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# **The Home Movie Imagination in UK and US Fiction Films**

**by**  
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Film and Television  
Studies

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## Declaration

This thesis consists entirely of my own work. It has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

## Abstract

This thesis examines the representation of home movies in UK and US feature fiction films released between 1939-2013. For the purposes of the thesis home movies are defined as a subset of amateur (i.e. non-professional) film concerned with the representation of home and family and intended for domestic consumption. Home *movies* are further distinguished from home *video* and domestic productions recorded digitally referring specifically to films shot on, or connoting, small-gauge film. Drawing on James Moran's notion of the 'imaginary medium' (*There's No Place Like Home Video*, 2002) and the scholarship on the Imaginary in media, this thesis advances the concept of the 'home movie imagination' to describe the way in which cinema constructs home movies in the process of representation. Using textual analysis, this thesis identifies a series of shifts in cinematic depictions of home movies. Accordingly, each case study chapter focuses on a selection of examples which best exemplify these transitions and continuing trends. Placing cinematic home movies in the context of the histories of amateur film and small-gauge technology, this thesis demonstrates that home movies in fiction films should not be perceived as a reflection on developments of the technology, but studied specifically as fictional stylisations.

The first chapter explores the emergence of home movies as a motif in feature fiction films, interrogating the technology's pervasive association with wealth and spectacle in films released between 1939-1949. The second elaborates on these concerns, observing an incongruity between cinema's continued affiliation of home movies with affluence and the developments in the social history of amateur filmmaking following the Second World War. Chapter Three looks at films released between 1964-1980, investigating the dual role of home movies deployed as sentimental reminders of lost familial cohesion and a tool to challenge the family ideal. Chapter Four focuses on the adaptations of Thomas Harris' novel *Red Dragon* (1981) — *Manhunter* (Michael Mann, 1986), *Red Dragon* (Brett Ratner, 2002) — charting the impact which the advent of home video had on the representation of cinematic home movies. Home movie obsolescence is explored further in Chapter Five which interrogates the transition of home movies from an aim to memory (prop) to texture of memory (aesthetic). The final chapter focuses on the depiction of home movies in *Super 8* (2011) and *Frankenweenie* (2012), investigating the nostalgia which they express towards the materiality of small-gauge technology.

This thesis argues that home movies in feature fiction film constitute a unique, and widely overlooked, object of study. As films-within-films they frequently function as a self-reflexive device, a tool for filmmakers to reflect on their art. However, they are also specifically a domestic technology, focusing an inquiry into the role which media and mediation play in the cinematic construction of family narratives. Exploring the ways in which cinema constructs home movies in the process of representation the home movie imagination offers an innovative approach for studying the depiction of domestic moving image technologies, one which recognises their character as stylisations and responds to their historical variability.

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Parts of Chapter Six have previously been published as ‘To Hold on or to Let Go? Small-Gauge Amateur Filmmaking and Nostalgia in *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie*’ in Jilly Boyce Kay, Cat Mahoney and Caitlin Shaw (eds.), *The Past in Visual Culture: Essays on Memory, Nostalgia and the Media* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2017), pp.137-153.

## Introduction

‘Would you look at him Martin!’, exclaims Philomena (Judi Dench), the eponymous heroine of Stephen Frears’ 2013 film, as she briefly diverts her attention away from the images of her lost son Anthony Lee/Michael Hess displayed on the television. The man she turns towards is Martin Sixsmith (Steve Coogan) a journalist who has been helping her search for the child she was forced to give up for adoption in the mid-1950s. Together Philomena and Martin have travelled from Ireland to the United States, only to discover that Michael had died of AIDS-related complications some years previously. They were however able to meet with his partner, Peter Olsson (Peter Hermann), who shares with them a compilation video, comprising childhood home movies and adulthood home videos, dedicated to Michael’s memory. The viewing of the memorial tape marks the climax of the film, a moment of both emotional and narrative importance. Frequently intercutting between the memorial video and close-ups of Dench, the sequence privileges Philomena’s reception to enhance the emotional resonance of the images. Foregrounding her viewership subtly but poignantly underscores that the mother’s role is solely that of a spectator of Anthony’s/Michael’s life.



Figure 1. Philomena looking away

The moment when she shifts her attention is however equally significant. Looking away, Philomena almost misses a crucial piece of information revealed by the video: images which depict Michael's return to the Sean Ross Abbey in Roscrea (Ireland) where he was born (Fig.1). Martin's surprised reaction urges her to turn back to the screen, and to discover that, as Peter explains, the son too was searching for his mother and that the nuns have deliberately thwarted their reunion. Philomena's moment of distraction serves a dramatic purpose, as the brief delay further heightens the effect of the revelation. Its significance may also however be read in another way, reminding the viewers of the insights which may be gained by attentively attending to the onscreen images, including those of cinema's representation of domestic moving image technologies.

This thesis emphasises the importance of looking closely at the fictional representation of home movies, a subject which has frequently been overlooked. Although home movies emerged as an object of analysis in the 1980s, studies have predominantly focused on their archival significance as historical documents. Fictional depictions have often been sidelined, not only within the scholarship on home movies but also in film studies. In the only, to date, sustained inquiry into fiction films' representation of amateur image making, Marie-Thérèse Journot (*Le film amateur dans le cinéma de fiction*, 2011) characterises this omission as a failure to identify the distinctive character of amateur film as a cinematic motif. Non-professional productions are thus rarely distinguished from other examples of films-within-films, and their relevance is frequently limited to the role they play within the work in which they are embedded. While, as I shall explore, in studying the representation of home movies it is important to take the relation between the contained and containing films into account, their concerns may also resonate beyond the confines of the work in which they are embedded. Accounting for fiction film's depiction of home movies it is however important

to not only to observe their recurrence, but also to perceive that representations of technologies are dynamic in time. Notably *Philomena*'s presentation of home movies transferred to home video would not have been feasible 40 years earlier, considering that, as the fourth chapter will illuminate, the earliest examples of domestic video-in-films date to the 1980s. As this thesis demonstrates, between the late 1930s and the 2010s cinema's representation of small-gauge domestic image making has not remained unchanged. Studying the role which home movies play thus requires us to take into account how cinema negotiates the significance of domestic small-gauge films at different moments of their cinematic history and to construct a framework which allows us to account for the transitions therein.

Laying the groundwork for the exploration of the history of home movies in UK and US fiction films, this introduction illuminates the concerns of this thesis, outlining and accounting for the corpus selection, advancing a conceptual framework and delineating the methodology. I begin by inquiring into the definition of the home movie, underscoring its difference from home video and digital domestic recordings, and its distinctive character among other examples of amateur film. I then move on to illuminate the specificity of home movies in fiction films, arguing that their concerns differ from documentary uses of domestic footage and avant-garde deployments of small-gauge technology. Underlining the specificity of home movies as fictional stylisations I will suggest the concept of imagination as a framework for studying commercial narrative depictions of domestic small-gauge films proceeding to illuminate the manner in which I will be charting their cinematic history.

## **Defining the home movie**

Discussing home movies in films it is first important to illuminate the meaning of the term. This thesis understands home movies as footage shot on or connoting small-gauge film, made by individuals or families (biological or of choice) and intended for the purpose of domestic consumption. There are thus two key aspects to the definition: the medium and its usage. With regard to the former, I understand home movies as footage shot on, or connoting, film stock which is narrower than 35mm (of which the most popular are: 8mm, 9.5mm and 16mm). Doing so I distinguish between home movies, home video and domestic digital recordings, underlining that, as James Moran argues in *There's No Place Like Home Video* (2002), the 'different looks [of film and video] mark different values, not merely neutral image making alternatives.'<sup>1</sup> While, as the memorial tape in *Philomena* underlines, the development of home movies, home videos and domestic digital recording has been, at times, intertwined, it is important to recognise that the media have distinct histories and carry dissimilar connotations. As Moran illuminates, video's relation to fiction films has often been perceived in terms of media rivalry, a question which has attracted much scholarly attention. For most of their cinematic history however, home movies have differed from the films in which they are embedded not in terms of their medium, but their modality — set apart by the domestic setting of the screening and the particular, distracted, mode of spectatorship which they occasion. Distinguishing between home movies, video, and domestic digital recordings I do not wish to dismiss the continuities between them; rather the aim of this thesis is to draw attention to the distinct character of fiction films' engagement with small-gauge film specifically, charting the negotiation of its changing place and significance on the big screen.

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<sup>1</sup> James M. Moran, *There's No Place Like Home Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 165.

In this thesis I deploy the term ‘home movies’ not only to refer to footage shot on small-gauge film and presented on the appropriate technology, but also to that which connotes the format. While the images of Michael’s childhood included on the memorial video tape in *Philomena* are displayed on television, they are nonetheless perceptibly small-gauge in origin and should thus be interpreted accordingly. As Moran demonstrates in his study of video-in-films (VIT), in order to be interpreted as ‘video’, images do not necessarily need to be produced by the technology they are communicating. Taking animation as an example, Moran illuminates that the reception of a medium relies on the replication of ‘cues’ which signal that the footage should be read as ‘video’ (for example: video noise, presence of the viewfinder and monitor messages such as ‘play’ and ‘record’) and that these may be communicated by cinema through means other than the deployment of the represented medium in their production. Of particular interest in this respect is the capacity of digital media to approximate the look and sound of analogue footage through the application of filters. Such hybrid representations (discussed in more detail in Chapter Five) may be, at times, indistinguishable from footage shot on small-gauge film they may also (as in the case of the fantasy sequence in Danny Boyle’s 2002 film *28 Days Later*) be a deliberately ‘imperfect’ approximation, signalling both media simultaneously. Although such images may not have originally been shot on small-gauge technology, I argue that it is nonetheless valuable to perceive them as part of the cinematic history of home movies. Digital approximations complicate notions of medium specificity, suggesting that modes of persistence are not solely tied to ideas around materiality (a feature which the transferral of film to video tape in *Philomena* also alludes to). Above all, such depictions foreground questions of legibility, urging us to consider what the ‘cues’ are through which cinema

signals that what we are seeing should be read as a home movie and how these shift over time.

Considering cinema's representation of home movies, it is important to inquire not only into the cues that constitute the medium but also those used to signal its affinity with 'home'. Notably, not all small-gauge films should be described as home movies, and in extension the definition of 'home movies' should not be limited only to that of a medium. As Patricia Zimmermann illuminates, substandard film stock may be used in a variety of moving image practices, and 16mm film is a particularly versatile format used both by amateur and professional filmmakers.<sup>2</sup> It is thus important to distinguish between 'home movies' and 'small-gauge film' as well as to differentiate between home movies and other examples of amateur production. As Heather Norris Nicholson underlines what we understand as amateur filmmaking (and its history) is not unified, illuminating that home movies should be seen as a particular subcategory of the practice, one which has distinct specificities and concerns.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, James Moran argues that although 'as a non-commodified practice, the home mode (in which home movies and videos operate) properly falls into the field of amateur, its cultural function should be studied as relatively autonomous.'<sup>4</sup> What however is the character of their autonomy? While broadly speaking home movies may be distinguished from both professional films and other amateur productions by their exhibition contexts (domestic screening), thematic preoccupations (on the family and domesticity), style (they are seldom invested in the creation of a cohesive fictional reality or coherent narrative) and modality (a participatory and often distracted form of reception), as this thesis will

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<sup>2</sup> Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur film: Meaning and Practice c. 1927–77* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Moran, *There's No Place Like Home Video*, p. 67.

illuminate, what cinema defines as a home movie is not always a neat amalgamation of these elements. The ‘home’ of the home movie is thus more than a set of characteristics, it is a site for negotiation, the inquiry into which reveals transitions in the meaning and significance of home movies, both as a domestic technology and as a cinematic device.

### **Home movies in fiction films**

In the literature on home movie studies, fictional depictions of home movies have frequently been side-lined in favour of documentary uses of archival footage and avant-garde deployments of small-gauge technology. As the Review of Literature will explore in more depth, the field’s omission of commercial narrative films stems largely from the importance which scholars ascribe to the evidential character of home movies. Patricia Zimmermann’s introduction to the collection *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (2012) exemplifies this approach, championing amateur film as providing ‘a vital access point for academic historiography in its trajectories from official history to the more variegated and multiple practices of popular memory, a concretization of memory into artefacts that can be remobilised, recontextualised and reanimated.’<sup>5</sup> Documentary and artists’ uses of archival home movies (such as Andrew Jarecki’s 2003 film *Capturing the Friedmans* or the works of Péter Forgács or Jasper Rigole) are perceived as part of these processes of reconfiguration, at once emphasising home movies’ capacity to serve as examples of histories from below and focalising the processes by which these narratives may be accessed and understood outside of the original domestic context.

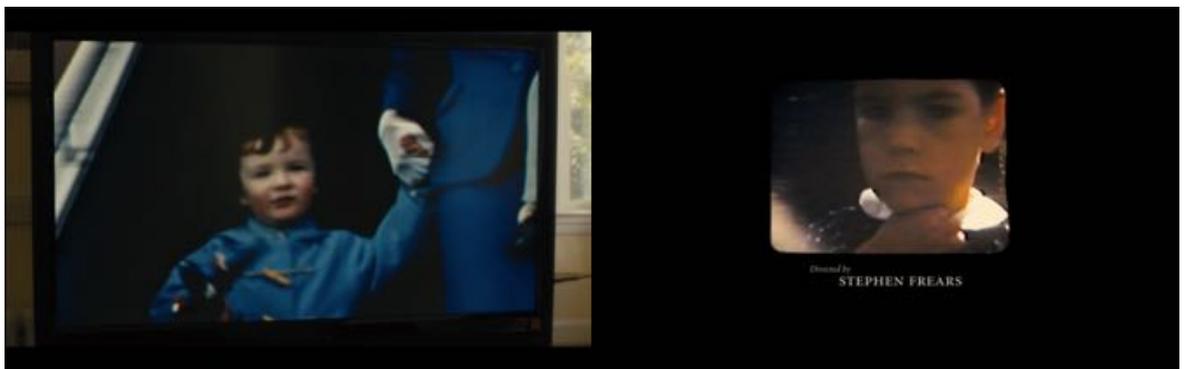
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<sup>5</sup> Patricia Zimmermann, ‘Introduction. The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings’, in Patricia R. Zimmermann and Karen L. Ishizuka (eds.), *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2008), p. 1.

Alongside documentary re-deployments of archival home movies, avant-garde uses of small-gauge technology have also frequently come under scrutiny, particularly with regard to the ways in which such works deliberately expand the meaning of the 'home movie' as a practice of familial self-inscription (the diary films of Jonas Mekas, the alternative families depicted in the 8mm films of Derek Jarman) and complicate the popular perception of amateur as unskilled and poorly executed (the experimental works of Stan Brakhage). In contrast, the stylised home movies contained in fiction films do not possess the same kind of documentary value as archival footage (they have been produced for the purpose of the film and do not refer to events or people outside of the diegesis) and do not always, as this thesis shall explore, bear a relation to the social practice of home movie making. Rather this work argues that study of the uses of home movies in commercial narrative films requires us to acknowledge and inquire into their character as devices of fiction.

Distinguishing between fiction films, documentary and avant-garde works, I do not wish to propose that the distinctions in their deployments of home movies are hermetic and absolute. On the contrary, as the study of *Performance* (Nicolas Roeg, Donald Cammell, 1970) in Chapter Three will illuminate, cinematic depictions of home movies may exhibit affinities with home movies deployed in other modes of filmmaking (in this case, avant-garde uses of small-gauge film). I do however argue that the context in which the home movies appear plays a fundamental role in shaping their meaning and reception. *Philomena* is a rare example of a fiction film which contains an example of archival alongside stylised footage, and offers an illuminating illustration of this. 'Inspired by true events', Frears' film is a work of semi-fiction, and the two types of home movies which it contains are reflective of its modality. In addition to the fictionalised home movies of Michael's life the film also includes a selection of the Hess' family films which are featured during the closing credits (Fig.2).

Visually, these home movies are proximate to the ones included in the film; both films focus on moments of familial leisure time and celebrations, rendered in the distinct small-gauge aesthetic characterised by blurry, washed out colours, hand held camera work and frequent, anti-illusionistic address to the camera. Their presentation in the film however, suggests that they should be interpreted as different kinds of footage. Embedded alongside the photographs of Philomena Lee and Martin Sixsmith, the Hess' family films are denoted as archival material, and thus as having an existence outside the role they play in the diegesis. Together the still and moving images function to inform the viewers that occurrences depicted in the film are a reference to actual events and people.



**Figure 2.** Tadhg Bowen as Anthony Lee/Michael Hess and the archival footage of Michael Hess

Underscoring the authenticity of the events, the real home movies however simultaneously emphasise the fictionality of the film's representation. Notably, the home movies included in the film are neither the same, nor a direct replica of, the ones which accompany the credit sequence. While the young actors playing Anthony/Michael — Tadhg Bowen and Harrison D'Ampney — bear some resemblance to the person they are portraying they are noticeably not the same child, and there is no direct overlap between the films included on the memorial DVD and the archival footage selected by Fears.<sup>6</sup> Focalising the film's dual pulls between

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<sup>6</sup> Although the fictionalised memorial DVD may have been based on the Hess' archival films, they are not explicitly presented as such in the film. One exception to this is the image of young Michael ascending the airplane upon his first arrival in the United States, an image of which also appears on the cover of *The Lost Child of Philomena Lee: A Mother, Her Son and a Fifty-Year Search* (2010) upon which the film is based, and thus may be familiar to viewers.

historical fidelity and dramatic effect, together the home movies contained in *Philomena* function as a self-reflexive device. Subtly distinguishing between the two home movies, Frears' work reflexively demarcates the boundary between actuality (archival footage) and fiction, underscoring that the film takes creative liberties with its subject as it does with the home movies. This recognition in turn, alerts viewers that the fictional family films embedded in *Philomena* should be perceived as a deliberate stylisation, and interpreted accordingly.

### **The home movie imagination**

This thesis advances the concept of imagination as a framework for addressing the specificity of home movies in fiction films. Fictional depictions of domestic filmmaking have often been perceived in terms of imitation, as 'fake', 'faux' or 'pseudo' home movies. Such descriptions however assume a comparative relation between what are presumed to be 'authentic' examples and their fictional lookalikes. As the juxtaposition between the Hess' home movies and the stylised family films contained in Frears' film suggests however, fictional depictions of domestic imagery should not simply be considered in terms of mimicry, but require a more nuanced appreciation of their specificity. In his study of home video Moran complicates the dichotomy, suggesting that video-in-the-film should be understood as an imaginary medium, imaginary in that, as I have elucidated previously, it may be entirely simulated by cinema. In extension, Moran argues that fiction films' depiction of technologies should be perceived as a discursive construction, illuminating how in representing a medium cinema imaginatively engages with its meaning, a characterisation which places emphasis on intention and creativity. Expanding on Moran, this thesis stresses that what home movies are imagined as being pertains not only to their medium, but can be used more broadly as a way of probing fiction films' definition of what constitutes a home

movie in a film. My use of imagination therefore refers to the ways in which cinema constructs home movies in the process of representation and serves as a collective term for commercial narrative films' engagement with this type of filmmaking. Although the archival family films contained in *Philomena* are not in the strictest sense imaginary, drawing attention to the processes of stylisation, they should, in this case, be considered as an element of the way in which imagination operates. They are thus not merely 'authentic' home movies, their 'authenticity' is constructed in the way in which they are represented in the film and in turn serves to draw attention the fictionality of the memorial footage, urging spectators to reflect on the distinct role which it plays within the film.

Using imagination as a framework for studying fictional depiction of home movies places this work within the concerns of the scholarship dedicated to the study of 'the imaginary' in media history. As the Review of Literature will illuminate, although the works do not necessarily form a unified field of inquiry (they have developed in relative isolation), they can be integrated by their shared concern with, what Simone Natale and Gabriele Balbi in their article 'Media and the Imaginary in History' describe as, 'evidence pertaining to the realm of the fantastic.'<sup>7</sup> Speculations about media offer an elusive class of evidence, however as Marita Sturken and Douglas Thomas argue in their introduction to *Technological Visions: The Hopes and Fears that Shape New Technologies* 'the rhetoric defining technology, and the representations of it, are key to how it is integrated into social lives.'<sup>8</sup> Listing representation alongside rhetoric, Sturken and Thomas suggest that cinema should be recognised as a contributor to the ideas which circulate around home movies, simultaneously indicating that it should not be considered as the only site in which imaginations about the

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<sup>7</sup> Simone Natale and Gabriele Balbi, 'Media and the Imaginary in History', *Media History* 20 (2014), p. 203.

<sup>8</sup> Marita Sturken, Douglas Thomas, and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, *Technological Visions: The Hopes and Fears that Shape New Technologies* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), p. 8.

technology develop. It is thus important to consider the stakes which cinema may have in the particular representations of the home movie by taking the context of the containing film into account.

In scholarship on the imaginary in media, fantasies are often associated with the period of a medium's novelty. Yet, while imaginations and fantasies are terms that are often used to describe the ways in which we envisage new or not yet existent technologies, this thesis suggests that it is not only openly speculative narratives that offer glimpses of the hopes and anxieties which become attached to particular media. In *Kicking the Pricks* (1987) Derek Jarman observes that 'in every home movie is a longing for paradise'; as this thesis will demonstrate cinematic home movies offer an ample site to explore the different ideas that 'paradise' can refer to and the manners in which they become corrupted.<sup>9</sup> Deploying imagination as a framework for historical inquiry further illuminates that cinema's representation of, and attitudes toward, home movies change overtime. With this in mind, it is important to emphasise that the history of home movies in fiction films does not develop in a vacuum. What histories are however of relevance and what is their relation to that of home movies in fiction films? In this thesis I argue that the history of cinematic home movies is interwoven, but cannot be accounted for solely in relation to the social and technological history of amateur film (studied by Patricia Zimmermann, Heather Norris Nicholson and Alan D. Kattelle), the life-cycle of the medium (a framework for studying media imaginations proposed by Natale and Balbi) or as a way of charting an alternative history of cinema (an approach for studying cinema's fantasies about represented technologies advanced by Paul Young in *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals*, 2006). It is also as *Philomena* suggests, entwined with the developments of other domestic moving image technologies,

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<sup>9</sup> Derek Jarman, *Kicking the Pricks* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 54.

and as Chapter Four will illuminate the history of video and its cinematic representation plays a particularly significant role

### **Methodology, structure and corpus selection**

In the influential accounts on amateur film, the history of home movies is frequently confined within the twentieth century. Patricia Zimmermann, Alan D. Kattelle and Heather Norris Nicholson and all conclude their studies of small-gauge film in the late-1970s, a time when video was introduced for the domestic market.<sup>10</sup> However, as this thesis will illuminate, home movies have persisted on the screen despite the commercial obsolescence of their technology; what is more, they have significantly risen in numbers since the 1980s. Therefore, although the historical studies form an important context for this work, I argue that in charting the development of cinematic home movies we must proceed from the films themselves. The structure of the thesis is thus tied closely to the methodology of the work. The approach taken in this study is that of close textual analysis of a selection of films from the late 1930s to the early 2010s. Compiling a filmography, I have assembled a large number of films which contain a depiction of domestic screening, a representation of small-gauge cameras or feature footage that connotes small-gauge film. In each case, I have posed the question: is this technology, or are the images, characterised as a 'home movie', and if so, how is this communicated? I have also consulted secondary literature, to ascertain whether a given depiction has been perceived as a home movie. In the process of viewing I have begun to identify a series of overlaps and shifts between the deployments of domestic small-gauge film, not only in terms of their narrative significance, but also in their styles, presentation in the diegesis, relation to the containing film and concerns which they gave

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<sup>10</sup> Patricia Zimmermann, *Reel Families*; Alan D. Kattelle, *Home Movies: A History of the American Industry, 1897-1979* (Nashua, NH: Transition Publication, 2000); Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur film: Meaning and Practice c. 1927-77*.

rise to. This thesis is organised in relation to these shifts, which have some aspect of periodisation but are also indicative of continuing trends.

Each chapter focuses on a particular development in the depiction of home movies-in-films, examining a selection of case studies which best exemplify these transitions. The first enquires into a pervasive association of home movies with wealth and spectacle in the films released between 1939-1949. The first date refers to the release year of *The Women* (George Cukor, US), which is the earliest example which I have identified that fits within the parameters of this study.<sup>11</sup> I do not wish to suggest that *The Women* offers the first example of a home movie within a US fiction film; however, as the first chapter will illuminate, the sophistication of the depiction of home movies in the late 1930s and 1940s bespeaks of their novelty as a cinematic motif. The second chapter follows on from the concerns established in the preceding one, observing an incongruity between cinemas' continued affiliation of home movies with affluence and developments in the social history of amateur filmmaking following the Second World War. However, in the films discussed in Chapter Three home movies are no longer depicted predominately as the provenance of the well-to-do. Focusing on films released between 1965-1980, the third chapter investigates the dual role of home movies deployed as sentimental reminders of a lost cohesion and a tool to challenge the family ideal. As I will argue, the films of the time not only deploy home movies to probe the fractures in the represented family but also complicate the place of the home movie, at home and on the silver screen. Chapter Four studies on the adaptations of Thomas Harris' novel *Red Dragon* (1981) — *Manhunter* (Michael Mann, 1986), *Red Dragon* (Brett Ratner, 2002) — charting the impact which the advent of home video had on the representation of

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<sup>11</sup> As I indicate in the filmography, a previous example may be found in Japanese cinema: Ozu Yashuzio's *I Was Born But...* (1932). The earliest example of amateur film within a fiction film discussed by Marie-Thérèse Journot is *The Cameraman* (Buster Keaton and Edward Sedgwick, 1928).

cinematic home movies. Home movie obsolescence is explored further in Chapter Five which observes a transition in fiction films' depiction of home movies from a prop in the diegesis to a texture, a stylistic metonym for the representation of anteriority. Finally, Chapter Six focuses on the depiction of home movies in *Super 8* (2011) and *Frankenweenie* (2012), films which express a nostalgic longing towards the materiality of small-gauge technology.

Although the chapters develop, on the whole, chronologically, it is important to underline that the transitions they chart are fluid. Thus, for example, while the sixth chapter studies a returned interest in the materiality of small-gauge film, not all cinematic representations around that time will express a similar longing as that connoted by Abrams' and Burton's work (*Philomena*'s depiction of home movies transferred to video is a point in case). As Raymond Williams cautions in *Marxism and Literature* (1977) the shifts between the old and the new should not be considered as clear cut transitions, but rather as a negotiation of the emergent, the dominant and the obsolete. Thus, instead of a teleological narrative of progress from an unfamiliar motif to a cinematic shorthand, the history of home movies in fiction films will reveal an uneven development that does not always abide by neat categorisations.<sup>12</sup>

Delineating the approach to studying the history of home movies in fiction films it is important to emphasise that home movies do not offer a straightforward corpus for study.

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<sup>12</sup> A point in case is Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960). The film features an exceptional use of home movies — scientific films documenting a father's cruel psychological experiments conducted on his son — which stands out from its contemporaries as a mark of its complexity and concerns as well as the robust critical attention it has received. Due to this I will not be studying the film as a primary case study. I will however be referring to it throughout the work. Addressing *Peeping Tom* throughout the thesis rather than isolating it out for its singularity will allow me to consider how Powell's film can contribute to shedding light on the broader issues of home movies-in-films.

As Marie-Thérèse Journot remarks in her analysis of amateur film-within-film, compiling a filmography proves a particular challenge for scholars endeavouring to study cinematic representations of non-professional moving images. Because the subject has for the most part eluded scrutiny finding examples of home movies in the films is not a simple task, and one that is not likely to produce an exhaustive list. In order to narrow the field of inquiry I have chosen to focus exclusively on home movies depicted in UK and US fiction films. This limitation is thus a practical choice, one which allowed me to dedicate attention to reading deeper rather than wider and to explore the chosen context more fully than an international approach would allow. Inquiring into the cinematic representations of home movies, I believe that it is important to engage with the work that has been done on the subject; to understand both how home movies have been depicted and how these representations have, or, as was more often the case, have not, been received and studied. In narrowing the focus to UK and US films, I have chosen not only two cinematic but also two critical contexts which are most accessible to me.

In light of the challenges posed by the corpus selection, this work remains conscious that the insights which it offers into the history of cinematic home movies may, in time, prove to be provisional. I have made extensive endeavours to discover as wide a range of examples as possible, drawing on number of sources which included: a search into the relevant literature, the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), consultations with colleagues, drawing on my own memory as well as, at times, educated guesses and serendipitous encounters. I remain aware however, that there are other case studies to be discovered, and that these may support, enrich as well as possibly complicate or contradict the trajectory of home movies in the films charted by this thesis. What this work hopes to achieve therefore, is to suggest the insights that can be gained from attending closely to the cinematic depiction of domestic moving

images, demonstrating the textual and conceptual richness of the object of study and advancing ‘imagination’, an approach which both responds to and interrogates the specificity of home movies in fiction films.

The inquiry into home movies in UK and US fiction films reveals cinema’s long-standing preoccupation with small-gauge domestic image-making. In exploring their persistent appeal it is paramount to ask: what role do home movies play on the big screen? In order to answer this, it is important to engage with the unique character of the cinematic home movie as an object of study. Unlike video or television, small-gauge films are not cinema’s rival media. For most of their history, cinematic home movies are akin, in terms of medium, to the containing works. Due to this affinity, small-gauge films are often deployed as a self-reflexive device, a tool through which filmmakers reflect on their art. Home movies are however not simply films-within-a-film. They are amateur works, and as such exist in a tension with the professional productions in which they are embedded. Studying attitudes which the contained films express towards the containing ones allows us to probe the fraught amateur/professional boundary which has structured much of the debates about small-gauge filmmaking. Most specifically home movies are domestic films. They are films made by and for families, a leisure time pursuit intended for private consumption. Studying the significance of home movies in cinema’s representation of domesticity (for example, as occasion for a social gathering, a tool through which the family cements or probes its togetherness, a repository of memory) opens up a broader discussion on the role which media and mediation play in cinematic construction of family narratives. Equally significant however is the question: what do the particular ‘homes’, in the literal and metaphorical sense, with which the home movie is associated reveal about cinema’s ongoing negotiation of the meaning of the home movie-in-film?

As this thesis reveals, fiction films' depictions of home movies shift over time. These transitions might entail a perceptible change in the presentation of the contained films (such as the shift from technology to texture discussed in Chapter Five); they may also consist of subtler transformations in the spaces and times which they are deployed to represent and the locations in which they are screened. However, to what extent do those developments correlate with the history of the technology? While the social and technological histories of home movies provide an important backdrop for studying the transition in the fiction film's representation of domestic image making, I argue that it is equally important to recognise their distinctiveness as devices of fiction. As this thesis illuminates, the cinematic depiction of home movies does not simply offer a reflection on developments in the domestic moving image making landscape. Rather, I argue that in representing the home movie, cinema constructs the meaning of the term. Studying the 'cues' which constitute the home movies, as well as the narratives which they are deployed in and give rise to, illuminates cinema's ongoing negotiation of the meaning and significance of the home movie, a process which I explore in terms of the home movie imagination.

## Review of the Literature

### Introduction

In order to lay the groundwork for exploring the history of home movies in fiction films it is first necessary to consider the relevant critical literature. While the analysis of cinematic depictions of home movies do not form a unified scholarship, there are two established bodies of literature in which the subject has come under consideration. The first of these is home movie studies, a discipline dedicated to examining the social role, technological development and cultural purchase of domestic image making. The second stems from film studies, and comprises works which reflect on the significance of the home movie-within-film. Bringing together the, hitherto for the most part disparate, material on the representation of home movies this Review of Literature will establish fictional depictions of home movies as a subject of scrutiny. Taking into account the contexts, methodologies and insights which scholars bring to bear on the analysis of fictional depictions of home moviemaking will allow us to identify the key concerns which underpin these inquiries as well as to illuminate and address the omissions in, and challenges posed by, the study of home movies-in-films.

This Review of Literature however seeks not only to establish and delineate the representation of home movies as an object of study but also to advance a framework for their analysis; one which recognises their cinematic specificity and accounts for their dynamic character. The models for such an inquiry may be found among the works dedicated to the study of cinema's depictions of other media such as Jane Stokes' analysis of cinema's 'technogenesis' of television in *On Screen Rivals: Cinema and Television in the United States and Britain* (1999), Lucas Hilderbrand's study of the history of bootleg video in

*Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of VideoTape and Copyright* (2009) or Caetlin Benson-Allott's examination of platforms of reception in *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens: Video Spectatorship From VHS to File Sharing* (2013). All works address the relation between commercial narrative film and its media rivals, yet while the scholars share an interest in cinema's representation of technology, they propose different approaches to exploring this subject. Stokes draws on sociology, analysing the discursive construction of television by cinema (which she defined in terms of 'cultural technologies') in relation to Igor Kopytoff's notion of the 'cultural biography of things'; Hildebrand situates his study within a broader concern with copyright law, while Benson-Allott locates her work within platform studies (with a particular focus on phenomenology). In each case, the frameworks are tailored to addressing the particular concerns of the work, suggesting that finding a suitable approach is a vital part of inquiring into representation of media. The aim of this Review of Literature is similarly to propose a framework for analysing home movies in fiction films. Building on the concerns identified in the summary of the critical literature, I will argue that it is constructive to perceive the representations home movies in terms of an imagination, locating the interests of this inquiry within the purview of the scholarship on the imaginary in media.

The Review of Literature is composed of three parts. It begins with a largely chronological overview of home movie studies, focusing particularly on how the field has approached the analysis of home movies-in-films and on questions of history. I will argue that the development of the cinematic depiction of home movies cannot be accounted for solely by consulting its social and technological histories, and it is paramount to consider its role in, and relation to, the containing film. With this in mind, this chapter then proceeds to the critical literature on home movies developed within film studies, illuminating the diversity

of what constitutes a home movie-in-film, exploring its role as a motif and surveying the taxonomical classifications it has engendered. Addressing the fraught character of home movies as stylisations, the third section is more speculative and eclectic, bringing together works on the imaginary in media in order to advance the concept of the home movie imagination. I will argue that, while cinematic representations of home movies do not always offer openly speculative narratives about the technology, perceiving home movies-in-film in terms of imagination fosters a nuanced appreciation of the way in which cinema constructs the meaning, and explores the expressive possibilities, of home movies in the process of representation.

### **1. Home movie studies**

The analysis of home movies in fiction film has been largely neglected in home movie studies. While the early publications envisaged cinematic representation of home movies as being of potential scholarly interest, as the field developed this concern has been side-lined in favour of archival and documentary concerns. Yet, while home movie studies may have on the whole overlooked the analysis of home movies-in-films, an overview of the field provides valuable insight into issues which are of importance to the inquiry into the small-gauge on the big screen. The two concerns that are of particular significance are: firstly, how the definition of what constitutes a 'home movie' has been established, complicated and refined; and secondly, how scholars have approached the study of the histories of domestic small-gauge filmmaking.

#### **Establishing the scholarship**

The interest in home movies as a culturally significant form of image making emerged in the 1980s accompanying a broader shift towards an academic focus on the study of everyday

life. Bringing together scholars from anthropology, sociology, history, and film studies the 1986 publication of a special issue of *The Journal of Film and Video* on home movies and amateur filmmaking can be perceived a symbolic inauguration of home movie studies as a field, establishing small-gauge filmmaking as a potential (and legitimate) object of study.<sup>1</sup> The diversity of approaches explored in the *Journal of Film and Video* suggest not only the versatility of amateur filmmaking as a scholarly subject but also reveal its relative unfamiliarity, indicating that the field was yet to clarify its dominant contexts, concerns and methodologies.

The novelty of the subject is foregrounded as we observe that the key consideration of the special issue is the definition of what constitutes the home movie and amateur film. In order to elucidate the terms, scholars often compare and contrast domestic films with what they perceive to be their opposite — professional fiction filmmaking — in terms of style (home movies are marked by a disregard for established filmmaking conventions), function (providing documents of family life rather than storytelling) and viewing environment (private in the home vs. public in the cinema). In ‘Some Notes on Home Movies’, Fred Camper argues that: ‘home movies fit none of the neat categories film critics have constructed’,<sup>2</sup> and advocates the need to be attuned to the specificities of the films themselves in order to classify and analyse them.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Richard Chalfen distinguishes home movies from commercial narrative film, cautioning against an approach which would

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Film and Video* 38:3/4 (Summer/Fall 1986). Precedents for the study of amateur and domestic movie making can be found in explorations of family photography (Julia Hirsch’s 1981 work *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning and Effect*), anthropology (Sol Worth’s and John Adair’s *Through Navajo Eyes: An Exploration in Film Communication and Anthropology* from 1972) as well as in avant-garde uses of small-gauge filmmaking (the articles and audio-visual works of Maya Daren, Stan Brakhage and Jonas Mekas).

<sup>2</sup> Fred Camper, ‘Some Notes on Home Movies’, *Journal of Film and Video* 38: 3/4 (Summer/Fall 1986), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> The issue with taxonomies and definitions, as shall become clear, still persists in the studies of the field.

seek to evaluate them comparatively. In 'My Aunt Alice's Home Movies' Chuck Kleinhans however suggests a different perspective; interrogating the ways in which home movies interact with popular culture he argues that family filmmaking may provide a space for women and children to re-evaluate their place in the 'structures provided by mass culture'.<sup>4</sup> Kleinhans' work illustrates how home movies, considered as belonging to the private realm of the home and family, cannot always be neatly separated from the influences of the public sphere.

This concern with the relation between amateur and professional productions comes to the fore in the articles dedicated to the analysis of interplay between home movies and what Patricia Erens collectively describes as 'other filmmaking practices'.<sup>5</sup> Investigating the relationship between small-gauge filmmaking and the avant-garde (Patricia Zimmermann's 'The Amateur, the Avant-Garde and the Ideologies of Art'; Maureen Turim's 'Childhood Memories and Household Events in the Feminist Avant-Garde'), documentary (Mark Rance's 'Home Movies in Cinema-Verite'), as well as commercial narrative film (Patricia Erens' 'Home Movies in Commercial Narrative Film') the scholars suggest that the study of family filmmaking cannot not be limited to its place in the home, but should also consider its creative redeployments. Of particular interest to this study is Patricia Erens' account of commercial narrative film's representation of domestic image making. In her work, Erens considers five examples of home movies-in-films (*Peeping Tom*, *Raging Bull*, *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, *The Falcon and the Snowman* and *Paris/Texas*) and proceeds to analyse the roles they play in the films.<sup>6</sup> Comparing the films to the Galler home movies, which she

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<sup>4</sup> Chuck Kleinhans, 'My Aunt Alice's Home Movies', *Journal of Film and Video* 38:3/4 (Summer/Fall 1986), p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Patricia Erens, 'From the Editor', *Journal of Film and Video* 38:3/4 (Summer/Fall 1986), p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Peeping Tom* (Michael Powell, 1960), *Raging Bull* (Martin Scorsese, 1980), *Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (Chris Petit, 1982), *The Falcon and the Snowman* (John Schlesinger, 1985) and *Paris/Texas* (Wim Wenders, 1984).

analyses in another essay in the issue, Erens' observes that cinematic depictions of home movies seek to 'reproduce 'familiar 'mistakes' which constitute the home movie aesthetic ... in order to create the necessary look' a correspondence which leads her to label these images as 'pseudo-home movies'.<sup>7</sup> As such, she argues that home movies in fiction films are structured by stylistic discord as: 'nothing could be further from this self-conscious, seemingly primitive mode of filmmaking than the seamless illusion created by most commercial narrative films.'<sup>8</sup> Erens summarises their role in the films by stating that: 'home movies have been utilised to provide insight into fictional characters, to indicate a higher truth, to serve as a Rorschach test for the emotional states of the protagonists, to offer visual contrast and to constitute an extended metaphor for the entire work.'<sup>9</sup> While her analysis is cursory, it does shore up key concerns which, as I shall demonstrate shortly, run throughout the works which interrogate cinematic home movies, namely: the narrative role of the home movie-in-film, their potential as a self-reflexive device and their status as stylisation.

Following the publication of *The Journal of Film and Video* special issue, the significance of home movies as a subject of scholarly inquiry was further cemented by two ground breaking studies on amateur film: Richard Chalfen's *Snapshot Versions of Life* (1987) and Patricia Zimmermann's *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (1995). While *Snapshot Versions of Life* was the first book-length study to investigate domestic filmmaking; small-gauge films do not however constitute the primary focus of this work. Rather, Chalfen is concerned broadly with what he calls 'the home mode of pictorial communication': an investigation into small group communication through familial image production and reception within the context of the home (which includes home movies as

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<sup>7</sup> Patricia Erens, 'Home Movies in Commercial Narrative Film', *Journal of Film and Video* 38:3/4 (Summer/Fall 1986), p. 99.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

well as snapshot photography and home video). Analysing domestic images as examples of the 'home mode' Chalfen emphasises their difference from 'mass mode' imagery, arguing that home movies are produced for dissimilar purposes, and received differently than other filmic forms. Domestic movie makers, he states, are on the whole unconcerned with 'the manipulative potential of recording technology' and rather seek to document special moments of everyday life in accordance with socially neutralised conventions which have become attached to this form of filmmaking.<sup>10</sup> As such home movies should not be perceived in comparison to professional work, as lesser or poorly made films, but rather as a distinct 'process of social communication.'<sup>11</sup> They may however, as Chalfen illuminates, be taken up in 'other communicative contexts' such as art cinema, documentary and commercial narrative film. On the whole, Chalfen sees the function of this appropriated footage as an extension of the role played by the adoption of the conventions of snapshot photography in art: providing an authenticating view, 'false intimacy' and a 'a sense of participation in extended family life.'<sup>12</sup> In his brief overview of re-contextualised home mode imagery, Chalfen however not only considers the roles which they serve but also constructs a taxonomy of their 'types' which broadly fall into three distinct categories (similar to those suggested in *The Journal of Film and Video*): documentary and artists films' which use 'authentic' home movies as found footage; films shot on small-gauge technology which he terms as 'ambiguous' home movies (although they are often shot on small-gauge film and at times made at home, their anticipated audience is different than that of domestic family filmmaking); and 'fabricated' home movies in fiction films. Chalfen's description of home movies-the-films as 'fabricated' brings to mind Erens' characterisation of this type of imagery as 'pseudo-home movies' both suggesting their status as an imitation. Yet while

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), p. 68.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 154–155.

Erens' designation of cinematic home movies as 'pseudo' places them in a somewhat subordinate position as a copy of 'the real thing' Chalfen's 'fabrication' suggests agency, indicating that in imitating home movies cinema can be seen not simply as emulating home movies but as constructing them for its own purposes a concern which comes to the fore in James Moran's *There's No Place Like Home Video* (2002).

While Chalfen's ethnographic analysis of domestic image production has been influential, it is Zimmermann's work that set the path for further developments in the scholarship.<sup>13</sup> In *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* Zimmermann criticises Chalfen's work for its indifference to historical analysis, arguing that his anthropological study isolates home moviemaking from the social and political realities within which it is produced. In contrast her aim is to chart a historically oriented study of amateur film, one which, as she writes, 'is located more specifically within its social relations to dominant cinematic practices, ideologies and economic structures, rather than in its presumed textual innocence.'<sup>14</sup> In contrast to Chalfen's understanding of home movies as a process of social communication, Zimmermann defines amateur film as 'a discursive construct, a category of products and producers'<sup>15</sup> encompassing a technology, the uses to which it has been put and notably the ways they been articulated (primarily by the topical press, camera manufacturers, and 'how to' manuals). Furthermore, she argues that these meanings are not stable and will change over time. Consequently, a history of amateur film is a study of the disparate forces which combine and compete to shape the understanding of non-professional moving image production. Illuminating the shifting definitions of amateur film, Zimmermann proceeds by

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<sup>13</sup> The centrality of Zimmermann's work is evidenced not only in the frequent reference to her work but also by the fact that she is a contributor to the majority of edited collections on the subject.

<sup>14</sup> Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. xii.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

identifying key periods in its discursive development.<sup>16</sup> Each of these periods is characterised by the dominance of a specific aesthetic and social definition which delineates how amateur technology should be used, by whom, and to what effect. Throughout, Zimmermann sees amateur film as a struggle between the capability of small-gauge technologies to serve as tools facilitating social and political critique, and the hindering of that potential by Hollywood cinema and camera manufacturers (Bell and Howell, Eastman Kodak, Victor Animatograph) as expressed in movie makers' publications (subject to the influences of both the film industry and producers of technology).<sup>17</sup> As she underlines: 'amateur film is not simply an inert designation of inferior film practice and ideology, but rather is a historical process of social control over representation.'<sup>18</sup>

Perceiving amateur film as discursively constructed, and illuminating the ways in which stylistic conventions associated with Hollywood filmmaking were deployed in 'how to' manuals as a way of criticising and constraining amateur aesthetics, Zimmermann however excludes a discussion of what Hollywood itself had to say on the matter of non-professional filmmaking. This oversight is surprising in light of the importance Zimmermann affords to

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<sup>16</sup> These periods comprise: the entrepreneurial period of early cinema, the standardisation of 16mm as the amateur film gauge in 1923, the militarisation of non-professional image technology during World War II, and finally the incorporation of the camera as a leisure-time commodity and its dominant association with the home movie in the 1950–1960s.

<sup>17</sup> For this reason, Zimmermann is highly critical of the home movie which she perceives as forestalling the critical potential of small-gauge film. She argues that the post-war expansion of the leisure market with its 'do-it-yourself' ideology and the popularisation of the 8mm substandard gauge 'marginalised amateur film-making as a hobby to fill up leisure time and as a retreat from social and political participation.' Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, p.146. While home movies are not exclusively a post war development, Zimmermann argues that whereas before 1950s family film making was one among a number of uses envisaged for small-gauge film, this changed with the popularisation of inexpensive and easy to use 8mm cameras which accompanied the post-war economic boom, increased leisure time, and rise of the nuclear family as a self-sufficient, self-centred unit. The 1950s–1960s saw the collapse of amateur film into home movies, and the distinction between amateur and professional became that of private versus public. For Zimmermann, this was the final step in the process which consigned amateurism from its original entrepreneurial spirit to an insignificant pastime.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv.

avant-garde practitioners in defining the meaning and effects of small-gauge practice. Studying the audio-visual and written work of filmmakers such as Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage and Jonas Mekas, Zimmermann perceives experimental film as at once posing a challenge to dominant artistic norms and offering a space where amateurism can be reinvented as an asset. Although her perception of the avant-garde as a template for domestic filmmaking is problematic as it side-lines the differences in their intentions and modes of address — in extension, as James Moran argues, holding domestic filmmaking ‘accountable for what it is not, for what it ought to be: socially or aesthetically radical’<sup>19</sup> — it also suggests how moving image practices interrogate, and potentially contribute to shaping, the definitions of amateur film and the home movie.

Chalfen’s and Zimmermann’s work are often considered as the foundational texts of home movie studies; there is however another important work to take into consideration: James Moran’s aforementioned *There’s No Place Like Home Video*. While Moran’s analysis engages with home movie studies (drawing on both *Snapshot Versions of Life* and *Reel Families*), it occupies a somewhat uneasy place in the scholarship on amateur filmmaking. Although it is recognised as an influential inquiry it is often situated at the parameters rather than at the centre of the field, and this is not only due to its focus on video in a field concerned with small-gauge filmmaking, but also in relation to his theoretical concern with questions of ‘medium’ which is at odds with the direction in which, as I shall illuminate shortly, the scholarship was developing at the time (towards a re-evaluation of home movies as historical documents). Moran’s work is however of particular importance to this thesis. While dissimilar in its object of study *There’s No Place Like Home Video* offers insight into the

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<sup>19</sup> James M. Moran, *There’s No Place Like Home Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 73.

analysis of home movies in fiction films as a result of the unparalleled importance it affords to analysis of the cultural circulation of home video, and its relation to ‘the competing media of television and film.’<sup>20</sup>

The primary aim of *There’s No Place Like Home Video* is to rethink the definition of ‘medium’, moving away from technological determinism (which perceives the possibilities of a medium as prescribed by its material capacities) and towards understanding it as a discourse. As Moran argues, ‘no medium exists in a vacuum’ and it is important to take into account the context in which its identity is being determined, re-evaluated and negotiated.<sup>21</sup>

Like Zimmermann, Moran thus largely excludes a discussion of actual amateur videos, focusing on the ways in which video has been envisioned and shaped by academics, artists, professional videographers, as well as, television and cinema. Notably it is his discussion of home video represented in film and on television that propels Moran to ‘retheorize the category of ‘medium’ itself as a dialectical synthesis of empirical, material technologies and imaginary, discursive constructs.’<sup>22</sup> As he observes — analysing the depiction of video in the animated television series *The Simpsons* where the images coded as video have perceptibly not been produced by a video camera — video-in-the-text (which he terms VIT for short) is a ‘textual signifier’ which can be simulated without the deployment of the technology which is being represented. This observation leads Moran to propose an understanding of video as an ‘imaginary medium’ a term which he argues can be applied not only to describe the VIT but to the analysis of the medium more broadly.<sup>23</sup> He writes that:

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<sup>20</sup> Moran, *There’s No Place Like Home Video*, p. xvi.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. xv.

<sup>23</sup> The term borrows its name from Christian Metz’s ‘imaginary signifier’; Moran however distances himself from the psychoanalytical approach, arguing that it denies the role of conscious intention, and thus obscures the ways in which models of medium specificity are produced by communities in accordance with their overriding ideologies and goals.

A concept of medium as imaginary lies ... somewhere between its material base and epiphenomenal idea, between its historical specificity and its perceived universal essence. In this sense, discourses about medium specificity are allegorical, circumventing the need to dismiss them purely on the basis of empirical contradiction. Irreducible to its mechanics and untethered to technological necessity, a medium's specificity, as Stephen Heath has suggested about cinema, may shift from its technological apparatus to a set of metaphysical codes. These codes constitute the imaginary apparatus, the imaginary medium, which despite its relative immateriality may nevertheless generate very real material consequences within a cultural field.<sup>24</sup>

In this thesis I wish to draw on Moran's notion of cinematic home video as an 'imaginary medium', which I believe can productively be applied to the analysis of cinematic home movies, whose images, like those of video, are not necessarily produced by the appropriate technology. As I will argue, perceiving the home movies as 'imaginary' allows us to more effectively evaluate their relation with the films in which they are contained, rather than perceiving them merely in terms of an imitation which places stress on the relation between cinematic home movies and their elusive 'authentic' counterparts. It is however also important to recognise the limits of deploying Moran's analysis of the VIT as a framework for studying home movies in fiction films. As Moran argues different media carry dissimilar connotations, and 'to prefer video or film as one's medium of choice makes a statement about one's imagined relation to the world.'<sup>25</sup> While they may at times be used to serve

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

similar functions, the meaning of video-in-film will thus be different to that of the small-gauge film-within-film, and the two media will thus, as I will explore further, engender different ‘imagination’.

### **Home movie histories**

Moran’s study of home video is a-typical of the direction taken by home movie studies whose concerns gravitated towards the historical questions posed by *Reel Families* and issues connected to the archival preservation of amateur material. Zimmermann’s analysis of the social history of amateur film is complemented and complicated by three further studies which evaluate distinct aspects of the development of non-professional filmmaking: Alan Kattelle’s inquiry into the evolution of small-gauge technology, Heather Norris Nicholson’s examination of amateur filmmaking in Britain in and Charles Tepperman’s account of what he terms as ‘serious’ or ‘advanced’ amateur film.<sup>26</sup> All of these studies share an interest in charting historical developments of non-professional filmmaking, offering different frameworks through which to approach the subject. Kattelle’s work details the evolution of motion picture equipment for the amateur and offers an in-depth account of the technological history of amateur filmmaking as well as insight into the working of film clubs, a largely neglected area of scrutiny. While his study is more akin to a survey than a critical account, it provides valuable insight into understanding what materials were available to amateurs at different points in time and suggests how these possibilities shaped the developments of small-gauge filmmaking in the US (and to an extent also in Europe). In

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<sup>26</sup> Alan D. Kattelle, *Home Movies: A History of the American Industry, 1897-1979* (Nashua, NH: Transition Publication, 2000); Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film: Meaning and Practice, 1927-77* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Charles Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema: The Rise of North American Moviemaking, 1923–1960* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2014).

*Amateur Film: Meaning and Practice*, Norris Nicholson draws on Kattelle as well as amateur periodicals (notably *Amateur Photographer and Cinematographer*) home movies and amateur films collected in the North West Film Archive and interviews with non-professional filmmakers, to offer insight into the largely neglected study of the emergence of amateur filmmaking in Britain (a subject which has previously come under scrutiny in Ian Craven's 2009 collection *Movies On Home Ground: Explorations in Amateur Cinema*). Challenging the dominance of US focused studies, Norris Nicholson demonstrates that while on the whole the trajectory of amateur filmmaking in Britain may not differ significantly from the development of the practice in the US — moving, as she notes ‘from being a specialist leisure activity to ... an adjunct of modern living’<sup>27</sup> — engaging with histories of amateur practice on a local, regional and national level allows scholars to critically scrutinise both personal and collective memories and to integrate these into a wider study of national identity and history.

Norris Nicholson's study differs from Zimmermann's work not only in its focus on British amateur film but also in the way in which she chooses to tell the history of small-gauge filmmaking. While *Reel Families* presents the development of amateur as a unified narrative which saw the transition of amateur film from entrepreneurial gadget to household item, Norris Nicholson proposes that the study of non-professional filmmaking should be perceived as composed of entwined histories. This is reflected in the manner in which her inquiry is organised: rather than chronologically, *Amateur Film: Meaning and Practice* proceeds thematically, mapping a series of histories which detail the development of amateur cine clubs, hobby press, family filmmaking, films about local communities, amateur

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<sup>27</sup> Heather Norris Nicholson *Amateur film: Meaning and practice c. 1927–77* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 10.

documents of work, travel films and socially engaged filmmaking. Proceeding in this way, Nicholson underlines that what we understand as amateur filmmaking (and its history) is not unified, further suggesting that, rather than a betrayal of the critical potential of small-gauge films, home movies should be seen as a facet of the practice, one which has its distinct specificities and concerns. This understanding of amateur filmmaking as a multifaceted phenomenon also informs Tepperman's *Amateur Cinema: The Rise of North American Moviemaking, 1923–1960* which criticises Zimmermann's conflation of amateur film into a single entity, emphasising instead the distinction between 'advanced' amateurs — who 'employ more polished filming and editing techniques' and who envisage an audience beyond the domestic — and home movies 'which are generally produced for private record.'<sup>28</sup>

Norris Nicholson's and Tepperman's studies indicate that the development of the field has led to a more nuanced appreciation of amateur film which is best understood as an umbrella term encompassing a variety of often distinct practices. The home movie, as Norris Nicholson illuminates, is thus one among many uses of amateur film, characterised by its concern with the family and its apparent lack of interest in the established conventions of filmmaking. In this thesis, I similarly conceive of the home movie as a distinct object of study. Recognising that the boundaries between different types of amateur filmmaking are not set in stone, my analysis is primarily concerned with cinematic representations of home movies and specifically, with the historical development of their depictions. Studying this history, it is important to take into consideration its relation to the broader social, technological and cultural developments of the home movie. Thus, throughout my thesis I

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<sup>28</sup>Charles Tepperman, *Amateur Cinema: The Rise of North American Moviemaking, 1923–1960* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2014), p. 6.

draw on Zimmermann's, Kattelle's and Norris Nicholson's studies, to explore the overlaps and divergences between home movies-in-films and their social and technological histories in the UK and US. My understanding of the history of home movies however differs from that outlined by the home movie scholars, not only in its cinematic specificity but also in our divergent perceptions of its duration. Notably, Zimmermann, Kattelle and Norris Nicholson all conclude their inquiry in the mid and late 1970s, at a time when the popularity of small-gauge technology became eclipsed by domestic video. I believe, however, that it is important to ask: what happens to the home movies following the commercial obsolescence of small-gauge technology?

The answer to this question, partially, lies the studies themselves, which indicate that following their obsolescence home movies shift from being a practice, to an object of scrutiny, a transition facilitated by the rising interest in the collection and preservation of such works since the 1980s.<sup>29</sup> The issues raised by the collection, preservation and dissemination of small-gauge films and the influence of these practices on the scholarly perception of the home movie, is a concern which comes to the fore in Patricia Zimmermann's and Karen L. Ishizuka's edited collection *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (2007). Bringing together international scholars, archivists and filmmakers, Zimmermann's and Ishizuka's collection 'integrates discussions on the theory, practice, filmmaking, acquisition, preservation and restoration of amateur film' emphasising the home movie's potential to serve, as Zimmermann writes in her

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<sup>29</sup> In the 1980s small-gauge films were predominantly gathered by regional archives (which acquired works relating to the history and culture of their particular location) and private collectors. By the year 2000 however several bodies had been founded on a national level in the US and Northern Europe, concentrating on establishing an archival sub-field dedicated to the preservation of small-gauge films. The Association Européenne Inédits was founded in 1989 in Europe, the National Film Preservation Foundation was established in 1996 in North America and in 1999 the Association of Moving Image Archivists set up the Small-Gauge Task Force which established the selection criteria for preserving amateur moving images and developed outreach strategies.

introduction, ‘as an index, marker and trace of trauma’ which urges scholars to ‘revise our notion of the historical to include lost and repressed objects, practices and discourses as vital and important realms of historical inquiry.’<sup>30</sup> As Roger Odin cautions however (in his essay ‘Reflections on the Family Home Movie as Document: A Semio-Pragmatic Approach’ published in the collection), to perceive the home movie as a historical document is also to re-contextualise it; as he argues:

The family film is in fact a *counter-document*. The collective interactions at the moment of their shooting or viewing and the individual interior discourses are more important than the images themselves. To read a home movie as a document is to ‘use’ it for something that is not its own function.<sup>31</sup> [emphasis in text]

Odin’s approach is of central importance to the project of *Mining the Home Movie* and his concern is reflected in the articles, many of which concern texts which have already been de-framed, whether through spatial re-location (from the home into the range of national and regional archives studied in the collection) or audio-visual appropriation (the use of home movies as found footage which is discussed by numerous contributors to the collection). The texts collected in *Mining the Home Movie* are thus always about something more than the films themselves: they tell the story of how movements in preservation and dissemination of

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<sup>30</sup> Patricia Zimmermann, ‘Introduction. The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings’, in Zimmermann and Ishizuka (eds.), *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, p. 1. *Mining the Home Movie* should be seen as a touchstone, rather than a turning point in the scholarship. Zimmermann and Ishizuka’s work focuses more on legitimisation than innovation: mapping out the scholarship’s institutional and critical history, and highlighting its dominant approaches, aims and concerns.

<sup>31</sup> Roger Odin, ‘Reflections on the Family Home Movie as Document: A Semio-Pragmatic Approach’ in Patricia R. Zimmermann and Karen L. Ishizuka (eds.), *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, p. 261.

amateur materials, together with the developments in contemporary historiography, foster an understanding of home movies as documents of histories from below.

While studying home movies as documents generates important historical insight, defining home movies in these terms also has its limitations. Perceiving home movies solely as archival material neglects addressing questions of the place of the home movie beyond the archive, which is particularly relevant in the case of the recent analogue nostalgia boom. As Paul Gansky illuminates while ‘most research treats Super 8 as a dead rather than residual medium ... [its] contemporary use in weddings also illustrates that the format’s technological, aesthetic, and cultural values are not wholly dictated by museums and historical societies.’<sup>32</sup> To fully understand the trajectories undergone by small-gauge filmmaking following their obsolescence it is thus important to address how (and in what form) the home movie persists in the new media landscape. Due to the spatial constraints of this Review of Literature, I am not able to provide a detailed account of the growing literature on analogue nostalgia, and will thus concentrate specifically on the literature which addresses the interplay between *home movies* and new media, drawing on the broader accounts of nostalgia in the relevant chapters.

If *Mining the Home Movie* is concerned with the ways in which archival preservation influences a re-definition of domestically produced images, *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web* (2014) maintains this concern, additionally inquiring into the impact which new technologies have on established definitions of the home movie. The discussions concern not only new archival practices (the digitisation and online

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Gansky, ‘Something Borrowed from the Past: Wedding Photography and Super 8mm’, *Mediascape* (Fall, 2013) <[http://www.tft.ucla.edu/mediascape/Winter2013\\_WeddingPhotography.html](http://www.tft.ucla.edu/mediascape/Winter2013_WeddingPhotography.html)> accessed: 29 February 2016.

dissemination of home movies and home videos discussed by Susana Aasman and Patricia Zimmermann in their articles) but also the technical developments in amateur film production. In contrast to *Mining the Home Movie*, which envisages the 'home movie' as a medium specific definition, in *Amateur Filmmaking*, the term refers to both films shot on film and those recorded digitally; both Lauren Berliner and Abigail Keating describe footage shot on digital cameras as home movies.<sup>33</sup> While such a description fosters a continuity between a range of home mode technologies and practices (integrating a discussion of new media into the studies of non-professional filmmaking) it is also problematic as it simplifies the complexities of the interweaving of old and new technologies in the contemporary media landscape and overlooks how the technologies' distinct aesthetics may carry dissimilar connotations (a difference suggested by Moran in his comparison of the dissimilar perception of video and film). This issue of aesthetic preference comes to the fore in works dedicated to analysis of the contemporary penchant for the small-gauge 'look', notably Gansky's study of Super 8 wedding photography and Giuseppina Sapio's analysis of digitised home movies and retro.<sup>34</sup>

Drawing attention to the contemporary proliferation of 8mm imagery, both Gansky and Sapio emphasise the continued appeal of the format, at the same time suggesting that what constitutes a 'home movie' is no longer solely defined in terms of the technology but can also be perceived as referring to a 'style'. In contrast to Berliner and Keating, who emphasise continuity of home movies and digital family footage, Gansky and Sapio argue that

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<sup>33</sup> Lauren S. Berliner, 'Shooting for Profit: The Monetary Logic of the YouTube Home Movie' in Laura Rascaroli, Gwenda Young and Barry Monahan (eds.), *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web* (New York, London: Bloomsbury, 2014). Abigail Keating, 'Home Movies in the Age of Web 2.0: The Case of "Star Wars Kid"' in Rascaroli, Young and Monahan (eds.), *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web*.

