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## The Routledge Companion to World Cinema

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### Cinephilia goes global

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## CINEPHILIA GOES GLOBAL

## Loving cinema in the post-cinematic age

*Belén Vidal***Introduction**

Cinephilia is both straightforward and elusive. The word alludes to the bonding desire for cinema, but also to the practices and cultures that this desire has inspired and brought to life. In this respect, cinephilia can be said to spring from two foundational moments: the rituals practised by the early twentieth-century avant-garde artists fascinated by the possibilities of the cinematograph, and the culture of viewing, talking and writing about film animating the various cosmopolitan centres in the post-World War II period, most notably Paris. The journal *Cahiers du cinéma*, founded by André Bazin and home to the well-known group of film critics, later *cinéastes* of the New Wave, is credited with the invention of the auteur and the valorisation of classic Hollywood cinema as art. These two by-products of the era's intense cinephilia smoothed the path towards cinema's consideration as a worthy object of academic study. Yet, paradoxically, cinephilia would be later sidelined by a nascent discipline—Film Studies—in search of academic legitimisation (Elsaesser 2005; Sperb and Balcerzak 2009; Baumbach 2012). The break of 1968 and the era of counter-culture were the turning point for successive waves of specialist debates that shaped Film Studies in the second half of the twentieth-century. Film theory rejected cinephilia's perceived amateurism and disarming sincerity in pursuit of more rigorously scientific methods, under the pressure of new political priorities (Andrew 2000).

The first decades of the twenty-first century have seen, however, a new host of viewing and writing practices that have invoked the spirit of cinephilia on both sides of the divide between scholarly analysis and film criticism (Bordwell 2011), a cinephilia that has real-world meeting places and communities (notably the worldwide boom of film festivals) as well as virtual ones. The moving image is consumed on a variety of platforms, while film-related content floods social media, including blogs and video streaming channels, where it enjoys unprecedented speed of access and dissemination. The birth of digital film cultures has seen the rebirth of cinephilia on a truly global scale: variously called “New Cinephilia”, “cinephilia 2.0”, or “digital cinephilia” (Jullier and Leveratto 2012; Shambu 2014), in the twentieth-first century the love for cinema has mutated into true *cinéphagie*. This indiscriminate desire for film has transformed viewing practices, while new tools of analysis have reinvigorated cinephilic writing: with objects such as the supercut (fan-made video that compiles similar moments from diverse films) and the audiovisual essay, which tends to combine text and image in a transmediation of the essay

form, the cinephile of the digital era records her fascination with specific fragments, or pursues an idea through the image itself. These forms of thinking through film and writing *with* film address intersecting communities of cinephiles, whether amateur or specialist. Endowed with a new lease of life by the digital turn, cinephilia has become firmly embedded in the discourse of the post-theory era.

Cinephilia, then, bookends the evolution of Film Studies, yet it has equally been disavowed on account of its excessive, unruly nature or, worse, dismissed as a solipsistic tendency to subjectivity and ahistoricism. In their discussion of contemporary cinephilia, Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener highlight its ambiguity and multiplicity, approaching it as “an umbrella term for a number of different affective engagements with the moving image” (2005: 14). In this spirit, I want to explore further the persistence of the attachment to the cinematic in the post-cinematic age, and the kinds of knowledges that such attachment may yield. After Susan Sontag, writing at the end of the twentieth-century, declared cinephilia dead (1996), its rebirth in millennial film debates, and its potential as a form of historiography continue to warrant investigation.

### **A matter of time: cinephilia’s generational thinking**

Antoine de Baecque defined cinephilia as the “invention of a gaze”: a particular way of “watching films, of discussing them, of spreading this discourse” but also, he adds, “the true way of considering cinema in its context”—therefore, as a historical object (2003: 11). In his reconstruction of this watershed moment in post-war French culture, de Baecque refers to the “holy trinity” of introduction, screening and discussion at the cine-club sessions where Bazin conducted this ritual “like others would hold mass” (2003: 40, my translation). Brimming with quasi-religious connotations, cinephilia is born out of what Hagener calls a “paradoxical structure of feeling, a specific disposition that is both radically subjective, but strives for communication and understanding” (2014). The dialectic between the spectator’s intimate relationship with the film, manifesting in the practices of cinema-going and cinema-sharing, and the lasting print legacy left by this generation of self-avowed film lovers is what makes cinephilia historically legible.

