *Oriental Elegy* only in passing. In a brief, general comment on the film, she observes that the images in *Oriental Elegy* "are the narrator's inner visions." But in analysing documentaries by Sokurov, Binder explores the filmmaker's "experimentation with media," and refers to Sokurov's technique of "slowing film images and reducing their most intrinsic quality - motion - to a standstill" (37), adding, this technique "applies equally to the movement of the camera and to the movement within and between the images." This slow movement is clearly observed in *Oriental Elegy.* Sokurov's technique of slowing the images and relying entirely on the black-and-white also "counteract the medium's tendency for mechanical reproduction." Binder cites Sokurov: "I'm not shooting a concrete picture of nature, I'm creating it. I destroy real nature and create my own" (38). In a section under the heading "The Subjective and the Elusive Narrator," Binder writes, "The dominant role of the narrator and Sokurov's insistence on a subjective point of view make his documentaries veritable monologues and leaves the films' subjects few opportunities to express themselves" (32). For all her enlightening observations about the working of the elegiac in Sokurov's films and even repeated use of the word "elegy" in her analysis, Binder never refers to any specific elegy in her work.

In introducing my arguments and making my propositions, my method hinges throughout on a rhetorical figure known as "apophasis," a device, which points to revealing or saying little or nothing and is usually associated with the use of "negatives." Put differently, the "apophatic" is associated with the unsayable, which sees something beyond or outside the confines of language but seeks to describe it. Michael A. Sells argues that "in order to claim that the transcendence is beyond names...I must give it a name, 'the transcendence'" (2). In *How Poems Think*, Reginald Gibbons writes "apophatic rhetoric goes beyond the absence of what was, to what can only be known as absence, or what is inconceivable in terms of our naming and knowing directly" (87). It is such a clinging to an indirect language of metaphor, or "seeing-as," that the subject resorts to when answers are beyond his grasp. Apophasis, in addition to being "indirect," is also associated with saying little, and saying in a way that is shrouded in mystery. After all, what can one say about something that is hard to comprehend? Little and probably only metaphorically.

Apophatic discourse is not only observed in the narration of *Oriental Elegy* but operates within its formal and visual elements as well. The film script is short, sentences are usually terse and approach towards a density, which is characteristic of poetry. Similarly, formal elements of the film, cinematography, deliberately reveal little and contribute to the brevity of the narration. The entire film seems to be shrouded in mist, and photography is done with very little light within the enclosed spaces of houses which constitute much of the setting. Even when the camera takes the viewers outside of the house, in the island where the film is shot, darkness and haze blur the view. The underlying taciturnity of the film in both formal elements and verbal components is both a response and a solution to the ineffability of the answers to the philosophical questions raised in the film.

I will finally interread *Oriental Elegy* with a poetic elegy by Hölderlin, "*In lieblicher Bläue*" ("In Lovely Blue") as reading the film in light of the poem will clarify the tenets of the film vis-à-vis loss and consolation. Moreover, such a cross-examination recalls and heightens the poetic nature of the film under study.

Apophasis: Where Silence Treads

> "Let him teach me that nothing" (from "Negative Love," John Donne)
>
> "No bird has the heart to sing in the thicket of questions" (Rene Char qtd. in Sontag's "The Aesthetics of Silence")
>
> Elected silence, sing to me / … / shape nothing, lips, be lovely-dumb …/ which only makes you eloquent. (G. M. Hopkins qtd. in *A Philosophy of the Unsayable*)

The Greek word "apophasis" means "negation" or even "denial." In *How Poems Think*, Reginald Gibbons offers an etymological definition of the term, writing, "the word combines a verb 'to say' (*phanai*) and a prefix (*apo*) which in this use means 'away from, down from, far from', or in other words 'opposed to.'" Gibbons, however, maintains that "the apophatic is not simply negation" (92), as "it implies something that is in fact present in mind … despite the inadequacy (or even absence) of any name for it" (93). Originally used in the compound, "negative theology," it was used to signify the ineffability of divinity and God. In *Mystical Language of Unsaying*, Michael A. Sells differentiates between formal and historical apophasis, believing that "historical apophasis" refers to "writers who employed the term in their own writings, and to writers with a clearly demonstrable historical connection to such writings" A little later he states, "[historical apophasis] would trace the development of a particular tradition" (4). Sells later

broaches “formal apophasis” and asserts that it “would apply the term ‘apophasis’ to any text that fit its formal definition.” Sells is quick to observe that apophasis “does not typically form into schools” because formal apophasis can be used to describe all writings including old and new and religious, philosophical and literary, “that engage explicitly the dilemma of saying the unsayable” (4). It is in this spirit that I will be using this rhetorical figure in my reading of *Oriental Elegy*. Similarly, Gibbons remarks, “An apophatic poetics does not practice any one poetic style. It is not a style or method but a mentality, a mode of perceiving” (114).

In *A Philosophy of the Unsayable*, William Franke defines apophatic discourse as a “representation of the unpresentable.” Franke’s interpretation of apophasis ends with metaphorical representation of the divine, arguing that such a representation is viable through a metaphorical delineation. He writes, “Even as an adequate representation of the divine, Jesus is known always in partial and personal ways that are expressed in language that can be considered not scientifically but metaphorically” (248). Apophasis, though, comes in different forms and appears in many media. In his further elaboration of apophasis, Franke refers to this potentiality:

> the negation of particular determinations of speech or other expressive forms exposes the unlimited significance of the breath or silence that underlies and sustains all these articulations, and this is the apophatic insight par excellence. Apophasis recognizes in the indeterminate background that serves as the medium of whatever form of linguistic determination or articulation, such as the continuum of sound or of visual form or of any other sensible or intellectual medium, the whole intact of that which is communicated only fragmentarily in its articulation. (171)

These lines indicate that the rhetoric of apophasis relies on a recognition of that which is articulated. In the context of *Oriental Elegy*, both visual and verbal determinants, like the terse tone, the dark and misty images, the sparsity of music, the paucity of answers, the terseness of sentences and, overall, the prevalent lack of colour, speak of things that need to be articulated, but the challenge is they can't be talked about or rather they can be expressed through the indirect language of metaphor. In a visual medium like film, a visual metaphor can be used to point to something beyond it. Sokurov uses a green tree with red fruits as a metaphor to "articulate" what Franke refers to as "the whole intact." In perusing the film, I endeavor to focus on different linguistic and cinematographic components of *Oriental Elegy*.

The apophatic is a perfect vehicle for a subjective expression like poetry. When something is hard to define, and when an objective reality cannot be expressed, efforts are made to define that thing through subjective lenses. In the words of Gibbons, "apophatic poetics is a mentality that refuses to limit itself to existing articulations of what reality is" (114). Facing the mysteries of such concepts as life, happiness, and poetry, the narrator can't help but to employ a technique that allows him to speak, yet indirectly, and metaphor equips him to this end. Apophasis does not merely mean "nothing" or negation of meaning. There is always something beyond "what cannot be said." In the preface to another book entitled *On What Cannot Be Said*, Franke argues that "apophatic discourse consists in words that negate themselves in order to evoke what is beyond words [, ... a] sense of negation that is informed ultimately by divine transcendence" (2). What makes this discourse such a fruitful method for analysing *Oriental Elegy* is how Sokurov makes use of silence. In the words of Franke, "The ultimate apophatic expression is silence, a silence that stretches in tension toward … what cannot be said" [Ellipsis is Franke's] (2). At the same time the methods of unsaying, or different modes of silence are

many: “the methods and forms of silence are legion, and numerous new forms of expression of it burst forth in almost every period of cultural history.”

Here in this chapter I take a “formal approach,” as opposed to historical approach to apophasis, to use a distinction made by Sells.[50] I analyse *Oriental Elegy* based on its formal apophatic *techne.* In short, if the metaphor of Jesus, as suggested by Franke, helps Christians define themselves in relation to Jesus and try to define, refine and define again, their understanding of divinity in a perpetual way, I argue the same perpetuity takes place through personal poetic metaphors. This perpetuity is what I refer to as *the elliptical*, an open-ended process of making and remaking. Drawing on such an originally theological concept as apophasis and benefitting from it in literary and artistic realms is not unknown and in fact apophatic discourse has been used especially in recent times culminating in works about the Holocaust. In *How Poems Think*, Reginald Gibbons makes extensive allusions to apophasis in the discourse relating to poetry. The reticence and the minimalism found at the heart of apophatic discourse, the ellipsis which is more often than not considered an inseparable *topos* of the discourse and finally the possibility of *kataphasis*-- a term which means naming, and stands in contrast to the negative rhetoric of apophasis-- in the form of metaphor make such a discourse an appropriate means for *Oriental Elegy*. Kataphasis, or cataphasis, is a Greek word “which means ‘to make visible’”, Gibbons tells us (93). It is the opposite of apophasis in that kataphasis “names and even catalogues,” but apophasis “evokes instead the presence of what is inconceivable or

[50] The formal approach, Sells says, “would apply the term ‘apophasis’ to any text that fits formal definition” (4). In this way, Sells remarks, apophasis can be seen in a large number of different texts from Eastern texts, to the “recent writings that engage explicitly the dilemma of saying the unsayable” (4). Historical approach, in contrast, would limit the word “to those writers who employed the term in their own writings.”

invisible" (93).[51] In the context of the film, the narrator for a long time traverses the film's space in the dark, hiding things, incapable of finding answers to his questions, which means he speaks apophatically. In contrast, he names "the green tree with red fruits" as a possible answer. This naming is kataphasis. Interestingly, the film's cinematic effects reinforce both kataphasis and apophasis. While the latter is manifested in the dark and misty images as questions of the film are asked, the former shows a tree in colour.

There is, however, another reason why an apophatic approach to the film will help unfold layers of meaning and that is some of the key characteristics of what Sells refers to as "critical Western apophasis," which at its core has "the metaphor of overflowing or 'emanation'" and at the same time "a distinctive dialectic of transcendence and immanence in which the utterly transcendent is revealed as the utterly immanent" (6). *Oriental Elegy*, for all its attempts to say "nothing" and say something only in a slant way, leaves the viewer with an intimation of immanence. Now let me turn my attention to a close reading of the film and its components and explore the myriad ways in which the film is deeply apophatic.

Oriental Elegy is a short film; it runs for 45 minutes. It is very dense. Its density results from the terseness of its constituent elements. The film shows a man who, in what appears to be a dream, sets foot on an unknown, mysterious island in Japan. We know the location because the people who appear in the film speak Japanese. While conversing with three characters, he puts a series of questions to them about the nature of life and death, about essence of happiness and the possibility of knowing happiness, about what poetry is and why it is sad. These conversations

[51] Gibbons writes "naming is cataphatic, positive," adding "the word does not exist in *OED*; perhaps it does not exist; I offer it as an opposite of apophasis meaning 'explicit mention'" (95). The word does not appear in Lanham's *Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*. Kataphasis, as a rhetorical term has, however, been employed by the scholars who are interested in negative theology and the apophatic discourse.

take place within houses which, apparently belong to these characters. The man, every now and again, also reflects, in a monologue, on these questions.

The whole film acts like a dream. In fact, no sooner has the film started than we hear the narrator, with a slow, melancholic voice which continues to the end, announce his first few words, “all is like a dream.” If we are in doubt whether or not the film portrays Sokurov’s dream, we are led to become increasingly convinced as we move forward. A little later as the speaker sets foot on the island, we hear the voice-over, “I do not hear my steps at all,” which is suggestive of an unreal situation. He then clearly expresses his confusion as to where he is when he asks, “where am I? In paradise?” Later, as he enters an enigmatic house, we hear “the door is like a sheet of paper, weightless” which is another indication of an unreal, dream-like series of events to come. Only in dreams can the narrator experience a weightless door and soundless silent steps. Juxtaposing these two statements, implicit allusions to dreams by the narrator next to his overt proclamation of the dream in the beginning, convinces us that the film is indeed portraying a dream especially when the narrator further ahead repeats “all is like a dream,” and even, “what a strange dream!”

The narrator’s voice is, always in the entire film, heard as voice-over and he is never seen talking. In fact, we only *hear* him speak. We know, of course, that the source of the voice is the narrator as he appears before the camera. That the narrator is seen a few times, in key places in the film like the end, allows us to clearly be able to separate the body from the voice. This disembodied voice, this “temporal and/or spatial dislocation,” as Silverman notes, plays an important role in how the film portrays dreams as it deploys this technique to separate the body from the voice and reinforce an oneiric atmosphere. The haziness of the images, almost in the

entire film, and its blurriness contributes all the more to this dream-like ambience, as the voice-over and the image are converging forces, heightening each other's force (Fig. 33-36). [52]

Figure 33. Oriental Elegy: Image 1

Figure 34. Oriental Elegy: Image 2

Figure 35. Oriental Elegy: Image 3

Figure 36. Oriental Elegy: Image 4

That the film is a dream is one of the first realizations the viewer comes to. A simultaneous revelation is that the narrator is exploring, indeed, is on a quest. But is there any indication if the man indeed is in search of knowing? And what kind of knowledge does he seek? A strong aura of sensory experience presages exploration of knowledge. There seem to be only two key occurrences, apart from a realization about this dream in *Oriental Elegy*, in these beginning parts. One is that the narrator seems melancholic and the second is the strong presence of sensory experience. However, he speaks about his sorrow when he realizes he doesn't have

[52] Kaja Silverman makes a distinction between voice-over and voice-off. This latter term refers to a voice whose source is not visible and the character is outside the frame.

any knowledge of his whereabouts, signified by "where am I? In paradise?" This absence of knowledge is followed by a first in a series of sensory experiences that the narrator participates in. We hear him say in a verb-less utterance, "the scent of candle," and then later, "the scent of jasmine on the sea-shore," heightening the olfactory sense and foreshadowing the quest for *knowing* on this remote, obscure island of no name, and no address. The presence of "no" is ample right from the beginning. "No," "not" and "un" are some of the most common words in the apophatic language. Let's read the beginning of a poem by Juan de la Cruz, (St. John of the Cross) and then return to the film:

> I went to a place where I did not know,
> and remained unknowing,
> transcending all knowledge.
> I knew not where I was,
> but when I saw myself there,
> without knowing where I was,
> I understood great things.
> I will not say what I felt,
> since I remained unknowing,
> transcending all knowledge.
> (Verses written on an ecstasy of full contemplation. Tr. Reginald Gibbons)

The narrator in *Oriental Elegy* bears similarities with the speaker of this poem; he is "unknowing." While in these lines, the speaker employs such apophatic elements as "un," "not,"

"without," the film deploys both visual and verbal techniques to magnify the sense of "unknowing."

Let me return to the discussion of senses, as they are means of acquiring sensory knowledge. We learn the sense of sight is evoked. While "sight" invokes sensory experience, "vision" intimates the extra-sensory. Sokurov experiences "sight," whereas St. John of the Cross experiences vision in the poem above. Sokurov seeks "to know" through senses, while St John of the Cross speaks of an otherworldly experience. There is an abundance of sight in this film, while vision seems to be absent, for maybe the only vision is that an answer to questions the narrator seeks is almost impossible. Sokurov sees "light" and looks carefully at different objects. He gazes at candles, at the windows and then later at the sky. But all these long gazes in the form of long takes reveal little. In one instance, the camera dissolves from the image of a man into a candle which lasts 20 seconds. The shots portraying most of the objects last at least ten seconds and most of them are in close-ups, emphasising a desire to see closely. The shots showing outside of the film's houses are immersed in mist, allowing little or no-thing to be conspicuous (Fig. 33-36). This dimming of the atmosphere seems to have been achieved through reliance on natural or diegetic lighting. The events take place over a night and the following morning. The absence of either frontal light (fill light) or backlight helps the film maintain its dark atmosphere to the end when the day breaks and some soft light shines in. For all his efforts to see, the narrator remains "unknowing," as the speaker of St. John of the Cross's poem.

Then the sense of hearing has a presence, albeit less directly and less strongly, intensified by the ever-present sound of the howling wind and expressed through the speaker's words: "I sense you and I are listening," the only four characters in *Oriental Elegy*. The auditory sense is subdued by the wind. Interestingly, the aural elements, the wind, is also an element that hides

things, getting in the way of hearing. If the dark, hazy atmosphere gets in the way of seeing, the wind prevents hearing. These aural and visual elements contribute to the "not" associated with the apophatic discourse. They turn the positive sense of hearing -- positive because it is an active sense -- to negative unhearing.

However, the most intense presence is somatosensation, the sense of touch and cognition through this sense, which operates through hands throughout. The speaker touches the windows of the dark house, the windowsill, even at one point the air. In one example, the camera picturing one of female characters dissolves into an extreme close-up of fingers – it's not clear whose -- which are touching what seems to be a tree bark, staying on this image for thirty seconds (Fig. 37-38).