<sup>34</sup> Giuseppina Sapio, 'Homesick for Aged Home Movies: Why Do We Shoot Contemporary Family Videos in Old-Fashioned Ways?' in Katharina Niemeyer (ed.), *Media and Nostalgia: Yearning for the Past, Present and Future* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

contemporary interest in the small-gauge stems from a perceived difference between analogue and digital imagery. This difference however is understood not in terms of their technologies but rather their aesthetics and affective attributes. As Sapio points out, while digital is perceived as cold and lacking in materiality, the grain of 8mm film is associated with warmth and tactility. Imbuing digital images with the texture of analogue allows users to re-enchant their footage, connoting a sense of pastness through their association with obsolete image making practices. At the same time, while the images shore up nostalgic associations they should not necessarily be perceived as expressing a desire for a return to small-gauge technology. As Sapio argues, contemporarily ‘we choose Super 8 [or to imitate Super 8] for its charming imperfections, not for its material disadvantages.’<sup>35</sup> Similarly Gansky elucidates that the medium specificity of 8mm film occupies an ambiguous position in wedding photography, as most companies deliver the footage on both processed film and a digital copy, recognising that it is often not the materiality of the medium but rather the small-gauge ‘look’ that constitutes the appeal of Super 8 film.

Yet, while Gansky and Sapio agree that the contemporary interest in small-gauges has more to do with their aesthetic than with the technology, the scholars diverge in their accounts of the factors which fuel this fascination. While Sapio argues that the preference for the small-gauge look stems from families’ desire to establish a ‘symbolic continuity’ with their previous family images, Gansky suggests that this interest in the 8mm aesthetic is, at least in part, driven by the proliferation of home movie footage in film and on television. Drawing attention to the way in which cinematic and televisual home movies are used by wedding photographers as examples of the product which they are selling, Gansky argues that:

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<sup>35</sup> Giuseppina Sapio, ‘Homesick for Aged Home Movies: Why Do We Shoot Contemporary Family Videos in Old-Fashioned Ways?’ in Katharina Niemeyer (ed.), *Media and Nostalgia: Yearning for the Past, Present and Future*, p. 45.

both wedding photographers and their customers may be more familiar with Super 8 through mass mediated, internationally broadcast replications, rather than from their own family's recordings ... through their frequent imitations in mainstream films, including Martin Scorsese's wedding-inflected opening credits sequence in *Mean Streets* (1973), or JJ Abrams' more recent *Super 8* (2011).<sup>36</sup>

Indicating the potential influence which home movies-in-films exert in the contemporary penchant for the 8mm aesthetic, Gansky turns the tables on the dominant perception of cinematic home movies as imitations of domestic films. Although analysis of the impact which fictional home movies have on the broader cultural perception of the practice lies beyond the parameters of this study, Gansky's assertion draws attention to a possibly important hold these images have on the public imagination, providing an additional reason for why these representations should not be overlooked.

Should however these digitised small-gauge films and footage enhanced by retro applications be considered as 'home movies'? One way of answering this would be, drawing on Sapio, to perceive these recordings as rendered in the home movie style. Such a description recognises both the medium in which they have been captured as well as the one which they are alluding to. However, it is important to point out that it may not always be possible to discern between films shot on film and transferred to digital or digital images manipulated to resemble home movies.<sup>37</sup> In light of this, I would argue that the question

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> *Searching for Sugar Man* (Malik Bendjelloul, 2012) indistinguishably interweaves footage shot on Super 8 with images taken with a retro application (8mm Vintage Cam).

itself is perhaps more interesting than arriving at a definite answer. It urges us to consider the context in which the images are brought articulated and to take into account how (and why) they are being presented as being either home movies or a digital approximation. Furthermore, even if these images cannot straightforwardly be considered as home movies, they should nonetheless be understood as part of the history of small-gauge filmmaking. As both Sapio and Gansky point out, the digitised Super 8 films and retro applications enter into a dialogue with small-gauge filmmaking, and the continuities which they forge should not be overlooked in favour of their divergences. The contemporary stylisations provide insight into how the persistence of home movies is envisaged following the commercial obsolescence of the technology in ways that complicate notions of medium specificity and urge us to revise our definition of the ‘home movie’. In order to account for these questions in this thesis I will consider home movies as referring to images which *connote* small-gauge film.<sup>38</sup> As I will demonstrate, cinema’s ‘imaginary’ representations of domestic films offer a particularly fertile ground to explore issues of stylisation which are crucial to studying contemporary home movies, as they allow us to explore not only what components need to be articulated for the footage to be interpreted as a ‘home movie’ but also how these ideas change over time.

As this survey has illuminated, since the mid-1980s there has been a growing interest in home movies as a subject of scholarly inquiry, and contemporarily the topic continues to attract much critical attention. As the field developed there has, however, been a marked marginalisation of home movies in fiction films. When home movies first became the focus of sustained academic inquiry, the depiction of home movies-in-films was envisaged as

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<sup>38</sup> Which is a particularly appropriate description for family films in fiction films which, as Moran argues with regard to video-in-the-text, are not necessarily generated by the appropriate technology.

being of possible interest to the field; the recent studies, such as *Mining the Home Movie* and *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, The Archive and the Web*, however, avoid engaging with home movies-in-films, favouring a discussion of documentary uses of found footage.<sup>39</sup> Thus, while ‘authentic’ and ‘ambiguous’ home movies, to borrow Chalfen’s terms, have an established place in studies of home movies and amateur film, the ‘fabricated’ home movies of commercial narrative film on the other hand appear to be conspicuously absent.

This marginalisation of home movies-in-film can be accounted for partly as stemming from the direction taken by the scholarship towards an understanding of home movies as documents of histories from below. Non-fictional works which draw on home movies are more easily integrated into the dominant concerns of the field with documentary and the archive than the stylised amateur film of commercial narrative cinema. In his introduction to *Small-Gauge Storytelling*, a collection of works addressing the frequently neglected subject of fictional productions made by amateur filmmakers, Ryan Shand identifies how the alignment of home movies with documentary resulted in a neglect of questions of fiction more generally. Accounting for this bias, Shand argues that ‘undoubtedly, this overemphasis on amateur documentaries is symptomatic of early attempts at justifying amateur cinema as a legitimate object of study ... This sometimes-difficult process has benefited from alignment with debates and practices that concern themselves with relatively established interests in documentary and issues of socio-cultural importance.’<sup>40</sup> However, as Shand illuminates, the study of amateur fiction films not only enriches our understanding of the

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<sup>39</sup> *Mining the Home Movie* features a number of studies dedicated to artists’ uses of archival and personal footage. Similarly, *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, The Archive and the Web* contains a section on ‘Amateur Auteurs’ which looks at the works of Péter Forgács, Joseph Morder and Jonathan Caouette.

<sup>40</sup> Ryan Shand, ‘Introduction: Ambitions and Arguments — Exploring Amateur Cinema Through Fiction’, in Ryan Shand and Ian Craven (eds.), *Small-Gauge Storytelling Discovering the Amateur Fiction Film*, p. 2.

cultures which surrounded small-gauge moving image production but may also provide ‘imaginative insight into ‘amateur subjectivity’.<sup>41</sup>

The side-lining of fictional depictions of home movies goes beyond the documentary orientation of the scholarship. The study of amateur film has, throughout the development of the field, been defined by its focus on a marginalised practice; overshadowed, both academically and culturally, by professional fiction film. As Fred Camper argues in ‘Some Notes on the Home Movie’, ‘virtually every general history of cinema awards hegemony to the commercial narrative film’, and one of the central aims of the scholarship on non-professional filmmaking was to address this imbalance.<sup>42</sup> While I recognise the importance of this perspectival shift, I argue that the study of home movies in fiction films should not be neglected. Studying how home movies have been imagined can provide insight into, and complicate issues of, medium specificity, allowing us to explore how home movies are culturally understood and how their history has been envisaged. Such an inquiry can also illuminate and complicate the fraught opposition between professional and amateur which structured much of the inquiry into the subject. When addressing what fiction films have to say about the home movie it is, however, important to pay attention to the context in which it is being articulated and thus, to take the containing film into account. With this in mind it is pertinent to draw not only on home movie studies but also to consult how the subject has been approached within film studies.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Camper, ‘Some Notes on the Home Movie’, *Journal of Film and Video*, p. 12.

## 2. Home movies-in-films

Home movies-in-films are a subject which has received sparse consideration not only in home movies studies but also within film studies. That is not to say that home movies have gone unnoticed, but that their analysis tends to focus on the roles which they play in individual films, and there is little consideration of their recurrent cinematic presence. There are, however, notable exceptions to this tendency. In his study of the honeymoon sequence in *Rebecca* in *Hitchcock's Motifs* (2006), Michael Walker proposes that home movies-in-films should be perceived as a cinematic motif, and thus benefit from being analysed comparatively. Marie-Thérèse Journot's French language study of amateur films-within-films *Films amateurs dans le cinéma de fiction* (2011) offers the most sustained analysis, to date, of the representation of non-professional filmmaking from their early appearances in the late-1920s (*The Cameraman*, Edward Sedgwick, 1928 is the earliest example she cites) and leading up to the late 2000s. Yet, while both Walker and Journot recognise home movies-the-films as a recurring cinematic presence, neither scholar accounts for their characteristic as a recurrent concern. This is particularly striking in the case of Journot's work (despite of the breadth of her study) which largely omits an engagement with the literature on home movies and home movies-in-films, particularly those developed outside of the French context, in favour of a close reading of the texts themselves. While this study, like Journot's, relies on textual analysis, arguing that in order to understand its development it is vital to carefully interrogate the relation between the contained and containing films, I believe it is also important to inquire into how the home movies have (or in some cases have not) been received and conceptualised. In consequence, throughout the thesis I will be drawing on relevant secondary literature to illuminate a particular film's critical history. In this Review of Literature I will however focus on studies whose insights are applicable

beyond the films in relation to which they were developed, identifying the key concerns pertaining to the study of the home movie in the film. This inquiry proceeds thematically, illuminating how scholars have defined what constitutes a home movie in a film, accounting for its potential as a reflexive device, then proceeding to study how its recurrence has been accounted for in terms of a motif and the taxonomical classifications it has engendered.

### **Defining home movies-in-films: site, style, mode and medium**

Before proceeding to studying the role which home movies play in fiction film it is firstly important to ask how to identify them. That is to say, how do we know that what we are seeing is a home movie? In *There's No Place Like Home Video* Moran accounts for the video-in-the-text's 'perception and interpretation as 'home video' by turning towards phenomenology as a framework through which to explore audiences' relation to the represented medium.<sup>43</sup> He argues that the VIT relies on spectators' lived experience of the medium, a familiarity which they bring to the cinema and which, in turn, structures their reception. Simply put, we know we are seeing home video, or a home movie, because we have seen it before. This may be true in some cases, but it is useful to keep in mind that home movies may not always have been (and perhaps in some cases still are not) a familiar presence. As Moran, observes viewers will bring different knowledges to the film and thus might interpret video differently depending on their understanding of the term. Without doing an audience focused study it is therefore impossible to determine exactly how spectators perceive or fail to identify home movies or videos. I argue, therefore, that it is necessary to pay attention to how the films signal to audiences that what they are seeing is a home movie. While, as I will demonstrate, cinema's depiction (and thus in extension definition) of the home movie changes over time, the literature on home movies in films

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<sup>43</sup> Moran, *There's No Place Like Home Video*, p. 173.

provides a preliminary survey of their defining characteristics, which lays a groundwork for the further analysis of their transformations.

In *Films amateurs dans le cinéma de fiction* Journot argues that a reason why amateur films-within-films have thus far been a largely overlooked scholarly consideration is that they are frequently considered as simply another instance of a film-within-a-film. Yet, as she argues, while amateur productions may be classed among this category, their relation to the film in which they are embedded differs from depictions of professional filmmaking. The nature of these incongruities will however vary, depending on the type of non-professional productions. It is thus important to differentiate not only between amateur films-within-films and films-within-films more broadly but also between the different types of non-professional works we may find in commercial narrative film, such as travelogue, personal documentaries and diary film, industrial films, surveillance footage, snuff films and home movies. As Journot illuminates the home movie (or what she terms as '*film de famille*') is one of the most robust and well defined categories of amateur film, and due to its centrality it is granted a separate case study in her work. It can be distinguished from both professional films and other amateur productions by its setting, thematic preoccupation and style, modality and as I will argue should also be differentiated from home video and digital domestic recordings by the medium which it connotes.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the home movie is alluded to by the term itself which indicates the affiliation with the home. A way of defining the home movie would thus be to perceive them as films which are watched domestically, and the private screening of which contrasts with the public, cinematic, viewing which, with notable exceptions, such as Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), characterises the depiction of professional films

prior to the introduction of television and home video. Yet, while the setting of the screening is an important aspect of understanding the representation of a home movie it should not be considered as its defining element. As Mary Ann Doane suggests in her comparison of the ‘projection sequences’ in *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940) and *Caught* (Max Ophuls, 1949), not all films shown at home should be considered as a ‘home movie’.<sup>44</sup> Although the definition of the domestic film is not a question explicitly addressed by Doane (her work focuses on issues of female spectatorship) she alludes to this concern in her use of terminology. While she describes the de Winters’ Riviera honeymoon film depicted in *Rebecca* as a ‘home movie’, she labels the film screened in *Caught* — showcasing Smith Ohlrig’s (Robert Ryan) preparations to further expand his oil empire — as a ‘documentary’. Drawing this distinction, Doane foregrounds the different thematic preoccupations of the two films. In *Rebecca* the home movie is presented as a family souvenir; the film celebrates an idealised image of the couple’s togetherness, and is envisaged by Maxim (Laurence Olivier) as having an enduring sentimental appeal for future generations (as he muses: ‘won’t our grandchildren be delighted to see how lovely you looked?’). In contrast the industrial documentary in *Caught* is explicitly un-familial in its contents. The focus is on work rather than, as is customary, on leisure and the screening of the film itself does little to foster a sense of familial togetherness as it is projected for Ohlrig’s business associates.<sup>45</sup> While it would be possible to read the footage metaphorically as a home movie, such a reading draws on the incongruity of the images with a more conventional understanding of domestic image making, and it is the extent to which the screening fails at being a home movie (despite its domestic setting) that further foregrounds Ohlrig’s inability to envisage ‘home’ in any other

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<sup>44</sup> Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988).

<sup>45</sup> His wife Leonora (Barbara Bel Geddes) is entirely absent from the film and although she is present in the audience her role is that of an accessory; much like the film itself, the ‘trophy wife’ is a testament to Oldrich’s success.

terms than as a display of the success of his commercial enterprise. As the comparison suggests, the ‘home’ of the home movie should thus be perceived as referring not only its setting but crucially its focus on the family and it is illuminating that in French the term used to describe this type of imagery is ‘film de famille’ — thus, the family film. Yet, if the domestic setting of the screening should not be considered as the defining characteristic of the home movie, it should not be overlooked. While there are both professional and a range of amateur films which are watched at home, as this thesis will demonstrate, the home movie provides a particularly fertile ground for exploring the significance of cinema’s preoccupation with domestic moving image consumption.

A further characteristic of the home movie which is frequently foregrounded in the critical literature is its ‘style’. In *On the History of Film Style* David Bordwell defines this term as referring to ‘a film’s systematic and significance use of the techniques of the medium.’<sup>46</sup> As he goes on to illuminate: ‘those techniques fall into broad domains: *mise-en-scene* (staging, lighting, performance, and setting’); framing and focus, control of colour values, and other aspects of cinematography; editing; and sound.’<sup>47</sup> As I have outlined previously, the style of home movies has often been delineated by contrasting ‘home mode’ imagery to that of the ‘mass mode’ and in particular, classical Hollywood film. While this juxtaposition has been criticised for misunderstanding the distinct communicative function of home movies, it is particularly relevant to the study of home movies-in-film, as the small-gauge productions always invite a comparison with the works in which they are embedded. Like Patricia Erens, who foregrounds the contrast between the ‘seamless illusion’ of commercial narrative films and the ‘self-conscious, seemingly primitive mode of filmmaking [that is the home movie]’,

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<sup>46</sup> David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

a number of scholars have drawn attention to the discord between the contained and containing films.<sup>48</sup> An example of this comparison is Stanley Cavell's reading of the home movie in *Adam's Rib* (George Cukor, 1949) which identifies the key difference between *The Mortgage the Merrier* and Cukor's film to be the variance in their production values.<sup>49</sup> The amateur character of the home movie-within-film is signalled by the quality of the images (their grain and blurriness indicate small-gauge film rather than 35mm), the use of natural, outdoor lighting, hand-held camerawork, and seemingly arbitrary editing. Cavell further draws attention to the home movie's lack of sound, and it is notable that although, as Alan Kattelle illuminates in his history of small-gauge technology, amateur equipment was capable of recording sound since the mid-1930s the majority of home movies in fiction films are depicted as being silent.

The home movie style however refers not only to their technological shortcomings but also to their distinct form of storytelling. Unlike commercial fiction film, home movies are seldom invested in the creation of a cohesive fictional reality or coherent narrative. The images are frequently strung together haphazardly and without additional information it is often difficult to tell who or what they are depicting (a confusion which is further enhanced by the absence of sound). As such home movies engender a different mode of reception to that of commercial narrative film. This difference is addressed by Vivian Sobchack in her chapter 'Towards a Phenomenology of Non Fiction Film' (in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, 1999). Drawing on Jean-Pierre Meunier's *Les structures de l'expérience filmique : L'identification filmique* (1969), she compares the modes of spectatorial identification in fiction, documentary film and the home movie (*film souvenir*), each of which inspires a

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<sup>48</sup> Erens, 'Home Movies in Commercial Narrative Film', *Journal of Film and Video*, p. 99.

<sup>49</sup> Stanley Cavell, *The Pursuit of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1981).

different relation between the viewer and the screen. In contrast to fiction films, where spectators gain their knowledge of the depicted events from attentive viewing, the role of the home movie is not apprehension but rather recovery. The *film souvenir* is thus 'evocative': 'its images are taken up as an intermediary, mnemonic, and channeling device *through* which the viewer evokes and identifies not with the mimetic image, but with an absent person or past event.'<sup>50</sup> As such home movies do not seek to tell a story but rather are objects which stimulates the viewers' recall, and unlike fiction films and documentaries, which require degrees of immersive viewership, domestic films invite spectatorial communication. Sobchack and Meunier's understanding of the home movie as a 'mode' therefore differs from the one envisaged by Richard Chalfen, suggesting that the *film souvenir* is a category of reception rather than necessarily primarily of production. While neither Sobchack nor Meunier consider home movies-in-films, Meunier's phenomenology of viewership plays an important role in Moran's analysis of video-in-the-text. Drawing on *Les structures de l'expérience filmique*, Moran argues that the term home video should be applied not only to footage explicitly focused on the family but can be used to describe all manner of images given that they are received as home video. Although such an approach potentially risks losing sight of the object of study, it also indicates the flexibility and mutability of the concepts of 'home video' and the 'home movie', as well as the complexity of the terms. Drawing on Meunier and Sobchack, it is useful thus to consider the home movie not only as a style but also as a mode, a reading which emphasises the importance of paying attention not only to the films-with-in-films but also to the representation of their reception.

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<sup>50</sup> Vivian Sobchak, 'Towards a Phenomenology of Non Fiction Film' in Jane Gaines and Michael Renov (eds.), *Collecting Visible Evidence* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 247.

Connected to the discussion of the home movie style are questions of stylisation. Aside from Moran's discussion of the VIT as an imaginary medium, Journot is the only scholar to address this issue at length. As she observes, the majority of the non-professional productions depicted in fiction films are fake (*'faux'*) and invite an understanding of them in terms of imitation.<sup>51</sup> However, as she cautions, what they are alluding to are not specific, pre-existing, family films but rather a 'collective text' (*'texte collectif'*) which is at once natural and naturalised by cinema (*'Il y a certes citation, mais citation d'un texte collectif non soumis à des règles, naturel, ici naturalisé.'*)<sup>52</sup> Journot's conception of amateur film as a 'natural' cinematic language (as opposed to the stylised artifice of fiction films) is problematic since, as Richard Chalfen illuminates, the conventionality of home movie imagery indicates that they are not exempt from representational codes, although these are different for home mode than for mass mode media. However, her assertion that these stylistic conventions are 'naturalised here' — presumably in and by cinema — insightfully suggests that fiction films not only draw on established codes but themselves contribute to their habituation. Considering home movies as imitation she argues that they are best understood as examples of pastiche and parody. Drawing on Gerard Genette Journot points out that both parody and pastiche are playful hypertextual practices, and as such are discreet from serious forms of imitation such as translation, homage, or citation (*'la traduction, la citation, l'hommage'*).<sup>53</sup> She further distinguishes between pastiche and parody, following Richard Dyer (*Pastiche*, 2007) who argues that pastiche has a neutral attitude to the text from which it borrows while parody, like irony, possesses a critical dimension. Pastiche is

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<sup>51</sup> Some filmmakers have used found footage, particularly in auto-fictions such as *Tarnation* which Journot classes among her case studies, and which she terms as 're-emploi', re-uses.

<sup>52</sup> 'They are citations but of a collective text, not subject to rules, natural, naturalised here'. Marie-Thérèse Journot, *Films amateurs dans le cinéma de fiction* (Arman Colin, 2011), p. 23.

<sup>53</sup> Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

Journot's preferred term, although she cautions against applying it to all amateur films-in-films, arguing that their depiction may vary from film to film. While Journot's use of the term 'pastiche' is insightful, her reluctance to apply it unequivocally to all home movies-in-films suggests that not only cinema's depiction of, but also its attitudes towards, home movies may vary. Moran's reading of the VIT as an 'imaginary medium' offers a more encompassing approach, illuminating not only its status as fabrication but also alluding to cinema's shifting perception of the home movie. Perceiving how cinema imagines home movies allows us to study what, at a given time, constitutes a 'home movie' in the film, what elements of its style, modality or medium are being foregrounded and side-lined, and what do these choices tell us about the meanings which they convey.

In *Films amateurs dans le cinéma de fiction* Journot does not consider the question of medium in great depth. Her study of amateur film is concerned not only with small-gauge films but also with video and digital and similarly she uses *film de famille* as an umbrella term for home movies, home video and digital domestic recordings. While she cursorily recognises their differences, she considers them as belonging to a shared history of amateur productions and in her chapters interweaves examples across this spectrum, favouring continuity over difference. As Moran cautions, however, the various media have distinct styles and aesthetics which are imbued with associations which may give rise to distinct interpretations. They will also, as he points out, exist in a different relation to the films in which they are embedded.<sup>54</sup> Thus, while I agree with Journot that it is important to recognise the continuities between home movies, home video and digital domestic recordings I also believe it is fruitful to perceive small-gauge films as a distinct subject of study. Such an

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<sup>54</sup> Video as Moran argues, has often been perceived to have a fraught relationship with film and as such has given rise to a range of mediaphobic narratives which are rare in the case of home movies (with the notable exceptions of *Peeping Tom* and Scott Derrickson's 2012 film *Sinister*).

analysis paves the way for a better understanding of the relation between home movies and the films in which they are embedded, and facilitates charting the changing associations which become attached to its medium and the ways in which it is imagined.

### **Reflexivity**

Distinguishing between professional and amateur film-within-film Journot argues that their difference is not only a question of style but also of reflexivity. She suggests that while films-within-films reflect on cinema as art or industry, these concerns are absent from amateur films.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Journot argues that home movies do not function as a form of allusion to other films, and that their reception is based on affect rather than on shared cultural knowledge. This does not however mean that home movies have not been used as a reflexive device. A number of scholars have noted the ways which the depiction of the moving image technology (the screen, projector and camera) functions to draw the viewer's attention to the invisible materiality of cinema itself. Mary Ann Doane argues that the 'projection sequences' in *Caught* and *Rebecca* 'disarticulate the components of the apparatus which constructs the woman as 'imaged' — camera, projector and screen — and incorporate them within the diegesis as props.'<sup>56</sup> In doing so the films draw attention to the questions of female spectacle and spectatorship in Classical Hollywood film. Similarly, Leighton Grist suggests that the home movie which opens Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973) offers a reflexive commentary on conventions of documentary realism which the film is exploring by drawing attention to the 'mechanics of mediation' and in effect to the construction of cinematic

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<sup>55</sup> 'La particularité du film amateur est ailleurs, dans son absence de référence au cinéma comme art ou même comme industrie – pour les personnages comme pour les spectateurs, visionner en famille un film amateur, ce n'est pas aller au cinéma.' 'The peculiarity of amateur film is also in its lack of reference to cinema as art or even as industry - for the characters and spectators, viewing family a home movie, is not the same as going to the cinema.' Journot, *Films amateurs dans le cinéma de fiction*, p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 156.

illusion.<sup>57</sup> Journot, Doane and Grist thus perceive home movies in term of what Fernando Canet drawing on Jacques Gerstenkorn considers as ‘cinematic reflexivity’.<sup>58</sup> As Canet points out, ‘cinematic reflexivity’ is directed at the mechanics of filmmaking and viewing and as such should be distinguished from ‘filmic reflexivity’ which intertextually addresses film history.<sup>59</sup> While I would agree with Journot’s assessment that home movies-in-films are for the most part examples of the former, as I will demonstrate there are some exceptions to this case which point towards the filmmaker’s recognition of home movies as an established cinematic motif and a familiarity with its history.

Another type of reflexivity suggested by home movies is the *mise en abyme* which is alluded to by Journot and studied in depth by Stanley Cavell. The term means ‘into the abyss’ and refers to two facing mirrors which reflect each other into infinity. It has been used to describe objects and works of art which contain a smaller replica of themselves such as *The Morton Saltbox*, which Cavell cites as an example. Probingly, Cavell deploys the term in his consideration of *The Mortgage the Merrier*, after observing the near overlap of the frame of the home movie with the screen on which Cukor’s work is projected. This almost complete alignment, he writes: ‘implies that the role of the camera in the one is fundamentally no different from its role in the other.’<sup>60</sup> Consequently, he argues that the projection of the film in *Adam’s Rib* functions as a self-referential device. The nature of its self-referentiality is however ambiguous, at once referencing the narrative of the film in which it is contained (on

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<sup>57</sup> Leighton Grist, *The Films of Martin Scorsese, 1963-1973: Authorship and Context* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

<sup>58</sup> Fernando Canet, ‘Metacinema as Cinematic Practice: A Proposal for Classification’, *L’Atlante* July-December (2014); Jacques Gerstenkorn, ‘À travers le miroir. Notes introductives’, *Vertigo*, 1 (1987).

<sup>59</sup> Journot does not directly cite Gerstenkorn but she does list the work in her bibliography which suggests that his work could have influenced the distinctions which she is drawing.

<sup>60</sup> Stanley Cavell, *The Pursuit of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 204.

the most basic level by doubling the characters in the movies and those in the home movie) and its medium by foregrounding the filmic qualities of *The Mortgage the Merrier* (through the inclusion of the screen-within-the-screen as well as through frame jumps, misalignment of sprockets and inverted images).

Yet, while the home movie displays a degree of similarity with *Adam's Rib* which is suggestive of the *mise en abyme*, Cavell argues that this term cannot be applied to *The Mortgage the Merrier*. The reason is that in the case of the *mise en abyme* the mirrors need to be identical while the relation between *Adam's Rib* and *The Mortgage the Merrier* is asymmetrical. Therefore, although the Bonners' home movie is an approximation of the containing film, it is also a different type of film: it is technologically inferior (it is silent), stylistically divergent (has lesser production values) and belongs to a different modality (it is screened for a domestic audience). While Cavell dismisses the *mise en abyme*, his analysis insightfully illuminates the ways in which the home movie may not only draw attention to the medium but also function as a self-reflexive device. Home movies can thus serve as a focal point which accentuates the larger preoccupations of the work (we might recall Erens' interpretation of the home movie in *Peeping Tom* as offering an extended metaphor for the containing work) potentially providing, as Journot argues of the study of amateur films-in-films more broadly, new insights into familiar works.

### **Observing recurrence: motif and taxonomy**

While the majority of the analysis of home movies-in-films focus on the role which small-gauge productions play in individual films, there has been some attempt to address their recurrence. Observing the reappearance of home movies across a number of films, both Michael Walker, in his analysis of the honeymoon sequence in *Rebecca* in *Hitchcock's*

*Motifs*, and Journot consider the home movie as a motif. Walker defines the term as describing ‘recurring elements of a certain kind in a narrative or series of narratives’ and distinguishes it from a theme, which he argues is ‘more abstract: it incorporates a point of view and implies that the film is saying something about this matter.’<sup>61</sup> While Walker’s primary concern is with the motifs which recur in the works of Alfred Hitchcock, in his assessment of the honeymoon film in *Rebecca*, Walker compares the director’s depiction of the home movie with small-gauge footage included in the works of other filmmakers: *Que la bête meure* (Claude Chabrol, 1969) and *Cinema Paradiso* (Giuseppe Tornatore, 1988). Juxtaposing the films, Walker argues that the meaning of the home movie motif is structured through discord. Narratively, home movies introduce a past tense to the present of the narrative, creating a contrast between a frequently idyllic past and a less-than-picture-perfect present. The home movie motif thus connotes a ‘lost ideal’, although the nature of that ideal is not necessarily, as Walker argues in regard to *Rebecca*, shared between the people who watch it. Walker’s account of home movies is brief, yet his choice to frame it via a consideration of the films in *Que la bête meure* and *Cinema Paradiso* suggest that it is pertinent to study not only their appearance in a particular film but to consider whether the distinct examples of cinematic home movies have anything in common; to not only observe their recurrence but to inquire into the character of that repetition. The question thus becomes: how should such an inquiry proceed?

Analysing the amateur film as a cinematic motif, Journot takes a taxonomical approach cataloguing the different types, uses and concerns of non-professional films-within-films. Seeking to answer the question ‘why use an amateur film in fiction film?’ (‘Pourquoi utiliser

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<sup>61</sup> Michael Walker, *Hitchcock’s Motifs* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), p. 17.

un film amateur dans la fiction ?')<sup>62</sup> she organises her inquiry thematically, beginning with an interrogation of the place of amateur film in film, proceeding to study what she perceives as two dominant categories of amateur productions (family films and personal films), the uses of amateur film within particular genres (in crime films and horror films), and concluding with a chapter on the significance of amateur filmmaking in the cinema which studies the themes mobilised by nonprofessional productions.<sup>63</sup> On a larger scale, Journot's work is thus akin to Patricia Erens' approach whose inquiry into home movies within commercial narrative film similarly endeavoured to understand home movies by listing the roles which they serve. Comparably, James Moran's work on home video also proceeds in a taxonomical manner, detailing the key concerns pertaining to the study of the VIT (video's rivalry with cinema, phenomenology of spectatorship, its narrative function) and the issues raised by video-in-the-text (which include its role in the construction of 'home', a dramatisation of Oedipal conflict, dangers of unrestricted access, autobiography, and the mediation of experience). Among the scholars concerned with the study of the cinematic representation of non-professional image making, classification thus appears as a dominant way of organising the inquiry into the subject. While it allows for a detailed account of the uses of small-gauge films-in-film, such an approach also has its shortcomings; drawing attention to the diversity of home movies in the films it fails to take account of how their depictions may be dynamic across time.

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<sup>62</sup> Journot, *Films amateurs dans le cinéma de fiction*, p. 7.

<sup>63</sup> The intimacy of the home movie places it in close proximity to the 'personal film' and Journot differentiates between them arguing that while the author is of no importance in the familial production (they are often unknown, implicitly the family is the author) the personal film places emphasis on the identity of the author and filmmaking as a journey of self-discovery. Home movies also often appear in crime films, and the de-contextualisation of the domestic imagery enhances the threat through the contrast or draws on the films' association with authenticity to depict them as clues to an investigation.

The oversight of historical development is perceptible in Journot's cursory treatment of the history of amateur film. She observes that amateur film has undergone a series of '*mutations*' from film to video and to digital and that these have impacted on the depiction of the media. She observes that small-gauge films dominated the screens between her symbolic dates 1928 to 1978, but the introduction of video in the 1980s has disrupted the position of its predecessors. Initially, the boundaries between video and film were unclear but by the 1990s their relation stabilised, with video becoming a medium for capturing the present moment and small-gauge film stabilised as a medium shoring up depictions of the past. However, in the 50 years of onscreen dominance have small-gauge amateur films been a stable cinematic presence? Did the compromise achieved following the introduction of video remain unchanged until today? Journot does not return to these questions following her initial assessment of the technological transitions, but rather seeks to offer an account of amateur film as a diverse but unified practice. Interweaving examples from different moments and media within the chapters, Journot emphasises the shared preoccupations of amateur film-in-films, obscuring however the specificity of the media and the developments of their cinematic histories.

In this thesis, I seek to continue the inquiry begun by Moran and Journot, focusing specifically on the history of cinematic home movies. I place emphasis on the fact that home movies not only form a part of a history (that of cinema and that of amateur film) but also that they have a history, which is distinct from that of home video and domestic digital recordings, and which helps us to chart cinema's changing depiction of the family film. This type of inquiry however requires a differently calibrated approach than that advanced by *Films amateurs dans le cinéma de fiction*. Rather than a taxonomy this study proposes a periodisation of home movies-within-films. Each chapter focuses on a specific development

in the history of the cinematic home movie, identifying a shift in the depiction, definition, or cinema's relation to the 'home movie'. Of particular importance is thus Moran's question of comprehension — how do we account for their perception and interpretation as home movies — and, as I will demonstrate, each of the periods I have identified provides a distinct answer to this inquiry. In light of this, I believe that it is insufficient to consider cinematic home movies merely in terms of a motif. Rather, drawing on Moran, I will be advancing the concept of 'the home movie imagination'. While the motif concept identifies their recurrence, and thus is the first step to recognising cinematic home movies as a valid object of study, it reveals little about their character. The term 'imagination' thus addresses not only the narrative, and reflexive potential of the home movie but also accounts for their changing depiction in terms of technology, modality, style and medium. While these shifts may at times coincide with the technological and social histories of the home movie, studying how cinema imagines home movies should not be perceived as replicating their commercial developments, but rather as indicative of changes to commercial narrative films' investment in the home movie and thus potentially in cinema more broadly. In order to further probe the relation between the home movie and fiction film, and the concept of the home movie imagination, it is helpful to turn to the literature which studies the imaginary in media history and cinema's construction of its rival media.

### **3. The home movie imagination**

Although the works dedicated to the study of imaginaries of media do not necessarily form a unified field of inquiry (they develop in relative isolation), they can however be integrated by their shared concern with, what Simone Natale and Gabriele Balbi describe as, 'evidence

pertaining to the realm of the fantastic.’<sup>64</sup> As Natale and Balbi argue, fantasies about media form an elusive and complicated class of evidence, and their analysis occupies an uneasy place in media history which, as they write, is a discipline ‘strongly concerned with technologies and hence machines.’<sup>65</sup> Yet, while the study of human imagination poses both methodological and theoretical challenges, Natale and Balbi emphasise that in order to understand how technology is perceived it is crucial to account not only for its uses but also for the ways in which it has been envisaged and speculated upon. Studying home movies-in-films in terms of ‘imagination’ this thesis proposes that cinematic depiction of media should be perceived as one such imaginary account. Drawing on Moran’s interpretation of the video-in-the-text as an ‘imaginary medium’ I argue that it is not only openly speculative narratives that should be taken as evidence of the fantastic, but rather that it is fruitful to consider all forms of representation in terms of imagination.

Studying how commercial narrative films envisage technologies allows us not only to assess what fiction films have to say about the home movie but also, as Paul Young argues in *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals*, to inquire into how cinema envisages its own identity in the process. Exploring the ways in which Hollywood’s depiction of its emergent rival media, a category which he labels as ‘media fantasy films’, serves as a crucible for a discussion and defence of classicality as the dominant definition of ‘film’, Young’s work illuminates the usefulness of engaging with concepts of the imaginary in the study of cinema and as such is of particular relevance to this thesis. Yet, although I share Young’s concern with study of the relation between the represented and representing medium, I argue that the framework of ‘media fantasies’ which he proposes cannot straightforwardly be deployed for the analysis

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<sup>64</sup> Simone Natale and Gabriele Balbi, 'Media and The Imaginary in History', in *Media History*, 20 (2014), p. 205.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

of cinema's representation of home movies. Whereas Young focuses on media in the period of their initial emergence, I argue that in order to chart and account for cinema's changing definition, of and relation to, home movies it is necessary to address how and why these depictions are dynamic in time. Such an inquiry requires engaging with issues of history which, as Natale and Balbi point out, have largely been neglected in the study of the imaginary. As I will demonstrate, 'imagination' is a term which has frequently been used to describe the anticipation of developments; in contrast in this thesis the term is used to refer to the unfolding of the history of the represented technology, illuminating how cinema continues to explore the possibilities and definitions of the home movie beyond its depiction as a novelty.

### **The imaginary, fantasies and imagination**

Moran's use of the term 'imaginary medium' in his analysis of home video, resonates with a broader scholarly interest in the role that fantasies play in media history. The term 'Imaginary' is also used by Simone Natale and Gabrielle Balbi, to serve as an umbrella term which encompasses works dealing with 'speculations, imaginary narratives, predictions, and other forms of fantasies regarding media technologies' such as the *imaginaire* (Patrice Flichy), media fantasies (Carolyn Marvin, Paul Young) or technological visions (Stucken, Thomas and Ball-Rokeach).<sup>66</sup> While disparate in their objects of study and approaches, the works are united through their shared interest in the role played by human imagination in the development of technology. As such, these studies are marked by a shift of emphasis away from the uses to which a medium is put to and how these are determined by its technology, and towards a study of how media are envisioned (often, as I will go on to demonstrate, in a predictive sense); as Martia Sturken and Douglas Thomas argue 'the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

rhetoric defining technology, and the representations of it, are key to how it is integrated into social lives.’<sup>67</sup> Strucken and Thomas caution however, that while some of these speculations may come to pass, they should not be perceived as uniformly as pre-visions of a technologies to come. Rather, what they provide insight into are the ways in which media are being envisaged in the present. Studying speculations about media thus allows us, as Carolyn Marvin writes in her seminal work *When Old Technologies Were New* (1988), ‘to determine what “consciousness” was in a particular age, what thoughts were possible and what thoughts could not be entertained yet, or anymore.’<sup>68</sup> Therefore, as Marvin argues, attention to expressions of what media ‘should be’ and ‘could be’ allows us to more fully understand how their social and cultural purchase had been negotiated.

It is notable that Sturken and Thomas list representation alongside rhetoric as a way in which technological visions are developed. While cinema’s depiction of technology does not form the predominant focus of the scholarship on the imaginary in media, it has been acknowledged as one of the key sites in which fantasies about media are being articulated. Science fiction film in particular, as Vivian Sobchack points out is a significantly generative genre for the study of media prophecies which allows us to better understand the anxieties and utopias that structure their contemporary consumption. Yet, while science fiction films often explicitly engage in fantasies about media futures (and media of the future), Moran’s analysis of the home video-in-the-text as an ‘imaginary medium’ suggests that it is not only openly fantastic narratives that offer glimpses at speculations on media, but rather that representation more broadly should be perceived as involving an imaginary component.

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<sup>67</sup> Martia Sturken and Douglas Thomas ‘Introduction: Technological Visions and the Rhetoric of the New’ in Marita Sturken, Douglas Thomas, and Sandra Ball-Rokeach (eds.), *Technological Visions: The Hopes and Fears that Shape New Technologies* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), p. 8.

<sup>68</sup> Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking about Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 4.

Although Moran does not frame his study of the video-in-the-text as addressing fantasies about home video, there are important overlaps between the approach he proposes and those advanced by scholars of the imaginary. A notable similarity is their shift away from a technological determinism towards an understanding of a medium as ‘both a material and a social construct’<sup>69</sup> and an acknowledgement that in order to understand media it is important to take the narratives about media into account. Representation offers one such narrative for Moran, and he brings this to the fore by describing the VIT as a ‘discourse’ about video.<sup>70</sup> Perceiving the cinematic representation of home video as ‘imaginary’, Moran thus suggests that to represent media is to imagine them, and that the depictions of technology should thus be studied as a speculation about their aesthetic, uses and their place in the home and on the screen.

Expanding on Moran, I propose the term ‘imagination’ to denote both the ways in which cinema defines home movies through representation and a collective term for cinema’s speculations about home movies. A comparable perception of the imaginary can be found in Paul Young’s analysis of ‘media fantasy films’ in *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals*. Young’s work offers an elaborate framework for analysing cinema’s depiction of other media, and in order to better illuminate the ‘home movie imagination’ it is useful to engage with his work in detail, in order to elaborate on the similarities and divergences in our interests and approaches. While Moran advances a *theory* which acknowledges the discursive dimension of media identities, Young in addition offers an inquiry into *history* asking ‘what does the history of cinema have to do with the histories of other media?’<sup>71</sup> As Young demonstrates,

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<sup>69</sup> Moran, *There's No Place Like Home Video*, p. 172.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173. All the while maintaining that in order to be legible it need to be grounded in ‘a material base in technology.’

<sup>71</sup> Paul Young, *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals: Media Fantasy Films from Radio to the Internet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. xvi.

cinema's depiction of other media has frequently been perceived as a form of slander against its economic competitors. Such a perception however simplifies the nuances of filmic intermedia identity. Rather than merely an expression of 'economic fear and loathing', Hollywood's engagement with new media should be perceived in terms of 'institutional' rivalry.<sup>72</sup> Defining Hollywood as an 'institution' Young is referring to an established set of filmmaking practices, representational conventions and modes of reception that comprise 'classical Hollywood cinema' and which differ from competing media institutions such as radio, television and the Internet, not only in terms of their technologies, but also in terms of the modes of engagement which they promise. Unlike the cinema in the classical conception, which fosters a passive private-in-public form of spectatorship, these media offer a possibility of social exchange, 'live' transmission as well as consumption within the private sphere of the home. Depicting the dangers of its rivals and the different, and potentially perilous, modes of reception which they engender, media fantasy films thus allow Hollywood defend the superiority of film as an entertainment medium.

As Young argues however, in defending 'film' Hollywood is also defining it. Drawing on the works of Marshall McLuhan (*Understanding Media*, 1964), Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin (*Remediation*, 1999) and Lev Manovich (*The Language of New Media*, 2001) Young proposes that studying how cinema imagines other media is a crucial element of understanding not only its attitude to its competitors but also how it envisages its own identity. As Bolter and Gursin argue, media constantly reinvent themselves in relation to their successors and predecessors and it is this mutual shaping that constitutes the very term 'medium'. They write that: 'a medium is that which remediates. It is that which appropriates the techniques, forms, and social significance of other media and attempts to rival or

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. xviii.

refashion them in the name of the real.<sup>73</sup> Expanding on *Remediation*, Young cautions that the identities of represented and representing media should not be considered as stable and unchanging but rather as discursively malleable. In consequence the ‘Hollywood film’ is only one of the many possible definitions of the medium. Staging a ‘rhetorical defence’ of film’s identity, media fantasy films entrench the understanding of the medium as synonymous with the particular mode of reception fostered by classical Hollywood. Playing a crucial role in establishing and policing the stability of the equation between Hollywood cinema as an institution and film as a medium, media fantasy films thus ‘offer a much needed opportunity to discuss classicality as one discourse about film’s identity among many discourses, against our tendency to consider it *the* definition of film qua medium that permanently overshadows all the others.’<sup>74</sup>

Drawing on both Moran and Young, this thesis studies home movies-in-films taking into account the discursive construction of onscreen media, and further arguing that in order to explore their depiction it is necessary to consider the context of the film in which they are contained. Thus, while the development of cinematic home movies might, at times, correspond to their social or technological histories, as I will demonstrate, it should not be reduced simply to a reflection of or on these histories. Rather, what home movies-in-films give us insight into is cinema’s imagination of home movies, a speculation on what home movies look like and the purposes which they serve. More than that however, as Young suggests, represented media are speculations not only about the represented medium but also about the medium that represents. The question thus becomes not only what do fiction films say about home movies but also what does their depiction of home movies say about itself?

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<sup>73</sup> Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), p. 63.

<sup>74</sup> Young, *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals*, pp. xxv-xxvi.

My answer to this question will however differ from the one which Young arrives at, a difference which is reflective of an underlying distinction in our objects of study. Unlike the media fantasy films studied by Young, I argue that home movies cannot straightforwardly be considered as cinema's rival media. Unlike radio, television and the Internet, home movies are not a competing entertainment institution. Furthermore, for most of their cinematic history, they differ from the films in which they are embedded not in terms of their medium which they connote (film), but rather in the modality (both in terms of their private viewing at home as well as their mode of reception). Thus while, as I will demonstrate, similarly to media fantasy films, home movies have been deployed as a device for introspection on the films in which they situated are the character of reflexivity will fluctuate at different moments of their history. Studying shifts in the representation of home movies-in-films, and thus the changes in the relation between the contained and containing films, reveals that rather than producing a unified narrative, home movies will draw attention to distinct characteristics of moving image production at different moments in time. Thus, in contrast to the kind of study pursued by Paul Young, my interrogation of home movies in fiction films does not seek to chart a history of classical Hollywood cinema but rather seeks to illuminate that what we understand as film history is a layered concept, and may be comprised of a number of histories, including those of represented technologies. Unlike Young who studies how a single cinema has historically defined itself through the depiction of a range of rival media, my work focuses on the development of a single technology across two national contexts. Perceiving the representation of home movies as a seam that draws my case studies together. I do not wish to argue that we should disregard the national differences, but rather that attending to the similarities and divergences in their presentation of domestic small-gauge productions may help us more fully understand the development of the home movie imagination.

A further distinction between our works is Young's exclusive focus on the depiction of media at the time of their emergence. Such an understanding of 'fantasy' is characteristic of the broader tendency of the literature on the imaginary to concentrate on the period of media inceptions. *Imaginaire*, technological visions and media fantasies are all terms developed to refer to either novel technologies, or to delineate the discourses which precede their invention. Similarly, the term 'imagination' has thus far been used largely to refer to anticipations of a technological developments. Distinguishing imagination from fantasy Arjun Appadurai writes that: 'the idea of fantasy carries with it the inescapable connotation of thought divorced from projects and actions, and it also has a private, even individualistic sound about it. The imagination, on the other hand, has a projective sense . . . of *being a prelude to some sort of expression*, whether aesthetic or otherwise. Fantasy can dissipate (because its logic is so often autotelic), but the imagination, especially when collective, can become the fuel for action' [my emphasis].<sup>75</sup> Peter Kramer likewise considers the televisual imagination as 'a vision of the whole world being made available to everyone in the privacy of their homes by means of technologies of sound and image reproduction', and uses the term to describe predictive speculations about its future applications.<sup>76</sup> The association between the imaginary and media novelty can be accounted for as stemming from a perceived limitation of fantasies which follows a medium's habituations. As Young writes: 'fantasy may be the only node of cultural practice from which we can excavate the most fervent wishes and strongly held beliefs, both destructive and socially progressive, that saturated emergent media identities before becoming obscured by institutional conventions

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<sup>75</sup> Arjun Appadurai 'Here and Now' in Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.), *The Visual Culture Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 177.

<sup>76</sup> Peter Kramer, 'The Lure of the Big Picture: Film, Television and Hollywood' in John Hill and Martin McLoone (eds.), *Big Picture, Small Screen: The Relations Between Film and Television* (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1996), p. 14.

and sheer mundane familiarity.’<sup>77</sup> Yet, as Natale and Balbi argue, the study the imaginary should not be limited only to their period of novelty, writing that: ‘media continuously change in nature, uses, technology, audiences and significance; the result is that in each moment of a medium’s evolution we find different fantasies and we need specific approaches to study those.’<sup>78</sup> The question thus becomes, how do we account for this development? In order to answer this, I would like to look in more detail at the framework of a medium’s life cycle by Natale and Balbi.

### **Towards a history of the home movie imagination**

In ‘Media and the Imaginary in History’ Natale and Balbi argue that studies of the imaginary should recognise that fantasies about media are dynamic in time and propose a framework of a medium’s ‘life cycle’ as a structure through which to organise the inquiry into the development of fantasies about media. They identify three such key stages which give rise to particular speculations: prophecies (which anticipate the invention of a medium), novelty (when a medium is new) and obsolescence (when a medium is old). At each of these moments media are subject to specific fantasies which reveal a negotiation of their changing identities. Thus, the prophecies stage constitutes a medium’s pre-history, a time when predictions about the futures of as yet-nonexistent technologies are cast; these speculations however, reveal more about the experience of the media of the present than they do about the actual media of the future. At the novelty stage, a medium’s identity has not yet become fixed, and the fantasies attached to new media reflect the horizon of possibilities of a medium before its identity becomes sedimented. Finally, as media become obsolete their character once more become unfixed, giving rise to predictions concerning their potential

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<sup>77</sup> Young, *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals*, p. xxiv.

<sup>78</sup> Natale and Balbi, ‘Media and the Imaginary in History’, p. 205.

disappearance as well as to the sentiment of nostalgia. There is an additional stage which is mentioned, but not interrogated, by Natale and Balbi, and that is their ‘dominant identity’, a time when media become ‘mainstream.’<sup>79</sup> This period however involves what they describe as a ‘closure of flexibility’ and, it would appear, does not give rise to fantasies.

Natale and Balbi do not account for their choice of the stages which comprise the ‘life cycles’ of media. It is observable however, that for the most part they constitute them by drawing on the scholarship which shares their concerns with media fantasies and media histories. Thus, the ‘prophecy’ stage is influenced by the studies collected by Marita Stucken, Douglas Thomas and Sandra Ball-Rokeach in *Technological Visions*; novelty follows scholars whose work interrogates ‘newness’ as a historical category (Marvin, Young, Bolter and Grusin) while obsolescence draws on Charles Acland whose *Residual Media* (2006) challenges the dominant focus on novelty and innovation calling for an interrogation of media which have expired past their commercial due date. In contrast to the majority of works consulted by Natale and Balbi, *Residual Media* is not a study explicitly concerned with questions of the imaginary. Rather, the focus of Acland’s collection is on material history, on the persistence of obsolete objects in a new media landscape. It thus engages with the kind of media history which Natale and Balbi are seeking to complicate. The choice of the authors of ‘Media and the Imaginary in History’ to draw on Acland’s work is suggestive of the bias towards novelty, as well as indicating that the fantasies concerning ‘old’ media have not yet received extended scholarly attention. Considering the recent interest in analogue nostalgia and retro, it is however crucial to recognise that technologies of the past may persist not only in their material form but also in discourse and representation. I have previously suggested some of the challenges which the re-emergence of small-gauge aesthetic poses to the definition of

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

the home movie (and conceptions of what constitutes their history). Perceiving footage which connotes the small-gauge as a form of fantasy about home movies (engaging with ideas about the home movie rather than specifically with the technology) allows us to integrate these depictions and uses into a discussion of the development of home movie making, urging us to explore and re-consider what we understand as constituting a 'home movie' and in extension to offer a more nuanced account of their history.

The importance of Acland's work to Natale's and Balbi's study however also illuminates a conspicuous absence among the works consulted by the authors of 'Media and the Imaginary in History': Raymond Williams' consideration of culture in *Marxism and Literature* (1977). While Williams does not engage with the subject of media fantasies, he does offer what Acland aptly describes as a 'conceptual apparatus' for the study of cultural development and it is notable that it is from *Marxism and Literature* that Acland borrows the term 'residual'. In his work Williams challenges the dominant critical tendency to study culture through an 'immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products'<sup>80</sup>, arguing instead for an analysis that recognises it as a dynamic process. He thus proposes to perceive culture as shaped through an interplay between its emergent, dominant and residual formations. The emergent denotes the 'new meanings and values, new practices new significances and experiences' that are 'continually being created'<sup>81</sup> whereas the residual indicates that which 'by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but is still active in the cultural process, not only, and often not at all, as an element of the past but as an effective element of the present' and is distinguished from the archaic which is 'wholly of the past'.<sup>82</sup> Detailing the trajectory of cultural formation, Williams argues that the stages of its development

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<sup>80</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 128.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

should not be perceived in isolation. Rather, the study of the emergent and the residual should always also take the dominant into account, and vice versa. Studying home movies-in-films it is thus necessary to perceive them in relation not only to the films in which they are embedded but also to the home media with regard to which they are characterised as obsolescent (video and domestic digital recordings). As I will demonstrate, the remediation of home movies to home video and DVD (in *Manhunter* or *Philomena*) offers one example of the interplay between the obsolete and the dominant, complicating a straightforward categorisation of the home movie as either archaic or residual and drawing attention to the layered character of what constitutes home movies in fiction film.

A further issue with the framework proposed by Natale and Balbi is that while it suggests how different stages in a medium's life cycle give rise to specific types of fantasies, they use examples of different media situated within a variety of discursive contexts to illuminate each of these periods. Cinema's depiction of home movies however poses certain challenges to this approach. Since small-gauge film and 35mm have developed contemporaneously, while film may engage the with novelty of 8mm and 16mm it will not be the site in which prophecies about these formats would be expressed. It is thus important to recognise that the imagination of a medium will develop differently depending on the medium in which it is expressed and to recognise that firstly, the history of home movies told by cinema is one of a number of available narratives of their development and secondly, that it requires an approach which reflects this specificity.

I argue that in accounting for the history of home movies-in-films it would be misleading to perceive imagination as developing solely in accordance with (and thus in response to) the particular stages of the life-cycle of the represented medium. The reason for this, as I

have indicated previously, is the complexity of the definition of home movies in fiction films which cannot solely be described in terms of a 'medium' and do not always follow in sync with their social or technological history. Therefore, although I propose that we can perceive the early depictions of home movies in the films of the 1940s and 1950s in terms of 'emergence' what this term refers to is not the novelty of the technology but rather of the motif. As Chapter One will demonstrate, while home movies are not depicted as a technology unknown to the diegetic spectators, their elaborate introduction and staging is suggestive of the cinematic viewers' unfamiliarity with home movies as an onscreen presence. Furthermore, home movies' dominance as a motif (its habituation as a shorthand) does not coincide with the time of their greatest commercial popularity which, as Patricia Zimmermann and Heather Norris Nicholson demonstrate, occurred in the 1950-1970s but rather at the time of the technologies 'obsolescence' (from the mid-1980s onwards). At the same time, it is important to recognise that home movies become a prominent cinematic presence not regardless, of but because of, their character as 'old' media. Accounting for the history of the home movie imagination therefore requires being attuned to its nuances and layered character, taking stock of the interplay, and tensions, between cinema's depiction of the history of small-gauge technology and the development of the home movie motif.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this thesis is to provide an inquiry into the history of home movies in fiction films, to study how the representation of small-gauge domestic films has developed over time and to account for the shifts therein. While cinematic home movies have been the subject of some, albeit limited, attention, as this Review of Literature has illuminated none of the studies have considered the subject in a sustained manner. Yet, as the study of the literature on represented home movies illuminates, their significance cannot be limited to

their role within a specific film, and there are broader patterns in the deployment of home movies-in-films. These patterns, I argue, cannot be accounted for solely, as is Journot's intention, by considering the common themes which these films mobilise. In order to fully understand the representation of home movies in fiction films it is important to perceive how, and why, these concerns shift over time.

In order to analyse these developments, I propose to perceive cinematic home movies in terms of an 'imagination'. In developing this category I draw on Moran's interpretation of the video-in-the-text as an 'imaginary medium', which illuminates that the cinematic representation of a medium relies on a selective replication of characteristic cues rather than on the deployment of the technology. Expanding on Moran I propose to analyse cinematic home movies in terms of imagination, which encompasses both the processes by which they are constructed and offers a collective description for cinema's engagement with home movies. Perceiving the depiction of home movies as a form of imagination, however leads me to consider questions which vary from the phenomenological inquiry proposed by Moran. What this thesis seeks to uncover is what kind of cues constitute a home movie and how (and why) these will vary at different points of its history. In order to account for this, it is important to recognise that as Bolter and Grusin, among others, have argued, media define themselves through other media. In analysing cinematic home movies it is thus important to take the contexts of the containing films into account, asking not only what fiction films say about home movies but also what they can deploy home movie to say about themselves.

Positioning Moran's notion of VIT as an 'imaginary medium' in relation to studies more broadly concerned with notions of the imaginary this thesis suggests that it is not only openly

fantastic narratives that engage with speculations on their identities, but that it is fruitful to consider the representation of media in terms of imagination. A similar approach is proposed by Paul Young, yet in contrast to *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals*, which focuses on the analysis of a number of emergent media throughout the history of classical Hollywood cinema, this thesis seeks to study how the development of single home mode medium had been represented in UK and US fiction films. Such an approach poses a challenge to the existing conception of imagination and fantasies, the exploration of which has thus far predominantly been limited to their period of emergence. Drawing on Natale and Balbi I propose that imagination can be deployed as a category pertaining to history. As Natale and Balbi point out, as they develop media change in character and give rise to a different set of fantasies depending on the stages of the medium's 'life cycle'. The narratives developed following a medium's obsolescence will thus differ from those generated at the time of its novelty. Similarly, this thesis argues that cinema's depiction and definition of home movies will vary with time, but at the same time, these transitions should not be perceived solely as a reflection of and on the commercial developments of the technology. Rather, in order to analyse fiction film's depiction of small-gauge domestic filmmaking it is important to take their specificity into consideration. Cinematic home movies do not only give rise to fantasies but also, as Moran argues, are in themselves an imaginary medium, one which is constructed by fiction films in the process of representation. My use of the term imagination is thus exploratory, rather than prescriptive, charting what at a given point in time constitutes the home movie, what elements of its definition (site, themes, medium, mode, aesthetic) are being foregrounded and which are downplayed and what these shifts can tell us about cinema's wavering understandings of, attitudes towards, and perception of the relevance of the home movie.

## Chapter 1: Toys of the Wealthy

### Introduction

This chapter inaugurates the inquiry into the history of home movies in fiction films. It focuses on the representation of home movies in works released between 1939 and 1949, beginning with George Cukor's *The Women* and closing with *Adam's Rib*, by the same director. As I will demonstrate, the home movies of the period are marked, on the one hand, by a notable diversity in terms of their on screen presentation, and on the other, by their frequently detailed characterisation. Depicting the small-gauge movie as a prop, a point-of-view and an event, the works studied in this chapter display varying conceptions of what constitutes a home movie in a fiction film. This divergence indicates a preoccupation with exploring the cinematic potential of home movies and suggests their likely unfamiliarity to contemporary viewers. This is further evoked by the elaborate staging of the home movies, which provides spectators with a wealth of information concerning their mode of production and reception. Yet, while I will argue that the home movies of the period are largely characterised as a yet-to-be habituated on screen presence, they do betray a number of similarities, notably: an explicit or implied association with domesticity, a preoccupation with establishing and exploring familial bonds, an interest in performance and a pervasive affinity with wealth. Examining the films comparatively will thus allow us not only to study the role which the home movies play within individual works but, above all, to probe into the parameters of the contemporary home movie imagination.

Analysing home movies-in-films of the time concurrently goes against a dominant tendency to consider them solely as significant to the works in which they are embedded. While the

home movies in *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940), *A Canterbury Tale* (Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger, 1944) and *Adam's Rib* have received significant scholarly attention, the correspondences between them have not been substantially investigated. The accounts of domestic image making within the works are frequently underpinned by an auteurial slant, perceiving the home movies as a self-reflexive gesture or a form of directorial signature. Yet, although such a reading is not unfounded — particularly in the case of Cukor and Powell, whose oeuvres contain more than one example of a home movie — studying the small-gauge films only as a reflection on Hitchcock's, Powell's or Cukor's directorial concerns obscures the wider landscape of fictional representations of domestic image making.<sup>1</sup> A notable pitfall of this tendency is not only its disregard for continuity between the contained home movies, but also its capacity to foster the perception that such depictions were predominantly the provenance of 'the auteur'. This is an argument put forward by Marie Thérèse-Journot in her assessment of the cinematic representation of amateur filmmaking. Journot contends that before 1979 small-gauge films-within-films mainly fall within the purview of 'big name' ('grands noms') directors, only achieving a broader popularity in the 1980s; she writes that: 'si l'on trouvait au début une majorité de grands noms (Cukor, Hitchcock, Lang, Powell, Resnais, Ferreri, Tarkovski, Truffaut, Scorsese...), ils sont maintenant noyés dans la masse.'<sup>2</sup> As my own research has confirmed, there has been a significant rise in the number of home movies-in-films in the 1980s and with the notable exception of David Butler (*If I Had My Way*, 1940), the majority of the films studied in this chapter conform to the tendency identified by Journot. Yet, although, on the whole, I am inclined to agree with her evaluation of the shifts in cinematic home movies, I would be hesitant considering a filmmaker's prominence as the defining characteristic of the period.

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<sup>1</sup> This is also the case with Martin Scorsese and Brian De Palma whose works will be studied in Chapter Three.

<sup>2</sup> Marie-Thérèse Journot, *Films amateurs dans le cinéma de fiction* (Arman Colin, 2011), p. 10.

My reluctance is rooted in recognising the particular challenges posed by identifying instances of home movies-in-films which I have addressed earlier in the introduction. Because films such as *Rebecca*, *A Canterbury Tale* and *Adam's Rib* have been written about extensively, the home movies contained within them have also attracted scrutiny and, in extension, generated scholarly familiarity. Accounting for the association between home movies and the figure of the auteur it is thus pertinent to perceive this affinity as a facet of the inquiry rather than exclusively as a defining characteristic of the material.

In her assessment of amateur films-in-fiction films, Journot not only suggests an alignment between depictions of home movies and the auteur but also points towards the scarcity of such representations relative to their abundance from the 1980s onwards. One way to account for this rarity is to consider it as an indication that, before the 1980s, small-gauge films-within-films have not yet become an established on screen presence. Such an argument is advanced by Michael Walker who compares Hitchcock's use of the home movie to examples from *Que la bête meure* (1969) and *Cinema Paradiso* (1988) contending that in *Rebecca* viewers find a precedent of 'a motif that was unfamiliar in the 1940s but is common today ... employed with a sophistication which had possibly never been bettered.'<sup>3</sup> Similarly to Walker, in this chapter I interpret the infrequent appearance of home movies in films released between 1939 and 1949 as indicative of the emergence of cinema's preoccupation with the domestic filmmaking. However, rather than assessing this solely on the basis of their scarcity I believe a case for the motif's unfamiliarity can also be made by focusing on the detail and complexity of their depictions. I will thus argue that what Walker identifies as the sophistication of the honeymoon sequence in *Rebecca* can be perceived as a feature of other films of the time. Considering the depiction of small-gauge family in terms of

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Walker, *Hitchcock's Motifs* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), p. 26.

emergence, it is important however to stress that this is a claim pertaining to the history of cinematic home movies, rather than home movies more broadly. As Patricia Zimmerman and Alan Kattelle have pointed out, the development of home movie technology may be traced to the late nineteenth century. In the 1940s small-gauge filmmaking should not therefore be considered as a technical novelty. Yet while viewers may be familiar with domestic image making from their day to day lives, as I have stressed previously in the *Review of Literature*, it is impossible to ascertain what bearing this knowledge would have had on the character of their cinematic depiction and their reception. What this chapter thus focuses on is not, as in the case of Paul Young's work on media fantasy film in *The Cinema Dreams its Rivals*, the hopes and anxieties cinema expresses about a novel technology but rather the emergence of home movies as a distinct motif in fiction film.