Thomas Elsaesser has established a fundamental distinction between this particular moment—which he calls cinephilia “take 1”—as opposed to contemporary cinephilia: cinephilia “take 2”. Cinephilia take 1 speaks of a state of synchronicity between the films and cinephiles, in which cinephilia is lived in the present tense, rooted in the urban culture of the cinemas of Paris in the 1950s and in the fleeting visibility of the films whose arrival had been delayed by the war, and that now flooded the city’s screens. This picture has been both mythologised and deconstructed in subsequent iterations of cinephilia, acquiring the trappings of a generational phenomenon. Elsaesser refers to the delays and deferrals that facilitated the “oedipal time” of cinephilia: the young cinephiles at *Cahiers* would be able to discover the work of Hollywood and European filmmakers and reinvent themselves as the children of Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks or Roberto Rossellini, while rejecting the mainstream French cinema made by established names of the older generation, which they dismissed as the *cinéma de papa* (2005: 31). Elsaesser extends this generational struggle to the film culture of 1970s London, where competing discourses in film magazines such as *Sight & Sound* and *Movie* were upstaged by the first breakthroughs of film theory of semiotic and psychoanalytical inspiration. Yet, as Laura Mulvey wrote in 2009, her call to arms for the political rejection of pleasure in her key intervention “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975) was less a rejection of Hollywood than an admission of her and her generation’s fascination with it, finding in the American genre cinema of the previous decades—and especially in the excessiveness of melodrama—an appealing alternative to the conservatism

of mainstream high culture in Britain, and to a certain “tiredness with the traditions of English realism” (Mulvey 2009: xii).

Generational dissent was a fixture of early cinephilic cultures, but subsequent iterations have seen this reactive aspect give way to a sense of desired legacies. In the preface to a Spanish translation of a selection of film criticism from *Cahiers du cinéma*, Cristina Pujol identifies a new university-educated cinephile in Spain, bred on both contemporary Hollywood, as well as an abundant dose of (mostly) European and American classics watched on television. This generation, she argues, is “happy to live on the borrowed cinephilia of their teachers” (Fecé and Pujol 2005: 23, my translation), teachers who, in turn, struggled to reconcile their own imported cinephilia with the urgency of their political militancy in the 1970s. By the 1990s cinephilia had lost its synchronicity with its object of love, yet the ensuing sense of self-conscious belatedness and cultural displacement only increases the rippling intensity of the feeling: an undercurrent of nostalgia not only for cinema, but also for cinephilia, feeds the post-2000 return to this particular lost moment, from myriad different places.

Between contemporary cinephilia and past generational histories stands, however, a seismic shift provoked by medium (r)evolution. Access to film progressively became the province of television and more crucially, home video. The introduction of the first domestic VCR machines in 1975 radically altered the cinephile’s habits and rituals: as Barbara Klinger notes, the conditions permitting cinephilia would be thereafter “relocated and rearticulated within the complex interactions among media industries, commodity culture, and the private sphere” (2006: 55). The spread of home video transformed a culture based on scarcity—the cinema as a “series of phantoms that the cinephile was trying to capture at out-of-the-way venues, at odd hours or at distant festivals” (Vernet 1999: 93)—to a culture of abundance, supported by ease of access outside metropolitan centres, and the democratisation of film collecting. The transition to this domesticated “new cinephilia” created new rituals and forms of compulsive love, but not without frictions and resistances since, as Nico Baumbach points out, “cinephilia is necessarily allied with some idea of medium specificity even if it tends to define the essence of the medium as undefinable” (2012: 52). Videophile Charles Shiro Tashiro speaks of the labour involved in the physical interaction and segmentation of the film experience enjoyed on video, claiming that it makes possible positive forms of connoisseurship that the theatrical experience discourages (1991: 16); in his discussion of cinephilia after videophilia, Lucas Hildebrand, however, concludes: “I am more likely to experience distanced aesthetic appreciation in a theatre but more emotional openness at home” (2009: 216–217).

