

On Length: A Short History of Long Cinema¹

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“The length of a film should be directly related to the endurance of the human bladder”: so goes one of Hitchcock’s most famous quotes. Characteristically tongue-in-cheek, it is also instructive in its emphasis on the forcefully temporal properties of the film medium. Yet human bladders and the length of films vary widely in terms of the time they take to endure in the former case and how long they take to unfold in the latter. And while both common sense and Hitchcock’s oeuvre may tell us that ninety-plus-minutes is usually the average time that films and bladders may coincide in their temporal workings, the question of what constitutes a standard film length is often defined in rather vague terms.

Take this definition from the “feature-length” entry, in the *Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies*: “Running times of between 65 and 120 minutes were common for studio-produced films around the world from the 1920s to the 1950s, and this is still regarded as the standard length for feature films” (Kuhn & Westwell 2012, 155). Whereas it would be logistically impossible and perhaps pointless to arrive at a more precise figure in terms of how long the average film usually lasts, it is worth noting that throughout film history the question of running time in the cinema has often been relegated to the margins. While a number of publications over the last decade or so have attempted to examine cinematic time from a wide variety of theoretical perspectives (see, for example, Biro 2008; Ma 2010; McGowan 2010; Mroz 2013; Lim 2014; de Luca & Barradas Jorge 2016; Carruthers 2016), filmic length still awaits its place in this growing literature. In fact, it is telling that one of the most popular methods of qualifying the pace of a film in recent decades, namely average shot length (ASL), uses length solely as a means for determining the way time is modulated within the film, not in order to assess length per se, or the wider questions of what constitutes a long or a short film.

Of course, as with any aspect of the experience of time in the cinema, the question of when a film becomes ‘long’ is necessarily subjective. That said, as Todd McGowan notes, running time is widely employed in film criticism “as a means of evaluation,” with the assessment of a given film dependent “to some extent on how it

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makes use of our time. For reviewers, the length of a film is integral to its aesthetic worth, and even a potentially great film can become mediocre if it takes too much time” (2011, 242, ff). In this respect, we would do well to attempt to understand what is at stake when a film is deemed long, and especially the broadly differing lengths the word can relate to. Here it might be instructive to turn to another, widely used film lexicon that is qualified in English by the same adjective. Tellingly, the entry “long take” in the same *Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies* also avoids specifying the time required for a take to be deemed long, stating that it “is a shot... of relatively lengthy duration” that can be as long as the 11 minutes of a film reel, as in Hitchcock’s *Rope* (1948), or even the duration of an entire film, as in Alexander Sokurov’s single-take *Russian Ark* (2002) (Kuhn & Westwell 2012, 250). Unlike ‘the long take’, however, the long film is not a consolidated expression that can be preceded by a definite article, which is interesting when considering its alleged opposite, that is to say, ‘the short film’.

To be sure, the shortness of short films is also extremely subjective, even though its maximum length can often be demarcated by film festival criteria (see Raskin 2002). By contrast, if the recent films of directors such as Lav Diaz and Wang Bing may similarly be appreciated at film festivals, there is no limit as to how long they may last. Diaz, for instance, has made films with varying running times: from the more digestible 4 hours and 10 minutes of *Norte, The End of History* (2013) to the 9 hours of *Death in the Land of Encantos* (2007). Likewise, Wang Bing’s *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks* (2002) runs for over 9 hours, while the more recent *Crude Oil* (2008) has a length of around 13 hours. In turn, these lengths may be deemed unendurable to many for whom a 3-hour film is already long enough.

Diaz and Wang are the most notable filmmakers interested in the long form today, as is reflected in many essays in this dossier. Often associated with ‘slow cinema’, it is worth stressing that both directors stand out in this pantheon in that their films are ‘long’ in addition to being ‘slow’, and indeed (with a few exceptions) the standard length of a contemporary slow film is often within the expected average mark of 2 hours. The durational quality of their work must thus be understood as operating on two reinforcing levels. The first is connected with the aesthetic of their films, which, in line with other slow films, makes recourse to contemplative long takes, minimalist visual content, silence, stillness, as well as other strategies, in order to emphasise duration as a constitutive element of the film experience and as related to the way time is modulated within the film as *pace*, and a slow one at that (see Flanagan 2012; Lim 2014; de Luca & Barradas Jorge 2016). The second relates to the length of their films, with duration understood as long running times quantified and measured by a mechanical instrument: the clock.

