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## FILM VS FINE ART

2023, THE YEAR OF THE CINEMA OF PERCEPTION, A CRITICAL OVERVIEW, 2.<sup>1</sup>

TODD HAYNES: *MAY, DECEMBER, 2023*

As the filtered light spreads across the butterfly's wings. Slowly the grid is assembled, the darkness of the web is transformed into signs. Metamorphosis in the cage. What does the caterpillar evolve into, what does the former sin become? I just saw the soft, unusual, filtered light, the lightness and randomness of the shot, and the fact that whoever made it knew what they were doing. This film is a phenomenally complex study of gravity and complexity itself – although I think I need to justify that claim.

I remember how difficult it was for me to reconcile the two basic theses of Kleist's ‚Marionettentheater‘ essay: the one about the puppet being more graceful than man because it is not limited by gravity: this thesis is about the primacy of art. And the other, that consciousness destroys the grace of man. And this is about original sin. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Julianne Moore, who plays a major role in the film, is called Gracie. And about what lies behind the fragile appearances, what kind of traumas, what is transformed into what, and whether we can access this content in general. Can we know the motives of another person, can we even know a person, can we understand an event? It is a search for the possibilities of art in a morally problematic case.

At the absolute climax of the film, during the greedy conversation that follows rapid lovemaking, Joe cries out in pain. It is the pain of lovers who believe for a moment that the other understands them in their unrepeatability. Can anything be understood in its uniqueness? Joe thinks Gracie is fragile, Elizabeth, the actress who plays Gracie, thinks the opposite. Who is right? Isn't all understanding a kind of generalisation? The film does not name a perpetrator or a victim. Is Elizabeth the predator who has tried to take on literally everything and everyone in this story for the sake of art, or the naive Gracie who wields power over Joe? Who is seducing whom? But do we get any closer to understanding Gracie as the film progresses? After all, we only see as much of her as the art allows. If Gracie herself has been abused, have we got the point, is everything round? And what if Gracie takes this hermeneutic relief back from us? Where does reality end and art begin in this story? Art is supposed to translate understanding into something unique and unrepeatability: when we see the snake of seduction in Elizabeth's hands

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at the end of the film, is this a true or the most clichéd interpretation of Gracie's act? Will Elizabeth reach art ,the adult way'? Or is art itself the original sin?

Todd Haynes, who interweaves melodramatic and comic elements with astonishing sensitivity, performs a light dance of butterflies around the film's gravitational centre, Joe. Joe reads the texts of the caterpillars. Joe is the butterfly in the cage of love. While interpretation, understanding of human life and art itself are at stake, everything is so colourful, delicate, soft, so light. And yet he, who can hardly express himself, who stutters and is awkward, is the only one with grace, he and not Gracie. Art as anti-gravity dance. The film does this as well as reflecting on the making of it, on the process itself. The magic dust of art is in the air, blurring our vision. The music has a mischievous, playful, impertinent life of its own: it erupts in a dramatic crescendo when a fridge opens, accompanying the most mundane scenes with sinister undertones, mockingly demonstrating its manipulative capacity as an artistic tool. One brilliant scene follows another, you don't know whether to cry or laugh when Joe, smoking his son's joint, almost falls off the roof, that truly antigravity place - or when he washes up in bed with a glass of water just to soothe and satisfy Gracie's irritable cruelty, and yes, she will cry at the end - oh, that one scene says it all about love and marriage.

I could go on for hours about the thousands of layers in the film, the thousands of subtle movements, the brilliant microrealism of the scenes. The most serious themes in the lightest, funniest, most playful performance - what is this if not the seduction inherent in art, the answer to Kleist's paradox: how can puppets dancing in the air be graceful if there is no art without awareness, consciousness, how can we achieve uniqueness in the abysmal detour of stereotypes and generalisations?

Just dance with butterflies.