As early as 1978, the symptoms of what Elsaesser would call cinephilia’s disenchantment were already evident in the very same places where cinephilia had been most ardently nurtured. An example of this is Louis Skorecki’s lengthy tirade published in *Cahiers du cinéma* that year (with some delay due to editorial disagreements) in which he dissects the excesses of classic cinephilia (such as the overvaluing of Hollywood cinema regardless of the films’ political content) and criticises the new cinephilia’s readiness to uphold auteurism as a prerogative of the market (1978: 33–35, 50–52). Skorecki’s combative scepticism with regard to past and present forms of cinephilia foreshadows fundamental changes. First, the new(est) cinephilia shuns the gatekeeping of taste of classical cinephilia, now perceived as elitist, and champions instead the egalitarian fan competences of “popular cinephilia” (Jullier 2009: 203). Second, this cinephilia prefers “ubiquity over purity”, jettisoning aesthetic concerns in favour of immediate access (Quandt 2009: 208).

Cinema as an institution and an experience seems to have lost pride of place in the social imaginary (Gaudreault and Marion 2015: 14–15), but its resilience as an object of love has deepened with its imbrication with other media, notably television and the digital.

Contemporary cinephilia or, cinephilia “take 2” (in Elsaesser’s words) arises from a culture of continuous recycling, remaking and remixing: “The need to always be conscious of several temporalities [. . .] has become a generalised cultural condition” (Elsaesser 2005: 40). As a result, cinephilia is caught in the nostalgia for the medium while thriving on the anachronisms prompted by the consumption of past cinema histories on new digital platforms: the new cinephile may have the entirety of the canon at her disposal, but risks losing her way down the rabbit hole of the seemingly limitless archive without the compass provided by the experience of classical (pre-video) cinephilia. The concern with the fading of historicity is in evidence in the work by scholars poised between the two moments of cinephilia (Elsaesser, but also Willemen 1994: 227–230, Keathley 2006: 23–25). Jenna Ng, a theorist of digital cinephilia, puts it differently: she asks to what extent “contemporary cinephilia” is an oxymoron, since “one cannot have contemporariness in a project located specifically in the past” (Ng 2005: 66). The answer to this pressing question lies in the technological remediation of cinephilia on a global scale, as we will see in the next section.

### **Global online cultures: technology, consumption and world cinephilia**

Any attempt at defining contemporary cinephilia needs to take into account the twin factors of unprecedented technological development, and the diversity of cross-cultural film experience that it has enabled (Ng 2005: 69)—factors that challenge the Eurocentric underpinnings of cinephilia’s narrative in the twenty-first century. The intertwining of the technological and the sociological is in evidence in Jullier and Leveratto’s three categories of cinephilia, which they link to three different stages in practices of film consumption: classical cinephilia and the cinema experience up to the mid-twentieth century; modern cinephilia and the privatisation of experience through home-viewing (1950–1980), and postmodern cinephilia (1980–2010) in relation to the relocation of the cinematic experience and the proliferation of user-controlled screens (2012: 153–154). The rhetoric about the death of cinema has become part of the genealogy of the medium’s historical development (as noted by Tom Gunning and Paolo Cherchi Usai, cited by Gaudreault and Marion 2015: 16–18). Likewise, though thriving on technological change, the social practices of cinephilia exist in almost contradictory relationship to a reactive discourse that sees the same technological evolution as a symptom of cinephilia’s unavoidable decline. In a perceptive account of this double dynamic, Sarah Keller goes as far as stating that there is no cinephilia without *cinephobia*—in other words, it is the shifting relationship between love and fear that defines the cinematic experience in a climate of constant technological change. From the literary to the visual, from silent to sound, from analogue to digital film, Keller traces cinephobia in the spectator’s epistemological relationship with a medium in constant change, and the social anxieties this relationship generates, including the fear of the loss of the medium itself. In this respect, cinephobia is the flip side to cinephilia’s nostalgic desire for an about-to-be-forgotten cinematic past (Keller 2014). Francesco Casetti’s choice of deliberately archaic metaphors is telling in this regard: Casetti discusses the spectator’s relationship with cinema after cinema’s digital relocation in terms of “relics” and “icons”. The former encompasses the film watched on DVD or on a lovingly restored print; these objects keep a metonymical relationship with the larger body of cinema, which is invested with the aura of its sacred remains. In contrast, the new settings in which film may be consumed (the digital home theatre) are icons, copies designed to replicate the original viewing conditions that produced the first wave of cinephilia, and thus to add an extra layer of authenticity to the watching experience (Casetti 2015: 63–66). We are back in the transcendent language of first-wave cinephilia, remediated into the digital

era, yet such terms belie the everyday nature of the diverse practices feeding digital cinephilia (Hildebrand 2009: 217).