Figure 37. Oriental Elegy: Image 5

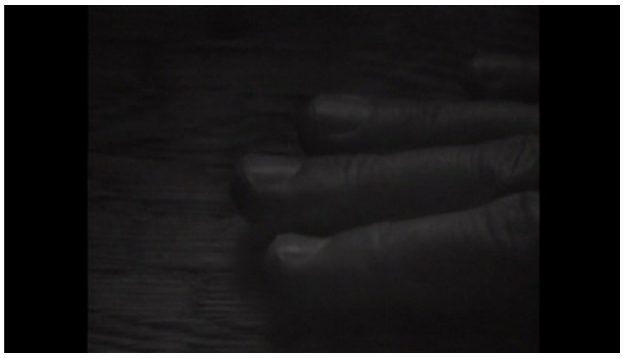
Figure 38. Oriental Elegy: Image 6

Sokurov tends to employ dissolves when making transitions from characters to objects and vice versa and overall there are few cuts in this film, reinforcing the sense of reflection on the past, as these gradual and slow transitions invoke memory. They also allow the takes to be longer, which, in turn, heightens the sense of perception. Although, paradoxically, this technique of slowing things down does not lead to knowledge. All these senses intimate an ardent attempt

on the part of the speaker to know something. However, his attempts to know through seeing, hearing, touching leave him unknowing things.

The speaker has arrived in this island and, in his dreams, he encounters three characters who, as we come to know, are "souls," as the film admits, or ghosts. The first time we meet with the first character, we hear the speaker say, "but if this soul responded, others too will be waiting for me," which indicates the presence of ghosts but, it also is suggestive of the speaker's impending inquiries. Once we hear the woman, the first interviewee, say "a soul loves humans," we come to realize that these characters are indeed ghosts who are embodied. After this first encounter with a ghost, the speaker is shown to be looking for help and he seeks succor from this ghost as he calls out to her, "don't go away; help me." We immediately realize that the speaker longs to know something and, on this journey, he seeks assistance from ghosts. It is this quest through the ghosts' aid that makes an understanding of *the film as dream,* or *the film in dream,* justifiable. And where else can the subject of the film encounter ghosts but in a dream? The film's endeavor is to connect three elements of dreams, knowing and the presence of ghosts. This can suggest that the narrator's answers may be found in dreams where ghosts who ostensibly have extraterrestrial experiences can come to aid. The presence of souls provides the narrator with another means to connect, as his intent is at the end, with transcendence. On another level, the viewer does not need to err on the side of caution vis-à-vis belief in immanence and/or ghosts, and can safely attribute them to dreams.

As we later learn that the narrator's questions are also about life and death, receiving help from ghosts appears only natural because the narrator is resorting to characters who can speak based on first-hand experience. These characters speak the Japanese language while the voice of the speaker can be heard at the same time, as if the narrator is interpreting his interlocutors,

suggesting that, again, the film happens in a dream and the narrator, Sokurov, is translating the Japanese words into Russian. Dreams always need interpretation.

Dreams also function in a taciturn way. The verbal communication in dreams is minimal, and they act apophatically. Dreams, verbally, tell little and, visually, portray a series of sequences without going into detail. This tendency not to reveal much makes dreams apophatic, a technique that *Oriental Elegy* relies on. The fact that the film is dreamlike, to say the least, can at the same time evince the ineffability of the narrator's experience. Dreams do not say explicitly and clearly yet make things manifest to us. In the words of Wittgenstein, "there are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical" (qtd. in Zwicky 83 Right). These words can be used to express the experience of dreams, which are hard to be put to words yet they are manifest to us in some ineffable ways. Many of the things which are not expressible through language can be said and shown in dreams but they need interpretation. The narrator continually comments on his exchange with his hosts. This interpretation is done in the film through Sokurov's words on his experience at regular intervals between his conversations with his interlocutors. It seems the speaker sees the need to comment and clarify. Moreover, the difference between the language of the film, Japanese, and the narrator's voice-over, Russian, intensifies not only the sense of interpretation but also the atmosphere of mystery. Only dreams and an unfamiliar, mysterious language need interpretation, and here language and dream intersect.

My insistence on why these characters are ghosts and why indeed the film is and takes place in a dream is, besides, due to the fact that the speaker is looking for answers to existential, fundamentally important questions in his life. These concerns belong to a profounder layer of existence and the answers to them may be found in an equally deep level such as dreams through

characters whose experiences and existences are different from the living person's, the narrator's.

Seventeen minutes into *Oriental Elegy*, shortly after the speaker settles in the house and make his acquaintance with the ghosts, and once he clarifies that he is indeed in search of knowing, questions start to emerge. Curtly asked and tersely responded to, questions are either put to the ghosts by the speaker or are asked as a follow-up by the ghosts themselves. The first question is asked by one of the women who complains about her desolate and difficult past life. Her question is: "what can one ask God for, what should one ask for?" And once she responds to the question, addressing the speaker directly, saying "ask for good sense." The woman's words abound with profuse regrets as she looks back and speaks in hindsight, in the second question in the chain, asks her if life ever "wearied her?" Of course, the answer is a "yes" and we later deduce that all the three ghosts speak with a heavy heart about their past life. The atmosphere of mystery is also intensified by this first woman's lack of knowledge about her birthplace: "where was I born? I no longer remember. Where is my motherland? I no longer remember," she contemplates. These negative answers to such simple questions are a continuation of the *no*'s that we encounter in the beginning and they will continue to be heard to the end. In addition, the ghost herself asks, "where is my motherland?" bespeaking the loss she experienced in her life. Along with "motherland," the words *home* and *river* are also mentioned. It is evident that this woman is at the same time of helping the speaker, lamenting her past life.

As the film moves ahead, we realize that these characters talk about their past life in a straightforward way and their conversation is about little things in their past life. These conversations are seemingly about simple things but as they are decoded, we realize there is in fact more to them than one is led to believe. As already indicated, the first woman talks about her

hard life. The male ghost, the second respondent, gives an account of his father's death but also meditates on dead fishermen. In his dialogue with the male guest of the house, the narrator asks, "may I ask about your father? To which the man answers "yes"; however, he moves on to say that he didn't understand why his father before his death mistook his wife for his mother. The male ghost says "we never understood." Here in this answer, there is denial, there is negative answer, an admission of the limitations to one's knowledge. The man at the same time relates an immeasurably mysterious story about fishermen who caught dead-bodies in their nets and a woman whose response to it is "laughter" and "a horrible grimace" and also even "dancing over the bodies." The male ghost, by recounting this story, further draws attention to puzzlement in the face of death and total ignorance of death. At the end of his miniature story, the man also reminisces about how one of the dead fishermen whispers to him not to be "afraid of anything" because "everything will be alright." Just as the male ghost was instructed by the dead fisherman, so too Sokurov is being guided by the now-a-ghost old man who resorts to an allegory to communicate his message to the narrator. His story is in plain, simple language but is shrouded in the interpretable language of allegory.

The movement of *Oriental Elegy* is both linear and vertical, that is, the narrative allows the film to move forward and from the surface elegiac layers -- which is the characters' elegy on their past life and the gloomy mood of the film -- to a profounder layer, which is the loss of meaning. The first woman only speaks of "good sense" while the second ghost, the man, reflects on life and death. That the probing speaker seeks to know the nature of death becomes more evident as we hear him ask his fourth question: "do you know how men change after death?" The answer is a laconic "they become tender..." and this nebulous knowledge of the nether world is, the man admits, given to him back in his earthly life by "the people like me who are no longer of

this world," itself another evidence that Sokurov is conversing with specters and another intimation that he is moving from the crust to the core. The elegiac moves from the surface to depth.

In a sudden shift of focus, the narrator puts a seemingly tangential question, "why is there so much sadness in poetry?" to the old man, the second respondent, insisting "perhaps you know why?" taking the concerns to a profounder level, to the core of the film. Believing that the old man belongs to a different realm of existence, the narrator states "return to us. We are in need of people like you." This "us," of course, does not allude to the speaker of the film who is engaged in a conversation with him already; it refers to this world, to the people. The speaker in his dream believes the ghosts can help the people of this world.

The question "why is poetry sad" sets a turning point to *Oriental Elegy*. The question about the elegiac in poetry acts as a linking chain between two parts of the film: in the preceding parts questions are about death, suffering and pain of the characters, whereas in the following part the speaker moves towards the end. It is as if the film is speaking in strophe and antistrophe with the question about poetry linking the two parts together. The first prepares for the argument and the second tries to comment and possibly offer an answer. These two parts are separated by the main question of the film regarding the sense of loss in poetry. Prior to such a direct reference to the elegiac nature of poetry, many questions are asked in the film while no answer is proposed. In fact, the film reaches a climax the moment this question is posed as this is the first and only time that the title of the film is reflected within the film. Subsequent to this central, binding question, the film attempts some answers.

The old man is about to leave as he is tired. Once he hears "we are so in need of people like you," the ghost responds "no, no, it's enough, quite enough, I don't want anymore, I don't

want to, I am weary." However, he continues his response, probably as he is leaving, in the most lyrical way, poeticising:

> But if I had to live earthly life once more
> I would like to live it as a *great tree with red fruits*.

Once this question is responded to, the film's silence breaks into the sound of seagulls flying and the camera dissolves into the extreme long shot of the house, presumably the setting of the conversation. The camera stays almost without movement for three minutes on this house, indicating, first, that the speaker is outside watching the house and, second, that the conversation has come to a close. The dark, misty and indeed cloudy long shot of the house shows no movement. This very long take heightens the sense of contemplation, that is, the speaker is reflecting on his temporary companions especially on the answer to the question of poetry. He needs some time to digest all the information he has received. But the man, afraid that the ghost is about to leave -- construed by the old man's "no, no, it's enough, quite enough, I don't want anymore, I don't want to" -- and still in the dark about certain other questions, goes to a third house, one which seems to be different from the previous house. The camera shows the man entering from without while his hand touches the dimly lit glass door of the house, sensing the glass for a long few moments before sliding the door open finally. The speaker hurries with the rest of the questions and the next three questions are asked successively in the course of only three minutes. The focus on these questions occupy the rest of the remaining nearly twelve minutes of the film. The questions include, in the order they are asked, "What is happiness?" "What can I know about happiness in life?" and finally "What can I know about life?" These

concerns structurally constitute the antistrophe of the film, the answers to which are tremendously difficult, making poetry relevant.

In this last house of the film and in his encounter with the third ghost, the questions become the most profound. The answers are only, according to the film, possible through an apophatic elusion. If the first woman responded literally by referring to "good sense," and if the male ghost answered with a poetic "a tree with red fruits," this last ghost only resorts to an emphatic apophatics.

Let's see what the answers are. We first know that the ghost was not happy back in life: "there was never anything that made me happy in my life," she says. Her answers are full of negative structures. She wonders if there was anything that really made her happy and she decides that "almost nothing" which is followed by an emphatic "I really don't know" and then a further emphasis that "no, I do not know anything about happiness" and ultimately a repetition of a simple apophasis "nothing, nothing." Similarly, the ultimate question of "what can I know about life," asked by the ghost herself and not the speaker, is answered negatively:

> I do not know anything about happiness,
> no, I cannot know it
> How could I understand it?
> All is so complicated in life

Poetry is sad because man in the face of existential conundrums, admits he does not have any answer. "What is life?" and "what is happiness?" are essentially intertwined with each other and the ghost draws the narrator's attention to this connection. However, the question denotes that

life and happiness are ungraspable, and that is why there is so much sadness in poetry. At the same time poetry is full of sorrow, because the consolation we may find in the poetic metaphors we create is temporary. There is always, as Zwicky says, “an implied not” (8 Left) in the metaphor, meaning that there is always a gap between what is being defined and the metaphor that defines it. This sense of unknowingness is further heightened by the fact that even the ghosts are in the dark about answers and we, of course, know that the narrator is equally in the dark as he was right from the beginning.

All these repeated moments of unknowingness, create a sense that this lack of knowledge is a priori, that is, the people living before, that is, the ghosts, did not know, much like the person living now, the film’s narrator, who does not have a knowledge either. This lack of cognition results in a structure of ellipsis at the core of the film. Between “I do not know anything about happiness, no, I cannot know it,” and the following line, “all is so complicated in life…,” the narrator is shown facing the camera, with his back at the closed lit window, while the sound of waves can be heard in the background (Fig. 39).


Figure 39. Oriental Elegy: Image 7


Figure 40. Oriental Elegy: Image 8

This image subsequently cuts to a medium close-up of an oil lamp which is almost burned out and is slowly and dimly flickering (Fig. 40). Juxtaposition of these two images

intimates how man's life is transitory, burning like a candle. The camera then goes to the same woman, who seems to be looking at the burning light and contemplating the meaning of happiness in silence for some long moments and deciding eventually "how could I understand it?" Throughout the film, the fleeting life is signified by the candle and this is one reason why the shots of the interviewees are repeatedly dissolved into the flickering candle or light, which dissolves back into those characters.

As I said previously, poetry is the link between two parts of the film located in between discussion of death and suffering of the characters, on the one hand, and reflections on life and happiness, on the other. That "there is so much sadness in poetry" seems to be a corollary of our lack of knowledge about the nature of happiness and life and it appears that only this question vis-à-vis poetry has an answer. Poetry is sad because, as we learn in this film, there is no answer about nature of life and this is the reason for grief, elegy, on one level. On another level, the film is an elegy performed by the dead who talk about their experience of suffering and loss in their life; however, the ultimate *raison d'etre* of this elegiac film is the incomprehensibility and the unsayability of the answers. These answers find expression in metaphors and the poetic thinking it is associated with. However, other questions arise and further metaphors to partially provide an answer to them. All these metaphors-in-the-makings create a sense of ellipsis.

This ellipticity, itself part and parcel of an apophatic style, is similarly reinforced by the silence at the end of statements. There is vacillation here. A verbal gap which is filled with images, over which there is no commentary, no voice-over, and no camera movement, evoking ellipsis at the end of sentences. At the same time, in these final moments, at a time when only waves can be heard, sentences are uttered after long pauses, indeed very long lulls. It seems as if sentences are interspersed with ellipses manifested as long takes and the seemingly diegetic

sound of waves only heightens this elliptical movements, with one splash of wave following another. The ebb and flow continue until the female ghost finishes her sentences. The gaps between sentences are filled only with the elliptical motion of waves. At the end of the woman's part, one of the most symbolic shots of the film can be seen. What appears to be an insect, maybe a moth, is seen facing the window and buzzing near the dimly lit door, as if hovering over light, reminiscent of the narrator's fascination with the window throughout *Oriental Elegy*.


Figure 41. Oriental Elegy: Image 9


Figure 42. Oriental Elegy: Image 10

It is immediately after this scene that the speaker is once again seen to move towards the door, and after touching the glass in rumination, opens the door and looking out, steps out in the rain. This juxtaposition of man with insect (Fig. 41-42), can reinforce the fleeting nature of life but, at the same time, indicates the similarity man shares with the moth in being enthralled by light. The sound of the rain fills the background and then combined with the non-diegetic music while the camera shows the image of a green tree with red fruits at a time when the colour is at its most conspicuous in the film, catapulting the film briefly from the near monochrome of black-and-white to a chromatic possibility. On the long take of the tree, the narrator cogitates, "it seems I am welcome here, and this island is enough for all my dreams" and finishing the film's voice-

over by the final emphatic "I shall stay." These words, coupled with the music and the black-and-white cinematography, heightens the elegiac in the film.[53] (Fig. 43)

Figure 43. Oriental Elegy: Image 11

The temporal positioning of this announcement after all those apophatic concessions of unknowing coterminous with the shot of "the tree with red fruits" is pivotal in the film. We are cognizant that the narrator has entered this island in search of what seems to be keys to his puzzles. He realizes, through his encounters, that answers are far too difficult to secure and likely impossible or ineffable. However, he appears at this final scene to be happy and seems determined to stay. But why? Is this not counterintuitive? The answer lies in the metaphor of the

[53] Many of other films by Sokurov employ the same kind of technique that relies on black and white cinematography. The most famous is probably *Soviet Elegy*, which in the words of Eva Binder, is "Sokurov's portrait of Andrei Tarkovsky" (34). Eva Binder writes, "*Soviet Elegy* begins with a black-and-white series of shots that express a mood of elegiac sorrow and invite the viewer to contemplate the transient nature of human life" (35).

tree, the answer to the poetry question, and the ultimate ambient light filling the whole expanse of the film just before it fades to dark again.

We know the conversation on poetry was initiated earlier but it was only connected to the old man's reference to "a great tree with red fruits" as if this aphoristic rejoinder could answer the question. Indeed, it does, but only partially. What kind of a metaphor is that specific tree and why that particular tree? In what ways can a tree be a metaphor for a man? The tree seems to be a rowan. We know that usually trees with fruits are not evergreen but deciduous and this is the answer to the analogy. Man, knowing that he is mortal -- the only certain knowledge we have is our mortality -- wishes to be like a tree, which blossoms again and again, and gives fruits repeatedly. A deciduous tree becomes dormant and awakens in a continuous way, something that man is incapable of. The male interviewee, by offering such a green metaphor, first, points to man's mortality and, then, to how, as a result of his transience, beauty for him is impermanent, too. The use of such a tree is directly connected to the question "why is poetry sad?" Poetry, aesthetically pleasing, uses metaphors to speak about realities of human life. *Oriental Elegy*, in this sense, is a poetic film because it is eventually based on a metaphor.

