Performative Cinema and Its Techniques

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Abstract

The aim of this paper presentation is to analyze in-depth the transition and transformation of performance art into the world of cinema, creating the notion of performative cinema – a notion that is very present in today`s cinematic language, however not enough recognized as a movement in itself. The core mantra of performative cinema is the involvement of the spectator – both the emancipation of the viewer in an age of consumerist blockbusters and his awakening into a certain state of mind (in some cases, performative cinema can even lead towards transcendental meditation). The paper will briefly follow the origins of performative cinema and its techniques, with roots in the works of Alejandro Jodorowsky, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Pere Portabella, while reaching into the present through works of film auteurs like Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Yorgos Lanthimos. The presentation will focus to unveil and analyze the approaches of performative cinema, conveying how it works as a piece of performance art in itself – and how its relay into cinema can be direct, with a dadaesque influence through a transgressive political message (`Holy Motors` by Leos Carax representing an example), or more subtle – through nuances and refined directorial interventions (Weerasethakul`s `Memoria`). The systematic analysis of these movies as core examples of performative cinema means an enterprise into both the narrative elements and the visual identity of the films, with the purpose of classifying a genre that has remained unknown for too long, deserving the treatment of a cinematic wave in itself.

Keywords: Performative cinema, Metadiscourse, `Performative` reality, Transcendental stage, Metaconsciousness.

Introduction

Cinema is both a young and youthful art form – it has existed for almost 130 years and has been constantly evolving and transforming, always trying to maintain its `freshness` and unique approach of storytelling. Its profoundly visual character intertwines with the semantics of literature and theatre, giving birth to a language that speaks in an affective manner to the spectator – it always shows, and seldom tells. As such, cinema has the ability to grab a moment from the natural flow of time and keep it forever locked in frame. As the great Andrei Tarkovsky puts it, when one makes a film, it is as if one `sculpts in time` (Tarkovsky 2015, p. 79), carving a new reality of story that remains long after the people who have made it have disappeared. One can even say that the flow of time itself becomes manipulated and the ephemeral nature of one`s existence becomes

eternal. As such, there arises a profoundly emotional and perceptual relationship between the film, this viewable document of a past age, and its spectator through the strength of images and rhythm alone.

Throughout its evolution, cinema has had different waves and tendencies – ranging from the desire to tell stories in a `realist` tone (for example the well-known Italian Neorealism and the British `Kitchen Sink` Realism that focused deeply on the working class social and economic issues happening after the Second World War), to more experimental and surrealist approaches of storytelling, that can be traced back to the Dadaists` and French Impressionists` influence of the 1920s. These promoters of the *avant-garde* tried to fully convey the purely visual nature of cinema through impression, abandoning traditional storytelling techniques while trying to showcase a type of *cinéma pur* (from French, meaning `pure cinema`), as it has been called by critics. Germaine Dulac, Abel Gance, Man Ray, Viking Eggeling, Hans Richter, are just some of the forerunners of surrealism that tried to create films that would partially or totally try to avoid reason and the reasoning of a story, instead focusing on the subconscious. Through this attempt at the connection to one`s subconscious using only pure impression, there arises a raw and unfiltered relationship between filmmaker and spectator – just like a raw, unfiltered relationship exists between performers who are involved in a piece of performance art and their audience, who are watching them in real time.

This brings us to the main enterprise of this article. Performance art has been around for centuries – originating from the Ancient Greek theatre, to the travelling circus, to the Commedia dell`arte of the Renaissance and ultimately to its contemporary form that started to shape during – evidently – the Dadaist movement of the 1920s. From that moment on, performance art gained its purely antithetical nature and started to expand in multiple ways – from live installations (like Marcel Duchamp`s `Fountain`) to live representations, focusing mainly on bodily movement and the artists` own personality imbuing the piece of performance (the likes of Georgia O`Keefe, Andy Warhol, later on Marina Abramovic that have experimented greatly with the many possibilities of performance). Their voices, their personalities, are sewn into the very fabric of the piece of performance, so that the spectator would experience a direct connection to the artist`s person.