Strictly speaking, then, slow films are not necessarily long, and long films are not necessarily slow.³ Nor is extreme length restricted to slow and/or contemporary cinema. From *Napoléon vu par Abel Gance* (Abel Gance, 1927, 332 minutes)⁴ to *Lawrence of Arabia* (David Lean, 1962, 221 minutes), *Out 1* (Jacques Rivette, 1971, 775 minutes) to *Arabian Nights* (Miguel Gomes, 2015, 383 minutes), *Empire* (Andy Warhol, 1964, 485 minutes) to *The Clock* (Christian Marclay, 2010, 24 hours), excessive running time has been exploited within a variety of styles, modes, and genres. One of the aims of the present dossier is to examine the different ways in which the long form has manifested itself, and the challenges it often poses in terms of production, exhibition, and consumption, aspects that will be considered at length in relation to specific case studies in the original essays that constitute this collection. Before I outline these contributions in more detail, I want to open up some preliminary avenues of thought towards a historicisation of the long film across different forms and practices. While this will no doubt be a sketchy, and indeed rather short history of long cinema, it is my hope that it will show some possible directions in which the study of long cinema and the question of cinematic length more broadly can be taken in the future.

Epic Times

It is perhaps instructive to remember that cinema emerged as a rather short form: often made up of a single unedited take that lasted from a few seconds to a few minutes. As the story goes, film narratives became increasingly complex, and so too did their length increase, first as multi-shot and then as multi-reel films. Yet the reverse was also true. As David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Janet Staiger have noted, the consolidation “of the 1000-foot length [around fifteen minutes] as the standard size of a film” by film distributors in order to ensure uniformity added pressure to “producers to provide a narrative with the requisite beginning, middle and end” (2003, 214) within that predetermined length.

In the US, the shift from the one-reel to the multiple-reel, or ‘feature’ film, resulted from efforts on the part of the emergent film sector to respond to wider socio-economic demands in an attempt to legitimize the cultural cachet of cinema. While, as Michael Quinn (2001) has noted, “feature” in its first usages did not connote a film of a certain length but instead a marketing strategy of differentiation, by 1917 the feature-length film had established itself as the model for film production, distribution, and exhibition, which attested to a need to raise the levels of cultural respectability attached

³ For a cognitive explanation of how ‘slow’ films may be perceived as ‘long’, see Smith 2015. See also Brown, in this dossier.

⁴ Running time of its 2016 restoration.

to the cinema. Thus, between 1909 and 1917, “films lengthened from an average of eighteen minutes to seventy-five minutes or even more” as part of “an international attempt to improve profits by making the film appear to be a quality product,” often through recourse to adaptations of a play or novel whose narrative textuality demanded a length that far exceeded one reel of a film (Bordwell et al 2003, 216). Firms such as Vitagraph, Famous Players, and later Paramount, for instance, all started to invest in “high-budget, multiple-reel, high-production values theatrical adaptations” (Quinn 2001, 47) aimed at a middle-class audience that would come out to pay a special price to see that particular film, and not an assorted programme of random short films strung together with other performance and theatrical acts, as was the case in the vaudevilles and nickelodeons.

In this respect, the length of a film, or the lengthier a film was, was increasingly identified as a sign of ‘quality’ or ‘prestige’ in many national contexts that were to have an impact upon each other. In Italy, this phenomenon assumed the form of films focused on classic and ancient themes, and was kick-started by *Dante’s Inferno* (1911). Focusing on its promotion in Britain in the journal *Biograph*, Bryony Dixon notes the “repeated quotation of the unusually long running time of 5000 feet as the production’s defining attribute ... [and] as a positive reinforced by the impressive entrance fee,” with the advertising further differentiating the film from other “inferior imitations of 1000 and 2000 feet” (2013, 33). *Dante’s Inferno* “heralded a whole series of prestige films that promoted longer running times and high production values” (Dixon 2013, 32), including *Quo Vadis* (Enrico Guazzoni, 1912) and the 12-reel *Cabiria* (Giovanni Pastrone, 1913). Particularly popular in the US, these historical epics were to leave a profound mark on D. W. Griffith, whose ambitions as a film director clashed with the 1000-foot length constraint imposed by *Biograph* since the beginnings of his career (Stokes 2007, 72). In 1915, Griffith released his infamous *The Birth of a Nation*, “the first American film to be twelve reels long and to last around three hours” (Stokes 2007, 3), to be followed by *Intolerance*, also around 3 hours in length.⁵ In turn, Griffith was to leave an impression on the French director Abel Gance, whose oeuvre constitutes one of the most consistent and extraordinary exercises in extreme length. As Paul Cuff has noted:

The celluloid legacy of [Gance’s] silent films is ... vast: *J’accuse* (1919) had an original length of 5250 metres, occupying over four hours of screen time; *La Roue* (1922) premiered at 10,730m and lasted over eight hours in the theatre. *Napoléon, vu par Abel Gance* (1927) consumed 400,000m of film stock during its production (equal to 290 hours of footage), and the longest version of the completed film ran to

⁵ For an account on the difficulty of establishing with precision *Intolerance’s* original length, see Merritt 1990.

12,800m – 666,000 frames of celluloid that took over nine hours to project. (2015, 23; see also Cuff, in this dossier)

Irrespective of the obvious differences between the directors mentioned above, their films nevertheless share a number of stylistic, thematic, and narrative traits. Their excessive running time was often justified and culturally legitimised by the historical weight of the themes and stories these films endeavoured to tell. Likewise, temporal engorgement was formally translated into stylistic excess, one that manifested itself in monumental sets, hundreds of extras, and technical and technological accomplishments – all duly publicised and reiterated in the critical and promotional discourses surrounding the films' production and release. These are directors whose impossibly grandiose vision had to contend with enormous logistical and practical issues that more often than not resulted in economic flops and even personal bankruptcy (Gance), and their films have become testaments of perseverance and single-mindedness. Yet such films were more than megalomaniac exercises. As Ismail Xavier has noted, *Cabiria*, *Intolerance*, and *Napoléon* are films that combine “aesthetic ambition, political engagement and celebration of national values” at a crucial point in film history (2012, 29). For Xavier, they are “film-cathedrals” that “testify to a faith in the virtues of hyperbolic forms. The idea is to create a spectacle which is highly revealing of its material resources and the filmmakers' artistic talent, while reasserting film's status as a showcase of national values and creative power” within an emerging international competitive market (30).

It goes without saying that the nation that emerged as the victor from this competition was the US, and although by the 1920s the 2-hour running time had already been established as the more or less standard length of a film, Hollywood maintained a big-budget epic tradition in some of its genres, such as the historical film. This peaked in the 1950s, when the introduction of Cinerama, Super-scope, and Cinemascope, with their literal enlargement of the field of vision, injected new vitality into the idea of a spatial monumentality that was translated into running times that often exceeded 3 hours. Examples include *The Ten Commandments* (1956, 219 minutes), *Ben-Hur* (1959, 217 minutes), and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962, 221 minutes). In her study of the genre, Vivian Sobchack has noted its discursive reliance on the notion of *temporal magnitude* as articulated on different textual and extra-textual levels: in the vast temporal range of the film's diegesis; in the film's promotion emphasising its lengthy mode of production “as a *mimetic imitation* of the historical events it is dramatizing” (1990, 35, emphasis in original); and in the film's long running time, in which an “excess of temporality finds its form in, or ‘equals,’ *extended duration*, films far longer than the Hollywood norm” (1990, 37, emphasis in original).

Writing in 1990, Sobchack concluded her article by noting the waning of the genre as coinciding with the end of the studio system and as subsequently migrating to television. Yet “films far longer than the Hollywood norm” would make a noticeable comeback in the 1990s and early 2000s. As James Russell notes in his book *The Historical Epic and Contemporary Hollywood* (2007): “Like their precursors, most modern epics are also very long. *Dances with Wolves* [1990] lasted 180 minutes, *Schindler’s List* [1993] 195 minutes, *Braveheart* [1995] 177 minutes, and *Gladiator* [2000] 154 minutes” (2007, 15). For Russell, long running time is a fundamental feature of the ‘modern epic film’ precisely because “so many other features of the 1950s and 1960s epics are no longer pertinent,” with extreme length further functioning as the differential marker through which a “sense of cultural and artistic significance” (15) is attached to a given film. While Russell sees the cycle of long epic films as one that finishes in 2005, recent evidence suggests that Hollywood is still investing in longer films (see Wigley 2014). In fact, it is worth noting, as Jeff Smith does, that no fewer than “five of the top ten grossing films [of all time] – *Gone With the Wind* (1939), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *The Sound of Music* (1965), *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), and *Titanic* (1998) – have running times that are around or above the three-hour mark” (2015, 490). Viewed in this light, while long films can be seen as risky ventures and result in commercial and critical flops, the superlative financial rewards the form has historically generated may explain its longevity in Hollywood film production.