Postmodern cinephilia spells out the ending of the cinema experience as a social event, displaced by isolated acts of consumption. In contrast, the production of cinephilic discourse has become increasingly visible through the digital public sphere and related forms of networked labour. The forms of sociability facilitated by the Internet have given a new reach to the notion of the cinephilic community; intersubjectivity and connectivity are the two essential features of cinephilia in its new, global stage (de Valck and Hagener 2005: 14). In 2003, the influential volume *Movie Mutations: The Changing Face of World Cinephilia* (edited by Jonathan Rosenbaum *et al.*) produced a possible mapping of the global paths of cinephilia through a traditional literary format. The volume is made up of short essays and a series of public letters by a select group of consolidated film critics, festival programmers and film academics across the world, most of them born around 1960. The epistolary exchanges in *Movie Mutations* are proof of the self-reflective quality of a cinephilia cultivated mainly in film festivals, and attentive to the flows of global auteur cinema. The often passionate conversation is presented as a form of group writing driven by a desire to reconfigure the borders of classic cinephilia through an internationalist outlook. For example, looking at Howard Hawks through the prism of his reception in Japan, and putting him in relation to neglected Japanese director Yasuzo Masumura brings to the fore what veteran U.S. critic Rosenbaum calls “global synchronicity” or “the simultaneous appearance of the same apparent tastes, styles and/or themes in separate parts of the world” in the course of his dialogue with Japanese academic and author Shigehiko Hasumi (Rosenbaum and Hasumi 2003: 61).

Such instances of global synchronicity offer new opportunities for a latitudinal re-mapping of cinephilia built on the input of an ever-widening circle of participants, beyond hegemonic centres of discourse production (notably Western Europe and the US) (Shambu and Campbell 2009: 55). In a dossier about Indian cinema’s global reach, Dina Iordanova makes a passionate plea for the individual testimony and the memory anecdote as tools for filling in the gaps in a potential historiography of international cinematic exchanges; according to the personal experience of the discussants involved, Indian popular cinema would emerge as a dominant presence in the markets of Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa at roughly the same time, challenging standard accounts of Hollywood domination in the industrial and the social imaginary (Iordanova *et al.* 2006: 113–117). The consideration of the worldwide presence of Indian cinema as the seed of a parallel cinephilia is but an example of the specificity of local cultures and the potential for a popular cinephilia to inform alternative historiographies (also see the exchange between Catherine Benamou and Lucia Saks on the transnational circulation of films *of* and *in* countries of the Global South in *Movie Mutations*, 2003: 150–165).

While reclaiming the cinephilic roots of Film Studies, *Movie Mutations* also demonstrates that it is not only cinema that has mutated, but also cinephilia, losing something of its original amateur impulse in favour of a specialised discourse. Against the persistent negative stereotype of the cinephile as an elitist snob with a passion for the obscure and the difficult, Nico Baumbach (borrowing from Jacques Rancière) predicates the “New Cinephilia” on *la politique de l’amateur*, which may bring the “breaking down [of] the strict divisions that separate filmmakers, critics, theorists, and cinephiles” (2012: 53). In this respect, the interpersonal practices of Internet film bloggers are perhaps the most prominent mode of writing through which twenty-first-century cinephilia may become legible. References in this field are Girish Shambu’s film blog *girish* (Shambu 2004), running since September 2004, and his subsequent book-length essay *The New Cinephilia* (2014). In the latter, Shambu highlights the Internet’s inverting of the relationship between a reduced number of active writers and a large number of passive readers that defined



the era of classical cinephilia (2014: 20). In other words, contemporary cinephilia is de-centred and more democratic, spawning a multi stranded dialogue through an increasingly large number of social networking platforms (Shambu 2014: 4). *The New Cinephilia* fully inhabits the forms and modes of interaction afforded by the “horizontal terrain of Internet cinephilia” (Shambu 2014: 44). The essay is also a spirited polemic that proposes an unabashedly utopian vision of digital cinephilia as a social force with the potential to give rise to communities that buck the dominant trend towards the compartmentalisation and specialisation of knowledge predicated by present-day “realist capitalism” (Mark Fisher 2009, cited in Shambu 2014: 45). Thus, cinephilia emerges as an idiom that may be shared by specialists and amateurs through the unregulated spaces of the Internet: “learning communities” made up of different constituencies with unique perspectives (Shambu 2009: 219) that were, in the best of cases, imagined, now become tangible in the virtual arena.