This elegy cannot bridge the gap which exists between man and his desires and wishes. This (rowan) tree gives fruit and resurrects every year, while man does not have such a rejuvenating power. The characters of the film attest to this fact not because they are old, but because they are in fact dead. Such a sorrow in poetry might also explain the unhappiness, the dissatisfaction that can be observed in the women's words. The interviewees, the ghosts are old, and are cognizant of the impossibility of living life back again. Once old, juvenescence is completely out of reach. Young age is usually associated with the colour green and the emphasis on the word "green" as an adjective for the tree may have roots in this outlook about aging.

At the same time the light shining from without in the finale does not define what the answer is, it does not say much about it. It does not clarify what lies beyond; nor does it speak to the question on the nature of life. Interestingly the light only segues into darkness, intimating further the sense of ellipsis in what appears to be similar to an assertion by the Syrian poet Ali Ahmad Said Esber (Adonis); "the light may cast on the unknown only enlarges the unknown's dimensions, announcing its depth and extremity as if light were transforming itself into night" (qtd. in *How Poems Think* 105).

"...Poetically Man Dwells..."[54]

> "I might feel like an old /dark place with no match / to strike, where each word / is trying the latch" (from "Elegy: for Robert Lowell," Brodsky)
>
> "Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is." (from "The Snow Man," Wallace Stevens)

In *Oriental Elegy* the narrator seems to be finally relieved that there might be an answer to his questions, a way to comprehend just a "something" in the ocean of mystery he faces in the film: metaphor. Metaphor-building, though, is a process as Heidegger elucidates in a reading of a Hölderlin's late poem called "*In lieblicher Bläue,*" ("In Lovely Blue"). Early in his essay "...Poetically Man Dwells…," Heidegger writes, "poetry causes dwelling to be dwelling. Poetry is what really lets us dwell." Heidegger then asks, "through what do we attain to a dwelling place?" He responds "through building," and continues "poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building" (215), quoting from Hölderlin: "Full of merit, yet poetically, man /dwells on

[54] This is the title of Heidegger's essay.

this earth" (218). This "building," to use a Heideggerian word, should be constant and this thinking poetically can offer a sort of consolation. It's true that the meaning of life and happiness eludes the narrator in its complete form, yet thinking poetically means to build layers of meaning in life. And the narrator seems to be happy with this open space at the end of the film. The nature of what I am referring to as *process* can be clarified through Heidegger's words when he asserts "man is capable of dwelling only if he has already built, is building, and remains disposed to building, in another way" (217). The metaphor of the tree, which makes Sokurov want to "stay on this island," however, consoles only a little because the power of metaphor is not to connect with the unknown beyond but with the questions of his island because "poetry does not fly above and surmount the earth to escape it and hover over it. Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it" (Heidegger 218). It is immediately after the sight of the tree, this metaphor, that the narrator decides that he wants to live on this island because, as he says, "it seems I am welcome here" and because "this island is enough for all my dreams. I shall stay." The speaker of the film could not be happier anywhere else. He knows his limits, and finds an answer to those limits through a poetic mode of "dwelling." He seems to be happily earth-bound.

However, we know that the narrator, having finished his conversation with the characters, steps towards the door, his hands stretched as if groping in the dark. The camera shows no movement in the entire scene while the diegetic sound of rain can be heard. The sound becomes louder and merges into a sad, adagio-like Japanese melody. Sokurov slowly opens the door, he hesitates for a few seconds, then steps outside, looks around, and finally looks at the horizon where the light comes from. It is the poetry of the tree that makes him want to stay on this earth for this metaphor does not reveal anything about the real answers to those questions which remain ungraspable. That the narrator faces the sky suggests that he is cognizant that a reality,

signified through light, resides elsewhere. However, poetry is what he has at his disposal here on his island. The sad music played for 70 seconds heightens the sense of sorrow for the final statements by the last interviewee. The following lines in the poem are similar to the final sequence of the film:

May, if life is sheer toil, a man
Lift his eyes and say: so
I too wish to be? Yes. As Kindness,
The Pure, still stays with his heart, man
Not unhappily measures himself
Against the godhead. Is God unknown?
Is he manifest like the sky? I'd sooner
Believe the latter. It's the measure of man.
Full of merit, yet poetically, man
Dwells on this earth. But no purer
Is the shade of the starry night,
If I might put it so, than
Man who's called an image of the godhead.
Is there a measure on earth? There is
None. (qtd in Heidegger 219-20)[55]

[55] I have used the translation of Heidegger's text in order to be consistent in my reading. In *Fredrich Hölderlin Hymns and Fragments*, translated by Richard Sieburth, these lines are as the following:
May a man look up
From the utter hardship of his life
And say: Let me also be
Like these? Yes. As long as kindness lasts

The film conspicuously depicts Sokurov looking first at the earth and then up above at the sky after finding a consolation, in the image of the tree with which he can "dwell poetically." For a few seconds the speaker stands at the threshold, with his back to the camera, looking down and up at the same time.[56] The man is in-between light and dark, in-between knowing and unknowing, demonstrated through the dichotomy of earth and horizon. The corollary of this in-betweenness, this *there but not quite*, is that the narrator wants to move forward and remain perpetually in the process of "building" new metaphors in order to "dwell poetically." This in-betweenness, at the same time, is another reason why the *elliptical process* make sense. The narrator is seen standing behind the door for a few seconds. When he opens the door, he stands in the threshold looking down at the earth first and up at the sky. Standing in the "threshold" heightens the idea of in-betweenness especially when the man stands there next to the crane.[57]

Pure, within his heart, he may gladly measure himself
Against the divine. Is God unknown? Is he manifest as the sky? This I tend
To believe. Such is man's measure.
Well deserving, yet poetically
Man dwells on this earth. But the shadow
Of the starry night is no more pure, if I may say so,
Than man, said to be the image of God.
Is there measure on earth? There is
None.
(249-250)

[56] I borrow the concept of in-betweenness from Seamus Heaney. His poetry, according to David-Antoine Williams, abound with instances of in-betweenness. Examples are many: "between fingers and my thumb," "between the by road and the main road," "between destiny and dread," and "between when I was buried and unburied" (All qtd in *Defending Poetry* 149).

[57] Heidegger's commentary on the lines from the poem above can illuminate my reference to the film's narrator's in-betweenness: "...in this realm, man is allowed to look up, out of it, though it, toward the divinities. The upward glance passes aloft toward the sky, and yet it remains below on the earth. This between is measured out for the dwelling of man" (220).

The bird, as we know, spends time in both the sky and on the earth, living in both realms, flying temporarily but nesting and living on the earth[58] (Fig. 44-45).

Figure 44. Oriental Elegy: Image 12

Figure 45. Oriental Elegy: Image 13

It should, however, be noted that despite this similarity between man and crane, the film never mentions anything about the nature of the light and the light may even be simply an indication of moments of consolation. Nor does the film mention god, unlike the Hölderlin poem. However, both these works of art suggest a beyond, something of a transcendence which lies without the human clinging grasp. *Oriental Elegy* only projects light at the end and it remains taciturn about the light, leaving it with no comment and in silence, a final apophasis which is interestingly similar to what this rhetorical figure was originally used for -- to ruminate about transcendence. Sokurov, by this final silence, also indicates that what lies there is "mysterious" and better expressed in an apophatic way much like Hölderlin's "God" who, "is unknown." Heidegger moves on to say, "the god who is unknown, must by showing himself as the one he is, appear as the one who remains unknown. God's *manifestness* … is mysterious" [italics Heidegger's]. Here are Hölderlin's lines vis-à-vis the unknown:

[58] We see the same kind of bird in other films by Sokurov. *Stone*, a film about Chekhov's loneliness is one clear example. In a scene in which Chekhov is lying on bed, we see the bird pecks at his shirt. Exactly at this time, the film makes a flashback to what seems to be the writer's past, showing a young writer and the stork looking at each other in the eyes while the writer pets the bird in its long neck.

What is God

Unknown, yet

Full of qualities is the

Face of the sky …

… The More something

Is invisible, the more it yields to what's alien (225).[59]

Just as Hölderlin's transcendence in the poem is "unknown" yet manifest, so too does the narrator's looming light pour in, in profusion, but remains unknown and mysterious. The shot in which Sokurov's eyes are looking up cuts into the tree. This cut is significant as it shows a flashback to an earlier conversation with the male ghost and at the same time juxtaposes the light with the tree. Therefore, another question arises here: can the metaphor of the tree, however beautifully "built," reveal anything about the 'beyond'? In other words, as Hölderlin asks in his poem,

Is there is a measure on earth? There is

None (226-7)

This "none" is echoed in the film through the ghosts, especially the final female ghost. The narrator, convinced that there is "nothing" about happiness and/or life which can be truly comprehended, turns from inside the house, dark and misty, to outside where he sees the tree

[59] These lines do not exist in the Sieburth's edition. Heidegger cites these from the Stuttgart edition, stating, "In Lovely Blue," at the time of composition, began with these lines.

with fruits and where light is shining. But even the characters who ostensibly have come from another realm can't or won't reveal anything about the nature of that other world. They reveal, however, things about this world. It is the male specter who first introduces the metaphor of "a great tree with red fruits." The light at the end remains unknown, as much as philosophical questions of this world always remain so, but the consolation is that there is always the possibility of "dwelling poetically" through metaphor and poetic thinking. Still, ellipsis is at the core of the consolation of poetic thinking. The last two lines of the stanza above function in the same vacillating vein that the film does. It is first conceded that "there is" and the line ends; however, the "None" surprises us, sitting in the line as the only word of the sentence; we read an affirmative but suddenly end in the negative.

These final two lines of the poem can be read analogously with the answers of the last two ghosts. Whereas the old man says if he were to live for a second time he would wish to be "a tree with red fruits," thereby opening a door ajar, into the possibilities, the woman's answer to the riddle of life and happiness is almost "nothing," because it's impossible to find objective answers to these questions. "In Lovely Blue," Hölderlin speaks of the sorrow of a man resulted from an inability to know the "measure": "The sufferings of this man seem indescribable, / Inexpressible, unspeakable" (Tr. Richard Sierburth). The solution is only through the subjective means of metaphor, or poetic thinking. In "Sokurov's Documentaries," Jeremy Hicks alludes to the subjectivity entrenched in Sokurov's films, highlighting "the centrality of the biography and portraiture in his films, the approach to death, the refocusing on non-recordable inner states and subjectivity rather than a recordable objective world, and a privileging of ambiguity and structures that only make sense when the whole is seen from the perspective of the end (14). Sokurov himself asserts, "I'm not trying to make documentaries as a realistic type of art. I'm not

interested in real truth. I don't think I could possibly understand reality that well" (qtd.in *The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov* 20). Sokurov, as he attempts to show in *Oriental Elegy*, does not believe the nature of objective reality is graspable, and the closest one can step towards reality is through a subjective prism that metaphor provides. Thus, the image of tree and that of the light are separated by a cut.

The emphasis on the nebulous nature of our being, our life, is supported by the opening and closing of the film; thick layers of mist encircling the island and dominating the whole space induce the sentiment that from "the unknown" we come or we set off and in "the unknown" we finish. At a time when reality is almost inexpressible, as the film wants to indicate by its use of apophatic "nothing" at the end, only a subjective means such as metaphor can articulate something.

Techne

But how does *techne* in *Oriental Elegy* represents the apophatic? The monochromatic ambience is the most discernible element. There is little colour in the film; black-and-white dominates most of the film leading to a dark atmosphere. The film's use of black-and-white is an apophatic way of painting the film canvas or representation. Not only does the dark make the image fuzzy, but the mere use of a monochrome, albeit in different shades, intimates a tendency to hide things rather than reveal them. The shades tend to be brighter when the camera dissolves into close-up of faces and hands and when there is a possibility of knowing. For instance, the image of a tree, although blurry, reveals a little colour. In *Oriental Elegy* rooms are mostly dark, lit by either a flickering oil-lamp or very low-key light, creating an atmosphere of mystery within the rooms where encounters between the narrator and the "souls" take place.

This want of colour coupled with looming mist creates what I refer to as *a diffidence effect*. This effect precipitates a tacit unfolding of things in the film and is in fact in keeping with the diffident attitude of the speaker about the nature of reality. The shadowy aura of the house and of the island allow for multiple interpretations apropos the nature of reality. In this sense the world can be compared to Rumi's dark room, also known as the parable of elephant in the dark, where an elephant is touched in disparate parts by a group of blind people. They keep surmising as to what the real object they are groping is only leading to a multitude of interpretations. The function of darkness, a facet of silence in the film, is to allow for disparate interpretations. Susan Sontag, in *Styles of Radical Will*, refers to this particular effect of silence when she writes, "A person who becomes silent becomes opaque for the other; somebody's silence opens up an array of possibilities for interpreting that silence, for imputing speech to it" (16). The film with its questions lends itself to multiple interpretations as a result of the varied layers and forms of silence. In addition, the haze and at times what seems to be low clouds blurs the vision, reinforcing what the colour, or lack thereof, of the film does.

Moreover, the rhythm of the film is immeasurably slow, in a way that some shots take as much as a few very long seconds especially towards the end when questions become exponentially more philosophical and ostensibly harder to answer. The increasingly long rendering of the takes, as the film moves along, is suggestive of the correlation between shots/takes and reflection. In answer to the question "what is happiness?" the still camera focuses on the female ghost for long seconds, showing her silent contemplation. Evidently one of the functions of these long takes is to lengthen the silence, the emptiness, the absence in the film. In *The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov*, Hicks quotes David MacDougall as saying, "with the long take we are forced to stay with an image after we think we have grasped its initial sense and

invited to demonstrate a coasting perusal or observe something occurring. In consequence, there is a far greater ambiguity, and a sense of process" (18). In fact, *Oriental Elegy* towards the end borders on photography, as if freezing the frames so that the viewers, in unison with the characters in the film, immerse in deliberation.

These long duration takes are heightened by a verbal apophasis. The script is so compact it should be read like a poem and the lyrical, meditative style of the sentences lends the film to a poetic perusal. This density is part of the apophatic strategy used by Sokurov. The script is curt especially for a film that asks such fundamentally philosophical questions as the nature of life and happiness and intrinsic sadness of poetry. In the face of such questions, one expects a profusion of words typical of philosophy. However, the script prefers a reticent method. Similarly, rooms and houses are sparsely decorated, suggestive of a dearth of exact answers. Space heightens the sense of nothingness present in the answers. Analogy between house and mind is a familiar one, and here in this film, the mind of the narrator of the film and the space he speaks in, the rooms and the house, have little decoration. The oil lamp, another important element in the mise-en-scène can be said to be flickering, illuminating very little in the room, suggestive of how little the mind is illumined. Just as the little lamp enlightens modestly, the mind of the film's actors and their answers seem to enlighten little about the questions. These houses seem to be places where these ghosts used to dwell once in the past. Binder believes that "the house" recurs as a leitmotif in Sokurov's documentaries, "for loss - of home, of the native land, of the private space - and stands at the heart of the documentaries as the image for the elegiac mood of loss" (29-30). *Oriental Elegy* moves forward based on a space which juxtaposes the dark and dimly-lit internal next to the slightly-bright external. Not only is the internal (the

house) dark and vague, but is at the same time associated with the transitory, the fleeting.[60] On the other hand, the external, which the sky shows, the light from outside coming from an unknown source at the very end before the credits roll, is suggestive of permanence.

Things human are put in contrast with things natural, albeit in a subtle way, as the contrast is not sharp or stark due to the presence of mist. This contrasting structure strengthens the binary of long-lasting or transcendence and the fleeting. Binder refers to the internal and external dichotomy in Sokurov's work, writing: "Sokurov juxtaposes - and links - the permanence of nature (the autumnal trees, the birds) with the passing of life (the cemetery) and the transience of everyday life (washing, playing, working)" (36). Binder's reflection is, in fact, on Sokurov's *Soviet Elegy*, a tribute to Sokurov's friend and mentor, Andrei Tarkovsky, but are also suggestive about *Oriental Elegy*. Insects, what looks like a moth and then a stink bug, figure two times throughout the film, intimating transitory nature of life as demonstrated in the example of the fluttering moth above. Another nonhuman animal portrayed in *Oriental Elegy* is the crane. The crane is observed alone once in a close-up but in another instance the narrator and the crane can be seen standing shoulder to shoulder, heightening the disparity between man and the crane, given particularly the fact that in the Japanese culture the crane represents longevity and permanence. Immediately after this shot, the camera cuts to the man's hand, which is being pecked at by the crane. This contrast, at the same time, indicates man's life is too brief for knowing. Another element of nature includes a howling wind which can be heard throughout. The sound of the wind not only shrouds everything in even more mystery but also heightens the sense of transition because of its ability to change (Fig. 46-47).