Tracing the emergence of home movies as a cinematic motif, this chapter proceeds by proposing a taxonomy of the three 'types' of home movie depictions which occur in films of the time. Highlighting their role as a prop (in *The Women*), point-of-view (in *Canterbury Tale*) and an event (*The Women*, *Rebecca*, *If I Had My Way*, *Adam's Rib*), I will argue that each of these categories entails a differently calibrated conception of what constitutes domestic moving image production and the role they play on the big screen. While the diversity of portrayals indicates the filmmakers' concern with the explorations of the expressive potential of the home movie, the overlaps between them should not be overlooked. Establishing common themes in the depiction of small-gauge image making will allow us to more precisely observe their character as motif, and to reveal the features of the home movie imagination of the time.

## Prop

George Cukor's *The Women* features two instances of home movies. The first occurs early on in the film, in a scene which introduces the protagonist, Mary Haines (Norma Shearer). Mary is a satisfied upper-middle class housewife whose life is thrown into turmoil as she learns, through her gossiping acquaintances, of her husband's infidelity.<sup>4</sup> The film begins with the news being passed around a beauty parlour until it reaches Sylvia (Rosalind Russell) and Edith (Phyllis Povah), who are to lunch with Mary that afternoon. The scene then shifts to the woman in question, and the unsuspecting Mary is first depicted horse riding with her daughter, little Mary (Virginia Weidler). The girl boasts of her racing victory, insisting that the mother passes the news on to the father. In order to indisputably prove her daughter's horse riding prowess Mary takes out a small-gauge camera and records a re-enactment of the grand finale. The mother and daughter then continue to film each other as they make their way towards the house, fooling around in front of the camera. While I will be returning to the second appearance of the home movie in due course (Mary projecting her holiday in Bermuda for her family), this section concentrates on the initial, establishing, appearance of the small-gauge camera, focusing on its role as a diegetic prop. What does the camera tell us about Mary and vice versa, what does the association with her reveal about the film's characterisation of domestic image making?

In its first presentation of the home movie *The Women* places emphasis on filmmaking rather than on viewing; the spectators do not see the material Mary is filming, neither at the time (it does not serve as a way to facilitate access to her point-of-view as is the case in *A Canterbury Tale*), nor later in the film. The function of the family film in the scene is thus

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<sup>4</sup> Since Stephen is unwilling to part with his lover, the conniving shop girl Crystal Allen (Joan Crawford), Mary decides to file for divorce. Her feelings of affection for her husband however remain unchanged, and when she finds out that Stephen is deeply unhappy in his new marriage she decides to win him back.

that of a prop and its significance should be interpreted accordingly. While ‘things’ in film have been the subject of substantial analysis, as Renira Gambarato notes they are frequently considered as part of a wider discussion of production design rather than as a distinct subject in their own right. Seeking to address this oversight Gambarato proposes a methodology for the analysis of the cinematic object, detailing ways in which scholars may determine and interpret their significance. As she argues, perceiving props as a focal point for analysis may provide novel insights into the film and its concerns. She writes that: ‘in films, objects can translate the characters’ interior state of mind in a concomitant way that is both revealing/dissimulating, explicit/implicit; a game whose rules are based on the ethical-esthetical commitment to a conceptual narrative. Objects are signs that represent ideas, and translate intended meaning in a film.’<sup>5</sup>

Of particular note for this inquiry is the emphasis which Gambarato places not only on an object’s ability to convey meaning but also on the film’s capacity to construct the meaning of the things it represents. She argues that: ‘the object-sign on the screen is often only partially an object of reality. Often times it carries with itself data that goes beyond the aesthetics of reality; data that are formed inside the infrastructure of the fictional image.’<sup>6</sup> The way we perceive things on screen thus might not necessarily follow seamlessly from our encounter with the same objects in our day to day life. Such an approach is particularly useful in exploring the home movie imagination, which perceives cinema’s representation of home movies not as a reflection of their social or technological history but rather emphasises their filmic construction. When studying the depiction of the camera in *The Women* it is however important to keep in mind that, as John Gibbs points out props do not

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<sup>5</sup> Renira Gambarato, ‘Methodology for Film Analysis: The Role of Objects in Films’ *Revista Fronteiras* 12:2 (May/August, 2010), p. 106.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

exist in isolation but are best understood as part of, what he terms, ‘the interplay of elements’, the interaction between the various components of the *mise-en-scène*.<sup>7</sup> In understanding Cukor’s representation of the home movie, it is valuable to analyse it in conjunction with three figures in particular: the horse, to whose saddle the camera is initially strapped and the camera’s operators Mary and her daughter. Doing so, I will foreground how the family film becomes a focal point for exploring ideas around mobility and gender which are central preoccupations of Cukor’s work.



**Figure 3.** A traveller’s companion

The camera first makes an appearance as Mary takes it out of a small bag attached to the saddle of her horse (Fig. 3). The pouch is a curious object, exactly the right size to fit the instrument, indicating that it was manufactured with this purpose in mind. The bag evidences habituation, illuminating that Mary is in the habit of taking the camera on her equine escapades. The significance of the saddle pouch can however also be interpreted more broadly as it intimates that the camera is something to be taken on a journey, characterising

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<sup>7</sup> John Gibbs, *Mise-en-scène: Film Style and Interpretation* (London: Wallflower Press, 2002).

it as a traveller's companion. The 'home movie' is thus not only a movie shot in the domestic space, it also comprises images that are brought back home, a definition which *The Women* explores further in the screening of Mary's Bermuda holiday film. The alignment between the camera and the horse which the scene forges is however doubly significant; signalling an association between the camera and mobility, *The Women* also draws attention to a motion of a different kind, to cinema's ability to record movement. A number of scholars have drawn attention to the affinity between horses and the moving image, emphasising the role which animals have played in the development of cinematic technology. Accentuating the significance of representing animals as subjects in sequential photography and early cinema Jonathan Burt argues that: 'animals were an important force in driving the new technology of moving film as well as being, in some senses, its inspiration.'<sup>8</sup> Drawing on Burt, Maria Praggiamore speculatively suggests how the horse in particular may be perceived as a figure of the 'cinematic imagination', a term she uses to describe the fantasies which preceded the development of moving image technology.<sup>9</sup> Establishing an association between the camera and the horse, Cukor's film may similarly be perceived as drawing attention to the movement of the moving pictures, and notably both home movie scenes are absent from Clare Boothe Luce's original play, further highlighting their significance as a cinematic device, and thus its self-reflexive potential.<sup>10</sup>

Drawing attention to the means of production suggests the director's broader reflexivity about the medium; this gesture can also however be interpreted as providing a reflection on

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<sup>8</sup>Jonathan Burt 'The Illumination of the Animal Kingdom: The Role of Light and Electricity in Animal Representation' *Society & Animals* 9:3 (2001), p. 210.

<sup>9</sup> Praggiamore, Maria, 'The Taming of the Bronies: Animals, Autism and Fandom as Therapeutic Performance', *Alphaville* 9 (Fall 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Clare Boothe Luce, *The Women* (New York, Dramatists Play Service Inc.: 1995). This concern becomes the more evident as we observe that the scene abounds with motion, both of represented the animals (horse riding, the dog jumping into Mary's arms) and the humans (Mary's putting on a strut as she makes her way home, Little Mary leaping onto her mother's back).

the type of film that *The Women* is — a classical Hollywood production. The work's reflexivity about its status as a Hollywood film comes to the fore as we observe the ways in which the home movie is deployed to parallel, and contrast with, the film in which it is embedded. The correspondence between the family film and Cukor's work is most directly articulated in the film's deployment of Mary and her daughter as diegetic surrogates of the film's cinematographers (Oliver T. Marsh and Joseph Ruttenberg), an alignment which is conveyed through the parallels between the movements of the small-gauge and the professional cameras. Filming her daughter, Mary begins with a static shot, later panning as the girl's horse reaches the stable. While the film does not directly replicate her perspective, *The Women* similarly captures little Mary's arrival through a static shot followed by a pan. A like comparison is again drawn in the footage little Mary takes of her mother (both consisting of a tracking shot followed by a pan) and the girl's alignment with the cinematographer is further emphasised by the staging which depicts the daughter with her back to the camera, placing her almost directly in its place.

Drawing parallels between the two kinds of filmmaking, Cukor however also indicates their differences. A notable contrast is foregrounded as Mary points out that her daughter is 'shooting on the bias', that is to say, tilting the camera (Fig. 4). Little Mary defends this as an artistic choice, one which as Mary points out, father would not approve of. This small exchange draws attention to the differences in style of the two productions, contrasting the girl's expressive and excessive use of the tilt with the unobtrusive framing of classical Hollywood film. Signalling questions of artistry, the dialogue however also serves to shore up a further distinction between the films, that of their creators and implied audiences. Notably both Mary and Little Mary stand-in for male cinematographers; moreover, while *The Women* is widely considered as a 'women's film' (appealing to a female spectatorship

through its all-female cast and a preoccupation with beauty and fashion) the implied spectator of the home movie is the absent husband.



Figure 4. 'Shooting on the bias'

Cukor's depiction of a female cinematographer (and his characterisation of the woman as a camera operator) is an unusual choice for the time, and one that is evocative of the film's broader concern with gender. Considering the gendering of the home movie, Patricia Zimmerman indicates that, conceptually, home moviemaking it is not exclusively a male domain.<sup>11</sup> As she demonstrates, the very term home movie suggests a fraught gender dynamics indicating a feminine preoccupation with domesticity on the one hand, and masculine connotations of technology on the other. In their depiction of the home movie, films discussed in this chapter, however, predominantly stress the latter, emphasising an

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<sup>11</sup> This is foregrounded in Zimmerman's analysis of the advertisements for small-gauge cameras released in the 1920s, a time when amateur filmmaking was undergoing a shift from entrepreneurial novelty to consumer gadget. Bell & Howell advertisements of the time would frequently feature female filmmakers, a choice which Zimmerman interprets as an endeavour on part of the company to 'ameliorate the aura of camera equipment as complicated professional machinery.' Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 61.

association between technology and masculinity over the feminine connotations of the home. In a number of the films of the time the domestic cinematographers are male (with the possible exception of *Adam's Rib*, where the camera operator remains anonymous, and to an extent also *Rebecca* which features an image of the husband taken by the wife), and aside from *The Women* it is unequivocally the men who operate the projector.

Perceived in this context, the depiction of the home movie in *The Women* as a female pursuit offers an alternative to the prevalent gendering of the home movie, exploring its potential as a tool through which women may express their experiences. Although the invocation of Stephen, in the family filmmaking scene as well as during projection, may be read as an indication that the female self-portrayal is always fashioned with a male viewer in mind I would argue that the husband's absence is equally significant.<sup>12</sup> Featuring an exclusively female cast *The Women* presents viewers with an image of a cinema made and consumed by women. Notably, the home movie in the film is depicted as a tool through which women may express their relationships with one another, as both the horse riding film and the Bermuda souvenir focus on the relationship between mother and daughter who freely exchange positions as filmmaker and subject. Yet, if Cukor presents the pleasures of the home movie, he also illuminates that these may not be available to all women uniformly. The alignment between the camera and the horse carries a further set of associations, functioning as an indicator of Mary's upper-class status. In a film which depicts the failure of social mobility (by the end Mary's rival, working class shop girl Crystal ends up back where she started, at the perfume counter), this association subtly foregrounds that the

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<sup>12</sup> While the husband's preferences are acknowledged, they are also, disregarded and within the home movie sequence the film twice draws attention that the images would not please Stephen, first as Mary remarks that her husband will be disappointed in her losing the race to her daughter and second in his implied dislike for the tilted angle.

freedom of movement which the horse and the home movie camera connote may, like the animal and the object, be largely the provenance of the well-to-do.

I will be returning to questions of spectatorship in more depth when studying the depiction of the home movie screening in the third section of the chapter, where I will also be discussing the second family film depicted in *The Women*. While the two instances of small-gauge movie making should not be perceived separately, my intention in isolating the initial appearance of the home movie was to accentuate the importance of perceiving the material dimension of the technology, and to illuminate how the film constructs the meaning of the represented object. Although the camera only makes a brief appearance in Cukor's work, perceiving it in association with the horse and the female characters facilitates a reflection on the film's concerns with mobility, gender and the moving image. Similarly to *The Women*, the home movie depicted in *A Canterbury Tale* is deployed as a self-reflexive device, focalising the film's concern with, and criticism of, the ways of seeing occasioned by cinema. It does so, however, by privileging the camera's point-of-view.

### **Point of view**

Like Cukor's film, *A Canterbury Tale* offers a depiction of small-gauge filmmaking. In contrast to *The Women* however the camera is presented not only as a prop, but the film also includes images stylised to appear as if seen through a viewfinder. The technology makes an appearance close to the film's finale. The protagonists – Bob Johnson (Sgt. John Sweet), Alison Smith (Sheila Sim), Peter Gibbs (Dennis Price) and Thomas Colpeper (Eric Portman) — journey to Canterbury where they are to part ways following their serendipitous encounter in a nearby fictitious town of Chillingbourne. In Canterbury, each of the young characters receives a 'blessing': Alison finds out that her boyfriend, whom she has presumed dead, has

survived, Peter is given the opportunity to play the cathedral organ and Bob receives a stack of delayed correspondence from his girlfriend. The letters are given to Bob by his friend, Sergeant Mickey Roczkinsky (Harvey Golden), who is first seen filming the Canterbury cathedral with his small-gauge camera.

While the filmmaker depicted by Powell and Pressburger is not explicitly coded as a domestic one to the same extent as Mary in *The Women*, I believe that it is nonetheless valuable to discuss it within the context of this thesis. Not only does it shore up ideas around mobility and travel discussed in this and the following chapter, it also offers an unusual, at the time, presentation of the small-gauge camera, one which enriches our understanding of how its cinematic presence was envisioned in the period. The small-gauge film is perhaps best classified as a travelogue, or a souvenir film; it is not what Zimmerman and Tepperman describe as a 'serious' amateur production as there is little attention dedicated to concerns such as framing, composition or narrative. Rather, the film functions as a personal record of Mickey's experience in Europe one that is likely to be presented to friends and relatives after the soldier's return. Thus although the film is not manifestly associated with the domestic it does stimulate a reflection on questions of home, particularly in the context of the film's broader preoccupation with displacement. *A Canterbury Tale* is a film set during the Second World War, and features characters who are, for the most part, away from home, and who are often depicted mourning the perceived loss of potential future homes.<sup>13</sup> In light of this, the small-gauge film which subtly invokes the possibility of returning home, may be perceived as contributing to the tentative sense of hope for the future conveyed by the finale,

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<sup>13</sup> The longing for home is emphasised throughout the film. Gazing on Colpeper's house Alison muses how it would be to grow old in a place like this, and she makes repeated allusions to her desire to settle in Kent. This is also palpable in Bob's description of his estranged girlfriend as his 'future son's mother'.

which invokes the restoration of the two couples and anticipates the prospective formation of new families.

The representation of small-gauge filmmaking in *A Canterbury Tale* is unusual for its time and it is the only film discussed in this chapter to depict images seen through the camera viewfinder.<sup>14</sup> While such a depiction may serve a narrative role, contributing to characterisation by granting spectators access to the character's subjective point of view, it also offers a point of departure for a reflection on the ways of looking occasioned by moving image technologies, their conventions and limitations. To illuminate this, it is useful to consider another example of a point of view camera featured in Michael Powell's later film *Peeping Tom* (1960), which explores the interplay of voyeurism and violence. The characterisation of filmmaking as a violent act is established in the film's opening sequence which depicts the murder of a prostitute from the point view of the camera hidden in the folds of the killer's coat. In her discussion of the scene Laura Mulvey draws attention to the comparison it establishes between the killer's look and the viewers' own. She writes that: 'when the spectator's look is aligned for so long with the camera's look, both become self-conscious: the conventional association between the camera's look and the male gaze becomes uncomfortable, as it becomes visible.'<sup>15</sup> The sequence urges spectators to confront their voyeuristic complicity, as well as functioning, like the film as whole, as a tacit admission of the filmmaker's own. Although in *A Canterbury Tale* the represented camera is not depicted as a tool of violence, I believe there is a conceptual comparison to be drawn between the two depictions. Like *Peeping Tom*, Mickey's home movie of Canterbury

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<sup>14</sup> Further examples type of home movie will be studied in chapters two and three.

<sup>15</sup> Laura Mulvey 'The Light That Fails: A Commentary in *Peeping Tom*' in Ian Christie and Andrew Moor (eds.), *The Cinema of Michael Powell: International Perspectives in an English Filmmaker* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005).

cathedral functions as a self-reflexive, and to an extent self-critical, gesture on the Archers' part, offering a commentary on mediated tourism.

In their depiction of Mickey's filmmaking, the Archers emphasise the limitations which the technology imposes on the soldier's encounter with the world. This is conveyed visually, by offering spectators access to the point of view of Mickey's camera. The cross of the viewfinder superimposed on the close-up of the facade undercuts the visual spectacle of the landmark, conveying a sense of fragmentation; the frame of the travel film is visibly smaller than that of Powell's and Pressburger's work, further underscoring the limitations imposed by mediation (Fig.5). The small-gauge camera is thus depicted as an inferior way of seeing, and its constraint metaphorically indicates the narrowness of Mickey's point of view. This critique is enhanced as Mickey reveals his ignorance about the historical and spiritual significance of the cathedral in his discussion with Bob (mistaking the Old Road for a street in London). In contrast to sergeant Johnson who recognises the cathedral as a site of pilgrimage and renewal Sergeant Roczinky perceives it simply as another landmark to be checked off the inventory.



**Figure 5.** The viewfinder and the window

The representation of filmmaking in *A Canterbury Tale* should not however be perceived solely as a critique aimed at small-gauge film but rather at film more generally, for which the home movie stands as a metonym. This equivalence is established as the scene continues through a visual parallel which the Archers draw between the viewfinder and a window

which Mickey deploys as a metaphor for cinematic spectatorship (Fig.5). Settling in a window seat at a nearby tea house, Roczinsky likens the experience to that of cinema going, telling his friend that: ‘you can sit right there and watch the world go by, like in the movies.’ His pronouncement directly echoes a sentiment which Bob has expressed earlier in a discussion with Colpeper, who chided the American for his love for the cinema. Responding to Bob’s account of his time in Salisbury — which involved frequent trips to the movie theatre where he could ‘sit back in an armchair and watch the world go by’ — Colpeper replies that unfortunately ‘people get used to looking at the world from a sitting position.’ Reiterating Bob’s assertion through Mickey the film illuminates the transformative effect which the brief stay in Chillingbourne has had on Sergeant Johnson. At the same time, *A Canterbury Tale* further stresses the adverse effects of movie going suggesting that Mickey’s manner of experiencing the world has been shaped by his viewing habits. This is conveyed through the visual alignment between the window and the home movie, both of which are segmented (by the cross of the viewfinder in the former and the frame in the latter) and constrained (the window is framed by curtains hanging on either side). In contrast to the customary meaning of the phrase ‘a window on the world’ which indicates a broadening of perspective, likening the window to the cinema the Archers instead emphasise its capacity ‘to screen’, presenting it as a barrier which separates Mickey from a full, that is to say unmediated, experience. The home movie in *A Canterbury Tale* is thus presented a symptom rather than the root of the problem.

Observing the film’s critique of cinema, Ian Christie poses the question as to ‘why do the Archers denigrate their own medium?’<sup>16</sup> One answer to this may be found in the film’s

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<sup>16</sup> Ian Christie “‘History is Now and England’: *A Canterbury Tale* in its Contexts’, in Christie and Moor (ed.), *The Cinema of Michael Powell*, p. 81.

broader reluctance towards modern technology which as Andrew Moor observes is in line with the film's celebration of pre-industrial values. Moor argues that throughout the film 'views all mechanical technology suspiciously', a hesitance which is perhaps most clearly illustrated in a scene in which Peter and his platoon playfully chase Alison in their tanks, destroying the surrounding landscape in the process.<sup>17</sup> While the small-gauge camera is not depicted as possessing the same ruinous capacity, it is similarly presented as being 'out of place', a characterisation which comes to the fore when Mickey's filmmaking is interrupted by a passing flock of sheep. The animals communicate a sense of the pastoral, enhancing the medieval character of the cathedral, which contrasts with the modernity of the camera. The encounter subtly evokes a clash of temporalities as well as the contrasting values which the film associates with them.

Yet, as Moor points out, Mickey's film is only one side to the film's reflection on cinema. The other is Colpeper's slide show lecture and it is with this cinematic metonym that the Archers' align their project. Notably Colpeper is a reluctant, and distinctly unskilled, user of technology, and the visual aids which he provides seek not to substitute for the soldiers' experience of Kent but rather to entice their curiosity about the region. In light of this it is possible to perceive Sergeant Roczinsky not only as an embodiment of cinema but more precisely as a representative of a particular type of film, a Hollywood production, to which Powell and Pressburger seek to offer an alternative (notably all the film enthusiasts in *A Canterbury Tale* are American soldiers). As Peter Conrad argues: 'Powell's aim ... is the redemption of his art. He wants to change film from a fickle mobile, inattentive substitute for seeing', symbolised by the travel film, 'to an entranced mediation on images.'<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Andrew Moor, *Powell and Pressburger: A Cinema of Magic Spaces* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p. 101.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Conrad, *To Be Continued: Four Stories and Their Survival* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 30.

Contrasting different ideas of cinema, Powell and Pressburger suggest that film not only imparts a perspective for its viewers but may teach spectators how to look, indicating in the process, how the home movie may serve a device for exploring questions of point of view. This concern with spectatorship may also be perceived in films which depict the home movie screening, a representation which facilitates a reflection not only on mediation but also on the particular character of domestic viewership.

### **An event**

A screening is the most prominent way of representing home movies in the films released between 1939-1949, and features in all but one (*A Canterbury Tale*) of the works discussed in this chapter. As I have suggested earlier, in addition to its depiction of home movie making, *The Women* also features a sequence of family film viewing, which focuses on little Mary, her mother and grandmother watching Mrs. Haines' holiday films from Bermuda. A home movie screening is also represented in Cukor's later film, *Adam's Rib*, which tells the story of two lawyers, Adam and Amanda Bonner (portrayed by Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracey) whose marriage is placed under stress as they take opposing sides in the trial of Doris Attinger (Judy Holliday) a woman accused of the attempted murder of her adulterous husband. Amanda informs Adam of her decision to defend Mrs. Attinger during a dinner party and the subsequent home movie screening (of their production entitled *The Mortgage the Merrier*) dramatises the tension between the couple who cannot voice their disagreement in front of their guests.

If in *Adam's Rib* the home movie has a function akin to a digestif, in *Rebecca* the film is screened as an apéritif, prior to the evening meal. The family film depicts the central couple, the affluent English aristocrat Maxim de Winter (Laurence Olivier) and his second wife, an

unnamed American ingénue (Joan Fontaine) on their Riviera Honeymoon. The pair are depicted enjoying a brief moment of marital bliss before moving into the husband's ancestral home — Manderlay — where the heroine confronts the lasting influence of Maxim's first wife, the eponymous Rebecca. Released the same year as Hitchcock's work, *If I Had My Way* opens with a home movie which focuses on the working day of three construction workers, Buzz Blackwell (Bing Crosby), Axel Swenson (El Brendel) and Fred Johnson (Donald Woods) and their interactions with Fred's daughter Patricia (Gloria Jean). The screening emphasises the camaraderie between the characters, presenting them as a family of choice; a depiction which becomes the more significant when Buzz and Alex become the girl's surrogate guardians following the death of her biological father.

In its association with working-class characters, the home movie contained in *If I Had My Way* is unusual for the time. As I have suggested earlier, home movies in the period are predominately depicted as the purview of affluent families, whose social status is frequently accentuated by the leisure activities depicted in their domestic recordings. These include exotic holidays (the Bermuda trip in *The Women*, the Riviera honeymoon in *Rebecca*) and sports typically associated with the wealthier classes (horse riding, tennis in *Adam's Rib*). The correlation between the home movie and wealth is perhaps most explicitly articulated in *The Mortgage the Merrier* which depicts the couple celebrating the purchase of a second house in Connecticut. Showcasing the characters' wealth, the films characterise home movies as an accessory only a few can afford. As such it is possible to read them as a desirable object, akin to the clothes depicted during the fashion show in *The Women*. Notably, home movies at once facilitate an exhibition of wealth and are themselves placed on show by the films, and this is foregrounded in the detailed attention to their machinery and mechanics, such as the threading of the projector in *Rebecca* or the camera lingering on

Mary dismantling the technology in *The Women*. Studying the depiction of the home movie screening it is thus important to take the multivalent role of the home movie into account: as a technology of display and a technology on display (Fig.6).



**Figure 6.** Technology on display

Illuminating the significance of home movie screening, I will begin by outlining its narrative role as a way of depicting past events, often establishing a tension between the present and the past. The home movies however also allude to a frisson of a different kind: that between the contained and containing films. Although the frequent references to the shortcomings of

the home movie could be read as a denigration of the amateur product by the classical Hollywood film, I will argue that these serve to foreground the distinct modalities of viewing. In the films of the time home movies are often depicted as offering a space for familial performance, a preoccupation which is reflected in my choice to label their depictions as ‘event’ rather than screening, which seeks to highlight the socially engaged and theatrical character of spectatorship.

In order to account for the significance, as well as the prominence, of the home movie screening sequences, it is valuable to consider the role which they play in the narrative. In his study of the video-in-the-text James Moran provides a way of conceptualising this function, describing video as a ‘meta diegesis’. ‘Meta diegesis’ as Moran explains is ‘a figure inserting an alternative narrative or universe within the narrative universe of its cinematic host’ whose ‘relationship to the primary diegesis may be explanatory, thematic or simply distracting.’<sup>19</sup> Although Moran’s focus is on video, his insights can be, in this case, applied to home movies. Like video-in-the-text, home movies-within-films offer viewers access to images which supplement the diegetic reality. While a similar claim could be made for the point-of-view-sequence, what distinguishes the home movie screening is its capacity to present a depiction of a different time and place, or the same space at a different time. Since small-gauge film needs to be developed before it can be viewed — a facet of domestic moviemaking to which Maxim draws attention in *Rebecca* as he remarks that ‘the films of the honeymoon have arrived, at last’ —there is a temporal lag between the shooting and the screening.

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<sup>19</sup> James, M. Moran, *There's No Place Like Home Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 180.

Capitalising on the delay between recording and viewing, fiction films frequently deploy home movies as a form of analepsis, a way of representing events prior to, or omitted in the course of, the narrative. Although their function could be likened to that of a flashback, as Maureen Turim points out in her study *Flashbacks in Film* (1989), the flashback is frequently associated with subjective memory. The home movie in contrast, does not serve to represent recall but rather functions as a prompt to remembrance, encouraging the diegetic spectators to reflect on their past (I will be returning to this distinction in more depth in Chapter Five). The representation of anteriority occasioned by the small-gauge film may, as it is in *If I Had My Way*, serve as an exposition, emphasising the intimacy of the characters by depicting their shared history. It is also frequently deployed to dramatise a tension between the past and present, as in the case of *Rebecca* and *Adam's Rib*, contrasting idyllic images of the family's happiness with the couple's present-day disagreements. The latter, as I will demonstrate in due course, becomes particularly prevalent as the home movie imagination develops, becoming a dominant trope in the depiction of cinematic home movies, one which Marie-Thérèse Journot describes as 'paradis perdu' (paradises lost).

While the home movie screening foregrounds a tension between past and present, it also shores up a contrast of a different kind, one between the home movie and the film in which it is contained. Stanley Cavell emphasises this comparative relationship as he considers whether the concept of the *mise en abyme* offers an appropriate framework for the analysis of *Adam's Rib*. As I have suggested previously in the Review of Literature, Cavell observes a number of similarities between the two films (their actors, settings, use of inter-titles), which lead him to reflect on the potential mirroring of the two productions. He concludes however that while the *mise en abyme* requires the two films to be exact replicas of each

other, the home movie differs from its host in a number of significant ways. As he illuminates:

putting aside the greater complexity of elaboration of character, plot, and setting, and the differences of audience each film expects, the remaining differences seem to be down to two: *Adam's Rib* has better production values than *The Mortgage the Merrier* (or, more strictly, better values than the elaborately produced fictional home movie we are shown impersonates); and *Adam's Rib* is a talkie whereas *The Mortgage the Merrier* is not.<sup>20</sup>

These differences, he contends are as significant as the overlaps, indicating that the containing work recognises the home movie as an autonomous film 'declaring it to be a complete (primitive) film in its own right.'<sup>21</sup> The parallels and differences between the two productions thus emphasise that the home movie is a different 'kind' of film than that in which it is embedded. This in turn prompts the question what 'kind' of film is the home movie or rather, what do the films of the period consider home movies to be and how is that different from the ways in which the works envisage their own projects.



Figure 7. The DIY quality of *The Mortgage the Merrier*

<sup>20</sup> Stanley Cavell, *The Pursuit of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 207

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

In his account Cavell accentuates two differences between the contained and containing film in particular: lesser production values and lack of sound. Notably, both the characteristics he lists are shortcomings, indicating a tendency on the part of fiction film to denote the home movie as inferior to the film in which they are embedded. Patricia Erens similarly suggests that commercial narrative films characterise home movies through their limitations arguing that the films: ‘reproduce ‘familiar ‘mistakes’ which constitute the home movie aesthetic ... in order to create the necessary look.’<sup>22</sup> *The Mortgage the Merrier* includes a number of such ‘errors’, depicting inverted frames and misalignment of sprockets, as well as a general disregard for classical Hollywood rules of visual storytelling. In contrast to the technical finesse of the containing film, the home movies accentuate a do-it-yourself quality, perceptible in the hand written inter-titles which punctuate the Bonner’s family film (Fig.7). The handmade quality of the home movie is also denoted by the deployment of a mobile camera which foregrounds the identity of the filmmaker, a feature particularly apparent in *Rebecca* and *The Women* where the camera is being passed around between the two characters (Maxim and his wife, Mary and her mother). Unlike a Hollywood production the home movies in the films do not strive to create an illusion of coherence, and frequently feature images of family members addressing the filmmaker. Because all of the films-the-films are silent however, these conversations remain inaudible, foregrounding the technical shortcomings of small-gauge film.

Drawing attention to the ‘mistakes’ of the domestic film may be interpreted as a denigrating gesture on part of the containing works. This is perceptible in *If I Had My Way* when Sven

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<sup>22</sup> Patricia Erens, ‘Home Movies in Commercial Narrative Films’ *Journal of Film and Video* 38:3/4 (Summer/Fall 1986), p. 99.

draws attention to the silence of the home movie, remarking that the film ‘would be better if you could hear me talk.’ In the context of Butler’s film, which is a Bing Crosby musical vehicle, this passing remark draws attention to the limitations of the home movie which, unlike the film in which it is contained, cannot offer the principal pleasure of hearing the crooner sing. Sven’s subtle belittling of the domestic film is also a feature of *Adam’s Rib* where the Bonner’s friend and self-professed projectionist/narrator Kip (David Wayne) repeatedly and explicitly deprecates the home movies, making snide remarks about their cinematography (as he asks ‘who shot those pictures, your cow?’) and questioning their entertainment value, finishing the screening with a relieved declaration: ‘we say good bye to Bonner hill and these sickening home movies.’ Since the home movies are directly contrasted with the film in which they are embedded it would be possible to interpret these examples in line with Paul Young’s reading of the denigration of amateur filmmaking in early cinema (in *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals*) as a way for classical Hollywood films to emphasise their superiority over the domestic variety. However, although both *If I Had My Way* and *Adam’s Rib* may appear to be putting the enjoyment of home movies into question by contrasting them with the containing film, I would argue that this juxtaposition also obliquely points to the pleasures of the home movies and their difference from those of fiction film.

Privileging the home movie screening, the films suggest that one of its chief pleasures lies in spectatorship. The viewing of the domestic recording however differs from cinema going in a significant way, and this is perceptible in the films’ characterisation of domestic projection as a space for conversation and performance. This dimension is perceptible in *Adam’s Rib*; although Kip’s commentary is grating, it does not reflect the attitudes of the



**Figure 8.** The narrator as spectacle

other viewers who appear genuinely entertained not only by the family film but also Kip's spirited narration (Fig.8). The storytelling complements the silent images and when the audience applauds at the end, it is equally the home movie and the narrator that they are praising (a number of spectators turn in Kip's direction nodding in approval). *If I Had My Way* similarly endows the home movie with a theatrical dimension. Like *Adam's Rib* the home movie is accompanied by a diegetic narration, delivered by Buzz whose position at the edge of the screen locates him as a complementary spectacle to that of the projected images. While neither *Rebecca* nor *The Women* emphasise the theatricality of family viewing quite to the same extent, both present it as an occasion for social exchange, intercutting between the family films and images of the family engaging in conversation. The distracted spectatorship of the home movie differs however from the one expected from the viewers of a classical Hollywood film (and thus the viewers of the containing films). In contrast to what Paul Young describes as a 'private-in-public' mode of viewing fostered by Hollywood film (which offer an immersive experience and requires the viewers' strict attention), the

inattentive viewing of the home movie can be described as a ‘public-in-private’ experience. Drawing attention to the distinct character of home movie viewing, the screening sequences thus characterise home movies as belonging to a different modality than classical Hollywood fiction films. Accentuating the engaged spectatorship, the films however also deploy the home movie to focalise a reflection on the idea of home envisaged as at once a social and an intimate space.

Highlighting performance as an element of home movie viewing, the films deploy the screening to draw attention to the families’ self-presentation. This concern is evidenced particularly in *Adam’s Rib* and *Rebecca* both of which envision the home as a semi-public space. In his study of Cukor’s film Wim Staat illuminates the ambivalence of its representation of domesticity, describing the family film viewing as a ‘display of “nested” privacy’.<sup>23</sup> The home movie functions as an exhibition of the couples’ marriage for the entertainment and scrutiny of the audience composed of both family members (Adam’s parents), friends (Kip and his partner) and professional acquaintances (the Judges). Intermingling the familial and the professional the screening of the family film anticipates and focalises a central concern of *Adam’s Rib*, which as Cavell indicates explores marriage as both a romantic and legal contract, a preoccupation which comes to the fore during the trial which becomes as much about the Bonner’s relationship as about the Attingers’. Staat illuminates this, writing that: ‘the courtroom is not the public opposite of the private Bonner residence. Both the courtroom and the Bonner apartment are settings for the interrelationship of the Bonners’ public and private lives’.<sup>24</sup> If the parallel between the home movie and the courtroom complicates the idea of home as an exclusively private space, it also suggests an

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<sup>23</sup>Wim Staat, ‘The Representation of Law on Film: Mr. Deeds and Adam’s Rib Go to Court’ in *Law, Culture and Visual Studies*, Richard K. Sherwin and Anne Wagner (eds), (New York, London: Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg, 2014), p. 782.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

imagining of the home movie screening as a social occasion, a conceptualisation which, as this thesis will demonstrate, is prone to shift over time.

In *Rebecca* the home movie sequence similarly draws attention to the conflicting ideas of home which as Ed Gallafent points out is envisaged in Hitchcock's film as a nest on the one hand and as social theatre on the other. This tension is conveyed in the family film screening through the contrast between the home movie image of the couple and that of the de Winters at home. Although Maxim and his wife are the only guests in attendance, the elegance of the attire lends a gravity to the viewing of the honeymoon films, marking it as at once a formal and intimate occasion. This tension underscores the naive heroine's difficulty in negotiating her new role as mistress of Manderlay, and the conflicting demands that are being placed on her by her husband.<sup>25</sup> This frisson is developed by contrasting the two images of the protagonists: the sensible simplicity of her clothing in the home movie and the glamorous gala evening dress which the character dons to impersonate the socialite she believes her husband wants her to be (Fig.9). Maxim's barely hidden displeasure with the evening dress and his obvious preference for the simplicity of her former attire (which as Gallafent points out is associated with a potential for motherhood) exacerbates the heroine's confusion, illuminating her difficulty with feeling 'at home' in Manderlay.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The significance of the costume in the home movie sequence has generated much scholarly discussion, notable examples include Mary Ann Doane's study of the projection sequences in *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988). and Ed Gallafent's 'Black Satin: Fantasy, Murder and the Couple in "Gaslight" and "Rebecca"' *Screen* 29:3 (1988).

<sup>26</sup> The heroine's difficulty in performing the role of the mistress of Manderlay are is further underscored in her inability to confront the servant Mrs. Danvers (Judith Anderson) who interrupts the screening to inquire about the missing china cupid which the heroine had broken and shamefully hidden.



**Figure 9.** Sensible vs. glamorous clothes. Note how the projector stands as a barrier between the couple

While *Adam's Rib* and *Rebecca* deploy the home movie to complicate the idea of the home, *If I Had My Way* to the contrary, uses the screening to establish a sense of homeliness and to transform a transitory space, the temporary barracks which the construction workers inhabit, into an intimate, domestic, one. The viewing is depicted as a bonding experience, prompting the characters' reminiscences about their shared history and the closing images of the home movie — which depict a series of constructions in which the protagonists have been employed — may in this context be read metaphorically as indicating the development and growth of their friendship. The role of the home movie in this case is thus performative; it transforms the impermanent abode into a home and the work colleagues into a family of choice, a capacity of domestic moviemaking which will be explored in more depth in Chapter Three.

With regard to the theatricality of the home movie there is another aspect of its representation which should be taken into account, and that is the containing film's recognition of the fictionality of the contained one. This takes a different form in the films under discussion. In Cukor's work it is perceptible in the stress placed on the characters' performance within the family. Both *The Women* and *Adam's Rib* allude to the fictionality of the containing film through their focus on re-enactment. Bringing the staging of the home movie to the fore — in little Mary's repetition of her racing victory — may be interpreted as a self-reflexive

device drawing the viewers' attention to the construction of cinematic illusion. Doing so however *The Women* also indicates the fictionality of the containing film and notably, Cukor returns to this preoccupation with re-enactment in the Bermuda holiday film which includes a similarly staged sequence of Mary 'catching' a fish which, as her daughter points out, is perceptibly dead.<sup>27</sup> Like *The Women*, *Adam's Rib* also draws attention to the artifice of the home movie, particularly when Adam's father cautions the viewers that the signing and subsequent burning of the mortgage depicted in the film is 'not actual' but was acted out afterwards (Fig. 10). Adam's father's admission that what the viewers are seeing is not 'actual' can be taken as much as a caution to the diegetic viewers as to the cinematic ones, indicating that they should not confuse the fictional family film for an actual home movie.



**Figure 10.** 'We acted all this out later of course' theatricality in Cukor's home movies

Hitchcock's work includes a similar recognition of artifice, evidenced in the inclusion of an 'impossible' cut in the final shot of the home movie which closes with a long shot of the couple enjoying a roadside picnic (Fig.11). As Maxim reminds his wife — and informs the cinematic viewers — the camera was placed on a tripod to capture an image of the couple together. The film then unexpectedly cuts to a close-up of the protagonists, a shot that could not have been achieved by the diegetic camera. Observing this discrepancy, Mary Ann Done

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<sup>27</sup> The deceased animal indicates that rather than a recording of the actual event, the 'catch' is a re-enactment staged for the camera. The image may also be perceived as a pun on Mary's marital situation, and the dead fish dangling from the hook can be read as a metaphor for Stephen who has emphatically become Crystals' 'catch'.

remarks that the close-up breaks ‘the rule dictating that the home movie conform to an arbitrary and contingent syntax’ guaranteeing ‘a certain rhetorical finesse’ and aligning the contained film with the containing one.<sup>28</sup> Stylistically affiliating the home movie with the film, particularly in light of Maxim’s comment, the cut in *Rebecca* emphasises the artifice of the home movie, revealing it to be a deliberate fictional stylisation.



**Figure 11.** An impossible cut indicates artifice

Interpreting these moments as reflexive indications of fictionality, I do not wish to argue that the spectators of the time would necessarily confuse home movies-within-films for actual home movies. Rather, my intention is to signal that an engagement with the fictional character of home movies should be perceived as a characteristic of the films of the period, and moreover to interpret this subtle demystification of the film-within-a-film as an indication of the relative novelty of the home movie as a cinematic motif. Overall, the films of the period share a penchant towards explaining the home movie, elaborating on their mode of production and status as a domestic film. As I have argued previously, not every film watched at home can be defined as a home movie (I have indicated this by contrasting the two projection sequences studied by Doane) and it is notable that the films of the time frequently draw attention to their status as amateur familial productions either explicitly, as is the case in *Adam’s Rib* which repeatedly brands the films ‘home movies’, or obliquely by emphasising that they were shot by the characters (*The Women* depicts filmmaking while

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<sup>28</sup> Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, p. 166.

*Rebecca* and *If I Had My Way* both feature the characters admitting that the films have been recorded by them). Similarly, characterising the home movie, the films frequently not only include but draw attention to the shortcomings which signal their amateur status (as is the case with little Mary ‘shooting on the bias’, the lack of sound in *If I Had My Way* or inverted frames in *Adam’s Rib*). This tendency towards detailed exposition indicates a concern with clearly delineating what constitutes a home movie within-a-film, ensuring that the contained films are legible to the viewers. The intricacy of the depictions of home movies discussed in this chapter will become the more apparent as the thesis progresses. I will be returning to this issue in Chapter Three, suggesting how in the films of the late 1960s and early 1980s we can observe a comparative simplification of home movies, which no longer need to be elaborately introduced to viewers to be legible.

## **Conclusion**

Considering the depiction of small-gauge domestic filmmaking in the films released between 1939 and 1949 as a time of the emergence the home movie as a cinematic motif, this thesis recognises and emphasises that representations of technologies do not have a trans historical stability but rather are prone to shift over time. As Natale and Balbi argue ‘media continuously change in nature, uses, technology, audience and significance; the result is that in each moment in a medium’s evolution we find different fantasies and need different approaches to study each’.<sup>29</sup> Analysing the cinematic representation of home movies, we should thus be attuned to the changes in their depiction which reveal the transition of cinema’s definition of the term. Simultaneously, it is important to recognise that the development of the home movie imagination does not necessarily reflect the trajectory of

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<sup>29</sup> Simone Natale and Gabriele Balbi, ‘Media and The Imaginary in History’ *Media History* 20 (2014), p. 204.

the technology. In the 1940s home movies were no longer a novel home mode medium, and they are not depicted as such within the films. However, the elaborate presentation and detailed characterisation of domestic filmmaking, together with the relative scarcity of the portrayals, suggests that they should not be considered as a habituated on-screen presence. In their shared concern with defining the contained film as a 'home movie' the films of the time illuminate how its meaning is constructed in the process of representation, a concern which runs throughout this thesis. While the works are diverse in terms of their presentation, displaying an inclusive definition of the home movie which encompasses both the production of images as well as their domestic consumption, they do exhibit a number of shared preoccupations, notably: an affinity with wealth, a concern with mobility, a focus on performance and function as a self-reflexive device. These overlaps indicate a shared imagination of what constitutes a home movie and suggest how its expressive potential was being envisaged at time.

In the films of the late 1930s/late 1940s home movies are predominantly defined as films to be watched at home. This characterisation comes to the fore in the predilection for the depiction of home movie screenings which is the most prevalent way of representing family recordings at the time. Imagining domestic moving image consumption, the films emphasise the social character of spectatorship, distinguishing the 'public-in-private' mode of viewing occasioned by the home movies from the 'private-in-public' spectatorship fostered by classical Hollywood cinema. This juxtaposition draws attention to the specificity of the containing film (contributing to its definition as a home movie) and focalises the films' concern with the notion of home as a space for social performance. While as I will demonstrate the preoccupation with domestic viewing remains relevant to the representation of home movies for a large part of their cinematic history, the dynamics of family screening

are prone to change. In films of the early 1960s-mid 1980s (discussed in Chapter Three) home movie viewing becomes an increasingly solitary and melancholy occasion, capitalising on the tension which the contained films establish between present and past, rather than the interplay between public and private. Interpreting the films' emphasis on social performance it is possible to read this concern in the context of the films' prevalent association between home movies and affluence as a way of mobilising ideas around, specifically, bourgeois image consumption and self-presentation. In *Adam's Rib* and *Rebecca* the characters in the films are doubly placed on display, both as the subjects of the films and as audience members and the screening serves to dramatise how the couple negotiate their private relationships with their public and professional personas. While in *The Women* the home movie viewing is characterised as an intimate occasion, the privacy which it connotes cannot entirely be separated from the social sphere. Considering the film's broader preoccupation with gossip, the family film is presented not merely as a counterbalance to the public scrutiny to which Mary's private life is subject, but as a tool which allows the heroine to take control of her narrative. The film evidences the protagonist's struggle to keep up appearances by contrasting her care-free performance for the camera with a candid shot which captures Mary melancholically lost in thought. As in *Rebecca* and *Adam's Rib* the home movie in *The Women* draws attention to the character's preoccupation with maintaining an image, suggesting her awareness of, and concern with, the public regard of her privacy which is tied to her social status.

Although home movies are primarily characterised as films intended for domestic consumption, they are frequently not shot at the home. With the exception of the initial appearance of the camera in *The Women* (the stables which Mary films in the sequence are located on her property) all of the home movies discussed in this chapter are recorded in a

different place than that in which they are screened. While *Adam's Rib* takes home as its subject, the abode which it presents is notably not the apartment in which the films are displayed and *The Women*, *Rebecca*, *If I Had My Way* and *A Canterbury Tale* feature images of journeys, both domestic and abroad. With regard to the depiction of travel the films can be separated into two categories. In the first, the mobility which the camera connotes operates in association with the characters' wealth. The exotic locations visited by the protagonists of *Rebecca* and *The Women* as well as the Connecticut house in *Adam's Rib* function as part of the broader display of wealth which the home movie facilitates and of which it is itself a part. In contrast both *If I Had My Way* and *A Canterbury Tale* associate travel with labour, depicting the protagonists' work-related journeys around the US and the soldier's war time visit to Canterbury. In these films, the small-gauge film's association with mobility serves to draw attention to the characters' displacement, foregrounding the ways in which the home movies may allude, or contribute, to fostering a sense of homeliness in an un-homely setting.

As I have indicated *A Canterbury Tale* is an unusual case study, not only in its depiction of point of view and ambivalent status as a home movie but also in its portrayal of space. Unlike the majority of the works analysed in this chapter the film's images of the Canterbury cathedral are shot on location rather than in the studio. Contrasting the home movie images of the medieval monument with those of the film's own, Powell and Pressburger deploy the home movie as a self-reflexive device to facilitate a reflection on cinema's mediation of space. In contrast the palpable studio setting of the Rivera honeymoon or the Bermuda holiday further enhances the artifice of the family film emphasised throughout the sequences, accentuating the fictionality of the contained film and subtly drawing attention to the construction of the containing one. The deployment of the home movie as a self-reflexive

device in the films of the time indicates how the home movie may help shed light on the concern of the work in which it is embedded. The recurrence of this use however also suggests that self-reflexivity is a key facet of the home movie imagination, characterising domestic recordings as a tool for filmmakers to reflect on their art.

The alignment of home movies with affluence and mobility is also a concern of the films discussed in the second chapter which concentrates on films depicting European travel. Like *A Canterbury Tale* the home movies contained within these films are frequently shot on location and serve to dramatise an opposition between mediation and lived experience, this time from the vantage point of American cinema. Unlike the Archers' work, which depicts a male cinematographer, the film's studied in the following chapter concentrate on the female experience of filmmaking and film viewing. Analysing the representation of women's physical or imaginative engagement with Europe via moving images will allow us to further explore the gendering of the home movie, an issue I have drawn attention to in the study of *The Women*. In their conceptual overlaps the first and second chapter should be considered as companion pieces. However, while they display similar preoccupations, they also illuminate different facets of cinema's home movie imagination. In this chapter I have indicated that the emergence of home movies as a cinematic motif does not follow in line with its technological history; the following study will elucidate its distinction from the social histories of home movies, demonstrating how the association with affluence persists despite the increased affordability of domestic filmmaking following the Second World War.

## Chapter 2: Objects of Desire

### Introduction

In a scene from *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* (Jeremiah S. Chechik, 1989) the protagonist, Clark Griswold (Chevy Chase), gets stuck in the attic of his suburban home. Browsing the assorted trunks in search of warmer clothing, he finds a box of home movie reels concealed beneath a pile of old fashioned female clothes. As he waits for a family member to notice his absence and rescue him from confinement, Clark settles down to pass the time watching an old family film (Fig. 12). The home movie opens with undated colour footage depicting Clark as a little boy being pulled on a sleigh by his mother. These are succeeded by black and white images of a child holding up a title card which marks the occasion and date: 'Xmas 55'. More shots of the family follow, capturing displays of maternal affection and Christmas preparations. The film then shifts indoors, depicting a large familial group gathered together in the living room, enjoying each other's company and the Christmas cheer. Aurally accompanied by Ray Charles' 'The Spirit of Christmas', the images exude a nostalgic pull, and their emotive power is further emphasised by the frequent intercutting between the home movies and Chase's exaggerated expressions of delight. Found in the attic, a space which as Fran Pheasant-Kelly illuminates is often used as a metonym for the mind, the home movie functions as an evocation of familial memory; it represents an ideal of a family holiday whose 'magic' Clark desperately strives to recapture in the present.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fran Pheasant-Kelly, 'Secrets, Memory and Imagination: The Psychic Space of the Cinematic Attic' in Eleanor Andrews, Stella Hockenhull and Fran Pheasant-Kelly (eds.), *Spaces of the Cinematic Home: Behind the Screen Door* (New York; London: Routledge, 2015).



**Figure 12.** 'XMas 55'

Associated with memory and tinged with nostalgia the holiday film in *Christmas Vacation* is characteristic of the depiction of home movies-in-films of the mid-1980s and early-1990s. Chechik's representation of the small-gauge film not only suggests how cinema imagined the persistence of home movies following their commercial obsolescence (discussed in more detail in Chapter Five) but also envisages the character of domestic filmmaking in the mid-1950s, the time of home movies' greatest commercial popularity. As Patricia Zimmermann demonstrates in *Reel Families*, while in 1952 only 6 percent of American families owned a home movie camera (according to Bell and Howell's annual report) the following years saw a significant rise in sales which by 1956 had grown 125 percent over those of the previous decade.<sup>2</sup> The increase in disposable income and leisure time following the Second World War offered a ripe environment for a surge in consumption, while the rising rate of marriages, together with the development of affordable, mass produced, suburban housing,

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<sup>2</sup> Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 115.

formed the foundations for the revitalisation of the nuclear family ideal. The family film in *Christmas Vacation* reflects these developments; in contrast to the home movies discussed in the previous chapter, Chechik depicts small-gauge domestic production not as the purview of the upper-classes but as associated with the leisure time of middle-class suburban families. The home movie is aligned with the ‘good life’, functioning as a means of documenting familial togetherness and post-war prosperity (most palpably perhaps in the image of the family unloading presents from the boot of their car).

While Chechik's representation is retrospective — imagining the filmmaking of the 1950s from the vantage point of the late 1980s — it is important to stress that the impression of home movies which it conveys was also in circulation at the time. Indicative of this is Kodak's sponsorship of the family-focused sitcom *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (ABC, 1952-1966). The show featured a branded opening sequence, and included the company's still and moving image cameras in a number of its episodes; the Nelson family also appeared in Kodak's own advertisements, praising the technology's ease of operation and its versatile applications. The representation of the Nelsons' home movies offered contemporary viewers a pattern by which to structure their own domestic image making pursuits, fostering an idea of home movies as an affordable, upwardly mobile, tool for the commemoration of wholesome family fun. As Jennifer Gillan argues ‘through its ten years of sponsorship, Kodak indelibly linked picture-taking and home movie-making with the Nelsons' leisure-oriented suburban lifestyle’, presenting domestic image making as the purview of the idealised ‘heteronormative, Anglo American, upper-middle-class, nuclear family living in a colonial house in an upscale suburb.’<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jennifer Gillan, *Television Brandcasting: The Return of the Content-Promotion Hybrid* (London, New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 56.

The association between home movies and middle class nuclear domesticity nurtured by texts such as *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* and cemented by *Christmas Vacation*, creates expectations about the representation of home movies in the decade to which they refer. One is thus led to presume that the films of the 1950s will offer corresponding images of families making the memories their grown-up children, like Clark Griswold, would later revisit. It thus comes as a surprise that the cinematic home movies of the period, do not map onto the patterns outlined above. Rather, the domestic films depicted in the 1950s and early 1960s bear a resemblance to those which preceded them. Like the films discussed in the previous chapter the home movie cameras continue to be predominantly presented as a glamorous accessory and associated with characters of above average affluence. In *The Constant Husband* (Sidney Gilliat, 1955), *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (Jose Quintero, 1961) and *The Naked Kiss* (Samuel Fuller, 1964) small-gauge films are represented as the provenance of the well-to-do, belonging to a successful photographer, a rich widow and a billionaire bachelor respectively. The exception to this trend is the protagonist of *Summertime* (David Lean, 1955) a middle school secretary, Jane Hudson (Katherine Hepburn), who, as the film repeatedly emphasises, had to save up for her European holiday and remains conscious of financial concerns throughout her trip. Yet, while Jane is a middle-class character, unlike Harriet Nelson, she is not a suburban housewife but a solitary female traveller and it is notable that in a number of the films of the time home movies are associated with single, and frequently financially independent, women rather than with the nuclear family. As I will demonstrate, the home movies depicted by Launder and Gilliat, Lean, Quintero, and Fuller serve to focalise the works' broader preoccupation with female desire, and offer a commentary on their encounters with beautiful foreign spaces and attractive men.

If the home movies-in-films released between 1955-1964 maintain the glamorous association with wealth which characterised the family films of the previous period, the movies in which they are embedded had changed. The migration to suburbia and the concentration of leisure time at the home have often been cited among the factors contributing to the unprecedented decline in cinema viewership in the US at the time. As Robert R. Shandley argues, in order to lure audiences back to the theatres, Hollywood had to compete with domesticated leisure pursuits and with the rapidly growing popularity of television.<sup>4</sup> In their endeavour to attract viewers the films of the 1950s and early 1960s emphasised the spectacular capabilities of theatrical moving images, deploying technologies of widescreen, Technicolor and stereophonic sound, promising viewers a unique and immersive cinematic experience unrivalled by at-home entertainment (of which, notably, home movies are an example). Thus, in contrast with the films studied in the first chapter, with the exception of *The Naked Kiss*, the works released between 1955-1964 are all colour productions. As I will argue, the spectacular qualities of these films are a crucial element of the works' broader concern with the representation of European travel (as both Lean's and Quintero's films are examples of the 'travelogue romance' genre); the emphasis placed on cinema's technological prowess, however, begs the question: how do the films characterise the distinctly humbler domestic small-gauge technology?

Studying the home movies-in-films released between 1955-1964 I will be proceeding chronologically. The chapter opens with a study of *The Constant Husband*, exploring how the film negotiates the gender dynamics of domestic filmmaking and fosters an association between home movies and female desire. The concern is explored further in the analysis of

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<sup>4</sup> Robert R. Shandley, *Runaway Romances: Hollywood's Postwar Tour of Europe* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2009).

*Summertime* and *The Roman Springs of Mrs. Stone*, both of which deploy home movies to explore the heroine's experience of Italy and its sensual pleasures. Analysing the travelogue romances, I will be returning to the concerns with mobility and travel suggested in the previous chapter, interrogating how small-gauge image making functions as a self-reflexive commentary on the films' mediation of European tourism. In conclusion, I will consider how the concerns with cinematic mediations of travel and desire are articulated in *Naked Kiss*, permeating beyond the generic and production context of the travelogue romance.

### **Mise-en-scène of desire**

*The Constant Husband* is a British comedy produced and directed respectively by Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat which follows the story of a man who wakes up in Wales on an August morning in 1954 to find that he has no recollection of who or where he is. The protagonist, played by Rex Harrison, then embarks on a journey to recover his memories, discovering in the process that he is a serial bigamist, married to seven women under several different identities. Morally appalled by his past self, the hero accepts his arrest and, when placed on trial, decides to plead guilty despite the protestations of his still-enamoured wives and recently smitten defence attorney. After serving a brief sentence, the protagonist is released from jail to find his former spouses waiting at the gates, ready to take him back.

The first wife he encounters is his most recent partner, Monica Hathaway (Kay Kendall), a wealthy London fashion photographer. Distraught by her husband's amnesia, Monica decides to help 'Charles' rekindle his memories by showing him a home movie which documents their first meeting on a golf course and their subsequent wedding three weeks later. As was the case with the films discussed in the previous chapter, the couple's affluence is perceptible in the upper-middle class leisure time activities in which they engage (in this

case, golf), and is further emphasised in the staging of the projection, which is somewhat uncustomary for a domestic film. While the screening takes place in the living room, the projector is operated not by the couple but rather by Mrs. Hathaway's butler/chauffeur Hogarth, suggesting that Monica is a woman accustomed to the discreet assistance of domestic servants. The projectionist remains hidden throughout the scene, emulating the screening conventions of the movie theatre, and the machinery is only briefly visible in the mirror of the drinks bar, situated behind the couple. The location of the home movie technology aligns its role with that of a mirror, an affiliation which can be interpreted in two ways (Fig. 13). On the one hand, it suggests the mirroring of the contained and containing film, indicating the self-reflexive potential of the home movie and its capacity to draw the viewers' attentions to the construction of the work in which it is embedded. On the other, it also underscores the function of the home movie as a mirror in which the diegetic spectators see themselves reflected. As I have suggested earlier, home movies frequently offer idealised images of past familial togetherness, which serve to contrast with their present-day realities. The film contained in *The Constant Husband* is no exception to this and the tension which it foregrounds most palpably is that between desire and its absence, focalising in the process the film's broader concern with the representation of women's sexual appetites.



**Figure 13.** The projector and the mirror

In its depiction of the family film, *The Constant Husband* suggests how the home movie may be used to facilitate and explore narratives of female desire. This concern is not however immediately apparent within the family film itself which privileges the husband's perspective. The golf course sequence in particular foregrounds 'Charles' point-of-view, as his camera follows Monica around the field detouring from its intended subject: Jack (Robert Coote) and his swing practice (Fig. 14, left). Commenting on her husband's cinematography, the wife remarks that 'Charles' had a 'roving eye', a comment which indicates his appetite for women, which is further emphasised during the wedding ceremony where the man is depicted passionately embracing a string of bridesmaids before proceeding to his wife. The home movie thus paints the hero as a 'rake' — a persona with which, as Marcia Landy remarks, Harrison was associated at the time — and this characterisation anticipates the unfolding narrative of bigamy.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 14.** Charles' 'roving eye' and Monica's mise-en-scène of desire

Yet while the family film, and *The Constant Husband* more broadly, appear to suggest that 'Charles' was a professional exploiter of women's affections, the home movie screening conversely, emphasises Monica's pursuit of her husband. The woman's desire for the protagonist is palpable throughout the scene, and she is depicted actively seeking out his attention, sitting herself next to him on a narrow settee and amorously leaning in for a kiss

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<sup>5</sup> Marcia Landy, *British Genres: Cinema and Society, 1930-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

in time with the home movie (Fig.14, right). Observing the photographer's deliberate endeavours to rekindle her husband's passion, the family film screening itself may be perceived as an element of her strategy of seduction. Not only does the film offer images of the couple's desire, providing a template of their relationship, but it also creates an appropriate atmosphere for romance to blossom. The dimmed lights intimately shroud the couple in darkness and the invisibility of the projectionist further enhances the sense of privacy. The effect of this setting becomes evident when the screening abruptly comes to an end, and the lights come back on, breaking the brief and fragile erotic connection which Monica has established. Thus while the wife may not be the creator of the home movie imagery, she is its active curator, knowingly using the family film to construct an image of their relationship, which she strives to re-enact in the present.



**Figure 15.** The living room studio

Although at this early point in the narrative the hero's deception does not yet become apparent, the depiction of the home movie hints at the film's overarching concern with misleading appearances. This is suggested by locating the screen in proximity to the backdrops for Monica's photography work. Framing the family film alongside these

tableaux suggests a notion of 'home' as at once a personal and professional space and serves to draw attention to the wife's occupation as a manufacturer of images (Fig. 15). Emphasising her profession, the film simultaneously indicates a preoccupation with appearance and artifice, a concern suggested in a previous scene when the hero had briefly mistaken a group of young models for his own children. As in the case of the films discussed in the previous chapter, this subtle admission of artifice may be perceived as a self-reflexive gesture, drawing attention to the fictionality of the contained home movie.

The gesture, however, is also of narrative significance. Paralleling the home movie and the backdrop undercuts the family film's authenticating credentials, indicating that the images should not be taken at face value, and that neither the marriage it depicts nor the protagonist are what they appear to be. The home movie may thus be perceived as an element of the identity which the hero constructs for himself, functioning akin to the props he deploys and costumes he dons to lure women into matrimony. At the same time, however, the photography backdrop accentuates Monica's role as the producer of images, suggesting that the positions which they occupy have become reversed. That is to say, while the wife may have been a victim of 'Charles' deception, presently she is the one to perpetuate the fiction which he had constructed. The home movie screening illuminates, and renders literal, the ways in which the identities which the hero has produced for himself are being projected back onto him by his desiring wives, often through the use of the same props and costumes which he has originally deployed (crucially, upon encountering their lost spouse both Monica and Lola —Nicole Maurey — proceed to dress the hero in clothes which reflect his former personas). As Marcia Landy notes, throughout the film Harrison's portrayal occurs in 'terms more often associated with women. He is presented as the object of desire, subject to the gaze of the females, gazing at himself, fragmented in his many identities, divided between mind and body, and seeking to escape the possessiveness and sexual desires of his

pursuers.’<sup>6</sup> Functioning as a key prop in the mise-en-scène of romance constructed by Monica, the home movie at once participates in and focalises the film’s concern with the representation of desire, drawing attention to the ways in which the female characters utilise the fictions constructed by the hero to mould him into the object of their affection.