Digital cinephilia may have turned into yet another expression of participatory culture (Jenkins 1992), but its opportunities come not without challenges, such as the friction between different interest groups (e.g. fans versus cinephiles, Sperb and Balcerzak 2009: 22) and the suspicion felt by many a professional film critic that blogging and the Twittersphere may be encroaching upon the domain of professional film criticism in ways that ultimately allow the logic of neoliberalism to erode the spaces for paid intellectual labour (Frey 2015: 10–12; James 2015). If horizontal Internet cinephilia has the potential to distil some of Film Scholarship’s most durable ideas into everyday criticism (Shambu 2014: 31), it has also helped Film Studies reclaim a space for the intuitive and the subjective that seems to have been ruled out of academic writing. This question is at the centre of the next section.

### Writing cinephilic histories

Blogging and film-related image-sharing make for a treasure trove of online micro-criticism that organises film-related thinking (observations, unexpected connections, personal phobias and phobias) into heterogeneous forms of exchange (Shambu 2014: 21–29). These instances of micro-criticism may seem random, dead-end forms of cinephilic expression. However, the fixation with the small segment, the fragment and the isolated image that criss-crosses the everyday creative practices of fans (as in the YouTube genre of the supercut) has also effected a shift in the ways scholars, now in possession of a set of digital tools for moving-image writing (DVD, video files, user-friendly editing software) have put the fragment at the centre of their theoretical thinking around cinephilia.

After the watershed of “grand” screen theory and the urgency of the (unresolved) battles around film and cultural politics, the return of cinephilia in Film Studies marked a return to the textual flesh and bones of film. Scholars practising formal analysis through a cinephilic prism both acknowledge and disavow the structural thinking behind the paradigm wars of the 1970s and 1980s (semiotics, psychoanalysis, and later the schemata of neo-formalism and cognitivism), as well as the consideration of cinema as a machine for the production of narrative competences and psycho-social identities. Instead, the theorists of the new cinephilia have staked their territory in earlier and peripheral moments of film theory. For example, Cardinal refers to the leftfield readings of the image by artists and critics close to Surrealism as a sort of “errant dream-criticism” (1986: 114) fed by an eye wandering off after the apparently meaningless detail in the edges of the frame, and by moments that seemed to transcend a film’s explicit subject matter. With Roland Barthes, this attention to the incidental begets an elaborate taxonomy (the *obtuse* meaning; the ‘third meaning’; the *punctum*). Thus, Barthes turns to the elusive qualities of the photographic image in a series of essays that intersperse a personal unveiling within

the wider remit of cultural criticism (see Cardinal 1986; Burgin 2004; Keathley 2006). Other scholars of cinephilia have turned to Jean Epstein's fascination with the disruptive qualities of the close-up, and to his reflection on the image as enigma, in his work on *photogénie* (Willemen 1994; Keller 2012). These scholars seek to explore aspects of spectatorship that may complicate the regulated relationship between the viewer and the film object.

Instead, cinephilia leads into more unpredictable attachments. The fragment and the "peripheral" detail (Cardinal 1986) enable epiphanic moments; Paul Willemen uses this phrase to single out particular moments pregnant with affective power, within and beyond the elements that belong to the conventional and highly coded forms of narrative film. The *cinephiliac* moment arises "in excess of the film's register of performance, as potentially undesigned, unprogrammed" (Willemen 1994: 239). Willemen's choice of adjective deliberately echoes the necrophiliac, for both modes carry the fascination with former life becoming *alive* in front of our eyes: Georges Méliès's remark about the rustling of leaves in the background of the film by the Lumière Brothers *Le repas de bébé* (Baby's Dinner, 1895, France) is a reaction to a moment that, as historian Georges Sadoul was prompted to note, would barely register today. However, this often-reproduced anecdote informs how we think of cinema as a form able to absorb the contingent and the spontaneous in ways that seemed radically new (Vaughan 1990: 65). Likewise, it lays the ground for future milestones of film criticism during the period of classical cinephilia, such as Bazin's thinking about cinema form in relation to the world framed. Thus, on the one hand, the cinephiliac moment throws light upon the particular relationships between film and burgeoning moments in film culture. Willemen retrospectively reads the writing of the Young Turks at *Cahiers du cinéma* in this vein, as a series of responses to "moments which, when encountered in a film, spark something which then produces the energy and the desire to write, to find formulations to convey something about the intensity of that spark" (1994: 235). From consumption to production, the *cinephiliac* moment (perhaps more so than the variant "cinephilic") alludes to the *history* of cinephilia as a "serialisation of moments of revelation" (1994: 233), thus embedding it into history. On the other, the foregrounding of different temporalities is what gives cinephilia its value as a historiographic tool; this aspect has been explored by several important monographs that return to Hollywood cinema, and to the scene of classic cinephilia, as key sites for the formation of contemporary Film Studies.