[60] In her essay, Binder refer to "the house" in Sokurov's films, saying it constitutes a clear "leitmotif" in Sokurov's film and associates the house with "dispossession and sorrow caused by emigration, war and modernization" (40).

Figure 46. Oriental Elegy: Image 14

Figure 47. Oriental Elegy: Image 15

Overall the tone of the narrator and the interviewees is terse, allowing the image to speak for the image. In her book, *Wisdom and Metaphor*, Jan Zwicky, quotes Charles Wright as saying "The true image raises out of the darkness ...the true image belongs to neither Imagism nor Surrealism. It belongs to Emptiness. Which is to say its power is otherworldly and ultimately apophatic, a luminous outline above the tongue" (72 Right). Encountering riddles of life, the narrator cannot but resort to saying little. The voice-over, constituting the whole narration, is like an extended narrative poem, slow and somber. This script is similarly very succinct; questions are asked, short answers are offered and curt descriptions are provided.

The cinematography is no different. There is very little movement of camera and except for the moments the camera pans to show the long shot of the island, it seems stationary and shots are connected by similar methods of dissolves or cuts. In addition, the houses, the main setting of the film, present very little in the way of mise-en-scène. Put differently, the technical elements of the film strengthen the prevalent taciturnity. *Oriental Elegy* runs for only about forty-three minutes, in the course of which the most philosophical questions about man and life are posed, each question taking a different section which is not unlike a poetic stanza. An amalgamation of a laconic film script and dark enigmatic images contributes to the overall apophatic propensity of the film.

The narrator seeks to discover answers to at least some of his questions, but the scale of the problems is so wide-reaching that he is made effectively to say little because it would be hard to speak about the ineffable. One way to speak about this ineffable is through silence because silence always points to its opposite, as Sontag points out: "Silence never ceases to imply its opposite and to depend on its presence: just as there can't be 'up' without 'down' or 'left' without 'right'" (*Styles of Radical Will* 11). The film, hence, hinges on a binary of silence and taciturnity, effecting a dichotomous movement which consists of terseness of language and the unsaid. All these instances of apophatic discourse in the film culminate in the end in "nothing," "none," and "no" to the questions raised in the film about life and happiness and inherent sadness of poetry. The film ends by proposing a metaphor as a consolation to man's grief over his unknowingness. Convinced that answers evade him, the narrator resorts to poetic thinking through a metaphor. However, this metaphor is only temporary and should be followed by other metaphors if man wishes to "dwell poetically" and think poetically or metaphorically. This poetical thinking and the resulting consolation are elliptical in nature. In the words of Charles Simic, "our deepest experiences are wordless. There may be images, but there are no words to describe the gap between seeing and saying" (qtd in Zwicky 85 Right). This gap may be bridged through the elliptical process of metaphor-making. The incomprehensibility of the answers is so profound that the narrator finally seems to be clinging to the metaphor of the tree which allows him to express what he thinks without articulating the thing itself. As the film, in the final shot, reveals, the narrator seems to be happy and rather consoled with his poetic grasp of knowledge construed by the words "I am welcome here" and "I shall stay." Who knows what the narrator's next "seeing-as" would be, but it's a certitude that to discover more layers of life, he will have to start anew and make another metaphor, or poem, or film.

Epilogue: An Inconclusion[61]

> All the new thinking is about loss / In this it resembles all the old thinking (from "Meditation at Lagunitas," Robert Hass)

> … . Can we keep her then
> In works of hands, or of the wits of men?
> Can these memorials, rags of paper, give
> Life to that name, by which name they must live?
> Sickly, alas! short-lived, abortive be
> Those carcase verses, whose soul is not she;
> And can she, who no longer would be she,
> Being such a tabernacle stoop to be
> In paper wrapp'd; or when she would not lie
> In such an house, dwell in an elegy? (from "A Funeral Elegy," John Donne)

> ...because language itself / is hope - the autonomic hope of a / voice calling out even in despair (from *Infinite Gradations*, Anne Michaels)

In this concluding chapter, I say some inconclusive words about the elegiac films discussed and analysed in detail in the preceding chapters, *The Salt of the Earth*, *Heart of a Dog* and *Oriental Elegy.* As we observed, all these films are elegies; they offer a temporary consolation, and in all the three films, the proposed solace is in the form of a meaning-making, whether art, love, or metaphor. In *The Salt of the Earth*, the narrator mourns the deaths of people he portrays in his photographs while at the same time bemoans the destruction of all his childhood forests, "home of his dreams," as he puts it. Salgado, the photographer, eventually finds a remedy in the resuscitation of those forests and in a turn to nature photography, a new episode in his artistic career. This remedy is manifested at the end of the film, in the form of luscious forests captured in aerial shots from above. In *Heart of a Dog*, the artist, the narrator of the film, after lamenting her different losses, which include her rat terrier, her husband, her friend, and her mother, takes

[61] I have borrowed this neologism from William Franke (*A Philosophy of the Unsayable* 326).

refuge in love that the film offers as consolation. In *Oriental Elegy*, the narrator, in search of answers to some of the most challenging questions of life, almost convinced that the answers are out of human grasp, resorts to the generating world of metaphorical thinking, proposed as the remedy to the unanchored feeling of loss and abandonment in a dark and misty island of mysteries, questions and conundrums.

In all of these films, the consolation is temporary and leads to a state of ellipsis. The subject of loss is always in-between and this in-betweenness allows for a third possibility which surpasses the binary of mourning and melancholia. The formal structure of these films, their ellipticity, as far as loss is concerned, and their attempt at proposing remedies despite their conviction of the impossibility of replacement and substitution, are the common features of these films. They also share a linearity of narrative and a resistance against fragmentation despite being filmic elegies. These characteristics are the reasons for grouping these films together under the same category.

One of the facets of this dissertation has also been reading and inter-reading the films with poetic elegies or elegiac poems. All the three films have been shown to be lending themselves to such an inter-reading. This approach to analysing films about loss recalls how a visual art -- like elegiac film -- can be informed by the older form, the elegiac poetry. The method of perusal of the film in relation to and in the light of poems can elucidate the function of elegy and the concepts of loss in films. Moreover, such a cross-examination of these art forms introduces elegiac nonfiction film as a different mode of documentary at odds with the vaguely defined “poetic mode,” long established as a form of documentary film by theorists such as Bill Nichols.

Similar to the preceding chapters, in which individual poems were used in order to explicate the function and dynamism of the elegiac in the films under scrutiny, this epilogue examines a widely-read elegy, "Meditation at Lagunitas," by the contemporary American poet Robert Hass. In this concluding chapter, I bring together the three films and draw conclusions about them. All the points I make about the films can be found in Hass's poem and I cross-refer to the films and the poem to not only arrive at some final words but at the same time point out how premises and points of a contemporary elegy can be found in films. In fact, it is "Meditation at Lagunitas," which assists me make these final remarks about the films.

First, the films, much like the poem, portray a locus amoenus which serves as the consolation. Secondly, in all the three films as well as the poem, the proposed remedy is shown to be pronounced through giving voice to the lost ones, the objects of loss. In other words, this solace is portrayed through naming through rhetorical term *Kataphasis*. Finally, as discussed in the main chapters of this dissertation, consolation points and leads to an ellipsis, that is, naming or *kataphasis* is continuous and elliptical. The consoling trope of locus amoenus, not estranged to the pastoral tradition, becomes a defining element of elegiac films. I amalgamate the locus amoenus with *kataphasis* to say how the films portray, cinematically, their consolatory space, and how narrators name consolation, using their imagination, kataphatically.

Locus Amoenus

In *The Visionary Landscape: A Study in Medieval Allegory*, Paul Piehler defines locus amoenus as "the enclosed garden, park or paradise," which is "portrayed as intensely desirable, and situated either very remotely or behind inhibiting physical or psychic barriers" (77). Piehler also writes that the paradisal garden "is often the scene of (or even represents) the solution of a

problem (78). In the wilderness of emotions that the mourner experiences, a small consolatory resort to art, love, or metaphor, can offer a solace, however small. Locus amoenus is a fruitful means to draw attention to the workings of consolation in the barrenness of loss. This trope, used in paintings, indicates how the pastoral can predominate and hold sway in the elegy. The application of the term here connects elegiac cinema back to its pedigree in elegiac poetry.

Exploring the term in the pastoral elegy, critic Robert Bernard Hass, not to be mistaken with the poet-critic Robert Hass, in "The Mutable Locus Amoenus and Consolation in Tennyson's In Memoriam," speaks of "the knowledge that the production of new, imaginative conventions can lessen the threats of the harsh natural world and confer upon the poet a small measure of control in the face of natural determinism" (2). R. B. Hass continues: "we should recognize that the durability of pastoral elegy as a generic form can in part be attributed to the changes in the locus amoenus as it responds to the needs of culture" (3). He argues that the term "keeps open the possibility of continually new imaginative structures which enable the poet to locate several consolations simultaneously" (4), adding "throughout the history of poetry the locus amoenus has appeared in many forms." Notwithstanding the changes this motif has undergone, R. B. Hass refers to "two stable themes" through which the locus amoenus functions:

> Throughout the history of poetry, the locus amoenus has appeared in many forms, each of which has responded to major shifts in cultural and philosophical paradigms. Despite the changes in classical, Christian, and the Romantic versions of the motif, however, two stable themes emerge. First, the *locus amoenus* is always an imagined, poetic activity that allows the poet to create some version of an ideal realm that is far removed from the painful difficulties of the real world. By imaginatively creating the landscape of one's

> desires, the poet, in effect, controls nature and transforms its wilderness into a realm that is suitable for human harmony and habitation. Second, the *locus amoenus* offers an ideal that remains unattainable because it exists only in language. [62]

In the words of R. B. Hass, while discussing Shelley's use of the technique, the ambiguity at the heart of the trope "keeps open the possibility of continually new imaginative structures which enable the poet to locate several consolations continuously" (4). However, the reason why locus amoenus originally in the history of art was portrayed in the form of a garden can be traced back to the story of Adam and Eve. Expelled from paradise, the couple descended to earth and, after the expulsion, they dreamed of a return to their paradise, to the locus amoenus. Man, following Adam and Eve's expulsion from an original home, laments its loss and always attempts to find a substitute. Replacement is, of course, impossible because earthly paradises are replicas only, a copy of an imagined garden.

R. B. Hass further comments: "the locus amoenus is an imaginative construct that lies between a past ideal and some future perfection that represents a return to that lost ideal" (7). In short, there is always a gap between the subject and the object of mourning that cannot be bridged. Also, the consolation, the locus amoenus, is the product of imagination. Imagination, however, does not replace or substitute the lost object in a Kristevean fashion. It provides a space where the subjects of loss can reminisce about the desired object of loss. In *Locus Amoenus and the Sleeping Nymph*, Barbara Baert affirms the place of imagination as the source of locus amoenus and alludes to the trope as "a haven of aesthetic thinking" (12).

---

[62] R. B. Hass also writes: "the three versions of the locus amoenus: the classical, with its emphasis upon leisure; the Romantic, with its emphasis upon sustained reverie; and the Christian, with its emphasis upon eternal paradise" (8) and then also says "most recent discussions of pastoral elegy have focused on the locus amoenus as a site for political subversion" (11).

Similarly, in *Placing Sorrow: A Study of the Pastoral Elegy Convention from Theocritus to Milton*, Ellen Zetzel Lambert holds that locus amoenus "might be a secluded spot or enchanted island which we come upon in the course of our life's journey," suggesting that while pastoral is "a homeland," locus amoenus, which is an inseparable part of the pastoral, is "a resort," which is "described through the wondering gaze of a visitor…" (67). Lambert continues: "The sweet, familiar world in which the elegist was wont to place his sorrow becomes a barren ground, and he is left un-consoled, looking toward those greener fields elsewhere." These words attest to the continuity of loss and consolation in and as locus amoenus, while at the same time suggests the trope is temporary and fleeting. The rather "pleasant place" the mourner comes to, or discovers, tends to lose effect for the subjects of mourning and they have to look for further loci amoeni. This continuity places them in an in-between status.

I employ the term in this epilogue to say some final words about consolation in the three films of this dissertation. The use of the term in pastoral elegy makes its application in my discussion of loss and consolation all the more relevant. Let me now go the films and show the ways in which the filmic elegies analysed in detail in the preceding chapters employ locus amoenus in an attempt to offer consolation.

In all the three films, the subject, or each narrator, attempts to find substitutes and replacements; each of the subjects in the studied films resorts to a certain locus amoenus. Anderson gravitates towards love, Wenders shows that Salgado finds solace in his art and nature, and in Sokurov we witness a discovery of metaphor as remedy. In other words, the speakers in the films find a locus amoenus in art, love, and metaphor. The gap exists between the subject and object of loss, one which cannot be filled completely even through the proposed remedies. We know that the speaker in *The Salt of the Earth* loses his childhood forests, while at the same time

mourns the deaths of so many people he portrays in his photography. In *Heart of a Dog* there is a similar rift, a profound longing that cannot be completely bridged due to the irretrievable nature of loss. In *Oriental Elegy*, a slightly different form of distance is brought to the fore. The fissure in this work is one between the speaking, exploring subject and the meanings, the answers he is searching for. The subject is lost among questions and the darkness of the paths. The sight of a colour tree in the film's black-and-white skin is a pleasing or rather reassuring experience. However, a replacement is impossible and it is exactly because of this impossibility that the replica becomes possible.

In each film the locus is offered or introduced as a consolation which the film magnifies just like a painting where locus amoenus is emphasised. Even the gaze of the film, the angle of the camera changes as it focuses from mourning to consolation and the locus amoenus. How does the movement of camera and cinematography, along with the verbal elements, contribute to this shift? In *Heart of a Dog*, such an emphasis is made through the contrast between the final pristine shot in which Lou Reed and Lolabelle are portrayed and the earlier images which are blurry and dream-like. The photo, an extreme close-up of the loved lost ones, is pristine and spotless compared with the rest of the film. We hear the words of love in the score and as the music reverberates love can "turn the time around," the camera pans from left to right, magnifying the picture completely. And this clear narrative takes place after the chaos of the *bardo.*

In a similar vein, in *Oriental Elegy*, the subject arrives at the locus amoenus after meandering in the dark, ultimately coming to the tree shot in colour. The contrast is again, here in this film, visible and the conspicuously different colour of the tree magnifies the portrayed locus amoenus. The camera shows at eye-level angle, the tree in long shots as well as long takes

(Fig. 43). Similarly, in *The Salt of the Earth*, the camera exhibits, a few times, the long takes and eventually in birds'-eye angle the forests, in order to emphasise the difference those resuscitated forests, at the end of the film, have with the barren lands they once were. At the same time, Wenders employs the technique of superimposition, putting the green forests on top of the dark, dead lands, to heighten the locus amoenus (Fig. 16).

It's important here in this conclusion to recall the framing structures of each chapter and how they are connected to these proposed loci amoeni. Deleuze's "montage," used in my study of *The Salt of the Earth*, interconnects the elements and reaches a climax through a superimposition. In *Heart of a Dog*, the *Bardo*, used in the entirety of the film as the unifying element, ends with love, because the film, as we witnessed, was Anderson's *bardo*: a space the subject of loss enters to come out as a new form. Recognition of love as a remedy to loss, as locus amoenus, is given at the end of the filmmaker's *bardo* (Fig. 11-14). The different spellings of *Bardo* and *bardo* were used to make a distinction between the film as the artist's *bardo* and the original Buddhist *Bardo* that the dead in the film enter as part of their re-awakening process after death. In Anderson's film, however, this pleasant place is also manifested in the presence of the animal in the film. It is Anderson's rat terrier that taught them, as she reflects, how to love. In *Oriental Elegy* the metaphor of the tree, as the locus amoenus, serves as a temporary remedy within the apophatic discourse. In the face of the difficulty in finding the answers to questions, everything in the film seems to be anchored to a negative discourse. This apophasis, associated with the color black and predominant mist in the film, is finally answered through a rather vibrant colour of the tree.

Locus amoenus is a pleasant place, a location one comes to after hardships of loss. It can be compared to an oasis in the barrenness of a desert. The trope is a retreat, an escape, a

consolation. This understanding of the term can be argued to be found in all elegiac films regardless of the kind of loss the film mourns, because in all elegies, visual or verbal, the lamenting subjects look for a remedy to console them in the face of the tribulations the death/loss of a beloved can create.