In cinema, the voice of the artist, which in the case of an *auteur* film is the director-screenwriter, usually does not relay directly to its public, as the film `speaks` in its own voice when being presented to an audience. However, after witnessing what the Impressionists, Dadaists and Surrealists of the Silent Film Era tried to convey to the film genre – an alternative to traditional,

rational storytelling – one can notice that, slowly but gradually, this direct relationship between the director and his audience started to take shape and evolve. The influence of performance art, which shaped itself almost at the same time with the first truly experimental films (worth mentioning are Man Ray`s *Le Retour à la Raison / Return to Reason* from 1923, René Clair`s *Entr`acte* from 1924, Hans Richter`s *Vormittagsspuck / Ghosts Before Breakfast* from 1928 and Germaine Dulac`s *La coquille et le clergyman / The Seashell and the Clergyman* from 1928), started to gain territory in the cinematic field. Ultimately, it formed a hybrid, as of yet uncategorized wave that has been, for more than 30 years, been influencing the development of filmmaking techniques and dramaturgy. It is a craft and style that performs directly for the spectator on the `silver screen`, sculpting directly in time – as such, it can only be called performative cinema.

Figure 1 – Screenshot from *Ghosts Before Breakfast* (1928), directed by Hans Richter: the flying hats, the main characters of the movie

Performative Cinema`s Origins and the Relationship Between the Denotative and the Connotative Concepts

The gradual evolution of performative cinema has been taking place for several decades. After the surrealists made the transition to moving pictures with sound in the 1930s, multiple new experimental pathways lied ahead for filmmakers. There are so many examples of these in the filmography of the entire world, that it is difficult to pinpoint just a few that could help in painting a clearer picture of what performative cinema is today. However, among the first important *auteurs* that have visible elements of performance intertwined in the dramaturgy of their films are Pier Paolo Pasolini and Alejandro Jodorowsky.

What is remarkable in both directors` movies is the mixing and reinterpretation of the denotative and connotative concepts of the image. Through a manipulation of the narrative and visual tropes of their respective fashions, they manage to no longer discern the denotative – what the image means first hand – from the connotative – the suggestion of the image`s meaning. This way, an alternate performative reality is born within the very own reality of the movie – a `metaverse` that breaks through the original filmic convention, creating a new one.

Pasolini, after debuting in a Neorealist fashion with *Accattone* in 1961, proceeds to tackle historical events in a unique style that evolves with every movie, starting with *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964, in original in Italian *Il vangelo secondo Matteo*). This interpretation of the life of Jesus Christ remains one of the most successful from the many attempts made, due to its simplicity and truthful style of filmmaking, as Pasolini maintains the Neorealist style of filming in real locations, with nonprofessional actors. However, he takes it a step further with *Oedipus Rex* (1967, in original *Edipo re*), where we can first discern traces of performative elements especially in the costumes of the characters and in the soundtrack of the movie. The characters look at times ridiculous, dressed in overly large costumes that represent a collage of different cultures` influences, from Sumerian to Aztec and Oriental. The soundtrack is composed mainly from Romanian and Indonesian folklore songs. As such, Pasolini`s adaptation of Aeschylus` play becomes completely antithetic, while imagining a new and unique world that works on its own, freeing itself from the shackles of historical accuracy. What `should` be in a certain way…isn`t, and in this manner, it represents a daring provocation and alternative to the classical period pieces of the time. The denotative meaning, the information that is shown, is challenged to mean the opposite of what it should ordinarily mean. It is something Pasolini continuously pursues in his later films, sometimes with more caution (like in *Medea* from 1969 or *The Decameron* from 1971), and sometimes completely unhinged (like in *The Canterbury Tales* from 1972 and, quite extremely, in *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* from 1975). This conscious choice of an alternative reality of filmmaking becomes purely performative due to this continuous provocation of the norms that established him as a daring and unconventional film author.

