

Neorealist Director-Architect

Critically Observing the Obvious

Book One

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Abstract

Within post-war (1975–2000) and post-Syrian-occupied (1976–2005) Beirut, civic values are being challenged on a daily basis. In this particular post-war, post-occupied condition, when seven million cubic feet of ancient Beirut have been demolished and dumped into the water, architecture can no longer be compatible with conventional design principles, but may alternatively seek to look ‘critically at the obvious’¹ through Neorealism in order to develop a new type of architect and architecture able to deal with such a circumstance. A similar condition may be experienced through considering the characteristics and techniques in *Rome Open City* (1945) by the Neorealist film director Roberto Rossellini; with makeshift studio space, no comprehensive cast of professional actors, no advanced lighting systems, one-page scripts, no formal camera framing, no perpetual recording of dialogue and no formal financial backing, Rossellini creatively documented post-World War II Italy and the devastating impact of the Fascist regime and Nazi occupation of Rome.

As an architect living in post-war/post-Syrian-occupied Beirut, I believe the fifteenth-century drawing tools and techniques of the designer-architect² are less useful in Beirut today. Rather, an investigation into the oeuvre of Neorealism and the formation of a ‘Neorealist Director-Architect’ (NrDA) model will attempt to offer relevant post-war architecture in Beirut. The research question raised is: to what extent can the gambits, devices and techniques of film history, with a focus on the Neorealist film-director Roberto Rossellini, serve as a model for the NrDA, providing an alternative model for the traditional designer-architect?

The proposed NrDA shall utilize a set of both theoretical and practical tools derived from Neorealist film technique and adapted to architecture through the use of interviews, photography, film, animation, video and audio recordings, newspapers and current gossip and material reconstitution, as well as digital and physical modelling, to locate and record the various forms of myth and matter within Beirut. The new-found knowledge base and tool set are then applied in making the proposed 'Municipal Structure of Negotiation' (MSN) as an architectural testimony to the NrDA model.

Dedication

A good man – I shall say – passed away on Friday 12 November 2004. Hussam Barghout was a victory of capacity and potential. He was physically strong, something I could never forget, full of life and laughter, heavy laughter, a heavy body. I still remember the way he would smile, very brutal but soft; I still remember his force; I still remember his face. I had the pleasure of working with Hussam Barghout for over two years: first, as my student; then, as a colleague.

Life is funny like that. People leave you unexpectedly, but it is so strange that their departure fills you with strength and compassion. It is precisely this strange compassion that I seek to give the city of Beirut through the MSN, a structure that Hussam was quintessential in visualizing through various phases. To Beirut a sacrifice has been made: a man for a structure, a great friend for a great idea. Life is funny like that, isn't it? This structure, its thoughts and manifestations, are dedicated to him.

I also dedicate this thesis, not only to Hussam, but to all those who believe in humanity, liberty, and the quest for freedom against oppression, occupation and fundamentalism. I pray that future generations in the Middle East understand god as an idea that unifies humanity, that signifies kindness and forgiveness, and not as a representative form, beautiful, that is manipulated by all against all.

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With sincerity and respect,

Chadi R. Chamoun

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Introduction: Thesis Structure

The general structure of this thesis comprises an abstract, table of contents, introduction, three chapters, conclusion and appendix. The thesis is divided into two books (bound as Volumes I and II to comply with UCL regulations): *Book One* contains the primary text, and *Book Two* contains the visual material of this research. The navigation of the two books is explained in the far right-hand column of the table of contents: b.1 indicates *Book One*; b.2 indicates *Book Two*. In certain instances the reader may be required to refer to both books in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the argument; in other instances *Book One* will suffice. When appropriate, *Book One* will direct the reader to refer to *Book Two* in order to expand the discussion on a particular section.

The first two chapters begin with an introduction and end with a conclusion. The third and final chapter begins with an introduction and ends with an architectural project. Within the body of each chapter there are a series of sequential sections that link the evolution of the discussion from beginning to end. Each section is then broken down into a series of sub-sections that expand on the particular contents of each chapter. Such a structure should be read chronologically, as the introduction, chapter, section, sub-section and conclusion build upon one another, each informing the next, like the linking of train cars on a track. The particularity of this thesis structure is that it appeals to the synthesis of two different disciplines, two different cities and two different characters with the aspiration of making a new type of architect, namely the NrDA. The two disciplines are film and architecture; the two cities are Rome and Beirut; and the two characters are Roberto Rossellini and I as the resultant NrDA.

The first chapter, entitled 'Re-directing Film', seeks to identify and discuss various components of history that both predicate and trace the existence of film. The research spans from the shadow puppet, to how the role of the Film-Director came to be, to the significance, traits and characteristics of Neorealism, to the evolution of the Neorealist Film-Director with contemporary director parallels, to the differences between Neorealism, montage and realism, and how Roberto Rossellini, as the father of Neorealism in his making of *Rome Open City* (1945), creates the comparative space for post-war (1975–2000) and post-Syrian-occupied (1976–2005) Beirut and the creation of the NrDA.

The second chapter, entitled 'Myth and Matter in Beirut', is an effort to identify the importance and limitations of myth, and conceptualize the relationship between mythologist and NrDA – their difference being that the NrDA challenges ideology in the pursuit of defining reality, while the mythologist extracts reality from ideology. The chapter then exhibits various forms of reality that have been extracted from Beirut through the preparation of ten case studies which reveal various traits and characteristics of Beirut – a taste of the city. The chapter concludes by establishing an understanding for the reader of what the capacities and qualities of the NrDA are, and how those qualities may develop in the enactment of an architectural project in the following chapter. Roland Barthes showcases the differences between the opposing polarities of reality and ideology:

The fact that we cannot manage to achieve more than an

unstable grasp of reality doubtless gives the measure of our present alienation: we constantly drift between the object and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a state which is still mystified. It would seem that we are condemned for some time yet always to speak excessively about reality. This is probably because ideologism and its opposite are types of behaviour that are still magical, terrorized, blinded and fascinated by the split in the social world. And yet this is what we must seek: reconciliation between reality and men, between description and explanation, between object and knowledge.³

The method of approach, and structure, of the ten case studies primarily draw their inspiration from Rossellini's and Barthes's writings on observation, reality, ideology and myth, as will be discussed in the body of this chapter. Particular reference and inspiration have been drawn from the way that Barthes writes about the power and shortcomings of myth in his book *Mythologies*, and also the way that Barthes evaluates a photograph or image in his book *Camera Lucida*.

Through the ten case studies, I have attempted to harness the communicative strength of these two canons and read into, explain and express what I see in Beirut. I hope that my efforts give homage to the research of Rossellini and Barthes and help in building the conversation between reality and

ideology and the formation of the NrDA as an alternative to the designer-architect. Jonathan Hill clarifies the origins of the architectural drawing/designer-architect, their severance from building/construction process, and the inherent gap in communication that has arisen as a result of their division:

The origins of the architectural drawing as an essential element of architectural practice and the architect as a distinct figure, knowledgeable in the visual and liberal arts, independent of the building trades, and associated with intellectual rather than manual labour, lie in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The architect, as we now understand the term, is largely an invention of this period. The (modern) architect and the architectural drawing are twins. Interdependent, they are representative of the same idea: that architecture results not from the accumulated knowledge of a team of anonymous craftsman but is the individual artistic creation of an architect in command of drawing who conceives a building as a whole at a remove from construction. From the fifteenth century to the twenty-first, the architect has made drawings, models and texts not buildings.⁴

Over a period of seven centuries the designer-architect's drawing has become the primary tool of communication, and has consequently served as a social and professional divide between the designer-architect on the one hand, and community/craftsman/construction/building on the other hand. David Nicol and

Simon Pilling, in their book entitled *Changing Architectural Education: Towards a New Professionalism*, present an argument centred on the lack of communication and social skills that the designer-architect model embodies and the subsequent reaction of the communities he or she serves. Nicol and Pilling suggest that a new educational and professional model is required for the designer-architect. As a result of several community and client-based interviews conducted by Nicol and Pilling, designer-architects 'were generally not seen as good listeners, communicators or team players. Clients believed that these shortcomings reflected the architects' attitudes, beliefs and training, and concluded that urgent and radical steps should be taken.'⁵ Nicol and Pilling state that designer-architects need to 'demonstrate greater sensitivity in their designs to the needs of building users and society'.⁶ Other criticisms cited by Nicol and Pilling are based on the designer-architect's need to 'develop interpersonal skills in relationship to clients and other professionals ... become better at listening and responding to, and communicating with, building users and the public'.⁷ Nicol and Pilling locate the cause of the designer-architect's deficiencies as based on two main criteria:

1. Architects don't explain their services well ... part of it is protectionism. In general architects are not good at putting over what they do; there is an inbuilt arrogance within the profession that makes them difficult to approach.⁸
2. They've [architects] got a vision in their head which we can't see, it might be a fantastic vision and they might be able to draw it down in time for the contractor to produce it, but it's no good if we can't see it.⁹

Nicol and Pilling identified that the primary problem with the designer-architect was his or her primary reliance on drawing as a means of communication and presentation. 'However the architect must be able to do more than clearly describe the benefits of a good design to clients. Communication is not just about effective description: equally important is listening to clients and negotiating and facilitating the process of building design.'¹⁰

Unlike the NrDA, the designer-architect does not possess the necessary skill set to appropriate such complex communal issues, participating on socio-cultural and economic levels, because his or her background is linked to design. Hill states 'the term design comes from the Italian "*disegno*", meaning drawing, suggesting both the drawing of a line on paper and the drawing forth of an idea from the mind into physical reality'.¹¹ Hill explains that the reliance on the term '*disegno*'¹² 'from the fifteenth century to the twenty-first' has led the designer-architect to make 'drawings, models and texts not buildings'.¹³ Hill allows the NrDA to understand and challenge the traditional forms of architects and builders. Hill clarifies that traditional forms of architects and builders have heavily relied on the architectural drawing, 'focusing attention on vision'.¹⁴ The focus on vision has caused the designer-architect, and the community for which he or she designs, to compromise human sensibilities such as touch, taste, smell and hearing, by not participating in the building process.¹⁵

The capacity of the designer-architect to produce drawings and not buildings is also discussed by the twenty-first-century architectural historian Robin Evans. Evans compares the relation of drawing and building to the translation of language; 'to translate is to convey'.¹⁶ It is to move something

without altering it'.¹⁷ Unlike language, drawing and building are not particularly conducive to translation, particularly in post-war/post-Syrian-occupied Beirut where ensuing mobilization and alteration during the building process are the norm. Evans clarifies that the 'transmutation that occurs between drawing and building remains to a large extent an enigma'.¹⁸ Drawing and building are different. The designer-architect's drawing is to a large extent under his or her control,¹⁹ while the demands of a building site extend beyond the capacity of the traditional designer-architect and require a reconsidered skill set that the NrDA offers. Evans states that to translate without appropriate modulation suggests 'more than just a naive delusion', and only by understanding the drawing's 'distinctness from and unlikeness to' the building 'can any precise knowledge of the patterns of deviations from this imaginary condition be gained.'²⁰ Evans clarifies that once producing a drawing, the designer-architect becomes distant from the building process 'while painters and sculptors, who might spend some time on preliminary sketches and maquettes, all ended up working on the thing itself which, naturally, absorbed most of their attention and effort'.²¹

Hill clarifies that designer-architects 'draw buildings and do not physically build them'²² and the work of the designer-architect is 'always at a remove from the actual process of building'.²³ The inability of the designer-architect to deal with fundamental building factors such as coordinated crane, hoisting and lifting schedules, contractor and sub-contractor typologies, factors of constructability and evolving community demands, as well as sudden changes in budget and project requirements, further removes him or her from the building process. In addition to the above noted building processes, the particularities of building in

post-war/post-Syrian-occupied Beirut, such as insufficient material availability, labour supply and methods of construction, as well as complex social and cultural criteria, further challenge the validity of the designer-architect model.

The twenty-first-century architectural historian and critic Mark Wigley suggests that paper, 'a layer of compressed and dried wood pulp or fragmented linen',²⁴ the material upon which the designer-architect makes drawings, and not buildings, 'allows for a 'bridge across the classical divide between material and idea'.²⁵ Wigley clarifies that paper 'has long been a standard support of dreams ... and those who never realize their dreams are called paper architects ... The technique of representation at once exemplifies and masks the very condition that it represents'.²⁶ The dream that Wigley suggests, masked by the designer-architect's paper, is in fact the building.

With the NrDA's ability to communicate as learned from Barthes and Rossellini, in addition to the inspiration and direction acquired from all those cited in this thesis, the above mentioned references to Hill, Nicol and Pilling, Evans and Wigley locate the inability of the designer-architect as an effective communicator, particularly in post-war/post-Syrian-occupied Beirut. Such inability is a result of the educational and consequential professional model of the designer-architect, limited to the 'idea of architecture and not the matter of building'²⁷ that has distanced him or her from the building process. The NrDA's awareness of communication as the primary driver of architecture, not restricted only to drawing, but also through comprehensive involvement in the social, cultural, political criteria defining the building process, will allow for an architectural model more appropriate to post-war/post-Syrian-Occupied Beirut.

The third and final chapter, entitled 'Neorealist Director-Architect and the MSN', is an assembly of values that the NrDA brings to the role of the architect via the history of film. Section 3.1 exhibits a set of comparisons between roles in film-making and roles involved in the making of architecture; they range from comparing a film to a building, to comparing a cinematographer to a designer. Section 3.2, 'Municipal Structure of Negotiation', is an architectural testimony to the development of the NrDA. Whereas the final exhibit of Neorealist Film-Director would be a film, the final exhibit of the NrDA would be a work of architecture.

Rossellini's ambition in making *Rome Open City* (1945) was to represent the lives of Italian citizens in Rome during the Fascist and Nazi occupation (1943–1944) of World War II. One year after the occupation was over, Rossellini readily located and identified the various social and cultural traces of the war on the Italian community of Rome. *Rome Open City* (1945) proceeded to reassemble these traces, and to inspire the Italian community in the reconstruction of their city. Not only were the Italians themselves inspired, but the world community learned that they were not all Fascists, nor Nazis, but that there were citizens of Rome who were struggling for liberty and freedom under the forces of war and occupation. *Rome Open City* (1945) acted as an ambassador for Italy to the world community.²⁸ Similarly, the MSN represents a collection of visual and textual evidence that reveals to the viewer/reader of this thesis the post-war and post-Syrian-occupation experiences of the citizens of Beirut – I hope that the MSN has similar effects in representing and signifying the Lebanese community.

As a reminder to the reader/viewer of this thesis, the visual evidence that is found in *Book Two* relates to each of the three chapters described above. The relationship is expressed within the text of *Book One*, as well as in the table of contents.

Chapter 1: Redirecting Film

1.0 Introduction

This chapter will exhibit a core history of film in order to develop an encompassing knowledge base that will establish firm theoretical groundwork for addressing Neorealist film-direction and the advent of the NrDA. Addressing a core history of film will allow the reader an insight into the origins and workings of film-direction, formulating an understanding of how film-direction began in the late nineteenth century with the magician Georges Méliès,²⁹ giving the profession a lifespan of just over one hundred years. This chapter will also exhibit oriental 'shadow plays', Plato's 'cave' and the 'silhouette chair' along with the 'magic lantern' that represent a two-thousand-year precedent of matter and material that (pre-)dates the workings of Méliès and the nineteenth century. Based on the above concept, the chapter presents an examination of historical precedents, along with their protagonists, inventors, artists and relevant contributions. This evidence of a pre-history of film defines a theoretical framework of 'film' before its actual invention – aiding in the development of invaluable criteria and material for architecture, and developing the history of film, the origin of film-direction and Neorealism into the components that define the NrDA.

In order to further present the relevancy of Neorealism within the context of present-day culture, a comparative analysis will be offered by traversing certain relationships between Neorealist directors and present-day directors with similarities in various aspects such as actor selection, cinematographers, writing technique and personal life experiences. The relationships developed between Neorealist film-directors and present day film-directors seek to establish a

present-day affinity for the benefit of today's viewing and reading audience – as some viewers and readers may not have viewed or be familiar with Neorealist films, contemporary references will aid in the understanding of Neorealist concepts. The director comparisons are intended to create not a finite relationship but rather a relation of plausible comparative analysis, as many present-day film-directors, particularly in war and documentary-style film, exhibit Neorealist values. The director couplings to be discussed are Vittorio De Sica/Ken Loach, Federico Fellini/David Lynch and Roberto Rossellini/Oliver Stone.

Once the comparative analysis has been established, a particular focus will be placed on Rossellini as the founding father of Neorealism through discussion of the various social and cultural aspects that have constituted his life, both as an individual, with pertinent reference to family and personal life, and as a film-director with a body of professional work. What will surface in this discussion is that Rossellini was greatly influenced as a film-director by his daily life experiences, particularly the people, places and events he had grown up around. In the final section of this chapter, Rossellini's benchmark film *Rome Open City* (1945) will be discussed, analysed and diagrammatically abstracted as a learning tool to examine how the NrDA may perceive and represent the experiences of a post-war city, as Rossellini did as a Neorealist film-director. A selection of three film stills in *Book Two*/pages 2–5 serve as a didactic tool in realizing the fact that there are several components and gambits to each scene that inform the reader/viewer, which the NrDA possesses the ability to identify and represent in detail.



Figure 1:
Lotte Reiniger, *Shadow Theatres and Shadow Films*, 1970. Legend of
Chinese shadow play.

1.1a

Legend of the Shadow Play and Creative Narrator

According to shadow puppet expert Lotte Reiniger, the shadow play is distinguished from all forms of theatre by a precise relation with the history of film spanning over two thousand years, comprising culturally rooted legends with origins in China, India and Egypt.³⁰ Historically, the shadow play originated in China during the Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) and later flourished during the Song Dynasty (960–1279). Its popularity culminated in the Yuan Dynasty and spread to Persia. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties it was divided into many sects and spread to Java, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma and Japan.³¹ The first historical example of the shadow play was presented in the form of a legend (Figure 1):

A Chinese emperor had a mistress whom he loved very much. But the lady died, and the young emperor was so stricken with grief that he lost interest in life and neglected all his duties. Finally one of the greatest artists of the court created, using all his skill, a likeness of the beautiful favourite in the form of a shadow figure. He put up a silk screen, lit it from behind and with his movable figure imitated the graceful movements of the departed. He even managed to catch the intonation of her voice, accompanying it with soft music. So accomplished was this artist's performance that the emperor felt comforted.³²

The creative communication skills of the artist acting as storyteller, director and performer mimicking the sound of the emperor's mistress and understanding the actual history of the emperor's loss may be considered core values in the pre-history of film. The creative communication skills of the artist remain the necessary ingredient for a good production; all other aspects, such as props, lights, sound effects and screens, inevitably change in form and technology over the course of time, while the role of the artist as 'creative narrator'³³ remains unflinching. In querying the Middle Eastern roots of the shadow play, Deborah Folaran, author of 'Oral Narrating and Performing Traditions in the History of Modern Middle Eastern and Maghrebian Theatre and Drama',³⁴ defines the role of the director as a creative narrator:

Through this imagery and theatrical play, the oral narrator created a 'place', a fictional or theatrical space in which the spectator or auditor was invited to enter into a special relationship of complicity, one that implicitly acknowledged a space maintained through the faculty of the imagination ... Both oral narrator and spectator engage in dialogue and in essence co-create a 'text'. Within the Arabic-Islamic oral tradition, the spectator has characteristically been an active one, insofar as the audience has been accustomed to playing a participatory role in the reception of the poem or narration. Spectators, auditors or interlocutors are not merely passive receivers or consumers of a product (like in the 'produced' performance), but

rather are active participating 'performers' themselves, with a certain bargaining power in the narrating event.³⁵

The three constituents of shadow play, creative narrator and spectator are rooted as the fundamental historical reference in the evolution of film, without which a history of film could not exist. The shadow play is necessary as the primal manner of presenting an image on a surface such as a wall or screen, the creative narrator as the artist who communicates the projected image, and the spectator as he or she for whom the performance is enacted. Together the three components can be considered to form a 'holy trinity' from which the very basis of film history evolves.