#### WANG BING: *YOUTH (SPRING)*, 2023

Wang Bing, one of the greatest contemporary Chinese filmmakers, says that since he has grown older, life has suddenly thrown a light on him, and he now lives in that light. That you arrange your life for yourself, and he arranged it with curiosity. That he's a conventional filmmaker trying to get back to the roots of storytelling. That his films are not documentaries, but stories about people living their own lives. That his films carry this humanism and that he makes no concessions on this issue. That the making of the longer than 3 hours *Youth* began when the characters in his previous film moved to Zhili to work, and he followed them. That Zhili is a factory town, but unlike the big state-owned factory monstrosities, which are impossible to get into, Zhili is an intricate network of 18,000 independent textile enterprises employing some 300,000 young migrant workers. That he followed the life of 4 garment factories with 6 cameras to edit together 2600 hours of footage for the first episode of a planned trilogy. That, fortunately, the owners of these factories did not care that he was showing the world enough about how our cheap, fast fashion clothes are made, under what conditions, in what exploitative system of new forms of oppression. That 24 hours

a day for five years was not enough for him because he wanted to be everywhere, to follow his twenty-something heroes into the depths of their private life, if necessary, back to their families. The fact that his films have a loose, decentralized patchwork structure does not mean that he wanted to take a collective picture. That his characters, who are never actors, are important to him as individuals. That when the plot focuses on a single character, you feel like you're getting a 360-degree view of his life, but it's an illusion; there are all sorts of things you don't see, and this leads to a distortion of reality. That he takes a 'piecemeal' approach because he thinks that's the way things are dispersed and fragmented. That the bosses didn't care when he showed the clothes trampled on the floor, the rooms in the workers' hostels where they live in squalor, in bunk beds, often without a bathroom, washing machine or hot water.

And as we plunge into the cavalcade of thin, hungry, young bodies, we too somehow stop noticing all this. Although we feel that this life is hard, that it is hopeless, that it is crushing their youth. It is true that this is not the transcendence of *Til Madness*, that the cinematography is not as breathtakingly unique as it is there, among the aquarium-greens, ochres, and earth tones of a Chinese madhouse. The slums of Zhili are not as picturesque as the rabbit holes of Pedro Costa's Fontainhas, and Wang Bing seems to have no other ambition than to follow these young people, almost invisibly, into a crowded, claustrophobic, colourful maze of narrow corridors and even narrower rooms. But the spaces of oppression are soon filled with the laughter, the happiness, the bursting vitality of the young people. Music is playing, they're humming, their heads are covered with headphones, but they're constantly flirting and communicating. This is Wang Bing's eternal theme, the warm light of humanity in inhuman circumstances. Loves and friendships are forged, we slowly get to know them and as their gestures of love multiplied, my soul was filled with an unexpected lightness, a real euphoria, and as I watched the boys sewing at witching speed, which also means those familiar chaotic seams and dangling, loose threads, I suddenly had to stand up and caress my navy-blue Chinese hoodie with tiny orange flowers, on the rack, with a lining that looks absurdly like it has been made from the brown fake fur of skinned teddy bears.

### SOFIA COPPOLA: *PRISCILLA*, 2023

A woman's feet as she hesitantly steps forward, her fingernails painted a garish red, sinking with each step into a luxurious pink soft carpet that muffles all sound. The whole concept of the film is there in that first frame, and it was actually the best frame.

It's really hard to say a bad word about Sofia Coppola's direction. Another film that stands out for its visual sophistication. The job is done perfectly. It's true that somehow I didn't feel the weight of Elordi's Elvis, to express my feelings of lack in such a profane way, and well, Priscilla's whispering drove me crazy, I was already looking for heavy objects to throw against the screen, but this film had another protagonist, the milieu, and it proved to be a really tyrannical character: if this is

about repression, we're all going to be very quiet now, the milieu said sternly, and everything (everyone) stuck to it.

Sofia Coppola is the master of the milieu and mood, Elvis and Priscilla were just a pretext for it, the concept was the point, and unfortunately the concept, important and laudable as it is, turned out to be too predictable and somehow too thin, too didactic for me. It's true that I wrote a review immediately afterwards that was full of borderline stories of invisible and visible emotional abuse, so I had to throw it away in a hurry – so even if the film didn't get out of its rut, I was still flooded with memories and tears.

The strange thing is that among my traumatic stories was the hardest about how women can torture and shame men: an unexpected reaction I suppose, but I think Sofia would welcome it. Abuse is universal. So is the experience of liberation, which she captured so beautifully with Parton's 'I will always love you'. And how well she chose. At the time, Elvis would have loved to get this song from Dolly, but he didn't. Now has he finally got it. I can't think of a more beautiful liberation anthem. I will always love you – I want to write that on the tombstone of every relationship I have ever had.

I have come this far from the parable of the emotional abuse. And that was the point, wasn't it? I told you, I can't say a bad word.