Even Longer

Outside the realm of industrial cinema, temporal excess has enjoyed currency in other forms and formats. Here, moreover, the flexibility of the signifier ‘long’ comes sharply into play, for if the term often denotes films of 3 or 4 hours in mainstream cinema, it can designate much longer stretches of time in filmmaking practices that are not restricted by commercial imperatives and dramatic structures. A germane example is Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985), a documentary about the Holocaust that lasts 9 hours and 23 minutes, and that was completed in the space of 11 years (1974-1985). Featuring no archival footage, the film comprises contemplative landscape shots and lengthy interviews with the survivors, whose testimonies are translated on-camera. Here, the seriousness of subject matter, allied with the enormous time in which the film was in the making and its original 350 hours of footage, legitimises the unusual length of this extraordinary documentary.

The history of experimental and avant-garde cinema is also replete with examples of long-duration works, many of which were conceived and/or realised in the 1960s and 1970s. At that time,

duration became a formal concern for many filmmakers, not only on the formal level of the shot and as a reaction to an “accelerated image world [that] began to feel dehumanizing” (Campany 2012, 36), but also in terms of running time. Michael Walsh, for example, discerns two broader tendencies in the period: first, an “encyclopedic kind of durational film” seen in titles such as Ken Jacobs’s *Star Spangled to Death* (1956–60, 2002–4; 405 minutes) and Michael Snow’s *Rameau’s Nephew by Diderot* (1974, 270 minutes), and second, a “subtractive or minimalist aesthetic” (2016, 59). Concerning the latter, one could cite many canonical works of experimental cinema, such as Michael Snow’s *La Région Centrale* (1971, 180 minutes), Stan Brackhage’s *The Art of Vision* (1965, 250 minutes), as well as incomplete or unrealized projects such as Hollis Frampton’s *Magellan*, “a preplanned 369-day project that would trace a ‘metahistory’ of cinema” (Suchenski 2016, 62). Yet, as far as popularity goes, it is no doubt the work of Andy Warhol that stands out as the most influential in the period.

When set against the lavish excess of the grandiose works of silent cinema and the Hollywood historical epic, the long duration of Warhol’s films appears wildly perverse. For if the running time of the former films is often instrumentalised by spectacular plots in turn made possible by a mode of production that is itself laborious, Warhol’s exercises in duration are instead characterised by a comparatively labour-free quest that seemingly lets the camera do all the work. *Sleep* (1963, 321 minutes), for example, combines different shots of the poet John Giorno sleeping, used repeatedly at a slowed-down projection rate of 16 frames per second, whereas *Empire* (1964, 485 minutes) stitches together shots of the Empire state building from a distance at the same projection rate. As Justin Remes has noted, however, Warhol advocated “a distracted, fragmentary and unfocused mode of spectatorship” (2015, 37-8), encouraging spectators to do other activities while watching his long films. For Remes, *Sleep* and *Empire* should be thus understood as “furniture films” in the sense that the “cinematic image becomes just one of many objects available for visual consumption” (39-40).

In his well-researched book-length study of what he calls the ‘modernist’ long-form film, Richard I. Suchenski further examines the modes of production and aesthetics of 3 canonical works within this tradition: Gregory Markopolous’s *Enianios* (1947-1992), a monumental project comprising footage from the director’s nearly 100 films, and 80 hours of projection divided into 22 cycles running for 3 to 5 hours each, in the Temenos site in Greece; Jacques Rivette’s Balzac-inspired, 13-hour *Out 1* (1971), divided into 8 parts of around 90-100 minutes each; and Jean-Luc Godard’s 244-minute audiovisual eulogy on cinema and history *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1998). Despite the divergences animating these projects, for Suchenski they all attest to a

supremely Romantic impulse ... to create extraordinarily ambitious films that also use duration to resist the industrial structures cinema is normally dependent upon. These films actively participate in a modernist interrogation of the relationship between form and content, often taking their innovations to what seem to be their limits, simultaneously establishing and exhausting their own paradigms (2016, 5)

Like Xavier, Suchenski makes recourse to the figure of the 'cathedral' as the conceptual metaphor most apt to render them "as monuments to the imagination that promise transformations of vision, selfhood, and experience" (2016, 6). He further differentiates the modernist form both from the Hollywood epic paradigm and its more recent incarnations in the long, slow cinema of Diaz and Wang, which "made entirely with inexpensive digital equipment, are no longer conceived as continuous units and are instead intended, like the longest films of Warhol, to be viewed in pieces, with the audience encouraged to come and go as they please" (Suchenski 2016, 205-6).