1.1b

Role of the Screen and Light

The screen that is utilized in the shadow play has undergone several developments over the course of history, but what remains consistent is the fact that it has mediated the creative narrator and their audience. In its relation to the previously discussed Chinese legend, the shadow play further lends itself to the history of film through the usage of the screen as a medium that transforms an existing reality – in the legend, the emperor's sorrow – into an artistically rendered representation of reality. The emperor had a need for the screen to see beyond his pain and anguish and to imagine his mistress; the shadow play provided the means for him to do this. The screen, artist and shadow filtered his sorrow and grief, allowing him to imagine that his mistress had returned to give

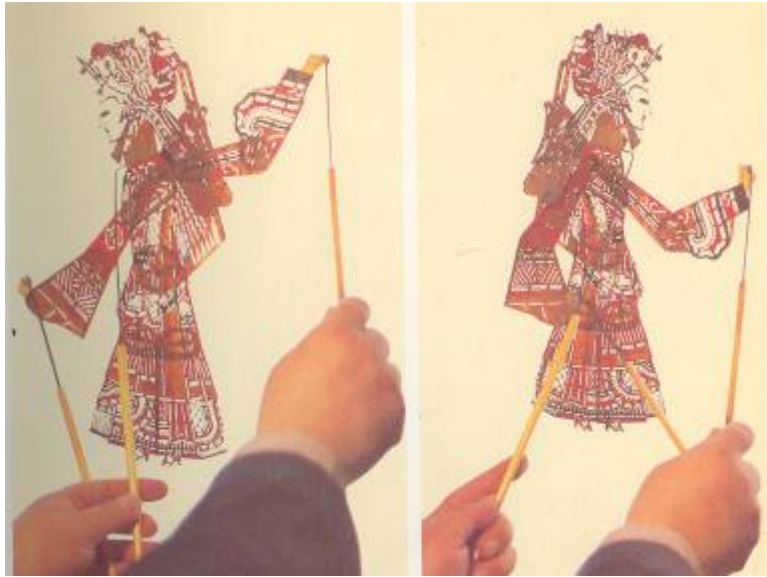


Figure 2:
Liu Jilin, *Chinese Shadow Puppet Plays*, 1988. Manipulation of Chinese puppet.

him comfort. Hereta Shonewolf, a shadow puppet expert, clarifies the historical significance of the screen:

On human and puppet stages alike, a real world of space is created in which the actors or figures stand at a real distance from each other; they have a direct contact with the audience. The effect of a shadow play is always indirect; action is filtered and monitored by the screen. The spectator is by himself, and his feeling of isolation is heightened by the darkness of the room ... he only sees the image, the projection.³⁶

The image in Figure 2 presents scenes of a puppeteer manipulating a shadow puppet behind a screen. The transference of the physical puppet to the screen is made possible by means of a light source. The light projects the material qualities of an object onto the screen. We no longer see the object but the image; we no longer see the material of the puppet but the immateriality of the shadow.

Historically, 'Lamps of vegetable oil, some with five cotton wicks, were the earliest lamps, but the light they gave was dim and smoky.'³⁷ The wick is a capricious light source; it is not continuous and steady in the sense that it flickers, softens and intensifies owing to the motion around it. If one wick were to burn out, the intensity would change, dark spots would arise, and the visual language of the play would be challenged. Future developments changed the light source from vegetable oil lamps to gas lamps, electric incandescent lamps and fluorescent lights. Each source of light presented a new challenge: a new set of



Figure 3:
Liu Jilin, *Chinese Shadow Puppet Plays*, 1988. Chinese puppet.

relations to be dealt with.

1.1c

Chinese Shadow Puppets

Shadow puppets (Figure 3) are traditionally called 'piying' or 'skin silhouettes', and are made from such animal skins as are available, depending on the particular region in China.³⁸ The puppets are conceived as puppets rather than human replicas of actors. They are given movements and characteristics of their own through both exaggeration and convention. For example, when a set of puppets return to the stage after a fierce round of hand-to-hand fighting, their chests rise and fall heavily as if they are gasping for breath. A human performer who acted in such a manner might be accused of incompetence or overacting, but for the puppet this is normal. The audience is more than willing to believe the verisimilitude of the performance.³⁹

The traditional making of shadow puppets was a regional exercise, based on locality and availability. Ox or cattle skin was used in Shaanxi, Shanxi, Gansu, Qinghai and the Ningxia provinces; donkey skin, and occasionally mule and horse skin, in Heibi and the north-eastern provinces; and buffalo skin in Hunan and Sichuan provinces.⁴⁰ The usage of that skin for the Chinese shadow puppets was also site specific: 'The skin used for a puppet's head should be very smooth and translucent, while the skin for the upper part of the body can be slightly less translucent. The skin for the torso should be stiff, and that for the legs should be thick.'⁴¹ A particular characteristic of the Chinese shadow puppet is that the replacement of the puppet's head allows it to change both role and action.⁴² One



Figure 4:
Liu Jilin, *Chinese Shadow Puppet Plays*, 1988. Carving tools.

head may indicate a calm angelic character, while another head may indicate a savage murderer.

After the selection of an appropriate skin, the shadow puppet maker seeks to locate the particular pattern necessary for each section of skin. The puppet maker then anchors the skin on a round wax plate or hardwood board, holding the skin down with one hand. Designs are lightly incised with a needle, and then the carving is begun.⁴³ Different carving techniques, tools (Figure 4) and skins in different regions of China have given rise to different styles of shadow puppets; some are elaborate and meticulous, while others are rough and bold. As described below, there are two methods for carving the skin:

1. Relief carving: The lines of the design are kept and the surrounding areas are excised. This technique produces a striking decorative effect because of the strong contrasts of lights and darks in the figures.⁴⁴

2. Hollow carving: The lines of the design are excised and the black areas are retained. This technique gives a fuller form.

Most designs of clothing and hats are hollow carved.⁴⁵

Chinese puppet makers also allow for variances within the two methods. Sometimes lines or surrounding areas are only partially cut out; another variance allows design patterns to be painted by using dyes on the skin and cutting nothing out. The act of painting allows for a variety of colours and hues to extend the language of the shadow. Chinese puppet makers colour the puppet skins



Figure 5: Pandam Guritno, Haryonoo Guritno, Teguh Djamal, MollyBondan, *Wayang Purwa Indonesia*, 1989. Puppet with structural horns.

utilizing a layering technique which regulates the intensity and depth of the colour. This permits light to diffuse through the skin, allowing for a healthy, soft and natural complexion.⁴⁶

1.1d

Javanese Shadow Puppets

Unlike the Chinese puppets, the Javanese (Figure 5) are not painted with translucent tints of colour. They are painted in diverse opaque colours and throw a very strong, distinct black shadow upon the screen.⁴⁷ The Wayang puppets require structural reinforcement as they are five times as large as those of the Chinese, which do not require any structural support other than their actual skin. Wayang puppets average around 50 centimetres in height and require a 'horn' structural feature, which acts as a spine to support their bodies and by which the dalang holds them; additional 'horns' are attached to the arms of the puppets, which are the only movable parts of the figures.⁴⁸ The technical title of the Javanese shadow play is 'Wayang Purwa' – Wayang meaning 'shadow' and Purwa 'ancient'.⁴⁹ The Wayang Purwa is a shadow show for which the 'ancient Ramayana and Mahabharata stories form the repertoire'. The shadows are cast on a white screen by opaque flat leather puppets that are stiffened by horn handles and manipulated by a puppeteer, who is called the dalang.⁵⁰

Over the course of history, the form of Javanese puppets would change. Such transformation can be seen by observing reliefs carved in stone from East Java temples. These show the Wayang characters in their realistic forms and proportions in the fourteenth century, and their gradual change into 'elongated



Figure 6:
www.istockphoto.com, [cited 7 August 2004]. Wayang Golek
Puppets. © Andy Green.

shadows' during the fifteenth-century dominance of Islam with its aversion to representations of human form.⁵¹ Like the Chinese shadow play, Wayang Purwa engages a position based on moral and ethical values: 'Wayang Purwa is a mine of the ethical teachings inherent in Indonesian culture (Javanese), and it is a medium of communication capable of acting as an agent of change in the fast changing world of Indonesia.'⁵² Both Chinese and Javanese shadow plays sought to communicate cultural and social values and concerns through their performance.

The shadow play stories of the Javanese do not change; rather they receive the interpretation of the dalang, the traditional director of the shadow play who is also the sole puppeteer of the performance. The dalang is responsible for the collaboration of the 'Niyaga', a group of thirteen musicians who play at least fifteen kinds of instruments, as well as the 'Pesinden' group of up to twenty-five female singers. Approximately 30 per cent of the contents of each Javanese play is bound by tradition in both word and tone; the remaining 70 per cent can be considered as the space for the personal interpretation of the dalang. During a performance, the dalang must be ready to slip in facts, comments and news of the conversations occurring in the audience; he then adds amusing details in order to enlighten listeners.⁵³ 'This is how the dalang serves as an instrument of two-way communication between people and government.'⁵⁴

As the dalang directs the various components of the performance, he utilizes a large variety of two-dimensional shadow puppets, except at the very end of a performance. At this final moment, when good triumphs over evil, a three-dimensional female dancer puppet called the 'golek' (Figure 6) dances for

the assembled victors, above the upper edge of the screen. The Javanese word *golek*⁵⁵ means ‘to look for’ or ‘to seek for’, so the audience is given the opportunity to seek the symbolic meaning of the story during the golek dance. The golek is the three-dimensional representation of an idea freed from the form of the shadow, suggesting a real and tangible resolution to the preceding events. Plato’s cave provides a useful comparative analysis to further understanding of the relation between shadows and reality.

1.1e

Plato’s Cave

According to the nineteenth-century American essayist, philosopher and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson:

Plato was able to become the seminal synthesizer of eastern and western thought and to this partiality the history of nations correspond. From his pilgrimages in the East, Plato imbibed the idea of one deity, into which all things are absorbed. Discovering the unity of Asia and being mindful of the detail of Europe – the infinitude of the Asiatic soul and the defining, result-loving, machine-making, surface-seeking, opera-going Europe – Plato came to join, and, by contact, to enhance, the energy of each.⁵⁶

Emerson clarifies that ‘[i]f Plato had made transcendental distinctions, he fortified

himself by drawing all his illustrations from sources disdained by orators and polite conversers; from mares and puppies; from pitchers and soup-ladles; from cooks and criers; the shops of potters, horse-doctors, butchers and fishmongers'.⁵⁷ It was the execution of Socrates (Plato's mentor) in 399 BC that triggered Plato to immediately depart from Athens and travel to Egypt and Italy, not returning to Athens until about 387 BC, when he founded The Academy, an institution devoted to research and instruction in philosophy.⁵⁸ In Book Five of the *Republic*, Plato clarifies that only those who can distinguish the world of 'absolute beauty' from that of 'beautiful things' are worthy of the name of philosophers.⁵⁹

Plato defines those persons who were limited to the pursuit of beautiful things as the 'sight-loving, art-loving, practical class ... fond of fine tones and colours and forms and all the artificial products that are made out of them [whose] minds are incapable of seeing or loving absolute beauty'.⁶⁰ In stark comparison, Plato's philosophers who are in search of absolute beauty possess the power to 'distinguish the idea from the objects which participate in the idea, neither putting the objects in the place of the idea nor the idea in the place of the object'.⁶¹ From considering this distinction between absolute beauty and beautiful things, it can be deduced that Plato was interested in the pursuit of the idea, going beyond the limited material beauty of an object.

Plato continues to express his discontent with beautiful things in Book Seven of the *Republic*, drawing a comparison from the realm of shadow play:

And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is

enlightened or unenlightened: Behold! Human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them ... Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.⁶²

Within Plato's cave, the 'vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials',⁶³ which man cannot see as the source of the shadow, can be compared to the actual shadow puppets that the respective audiences for the Chinese and Javanese shadow performances do not see during the performance, although unlike the prisoners in Plato's cave the shadow play audience possesses the ability to rise up and confront the shadows' source. The allegory's message as discussed by Plato, and further clarified by Hill 'is that the deceptive, shadowy world of appearances should be rejected in favour of understanding the ideal forms on which they are modelled'.⁶⁴ Upon liberation, the difficulty for the prisoners in identifying absolute beauty is stated by Plato:

At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards

the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows ... that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned toward more real existence, he has a clearer vision ... And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them – will he not be perplexed?⁶⁵

The performance, screen, puppets and shadows are simply the objects and tools utilized to communicate social and cultural ideas to the audience; the creative narrator and dalang are communicators of ideas. Emerson's earlier reference to cooks and criers suggests that those persons who are not tainted with the opinionated social conditioning of a 'sight-loving, art-loving'⁶⁶ class possess the capacity to comprehend absolute beauty, free from constructed cultural preconceptions and 'the artificial products that are made out of them'.⁶⁷ Emerson suggests that the cook has a greater tendency and capacity to perceive the world of ideas, based on his belief that he/she is not prejudiced or opinionated as to form, compared to the 'sight-loving, art-loving'⁶⁸ class who are opinion-based – since 'opinion lay between knowledge and ignorance'.⁶⁹ Plato suggests that opinion tends more towards ignorance: 'beautiful things are also ugly, just things also unjust, holy things also unholy, double things also half, and big things also little'.⁷⁰

Man's desire to understand, document and record the idea of absolute

beauty has continued to evolve in various forms. Such pursuits were to be notably carried out in the late eighteenth century by Marquis Etienne de Silhouette,⁷¹ Controller General of Finance in Paris as well as the inventor of the 'silhouette', along with the scientist John Casper Lavater, who utilized the silhouette as a means to deduce the character of an individual.

1.1f **Observations of Silhouette and Lavater**

The term 'silhouette' was adopted from the surname of Marquis Etienne de Silhouette to represent all that was 'strict and crude',⁷² stemming from his stringency in handling the fiscal policies of the period. The Marquis de Silhouette also had a hobby: he was an enthusiast at cutting shadow-portraits. The general public of France became aware of his hobby and, because 'shadow-portraits were so much easier and cheaper than costly painted miniature portraits',⁷³ supported an industry that was to become synonymous with his name. The continued popularity of such portraits in the late eighteenth century led the scientist John Casper Lavater to develop a means of observation and study using the silhouette to deduce the character of an individual:

The shadow-picture of a man – of a human face – is the most feeble, the emptiest – but at the same time, if the light has been standing in the right distance, if the face has been falling on a pure surface, it becomes the truest and the most faithful picture which you can give of a man. For it is nothing positive, it is only



Figure 7:
Lotte Reiniger, *Shadow Theatres and Shadow Films*, 1970.
Silhouette chair.

negative, only the outline of half a face ... In a silhouette there is only one line, no motion, no light, no colour, no height, no depth, no eye, no ear, no nostril, no cheek, only a very little part of the lip.⁷⁴

Lavater's means of observation were highly controlled in order to 'obtain a true and unquestionable likeness of the sitter'.⁷⁵ Lavater engaged in a concise process of abstraction; He would not record any detail, just the outline, and then proceeded to fill that outline with black ink. His desire to record a controlled abstraction was so intense that it led to his invention of the 'Silhouette Chair' (Figure 7):

A subject was seated on a specially constructed chair, with a support for his head. Incorporated in the chair was a frame with a glass plate in a fixed position. The frame was covered with oiled paper and a candle was adjusted so as to throw its light on the subject so that the shadow fell on the screen without distortion. Then the shadow's outline was drawn on the paper with the utmost correctness. The inner space was filled with black ink, so that a life-size portrait of the sitter was obtained with complete accuracy.⁷⁶

Reiniger clarifies that the shadow lends itself to abstraction while the silhouette does not. Reiniger remarks: 'The essential difference between a shadow and a

silhouette is that the latter can not be distorted. A silhouette can cast a shadow. When you see trees or figures against an evening sky, you would say, not that they are shadowed against the sky, but silhouetted against it. The silhouette exists in its own right.⁷⁷

1.1g Merging Shadow Puppets, Animation and Film

Reiniger, in the first two chapters of her book entitled *Shadow Theatre and Shadow Films*, traces the history of shadows and silhouettes in China, India, Europe and the Middle East, delving into great detail concerning the nature of shadow hand puppets, the making of figures, the making of theatre sets and the orchestration of a proper performance. In her third and final chapter, 'Shadow Films', she cites the merging of shadow puppets and film, explicitly stating that 'it took the invention of cinematography for an entirely new kind of puppetry to come into being. This was called animation, which meant giving life to otherwise unmovable objects.'⁷⁸

Reiniger defines the particular moment when animation and cinematography were to merge in the making of the film *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, directed and written by Paul Wegener in the town of Bautzen, Germany, in 1918. Wegener was a multi-talented director who also was an actor, writer and producer.⁷⁹ Reiniger happened to be living in the town of Bautzen during the making of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (1918) and had the chance to participate in the actual making of the film. She states:

Early in the morning the street was cleared of traffic and Wegener in his Pied Piper costume passed along, piping enticingly. Then a revolver shot was fired ... whereupon we all opened our baskets and let the rats escape through the cellar windows. And escape they did! None of them thought of following the Pied Piper ... When the scene was projected you could hardly see them at all. In spite of the fact that the Pied Piper, so far from freeing the town of Hamelin from a plague of rats, had infected the town of Bautzen with another.⁸⁰

The film crew then attempted to use guinea pigs painted grey with tails of leather strings attached to them, but this did not work either; the guinea pigs played in the middle of the street. Reiniger remarks that finally wooden rats were used, and the technique of stop-motion photography. This process was tedious and long, as Reiniger and all the other young girls and boys in the town helping with the film had to run out onto the street, move the wooden rats a centimetre, and then run out of sight again as the camera photographed the change in position of the rats.

Reiniger would continue to work with Wegener, cutting out silhouette titles for his films. Impressed by Reiniger's accuracy and versatility, Wegener introduced her to a group of young artists and scientists who were opening up an experimental animation studio, and persuaded them to let the 'silhouette girl'⁸¹ Reiniger make her silhouettes movable so as to create a silhouette cartoon. It may be deduced that the animation experience from *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (1918), involving stop-motion photography, and Reiniger's ability in making

accurate silhouettes, allowed her to evolve as a crucial figure in merging the worlds of shadow play and film. Reiniger would then take these lessons and apply them to her shadow and silhouette puppets over the coming years by developing the machines and devices that would allow the shadow puppet to merge with cinematographic animation technique. Reiniger describes in great detail how to animate a shadow puppet. From her explanation I have understood the following process:⁸²

1. Cut out one articulated shadow figure.
2. Lay the figure flat on a glass plate and cover with transparent paper.
3. Saw a hole in a table the size of the glass plate.
4. Place the glass plate with the figure and transparent paper over the hole.
5. Place a lamp on the floor under the hole and switch it on.
6. Switch off all the other sources of light in the room so the figure will appear in pure silhouette.
7. Fix a camera at the proper distance above the glass plate in order to achieve a perfect plan view with proper focus.
8. Take a shot of the shadow figure with the camera, repeatedly moving the figure and taking a series of shots to coincide with each movement.
9. Project the results, and the figure will appear to be moving of its own volition.