#### ALICE ROHRWACHER: *LA CHIMERA*, 2023

Magic realism has never been my cup of tea, even in literature, but if you want a charming, light bedtime story, *La Chimera* is a good choice. The weirdo British archaeologist, neglected and grumpy in every way, a dowser with the ability to locate hidden treasures, a pale copy of Tarkovsky's *Stalker*, scouring industrial estates and derelict factory and cemetery yards for the realm of the dead with his magic wand and wand – continuing the Fellini tradition a little Kusturica-style – with his blandly cheerful gang of Italian grave robbers, fails to fall in love with the very bohemian, very colourfully dressed wannabe opera singer girl. Eventually he is swallowed up by an Etruscan tomb, a punishment from the local mafia, global capitalism and robbed ancestors, but it allows him to be reunited with his dead love, to whom he has remained faithful all this time.

In fact, it is the literally hidden thread of grief that gives this bohemian farce its touching depth. Alice Rohrwacher worked with a variety of film stock (35/16mm), and although the colours are too pretty, the story too charming, the homeless, dishevelled and sleepless archaeologist too lovable, there was one moment that made up for the somewhat sleepy narrative, helped only a little by Isabella Rossellini and the children who live hidden among the beautiful murals in the picturesque Italian villa. In this film, everything stays on the fabulous surface, even though the characters are searching in the depths.

Only at the end do we understand what and who the obsessed Englishman is looking for in the depths of the graves, why he is no longer bound by his worldly

love, and because of that one minute, when he grasps the red thread in the darkness and his expected death is touched by the past life of his dead love, it was worth staying awake – just to shed a few tears under the fluffy blanket and then fall into the blue sea of that day's dream.

### CÉLINE SONG: *PAST LIVES*, 2023

I always wanted to live in a house like this. White walls, white wooden floors, huge windows, big bright rooms opening onto the garden, flooded with glorious light. The buzzing of the garden and the curtain of sound woven from birdsong. A few wooden sunbeds, some chairs and a table in the wildflower-filled grass, the blue mountains on the horizon and the tinkling of wind chimes in the soft late-spring breeze.

I'm afraid that's about all I'll remember of *Past Lives* – the house, where Nora and Arthur met. What I can still resonate with is the Korean boy Hae Sung's quiet, deep, enduring love for Nora, which has lasted for decades. The Korean term 'in-yeon' means 'destiny or fate'. Nora, who was born in Korea but emigrated with her family from Seoul to New York when she was 12, explains the concept: „It's an in-yeon when two strangers pass each other on the street and their clothes accidentally touch, because it means there must have been something between them in their past lives.” It all sounds very nice. There are some more of these attractive sentences about the in-yeon, past-lives-connection is, for example with the bird resting on the branch. In fact, Nora uses this as some kind of ideology to cover the emotional inequality that the film allows us to see in this relationship. Hae Sung fell in love with Nora as a child, found her after 12 years, and for a few months they lived an intense long-distance relationship thanks to the Internet, which she broke off out of emotional convenience, because by then it was clear that they were not going to give up their lives in two distant parts of the world for each other. After another 8 years, Hae Sung visits Nora in New York, who is now living with Arthur. The only thing the film tells us about Nora is that she is pragmatic and ambitious. But we learn nothing about her life, her goals, her work, her family, her reasons for moving to New York, about immigrant's problems or her true feelings. At the end, Nora cries. Maybe she's a little sorry that she can't live all the possible lives. That is the whole content. The characters are completely undeveloped. The film flaunts its banality learned in the Hong Sangsoo school, but the dialogue completely lacks the dramatic accents of Sangsoo cinema and the turbulence that erupts in hysterical crescendos. Clichéd melancholic music plays throughout, but there's no real chemistry between the characters, just an infantile connection, and although the film is autobiographically inspired, it doesn't create any stakes of its own. Apart from a fleeting, wistful melancholy, we get nothing, just a mere skimming of the surface like if a bird's wing touches the water. The film works by popularising Hong Sangsoo's ascetic, bold in its extremes surface- aesthetic with a sweetly light depiction of a melancholy love triangle. Because nowadays we can easily connect to people who live far away from

us in space and time, often in another time zone, we all have a basic experience of the melancholy of the in-yeon. Attachments and affections are born where there is little chance of fulfilment, and this hurts everyone, as many feel that their own lives are more insignificant than they could have lived. But in this subtly sentimental pop-slow-cinema, it is precisely that thing is lost, the point to which slowing down and the surface-aesthetic should lead us. But here, slow cinema also means that we have time to look at the details, with much more emphasis on colour, sound and carefully constructed frames.