Figure 2 – Screenshot from *Oedipus Rex* (1967), directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini (shown here in a cameo).
Photo source: https://www.sabzian.be/film/edipo-re

The other example of a film *auteur* that birthed the origins of performative cinema is Alejandro Jodorowsky, who demonstrates with both the acid western *El Topo* (1970) and the psychedelic masterpiece *The Holy*

Mountain (1973) the thesis of imagistic polysemy and the limitless possibilities of the cinematic language to break the barriers of perception. In his films, the denotative sense is embedded in the connotative, and what emerges from this union are both a *metareality* and a *metaconsciousness*, i.e. the development of human consciousness to a transcendental stage, beyond one's mere subjective perception. Taking both films as examples, we see that the narrative thread of the story is, paradoxically enough, a classic *bildungsroman*, peppered with personal touches of poetic deconstructivism. The frog sequence in *The Holy Mountain* is a prime example of this.

Today, such a sequence could no longer be made due to the advancement of laws regarding ethical constraints on animal rights, as the frogs dressed as Aztecs and conquistadors from the `Great Toad and Chameleon Circus` at the beginning of the film were actually killed for the film. However, the real cruelty (incidentally, typical of both South American literature and cinema, a fact which is explicable by the brutal cycle of violence and bloody history of the countries making up this continent) captured by Jodorowsky's camera serves to `explode` the relationship between the denotative sense and the connotative. Seeing the images presented, we as viewers say to ourselves: "Here are some reptiles dressed as Aztecs, and others dressed as Spanish conquistadors, drowned in a bloodbath, and then blown up along with their entire miniature fairground world". The metaphorical interpretation could be: "Here is a fierce critique of colonialism and historical slaughter carried out under the guise of civilization, in the aftermath of which nothing remains but death, destruction and depravity". Through this reptilian `explosion`, the relationship between the very concepts of denotative and connotative is shattered. The key to understanding the sequence remains, de facto and de jure, uncertain, up to one's own discretion, for cinema must, in this vision, be the enemy of the explicit, and exist in itself as a work of art. In order to conform to convention, all we can do is appeal to the same meta-reality that Jodorowsky assiduously pursues in this film, and look beyond symbols and metaphors (beyond constructivism, that is), and appreciate the entire polysemantic capacity of the visual language without trying to "dissect" it in search of some tangible answer.
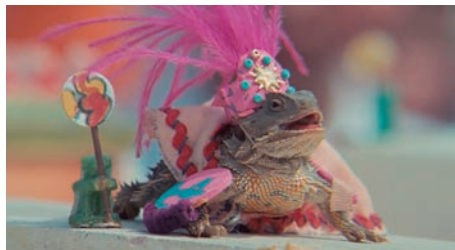

Figure 3 – Screenshot from *The Holy Mountain* (1973), directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky. A toad in Aztec costume.

The frog massacre sequence is emblematic and representative of Jodorowsky's universe, especially because it has no dramatic impact on the main plot. The story of `The Holy Mountain` is about the quest for immortality by seven representatives of the seven planets of the solar system (one being the not-so-subtle figure of Christ), led by the Alchemist, played by Jodorowsky himself. The fairy-tale structure and sci-fi elements help create a separate reality to the film, in which, in Hollywood terms, the viewer is "immersed", thus escaping their own reality and fulfilling the story's primary purpose. And therein lie a plethora of tropes that would shape performative cinema in the years to come – challenging the traditional way of filmmaking, provoking the viewer in an antithetic (and at times shocking) manner, employing a *metareality* within the reality of the story, breaking narrative rules while actually following a clear, *bildungsroman*-type of dramaturgy. Sometimes, there is even a direct statement present, from the director to the viewer, through the breaking of the fourth wall.