Kataphasis and Ellipticity

This proposed locus amoenus is only possible through *naming* or *kataphasis*. In all the three films the elegiac gives voice to the objects of lament, bringing them back to life through a particular device. In *The Salt of the Earth* such a device is *prosopopoeia*. In *Heart of a Dog* the lost ones are given a voice through ventriloquial techniques, while in *Oriental Elegy* metaphor resuscitates the lost meaning, and enlivens/animates it. Similar proclamations are made by Diana Fuss who, in the beginning of the introduction to *Dying Modern* writes that elegy "concentrate[s] on reviving the dead through the vitalizing properties of speech" (1). Consolation, hence, in these films takes place within a kataphatic discourse, that is, through naming. We can observe that in all the films under study the object of loss is visually represented. Not only are the lost ones named, visually, but they are magnified. In *Heart of a Dog*, the camera zooms on the final image of Lou Reed and Lolabelle, panning from left to right. The camera shows a medium close up of the green tree with red fruits in *Oriental Elegy,* while in *The Salt of the Earth*, the restored forests are superimposed on top of barren lands in a process that takes a few long seconds. The actual forests are seen from above, in aerial photography, later at the end of the film. The locus amoenus, a construct of imagination, lies between a past ideal and a future perfection and represents a return to that lost ideal. Despite loss, the subject imaginatively makes something that can represent that loss.

There also seems to be a repetition at the end of all these films, bespeaking a continuity at the heart of the elegiac. In other words, the proposed remedies at the end of the films are shown to be elliptical, indicating that the solace is not an act that happens momentarily but is rather a continuous process. In Wim Wenders's *The Salt of the Earth*, restoring the narrator's childhood forests and a turn to a new photo collection cannot be but a continued trend. The resuscitation of forests takes generations as the film declares at the end. By extension, *Genesis*, the new collection the photographer embarks on can't be the final collection of the artist. Both of these art forms are continuous, temporary, and consolatory creations. One of the arts in the film, resuscitation of forests, is an actual locus amoenus. Given the scale of the destruction the film portrays, such a resuscitation can only be a small pleasant place, a temporary locus amoenus. The use of Deleuze's notion of "open" further illustrates such an ellipticity and continuity in the film.

Laurie Anderson's *Heart of a Dog* is an elegy of the different losses the narrator mourns, showing how consolation can only be transitory and the final love, offered as solace at the end of the film, to be repetitive. As much as loss is repetitive, consolation is continued too. This continuity is represented through a diminuendo, the diminishing sound of the music, pointing to the elliptical structure of the symbol of consolation. This small solace, introduced as continuous to the point of disappearing, is just a small pleasant spot.

In Alexander Sokurov's *Oriental Elegy*, the final metaphor is offered as a small solace in the face of difficulty of understanding the meaning of life and the question it poses. This poetic metaphor can be a reassurance that there is a trope one can hold onto while faced with the ineffability of meaning of life and happiness. However, the metaphor-making takes place on different occasions and is, hence, repetitive and elliptical. In Sokurov's elegy, the metaphor that

attempts to answer the questions the narrator puts to his interviewees, happens to be a green tree with red fruits, possibly a rowan tree, which plays the role of the locus amoenus for narrator.

The title and the subtitle of this chapter elucidate the ways I understand the elegiac in these films. As far as the concept of consolation is concerned, the word *inconclusion* evinces a sense of ellipticity. This continuity is what I believe lies at the center of the filmic elegies I have selected for this study; an elliptical process that allows the bemoaning subject to remain in an in-between status. Such a status permits him or her to both think of the loss and move forward at the same time. Robert Hass's "Meditation at Lagunitas" also functions in the same vein as the three films, showing the same dynamism in terms of ellipticity, kataphasis and distance as defining elements of the elegiac. The films and Hass's elegy also share similar features in proposing a locus amoenus.

"Meditation at Lagunitas"

"Meditation at Lagunitas" starts with two fact-like statements. This first lines read, "All the new thinking is about loss. / In this it resembles all the all thinking." The poem then gives supporting evidence to clarify these opening lines:

> The idea, for example, that each particular erases
> the luminous clarity of a general idea. That the clown-
> faced woodpecker probing the dead sculpted trunk
> of that black birch is, by his presence,
> some tragic falling off from a first world
> of undivided light.

What these lines seek to emphasise is a distance, a gap that always exists between subjects and their desired lost objects. Something seems to have been lost to the speaker in this elegy. This distance appears to be between the light and its source, between the dead tree and its green living past, a gap that cannot be filled. This is a rather abstract kind of loss, Neoplatonic in meaning. There are two worlds divided by a rift. The general idea is lost, while the trunk is also dead. These lines, then, foreshadow a loss the speaker of the poem has experienced. The poem then introduces another thesis:

> ... . Or the other notion that,
> because there is in this world no one thing
> to which the bramble of *blackberry* corresponds
> a word is elegy to what it signifies.

There are two very suggestive points in these four lines. The first is that there is a distance between the signifier and the signified, between what is lost and what defines it. This distance suggests an impossibility of substitution or replacement. When something is lost, nothing can replace it because "there is no one thing / to which the bramble of the *blackberry* corresponds." At the same time, the line indicates, because a word is a sign that names a general concept, the word, by being at an abstract remove from an actual thing, can be no more than an elegy for that thing. In other words, the word is not the thing, and it is not integral to the thing. In addition, a word, articulated to speak about such distance is subject to the same gap. And why *blackberry*? Because it constitutes the speaker's loss. We learn later in the poem that this is, in fact, the

blackberry the speaker of the poem reminisces about from childhood, a blackberry which will not recur because it was unique and despite the availability of other blackberries, nothing can be exactly like that particular one from the speaker's childhood.

The second point is that "a word is elegy to what it signifies." Naming "the bramble of blackberry" is simply an elegy to the thing which has been lost. Like the first few lines, here too, there are two worlds, the past, when the blackberry was present and the present time when the blackberry is no more. The poem moves on to another axiom, saying, "Longing we say because desire is full of endless distances." This line further heightens the previous point that, according to the poem, there is always a distance, a gap that cannot be filled. We hear examples of "longing" and "desire":

> ... . There was a woman
> I made love to and I remembered how, holding
> her small shoulders in my hands sometimes,
> I felt a violent wonder at her presence
> like a thirst for salt, for my childhood river

The presence of the woman is at a remove from the speaker's desires. First, her presence cannot replace the things of the childhood that have been lost and gone forever. Secondly and more importantly, these lines are about the paradoxical experience of longing for the thing that is present. The experience of presence is like longing in fact, a longing that is like a thirst for salt, or thing from the past -- a childhood thing felt as a presence.

The feeling of "wonder" at the woman's presence is like "a thirst for salt," the speaker says. For a thirsty person, salty water only brings more thirst. At the same time, this "thirst for salt" is immediately followed by "my childhood river," indicating that remembering childhood memories can be compared with "salt," which is no remedy. Even if "salt" here is taken to be salt and not salty water, any thirst for it cannot exactly be satiated, which is to say no remembering can satiate "longing" we sometimes feel for the things of the past. We hear the speaker say the woman felt the same way, meaning that the speaker believes such a statement is a universal truth: "I must have been the same to her." Once something is lost, it is lost forever and no one thing, nothing indeed, can replace the void. Remembrance of the things past to the speaker, "a woman," "a river," "a fish called *pumpkinseed*," and more importantly the "*blackberry*," will not bridge the distance between the desiring subject and the longed-for object.

Of course, the speaker writes those axioms and supports them by examples in order to speak of his own loss, which is that of the past, and the blackberry which stands for a past that is lost to him. The speaker, however, in the face of all these losses, admits that there is a strong desire to hold the lost thing which has slipped away.

> …There are moments when the body is as numinous
> as words, days that are the good flesh continuing.

His whole being is filled with a desire for those moments and those days which are present in him but absent to him at the same time. The speaker is linking the "numinous" with the fleshly. But if a word is elegy to what it signifies, and if the presence of the woman is curiously not really present, then this body refers to the woman's body and the speaker of the poem is

emphasising the gap that exists. Those days of the past, although continuing in the speaker's mind in the form of memory, are in fact absent and not retrievable. Those days are lost to the speaker and the lacunae cannot be removed. The juxtaposition of both the present/absent woman and words with "days," indicates the logic of loss in all the three. A rift also exists between the speaker's present and his lost past manifested in "*blackberry*." He concludes with a kataphatic pronouncement which seems to end with an interjection:

> Such tenderness, those afternoons and evening,
> saying *blackberry, blackberry, blackberry.*

The speaker remembers those past, lost moments when the "*blackberry*" was the main preoccupation. But the only way the speaker is capable of resuscitating this lost object is by naming it in his poem, and naming he does, three times, in fact. By articulating "*blackberry*" three times, Hass is naming in the manner of an elegist, testing to see if the lost thing can be recovered in the name of the thing. Repeated naming highlights presence. Of course, this presence, like that of the woman, is paradoxically an absence, too. Hass is highlighting the word "*blackberry"* by italicizing it, making it not just a sign for something else but a thing one attends to. The repetition extends this. The repetition is part of the process of consolation as I argued in my analysis of the films. This is in line with what Peter Sacks refers to as "the mourner's replayed entry into language." The subject of lament brings the "loss into language," in "testing how it feels to speak and hear of it in words" (25). The multiple use of the word "*blackberry*" points to an elliptical structure which is also observed in the three films. However, such a repetition, at the same time, indicates the importance of naming in the process of mourning

through consolation. I use the word *process*, to indicate the ways in which solace is continuous and elliptical. Sacks affirms the significance of the *kataphatic* technique when he states that the elegy sees "the custom of repeating the name of the dead, a custom extending once again to the ancient vegetation cults," connecting naming to early laments in which an important element "was the refrain calling the dying man or god by name" (25). Also, the only way towards consolation is through *kataphasis,* as we can see in this poem, for example, and as we witnessed in the films.

It seems the only one way around the profundity of lament is a resort to imagination which accompanies naming to animate the lost loved ones back to life through a form of meaning-making. Diana Fuss affirms such a process when she writes of the poets who "reanimate the dead." These words, although primarily used for what Fuss calls "corpse poems," in which the dead is reanimated back to life through poems, can well be deployed in all the films and Hass's elegy alike. In the words of William Watkin, "The name is the simplest and most poignant of the thanatropes" (*On Mourning* 67).

The word *kataphasis*, recalling an affirmation, automatically brings to the fore its opposite, an *apophasis*. It appears that subject of mourning in his/her in-betweenness, undergoes a process that puts the subject of loss between avowal and disavowal of loss which can be explained through an oscillation in-between *kataphasis* and *apophasis*, between the affirmative language of naming and negative language of silence. Sacks's words are helpful in clarifying the relation between naming/language and consolation. He writes, "We may always call the repetition of the lost love-object's name a form of verbal 'propping'", adding immediately, "The survivor leans upon the name, which takes on, by dint of repetition, a kind of substantiality, allowing it not only to refer to but almost to replace the dead" (26). The word "almost" here

should not be overlooked as it suggests the irreplaceability of the lost object and the impossibility of substitution discussed in three films.[63]

In his note on the death of Roland Barthes in *The Work of Mourning*, Derrida draws attention to the relationship between naming and mourning: "When I say Roland Barthes it is certainly him whom I name, him beyond his name. But he himself is now inaccessible to this appellation, since his nomination cannot become a vocation, address, or apostrophe. … It is him in me that I name, toward him in me" (46). These words indicate a distance between the lost and the living. As Derrida suggests, the word "inaccessible" and the phrase "him in me," both point to a distance and a desire at the same time -- a desire to fill this distance by naming, as we observed in Hass's elegy. At the end of his essay on Barthes, Derrida finishes on a note which intimates a continuity, a repetition in naming: "anamnesis, even if it breaks off always too soon, promises itself each time to begin again: it remains to come" (67). These words, which stress the repetitiveness of naming, put next to the singularity of each loss, can indicate how continued mourning and with it the process of consolation can be. In this way mourning and consolation move side by side, hand in hand, as the three films of this study and the final elegy of this epilogue attest.

As Hass meditates, all the thinking, old and new, is about loss because there is always a distance between the subjects of loss and what has been lost to them, the "undivided light," becomes divided with the gap that loss creates. Death parts Anderson and her companions, animal and human. Drought separates Salgado and his loved childhood forests, while the difficulty of life's notions precludes a unity between Sokurov and the meanings he seeks. Can

[63] Sacks writes "this invocation was frequently expressed by the verb *anakaleishtha* (to call upon, invoke)," adding that "the word *anaklisis*, literary 'a leaning upon', has entered English usage as a psychoanalytic term denoting the choice of an attachment made on the basis of its resemblance to a previous, usually parental, attachment" (25-26).

such a division be bridged? Efforts are made through art, love and metaphor. The gap, seen in all the films, can only be filled with language and imagination, with naming, with a kataphatic confirmation that can take different forms. This naming, however, is only a temporary, small solace acting like a locus amoenus that the mourner embraces. The "blackberry" of the speaker's past can only be revived through naming it in a poem, just as the lost forests and dead people in *The Salt of the Earth*, the lost loved ones in *Heart of a Dog*, and the evasive meanings in *Oriental Elegy* are reanimated through figuration. However, substitution is impossible. The metaphysical poet, John Donne, in "A Funeral Elegy" asks, can we keep the lost loved ones

> In works of hands, or of the wits of men?
> Can these memorials, rags of paper give
> Life to that name, by which name they must live?

This dissertation concurs with John Donne in his negative answer: "alas … these carcase verses," all the work of imagination and the consolatory creations, cannot replace the loved ones. How can they, the lost loves ones, "dwell in an elegy," when they are no longer present and "do not lie / In such an house," this body?

Bibliography

Abraham, N. and Maria Torok. *The Shell and the Kernel*. University of Chicago Press, 1994. Print.

Alter, Nora. "Sound Scores: Musical Armature in Displaced Person." *Postwar: The Films of Daniel Eisenberg.* Edited by Jeffrey Skoller. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2010. Print.

Anderson, Laurie. *Empty Places: A Performance*. Harper Perennial. 1991. Print.

---. *Heart of a Dog*. 2015. DVD.

---. *Night Life*. Göttingen, Germany: Edition 7L., 2006. Print.

---. *Nothing in My Pockets*. Paris: Éditions Dis Voir, 2009. Print.

---. *Stories from the Nerve Bible: A Retrospective 1972 – 1992.* Harper Perennial, 1994. Print.

Baert, Barbara. *Locus Amoenus and the Sleeping Nymph: Ekphrasis, Silence and Genius Loci.* Leuven; Paris; Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2016. Print.

Barthes, Roland. *A Discourse on Love*: *Fragments*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. Print.

---. *Mourning Diary: October 26, 1977 - September 15, 1979*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2009. Print.

---. *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1985. Print.

Berger, John. "Why Look at Animals." *About Looking*. New York: Vintage International, 1991. Print.

Berger, John, and Geoff Dyer. "A Tragedy the Size of the Planet: Conversation with Sebastião Salgado." *Understanding a Photograph*. New York: Aperture, 2013. Print.

Binder, Eva. "Sokurov's Film Portraits." *The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov.* Edited by Brigit Beumers and Nancy Condee. New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011. Print.

Burke, Kenneth. “Four Master Tropes.” *The Kenyon Review*, Vol 3, No. 4, 1941, PP. 421-438. Web.

Chandler, Daniel and Rod Munday. *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*. 2nd ed., 2016. Web.

Coates, Paul. “Moving Pictures at the Edge of Stasis: Elegy and the Elegiac in Film.” *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*. Edited by Karen Weisman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Print.

Colman, Felicity. *Deleuze and Cinema: The Film Concepts*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2011. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image.* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. “The Animals that Therefore I Am.” Translated by David Wills. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2002, PP. 369-418. Print.

---. *The Work of Mourning*. Edited by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2001. Print.

Donne, John. *The Complete Poems of John Donne.* Edited by Robin Robins. New York: Longman, 2010. Print.

Eliot, T. S. “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” *Poetry Foundation*. Web.

Ellenbogen, Josh. “On Photographic Elegy.” *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*. Edited by Karen Weisman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Print.

Eng, D. L. and David Kazanjian. *Loss*. University of California Press, 2003.

Empson, William, *Some versions of Pastoral: A Study of the Pastoral Form in Literature*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966. Print.

Evans-Wentz, W. Y. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead, or The After-Death Experience on the Bardo Plane, according to Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup's English Rendering.* Oxford University Press, 1960. Print.

Fischer, Alden. L. (ed.). *The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty*. Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969. Print.

Franke, William. *A Philosophy of the Unsayable*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014. Print.

---. *On What Cannot Be Said: Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and the Arts*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007. Print.

Fremantle, Francesca. *Luminous Emptiness: Understanding the Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Boston: Shambhala, 2001. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. XIV. London: The Hogarth Press, 1962. Print.

Fuss, Diana. *Dying Modern: a Meditation on Elegy*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. Print.

Garber, Marjorie, *Dog Love*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996. Print.

Gibbons, Reginald. *How Poems Think*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2015. Print.

Harrison, Robert Pogue. "Deforestation in a Civilized World." An Interview with Ross Anderson. *Los Angeles Review of Books*. July 7, 2012. Web.

---. *The Dominion of the Dead*. University of Chicago Press, 2010. Print

---. *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. Print.

---. *Gardens*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. Print.

Hass, Robert. *A Little Book on Form: An Exploration into the Formal Imagination of Poetry*. New York: Ecco, 2017. Print.