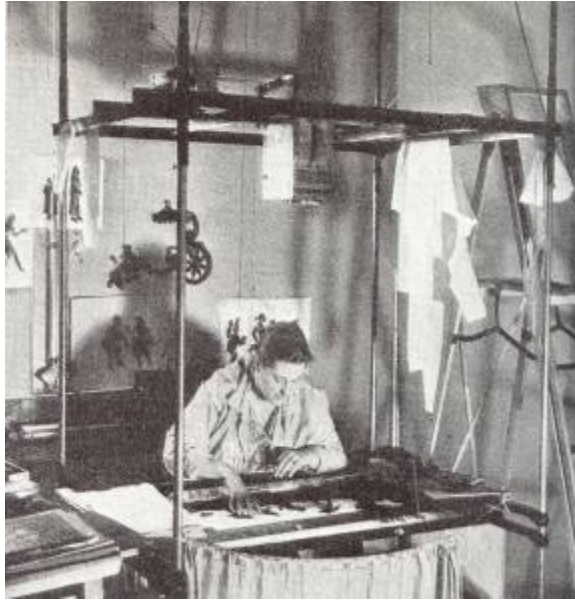


Figure 8:
Lotte Reiniger, *Shadow Theatres and Shadow Films*,
1970. Trick-table version one.



Figure 9:
Lotte Reiniger, *Shadow Theatres and Shadow Films*,
1970. Trick-table version two.

Reiniger's technique was to achieve a greater level of complexity through the construction of wooden 'trick-tables'.⁸³ The first 'trick-table' (Figure 8) was made in Berlin one year after her participation in the production of the 1918 *Pied Piper of Hamelin* film. An even more complex apparatus was developed for the 'trick-table' from 1923 to 1926 that operated with experimental effects requiring different layers of glass plates (Figure 9). The second trick-table was utilized in the production of her full-length film *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926).⁸⁴

According to Reiniger:

The cinema camera was still in its infancy and we had the satisfying opportunity of doing things for the first time, things which are now a household word in animation. My husband Karl Koch controlled the camera, my assistant, Walter Tuerck, performed some magic on the upper glass plate and my other assistant, Alexander Karden, handled the stop motion switch and noted the number of frames shot in the shooting book.⁸⁵

It may be deduced that the trick-table was the place where the shadow play and film converged in a highly controlled and orchestrated manner that sought to abstract reality. Utilizing the trick-table over the course of a three-year period, Reiniger abstracted and re-constructed the ancient Arabic story of *One Thousand and One Nights* to create *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926). This was developed from the original medieval Middle Eastern literary epic that tells the story of Queen Scheherazade, who must relate a series of stories to her

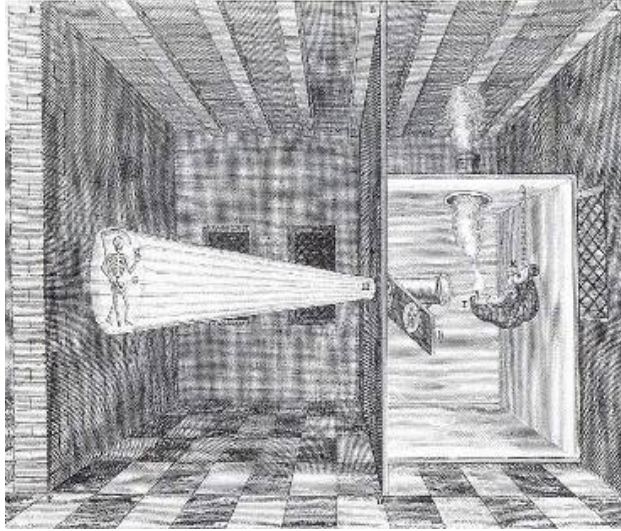


Figure 10:
David Parkinson, *History of Film*, 1995. Principles of the magic lantern.

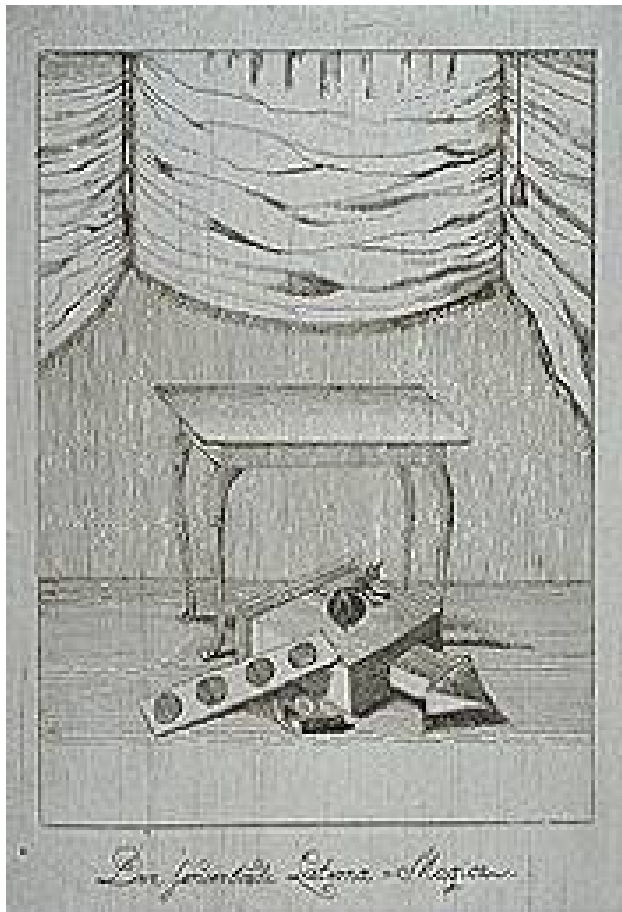


Figure 11:
Den sonder brudte Laterna = Magica, Dutch, c.1718.
The Bill Douglas Centre, University of Exeter ©.

husband, King Shahryar, to delay her execution; each story ends with a suspenseful situation, forcing the King to keep her alive for another day.⁸⁶

1.1h The Magic Lantern and Painted Glass Slide

Just as the shadow play and shadow puppet have informed the pre-history of film and the film-director, the magic lantern and glass slide share a role. Their point of departure is approximately 1650 years after the shadow play, when the principles of the magic lantern (Figure 10) were originally described by the German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher in his 1646 edition of *Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae* ('The Great Art of Light and Shadow').⁸⁷ The primary difference in terms of how they informed the pre-history of film is that while the shadow play and shadow puppet were accomplished through manual efforts, the magic lantern and glass slide accomplished their task by means of mechanical devices. It is, however, critical to emphasize the fact that Kircher's original magic lantern was not mechanized, but was a manual apparatus that consisted of a gaseous-type light source, glass slide and projection lens. Kircher can hence be perceived as the seminal link between the primal act of the shadow play and that of the magic lantern. The magic lantern was later developed into a mechanical device in the year 1660 by the Dutchman Christiaan Huygens.⁸⁸

One of the earliest graphic representations of the magic lantern, a print dating from 1718 entitled *Den sonder brudte Laterna=Magica* (Figure 11),⁸⁹ indicates the public's perception of the device well into the late nineteenth century. According to the *Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and*



Figure 12:
Etienne-Gaspard Robert, *Phantasmagoria, Magic Lantern Show*, c.1763. ©.De Luikerwaal.

Popular Culture:

From a background in renaissance science, which was never very far removed from sorcery in the popular imagination, the lantern developed into popular entertainment via supernatural shows such as the early nineteenth-century Phantasmagoria. The idea that the forces of darkness were somewhere behind the ability to project images where none had previously been is graphically illustrated by the devil climbing out of the overturned lantern.⁹⁰ (Figure 11)

By the year 1790, the Belgian artist named Robertson, born Etienne-Gaspard Robert in 1763, pioneered the 'phantasmagoria'⁹¹ (Figure 12), a magic lantern show of the eighteenth century. Images were combined with the sound effects of rattling chains, thunderclaps and lightning explosions, as well as visual effects using dry ice (frozen carbon dioxide: as it breaks down, it turns directly into carbon dioxide gas rather than a liquid) to create a smoky atmosphere. In some instances two or more lanterns were coupled: different images could be faded into each other or merged, and as many as eight lanterns were used in the phantasmagoric performances. Robertson was also encouraged by the inventions of Wilhelm Jacob Gravesande and Ami Argand, who had developed powerful lime light jet-lamps and multiple lens slide lanterns.⁹²

Through these advancements, the magic lantern began to transcend its basic features, becoming a highly complex apparatus that relied on a variety of

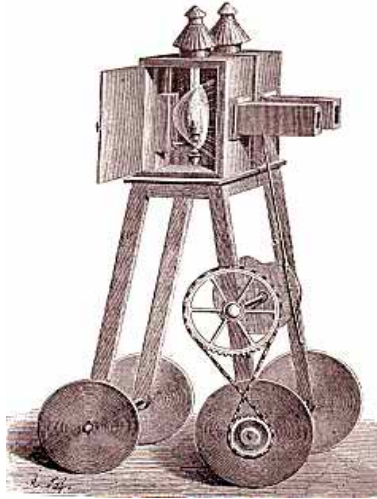


Figure 13:
Etienne-Gaspard Robert, *Phantasmagoria, Lantern mounted on pedestal*, c.1763. © De Luikerwaal.



Figure 14:
John Wrench, *Biunial Magic Lantern*, c.1890. De Luikerwaal. ©.

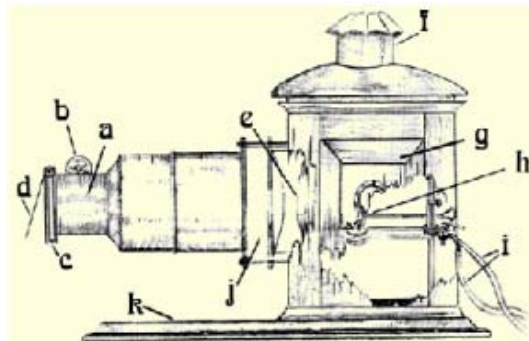


Figure 15:
Nineteenth-century magic lantern components. De Luikerwaal ©.

mechanisms and devices including gears, rotary discs and slipping glass.⁹³ Utilizing his new-found techniques coupled with a magic lantern mounted on a wheeled pedestal (Figure 13), Robertson created the 'Phantascope'. His new invention enabled him to approach the screen from behind or draw away from it, thus making the projected figures expand into giants of enormous magnitude or contract into puny dwarfs. As the magic lantern moved behind the screen, the varying distance would alter the focus of the projected image. In order to compensate for the changing distance, the apparatus had an ingenious auto-focus and auto-aperture arrangement.⁹⁴

Through the use of mirrors and an actual stage set, the projectionist could now be hidden below the stage while an actor was engaging with the projected image on the stage itself – for example, an actor could sword-fight with a projected ghost. With the biunial or triunial magic lanterns there were other possibilities, particularly the 'dissolve effect', which allowed the utilization of two or more fixed slides, set either in two lanterns or in a single lantern with a minimum of two projectors mounted in it (Figure 14). The light is then adjusted slowly so that the first slide to be lit is gradually faded out, while the second slide is made brighter. This method was applied in turning day to night, summer to winter, or even setting a town on fire.⁹⁵

As the technology and technique of projection developed in the 1880s more sophisticated versions of the magic lantern continued to appear, although their primary components were to remain similar (Figure 15):

(a) objective lenses; (b) focus knob; (c) coloured glass filter slot;

(d) flap (to soften the light); (e) light condenser lenses; (f) chimney (to provide an updraft for oil-burning illuminates and to carry off smoke and heat); (g) door (adjustments to the burner were made through here; with inspection window, fitted with tinted glass); (h) light source (oil or gas); (i) gas pipes; (j) slot for slides; (k) base board.⁹⁶

The magic lantern evolved throughout history as a multi-use device, generating images that inform, educate and entertain. For example, Henry Michael John Underhill was a photographer, lantern showman and specialist speaker who delivered illustrated lectures utilizing a magic lantern and his own hand-painted glass slides.⁹⁷ According to the University of Oxford archives:

In 1895, Underhill delivered two lectures to the Oxfordshire Natural History Society, both on antiquarian subjects, one on megalithic stone circles of Southern Britain, and another on the remains of Romano-British cities. In 1907, Underhill produced a series of slides on the subject of *Windmills*, delivering a talk to the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society in January of the following year.⁹⁸

Several innovative forms of the glass slide were developed in nineteenth-century England. In its basic form, the glass slide would have a wooden frame to protect its edges as well as to frame particular scenes as it was placed within the magic



Figure 16:
Benetfink Cheapside, London, c.1880.
De Luikerwaal. ©.

lantern. The glass slide would later acquire more complex attributes in order to satisfy the growing expectations of the viewer; ‘slipping slides’ and ‘rotating slides’ were introduced. The mechanism of a slipping slide consisted of a lever attached to the edge of a slide within a wooden frame, which granted the projectionist the ability to manipulate the image that was projected on the screen by slipping it in and out of the magic lantern’s lens. The rotating slide (Figure 16) allowed for a kaleidoscopic effect through a rotating disc mechanism manipulated by a tiny lever. The projectionist was able to rotate the slide at varying speeds to create an illusion, which entertained viewers by contesting their common perception of an image.

Owing to the mechanical advancements of timed mechanisms and powerful light sources, by 1889 the *Optical Magic Lantern Journal* reported that most principal railway stations were showing lantern advertisements. The slides were changing automatically every 30 seconds, day and night; the clockwork mechanism needed only to be wound up by railway staff once a week.⁹⁹ Today, we may see a similar phenomenon of projection taking place in public spaces and cities, not through the use of magic lanterns and glass slides but through liquid crystal display (LCD) projectors and digital imaging software on computers.

1.1i LCD Projector as Descendant of the Magic Lantern

The magic lantern and glass slide are seminal projection devices that could be considered the precursors of the liquid crystal display (LCD) projector, which when attached to a computer has also found its way into various types of venues:

homes, restaurants, pubs and university lecture halls. Like the magic lantern, the LCD projector is constructed out of basic components: light source, mirrors, magnifying lens, LCD panel, glass prism and projection lens.¹⁰⁰ The new ingredient in the mix is the LCD panel. The concept of liquid crystal technology was developed in 1904 by the German physicist Otto Lehmann.¹⁰¹ Research and development in liquid crystal technology by scientists such as American James Fergason and Englishman George Gray in the 1970s contributed to forming the LCD projectors and screens that we know and use today.

In practical terms, the LCD panel has thousands of tiny pixels which are controllable by data coming from a computer. The computer-generated data then determines whether light is allowed to pass through each individual pixel. The controlled light emitted by way of the LCD screen is recombined within a glass prism and emitted through the projection lens and onto the screen. Just as sophisticated magic lanterns utilize multiple mirrors and lenses, so high-technology LCD projectors comprise several mirrors and LCD screens which allow for greater light and pixel control.

Any person using a laptop computer and LCD projector is re-enacting the primal activities of the late seventeenth-century projectionist in sharing projected visual information through a mechanical device. The drawings and images on glass slides have been technologically advanced through the invention of the LCD and various forms of imaging software present on a laptop or desktop computer. When coupled with a projector, software such as 'Windows Media Player' or 'Reel Player' has developed the techniques of trick slides, allowing us to project fluid moving images to an audience, while 'PowerPoint' will allow us to

give a slide-by-slide presentation, recalling the most basic of magic lantern shows from the late seventeenth century in which one slide was displayed at a time.

An advanced form of the magic lantern may be the digital LCD facades of buildings found in London, New York or Tokyo, which communicate visually to the public eye. What is interesting in this case is that the magic lantern, many decades later, has come out of the darkened interior environment of architecture and onto the streetscape of cities. With the advent of digital technology, the constant presence of a projectionist is no longer necessary; the projectionist has become an ephemeral being, with the capacity to program, record and project the contents of a presentation while not being at the actual show.

1.1j **Photography and Duplicate Images**

In 1822 the French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, unable to find the flat limestone necessary to continue his exploration in lithograph printing, pursued an interest in discovering alternative means of recording an image.¹⁰²

By 1827, Niépce had achieved the first permanent photograph taken from nature, a view of his country estate. Niépce had fitted a camera obscura with a lens. Inside he placed a pewter plate treated with the bitumen solution used in the lithographic experiments. To take the photograph, Niépce exposed the plate for approximately eight hours. After rinsing the plate, the lights were represented by

solidified bitumen and the darks by the pewter background.¹⁰³

Niépce produced a very faint print and had arrived at the seminal invention of photography. He named the process of capturing the image 'heliography', meaning 'sun writing'.¹⁰⁴ Because of the long exposure time needed – from eight to twenty hours – the process was not suited to capturing images of people, but was primarily used to photograph buildings and other inanimate objects. The French poet and dramatist Louis Jean Népomucène Lemercier¹⁰⁵ cites in a poem the cultural significance of being able to capture an image. The poem expresses the continuing excitement concerning the advancement of photography in 1839:

The face of a crystal, convex or concave,
Will reduce or enlarge every object it marks
Its fine lucid rays, through the depths of the trap
Catch the aspect of places in rapid inscription
The image imprisoned within the glass plate
Preserved from all threatening contact
Retains its bright life; and certain reflections
Break through to the most distant spheres.¹⁰⁶

Hearing of Niépce's invention, the Frenchman Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre¹⁰⁷ – by profession an artist and chemist, but also apprenticed in architecture, theatre design and panoramic painting, and the inventor of the Diorama – spent two years collaborating with Niépce, until the latter's death in 1829.¹⁰⁸ Daguerre

continued Niépce's work, coating plates in silver iodide rather than bitumen. When the exposed plates were treated with mercury vapour, an image appeared which was made permanent by the removal of the excess silver iodide.¹⁰⁹ The photographs that were produced by this process were called 'daguerreotypes'. On 9 January 1839 Daguerre's technique was recognized by the French Academy of Sciences, and was patented by the French government on 19 August of the same year. The French government announced that the invention was a gift 'Free to the World'.¹¹⁰ The cultural impact of Daguerre's invention can be recognized in the French artist Antonis-Joseph Wiertz's 'A prophesy from the year 1855', as cited by the early twentieth-century critic, essayist, translator and philosopher Walter Benjamin:

Only a few years ago, there was born to us a machine that has since become the glory of our age ... This machine, a century hence, will be the brush, the palette, the colours, the craft, the practice, the patience, the glance, the touch, the paste, the glaze, the trick, the relief, the finish, the rendering. A century hence, there will be no more bricklayers of painting; there will be only architects – painters in the full sense of the word. Are we really to imagine the daguerreotype, this titan child has murdered art? No, it kills the work of patience, but it does homage to the work of thought. When the daguerreotype, this titan child, will have attained the age of maturity, when all its power and potential will have unfolded, then the genius of art

will suddenly seize it by the collar and exclaim: 'Mine! You are mine now! We are going to work together.'¹¹¹

Although Daguerre's early photographs were a great improvement in quality compared to those by Niépce, two essential problems remained for the advancement of photography. The first was that the image still required a very long exposure time, making portraiture of animate objects unattainable. Secondly, only a sole original could be produced since the plate that captured the image was also the final product. The production of a large numbers of prints from an original photograph required a different process, which was invented by the Englishman William Henry Fox Talbot in 1835.¹¹²

Hearing of the progress Niépce and Daguerre were making in capturing the image, and the problems they were incurring with its duplication, Talbot began to experiment with paper that he had washed in table salt and treated with silver nitrate. Talbot made his images by putting objects on the paper so that it would darken under bright sunlight; he had found the method of making a duplicate, a likeness. The process was named the Talbotype. 'These images, however, were all negative ones. Light appeared as dark and dark as light. But Talbot kept revising and improving his chemical processes until, in 1841, he was finally able to create multiple positive pictures from one of his negatives. At that point, modern photography, as we know it, was born.'¹¹³

In 1844, Talbot published what is considered to be the first book illustrated with photographs. *The Pencil of Nature* describes the possibilities for the new medium of photography, and the trials and tribulations of his first experiments

with photochemistry. More importantly, he begins to define characteristics of camera vision.¹¹⁴ Between 1843 and 1847 Talbot's technique was to be further developed for commercial uses by David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson.¹¹⁵ Hill and Adamson were to maintain close contact with Talbot, who remained their artistic mentor and reference. Two aspects were to determine the early evolution of the photographic print – namely, the quality of both the paper and the water that were available.