In this sense, Jodorowsky's monologue at the end of the film is the ultimate argument: `If we have not obtained immortality, at least we have obtained reality. We began in a fairytale and we came to life! But is this life reality? No. It is a film. Zoom back camera! We are images, dreams, photographs. We must not stay here! Prisoners! We shall break the illusion. This is Maya. Goodbye to the Holy Mountain! Real life awaits us.` (direct transcript from *The Holy Mountain*, 1973). Realities are intertwined and the innate existence of the reality of the moving picture is challenged. The film's multiple possible meanings stop here, at the end, where the film is revealed to be a film, and not a reality, by its own author. Further on, the viewer is left to fend for himself, emboldened to break out of the false existence in which he has been held captive for 114 minutes. And Jodorowsky achieves this sudden breakthrough by simultaneously assuming the roles of actor and director before the viewer's eyes, giving the camera operator the cue to perform the zoom out that reveals the rest of the crew beyond the initial confines of the frame. The filmic illusion is broken, the round table at which the characters sit is pushed aside, and the collaborators and technicians from the film crew become characters themselves. We can also look at it the other way around, that the characters are the actors paid to appear on screen alongside the crew, and the meta-reality of *The Holy Mountain* has become that very faithful reproduction of reality it denies, and as such the paradoxes are intertwining. Whichever the interpretation one wishes to bestow upon the film, these directorial marks are definitely performative, as they are meant to challenge the viewers up close and personal, with no regard to their `wellbeing`. It performs for the viewers in order to draw them in the very performative reality it has built. It does so not only through narrative elements, but through the very emotions and cognitive areas instilled in the viewer that are the foundation of this whole discussion. Never mind the concepts themselves, which are clear, definable, and underlie abstraction. It is about

the exchange of emotions and feelings, about those indefinable and ineffable feelings that arise when an artist relates to the public through his work of art. The story unfolds on the projection screen, and all that matters in that moment, in the present of the cinema, are the feelings that are born, grow and, why not, even die within us, in the spectators.

Figure 4 – Screenshot from *The Holy Mountain* (1973), directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky. The ending of the film and the breaking of the fourth wall.

Jodorowsky`s use of performance dramaturgy in his movies comes from his own background as a performance artist within the *movement panique* (*Panic Movement*), an art collective that concentrated on a `chaotic` form of performance art that was meant to be a response to the classical approach of surrealism. Jodorowsky`s films are imbued with moments of performance, as the two examples given above are just some of the many memorable sequences that compose his movies, from *El Topo* to *Santa Sangre* (1989).

It becomes quite noticeable that both Pasolini and Jodorowsky implemented performative elements in their filmography in order to create new worlds and universes that are not subdued by the rules of the known universe. They advanced through innovative means the different forms of storytelling that would be taken as an inspiration by their successors, emancipating the spectators in this process. They proved that cinema works in many, mysterious ways in relating to both the *Zeitgeist*, and the subconscious understanding of a story unfolding on the silver screen.

Performative Cinema – Direct and Indirect Expressions and Impressions

After understanding the intertwining of the denotative with the connotative in Pasolini`s and especially Jodorowsky`s work, we should jump next into the present, regretfully omitting many outstanding film *auteurs* that have also contributed tremendously not only to the development of performative cinema, but to the evolution of movies as we know them today. Federico Fellini, Luis Buñuel, Sergei Parajanov, Emir Kusturica, David Lynch – they and so many others deserve entire papers and volumes dedicated to their work and influence on the cinematic style worldwide, but there only is so much space in one article. And

the focus of these upcoming paragraphs should be on the present-day tendencies, and how the techniques of performative cinema have advanced and continue to transform, while drawing an important amount of influence from the above-mentioned predecessors.