At one point I fell asleep during the film, and in my dream I returned to the bright white house filled with the emanation, the gravitational presence of someone, whom I once loved. A real drama could have unfolded out of the unfulfilled. But when I woke up, all I could hear were platitudes, and all I could see was Nora's slightly annoying, imperturbable face. And it was no consolation that the film was intended to work against the drama, because I got nothing instead. The characters ran out of material, of substance. In this Korean version of the *Before Sunset* movies, even the respectful, accepting interaction between the three characters, the deliberate banality of communication, has no real meaning beyond the message 'c'est la vie'. But it's not that *Past Lives* is such a bad film. Still, I remained a tourist in this New York and among these people, but the film itself gave the impression of a somewhat superficial city tour, with a somewhat papery-tasting romcom instead of a serious social or emotional analysis. Céline Song's debut work is charming, visually and conceptually unpretentious, somehow too thin and weightless film from A24's 'lovable arthouse cinema selection' that much more imitates depth and gravity rather than working it out.

#### WIM WENDERS: *PERFECT DAYS*, 2023

So sorry, but I think that Wim Wenders' new film *Perfect Days* is one of the biggest disappointments of 2023, despite its heartwarming story. It follows the life and barely variable daily routine of a happy, very happy Japanese toilet cleaner in Tokyo. The ageing man begins each day by looking up at the sky and smiling. Then he gets into his car and plays Wenders' favourite retro playlist from a cassette player, shamelessly consuming *House of Rising Sun*, Lou Reed's *Perfect Days* and Nina Simone's wonderful *Feeling Good* in the same film, to the sound of which he drives straight into a brilliant sunrise with the widest, happiest smile on his face in the film's final frames. He has reason to be happy, because the toilets in this part of Tokyo are extremely varied and hygienic (in the Sibuja district, the protagonist cleans toilets of internationally renowned architects, where guided tours are now being held because of the film), and he only has to clean two a day, the people are more friendly than not, and although the man's bedroom is bigger than my entire apartment, he still goes to the public bath in the early afternoon, then eats delicious Asian food at a fabulous diner, sits in parks and takes analogue black-and-white photos of people hugging trees and the sunlight streaming through the canopy. In his spare time, he

digs up little Japanese maple saplings from the base of large trees and transplants them at home, shaking the soil from their roots as carelessly as possible – the little seedlings are obviously for bonsai trees – and in the evenings he reads for hours on the ascetically hard mattress spread out on the floor.

The reviews of the film are invariably hymns to the joy of simple living. Hard to argue with them. Like *Godland* or *The Lighthouse*, this film is a fake: a misappropriation of the Asian, urban version of slow cinema, a saccharine, maudlin, involuntary imitation of the genre. But for those who recognise in the beautiful landscapes of *Godland*, the superb acting of *The Lighthouse* or the humanist message of *Perfect Days* something that has strong precedents in their visual memory and that they long for, it's very hard to say that it's all just an illusion, a beautifully photographed lie. Moreover, creators are driven by the same nostalgia when they unconsciously choose imitation over autonomous creation with its own stakes. It's a kind of mimicry. And it is very difficult to call a great director's swan song, intended as a final, happy yes to life, didactic and tasteless. Too bad that Wenders has chosen to convey his message in the most clichéd and unreflective way possible, using the topos of the ideal Asian man, capable of leading a simple and wise life (but listening to Western music!). This is a textbook example of Orientalism, which uses stereotypes to convey a not very complex mental hygienic message (the use of the main motif is revealing, an unconscious slip of tongue the toilet here, but preferably nice and clean toilet, manufactured for the pleasure of global capital, as befits a comfort cinema, the shit of existence is not in the picture). But the point is that you can't just want to make a film about the gift of life, there are some things you can't want or imitate. This should have happened spontaneously, against the gravity of the material – but this material is concentrated kitsch, one hundred percent kitsch, which has no gravity at all. The particularly poignant result of the film is that, in retrospect, it reveals Wenders' omnipresent tendency towards sentimentality; what once seemed like overflowing emotionality no longer seems so appealing from the perspective of this too-perfect *Perfect Days*.

#### HARMONY KORINE: *AGGRO DRIFT*, 2023

Another film that could easily be compared to Mannerist painting. Bronzino, Parmigianino, El Greco recycled the genres and iconography of their time, using a highly formalist toolkit. A decidedly non-naturalistic palette, in which the coolness or vividness of the colours, their positioning on a temperature scale, had symbolic significance, as did the unnatural alteration, stretching, distortion and rearrangement of the proportions of the figures into new rhythmic, often turbulent groupings, all proclaimed the power of art over reality. The analogy between contemporary film formalisms and Mannerist painting seems revelatory, at least from an epistemological point of view.