Various problems confronted paper-making during its industrialization in the early part of the nineteenth century, such as consistency of whiteness, thickness and chemical composition.¹¹⁶ For a photographic print, paper should be carefully selected to have as smooth and uniform a texture as possible and, wherever possible, to be without a watermark. Subtle defects in paper – for example, uneven patches undetectable when it is looked at by reflected light, as when writing a letter – became painfully apparent when light was shone through it, as it would be for a negative. Although the impure paper caused problems, photograph operators were able to correct errant details in the image. Contemporaries of Talbot, particularly Hill and Adamson, frequently used pencil or ink to retouch their paper negatives.¹¹⁷

In addition to careful paper selection, clean water was necessary to achieve a fine print. Water was utilized as the essential solvent that removed photographically sensitive chemicals after their use. If any chemical traces remained, the print might fade or develop blotches. Nicolas Henneman, Talbot's assistant, set up the world's first photographic print establishment in Reading, England, but faced a great many difficulties – particularly because the municipal

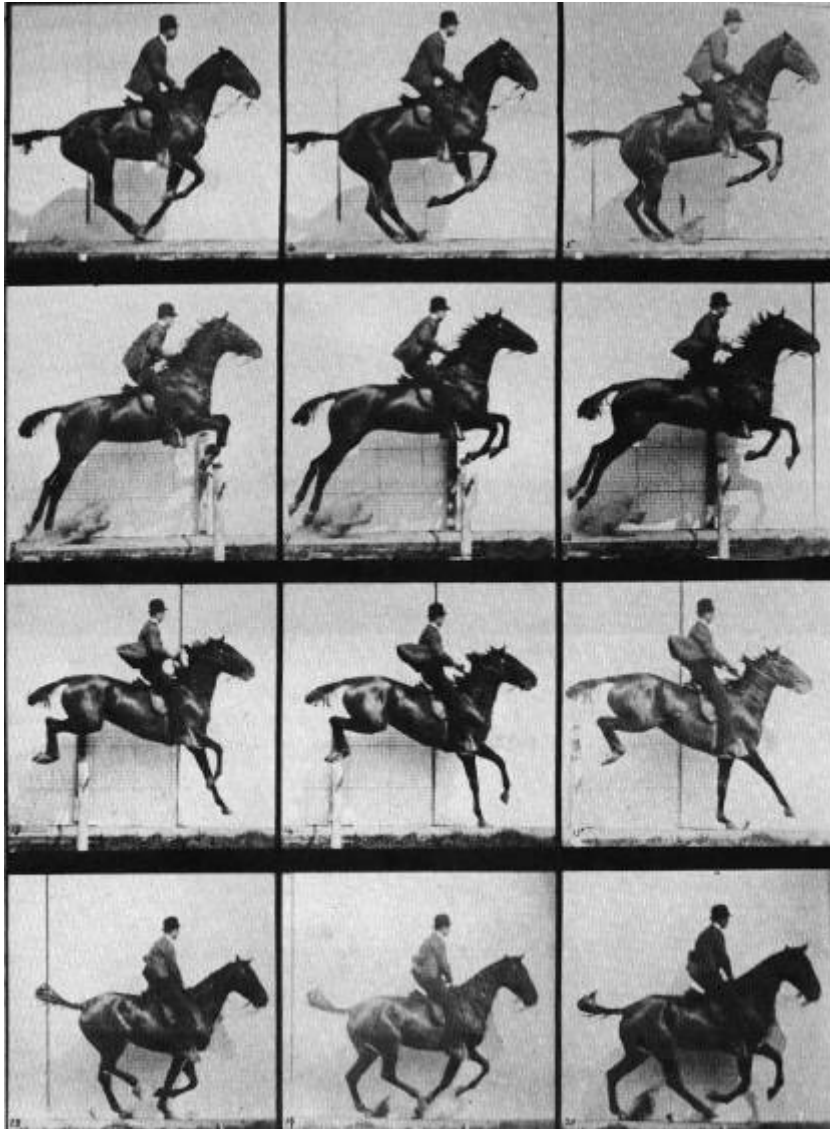


Figure 17:
Eadweard Muybridge, Sequence Photography, c.1878.
The Bill Douglas Centre, University of Exeter ©.

water supplies were erratic, often flowing for only a few hours a day, and heavily contaminated, particularly with organic materials.

1.1k A Running Horse, Glass Gun and Celluloid

The technique of 'series photography' was developed by Englishman Eadweard Muybridge and the Frenchman Etienne-Jules Marey.¹¹⁸ Muybridge began his career in 1855 as a publisher's agent and bookseller, concurrently dabbling in photography, and by 1866 he had become a renowned landscape photographer. In 1878, at the request of Leland Stanford, the former governor of California, Muybridge conducted an experiment to produce a sequence of photographs taken in quick succession in order to resolve a bet that was placed by the governor as to whether at a certain instant during a race the four feet of a race horse were off the ground at the same time.¹¹⁹

Figure 17 shows the photographic results of the experiment as it was set up at the Palo Alto race course. The experiment consisted of twelve cameras connected to tripwires, which were then triggered by the running horse and a series of pictures taken. Using this apparatus, Muybridge was able to show what the motion of a galloping horse looked like when captured on film – in particular, that there were in fact several instances when all of the horse's feet were off the ground. Muybridge continued to develop his sequence photography to study the movement of both animals and humans. He was also keen to attempt to show his sequence of photographs as a moving image projected by a magic lantern. He developed a machine known as the zoopraxiscope. This projected a series of



Figure 18:
Etienne Jules Marey, Multiple exposure, c.1876. © The Bill Douglas Centre, University of Exeter.

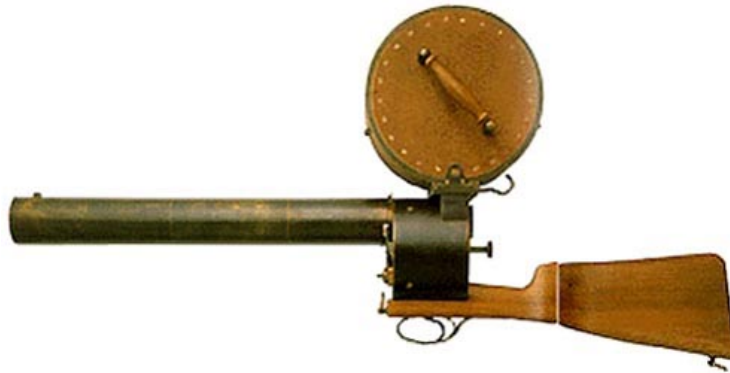


Figure 19:
Etienne Jules Marey, Photographic gun, c.1880's. Musée des Arts et Métiers, Photograph, © David Monniaux.

images from a glass disc, which turned past the lens of the projector and gave the impression of a moving picture.¹²⁰

Etienne Jules Marey was a French physiologist inspired by Muybridge's work. In studying motion photography Marey came up with two techniques. The first was to take multiple images on the same plate, so that all the movement could be analysed on the same print. This worked well for images with a movement along the plate, but less well for more static images. For example, the man jumping over the chair (Figure 18) shows the movement well, but his picture of a fencer is less easy to break down into the different movements.¹²¹

The multiple-exposure method was hopeless for photographing birds in flight, which was one of Marey's main interests. So he came up with a new idea and created a 'photographic gun' (Figure 19), which carried a glass plate instead of bullets. When the trigger was pulled the glass plate rotated once a second, simultaneously operating the shutter. The photographer simply pointed the 'gun' at the bird, and sequentially pressed the trigger twelve times while following the bird with the gun. The result was a glass plate with twelve different images set around the edge, showing the different parts of a bird's flight.¹²²

The inventions of Marey and Muybridge succeeded in establishing the beginnings of 'series photography', giving the camera the capacity to discern and separate motion, which in turn allowed the observer to study the differentiations and particularities of that motion. Although sequential images from series photography were possible, the smoothness of transition between one image and another still required fine tuning. This advancement would occur through the development of celluloid by the Englishman Alexander Parkes¹²³ and the

American John Wesley Hyatt. Parkes, a metallurgist and inventor, developed a 'synthetic ivory' named 'pyroxlin'. Marketed under the trade name 'Parkesine', it won a bronze medal at the 1862 World's Fair in London. Parkesine was made from cellulose treated with nitric acid and a solvent. The output of the process hardened into an ivory-like material that could be moulded when heated. However, Parkes was not able to scale up the process to an industrial level, and products made from Parkesine quickly warped and cracked after a short period of use.¹²⁴

Hyatt, a printer and inventor, took up where Parkes left off. Parkes had failed for lack of a proper solvent, but Hyatt discovered that camphor would do the job very nicely. Hyatt proceeded to design much of the basic industrial machinery needed to produce good-quality plastic materials in quantity. Since cellulose was the main constituent used in the synthesis of his new material, Hyatt named it 'celluloid' and formed the Celluloid Manufacturing Company.¹²⁵

The invention of celluloid was to lead to many different types of products, ranging from dental pieces and waterproof shirts to corsets and ping pong balls. Although Hyatt was the first to invent celluloid as a material, its development in film-making history was principally due to Thomas Edison,¹²⁶ best known for his development of the electric light bulb and the phonograph. Edison's experiments with film-making followed the same pattern as those with his phonograph: the pictures were recorded onto a wax cylinder.

By 1889, Edison had sponsored a young Scotsman, William Kennedy Laurie Dickson, head of his West Orange Laboratory, to begin work on a camera using celluloid film. This camera was called the 'Kinetograph'. The rolls of film



Figure 20:
Thomas Edison, Kinetoscope. c.1894. *The History of Film*, David Parkinson, 1995.



Figure 21:
Fred Ott's Sneeze, c.1894. *The History of Film*, David Parkinson, 1995.



Figure 22:
Rice Irwin Kiss, c.1896. *The History of Film*, David Parkinson, 1995.

were about 35mm wide, and these film strips carried rows of holes down the sides to allow the film to be pulled through the camera at an even rate. Dickson developed a viewer for the films called a 'Kinetoscope' (Figure 20), which could only be used by one person at a time looking through the viewing piece at the top of the box. The film could mechanically run both backwards and forwards around a series of pulleys, and was held as a continuous loop so that it could be watched over and over again without rewinding.

1.11

Camera and Viewer

The 'Kinetoscope' was first demonstrated to the public in 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair. By the following year, a 'Kinetoscope parlour' had been opened in New York, with ten machines showing different films. The first demonstration in London was in October 1894.¹²⁷ It is important to note that these first films were fundamentally unedited lengths of footage, no longer than the particular strip of celluloid itself.¹²⁸ Two examples of films shown at the Kinetoscope parlour during its first years of operation were *Fred Ott's Sneeze* in 1894 (Figure 21) and *The Rice Irwin Kiss* in 1896 (Figure 22), both of which were produced by Edison in his laboratory.

The first film, *Fred Ott's Sneeze* (1894), was a documentary of Fred Ott, one of Edison's employees at the laboratory, sneezing. The second, *The Rice Irwin Kiss* (1896), was directed by William Heise, an American film director who was collaborating with Dickson, and depicted a kiss between two theatre actors, May Irwin and John Rice. The limitation of Edison's 1894 Kinetoscope was that

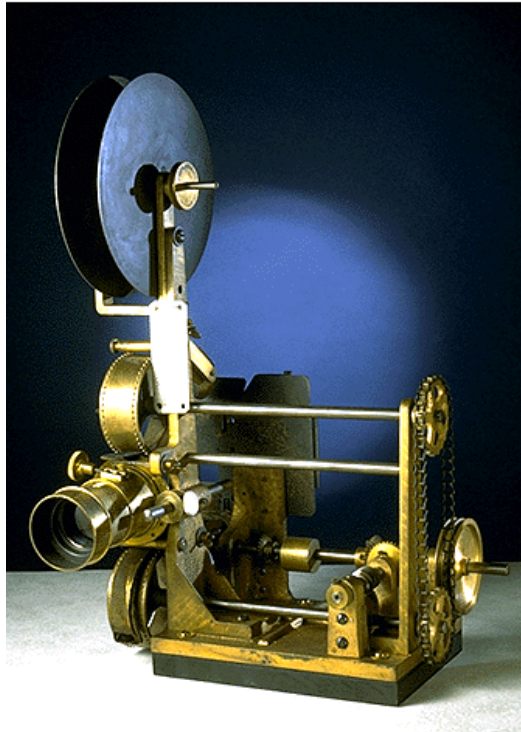


Figure 23:
Charles Francis Jenkins and Thomas Armat,
Phantascope, c.1895. © Smithsonian Institution.
Photograph, Rick Vargas.



Figure 24:
Auguste and Louis Lumière, Cinematographie,
c.1895. © Smithsonian Institution, Photograph.
Rick Vargas.

'it provided views of images but not projection, and limited viewing audiences in Kinetoscope parlours to one person at a time'.¹²⁹ By only allowing one viewer at a time, Edison had lost the community of viewers that the shadow play and magic lantern shows had fostered.

By 1895 inventors in Europe and the United States had designed several projectors that enlarged film images for viewing by large groups – particularly the 'Phantascope' (Figure 23) of Charles Francis Jenkins and Thomas Armat, of Washington DC, which enabled the very same camera to make multiple photographs in a series. The downfall of this camera was its constrained indoor use – it had not been engineered for outdoor recording.¹³⁰ By 28 December 1895, Auguste and Louis Lumière (the Lumière Brothers) had developed a camera, the 'Cinématographe' (Figure 24), that was able to go out into the street, into the city, and record events. Englishman David Parkinson, film critic and historian, states:

Their portable, hand-cranked cameras ... capable of shooting, printing and projecting moving pictures, were soon filming around the world to produce a catalogue of general, military, comic and scenic views as well as living portraits ... fifteen to twenty second slices of life.¹³¹

The Lumière Cinématographe had utilized cellulose-based 35mm film in 4:3 screen formats, with one sprocket hole per frame. The film ran at sixteen frames per second. It had an internal claw and rotary shutter mechanism, and a

maximum film capacity of 100 feet, or 30.48 metres. It could not, therefore, film or project sequences longer than 90 seconds. The Cinématographe, when fixed to a tripod, could not pan or tilt. The camera could therefore not follow the action of a subject, but rather had to distance itself in order to encompass the entire scene of action within its view frame.¹³²

With the advent of series photography, celluloid and the Cinématographe, the concept of film-direction had begun to emerge, enabling film-makers to venture into the city and capture the actual events that were taking place. Prior to the Cinématographe, the Kinetoscope had limited film-makers to staying within the confines of a laboratory environment, as was the case with Edison, although it is important to note that in both cases film-making, 'at this early stage in cinema, consisted mainly of pointing a stationary camera in one direction and capturing whatever action transpired within the frame'.¹³³ Owing to limitations in technology and artistic creativity, film-makers had not yet the flexibility of following, neither directing the action that was transpiring in front of the lens.

1.2a

Tadpole and Film

At birth, the tadpole lives strictly in water. During metamorphosis the legs and limbs appear, and with them the ability to go on land. Finally, the tail of the tadpole is reabsorbed and digested by the body. During this process, the digestive system of the tadpole becomes carnivorous as the tadpole becomes a frog. The frog's body has digested a piece of itself in order to become another self. The historical trajectory of film is constantly digesting itself, in a process

similar to that of tadpole metamorphosis, and in turn developing extended forms of synthesis; for example the shadow play, magic lantern and Cinématographe were to utilize basic components such as light, image and projection from one another, while gathering various technological features that developed throughout film history.

Unlike the tadpole, film derives its strength from being artificial and manmade. The tadpole will digest its tail once, metamorphose into a frog once, live and die once. Contrarily, the nature of film as an artificial medium has allowed it to continue changing, shifting, making newer pieces and appendages, both mechanical and theoretical, drawing on the various aspects of technology, art and invention in order to reposition itself and evolve as a medium, as has been demonstrated in the previous sections. Parkinson states:

The most modern of all the arts, cinema is fittingly the most dependent on science and technology ... Film's prehistory is a labyrinth of discoveries, inventions, part-solutions and part-failures. Some were accidental, others coincidental, but few were devised with the end product of projected moving photographic images in mind ... The majority of its pioneers always envisioned the moving picture as primarily a scientific aid.¹³⁴

Although Parkinson's statement is radical in idealizing the status of film among the arts, he makes a clear point with regard to its dependency on 'science and

technology'. The usage of the term 'dependent' may be linked to film's tadpole characteristics: the tadpole is similarly dependent on digesting its tail in order to become a frog. Film history is dependent on utilizing and consuming its inventiveness in order to develop as a medium. For example, the LCD projector ate the magic lantern (meaning that it utilized the magic lantern's principles as nutrients) and added on new technological appendages (mechanical and electrical parts) such as the computer and imaging software. If the tadpole had not eaten its tail, it would not have become a frog; and if film history had not digested the various bits of art, science and technology, it would have remained a temporary and limited visual novelty.¹³⁵ The capacity to digest and nurture itself from art, science and technology also bonds the history of film with that of other mediums such as architecture.

Potentially because of its 'tadpole' quality of drawing on inventors and inventions from diverse disciplines and technologies, film received severe criticism as it evolved. As late as 1947, the *Observer* film reviewer decided that films were nothing but 'bits of celluloid and wire ... it is not within the power of electrical engineering or mechanical contraption to create. They can only reproduce. And what they reproduce is not art.'¹³⁶ In 1933, assessing the current state of film, the German-born author, art and film theorist, and perceptual psychologist Rudolf Arnheim stated that 'there are still many educated people who stoutly deny the possibility that film might be art; they say in effect film cannot be art, for it does nothing but reproduce reality mechanically'.¹³⁷

In contrast to such criticism by the *Observer* and Arnheim, the English-born author, film critic and theorist Victor Francis Perkins states that film history

'belongs in the first place to its inventors. It is appropriated by artists but at every stage in the creation and presentation of their work they are dependent upon, and often at the mercy of, the machine and its operators. As the movie cannot exist apart from its apparatus, a satisfactory definition of the medium's artistic nature depends on a full recognition of its material base.'¹³⁸

In support of Perkins's statement that film history 'depends on a full recognition of its material base', the body of this chapter has drawn on precedent, setting out accounts such as the legend of the Chinese Emperor for whom the shadow play was invented, the concept of the dalang as a seminal form of film-director and Plato's 'cave' as a historical reference to the constant flux between that which is material and that which is immaterial. Perkins's 'material base' of film history also draws on inventions and inventors like Silhouette, Lavetar, Muybridge, Edison and the Lumière Brothers, along with their various machines and devices such as the 'Silhouette Chair', 'magic lantern', 'slipping slides', 'Phantascope', 'series photography' and 'Cinématographe', in order to reveal that it was such diverse forms of matter and material that formed film history.

According to *Webster's Dictionary*,¹³⁹ the term 'cinema' is defined as a film theatre; etymologically it is an abbreviation of 'cinematographer', by definition the chief operator of a film crew. In this most fundamental definition, the commonly used term 'going to the cinema' is in effect going to see the work of the cinematographer, or in the words of Perkins, 'the machine and its operators'.¹⁴⁰ Film history up until this point in the thesis has been enriched with a variety of cultural and technical components such as the creative narration of shadow

puppets with the dalang, technical ingenuity with the inventors of the magic lantern and photography, and capturing motion with the Cinématographe.

Within the above mentioned parameters, the evolving history of film – consisting of, but not limited to, the dalang, shadow play, projectionist, camera, magic lantern and Cinématographe – suggests fixed components that are limited to a sedentary observation stance, while action transpires in front of them. The ability to combine the various historical components as well as critically observe, direct and pursue action would be the point of entry for the film-director in the history of film.