We can identify a great deal of performative tendencies in the cinema of the present. And there are two directions to notice when analyzing the movies that are unofficially shaping this wave. Let us take Leos Carax`s *Holy Motors* (2012) as a first example. Adhering to a contemporary form of surrealism, *Holy Motors* has at its center an actor (a *tour de force* for Denis Lavant) playing nine different roles throughout the day, from Monsieur Merde (a sort of grotesque leprechaun) kidnapping a model from a graveyard, to a dying man in a hotel room, where we see that the woman he's interacting with is also an actress playing the same type of roles after their willingly melodramatic sequence ends. Even though there is no audience to witness their act, excepting the real audience of the movie, they fulfill their performance anyway. The film's script is made up of such separate sequences of performance that aim to stir up emotions and impressions as virulently as possible, wrapped around the convention of the main character's journey in the limousine, from one performance act to another. In these representations, the main character shows tremendous dedication, immersing himself completely in the characters he is playing up to absurd peaks. At the end, after the actor has fulfilled all of his `appointments`, the limousine is driven to a garage, where it is parked in the company of other limousines. There, in the absence of human beings, the car starts to converse with the other limousines about their fate and approaching extinction.

In this manner, the transposition of performance happens completely unfiltered, in a raw and experimental form that respects the very essence of performance art, in that it builds an intimate relationship with the viewer. *Holy Motors* engages the viewer emotionally – whether positively or negatively – and adopts, evidently, a metadiscourse about its own narration and performative elements. At the same time, the film criticizes itself and the clichés it satirizes (for example, the extreme method acting of some thespians and the audience`s desire for immersivity) while adopting a direct way of imbuing performance art into its story threads – something we can also notice in Pere Portabella`s *Warsaw Bridge* (1989, in original in Spanish *Pont de Varsòvia*), an earlier example of performance vignettes intertwined in the main story thread. What matters, in this type of movies, is not the main journey of its characters, but the separate, sometimes completely independent sequences that willingly choose not to contribute to the advancement of the plot, but rather exist by themselves within a larger movie.
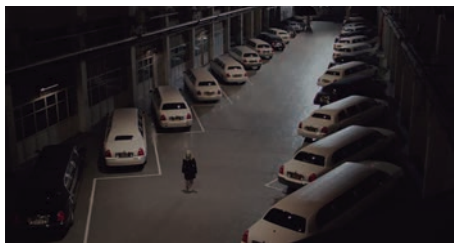
Figure 5 – Screenshot from *Holy Motors* (2012), directed by Leos Carax. The ending of the film, before the `existential crisis` of the limousines.

This approach of a direct form of performative cinema is continued by Leos Carax in *Annette* (2021), and it is also employed by Ruben Östlund in his satirical Palme d`Or winner *The Square* (2017). Here, within the context of an art museum, multiple story threads emerge and ramify, surrounding the personal and professional life of the museum`s curator while trying to set up a controversial exhibit (the eponymous square). The context of a modern art gallery represents a fertile area for the Swedish director to implement elements of performance that, just like in the case of *Holy Motors*, work as social, economic and political critiques of modern-day society and of the tendencies of contemporary art. The performances are taken too far, as is the example of the ape-man performance in the context of a high-class dinner, where people start getting hurt by the impersonator of a gorilla. All of this in the context of social and ethnic tensions that arise due to the desire of advertising agencies to make everything controversial and shocking, so that it drains a strong reaction from the public. There is plenty of metadiscourse about what something is and what it can mean – again, another take on the relationship between the denotative and connotative meanings, but in a modern-day society where the radical media manipulates freedom of speech and turns it into an agenda. In this case, everything needs to be `transgressive` in order to be `relevant` and impactful. *The Square* toys with these tendencies and cleverly leaves many possible interpretations for the spectator to follow, giving multiple connotations to elements that perform for both the audience in the movie, and for the audience watching the movie. Östlund continues this style in his recent *Triangle of Sadness* (2022), but with much fewer elements that are inspired by performance art, and in some ways not as challenging as *The Square*.