---. *The Apple Trees at Olema; New and Selected Poems*. New York: Ecco. 2010. Print.

---. *Praise*. Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1990. Print.

Hass, Robert Bernard. "The Mutable Locus Amoenus and Consolation in Tennyson's In Memoriam." *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900,* Vol. 38, No. 4, 1998, PP. 669-687. Web.

Susanna Helke Poetic "Vérité in the Eastern European Tradition." *The Documentary Film Book.* Edited by Brian Winston. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. "The Thinker as Poet." *Poetry, Language, Thought.* New York: Harper and Row, 1970. Print.

---. "What Are Poets for?" *Poetry, Language, Thought.* New York: Harper and Row, 1970. Print.

---. "…Poetically Man Dwells…" *Poetry, Language, Thought.* New York: Harper and Row, 1970. Print.

---. *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics, World, Finitude, Solitude.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. Print.

Hicks, Jeremy. "Sokurov's Documentaries," *The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov.* Edited by Brigit Beumers and Nancy Condee. New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011. Print.

Hill, Geoffrey. *Without Title*. London: Penguin Books, 2006. Print.

Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Hymns and Fragments*. Translated by Richard Sieburth, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. Print.

Howell, John, F-Stop Fitzgerald, and Laurie Anderson. *Laurie Anderson*. New York: Thunder's Mouth, 1992. Print.

Jameson, Fredrick “History and Elegy in Sokurov.” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2006, PP. 1-12. Web.

Jones, Alexander. *The Gospel According to Matthew, A Text and Commentary for Students.* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965. Print.

Kolker, Robert Phillip, and Peter Beicken. *The Films of Wim Wenders: Cinema as Vision and Desire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Print.

Kristeva, Julia. *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*. Columbia University Press, New York. 1992. Print.

Kuzniar, Alice A. *Melancholia's Dog: Reflections on Our Animal Kinship*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2014. Print.

Lambert, E. Z. *Placing Sorrow: A Study in the Pastoral Elegy Convention from Theocritus to Milton*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1976. Print.

Lanham, Richard A. *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1991. Print.

Li, Yueh-Tuan and Wen-Shu Lai. “Voice, Object and Listening in the Sound Installations of Laurie Anderson.” *International Journal of Performance Art and Digital Media*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2013, PP. 347-361. Web.

Luck, Georg. *The Latin Love Elegy*. London: Methuen, 1979. Print.

McCabe, S. *Cinematic Modernism: Modernist Poetry and Film*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Print.

MacDonald, Scott. *Adventures of Perception: Cinema as Exploration: Essays/interviews*. Berkeley: University of California, 2009. Print.

McGuirk, Kevin. “A. R. Ammons and the Whole Earth.” *Cultural Critique*, No. 37, 1997, PP. 131-158. Web.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Galen A. Johnson. *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994. Print.

Michaels, A. *Infinite Gradation*. Exile Editions, 2018. Print.

Moraru, Christian. “‘Topos/typos/tropos’: Visual strategies and the mapping of space in Charles Olson's poetry.” *Word and Image*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1998, PP. 253-266. Web.

Nichols, B. *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010. Print.

Piehler, Paul. *The Visionary Landscape: A Study in Medieval Allegory*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press 1971. Print.

Pielak, Chase. *Memorializing Animals during the Romantic Period*. Ashgate Publishing, 2015. Print.

Prassad, Anil. “Laurie Anderson: The Big Picture.” *Music Without Borders Interviews*. 1990. Web.

Ramazani, Jahan. *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994. Print.

Rascaroli, Laura. *How the Essay Film Thinks.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Print.

---. *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film*. London: Wallflower, 2009. Print.

Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Duino Elegies*. Translated by Leslie Norris and Alan Keele. Columbia: Camden House, 1993. Print.

---. *Duino Elegies*. Translated by C. F. McIntyre, Berkeley: University of California, 1961 Press.

---. “Black Cat.” Translated by Stephen Mitchell. *Academy of American Poets.* Web.

Sacks, Peter M. *The English Elegy Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987. Print.

Sandler, Stephanie. "On Grief and Reason, On Poetry and Film: Elena Shvarts, Joseph Brodsky, Andrei Tarkovsky." *The Russian Review,* Vol. 66, No. 4, 2007, PP. 647-670. Web.

Schiller, Friedrich. "The Walk." Translated by Marianna Wertz. *The Schiller Institute*. Web.

Schweizer, Eduard, and David E. Green. (tr.) *The Good News According to Matthew*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975.

Sells, Michael Anthony. *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011. Print.

Shaw, Spencer. *Film Consciousness: From Phenomenology to Deleuze*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. Print.

Silverman, Kaja. *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988. Print.

---. *World Spectators*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000. Print.

Sitney, P. A. "Andre Tarkovsky, Russian Experience, and the Poetry of Cinema." *New England Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3-4, 2014, PP. 208-241. Web.

---. *The Cinema of Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Print.

---. *Eyes Upside Down: Visionary Filmmakers and the Heritage of Emerson.* Oxford University Press, USA, 2008. Print.

---. *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000*. Oxford University Press, 2002. Print.

Sokurov, Alexander. *Oriental Elegy*. 1996. DVD.

Sontag, Susan. *Styles of Radical Will*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969. Print.

Spargo, R. C. *The Ethics of Mourning*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. Print.

Tarkovsky, Andrei. *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*. London: The Rodley Head, 1986. Print.

Vickery, John B. *The Modern Elegiac Temper*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2006. Print.

---. *The Prose Elegy: An Exploration of Modern American and British Fiction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2009. Print.

Walcott, Derek. *Poems: 1965-1980*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1992. Print.

Watkin, William. *On Mourning: Theories of Loss in Modern Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2004. Print.

---. "Taking Steps beyond Elegy: Poetry, Philosophy, Lineation, and Death." *Textual Practice*, Vol. 23, No. 6, 2009, PP. 1013-1027. Web.

Weil, Simone. *Gravity and Grace*. Translated by Emma Crawford. London: Routledge, 2002.

Weisman, Karen A. (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Print.

Wenders, Wim, and Mary Zournazi. *Inventing Peace: A Dialogue on Perception*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2013. Print.

Wenders. Wim. *The Salt of the Earth*. 2014. DVD.

---. *Emotion Pictures: Reflections on the Cinema*. London: Faber and Faber, 1991. Print.

Williams, David-Antoine. *Defending Poetry: Art and Ethics in Joseph Brodsky, Seamus Heaney, and Geoffrey Hill*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Print.

Wolfe, Cary (ed.). *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. Print.

Zwicky, Jan. *Wisdom and Metaphor*. Kentville, Nova Scotia: Gaspereau Press, 2003. Print.

Ziolkowski, Theodore. *The Classical German Elegy: 1795-1950*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. Print.

---. *Varieties of Literary Thematics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983. Print.

Ziegler, Melissa F. *Beyond Consolation: Death, Sexuality, and the Changing Shapes of Elegy.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997. Print.

Appendix of Poems

DER SPAZIERGANG[64]

Sey mir gegrüßt mein Berg mit dem röthlich strahlenden Gipfel,

Sey mir Sonne gegrüßt, die ihn so lieblich bescheint,

Dich auch grüß' ich belebte Flur, euch, säuselnde Linden,

Und den fröhlichen Chor, der auf den Ästen sich wiegt,

Ruhige Bläue dich auch, die unermeßlich sich ausgießt

Um das braune Gebirg, über den grünenden Wald,

Auch um mich, der endlich entflohn des Zimmers Gefängniß

Und dem engen Gespräch freudig sich rettet zu dir,

Deiner Lüfte balsamischer Strom durchrinnt mich erquickend,

Und den durstigen Blick labt das energische Licht,

Kräftig auf blühender Au erglänzen die wechselnden Farben,

Aber der reizende Streit löset in Anmuth sich auf,

Frei empfängt mich die Wiese mit weithin verbreitetem Teppich,

Durch ihr freundliches Grün schlingt sich der ländliche Pfad,

Um mich summt die geschäftige Bien', mit zweifelndem Flügel

Retrieved from http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/gedichte-9097/70. Accessed 12 Dec. 2018

Wiegt der Schmetterling sich über dem röthlichten Klee,

Glühend trifft mich der Sonne Pfeil, still liegen die Weste,

Nur der Lerche Gesang wirbelt in heiterer Luft.

Doch jezt braußt's aus dem nahen Gebüsch, tief neigen der Erlen

Kronen sich, und im Wind wogt das versilberte Gras,

Mich umfängt ambrosische Nacht; in duftende Kühlung

Nimmt ein prächtiges Dach schattender Buchen mich ein,

In des Waldes Geheimniß entflieht mir auf einmal die Landschaft,

Und ein schlängelnder Pfad leitet mich steigend empor.

Nur verstohlen durchdringt der Zweige laubigtes Gitter

Sparsames Licht, und es blickt lachend das Blaue herein.

Aber plötzlich zerreißt der Flor. Der geöffnete Wald giebt

Uberraschend des Tags blendendem Glanz mich zurück.

Unabsehbar ergießt sich vor meinen Blicken die Ferne,

Und ein blaues Gebirg endigt im Dufte die Welt.

Tief an des Berges Fuß, der gählings unter mir abstürzt,

Wallet des grünlichten Stroms fließender Spiegel vorbei.

Endlos unter mir seh' ich den Aether, über mir endlos,

Blicke mit Schwindel hinauf, blicke mit Schaudern hinab,

Aber zwischen der ewigen Höh' und der ewigen Tiefe

Trägt ein geländerter Steig sicher den Wandrer dahin.

Lachend fliehen an mir die reichen Ufer vorüber,

Und den fröhlichen Fleiß rühmet das prangende Thal.

Jene Linien, sieh! die des Landmanns Eigenthum scheiden,

In den Teppich der Flur hat sie Demeter gewirkt.

Freundliche Schrift des Gesetzes, des menschenerhaltenden

Gottes,

Seit aus der ehernen Welt fliehend die Liebe verschwand,

Aber in freieren Schlangen durchkreuzt die geregelten Felder

Jetzt verschlungen vom Wald, jezt an den Bergen hinauf

Klimmend, ein schimmernder Streif, die Länder verknüpfende

Straße;

Auf dem ebenen Strom gleiten die Flöße dahin,

Vielfach ertönt der Heerden Geläut im belebten Gefilde,

Und den Wiederhall weckt einsam des Hirten Gesang.

Muntre Dörfer bekränzen den Strom, in Gebüschen verschwinden

Andre, vom Rücken des Bergs stürzen sie gäh dort herab.

Nachbarlich wohnet der Mensch noch mit dem Acker zusammen,

Seine Felder umruhn friedlich sein ländliches Dach,

Traulich rankt sich die Reb' empor an dem niedrigsten Fenster,

Einen umarmenden Zweig schlingt um die Hütte der Baum,

Glückliches Volk der Gefilde! Noch nicht zur Freiheit erwachet,

Theilst du mit deiner Flur fröhlich das enge Gesetz.

Deine Wünsche beschränkt der Aernten ruhiger Kreislauf,

Wie dein Tagewerk, gleich, windet dein Leben sich ab!

Aber wer raubt mir auf einmal den lieblichen Anblick? Ein

fremder

Geist verbreitet sich schnell über die fremdere Flur!

Spröde sondert sich ab, was kaum noch liebend sich mischte,

Und das Gleiche nur ist's, was an das Gleiche sich reiht.

Stände seh ich gebildet, der Pappeln stolze Geschlechter

Ziehn in geordnetem Pomp vornehm und prächtig daher,

Regel wird alles, und alles wird Wahl und alles Bedeutung,

Dieses Dienergefolg meldet den Herrscher mir an.

Prangend verkündigen ihn von fern die beleuchteten Kuppeln,

Aus dem felsigten Kern hebt sich die thürmende S t a d t.

In die Wildniß hinaus sind des Waldes Faunen verstoßen,

Aber die Andacht leiht höheres Leben dem Stein.

Näher gerückt ist der Mensch an den Menschen. Enger wird

um ihn,

Reger erwacht, es umwälzt rascher sich in ihm die Welt.

Sieh, da entbrennen in feurigem Kampf die eifernden Kräfte,

Großes wirket ihr Streit, Größeres wirket ihr Bund.

Tausend Hände belebt Ein Geist, hoch schläget in tausend

Brüsten, von einem Gefühl glühend, ein einziges Herz,

Schlägt für das Vaterland und glüht für der Ahnen Gesetze,

Hier auf dem theuren Grund ruht ihr verehrtes Gebein.

Nieder steigen vom Himmel die seligen Götter, und nehmen

In dem geweihten Bezirk festliche Wohnungen ein,

Herrliche Gaben bescherend erscheinen sie: Ceres vor allen

Bringet des Pfluges Geschenk, Hermes den Anker herbei,

Bacchus die Traube, Minerva des Ölbaums grünende Reiser,

Auch das kriegrische Roß führet Poseidon heran,

Mutter Cybele spannt an des Wagens Deichsel die Löwen,

In das gastliche Thor zieht sie als Bürgerin ein.

Heilige Steine! Aus euch ergossen sich Pflanzer der Menschheit,

Fernen Inseln des Meeres sandtet ihr Sitten und Kunst,

Weise sprachen das Recht an diesen geselligen Thoren,

Helden stürzten zum Kampf für die Penaten heraus.

Auf den Mauern erschienen, den Säugling im Arme, die Mütter,

Blickten dem Heerzug nach, bis ihn die Ferne verschlang.

Betend stürzten sie dann vor der Götter Altären sich nieder,

Flehten um Ruhm und Sieg, flehten um Rückkehr für euch.

Ehre ward euch und Sieg, doch der Ruhm nur kehrte zurücke,

Eurer Thaten Verdienst meldet der rührende Stein:

„Wandere, kommst du nach Sparta, verkündige dorten, du habest

„Uns hier liegen gesehn, wie das Gesetz es befahl. “

Ruhet sanft ihr Geliebten! Von eurem Blute begossen

Grünet der Oelbaum, es keimt lustig die köstliche Saat.

Munter entbrennt, des Eigenthums froh, das freie Gewerbe,

Aus dem Schilfe des Stroms winkt der bläulichte Gott.

Zischend fliegt in den Baum die Axt, es erseufzt die Dryade,

Hoch von des Berges Haupt stürzt sich die donnernde Last.

Aus dem Felsbruch wiegt sich der Stein, vom Hebel beflügelt,

In der Gebirge Schlucht taucht sich der Bergmann hinab.

Mulcibers Ambos tönt von dem Takt geschwungener Hämmer,

Unter der nervigten Faust sprützen die Funken des Stahls,

Glänzend umwindet der goldne Lein die tanzende Spindel,

Durch die Saiten des Garns sauset das webende Schiff,

Fern auf der Rhede ruft der Pilot, es warten die Flotten,

Die in der Fremdlinge Land tragen den heimischen Fleiß,

Andre ziehn flohlockend dort ein, mit den Gaben der Ferne,

Hoch von dem ragenden Mast wehet der festliche Kranz.

Siehe da wimmeln die Märkte, der Krahn von fröhlichem Leben,

Seltsamer Sprachen Gewirr braust in das wundernde Ohr.

Auf den Stapel schüttet die Aernten der Erde der Kaufmann,

Was dem glühenden Strahl Afrikas Boden gebiert,

Was Arabien kocht, was die äußerste Thule bereitet,

Hoch mit erfreuendem Gut füllt Amalthea das Horn.

Da gebieret das Glück dem Talente die göttlichen Kinder,

Von der Freiheit gesäugt wachsen die Künste der Lust.

Mit nachahmendem Leben erfreuet der Bildner die Augen,

Und vom Meißel beseelt redet der fühlende Stein,

Künstliche Himmel ruhn auf schlanken jonischen Säulen,

Und den ganzen Olimp schließet ein Pantheon ein,

Leicht wie der Iris Sprung durch die Luft, wie der Pfeil von der

Sehne

Hüpfet der Brücke Joch über den brausenden Strom.

Aber im stillen Gemach entwirft bedeutende Zirkel

Sinnend der Weise, beschleicht forschend den schaffenden Geist,

Prüfet der Stoffe Gewalt, der Magnete Hassen und Lieben,

Folgt durch die Lüfte dem Klang, folgt durch den Aether dem

Strahl,

Sucht das vertraute Gesetz in des Zufalls grausenden Wundern,

Sucht den ruhenden Pol in der Erscheinungen Flucht.

Körper und Stimme leiht die Schrift den stummen Gedanken,

Durch der Jahrhunderte Strom trägt ihn das redende Blatt.

Da zerrinnt von dem wundernden Blick der Nebel des Wahnes,

Und die Gebilde der Nacht weichen dem tagenden Licht.

Seine Fesseln zerbricht der Mensch. Der Beglückte! Zerriß er

Mit den Fesseln der Furcht nur nicht den Zügel der Schaam!

Freiheit ruft die Vernunft, Freiheit die wilde Begierde,

Von der heil'gen Natur ringen sie lüstern sich los.