### **Mediating Venice**

While *The Constant Husband* depicts the home movie as a conduit for desire (albeit one that ultimately fails in its objective to rekindle the couple’s passion), David Lean’s *Summertime* (1955) deploys the small-gauge film in a contrasting manner. As I will demonstrate, rather than facilitating romance, the heroine’s filmmaking serves as a barrier which separates her from a sensual, unmediated, experience of Venice and its pleasures. This characterisation of amateur filmmaking raises questions about the film’s own representation of Italy. Foregrounding the moving image technology in the diegesis draws attention to mediation, a gesture which, as I have stressed in the previous chapter, possesses a self-reflexive, and critical, potential. Inquiring into the representation of the home movie it is thus important to consider not only its narrative role but also to ask what does the small-gauge film reveal about Hollywood’s depiction of European travel?

*Summertime* follows the story of Jane Hudson, an elementary school secretary enjoying a twentieth century variation of the Grand Tour of Europe. Although the term ‘Grand Tour’ has originally been used to refer to an educational journey undertaken by members of the British aristocracy in the 17th and 18th centuries, as John Towner argues over time it has taken on a new meaning reflecting the changing practices of European travel.<sup>7</sup> Towner thus

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<sup>6</sup> Landy, *British Genres*, p. 192.

<sup>7</sup> John Towner, ‘The Grand Tour: A Key Phase in the History of Tourism’ *Annals of Tourism Research* 12 (1985).

broadly defines the practice as ‘a tour of certain cities and places in western Europe undertaken primarily, but not exclusively, for education and pleasure’, illuminating that it should not be perceived solely as within the purview of people of above average affluence.<sup>8</sup> In fact, as Richard Pells notes, following the Second World War ‘the number of Americans traveling to Europe rapidly escalated’ a development facilitated by the consumer boom of the 1950s, the introduction of jet liners to commercial transatlantic flights and the popularity of mass produced tours which ‘reduced the costs and anxieties of traveling in a foreign land’.<sup>9</sup> While Jane is depicted arriving on a boat (during the credit sequence, which consists of a series of paintings representing the heroine’s journey to and across Europe), the film repeatedly accentuates her middle class status, characterising the heroine as frugal (choosing the cheaper water bus over the gondola) but nonetheless able to indulge in the occasional spending spree (on which she embarks as she begins her affair with Renato). She is in the position to do so partly because of the differences in prices between Europe and the US. Jane draws attention to this, listing, in a conversation with Signora Fiorigni (Isa Miranda), ‘buying perfume cheap’ as one of the aims of her journey.<sup>10</sup> The aspiration which she gives priority to is ‘to get some culture’, indicating the desire to acquire cultural capital which as Shandely points out, following Pierre Bourdieu, would legitimate her belonging to the consuming middle-classes. The true aim of her trip, however, lies elsewhere, and, as the heroine suggests what she is really looking for in Venice is ‘a wonderful, mystical, magical, miracle’. When asked by Fiorini what that miracle entails, Jane is however unable to face up to her own desires, replying evasively: ‘beats me. I guess to find what she’s been missing all her life.’

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<sup>8</sup> Towner, ‘The Grand Tour: A Key Phase in the History of Tourism’, p. 297.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p. 137.

<sup>10</sup> The protagonist lists her expectations speaking in third person, a choice which accentuates her disavowal of her desires.

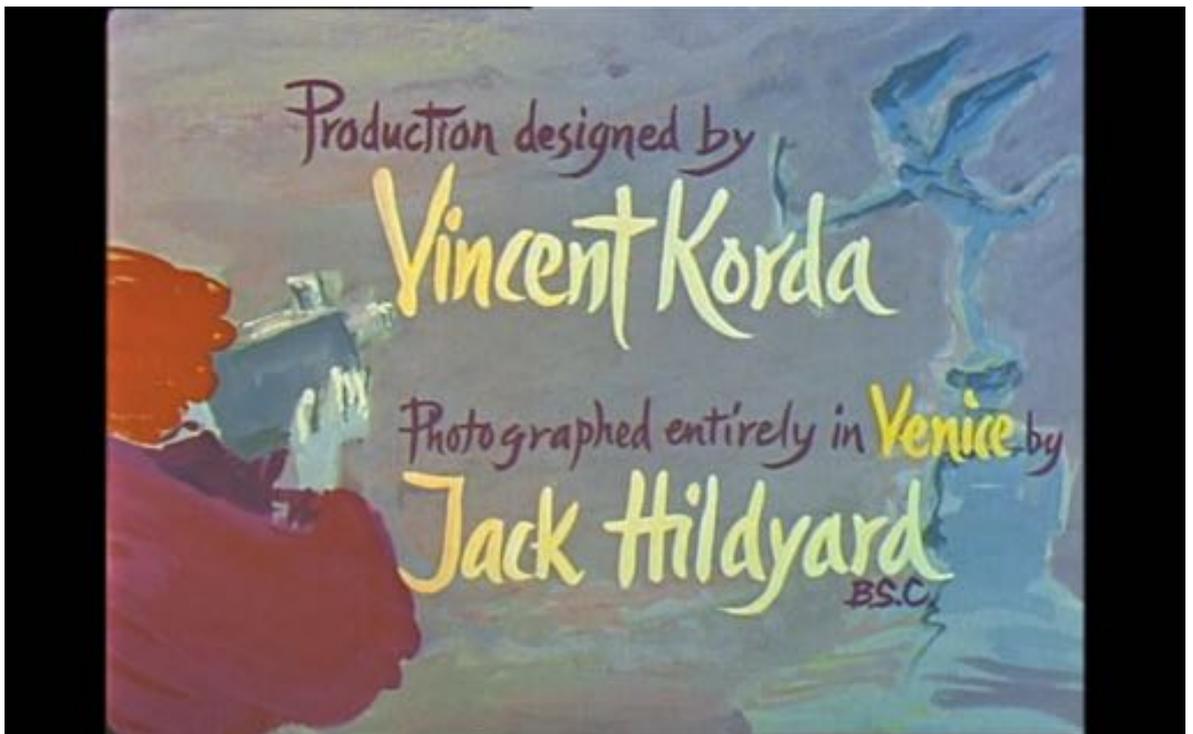
Although Jane is reluctant to voice her desire, the viewers know that what she is looking for, above all, is romance. Already the posters for the film announce this pursuit as a *fait accompli*, declaring that Jane ‘came to Venice as a tourist — and went home a woman!’. Like *The Constant Husband*, *Summertime* is a film which privileges female desire, and, notably, the preoccupation with finding love is a broader characteristic of the genre to which Lean’s film belongs. *Summertime* is an example of the ‘travelogue romance’, a group of films released in the 1950s and 1960s which share a narrative focus on romance in a European location. In his study of the cycle Shandley illuminates how, in their representation of the American-Italian love affair, the films should be read as a self-reflexive commentary on the relation of the New to the Old World. While the association of Europe with romance was not a novel one, it had gained new currency in the aftermath of the Second World War as America abandoned its position of isolationism to become a key player on the international stage.

The films not only offered cultural metaphors for US engagement with Europe, but also themselves took part in this exchange. While referring to the flight of their heroines from their circumstances at home, the ‘runaway’ of Shandley’s title is also a reference to a term popularly used to describe productions shot abroad. As Shandley demonstrates, location shooting reached unprecedented popularity in post-war Hollywood. If in 1951 only three films were shot outside of the US, ‘by 1956 fifty-five productions were filmed abroad, while ever fewer were being taken up in Southern California.’<sup>11</sup> The reasons for this were numerous, and involve an interplay of economic relations between Hollywood and the foreign film markets and the drastic decline in domestic audiences. While the move of

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<sup>11</sup> Robert R. Shandley *Runaway Romances: Hollywood’s Postwar Tour of Europe* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), p. 3.

production abroad allowed Hollywood to extract the earnings from European film rentals and to make use of the lower priced labour, Shandley argues that location shooting also represented a lure for domestic audiences for whom the cinema competed with television. The attraction of such films lay not only in their settings but also in the spectacular technologies such as widescreen, Technicolor or CinemaScope through which they were mediated. Shandley draws attention to this in his study of *Three Coins in the Fountain* (Jean Negulesco, 1954), arguing that: 'is not only supposed to be a film with pretty pictures of Rome, its CinemaScope effects are meant to function as a portal, allowing the spectator to experience Rome with more immediacy than the cinema had theretofore been able to provide.'<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 16.** Introducing Jane, note the parallel between the amateur and professional cinematographers

*Summertime*'s concern with the mediation of travel comes to the fore prominently in the film's depiction of Jane's home moviemaking. Already the credit sequence presents the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

heroine as an avid filmmaker (Fig. 16) and the viewers first encounter Jane camera-in-hand, asking a fellow traveller to hold up a brochure announcing ‘Venice: City of Romance’ for her to film (Fig. 17). As Anna Sloan suggests Jane’s introduction not only communicates the character’s expectations of Venice, but also suggests how these may have been shaped by mediations of the city, including films like *Summertime*.<sup>13</sup> In doing so the film communicates a self-reflexivity about its own project, locating the small-gauge camera as a privileged device for exploring how cinema represents, and shapes a particular idea of, Italy.



Figure 17. Jane's expectations of Venice

It is thus notable that, throughout, *Summertime* characterises home movie making as an obstacle which stands in the way of the heroine’s desire. The role of the camera as a screen which separates the protagonist from a sensual experience of Venice is most palpably communicated through the way in which Jane uses the technology to hide, and hide from, her desire. An illustration of this occurs when Jane returns to Renato’s shop to inquire about the purchase of a second goblet.<sup>14</sup> The stated purpose for her visit veils her true intentions, which are to see Renato again, and the heroine’s inability to face up to her desire is further emphasised when, upon exiting the shop, she picks up the home movie camera in frustration and begins to film the display. The technology not only gives her a sense of faux purpose,

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<sup>13</sup> Anna Sloan, *Imperial Hollywood: American cinematic representations of Europe, 1948-1964* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Warwick, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Representing the relationship through the exchange of the beautiful but implicitly fragile glass goblet subtly foreshadows that the relationship may not last.

making her appear as an inconspicuous tourist rather than a woman in desperate search for romance, but also functions akin to the sunglasses which she dons in moments of embarrassment, as a prop which shields her face and renders her desires unreadable.

In his brief analysis of the home movie in *Summertime* Shandley emphasises this role of the camera, interpreting it as a symptom of Jane's 'inability to experience the city (and by extension life) directly.'<sup>15</sup> He compares the heroine's insistence on mediating her relation to Venice (which he terms as the 'mediated tour') to another popular strand of tourist representation: 'the consumer tour' embodied in the film by the McIlhennys. The American couple amalgamate a vast combination of touristic faux pas as they rush through the city without displaying any actual interest in its sights, smells and tastes. As Shandley argues, both the mediated tourist and the consumer engage only with the surfaces and objects of the place to which they have travelled and this is contrasted with the authentic experience Jane ascends to as she consents to the romance with Renato. Crucially, as Jane begins her love affair with the Italian, the camera disappears. Its loss is foregrounded when she is reminded of its absence by her idiosyncratic tour guide, the young street urchin Mauro (Gaetano Autiero). Jane admits that she forgot to take the camera with her and the prop does not reappear for the remainder of the film.

Depicting the camera as a barrier to romance, *Summertime* establishes a tension between lived and mediated experience. As we may recall, a similar conflict was emphasised in *A Canterbury Tale* which deployed the small-gauge technology to offer a self-reflexive critique of cinema's representation of the landscape, which fails to inspire the viewers to engage with the world directly. In their representation of amateur film, the Archers liken

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

home movie making to cinematic spectatorship, developing the analogy by visually affiliating the camera viewfinder with a framed window which communicates a fragmented and narrow-minded perspective. Yet, while *Summertime* presents the heroine's filmmaking as an obstacle to authentic experience, in contrast to *A Canterbury Tale* Lean's film does not use the small-gauge to obstruct the cinematic viewer's perception of Venice. Rather, the home movie functions to enhance the immersive pull of the containing film, and the representation of the sights which Jane observes is visually unencumbered by the presence of the small-gauge technology (Fig. 18). Throughout the film the spectators not only look at Jane and the camera but also *with Jane through* the camera;<sup>16</sup> granting viewers access to the heroine's subjectivity, the technology plays a crucial role in the film's representation of the city as it allows Lean to linger on its monuments and sights as the heroine wanders through Venice observing its beauty. Unlike Powell and Pressburger's work Lean does not mediate these image via the small-gauge viewfinder instead indicating the presence of the technology by aurally accompanying the images with the whirl of the film running through the camera. The sound provides the shots with a sense of impossible immediacy — suggesting they are being captured at the same time as we are watching them — which serves to strengthen the immersive draw of the film. It is as if Jane's camera acts as a gateway between Venice and the movie theatre, offering the spectators the illusion that the images they are viewing are being transmitted directly from the represented city.

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<sup>16</sup> In *Imperial Hollywood* Anna Sloan argues that the film grants the viewers a privileged access to the heroine's point of view and emotions and that the home movie plays a crucial role in drawing our attention to the uncustomary importance of woman's gaze. *Summertime's* prioritizing of the female scopic experience is, as Sloan points out, unusual in Classical Hollywood cinema which tends to be organised around the male gaze. While uncommon, Jane's looking is however appropriate in the context and it is at once facilitated and contained by her role as tourist. Thus, Sloan argues, it is the displacement of Jane from the States to Italy that is one of the key factors that allows the heroine the power to gaze freely.



**Figure 18.** Jane films Venice

*Summertime*'s use of the home movie to heighten the immersive pull of the containing film can be illuminated further by drawing on what Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin have termed the double logic of remediation, which consists of immediacy and hypermediacy. The former refers to the strive for transparency (where the medium is erased) while the latter indicates the tendency towards a multiplication of media (where the medium is foregrounded). Bolter and Grusin define immediacy as a 'window through' while hypermediacy is described as a 'window at'. Both promise to provide the viewers with access to an event, in the former case the erasure of the medium is perceived as giving access to the real, in the latter the experience of the medium is the experience of the real. While the focus of *Remediation* is on digital media's incorporation of old media, as Bolter and Grusin argue its double logic can be applied more broadly to the study of the relation between any media.

Drawing on Bolter's and Grusin's distinction between immediacy and hypermediacy, I would argue that the representation of the home movie camera in *Summertime* is an example

of the former. While its diegetic presence does acknowledge the means by which the contained images were produced, the film's avoidance of replicating the small-gauge aesthetic or the viewfinder point-of-view seeks to render mediation unobtrusive. Jane's camera thus functions as a window through which viewers look onto Venice, spectacularly rendered in Technicolor rather than the less impressive 8mm stock. In contrast in *A Canterbury Tale* the camera functions as a 'window at' as the Archers impose the frame of the viewfinder onto the images which it is supposedly capturing. Lean's representation of the home movie is thus predicated upon a duality. On the one hand, the technology functions as an obstacle for the heroine, barring her from a sensual, unmediated experience of the city. On the other, it does not present the same barrier for cinematic spectators; to the contrary, it serves to convey a sense of immediacy, of accompanying Jane on her tour of Venice. In its depiction of home movie making, Lean thus at once offers a commentary on the camera's role as a tourist prop whilst at the same time suggesting its expressive potential as a cinematic device. This ambiguity of the characterisation of the small-gauge technology in *Summertime* bespeaks the complexity of the home movie imagination, illuminating how attending to the detail of its representations allows us to apprehend and appreciate these nuances.

### **Decorative toy**

Like *Summertime*, *The Roman Springs of Mrs. Stone* has been categorised as a 'travelogue romance'. However, as Shandley argues, while Lean's work was released at the height of the genre's popularity, Quintero's film appears at its moment of decline, and displays a markedly darker tone than its predecessors. The film is based on a novel by Tennessee Williams (under the same title) and follows the story of a retired American stage actress, Karen Stone (Vivian Leigh), whose wealthy husband dies on their trip to Rome. Deciding to stay in Italy the woman becomes acquainted with a handsome young gigolo, Paolo (Warren

Beatty) who pursues her affection. Apprehensive at first, Mrs. Stone soon gives in to his charms, compensating him for the pleasure of his company with luxury gifts. Soon however Paolo tires of their relationship and begins an affair with a younger woman — Hollywood starlet Barbara Bingham (Jill St. John) — while the humiliated Mrs. Stone embraces her death at the hands of a nameless young man who had been following her throughout the film. In contrast to *Summertime*, which hints at the mutual exploitation of the wealthy tourist and the local man (in structuring their acquaintanceship around the purchase of a goblet), *Roman Springs* exposes and interrogates the euphemisms which underlie the American-Italian affair and its own generic premise. The home movie camera— a gift from Karen to Paolo — is one of such understatements; it marks the price which Karen pays for Paolo’s affection and illuminates the inequalities in economic and social status that underlie their romance.



**Figure 19.** A coveted object

The home movie camera in Quintero’s film is presented as an expensive, and coveted, object. While overtly the technology functions as a symbol of elevated social status, its depiction also subtly draws attention to the manner by which that ascension is achieved. This characterisation is palpably articulated in a scene in which Paolo displays the gift to arouse the envy of his barber Renato (Paul Stassino). The scene begins with the gigolo dismissively commenting on his picture with Karen which graces the cover of a gossip magazine. Paolo’s attachment to the glossy publication signals his narcissism, while his arrogant tone masks his excitement about his recently acquired notoriety. His enchantment with a life of leisure

and luxury is however palpable in his eagerness to tell Renato all about his daily schedule as well as in how he proceeds to show off the gifts from his benefactress. In an offhand manner, he pulls back the cuff of his sleeve to reveal a watch and proceeds to inform his friend about its gold plating and number of jewels. He then ‘unveils’ the home movie camera which was hitherto hidden under his trench coat on a rack. The camera appears to have an even greater effect than the watch and Renato is palpably stunned by its appearance (Fig. 19). While Paolo refuses to reveal its value, he indicates that it is an expensive object and Stassino’s performance further emphasises this impression. Yet, while the scene appears to establish a contrast between the two young men, what it in fact suggests is an affinity between their circumstances. Paolo’s assumption of the role behind the camera — filming Renato’s stunned expression — at once disavows and foregrounds his own role as a spectacle which has been repeatedly emphasised in the scene through its subject matter (grooming) as well as through the attention dedicated to the gossip magazine. Thus while the gigolo’s gloating seeks to emphasise the difference between the two friends, its effect however is the opposite, drawing attention to the fact that Paolo’s position is not dissimilar to Renato’s: they both provide services to those who can pay for them; and in both cases the person who does pay for them is Mrs. Stone. Beatty’s character is thus not the leisured gentleman he projects himself to be — the tourist on the other side of the movie camera — rather, he is paralleled with the objects given to him by Mrs. Stone: like the watch and the camera he too is a decorative toy.

The film’s use of the home movie as a way of criticising the generic premise of the travelogue romance is further accentuated during the screening which Mrs. Stone reluctantly

holds for a group of acquaintances.<sup>17</sup> While the representation of the couple's relationship differs from their present circumstances, there are significant correspondences between the contained and containing film which suggest its self-reflexive potential. The small-gauge film presents a selection of moments from Karen's time with the gigolo and, narratively, serves to emphasise the breakdown of their relationship, contrasting the idyllic images of togetherness with their present day disagreements over Paolo's courtship of Miss Bingham. Yet, while the home movie establishes a tension between the past and the present, it also serves to parallel the film in which it is embedded. This is already emphasised by the visual qualities of the small-gauge film of which, like *The Roman Springs*, is shot in colour. Notably, Quintero's film offers an early example of a colour small-gauge production, and all the other home movies previously discussed in this thesis have been shot in black and white.<sup>18</sup> The departure from monochrome draws attention to one of the chief attractions of the containing work — its vibrant aesthetic — and suggests a reflexivity about the genre and its pleasures.



Figure 20. A commentary on the genre...

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<sup>17</sup> Which includes Paolo's pimp the Contessa Magda Terribili-Gonzales (Lotte Lenya), Barbara Bingham and a couple of elderly nightclub proprietors: Rollo (Peter Dyneley) and Lucia (Josephine Brown).

<sup>18</sup> Even in the cases where the films themselves were in colour, such as *The Constant Husband* and *Peeping Tom*.



**Figure 21.** ... and its pleasures

The self-reflexive deployment of the home movie is further perceptible in the narrative of the home movie which mirrors that of the travelogue romance, albeit in a schematic way. The film opens with shots of Hadrian's villa, a choice which references the genre's preoccupation with the attraction of on-location shooting. The film-within-the-film then continues with a depiction of Mrs. Stone and Paolo, shot separately at first and finally sharing a passionate embrace (Fig. 20). While the home movies' focus on the couple is in line with its role as a summary of their romance, it is significant that the small-gauge portrayal of their relationship differs from the development of their affair charted by the containing film; absent are the Contessa's schemes, Paolo's petulance or Mrs. Stone's half knowing recognition that the young man is not after her personality but her wealth. On the one hand, the contrast between the contained and containing film may be read as a reflection on the selective character of domestic filmmaking. On the other hand, however, it can also be perceived as self-reflexive indication of the omissions which structure the genre's

representations of the European love affair, a concern which further comes to the fore in the reception of the home movie.

Despite its idyllic presentation of the couple, the contained film does showcase the power dynamic upon which Paolo's and Karen's relationship is predicated and this is foregrounded in the viewing of the home movie. The attraction of the film appears to lie neither in the sightseeing nor in the romance, but rather in the display of Paolo's body (Fig. 21). The Contessa emphasises this as she dismisses the images of Karen stating: 'that's all very nice, but where are you Paolo?' Her wish is soon granted and the following shot depicts the young man splayed on the terrace, sunbathing.<sup>19</sup> This is succeeded by images which display his athletic prowess before the film, once more, returns to Karen. The image of the young man is compared to a handsome statue of an Egyptian river God seen in one of the previous shots, and the parallel is more than simply physical. 'Romans conquered Egypt you know' Karen explains to Miss Bingham as she asks about the statue. Her comment then reverberates bitterly as Paolo unfavourably compares Karen to Rome ('Rome is 2000 years old and how old are you, 50?'). Echoing the Contessa's earlier assertion that America is too young a country to produce 'Great Ladies', the young man seems to imply that not being one of them, Mrs. Stone has little chance of being Rome's conqueror. The home movie however, seems to suggest otherwise. Offering the viewers an image of the Italian body polished to perfection with American money and put on display for an audience made up predominately of women,

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<sup>19</sup> The 'Italian' body on display is notably however not Italian but American, performed, with a certain grotesque intensity, by Warren Beatty. The casting is suggestive of artifice and this is further enhanced by the representation of the city. As Shandely illuminates, due to the film's subject matter the producers did not attain licence to send both units to Rome, and thus while the film features some images of the city, the scenes which include the principal actors were shot in a studio in London. In contrast to *Summertime* which featured Italian actors and locations, *Roman Spring* approximates the attractions of the travelogue romance, simultaneously, in a more or less subtle manner, revealing their constructed character.

the shot succinctly encapsulates the film's complicitous critique of both American cultural imperialism and of Italian opportunism perpetuated by the travelogue romances.

While the home movie screening foregrounds Paolo's role as spectacle he is not the only character who is under scrutiny during the scene. Karen is also placed on display both in the home movies and during the screening as the audience observes her struggle to contain her emotions over her lover's betrayal. Yet, the film suggests, Mrs. Stone cannot but avoid falling apart publicly and this much more intimate moment of crisis parallels the film's opening disastrous reception of her performance as Rosalind in *As You Like It* (a role for which she was deemed unsuitably aged). The parallel suggests the theatricality of the home movie, a concern which I have illuminated in the previous chapter. As in the case of the films released between 1939-1949, *The Roman Springs* emphasises the social character of the screening, presenting the home movie in a manner which resembles the depiction of the projection in *Adam's Rib* which Wim Staat aptly describes as offering a 'public display of privacy'.<sup>20</sup> The presentation of the home movie offers a suitable reflection of the couple's affair, which was orchestrated behind the scenes by the scheming Contessa and which, as Paolo's attachment to the gossip magazine had indicated previously, has been under constant scrutiny. Yet while the film indicates that Mrs. Stone is on display on behalf of her job as an actress, her employment also serves to self-reflexively draw attention to the roles which women are expected to perform, on stage and screen. Like the opening performance of *As You Like It* the home movie audience again ridicules Mrs. Stone as being ill equipped for the role she has chosen to play (the Contessa calls her 'a chickenhawk', a bird of prey which favours the young). Mrs. Stone's unsuitability is further emphasised by Paolo's choice not

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<sup>20</sup> Wim Staat, 'The Representation of Law on Film: *Mr. Deeds* and *Adam's Rib* Go to Court' in Richard K. Sherwin and Anne Wagner (eds.), *Law, Culture and Visual Studies*, p. 775.

simply of another woman, but of another actress. While the diegetic audience might find her performance inappropriate, like the theatrical one had earlier, I would argue that the film's concern is not to ridicule its protagonist. Rather, showcasing her inability to fit into the roles provided for her by both traditional (Shakespeare) and more modern (the travelogue romance) narratives, on stage and on the screen, *The Roman Springs* poses the question: what kind of roles are available to women her age; the death of the eponymous protagonist in the final scene of the film appears to suggest that there are none.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion I would like to attend to an additional case study and to consider the travel film contained in Samuel Fuller's *The Naked Kiss* which, as I will demonstrate, focalises the concerns of this chapter with its representation of affluence, mediation of travel and female desire. Released in 1964, Fuller's film is an independently produced social problem neo-noir, featuring Constance Towers as a reformed prostitute named Kelly who comes to the small town of Grantsville where she finds a job as a children's nurse and falls in love with J.L. Grant (Michael Dante), a charming billionaire harbouring a dark secret. In his attempt to woo the heroine, Grant invites Kelly over to a party, persuading her to stay after the other guests have departed. As they bond over a shared love of Beethoven's music and Lord Byron's poetry (a choice which indicates their sophisticated tastes and romantic sensibilities), Grant asks if Kelly would like to visit where the poet has written many of his famous sonnets. 'Venice?' she asks, and he nods announcing 'I am going to take you there right now.' Yet, rather than showing next an image of a plane the film cuts to a shot of a running projector screening the amateur films Grant took on his recent trip to Italy. As the screening progresses Kelly becomes increasingly engrossed in the images, imagining herself riding a Gondola through the Venetian canals. The romantic atmosphere of the projection

heightens the mutual attraction between the characters and the scene ends with a kiss with which the couple begin their affair.

Similarly to the majority of the works discussed in this and the previous chapter, Fuller's film associates the home movie with an exceptionally wealthy character. As I have argued, while such a depiction is familiar from the home movies-in-films released between 1939-1949, it does not map on to the technological history of small-gauge equipment detailed by Allan Kattelle or the social history studied by Patricia Zimmermann. As both scholars point out, following the Second World War domestic moving image making equipment had become more affordable, and thus more broadly accessible, than it had before and as such it was no longer predominantly within the purview only of affluent consumers. As Zimmermann argues however, in the 1950s small-gauge film not only became less expensive, but also became largely associated with the practice of home movies, a term which she uses to describe 'private movie production of and by the nuclear family.'<sup>21</sup> It is thus notable that the home movies studied in this chapter diverge from the definition provided by Zimmermann, focusing on the depiction of solitary travellers (in *The Naked Kiss* and *Summertime*) and the representation of couples (in *The Constant Husband* and *Roman Springs of Mrs. Stone*) rather than families with children. As I have illuminated in the Review of Literature, in her assessment of amateur filmmaking, Zimmermann draws primarily on the advertising discourses of the time, a key example of which is Kodak's sponsorship of *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*. The association forged by the show between home movies and the suburban nuclear family, however, not only suggest the ways in which the camera companies sought to shape the identity of their product, but also offers a glimpse at the ways in which television imagined home movies. Observing the discrepancy

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<sup>21</sup> Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, p. 122.

in the meaning of 'home' between that suggested by the Nelsons' family films and the home movies contained in fiction films at the time, indicates that the cinematic home movie imagination is also distinct from, if interwoven with, the imaginations of home movies expressed by other media.

In this and the previous chapter I have argued that home movies should not be exclusively understood as films shot at home but rather, more broadly, as films intended for domestic consumption. Such a definition allows us to take into account the practice of holiday filmmaking, which forms a sizeable proportion of the domestic productions contained in fiction films released between 1939-1964. Representing the small-gauge camera as an essential tourist accessory, the films draw attention to the mobility afforded by amateur filmmaking equipment, frequently accentuating its portability by associating it with means of travel such as the train and the boat bus in *Summertime* or the gondola in Fuller's work. However, if the camera is affiliated with the ability to move around, its representation also reveals that not all the characters have the freedom, and the privilege, to travel in the same way. A contrast between *Summertime* and *The Naked Kiss* is illuminative of this. While Grant's footage is taken from the vantage point of a gondola cruising the Venetian canals, Jane largely traverses the city on foot, or by the significantly cheaper water bus which the frugal heroine chooses over the iconic, and luxurious, rowing boat.

A further difference is perceptible in the kind of footage which the characters are recording. The focus of Grant's home movie is, for the most part, on the city's scenic canals. Despite the initial impression, however, the billionaire's relation to the city differs from that stereotypically associated with the American tourist, characterised, like the McIlhennys in *Summertime*, as a consumer of monuments. Although the canals are undoubtedly one of

Venice's key attractions, they are the only one featured on the movie shot by the billionaire. Furthermore, as Grant illuminates in conversation with Kelly, their appeal rests not only, and not predominantly, with their capacity for the picturesque, but rather in the cultural capital which they serve to display. Functioning as a backdrop to the story of Lord Byron's stay in Venice, the man's home movies exude a charm accessible to a select cultured few, characterising the billionaire as a sophisticated connoisseur rather than an ordinary tourist. In contrast to Grant, who has the financial means to directly partake in European cultural heritage, Kelly can only experience it through mediation, by watching the home movie and listening to a gramophone recording of a classical concert. Thus, while *The Naked Kiss* suggests how technology may serve to democratise culture, making it more broadly accessible, the media also serve to emphasise the distinction between those who take holiday films, and those who may only be able to afford travel vicariously.

Although Kelly experiences Venice through mediation, in its depiction of domestic spectatorship *The Naked Kiss* emphasises the immersive power of moving images. This is already alluded to in Grant's promise to 'take' Kelly to Venice rather than to 'show' her the images of the city and is further accentuated during the projection sequence. Watching the silent pictures, Grant claims he can hear the gondolier's song (which plays on the non-diegetic soundtrack), imploring Kelly that: 'if you pretend hard enough and listen hard enough, you'll hear his fine Italian voice'. Soon she too is swept away by the fantasy and the couple are 'transported' to Italy as the sofa becomes a gondola floating on the waves of the canal. In contrast to *A Canterbury Tale* where a similar imaginative transition (through time rather than space, as lying in the field with Colpeper Alison hears the voices of the medieval pilgrims) was only made possible by a direct experience of the landscape, *The Naked Kiss* celebrates the power of cinema to enthral the spectators' imagination. This

concern with film's capacity to imaginatively transport viewers to the represented space is reminiscent of the preoccupation of the travelogue romances which, as Shandley argues, sought to offer viewers an immersive experience of the locations which they depict. Notably however, the images of Venice presented in *The Naked Kiss* differ significantly from the portrayal of the city offered by *Summertime*. (Fig. 22). The monochrome tonality of Grant's home movie, together with the hand held mobile camera, contrast with the vibrant technicolour of Lean's work; while *Summertime* enhances the immersive pull of the film by refraining from mediating Venice through the aesthetic of small-gauge film, the travel film contained in Fuller's work offer starker, harsher images of the city reminiscent of the kind of footage which Jane would have brought back home. In effect *Summertime* and *The Naked Kiss* present two distinct notions of what it means to experience Venice cinematically, suggesting the differing roles which home movies may play in fiction films. While Lean uses the home movie camera to create a sense of immediacy, Fuller deploys the small-gauge film not to foster but rather to draw attention to cinema's power to stimulate engagement, reminding the viewers of mediation by accentuating the act of spectatorship.



Figure 22. Venice in *Summertime* and *The Naked Kiss*

In its representation of spectatorship *The Naked Kiss* evidences a preoccupation with female desire, a concern shared by all the case studies examined in this chapter. Similarly to *The Constant Husband*, the home movie in Fuller's work is deployed to construct a mise-en-scène of romance. The projection creates an intimate atmosphere, and the mood is further

enhanced by the images of Venice displayed on the screen. The mobility of the gondola, together with the lack of a significant human figure and the grainy texture of the image, give the home movies a feel of a rear projection, providing the couple with a suitable backdrop which enhances their mutual attraction. Although, in contrast to Gilliat's and Launder's work, in Fuller's film it is Grant who creates the romantic setting rather than the heroine, as the scene progresses the concern shifts towards an emphasis on Kelly's imaginative interaction with the travel film (Fig. 23). The editing of the sequence aligns the viewers' perspective with the protagonist's point-of-view, as the film cuts between Towers lying on the gondola/sofa and the home movie images of Venice. The depiction of interiority is further conveyed through the frequent close-ups of the actress' face which communicate subjectivity.



**Figure 23.** Kelly imagines herself in the home movie

As was the case with *The Constant Husband*, the home movie in *The Naked Kiss* exhibits a concern with the ways in which narratives woven and images shot by men may stimulate women's imagination, a preoccupation which reverberates with the concerns of the containing works. Notably all the films discussed in this chapter were written and directed

by men (and both *Summertime* and *Roman Springs* were adapted from works penned by men); simultaneously, all of these works focus on the representation of women's desire, a preoccupation which suggests their address to a female audience. Home movies-in-films thus function as a reflexive device, drawing attention to the concerns and construction of the containing works. Moreover, while Fuller's film is ostensibly not an example of the genre, the travel film may be interpreted as a reflection on the preoccupations of the travelogue romance, which the screening sequence approximates. Central to this is the way in which the amateur production is employed as a literal backdrop for Kelly's imagination, at once capitalising on, and perpetuating, an association between Italy and romance and indicating how these are shaped culturally. Significantly, both *Summertime* and *The Roman Springs* evidence, to a greater or lesser extent, a similar recognition of the generic conventions within which they are operating, using the home movie to draw attention to the films' construction of the Italian-American love affair.

As the films discussed in this and the previous chapter indicate, the self-reflexive potential of the home movie should be considered as a key feature of the cinematic imagination of domestic small-gauge films. The representation of filmmaking and viewing focalises the concerns of the containing works, drawing attention to the construction of the cinematic illusion. However, as the study of *Summertime* has demonstrated, while the home movies possess a capacity for reflexivity, they are not always deployed in a manner which undermines the coherence of the containing work. Conversely, small-gauge films may also serve to heighten the immersive pull of the films in which they are embedded, creating a sense of immediacy by offering the viewers an impression of perceiving the images as they are being recorded. The ambiguity in Lean's representation of mediating travel (at once characterising the home movie as an obstacle to sensual experience, and deploying it to

enhance spectatorial engagement) suggests the nuanced character of the cinematic home movie imagination, indicating that what constitutes a home movie-in-a-film is subject to negotiation.

The flexibility of cinematic home movies comes to the fore further in the following chapter which observes a shift in the home movie imagination. While the films discussed in this and the previous chapter predominantly associated home movies with affluence, in the mid-late 1960s the landscape of leisure to which cinematic home movies belong begins to broaden. As the following chapter will demonstrate, in the films released between 1964-1980 home movies are no longer depicted predominantly as toys of the rich, but rather as a more broadly affordable technology. Accompanying this is a further shift in the home movie imagination away from a depiction of the family film as a glamorous gadget of the well-to-do and towards a concern with domestic family life. While some of the films still associate home movies with travel, in contrast to the works discussed here, the case studies analysed in the following chapter are predominantly shot at home, expressing a sentimental longing for, or focalising a critique of, the represented family. Although the notion of 'home' is, throughout their history, a central preoccupation of home movies-in-films, as the following chapter will demonstrate what that term entails is prone to shift over time.

## Chapter 3: Sentiment and Subversion

### Introduction

In his memoir *Kicking the Pricks* (1987) British artist and filmmaker Derek Jarman writes that: ‘in all home movies is a longing for paradise.’<sup>1</sup> The idyllic character of the home movie, he cautions, should thus not be mistaken for a reflection of a family reality but rather perceived as a carefully crafted and curated impression. Jarman argues that upon closer inspection the films themselves reveal their artifice. Asking viewers to observe ‘who smiles when they are told? Whose hair is brushed? Where is the serpent lurking?’<sup>2</sup> the director points to the cracks in the facade which betray that home movies are not documents of families’ lives, but images of their aspirations. Home movies are thus doubly revealing, pointing at once to how the family wants to be perceived, as well as to what it wishes to conceal. This ambiguity is a key concern of the films interrogated within this chapter which explores the tension between the familial ideal, connoted and constructed by the home movie, and the lives of the represented families. While this issue is not itself a novel development — as the previous chapters have demonstrated, home movies have frequently been deployed to underscore moments of marital turmoil — what distinguishes the films released between 1964 and 1980 are the ways in which these questions are explored and the role which the home movies occupy within the films.

The films discussed in this chapter evidence a shift, or more precisely a broadening, in the landscape of leisure with which home movies are associated. As I have argued in Chapter Two, in contradiction to the social history of home movies, the cinema of the 1950s

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<sup>1</sup> Derek Jarman, *Kicking the Pricks* (London: Vintage, 1996, first published 1987), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

represented domestic filmmaking as the preserve of wealthy, upper class consumers rather than as a leisure pursuit of suburban middle classes. In the 1960s, however, home moviemaking was no longer predominantly associated with the upper echelons of society. While a number of films from the time continue to depict the home movies as a toy of the wealthy — such as *The Naked Kiss*, discussed in the previous chapter, as well as *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* (Paul Mazursky, 1969) and to an extent also *Performance* (Donald Cammell and Nicholas Roeg 1970) — such films appear more frequently in films representing middle class families. Robert Kolker indicates this conflation between domestic filmmaking and the middle classes in his reading of the home movie opening sequence of Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973). He argues that the family film-within-the-film represents Charlie's (Harvey Keitel) desire for upward mobility — expressing a fantasy not only about familial cohesion but also about middle class respectability.<sup>3</sup> The widespread availability of small-gauge cameras also finds reflection in the numerous films depicting alternative uses of amateur equipment such as pornography (in Brian de Palma's *Hi Mom!*, 1970 or Mike Hodges' *Get Carter*, 1971) and counter cultural cinemas (John Schlesinger's 1969 *Midnight Cowboy* includes an experimental documentary being shot at a Warhol-esque party). Notably, many of these films suggest the prevalent association between small-gauge cameras and home movies, perhaps most directly articulated in De Palma's *Hi Mom!* when the aspiring pornographer Jon (Robert De Niro) visits a camera store in order to purchase suitable equipment for his venture, and meets a housewife purchasing a similar camera for domestic use.

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<sup>3</sup> Kolker writes: 'Charlie wants to become middle class and run a restaurant under the patronage of his uncle, a small-time neighbourhood mafioso. The home movies suggest that he achieves his wish, survives his gunshot wound, marries Theresa and has a child.' Robert Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness: Penn, Stone, Kubrick, Scorsese, Spielberg, Altman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 208.

Broadening the accessibility of home movies and diversifying the uses of small-gauge equipment is not the only shift undergone by home movies-in-film the time. While, like the films discussed in the previous chapters, the works exhibit a concern with the home movie as a tool to probe the rifts in the represented family, they also put the home movie itself into question by complicating its place in the home and on the big screen. Notably, a number of the films studied in this chapter betray a self-reflexivity, not only about the relation between the contained and containing films, but also about the role of home movies in cinema. Both *Mean Streets* and *Home Movies* (Brian De Palma, 1980) represent home movies in an intertextual manner, as a reference to other cinematic examples of small-gauge filmmaking. In doing so, Scorsese and De Palma suggest that the reflexive role of home movies should not be limited only to their capacity to focalise the concerns of the containing work, but may also involve a recognition of the home movie as a cinematic motif.

The films released between 1964-1980 can be divided into two distinct categories with regard to the tonality of the represented home movie, as either sentimental or subversive, and this chapter is structured accordingly. The former category — which includes *The Last Man on Earth* (Ubaldo Ragona, Sidney Salkow, 1964), *The King of Marvin Gardens* (Bob Rafelson, 1972), *Mean Streets* and *Raging Bull* (both Martin Scorsese, 1973 and 1980 respectively) — comprises films which deploy the home movie in order to elicit emotions of tenderness and sadness. The home movie screenings function to underscore a tension between the families' idyllic aspirations and their imperfect presents; The ways in which this contrast is conveyed, however, differs from the family viewings discussed in the previous chapters, which drew attention to familial fissures through the representation of reception. In contrast, the films belonging to the sentimental category, accentuate the breakdown of the family by presenting the home movie as being 'out of place' in the homes in which it is

screened. This may, as in Rafaelson's and Salkow and Ragona's works, be achieved through an uncustomary presentation of the family film in the domestic space or, as in the case of Scorsese's film, by untethering the family film from the *mise-en-scène*. Questioning the relationship between the home movie and the home, the films at once highlight the impossibility of the ideal connoted by the family images and contribute to the redefinition of the relation between the contained and containing films. The second category, subversion, describes works which use home movies to directly challenge the family ideal. The films of this category — *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*, *Up the Sandbox* (Irvin Kershner, 1972) and *Home Movies* — are characterised by a shift in emphasis away from the depiction of domestic viewing to domestic filmmaking (*Home Movies* is the only one to feature a screening). Focusing on the processes of image production, the films critically interrogate home movies as tools for the reproduction of sanctioned images of domesticity and foreground the erasures and omissions frequently left out of family self-portrayals. The final section of the chapter further expands on the subversive representations of home movies, considering the counter cultural depiction of domestic filmmaking in *Performance*. Exploring the role of small-gauge image making in Cammell's and Roeg's work further illuminates the broadening of the term 'home movie' in the period as well as suggesting that home movies can be used not only to criticise but also to reimagine familial togetherness.

### **Sentiment**

In the critical literature on cinematic home movies scholars frequently foreground emotional resonance as a key characteristic of home movies-within-films, attributing their ability to move spectators to the role which home movies play in the depiction of anteriority. As I have discussed previously, home movies have often been deployed to indicate a tension between an idyllic past and the turmoil of the present, representing what Walker calls a 'lost ideal'

and Journot terms as the 'paradis perdu' (paradise lost). The association between home movies and anteriority is so prevalent, that even in cases when the films are not explicitly depicted as images of the past, they can serve to elicit feelings of sentimental longing. This is the case for example with the domestic films in *Raging Bull*, where, as Patricia Erens writes, 'even though the home movies appear as contemporaneous in the chronology ... the strong association between home movie footage and a sense of the past provoke feelings of nostalgia.'<sup>4</sup> Although the temporal role which home movies play in the evocation of the past is of crucial importance, it is also valuable to reflect on the significance of space. In her analysis of the *film de famille* which she classes as falling into the 'paradises lost' category, Journot contends that: 'space does not exist in the family film' ('l'espace, dans le film de famille, n'existe pas').<sup>5</sup> This is however not entirely the case. While she is right in arguing that it is people rather than places that frequently constitute the focus of the home movie, as the travel films discussed in the previous chapter suggest, space has also been an important consideration within domestic films. Home movies not only depict space but also, crucially, exist in space, and questions concerning the home raised by the films' screenings are of central importance to the representation of home movies, as well as to their emotional appeal. Of particular note are films which draw on the disjuncture between the happiness of the couple in the home movie and their troubled cohabitation. *Rebecca* is a prime example, contrasting the idyllic fantasy space of the Riviera honeymoon (its depiction as a fantasy enhanced by the visibly studio-bound setting of the French countryside which the film

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<sup>4</sup> Patricia Erens, 'Home Movies in Commercial Narrative Film', *Journal of Film and Video* 38:3/4 (Summer/Fall 1986), p. 100. This is enhanced by the fact that *Raging Bull* takes place in the 1940. Contemporaneous with the narrative the home movies thus indicate a pastness by their period setting.

<sup>5</sup> Marie-Thérèse Journot, *Films amateurs dans le cinéma de fiction* (Arman Colin, 2011), p. 49.

depicts) and the unnamed heroine's discomfort in *Manderley* where the screening takes place.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of the domestic space in enhancing the emotional resonance of the home movie continues to be a central consideration for the films which fall into the sentimental category. The domestic screenings depicted in *The Last Man on Earth* and *The King of Marvin Gardens* both capitalise on the disjuncture between the idyllic images of the past and the spaces of the present. The family films in these films are depicted as being out of place in the homes in which they are screened, and this displacement highlights the disintegration of the represented families. *Mean Streets* and *Raging Bull* take the dislocation of the home movie even further, foregrounding the disjuncture between family images and family reality by dislodging the home movie from the *mise-en-scène* altogether. While *Mean Streets* depicts the home movie as a projection, its role within the diegesis is however unclear as the film portraying Charlie's life in Little Italy appears during the film's opening sequence; in *Raging Bull* the home movie of Jake's (Robert de Niro) courtship of, and marriage to, Vicky (Cathy Moriarty) has no defined place within the world of the film and serves as a cinematic technique — intercut with footage of Jake's boxing matches — to indicate and condense the passage of time in the narrative. Displacing the home movies from the *mise-en-scène*, Scorsese puts the idyllic family images into question. This untethering is of further consequence, as it re-evaluates conventional representations of home movies in the cinema, urging viewers to reflect on the relation between the contained and containing films.

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<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* the social fiasco of her home movie screening underlines not only the protagonist's romantic difficulties but also indicates her failure to create a home for herself in Italy.

*The Last Man on Earth* capitalises on the contrast between the idyllic domesticity the home movie conveys and the space within which the hero, Robert Morgan (Vincent Price), watches the family film. Morgan is the eponymous last man on earth, the final survivor of the vampire plague which has destroyed the population of the planet, including the hero's wife and daughter.<sup>7</sup> The home movie screening occurs early on in the film and provides a prelude to a flashback which portrays the onset of the disease three years previously and the destruction of Morgan's family. The film's depiction of past familial happiness — documenting the daughter's early days, a birthday party and a visit to the circus — contrasts starkly with Morgan's present situation, and this juxtaposition is enhanced through the design of the mise-en-scène of the living room where the projection takes place (Fig.24). While its customary leisure role is still perceptible in the decor, the space has been transformed into a protective vampire-repellent bunker with boarded up windows and barricaded with furniture. The house is derelict — wreaths of garlic dangle from the ceiling, pictures hang askew and naked lightbulbs cast harsh shadows — and ordinary domestic objects have for the most part been transformed into weapons (the grindstone, once perhaps a source of innocent domestic DIY now deployed to make stakes for killing vampires). The home movie machinery has not however been weaponised and appears out of place among the decrepit surroundings. The family film reminds the hero, and the viewers, that Morgan's house had once been a home. The disparity between their intended projection and the one featured in the film enhances the emotional pull of the images, whose emotive power is conveyed through Morgan's excessive response: first hysterical laughter at the circus clowns and then sobbing in grief at the family he has lost.

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<sup>7</sup> Salkow and Ragona's work is the only film among those discussed in this chapter, where the threat to the family is exterior to it.



**Figure 24.** Decrepit home of the present and the orderly home of the past

Similarly to *The Last Man on Earth*, *The King of Marvin Gardens* also suggest the fracture of the family by depicting the home movie as being out of place in the home. The displacement of the home movie depicted in Rafaelson's film is however subtler than the

contrast generated in *The Last Man on Earth* and relies on the disassembly of the technology. *King of Marvin Gardens* follows David (Jack Nicholson), a radio host who becomes entangled in a real estate scam orchestrated by his conman brother Jason (Bruce Dern). After Jason is fatally shot, David returns with his brother's body to Philadelphia and the film ends with David's grandfather (Charles Lavine) watching the home movies of the brothers' childhood. Occurring in the final scene of the film, the home movie serves as a form of concluding remarks, setting the mood in which the audience will leave the cinema. They are followed by the closing credits which are unaccompanied by sound, and the silence aurally compounds the sense of absence created by the home movie. The small-gauge film depicts the two brothers as children building sandcastles at the beach. The activity is at once an innocent childhood game as well as a potent metaphor: a futile pursuit of creating something that will shortly return to its natural state.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 25.** Home movies projected on the door in *The King of Marvin Gardens*

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<sup>8</sup> Seaside scenes recur in a number of cinematic home movies, and examples can be found in *Paris/Texas* (Wim Wenders, 1984) and *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993).

The representation of the screening compounds the melancholy tone of the scene: rather than conventionally, on a screen, the films are projected on the living room door (Fig. 25). The absence of the relevant equipment indicates the distance between the family members, suggesting that they are not in the habit of celebrating their togetherness through film viewing.<sup>9</sup> Centrally, the representation of the projection serves to compound the absence created by Jason's death, and projecting the family films onto domestic fixtures emphasises the ephemerality of the images (with the crevices of the door perceptible beneath the film), lending them a ghostly quality. Overlaying the home with the home movie, *The King of Marvin Gardens* suggests that the brother's physical presence has been replaced by evanescent imagery, which cannot fill but instead emphasises the void he has left behind. The staging further serves to at once facilitate and undermine David's attempt to disentangle himself from the past, depicted symbolically when the hero closes the screen/door behind him as he walks out of the room. This gesture is however ultimately futile, as the door opens revealing the protagonist ascending the staircase with the images of his idyllic childhood creating a flickering texture which overlays David, suggesting that the past will continue to haunt the protagonist.

*The Last Man on Earth* and *The King of Marvin Gardens* both use domestic space to symbolically emphasise the loss and absence conveyed by the home movie. The themes of displacement of the home movies (in Salkow and Ragona's work) and the disappearance of the screen (in Rafaelson's film) are however important not only with regard to their emotional resonance within the individual works, but are also significant to understanding

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<sup>9</sup> While home movies have frequently been depicted as a temporary set up the technology has never before been depicted as incomplete. A depiction as a permanent fixture of the household is rare and occurs in *The Constant Husband* where the home movie apparatus is hidden as it would be in the cinema and in *Roman Spring* where the gilded golden frame of the screen suggests that it is a decorative element of the mise-en-scène of Mrs. Stone's apartment.

the broader transitions in the cinematic representation of home movies. Questioning the place of the home movie within the domestic mise-en-scène anticipates a shift in the depiction of home movies which comes to the fore in the films of the 1990s and the new millennium, away from a habituated representation of domestic productions as memory aids to their depiction as textures of memory (discussed in Chapter Five). Underpinning this transition is a negotiation of the relation between the contained home movie and the containing one; a shift from home movies as, to echo Cavell's description of *The Mortgage the Merrier*, 'complete film[s] on their own' to home movies as an aesthetic element of the cinematic vocabulary for depicting the past.<sup>10</sup> While neither *The Last Man on Earth* nor *The King of Marvin Gardens* put the home movie's status as a film into question, the representation of family films in *Mean Streets* and *Raging Bull* is, as I have indicated earlier, more complicated. In his depiction, Scorsese literalises the displacement (in *Mean Streets*) and disappearance (in *Raging Bull*) of the home movie suggested by Rafaelson, Ragona and Salkow, complicating the place of family footage in the world of the film and offering a reflexive commentary upon their role in the cinema.

*Mean Streets* opens with the protagonist Charlie, a young Italian-American who aspires to move up in the ranks of the New York mafia, waking up from a dream in the middle of the night. Charlie gets up and walks to the mirror, then returns to bed. As he lays down his head the Ronettes' song 'Be My Baby' comes on the soundtrack and the film cuts away from Charlie, transporting the viewers into an unidentified room with a projector standing in its centre. The camera revolves around the projector and comes to a stop as it is positioned directly opposite it, the light flooding the screen. The film then cuts to reveal the projected

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<sup>10</sup> Stanley Cavell, *The Pursuit of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 207.

images: a home movie. The film depicts Charlie on the streets of New York, subtly foreshadowing, as Leighton Grist suggests in the tensions which run throughout *Mean Streets* conceiving the hero's suspension between a life of crime (indicated by the flashing lights of the police cars, which are the first images of the home movie) and his troubled relation with the church (Charlie shaking hands with the priest).<sup>11</sup> The focus of the home movie is however primarily familial, depicting the christening of a baby, and a party which follows, at which a large number of the film's characters are assembled.

The home movie offers viewers brief, introductory glimpses into Charlie's life; however, the place of the family film within the world depicted in *Mean Streets* is unclear. In his reading of the sequence, Kolker perceives it as an evocation of Charlie's subjective point of view, a reading which is supported by Scorsese's choice to precede the images of the technology with a close-up of Charlie's face suggestive of interiority. The home movie's suspect place within the world of the film is further enhanced by Scorsese's use of the family footage as the film's credit sequence. The credits which appear on the screen to frame the images undermine the authenticity created by the film by juxtaposing the actors in character with their names, and thus revealing them as actors performing a role, and the family film as a carefully crafted fictional representation. The obtuse and anti-illusionistic depiction of the projection sequence in *Mean Streets* suggest that the family films are not so much an element in the film's story (an object within Charlie's domestic *mise-en-scène*) but rather a self-reflexive commentary on the way in which the story is told, on the role of home movies not in the homes but in the cinema (Fig. 26).

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<sup>11</sup> Leighton Grist, *The Films of Martin Scorsese, 1963-1973: Authorship and Context* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).



Figure 26. Opening credits of *Mean Streets*

The reflexivity of the opening home movie sequence of *Mean Streets* has received some critical attention. Grist argues that it functions as ‘a reflexive commentary on the film’s realism, a tacit deconstruction of its documentary effect.’<sup>12</sup> Grist locates this deconstruction primarily in the film’s representation of the cinematic apparatus, which, as he writes, serves to foreground ‘the mechanics of mediation’ accentuating the construction of the cinematic illusion. Like a number of home movies-with-films, *Mean Streets* draws attention to the technology of film, a reflexive gesture which has the potential to fracture the cohesion perpetuated by Classical Hollywood cinema. However, unlike most films discussed thus far in this thesis, Scorsese’s work does not seek to mitigate the threat of anti-illusionism by emphasising the home movie’s role within the film (as a reflection of the diegetic spectators) but to heighten it, putting the diegetic role of the family footage into question.

The film’s reflexivity is not however limited to the depiction of technology but can also be found in its subtle intertextuality. Kolker draws attention to this, arguing that the home movie

<sup>12</sup> Grist, *The Films of Martin Scorsese, 1963-1973*, p. 68.

has a function akin to other cinematic references within the film which, as he argues: ‘constitute a celebration of the medium, an indication of a cinematic community; they enrich the work by opening it out, making it responsive to other works and making others responsive to it; and they point to the film’s own existence as film.’<sup>13</sup> While Kolker does not consider the home movie as a citation of any particular work, Howard Hampton suggests this possibility in his analysis of Scorsese’s use of ‘Be My Baby’ which he aligns with the use of popular music in the works of the underground American filmmaker Kenneth Anger.<sup>14</sup> Scorsese’s use of the home movie for the opening sequence can itself be perceived as an indication of influence, echoing the use of small-gauge film in opening credit sequence of *Peeping Tom*, a film which Scorsese has championed throughout his career (Fig. 27). While it can be perceived as functioning similarly to the other allusions in the film, the reference to Powell’s work is of further significance in that it suggests a film which features small-gauge film. In its allusions, the home movie opening sequence of *Mean Streets* thus reveals not only the director’s reflexivity about film, but also about the home movie as both a medium (film) and as a cinematic convention. Complicating their existence as part of the reality represented by the film, Scorsese draws the viewer’s attention to their role in the cinema, pointing, even if subtly and briefly, to a contextual history of home movies-within-films.

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<sup>13</sup> Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness*, p. 202. A notable intertextual reference is Roger Corman’s 1964 *Tomb of Legia* which Charlie goes to see with Johnny Boy (Robert de Niro).

<sup>14</sup> While Scorsese’s use of *Be My Baby* has frequently been perceived as an autobiographical flourish, adding authenticity to the film’s depiction of the Italian-American community (as the director himself points out in *Scorsese on Scorsese* the song was popular in Little Italy in the mid-1960s), it is notable that the music does not simply accompany the family footage, but that the home movie is cut to match the rhythm of the song (in a manner that anticipates a music video). The matching of the aural and visual beats, suggests deliberation which is at odds with the haphazard in camera editing which frequently characterises cinematic home movies and indicates Scorsese’s self-reflexivity about the realism conveyed by the home movie which Grist has identified.



Figure 27. Opening credits of *Peeping Tom*

In *Films amateurs dans le cinéma de fiction* Journot argues that in contrast to other examples of films-within-films, home movies do not lend themselves to intertextuality and that their reception ‘is not based on culture but on affect and experience.’ (‘une réception qui ne se fonde pas sur la culture mais sur l’affect et l’expérience.’).<sup>15</sup> While I agree with Journot’s observation that, for the most part, home movies serve to create emotional resonance rather than engender a cerebral appreciation, it is equally important to recognise that the representations of domestic films may function as allusions. Although rare, intertextuality has not been absent from the cinematic representations of home movies. *Mean Streets* is not the only film of the time which uses family footage in such a fashion. Citations can be found in the films of Brian De Palma, particularly in *Home Movies* and *Hi Mom!* where the depictions of small-gauge filmmaking reference *David Holzman’s Diary* (Jim McBride, 1967) and *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954) respectively.<sup>16</sup> The intertextual references of the small-gauge films in Scorsese’s and De Palma’s work, can be accounted for, like the broader intertextuality of their works, by situating the directors in the context of New

<sup>15</sup> Journot, *Films amateurs dans le cinéma de fiction*, p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> De Palma’s depiction of Denis’ (Keith Gordon) attempts to catch his life on films (in order to become ‘the star in his own life’) echoes David’s obsessive self-documentation in *David Holzman’s Diary*. The reference to Hitchcock in *Hi Mom!* functions in a different way, as loosely recreating the premise of *Rear Window* (the protagonist is an aspiring amateur pornographer who spies on his neighbours with small-gauge camera) De Palma at once pays tribute to his cinematic hero and offers a commentary on the over saturated media landscape.

Hollywood cinema and the Movie Brat generation.<sup>17</sup> As Noël Carroll points out, a familiarity with cinematic history, conventions and genres was one of the key characteristic of the films of the time, a feature he emphasises by describing them collectively as a ‘cinema of allusions’.<sup>18</sup>

While the citations in Scorsese’s and De Palma’s work can be perceived more broadly within the context of the shifts in Hollywood cinema of the 1970s, the intertextual representation of home movies is not limited to the American films of the time. As the final section of this chapter will illuminate, a referential permeability between home movies and the avant-garde can also be found in Cammell’s and Roeg’s *Performance*. As the final chapter of this thesis will explore, home movies are deployed in an intertextual manner in a number of contemporary films which use home movies to express nostalgia for cinematic heritage. A notable example among these is Richard Ayoade’s *Submarine* (2011), which, in its presentation of projection, located within an unidentified space with no diegetic viewers present, and use of typewritten credits, explicitly alludes to Scorsese’s depiction of home movie screening in *Mean Streets* (Fig. 28). Like Scorsese’s work, *Submarine* showcases a reflexivity about the history of home movies in the cinema, illuminating that their significance cannot be limited only to their role within a given film.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> New Hollywood is a term that refers to films produced between 1967 and 1975. The films of the time were marked by a shift in the style and content of the productions, a feature often associated with the coming of age of a new generation of filmmakers influenced by the French New Wave and Italian Neo Realism. The collapse of the production code in the 1960s allowed for a more open depiction of sex and violence, and the films often engaged with contemporary issues reflecting on the upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s including the Vietnam War, the African-American Civil Rights movement, the sexual revolution and the Women’s Liberation movement.

<sup>18</sup> Noël Carroll ‘The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (and Beyond)’, *October* 20 (Spring, 1982).

<sup>19</sup> The director admits to this borrowing in an interview with Simon Reynold’s where he says ‘Oh yeah, that is from the start of *Mean Streets*. We altered it, but that’s pretty direct.’ Simon Reynolds, ‘Richard Ayoade on “Submarine”, Garth Marengi and Jedward’, *Digital Spy* (2011) <<http://www.digitalspy.co.uk/movies/at-the-movies/a332655/richard-ayoade-on-submarine-garth-marengi-and-jedward.html#ixzz3jvyeAewV>> accessed 23 August 2015.