The Frenchman Georges Méliès, who produced a substantial body of creative works in the decade linking the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is considered the seminal film-director as he was able to combine artistic talent, mechanical ingenuity and critical observation in the pursuit of his creative endeavours. Méliès's ability to pursue action was powerful enough that he was able to take his audience on imaginary and adventurous trips to such places as the moon.

1.2b Méliès as Shoemaker, Magician and Seminal Film-Director

Growing up in Paris and working at his family's shoe-manufacturing company, Méliès attended his first performance at the Théâtre Robert-Houdin in 1871.¹⁴¹

The theatre was owned and operated by the French magician Robert Houdin, the man considered to have pioneered the 'modern performance art of illusion'.¹⁴²

One of Houdin's most famous performances on stage was presenting to the

audience an empty box with an iron bottom, which the average man could move, but which 'by turning on an electro-magnet hidden under the floor, he made ... immovable, "proving" that through will power, he could make it impossible to lift even for the strongest Algerian warriors'.¹⁴³

Méliès, who was ten years of age at the time, would thereafter regularly attend the performances of Houdin, also constructing his own cardboard sets for marionette shows, which he would perform for family and friends.¹⁴⁴ Méliès was later to take painting lessons from the French Symbolist painter Gustav Moreau, whose main focus was the illustration of Christian and mythological figures.¹⁴⁵ At the age of twenty-four in 1884, Méliès was sent to London by his family to learn English. 'However, during the evenings Méliès would frequent the many theatrical venues that were on offer in the city, particularly the visual fantasy productions that included Maskelyne and Cooke, billed as "Royal Illusionists" at The Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly. Later Méliès commented on the profound influence these visits would have on his career in the magic art.'¹⁴⁶

In 1885, upon his return to Paris, Méliès was forced by his father to take on the position of overseer of machinery at their shoe-manufacturing company. The disgruntled Méliès assumed this role, but also pursued his own interest in magic by concurrently taking lessons with the French magician Emile Voisin. Later that same year Méliès would marry 'Eugénie Génin, a young Dutch woman whose father was a rich industrialist and a close friend of Georges's uncle'.¹⁴⁷ In 1888, Méliès père retired from the shoe-manufacturing business and divided it among his three sons. Georges Méliès, youngest of the three, would sell his share of the family business to his two brothers, and from the proceeds, coupled

with financial backing from his wife's family, purchase the two-hundred-seat Théâtre Robert-Houdin, the very same place in which his passion for magic had begun seventeen years earlier.¹⁴⁸ Over the next seven years Méliès would go on to direct and produce magic performances in the Théâtre Robert-Houdin.

Méliès's social status as the owner of the Théâtre Robert-Houdin would earn him, along with a select crowd of recognized entertainers in Paris, an invitation to attend the premier of *L'Arroseur arrosé* (1895) by the Lumière Brothers at the Grande Café on 28 December 1895.¹⁴⁹ During the premier, the Lumière Brothers demonstrated their abilities as inventors of the Cinématographe, a 'documentary' type machine with which they would record and project short films. Upon viewing the premiere, Méliès stated:

The other guests and I found ourselves in front of a small screen, similar to those we use for projections, and after a few minutes, a stationary photograph showing the Place Bellcour in Lyons was projected. A little surprised, I scarcely had time to say to my neighbour: 'Have we been brought here to see projections? I've been doing these for ten years.' No sooner had I stopped speaking when a horse pulling a cart started to walk towards us followed by other vehicles, then a passerby. In short, all the hustle and bustle of a street. We sat with our mouths open, without speaking, filled with amazement.¹⁵⁰

Méliès was intrigued, and sought to purchase a Cinématographe machine from

the Lumière Brothers in order to begin his own experiments in film. His efforts to do so were not successful; the father of the Lumière Brothers would not sell him a copy of the device. According to Elizabeth Ezra, 'The father of the machine's inventors felt that interest in the new medium would be short lived, and that it would be best for the family to exploit it exclusively until its popularity waned.'¹⁵¹ The Lumière Brothers enacted their exploitation by commissioning the engineer Jules Carpentier to fabricate 225 Cinématographes so that they could send designated agents throughout Europe, America and the world, recording scenes from everyday life and giving film shows to paying audiences.¹⁵² 'Quite soon this policy of appointing official agents rather than selling the device outright was abandoned as other manufacturers made alternatives available.'¹⁵³

The Lumière Brothers had a limited belief in the medium of film as an art form. Louis Lumière, the elder of the two, would state: 'The cinema is an invention without a future.'¹⁵⁴ The refusal of the Lumière brothers to share their newly invented machine with Méliès reinforces the idea that they were not film-directors who sought to investigate ideas and concepts in film with their professional community, but rather film-makers with an entrepreneurial spirit for business, believing that film was a momentary fad that would fade away and wanting to capitalize on it financially. The film-maker and film-director ultimately differ in their ends, the former primarily seeking technical invention and mechanical progress and the latter seeking to explore film theoretically, particularly in terms of how 'film' may be coupled with other concepts and disciplines. According to Ezra, it was precisely Méliès's ability to couple the art of

magic and film-making together that granted him the status of cinema's first director.¹⁵⁵

In 1896, one year after the invention of the Lumière Brothers' Cinématographe, Méliès would finally transform the Théâtre Robert-Houdin into a film studio where he would direct his films. At the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, Méliès formed the 'Star Film Company' where he began his investigation into the entire film production process. Over the next ten years Méliès was to produce in excess of 500 films, of which fewer than 140 survive.¹⁵⁶ At his theatre, Méliès would take on the roles of 'producer, director, writer, designer, cameraman and actor'.¹⁵⁷

The origin of film branched out into two inter-related traditions. While Lumière began the tradition of reality, Méliès started the tradition of fiction and fantasy. He transported audiences to other worlds, other times and other dimensions. He proved that the medium could only be limited by one's imagination.¹⁵⁸ Méliès's ability to transport the audience can be compared with that of the Lumière Brothers who kept in tune with the 'photographic impulses of the primitives'¹⁵⁹ – the 'primitives' being those persons who were solely interested in the technical ingenuity and financial opportunities of film. In line with film's seminal roots in early photography, the Lumière Brothers were content with recording reality – not challenging the difference between 'screen and real time'.¹⁶⁰ Méliès, however, was able to understand and master the differences of the screen and camera, screen and real time, as exemplified in his films and techniques.

1.2c

Precedent Films and Techniques of Méliès

A particular example of Méliès's creative process was the utilization of technical mistakes for the artistic benefit of film. Once while recording a street scene, his camera jammed, then started to work again. When Méliès played back the footage, objects suddenly appeared and disappeared. A bus was suddenly transformed into a hearse. He had accidentally discovered the process of stop-motion photography. It was the birth of special effects.¹⁶¹ In *The Vanishing Lady* (1896) Méliès used double exposure to turn a woman into a skeleton. In *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) Méliès was to make the world's first film epic. Even without consideration of its stunning content, its length of twenty-one minutes would qualify it as a masterwork at a time when films lasted little more than one or two minutes.¹⁶²

For the plot of *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), Méliès took inspiration from the works of two literary masters of science fiction: Jules Verne's 1865 book *De la Terre à la Lune (From the Earth to the Moon)*, and Herbert George Wells's *First Men in the Moon*, published in 1901. In the film, Méliès interpreted Wells's story of the Selenites who were crustaceous inhabitants of the moon, along with Wells's concept of a space gun. Not content with scripting, designing and constructing this epic, Méliès also played the leading role of Professor Barbenfouillis, whose great plan for the exploration of the moon is accepted by the Scientific Congress of the Astronomy Club.¹⁶³

The plot of the film unfolds. First, the master gun has to be cast at a vast foundry. Then the astronauts enter the space shell. The huge cannon is fired and

the shell flies through space, landing right in the eye of the moon. The explorers emerge and observe the appearance of the earth from the moon. A snowstorm starts, and the explorers descend into a crater for shelter, thence into the interior of the moon. In a grotto of giant mushrooms they are captured by the curious inhabitants, the Selenites, who take them before their King. The frightened explorers manage to escape, and discover that when the pursuing Selenites are struck they explode in puffs of smoke. Relieved to find their space shell again, the astronauts fly back to earth, to be commemorated in Paris by a lavish parade and statue.

Méliès had signalled the beginning of film-direction, particularly in the sense that his work was to inform future generations of film-directors that a director may be the contemporary equivalent of the *dalang* as creative narrator. The new reality that Méliès constructs in *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) is through the creative use of the camera, revealing to the viewer shifts in space, time, thought, scale and perception. For instance, Méliès has allowed us to go on an adventure to the moon and return to earth in just twenty-two minutes. In contrast, the documentaries of the Lumière Brothers showed us recorded realities – a man boxing, workers leaving the factory – as real time recordings. The Lumière Brothers had not utilized the camera as a device that can alter our perception of time and space as Méliès did; in a Lumière Brothers film, one second of recorded film was equivalent to one second of real time.

In *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), Méliès engages the viewer with certain recognizable symbols and ideas such as the moon, travelling to the moon, aliens and heroic figures, and then fabricates a film-story in a way that engages the

audience by challenging their common perception of reality. Astronauts are not shot into space with a large cannon, nor do the Selenite aliens exist, but the ability to meld such different ideas found in everyday life suggests the 'magical' powers of Méliès as the seminal film-director, earning him the distinction of being a film-magician.¹⁶⁴

Méliès's reputation as a film-magician extends beyond his professional study of magic tricks and devices for film; it is defined by his regard for conceptually communicating ideas that engaged his audience with a personalized and creative view of the world. In comparison, Méliès's contemporaries the Lumière Brothers had not offered the viewer much that transcended the experience of everyday life; rather the Lumière Brothers offered an overall statement of general facts and represented the world as it was. Like Méliès, Rossellini would later be referred to by David Forgacs, Sarah Lutton and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith as a magician – the *Magician of the Real*¹⁶⁵ – for being able to take the stark realities of post-World War II Rome, address them in a 'highly individual and idiosyncratic manner',¹⁶⁶ and in so doing alter the way in which film-direction was approached.

1.2d Méliès and Rossellini as Film-Director Magicians

Although the films of Méliès and Rossellini were different in subject matter and time, the roles of the two men as film-director magicians are interlinked by the fact that both recognized the cultural and social curiosities of their respective milieus. Méliès was professionally active between the years 1896 and 1914 and

focused on themes of science fiction and space travel, while Rossellini, from 1936 to 1977, thematically focused on the implications of World War II. There are three main aspects that specifically join Méliès and Rossellini as film-director magicians. The first is their ability to tell a story in a personalized manner that is in proper alignment to the realities and concerns of their respective audiences. The second is their capacity to break away from the documentary film style of their respective periods. The third is their capacity to detail events through the medium of film.

In *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) and *Impossible Journey* (1904) Méliès developed themes of science fiction and space travel, both of which were concerns and infatuations of his generation crystallized in the novels of his contemporaries Verne and Wells. Méliès had the power to take the stories of Verne and Wells and detail them through the medium of film by means of various props and mechanisms.

In the making of *Rome Open City* (1945) and *Germany Year Zero* (1947) Rossellini was able to recognize and creatively detail the historical content of his period and age, particularly the political and social movements surrounding Fascism and the effects of World War II (1939–45). Rossellini had not simply recorded everyday events in the manner of Edison or the Lumière Brothers, but had infused and detailed the events he had undergone during the war with creative and personal interpretations. When Rossellini made the two films mentioned above, the war had barely concluded; it was his achievement to capture the remaining matter in their respective cities and represent them to a post-war viewing audience keen to understand what had happened.

The 'magic' of Rossellini and Méliès can be recognized in the manner in which they detailed the events in their films. For instance, in *Rome Open City* (1945) we are able to carefully observe the details of Pina making a pot of espresso or the torture scene of Manfredi. In *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902) we are able to observe the details of how a space shuttle may travel to the moon, as well as what an astronaut and alien may look like. Both Méliès and Rossellini allowed the viewer to enter into their personal rendition of the world by identifying certain basic realities that were understood, but then developing their respective themes in a creative and artistic manner.

The details we find in the work of Méliès and Rossellini are unlike those in a documentary film in that they seek to personalize the information being disseminated to the audience. The difference between a general documentary recording and a Méliès or Rossellini detail is that the first simply records and exhibits what has happened, while the later describes, synthesizes and articulates the circumstances of an event. Neorealism and Neorealist film-directors, with pedantic attention to their immediate history, may be considered detailers of everyday life. The usage of detail in film-direction differs for Méliès and Rossellini. Méliès detailed everyday human fantasy as depicted in the books of Verne and Wells, while Rossellini detailed everyday human experience as found on the streets of post-World War II Rome.

This is not to say that fantasy and experience do not coexist, but rather that each director exercised his particular tendencies in filming his personal views of the world. Méliès's tendency may be located in his early exposure to magic, for which he later sold his share of his family shoe-making business;

Rossellini's tendency may be located within his liberal family's frustration at the repression exercised by Fascists and Nazis on the civil life and culture of Rome.

1.3a **Locating Neorealism and the Neorealist Directors**

In order to further understand and locate the Neorealist film-directors, it is valuable to locate the origins of the term 'Neorealism' and examine how that term was to be introduced and adapted to film. After locating and understanding the concept of Neorealism, it is then possible to develop a comparative analysis of the leading Neorealist film-directors, as well as to locate contemporary directors who share similar traits and characteristics, in order to formulate the present day continuum and relevance of Neorealism. According to Millicent Marcus, author of *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*:

'The term Neorealism began its career as a literary designation, coined by Arnaldo Bocelli in 1930 to describe the style that arose in reaction to the autobiographical lyricism and elegiac introversion of contemporary Italian letters.'¹⁶⁷

Literary Neorealism offered a 'strenuously analytic, crude, dramatic representation of a human condition tormented between will and inclination'.¹⁶⁸

Marcus clarifies that based on similar 'aesthetic and ideological impulses' many stylistic considerations that were pertinent to literary Neorealism were adapted to its cinematic equivalent.¹⁶⁹ Marcus states that although cinematic 'Neorealism

Proper' began with *Rome Open City* (1945), as early as 1933 the literary forefathers were calling for a film-making approach 'free of artifice, unhampered by fixed screenplays, inspired by real-life subjects, and resolved to tell the unvarnished truth'.¹⁷⁰

In citing fellow critics of Italian cinema, such as Peter Bondanella and Peter Brunette, Marcus re-emphasises the fact that Neorealist film-directors, unlike the Futurists or the French Nouvelle Vague, never constituted a formal group that subscribed to an 'agreed-upon aesthetic code'.¹⁷¹ Marcus emphasizes the flexibility of Neorealism by explaining that no Neorealist film-director could methodically formulate all the benchmarks of the Neorealist style, either in literature or in film, from other examples of documentary or realist fiction-making.¹⁷²

Further strengthening the fact that Neorealism was constantly malleable and flexible in its creative response, De Sica, a leading Neorealist director of the period, states: 'It's not that one day we sat down at a table on Via Veneto, Rossellini, Visconti, myself, and the others, and said now let us create Neorealism.'¹⁷³ However, in retrospect and through research, Marcus states that certain values can be deduced from observing the qualities of Neorealist film-directors that allow for an understanding of what a Neorealist film is:

The rules governing neorealist practice would include location shooting, lengthy takes, unobtrusive editing, natural lighting, a predominance of medium and long shots, respect for the continuity of time and space, use of contemporary, true-to-life

subjects, an uncontrived, open-ended plot, working-class protagonists, a nonprofessional cast, dialogue in the vernacular, active viewer involvement, and implied social criticism.¹⁷⁴

1.3b Capturing Truth and Moral Statement

Although loosely structured in terms of actual filming technique and approach, the works of Neorealist film-directors were linked and are readily recognizable by their pursuit of the 'truth' and a 'moral' statement. Such a pursuit can be considered a form of reconciliation and reconstruction, through the medium of film, of the social and cultural damage that Italy had incurred during its traumatic experiences in World War II. Tag Gallagher, a leading Rossellini critic and writer, explains the intentions of Neorealism by drawing on extensive interviews with Rossellini, as well as citing the film critic and colleague of Rossellini, Luigi Chiarini:

Neo-realism was a commitment to construct a new culture – a new reality. Transcending any party or faith, inspired by both Christ and Gramsci, its priorities were fraternity and open-mindedness. Neo-realism was not style, nor content. It was a 'soul' in Chiarini's words, that had been forged during the Resistance and that tried to look at Italian realities 'with, above all, an insistence on sincerity toward oneself and others'.¹⁷⁵

Rossellini, in agreement with Chiarini, stated: 'There does not exist a technique for capturing the truth, only a moral position can.'¹⁷⁶ The concept of capturing the 'truth' and a 'moral position' is explained by Gallagher: 'For moviemakers, in practical terms, capturing the truth meant getting free of convention.'¹⁷⁷ The 'conventions' that Neorealism sought to be free of were the dogmatisms and propagandas of the Fascist and Nazi cultural agenda. As clarified by Gianni Puccini, the Fascists and Nazis 'were so ignorant of poverty and real-life drama that they had to imagine it'¹⁷⁸ in the making of their propaganda films. In stark contrast, the significance of Neorealist film was its 'recourse to actuality'.¹⁷⁹ Such 'recourse' was to be demonstrated in Rossellini's rendition of Rome and Berlin, as well as in Charlie Chaplin's depiction of a 'bitter, ragamuffin America'.¹⁸⁰

According to Marcus, the pursuit of a 'moral position' by Neorealist film-directors dissolved petty stylistic differences into basic agreement on the larger issues of human concerns and general world view.¹⁸¹ Marcus locates the root of 'Neorealist morality' in the nineteenth-century literary inspiration of Giovanni Verga. The Sicilian writer promises to give 'the representation of reality as it has been or as it should have been'.¹⁸² The problematic that Marcus notes is that Verga's vision discusses events in the past tense and gives the objects of his representation a 'fixity and closure that defies any possible modification'.¹⁸³ In contrast Marcus explains that the 'Neorealist, on the other hand, considers himself part of the world he records – he is in it and a determinant of it, intervening in the present so that the conditional verbs will one day merit the unqualified future tense, and eventually even the present tense itself'.¹⁸⁴

Marcus then locates the historical point at which the nineteenth-century

vision of Verga developed into that of the twentieth-century Neorealist as the formation of the 'Italian Resistance movement'¹⁸⁵ against the Fascists and Nazis during World War II, which rekindled their sensibilities, pursuit of truth and morals. In citing De Sica, Marcus clarifies:

The experience of the war and the Resistance movement in Italy was decisive in the beginnings of Neorealism. That each director felt the desire to throw away all the old stories of the Italian cinema and to plant the camera in the midst of real life, in the middle of all that struck their astonished eyes.¹⁸⁶

According to De Sica, the Neorealists were seeking to liberate themselves from the weight of their sins by telling the truth, in effect contributing 'a very small stone'¹⁸⁷ to the moral reconstruction of their country, Italy.¹⁸⁸ Marcus states that 'if the collective Italian conscience is figured as an edifice, devastated by years of Fascism and war, then the nature of De Sica's building materials must not escape our notice for his is, quite importantly a film'.¹⁸⁹ Such a parallel with building materials suggests that the pursuit of truth and moral position were more the building tools of Neorealism than technique itself.