In *Cinephilia and History, or The Wind in the Trees* (2006) Christian Keathley returns to pivotal moments in classic film theory and looks at modes of watching cinema repressed by historical discourse. Whether conjuring up the cinephile's active "panoramic perception" (2006: 29–53) in alignment with other tropes of technological modernity, or tracing the Surrealist taste for the uncanny and the arbitrary association in the thinking of Bazin, Keathley goes back to well-established histories through attention to the fragment, the marginal detail and the personal anecdote. This practice opens alternative routes that may alter our sense of the archive, introducing the contingent, the sensuous, and the subjective experience as paths into historical thinking. The potential of this approach is further explored by Rashna Wadia Richards's study of classical Hollywood cinema as a collection of open-ended, cinephilic moments. Inspired by Walter Benjamin's materialist, non-linear historiography, Richards approaches classical Hollywood's closed system through a network of cinephilic "flashes", moments that, rather than corroborating standard accounts of Hollywood history, perform as "fleeting images from the past [that] rupture the tedious narration of timeless truths" (2013: 20). The interruptions, incongruities and anomalies repressed by the classical narrative system yet intermittently visible in the body of the film make for a "network of uncanny coincidences" that reads transitional moments in Hollywood history (such as the passage from silent to sound) as open to contingency and variation.



Laura Mulvey's *Death 24 x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (2006) is perhaps the most decisive contribution in terms of a potential cinephilic historiography. Mulvey's notion of "delaying cinema" captures the continuum between the scholar's and the cinephile's attachment to the film as a material object, and between the fugitive image of classical cinephilia and the full availability (and manipulability) of the digital image in postmodern cinephilia. The desire to slow down or "freeze" the film in order to apprehend a particular moment is a typical form of fetishistic possession, most notably in relation to the iconic images of film stars. But this form of delaying cinema also allows the cinephilic gaze to look for clues of what cinema represses. In both cases, the material basis of the medium (be it the film strip, or the frame capture apprehended through the freeze-frame function on video or DVD) enables the "shifts of consciousness between temporalities" (2006: 184): the deferral of narrative movement makes the indexical trace of pro-filmic time emerge, with the attendant uncanny effects. Thus, Mulvey's close look at the frame in an early scene in *Imitation of Life* (1959, USA, Douglas Sirk) makes an anonymous African American actress in a walk-in role become visible for a second on the edge of the frame, in the periphery of the action centred on the (white) stars, Lana Turner and John Gavin. In this sequence, a brusque yet choreographed gesture by Turner accidentally spoils the snapshot of the anonymous black woman, occluding her presence in the *mise-en-scène*. This gesture is narratively unremarkable yet, when seen today, is tantalising with displaced meaning with regard to the off-screen context of racial segregation as well as the themes of racial relations and invisible black labour espoused by the film. Mulvey's illustration of the process of stopping the image, and putting it back in narrative context with a surplus of deferred meaning (2006: 151) is a powerful example of the affective import of the cinephiliac moment. Through the delaying of cinema, the alertness to the peripheral detail reveals an altogether visible *yet* dormant archive that yields unexpected returns through the filter of historical distance and the re-reading of favourite films.