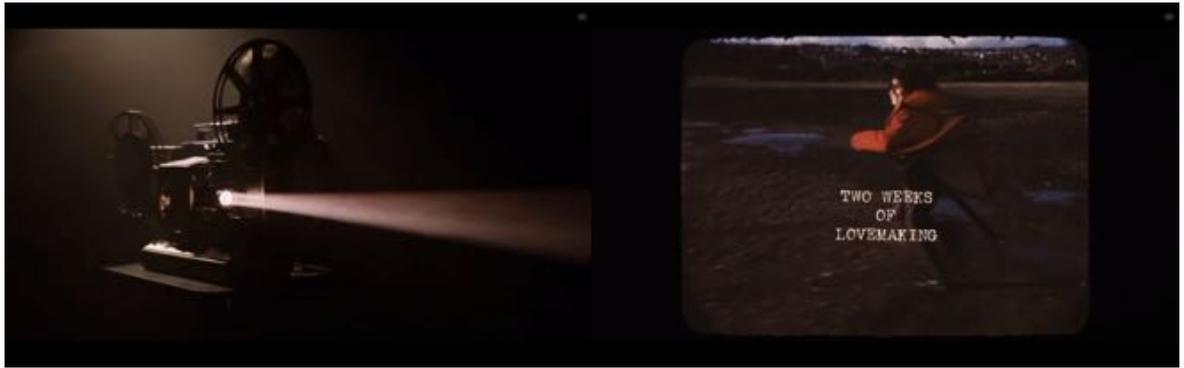


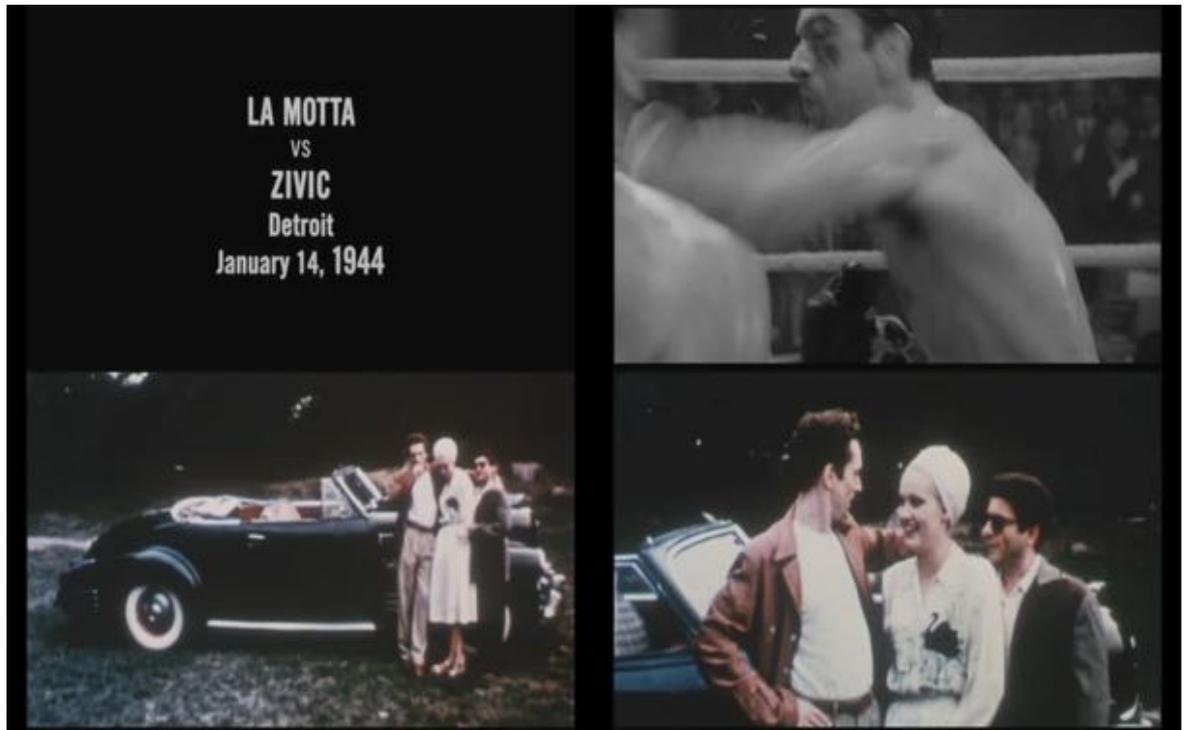
Figure 28. ‘Super 8 footage of memory’ in *Submarine*

*Raging Bull* takes the displacement of the home movie from the *mise-en-scène* even further than *Mean Streets*, removing it from the diegesis altogether. The family films appear during a montage sequence which interweaves the development of Jake’s boxing career and his private life (Fig. 29). They act as a shorthand, condensing time into a succession of brief snippets which chart the key developments in a family’s life (courtship, marriage, purchase of a house, birth of children). In his analysis of the films, Robin Wood considers it a ‘very unusual type of sequence’ observing that it is the only intrusion of colour into an otherwise black and white film.<sup>20</sup> Wood reads the film’s deployment of colour as akin to the use of technicolour in the *Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939), to symbolise imagination and thus to emphasise that the home movies offer a representation of Jake’s fantasy of family life rather than a reflection of its realities. These home movies, following convention, present the marriage as a succession of idyllic scenes, supported by increasingly conspicuous consumption (facilitated by Jake’s successes in the ring).<sup>21</sup> The home movies present Jake and Vicky as the perfect family, young, affluent and above all happy; however, the image of the couple the domestic production conveys is at odds with their depiction elsewhere in the

<sup>20</sup> Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan — and beyond* (Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 224.

<sup>21</sup> As Peggy McCormack points out, it is possible to read Vicky as herself an acquisition of Jake’s. The home movies suggest this, depicting the boxer’s fondness for adorning and showing off his spouse. Peggy McCormack ‘Women in *Raging Bull*: Scorsese’s Use of Determinist, Objective and Subjective Techniques’ in Kevin J. Hayes (ed.), *Martin Scorsese’s ‘Raging Bull’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

film. This is foregrounded in the scene which immediately follows the montage, as the illusion of both professional and personal fulfilment is undermined with the revelation of Jake's difficulties in finding opponents (owing to his viciousness in the ring no one wants to fight him) and his obsessive jealousy over Vicky which puts a strain on their marriage.



**Figure 29.** Home movie depicting the development Jake's relationship with Vicky (colour), intercut with images of his sporting success (b&w)

*Raging Bull's* idealized representation of marriage via the home movie corresponds to the majority of films I have discussed thus far; however, the presentation of the home movie itself is different to these previous examples. The home movie is not anchored in the diegesis: the viewers see neither the making nor the screening of the film and the frame of the family film corresponds to that of *Raging Bull*. Despite the absence of the technology, the home movie is nonetheless immediately recognisable as a home movie solely on behalf of its aesthetic, suggesting the habituation of the home movie 'look' in the cinema. Thus, while the depiction of the displaced family footage in *Mean Streets* showcases Scorsese's reflexivity about the home movie as a cinematic convention (indicating spectators' awareness of the films alluded to by the director), *Raging Bull* explores the conventionality

of domestic image making in a different manner, suggesting viewers' familiarity with family footage and the associations attached to it. Scorsese's use of home movie in *Raging Bull* is a stylistic choice, on par with his decision to shoot the film in black and white. Like the use of monochrome, which, as Wood argues, is deployed to convey realism, the home movie 'look' not only connotes a domestic film, but also mobilises a range of associations attached to this type of production. It implies, as Wood writes, the fantasy character of the familial idyll as well as suggesting a past tense. Unconventional in its presentation of a family film, Scorsese's work simultaneously draws on and points to the conventionality of home movies as idyllic representations of the family's past.

### **Subversion**

The customary characterisation of home movies as a sentimental expression of familial cohesion, suggested by *Raging Bull*, is explored and undermined by films belonging to the subversive strand. *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*, *Up the Sandbox* and *Home Movies* are united by their shared concern with disrupting the utopian dimension of the home movies which they portray. This is not to suggest that until the late 1960s cinema has never put the authenticity of the idyllic family of the home movie into question; previous films have, for the most part, explored the rift between family footage and the realities of the represented families by means of a home movie screening, revealing the families' inability to live up to their idealised self-image. What sets the subversive films apart is thus not their concern with complicating the picture-perfect image of the family, but rather the way in which this issue is explored. Collectively, the films are characterised by a shift of emphasis away from home movie viewing and towards an exploration of domestic filmmaking.<sup>22</sup> In their depiction of

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<sup>22</sup> De Palma's *Home Movies* is a rare example of a film which features both filmmaking and viewing.

familial moving image production Mazursky, Kershner and De Palma all seek to expose the home movies as tool for the production, rather than as a reflection, of familial cohesion. *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* subtly draws the viewer's attention to the directorial control and the erasures which facilitate the construction of the idyllic domesticity associated with home movies. *Up the Sandbox* and *Home Movies* take the critique further, suggesting what the home movie would look like if the erasures did not take place and the tensions were brought to the fore. Rather than serving the production of cohesion, the home movies in Kershner's and De Palma's films are deployed in a critical fashion, supporting the films' broader concerns with undermining the familial performance of congeniality. Their shared concern with exposition is illuminated most prominently in De Palma's film, which not only confronts the family with their subversive home movies, but, as I will explore, can itself be perceived as an example of one.

In its portrayal of family filmmaking, *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* — a comedy about the liberation of sexual mores of the late 1960s — suggests a rift between the imagery produced by the domestic cinematographer and the realities of the represented family by foregrounding the contrast between what the camera captures (the images) and what it cannot record (dialogue). The scene, which occurs roughly halfway through the film, is brief and depicts Bob (Robert Culp) and Carol (Natalie Wood) celebrating their son's birthday together with their friends and their children. On the surface the party appears as an idyllic familial event, conventional to the point of being stereotypical: the mother brings in the cake and the son blows out the candles as the friends all applaud the boy. Mazursky however undermines the paradisaical character of the celebration, by drawing attention to the tensions and petty disagreements which abound among the gathered guests and which are expressed in the dialogue. As Carol leans over her son, instructing him to make a wish, Bob (who is

operating the camera) brusquely reprimands her for being overbearing and instructs her to move out of shot, as she is obscuring the boy. Bob's directorial intervention illuminates the artifice of the home movie staging, drawing attention to the patriarchal control over the appropriate (aesthetically and ideologically) image of the family (Fig. 30). The film suggests, however, that the home movie will not bear evidence of this exchange, as the camera is depicted without a microphone and, thus, unable to capture the nuances of the dialogue. The disjuncture between sound and image comes most prominently to the fore later in the scene, when Bob films Ted (Elliott Gould) and Alice (Dyan Cannon). Unwilling to participate in the family filmmaking, Ted attempts to evade the camera's attention saying that he has nothing interesting to show for the recording. In response, Bob playfully instructs him to rip Alice's blouse off. Flustered Ted mutters 'I don't know what to do. I can't rip her blouse off'. Gould's delivery of the lines indicates in equal measure shock at Bob's forward proposition and a frustration at the diminished eroticism of his marriage (which was the subject of the couple's conversation previously). Like the exchange between Bob and Carol, the subtleties of the relation between Ted and Alice which underpin the exchange will, implicitly, also be erased from the finished home movie, in favour of the goofy grin which Ted pulls to placate the domestic cinematographer.



**Figure 30.** Directorial control

*Up the Sandbox* takes the criticism of family footage further than *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*, accentuating the erasures suggested by Mazursky. In this, Kershner's deployment of the home movie is at odds with the dominant sentimental associations of domestic filmmaking found in the cinema, presenting the small-gauge camera as a tool which exposes, rather than conceals familial fissures. The film follows Margaret Reynolds (Barbara Streisand), a middle class urban housewife who finds herself facing an unplanned pregnancy. As she debates whether she will be able to care for a third child, the heroine slips between her everyday reality and a vivid, outrageous fantasy life, imagining alternatives to her situation which allow her to work through her concerns about the choice to give up her career, her suspicion about her husband's infidelity and her mother's excessive desire to manage her life. It is the final issue that comes to the fore in the home movie sequence that takes place during the celebration of Margaret's parents' thirtieth wedding anniversary. A large portion of the scene is presented from the point of view of the domestic cinematographer's camera, a choice which suggests the central role which the home movie plays in the collective imagination of a family celebration. Distinguishing between the home movie and the containing film by framing the family images in a way that suggests a viewfinder, Kershner accentuates the act of mediation: both of the represented family through the home movie and the remediation of the home movie by the film (Fig. 31). This duality of the family film reflects its ambiguous role in Kershner's work as both a tool and a subject of representation.



**Figure 31.** The home movie as subject and tool of critique

In his review of the film, Roger Ebert praises the anniversary scene for what he terms as its horrifying realism,<sup>23</sup> a description which encapsulates Kershner's unsentimental treatment of the family. The scene offers a satire of familial togetherness, exaggerating the relatives' flaws and disagreements by playing on the contrast between their desire, and inability, to present themselves as the perfect family. The home movie plays a crucial role in exploring the failure of the family's self-presentation, at once fuelling and undermining their desire to embody ideal domesticity. The family's concern with appearances is foregrounded in the anniversary party's diegetic performances: piano-playing, singing, and recitation. However, these individual performances are constantly undermined by relatives who disrupt their self-display (such as the man who repeatedly hits his wife with a toy club as she sings) or refuse to play the required part (Margaret rejecting her mother's proposition to move to the suburbs). Recording the family, the cameraman captures both the successful and the less accomplished moments of their performance, not only visually, but also aurally, as in this case the home movie camera is equipped with a microphone. While in *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* the absence of dialogue facilitates the idealisation of the represented family, the

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<sup>23</sup> Ebert writes that: 'director Irvin Kershner (who directed the best party scene of 1971 in his comedy masterpiece 'Loving'), gives us another party that is horrifying in its realism.' Roger Ebert, 'Up the Sandbox' (1972), *rogerebert.com* < <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/up-the-sandbox-1972>> accessed: 29 August 2015.

presence of sound in *Up the Sandbox* de-idealises the relatives, capturing snippets of arguments which reveal the turmoil beneath the surface of congeniality.

Notably, the family film not only captures but also contributes to the family's discomfort. Throughout the anniversary scene the home moviemaker is depicted not as an invisible observer, but as an intrusive presence; this is particularly apparent in the abrasive use of the camera lights, intended to facilitate indoor shooting, but which also blind the partygoers, many of whom are depicted shielding their eyes from the glare.<sup>24</sup> Contributing to the film's satirical depiction of the family, the home movie does not itself avoid ridicule. The domestic moviemaker is depicted as incompetent, and this is perceptible in the chaotic camera work, which zooms in and out, focusing on inconsequential details (domestic fixtures and decorations) and embarrassing situations (capturing a woman's argument with her intoxicated husband). While the flaws of the home movie have often, as the previous chapters demonstrated, been deployed to imbue the representation with a naive charm, the shortcomings of the family film in *Up the Sandbox* — the harsh lighting, erratic camera work, unstable framing and the cinematographer's inability to distinguish between suitable and unsuitable subjects — are, like the family itself, presented not as endearing but as ludicrous.

In its depiction of home moviemaking, *Up the Sandbox* thus lampoons the notion of an ideal family, and the practice of making home movies, presenting the home movie as a subject, as much as a tool of, satire. The criticism of the home movie reaches its peak as the film shifts

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<sup>24</sup> The use of the camera lights foregrounds the limitations of the technology. Home movie stock was not sensitive and required shooting in brightly lit conditions, thus the dominance of outdoor and day time scenes. In Kershner's film the lights are however not only used to add authenticity to its depiction of family filmmaking but are also deployed expressively to heighten the relatives' discomfort.

to the depiction of Margaret's fantasy. The anniversary party scene follows on from the attempts of Margaret's mother (Jane Hoffman) to emotionally blackmail her daughter to move to the suburbs by imploring her to give her acceptance as an anniversary gift ('just say yes Margaret and make my happiness complete'). After Margaret refuses, the mother attempts to exact her revenge by informing the family of Margaret's pregnancy, a fact she had hitherto kept secret. No longer able to contain her anger, Margaret attacks her mother and slams her face into the anniversary cake. The women begin fighting as the relatives cheer and the domestic cinematographer turns on the camera, climbing under a table in an attempt to get the best shot of the action. The scene then cuts abruptly, revealing that the disclosure of Margaret's pregnancy and the fight which followed was one of the heroine's fantasies.

While the explicit subject of the fantasy is Margaret's desire, but inability, to confront her mother, the scene also suggests Margaret's wish to break free of the stifling familial conventions. The fantasy sequence expresses her exhaustion with the affable familial performance which is expected of her and which, the film suggests, is being policed by the home movie. *Up the Sandbox* emphasises this by cutting away from the fantasy and cutting back to the 'authentic' family film (reverting to the beginning of the fantasy sequence), foregrounding Margaret's distress at the camera's scrutiny, whose relentless attention parallels the mother's unceasing attempts to stage-manage her daughter's life (Fig. 32). The two home movies — one in which the camera gleefully participates in the domestic outburst and the one dutifully recording Margaret's embarrassment and frustration — reflect two varying characterisations of the family within the scene, one revelling in their tensions and disagreements and the other striving, and struggling, to conceal them under the surface of congeniality. Aligning the home movie as an expression of familial relations, *Up the Sandbox* at once illuminates how home moviemaking can be deployed to satirise the family,

and simultaneously offers a critique of domestic small-gauge film, depicting it as an intrusive presence policing the family's performance and taking measure of its inadequacies.



**Figure 32.** Unceasing scrutiny of the domestic camera

The films contained in Brian De Palma's *Home Movies* explore the fantasy of the home movie suggested by *Up the Sandbox*, depicting domestic filmmaking as gleefully exposing the deceptions and secrets which the family struggles to conceal. The film follows Denis Byrd (Keith Gordon) who endeavours to disclose his father's infidelity in order to help his mother get a divorce. To achieve this, Denis spends his evenings perched in a tree overlooking his father's office, camera in hand, hoping to record the patriarch in flagrante delicto. When not spying on his father, Denis spends his time consoling his mother and competing for her attention with his parodically hyper-masculine older brother James (Gerrit Graham). The familial situation is further complicated with the arrival of James' fiancé Kristina (Nancy Allen) a former prostitute whom the brother, unsuccessfully, strives to reform through marriage. The family's story is reflexively framed as a film-within-a-film, with Denis' struggles depicted as a case study in a class on 'becoming a star in your own life' taught by the charismatic impresario Maestro (Kirk Douglas). The hypermediacy of the framing narrative illuminates De Palma's concern with mediation, which reverberates throughout the work in the presentation of the numerous films-within-the-film which include Denis' surveillance of his father, his film diary 'My Life', as well as home movies shot by his grandmother on the day of Kristina's and James' disastrous wedding party.

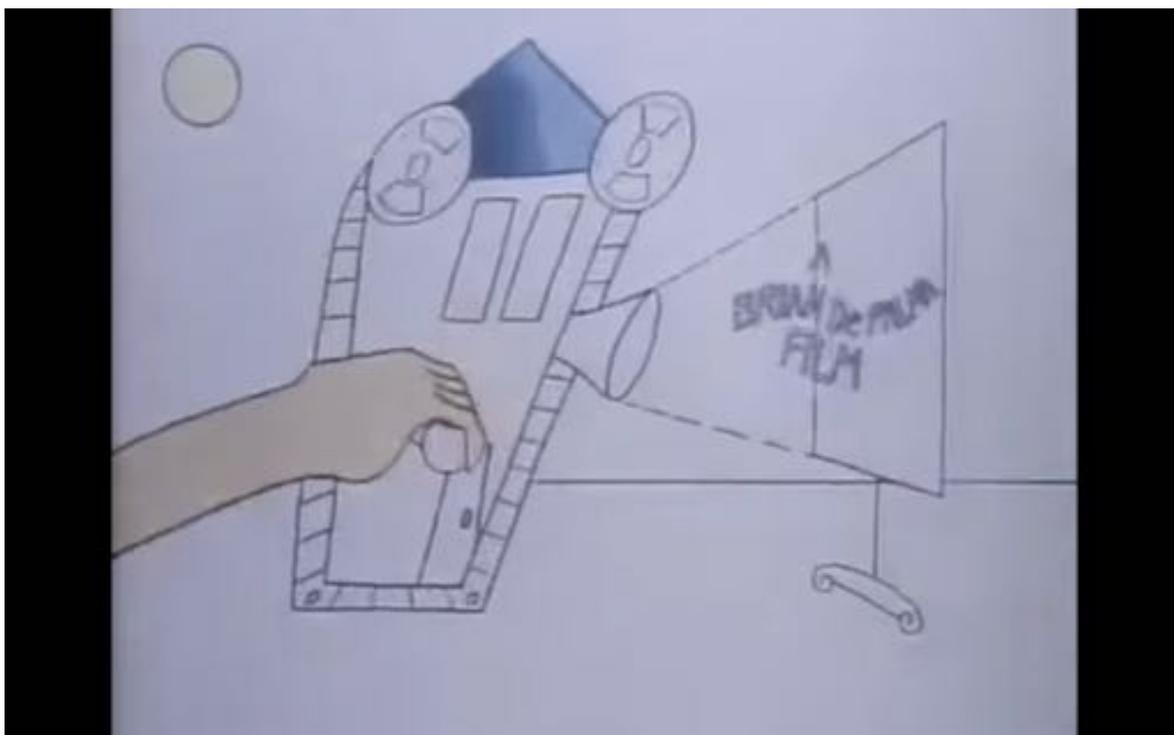


Figure 33. 'A Brian De Palma film'

The eponymous home movies of De Palma's title can be read doubly. On the one hand they refer to the home movies embedded in the films: the grandmother's film of the wedding and the evidence of the father's infidelity gathered by Denis, both of which are screened in the film's finale to the appalled domestic audience. The title however, as Douglas Keesey suggests has another meaning, and can be perceived as referring to the broader representation of the family in the film and its relation to De Palma's own family history. As De Palma has pointed out in interviews, the story of *Home Movies* is directly based on his own familial experience, and Keesey argues that *Home Movies* 'is the most nakedly revealing film about De Palma's youthful past we have.'<sup>25</sup> In his book, Keesey offers a detailed tracing of how the director's family history has been represented and reworked in the fiction film, concluding that it is possible to read the film itself as a home movie, based on an analysis of the title sequence. As Keesey argues: '*Home Movies* is in fact a kind of home movie about

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<sup>25</sup> Douglas Keesey, *Brian De Palma's Split-Screen: A Life in Film* (University Press of Mississippi, 2015), p. 121.

the De Palmas, as is hinted during the animated opening credits when a family home transforms into a giant projector shining an image on a screen that says, ‘A Brian De Palma Film’<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 33). The metaphorical reading of *Home Movies* as a home movie which is indicated in the credits, is further supported by the affinity between the film’s depiction of the family and the family self-representation in the home movies contained within the film, both of which seek to expose and ridicule the represented relatives.<sup>27</sup>

Like *Up the Sandbox*, De Palma’s film diverges from the conventional idyllic associations of the practice, presenting home movies as a way of unmasking the flaws and indecencies of the represented family. This is highlighted most prominently in Denis’ endeavour to collect evidence of his father’s adultery. Unable to obtain the proof from his vantage point on the tree, Denis decides on a more direct approach, bursting into his father’s office wielding his small-gauge camera. As Keesey illuminates, the scene is a reworking of De Palma’s own assault on his adulterous father, whom the filmmaker confronted not with a camera but a knife. The substitution suggests that the tools of the filmmaker can function as a weapon, indicating the camera’s capacity for violence.<sup>28</sup> While Denis’ film-evidence of the father’s adultery does not appear as a home movie in that moment, this categorisation is supported by its domestic screening in the film’s finale. As the film draws to a close, the family members gather together watching the films shot by the grandmother during James and Kristina’s ill-fated engagement party.<sup>29</sup> Similarly to the family films in *Up the Sandbox*, the grandmother’s effort draws on the contrast between the home movie ideal and the family captured in the film, revealing Kristina’s inability to perform the prescribed role of the bride-

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> A concern foregrounded by the film’s promotional tagline which reads ‘Brian De Palma’s comedy which catches everyone in the act’.

<sup>28</sup> The camera as weapon is depicted literally in *Peeping Tom* where the camera tripod conceals a hidden knife foregrounding the aggression of cinema.

<sup>29</sup> Denis is absent from the screening, as he has left for college.

to-be (Fig. 34). After witnessing what she believes to be James' sexual encounter some of his students, the girl surrenders to the repressed part of her personality embodied by her foulmouthed puppet Bunny. On the morning of the engagement Kristina descends the staircase with her hair and dress in disarray, handing out revealing, both visually and metaphorically, pictures of herself as a glamour model. Her entrance is recorded by the grandmother, an overzealous domestic cinematographer, determined to capture every moment of the event and seemingly oblivious to its deviation from the customary script. Like Kershner, De Palma uses the home movies to comedically enhance the family's aberration from the established norms which they are committed to upholding, contrasting the type of representation suggested by the home movie aesthetic with the images which they record. While Kershner does not present the viewers with a home movie screening, leaving open the question of how the family would react to the unflattering representation, De Palma returns to the grandmother's films in the film's finale. The home movies function as a way for the family to symbolically expel Kristina and define their togetherness through their shared rejection of the deranged bride (conveyed by their physical proximity as they hug each other for comfort). However, the Byrds' togetherness is short lived, as the grandmother's home movie is succeeded with Denis' film, exposing the father's infidelity and fracturing the brief truce achieved among the relatives (Fig. 35).



**Figure 34.** The grandmother records Kristina



**Figure 35.** The father's infidelity revealed

Screening the evidence gathered by Denis for the familial audience, *Home Movies* resembles a similarly disruptive deployment of domestic image making technologies in an early cinema film *Bobby's Kodak* (Wallace McCutcheon, 1908). Upon receiving a Kodak still camera Bobby proceeds to take compromising pictures of the family (including his father's affair) which he then projects as slides to the relatives' embarrassment. In his analysis of the film, Paul Young (*The Cinema Dreams its Rivals*) emphasises that a key aspect of the work is its punishment of the 'bad boy' and his weapon: the child gets a beating and the camera is destroyed by his father. This punishment, Young argues, serves to warn cinema goers against amateur uses of image making technologies, indicating that only institutionalisation of film can turn it into a 'decent' form of entertainment. In contrast, De Palma refuses to punish his amateurs — the grandmother and Denis — for their salacious tastes and hunger for images (although, like the rest of the family, he does subject them to ridicule). Additionally, with *Home Movies*, De Palma declares himself on the side of small-gauge cinematographers, an alignment perceptible in the film's autobiographical dimension. Thus, if the screening of Denis' incriminating films recalls *Bobby's Kodak*, *Home Movies* as a home movie echoes another early cinema 'bad boy' film: *The Story the Biograph Told* (Biograph, 1904). Unlike *Bobby's Kodak* where the indecent slides are presented for family eyes only, the Biograph film projects the evidence of the husband's infidelity at a cinema, presenting the man's

adultery for public scrutiny and judgement. *Home Movies* similarly performs an act of public denunciation of De Palma's family history, in the guise of fiction.<sup>30</sup>

In his interpretation of the Biograph film, Young similarly considers it as a cautionary tale, arguing that: 'perhaps this is even a "friendly" warning to viewers not to let their own productive impulses get out of hand. If the amateur film critics in the audience were ever to get their hands on actual film cameras, the film hints, no one's privacy would be safe.'<sup>31</sup> 76 years later De Palma works with the same themes, suggesting that no one's privacy is safe in a world saturated by widely available image making technologies. De Palma foregrounds this through the intricate hypermediacy of his work, indicating that even as he is spying on his father, Denis himself is not immune to scrutiny. Throughout the film Denis is incessantly being followed and recorded by the Maestro and his crew, becoming the subject of a documentary about a man who failed to become the star of his own life.

De Palma's depiction of home movies, together with the other films of the subversive strand, poses questions concerning the prominence of bad boy (and bad girl) amateurs in the 1970s. One way to account for the de-idealisation of home movies within these works is to consider the social issues raised by the films. Both *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* and *Up the Sandbox* explicitly engage with the repercussions of the upheavals of the 1960s, most notably with the sexual revolution and the women's liberation movement. In his study of American film in the 1970s, Jonathan Kirshner argues that Mazursky's movie takes the sexual revolution of the 1960s as its subject, exploring its effect 'on a generation that came of age under the

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<sup>30</sup>The public nature of the denouncement performed by the film is again suggested by the opening sequence where home/projector is depicting as casting its images not inwards at itself, but outwards towards a screen outside of the home.

<sup>31</sup> Paul Young, *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals: Media Fantasy Films from Radio to the Internet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 36.

old rules but were still young enough to wonder if they were missing out on something special.<sup>32</sup> *Up the Sandbox* explores the impact of the woman's liberation movement on a woman's self-perception, offering, as Joan Mellen argues, a reactionary critique of second wave feminism, lampooning its achievements in order to champion the woman's role as devoted wife and mother.<sup>33</sup> While the film's unfavourable treatment of the family in the home movie scene does not as readily signal itself as a critique of feminism as the film's other sequences, Mellen convincingly argues how the anniversary scene, with its focus on the controlling and emasculating mother, can be read as a cautionary tale about the damaging impact of women's liberation on the family. While the home movie still offers the possibility of coherence in Mazurky's work, in its denigrating depiction of the family film *Up the Sandbox* suggests that the flawed family is unable to present itself as the bourgeois ideal associated with the home movie, which is emphasised by the absence of the screening which puts the place of the home movie in the home into question. The de-idealisation of home movies performed by the films of the subversive strand can also be seen as part of a broader cultural shift in the perception of home movies; it is perhaps not coincidental that the mid-1970s and early 1980s were the time when home movies first came to academic attention. The critical perception of home movies suggested by these films finds its echoes in the broader cinematic landscape, particularly in a number of avant-garde films of the time which put the idyllic domesticity of family films into question. A key example is Michelle Citron's autobiographical work *Daughter Rite* (1980, the same year as De Palma's *Home Movies*) in which the director manipulated her own childhood movies with the goal to, as Maurim Turim

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<sup>32</sup> Jonathan Kirshner, *Hollywood's Last Golden Age: Politics, Society, and the Seventies Film in America* (Cornell University Press, 2012), p. 77.

<sup>33</sup> Joan Mellen, *Women and their Sexuality in the New Film* (London: Davis-Poynter, 1974).

writes: 'expose and protest this ritual, to investigate its elements and satirize some of its efforts to display itself as an idealized family portrait.'<sup>34</sup>

### **Home movies and counterculture**

In their unconventional depiction of home movies, Mazusky, Kershner and De Palma at once draw on and indicate their habituated association with the ideal family, a connotation which is also explored, albeit in a very different manner, in *Performance*. Like the films of the subversive strand, Cammell's and Roeg's work presents viewers with an unusual home movie, unusual however not in its characterisation of the process of filmmaking, but in its depiction of the family. Focusing on a ménage à trois between the washed out rock-star Turner (Mick Jagger) and his lovers Pheber (Anita Pallenberg) and Lucy (Michèle Breton), *Performance* draws on the performative powers of the home movie to present the characters as a family of choice. In doing so, the film offers a differently calibrated meaning of subversion, emphasising the sentimental associations of small-gauge filmmaking in order to celebrate its countercultural familial arrangement.

Before proceeding to explore *Performance*'s depiction of small-gauge filmmaking it is valuable to inquire into the ways in which the film itself has been likened to a home movie. Matthias Frey argues that Donald Cammell's and Nicolas Roeg's film 'was, in effect, the first Warner Brothers 'home movie.'<sup>35</sup> The description is striking as it invokes a juxtaposition of two modes of filmmaking which have frequently been perceived as polar opposites: the domestic production and the Hollywood fiction film. Describing *Performance* as a 'home movie' Frey capitalises on that contrast to argue that despite its ties with the

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<sup>34</sup> Maureen Turim 'Childhood Memories and Household Events in the Feminist Avant-Garde', *Journal of Film and Video* 38:3/4 (Summer/Fall 1986), p. 91.

<sup>35</sup> Mattias Frey, 'London a la Mod': Fashion, Genre and Historical Space in *Performance*', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 23:2 (2006), p. 374.

Hollywood studio, Cammell's and Roeg's work is an intimate film. This intimacy, as Frey among many others has argued, stems from the familiarity of the cast and crew, most of whom were friends and among whom only the director/cinematographer Nicolas Roeg and principal actor James Fox had previous cinematic experience. The proximity between the cast and crew has led many commentators to imbue the film with a documentary quality. While, as Colin MacCabe argues in his monograph on the film '*Performance* is anything but an attempt to produce a vérité account of London in the 60s'<sup>36</sup> (emphasising that it is, indisputably, a work of fiction), the film nonetheless frequently been perceived as offering a reflection of the time and place of its setting as it, to borrow Marianne Faithful's description, 'preserves the whole era under glass.'<sup>37</sup>

Describing *Performance* as a 'home movie', Frey seeks to convey how the film can be perceived as an intimate document of London in the 1960s. Writing in *Sight and Sound* on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the film's release, Peter Wollen further complicates this characterisation by aligning its 'home movie' quality with the 'anti-cinema' of Kenneth Anger.<sup>38</sup> The addition of Anger's work as a point of reference not only complicates the status of *Performance* as a Hollywood film, but also, problematises the term 'home movie'. Wollen does not elaborate on the characteristics of Anger's work which inform his choice of the term home movie; he is presumably referring to the intimate, 'do-it-yourself' quality of the American filmmaker's oeuvre which finds echoes in *Performance*. Yet, while their mode of production aligns them with domestic films, Anger's works however are not home movies in the conventional sense of the term. Not only were his films intended for an audience

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<sup>36</sup> Colin MacCabe, *Performance* (London, British Film Institute, 1998), p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Marianne Faithfull, *Faithfull: An Autobiography* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), p. 154.

<sup>38</sup> He writes that: 'like Anger's films *Performance* also has the feel of a home movie, albeit a home movie produced by Warner Brothers.' Peter Wollen, '*Performance*', *Sight & Sound*, 5:9 (1995), p. 23.

broader than the domestic, but Anger's fascination with 'sexuality, violence and occult lore'<sup>39</sup> which permeates his films (and which, as Wollen argues, reverberates in *Performance*) contrasts with the celebration of middle class domesticity which underlies the habituated understanding of home movies. Thus, while Frey uses the term 'home movie' to complicate *Performance*'s status as a Hollywood studio film (and thus its status as a 'movie'), Wollen's invocation of Anger also serves this purpose but it additionally complicates the term 'home'. It suggests that *Performance* is not just like a home movie (and thus an alternative to mainstream fiction film) but a film about an alternative domesticity, offering both a revision of the Hollywood film and of a home movie.



Figure 36. Pheber filming

Notably *Performance* is not only like a 'home movie' but also features a home movie. The film-within-the-film depicts a ménage à trois between Turner, Pheber and Lucy. It opens with Pheber picking up a Bolex 16mm camera lying on the side of the bathtub and proceeding to film: first her own reflection in the mirror and then her sleeping companions (Fig. 36). The scene is the spectator's first introduction to the inhabitants of 81 Powis Square, and to Mick Jagger's character. The home movie sequence occurs roughly half-way through the film and inaugurates its second, psychedelic part. It is the second time the viewers see Turner, and the first which offers a sustained look at the rock-star. Initially, the home movie sequence was to be the viewer's first introduction to the character. The directors' choice to

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

withhold Jagger's appearance for almost half of the film was controversial: as MacCabe points out the film was funded primarily on the bankability of its star and upon seeing the first cut of the film: 'Warner Brothers were horrified... He was the one thing they were betting on.'<sup>40</sup>

When Jagger does finally make an appearance the filmmakers' choice to introduce him through the home movie indicates a self-reflexivity about its depiction of the star. The grain and colour palette of the 16mm film contrast with the vibrancy and sharpness of the containing one, stressing the mediation of the star's image which is additionally emphasised by the inclusion of a viewfinder which frames the sleeping Jagger and his androgynous double Michèle Breton. The scene draws attention to the act of representation, offering an example of hypermediacy, which is emphasised through the presence of the 'window' of the viewfinder (an additional frame-within-the-frame), which as Bolter and Grusin argue is one of the key characteristics of this form of remediation (Fig. 37). Hypermediacy, as the scholars point out, frequently functions as a self-reflexive strategy as: 'in every manifestation, hypermediacy makes us aware of the medium or media and ... reminds us of our desire for immediacy.'<sup>41</sup> Representing Jagger through the home movie, together with withholding his appearance, can be perceived as a strategy on the filmmakers' part to teasingly frustrate the viewers' desire for an unmediated, or at least unobstructed, encounter with the rock-star.<sup>42</sup> The use of the home movie in the sequence should thus not be read simply as an aesthetic flourish but rather as the filmmakers' playful interrogation of the

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<sup>40</sup> *Influence and Controversy: Making 'Performance'* (Greg Carson, 2007). To placate the studio, Cammell produced a second edit of the film inserting an additional scene — depicting Jagger painting a wall which is intercut with Maddock's attack on Chas — earlier in the film. This is however a fleeting appearance, and serves to signal rather than to foreground the film's star.

<sup>41</sup> Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), p. 34.

<sup>42</sup> A contrast to *Summertime* is insightful here for, as we recall, while Lean aligned the film's images of Venice with the point of view of his heroine via her home movie camera, the images it presented the viewers with were not those recorded by the small-gauge apparatus.

representational convention within which they are working: the star vehicle. In doing so Cammell and Roeg however showcase a self-reflexivity not only about the desirable status of the star but also about the home movie as a cinematic tool. This is further developed in the role which the small-gauge imagery plays in the construction of the image of the alternative family.



**Figure 37.** From hypermediacy to immediacy

The sequence serves not only as an introduction to Jagger's character but also to the inhabitants of 81 Powis Square and to the relationships between them. Although the home movie-in-the-film contrasts with conventional associations with the practice — focusing on an unconventional togetherness — it is nonetheless recognisably a home movie. This is not only due to its use of a Bolex 16mm camera but primarily because of its modality. The film, shot by Pheber, is an intimate production, its purpose is to document the togetherness of the characters, and it is also, presumably, meant for domestic consumption (there is no indication that Pheber is working on a film which would be intended for a broader audience). The home movie is deployed to create a sense of intimacy and the blurry, washed out quality of the imagery lends a delicacy to the scene, which is enhanced by the ethereal eastern music, and lighting which is softened as it is filtered through the sheets which cover the characters. As the scene progresses the camera moves closer to the characters, opening with a full shot of Pheber's body in the mirror, through medium-close ups of the sleeping Turner and Lucy to extreme close-ups of their bodies during the lovemaking. This proximity is further enhanced by the shift in the representation of the home movie itself: the viewfinder which framed the

sleeping Jagger disappears, and the frame of the home movie merges with that of the film itself, liberated from the constraints of plausibility as Pheber comes into the shot (there is thus no one taking the footage).<sup>43</sup> While the intimacy between the characters appears effortless — and thus, it would be possible to assume that it is an example of the ‘documentary’ quality of *Performance* identified by Frey and Savage— it is important to recognise that this was a carefully crafted impression. As Anita Pallenberg points out, contrary to appearances, Michèle Breton had not felt at all comfortable in front of the camera, and the scene took several hours to film. She argues: ‘it was so much fun. It looks like fun anyway ... the reality is different, it’s the magic of film, isn’t it.’<sup>44</sup> Pallenberg’s comment poignantly illuminates that the home movie should be read as a deliberate cinematic strategy deployed by the filmmakers which, similarly to the hypermediacy of Jagger’s appearance, indicates the directors’ awareness of the conventions which they are working with.

In its depiction of the domestic filmmaking, *Performance* draws on the performative function of the home movie as a way of calling a family into being. It is in this regard that the films’ connection to the avant-garde identified by Wollen comes to the fore. As I have explored previously in the Review of Literature, the idea of an avant-garde home movie was not unheard of; a number of artists of the 1920s and 1930s— including Man Ray, Luis Buñuel and Jean Cocteau — had made films casting their friends and shooting their surroundings. In their writing Maya Deren and Stan Brakhage had frequently exalted the virtues of amateur filmmaking, contrasting it with the constraints of professionalism.<sup>45</sup> The use of small-gauge film to forge a sense of community in *Performance* is however

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<sup>43</sup> The tender tone of the scene contrasts starkly with the rough sex between Dana (Ann Sidney) and Chas (James Fox) which opened the film, and introduced viewers to the gangster protagonist.

<sup>44</sup> *Influence and Controversy: Making ‘Performance’* (Greg Carson, 2007).

<sup>45</sup> See for example: Stan Brakhage ‘In Defense of the Amateur’ in Bruce R. McPherson (ed.) *Essential Brakhage* (New York: Documentext, 2001). Maya Deren, ‘Amateur vs. Professional’ in *Film Culture* 39 (1965).

particularly close to Jonas Mekas' deployment of domestic technology. Mekas' approach is exemplified in *Lost, Lost, Lost* (1949-1963) a personal documentary of exile, charting the director's search for an alternative home which he finds among his fellow artists. Critics have frequently explicitly aligned Mekas' work with home movies; Michael O'Pray for one, argues that Mekas was the 'most systematic and committed exponent of the home movie in an avant-garde context',<sup>46</sup> while James Moran similarly suggests that: 'where Brakhage reformulated the referential aesthetic of the home mode, Jonas Mekas reformulated the idea of home itself, creating a new home for the artist in exile.'<sup>47</sup> Like Mekas' work *Performance* offers an unconventional representation of home: unconventional in that it jars with the predominant representation of home movies as documents of traditional middle class families in the films of the time. However, in the spirit of home movie making, Mekas' work, as well as the film shot by Pherber, are performative: they call the home into being by using the tools culturally associated with the reproduction of sanctioned images of the family and domesticity.

*Performance's* avant-garde connection has, however, an additional reverberation in the British context: as suggested by Michael O'Pray, its potential influence on Derek Jarman makes *Performance* of interest both as an alternative iteration of the home movie and as a film that has embedded within itself a national specificity. Writing about Jarman's early work, O'Pray wonders 'if the scene in which Anita Pallenberg films the sleeping Jagger and Michèle Breton with a super-8 camera in that film helped motivate Jarman's home movies.'<sup>48</sup> Although it is impossible to confirm or disprove this connection, like the film

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<sup>46</sup> Michael O'Pray, *Derek Jarman: Dreams of England* (London: British Film Institute, 1996), p. 61.

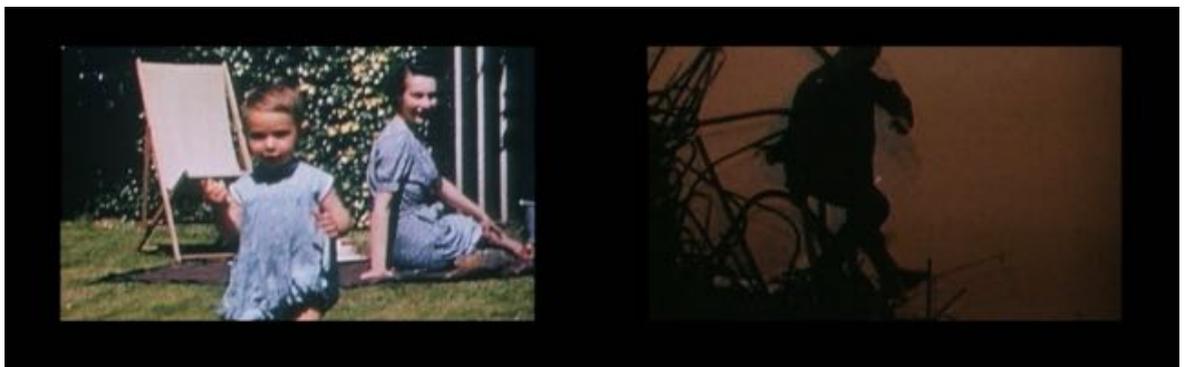
<sup>47</sup> James, M. Moran, *There's No Place Like Home Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 75.

<sup>48</sup> O'Pray, *Dreams of England*, p. 65.

depicted in *Performance* Jarman's use of the term 'home movies' to describe his Super 8 films was not descriptive but rather performative. As Patricia Zimmermann illuminates, in the 1950s-1970s the term 'home movie' has conventionally become associated with a particular kind of domesticity: suburban, nuclear, middle-class. In his use of Super 8 stock Jarman, however, seeks to both contest and broaden this connotation.<sup>49</sup> Jim Ellis aptly summarises Jarman's tactic, as he argues that:

by filming the denizens of the London counterculture in super-8 and calling the results home movies, Jarman is challenging the dominant understanding of home and family, one that is premised precisely on the exclusion of the people and scenes he is filming.<sup>50</sup>

As Ellis illuminates, in calling his films 'home movies', Jarman is thus laying claim to the term *home* and to his right to define what that term means.



**Figure 38.** Idyllic past and ruins of the present in *The Last of England*

Notably, for Jarman filmmaking as home making had not only a personal but also national dimension. This comes to the fore in *The Last of England* (1987), a fantasy state-of-the-

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<sup>49</sup> Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).

<sup>50</sup> Jim Ellis, *Derek Jarman's: Angelic Conversations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 18.

nation documentary which imagines the breakdown of Britain under the present conservative government. Interweaving his grandfather's home movies of the Raj, his father's family films from World War two and contemporary Super 8 footage shot by the director, Jarman emphasises a family tradition of filmmaking. Doing so the director does not perceive himself as merely reproducing the family heritage, but rather, as reinventing it. The images of past splendour — India under British rule shot by his grandfather and the lush gardens of Jarman's childhood shot by his father — offer a strong contrast to the industrial wastelands that make up much of the film's backdrop (Fig. 38).<sup>51</sup> Shooting on Super 8, Jarman situates *The Last of England*, in line with his broader use of the stock, as a home movie: this time a home movie of the nation, foregrounding how the tools conventionally used to cement middle class respectability can also be used to dismantle it. Frey attributes a similar national specificity when he describes *Performance* as a home movie, and argues that: 'this intimate microgeography of the film's production corresponded, on a national-historical level, with the film's reception.'<sup>52</sup> Arguing that the film was badly received in the US but gained a positive reception in the UK, Fray suggest that the 'home' refers not only to the film's intimacy, but that this intimacy has a national dimension. While I would exercise caution in calling *Performance* a British home movie— not least because it was funded with American money and featured an international cast – in its use of Pherber's home movie, Cammell and Roeg suggest a reformulation of what a British home, and thus a British home movie, can look like.

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<sup>51</sup> The constructed nature of home movie happiness is particularly apparent in Jarman's father's footage of the garden. Here the idyllic scenes of family togetherness are overshadowed by the setting as the garden is surrounded by the barbed wire fence of the army barracks. The barracks provide the films with a sense of time and place — an RAF base at war time — which contrasts with the 'timeless' utopia of the garden. The imposing concrete structure which looms over the figures in Jarman's father's home movie suggest an impending sense of threat, but also offers a shelter from whatever lurks outside of the garden. Visually, the wall conveys a strong sense of boundaries being drawn between the family and the dangers of the world outside.

<sup>52</sup> Frey, 'London a la Mod': Fashion, Genre and Historical Space in *Performance*, p. 376.

## Conclusion

The home movie depicted in *Performance* suggests how sentiment can become the tool of subversion. In its portrayal of domestic filmmaking Cammell's and Roeg's work unites the two dominant characterisations of home movies at the time, drawing on the sentimental association of small-gauge filmmaking to establish, cement and celebrate its portrayal of an alternative family arrangement. As this chapter has argued, home movies-in-films of the 1960s and 1970s can broadly be divided into two categories, with regard to the tonality of the represented film. Sentiment describes films which deploy the home movie in order to elicit feelings of tenderness or sadness. While their focus on the affective properties of the home movie continues an established association of domestic moviemaking, the films of the sentimental strand mark a departure from the works discussed in the first two chapters, by explicitly troubling the relation between the home movie and the space of the home. *The Last Man on Earth* and *The King of Marvin Gardens* both heighten the emotional pull of the family images through their displacement from the home and the disassembly of the technology. *Mean Streets* and *Raging Bull* take this dislocation and disappearance further, depicting home movies which cannot easily be located within the represented reality, troubling the relation between the family and its ideal.

Drawing on while simultaneously eschewing the sentimental associations of domestic small-gauge films, the works belonging to the subversive strand foreground the rift between the model family connoted by the home movie and the realities of the represented relatives. Interrogating each family's inability to live up to their ideal, the films are marked by a shift of emphasis away from domestic viewing to domestic moviemaking, a transition which illuminates that the home movie is not a reflection of but a tool for the production of idyllic

familial self-portrayals. *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* draws attention to the directorial control and erasures which facilitate the creation of the perfect home movie image. *Up the Sandbox* and *Home Movies* extend the criticism, illuminating what home movies would look like if these effacements did not take place. Deploying the home movie as a tool which facilitates a satire of the familial performance of congeniality, the films also offer a critique of domestic filmmaking, foregrounding its oppressive role as the expression of the family's desire to present itself as the conventional family ideal. The films' concern with questioning the adequacy of the middle class ideal connoted by the home movie can productively be perceived in line with their broader interest in exploring the legacy of the social upheavals of the 1960s and their impact on the family. The films thus suggest that the ideal is not only unachievable but also anachronistic. This out-of-date quality of the home movie can also be perceived in the films of the sentimental strand. Notably, *The King of Marvin Gardens* contrasts the family's present dissolution with idyllic images of a distant past — the brothers' childhood — and *Mean Streets* and *Raging Bull* are both set in the past (*Mean Streets* in the 1960s and *Raging Bull* in the 1940s), and the period setting of the family film (the mise-en-scène and costumes of *Raging Bull* and the choice of the Ronettes' song in *Mean Streets*) serves to enhance the nostalgic pull of the home movie. In contrast to the films which perceive (and criticise) the home movie as a bygone ideal, *Performance* suggest how the performative role of the home movie can be deployed productively to authenticate the legitimacy of a contemporary alternative familial arrangement. In doing so, Cammell's and Roeg's work at once draws on and subverts the dominant associations of domestic image making, re-defining and broadening the meaning of 'home' which underpins the home movie.

In its performative use of the home movie — the deployment of the home movie as a way to call the family into being — *Performance* displays a reflexivity about domestic filmmaking, as a mode of representation but also as a cinematic tool. Drawing attention to mediation and its tools, cinematic home movies have frequently functioned as a self-reflexive device calling attention to the construction of the containing film. The films of the 1960s and 1970s expand on the reflexive potential of the home movie, suggesting that it can also be used to point towards what Jacques Gerstenkorn identifies as ‘filmic reflexivity’ (addressing film history), as opposed to ‘cinematic’ reflexivity (which concerns the mechanics of filmmaking and viewing).<sup>53</sup> While many scholars have studied home movies as examples of the latter (Journot, Cavell, Doane and Grist) the former has seldom come under scrutiny. Indeed, Journot has rejected the possibility of allusion in the home movies altogether, arguing that home movies-within-films involve an emotional rather than a cerebral response. However, a number of films from the time contradict this assertion, containing references to other films and most notably to films which feature home movies. While these are at time perceptible in the contents of the represented films (‘My Life’ in *Home Movies* is a playful homage to *David Holzman’s Diary*; *Performance* can be read in relation to, and as an influence on, the depiction of alternative families in the avant-garde), they also invoke the formal properties of the home movie: its place and presentation within the film.

The filmic reflexivity of the home movie thus not only showcases the filmmakers’ acknowledgement of the cinematic heritage (assuming the same awareness from the viewers) but also suggest that what constitutes a home movie-in-the-film is not only the contents of the domestic productions but also the ways in which they are presented. Crucially, the films released between 1965-1980 suggest that the ‘presentation’ of a home movie is not limited

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<sup>53</sup> See Review of Literature for more details.

to its place within the diegesis, but refers more broadly to its relation to the film text. While the majority of the films of the 1960s and 70s represent home movies in a way established by their predecessors (as a film screening or as a point-of-view of the diegetic camera) a number of the films question the place of the home movie in the home or take it beyond the limits of technological plausibility. The experimentation with the place of the home movie-in-the-film comes to the fore most prominently in the works of Martin Scorsese, which undermine the location of the family film in the represented reality in order to re-negotiate the relation between the contained and containing film. Scorsese's depiction of the home movie however suggests not only the director's self-reflexive sophistication but also points towards the habituation of the home movie. Representing the family film without anchoring it in a technology *Raging Bull* foregrounds the habituation of the cinematic home movie, illuminating that the domestic film no longer needs to be introduced as a home movie in order to be read as one. In this, the film anticipates a transition in cinema's home movie imagination away from a definition rooted in technology and towards an aesthetic which comes to the fore in films of the 1990s and the new millennium.

Expounding the habituation of home movie-in-films, *Raging Bull* can be read symbolically as suggesting a closure to their period of emergence. It is notable that habituation involves the disappearance of technology, replacing the attention paid to representing the mechanics of the family film that had been characteristic of their early depictions. Home movie viewing in these earlier films was often characterised by explaining its character (often in contrast to the film in which they were embedded) and to depicting the fascinations and frustrations of its operation. The unfamiliarity of the films has often also been enhanced by their unavailability (and thus desirability) by depicting home movies as a glamorous accessory of the well-to-do. While, as Zimmermann indicates, in the 1950s home movies were no longer

an exotic, but rather a customary presence in the middle class household, the cinematic imagination of home movies did not reflect their social development; as the second chapter has illuminated the association between small-gauge films and wealth continued into the 1960s. While the films of the 1960s and 1970s broadened the landscape of leisure that included home movies, the place and role of the cinematic home movie continued to be negotiated.

As this chapter has shown, the films of the 1960s and 1970s frequently drew on a dominant association of home movies with idyllic domesticity. However, doing so they used the home movie not simply to signal a perfect past, but also to explore its expressive possibilities a cinematic tool both in its depiction of domesticity and its self-reflexive potential. However, the disappearance of the technology in *Raging Bull* anticipates the transition of the cinematic home movie motif into its period of dominance. With increasing frequency, from the 1980s onwards, home movies are depicted without recourse to their technology. While a number of films still include home movie viewing, for the most part home movies become untethered from the technology, presented as a stylistic element of the cinematic vocabulary for the representation of the past, not as an alternative moving image practice. This development indicates a stabilisation of the home movie as a motif both in its expressive possibility and in its place within the film. Notably, the dominance of home movies as a motif — characterised as a shorthand for signalling ‘the past’ — overlaps with another transition: the obsolescence of the home movie as the dominant home mode medium. As the following chapters will explore, the arrival of home video means the longevity of the home movie technology came into question. While the disappearance of small-gauge film suggested by the *Red Dragon* adaptations (see Chapter Four) did not come to pass (to the contrary, there was a significant increase of the number of home-movies-in-films), Chapter Five explores

how home movies were subject to a vanishing of a different sort, not of the family films from the screens but family films as screens (from memory aids to textures of memory). While the use of the home movie as a shorthand for representing memory and the past continues to be an important aspect of the motif in contemporary cinema, as Chapter Six will illuminate the films of the 2010s evidence a renewed interest in the technology of small-gauge film, frequently imbuing the material culture of the past with a nostalgic longing.

## Chapter 4: Home Movies to Home Video

### Introduction

Published in 1981, Thomas Harris' novel *Red Dragon* follows the story of a serial killer — the eponymous Dragon, Francis Dolarhyde — who targets nuclear families, selecting his victims on the basis of their home movies sent to be developed at the lab in which he is employed as a chief technician. Dolarhyde records the killings on his own small-gauge camera, later splicing the footage into the home movies. The mutilation of the family films parallels that of the family, establishing a metonymic relation between the victims and their films, suggesting Dolarhyde's own frustrated desire for familial comfort. Placing the film technician at the heart of its narrative, *Red Dragon* draws attention to a frequently neglected aspect of home movie practice (the development of the footage), putting a sinister spin on Kodak's famous slogan 'you push the button we do the rest'. Harris foregrounds the specialised technical labour which the company is encouraging the customers to disregard and in doing so, imagines the potential dangers inherent in the families' willing relinquishing of their intimate imagery. The home movies are however a source of knowledge not only for the killer but also for the empathetic detective Will Graham who watches the family films in order to 'see them [the families] alive', and in extension to better understand the Dragon's motivations.<sup>1</sup> It is also through a close reading of the home movies that the FBI agent is finally able to identify the killer, realising that his particular knowledge of the victims' homes could only have come from his familiarity with the domestic recordings; as the detective comes to realise: 'everything the Dragon needed to know was on the two films'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (Arrow Books, 1981), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365. He realises this by recognising that the killer brought bolt cutters to cut through the padlock door which the family had changed following the home movie.

Harris' novel has been the subject of two cinematic adaptations: *Manhunter* (Michael Mann, 1986) and *Red Dragon* (Brett Ratner, 2002). Both films are set in the 1980s and are, on the whole, narratively faithful to the source text; they are however strikingly dissimilar in their presentation of the period setting, and there are notable differences in their depiction of domestic moving image technologies. While in Harris' novel both the killer and the detective view the family images on small-gauge film, in *Manhunter* Dolarhyde still accesses the homes through the home movies, but the detective however watches the films on video tape (to which they have been transferred for the purpose of the investigation). In the 2002 adaptation, both the killer and the detective access the families through their videos. Dolarhyde still works at the film lab, but is now responsible for creating compilation videos: VHS tapes edited from shorter video fragments shot by the families. Although these changes may appear minor, in light of the concerns of this thesis they are not insignificant. The substitution of home video for home movies indicates a shift in cinema's representation of small-gauge domestic filmmaking, a transition in its meaning and place on the screen. The question thus becomes, how do we account for the shifts to the represented media and what do they reveal about the home movie imagination?

Investigating the changes in the technologies of domestic image making across the *Red Dragon* adaptations, this chapter argues that it is important to perceive them in the context of the obsolescence of home movie technology. In the Review of Literature I have indicated that the majority of histories of home movies conclude in the late 1970s (Heather Norris Nicholson in 1977, Alan Kattelle in 1979, and Zimmermann argues that discursive predictions of 'death' of home movies began in 1981) a time when, as the scholars point out, the popularity of small-gauge image making was beginning to be eclipsed by the arrival of

home video. As Lucas Hilderbrand illuminates in *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright* (2009) in 1981, at the time of the publication of Harris' novel, only over 5 percent of TV households owned a VCR; in 1987 however, in the year following the release of *Manhunter*, VCR penetration surpassed 50 percent.<sup>3</sup> While, as I have argued previously, the history of cinematic home movies should not be uniformly read as a reflection of or on the social and technological histories of domestic filmmaking, *Red Dragon* and its adaptations are all texts which betray a concern with the shifts in home mode media. Harris' awareness of the technological landscape of its setting and a sensitivity to the changes which are taking place therein comes to the fore particularly in the description of Gateway, the company in which Dolarhyde is employed. While home movie processing is characterised as 'Gateway's largest division' Harris writes that 'the recession of the 1970s cut deep into home movie making and there was increasing competition from video recorders' which lead the company to diversify their services (offering specialised processing and new facilities for the transfer of film to video tape).<sup>4</sup> While Harris' mention of video is brief, it nonetheless frames the novel's wider representation of home movies, presenting it as a technology on the brink of obsolescence and this transition is explored further in the two adaptations.<sup>5</sup> While their respective depictions of the relation between home movies and video may not necessarily accurately represent the historical realities of the period, as this chapter will demonstrate, the adaptations do speak to the changes in their popular perception. Investigating the substitution of an 'old' medium by a 'new' one over the course of the *Red Dragon* adaptations, this chapter will explore the interplay and

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<sup>3</sup> Lucas Hildebrand, *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2009), p. 248.

<sup>4</sup> Harris, *Red Dragon*, p. 266.

<sup>5</sup> Considering the broader parallels which the novel draws between the families and their films (the films as metonyms for the families) it is possible to read this 'almost outdated' characterisation of the home movie in conjunction with the narrative of threatened family values and the broader ambiguity which the work displays towards the family.

negotiation between the novel and the obsolete, inquiring into the transitions between the technologies and shifts to the home movie imagination.

### **Manhunter, 1986**

Released five years following the publication of *Red Dragon*, *Manhunter* features both home movies and video tape. While Dolarhyde (Tom Noonan) is depicted as the chief technician at a film lab and accesses the families through their home movies, Will Graham (William Petersen) views the films on video tape. The inclusion of both technologies is suggestive of the transition between media alluded to in Harris' work, indicating Mann's concern with exploring the shifting media landscape. It also however marks a notable departure from the text which it is adapting. In Harris' work Graham and Dolarhyde are paralleled through their shared viewing of the home movies and the novel urges its readers to recognise not only the differences, but also the affinities, between the detective and killer; a proximity emphasised by Philip L. Simpson, who describes Dolarhyde as Graham's 'Gothic double'.<sup>6</sup> While Mann maintains this ambiguous juxtaposition between the representative of the law and the killer, the film encourages its viewers not only to reflect on the correspondences between the two characters but also to compare and contrast the two media with which they are associated.

The domestic recordings are first presented on video in a scene which depicts Graham watching the Leeds' film (the second murdered family) on a television set in his hotel room. The scene occurs following the examination of the victim's home, which concluded with the detective being startled as Mrs. Leed's voice could unexpectedly be heard on the answering machine. The home video viewing further elaborates on the uncanny capacities of

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<sup>6</sup> Philip L. Simpson, *Psycho Paths: Tracking the American Serial Killer Through Contemporary American Film and Fiction* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), p. 87.

technology introduced in the previous sequence. In contrast to the answering machine the tapes are silent and the lack of voice enhances the eeriness of the imagery, foregrounding the limitations in technology's ability to preserve the past. It also makes way for Graham's monologue which contrasts two different modes of viewing: the investigator's and the killer's. Graham watches the films twice. First, he impassively recounts the manner of death and the mutilation of the bodies, and the morbid details contrast starkly with the idyllic, sunny images of the family on the video. Visibly shocked by the violence, the detective then takes a break, and when he returns to the video the tone of his voice shifts. Rather than recounting factual information, Graham initiates an imaginary dialogue with the killer, attempting to see the family through his point of view (looking at Mrs. Leeds Graham croons 'God she's lovely isn't she. It was maddening to have to touch her with rubber gloves on wasn't it'). While the detective's empathetic approach proves successful (it allows him to intuit that the killer took his gloves off to touch the victim, and thus left prints) it also brings the investigator's darker side to the fore, and this is conveyed particularly through Petersen's performance which shifts from an impassive recount of information to a passionate fascination with Mrs. Leeds. It is thus through the home video viewing that Mann shows that the empathy which set the detective apart from the other investigators, also brings Graham closer to Dolarhyde.

As in the case of the detective, technology also plays an important role in the characterisation of the film's villain. *Manhunter* returns to family imagery in a scene which depicts Dolarhyde watching the home movies of his future victims, the Shermans, accompanied by his blind colleague, and love interest, Reba (Joan Allen). Existing in contrast to the film's previous depiction of video, the movies appear as an old fashioned technology, a characterisation which is further enhanced by their setting in the modern mise-en-scène of

Dolarhyde's apartment, a departure from the run down Gothic mansion the killer inhabits in the source novel (and the subsequent adaptation) (Fig. 39). The blurred, soft colours of the home movie diverge from the brilliant, saturated greens that dominate Dolarhyde's flat and the old fashioned charm of the screening is further enhanced by the humming sound of the running projector which is the only aural accompaniment throughout the scene. The rattle at once imbues the scene with a nostalgic pull, which is at odds with the invasive character of the viewing, and serves to draw the viewers' attention to the technology, something that Mann does frequently throughout the scene not only aurally but also visually. The killer is repeatedly framed with the projector at his shoulder positioning the beam of light proximately to the actor's head. Such a framing endows the projection with a metaphorical quality, associating it with fantasy — akin to a projection of interiority — thus subtly indicating the crucial role which the home movies play in the characterisation of the villain.