According to Gallagher, one of Rossellini's favourite phrases was the mantra of a 'moral attitude'. Gallagher clarifies that, according to Rossellini, the pursuit of a moral attitude was 'a need for each of us to make our individual consciousness ever clearer and create a "harmonious discord"'. The world's hope needs each of us to be maximally ourselves – even at the risk of looking

ridiculous.¹⁹⁰

1.3c **Neorealist Directors and Present-Day Parallels**

According to Marcus, Neorealist film lasted only seven years and generated a total of twenty-one films.¹⁹¹ Marcus explains that Neorealism began with Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945) and concluded with De Sica's *Umberto D* (1952).¹⁹² The precise period of Neorealism as defined by Marcus, 1945 to 1952, is clarified by English European-film specialist Michael Walford:

It is possible to read into *Umberto D* a sense of the moment of neorealism coming to its end. Millicent Marcus suggests it is both a celebration of that moment and a lamentation of its death. There is dialectic of generational compositions which in the opening film of neorealism – commonly accepted as *Rome Open City* – there is a parade of boys marching on Rome to reclaim the future. By comparison *Umberto D* opens with coverage of a march by pensioners trying to improve their plight for they have been left in poverty in post-war Italy. The film bears witness to the failure of social change to happen. Rather than being a society welded together around notions of social solidarity *Umberto D* can be read as being about a society at war with itself.¹⁹³

In addition to Walford's explanation of Marcus's Neorealist time line, Suso Cecchi d'Amico, a film writer during the Neorealist era, best known for De Sica's *Bicycle Thief* (1948), offers additional reasons for the short period of Neorealism, such as lack of risk and creativity in film-direction owing to escalating production costs by the early 1950s in Italy that had forced film-directors, writers, cast and crew members to become part of a profit-driven industry. Amico clarifies that the goal of Neorealism was not essentially to make a financial profit, but rather to communicate post-World War II Italian experience: 'If we had as many newspapers and magazines back then as we do now, maybe many of us would have become journalists instead of making films. But there weren't many papers and making film was inexpensive and we merely wanted to tell our stories about our experiences of that era.'¹⁹⁴

Although the interlude of Neorealist film-direction was brief, it would continue to affect the community of post-World War II Italian film-directors in terms of utilizing the media in socially responsible ways, as well as inspiring film-directors beyond Italy, particularly in all serious post-war cinematic practice.¹⁹⁵ In this section the influence of Neorealism will be demonstrated to have exceeded its national boundaries, as well as having affected various contemporary film-directors who have engaged subjects that identify and criticize social and cultural conditions.

In order to focus my comparative analysis, it is necessary to cite the main directors of the Neorealist film movement. According to Peter Bondanella, film theorist, critic and writer, the three main directors who may be noted as the masters of Neorealism are Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica and Luchino

Visconti.¹⁹⁶ Costanzo Costantini's book entitled *Conversations with Fellini*, comprising thirty years of personal interviews, clarifies that, in parallel with the above three masters, Federico Fellini also holds a privileged position as a Neorealist director, having been a student, co-writer and assistant director to Roberto Rossellini for eleven years.¹⁹⁷ Most importantly, Fellini worked on the screen-play for *Rome Open City* (1945) and participated as Rossellini's assistant director in *Paisà* (1946).¹⁹⁸ Fellini states: 'It was by accompanying him as he [Rossellini] shot *Paisà* that I discovered Italy. From him I derived the conception of film as journey, adventure, and odyssey. He was a peerless friend and teacher to me.'¹⁹⁹

Being deeply influenced by Rossellini, Fellini continued to develop the principles of Neorealism into an art form, winning five Oscars as well as the Praemium Imperiale, the Far East equivalent of the Nobel Prize, awarded in Tokyo annually to an artist from a background in painting, sculpture, architecture, music, film or theatre.²⁰⁰ Because of the long relationship between Rossellini and Fellini, I would replace Visconti as a master Neorealist director with Fellini, based on the fact that Geoffrey Nowell-Smith – a Visconti expert – makes it clear Visconti was actually distant from Rossellini and Neorealism:

Whereas with Rossellini a realistic and immediate treatment of something for which he feels a direct interest uneasily masks a set of fairly constant moral imperatives, with Visconti there are no imperatives, realism appears as incidental and direct interest expresses itself only in the form of certain recurring themes and

motifs. Their paths coincided very little.²⁰¹

Before probing the traits and characteristic of the Neorealist film-directors and venturing into a stratagem of understanding how their values have been disseminated to present-day film-directors, it is helpful to understand how they each compare to one another. As the father of Neorealism, Rossellini is best known for his ability to look 'critically at the obvious',²⁰² his eye experiences the events of the world like that of a child, where 'everything is real and at the same time everything is fiction, everything is old and at the same time everything is new, everything is found and everything is invented'.²⁰³ In comparison to De Sica, Rossellini does not intentionally seek to be sentimental towards any specific social or cultural condition, but rather to expose and illustrate the components of that situation. For example, in *Germany Year Zero* (1948) Rossellini simply represents the young boy as a grave-digger, murderer and thief in post-World War II Berlin.

Such a position is contrary to De Sica's sentimental dealings with children. It is De Sica's relation to the world as seen through the eyes of a child that sets his work apart from that of Rossellini.²⁰⁴ An example of De Sica's sentimentality can be observed in the film *The Children Are Watching Us* (1942). The plot develops around a wife's scandalous love affair, which drives her husband to suicide, in turn destroying her child's sense of trust and affection. De Sica uses the camera from the child's perspective in order to obtain a sentimental response from the viewer.²⁰⁵

Compared with Rossellini and De Sica, Fellini possesses the greatest

capacity for fabricating fantasy from reality; for example, Fellini had written the comical anecdotes in *Rome Open City* (1945) based on his experiences as a newspaper cartoonist, comedian and clown. Fellini ultimately differs from Rossellini and De Sica in his usage of a studio environment, where he could have a greater amount of control in his films; Fellini preferred to reconstruct 'real' locations as much as possible while Rossellini and De Sica were more inclined to use actual city locations.²⁰⁶ In Fellini's film *Roma* (1972), 'Almost everything in the film – the variety theatre, outdoor scenes, even the Coliseum and the Roman autostrada – has been reconstructed by Fellini and in most cases, perfectly serviceable "real" locations have been consciously avoided.'²⁰⁷

Peter Bondanella defines Fellini's treatment of Neorealism as the 'interplay of reality and illusion, autobiography and history',²⁰⁸ coupled with 'the importance of bizarre characters, grotesque make-up and eccentric faces that allowed him to illustrate what characters both looked and felt like, both to the public eye and internally to themselves'.²⁰⁹ Fellini sought to practise his artistic freedom more profoundly than Rossellini or De Sica. Bondanella explains: 'It is as if Fellini were declaring to his audience that reality consists solely in what the artist creates; the actual autostrada or Coliseum will not suffice, since they are not constructed as Fellini's imagination pictures them.'²¹⁰

Having showcased the different characteristics of the three Neorealist directors Fellini, Rossellini and De Sica, I have selected three present-day directors who share certain aspects of their Neorealist qualities and attributes. Such a comparative analysis between directors will allow the reader to understand how certain traits and attributes of Neorealism have been carried

through the history of film and are still viable and applicable in the present day.

The selection is:

1. Vittorio De Sica and Ken Loach, searching for authentic emotions and desire.
2. Federico Fellini and David Lynch, dealing with the quirks of human nature.
3. Roberto Rossellini and Oliver Stone, reacting to contemporary history.

1.3d

Vittorio De Sica/Ken Loach

De Sica's rendition of Neorealism is primarily a manner of exposing feeling and sentimentality within the film's subject matter. By studying the reaction of the crowd in his early career as a comic actor, De Sica was trained in how to 'feel' and react to the response of his audience, their rhythm, noise, laughter and applause. The English film-director Ken Loach, although not having the acting history of De Sica, possesses similar characteristics in that his films 'feel' and are emotionally charged 'portraits of working-class life in the UK'.²¹¹

In the film *Umberto D* (1952), De Sica depicts the complex relationship of a retired pensioner, a pet dog, an apartment building and a young pregnant maid girl. By engaging such ordinary figures and circumstances, a connection is developed with the audience, who may share similar tragic situations and disappointments in their everyday lives. In the film, De Sica describes the desperate and complex conditions of human existence. The dog's existence in

the film, becomes the only reason that the retired pensioner does not commit suicide, while the young maid is in fear of losing her job owing to her pregnancy, after she has served her employer and landlord with great faith and respect for several years. Such powerful sensitivity, thought and imagery generated from common daily events established De Sica as a leading Neorealist who built his films around the concepts of 'feeling' and 'sentimentality'.

Similar circumstances and emotional links to De Sica are present in Loach's *Ladybird, Ladybird* (1994), which was based on an actual case history of a woman who keeps losing custody of her children.²¹² Through the discourse of the film we are pulled into the world of a single mother, 'Maggie', trying to keep her children from being snatched away by the social services. 'Maggie' also faces internal and personal struggles, ranging from the memory of her own abusive childhood to her confrontational yet dependent relationship with her partner 'Jorge'.²¹³ The character of 'Maggie', played by actress Crissy Rock, was very much linked to the oeuvre of De Sica, in that Rock herself was actually a real-life stand-up comic from Liverpool. This links her to the concepts of De Sica's early career, particularly his capacity to communicate 'feeling' to an audience as a result of the maturity he gained from performing to a live audience.²¹⁴

Loach also upholds two specific Neorealist attributes: the utilization of non-professional actors in an attempt to prevent the over-directing and over-rehearsing that he had previously encountered while working as a television director early in his career, as well as not giving the entire script to the leading actor in order that he or she might authentically discover their role and character

as they went through the development of a film. As Loach describes: 'When I did TV, the read-through was often the best performance the actors gave, and the more you worked and directed it the less good they got. They became more studied, tricky and less spontaneous. The camera sees through it.'²¹⁵ Seeking an amateur 'actor', free from an over-rehearsed film history, De Sica states:

It is not the actor who lends the character a face which, however versatile he may be, is necessarily his own, but the character who reveals himself, sooner or later, in that particular face and in no other ... their ignorance is an advantage, not a handicap. The man in the street, particularly if he is directed by someone who is himself an actor, is raw material that can be molded at will. It is sufficient to explain to him those few tricks of the trade which may be useful to him from time to time; to show him the technical and, in the best sense of the term, of course, the historic means of expression at his disposal. It is difficult – perhaps impossible – for a fully trained actor to forget his profession. It is far easier to teach it, to hand in just the little that is needed, just what will suffice for the purpose at hand.²¹⁶

Loach and De Sica can also be linked in their belief and reliance on competent individuals in the development of a film. For instance, Loach depends greatly on his cameramen, for whom he has high regard. He does not perceive the cameraman solely as a technician but also as a creative source in the directing

process. Loach also describes his alliance and dependency on his writer Roger Smith:

The writer and I will have been through draft after draft of the script and tested it from every angle. What is the story? Is it worth telling? Does it have implications beyond the narrative? ... We don't show the actors the script. It unfolds bit by bit. They might not know what is going to happen at the end, but they should know everything about the character, their past history and circumstances.²¹⁷

The development of the script and its being fed to actors, bit by bit, scene by scene, is also recognized as a Neorealist principle linking Loach and De Sica. Such an attitude maintains the liberty of the director to develop and modify the film as it develops with the help of collaborators, writers, designers and cameramen. This approach to collaboration may be recognized in De Sica particularly through his fruitful collaboration with the screen-writer Cesare Zavattini, who was the script-writer of all of his Neorealist films. Zavattini, a leading writer for the Neorealists, would formulate a strong social and philosophical position in each film.²¹⁸

1.3e

Federico Fellini/David Lynch

Both directors were coincidentally born on 20 January: Fellini in Rimini, Italy

(1920), and Lynch in Missouri, USA (1946). Both directors were deeply influenced by their small-town upbringing, which served as a source of imaginative inquiry and speculation. The powerful imagination of both directors helped them in the creation of personalized renditions of the world. Such renditions depended on the local landscapes and towns that they were familiar with and had grown up among. By establishing themselves in familiar territory, Fellini and Lynch were able to explore conceptual approaches to representing the world around them. Lynch states: 'All my movies are about strange worlds that you can't go into unless you build them and film them. That's what's so important about film to me. I like going into strange worlds.'²¹⁹

For Fellini, the fundamental texture and patina of his real life experiences, coupled with his dreams, were the raw material for his films. For instance, the Gambettola farmhouse of his paternal grandmother would be remembered in several films, a place where he would have illusions and fantasies. Also his travelling salesman father Urbano Fellini played a part in two of his Oscar-winning films, *La Dolce Vita* (1960) and *8½* (1963).²²⁰

Fellini utilized the studio setting for developing his movies more than any of the other Neorealists, who were more inclined to take to the streets and actual locations. The studio, for Fellini, was a location where he believed that he could become more involved in developing personal details; he would seek to construct bits and pieces of his memory within a film, stemming from reality and from dreams.²²¹ According to Fellini:

Memory is by nature an altered vision of reality, a mediated view of what really happened. To relate stories, characters, encounters, passions that have been filtered through memory is to express something which, in order to be faithful to the emotions and sentiments it stirs up, must be enriched with sounds, lights, colours, atmosphere. All this can be re-created only in the magical laboratory that, for the film-maker, is the studio. In Studio 5 of Cinecittà I re-create everything.²²²

The source of Fellini's ability to engage with such stimuli may be located in his profound respect for and utilization of art as a medium for cinematic exploration and development. His belief in the creative role of the director as an artist was rooted in the inspiration he derived from Mario Mafai, Ottone Rosai, Massimo Campigli, Carlo Carrà, Mario Sironi, and mostly Giorgio de Chirico and Pablo Picasso.²²³ He appreciated De Chirico's ability to capture Italy with a sincere vision. Fellini states: 'De Chirico's metaphysical painting is extraordinary: he has invented Italy, with her piazzas, her streets, colonnades, seascapes; Italy at once realistic and poetic.'²²⁴

Fellini's manner is inspired by art, and similarly film for Lynch is a combination of '[p]ainting, taking still photographs and time thrown in together'.²²⁵ Lynch also clarifies that in some ways you don't have to know anything to make a film; you just have to understand the processes of editing, sound, music, acting, sequence and the repetition of shapes. He states that 'the same rules that exist in any medium exist in film, only maybe a little more'.²²⁶ Like Lynch, although with

a different bent, Fellini explains that cinema is an art form that has nothing to do with the other arts, least of all with literature. Fellini's placement of film as an autonomous art form, particularly distanced from literature, is due to the reliance of film on light. He links film and painting through their necessary treatment of light; but for Fellini, in cinema 'the light comes before the subject, the plot, the characters: it is light that expresses what the director means'.²²⁷

Lynch is further linked with Fellini in that both were interested in the fine arts early in their careers. Lynch underwent formal training through a structured university curriculum, while Fellini acquired his training through the childhood curiosity of doodling images of fellow classmates and teachers while in elementary school. Regardless of their different beginnings with drawing and art, both Fellini and Lynch drew cartoons and illustrations for local newspapers and journals in the earlier parts of their careers.

Fellini believed that the script was a malleable and growing work in progress, rather than a finite structure that could not be adjusted and amended during the making of a film. He would invent and develop the script with the actors, as he did in *La Dolce Vita* (1960) with Anita Ekberg. When the actress asked Fellini for the script he simply replied, 'I'll explain to you what you have to do, then we'll write the script; better still, you write the script.'²²⁸ Ekberg was so shocked that she then confronted her agent and asked him if Fellini was actually a director. Fellini developed such a system with the entire cast of the movie. The script was eminently flexible: 'Day by day I would write out the lines she had to say and then ask her, "You like them? If not we'll change them."²²⁹

Lynch is an advocate of the same flexibility-in-script policy as Fellini,

stating 'The script is more like an indication, a blueprint – it's not the house. You can see the house in your mind's eye when you look at the blueprint, but eventually you're going to get the experience of walking in there and realize that your blueprint is nothing compared to the real thing.'²³⁰ In the case of Fellini and Neorealism, basic ideas served as flexible blueprints.

1.3f

Roberto Rossellini/Oliver Stone

Rossellini and Stone may be linked through their capacity for 'looking critically at the obvious',²³¹ and searching for 'truth' in patterns and cultural trends within their respective countries – particularly on topics of war and social injustice. The retaliation against the blind patriotism and propaganda of Fascists and Nazis by Rossellini in *Rome Open City* (1945) can also be observed in Stone's *Platoon* (1986): 'the film was the complete antithesis of the cod patriotism espoused in such ultimate Reagan era films as *Top Gun* and *Rambo*'.²³²

Similarities are present in the way both directors deal with national issues: compare Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945), *Paisa* (1946) and *Germany Year Zero* (1947), and Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986), *Natural Born Killers* (1993) and *U Turn* (1997). For both directors these films were geared to present the reality of cultural phenomena within their respective environments, either historical or current, and from those facts communicate a particular personalized vision through the medium of film and the art of film-direction. Although the intensity and vigour of Oliver Stone may make him appear different from Rossellini, this can be explained by consideration of the social and cultural differences between

America circa 2003 and Italy circa 1945.

A difference in intensity and vigour can be observed between Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945) and Stone's *Platoon* (1986). In Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945) Pina runs after the Nazi truck that is hauling her future groom away; she is shot and murdered by the Nazis from the rear of the truck as it drives off. We do not see any blood shed. Instead we hear the bullet being fired; we see Pina fall to the ground, her young son running to cover her body, the priest and neighbourhood policeman coming to her in her fatal condition, the priest pulling the son away. There is minimal dialogue during this sequence; Rossellini allows the event to speak for itself, and the viewer to relate personally to the tragedy – the viewer is allowed to observe the circumstances critically and consider the Nazi, the bullet, Pina's son Marcello. The viewer realizes the truth of the situation: that the Nazis showed a great deal of malicious aggression towards Italian citizens; that without remorse the Nazis were able to get away with whatever they did, such as killing an innocent woman like Pina.

The act of murder in Stone's *Platoon* (1986) is much more visceral than that in Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945). This can be observed in the scene where Lieutenant Gardner has been hit in a Vietnamese ambush: his entire chest is drenched in blood; the noise of artillery shells and screaming troops fills the scene. The soldiers aiding him do not sympathetically cover his body, but rather attempt to stop the bleeding with large cloths and apply aggressive resuscitation techniques, banging on his wounded chest.

A strong similarity between the two directors is evident in their ability to communicate truthfully with the viewer by showing the obvious circumstances of

a scene. For example, Stone stresses the disorientation and displacement of the soldiers in *Platoon* (1986) prior to their ambush. He shows us that the soldiers have fallen asleep; the one that remains awake is helpless and cannot react, both because of his fear and because any reaction from him would further endanger his troop. Similarly, Rossellini portrays the people gathering outside the tenement building in *Rome Open City* (1945) while the Nazis are shooting Pina's lover as helpless onlookers.