The second direction of present-day performative cinema lies in a more subtle approach, which is not as direct as the first one, but rather sewn into the essence of the story that the authors are telling through their movie. This means that the performative elements are not as `*in your face*` as in the case of the aforementioned examples. For this category, three extremely important film directors are emblematic, as they are not limited to being categorized as `performative directors`. Rather, they are *auteurs* who use performative elements in their unique style and approaches in order to birth a new world, a universe of its own rules happening within the limits of `sculpted time` that cannot be reproduced by anyone else. However, out of these three directors – Lars von Trier (his most `performative` film being *Dogville* from 2003), Yorgos Lanthimos (with *The Alps / Alpeis* from 2011) and Apichatpong Weerasethakul – we shall dedicate this last part of the article only to the latter. There have already been too many examples cited above that risk making this paper too thick and intricate. Both von Trier and Lanthimos are directors with such a vast and complex creative universe, that each of them deserves separate analyses. Maybe with other occasions, in different articles.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul is notable for the uniqueness of his cinematic language and his deeply sensory style, influenced both by Thai culture and the spiritual religions of the East (Animism, Hinduism and Buddhism) and by the magical realism of South American writers, like Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges. He is also a celebrated artist of live installations taking place in art exhibitions, and as such has a close connection to and understanding of performance art and its techniques.

Bearing these in mind, one feels that the effect when watching either *Tropical Malady* (2004, in Thai original *Sud Pralad*), *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010, in Thai original *Loong Boonmee raleuk chat*), *Memoria* (2021) or any of Weerasethakul`s feature or short films (57 in total to date) is purely hypnotic. From the slow pace of the action unfolding in the frame to the alienating natural sound effects (the chirping of crickets is recurrent throughout all of his films) and the hermetic dialogue often focused on mundane details, the entire directorial stylistics are represented by impression. It's as much about the impression of affection, cultivated by the French impressionists, as it is about the empirical impression elicited in the viewer by the sense that certain elements in the frame are out of place or that certain characters are not as they were before. The lack of clear identity, the deduplication, the sudden disappearance of palpable elements – all these represent the mythicization of the concrete, the main theme of Apichatpong Weerasethakul's filmography.

Once more, just like in Jodorowsky`s case, the human consciousness develops into a transcendental stage through an almost transcendental meditation imbued by Weerasethakul`s cinematic style. His films truly represent the culmination of performative cinema, as every element is so refined, carefully crafted and deeply, personally assumed, that nothing is flabbergasting to the viewer, however absurd some narrative `switches` can be. The immersion of the spectators is complete, with poetic undertones that lend a unique feeling to that moment when one watches a film by Apichatpong Weerasethakul (who modestly prefers the nickname `Joe`, due to his long and difficult to pronounce name by non-Thai persons). The metareality of his films is a performative reality that has nothing to do with direct performative elements, but with rather the very spirit of performativity that `drenches` itself in the essence of the story. One does not exist without the other. The connotations of the denotative elements become almost superfluous,

as a rational understanding of all the metaphors and symbolical poetry that constitutes the simplicity of the characters` actions becomes unnecessary. Subconscious feelings matter so much more than the thorough rationalizing of his films. The pure feelings one has, the trance that one can enter (if one so desires, of course) when watching, for example, *Memoria*, is purely immersive without trying to be so.

Memoria centers on Jessica (played by versatile actress Tilda Swinton), a Scottish-born woman visiting her sick sister in Bogotá, who wakes up one night hearing a strange noise. Over the course of the film, she searches for the origins of the sound, making her way to the Colombian forests, where she learns to reconnect with her own memories, recognizing and accepting the noise that sent her on her journey. The very impossibility of remembering facts and things as they happened represents the starting theme of the film. Jessica's sensibility and subjective perception are mirrored by the author's own, who for the first time is making a film outside of his native country, with an international cast and in an unknown land, which is thoroughly and empirically explored. From this point of view, Jessica is haunted by a lack of certainty about her own memories and, automatically, her own lack of identity – she remembers events that didn't happen, people that didn't exist (but that we, as viewers, have seen over the course of the film) and is constantly haunted by the mysterious sound she keeps hearing.

Figure 6 – Screenshot from *Memoria* (2021), directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul.