Figure 39. Dolarhyde's modern apartment in *Manhunter* and run down gothic manor in *Red Dragon*

Briefly analysing the role which the home movies play in *Manhunter* Slavoj Žižek argues that 'the content of the home movies is secondary to their status as home movies.'<sup>7</sup> While Žižek right points out that it is only after the detective realises that the killer had seen the films that Graham is able to apprehend Dolarhyde (and thus the primacy of their format over their contents), the images which the films depict should not be neglected, particularly in light of the sparse characterisation of the villain in *Manhunter*. Unlike the novel and its 2002

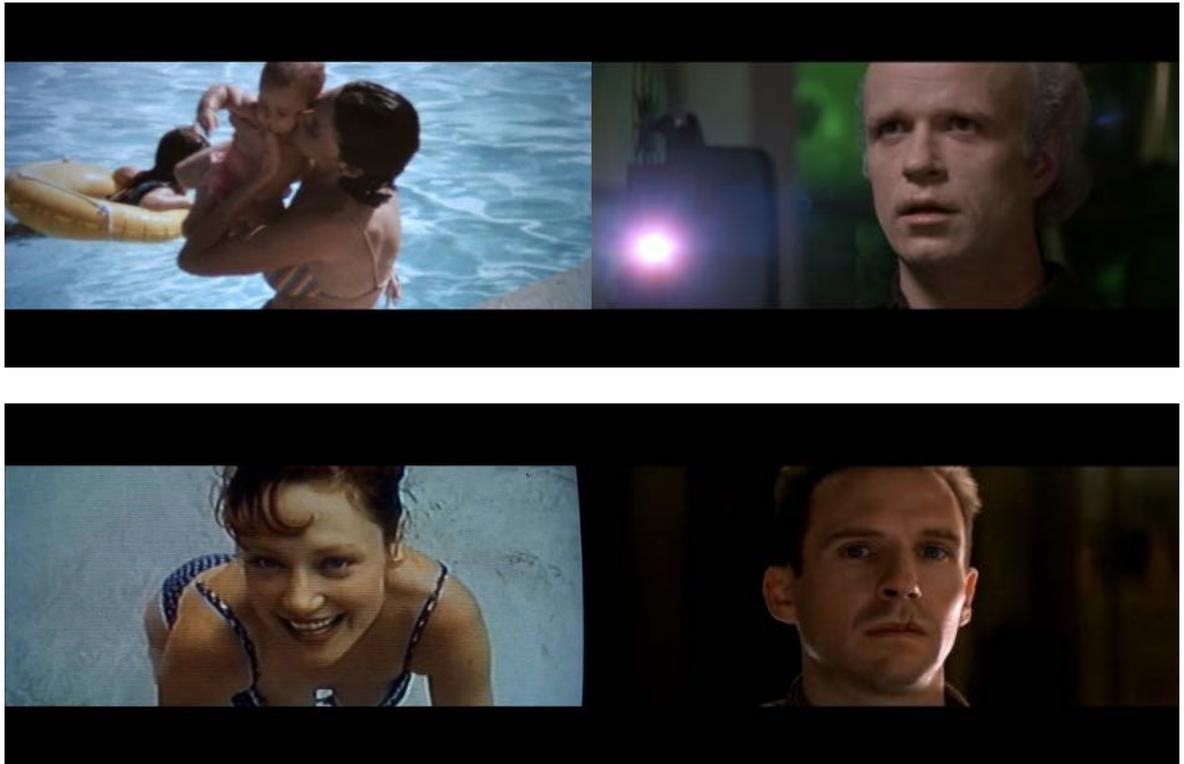
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<sup>7</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Looking Awry', *October* 50 (Autumn, 1989), p. 36.

adaptation, in Mann's work there is almost no indication of his motivation and the film relies largely on Tom Noonan's performance to bring the nuances of the character across. The home movies are a crucial contribution in aid of this characterisation, bringing Dolarhyde's desire for maternal comfort into sharp relief. The family film comprises of a brief shot which depicts a mother with her children in the pool. Mrs. Sherman kisses the baby, places it in the water and plunges in herself. Entirely absorbed in the relation between herself and her child the mother does not interact with the camera. Notably, this imperviousness to the look was also the case with the footage of Mrs. Leeds watched by Graham.<sup>8</sup> There is a curious innocence to the scene, enhanced by the old-fashioned associations of the home movie, and it comes to the fore through the contrast with the parallel sequence in the later adaptation where the mother is depicted as sultry and voluptuous. In *Red Dragon* Mrs. Sherman seduces the husband's camera and in extension, the viewer. It is her manifest sexuality that makes her alluring as well as, judging from Dolarhyde's (Ralph Fiennes) terrified expression, threatening. In contrast, in *Manhunter* Dolarhyde appears captivated by Mrs. Sherman's motherly absorption in her baby. Noonan's performance in the scene communicates an almost child-like fascination with this image, conveyed through the hesitancy of his half-open mouth, which suggests that his motives lie in a frustrated desire for maternal acceptance (an impression which is later confirmed by Graham in his conversation with Crawford as he admits that: 'this started from an abused kid, a battered infant...My heart bleeds for him, as a child.') (Fig. 40).

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<sup>8</sup> In the video the mother appears to be lost in thought. She never turns to look at the camera, as opposed to the father who, coaxed by the cameraman-son, waves at it tentatively. In both cases the women are also defined in relation to, or through the eyes of, the child.



**Figure 40.** The caring mother (*Manhunter*) and the sexual mother (*Red Dragon*)

The home movies in *Manhunter* play a crucial role in the characterisation of the film's villain. Could the same effect however not be achieved by video? Notably the tapes watched by Graham and the home movies screened by Dolarhyde carry the same images (family films). While their contents might overlap, *Manhunter* however presents the two technologies as distinct with regard to the roles they serve and the connotations they carry. Mann's depiction of home movies thus has another effect, revealing that video in *Manhunter* is not a home mode medium. The un-homely character of video is already suggested in the first appearance of the technology which, unlike the novel and the 2002 adaptation, takes place not the Leeds' house but in a hotel room. The scene in the film is an amalgamation of two separate sequences: Graham's viewing of the family films and his discovery of the killer's fingerprint on Mrs. Leeds body which follows his realisation that Dolarhyde took his gloves off to touch the mother. In the novel and its later adaptation this revelation occurs to Graham by association of the crime scene photographs with an unrelated memory. In *Manhunter* it is the product of his engagement with the video tape containing the family's

images. While these shifts would only be legible to viewers familiar with the source novel, the hotel room setting subtly foreshadows the film's broader characterisation of video as an investigative, rather than a homely technology, an intuition which is further confirmed in the home movie sequence and emphasised in the final video sequence in which Graham discovers the killer's occupation at the film lab.

In *Manhunter* video functions as a technology of superior visual access. As opposed to the home movie screen, which is that of fantasy, the television set is the screen of inquiry. Video's role as an investigative technology comes to the fore most prominently in the scene in which Graham realises how the killer chooses the families. Seated in the chief investigator Jack Crawford's (Dennis Farina) office on the night of the next suspected killing Graham intensely scrutinises the Leeds' and the Jacobis' films. He watches them side by side, displayed on two television sets placed adjacent to each other. The two sets at once fill and split the screen, and this multiplication of frames-within-the-frame brings to mind an earlier scene in which Graham, Crawford and the forensic scientist Lloyd Bowman (Bill Smitrovich) investigate a note which the Dragon sent to the incarcerated Hannibal Lecter (Brian Cox) by magnifying the writing on a row of monitors. The almost gratuitous abundance of screens-within-the-screen palpably communicates Mann's fascination with technologies of seeing, not only with their capacity to reveal hidden information but also with their aesthetics. Multiplying the monitors to the point where they become conspicuous allows the director to draw the viewer's attention to the act of looking and to the represented technology which facilitates it (Fig. 41). *Manhunter* achieves a similar effect in the final home video sequence. The two sets direct the viewers' attention to the medium and to Graham's active engagement with it, pausing and rewinding the images in order to scrutinise them in more detail. Drawing attention to the operation of video, *Manhunter* however

simultaneously side-lines the other technology at play, the home movies from which the films have been transferred. While viewers may intuit video's multilayered character from Dolarhyde's previous screening, it is not until Graham realises that the tapes are transfers from films that their status as home movies fully comes to light.



**Figure 41.** A technology of superior visual access

Downplaying video's relation to home movies (by not stating it explicitly earlier in the film) serves a narrative role in *Manhunter*: it enhances the mystery of the images' origin and in extension, the surprising insight of Graham's revelation. What is 'revealed' by the detective's discovery is however not only Dolarhyde's occupation but also, on a meta level, the realisation that the insight which the scene is offering is not merely a reflection on video but on the interplay between video and small-gauge film. The sequence should thus be read not simply as a case of remediation (of video by film) but rather as a representation of remediation (of small-gauge film by video, within a film). As I have indicated previously, Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin define remediation as 'the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms' and it is productive to scrutinise the film's representation of the two technologies from this vantage point.<sup>9</sup> Although perceiving video as a new medium, in cinematic terms, is a slightly antiquated characterisation — as Moran points out, while video did not reach its cinematic heyday until the 1990s, the medium was no stranger to the

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<sup>9</sup> Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), p. 272.

screen in the 1980s<sup>10</sup> — this incongruity suggests that rather than distinct periods *Manhunter* defines novelty and obsolescence as intertwined processes. On its own, video may not have appeared ‘new’ but it does so in relation to the home movies which it remediated, and vice versa it is in relation to video that home movies in *Manhunter* are constructed as obsolete.

Lucas Hilderbrand suggests that novelty should not be perceived as involving a radical break from what has come before. Hildebrand argues that rather than in terms of contrast, it is more adequate to perceive the transitions between media in terms of comparison and collaboration. He writes that ‘new technologies do not necessarily kill media when they upgrade the devices. What is new about new media is specific technologies, interfaces, and uses but these technologies often rework pre-existing practices, concepts and contents’.<sup>11</sup> Like Hilderbrand, *Manhunter*’s depiction of the relationship between small-gauge film and video suggest that rather than a clean break, novelty and obsolescence are better understood as processes, in the course of which the identities of both media are being defined. Therefore, as a film invested in questions of the visual *Manhunter* is not only interested in divulging the dangers of looking (aligning the killer, the detective and the viewer through their shared engagement with the family imagery) but also devoted to divulging the nuances of point of view. Technologies of seeing are a central element of this strategy. Mann insists on foregrounding his protagonist’s relation to media, picturing Dolarhyde with the beam of the projector at his shoulder and Graham framed by the two television sets, drawing attention to the relation between the characters and the technologies. Thus, while the images they show may be the same, the modes of seeing occasioned by home movies and video are quite different. Media in *Manhunter* are not neutral; they mobilise dissimilar spectatorial associations and condition

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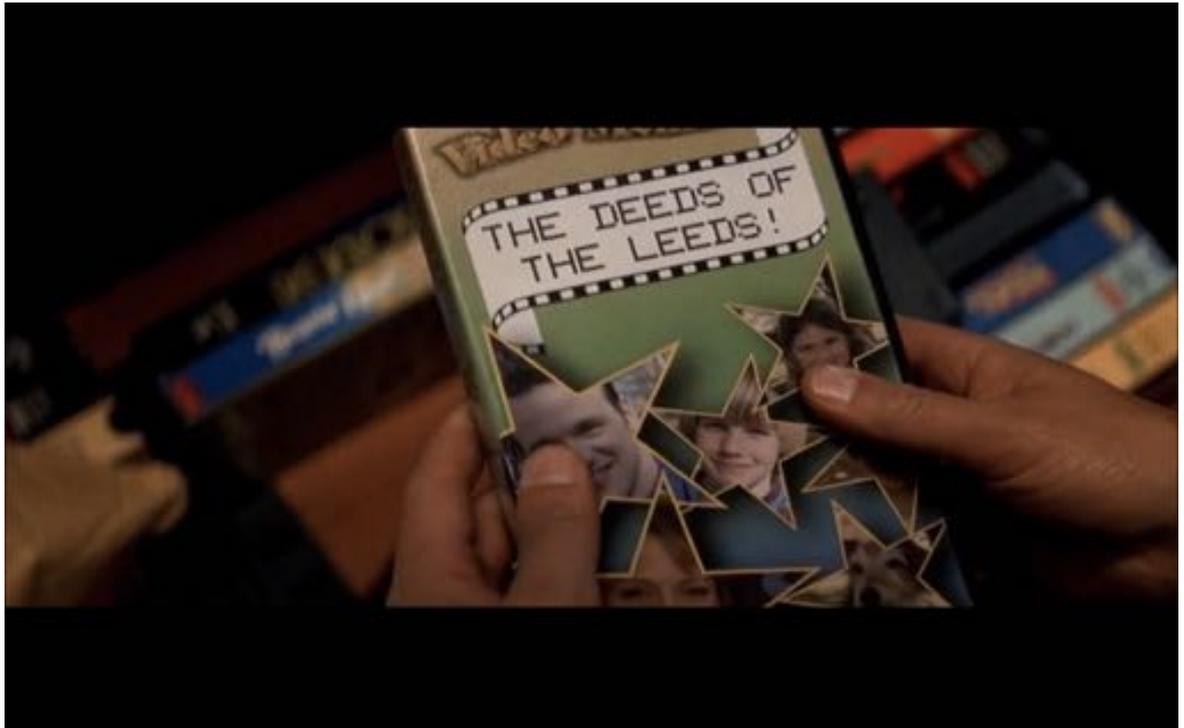
<sup>10</sup> Example include: *The Big Chill* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1983), *Next of Kin* (Atom Egoyan, 1984), *Down and Out in Beverly Hills* (Paul Mazursky, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> Hilderbrand, *Inherent Vice*, p. xiii.

diverse expectations. These expectations however, are by no means timeless. Revisiting the period of transition from the vantage point of the new millennium, *Red Dragon* confirms *Manhunter's* intuition concerning the shifts in the technological landscape of the home. However, looking back at the 1980s *Red Dragon* presents video not as an exciting new medium of seeing, but as a replacement for antiquated home movie technology, a gadget of middle-class leisure consumption rather than a superior tool of perception.

### **Red Dragon, 2002**

In Bret Ratner's 2002 adaptation of Harris' work the home movies of the original source novel have shifted to home videos. The presentation of the tapes in Ratner's film is however unlike Mann's treatment of the medium in *Manhunter*. The family recordings in *Red Dragon* are not, as is the case in Mann's film, transfers from small-gauge films, but compilation tapes, edited together from a number of video recordings. While Dolarhyde is, once again, employed at a film lab, he works as a video editor, creating commemorative family VHS tapes. Video in *Red Dragon* is thus not presented as a technology of superior visual access, but rather as a homely one. This characterisation is established in the first sequence which features home video — Graham's investigation of the Leeds home. The detective finds the tapes in the cupboard under the television, stored together with VHS copies of commercial blockbusters such as Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and *E.T.: Extra Terrestrial* (1982) a collation that highlights the double meaning of 'home video', as family recordings and as movies watched on video tape (Fig. 42).



**Figure 42.** Home video as a technology of family entertainment

Locating the domestic recordings among the tapes firmly establishes their status as a technology of familial entertainment, rather than as was the case in Mann's work, an investigative medium. This is further enhanced by the contrast between the film's competing depictions of spectatorship. In *Red Dragon* the video serves to establish an affective connection between the detective and the murdered family. The detective's visit to the family's house is motivated by his desire to 'see them alive' underlining the uncanny power of recorded images to conjure an illusion of reversed time, which was also, as I have argued, a quality emphasised in *Manhunter*. It is crucial that in the novel as well as in its adaptation, in contrast to Mann's depiction, at this point Graham is not watching the films as clues and the key to the interpretation of the scene is its seeming narrative redundancy. The viewing does not occasion a breakthrough in the investigation or to a discovery of a new lead. They offer a more elusive type of evidence, establishing an affective bond between the viewer and the murdered family, and providing a template of 'wholesome' spectatorship opposed to Dolarhyde's 'perverted' viewing depicted later on in the film. In contrast to Dolarhyde who

is visibly aroused by the sexualised images of Mrs Sherman, Graham's responds to Mrs. Leeds' playfully seductive images with a bashful smile, diffusing the sexual undertones of the exchange (Fig. 43).



**Figure 43.** Wholesome spectatorship

In order to account for the shift from small-gauge film to home video, and in the depiction of video from *Manhunter*'s investigative to *Red Dragon*'s domestic affiliation, it is important to engage with the film's broader depiction of its period setting. Like the novel, and *Manhunter*, *Red Dragon* is set in the 1980s; the year itself is however indeterminate. The film opens with an announcement of its time and place: the words 'Baltimore MD, 1980' imprinted onto the establishing shot of an orchestra preparing to strike-up. This temporal marker is however not the time of the story proper, as what follows is a mini-prequel, which depicts Graham's arrest of Hannibal Lecter (an inclusion likely motivated by the film's design to maximise the presence of its star Anthony Hopkins). *Red Dragon* then moves forward in time by a vague 'several years' setting itself in the loosely defined 1980s. A final indication of temporality occurs close to the film's end, as Dr. Chiltern (Anthony Heald) announces the appearance of Clarice Starling: the protagonists of *Red Dragon*'s sequel *Silence of the Lambs*. This indication suggests either the middle or the end of the decade, a possible indication of either the date of the novel's publication (1986) and that of Jonathan Demme's film adaptation (1991).

The vagueness of *Red Dragon*'s temporality is reflected in its hesitant period setting. In contrast to *Manhunter* which declared its 80s milieu through its bold colour scheme, costumes and use of electronic music, Ratner's work seeks to dispel rather than emphasise a similar association. In doing so *Red Dragon* avoids period detail in the set design or costuming, favouring instead a 'timeless' neutrality of grey suits, jeans coupled with white t-shirts, and sensible hair (Fig. 44). Aside from the opening time stamp, the film also carefully eludes any markers which would help approximate its setting thus, there are no calendars and the newspaper extracts included in the film are not dated. Technology poses an obvious problem to *Red Dragon*'s attempts to appear timeless and there is a deliberate endeavour to render it unobtrusive, where possible. This becomes clear as we consider the surprising lack of technological assistance in Graham's investigation. In his analysis of *Manhunter* Simpson comments on the utopian depiction of technological superiority of the FBI. He writes: 'as a surrogate family for its investigators, Crawford's FBI is a professional technocrat's dream. As a privileged member of this extremely wealthy family, Graham has literally millions of dollars' worth of crime-fighting equipment and expertise at his command.'<sup>12</sup> Comparatively the FBI imagined in *Red Dragon*'s has limited technological prowess. Rather than through the technology which is present, the film's temporality becomes palpable through the things that are *not* there, primarily portable devices such as the cell phone or the laptop. The FBI's equipment is however not the only technology present in the film; the home is *Red Dragon*'s other media saturated environment. The VHS tapes appear as the most explicit markers of time. While the majority of the films date to between the 1970s and early 1980s (*Jaws*, *E.T.*, *The Big Fix*) there is an inclusion of *Mrs. Doubtfire* (Chris Columbus, 1992) which complicates the film's 1980s setting. While this might be simply a question of oversight, the

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<sup>12</sup> Simpson, *Psycho Paths*, p. 91.

inclusion of the Columbus' comedy enhances the confusion in the film's temporality, through which *Red Dragon* seeks to maintain its illusion of 'timelessness'.



**Figure 44.** Representing the 1980s, *Red Dragon* and *Manhunter*

Opting for an indistinct temporality, *Red Dragon* blurs the lines between the time of its setting (1980s) and that of its making and release (2002). One way of explaining this vagueness is to consider the film's place in the Hopkins' franchise; a prequel which was produced last, the film has not only to maintain coherence with the texts which 'follow' it (*Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal*, Ridley Scott, 2001) but also strive to counterbalance the uncanny effect of Hopkins' age which causes Lecter to appear to be ageing in reverse. There is however another reason for the period uncertainty and this has to do with the role which the home movies play in the source novel. It is important to keep in mind that while to present day readers the focus on small-gauge film may appear antiquated, within the context of the novel's publication Harris' characterisation of a familiar and ubiquitous technology as a potential threat to the family's safety would likely resonate with many contemporary families who were sending their own films to a developing lab without considering the potential dangers inherent in their willing surrender of personal information. The possibility of this imaginative identification would likely be part of the 'thrills' of the novel, and Ratner's choice of home video in place of home movies allows him to maintain this concern for its contemporary audience.

The bridging role of video becomes more pronounced when we consider how home movies would have resonated in the context of Ratner's film. While, as *Manhunter* illuminates, small-gauge films do not appear out of place in the context of the film's setting, the technology resonates differently from the vantage point of 1986 than it does in 2002. While at the time of the release of *Manhunter* 8mm films may have appeared slightly old-fashioned, in the early new millennium they would have come across as anachronistic. What this indicates is not simply that home movies are a technology from the past (as set in the 1980s that is precisely what *Red Dragon* is looking for) but that they are a technology of the past. As a medium whose role it is to record and to preserve, home movies signify a way of relating to the past which has itself aged alongside the technology. As the next chapter will explore, as they have been replaced by home videos, home movies have begun to acquire new associations, with distant pasts and childhood memories, rather than recently recorded events. As I have argued *Red Dragon*'s construction of timelessness is itself very much time-bound and draws its power from the fusion of proximity and distance which characterised video in 2002. To use home movies would have fractured the balance Ratner strove to create, setting the film in an all too definite and too distant past.

Substituting home video for home movies, *Red Dragon* illuminates that the associations attached to media are prone to change. While from the vantage point of the new millennium home movies appear as an antiquated, or even archaic technology (in Raymond Williams' words 'wholly recognised as an element of the past'),<sup>13</sup> home video is both plausible in the 1980s and would not seem out of place in 2002, allowing *Red Dragon* to construct its appeal as more than that of a period piece. Notably, however, video's characterisation had also shifted between the novel's first publication and Ratner's adaptation. While in the source

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<sup>13</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 122.

work, and to an extent also in *Manhunter*, video is presented as a technological novelty, in the early new millennium home video was itself a technology on the brink of obsolescence; it was a year after *Red Dragon*'s release that DVD rentals overtook those of VHS tapes in the United States.<sup>14</sup> Considering its impending decline, video thus appears the more appropriate replacement for the home movies of the source novel which, as we may recall, were described as falling out of fashion. The parallels between the development of home movies and that of video subtly implied by the *Red Dragon* adaptations foregrounds what Natale and Balbi describe as the 'life cycle' of media, emphasising the importance of studying technologies as having historically specific meanings and associations.

## **Conclusion**

Considered together, Harris' novel, *Manhunter* and *Red Dragon* suggest how 'old' home movies make room for 'new' home video and how the latter itself begins to edge towards obsolescence. Yet while the adaptations indicate that the popular perceptions of media shift over time, they do not necessarily probe into the persistence of small-gauge film following its commercial obsolescence. As Natale and Balbi argue, while disappearance, or 'death' of a medium is one of the dominant fantasies attached to technologies on the brink of obsolescence, it is a prophecy that frequently does not come to pass. Studying the potential disappearance of print books with the advent of e-readers, Natale and Balbi write that 'while it is not possible to ascertain now whether this claim is true ... technological changes have usually not caused older writing media to disappear completely — even if technological change has resulted in the marginalization of certain techniques.'<sup>15</sup> Drawing on Charles

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<sup>14</sup> Anonymous 'It's unreel: DVD rentals overtake videocassettes' in *The Washington Times* (20 June 2003) < <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2003/jun/20/20030620-113258-1104r/?page=3>> accessed: 4 February 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Simone Natale and Gabriele Balbi, 'Media and The Imaginary in History' *Media History* 20 (2014), p. 211.

Acland (*Residual Media*) the authors of 'Media and the Imaginary in History' argue that rather than disappearing, old media often persist alongside the new ones; they do not always however continue in the same way as before. The manner and significance of the persistence of cinematic home movies is the subject which shall be explored in the two following chapters. As an introduction to the inquiry into home movie obsolescence I would like to conclude by briefly attending to the way in which the endurance of small-gauge film is envisaged within the Hannibal adaptations by briefly looking at the most recent take on the *Red Dragon* narrative, Bryan Fuller's television series *Hannibal* (NBC, 2013-2015). While as a television series *Hannibal* falls outside of the purview of this thesis it is illuminating to study how the show adapts domestic recordings at a time when social media encourage an indiscriminate surrender of private data to a wider, public, audience. As I have argued previously, whilst cinema offers an important site where fantasies concerning home movies are articulated and developed, there are other sites in which such imaginations are articulated. While a detailed inquiry into these is a subject for another study, this chapter has indicated some of the ways in which cinema's imagination is interwoven with those of literature as well as television.

Loosely based on the works of Thomas Harris, *Hannibal* transports its characters from the 1980s to the present day, focusing on the relationship between Will Graham (Hugh Dancy) and Hannibal Lecter (Mads Mikelsen) who is introduced in the first season as the detective's therapist. For the most part, the series develops as a prequel to the events of *Red Dragon* and it is only in the second half of its third and final season that viewers are first introduced to the character of Francis Dolarhyde (S3E8 'The Great Red Dragon'). Considering the show's contemporary setting it was not obvious how Fuller would adapt the home movies of the source novel. From the character's first introduction however Dolarhyde is associated with

celluloid. He is first seen sitting at a table in a cafeteria with a wall of windows covered by a graphic depicting a strip of film behind him (with every window as a single ‘frame’) (Fig. 45). While the opening does not explicitly state its location, for viewers familiar with Harris’ novel (whom the series repeatedly courts via allusion), this is recognisably the film development lab in which Dolarhyde is employed. In 2015 the associations of this setting are however different from what they were in the 1980s. This is foregrounded in a later episode (S3E9 ‘And The Woman Clothed With The Sun’) in which Dolarhyde asks his colleague Reba (Rutina Wesley) for a roll of infra-red film (which he then uses to record Graham’s family whom he is planning to kill). Before she agrees, Reba informs Dolarhyde of the difficulties involved in shooting on the stock, and, arguing that it is ‘mean to handle’, tells him that he would be ‘better off shooting digital’. In response, Dolarhyde replies laconically that he is ‘not a fan of that format’, emphasising his affinity for analogue as a preference, and the status of small-gauge film as a niche, connoisseur format.<sup>16</sup>



**Figure 45.** The film lab in *Hannibal*

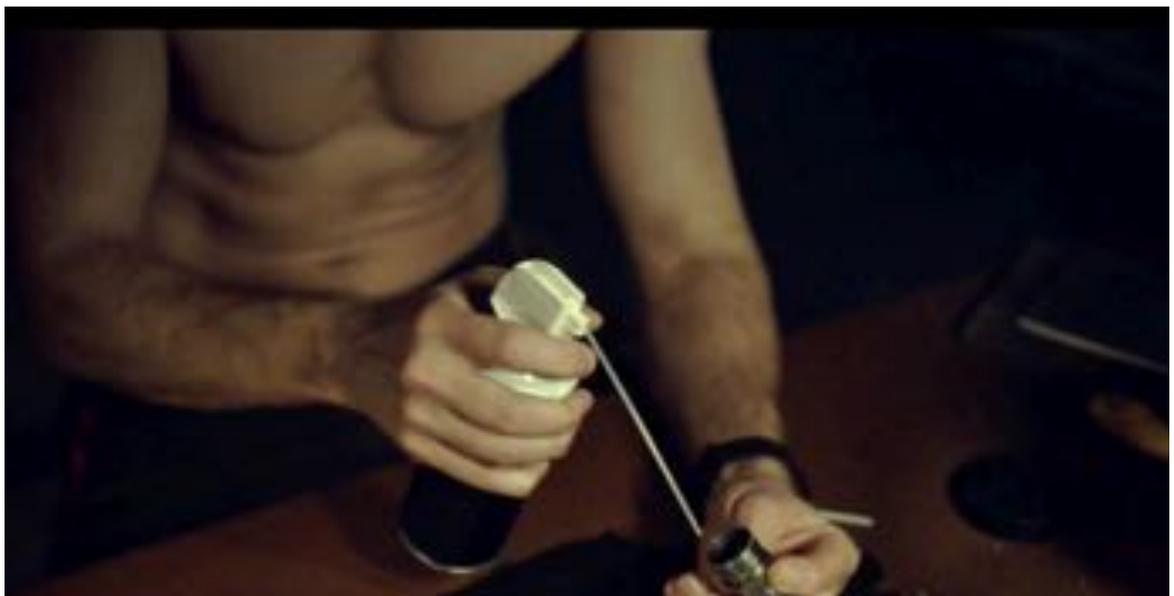
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<sup>16</sup> The characterisation of home movies in the series may be read as a subtle reflection on *Hannibal*'s own status as an adaptation of a 1980s text, posing questions about its appeal and relevance in the contemporary context.

Yet, while *Hannibal* maintains the setting of the film development lab, it does not directly follow the story which accompanies it. In contrast to the novel, Dolarhyde does not choose the families on the basis of the home movies which they sent for processing, but rather finds them on social media. The show thus acknowledges the changes in the media landscape, suggesting that while technologies of domestic image making and their dissemination have changed, concerns over privacy and security have not lessened. On the contrary, the threat to the family which Harris locates in their surrender of personal information is depicted as at once pressing and somewhat self-evident. While in the previous adaptations the Dragon's selection of his victims was a mystery the detective needed to solve, in Fuller's series Lecter dismissively answers Graham's question concerning the killer's choices replying that 'one cannot be too careful about privacy settings these days'. In extension, although the series does contain a family recording — Graham watches images the of Leeds' birthday party — these have not been shot on small gauge film but rather digitally, and the detective views them on a tablet.

In its depiction of the small-gauge, *Hannibal* foregrounds an aspect of Harris' novel that was alluded to but not explored in either in *Manhunter* nor *Red Dragon*: Dolarhyde's documentation of the murders. By doing so the series shifts emphasis from a concern over the violation of privacy and towards a depiction of filmmaking as a violent act. As in the source novel, Fuller's series portrays Dolarhyde as a filmmaker who records the crimes he perpetrates and keeps the films as mementos. In Harris' book the killer splices his snuff films with the home movies — indicating that at the root of his violence is a desire to be accepted as part of the family — and *Hannibal* alludes to this detail by cutting between Graham's viewing of the idyllic digital family footage and Dolarhyde's recordings of the killing. Depicting the camera as akin to a weapon, a characterisation which comes to the fore in the

scene in which the killer cleans his movie making ‘tools’ as if he were cleaning a gun,<sup>17</sup> *Hannibal* echoes *Peeping Tom*, a film which famously literalises this connection by weaponising the camera tripod (Fig. 46). *Hannibal*’s depiction of the small-gauge however not only bears a resemblance to the concerns of *Peeping Tom* but also recalls a more recent depiction of the dangers of analogue film — Scott Derrickson’s *Sinister* (2012) (Fig. 47). Like *Hannibal*, *Sinister* focuses on the hunt for a killer who targets nuclear families, and the film features a mysterious box of small-gauge films which the protagonist — a true crime writer Elisson Oswald (Ethan Hawke) — mistakes for home movies on behalf of their deceptively innocent titles (such as: ‘Pool Party’ or ‘Family Hanging Out’). As viewers later find out, the reels are inhabited by a demon named Baghul who possesses children which happen to watch these images. Like *Peeping Tom* and *Hannibal*, in *Sinister* the small-gauge camera is characterised as a tool of violence, perceptibly in the film’s finale as Ethan’s daughter kills her family holding an axe in one hand and a camera in the other. In contrast to *Peeping Tom*, however, in both *Sinister* and *Hannibal* shooting small-gauge is a deliberate, and perceptibly anachronistic choice, rather than the norm.



**Figure 46.** The depiction of Dolarhyde cleaning the camera likens it to a weapon

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<sup>17</sup> The alignment between camera and weapon is further enhanced by intercutting between the image of Dolarhyde and his tools to the snuff film which he had shot.



Figure 47. Camera as and like a weapon in *Peeping Tom* (1960) and *Sinister* (2012)

Interweaving their depiction of small-gauge film, *Sinister* and *Hannibal* offer not only an exploration of violence and voyeurism but also suggest the monstrous dimension of obsolete media (a question which I will be returning to in Chapter Six). In *Residual Media* Acland emphasises that the persistence of the past can be a problematic phenomenon. He begins his introduction by recounting an Honoré de Balzac novella *Colonel Chabert*. The eponymous character is a Napoleonic soldier who was thought to have died on the battle field but who comes back and makes claims to his past possessions in a world that has moved on in his absence. In narrating the turmoil that results from this unexpected return, Acland argues that ‘Balzac’s narrative captures how surprising and unsettling figures from the past can be.’<sup>18</sup> Both Derrickson’s film and Fuller’s series draw attention to the unsettling capacity of home movies. In both the analogue reels are not only the tool of violence, but are also depicted as the perpetrator. In *Sinister* small-gauge film is the locus of the demon. Similarly in *Hannibal* the home movie is depicted as having a hypnotic hold over Dolarhyde, which comes to the fore in an imaginary sequence (one of many similar moments in the series which frequently edges towards the surreal) in which the film literally attacks its viewer. The reel unspools during the screenings and erupts from the projector, tangling itself around Dolarhyde. His face, entirely covered by the film, becomes a mask, with slits for eyes and mouth out of

<sup>18</sup> Charles R. Acland ‘Introduction’ in Charles R. Acland (ed.), *Residual Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. xiii.

which come beams of light as Dolarhyde becomes the projector. This alignment on the one hand suggests the relation between the films and fantasy explored in *Manhunter* (an association further fostered by locating the screening in the attic, a space traditionally associated with fantasy and mental states). On the other hand, however, the focus on the eyes and mouth as projective orifices parallels Dolarhyde's mutilation of his victims. The alliance it fosters signals that Dolarhyde is a victim as well as a perpetrator; the camera is as much his tool as it is the harbinger of his violence (he appears possessed by the film) (Fig. 48).



Figure 48. Dolarhyde becomes a projector

In their varying depictions of home mode media, the three *Red Dragon* adaptations illuminate that the meanings attached to technologies are not stable but rather temporally specific and as such, prone to shift over time. The adaptations chart the obsolescence of home movies, presenting their transition from a dominant home mode medium in the source novel to one associated with a distant rather than a recent past and finally to a monstrous, persistent technology. Together, the texts present obsolescence as a gradual process and in extension also imply that novelty should not be perceived as a radical break from what has come before. As Lucas Hilderbrand argues 'new media reveal continuities, collaborations

and periods of coexistence as technologies change', and this interplay is made explicit in Mann's work and implicitly underpins Ratner's.<sup>19</sup> Interweaving home movies with video, *Manhunter* depicts how the newer technology defines itself in relation to its predecessor. Remediating the family films on VHS Mann characterises video as a cutting edge technology of superior visual access, one that grants Graham mastery over the imagery, allowing him to pause and rewind the films to scrutinise their detail. *Red Dragon* in turn, indicates the habituation of video in the home mode by using home video in place of home movies. Yet while Ratner's film suggests that video takes over from home movies as the technology for documenting familial togetherness, the choice of medium should not be perceived as insignificant, (particularly in its departure from an otherwise faithful adaptation of the source novel). *Red Dragon's* depiction of video is best understood as strategic, serving as a bridge between the period of its setting and that of the film's making, in a way that is revealing not only about video but also about the perception of home movies. While in 2002 cinema begins to recognise that video is itself edging towards obsolescence, it is still depicted as a familiar and relevant; home movies on the other hand, through their absence, are characterised as belonging solely to the past. In its presentation of home movies *Hannibal* in turn suggests that obsolescence does not mean the death of media. As Charles Acland argues, old media continue to develop alongside their novel counterparts and their identities are subject to ongoing negotiations. It is these shifts that I will be attending to in the following chapters dedicated to the study of cinema's continued engagement with home movies following their commercial decline.

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<sup>19</sup> Hilderbrand, *Inherent Vice*, p. xiii.

## Chapter 5: From Memory Aids to Textures of Memory

### Introduction

The final scene of Jodie Foster's 1995 Thanksgiving comedy-drama *Home for the Holidays* consists of a montage of, what appear to be, home movies. The images are grainy and scratched, their colours are vivid, yet blurry and washed out and the shaky hand-held camerawork endows them with an amateur quality. Yet while they look like home movies, the viewers are not encouraged to read them as existing family films. This is made clear in an earlier sequence which depicts the heroine Claudia (Holly Hunter) watching home movies with her father Henry (Charles Durning). As the screening progresses the father melancholically recalls the past, reflecting on the special moments which he failed to capture with his camera. 'I wish I had it all on tape' he muses, as he recalls young Claudia fearlessly enchanted by the sight of departing airplanes. It is precisely this missing, and coveted, image that opens the final montage. Subsequently the sequence includes a number of similarly undocumented moments that were alluded to throughout the film, such as Tommy's (Robert Downey Jr.) wedding, a kiss between Henry and Aunt Gladys (Geraldine Chaplin) and the early, happy, days of Joanne's (Cynthia Stevenson) marriage. While these images look like small-gauge films, as Henry's statement indicates, what they represent are not material artefacts of the past, but rather, memories. Imaginatively fulfilling Henry's wish for a perfect family film — a tangible equivalent of recollection — the ending of *Home for the Holidays* blurs the boundary between memory and recording, untethers aesthetic from technology, and presents the 'home movie' as a texture of memory (Fig. 49).



**Figure 49.** The home movie and the memory

In its dual presentation of home movies *Home for the Holidays* is characteristic of the transition in the home movie imagination which becomes discernible in the 1990s: a shift from the previously dominant presentation of home movies as aids to memory (the role played by the home movie watched by Claudia and her father) and towards the emergent convention of home movies as textures of memory (the final montage). Since their early appearance, home movies-in-films have frequently been used in the representation of anteriority, providing viewers (diegetic and cinematic) access to events which occurred before the present time of the narrative. The home movie, however, not only served to present images of bygone events but also to dramatise the characters' relation to the past. As an aid to memory, home movies were often used to encourage a narrative of reminiscence (as is the case in *Home for the Holidays*), and the staging of the home movie could also be used to reveal the character's attitude towards the past without recourse to dialogue (as was the case for example with the emotional resonance of the unconventional screening in *The King of Marvin Gardens* discussed in Chapter 3). The materiality of the home movie was thus an important aspect of its presentation and its expressive potential; its role as prompt was closely intertwined with its status as prop. Since the mid-1980s, however, the presentation of home movies- in-films began to shift, and films began to include home movies with no material grounding in the diegesis. In the third chapter I have suggested how *Raging Bull* can be perceived as an early example of this transition. Representing the home

movie without anchoring it in a technology, Scorsese foregrounds its habituation, indicating that the home movie no longer needs to be explicitly introduced as such in order to be recognised as one. Yet, while the home movie in *Raging Bull* was undoubtedly presented as a film, the final montage of *Home for the Holidays* at once connotes home movies and undermines that association. Presenting the family memories in a way that alludes to (but does not stand for) small-gauge films the final montage can be read not only as Henry's fantasy home movie but also as a cinematic fantasy about home movies, posing questions about the term's definition as well as its onscreen mutability.

In order to analyse these developments it is crucial to take into consideration the obsolescence of home movie technology. As the previous chapter has demonstrated, between the early 1980s and the early new millennium small-gauge film has gone from being the dominant home mode medium, to an outmoded one. Yet, while the *Red Dragon* adaptations suggest that home video replaced home movies as the families' medium of choice, the films discussed in this chapter complicate this narrative of disappearance, presenting viewers with a more complex understanding of continuity and change in a shifting media landscape. Studying the transition from home movies as memory aids to home movies as textures of memory in the context of the obsolescence of the technology, this chapter examines the diverse modes of persistence which cinema envisaged for home movies (as a domestic technology as well as a cinematic motif).

Examining the endurance of home movies, this study is divided into two parts. The first focuses on prevailing depictions of home movies as aids to memory, interrogating the impact of obsolescence on the presentation of the technology in the diegesis. Exploring small-gauge family films depicted in *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* (Jeremiah Chechik, 1989),

*Home for the Holidays* and *Arizona Dream* (Emir Kusturica, 1995) the section will consider how the films negotiate the relevance of the home movie when they are no longer the dominant home-mode media. Are home movies depicted as still pertinent, and if so what is the nature of the continued appeal of this format? The second section of the chapter continues this interrogation, focusing on films which depict home movies as textures of memory: films which draw on the aesthetic of the home movie in their representation of memory, but which do not ground the home movie 'look' in a diegetic representation of technology. While the disappearance of the technology from the mise-en-scène can be read as indicating a habituation of the cinematic home movie, as *Home for the Holidays* indicates, the untethering of the aesthetic from the artefact can also put their status as a 'home movie' into question. Drawing on Paul Schrader's description of the memories depicted in his work *Affliction* (1997) as 'not really a home movie',<sup>1</sup> I will explore the extent to which the memories depicted in these films be called 'home movies', before proceeding to explore what such depictions tell us about the modes of persistence of small-gauge domestic films. Focusing on the home movies alluded to in *Atlantis: Lost Empire* (Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, 2001) and *28 Days Later* (Danny Boyle, 2002) the chapter will illuminate how the outmoded home small-gauge can be deployed to imaginatively interrogate broader questions of obsolescence and transition in changing media landscapes.

It is important to note that while this penultimate chapter focalises a discussion of home movies around their role in the depiction of recall, this study does not seek to engage substantially with memory studies. The depiction of home movies as 'memory' constitutes a framework rather than the central concern of this work. Instead of asking what does the transition in home movie imagination tell us about the shifts in the cultural conceptualisation

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Jackson (ed.), *Schrader on Schrader and Other Writings* (London: Faber, 2004), p. 259.

of the relation between technology and memory (in the manner characteristic of memory studies) I will be asking what the change in the deployment of home movies in the representation of memory and the past betrays about the home movie imagination.

### **Aids to memory**

In *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America* (2007) Giles Slade demonstrates that we live in a culture of planned disposability. Slade argues that: ‘not only did we invent disposable products, ranging from diapers to cameras to contact lenses, but we invented the very concept of disposability itself, as a necessary precursor to our rejection of tradition and our promotion of progress and change.’<sup>2</sup> The history of the twentieth century has been characterised by a ravenous desire for constant improvement and, as a result, littered with the discarded debris of consumption. Slade warns, that while we enjoy the thrill of novelty, we are not accustomed to thinking where the old things go. The amnesia which characterises our relation to consumer objects finds a reflection in the critical literature on media. As Charles Acland asserts in his introduction to *Residual Media* (2006), the history of media developments has been characterised by an almost exclusive focus on novelty. He states that: ‘if there is a reigning myth of media, it is that technological change necessarily involves the ‘new’ and consists solely of rupture from the past.’<sup>3</sup> As in the case of the *Red Dragon* adaptations, old media are thus frequently perceived to disappear from view as they are replaced by a novel counterpart. Acland warns, however, that this teleological narrative of progress is a fallacy, drawing attention away from issues concerning the persistence of the past and its, at times uneasy, integration in the present. Following Acland’s cue, the first section of the chapter explores films which envisage the accumulation and accommodation

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<sup>2</sup> Giles Slade, *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America* (Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Charles R. Acland, ‘Introduction’ in Charles R. Acland (ed.) *Residual Media* (London, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. xix.

of the obsolete technology in a shifting home mode media landscape and, in extension, explore its changing significance. It begins by looking at *Home for the Holidays* and *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, demonstrating how both films recognise the small-gauge as a medium of the past and asking how they envisage the continued relevance of the home movie. In order to address this, I will draw on Acland's concept of residual media, comparing it with Raymond Williams' notion of the archaic. Arguing that the obsolescence of the home movie influences not only its depiction as a prop but also, in extension, its role as a motif, I will turn to *Arizona Dream* to explore how the film capitalises on the home movie's status as obsolete media to make a broader statement about obsolescence in the cinema.

*Home for the Holidays* and *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* are both films that engage with questions of obsolescence in their depictions of home movie technology. In doing so, however, the films present distinct (although not incompatible) ideas about the place of the past in the present. Foster's film foregrounds the outmoded character of the home movie by placing it in contrast with the newer technology of video which plays a central role in the film's narrative and the domestic mise-en-scène. The family's obsession with image making is introduced early on in the film when the father greets the flu ridden, and flight exhausted, Claudia at the airport videocamera in hand, and continues to develop as the film continues, as each new arriving character brings with them an additional recording technology.<sup>4</sup> Within the broader home mode image making landscape of *Home*

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<sup>4</sup> Later that night, the heroine once more falls victim to the prying eye of domestic image making technologies, this time at the hands of her younger brother Tommy, who upon his arrival proceeds to take embarrassing Polaroid pictures of his older sibling in a state of night time disarray. A further video camera makes an appearance the following day brought the son of Claudia's sister. Throughout the Thanksgiving celebrations the domestic image makers incessantly scrutinise the family members, intent on capturing both idyllic and awkward details of familial celebration. Domestic image making technologies are thus characterised as at once pervasive and invasive, producing an encompassing and detailed, if unflattering, portrayal of the family's intimacy.

*for the Holidays* the home movie thus appears as an obsolete medium (Fig. 50). This is further emphasised by locating the projector in the cellar, a gesture which indicates displacement from its previously central place in the domestic mise-en-scène —the living room. While the basement may at times have uncanny associations (as a space where things are hidden) *Home for the Holidays* presents it as a comfortable and comforting location. This is conveyed in the set design which is dominated with warm reds, oranges and browns as well as in choice of props such as the rocking chair and blankets that further enhance its homeliness. The presence of live caged birds in the background also suggest that the family is likely to visit this space often, and the spatial association between the birds and the home movie suggests the family's dedication to keeping the past alive, to preservation rather than merely storage.



**Figure 50.** The dominant and the obsolete in *Home for the Holidays*

Similarly to Foster's film, *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* communicates the obsolescence of home movies through an uncanny, at that point in the history of home movies-in-films, choice of screening location. While we may recall the sequence from the introduction to the second chapter, it is worth briefly reiterating its concerns. The scene is a short comic interlude and depicts the hero, Clark Griswold (Chevy Chase) unwittingly locking himself in the attic. Uncomfortably cold in his pyjamas, he browses the assorted trunks in search of warmer clothing, and in the process finds a box of home movie reels

concealed beneath a pile of old fashioned female attire (Fig. 51).<sup>5</sup> As he waits for a family member to notice his absence and come to his aid, Clark settles down to pass the time watching the, for the most part, monochrome recordings of his childhood Christmases projected on a makeshift bedclothes screen to the non-diegetic accompaniment of Ray Charles' 'The Spirit of Christmas'. The circumstances, setting and the impromptu projection of the home movie all foreground its obsolete character. In contrast to *Home for the Holidays*, where the home movie is presented as still an active part of familial practices of reminiscence, *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* depicts home movies as a forgotten remnant of childhood (the film is discovered accidentally rather than, as in Foster's work, sought out deliberately). The attic location communicates a space of memory; the accidental character of the discovery however suggests the family is not in the habit of revisiting these home movies. This is compounded by the missing screen which indicates they are no longer in possession of all the necessary 'parts'. The absent screen thus also draws the viewers' attention to the materiality of the home movie, its status not only as images but as things of the past.



**Figure 51.** Clark discovers a box of home movies

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<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, the home movies reels are found under a pile of female clothes which forges an association between family filmmaking and the mother rather than as is customarily the case, with the father.

*Home for the Holidays* and *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* both depict the home movie as an obsolete technology. In their concern with the afterlife of the artefact the films however not only demonstrate that the home movies have fallen into disuse, but suggest something about the character of their persistence, and in extension about their continued place and role in the home and on the big screen. Obsolescence should not be considered as a unified phenomenon. Once they exceed their commercial due date technologies may be subject to varying modes of accommodation. One such manner is suggested by Charles Acland in *Residual Media*, an edited collection of essays dedicated to the investigation of the shifting place of old media in the new media landscape. Already the title of the work is suggestive; in his study, Acland draws on Raymond Williams who defines the residual in his work *Marxism and Literature* (1977) as denoting that which has ‘been effectively formed in the past, but ... is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present.’<sup>6</sup> The residual is thus not simply a term for old experiences, practices or meanings, but rather for those that persist despite their obsolescence. This is because, as Williams argues, and as I have elaborated previously in the Review of Literature, cultural development is not straightforward, and the dominant is always informed by the residual and the emergent: that which came before and that which is in the process of forming. Not all obsolete practices or media can however be described as residual. In his work Williams contrasts the residual with the archaic — that which is ‘wholly recognised as an element of the past’.<sup>7</sup> Unlike the residual which remains active in cultural processes, the archaic is no longer relevant for the present.

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<sup>6</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 122.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

In *Residual Media* Acland does not dedicate much attention to the archaic, deploying it only as a contrast to the residual and describing it as the more ‘predictable’ category. In studying the representation of home movies as obsolete media it is however important to contend with both categories, the residual and the archaic, as this distinction allows us more precision in investigating the manner of their persistence. *Home for the Holidays* and *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* characterise home movies as an obsolete practice which consists of both residual and archaic elements. In contrast to *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993) which presents the home movie as being wholly of the past, both Chechik and Foster envision the endurance of its elements. In its final scene Demme’s film includes footage which, while it is perceptibly home movie in origin (the grainy aesthetic communicates that the footage was originally shot on small-gauge film), is presented on video tape (Fig. 52). This depiction indicates that due to the possibility of transferring footage onto the newer medium, the home movie technology is no longer relevant. Conversely, while both Chechik and Foster depict the home movie as a technology of the past, they nonetheless suggest that it is still of use in the present. Presenting home movie viewing as a residual practice the films also however indicate its archaic dimension, and that is the absence of home movie making. This is particularly apparent in *Home for the Holidays* which explicitly limits the representation of the small-gauge film to the screening (all the while depicting the family’s fervour for domestic videography), thus characterising it as a technology of reviewing, but implicitly no longer of recording.<sup>8</sup> In their presentation of home movies *Home for the Holidays* and *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* thus present home movie viewing as a residual practice (and the projector as a residual technology) at the same time, suggesting the archaic character of home movie making. In the process the films empathise that what

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<sup>8</sup> The status of domestic movie making as an archaic practice is further emphasised by the fact that since the 1980s home movies were seldom featured in films set in the present (there are exceptions to this rule, like in the case of *Sinister*) and its more common deployment was as a period prop. I will be exploring this in more depth in the following chapter.

we describe as the ‘home movie-in-the-film’ should not be considered as a monolithic entity, which is a consideration I will be returning to shortly in my interrogation of textures of memory.



**Figure 52.** Home movies transferred to video in *Philadelphia*

As they become obsolete, media do not simply continue in the same manner as before, but rather are prone to acquire new meanings and significance. This concern is foregrounded by Simone Natale and Gabrielle Balbi, who in their study of the development of media imagination argue that: ‘media interact with human imagination in different ways in different moments of their evolution.’<sup>9</sup> As Natale and Balbi observe, obsolescence has the potential to alter the narratives surrounding media, and in extension it can also have an effect on the kind of narratives which the media are deployed in telling. This transformation is already perceptible in the films under discussion. Re-locating the home movie from its hitherto dominant place in the domestic mise-en-scène to the cellar and the attic allows Foster and

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<sup>9</sup> Simone Natale and Gabriele Balbi, ‘Media and The Imaginary in History’ *Media History* 20 (2014), p. 204.

Chechik to bring to the fore questions not only of screening but also of spaces of storage, which previous cinematic representations of home movies did not contend with. In both films home movies feature not only as aids to memory (and thus as vehicles for images of the past) but also as objects of the past bringing questions concerning the histories of media to the fore. This concern is explicitly articulated in *Home for the Holiday* which in its depiction of the home mode media landscape creates a sense of continuity between home movies and video, presenting the home movie as an antecedent to the family's present video-mania. While *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* does not include home video making, Chechik's film can also be seen as offering a reflection on technological transitions through the visual contrast between the black and white home movie and the vibrant colours of the film in which it is embedded. The choice of monochrome to connote the 1950s (when the films are set) may be interpreted not only as an attempt at period fidelity but also as a way to emphasise their status as 'of the past'. In visually emphasising their anteriority *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* not only presents the home movies as a different kind of film to the one the viewers are watching but also indicates that difference is no longer simply between professional and amateur but that it is also temporal: between the films of the present and those of the past.

The depiction of home movies as a way of denoting a bygone time is a concern which comes to the fore in Emir Kusturica's *Arizona Dream*, a film which capitalises on the obsolescence of the home movie to make broader statements about obsolescence in the cinema. *Arizona Dream* was the first, and to date only, American film of the Serbian filmmaker Emir Kusturica (produced by the French company Canal Plus and distributed in the USA by Warner Brothers). It follows a lethargic fish and game inspector Alex (Johnny Depp) who reluctantly returns to his home town in Arizona to attend the wedding of his uncle Leo (Jerry

Lewis), an entrepreneurial Cadillac salesman. Leo, who brought Axel up after the death of his parents, wants the hero to remain in Arizona and to take over the family business. Axel refuses and in order to sway his decision the Uncle orchestrates a nostalgic screening of home movies from Axel's childhood. Following the emotional scene the hero decides to stay to please his uncle, who promptly proceeds to coach him in the art of car salesmanship.

Central to understanding the depiction of the home movie in *Arizona Dream* is its association with Uncle Leo. A self-made entrepreneur, Uncle Leo stands as the film's embodiment of the American Dream, a figure who focalises Kusturica's fascination with American ideals and iconography. Affiliating the home movie with Uncle Leo, Kusturica indicates the important place which the technology holds in the imagination of the American home, an alignment which is also perceptible in Wim Wenders' *Paris/Texas* (1984, a French-West-German co-production), which associates home movies with a similarly quintessentially American figure: advertising designer Walt (Dean Stockwell).<sup>10</sup> However, Uncle Leo is not only the film's embodiment of American values but also the character who features as the film's figure of obsolescence. A Cadillac salesman, the uncle represents a flashy but outmoded glamour associated with the car, the allure of which relies as much, if not more, on its nostalgic connotations than on its luxurious elegance (Fig. 53).<sup>11</sup> Like the Cadillac, the home movie can be described as what Goran Gocić terms a 'nostalgic gadget'.<sup>12</sup> Gocić's term is intriguing, since as the scholar explains, the term 'gadget' is usually deployed to

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<sup>10</sup> The concerns of the home movie in *Paris/Texas* echo those discussed in the third chapter. The images convey an idealised depiction of the family, which, as the film later reveals, did not coincide with its realities.

<sup>11</sup> This comes to the fore as Axel passes the surreal image of the Cadillac Ranch, a 1974 art installation by the group Ant Farm which depicts a row of various versions of the car buried in the ground in a manner reminiscent of tombstones in a graveyard. The Cadillac's obsolescence is further emphasised by the lack of demand, as customers are said to prefer more efficient automobiles.

<sup>12</sup> Goran Gocić, *Notes from the Underground: The Cinema of Emir Kusturica* (London: Wallflower Press, 2001).

denote an ingenious novelty rather than an obsolete artefact. In its tension between the old and the new the term however neatly encapsulates Kusturica's attitude to the depiction of the outmoded, which frequently plays on, as it does in *Arizona Dream*, the tension between the object's obsolescence and the characters' inability or refusal to recognise it as such.



**Figure 53.** Uncle Leo, the film's figure of obsolescence

While Gocić does not class the home movie among the director's nostalgic gadgets (he focuses on the depiction of the Cadillac and the flying machine which Axel builds for his lover Grace, played by Faye Dunaway) its representation similarly draws its power from the play between the admittance and the negation of its obsolescence. Unlike the home movies in *Home for the Holidays* and *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* the small-gauge film does not appear obsolete within the mise-en-scène; rather it features as one among many old-fashioned items and sentiments which populate the obsolete world inhabited by Uncle Leo. At the same time, throughout the sequence Kusturica compounds a sense of nostalgic allure of the home movie, capitalising both on visual and aural cues to evoke pastness. The film is black and white and silent, contrasting with the work in which it is depicted. It is accompanied by the rattling of the projector and well as non-digetically by Goran Bregovich's aptly entitled song 'Old Home Movie' which resembles the tinkling sounds of a music box, aligning the family film with childhood and enhancing its obsolete charm.

As Marie Therese-Journot suggests, Uncle Leo however is not only a dietetically nostalgic figure for Axel but also performs this function on a meta level for the viewers. Quoting Axel's admission that 'my uncle was the hero of my childhood ... and you don't say no to your childhood heroes', Journot argues that 'in fact, in 1992, his uncle [Jerry Lewis] was still a hero to many spectators, reprising a role which has pleased them before' ('De fait, son oncle est encore, en 1992, le héros de bien des spectateurs, et dans le rôle même qui les a ravis').<sup>13</sup> Reflecting on Kusturica's choice Gocić reads the casting as a 'post modern revisiting of the history of cinema' suggesting that it functions in line with the film's broader dedication to an intertextual exploration of cinematic heritage.<sup>14</sup> The director's deployment of Lewis' performance as a way to engage with cinema history comes to the fore most prominently in the home movie sequence, which offers the actor a space to engage with the physical comedy which he was most renowned for. Silent and black and white, the home movie can be perceived as a nod to *The Bellboy* (1960) the first film written, directed and produced by Lewis which offers an homage to early cinema. Interweaving a representation of familial memory with an intertextual homage to film history, the home movie thus communicates a double nostalgia: for a time of childhood as well as for a cinema of the past (and its heroes).

Using the home movie as a way of articulating a longing for both a time of youth and a bygone moment in film history *Arizona Dream* anticipates the representation of home movies in films such as *Super 8* (J.J. Abrams, 2011) and *Frankenweenie* (Tim Burton, 2012) discussed in the following chapter. However, in contrast to Kusturica's work, which deploys the home movie as a vehicle *through* which these longings are communicated, Abrams and

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<sup>13</sup> Marie-Thérèse Journot, *Films amateurs dans le cinéma de fiction* (Arman Colin, 2011), p. 47.

<sup>14</sup> Goran Gocić, *Notes from the Underground: The Cinema of Emir Kusturica* (London: Wallflower Press, 2001), p. 135.

Burton also express a nostalgia *for* the home movie. In order to fully understand the significance of Abrams' and Burton's attachment to obsolete technology it is important to recognise that the ways in which cinema envisaged the persistence of home movies cannot be limited only to the material terms discussed in this section. Since the mid-1980s, home movies in the films became increasingly deployed as a texture rather than a technology, a deception which as the following section illuminates, involved a significant shift in cinema's home movie imagination.

### **Textures of memory**

In *Residual Media* Charles Acland considers the residual solely in relation to material culture: the accumulation and accommodation of the things of the past. This perspective is however insufficient to account for the cinematic representation of home movies following their technological obsolescence. To understand how cinema has envisaged the endurance of home movies as an obsolete home mode medium it is not enough to look only to the films which engage with the afterlife of its technology; it is also crucial to take into account representations which define the residual character of home movies —which consider what is 'left behind' — not in terms of their objects but in terms of their aesthetics. Running parallel to films which envisage the residual character of home movie projection was another, emerging, convention for representing home movies-in-films: the use of small-gauge films as textures of memory. By the term 'textures of memory' I designate a deployment of home movies which draw on a small-gauge aesthetic for the purposes of representing memory, without anchoring it to a dietetically represented technology. Such a depiction marks a striking departure from the established conventions for imagining home movies-within-films which, as this thesis has demonstrated, for the most part of their history drew their legibility from, and constructed meaning through, their depiction as a technology

(of filmmaking and of film viewing). Since their emergence in the 1980s however, home movies as textures of memory have proven increasingly popular, eclipsing, in the films of the 1990s and the early new millennium, the number of films depicting home movies as technology.<sup>15</sup>

In presenting home movies as memories the films propose a reformulation of their place on the screen. This concerns not only a novel articulation of the relation between the contained and containing film but also, as I have suggested in the introduction, a re-definition of what constitutes a cinematic home movie. Their role as an aesthetic metonym for remembrance complicates the images' status as a home movie, an issue that is poignantly foregrounded in Paul Schrader's depiction of memory in *Affliction*, which at once draws on the cues associated with small-gauge domestic moviemaking and denies their status as films. While the images cannot, in the strictest sense, be considered as home movies, the small-gauge domestic film, as I will argue, nonetheless provides an important context for the interpretation of the images, bringing to the fore issues of both family and medium. It is the latter that is central for the representation of home movies in *Atlantis* and *28 Days Later* which approximate analogue textures in a digital context, offering a reflection on the relation between the novel and the obsolete in the new media landscape.

The technological untethering of the home movie which characterises their representation as textures of memory is a significant departure from their hitherto customary presentation as

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<sup>15</sup> Because of the challenges involved in compiling a filmography for this project it is impossible to precisely determine the number of films belonging to each category. Comparatively, between 1985 and 2005 I have identified 11 films featuring a home movie aesthetic (*The Falcon and the Snowman*, *My Own Private Idaho*, *Johnny Mnemonic*, *The Game*, *Affliction*, *The Myth of Fingerprints*, *Hilary and Jackie*, *Virgin Suicides*, *28 Days Later*, *Atlantis: Lost Empire*, *View from the Top*) and only 4 films depicting the technology (*National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, *Home for the Holidays*, *Arizona Dream* and *Female Perversions*).

props, and gives rise to questions about their place and role in the film. An illustration of this issue can be found in an early example of the use of a small-gauge aesthetic in the depiction of recall in *The Falcon and the Snowman* (John Schlesinger, 1985), a film based on the true story of two childhood friends — Christopher Boyce (Timothy Hutton) and Andrew Daulton Lee (Sean Penn) — who, in the mid-1970s, traded classified government information with the Soviet Union. The film concludes with the arrest of the two men, and their families look on as they are being escorted to prison. The scene is intercut with home movie images of the boys' youth — church Sundays and collage graduation — and the contrast between their present circumstance and the images of the past evokes the thwarted promise of youth. It is not however made clear whether viewers are invited to read the home movies as films. On the one hand, the images are identifiably home *movies*. Depicting the characters smiling and waving at the camera (a familiar convention of domestic image making) acknowledges its presence, and, in extension, the status of the films as a recording. On the other hand however, the home movies are not presented as films-within-the-film (*vis-a-vis* screening), but rather are coded as memories of the gathered family members. This, in turn, is made clear by the editing, which frames the domestic images with close-ups of Christopher's mother (Joyce Van Patten) (Fig. 54). The focus on Van Patten's face suggests that the images should be read as an evocation of her interiority, that the home movie represent what she is thinking about as she looks at her son being led off to prison. In its deployment of home movies as memories *The Falcon and the Snowman* blurs the boundary between remembrance and recording, urging viewers to ponder the relation between the home movie, memory, and the film.