I will return to (and complicate) this last point in the next section; let us note for now that digital technology must indeed be reckoned with as a major player in the contemporary production of long duration. This is not only because of its inexpensiveness, which allows filmmakers such as Diaz and Wang to make their films in their home countries, but also because digital technology has raised ontological questions regarding the extent to which it can express duration and the passing of time in the same way photochemical celluloid does (see Rodowick 2007). It is also worth noting that the running time of a film ceases to be measurable in terms of spatial length, since filmstrips mutate into immaterial algorithms. In this respect, Suchenski is certainly right in drawing attention to the many (and irreconcilable) aesthetic, institutional, and material differences between different forms of long cinema across time and space. Nevertheless, I do want to attempt to locate some points of continuity for the sake of a more systematic, if still preliminary, account of this phenomenon throughout the history of cinema.

Looking at the selected examples outlined above, a few connections immediately present themselves, in turn relating to the wider paradigms of authorship and labour in the cinema. First, whether we are looking at industrial, arthouse, or avant-garde cinema, the long film is often the fruit of a deeply personal (con)quest. While there is little doubt that such a quest has to contend with other demands in the case of mainstream cinema, even big-budget epic films cannot be dissociated from the single-mindedness of an individual with which such projects often become indelibly associated, from D.W. Griffith to James Cameron. This leads to a second point, namely, that the long film, with some notable exceptions (such as Warhol's works), is often acknowledged and publicised not

only in terms of its onscreen material, but also, and crucially, in relation to the copious amount of time and work that goes into the production, filming, and editing of such material. Keeping in mind the obvious differences in terms of size and scale that artisanal and commercial modes of production entail, it can be argued that life and work often become indistinguishable in the long film precisely because its monumentality demands full attention, if not a certain degree of obsession, on the part of the people in charge. In this respect, it is similarly worth noting that, from Abel Gance through to Lav Diaz, the long film has often been a strictly male-gendered affair that as such would welcome a feminist unpacking of its discursive and critical associations with notions such as muscularity and virility.⁶

While I do not have the time to pursue these points further, I outline them in the hope that they will in some way foster discussion on the phenomenon of long duration in the cinema. I do wish, however, to concentrate on one more aspect concerning extreme length in order to propose one possible framework to examine how its various instantiations may be productively brought together. Irrespective of the different modes of production and visions long films may espouse, the one thing that necessarily binds such films together is that they will always pose problems in relation to how, when, and where they will be viewed in their entirety. As such, the most obvious place to begin a more thorough examination of the form is from the perspective of exhibition practices and attendant modes of consumption and spectatorship.

Fashioning Duration

How and where is a long film to be experienced? Because of the unusual temporal demands on the viewer, it would seem that films that last for hours on end lend themselves particularly well to domestic viewing, insofar as they can be watched in instalments over the course of days or even weeks (see Brown, in this dossier). In fact, when it comes to non-mainstream long films, home viewing is more often than not the only option available for viewers – whether we are looking at pirate downloading or a streaming website specialised in arthouse cinema, such as MUBI. The latter is a particularly fitting example as it not only currently hosts a retrospective on Lav Diaz on its website, showcasing one film by the director per month, but it has also showed Rivette's *Out 1* as separate episodes and the 3 parts of Miguel Gomes's *Arabian Nights* (2015).

In turn, the intermittent viewing practice associated with domestic long-cinema consumption recalls the modes of spectatorship identified with the fruition of televisual seriality, itself

⁶ One notable exception here is Chantal Akerman's 3-and-half-hour *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975).

indebted to nineteenth-century literary forms such as the *feuilleton* and the serial novel (see Nagib, in this dossier). In fact, between its literary and televisual incarnations, seriality also enjoyed a prominent currency in early cinema well up until the early 1930s (Jess-Cooke 2009, 16-7). Comprising the same protagonists and/or the same settings, serials were devised to attract and bring back the same audience to a particular cinema venue over a period of weeks. The most obvious example is perhaps Louis Feuillade's *Fantômas* (1913-14), adapted from the eponymous serial novel and divided into 5 episodes. In many ways, serials can be seen as important precursors to long-form cinema when we look at films that are originally conceived as parts to be released simultaneously, or over the course of years. Blockbusters like Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003) and *The Hobbit* (2012-2014) for example, were both released as 3 different (and lengthy) parts, each over the course of 3 years in a clear bid to maintain public interest and maximise profit over the longest possible period of time. The infinitely cheaper and smaller international co-production *Arabian Nights* was also divided into '3 volumes'. Yet these were released at the same time and exhibition strategies differed widely: while in some countries the instalments were screened at cinemas back-to-back, in others they had the space of a week or a month between them (Toye 2016).