In comparing Stone's personal outlook on film-directing to Rossellini's 'personal view of the world',²³³ it is apparent that both directors have a similar take. Stone states: 'I'm a writer and director and co-producer – in other words you could say film-maker. Writing is the dirtiest job; you're spending six to eight hours a day alone. There's nothing like that feeling of loneliness, doubt and an ultimate trust in your personal view of the world.'²³⁴

Stone utilizes the same words as Rossellini – 'a personal view of the world' – but what is even more interesting is that such a view of the 'world' is intimate and local. Rossellini created his Neorealism mainly in Italy because of his understanding of the problems faced by many Italians from Fascism and Nazi occupation. Stone's personal view of the world is demonstrated on both a national and an international scale. *Natural Born Killers* (1993) exhibits the crime and corruption found within American culture, expressed through scenes of satirical comedy and murder, drug abuse and theft. Stone also deals with international themes that have affected the American public, such as their involvement in Vietnam, through the film *Platoon* (1986). He created his films, as Douglas Kellner states in his article 'Hollywood Film and Society', as a reaction

against the conservative right-wing politics of Ronald Reagan, in much the way Rossellini fought against Nazi and Fascist propaganda. Because of the influence of right-wing politics in America today, we can see Stone as a necessary presence to maintain an opposing vision against conservative ideologies.²³⁵

Although the technique of writing a script varied greatly from Stone to Rossellini, Stone writing for several hours in isolation, in comparison to Rossellini who would only write when necessary, in the form of brief notes and excerpts – both men perceive the development of a script into a film as a flexible and dynamic act – to the extent that they allowed the script to develop through the course of the film with the help of cast, crew and actors. Once the basic ideas of a script are completed, for both Stone and Rossellini it still maintains the capacity for adjustment throughout the film-making process. Stone maintains such a liberal position in order to avoid focusing either entirely on the whole or on detailed parts. It is his belief that allowing the writing to dominate a film could bring failure to the production:

I have done so much re-adjusting of the script in editing rooms; there's been so much creativity and moving things around. If you look at the original scripts and see what we did with the structure, you'll see that everything is fluid. It's up for grabs in rehearsal, in directing, again in editing, but writing itself is the beginning, the core, the beginning of the description we bring to our lives.²³⁶

In Rossellini's case during the making of *It was Night in Rome* (1960), a film that was shot in only forty-five days: 'Roberto would arrive around mid-day, still vague about the scene to be shot, work out his ideas while dressing the set or hanging out with the crew, and at the last minute decide on the dialogue.'²³⁷ Rossellini would then start to dictate lines to the various actors and have them write them down by hand. The script was being re-created with no reference to the original; this level of liberal editing may be seen to parallel that of Stone, but was even more extreme. Rossellini commented to a crew member regarding the script: 'We have a script, now we actually want to use it too?'²³⁸ Like Rossellini, Stone also believes that the script is fundamentally a point of departure:

Some people think that I am primarily a writer and I use the camera like a big typewriter trying to make the point. Far from it – I feel that the directing is a process and it grows with the actors and the cinematographer and the designers because they collaborate ... it grows into another beast.²³⁹

1.3g Neorealism and the Necessity of Rossellini

The birth of Italian Neorealism had been greatly dependent on Rossellini's immediate reaction to and translation of the events that defined World War II Rome amid the defeat of the Fascist regime and Nazi occupation in September 1943 and Rome's liberation in June 1944. Rossellini would dynamically respond, and in less than sixteen months conceive and develop *Rome Open City*,

presenting it to the world community on 27 September 1945.

The international success of *Rome Open City* (1945) was due in great part to its release shortly after the end of World War II. The world audience of Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, which was still very familiar with the concept and violence of war, was to become aware of the suffering that had occurred in Rome during the Nazi and Fascist occupation. The world learned that Rome was not a malicious city inhabited by Nazis and Fascists, but rather a city where working-class people rebelled and fought against Nazi and Fascist beliefs. Such a remarkable message from *Rome Open City* (1945) positioned Rossellini as the founding father of Neorealist film.

Rossellini believed that from a very humble position you can face any obstacle and revise the whole concept of the universe.²⁴⁰ It may be speculated that Rossellini's universe derived from his capacity to critically observe the obvious cultural, social, political and economic influences in Rome during and directly after World War II. The capacity to abstract the universe into a personalized conglomeration of facts and ideas allowed Rossellini to formulate a personalized rendition of Rome. Rossellini's Rome was a universe formulated within his creative mind – as the place where the individual re-makes the world as he or she sees fit. The physical world – or, as Plato critiques, the shortcomings of the world of 'beautiful things' – was not Rossellini's concern. Rather his concern was fundamentally to communicate ideas in the most succinct and direct manner; for example, in *Rome Open City* (1945) there was limited artistic artifice involved, non-professional film actors were used, there was no film studio, no sound dubbing, the actors did not have costume or make-up.

Rossellini has specifically sought to communicate his idea of a liberated Rome fighting against the Nazi and Fascist regimes without the pretence involved in attempting to be beautiful or decadent.

Rossellini's ability to bridge ideological divisions – when most of his contemporaries, were aligned to particular schools of ideology, leaning either to the left or to the right, running the gamut from communists and socialists to Fascists and libertines – infused him with the ability to go beyond the confines of a single school of thought. He combined theories of the French phenomenologist André Bazin, who was to introduce existentialism into Neorealism, and of the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce, who professed rational scientific thought. Rossellini believed in hybridizing the different tendencies, welcomed their varying tensions, and in turn shocked both schools.²⁴¹

The influential stages of Rossellini's Neorealism were first developed through the making of fictionalized war documentaries for the Italian Fascist party. His engagement with the Fascists was begun based on the fact that his father had passed away²⁴² and he was in search of a job and salary.²⁴³ Rossellini's employer was the film-director Goffredo Alessandrini. Rossellini's film debut was his work on *Luciano Serra Pilota* (1937) as an assistant director and script-writer to Alessandrini. Shortly after filming began, Rossellini was frustrated with the work of Alessandrini and felt that he could personally execute the film better; he quickly networked in the Fascist party and secured the role of lead film-director.²⁴⁴ Rossellini became more aggressive in his film-directing skills and began to inject Fascist propaganda films with humanist and liberal aspects of Italian culture, not simply to promote the pompous strength of the Fascist party.

Failing to meet Vittorio Mussolini's expectations, Rossellini was banned and no longer commissioned by the Fascist party.

Going beyond the fictionalized war documentaries of the Fascist party, Rossellini began to explore what Barthes defines as the 'reconciliation between reality and men, between decryption and explanation, between object and knowledge'.²⁴⁵ The couplings proposed by Barthes, as visualized through Neorealist theory, can be perceived as the desire to educate mankind by distancing him or her from opinion and bringing him or her closer to knowledge. Rossellini believed that all forms of ideology, coupled with the propaganda of Fascists and Nazis, represented ignorance in Rome. He desired to educate the world community through Neorealism and *Rome Open City* (1945), distancing them from their opinions of what Rome, the Italian citizens of Rome, Fascists and Nazis might be like, by revealing actual knowledge of post-World War II Rome.

Rossellini continued to challenge the concept of ideology in his films. He fought the ideology of war and power in *Rome Open City* (1945) and *Germany Year Zero* (1947); he fought the ideology of love in *Europe '51* (1951). In his fight against ideology Rossellini stated: 'When you give up pretending, manipulating, you already have an image, a language, a style. When you leave the sound stage and shoot on the street like someone who lives and belongs there, you discover as a result that you possess a style. The language, the style of neorealism is here: it is a result of a moral position, of looking critically at the obvious.'²⁴⁶

To further understand how Rossellini became interested in the destruction of ideology it is necessary to consider the phases of his development and growth as an individual. He was born on 8 May 1906 in the city of Rome to Angiolo Giuseppe Rossellini and Elettra Bellan. His trajectory from childhood to Neorealist film-director was driven by the impetus of a variety of people, places and events. Such a combination of factors can be noted in Rossellini's relation with his father Angiolo Giuseppe Rossellini, who was wary and critical of the Fascist regime led by Benito Mussolini.

According to Gallagher the defining moment that was to inspire *Rome Open City* (1945) occurred on 30 October 1922 when 'Mussolini arrived by train from Milan, took a taxi to the Quirinal palace, and presented himself to the king in a black shirt, un-pressed trousers, scruffy shoes, and a growth of beard'.²⁴⁷ Gallagher then describes how Mussolini made his way into the city, where he was to address the people of Rome from the balcony of the Hotel Savoia, directly across the street from the Rossellini home. Roberto and his siblings were very excited at the event and ran to the lower floor of their home, eagerly peering out of the window to observe the event that was about to unfold. Roberto's father suddenly walked into the house and, with the door open, stated loudly enough to be heard across the street: 'Remember, kids. Black's good for hiding dirt.'²⁴⁸

Angiolo Giuseppe Rossellini's statement 'Remember, kids. Black's good for hiding dirt' was a defining moment for Roberto. While everyone in Rome was cheering Mussolini, along with America, Britain and the Pope, Roberto's father

was denouncing the entire idea. Angiolo Giuseppe Rossellini's cynicism – or rather, his adoration of liberty – led him rightly to believe that 'Mussolini would be a dictator to ruin us all'.²⁴⁹ Such a position was a remarkable stand on principle, courageously at odds with his time and class. It was a lesson Roberto would never forget. Roberto, inspired by his father, stated: 'Ideology – islands of ideology, each claiming transcendence – had destroyed liberal democracy.'²⁵⁰

Gallagher clarifies that 'Roberto would make it his life's work to destroy ideology'.²⁵¹ Rossellini's means of destroying ideology would be to search for, define and articulate reality. The basic premise would be to allow individuals to develop their own rendition of reality, rather than impose on them the vision of ideological groups like the Fascists or Nazis. The inability of the viewer to establish his or her own personal reality is also the basic criticism against montage, which through a series of camera manoeuvres, shifting back and forth on various details and close-up shots, attempts to emotionally arouse the viewer, but in so doing also compromises the chronology of time and event that Neorealism honoured.

1.3i

Reality Not Montage

According to Hugh Gray, translator and editor of *What Is Cinema?*, Andre Bazin was to contribute significantly to bringing the 'French film back to life'²⁵² by inspiring the French new wave as well as the Italian Neorealists. Bazin's immense contribution to film history has allowed him to be referred to as the Aristotle of film critique by his contemporary Pierre Aime Touchard.²⁵³

Like Rossellini, Bazin opposed the Nazi regime. During World War II Bazin was a member of the *Maison des Lettrés*, which was founded to take care of students whose regular scholastic routine had been disturbed by the war. At the *Maison des Lettrés* Bazin began his interest in film and organized a cine-club, which showed movies that were against the principles of the Nazi and Vichy government ideologies and had been banned for political reasons. The Vichy regime had taken over France, after its defeat in 1940, by cooperating with the Nazis – a situation similar to the Fascist/Nazi relationship in Italy. The Vichy government imprisoned some 135,000 people, deported some 76,000 Jews, and sent approximately 650,000 French workers to Germany.²⁵⁴ After World War II ended, Bazin had built a strong foundation in the analysis of film. He was appointed film critic of *Le Parisien Libéré* and eventually became the director of *Le Cahiers du Cinéma*, which owing to his contribution became one of the world's most distinguished film publications.²⁵⁵

According to Bazin, the cinema of the 1920s and 1940s is located 'between two broad and opposing trends: those directors who put their faith in the image and those who put their faith in reality'.²⁵⁶ Bazin proceeds to separate the directors aligned with 'image' into two categories: firstly, those that relate to the 'plastics' of the image, such as style of sets, make-up, performance, lighting and the framing of the shot in order to achieve composition; and secondly, those that relate to the resources of montage.²⁵⁷ Based on Bazin's definition, this section has two objectives: to define reality according to Rossellini, and to understand how the resources of montage compare with the reality of Neorealism.

Reality, as signified in Rossellini's films, was not the exploration of form and material, but the ideas that defined human characteristics. Ideology becomes the subject matter, not the method of his movies. Gallagher suggests that reality for Rossellini is 'a theatre of ideas ... His characters suffer from ideology. Characters forever seek to remake the world according to their own ideas.'²⁵⁸ *Rome Open City* (1945) presented the idea of reality: 'not of direct representations of events but of elaborations of already represented events, of stories already told orally or written down in clandestine publications, letters and diaries'.²⁵⁹ The described forms of oral and written matter utilized in the making of *Rome Open City* (1945) suggest Rossellini's reality to be a transfer of personal objectives, social and cultural criticisms, his ideas. Rossellini's reality, like a text in a discovered diary, communicates a level of personal ideas to the audience. Through the medium of film Rossellini shared his ideas of reality with the audience.

Bazin clarifies that the relevance of film is to allow the viewer to believe in the reality of what is occurring on the screen, while at the same time being conscious that it is a 'trick'.²⁶⁰ Film was not meant to deceive the viewer, but to organize information and scenes in a manner that clarified the subject matter. Bazin, in agreement with Rossellini, believed that Neorealism was concerned with ideas and content rather than material. Ideas were superior to material; material could be anything, or any form that could convey an idea.

The reality of Neorealist film, as opposed to that of montage technique, is its ability not to trick or lose the viewer, but rather to maintain a historical and chronological order of events. The technique of montage in film was developed by David Llewelyn Wark Griffith around 1912 as the breaking down of a scene

into a number of shots, each from a different angle or viewpoint, enabling the audience to see significant parts of the scene in close-up.²⁶¹ Montage was utilized by Griffith to manipulate 'cinematic space and time, creating a suspense that was resolved when the "space" of danger and "space" of rescue were finally joined and the hero rescued the heroine'.²⁶² Eisenstein later utilized a similar principle that built on Griffith's concept through the conflict or collision of successive images, such as 'Knife + Horrified Eyes = Terror'.²⁶³ Bazin further clarifies how successive images of montage in film produce an abstract idea by means of metaphor and association:

Thus between the scenario properly so-called, the ultimate object of the recital, and the image pure and simple, there is a relay station, a sort of aesthetic 'transformer'. The meaning is not in the image, it is in the shadow of the image projected by montage onto the field of the spectator.²⁶⁴

The viewer of a montage sequence produces an emotional response based on the juxtaposition of the image and not necessarily on the narrative of the film. Comparably, Neorealist film leads the viewer from one scene to the next, relying on the narrative, on a series of sequential and intertwined events, to build the viewer's emotional response. The Neorealist camera's ability to follow the history, chronology and sequence of events defined time realistically, in contrast to the montage techniques of Griffith and Eisenstein, which controlled the pace and rhythm of time through camera shifts and editing, creating a sense of unjustifiable

excitement for the viewer. As an example, I compare Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945) and Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) to illustrate the differences between montage and Neorealism.

Whereas Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945) presented a personalized rendition of actual events that had happened in Rome, Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) re-wrote the actual conclusion of the mutiny aboard the *Potemkin*. 'Eisenstein's narrative ends on the relative victory of the fleet's passing the ship without firing',²⁶⁵ in contrast to the actual, and less valiant, ending of the story when the *Potemkin* 'left Odessa and the sailors eventually sought asylum in Romania'.²⁶⁶ Rossellini clarified reality; Eisenstein re-wrote reality.

Unlike Rossellini's merging of four separate plots into a single intertwined narrative, Eisenstein's technique is to structure his film around five episodes, introduced by intertitles: (1) Men and Maggots; (2) Drama on the Quarterdeck; (3) An Appeal from the Dead; (4) The Odessa Steps; (5) Meeting the Squadron.²⁶⁷ These correspond to episodes in the 'historical memory of the event', rather than there being a fusion of the five plots into one intertwined story.

An example of montage technique in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) is observed in the 'juxtaposition of images of innocence against images of violence ... the child trampled, the mother's appeal to the soldiers, the mother with the pram against the mass of the soldiers'.²⁶⁸ The rapid succession of events, and the use of the camera as a device to wipe, fade, dissolve, cut and alter the human perception of time and space, allowed Eisenstein to communicate to the

viewer. In contrast, Neorealism revealed the sequence of events as they were, as they unfolded. For instance, in *Rome Open City* (1945) we see Pina's son run up the steps of the tenement building and then get smacked by his mother. Neorealism allows us to witness all of the various circumstances of the event, such as the young boy sneaking out of the home at night, the explosion of the Nazi truck that the boy and his young friends had caused, the boy craftily re-entering the building, walking up the steps, and finally approaching the apartment door and getting smacked by his mother. The viewer may not be stimulated by the boy slowly walking up the steps, but may enjoy the other instances throughout the sequence. Neorealism wanted to represent life as it was: sometimes creating awesome circumstances, and at other times being unhurried and pensive.

1.3j

Neorealism not Realism

In contrast to Neorealism, realism does not indicate a specific objective. Cultural theorist Colin McCabe clarifies that realism in film was based on objectives similar to those of the nineteenth-century novel whose subject matter included 'science fiction, horror, romance or adventure, set in the past or in the future'.²⁶⁹ Neorealism, unlike realism, is historically rooted to a specific period of post-World War II Italian cinema that was focused on presenting and analysing the social and cultural conditions of post-war culture.

In contrast to Neorealism, realism 'is not presented as an interpretation but as a final statement of the truth about its subject'.²⁷⁰ Historical films have

traditionally utilized realism as a means to create a story that does not 'handle complex historical issues from a range of viewpoints'²⁷¹ but rather from the position of an authoritative voice-over, as if this were the sole source of reason. Nineteenth-century specialist Dennis Walder clarifies that realism, as expressed in the nineteenth-century novel, was a masterfully constructed tale, rich in realist detail and impersonal in narration, and suggested that mystery, intrigue and suspense were far more important than everyday life.²⁷² The premise of the nineteenth-century novel was that it re-wrote social and historical realities from the position of the writer, leading to 'a conception of fictional truths as a function of the point of view'.²⁷³

The film technique of montage as utilized by Eisenstein in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) was also dependent on realism. Through the re-working of historical truth and fact, Eisenstein considerably modified the actual events in describing the mutiny aboard the *Potemkin*. Prior to the formation of Neorealism in *Rome Open City* (1945), realism for Rossellini was 'not the reality of the perceived object; it means the reality of the perceiving subject's relationship to his or her object'.²⁷⁴ Rossellini's states that realism accounted for the 'fantasies' of his youth such as in his film *Undersea Fantasy* (1938), telling 'the tale of two fish in love, threatened by an octopus and saved by an eel'. Realism would also play in Rossellini's first three feature films, a Fascist propaganda war trilogy dedicated to the navy: *The White Ship* (1941); air force: *A Pilot Returns* (1942); and army: *The Man of the Cross* (1943). The first of the films, *The White Ship* (1941), portrayed how well the Fascist navy cared for their wounded, and blind trust to superiors; it praised dedication to duty, and encouraged the young to

come to war.²⁷⁵ Although Rossellini dealt with realism in two characteristically different topics – a love story of fish and the Fascist war trilogy – the underlying concept of realism can be understood as Rossellini's personal relation to the object being perceived and not the reality of the objects themselves; fish do not necessarily fall in love, and neither were the Fascists particularly humane. Rossellini expert Ruth Ben-Geit clarifies:

Although Rossellini belonged to the generation of Italians whom the Fascist government had targeted as its future political and cultural elite, he did not participate in official programmes designed to train the next leaders of the Fascist film industry. His choice to forgo a university education kept him out of film sections of the *Gruppi Universitari Fascisti* (University Fascist Groups) and he did not attend the *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* (Experimental Centre for Cinematography), the film school that the regime established in 1935 ... Rossellini received his film training the traditional way: through a series of apprenticeships as a dubbing assistant, film editor and screenwriter.²⁷⁶

Ben-Geit explains that Rossellini's experience in realism primarily came from working on two films. The first, Carlo Ludovico Bragaglia's *The Quarry of the Angels* (1937), was shot on location in the marble quarries of Carrara with the working miners as its protagonists. The second film, Goffredo

Alessandrini's *The Pilot Luciano* (1938), shot on location in Ethiopia, portrays the 1936 Fascist invasion, where the courageous Fascist pilot Luciano dies. Rossellini had worked as an assistant director and screenwriter in both films.²⁷⁷

Forgacs clarifies that locating realism in Rossellini's films is controversial and depends on one's definition. Forgacs cites Brunette as arguing that Rossellini's work 'cannot be subsumed under a realist heading because of the central role played by imagination and fantasy both in his films and in his explanation of them'.²⁷⁸ Forgacs clarifies that 'fantasy did not stand in an antithetical relationship to realism and the introduction of fantasy elements into the film remained perfectly consistent with a broadly realist project'.²⁷⁹ According to Forgacs, the fundamental issue regarding the definition of realism for Rossellini as well as other Neorealist film-directors was:

Whether they would remain free to explore reality in their own way, looping off in the direction of fantasy as they saw fit, or whether they would be obliged to subordinate their approach to the rules of the genre convention. And there can be no doubt that Rossellini, who was an intuitive artist rather than a theorist, not only chafed against the restrictions of genre but used his freedom to follow an inspiration which was realist in a sense which, while admittedly loose, was a kind which artists themselves recognize.²⁸⁰

In *Rome Open City* (1945) Rossellini contested the one-sided reality of

traditional realism by exposing both the adequacies and inadequacies of all parties involved, clarifying reality – showing the viewer that certain Fascists and Nazis were critical of their own regime. Traditional realism gave way to Neorealism in *Rome Open City* (1945), showing us how the Fascist troops, emotionally and culturally linked to the citizens of Rome, refused to shoot the priest who was sentenced for execution by the Nazis – the Nazi officer then scolded them, approached the priest and shot him point-blank in the head. Another example is when a Nazi officer, while sitting in the officer lounge, condemns the values and principles of the Nazi regime. Finally, there is no voice-over that attempts to dictate our emotions and reactions to Rossellini's Neorealist films; we are exposed to the dialogues among the actors, and can draw our own conclusions. In contrast to Neorealism, traditional realism imposes a one-sided reality that leads the viewer to a verdict without justly identifying any redemptive or contemplative measures of self-criticism.