But Harmony Korine's *Aggro Drift*, stripped of its digital, AI-manipulated, thermal-camera colour orgy, is no different from an average assassin genre film, with

writhing strip dancers and mythicised scenes of violence counterpointed by simple verbal messages of love in the form of whispering voice-overs. Mannerist, ironic genre recycling, but with what added value? Korine has warmed up the spectacle of violence, aestheticized it, tamed it into a kind of adult animation, a colourful mythical tale, an intimate gamer trip – but is there any content, any meaning beyond the sheer pleasure of the form, which after a while always becomes redundant, empty, self-repeating?

It does say something about the changing culture of images, from video games to TikTok, but this sentence is nothing more than a statement or an affirmation. Harmony Korine must have had a great time as a naughty kid in the paintball arena. It's much easier to draw the line at the level of experience and taste than at the level of theory, and the example of Mannerism won't help much here, since there is perhaps no contemporary formalist phenomenon for which it doesn't offer an analogy, regardless of value or content. The vulnerable bodies subject to the deforming power of formalism, an ever stronger abstraction of suffering, a move away from naturalism will always remain powerful keywords, as will irony, but it's really just style over substance, which can easily get boring after 10 minutes. I mean, it seems to be all hocus-pocus, but there's something strangely impressive about this utterly nonsensical inner mumbling. The murmur of the dream-hungry soul. Whispering mischievously in the hot embrace of brilliant colours that it is all for love is a tricky game, but no more so than a childish prank that deserves a scolding rather than sweets.

#### MARTIN SCORSESE: *KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON*, 2023

This film was over the moment Leo di Caprio and Robert de Niro were cast in the lead roles, or the moment someone wrote the last word in the script, turning this attempt at historical reconstruction and confrontation into a jam between the two. Of course, it is also a big question whether these goals are sufficient for a good work of art. Scorsese himself felt that this was not so different from the not so glorious 'true crime' genre when he added that certain epilogue to the film. In fact, it was then that I realised how many good intentions had gone completely wrong in this aesthetic disaster. Because I can only see it as an aesthetic disaster: the exterior sets of the film look like a colourful, oversaturated HDR postcard collection and the interior shots look like from an underexposed digital restoration of *The Godfather*. And I say this with both anger and sadness, because I sense here an effort to do something different and contemporary in cinematography, something that addresses the fact that digital film lacks depth and is therefore de facto incapable of capturing not only spatial depth but also time. The 360 pans in the interiors were fantastic, the tentative little attempts at a more experimental effect, but this was to be done in an old-school Scorsese frame, with old-school acting, in the most traditional narrative way, full of white guilt but still stuck in Hollywood. The most memorable face is that of the actress who plays Mollie, Lily Gladstone, known from Kelly Reichardt's *Certain Woman*, but she had little to do here apart from the permanent, silent dying. Despite the more



than 40 Osage Indian descendants in the film, it was still built on the inner drama of the white duo, which, with Leo's babbling mumbling and de Niro's grotesque grandfather gangster profile, was not enough to carry a film of almost 4 hours, not to mention that this in itself contradicted the film's own stated intentions, that the Osage people will not just be secondary characters here. The internal contradiction could not be overcome, the figures lacked depth, and the ethical parabola gave only dubious possibilities for complex characterisation. As for the music, it was as if they couldn't decide whether to play it or not: it was quite distracting in places.

In the end, despite all its good intentions, the film became the same appropriation of the tragedy of the Osage people that Scorsese criticised in the film's final scene. White guilt in the leading role. I should have cut the film in half, because the pacing was so bad, but it still wouldn't have been any good. Scorsese had it all here, professional, tasteful cinematography, epic historical tableaux, period photographs, the usual psychologising approach and a really deep empathy for the victims - but he missed the point: that it's not enough to have a different point of view, you have to be able to change paradigms if you want to take on a task of this weight, of this gravity.