Here, it might be useful to attempt to draw distinctions between long films that are designed to be screened and watched in one go and those that are conceived as instalments to be watched separately, and to question whether it still makes sense to uphold such distinctions in light of the myriad of ways a film can be experienced nowadays. The case of *Arabian Nights* is instructive not only because it demonstrates a certain autonomy on the part of the exhibition sector in dictating how the film was to be viewed, but also because it was simultaneously released on the aforementioned MUBI, meaning that viewers signed up to the streaming website would also have had the chance to watch the instalments at home and decide whether to watch them as one single durational film or not.

The suggestion that spectators would forego the seriality of an audiovisual text in favour of durational continuity is not entirely unfounded when one considers contemporary forms of TV consumption such as binge-watching, in which entire seasons are seen in one sitting. Binge-watching would thus seem to privilege not the distracted mode of spectatorship commonly associated with television, but a focused one in which the temporal integrity of an audiovisual text is enforced by the spectator. Worthy of note is that the practice is often associated with 'quality' television programmes (see Jenner 2017) that are marketed in terms of their 'cinematic' style, such as *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007-2015), *House of Cards* (Netflix,

2013-) and *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011-) (tellingly, the latter was controversially described by its producers as a ‘73-hour movie’ recently; see Alexander 2017).

What is undeniable is that not only are television series increasingly described in terms of their filmic properties, and films watched on the variously sized screens of portable and mobile devices as fragmented clips, but the cinema as an institution now has to compete with other spaces in which moving images have become widely prevalent, notably museums and galleries. Here, too, long duration has appeared as a central component of many works over the last two decades, prominent examples including Douglas Gordon’s *24-Hour Psycho* (1993, 24 hours), Bruce Nauman’s seven-channel *Mapping the Studio I (Fat Chance John Cage)* (2001, approx. 8 hours), David Claerbout’s *Bordeaux Piece* (2004, 14 hours), and of course, Christian Marclay’s smash hit *The Clock* (2010), a 24-hour assemblage of shots lifted from all sorts of films, many of which display clocks that correspond exactly to the real time of the viewer. Connecting these otherwise disparate installations is the fact that they are most likely impossible to watch in their entirety owing to institutional as well as biological reasons.⁷ As with all gallery-based moving image pieces, here it is the visitor who controls the time spent in what is largely an individual and fragmented mode of spectatorship that is divorced from narrative-related pleasures (as is the case with television binge-watching, for example).

At this point it is useful to return to the works of Lav Diaz and Wang Bing, which have been exhibited in places that combine both theatrical and gallery-like elements (see Ingawanji, Davis, and Ramos Monteiro, in this dossier). As Matthew Flanagan notes, when screened at major film festivals such as Toronto and Rotterdam, Diaz’s films have been projected “in an open installation space where food and drink are provided, and where people are encouraged to come and go during the projection” (2012, 209). The latter was also the case in his recent exhibition in London, and Wang Bing’s films have been exhibited under similar conditions at the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Wattis Institute in São Francisco, to cite two examples. However, insofar as they have been exhibited in galleries, the work of both filmmakers must be differentiated from the time-based installations mentioned above, since they are not oblivious to narrative structures and meaningful sequentiality. In fact, intricate plotlines are a crucial aspect of Diaz’s films, often seen as national allegories that can encompass decades and even centuries of Filipino history in their textual mesh. In this respect, Suchenski’s contention that these films are conceived, “like the longest films of Warhol, to be viewed in pieces” is not entirely accurate (Suchenski 2016, 205). While it is true that Diaz grants exhibitors the freedom

⁷ *The Clock* was screened in its entirety at some galleries that stayed open 24 hours on a few selected weekends as a part of a major publicity stunt.

to showcase his works the way they wish (see Ingawanji, in this dossier), the mode of address of his films does not accommodate a purely distracted viewing practice.