**Figure 54.** The editing anchors the home movie in subjectivity

The film's depiction of the home movie as a texture of memory can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it can be seen as suggesting that what the mother is remembering is a pre-existing home movie, thus indicating the internalisation of the family film by the character. Interpreted in this way Schlesinger's film can be perceived as visualising a popular perception concerning a confusion between memory and the memory object, whereby the recording of an event may become mistaken for memory.<sup>16</sup> The blurring of media and memory in *The Falcon and the Snowman* can also, however, be read in another way: as illuminating how home movies-in-films can serve to visualise memory. While they may allude to a pre-existing film the home movie images in Schlesinger's film are presented as evocations of the characters' interiority rather than as material artefacts within the diegesis. The home movie is therefore not only something that is remembered by the character but it

<sup>16</sup> A similar proposition can be found in *Johnny Mnemonic* (Robert Longo, 1995) a film whose finale takes place inside the protagonist's mind which is visualised as a virtual reality environment. Striving to recover lost data which he was paid to transport on his mnemonic hard drive, the eponymous hero (Keanu Reeves) hacks his own brain and in the process uncovers forgotten memories of his childhood which return to him in the form of home movies.

is also the means by which remembrance is represented. Rather than an element in the story, the home movies are deployed as a way in which cinema tells the story, a technique rather than a prop. As such they point to another understanding of internalisation: not only of the home movies by the characters but also of home movies by the cinema.

The incorporation of the home movie as a cinematic vocabulary for the depiction of the past however involved more than simply an untethering of the aesthetic from the technology. While *The Falcon and the Snowman* connotes a pre-existing home movie in its depiction of the interaction between the characters and the camera, as the brief study of *Home for the Holidays* in the introduction has already suggested, this is not always the case for cinematic uses of small-gauge aesthetics. A striking illustration of the uncertain status of the images as a home movie occurs in Paul Schrader's *Affliction*, a film which, like Foster's work, at once draws on and denies the home movie's status as a 'film-within-a-film'. Released twelve years after Schlesinger's film, *Affliction* involves not only the diegetic untethering of a home movie from its technology but also from the limits of technological plausibility. The film follows Wade Whitehouse (Nick Nolte) a man struggling against the legacy of patriarchal violence to which he was subject as a child. Throughout the film, Wade is haunted by the memories of his abusive father (Glen, played by James Coburn) which, as *Affliction* later reveals, may not have actually taken place.<sup>17</sup> These 'memories' are depicted as, what initially appear to be, home movies. Their amateur quality is communicated by the deployment of a hand-held camera, while the grain and low quality of the images (comparatively to the film in which they are embedded) points towards the small-gauge. Their familial subject matter

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<sup>17</sup> If at first spectators are encouraged to take Wade's memory as an accurate representation of the past, this is put into question by his brother Rolfe (Willem Dafoe), who, while featuring prominently in the flashback, denies having been present at the event. While this does not suggest that the incident has not taken place, it indicates the complex interplay between memory and fantasy which structures Wade's remembrance.

further indicates their status as family films although, the image of the family which they depict differs starkly from the idyllic representations frequently associated with the clichéd iconography of domestic image making (Fig. 55). As Stella Bruzzi points, the amateur aesthetic is deployed to connote violence rather than comfort. She characterises it as: ‘frenzied and uncontrollable snatches of jerky and roughly hewn home movies, scars on the psyche as opposed to tempered reflections.’<sup>18</sup> Similarly to Bruzzi, Kevin Jackson (in his interview with the director in *Schrader on Schrader*, 2004) also points to the incompatibility between the ideal family frequently associated with small-gauge family filmmaking and Schrader’s representation, describing the hero’s memories as ‘deranged home movies’.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 55. 'Not really a home movie'

<sup>18</sup> Stella Bruzzi, *Bringing Up Daddy: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Post-War Cinema*, (London: BFI Publishing, 2005), p. 183.

<sup>19</sup> Jackson (ed.), *Schrader on Schrader*, p. 259.

In response to Jackson's question (concerning the motivation behind the 'deranged home movies') Schrader disputes their status as a home movie altogether. He argues that the footage is 'not really a home movie' and that the purpose was not to depict a home movie but to 'replicate a memory which may or may not be true.'<sup>20</sup> Contesting Jackson's reading of the footage, Schrader elaborates on the production of the memory sequence, revealing its home movie texture as a deliberate stylisation. As he explains the 'home movies' were shot on the same stock as the film itself (16mm) and were later 'overexposed two stops and then projected onto a screen, then re-shot — again over exposing — and zooming in and out while ... shooting.' While the 'home movie' indicates an alternative convention of image making, as Schrader reveals it is in fact the same film, a gesture which emphasises the home movie as a cinematic fantasy. As he continues to argue, *Affliction* not only approximates the appropriate technology but its approximation of the home movie is an unfaithful one. Schrader himself points to the inconsistencies between the memories and characteristics of domestic filmmaking, indicating the presence of sound as a key giveaway.<sup>21</sup>

Schrader's infidelities to the home movie in fact extend beyond the use of sound. A contrast with David Fincher's *The Game*, released in the same year (1997), is illuminating here (Fig. 56). Similarly to Schrader, Fincher uses home movies to depict the protagonist's traumatic childhood memory of his father's suicide as a fantasy of his adult self. While the images are implausible — signalling their status as imaginary through the inclusion of an aerial shot of the protagonist's childhood mansion which would be technically challenging, as well as images of his father's dead body which sit uneasily with the conventions of familial image

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Although not all home movies were silent, the majority of home movie-in-films do not contain sound which is likely what Schrader is referring to.

making — they exist within the broadest limits of possibility. The scenes are silent, short in duration, and the images are suitably scratched to indicate their erosion in time. In contrast, Schrader's images only tangentially link to the familiar iconography of home movies. While they are grainy and shaky, they not only possess sound, but also lack the characteristic wear and tear associated with such images. They are also implausible as diegetic films: since all the characters are present in the footage, there would be no one to shoot the home movie.



**Figure 56.** Nicholas (Michael Douglas) remembers his father's suicide

Describing the footage in *Affliction* as 'not really a home movie' is not the same however as admitting that it is 'not a home movie'. The phrase thus not only indicates that the director's intention was not to produce footage which would be received as a home movie-within-the-

film but also suggests that there is a correspondence between the representation of Wade's memories and the stylistic characteristic of a home movie. 'Not really a home movie' can thus be perceived as encapsulating both the departures from, as well as affinities with, the small-gauge family film. While Schrader's hesitation concerning the labelling of the images as home movies should not be dismissed, Jackson's question as well as Bruzzi's reading already indicate that despite the director's intentions the images are received and read as such. The scholars' perception of Wade's memories as home movies indicates how even a selective replication of familiar small-gauge cues can lead viewers to interpret the images as communicating the home movie and, further, that their perceived status as a domestic film has the potential to condition their reception (as the violence of the images is heightened through the contrast with the idyllic associations of the imagery).

Crucially, Schrader's selective approximation of the home movie not only plays on the disjuncture between the viewer's expectations and the film's depiction of the family, but also can be read in conjunction with the director's depiction of memory as fallible and mutable. As George Kouvaros argues in his monograph on Schrader's work, what is at stake in the film is not so much a question of truth — determining 'what really happened' — but rather how the characters struggle 'to make sense of people and things, in the past and in the present.'<sup>22</sup> The memories depicted in the film function as part of this endeavour and rather than representing a 'fact' of the past, are used by the director to dramatise the protagonist's struggle to make sense of his traumatic childhood. Like the memories, which might or might not be true, the film's depiction of the home movie is thus also an 'as if' and the film's selective approximation, invoking while at the same time contradicting its status as a small-gauge domestic recording, serves to enhance the dubious character of the memory. Like

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<sup>22</sup> George Kouvaros, *Paul Schrader* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), p. 98.

Wade's memories the home movies approximated in *Affliction* exist at the intersection of remembrance and imagination, a depiction which can be perceived as a reflection of their status as residual. The home movies suggested by *Affliction* are thus more accurately perceived as memory of an object rather than a memory object. Instead of a faithful representation of the technology, the images offered by Schrader should be understood as a distant echo, dispersed almost to the limits of legibility and transformed by the passage of time and the distance from the original event.

The depiction of home movies as textures of memory can however function not only as a way to draw attention to the mutability of cinematic home movie following the obsolescence of its technology, as it does in *Affliction*, but can also be deployed to offer a reflection on the potential obsolescence of the medium of film itself. This concern comes to the fore in two films which approximate the analogue textures of the home movie in the context of new digital media, *Atlantis: Lost Empire* and *28 Days Later*. Both films foreground and capitalise on the imaginary character of the home movie by depicting the characteristic cues of the technology without the deployment of the small-gauge medium. Unlike Schrader's work which draws on the unity between the film and the medium which texture it approximates, in both Trusdale's and Wise's film and Boyle's work the approximated analogue texture exists in a tension with the broader deployment of computer generated imagery and digital video.

The 'home movie' sequences in *Atlantis* and *28 Days Later* are both singularly brief. *Atlantis* takes the viewers back to the beginning of the twentieth century (it is set in 1914) and follows Milo Thatch (voiced by Michael J. Fox) a scholar who specialises in dead languages and tries in vain to secure funding for his expedition to discover the eponymous mythical land.

The home movie occurs close to the beginning of the film as Milo is preparing to deliver a funding bid to the heads of the Smithsonian museum who have ridiculed his research in the past. To prepare himself for the encounter, Milo looks at a photograph of his grandfather, a famed explorer, who has inspired his search for Atlantis. As he is scrutinising the photograph, the image expands and comes to life, turning into a home movie (Fig. 57). Like the photograph, the memory is rendered in sepia colours and its status as a film is, paradoxically, signalled by overlaying the image with the scratches that are characteristic of celluloid as well as in the sound of a running projector which accompanies the moving pictures (there are thus both aural and visual cues that suggest film).



Figure 57. Milo's memory



**Figure 58.** Jim's fantasy

*28 Days Later* is in many respects a very different kind of film. It is a British zombie horror which follows Jim (Cillian Murphy) a victim of a cycling accident who wakes up in a hospital to find that the country has succumbed to a rage virus which turns humans into enraged zombies. Rescued by a group of fellow survivors the hero returns home where he finds the bodies of his parents. Deeming it too dangerous to venture out after dark the group opt to spend the night at the house. While the others are asleep the protagonist wanders around his home, melancholically surveying remnants of his former life. As he contemplates a photograph on the fridge the film switches to what appears as a home movie which depicts the family returning home from a shopping trip. The images are warm and their vibrant

colours contrast starkly with the cold grittiness of digital video. The grain and blur of the image further accentuates the sense of comfort conveyed by the footage. Like in *Atlantis*, *28 Days Later* also, impossibly, presents the images as a film-within-a-film, in this case by rendering the frame of the home movie smaller than that of the film in which it is contained (Fig.58).

*Atlantis* and *28 Days Later* are both films which interweave digital and celluloid elements within the scope of a single film. As Chris Pallant observes in its depiction of Milo's journey of discovery, *Atlantis* deploys both hand drawn animation and computer generated imagery to an extent which, at the time, was unprecedented for a Disney film.<sup>23</sup> The integration of traditional and CG elements retrospectively appears as a key feature of the period in the studio's history to which *Atlantis* belongs and which Pallant calls 'Neo-Disney'. Occurring between the late 1990s and the late 2000s (*Tarzan*, released in 1999 is widely considered as the last film of the renaissance era while *Princess and the Frog* inaugurated the revival period in 2009), Neo-Disney is considered as a time of transition, when the studio was finding its feet in the changing landscape of animation which had been undergoing changes since the release and success of Pixar's computer generated *Toy Story* (John Lasseter) in 1995.

The late 1990s and the early new millennium were however a time of transition not only for animation but for cinema more broadly and, like *Atlantis*, *28 Days Later* is a film deploying both old and new media. Shot, for the most part, on digital video, the film uses celluloid in its final sequence: an optimistic finale depicting the protagonists surviving the zombie

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<sup>23</sup>Chris Pallant, *Demystifying Disney, A History of Disney Feature Animation* (New York: Continuum, 2011).

apocalypse. As Moran has argued in regard to the choice between film and video, film and digital should not be perceived as merely neutral image making alternatives. Boyle himself draws attention to the notion of preference in interview with Sandy Hunter. Elaborating on his choice to shoot the film on DV, Boyle notes its affordability, ease of deployment and manipulation (allowing him to shoot the challenging empty London street scenes and to enhance the movement of the zombies) as well as the novelty of its look. He argues that: ‘we wanted it to feel different in texture from normal film. Because it’s an apocalypse, you can use a different hue, because nobody knows what things will look like ... so we talked about having a different texture, which we got with the DV.’<sup>24</sup> While he does not account for his choice to shoot the finale in 35mm, it is notable that the optimistic conclusion of the film was not the director’s first choice of ending. The original was far bleaker — depicting Selena’s (Naomie Harris) and Hannah’s (Megan Burns) unsuccessful resuscitation of Jim — and was discarded due to negative audience responses. Like the rest of the film, this finale had been shot on digital video. In light of these changes, the director’s decision to shoot the ‘compromised’ closing sequence on celluloid can be perceived as a gesture of refusal to entirely give in to the audience’s demand, subtly distinguishing the amended ending from the rest of the narrative. The final images of *28 Days Later* are literally a different kind of film than the preceding DV narrative, and their interpretation as either a gesture of rejection (they do not belong with the rest of the film) or optimism (the image is crisper and clearer than the DV images connoting a return to the familiar realm of film) appears open to the viewer’s interpretation (Fig. 59).

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<sup>24</sup> Sandy Hunter, ‘28 Days Later: An Interview with Danny Boyle’ in Brent Dunham (ed.), *Danny Boyle Interviews* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), p. 79.



**Figure 59.** The distinct aesthetics of digital video and 35mm film

In his 1996 essay ‘True Lies: Perpetual Realism, Digital Images and Film Theory’ Stephen Prince writes that ‘digital imagining technologies are rapidly transforming nearly all phases of contemporary film production’ problematising notions of authenticity and posing challenges to film theory, particularly in relation to concepts of photographically based realism.<sup>25</sup> While there have been many and diverse responses to the issues identified by Prince, it is notable that texture has been perceived as one prism through which to interrogate the changing media landscape. As Lucy Fife Donaldson observes, texture, and the notions of touch and tactility with which it has been associated, ‘have received growing theoretical and philosophical attention in Film Studies since the 1990s, as they connect to prominent questions about our perception of film, its ontological status and aesthetics.’<sup>26</sup> A key text in this regard is Laura Marks’ work *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (2002) and in particular her chapter on haptic textuality, ‘Loving the Disappearing Image.’ Studying a range of avant-garde works which foreground the decay of analogue media, Marks demonstrates that in the 1980s and 1990s there has been a marked interest in questions concerning the damage and disappearance of film. She writes that: ‘these expected and unexpected disasters remind us that our mechanically reproduced media are indeed unique’<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> ‘Stephen Prince, ‘True Lies: Perpetual Realism, Digital Images and Film Theory’, *Film Quarterly* 49:3 (Spring, 1996), p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> Lucy Fife Donaldson, *Texture in Film* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 2-3.

<sup>27</sup> Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 93.

in extension alerting viewers to the volatility of celluloid and its limited lifespan. As Paul Grainge points out a self-consciousness about the textures of media was to be found not only in artists' work but also in popular cinema. Writing about the relationship between colour and memory in *Pleasantville* (Gary Ross, 1998) Grainge points out that the film is a 'pregnant, even indicative, memory text of the late 1990s: it articulates a discourse of cultural remembrance in a moment when textuality of memory has, itself, become hyperconscious.'<sup>28</sup>

In light of these debates fiction film's engagement with the texture of home movies can similarly be read as a reflection not only of the obsolescence of small-gauge film but of celluloid more broadly. This possibility is foregrounded in *Atlantis* in the relationship between film, memory, and animation. In its depiction, *Atlantis* presents the home movie not only as a metonym but also as a metaphor for memory. While the viewers are not urged to read the footage as an existing home movie — unlike the photograph which prompts Milo's recall it is not presented as a material artefact of the past — the sequence paradoxically draws attention to its status as a 'film' by overlaying the image with scratches which connote celluloid and by accompanying the images with the sound of a running projector. In doing so, the film not only deploys the texture of the home movie as a metonym for remembrance but indicates a parallel between the processes of memory and the mechanisms of cinema. Their similarity is to be found, *Atlantis* appears to be suggesting, in their shared capacity for animation. Film and memory are united in their aptitude for animating still images: memory in making the photograph come to life and film in literally animating a succession of still images. Perceived in light of the film's production context outlined above, the association between animation, film and memory in the home movie sequence may be read as a

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<sup>28</sup> Paul Grainge, 'Pleasantville and the textuality of media memory' in Paul Grainge (ed.), *Memory and Popular Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 2003).

recognition of the waning of celluloid, and a nostalgic reflection on the dawn of hand-drawn animation.

It is however also possible to read the home movie in *Atlantis* as a way of dramatising not the end of an era but also of a new beginning. This comes to the fore as we consider the moment in cinema history which the home movie is connoting. The film, as I have mentioned previously is set in 1914 and in consequence, Milo's imaginary home movie indicates a film from the late nineteenth century, a time conventionally associated with the beginning of cinema. The home movie does not therefore only connote an 'old' film, but it also draws the viewer's attention to a time when old technologies were new. Imaginatively taking the spectators back to the origins of film allows *Atlantis* to offer a reflection on the kind of cinema produced at a moment of emergence. This is perceptible in the subject matter of the home movie — the depiction of the grandfather — which forges an association between early cinema and explorers, casting early film as an unknown land. Its status as a home movie — an amateur, rather than a professional, film — further suggests a sense of discovery and experimentation. In its depiction of the home movie *Atlantis* can thus be perceived not only as offering a reflection on the obsolescence of a medium but also as an engagement with questions of emergence. At once connoting the old and the new, the home movie self-reflexively draws the viewer's attention to the tensions at the heart of *Atlantis* (and the 'neo-Disney' period more broadly); its suspension between the celluloid past and the digital future, at once expressing a longing for the one and an anticipation of the other.

While *Atlantis* approximates the analogue texture of the home movie to dramatise the tension between obsolete and emergent media, in its depiction of a faux-analogue aesthetic *28 Days Later* negotiates the boundary between the past and the present by blurring the distinction

between memory and fantasy. At first glance, the sequence signals itself both as remembrance and as a film. Depicting the protagonist's parents it connotes a time prior to the events of the narrative, while the framing of the contained film, which is perceptibly smaller than the frame of the containing one, suggests its status as a recording. This initial perception is reflected in the critical readings of the film, where the scene has been interpreted as both a home movie and as a memory (Jordan Carroll suggests a home movie viewing while Edwin Page reads it as a flashback.<sup>29</sup> Upon closer inspection however, it becomes clear that it is neither memory nor film, but rather a representation of the protagonist's fantasy. This is perceptible in the continuity between the costume worn by the hero in the present and the home movie which, in both cases, is the same green hospital scrubs he had donned thus far in the film. The status of the 'home movie' sequence as imagination is further emphasised as the film intercuts between the 'family film' and the hero, including Jim's responses to the questions posed by his parents.

As was the case with *Affliction* the 'home movie' in *28 Days Later* subtly undermines the authenticity of the scene, drawing attention to its status as a fantasy. Like *Affliction*, Boyle's film indicates the malleability of the 'home movie' (in this case, as in Schrader's, the images have been read as a family film). Yet while Schrader presents the 'not really a home movie' as film's fantasy about film, Boyle depicts it as digital imagination of analogue. Notably, the 'home movie' was not shot on the appropriate format, but exist as a digital approximation, where the grain and blur of the images appear to have been added in post-production. Consequently, in its depiction of the home movie aesthetic, Boyle not only deploys film as a texture of fantasy (which can also be perceived as the motivation behind

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<sup>29</sup> Jordan S. Carroll, 'The Aesthetics of Risk in *Dawn of the Dead* and *28 Days Later*', *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 23:1 (January 2012). Edwin Page, *Ordinary Heroes: The Films of Danny Boyle* (Empiricus Books: 2010).

the use of celluloid in the closing sequence) but also suggests how film based media can be imaginatively approximated in the new media landscape, anticipating the contemporary proliferation of analogue filter apps which allow users to effortlessly enhance their digital footage to convey a range of analogue looks.

## **Conclusion**

In *Residual Media* Charles Acland challenges the dominant perception of technological progress as consisting solely of a rupture from the past. He argues that media do not disappear as they become obsolete, and it is thus fundamental to acknowledge and engage with the persistence of the old in the new. As explored in my Review of Literature, the accounts of domestic and amateur small-gauge image making (cf. Patricia Zimmermann, Alan Kattelle and Heather Norris Nicholson) consistently delimit the history of home movies to the arrival of home video in the mid-1970s/early 1980s. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, the history of home movies in fiction films does not directly reflect this trajectory. The obsolescence of small-gauge technology did not result in a disappearance of home movies. To the contrary, as I have argued, it is as old media that home movies have reached unprecedented popularity, becoming an increasingly prominent cinematic presence since the 1980s. Importantly, while obsolescence did not mean the disappearance of home movies from the big screen, it did impact on their representation in significant ways. Studying cinema's depiction of home movies following the commercial obsolescence of the technology reveals a diverse, and shifting, imagination of the place and relevance of small-gauge domestic films on the big screen.

Analysing cinema's engagement with home movie obsolescence foregrounds the complexity of what constitutes a 'home movie' in a fiction film. This is already apparent in the works

which present small-gauge projection as a residual technology. Suggesting the continued relevance of home movies as a material repository of familial memories, *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* and *Home for the Holidays* indicate the archaic character of small-gauge image making; a characterisation which is particularly visible in Foster's film which features home video as the family's medium of choice. Containing a representation of both technologies of home movies and home video, *Home For the Holidays* indicates the changes that are taking place in the domestic image-making landscape, while also suggesting the ways in which, as Acland argues, 'the dynamics of culture bump along unevenly, dragging the familiar into novel contexts.'<sup>30</sup> Perceived in light of the possibility of home movies to video transfer (per the *Red Dragon* adaptations), such depictions indicate that attachment to the obsolete should be interpreted as expressing more than a desire to preserve family images. Storing the projection technology represents the families' refusal to fully relinquish the past, a characterisation found most prominently in *Arizona Dream*'s use of the home movie to accentuate Uncle Leo's inability to face up to his own obsolescence.

Starting in the 1990s, the representation of home movies as aids to memory became an outmoded depiction. Since the 1980s the characterisation of home movies-in-films began to shift away from technology (a prop in the diegesis) and towards a texture, becoming an element of cinema's stylistic vocabulary for the representation of the past. As I have previously argued regarding *Raging Bull*, the untethering of aesthetics from technology suggests the habituation of home movies in fiction films, indicating that the images no longer need to be introduced as a 'home movie' in order to be interpreted as such. However, in contrast to *Raging Bull*, films which deploy home movies as a texture of memory increasingly foreground and explore the imaginary character of home movies-within-films,

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<sup>30</sup> Acland, 'Introduction' in Acland (ed.), *Residual Media*, p. xix.

putting the images' status as 'films' into question. While *The Falcon and The Snowman* suggests the possibility that the images which the mother recalls may refer to pre-existing family footage, in more recent films there is a discernible shift away from plausibility. *Affliction* and *28 Days Later* highlight the imaginary character of the contained home movies, blurring the boundary between recording, memory, and fantasy. Putting the credibility of the represented footage into question, the films present and then reflect upon the creative liberties which fiction films take when using home movies as a cinematic device.

Untethering aesthetics from technology, the home movies contained in films of the 1990s and early 2000s complicate Acland's understanding of residue, which is concerned exclusively with the material persistence of the obsolete. The enduring appeal of the small-gauge texture gains further significance in the context of digital approximations of analogue aesthetics typified by smartphone applications such as the 'Super 8' app (affiliated with J.J. Abrams' *Super 8*, 2011). As demonstrated in the Review of Literature, the place of these images in the history of home movies is a subject of debate. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, although this footage might not be produced on small-gauge technology, by approximating its characteristic 'look' these images are in dialogue with home moviemaking, enriching our perception of the persistence of the old in the new media landscape. While Wade's memories in *Affliction* and Jim's fantasy in *28 Days Later* cannot unambiguously be characterised as home movies, their aesthetic association with domestic image production plays an important role in the reception of the sequences. By affiliating Wade's memories with home movies, Schrader heightens the emotional resonance of the scenes by drawing on the disjunction between the idyllic domesticity traditionally connoted by home movies and the violence which permeates the flashbacks. Alluding to the home movie, *Affliction* thus draws on the term's association with the 'home'; on the other hand,

*Atlantis* and *28 Days Later* approximate small-gauge texture to prompt a reflection on film as a medium. Deploying the small-gauge look to facilitate a self-reflexive inquiry into the changing media landscape (dramatising the transition between analogue and digital media), these films illuminate cinema's nuanced engagement with home movie obsolescence, indicating the different narratives it stimulates as an outmoded practice, technology and medium.

The deployment of small-gauge texture as an aesthetic metonym of anteriority continues to be an important facet of cinema's home movie imagination in films released in the early 2000s (for example: *View from the Top*, Bruno Barreto, 2003; *My Sister's Keeper*, Nick Cassavetes, 2009). The ubiquity of such portrayals have led the home movie to become something of a cliché, a characterisation which receives a poignant articulation in Richard Ayoade's *Submarine* (2010). The protagonist Oliver Tate (Craig Roberts) imagines the time he spends with his girlfriend Jordana (Yasmin Paige) as if it were shot and projected on 8mm film, saying 'I've already turned these moments into the Super-8 footage of memory'. Drawing attention to the protagonist's deliberate conflation between memory and recording, Ayoade at once deploys and denaturalises home movies as an established cinematic convention for depicting recall. This is heightened by recognising that the staging of the home movie is itself an intertextual allusion to a previous home movie-within-a-film: the opening credit sequence of *Mean Streets* (which I have discussed earlier in Chapter Three). In her study of *Submarine*, Caitlin Shaw draws attention to Ayoade's knowing referentiality, interpreting it as part of the film's broader 'retro' sensibility, a fascination with the fashionably old-fashioned styles of the past.<sup>31</sup> As Shaw writes: 'despite its eighties setting,

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<sup>31</sup> Drawing of Elizabeth Guffey (*Retro: The Culture of Revival*, 2006), Shaw defines retro as a form of revivalism that deliberately avoids historical accuracy in favour of style.

*Submarine* is not really about the past at all, but instead about the impact of recycled pasts – or, more specifically, retro – on the present.<sup>32</sup> At once an example of the cultural predilection for bygone texts, textures and technologies, *Submarine* is not the only work to deploy small-gauge films to explore the appeal the past holds for the present. As the following chapter will explore, this question comes to the fore in *Super 8* (2011) and *Frankenweenie* (2012), films which deploy home movies as at once an object of sentimental attachment and a lens through which that longing can be interrogated. Studying the depiction of amateur filmmaking in J.J. Abrams’ and Tim Burton’s work, the final chapter will interrogate cinema’s continued negotiation of home movie obsolescence, exploring the renewed interest in the technology of small-gauge filmmaking and nostalgic longing it inspires.

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<sup>32</sup> Caitlin Shaw, *Remediating the Eighties: Nostalgia and Retro in British Screen Fiction from 2005 to 2011* (Ph.D Thesis, De Montfort University, March 2015), p. 92.

## Chapter 6: To Hold On or to Let Go?

### Introduction

*Super 8* and *Frankenweenie* are films fascinated with the past: its texts and technologies. Set in the late 1970s and 1950s respectively, both works are cinephilic homages, *Super 8* to the blockbuster cinema of the 1970s and 1980s (and, in particular, to the films of Steven Spielberg), and *Frankenweenie* to B-grade horror film. Notably, both directors focus their return to the films of the past through a preoccupation with a bygone domestic image making landscape. In both films, the protagonists are adolescent moviemakers whose 8mm productions (*The Case*, a zombie horror film that closes *Super 8*; and *Monsters from Beyond*, a dinosaur disaster movie that opens *Frankenweenie*) are, like the films in which they are embedded, intertextual homages that echo, albeit on a smaller scale, the concerns of the containing works. Studying movie making depicted in *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie*, this chapter will argue that small-gauge films function as a self-reflexive device, occupying a privileged space as once cherished objects of a bygone past, as well as a lens through which that attachment can be interrogated.

In their depiction of small-gauge film, *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie* diverge from the trajectory of the home movie imagination identified in the previous chapter. Rather than as textures, Abrams and Burton represent home movies as material objects, infusing their return to the technology of the past with a nostalgic yearning. Simone Natale and Gabriele Balbi argue that nostalgia is one of the key fantasies attached to media following their obsolescence, writing that: ‘when a new medium partially or completely supplants a new

[sic. old] one, mechanisms of emotional affection ... can arise.’<sup>1</sup> As Katharina Niemyer illuminates, nostalgia not only indicates an attachment to the past but also often functions as a reflection on change. Studying nostalgia thus allows us to interrogate the attitudes towards both the obsolete and the novel, and to gauge and assess the fantasies and anxieties which accompany the transitions between them. Negotiating the relevance of the past for the present is a central concern to the projects of both *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie*, and is apparent in the directors’ choice to frame their nostalgic exploration via narratives of grief: the death of the mother in *Super 8* and of the beloved dog in *Frankenweenie*. Representing their protagonists’ struggles to come to terms with loss, the films pose broader questions about their own affection for the bygone. Yet while they propose different resolutions to this issue—*Super 8* foregrounding the need to overcome mourning, and *Frankenweenie* refusing to accept separation—their representation of past and present media do not always support those resolves, revealing a complex, and at times contradictory, negotiation over the continued relevance of the small-gauge on the big screen.

The amateur films embedded within *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie* are not all, strictly speaking, home movies. While *Super 8* contains footage which can undoubtedly be classed as home movie material (recordings depicting the hero as a child) *The Case* and *Monsters from Beyond* are more properly categorised as amateur fiction films. They do not seek to document familial togetherness but rather are invested in the creation of a fictional narrative and in the case of *The Case* are meant for an audience broader than the domestic (the film is shot for the fictional Cleveland International Amateur Film Festival). Nevertheless, I argue it is valuable to study them in the contexts of cinema’s home movie imagination, and there

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<sup>1</sup> Simone Natale and Gabriele Balbi, ‘Media and The Imaginary in History’ *Media History* 20 (2014), p. 211.

are two reasons for this. Firstly, I believe that their association with the domestic should not be dismissed. Both *The Case* and *Monsters from Beyond* are films shot in and around the home, and use everyday clothes and objects as costumes and props. In her study of amateur domestic comedies Karen Lury highlights the particular challenge that family fiction poses for categorisation, denoting them as ‘something other’.<sup>2</sup> While they are not quite home movies, such films have the capacity, as Lury writes, to ‘expose and defamiliarise’ domestic space and familial relations.<sup>3</sup> Drawing on Lury, this chapter will argue that it is productive to study *The Case* and *Monsters from Beyond* as examples of ‘something other’, as films that at once ‘expose and defamiliarise’ the domestic image making landscape which they stem from (‘the home’) and the professional cinema which they aspire to (‘the movies’). Exploring the children’s capacity to imaginatively transform mundane domesticity, Abrams and Burton emphasise the central role which cinema plays in fuelling the creativity of the amateur auteurs, a concern perceptible in the intertextuality of *The Case* and *Monsters from Beyond* which mirrors that of the containing works, thereby suggesting the role of the small-gauge as a self-reflexive device.

Secondly, it is generative to consider these small-gauge films in light of the meaning of ‘home’ connoted by nostalgia. As Svetlana Boym illuminates the term is comprised of two Greek words, *nostos* meaning ‘return home’ and *algia*, meaning ‘longing’.<sup>4</sup> It was originally developed in the sixteenth century as a medical term to describe homesickness, an ailment that could be cured by returning the afflicted patient back to their domicile. Yet, as Boym elucidates, by the end of the eighteenth century the term acquired a different meaning,

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<sup>2</sup> Karen Lury, ‘The Fragile Magic of the Home: Amateur Domestic Comedies and the Intimate Geography of Childhood’ in Ryan Shand and Ian Craven (eds.), *Small-Gauge Storytelling*, p. 261.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Svetlana Boym, *Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

denoting a longing for home understood not in the literal sense of space but used to refer to a former time, usually that of one's childhood. In interviews both directors have been vocal about their own 8mm roots, suggesting the films' semi-autobiographical dimension.<sup>5</sup> While it is not my intention to perceive *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie* as reflections on the directors' biographies, this chapter proposes that it is productive to consider *The Case* and *Monsters from Beyond* as movies which connote 'home' in the nostalgic sense, focalising the filmmakers' longing for a bygone moving image making culture of their youth. Studying these examples in the context of the home movie imagination illuminates fiction film's continued negotiation of the meaning of, and relationship between, the 'home' and the 'movie', as well as the shifting significance of the obsolete technology on the big screen.

### **Wistful returns**

Set in the town of Lilian, Ohio in 1979, *Super 8* tells the story of a group of teenagers shooting amateur zombie film *The Case*. Among them is the film's protagonist Joe Lamb (Joel Courtney), who is struggling to come to terms with his mother's death and his burgeoning romantic feelings for his friend Alice (Elle Fanning). The narrative of the young filmmakers is interwoven with an extra-terrestrial plot of an alien who escapes military confinement following a train derailment in Lilian. Taking revenge for his mistreatment by the army, the enraged creature wreaks havoc on the small town, kidnapping many of its inhabitants, including Alice. Joe and his friends set out to save her; the rescue concludes as

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<sup>5</sup> In interview with Richard Corliss Abrams admits that 'the film was obviously inspired by my childhood experiences doing these movies' while Stella Papamichael quotes Burton describing *Frankenweenie* as a 'memory piece.' See Richard Corliss, "What the Hell Would Spielberg Do Here?": J.J. Abrams Talks *Super 8*, *Time* (6 June 2011). <<http://entertainment.time.com/2011/06/06/super-8-director-jj-abrams-interview/>> accessed: 22 May 2015; Stella Papamichael 'Tim Burton revives a dying art but is he thinking of the children?', *Radio Times* (10 October 2012) <<http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2012-10-10/frankenweenie-review--tim-burton-revives-a-dying-art-but-is-he-thinking-of-the-children>> accessed: 22 May 2015.

the hero faces the monster and persuades it to let go of its grudge against humans. While the encounter leads to the alien's departure, it also facilitates the resolution of the protagonist's grief, which is symbolically enacted in the film's finale when Joe relinquishes his mother's locket—a cherished souvenir—to the departing spaceship.

Inspired by James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and a remake of Burton's own 1984 short film of the same title, *Frankenweenie* focuses on young Victor Frankenstein (voiced by Charlie Tahan), a reclusive child with a love for science. When his beloved dog (and the star of his films) Sparky is hit by a car, Victor decides to re-animate his deceased pet. As the word of Sparky's resurrection spreads, the other children conspire to steal Victor's secret for life beyond the grave in order to win the first prize at the school science fair. The experiments get out of hand and a horde of undead pets is unleashed upon the fictional town of New Holland. The most dangerous of these is Weird Girl's (Catherine O'Hara) mutant bat-cat Mr. Whiskers. Facing the feline in a final showdown at a mini golf course, Sparky manages to save the day at the cost of his own life. No longer terrified by the dog's monstrosity, the town's people gather together to (re-)resurrect Victor's beloved pet, and he is revived once more in the film's finale.

*Super 8* is a film fascinated with small-gauge filmmaking. It contains a diverse range of non-professional films which include: the children's amateur zombie film *The Case*, Joe's childhood home movies depicting his mother, and accidental footage of the alien captured by the camera which the teenagers abandoned whilst fleeing the train crash. The film's fascination with a bygone image making landscape is already apparent in its title, which is a reference to an Eastman Kodak motion picture format which was released in 1965 as an improvement on their previous 'Regular' 8mm stock. Technology historian Alan Kattelle

has praised the system, writing that: ‘with the arrival of Super 8, motion picture equipment for the amateur had reached a high plateau of versatility and sophistication.’<sup>6</sup> It is notable, however, that as Kattelle illuminates, Super 8 was also one of the final developments in the history of small-gauge film, which, as I have explored in Chapter Four, declined in popularity in the 1980s following the introduction of video for the commercial market. Set in 1979 *Super 8* thus takes place at the end point of the format’s commercial popularity and the sense of the end of an era subtly shades Abrams’ film, infusing its representation of domestic media with a melancholic sense of impending loss.

While *Super 8* takes place just as small-gauge filmmaking was facing impending obsolescence, *Frankenweenie* is set in the loosely defined 1950s, sometime during the post-war consumer boom, a time which, as Patricia Zimmermann indicates in *Reel Families*, marked the widespread popularity of domestic filmmaking.<sup>7</sup> Although Burton’s film does not display the same zeal for small-gauge image making as *Super 8*, the film-within-the-film is nonetheless of crucial importance to the project of the work, offering a condensation of its central themes and preoccupations. *Frankenweenie* communicates its interest in small-gauge image making from the outset, opening with a family screening of Victor’s film—*Monsters from Beyond*—which stars Sparky as the dinosaur Sparkysaurus. The contained film is, like *Frankenweenie* itself, a mix of stop-motion animation (using toys and domestic appliances as characters and props) and live action in the scenes featuring the dog (live action, that is, within the diegetic world). The use of homely objects in the boy’s film draws attention to Victor’s creativity, indicating his capacity to enchant and re-enliven everyday objects. It also

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<sup>6</sup> Alan D. Kattelle, ‘The Evolution of Amateur Motion Picture Equipment 1895-1965’ *Journal of Film and Video* 38:3/4 (Summer/Fall 1986), p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> It is however possible to approximate *Frankenweenie*’s period by its use of the characteristic props typically associated with 1950s prosperity such as the television set, the rounded fridge and Chevrolet car as well as in the costumes and hairstyles of the characters, particularly Mrs. Frankenstein’s calf-length flared dresses and flip coiffure.

however bespeak of his isolation (Fig. 60). The pet being the only living presence within Victor's film establishes the boy as a lonely auteur, a depiction which mirrors Burton's own creative persona. In contrast, *The Case* is presented as a collective endeavour, a characterisation which reflects Abrams' accounts of his youthful image making pursuits.<sup>8</sup> The parallels between young amateur and professional filmmakers at once suggest the films' semi-autobiographical dimension (which both directors have divulged in interviews) as well as indicating the self-reflexive role of the contained films.



**Figure 60.** Transforming the domestic environment

The self-reflexive deployment of the small-gauge productions is further foregrounded as we observe that both *The Case* and *Monsters from Beyond* are intertextual homages. In this, the amateur production mirror, albeit on a smaller scale, the referencing of the containing works.

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<sup>8</sup> Like the protagonists of *Super 8*, J.J. Abrams, the film's producer Bryan Burk and cinematographer Larry Fong were aspiring amateur auteurs, whose blockbuster-inspired 8mm work caught the attention of Steven Spielberg who asked the young filmmakers to edit his own childhood films. Katie Puckrick, 'JJ Abrams: 'I called Spielberg and he said yes' in *The Guardian* (1 August 2011) < <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/aug/01/jj-abrams-spielberg-super-8> > accessed: 22 May 2015.

*The Case* alludes to George A. Romero—a prominent horror filmmaker of the 1970s known for his zombie films such as *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *Dawn of the Living Dead* (1978)—by naming the chemical plant which manufactures the zombie virus ‘Romero Chemicals’, and through the Romero film posters in the bedroom of the film’s director, Charles (Riley Griffiths) (Fig 61, left). Charles’ fascination with the horror filmmaker obliquely reflects *Super 8*’s preoccupation with Steven Spielberg—the executive producer of the film and Abrams’ childhood hero—whose influence is palpable in the tone and style of the production.<sup>9</sup> A key inspiration for *Monsters from Beyond* is *The Lost World* (Harry O. Hoyt, 1925), an adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle’s novel. This reference is identifiable not only through their shared narrative preoccupation with dinosaurs running amok in a modern day city (Hoyt’s film ends with a Brontosaurus set loose in London), but also in the use of stop-motion animation (*Lost World*’s dinosaurs were animated by stop-motion pioneer Willis O’Brien). Thus, while *Frankenweenie* has often been read as a semi-autobiographical film — particularly in its representation of Victor and his relationship with Sparky — it is also a cinematic autobiography, an homage to Burton’s formative influences and inspirations (Fig. 61, right).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Spielberg’s influence on *Super 8* is perceptible in the film’s narrative—the interweaving of a family tragedy with an extra-terrestrial plot recalls Spielberg’s *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and *E.T.: Extra-Terrestrial* (1982)—as well as in the tone and style of the production, particularly the frequent use of an expression of wonder which critic Kevin B. Lee has termed as ‘the Spielberg Face’ and Abrams’ signature lens flares. Kevin B. Lee ‘Essential Viewing: The Spielberg Face’, *Fandor* (13 December 2011) <<https://www.fandor.com/keyframe/essential-viewing-the-spielberg-face>> accessed: 22 May 2015.

<sup>10</sup> The reading of *Frankenweenie* as a cinematic, or cinephillic, autobiography is further enhanced by Burton’s admission, in interview with Anthony Gibson, that while Victor’s classmates were partially based on real people they are also references to horror icons such as Boris Karloff and Peter Lore, while the design for the science teacher Mr. Ryzuski bears a resemblance to Vincent Price. Anthony Gibson, ‘Tim Burton: Disney was Brave to Let Me Make Frankenweenie in Black and White’, *Metro* (6 March 2013) <<http://metro.co.uk/2013/03/06/tim-burton-disney-was-brave-to-let-me-make-frankenweenie-in-black-and-white-3526469/#ixzz3wxYwxhn1>> accessed: 2 January 2016.



**Figure 61.** Homages to horror and stop motion

*The Case* and *Monsters from Beyond*, however, not only serve to focalise the film’s interest in the cinema of the past but also allude to Abrams’ and Burton’s broader concern with return. This theme comes to the fore as we take the narrative preoccupations of the contained works — with the zombie and the dinosaur — into account (Fig. 62). In their work, Garnet Hertz and Jussi Parikka recognize the critical potential of the zombie as a metaphor for the endurance of the obsolete which, by hanging around long past its due date, grates against the dominant thrust towards incessant innovation and disposability.<sup>11</sup> The dinosaur, similarly can be perceived as a metaphor for return. As Svetlana Boym argues, in Northern American culture the dinosaur features as a privileged figure of nostalgia, symbolising ‘an attempt to make the past come alive’ and frequently also charting the consequences of seeing that desire fulfilled.<sup>12</sup> Like the living-dead, Sparkysaurus thus indicates a concern with the persistence of the old in the new (particularly considering the modern day setting of *Monsters From Beyond*). At the same time, both figures also possess a potentially monstrous dimension, suggesting the uncanny character of the persistence of the obsolete which I have explored previously in the study of *Hannibal* in Chapter Four. While Hertz and Parikka consider the persistence of the past as a purely positive phenomenon, Boym’s study of *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) suggests that the desire to bring the obsolete back to life may have

<sup>11</sup> Jussi Parikka and Garnet Hertz, ‘Zombie Media: Circuit Bending Media Archaeology into an Art Method’, *Leonardo*, 45:5 (2012).

<sup>12</sup> Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, p. 33.

less than fortuitous consequences. Charles Acland similarly acknowledges that the old can at times appear disconcerting. He writes that: ‘for an era such as ours that puts a premium on advancement and change above all else, declarations of the presence of the past can be confusing or alarming.’<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 62.** Figures of return

Reflecting on the persistence of the obsolete, Acland perceives horror and nostalgia as two opposite pulls in relation to our encounter with the past. While horror suggests how uncanny and disturbing the perseverance of the bygone can be, nostalgia seeks to find comfort in continuity with what has gone before. In his study of the home movie horror film *Sinister* (Scott Derrickson, 2012) — which as we may recall, depicts home movies as haunted media inhabited by a murderous demon — Marc Olivier offers another interpretation of the interplay between horror and nostalgia, perceiving them as cyclical phenomena.<sup>14</sup> He argues that horror arises from an over saturation with nostalgia, interpreting the mediaphobia expressed by Derrickson’s film as indicating a weariness with the contemporary predilection for retro photo filter photography. In contrast to the ‘home movies’ depicted in *Sinister* (which are revealed to be snuff films documenting the murders of families) the small-gauge films in *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie* are not particularly horrifying. The living-dead depicted

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<sup>13</sup> Charles R. Acland ‘Introduction’ in Charles R. Acland (ed.), *Residual Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), pp. xiii.

<sup>14</sup> Marc Olivier, ‘Sinister Celluloid in the Age of Instagram’ *Refractory*, 2014 < <http://refractory.unimelb.edu.au/2014/06/26/instagram-olivier/>> accessed: 7 June 2015.

in *The Case* and the dinosaur in *Monsters from Beyond* are both perceptibly non-threatening and their potentially abject qualities (such as leaking blood or other fluids), voracious appetites and destructive capacities are diffused by the humour which arises from their clumsy special effects. If, as Marc Olivier argues, Derrickson's horror indicates a weariness with the contemporary predilection for nostalgia, and attempts to turn this cultural fascination into revulsion, Abrams and Burton offer a contrary message about persistence, indicating that while the proliferation of the past in the present may initially appear unsettling, it is fundamentally harmless and charming.

Notably, the small-gauge films contained in *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie* function not only as vehicles for but also objects of nostalgia for a bygone cinema and image making culture. In their depiction of amateur films, *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie* differ from the prevalent usage of small-gauge imagery which, as the previous chapter has illuminated, since the mid 1980s has tended to privilege the 'degraded' aesthetic of the format (integrated as part of the cinematic vocabulary for the depiction of past) over a representation of its technology. In contrast, both Abrams and Burton foreground the *material* culture of the past practices of domestic image making. The focus on materiality is apparent in *Frankenweenie*; as the screening of *Monsters from Beyond* concludes, the camera lingers on the dismantling of the machinery—as Victor takes the projector up to his studio in the attic, while Mrs. Frankenstein folds the screen away in the living room and hides it behind the chimney—prominently foregrounding the physical dimension of the equipment which sets images in motion, and its place at the home.



Figure 63. Wistful product placement and self-reflexive commentary

Representing the now obsolete technologies at a time of their dominance, *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie* fondly recall the time of their commercial ubiquity. In both cases the protagonists occupy a world saturated with home movies and home moviemakers. When Charles' camera is broken during the train crash, the young filmmakers simply borrow a substitute from Joe's father, a detail which at once indicates the wide spread of the technology and locates the children's amateur within a broader domestic image making landscape. Similarly in *Frankenweenie*, Victor is not the only small-gauge filmmaker; his friend Toshiaki (James Hiroyuki Liao) is also shown to be in possession of a camera which he uses to record the return of his own undead pet, an oversized turtle called Shelly. The nostalgic yearning for the media of the past which the films engender is thus predicated upon a disjunction: between the widespread availability of the technology at the time of the films' setting and its contemporary scarcity. *Super 8* offers a poignant illustration of this in a scene in which Joe and Charles take the broken camera to the camera store where numerous accessories and boxes of film are prominently on display. A cardboard Kodak logo hovers

over a pyramid of KodaChrome films and its appearance is wistful, a product placement with nothing to sell; it fuels the film's nostalgic longing by igniting a desire for the things of the past which are largely unavailable for contemporary consumption, and which the digital remediation of an analogue aesthetic cannot alleviate (Fig. 63).



**Figure 64.** 'I don't want him in my heart. I want him here with me'

As Katharina Niemeyer argues, nostalgia is a bittersweet sentiment, and as such entails not only a celebration of the past, but also a melancholic recognition of its inevitable passing. Both Abrams and Burton recognise this ambiguity, and foreground it by framing their nostalgic explorations through narratives of grief. *Super 8* opens with the death of Joe's mother and her absence is central to the project of *Super 8*, not only narratively—providing Joe with an arc for his maturation—but also tonally, imbuing the film with a sense of longing.<sup>15</sup> The loss is accentuated throughout the film in the form of the mother's locket which Joe carries around with him for comfort. Victor similarly seeks to keep a hold of the past after he loses his beloved dog. In an attempt to prolong his encounters with Sparky, after the dog's death the boy revisits *Monsters from Beyond*; the somber tone of the scene, however, contrasts starkly with the exuberance of the opening (Fig. 64).<sup>16</sup> The screening

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<sup>15</sup> As Caetlin Benson-Allott points out in her study of Abrams' affective use of lens flare, the setting of the accident serves to sharpen the sense of loss which the opening creates by hinting at the imminent decline of the US steel industry. Caetlin Benson-Allott, 'Slants of Light' *Film Quarterly* 65:1 (2011).

<sup>16</sup> The second screening also introduces Burton's interest in repetition, which is central to *Frankenweenie*'s exploration of nostalgia.

emphasises the ephemerality of the images—the film is projected on a bed sheet, with folds and crevices of the fabric perceptible beneath—intensifying the illusory sense of presence that home movies convey. In a parallel scene, Abrams too presents cinema as a ghostly medium; watching the home movies of his mother, Joe remarks that: ‘It’s weird seeing her like this, like she’s still here.’ (Fig. 65) Both sequences offer a meditation on the protagonist’s loss, but can also be read self-reflexively as a commentary on the film’s own nostalgic projects and the directors’ attempts to return to the past in the form of moving images.



**Figure 65.** ‘It’s like she’s still here’, screens of mourning

Framing their nostalgic explorations through narratives of grief not only allows Abrams and Burton to add poignancy to their yearning, but also poses questions concerning a coming to terms with loss. As I have already suggested, however, *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie* diverge in their proposed resolutions. On the one hand, *Super 8* advocates letting go, and the final scene of the film symbolically enacts laying the past to rest as Joe relinquishes the mother’s locket which he had clung to throughout the narrative. *Frankenweenie* on the other hand refuses to accept separation; rejecting the finality of the pet’s death, Victor converts his film studio in the attic into a science laboratory, and turns from animator to resurrectionist, to bring Sparky back to life. Considering these dissimilar conclusions, it is instructive to study how the directors’ narrative resolutions relate to the nostalgia for the things of the past professed by the film. Studying how Abrams and Burton locate their fascination with the

obsolete in the new media landscape, the following sections will investigate the films' attitudes towards nostalgia, which at times contradict the resolutions proposed by their narratives.

### **CGI meets DIY**

While it is fascinated with the past, *Super 8* embraces contemporary forms of visual storytelling. Its dual interest in the filmmaking of the past and the media of present is apparent in the film's promotional material (Fig. 66). The posters for *Super 8* pay tribute to those of the 1970s and 1980s, signalling the film's affinity with the Blockbuster Renaissance by replicating the characteristic composition and hand-drawn style of the posters of the time. However, the marketing also makes use of contemporary platforms and includes a smartphone application entitled 'Super8' which promises to 'turn your iPhone into a vintage camera,' and a tie in with the video game *Portal 2* which features a hidden level that transports the players to the inside of the train which carries the alien. The marketing appears to present two different readings of the project of *Super 8*; while the posters signal the film's commitment to a nostalgic exploration of cinematic heritage (fostering a fantasy that *Super 8* belongs to the time of its setting) the transmedia tie-ins suggest a negotiation around the position and status of the obsolete in the new media landscape. The marketing's ambiguous stance echoes *Super 8*'s own hesitancy in gauging its attitude towards the past. Captivated by the possibilities of digital special effects, Abrams' work dramatises the attempt to reconcile the new with his longing for the obsolete.



**Figure 66.** The old and the new. Note the visual affiliation between the posters for *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Steven Spielberg, 1978) and *Super 8*

An interest in the potential of digital media is evidenced in *Super 8* itself and comes to the fore in the frequent deployment of computer generated imagery. The delight which the film takes in the spectacular possibilities of CGI is seen in the train crash sequence which occurs early in the film. The crash's cascade of fiery computer-generated debris is the film's most spectacular moment; the force and duration of the explosion are extensive, and practically gratuitous. The derailment of the train is one of the film's many moments of magnificent destruction, all of which are occasioned by, or produced in response to, the film's key CGI figure, the alien (Fig. 67). Although the appearance of the creature is withheld until the film's finale, because of the consistent depiction of digital effects as metonyms for the monster, the extra-terrestrial is arguably *Super 8*'s symbolic figure of new media (in the manner in which the zombie can be perceived as its metaphor for the obsolete). This is suggested not only visually (the creature's body is entirely CG), but also on the level of characterisation which emphasises the unknowability of the alien and its technological sophistication.<sup>17</sup> Inserted into a faithfully recreated 1979 diegesis, the CGI alien anticipates the media transitions yet

<sup>17</sup> The alien's unknowability and sophistication is foregrounded in the scientific films which depict the military researchers' incapability to comprehend neither the mechanics of the alien spaceship nor the creature's biology, origin or culture.

to come, anchoring the film's concern with the place and role of new media in narratives about the obsolete.



**Figure 67.** The alien as the figure of the digital imagination in *Super 8*

The train crash offers not only a thrilling sequence of digital spectacle, but also a key moment of intersection between the DIY and CGI narratives.<sup>18</sup> The derailing of the military transport is witnessed by the film's protagonists, who had been in the process of shooting a scene at the station. As the children frantically seek safety from the explosion, they leave the equipment behind, including a camera which is left running and acts as witness to the crash and its aftermath. The recording references a horror genre trope of 'found footage' films, in which horror is enhanced by stylising the footage to resemble amateur recordings. Alexandra Heller-Nicholas argues that found footage horror relies on film's aesthetic appeal to realism, 'to create a space... where spectators can enjoy having their boundaries pushed, where our confidence that we know where the line between fact and fiction lies is directly challenged'.<sup>19</sup> The 'accidental' footage in *Super 8* functions in a similar way, except the

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<sup>18</sup> The duality of *Super 8* can be traced to the genesis of the film which began as two separate projects which Abrams was struggling to get off the ground until Spielberg suggested that he should combine them. See: Geoff Boucher 'Steven Spielberg: "Super 8" is the first true J.J. Abrams film', *Los Angeles Times* (2 June 2011) <<http://herocomplex.latimes.com/movies/steven-spielberg-super-8-is-the-first-true-j-j-abrams-film/>> accessed: 22 May 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, *Found Footage Horror Films: Fear and the Appearance of Reality* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2014, p. 13.

boundary it blurs is not between fact and fiction, but rather between analogue home movie and digital special effects.

At first, the accidental footage suggests the incompatibility of the technologies of the past and present. The train crash—the spectacular centre of Abrams’ work—is depicted as unrepresentable on small-gauge film. The camera’s view is clouded by thick smoke and the film makes a point of emphasising this as Charles draws attention to the inferiority of the footage, saying: ‘look at all that smoke. We can’t use this’. However, as the sequence progresses, its representation of the relation between *Super 8*’s different media forms shifts. When the smoke settles, the film reveals an image of a creature climbing out of the train wreckage. In contrast to the train crash which showcases its own spectacularity, the alien is integrated into the home movie, its computer-generated body subject to the small-gauge’s technological limitation: it is barely visible in the poorly lit conditions and partially obscured by the crack in the lens which cuts across the screen (Fig. 68). Introducing the alien through the analogue found footage ‘authenticates’ the creature (anchoring it as part of the world of Abrams’ film as it is depicted through the media of the period) but exposes an extra-diegetic tension between the director’s stated ambition to shoot the amateur sequences on Super 8 film and the difficulties involved in representing the CGI creature on this particular format. As Larry Fong (the film’s cinematographer) elucidates, unlike *The Case* and the home movie, the accidental footage was not recorded on Super 8 but on Super 16, as the special effects team was unable to work on 8mm to generate the image of the alien. Fong reveals that Abrams was at first reluctant to give in to the special effects team’s request to shoot on 35mm, but finally he settled for a compromise to use 16mm. He states that: ‘it bummed J.J. and me out but we couldn’t ignore ILM’s [Industrial Light&Magic, the special effects

studio] predicament.’<sup>20</sup> The found footage scene is thus built upon a compromise, one which suggests a successful integration between the CGI and DIY narratives, but which comes at the price of sacrificing nostalgic fidelity to technological purism.



**Figure 68.** Integrating CGI spectacle into the DIY narrative

Should we read this compromise as symbolic of the film’s message about nostalgia? Abrams’ conclusion appears to indicate a positive resolution, suggesting that an encounter with the new propels Joe to let go of the past. The ending of *Super 8* is however more problematic than it first appears. After Joe relinquishes the medallion, the alien also takes his leave and the characters remain standing among the burning debris of Lilian. The final images offer a summary of the impact of the CGI extra-terrestrial on the nostalgic setting, which appears to have been exclusively negative: throughout the film the creature has done little else but devour the supporting cast and demolish the mise-en-scène. The film’s positive resolution thus entails not only Joe’s completion of grief (the message to let go of the past), but also the alien’s departure and an end to the destruction. This, however, brings into

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<sup>20</sup> Iain Stasukevich, ‘Monsters out of the Box’ *American Cinematographer* 92:7 (June 2011) p. 27.

question the success of the integration between the novel and the obsolete, and suggests that while Abrams is prepared to envisage their coexistence, he is ultimately unable to embrace it. Rather than an anticipation of the arrival of new media, *Super 8*'s depiction of the alien communicates an anxiety about the impact the new will have on the obsolete. Its consistent characterisation as voracious, vengeful, and incomprehensible betrays a profound fear of change. The alien's depiction as a metonym for new media is, however, anachronistic; it comes too late for 2011, a time when digital special effects are de rigour in a Hollywood blockbuster. This suggests in turn that transition which *Super 8* dreads has thus already taken place. The film's ending on the image of ruins rather than on regeneration can therefore be interpreted as visualising the film's wider inability to move on, and Abrams' difficulty in envisaging a time after *Super 8* and the Blockbuster Renaissance.

### **Good and bad monsters**

In contrast to Joe, who relinquishes the material remnant of his attachment to the mother, Victor refuses to let go of the past. An intertextual nod to James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), Sparky's resurrection also reverberates with references to Burton's own work, specifically to the 1984 live action short film *Frankenweenie* which provided the template for the 2012 animation. The short was shot early in the director's career, at a time when Burton was working as an animator for Disney. It was intended to be shown as an accompaniment to the 1984 re-release of *Pinocchio*; it was, however, shelved after receiving a PG rating (which meant it could not be screened alongside a G-rated film) and soon afterwards Burton and Disney parted ways.<sup>21</sup> Between the two *Frankenweenies* Burton had collaborated with Disney on occasion, yet as Tim Adams points out in an interview with the

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<sup>21</sup> The film was granted a small release in the UK (alongside *Baby: Secret of a Lost Legend*) and was released on video in the US alongside the release of *Batman Returns*.

director, the remake is of particular symbolic importance and the parallels between Victor's resurrection of Sparky and Burton's (re-)animation of *Frankenweenie* are hard to overlook.<sup>22</sup> Is the film's transformation, like Sparky's, merely superficial (the pet's character remains essentially unchanged by the revival) or does it signal a fundamental change of attitude towards the material? In order to evaluate this, it is instructive to look at the amateur movies that open the two films—*Monsters from Long Ago* in the 1984 version and *Monsters from Beyond* in 2012—which offer a condensation and intensification of the concerns of the containing works.

The two differences between the *Frankenweenie* films (and the home made films contained within them) which become immediately apparent are technical: a shift from live-action to stop-motion and from 2D to 3D. As Burton's biographer Mark Salisbury illuminates, Burton had always intended for *Frankenweenie* to be an animation but the costs proved prohibitive at the time.<sup>23</sup> Remaking the film as it has originally been envisaged, the director's use of stop-motion can therefore be read as a restorative gesture. This choice, however, resonates differently in the contemporary media landscape than it would have done 28 years before, and this becomes apparent in critics' consistent reading of the film's stop-motion as an

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<sup>22</sup> Tim Adams argues that returning to the studio 28 years later to direct the film according to his initial vision 'no doubt feels a little like a score finally settled.' Tim Adams, 'Tim Burton: "The love and life and death stuff was stewing from the start"', *The Observer* (7 October 2012). <<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2012/oct/07/tim-burton-frankenweenie-interview>> accessed: 22 May 2015.

<sup>23</sup> While the 1984 film is not animated, it nonetheless signals its interest in animation in the opening home movie. In both *Monsters from Long Ago* and *Monsters from Beyond*, Sparky is the only living presence; the supporting cast is made up of inanimate objects. While the manner in which Burton's protagonist brings them to life differ—in the 1984 version embellished potholders act as dinosaur puppets while in the 2012 Victor animates his toys using stop-motion—both opening sequences introduce Victor as an animator, a role which foreshadows his persona as a resurrectionist. The parallel between Victor's filmmaking with his revival of Sparky—a comparison which is further cemented as the boy converts his attic film studio into a laboratory—is, I believe, central to Burton's conception of filmmaking. The analogy suggests that director's work is motivated not only by a desire to bring things to life, but also to reanimate, that is, to bring them back, an interest which is perceptible in the dense nostalgic intertextuality of Burton's oeuvre.

opposition to digital cinema. Adams positions *Frankenweenie* as a respite after the director's turbulent experience of digital animation in *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), while David Cox perceives it as an example of 'digital-disdain': a snobbishly high-brow rebuttal of popular contemporary media.<sup>24</sup> While I would disagree that Burton's film displays high-brow pretensions (its intertextual references are drawn from the popular end of the spectrum) I am inclined, in this case, to read stop-motion as oriented towards the cinema of the past, particularly in light of the intertextual acknowledgment of Willis O'Brien in Victor's amateur film.



**Figure 69.** 3D home movies. Indicating a reflexivity about *Frankenweenie*'s own domestic reception

Burton's use of 3D has similarly been perceived as a nostalgic reference. As Mark Kermode argues, stereoscopic filmmaking in *Frankenweenie* has 'an appropriately nostalgic feel,' stylistically referring to the films of the 1950s 3D boom such *The Creature of the Black Lagoon* (Jack Arnold, 1954) and *The House of Wax* (André De Toth, 1953).<sup>25</sup> The director's commitment to a nostalgic (re-)appreciation of the history of stereoscopic filmmaking is already apparent in the opening small-gauge film which forges an association between 3D and obsolete technology (Fig. 69). While the connection which Burton draws is an

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<sup>24</sup> David Cox, 'Stop Admiring Frankenweenie! Why Stop-motion Doesn't Move Me', *The Guardian* (15 October 2012)

<<http://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2012/oct/15/frankenweenie-stop-motion-animation>> accessed: 22 May 2015.

<sup>25</sup> Kermode, Mark, 'Mark Kermode Reviews Frankenweenie', *Kermode Uncut* (19 October 2012) <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0100c31>> accessed: 22 May 2015.