#### JONATHAN GLAZER: *THE ZONE OF INTEREST*, 2023

The biggest problem with Jonathan Glazer's Holocaust film is not, as many have said, that it is distancing, boring, too cautious or too conceptual. In fact, this adaptation of Hannah Arendt's thought is not overly intellectual: the film is not a further elaboration of the concept, but a simple illustration. Even the 'banality of evil' is taken too literally, or rather not at all, since Höss was much more actively involved in the daily life of the concentration camp than just sitting in a white linen suit after a few phone calls in a green and white set reminiscent of Lanthimos' *Dogtooth*. We don't have enough sources, no concrete information about the real Hedwig beyond a few written anecdotes - but this isn't a historical reconstruction, despite what Glazer would have us believe. Its elliptical structure, which also opens the film up to ASMR dimensions and the cinema of the senses, makes it seem both highly effective and apparently novel, although no element of the film is original, all its seemingly experimental solutions are based on concrete antecedents, expressed in euphemistic terms. But even that wouldn't be so bad, because what Glazer touches, he takes and immediately translates into pop, as he did with Grandrieux's *Sombre* or with *White Epilepsy* in the forest scene of *Under the Skin*, and this also means a kind of mediation. In *The Zone of Interest*, the most innovative sequence of images, in which the figure of a girl turns into a negative, imitating an infrared camera, in secretly hiding fruit for the prisoners along the wall, is very similar to Lois Patiño's *Night Without Distance*, which deals with the secret crossing of borders in a political dimension - but another analogy throws a rather embarrassing light on the real problems with Glazer's film.

The film's papier-mâché characters, already didactically reduced to banal traits (Hedwig, for example, is deliberately played as „ridiculous” by Huller), are stripped

of their depth and often decapitated by the frame. We have already seen this solution in Lucrecia Martel's film *Zama*, one of the most interesting representatives of postcolonial cinema, which uses a unique framing technique. Bodies made into torsos, especially headless ones, are a sign of dehumanisation, of objectification; in *Zama*, for example, we often see animals as torsos. It is very telling that Glazer presents the perpetrators in this way in his film. The problem with Glazer's popular picture book is not just that he seems to know nothing about philosophical developments after Arendt. A much bigger problem is what one enthusiastic critic said, unwittingly revealing the main flaw: „Instead of showing fascination even as a criticism of the central characters, Glazer renders the fascists as flat, dull objects”. Flat, dull objects. And, yes, that telling line comes from Glazer himself, who declared: „These characters have no faces. There's no conscience, there's no redemption, there's no salvation, there's nothing. They're flat. They're a flat line.” This is very similar to what the Nazis did to the Jews when they treated them as mere objects, giving them numbers instead of names. „And I remember making a sketch of a pair of shoes and a pile of vomit. There was a pile of vomit on the bottom of the shoes, and I thought, „Well, that's him,“” Glazer added. The cameras in the rooms evoke the gaze of a prison guard in the Foucauldian sense, used, as Glazer himself said, to observe the Nazis as „bugs”. Now, more than half a century after Arendt, there is a cinema that imagines Nazis as blunt objects or piles of vomit or bugs. I think this is a serious step backwards.

The fact that the film treats the Nazis in the same way that the Nazis treated the Jews does not bring us any closer to the difficult task of thinking about the subject. This time Glazer's ‚pop magic’ is exposed as an intellectual deficiency. In all Glazer's films there is a void between the contours that he never manages to fill with real content. In a good case, he invites you to fill it with your imagination. He usually works with a concrete visualisation of a metaphor rather than the other way around, which is quite telling. Just as *Birth* comes perilously close to Shyamalan's *Sixth Sense*, the eerie, scream-filled concept of *The Zone of Interest* comes frighteningly close to *The Village*, set behind a mythical wall, in its transformation of metaphor into concrete imagery. The fact that Höss is not even allowed to vomit in the film is a vulgar revenge. It suggests that these are not people, they don't even care about their children, one-dimensional beings embedded in the everyday pursuit of profit or power. It is misleading that the film is supposed to focus on the ‚human, everyday’ nature of the characters. In fact, their human qualities, Höss's love of horses, etc. are carefully measured attributes for a didactic concept. We see no real feelings, dilemmas or thoughts, and this is underlined by the cold formalism of the film, which misses the point that we are all human, on both sides of the wall.

The film's much-lauded final scene, which banalises the basic idea of Sergei Loznitsa's *Austerlitz*, is a kind of obligatory didactic appendix on historical dimensions and becomes a repository in which a film is unwittingly complicit - but this should not be the case if the showcase were filled not with mere representations but with attempts at reflection and reinterpretation. Glazer's film is the *Schindler's List*

of our time. What we can admire is that the art of cinema is slowly learning to abandon mere storytelling, narrative, and perhaps we will still be alive when A24 conquers Hollywood. Unfortunately, this does not mean that art has replaced the industrial production of spectacle. The issue is much more complicated.