As such, it perhaps makes more sense to say that the conditions under which the work of Diaz and Wang are often exhibited is a symptom of a larger phenomenon whereby long duration forms are reappropriated by the gallery. Other examples include Béla Tarr's *Sátántangó* (1994), shown as an installation piece at the Galerie Andreas Huber in Vienna in 2010, and even Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 14-part TV miniseries *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980), exhibited at Kunst-Werke and P.S.1 in 2007, with each episode screened on loop and simultaneously in a separate room. As Erika Balsom notes, "durational commitment" is eliminated here, for "the likelihood of viewing the entire 894 minutes of the series is highly unlikely, to say the least, while sound bleeding from other projections made concentrated viewing difficult" (2013, 42). Thus, at worst, these exhibitions "make choices that present the historical products of cinema under unfavorable circumstances, diluting their potency and misunderstanding their objectives" (41).

Furthermore, viewed alongside other films identified with slow cinema, the ease with which the films of Diaz and Wang traverse through the spaces of the cinema and the museum is certainly not an isolated phenomenon. As I have argued elsewhere (de Luca 2016), slow cinema currently sits at the crossroads of two distinct social spheres and aesthetic projects as associated with both spaces. Directors such as Tsai Ming-liang, Abbas Kiarostami, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Pedro Costa, and Chantal Akerman, for example, have all over the past decades often made moving image installations that recycle and expand upon their own feature films. The cases of Diaz and Wang, however, add a layer of complexity to this phenomenon, for, unlike the directors mentioned above, they have not specifically designed short films to be screened on loop as installations, meaning their films are often exhibited in galleries but in their full and continuous duration. In any case, I still hold the view that slow cinema's aesthetic project is only fully compatible with the cinema theatre not only because of the temporal imposition enforced by the latter, but also because in the theatre the experience of duration is a fundamentally collective one, an aspect upon which many slow films have directly reflected (see de Luca 2016). As a relatively new space for moving-image consumption, and in its fostering of a solitary spectator always 'on the move,' gallery contexts privilege an individual and distracted viewing mode that stands in contrast with the collective immobility of the film theatre. Such a collective sense is even more heightened when it comes to the work of Diaz and Wang since, in addition to foregrounding the question of time as a fundamental aspect of the film experience through their slow style, they are further characterised by lengthy

running times whose endurance can only reinforce the collectivity of the cinematic experience.

But perhaps we should not fear that this collective experience is gone for good. Though within a necessarily selected circuit of cinemathèques, film festivals, and alternative cinema venues, Diaz and Wang's films, as well as other slow and long films, are still exhibited under theatrical conditions, drawing crowds of cinephiles who come precisely for the sense of collective 'event' that spending hours on end watching the same film together will entail (see, for example, Ramos Monteiro, in this dossier). On the other hand, we can no longer simply ignore the museum as a crucial player in the dissemination of durational images, and it is interesting to note that some galleries have attempted to replicate the features associated with theatrical cinema, such as darkened spaces, seated rooms, and fixed start and end times. No doubt, it remains to be seen whether these features will become standard practice when it comes to the experience of moving images in the museum, and the extent to which they can deliver communal watching to the same affective degree is debatable. Yet they do reveal an attempt to forge a collective experience in other institutional realms. Nor is it possible anymore to pretend that films are not watched at home in the most different of ways, especially when it comes to long films.

As the contributions that comprise this dossier will attest, cinema currently finds itself within a particularly dynamic and promiscuous media landscape that is drastically redefining the previously rigid lines that used to safeguard the temporal demarcation of an audiovisual text. While these transformations have elicited radically different ways of engaging with films, and whereas it is important to acknowledge and respect the aesthetic intention and integrity of works as they are conceived, long duration may be a productive place from which to examine such transformations precisely because it weaves its way with remarkable ease around the new spaces and screens that now form part of our audiovisual landscape.

Contributions

Opening the dossier is Paul Cuff's article on the question of temporality and duration in the cinema of Abel Gance. Situating the latter within early cinema's transitional period, Cuff examines Gance's quasi-religious investment in the film medium as one that was translated into monumental lengths. He further investigates the different ways in which Gance's films were marketed and exhibited. Looking specifically at *J'accuse* (1919) and *La Roue* (1922), the article explores how long-duration exhibition practices changed across a short period of time: while the former film was usually shown as a multi-part film and publicised in terms of its seriality, the latter

consolidates Gance's desire to show his works in their integral length, as a 'super-film'. Furnished with a wealth of contextual detail and close textual analysis, the article illuminates how duration constituted one of the most important elements of Gance's view of cinema as a profoundly ritualistic and collective experience.