In the first part of the film, Jessica tries to reproduce in a studio, with the help of a young technician named Hernán (played by Juan Pablo Urrego), the sound that woke her up from sleep and that she constantly hears in completely different contexts. The two become friends and decide to travel together through the wilderness of the Amazon, but at some point Hernán disappears. Jessica asks other people at the mixing studio for him, and she is told that no one by that name ever worked there. She then leaves Medellín and arrives in a remote mountain village, close to the Amazon jungle, where she meets a fish vendor (played by Elkin Díaz) who claims to remember absolutely everything (a clearly Borgesian character) – and who lives in seclusion, away from any possible news of the outside world. The man's name is also Hernán, and it is he who will help Jessica reconnect with her own memories. At the end, Jessica hears the strange sound once more, but this time it seems she finally assimilates it with a sense of recognition, only for a cloaked alien ship to then rise from the bushes (the obsessive sound actually represented the "exhaust" of the ship that failed to start), which leaves Earth's orbit without warning, leaving behind a circle of smoke that dissipates into the atmosphere.

The dramaturgy is minimalist, but very hard to put into any context. Every sequence has a purpose, every narrative detail facilitates the subsequent splicing of the next details. The jungle universe and the character Hernán are leitmotifs in Weerasethakul`s filmography, highlighting the same themes as in *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*: the theme of reincarnation, of fluid identity, the relationship between man and nature, the tenderness and incredible depth of real human contact. Moreover, it is precisely this tenderness, rendered with such finesse, that is captivating in its simplicity. Jessica's relationship with Hernán is non-verbal, what is said fades into moments of silence, when their connection seems to be rekindled. Jessica manages, holding Hernán's hand, to see his childhood memories and traumas and to believe that they belong to her – whether Jessica and Hernán are one and the same person, after all, can only be speculated upon and in fact it doesn't really matter. In the end, following their prolonged interaction, what matters is the sense of recognition, of closure, of reconciliation that we feel with Jessica (in the second part of the film, frame lengths average over ten minutes per sequence, as pauses play a pivotal role and the characters allow themselves to be engulfed in the space, be it urban or rural). We empathize with her completely, even if we do not perhaps understand clearly what the final narrative goal is.

In itself, the grandeur of the Amazon completely overwhelms the viewer on all sensory levels – from the sounds of monkeys in the trees to the chirping of crickets, the murmur of streams and the rustling of leaves. As such, the entire film reaches the point where it performs for the spectator, even though there are no literal scenes of performance embroidered in the narrative structure. This is why *Memoria* represents the culmination of the old idea of pure cinema promoted by the avant-garde currents of the Silent Film era. Technical experiments on a formal level are no longer intended to transcend the notions of classical drama, nor to arouse vehement reactions, but have finally come to be understood strictly for what they are: just another tool for the filmmaker to externalize his inner world. We are not dealing with art for art's sake, but with art for the sake of people, and the spiritual communion between them. The direct relationship between the viewer and the author is thus perfectly established, as the story is no longer about narration, but about feeling. Nothing is extra, yet no element is missing, and although the convention is obviously outside of the realistic, the film feels incredibly real.

Weerasethakul has managed to `polish` the style of including performance art into cinema, revealing the hidden gem that his forerunners sought to unearth to be a diamond that shows its qualities only to those willing

to look clearly upon it. It is not a diamond that shines or sparkles, but rather one that requires the attention and willfulness of the audience to show its true qualities. This is proven also by the projection of *Tropical Malady* at the Festival de Cannes in 2004 (a film that has two different parts that are linked by the same character), when, in the middle of the movie, the audience got up from the chairs to leave, thinking that the film had ended and another one had abruptly begun. It is noticeable that Weerasethakul has always, without really trying to do so, managed to draw the audience into his universe, unwillingly creating with this example a moment of performance that transpired into the real world. Thus, `sculpting` in both past and present.