Mulvey's emphasis on the material basis of cinema is richly informed by her own practice as an avant-garde filmmaker as well as a scholar (as noted in Grant 2013). Whereas Raymond Bellour (writing in 1975, just prior to the advent of video) calls cinema "the unattainable text", forever slipping through the fingers of the analyst, in 2003 Nicole Brenez states that "nothing clarifies an image like another image, nothing analyses a film better than another film" (2003: 23). This is what the increasingly consolidated field of the audiovisual essay, or "videographic criticism", sets up to do (Keathley and Mittell 2016).<sup>1</sup> A performative mode of writing about film *through film*, the audiovisual essay allows the cinephile simultaneously to "play with a source text as a way to think about it, and about her interaction with it, and to signal its value to her" (Grant and Keathley 2014), taking a step further towards the integration of cinephilic consumption and production. The audiovisual essay remediates both the historical undercurrent of film criticism drawn to the fragment and the peripheral detail, and the formal strategies of delay in cinema, inscribing the author's fascination with a particular film moment through a set of critical questions. By incorporating the object itself through different forms of reframing (slowing down a gesture, or re-cutting or captioning a particular scene to elaborate on a point of style or performance) the audiovisual essay is by its very nature an experimental, open-ended form that draws on both explanatory and poetic modes of exegesis (Keathley 2011: 180–182), ultimately approaching the (*readerly*) film object in the spirit of Barthes's *writerly* text (self-reflective, inconclusive and open-ended). To extend the Barthesian analogy further, we could argue with Grant (2013) that the experimental practice of videographic criticism productively incorporates the subjectivity and pleasure (*jouissance*) historically repressed with the turn from cinephilia to politics, *while* reclaiming *both* cinephilia *and* politics in our encounters with the film object.

The rise of videographic Film Studies echoes contemporary art's use of film. Installation pieces such as Douglas Gordon's *24-Hour Psycho* (1993) or Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010)

play on the tension between the fragment and the work, the medium and the institution, popular and avant-garde film: *24-Hour Psycho*—remarked by Mulvey as a creative instance of delaying cinema—“stretches” Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960) to a twenty-four hour projection by slowing down the electronic image, whereas *The Clock* puts together hundreds of film clips displaying ticking clocks into a single supercut that lasts twenty-four hours. Represented time and screening time become (almost) perfectly aligned: a complete day is required for one viewing of the entire piece. The incorporation of film in contemporary installations fetishises and commemorates cinema while deconstructing the illusion of presence and plenitude connoted by the original work (Balsom 2013: 30). Contemporary art thus performs as another form of cinephilic production, setting up a dialogue with remembered films that accentuates the import of time in the spectator’s cinephilic experiences and attachments.

### Conclusion

In the context of a globalised film culture and the transition to the digital medium, cinephilia has resurfaced with a renewed urgency arising from a certain nostalgia for the materiality of cinema and the rituals of film love. Films themselves are also actively joining in the process of memorialisation and historicism, as the cinema of the twenty-first century embarks on the re-telling of its twentieth-century history. Mainstream fictions such as *Hugo* (2011, USA, Martin Scorsese), *The Artist* (2011, France, Michel Hazanavicius) or *Blancanieves* (Snow White, 2012, Spain, Pablo Berger) lovingly recreate a film historical imaginary (Gorfinkel 2005), to different effects: celebrating the technological aspects of cinema put at the service of the imagination, dramatising the crises and rebirths of the medium, or fusing iconographies and styles. These cinephilic films are not so much concerned with the trappings of history, as with a specific spectatorial experience belonging to film history—experience that they re-inflect through a contemporary film-literate language (Sperb 2016: 52–70). Films, as Lalitha Gopalan puts it with regard to the self-reflexive plots in popular Indian cinema, can “‘read’ our desire as much as we can marshal our critical machinery to read their creations” (2002: 2). Films can be the subject, as well as the object, of cinephilia.

This chapter has looked at the various facets of world cinephilia: as an attachment to film mediated by temporal displacement and technological change, as a social practice bringing together ever widening communities, within and outside the traditional centres of film culture, and as a discourse that shifts the boundaries between specialised and amateur practice, and produces a set of tools for rethinking cinema’s past and future. The persistence of cinephilia spells its truly global reach as an ongoing dialogue across generations of cinema lovers.

### Note

- 1 There already exist a number of curated academic spaces dedicated to the audiovisual essay, the most prominent of which is the *Cinema Journal*-endorsed online journal *[in]Transition* (<http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition>).

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