Ach, da reissen im Sturm die Anker, die an dem Ufer

Warnend ihn hielten, ihn faßt mächtig der fluthende Strom,

Ins Unendliche reißt er ihn hin, die Küste verschwindet,

Hoch auf der Fluten Gebirg wiegt sich entmastet der Kahn,

Hinter Wolken erlöschen des Wagens beharrliche Sterne,

Bleibend ist nichts mehr, es irrt selbst in dem Busen der Gott.

Aus dem Gespräche verschwindet die Wahrheit, Glauben und

Treue

Aus dem Leben, es lügt selbst auf der Lippe der Schwur.

In der Herzen vertraulichsten Bund, in der Liebe Geheimniß

Drängt sich der Sykophant, reißt von dem Freunde den

Freund,

Auf die Unschuld schielt der Verrrath mit verschlingendem Blicke,

Mit vergiftetem Biß tödtet des Lästerers Zahn.

Feil ist in der geschändeten Brust der Gedanke, die Liebe

Wirft des freien Gefühls göttlichen Adel hinweg,

Deiner heiligen Zeichen, o Wahrheit, hat der Betrug sich

Angemaßt, der Natur köstlichste Stimmen entweiht,

Die das bedürftige Herz in der Freude Drang sich erfindet,

Kaum giebt wahres Gefühl noch durch Verstummen sich kund.

Auf der Tribune prahlet das Recht, in der Hütte die Eintracht,

Des Gesetzes Gespenst steht an der Könige Thron,

Jahre lang mag, Jahrhunderte lang die Mumie dauern,

Mag das trügende Bild lebender Fülle bestehn,

Bis die Natur erwacht, und mit schweren, ehernen Händen

An das hohle Gebäu rühret die Noth und die Zeit,

Einer Tigerinn gleich, die das eiserne Gitter durchbrochen

Und des numidischen Wald's plötzlich und schrecklich gedenkt,

Aufsteht mit des Verbrechens Wuth und des Elends die

Und in der Asche der Stadt sucht die verlorne Natur.

O so öffnet euch Mauern, und gebt den Gefangenen ledig,

Zu der verlassenen Flur kehr' er gerettet zurück!

Aber wo bin ich? Es birgt sich der Pfad. Abschüssige Gründe

Hemmen mit gähnender Kluft hinter mir, vor mir den Schritt.

Hinter mir blieb der Gärten, der Hecken vertraute Begleitung,

Hinter mir jegliche Spur menschlicher Hände zurück.

Nur die Stoffe seh' ich gethürmt, aus welchen das Leben

Keimet, der rohe Basalt hofft auf die bildende Hand.

Brausend stürzt der Gießbach herab durch die Rinne des Felsen

Unter den Wurzeln des Baums bricht er entrüstet sich Bahn.

Wild ist es hier und schauerlich öd'. Im einsamen Luftraum

Hängt nur der Adler, und knüpft an das Gewölke die Welt.

Hoch herauf bis zu mir trägt keines Windes Gefieder

Den verlorenen Schall menschlicher Mühen und Lust.

Bin ich wirklich allein? In deinen Armen, an deinem

Herzen wieder, Natur, ach! und es war nur ein Traum,

Der mich schaudernd ergriff, mit des Lebens furchtbarem

Bilde,

Mit dem stürzenden Thal stürzte der finstre hinab.

Reiner nehm' ich mein Leben von deinem reinen Altare,

Nehme den fröhlichen Muth hoffender Jugend zurück!

Ewig wechselt der Wille den Zweck und die Regel, in ewig

Wiederholter Gestalt wälzen die Thaten sich um.

Aber jugendlich immer, in immer veränderter Schöne

Ehrst du, fromme Natur, züchtig das alte Gesetz,

Immer dieselbe, bewahrst du in treuen Händen dem Manne,

Was dir das gaukelnde Kind, was dir der Jüngling vertraut,

Nährest an gleicher Brust die vielfach wechselnden Alter;

Unter demselben Blau, über dem nehmlichen Grün

Wandeln die nahen und wandeln vereint die fernen Geschlechter,

Und die Sonne Homers, siehe! sie lächelt auch uns.

The Walk[65]

[65] Retrieved from https://archive.schillerinstitute.com/fid_97-01/973_schiller_walk.html. Accessed 12 Dec. 2018

Greetings from me, my hill, with the reddish, radiant summit!

Sun be greeted by me, shining so lovely thereon!

You I greet too, enlivened plain, you, murmuring lindens,

And the jovial choir, cradled ahigh in the boughs,

Azure pacific, you too, who pour your fullness unmeasured

Round the brown mountain range, over the green-growing woods,

And round me, who, fleeing at last the prisonlike chambers

And the small-minded talk, gladly escapes unto you.

Zephyr streams of your redolent air race through me refreshing,

And the hungering glance feasts on the vigorous light.

Robust on flowery field the e'er-changing colors are bursting,

Yet does the turbulent strife settle itself in full grace.

Free the meadow receives me with carpet widespread in the distance,

Through its affable green coils the rustical path,

Round me hum the industrious bees, on pinions uncertain

Flits the butterfly by over the clover red-hued,

Glowing strike me the sun's bright rays, the Westwind rests silent.

Just the song of the lark trills in the genial air.

Now it roars in the bushes nearby, the crowns of the alders

Bend deeply, and the wind waves through the silvery grass.

Night ambros'al closes me round: in sweet-smelling freshness

O'er me the shadowy birch join in sumptuous roof,

In the secretive woods the landscape escapes me a moment,

And a serpentine path climbing conducts me above.

Only sparsely with stealth through leafy grid of the branches

Filters the light, and the blue azure looks smiling herein.

But abruptly the crape is rent. The opened-up forest

Startling gives back to me dazzling the glow of the day.

Vast and boundlessly pours forth unto my vision the distance,

And a blue mountain range ends in a vaporous world.

Deep at the mountain's foot, which under me slopes of a sudden,

Flowing, the green-lighted stream mirrorlike wanders along.

Endless see I the aether beneath me, over me endless,

Dizzy I look up above, shuddering look down below.

But between the eternal of height and eternal of deepness

Safely a banistered path carries the wand'rer across.

Laughing flee forth the ample banks approaching toward me,

And the splendorous vale praises the gay diligence.

See those lines on the way! which divide the farmers' possessions,

Which in tapestried field lovely Demeter did weave.

Genial script of the law, of the God who is mankind's protector,

Since from the pitiless world fleeing has love disappeared!

But in more unconfined windings criss-crosses the orderly meadows,

Now entwined in a wood, now on the mountains above,

Climbing, a shimmering streak, the roadway connecting the region,

On the smooth-flowing stream raftsmen are gliding along.

Often the bleating of flocks rings out in the meadows so lively,

And the herdsman's fair song calls the lone echo awake.

Cheerful villages wreathe round the stream, in shrubs disappearing

Others, on back of the hill drop quickly down there below.

Neighborly dwells still the man there along with his pastures,

Round his rustical roof peacefully slumber his fields,

Snugly creeping the vine ascends up the plain, humble window,

One all-encompassing branch winds from the tree round the hut.

Fortunate folk of the country! Not yet to freedom awakened,

Gayly share with your field narrow restraints of the law.

All your wishes confined by the harvest's peaceful rotation,

As your daily work goes, thus does your life so unwind.

But who now robs me so suddenly of this fair prospect? a foreign

Spirit spreads quickly out over the foreign terrain.

Brittly separates out what was just lovingly blended,

And 'tis only the like which follows after the like.

Stands I see cultivated, of poplars' proud generations

Grown in an orderly pomp splendid and elegant thence.

Rule governs all here, and all is by choice and all has a meaning,

Yonder retinue train heralds the ruler to me.

Splendent the luminous cupola structures from far off announce it,

From the craggyest core tow'ring the city does rise.

To the wild outside are the woodland fawns now ejected

Yet does devotion lend loftier life to the stone.

Man is brought closer to mankind. Around him everything narrows,

In him the world now awakes, lively it quickly revolves.

See, there are kindled in fiery strife the vehement powers,

Strife brings great things to the fore, greater their union brings forth.

Thousand hands one spirit livens, high beat in a thousand

Breasts all aglow with but one feeling, a singular heart,

Beats for the Fatherland and glows for the laws of ancestors,

Here on the cherished ground rest their most hallowed remains.

Down from heaven descend the divinities blissful and take up

Festive and solemn abode there in the sanctified field,

Wonderful presents bestowing they show themselves; Ceres above all

Brings forth the plough as a gift, Hermes the anchor presents,

Bacchus the grapevine, Minerva the verdant sprig of the olive,

And Poseidon thereto leads forth the militant steed,

Mother Cybele yokes to the wagon shaft her two lions,

Through the genial gate comes she as citizen in.

Sacrosanct statues! From you humanity's plantings effused forth,

To the ocean's far isles sent you both manners and art,

Sages discoursed on the law inside of these sociable gateways,

Heroes eager to fight for the Penates rushed forth.

There appeared on the bulwarks, her infant enfolding, the mother,

After the army gazed, till 'twas by distance engulfed.

Praying rushed she forth then, at the deities' altars prostrated,

Pleading for vict'ry and fame, pleading that you might return.

Honor, vict'ry were yours, but the fame alone was returning,

On your praiseworthy deeds comments the heartrending stone:

“Wanderer, come you to Sparta, proclaim it there loudly, that you have

Seen us lying here still, just as the law does command.”

Rest then easy, beloved! For by your bloodshed now watered,

Verdant's the olive, gayly sprouts up the wonderful seed.

Kindled awake, an industry free, with joy of possessions,

From the reeds of the stream, winks the Cerulean god.

Hissing flies in the tree the axe, the dryad is sighing,

High from the mountain's head tumbles the thunderous load.

From the quarry swings up the stone, with levers bewinged,

Deep in the mountain's gorge plunges the miner below.

Mulciber's anvil rings from swinging stroke of the hammers,

Under the sinewy fist spurt out the flashes of steel,

Golden-hued flax round the dancing spindle glist'ning encircles,

Through the strings of the yarn weaving the shuttle does flit.

Far on the roadsteads cries out the pilot, the ships wait at anchor,

Which to the country abroad carry the products from home,

Others draw rejoicingly in with their gifts from the distance,

High from the towering mast flutters the festival wreath.

See there the markets are swarming, alive with joyful existence,

Whir of the curious tongues sings in the wondering ear.

In the market the merchant pours out the earth's fruitful harvest,

What to glowing hot ray Africa's soil begets,

What Arabia cooks, what the farthermost Thule is preparing,

High with enjoyable goods fills Amalthea the horn.

There begets happy fortune the talents of heavenly children,

Nursed at freedom's fair breast, flourish the arts of delight.

Imitations of life by the sculptor give joy to the vision,

And the sensitive stone speaks, by the chisel besouled,

Heavens synthetic rest on slender Ionian columns,

And the Pantheon's walls all of Olympus contain.

Light as the rainbow's vault through the air, as the cowherder's arrow,

Bounces the bridge's yoke over the thundering stream.

But in the still of the room, outlining meaningful figures,

Brooding, the sage is in search, stalking the creative mind.

Matter's power he tests, the hatreds and loves of the magnet,

Follows the sound through the air, follows through aether the ray.

Seeks the familiar law in the awful wonders of hazard,

Seeks the immobile pole in the occurrence of flight.

Body and voice the writing lends to silent reflections,

Down through the centuries' stream borne by the eloquent page.

There dissolves 'fore his wondering glance the fog of delusion,

And the creations of night yield to the light of the day.

Man his fetters in pieces breaks. The most happy! But break he

Not with fetters of fear also the bridle of shame!

Freedom, reason cries out, freedom the savage's passions,

Out from Nature august, strive forth in greed to be free.

Ah, now break in the storm the anchors, which at the shoreline

Held it in warning, 'tis grasped strongly by incoming tide,

To infinity carried away, the coast disappearing,

High on the peak of the flood tosses the bark without mast.

Steadfast stars of the Wain are extinguished behind the cloud cover,

Naught is remaining, e'en God loses his way in the breast.

Out from the dialogue vanishes truth, sincereness and credence

Out of living, and oaths lie as they spew from the lips.

In the intimate bond of the heart, in the myst'ry that love is

Sycophant pushes in, breaking the friend from his friend,

At the innocent treachery leers with devouring glances,

With its poisonous bite tooth of the slanderer kills.

Venal's the thought in the breast of the one who's dishonored, the lover

Casts the nobly divine unsuppressed feeling away.

All your sacrosanct symbols, O Truth, has fraud arrogated

To itself, Nature's most exquisite voices profaned,

Which the necessitous heart in its urge for joy improvises,

Scarce does feeling sincere yet through the silence pervade.

Justice boasts of itself on the bench, in the cottages concord,

Only the spectre of law stands by the throne of the king.

Many years long, for hundreds-long years the mummy may live on,

May the misleading form stand for the fullness of life,

Till fair Nature awakes, and with hands both heavy and brazen

On the edifice void Time and Necessity move,

Like a tigress confined, who bars made of iron has broken

And of Numidian woods suddenly, frightfully thinks,

So arises mankind, with fury of crime and of mis'ry,

And in the ash of the state seeks for the Nature he lost.

O then open ye walls forth and give to the pris'ner his freedom,

Unto the field left behind let him in safety return!

But now where am I? The path is concealed. Precipitous landscape

Hinders with yawning abyss both 'fore and after my step.

After me stayed the escort familiar of gardens and hedges,

After me every last trace of human hand stayed behind.

I see only matter piled up, from out of which life will

Spring up, the roughhewn basalt hopes for the fashioning hand.

Storming falls the torrent on down through the rock's narrow channel,

Under the roots of the tree breaks it indignantly through.

Wild is it here and horribly bleak. Alone in the air-space

Only the eagle does hang joining the clouds to the world.

High above all else no feather of wind to me carries

Sounds forlorn of mankind marking his pleasure and pain.

Am I really alone? within your fair arm, within your

Bosom, Nature, again, ah! and it was but a dream,

Which did shuddering seize me with life depicted so frightful,

With the fall of the vale fell too the darkness away.

Purer I take back my life from your own purified altars,

Take joyful courage back too, of hopeful, confident youth!

Ever changes the will both its rule and its object, and ever

In a repeating form actions revolve and roll on.

But perpetually youthful, in beauty perpetually changing,

Pious Nature do you chastely the old law revere.

Ever the self-same, you safeguard for man in hands that are faithful,

That which the fanciful child, that which the youth to you trusts.

On equal breast you nourish the oft-changing ages;

'Neath the same azure sky, on the self-same growing green.

Wander the near and united the distant do wander,

And see! Homer's fair sun, also is shining on us.

DIE ACHTE ELEGIE[66]

Rudolf Kassner zugeeignet

Mit allen Augen sieht die Kreatur

das Offene. Nur unsre Augen sind

wie umgekehrt und ganz um sie gestellt

als Fallen, rings um ihren freien Ausgang.

Was draußen *ist*, wir wissens aus des Tiers

Antlitz allein; denn schon das frühe Kind

wenden wir um und zwingens, daß es rückwärts

Gestaltung sehe, nicht das Offne, das

im Tiergesicht so tief ist. Frei von Tod.

Ihn sehen wir allein; das freie Tier

hat seinen Untergang stets hinter sich

und vor sich Gott, und wenn es geht, so gehts

[66] Retrieved from http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/duineser-elegien-829/8. Accessed 12 Dec. 2018

in Ewigkeit, so wie die Brunnen gehen.

Wir haben nie, nicht einen einzigen Tag,

den reinen Raum vor uns, in den die Blumen

unendlich aufgehn. Immer ist es Welt

und niemals Nirgends ohne Nicht: das Reine,

Unüberwachte, das man atmet und

unendlich *weiß* und nicht begehrt. Als Kind

verliert sich eins im Stilln an dies und wird

gerüttelt. Oder jener stirbt und *ists*.

Denn nah am Tod sieht man den Tod nicht mehr

und starrt *hinaus*, vielleicht mit großem Tierblick.

Liebende, wäre nicht der andre, der

die Sicht verstellt, sind nah daran und staunen . . .

Wie aus Versehn ist ihnen aufgetan

hinter dem andern . . . Aber über ihn

kommt keiner fort, und wieder wird ihm Welt.

Der Schöpfung immer zugewendet, sehn

wir nur auf ihr die Spiegelung des Frein,

von uns verdunkelt. Oder daß ein Tier,

ein stummes, aufschaut, ruhig durch uns durch.

Dieses heißt Schicksal: gegenüber sein

und nichts als das und immer gegenüber.

Wäre Bewußtheit unsrer Art in dem

sicheren Tier, das uns entgegenzieht

in anderer Richtung –, riß es uns herum

mit seinem Wandel. Doch sein Sein ist ihm

unendlich, ungefaßt und ohne Blick

auf seinen Zustand, rein, so wie sein Ausblick.

Und wo wir Zukunft sehn, dort sieht es Alles

und sich in Allem und geheilt für immer.

Und doch ist in dem wachsam warmen Tier

Gewicht und Sorge einer großen Schwermut.