Conclusion

In the process of empirically researching this article, I couldn`t find much information written directly on the notion of performative cinema, but rather on performativity related to philosophical and political elements that occur in movies like *Dogtooth* (2009, in original in Greek *Kynodontas*) or *Dogville* (Koutsourakis, 2012). I have tried to convey in this paper just a few of the many influences of performance art that have been implemented in cinematic dramaturgy for many decades now. Surely, there are so many other examples that deserve an even more thorough analysis. Yet the most important idea that concludes this thesis is that performative elements are extremely relevant and actual in today`s style of making movies. As mentioned in the introduction, cinema is continuously evolving and transforming its means of relaying an audiovisual story to the audience. Hybrid forms between documentary and fiction have started appearing, as the experimental type of cinema advances its techniques alongside the technology of our time.

Performative cinema has an innate experimental trait, while not necessarily being completely experimental. Its manifestations will continue to vary just like they have until now. One couldn`t initially believe that Pasolini, Jodorowsky and Weerasethakul would have too much in common. At a first glance, their stylistics are so different from one another. Yet, as shown above, they do actually share this common, continuous feat of strength: they achieve the new with daring stories told in an even more daring and deeply personal way. And it is quite certain that other filmmakers will follow in their footsteps, both knowingly and unknowingly contributing to the evolution of performative cinema in the years to come.

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Annette, 2021. Directed by Leos Carax. France: CG Cinema International. DVD.

Dogtooth (orig. *Kynodontas*), 2009. Directed by Yorgos Lanthimos. Greece: Boo Productions. DVD.

Dogville, 2003. Directed by Lars von Trier. Denmark: Filmek AB. Zoma Films. UK. Canal +. DVD.

Entr`acte, 1924. Directed by René Clair. France. DVD.

Holy Blood (orig. *Santa Sangre*), 1989. Directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky. Mexico: Produzioni Intersound. DVD.

Holy Motors, 2012. Directed by Leos Carax. France: Arte France Cinema. Wild Bunch. Pierre Grise Productions. DVD.

Ghosts Before Breakfast (orig. *Vormitagsspuck*), 1928. Directed by Hans Richter. Germany. DVD.

Medea, 1969. Directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini. Italy: San Marco. DVD.

Memoria, 2021. Directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul. Colombia: Kick the Machine. DVD.

Oedipus Rex (orig. *Edipo Re*), 1967. Directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini. Italy: Arco Film. DVD.

Return to Reason (orig. *Le Retour à la Raison*), 1923. Directed by Man Ray. France. DVD.

Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom (orig. *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*), 1975. Directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini. Italy: Produzioni Europee Associati. DVD.

The Canterbury Tales (orig. *I racconti di Canterbury*), 1972. Directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini. Italy: Produzioni Europee Associati. DVD.

The Decameron (orig. *Il Decameron*), 1971. Directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini. Italy: Produzioni Europee Associati. DVD.

The Gospel According to St. Matthew (orig. *Il vangelo secondo* Matteo), 1964. Directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini. Italy: Arco Film. DVD.

The Holy Mountain (orig. *La montaña sagrada*), 1973. Directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky. Mexico: ABKCO Films. Producciones Zohar. DVD.

The Mole (orig. *El Topo*), 1970. Directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky. Mexico: Producciones Panicas. DVD.

The Seashell and the Clergyman (orig. *La coquille et le clergyman*), 1928. Directed by Germaine Dulac. France. DVD.

The Square, 2017. Directed by Ruben Östlund. Sweden: Film i Väst. Blu-ray.

Triangle of Sadness, 2022. Directed by Ruben Östlund. Sweden: Imperative Entertainment. DVD.

Tropical Malady (orig. *Sud Pralad*), 2004. Directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul. Thailand: Kick the Machine. DVD

Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives (orig. *Loong Boonmee raleuk chat*), 2010. Directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul. Thailand: Kick the Machine. DVD.

Warsaw Bridge (orig. *Pont de Varsòvia*), 1989. Directed by Pere Portabella. Spain: Films 59. DVD.