*imaginative* one (his home movie is an animated approximation) it is not purely *imaginary*. Intentionally or not—the director himself remains evasive on the subject—*Frankenweenie*'s portrayal of amateur 3D filmmaking indicates a factual but little discussed facet of small-gauge film.<sup>26</sup> Locating 3D within the context of domestic small-gauge filmmaking, Burton's film functions as a media archeological text, bringing a forgotten history of the practice to light. In contrast to Abrams' attempts to combine DIY and CGI, *Frankenweenie* appears to bypass the novel altogether, using past texts, technologies, and techniques to tell a story concerned with the endurance of the obsolete.



**Figure 70.** *Monster from Long Ago* and *Monsters from Beyond*

It is, however, not only the media landscape that has shifted between 1984 and 2012: cultural attitudes towards nostalgia have also undergone significant changes. *Frankenweenie* reflects on these cultural transitions through its depiction and defence of monstrosity. While both works open with Victor's dinosaur spectacles, there are important differences in their depiction of the creatures and their environment (already suggested by the adjustments to their titles) (Fig. 70). While *Monsters from Long Ago* takes place in a pre-modern setting, *Monsters from Beyond* is set in a modern day city in which the dinosaurs appear distinctly out of their time. The changes to the mise-en-scène are accompanied by further modifications to the narratives. In *Monsters from Long Ago*, Sparkysaurus emerges as

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<sup>26</sup> This is explored by Ray Zone in *3DIY: 3D Moviemaking on an Indy Budget* (Focal Press, 2012).

neither the hero nor the villain of the piece. The plot is somewhat loose, as the dog comes on screen, walks off, tries to catch a pterodactyl, but then distractedly trips over the cardboard volcano. *Monsters from Beyond*, however, has a clear-cut narrative, where the pterodactyl angrily menaces the town and is stopped in his tracks by the heroic Sparkysaurus. While these changes humorously reflect on the realities of working with real vs. animated dogs, they also suggest a more profound shift in *Frankenweenie*'s perception of nostalgia. The change in the character and role of Sparkysaurus anticipates a narrative shift which occurs between the two films; while in the 1984 film the conflict is centred on the town's growing acceptance of Sparky's monstrosity, the 2012 film maintains this narrative but adds a further tension between good and bad monsters: Sparky and the pets reanimated by the other children.



**Figure 71.** Mr. Whiskers, nostalgia without loss

It is possible to read the added distinction between good and bad monsters as Burton's defence of the film's nostalgia against a broader cultural landscape flooded with texts and textures of the recent past (a phenomenon Niemyer terms as the 'nostalgia boom' and Simon Reynolds describes as 'retromania').<sup>27</sup> This comes to the fore as Sparky's characterisation is contrasted with that of the other un-dead pets, and particularly with the film's chief

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<sup>27</sup> Reynolds argues that whilst an interest in the past is not a novel cultural phenomenon, 'there has never been a society in human history so obsessed with the cultural artifacts of its own immediate past.' [emphasis in original] Simon Reynolds, *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011), p. xiii.

antagonist, Weird Girl's bat-cat Mr. Whiskers (whose winged apparition echoes the menacing pterodactyl of *Monsters from Beyond*). Unlike the other resurrected animals, whose return is, at least in part, motivated by a longing for reunion, the cat's transformation is accidental and arises from curiosity rather than grief. Striving to imitate Victor's experiment, Weird Girl chooses as her subject a dead bat brought in by her feline companion. Mr. Whiskers, however, is unwilling to part with his prey and when the lightning strikes it hits both the cat and the bat, fusing them together into a single monstrous entity (Fig.71). The difference between the two types of return envisaged by Burton is reminiscent of the distinction proposed by Paul Grainge between 'nostalgia mode' and 'nostalgia mood.' Mr. Whiskers represents the latter, standing for a hollow fascination with the past which takes the form of repetition of surface styles. The feline symbolises a 'nostalgia divorced from the necessary concept of loss' and this is made clear as, unlike the other resurrected pets, the cat is alive when he is hit by lightning.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, Sparky is the film's figure of 'good' nostalgia (and Grainge's nostalgia mode), an attachment to the past that arises from grief and whose return is fuelled by love and not merely a morbid or superficial curiosity. *Frankenweenie* culminates in a showdown between them and, like in the opening home movie, 'good' nostalgia triumphs over its shallow counterpart, allowing *Frankenweenie* to justify its attachment to the past in, to quote Simon Reynolds 'an age gone loco for retro and crazy for commemoration.'<sup>29</sup>

Burton's definition of 'good' nostalgia is, however, fundamentally underlain by an inability to fully come to terms with the inevitability of loss. This is foregrounded in the film's finale

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<sup>28</sup> Paul Grainge, 'Nostalgia and Style in Retro America: Moods, Modes and Media Recycling' *Journal of American Culture* 23:1 (2000), p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> Reynolds, *Retromania*, p. ix.

which stages a re-resurrection of Sparky after he dies saving Victor from Mr. Whiskers.<sup>30</sup> Convinced of the dog's heroism, the New Holland community embraces his otherness and comes together to save the pet by lining up their automobiles to create a supply of power which will jolt Sparky back to life. Burton's use of the car—an icon of the mobility and prosperity of 1950s America—to resurrect the film's metaphor for the attachment to the past, can be read as a reflection of *Frankenweenie*'s own commitment to explore nostalgia through bygone forms of filmmaking. Initially the revival appears to fail, and Sparky continues to lie lifelessly in a circle of car lights. Faced with his dog's inanimate body Victor, indicates that he is ready to let go of the past as he hugs the dog and says: 'It's ok boy, you don't have to come back. You'll always be in my heart'. Burton's resolution however contradicts this message, and after a dramatic pause Sparky is revived once more. This repetition is not without repercussions and the cyclicity of the ending suggests that *Frankenweenie*, like *Super 8*, betrays a deep unease about finality. If the first resurrection expressed a fantasy for a prolonged engagement with the object of one's affection, the second one fails to recognise the limits of that fantasy. This perception is amplified by the similarities between the finale of the 2012 remake and that of the 1984 film, both of which conclude with Sparky's second resurrection. If the first instance conveyed Burton's refusal to lay the past to rest, the second *Frankenweenie* is the intensified and enduring product of this attitude, forcefully signalling the director's commitment to nostalgic return.

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<sup>30</sup> The sequence also appears in Burton's 1984 film, except that it is the angry townsfolk and not Mr. Whiskers who pursue Sparky to the windmill on the mini golf course.

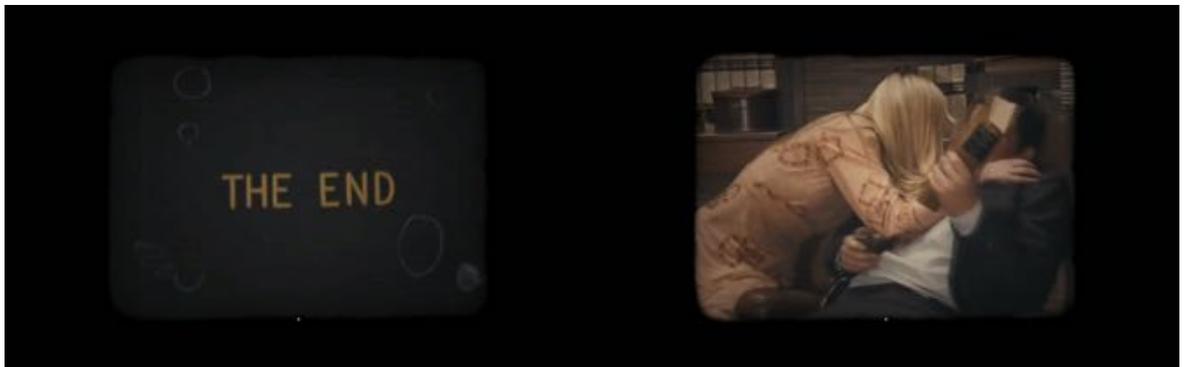
## Conclusion



**Figure 72.** Hesitant about closure

The words ‘the end’ seal the kiss between Sparky and his canine sweetheart, the bride of Frankenstein-styled poodle, Persephone. The final image of *Frankenweenie* declares a closure not only of the film itself, but also implicitly of its project and genesis which after 28 years can finally be put to rest. Yet to what extent should the viewers trust the finality which it imposes? We may recall that the 1984 film ended with the very same words. Fresher in mind is perhaps the ending of *Monsters from Beyond* which suggests the illusory nature of closure, following a similar proclamation of finality with a questioning title card: ‘or is it?’ (Fig.72). The finale offered by *Super 8* is equally ambiguous. The film ends with a lens flare, a line of light emanating from the departing spaceship slashing across the darkness of the screen. The slow fade to black indicates closure, which aligns with the film’s wider message of laying the past to rest. These ‘final’ images, however, are not actually the film’s last. As the credits roll, the viewers are treated to a screening of Charles’ amateur film. *The Case* itself also contains two endings: the first of which resolves the zombie threat (as the

detective reverses the transformation of his infected wife by injecting her with a vaccine), while the second shows the living-dead return (the zombified wife attacks Charles as he addresses the audience, urging them to vote for the film in the Cleveland Amateur Film Festival) (Fig. 73). A movie about zombies, *The Case* is itself zombie-like in its persistence, contradicting the apparently firm and final conclusion proposed by Abrams. Returning to the amateur film in its closing credit sequence, *Super 8* thus once more reinstates its commitment to the obsolete, communicating that, contrary to the film's message, the director is reluctant to lay the past to rest.



**Figure 73.** The zombie wife returns

The return of the living-dead in the conclusion of *Super 8* mirrors the double resurrection of Sparky in *Frankenweenie*. Both Abrams and Burton champion the prolongation of engagement with the past, and use the figure of the zombie as a mascot for nostalgia. Diffusing their monstrosity with humour, both films use the living-dead to fulfil a fantasy of endless return, a gesture which hints at horror of a different kind: a fear not of persistence but of finality; of precisely that which *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie* appear to suggest but conspicuously avoid achieving: closure. The truly monstrous figure in Abrams' film is thus not the zombie but the mother who, as Joe's friend Cary (Ryan Lee) emphatically stresses during the wake, 'is not a zombie' and therefore cannot return but can only be returned *to* as an image on the screen. If the train crash is *Super 8*'s spectacular centre, the home movies of the mother are its emotional heart, fuelling a desire for return which they are ultimately

unable to bring to fruition. As the double screening of *Monsters from Beyond* suggests, the images cannot move forward (there can be no new footage) and all that Victor can do is to endlessly re-watch the same film. Yet, while both Joe and Victor learn to recognise the inevitability and irreparability of loss, *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie* both refuse to embrace the acceptance of closure they bestow on their characters. Abrams exorcises the figure of new media and refuses to move on from the image of the ruins of the past; Burton emphasises his commitment to cyclicity by remaking his own film, and then using that remake to stage a defence of its own project. The contradictory messages conveyed by the films' finales signals an inability on the part of the filmmakers to fully renounce their attachment to the past and to embrace that times, technologies, and the cinema, have changed.

Exploring their attachment to the past through the lens of the home made film, *Super 8* and *Frankenweenie* indicate a development in the home movie imagination. Deploying the small-gauge to stage a nostalgic return, the filmmakers suggest a novel iteration of 'home' as referring, in the nostalgic sense, to the time of childhood and in this case to the bygone cinematic cultures of the directors' youth. The films' imaginative conflation of the 'home' and the 'movies' gains further resonance in light of Kodak's recent announcement of their plans for a 'Super 8 Revival Initiative' (2016). In the conclusion, I would like to attend to the press release which accompanied the unveiling of a new camera prototype, suggesting how the discursive reframing of the technology indicates that presently home movies might have found their 'home' on the big screen.

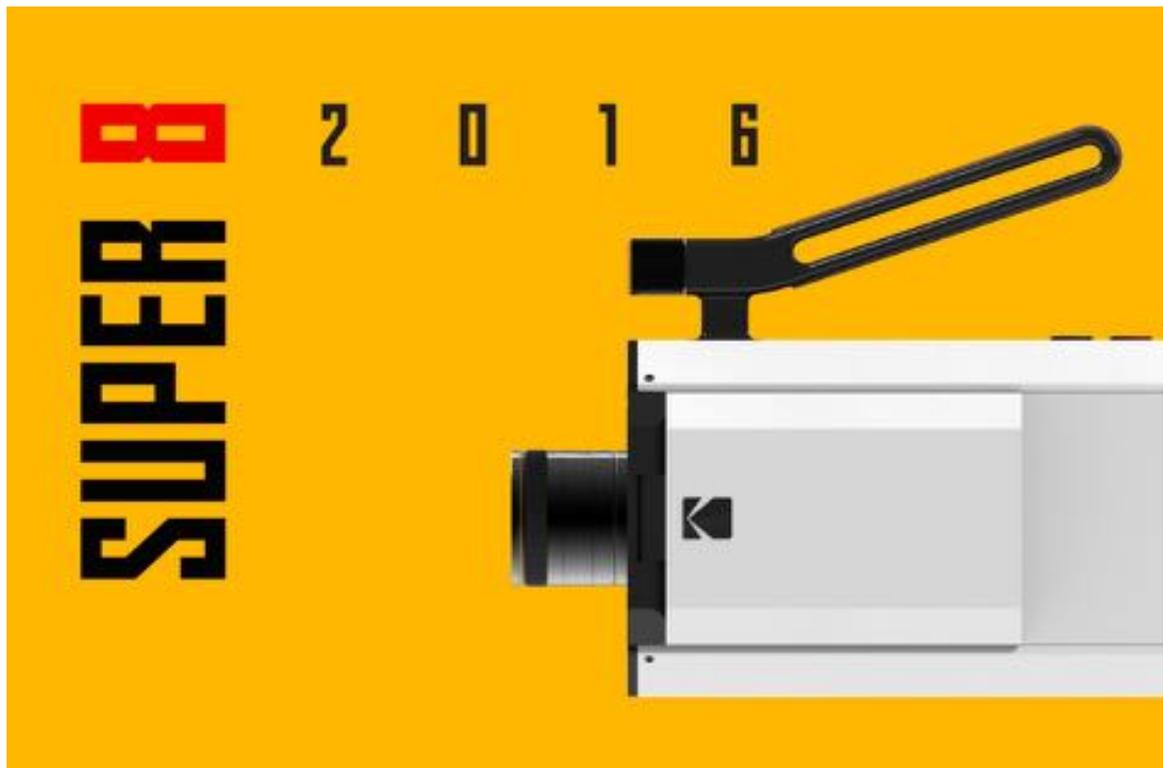
## Conclusion

### **‘A dream come true’**

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2016, soon after the 50th anniversary of the format’s first introduction, Kodak revealed that it will be releasing an all-new Super 8 camera as part of ‘The Kodak Super 8 Revival Initiative’ (Fig. 68). An early prototype was presented at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, where the company also announced its expansive plans for the future, which include a series of cameras, a network of film development services and post-production tools. In the company’s press release Eastman Kodak’s Chief Executive Officer, Jeff Clarke, expresses his hope that the revival of Super 8 will create an ‘ecosystem for film’ providing ‘new opportunities to enjoy and appreciate film as a medium.’<sup>1</sup> Shoring up support for the format, the announcement features enthusiastic accolades from a range of industry professionals, including J.J. Abrams who describes Kodak’s Super 8 revival as a ‘dream come true’. In light of the sentimental fondness for the technology of the past expressed by Abrams in *Super 8* (2011), the return of the format certainly appears as a wish fulfilment. Perceiving the resurgence of Super 8 through the prism of *Super 8*, however, begs the questions: how do we understand the relation between cinematic home movies and their broader cultural development, and what role does cinema play in shaping the identity of small-gauge family filmmaking?

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<sup>1</sup> Kodak, *Kodak Launches Super 8 Filmmaking Revival Initiative At CES 2016*, 2016  
<[http://www.kodak.com/ek/US/en/corp/Press\\_center/Kodak\\_Launches\\_Super\\_8\\_Filmmaking\\_Revival\\_Initiative\\_at\\_CES\\_2016/default.htm](http://www.kodak.com/ek/US/en/corp/Press_center/Kodak_Launches_Super_8_Filmmaking_Revival_Initiative_at_CES_2016/default.htm)> [accessed 26 January 2016].



**Figure 74.** Promotional image for the ‘Super 8’ camera prototype

In order to answer this, it is important to inquire into the ways in which Kodak articulates its renewed interest in the technology, and in addition, how the company (re-)defines the format’s identity, paying particular attention not only to the associations which are being fostered (namely the camera’s ‘modern sensibility’ and appeal to aspiring filmmakers) but also to those which Kodak avoids: nostalgia and the home movie. Investigating ‘The Kodak Super 8 Revival Initiative’ I will argue that, at the present time, cinema not only offers a privileged site for negotiating the definition and meaning of the small-gauge film, but that it is being recognised and addressed as an active participant in those debates. Yet, while cinema is being envisaged as playing a key role in shaping the identity of the home movie, was this the case throughout their on-screen history? As this thesis has demonstrated, the history of home movies in fiction film has a complicated relationship to range of other histories (social, technological as well as the history of cinema) and movies-in-films should be perceived as having a distinct history of their own, one which I have considered in term of ‘imagination’. In my concluding remarks, I thus wish to return to the idea of the home movie imagination,

demonstrating its usefulness in addressing and accounting for the specificity of cinematic home movies.

Kodak's revival of Super 8 can be perceived as an attempt to capitalise on the growing market for analogue nostalgia, which, in the case of 8mm film, has thus far largely been the preserve of independent enthusiasts on the one hand, and Pro8mm (a company offering a range of comprehensive small-gauge services for both professional and amateur filmmakers) on the other. Yet while commentators such as Steve Rose or Erik position the new Super 8 camera as part of a broader trend towards, to use Sofage's description, 'nostalgia tech', nostalgia itself is a term that is conspicuously absent from the online promotional material which accompany Kodak's announcement.<sup>2</sup> As Pam Cook points out, nostalgia is often considered to have negative connotations, perceived as a 'reactionary, regressive condition imbued with sentimentality',<sup>3</sup> and perhaps it is in order to proactively dismiss such accusations that Kodak prefers to use the term 'analogue renaissance', when referring to the contemporary penchant towards the obsolete. In the entire press release, the word nostalgia appears only once, and when it does, it is only to be dismissed. In his endorsement of the format experimental filmmaker Jem Cohen explicitly disavows sentimental yearning as part of Super 8's appeal arguing that: 'I didn't shoot it out of nostalgia or because I wanted something "low fi" or because it reminded me of something else. I shot it, and continue to do so, because it has its own integrity, versatility, and power.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Steve Rose, 'The return of Super 8: why Kodak's rebooted old-school camera could be a hit', *The Guardian* (6 January 2016) <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/shortcuts/2016/jan/06/return-of-super-8-kodak-camera-tarantino-spielberg-analogue>> accessed: 26 January 2016. Erik Sofage, 'Kodak Raises the Super 8 From the Dead', *Men's Journal* (n.d) <<http://www.mensjournal.com/gear/electronics/kodak-raises-the-super-8-from-the-dead-20160115>> accessed: 26 January 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Pam Cook, *Screening The Past* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Kodak, *Kodak Launches Super 8 Filmmaking Revival Initiative at CES 2016*, 2016 <[http://www.kodak.com/ek/US/en/corp/Press\\_center/Kodak\\_Launches\\_Super\\_8\\_Filmmaking\\_Revival\\_Initiative\\_at\\_CES\\_2016/default.htm](http://www.kodak.com/ek/US/en/corp/Press_center/Kodak_Launches_Super_8_Filmmaking_Revival_Initiative_at_CES_2016/default.htm)> accessed 26 January 2016.

Drawing attention away from ‘regressive sentimentality’ Kodak keenly emphasises the camera’s ‘modern sensibilities’, in a way that simultaneously acknowledges and mitigates its retro credentials. This is already perceptible in the camera’s design which while paying tribute to that of the 1965 original, includes a fold out viewfinder, a feature reminiscent of more contemporary recording technology. The desire not only to revive but also to reinvigorate 8mm as part of the current media landscape can also be read as the motivation behind Kodak’s promise to return the developed film as both an analogue and digital copy. In its offer to digitise the footage, the company obliquely draws attention to changes in the cultures of film viewing and sharing, and consequently to the shifts in the definition of what constitutes ‘small-gauge film’. Notably, ‘The Kodak Super 8 Revival Initiative’ does not explicitly list projection equipment as a part of their plans.

Like the CGI alien in the DIY narrative of *Super 8*, digital, however, occupies a somewhat awkward place in Kodak’s press release, particularly when the industry appraisals of the format are taken into account. While Abrams appears happy to imagine the coexistence of the obsolete and the novel, describing the new Super 8 camera as a ‘perfect bridge between the efficiency of the digital world and the warmth and quality of analog’, a number of filmmakers support their defence of 8mm film by positing it as the antithesis to digital filmmaking.<sup>5</sup> Patty Jenkins (the director of *Monster*, 2003) argues that: ‘there are plenty of looks, feelings and qualities that only film can do, and you simply cannot capture digitally.’<sup>6</sup> Ed Sayers (the founder of the Straight 8 initiative which challenges filmmakers to shoot single reel films) makes an even bolder claim for medium specificity, differentiating the ‘real

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

thing' from the 'hundreds of apps and plug-ins [that] borrow its aesthetic' and arguing that: 'Super 8 is thrilling as it purrs through camera and more so, once processed, as it reveals its unique visual nuance.'<sup>7</sup> While the 'unique nuance' of 8mm film is perhaps not as irreplicable as Jenkins or Sayers believe it to be — the indistinguishable interweaving of footage shot on Super 8 and on 8mm Vintage Cam app in *Searching For Sugar Man* (Malik Bendjelloul, 2012) offers an excellent counter example — what is significant about the medium specificity focused definitions of Super 8 is that they are not simply defences of 8mm but of film more broadly.

The metonymic usage of Super 8 as a stand in for celluloid is already perceptible in Clarke's plans to foster an 'ecosystem for film', and is perhaps most clearly articulated in Quentin Tarantino's endorsement of Kodak's initiative. As the director argues:

I've always believed in the magic of movies and to me the magic is connected to film. When you're filming something on film you aren't recording movement, you're taking a series of still pictures and when shown at 24 frames per second through a lightbulb, THAT creates the illusion of movement. The fact that Kodak is giving a new generation of filmmakers the opportunity to shoot on Super 8 is truly an incredible gift.<sup>8</sup>

Tarantino's appraisal suggests that what is at stake in the return of Super 8 is more than a revival of an obsolete technology. Rather, Kodak's reintroduction of its iconic format is presented as a strategy to maintain the relevance of film. Bringing Super 8 back from the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

brink of obsolescence and into the hands of a new generation, Kodak's revival initiative is presented as a way of teaching young filmmakers to appreciate film and thus, by extension, fostering their interests in ensuring its longevity.

This strategy however involves a notable shift in the discursive definition of Super 8. Presenting 8mm film as a format for filmmakers, and particularly for those with an ambition to pursue a career in the industry, what Kodak is simultaneously downplaying are its association with domestic image making. Like nostalgia, the term 'home movie' is largely absent from the press release and promotional material, and throughout Kodak emphasises 8mm's ties to the industry, rather than to the home.<sup>9</sup> While domestic movie makers are alluded to, it is professionals and 'serious' amateurs who are addressed as the potential customers. This is perceptible in the company's statement that: 'this product, like many in Kodak's history, will be a tool for *artists* and all those who aim to capture special moments' [my emphasis].<sup>10</sup> Presenting Super 8 as firstly a tool for artists, Kodak is notably not only imagining a future for the format but also re-articulating its history in a way that complements its marketing strategy. While it is true to say that 8mm film has often been used in avant-garde filmmaking, as Patricia Zimmermann has elucidated, experimental uses were an important but discursively sidelined aspect of small-gauge filmmaking at the time of its commercial dominance. If, as Zimmermann argues, in the 1950s-1970s the domestic association of 8mm film overshadowed its use as an artists' medium, contemporarily, the opposite appears to be the case. Super 8 is presented as a format associated with the cinema, rather than the home. Nowhere perhaps is this clearer than in Steven Spielberg's endorsement which reads: 'when I think of 8mm, I think of the movies.'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The term 'home movie' is used only once, informing CES visitors that they may watch home movies at the company's booth.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

The absence of domestic consumers from Kodak's press release, together with its persistent association of Super 8 with the cinema, obliquely suggests that contemporarily the place of the home movie is, to a large extent, in the movies rather than at the home. While, familial moviemakers may have, for the most part, moved on to newer technologies, cinema remains invested in the small-gauge, and the representation of home movies in fiction films constitutes a significant element of that preoccupation. Kodak's revival of Super 8 can arguably be perceived as recognising and seeking to capitalise on this commitment. The company's not-so-vested interest in the place of Super 8 on the big screen is expressed in its ambition not only to appeal to a new generation of filmmakers but also to cater to the current one; as the company states Super 8's revival aims to: 'meet ... the needs of top directors, indie filmmakers and others who appreciate the art and craft of filmmaking.'<sup>12</sup> Addressing filmmakers as their potential customers, Kodak recognises that the future of Super 8 is in part tied up with a negotiation over the character of the home movie-in-film. Emphasising medium specificity, the company suggests the 'home movie' should be defined as a *film-within-a-film* rather than a digital approximation, a characterisation which will, explicitly, serve to safeguard the future of the medium, and, implicitly, Kodak's own relevance. Yet, if the prominence of the medium specificity argument betrays Kodak's commercial strategy (its ambition to be the dominant supplier of small-gauge film for filmmakers), it also reveals something about contemporary cinema's investment in obsolete technology. What it indicates is a shift in the meaning of home movies-in-films from the hitherto dominant understanding as a metonym for 'the past', towards a more specific association with the cinema of the past and its medium, film.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Thus, perhaps, in this case, ‘the movies’ and ‘home movies’ are not as distinct as they appear to be. As this thesis illuminated, the cinematic definition of the ‘home’ of the ‘home movie’ has, throughout its history, been subject to change. In its early depiction, home movies were defined primarily as films to be watched at home, a largely exceptional pastime of the well-to-do. The ‘public-in-private’ mode of spectatorship they engendered contrasted with the ‘private-in-public’ model advocated by the classical Hollywood films they were contained within, bringing to the fore questions concerning bourgeois viewership. In the films of the 1960s-1980s home movies’ metaphorical association with ‘family’ came to the fore; home movies described films shot by and for relatives. Shifting emphasis from home movie viewing to home movie making the films explored small-gauge filmmaking not only as a reflection of the family but also as a tool through which sanctioned images of domesticity are being (re-)produced and can be undermined. Recognising the home movie’s capacity to symbolically legitimate a group of characters as a family, the films’ of the 1960-1980s drew attention to questions concerning the definition of a ‘family’ and reflexively explored the role which domestic image technologies play in the cinematic representation of kinship.

Following the obsolescence of the technology, the cinematic ‘home movie’ became a metonym for memory and the past. Home movies were integrated as part of cinema’s stylistic vocabulary of the flashback, and their characterisation shifted once again, this time from technology to texture. This transition, however, put home movies’ status as ‘films-within-films’ into question, foregrounding the imaginary character of their medium. While home movies as ‘textures of memory’ remain an important category of the contemporary depiction of small-gauge film in the film, in the early 2010s have witnessed a resurgence of interest in the materiality of home movie technology. Film such *Submarine* (2010), *Super 8* (2011), and *Frankenweenie* (2012) not only depict home movies as objects but also deploy

small-gauge film as a lens through which to indicate or reflect on cinematic heritage, often within the context of media transitions. The ‘home’ of the home movies contained in these films thus refers not only to domesticity and the family but is also used to stand in for a past cinematic culture (both its texts and technologies). In their depictions of small-gauge filmmaking, the films redefine ‘home’ in a way that corresponds to the nostalgic understanding of the term, elucidated by Svetlana Boym, in which ‘home’ stands not for a particular space but rather for a time of origin and beginning.

Should Abrams’ *Super 8* and the films of the early 2010s be perceived as a factor contributing to the return of Super 8 format? Possibly. Describing the Super 8 revival as a ‘dream come true’ J.J. Abrams communicates not only his enthusiasm for the return of the format but also suggests that Kodak’s renewed interest in the format can be perceived as an enactment of the imagination expressed by *Super 8*. Notably, both Abrams’ film and Kodak’s ‘Revival Initiative’ are predicated upon a similar nostalgic disavowal, which at once recognises and refuses to accept the obsolescence of its object. While the finale of Abrams’ film appears to advocate letting go of the past, as I have argued *Super 8*’s wider depiction of past and present media contradicts this message. Similarly, while Kodak emphasises the camera’s ‘modern sensibility’, nostalgia plays an understated but crucial role in the way in which Super 8’s identity is characterised by the press release. This is particularly palpable in the industry endorsements, which not only express enthusiasm for news of the revival, but also frequently feature reflections on the filmmakers’ own 8mm origins. Steven Spielberg argues that: ‘for me, 8mm was the beginning of everything’; Ed Lachman explains that: ‘the first camera I ever picked up was the Super 8 camera and it’s still a joy to play and experiment with’; while producer Shannon McIntosh discloses that: ‘the fond memories of working in

the medium have always held a very special place in my heart.<sup>13</sup> These testimonies serve a clear purpose in the pitch, presenting Super 8 as a ‘tested’ route into professional filmmaking and thus seeking to appeal to Kodak’s coveted ‘new generation’. At the same time, however, they clearly signal that filmmakers’ preference for the medium is rooted in subjective experience and not merely in the medium’s objective superiority over digital. Recalling the past pleasures of the format, the filmmakers’ endorsements thus shore up what Kodak works hard to disavow, suggesting that the medium’s appeal lies not only in what Cohen describes as its ‘integrity, versatility, and power’ but also, as in the case of *Super 8*, in memory, nostalgia and autobiography.

### **Summary of findings and final thoughts**

Yet if *Super 8* can be perceived as an influence on the contemporary Kodak revival, should cinematic home movies more broadly be understood as a vanguard, anticipating the transitions in the cultural perception of home movies? Not necessarily. On the one hand, the focus on texture in the 1990s and the renewed interest in materiality of technology in the 2010s may be seen as foreshadowing first the boom for retro apps and contemporarily the ‘Super 8 Revival Initiative’. On the other hand, as I have demonstrated, in the 1950s and early 1960s cinematic portrayals of home movies did not ‘lead the way’ but rather lagged behind the times diverging from home movies’ dominant post war association with the suburban nuclear family in favour of an earlier affiliation with upper class affluence. Thus, while it is possible to, at times, identify correspondences between cinematic portrayals of domestic image making and the development and applications of small-gauge technology, the relation between them is not straightforward. Throughout this thesis I have argued that the history of cinematic home movies is entangled with, and by extension, mixes, a variety

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

of different histories: charting the development of a motif, responding to, but not conditioned by, the life-cycle of the medium and illuminating the layered histories of cinema. It is thus important to recognise that cinematic home movies have a history which benefits from being analysed on its own terms. This is not to suggest that cinematic home movies exist in a vacuum; yet, while the social and technological histories offer an important backdrop, in order to understand their cinematic development it is fundamental to attend closely to their depiction, establishing an approach which recognises their character as representation.

This thesis has advanced the concept of ‘imagination’ to address the specificity of the depiction of home movies in fiction films. As I have emphasised throughout, cinematic home movies are not examples of actual home movies, but rather stylisations made to connote domestic moving images. They have often been described in terms of imitation as ‘faux’, ‘fake’, or ‘pseudo’ home movies, designations which rely on the notion of an ‘authentic’ counterpart which cinematic home movies are perceived to mimic. Complicating this proposition, this work has argued that in studying the fictional representation of domestic moving images it is crucial to inquire into the relation between the contained and containing film. In order to do so I have drawn on James Moran’s notion of home video as an ‘imaginary medium’; ‘imaginary’ in that for Moran it may be entirely simulated by the film in which it is embedded. Taking animation as an example, Moran demonstrates that video-in-the-text does not need to be produced by the appropriate technology to be legible as video. Similarly, the animated home movies in *Atlantis: Lost Empire* and *Frankenweenie* as well as the digital approximation of an analogue aesthetic in *28 Days Later* show that in order for the footage to be read as a ‘home movie’ it need not be shot on 8mm or 16mm film. Rather, in its depiction of domestic moving images, fiction films deploy particular ‘cues’ which inform viewers that the footage they are seeing should be interpreted as a home video or a home

movie. These cues are, however, neither universal or unchanging. As this study revealed, feature fiction films will construct home movies differently at different points in time, and may communicate varying understandings of what constitutes a 'home movie'. 'Imaginary' thus stresses the discursive character of cinema's depiction of moving image technologies, illuminating that to represent home movies is to imaginatively engage with the meaning of the term.

Moran's understanding of home video as 'imaginary' resonates with the broader scholarship on the imaginary in media history, which emphasises that to understand media and their development it is fundamental to take into account not only material culture but also more ephemeral evidence, such as the ideas which circulate around them. Studying how media have been envisioned, how they have been written about or represented, allows us to apprehend more fully how their social and cultural purchase has been negotiated. In consequence, this thesis proposed 'imagination' as a way to describe how cinema constructs home movies in the process of representation as well as a collective term for its engagement with the practice. Analysing the depiction of home movies in terms of imagination, I have emphasised that films-within-films should not be considered simply as an attempt at emulating the uses of domestic technologies; rather cinema's depiction of home movies reveals a set of ideas about what can be thought of as a home movie and the functions which it serves, at home and on the big screen.

Studying the cues which cinema deploys to signal a home movie I have demonstrated that their is historically varied; how fiction films imagine what home movies are and mean, is therefore prone to shift over time. While, in the scholarship on the 'imaginary' in media, fantasies and speculations are frequently considered to be attached to the period of novelty,

this thesis has illuminated that fiction films continued to explore the definitions and possibilities of the home movie throughout its cinematic history. Cinema's negotiation of the 'home movie' reveals, above all, the complexity of the term itself. While Moran perceives home video primarily in relation to the medium which it connotes, the meaning of home movies-in-films cannot be solely limited to their status as 'films'. Although the medium is an important aspect of their definition, it is, firstly, only one among a number of characteristics and, secondly, one that is not granted equal significance at all moments of their history. The home movie is thus presented not only as a 'film-within-a-film', it may also refer to: a format, a small-gauge technology, a practice, a mode of reception (public-in-private), a style of filmmaking (characterised by a disregard of narrative continuity and the conventions of classical Hollywood storytelling) and an aesthetic (washed out colours, grain and scratches). For the most part, the cinematic depiction of home movies comprises a number of these elements; fiction films however foreground and neglect different aspects of the definition at different times (an example of this is the shift from *technology* of memory to *texture* of memory discussed in Chapter Five). Home movies are thus not simply 'imaginary media'; rather the medium should be considered as an element of the imagination, constituting one of the possible meanings of home movies in fiction film.

How do we account for the shifts in cinema's representation of the home movie? One way of doing so is to consider the theoretical framework for approaching the history of media imaginations proposed by Simone Natale and Gabriele Balbi.<sup>14</sup> Natale and Balbi suggest that imaginations shift according to life-cycle of a medium; thus, at each stage of its development — prophecies, novelty and obsolescence — a medium gives rise to a novel set of fantasies

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<sup>14</sup> Simone Natale and Gabriele Balbi, 'Media and The Imaginary in History' *Media History* 20 (2014).

which reveal a negotiation over its changing identity. As this thesis has demonstrated, cinematic portrayals of home movies have undergone significant changes at the time when cinema began engaging with the obsolescence of the technology (in the mid-1980s). Depicting the remediation of home movies to home video (in *Manhunter* or *Philadelphia*) the relocation of the technology to the attic or basement (in *Home for the Holidays*, *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*) the films suggest changes in domestic moving image making and viewing habits. Key to these portrayals becomes the question of persistence; whether and, if so, in what ways, home movies will continue to be relevant.

Although the framework for studying *media* imaginations proposed by Natale and Balbi can be applied to analyse the development of a *technology*, it is important to recognise the distinction between those terms, noting that the obsolescence of the home movie did not necessarily follow in sync with that of film. While cinema began envisaging home movies as a residual technology in the 1980s, questions of medium come to the fore in the films of the 2000s. Emphasising, in a more or less conspicuous manner, stylisation, *Atlantis: Lost Empire* and *28 Days Later* deploy the texture of small-gauge film to foster a reflection on broader transitions in the media landscape (between analogue and digital media). In contrast to the films which envisage persistence in aesthetic terms, as Chapter Six illuminated, recently cinema has shown a renewed interest in the materiality of the technology; a preoccupation which reverberates in Kodak's recent 'Super 8 revival initiative'. Like Abrams' *Super 8* the promotional material for the prototype of Kodak's new camera evidences a nostalgic slippage, presenting the persistence of the small-gauge technology as a way of ensuring the broader relevance of film.

The shifts in the representation of cinematic home movies in the mid-1980s and early new millennium not only suggest the changing place of home movies in the home, but also evidence of the transformation of their role on screen, from a prop in the diegesis to a technique for the representation of memory. The home movie-in-film should thus be understood not only as a represented technology but also a cinematic motif whose development may recognise, but does not necessarily follow in sync with, the development of the small-gauge film. This is visibly articulated in the home movies of the late-1930s/late-1940s, whose detailed characterisations suggest their unfamiliarity to contemporary viewers, at a time when the technology itself was not a novelty. The transitions in cinema's deployment of domestic small-gauge film show that imaginations which circulate around technologies develop within particular contexts. In accounting for cinema's imagination of home movies it is therefore fundamental to take the conditions of the containing films into account. Doing so adds nuance to the framework proposed by Natale and Balbi as it illuminates that the imagining of media may shift not only in relation to a medium's life-cycle but also as a result of the vantage point from which they are being articulated. It is thus important to recognise that fiction films offer a particular perspective on small-gauge films, and by extension, to consider the ways in which the context of the containing film may influence the content of the imagination.

In accounting for the imaginings of home movies expressed by UK and US fiction films it is important to take the concerns of the containing films into account. As I argued, fiction films are one among of a number of sites where home movies are imagined. While these, at times, may coincide — as in the case of the NBC series *Hannibal* whose preoccupation with monstrous celluloid is similar to the contemporary cinematic depiction of home movies— they may also be at odds with each other (as the comparison between *The Adventures of*

*Ozzie and Harriet* and the travelogue romance in the second chapter has illuminated) and the interplay of the numerous home movie imaginations offers a fruitful avenue for future study. It is, however, important to recognise that each site may have distinct stakes in the representation of a particular technology. With regard to cinematic home movies, fiction films' investment in domestic filmmaking comes to the fore prominently as we consider the reflexive role which it serves. As I have argued, reflexivity is a key facet of the home movie imagination; throughout their history, small-gauge domestic productions have been deployed to draw attention to the act of mediation and focalise or comment on the concerns of the containing works.

However, while home movies have frequently been used as a self-reflexive device, the issues which they draw attention to are not always uniform. Although cinematic home movies often bring to the fore a reflection on film as a medium, they have also been used to raise questions of modality (in the representation of spectatorship), genre (in cases such as the travelogue romance films where the narrative of the containing work mirrors that of the containing one) and the history of film texts (perceptible in the rare cases of intertextual uses of home movies discussed in Chapter Three, Five and Six). Consequently, while the study of the development of the representation of home movies facilitates a reflection on the history of cinema, their portrayals do not chart a uniform narrative, as was the case with Hollywood's depiction of emergent rival media studied by Paul Young in *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals*. Drawing attention to cinema's ongoing discourse about moving images, the study of home movies in fiction films suggests that the history of cinema is layered, consisting of a number of histories, including those of the represented technologies.

Although reflexivity is an important facet of cinema's home movie imagination, their role on the screen cannot be limited to that of a metonym for the containing work. The history of home movies-in-films thus consists of more than the development of cinematic self-reflexivity; it also evidences a negotiation of their narrative role in the exploration of domesticity, family ties and the representation of memory and the past. Since their early portrayals, home movies have served to elicit an emotional response on the part of spectators, both diegetic and cinematic. They are frequently depicted as holding a utopian capacity, promising to bring the family together, literally and figuratively, in the process of filmmaking and film viewing. This potential, however, is often thwarted, and cinematic home movies are deployed to perform the opposite: to underscore the failure and breakdown of the represented kinship group. Small-gauge domestic productions thus often serve as a reminder of better times, highlighting the fragility of familial relations and of human life, a depiction which becomes amplified when the technology itself becomes threatened with obsolescence. Repeatedly used in the expression of longing, home movies have increasingly become a shorthand for evoking a, more often than not, unspecified 'past' and more recently, objects of sentimental attachment themselves. As I have illuminated previously in this conclusion, the shifts in the cinematic depiction of home movies thus concern not only the small-gauge medium's status as a 'movie' but also the meanings of 'home' to which they refer. These may indicate literal homes as spaces of projection or stand as a metonym for 'family'; they can also however function in a more abstract way to refer to a temporality (the past but primarily 'childhood') or, as in *Super 8* and *Frankweenie*, to a bygone moving image culture.

Carolyn Marvin argues that studying fantasies which surround media allows us 'to determine what "consciousness" was in a particular age, what thoughts were possible and what

thoughts could not be entertained yet, or anymore.’<sup>15</sup> Deploying imagination as an approach for the analysis of cinema’s representation of home movies, this thesis has argued that studying the kinds of stories which home movies are used to tell, and how they do so, reveals an ongoing negotiation of the meaning and onscreen significance of small-gauge domestic image-making. Probing into the characterisation uncovers a nuanced narrative of cinema’s reflexivity about ‘the movies’, and a shifting perception of the ‘homes’ with which they are affiliated, yielding insight into the complicated interplay between the two.

As this thesis has demonstrated, home movies offer a challenging body of evidence. They are a pervasive but easily overlooked cinematic presence; at first glance the meaning of the term might appear ‘obvious’ and yet what constitutes a home movie in a fiction film is not always uniform, or in fact explicitly clear. Studying home movies thus requires us to look closely at their depictions, a concern which, as I have suggested throughout this work, is frequently accentuated by the works themselves. Consider the following moment from *Rebecca* (Fig. 75). Imploring his wife to look at the images Maxim de Winter commands not only Mrs. De Winter’s attention but also that of the cinematic spectators, urging them to attend to the small-gauge on the big screen. Exploring the richness and complexity of cinema’s home movie imagination, this work has performed a similar role, demonstrating that home movies in the films should not go overlooked.

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<sup>15</sup>Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking about Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 4.



**Figure 75.** Maxim de Winter drawing attention to the home movie in *Rebecca*

## Appendix 1

### Timeline

1897	<b>Entrepreneurial period, early experiments with moving image technology</b>
1906	Bell and Howell forms in the US
1908	<i>Story of the Biograph Told</i> (earliest identified representation of amateur film) Motion Pictures Patent Company established
1914-1918	World War I
1923	Standardisation of amateur gauge as 16mm Pathé makes Baby camera for 9.5mm gauge in France Bell&Howell Filmo 70A (first clockwork 16mm camera) First camera employing double 8mm film Cine-Kodak Model A
1928	Bell & Howell introduce Filmo 75 designed with female users in mind Kodak introduces Kodakcolor process for amateurs (colour available for small-gauge films)
1929	Great depression significantly impacts on amateur camera sales
1932	Introduction of Standard 8 film (Cine Kodak 8) <i>I Was Born But...</i> (Yasujirō Ozu) earliest identified home movies in a feature fiction film
1939-1945	World War II, militarisation of amateur technology
1951	Kodak Brownie Movie Camera introduced
1952	Bell & Howell annual report indicates only 6 percent of American families own small-gauge cameras
1954	Bolex 3-D camera introduced
1955	Bell&Howell Filmorama and Vitascope (response to widescreen technology)
1956	Kodak begins its sponsorship of <i>The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet</i> (ABC, 1952-1966) Bell & Howell annual report suggests domestic camera ownership has risen 125 percent over the previous decade
1960	<i>Peeping Tom</i> (Michael Powell, 1960) released in the UK
1962	Bell and Howell disengage from the amateur market due to competition from foreign camera manufactures

1963	Frames from Abraham Zapruder's recording of the Kennedy Assassination published in <i>Life</i>
1965	Kodak Super 8 cartridge introduced
1965	Maya Deren published 'Amateur vs. Professional'
1971	Stan Brakhage 'In Defence of the 'Amateur'
	Super8 Sound founded, a company dedicated to exploring the possibilities of 8mm film as a professional production medium
1975	Introduction of the VCR for the consumer market
1977	Introduction of Polarvision, Polaroid's failed attempt at marketing an instant moving-image camera
1982	Super8 Sound adds facilities for the transfer of 8mm film to videotape
1986	Special Issue of the Journal of Film and Video dedicated to Amateur Film
1988-1989	National Film Registry established Association Européenne Inédits established Zapruder film added to National Film Registry
1995	DV and mini-DV formats introduced Centre Pompidou published <i>Le Je Filme</i> essays on the use of home movies in experimental film Patricia Zimmermann <i>Reel Families</i> published
1996	National Film Preservation Foundation established ('For the purpose of preserving and making accessible regional and orphan films')
1997	DVD format introduced to US consumer market Super8 Sound rebranded as Pro8mm film, specialising in the supply of 8mm film for professional filmmakers
1999	Small-gauge task force established by the association of Moving Image Archivists Roger Odin publishes a special issue of <i>Communications</i> on amateur film and home movies Orphan Film Symposium I 'Orphans of the Storm: Saving orphan Films in the Digital Age' (at University of South Carolina)
2001	Association of Moving Image Archivists launches <i>The Moving Image</i> journal DVD rentals surpass VHS
2002	Home Movie Day Launched
2010	Instagram smartphone application launches
2016	Kodak introduces the 'Super 8 Revival Initiative'

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## Filmography

### Primary Case Studies

*The Women*. Dir. George Cukor. Prod. MGM, USA, 1939. Main Cast: Norma Shearer (Mary Haines), Joan Crawford (Crystal Allen), Rosalind Russell (Sylvia Fowler) Mary Boland (The Countess De Lave), Paulette Goddard (Miriam Aarons), Phyllis Povah (Edith Potter), Joan Fontaine (Peggy Day), Virginia Weidler (Little Mary).

*Rebecca*. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Prod. Selznick International Pictures, USA, 1940. Main Cast: Joan Fontaine (Mrs. de Winter), Laurence Olivier (Maxim de Winter), Judith Anderson (Mrs. Danvers).

*If I Had My Way*. Dir. David Butler. Prod. Universal Pictures, USA, 1940. Main Cast: Bing Crosby (Buzz Blackwell), Gloria Jean (Patricia Johnson), Charles Winninger (Joe Johnson), El Brendel (Axel Swenson).

*A Canterbury Tale*. Dir. Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. Prod. The Archers, UK, 1944. Main Cast: Sgt. John Sweet (Bob Johnson), Dennis Price (Peter Gibbs), Sheila Sim (Alison Smith), Eric Portman (Thomas Colpeper), Harvey Golden (Sergt. Roczinsky).

*Adam's Rib*. Dir. George Cukor. Prod. MGM, USA, 1949. Main Cast: Spencer Tracy (Adam Bonner), Katharine Hepburn (Amanda Bonner), Judy Holliday (Doris Attinger), Tom Ewell (Warren Attinger), David Wayne (Kip Lurie).

*The Constant Husband*. Dir. Sidney Gilliat. Prod. Individual Pictures Ltd, UK, 1955. Main Cast: Rex Harrison (The Husband), Kay Kendall (Monica Hathaway), Nicole Maurey (Lola), Cecil Parker (Doctor Llewellyn).

*Summertime*. Dir. David Lean. Prod. United Artists, USA, 1955. Main Cast: Katharine Hepburn (Jane Hudson), Rossano Brazzi (Renato de Rossi), Isa Miranda (Signora Fiorini).

*Peeping Tom*. Dir. Michael Powell. Prod. Michael Powell, UK, 1960. Carl Boehm (Mark Lewis), Anna Massey (Helen Stephens), Moira Shearer (Vivian), Maxine Audley (Mrs. Stephens), Michael Powell (Mark's Father).

*The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*. Dir. José Quintero. Prod. Seven Arts-Warner Brothers, USA, 1961. Main Cast: Vivien Leigh (Karen Stone), Warren Beatty (Paolo di Leo), Lotte Lenya (The Contessa), Jill St. John (Barbara Bingham).

*The Naked Kiss*. Dir. Samuel Fuller. Prod. Leon Fromkess, Sam Firks, USA, 1964. Main Cast: Constance Towers (Kelly), Michael Dante (J.L. Grant), Anthony Eisley (Capt. Griff).

*The Last Man on Earth*. Dir. Ubaldo Ragona, Sidney Salkow. Prod. Associated Producers Inc., USA, 1964. Main Cast: Vincent Price (Dr. Robert Morgan), Franca Bettoia (Ruth Collins), Emma Danieli (Virginia Morgan), Giacomo Rossi-Stuart (Ben Cortman).

*Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice.* Dir. Paul Mazursky. Prod. Columbia Pictures, USA, 1969. Main Cast: Robert Culp (Bob Sanders), Natalie Wood (Carol Sanders), Elliott Gould (Ted Henderson), Dyan Cannon (Alice Henderson).

*The King of Marvin Gardens.* Dir. Bob Rafelson. Prod. Columbia Pictures. USA, 1972. Main Cast: Jack Nicholson (David Staebler), Bruce Dern (Jason Staebler), Charles Lavine (Grandfather), Ellen Burstyn (Sally).

*Performance.* Dir. Donald Cammell and Nicholas Roeg. Prod. Warner Brothers, USA, 1970. Main Cast: James Fox (Chas), Mick Jagger (Turner), Anita Pallenberg (Pherber), Michèle Breton (Lucy), Johnny Shannon (Harry Flowers), Anthony Valentine (Joey Maddocks).

*Up the Sandbox.* Dir. Irvin Kershner. Prod. National General Pictures, USA, 1972. Main Cast: Barbra Streisand (Margaret Reynolds), David Selby (Paul Reynolds), Jane Hoffman (Mrs. Koerner), John C. Becher (Mr. Koerner).

*Mean Streets.* Dir. Martin Scorsese. Prod. Warner Brothers, USA, 1973. Main Cast: Harvey Keitel (Charlie Cappa), Robert De Niro (Johnny Boy), David Proval (Tony DeVienazo), Amy Robinson (Teresa Ronchelli).

*Raging Bull.* Dir. Martin Scorsese. Prod. United Artists, USA, 1980. Main Cast: Robert De Niro (Jake LaMotta), Joe Pesci (Joey LaMotta), Cathy Moriarty (Vickie LaMotta).

*Home Movies.* Dir. Brian De Palma. Prod. Brian De Palma, Jack Temchin, Gil Adler, USA, 1980. Main Cast: Keith Gordon (Denis Byrd), Kirk Douglas (The Maestro), Gerrit Graham (James Byrd), Nancy Allen (Kristina).

*The Falcon and the Snowman.* Dir. John Schlesinger. Prod. Hemdale Film Corporation, USA, 1985. Main Cast: Timothy Hutton (Christopher Boyce), Sean Penn (Andrew Daulton Lee), Pat Hingle (Mr. Boyce), Joyce Van Patten (Mrs. Boyce), Richard Dysart (Mr. Lee), Priscilla Pointer (Mrs. Lee).

*Manhunter.* Dir. Michael Mann, Prod. De Laurentiis Entertainment Group, USA, 1986. Main Cast: William Petersen (Will Graham), Tom Noonan (Francis Dollarhyde) Dennis Farina (Jack Crawford), Kim Greist (Molly Graham), Brian Cox (Hannibal Lecktor).

*The Last of England.* Dir. Derek Jarman, Prod. James Mackay and Don Boyd, UK, 1987. Main Cast: Tilda Swinton (The Maid), Spencer Leigh (Soldier/Various roles), 'Spring' (Various Roles), Nigel Terry (Narrator).

*National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation.* Dir. Jeremiah S. Chechik. Prod. Warner Brothers, USA, 1989. Main Cast: Chevy Chase (Clark Griswold), Beverly D'Angelo (Ellen Smith Griswold), Randy Quaid (Cousin Eddie), Juliette Lewis (Audrey Griswold), John Randolph (Clark's Father), Diane Ladd (Clark's Mother).

*Home for the Holidays.* Dir. Jody Foster. Prod. PloyGram Entertainment, Egg Pictures, USA, 1995. Main Cast: Holly Hunter (Claudia Larson), Robert Downey Jr. (Tommy Larson), Anne Bancroft (Adele Larson), Claire Danes (Kitt Larson), Charles Durning (Henry Larson), Dylan McDermott (Leo Fish), Geraldine Chaplin (Aunt Gladys).

*Arizona Dream*. Dir. Emir Kusturica. Prod. Canal Plus, France/USA, 1995. Main Cast: Johnny Depp (Axel Blackmar), Jerry Lewis (Leo Sweetie), Faye Dunaway (Elaine Stalker), Lili Taylor (Grace Stalker), Vincent Gallo (Paul Leger).

*The Game*. Dir. David Fincher. Prod. Propaganda Films, USA, 1997. Main Cast: Michael Douglas (Nicholas Van Orton), Sean Penn (Conrad Van Orton), James Rebhorn (Jim Feingold), Deborah Kara Unger (Christine), Charles Martinet (Nicholas' father).

*Affliction*. Dir. Paul Schrader. Prod. Largo Entertainment, Reisman/Kingsgate, USA, 1997. Main Cast: Nick Nolte (Wade Whitehouse), James Coburn (Glen Whitehouse), Brigid Tierney (Jill Whitehouse), Willem Dafoe (Rolfe Whitehouse), Sissy Spacek (Margie Fogg).

*Atlantis: Lost Empire*. Dir. Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise. Prod. Walt Disney Pictures, USA, 2001. Voice Cast: Michael J. Fox (Milo Thatch), James Garner (Commander Rourke), Cree Summer (Princess Kida), Don Novello (Vinny Santorini), Phil Morris (Doctor Sweet), Claudia Christian (Helga Sinclair), Jacqueline Obradors (Audrey Ramirez).

*28 Days Later*. Dir. Danny Boyle. Prod. Fox Searchlight Pictures, UK, 2002. Main Cast: Cillian Murphy (Jim), Naomie Harris (Selena), Brendan Gleeson (Frank), Christopher Eccleston (Major Henry West), Megan Burns (Hannah).

*Red Dragon*. Dir. Brett Ratner. Prod. De Laurentiis Entertainment Group, USA, 2002. Main Cast: Edward Norton (Will Graham), Ralph Fiennes (Francis Dolarhyde), Anthony Hopkins (Hannibal Lecter), Emily Watson (Reba McClane), Harvey Keitel (Jack Crawford).

*Submarine*. Dir. Richard Ayoade. Prod. Warp Films, Film4 Productions, UK Film Council, UK, 2010. Main Cast: Craig Robert (Oliver Tate), Yasmin Paige (Jordana Bevan), Sally Hawkins (Jill Tate), Noah Taylor (Lloyd Tate), Paddy Considine (Graham Purvis).

*Super 8*. Dir. J.J. Abrams. Prod. Bad Robot Productions, Amblin Entertainment, USA, 2011. Main Cast: Joel Courtney (Joe Lamb), Elle Fanning (Alice Dainard), Kyle Chandler (Jackson Lamb), Riley Griffiths (Charles Kaznyk), Ryan Lee (Cary), Gabriel Basso (Martin), Zach Mills (Preston).

*Frankenweenie*. Dir. Tim Burton. Prod. Walt Disney Pictures, USA, 2012. Voice Cast: Charlie Tahan (Victor Frankenstein), Martin Landau (Mr. Rzykruski), Martin Short (Victor's Father/ Nessor), Catherine O'Hara (Victor's mother/ Weird Girl), Winona Ryder (Elsa van Helsing), Atticus Shaffer (Edgar 'E' Gore), James Hiroyuki Liao (Toshiaki).

*Sinister*. Dir. Scott Derrickson. Prod. Alliance Films, Automatik, Blumhouse Productions, IM Global, Possessed Pictures, USA, 2012. Main Cast: Ethan Hawke (Ellison Oswald), Juliet Rylance (Tracy Oswald), Fred Thompson (Sheriff), Clare Foley (Ashley Oswald), Michael Hall D'Addario (Trevor Oswald), Nick King (Bughuul).

*Philomena*. Dir. Stephen Frears. Prod. Pathé, BBC Films, National Lottery Fund, BFI, UK, 2013. Main Cast: Judi Dench (Philomena Lee), Steve Coogan (Martin Sixsmith), Barbara

Jefford (Sister Hildegarde), Sean Mahon (Michael Hess), Harrison D'Ampney (Michael aged 8-10), Tadhg Bowen (Young Anthony).

'The Great Red Dragon', episode eight, *Hannibal*, third season, USA, NBC, tx. 25 July 2015. Writers: Nick Antosca, Steve Lightfoot and Bryan Fuller, Dir: Neil Marshall. Main Cast: Hugh Dancy (Will Graham), Mads Mikkelsen (Hannibal Lecter), Laurence Fishburne (Jack Crawford), Richard Armitage (Francis Dolarhyde).

'...And the Woman Clothed with the Sun', episode nine, *Hannibal*, third season, USA, NBC, tx. 1 August 2015. Writers: Jeff Vlaming, Helen Shang, Bryan Fuller and Steve Lightfoot, Dir. John Dahl. Main Cast: Hugh Dancy (Will Graham), Mads Mikkelsen (Hannibal Lecter), Laurence Fishburne (Jack Crawford), Richard Armitage (Francis Dolarhyde), Rutina Wesley (Reba McClane).

'...And the Woman Clothed in Sun', episode ten, *Hannibal*, third season, USA, NBC, tx. 8 August 2015. Writers: Don Mancini and Bryan Fuller, Dir. Guillermo Navarro. Main Cast: Hugh Dancy (Will Graham), Mads Mikkelsen (Hannibal Lecter), Laurence Fishburne (Jack Crawford), Richard Armitage (Francis Dolarhyde), Rutina Wesley (Reba McClane).

'...And the Beast from the Sea', episode eleven, *Hannibal*, third season, USA, NBC, tx. 15 August 2015. Writers: Steve Lightfoot and Bryan Fuller, Dir. Michael Rymer. Main Cast: Hugh Dancy (Will Graham), Mads Mikkelsen (Hannibal Lecter), Laurence Fishburne (Jack Crawford), Richard Armitage (Francis Dolarhyde), Rutina Wesley (Reba McClane).

'The Number of the Beast Is 666' episode twelve, *Hannibal*, third season, USA, NBC, tx. 22 August 2015. Writers: Jeff Vlaming, Angela Lamanna, Bryan Fuller and Steve Lightfoot, Dir. Guillermo Navarro. Main Cast: Hugh Dancy (Will Graham), Mads Mikkelsen (Hannibal Lecter), Laurence Fishburne (Jack Crawford), Richard Armitage (Francis Dolarhyde), Rutina Wesley (Reba McClane).

'The Wrath of the Lamb', episode thirteen, *Hannibal*, third season, USA, NBC, tx. 29 August 2015. Writers: Bryan Fuller, Steve Lightfoot and Nick Antosca, Dir. Michael Rymer. Main Cast: Hugh Dancy (Will Graham), Mads Mikkelsen (Hannibal Lecter), Laurence Fishburne (Jack Crawford), Richard Armitage (Francis Dolarhyde), Rutina Wesley (Reba McClane).

## **Supplementary filmography**

*The Story the Biograph Told* (Wallace McCutcheon, 1904, USA)

*Bobby's Kodak* (Wallace McCutcheon, 1908, USA)

*I Was Born But...* (Yasujiro Ozu, 1932, Japan)

*The Damned Don't Cry* (Vincent Sherman, 1950, USA)

*Bed Time for Bonzo* (Frederick De Cordova, 1951, USA)

*Lost, Lost, Lost* (Jonas Mekas, 1949-1963, USA)

*Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954, USA)

*Tomb of Legia* (Roger Corman, 1964, USA)

*David Holzman's Diary* (Jim McBride, 1967, USA)

*Alice's Restaurant* (Arthur Penn, 1969, USA, USA)

*Jubilee* (Derek Jarman, 1972, UKA)

*Autobiography of a Princess* (James Ivory, 1975, UK)

*Night Moves* (Arthur Penn, 1975, USA)

*Midnight Cowboy* (John Schlesinger, 1969, USA)

*Hi Mom!* (Brian De Palma, 1970, USA)

*Get Carter* (Mike Hodges, 1971, UK)

*Gardens of Luxor* (Derek Jarman, 1972, UK)

*The Big Chill* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1983, USA)

*Paris/Texas* (Wim Wenders, 1984, USA)

*Mala Noche* (Gus van Sant, 1986, USA)

*Down and Out in Beverly Hills* (Paul Mazursky, 1986, USA)

*The Last of England* (Derek Jarman, 1987, UK)

*Pleasantville* (Gary Ross, 1998, USA)

*Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993, USA)

*My Own Private Idaho* (Gus Van Sant, 1991, USA)

*Johnny Mnemonic* (Robert Longo, 1996, USA)

*Female Perversion* (Susan Streitfeld, 1997, USA)

*The Myth of Fingerprints* (Bart Freundlich, 1997, USA)

*Hilary and Jackie* (Anand Tucker, 1999, UK)

*Virgin Suicides* (Sofia Coppola, 1999, USA)

*My Girl 2* (Howard Zieff, USA, 1993)

*Selena* (Gregory Nava, 1997, USA)

*Gummo* (Harmony Korine, 1997, USA)

*Buffalo 66* (Vincent Gallo, 1998, USA)

*Armageddon* (Michael Bay, 1998, USA)

*8mm* (Joel Schumacher, 1999, USA)

*Zoolander* (Ben Stiller, 2001, USA)

*Minority Report* (Steven Spielberg, 2002, USA)

*View from the Top* (Bruno Barreto, 2003, USA)

*The Aviator* (Martin Scorsese, 2004, USA)

*The Ballad of Jack and Rose* (Rebecca Miller, 2005)

*Final Cut* (Omar Naïm, 2004, USA)

*Factory Girl* (George Hickenloope, 2006, USA)

*Paranoid Park* (Gus van Sant, 2007, USA)

*Influence and Controversy: Making 'Performance'* (Greg Carson, 2007, USA)

*Hollywoodland* (Allen Coulter, 2006, USA)

*500 Days of Summer* (Marc Webb, 2009, USA)

*My Sister's Keeper* (Nick Cassavetes, USA, 2009, USA)

*It's Kind of a Funny Story* (Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck, 2010, USA)

*Everything Must Go* (Raymond Carver, 2010, USA)

*Parkland* (Peter Landesman, 2013, USA)

*The Theory of Everything* (James Marsh, 2014, UK)