Denn ihm auch haftet immer an, was uns

oft überwältigt, – die Erinnerung,

als sei schon einmal das, wonach man drängt,

näher gewesen, treuer und sein Anschluß

unendlich zärtlich. Hier ist alles Abstand,

und dort wars Atem. Nach der ersten Heimat

ist ihm die zweite zwitterig und windig.

O Seligkeit der *kleinen* Kreatur,

die immer *bleibt* im Schooße, der sie austrug;

o Glück der Mücke, die noch *innen* hüpft,

selbst wenn sie Hochzeit hat: denn Schooß ist Alles.

Und sieh die halbe Sicherheit des Vogels,

der beinah beides weiß aus seinem Ursprung,

als wär er eine Seele der Etrusker,

aus einem Toten, den ein Raum empfing,

doch mit der ruhenden Figur als Deckel.

Und wie bestürzt ist eins, das fliegen muß

und stammt aus einem Schooß. Wie vor sich selbst

erschreckt, durchzuckts die Luft, wie wenn ein Sprung

durch eine Tasse geht. So reißt die Spur

der Fledermaus durchs Porzellan des Abends.

Und wir: Zuschauer, immer, überall,

dem allen zugewandt und nie hinaus!

Uns überfüllts. Wir ordnens. Es zerfällt.

Wir ordnens wieder und zerfallen selbst.

Wer hat uns also umgedreht, daß wir,

was wir auch tun, in jener Haltung sind

von einem, welcher fortgeht? Wie er auf

dem letzten Hügel, der ihm ganz sein Tal

noch einmal zeigt, sich wendet, anhält, weilt –,

so leben wir und nehmen immer Abschied.

The Eighth Elegy[67]

With full gaze the animal sees the open.

Only our eye, as if reserved, are like snares

set around it, block the freedom of its going.

[67] *Duino Elegies*. Translated by McIntyre translation, Berkeley: University of California. 1961 Press.

Only from the face of the beast do we know

what *is* outside; for even little children

we turn around and force them to look backward

at the world of forms, and they do not see the open

so deep in the animal's eyes. Free from death.

Only we see *that*; but the beat is free

and has its death always behind it and God before it,

and when it walks it goes toward eternity,

as spring flow. Never, not for a single day

do we have pure space before us in which the flowers

are always unfolding. It's forever world

and never Nowhere-without-Not:

the pure ad unwatched-over air we breathe,

know infinitely and we do not want. As when sometimes

a child gets lost in silence

and has to be shaken back. Or someone dies and *is* it.

For nearing death, one sees death no more and stares

f*orward*,

perhaps with wide gaze of the animals.

Lovers, were it not for the other who blocks the view,

are close to it and marvel …

as if by carelessness it is open to them

behind each other … but neither gets past, and again

it's world. Always turned to creation, we see there

only the reflection of the free,

darkened by us. Or that a beast, a dumb one,

lifts his eyes and looks us calmly through and through.

That's what destiny is: to be face to face

and nothing but that and always opposite.

If the sure animal that approached us

in a different direction had this awareness of ours,

he would drag us along behind him. But his existence

is infinite to him, ungrasped, without a glimpse

at his condition, pure as his outward gaze.

And where we see the future, he sees All

and himself in All and himself healed forever.

And yet within the warm and watchful creature

is the care and heaviness of a great melancholy.

For it also clings to him always, that

which often overcomes us – memory:

as if once before the thing for which we strive

had been closer, truer, and the relation

infinitely tender. Here all is distance,

there it was breath. After the first home

the second is hybrid and open to the winds.

Oh, the beatitude of the *little* creatures

that *stay* forever forever in the womb that conceived them;

oh the joy of the midge, that is still hopping *within*,

even during its nuptials: for womb is all.

And look at the half-certainty of the bird

that from its origin knows almost both;

as if it were the soul of a dead Etruscan

shut in the space where his effigy rests as a lid.

And how perturbed it anything come from a womb

when it has to fly! As if afraid of itself,

it jerks through the air, as a crack goes through a cup.

As the track of a bat tears through the porcelain of

evening.

And we: onlookers, always, everywhere,

turned toward everything and never from!

We are surfeited. We set it in order. It breaks.

We put it in order again and break down ourselves.

Who has twisted us like this, so that --

no matter what we do -- we have the bearing

of a man going away? As on the last hill

that shows him all his valley, for the last time,

he turns, stands still, and lingers, so we live,

forever saying farewell.

SCHWARZE KATZE[68]

Ein Gespenst ist noch wie eine Stelle,

dran dein Blick mit einem Klange stößt;

aber da, an diesem schwarzen Felle

wird dein stärkstes Schauen aufgelöst:

wie ein Tobender, wenn er in vollster

Raserei ins Schwarze stampft,

jählings am benehmenden Gepolster

einer Zelle aufhört und verdampft.

Alle Blicke, die sie jemals trafen,

scheint sie also an sich zu verhehlen,

um darüber drohend und verdrossen

zuzuschauern und damit zu schlafen.

Doch auf einmal kehrt sie, wie geweckt,

[68] Retrieved from http://www.rilke.de/gedichte/schwarze_katze.htm. Accessed 12 Dec. 2018

ihr Gesicht und mitten in das deine:

und da triffst du deinen Blick im geelen

Amber ihrer runden Augensteine

unerwartet wieder: eingeschlossen

wie ein ausgestorbenes Insekt.

BLACK CAT[69]

A ghost, though invisible, still is like a place

your sight can knock on, echoing; but here

within this thick black pelt, your strongest gaze

will be absorbed and utterly disappear:

just as a raving madman, when nothing else

can ease him, charges into his dark night

howling, pounds on the padded wall, and feels

the rage being taken in and pacified.

She seems to hide all looks that have ever fallen

into her, so that, like an audience,

[69] Retrieved from https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/black-cat. Accessed 12 Dec. 2018

she can look them over, menacing and sullen,

and curl to sleep with them. But all at once

as if awakened, she turns her face to yours;

and with a shock, you see yourself, tiny,

inside the golden amber of her eyeballs

suspended, like a prehistoric fly. (retrieved from poets.org)

Oddjob, a Bull Terrier[70]

You prepare for one sorrow,

but another comes.

It is not like the weather,

you cannot brace yourself,

the unreadiness is all.

Your companion, the woman,

the friend next to you,

the child at your side,

[70] Walcott, Derek. *Poems 1965-1980*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1992. Print.

and the dog,

we tremble for them,

we look seaward and muse

it will rain.

We shall get ready for rain;

you do not connect

the sunlight altering

the darkening oleanders

in the sea-garden,

the gold going out of the palms.

You do not connect this,

the fleck of the drizzle

on your flesh,

with the dog's whimper,

the thunder doesn't frighten,

the readiness is all;

what follows at your feet

is trying to tell you

the silence is all:

it is deeper than the readiness,

it is sea-deep,

earth-deep,

Love-deep.

The silence

is stronger than thunder,

we are stricken dumb and deep

as the animals who never utter love

as we do, except

it becomes unutterable

and must be said,

in a whimper,

in tears,

in the drizzle that comes to our eyes

not uttering the loved thing's name,

the silence of the dead,

the silence of the deepest buried love is

the one silence,

and whether we bear it for beast,

for child, for woman, or friend,

it is the one love, it is the same,

and it is blest

deepest by loss

it is blest, it is blest.

[In lieblicher Bläue …][71]

In lieblicher Bläue blühet mit dem metallenen Dache der Kirchturm. Den umschwebet Geschrei von Schwalben, den umgibt rührendste Bläue. Die Sonne gehet hoch darüber und färbet das Blech, im Winde aber oben stille krähet die Fahne. Wenn einer unter den Glocken dann herabgehet jene Treppen, ein stilles Leben ist es, weil wenn abgesondert so sehr die Gestalt ist, die Bildsamkeit herauskommt dann des Menschen. Die Fenster, daraus die Glokken tönen, sind wie Tore an Schönheit. Nämlich, weil noch der Natur nah sind die Tore, haben diese Ähnlichkeit von Bäumen des Waldes, Reinheit aber ist auch Schönheit. Innen aus Verschiedenem entsteht ein ernster Geist. So sehr einfältig aber die Bilder, so sehr heilig sind sie, daß man wirklich oft fürchtet, die zu beschreiben. Die Himmlischen aber, die immer gut sind, alles zumal, wie Reiche, haben diese, Tugend und Freude. Der Mensch darf das nachahmen. Darf, wenn lauter Mühe das Leben, ein Mensch aufschauen, und sagen: so will ich auch seyn? Ja. So lange die Freundlichkeit

[71] Retrieved from http://brahms.ircam.fr/documents/document/4367/. Accessed 12 Dec. 2018

noch am Herzen, die Reine, dauert, misset nicht unglücklich der Mensch sich mit der Gottheit. Ist unbekannt Gott? Ist er offenbar wie der Himmel? dieses glaub'ich eher. Des Menschen Maaß ist's. Voll Verdienst, doch dichterisch wohnet der Mensch auf dieser Erde. Doch reicher ist nicht der Schatten der Nacht mit den Sternen, wenn ich so sagen könnte, als der Mensch, der heißet ein Bild der Gottheit.

Giebt es auf Erden ein Maß? Es giebt keines. Nemlich es hemmt den Donnergang nie die Welten des Schöpfers. Auch eine Blume ist schön, weil sie blühet unter der Sonne. Es findet das Aug' oft im Leben Wesen, die viel schöner noch zu nennen wären als die Blumen. O! ich weiß das wohl. Denn zu bluten an Gestalt und Herz, und ganz nicht mehr zu seyn, gefällt das Gott? Die Seele aber, wie ich glaube, muß rein bleiben, sonst reicht an das Mächtige auf Fittichen der Adler mit lobendem Gesange und der Stimme so vieler Vögel. Es ist die Wesenheit, die Gestalt ist's. Du schönes Bächlein, du scheinst so rührend, indem du rollest so klar, wie das Auge der Gottheit durch die Milchstraße. Ich kenne dich wohl, aber Thränen quillen aus dem Auge. Ein heitres Leben seh' ich in den Gestalten mich umblühen der Schöpfung, weil ich es nicht unbillig vergleiche den einsamen Tauben auf dem Kirchhof. Das Lachen aber scheint mich zu grämen der Menschen, nemlich ich hab' ein Herz. Möcht’ ich ein Komet seyn? Ich glaube. Denn sie haben die Schnelligkeit der Vögel; sie blühen an Feuer, und sind wie Kinder an Reinheit. Größeres zu wünschen, kann nicht des Menschen Natur sich vermessen. Der Tugend Heiterkeit verdient auch gelobt zu werden vom ernsten Geiste, der zwischen den drei Säulen wehet des Gartens. Eine schöne Jungfrau muß das Haupt umkränzen mit Myrtenblumen, weil sie einfach ist ihrem Wesen nach und ihrem Gefühl. Myrthen aber giebt es in Griechenland.

Wenn einer in den Spiegel siehet, ein Mann, und siehet darinn sein Bild, wie abgemalt; es gleicht dem Manne. Augen hat des Menschen Bild, hingegen Licht der Mond. Der König Oedipus hat

ein Auge zuviel vieleicht. Diese Leiden dieses Mannes, sie scheinen unbeschreiblich, unaussprechlich, unausdrüklich. Wenn das Schauspiel ein solches darstellt, kommt's daher. Wie ist mir's aber, gedenk' ich deiner jezt? Wie Bäche reißt das Ende von Etwas mich dahin, welches sich wie Asien ausdehnet. Natürlich dieses Leiden, das hat Oedipus. Natürlich ist's darum. Hat auch Herkules gelitten? Wohl. Die Dioskuren in ihrer Freundschaft haben die nicht Leiden auch getragen? Nemlich wie Herkules mit Gott zu streiten, das ist Leiden. Und die Unsterblichkeit im Neide dieses Lebens, diese zu theilen, ist ein Leiden auch. Doch das ist auch ein Leiden, wenn mit Sommerfleken ist bedekt ein Mensch, mit manchen Fleken ganz überdekt zu seyn! Das thut die schöne Sonne: Nemlich die ziehet alles auf. Die Jünglinge führt die Bahn sie mit Reizen ihrer Stralen wie mit Rosen. Die Leiden scheinen so, die Oedipus getragen, als wie ein armer Mann klagt, daß ihm etwas fehle. Sohn Laios, armer Fremdling in Griechenland! Leben ist Tod, und Tod ist auch ein Leben.

[In lovely blue …][72]

In lovely blue the steeple blossoms

With its metal roof. Around which

Drift swallow cries, around which

Lies most loving blue. The sun,

High overhead, tints the roof tin,

[72] Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Hymns and Fragments*. Translated by Richard Sieburth, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. Print.

But up in the wind, silent,

The weathercock crows. When someone

Takes the stairs down from the belfry,

It is a still life, with the figure

Thus detached, the sculpted shape

Of man comes forth. The windows

The bells ring through

Are as gates to beauty.

Because gates

Still take after nature,

They resemble the forest trees.

But purity is also beauty.

A grave spirit arises from within,

Out of diverse things. Yet so simple

These images, so very holy,

One fears to describe them. But the gods,

Ever kind in all things,

Are rich in virtue and joy.

Which man may imitate.

Maya man look up

From the utter hardship of his life

And say: Let me also be

Like these? Yes. As long as kindness ls lasts,

Pure, within his heart, he may gladly measure himself

Against the divine. Is God unknown?

Is he manifest as the sky? This I tend

To believe. Such is man's measure.

Well deserving, yet poetically

Man dwells on this earth. But the shadow

Of the starry night is no more pure, if I may say so,

Than man, said to be the image of God.

Is there measure on earth1 There is

None. No created world ever hindered

The course of thunder. A flower

Is likewise lovely, blooming as it does

Under the sun. The eye often discovers

Creatures in life it would be yet lovelier

To name than flowers. O, this I know!

For to bleed both in body and heart, and cease

To be whole, is this pleasing to God?

But the soul, I believe, must

Remain pure, lest the eagle wing

Its way up to the Almighty with songs

Of praise and the voice of so many birds.

It is substance, and is form.

Lovely little brook, how moving you seem

As you roll so clear, like the eye of God,

Through the Milky Way. I know you well,

But tears pour from the eye.

I see gaiety of life blossom

About me in all creation's forms,

I do not compare it cheaply

To the graveyard's solitary doves. People's

Laughter seems to grieve me,

After all, I have a heart.

Would I like to be a comet? I think so.

They are swift as birds, they flower

With fire, childlike in purity. To desire

More than this is beyond human measure.

The gaiety of virtue also deserves praise

From the grave spirit adrift

Between the garden's three columns.

A beautiful virgin should wreathe her hair

With myrtle, being simple by nature. and heart.

But myrtles are found in Greece.

If a man look into a mirror

And see his image therein, as if painted,

It is his likeness. Man's image has eyes,

But the moon has light.

King Oedipus may have an eye too many.

The sufferings of this man seem indescribable,

Inexpressible, unspeakable. Which comes

When drama represents such things.

But what do I feel, now thinking of your

Like brooks, I am carried away by the end of something

That expands like Asia. Of course,

Oedipus suffers the same? For a reason,

Of course. Did Hercules suffer as well?

Indeed. In their friendship

Did not the Dioscuri also suffer?

Yes, to battle God as Hercules did

Is to suffer. And to half share immortality

With the envy of this life,

This too is pain. But this also

Is suffering, when a man is covered with summer freckles,

All bespattered with spots. This is the work

Of the sun, it draws everything out.

It leads young men along their course,

Charmed by rays like roses.

The sufferings of Oedipus seem like a poor man

Lamenting what he lacks.

Son of Laios, poor stranger in Greece.

Life is death, and death a life.

Meditation at Lagunitas[73]

All the new thinking is about loss.

In this it resembles all the old thinking.

The idea, for example, that each particular erases

the luminous clarity of a general idea. That the clown-

faced woodpecker probing the dead sculpted trunk

of that black birch is, by his presence,

some tragic falling off from a first world

of undivided light. Or the other notion that,

because there is in this world no one thing

to which the bramble of *blackberry* corresponds,

a word is elegy to what it signifies.

We talked about it late last night and in the voice

[73] Hass, Robert. *Praise*. Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1990. Print.

of my friend, there was a thin wire of grief, a tone

almost querulous. After a while I understood that,

talking this way, everything dissolves: *justice,*

pine, hair, woman, you and I. There was a woman

I made love to and I remembered how, holding

her small shoulders in my hands sometimes,

I felt a violent wonder at her presence

like a thirst for salt, for my childhood river

with its island willows, silly music from the pleasure boat,

muddy places where we caught the little orange-silver fish

called *pumpkinseed*. It hardly had to do with her.

Longing, we say, because desire is full

of endless distances. I must have been the same to her.

But I remember so much, the way her hands dismantled bread,

the thing her father said that hurt her, what

she dreamed. There are moments when the body is as numinous

as words, days that are the good flesh continuing.

Such tenderness, those afternoons and evenings,

saying *blackberry, blackberry, blackberry*.