Lúcia Nagib's article also explores questions related to seriality in the long film, but it does so through a contemporary film: Raúl Ruiz's *Mysteries of Lisbon* (2010). As Nagib argues, here the long duration is a direct result of the eponymous novel on which the film was based. Released in 3 volumes, Camilo Castelo Branco's novel comprises a myriad of storylines that interlace across time and space, inspired by the nineteenth-century *feuilleton* literary genre, itself a precursor of the television soap opera. Significantly, *Mysteries of Lisbon* was simultaneously conceived as both a film and a televisual mini-series. Looking at the film's multiple and intertwining storylines through an intermedial methodological lens, Nagib examines how the film's dialogue with other visual and literary media results in a mode of 'history-telling' through which the film is infused with a sense of the physical real and the messiness of real life.

The third article, by Glyn Davis, looks at the contemporary long cinemas of Lav Diaz and Wang Bing from the theoretical perspective of 'waiting'. Davis provides an overview of the ways in which the concept of waiting has been theorised in both philosophical and anthropological discourses, and proposes that the concept may constitute a particularly apt framework to illuminate films that engage with the activity of waiting on many textual and extra-textual levels. By looking at the theatrical exhibition of Diaz's *Death in the Land of Encantos* (2007) and Wang's 13-hour documentary *Crude Oil* (2008) as a gallery installation, Davis reflects on the different forms of waiting on show in both films, and more broadly on the different modes of engagement and waiting encouraged by both viewing sites in relation to long-duration spectatorship.

Questions related to the exhibition and circulation of long films are also the subject of the fourth article, by May Adadol Ingawanji, in which she reflects on the challenges involved in putting together and co-curating the first Lav Diaz retrospective in London. As Ingawanji notes, Diaz's long films often elude standard models of exhibition practices, an aspect that she illustrates with reference to a number of examples in which the director's films were shown in conditions that combine theatrical and gallery-based elements. In this context, Ingawanji proposes that Diaz's oeuvre and the myriad of ways it can be displayed and exhibited offer a productive framework within which to examine and interrogate traditional modes and models of spectatorship.

Lav Diaz is also the focus of Lúcia Ramos Monteiro's article, available only in Portuguese. For Monteiro, the work of the Filipino director provides a fascinating case study to reflect on several questions concerning the analysis and experience of films. On the one hand, the article draws attention to the fact that an excessive emphasis on the question of time can eclipse equally important features such as the intermedial configurations and narrative allegories of his films. On the other hand, duration presents itself as an indispensable element of Diaz's cinema, an aspect that Monteiro examines both in relation to how it radicalises the problems inherent in film analyses that tend to subtract temporality, and the wider question of spectatorship as experienced in the cinema.

Closing the dossier is William Brown's essay, which looks at domestic forms of long-cinema consumption. Exploring the conceptual volatility of the adjective 'long' when applied to the cinema, Brown reflects on its semantic flexibility across a number of institutional and critical discourses, and examines the extent to which long cinema may constitute a rebellion against standard ways of experiencing time. He argues that it is only when a film lasts longer than planned that it holds the potential to disrupt capitalist models of time as value and money. Looking specifically at online viewing modes, Brown explores how the continuity of the audiovisual text is particularly prone to be interrupted owing to Internet speed issues, thus making long films even longer, against the viewer's will. For Brown, such interruptions hold the potential to trigger valuable reflections on the concealed and uneven power relations subtending the infrastructure of wealthier societies.

Accompanying the dossier is C. Claire Thomson's interview with Thomas Hellum, the producer behind the Norwegian TV show *Minutt for Minutt*. Comprising long-duration programmes such as a 7-hour train journey from Oslo to Bergen and 24 hours of salmon fishing, the series was tellingly translated as 'slow TV' when distributed internationally, which, as Thomson notes, can eclipse the radical durational aspect of this series as one derived from its excessive running time. In the interview, Hellum discusses the concept of the show, its roots in Norwegian culture, the challenges involved in filming and broadcasting, and, not least, the viewing habits the series has encouraged as spectators carry on with their life while watching the programmes. Here, the fruition of long duration becomes not so much antithetical to the endurance of the human bladder, but one in which basic physiological needs are necessarily a part of the viewing experience.

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