1.3k Observing Rome Open City and Beirut

When Rossellini originally envisioned *Rome Open City* (1945) it was to be a combination of four stories: (1) a priest who aids the Italian resistance against the Nazis and Fascists and is later captured, interrogated and executed; (2) a pregnant woman who is shot down while running after the Nazi truck that is hauling away her lover; (3) a communist leader who is betrayed by an ex-lover and later captured, tortured and murdered; (4) a group of young boys who participate in the revolutionary process by torching a Nazi army truck. The film

was then restructured into a single narrative that intertwined the various plots, people, places and events.²⁸¹ The priest, pregnant women, communist leader and group of young boys all interact with one another in a cohesive and dependent manner. For a narrative description of the film, the reader may refer to *Book Two*/pages 106–114.

The four character plots were based on actual events that happened in Rome in 1944, during the Nazi occupation. The character of the priest was based on two different priests who were arrested and executed for supplying forged documents, weapons and ammunition to the revolutionary partisans. The woman was based on Maria Teresa Gullace, a pregnant woman with five children, who while participating in a protest adjacent to the barracks where her husband and other men were captured was shot dead by a Nazi soldier who was riding by on a motorcycle. The Communist leader was based on various accounts of resistance leaders who had participated in the struggle against the Nazis and Fascists. The boy gang reflects Rossellini's interest in children and the effects that war has on them.²⁸²

In developing the interwoven characteristics of the various plots Rossellini was not concerned about technique, describing himself as a 'careless technician'.²⁸³ He believed that the technique of film-direction was something secondary compared to the content, which he believed was far more important than technical excellence. Comparably, Rossellini's concern was the 'internal composition of a shot, as he cared about the rhythm of editing, but he did not mind a certain roughness to the image or the cutting, just as he did not mind if sound synchronization was poor'.²⁸⁴ Jean Renoir clarifies Rossellini's method of

analysing reality, in terms of the various people, events and places that were to define Neorealist films such as *Rome Open City* (1945):

Rossellini exists first by his eyes. It's the sense of vision that establishes his bridge to the rest of the world. It's by his eyes that he absorbs, that he records, that he penetrates: two good drills capable of piercing the toughest surface. After that, his heart follows, and then his brain starts to dissect.²⁸⁵

During *Rome Open City* (1945) Rossellini would utilize his eyes in order to achieve 'the representation of authentic passions'.²⁸⁶ The notion of authentic passions for Rossellini is the pursuit of truth and moral statement that he was able to achieve by looking 'critically at the obvious'.²⁸⁷ For Rossellini, Neorealist film was seeking reality not as a direct copy or documentary, but rather as an 'illusion of the present tense'.²⁸⁸ Neorealist illusion was a product of its immediacy to time and history. The events occurring in Nazi-occupied Rome in 1944 were represented in *Rome Open City* in 1945. The ability to join together originally non-adjoining plots and not deform their historical premise allowed *Rome Open City* (1945) to act as a learning tool; it was Rossellini's goal to educate the public.²⁸⁹ This combining of historical material that is not linked in origin is similar to an instructor's organization of complex material in a lecture to best explain the subject matter to his or her audience.

Rossellini also argues the need for a heroic subject matter in the making of a Neorealist film: not a hero in utopian terms, but heroes who expose their

shortcomings and sustain a level of self-critique. Rossellini clarifies that the hero possesses the 'extraordinary élan and enthusiasm of a man who throws himself into some sort of adventure'.²⁹⁰ The various characters in *Rome Open City* (1945) are all heroic: the priest who dies for the sake of the partisans; the Communist leader who dies for the cause of liberty; the pregnant woman who dies in pursuit of her lover; and the young boys who risk death in razing a Nazi truck. Neorealism is a manifesto of heroic acts by heroes and heroines.

The atrocities of war do not discriminate by city, race, colour, ethnicity, wealth or religion. A bullet kills a man, woman or child in Rome in the same way that it does in Beirut. The atrocities of World War II as portrayed in *Rome Open City* (1945) are similar to those that occurred in Beirut during the withdrawal of the Syrian government, ending a twenty-nine-year occupation (1976–2005). The major difference between Rome and Beirut can be perceived through their reactions to the post-war period.

Post-World War II Rome developed a wide base of industries. Traditional products such as textiles and tourist souvenirs were supplemented by printed materials, high-fashion clothing, processed food, pharmaceuticals, machinery, and paper and metal products.²⁹¹ Owing to reoccurrences of war at fifteen- to twenty-year intervals, Beirut's economic development has not been as prosperous as that of Rome, which has been comparatively stable for approximately sixty-five years. *Rome Open City* (1945) serves as a wonderful repository of information about the city and its citizens, particularly rich in material detail and presenting the development of a civilization.²⁹²

As a fundamental exercise in observation, *Book Two*/page 2 of this thesis

considers three scenes from *Rome Open City* (1945) to begin experimenting with how the NrDA, drawing on the history of Neorealism and Rossellini, can look ‘critically at the obvious’²⁹³ components of a particular scene. Like *Rome Open City* (1945), post-occupied Beirut 2006 is a ‘wonderful source of information, particularly rich in material detail’.²⁹⁴ ‘Chapter 2: Myth and Matter in Beirut’ will develop the means and methods for detecting and utilizing myth and matter in Beirut, as well as developing Neorealist principles as they relate to the NrDA ‘where photographic documentation and historical testimony coexist with a mythical reconstruction of the past in which good memories are made to drive out the bad’.²⁹⁵

Chapter 1

1.4 Conclusion

Realism, reality and Neorealism are three key words which have surfaced in addressing the pre-history of film. Reality is central and is considered in two distinct directions tending to Realism on the one hand and Neorealism on the other. Reality for Rossellini has been demonstrated as having greater self-awareness and self-criticism than the prescriptive reality of realism. Rossellini’s reality does not tell the reader/viewer how to feel, there is no dominating voice over, there are no dramatic shifts in camera to excite and suggest a final verdict for the reader/viewer as does the realism intrinsic to montage. Neorealism allows the reader/viewer the ability to observe protagonists who question their actions.

Realism ← Reality → Neorealism

Throughout the discourse of 'Chapter 1: Re-directing Film' there has been a predominant theme and a desire to record and project images to satisfy an evident human curiosity and need to re-visit reality. Once an object is recorded as an image in a specific medium, be it as a temporary projection on a shadow screen or a permanent fixation on plate or celluloid film or in digital format, the reality of that object is no longer. The projected or fixated image of a train is no longer a train, but has become an image that belongs to the history of film. What does remain for the researcher of images is the ability to re-visit and re-evaluate reality through the image – not the object that the image represents, as that object is no longer there.

Once we record what is real, it is no longer what it was; it is a reproduction, a likeness. Neorealism stays focused on reality, but maintains a level of ambiguity.²⁹⁶ Ambiguity was practised by Neorealist film-directors inasmuch as they were experts at selecting images that represented the current state of society, but their particular skill was in the chronological and historical arrangement of those images, which when placed together in a film suggested a particular idea or message. History for Rossellini was very particular, in the sense that he did not perceive it as a 'celebration of the past' but rather a place in which to 'judge ourselves and guide ourselves towards the future'.²⁹⁷ According to Rossellini:

We are, in all ways, the product of our history. To be conscious of what we have become we need to know our history in its architecture: not as a series of dates, names, alliances, treaties,

betrayals, wars, conquests, but following the thread of transformations of thought.²⁹⁸

In alignment with Rossellini's position on history, 'Chapter 1: Redirecting Film' has been structured in such a manner as to document and articulate the pre-history and history of film, leading to an understanding of how things came to be, and more importantly where they may lead. In particular, it is only through understanding the beginnings and workings of film, and the evolution from its pre-history in shadow play to film-making, from film-director to Neorealist film-director, that I postulate a new way of perceiving the city of Beirut and its architecture, and, developing through Neorealism, the characteristics of the NrDA.

According to Zavattini: 'The ideal film would be ninety minutes in the life of a man to whom nothing happens.'²⁹⁹ The reason for such a statement may be due to the social atmosphere of Italy directly after World War II. The urban structure had been devastated; people were left out of work; 'nothing' was happening to the average citizen. Consequently, film-makers were forced onto the streets of Rome following the partial destruction of *Cinécitta*, the main film studio of the city. The designated place for film-making had been destroyed, the film sets and technical equipment burned.

Without a studio environment, the film-director had to look for another way to practise his or her craft. Hence, the scarred city served as his or her *mise en scène*, and its working-class citizens, often cast according to type, became the stars. It was Neorealist film-directors encouraging non-professional actors to

improvise that necessitated a 'flexibility of framing and camera movement, shooting in available light and adding dialogue in post-production to attain documentary-like spontaneity'.³⁰⁰ Neorealist film came into existence with no studio, no professional actors, no mechanical lighting systems, no scripts, no formal framing and camera positions, no perpetual recording of dialogue and no formal financial backing.

Inspired by Neorealism and the series of controls that the Neorealist film-directors had to operate within, I realized striking parallels: the conditions in post-war, post-Syrian-occupied Beirut 1976–2005 are very much in tune with those of Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945) and the impact of the Fascist regime and Nazi-occupied Rome during World War II. The following chapter, 'Myth and Matter in Beirut', draws on Barthes's discussion of myth as a means of understanding and interpreting post-war, post-Syrian-occupied Beirut (1976–2005) as a 'signifier of myth'³⁰¹ to the NrDA. Barthes's definition of the term 'signifier of myth'³⁰² allows the viewer and reader of Beirut to consider the city as simultaneously possessing 'meaning and form, full on one side and empty on the other'.³⁰³ The fact that it is 'full on one side'³⁰⁴ corresponds to the visual impact that Beirut has on the viewer; it is a 'sensory reality ... the meaning is already complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions'.³⁰⁵ The fact that it is 'empty on the other'³⁰⁶ side indicates that Beirut is still open to interpretation through the controls of myth and matter and can therefore be an inspiration to the NrDA.

Chapter 2: Myth and Matter in Beirut

2.0 Introduction

'Chapter 2: Myth and Matter in Beirut' is inspired by *Rome Open City* (1945) and Rossellini's ability to identify and utilize the rich repository of myth and matter prevalent in post-war Rome. In order to accurately identify a method to locate myth and matter this chapter consists of two sections. The first examines how the NrDA has been influenced by Barthes's definition of myth and the role of the mythologist. The second demonstrates how I as NrDA record and present a testimony of post-war Beirut based on principles of myth and matter. The presented testimony will be a combination of text-based and visual evidence, discussed in *Book One* and exhibited in *Book Two* of this thesis.

Prior to the examination of particular sections of the chapter, this introduction presents the reader with (1) an understanding of the concepts of myth as discussed by Barthes and (2) the NrDA's understanding of matter based on the scientific principles of state and phase. Particular concepts of myth and matter serve as a set of theoretical controls for the NrDA.

The understanding of Barthes – a leading social and literary critic of the twentieth century – utilized in this thesis is from his text *Mythologies*. The text joins signs, signifiers and their signified into what Barthes offers to the reader as myths. Signs can be fundamentally considered as words, images or anything from which meaning is produced. Every sign consists of two parts, a signified and a signifier. The signifier is what form the sign takes; it is the literal and physical aspect of a sign. The signified is in turn what the sign signifies. Through myth, *Mythologies* dissects a massive amount of objects by the consideration of

aspects such as advertising, events and history.

Barthes addresses examples such as 'The Face of Garbo'.³⁰⁷ He proceeds to give added value and meaning to the face of Greta Garbo, a prominent female actress of the early twentieth century. Through myth Garbo's face has become a 'Platonic Idea of the human creature ... almost sexually undefined, without however leaving one in doubt.'³⁰⁸ The climax of the discussion is Barthes's comparison of Garbo's face with that of her contemporary Audrey Hepburn. Barthes leads the reader to understand that Hepburn's face, in contrast to Garbo's, is related not to the 'idea' of Plato, but rather to the 'beautiful'. Barthes defines Hepburn's face as individualized, substance and event, and 'constituted by an infinite complexity of morphological functions'.³⁰⁹ Through myth Barthes has studied and compared the visual significance of Garbo and Hepburn beyond their initial impact on the viewer – the idea of Garbo as compared to the form and shape of Hepburn. Barthes dissects the image, and makes the clear point that so many signs in culture go overlooked, and that by taking time to seek out and find meaning in signs, such as the face of Garbo, one might achieve deeper insights into just about 'everything'.³¹⁰

Through examples such as Garbo's face, the study of *Mythologies* has opened doors to analysing and understanding Beirut. *Mythologies* has taught me, as NrDA, to consider the various forms of matter represented in an image or text, rather than focusing on what one is directly led to believe. The image can be read as a text, and the text can be viewed as an image. Myth is also linked with the NrDA on the basis that they both deal with poor and incomplete images that set the ground work for signification.³¹¹ It is through images that are stripped of

their surface beauty and wholeness that myth and NrDA find their matter.

In much the way Rossellini found meaningful matter among the complex social and economic issues of post-World War II Rome, Barthes found meaningful subject matter in places such as Garbo's face. Comparably to Rossellini and Barthes, the NrDA has found meaningful subject matter in post-war Beirut, in places such as cafés, barber shops, motels and streetscapes that carry a rich repository of myth and matter. Walking through the streets of post-war Beirut has felt very similar to reading *Mythologies*. The intention of this chapter is to allow the reader and viewer of this thesis a similar sensation.

Like the mythologist, the NrDA extracts the meaning of ideas found within form; the form then becomes an isolated specimen under observation, set apart, discounted from both social and cultural 'substance'.³¹² This is done not to devalue culture or society, but rather to allow the mythologist and NrDA to be critical operators during the act of dissecting and examining reality and ideology. In addition to analysing matter in material terms such as wood, metal, and plastic, the NrDA analyses the matter of Beirut specifically in terms of state, phase and properties.

The state of matter refers to the particular differences between gas, liquid and solid. The significance of matter is that 'it can exist in several different phases depending on pressure and temperature'.³¹³ For example, diamond and graphite are both solids; they are in the same state but they are in different phases, even though their physical and chemical composition may be identical.³¹⁴ The fundamental difference in phase has caused the differentiation between the qualities of a diamond and those of graphite.

The physical properties that describe the different phases and states of matter can be classified into two categories: intensive and extensive. Intensive properties do not depend on the amount of matter present, while extensive properties do. The intensive properties of matter are colour, odour, lustre, malleability, ductility, conductivity, hardness, melting and freezing point, boiling point and density. The extensive properties of matter are mass, weight, volume and length.³¹⁵

Physical changes in matter – such as in size, shape, state and dilution – do not alter the identity of the matter itself; they only alter the physical appearance of the matter. For example, ice melting, water freezing, water evaporating, steam condensing and dilution of a dye solution where the colour becomes faint are all examples of state change. In contrast, chemical changes alter the identity of matter. Examples of chemical changes in matter are iron rusting, wood burning and copper turning to brass.

2.1a

Barthes, Rossellini and Myth Making

When he considered the question ‘What is myth today?’,³¹⁶ Barthes replied that myth can be considered a ‘type of speech’³¹⁷ as well as a ‘system of communication’.³¹⁸ The fact that he refers to myth as ‘type’ and ‘system’ suggests that myth is not limited to oral speech or written discourse. Barthes clarifies that myth can be found within various forms such as ‘photography, cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity, all these can serve as a support to mythical speech’.³¹⁹ He clarifies that myth is not an object or idea – it is a mode

of signification, a form.³²⁰ Barthes explains:

Every object can pass from a closed, silent existence to an oral state open to appropriation by society, for there is no law, whether natural or not, which forbids people from talking about things.³²¹

As an example of the capacities of myth, Barthes cites the twentieth-century French poet, musician and actress Minou Drouet's description of a tree. The Drouet tree is no longer a natural form of matter. According to Barthes, it is 'decorated, adapted to a certain type of consumption, laden with literary self-indulgence, revolt, images, in short with a type of social *usage* which is added to pure matter'.³²² In considering an excerpt of the poem 'Tree that I Love',³²³ the reader acquires a rich massing of information and images:

Tree that I love ...
knowing like me
the voices of silence
that sways
the depth of your green locks
the quiver of your living hands ...
lost like me
lost in the sky
lost in the mud

lacquered in the dancing light ...
tree undressed by winter
for the first time I watch you.

The tree as expressed by Drouet has become myth-ified. It is given qualities and attributes beyond its pure matter. The tree quivers, dances, undresses, loves. The tree has given itself to social usage, meaning that it has engaged the senses and emotions of the reader of the text; it is not simply representative of a tree. Like Barthes's description of Garbo or the Drouet tree, Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945) can be linked to the understanding of myth. Rossellini utilized easily recognizable representations of World War II Rome, such as women raiding a bakery because of the high cost of bread, as well as a man selling black market eggs as a result of the Fascist rationing of food. Watching these scenes, we are able to identify the overall poverty and complex social circumstances in which the protagonists are living.

Rossellini allows the viewer to understand more than just the materials that are being projected on the screen. The film has acquired characteristics similar to those of the Drouet tree and the face of Garbo – it has acquired a social usage. The film can be considered a 'signifier to a concept filled with a very rich history'.³²⁴ Barthes, Rossellini and NrDA utilize matter as a means to communicate ideas; the idea revisits and redefines the qualities and attributes of matter. Matter goes beyond its scientific limitations. Rust does not necessarily signify decay and corrosion, but can signify the passage of time and history. Myth expands the conversation of matter, allowing it to acquire new qualities. Myth

draws the viewer of Beirut inwards, allowing him or her to feel as if it were their own because they have the power to re-evaluate and re-invent what they observe.

Presenting a series of World War II circumstances, *Rome Open City* (1945) captivates the viewer by its signification of tangible social and cultural forms. *Rome Open City* (1945) can be considered a product of myth-making because it challenges our understanding of reality and ideology. Barthes explains that for the mythologist, ideology is to be understood with reference to reality, as it relates to the various forms of mythical objects. The fact that it is difficult to 'achieve more than an unstable grasp of reality' places the mythologist in a position where he or she does not have a fixed technique or position with regard to understanding the object's reality and ideology. Barthes clarifies that the mythologist will:

drift between the object and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a state which is still mystified.³²⁵

The tension formed between ideology and reality is dependent on the variable object of observation that flows in between them. The object changes; it can be Garbo's face, Drouet's tree or *Rome Open City* (1945). The relation formed between ideology, object and reality is Myth. The following principle can be deduced:

Barthes

MYTH = [Ideology ← object → reality]

Barthes defines ideology and reality as 'types of behaviour which are still magical, terrorized, blinded and fascinated by the split in the social world'.³²⁶ The complexity of ideology and reality is that they are relative terms. Each society defines them differently; each social group moulds them according to their needs. The ← object → is then examined according to the subjectivity of each social structure's ideology and reality. Barthes suggests that between ideology and reality the mythologist may search for 'the inalienable meaning of things'.³²⁷ The meaning is inalienable because it is particular to a culture and social structure. Referring to the recent HSBC advertising campaign, the colour red in England signifies danger, while in China it signifies power. The colour red is an inalienable value that is particular to a culture and social structure. Unlike Barthes, Rossellini did not attempt to mediate the object of observation between reality and ideology. Rossellini identified ideology in order to destroy it. Destroying ideology for Rossellini was always the means to achieve reality.

Rossellini

Myth = [actor as object → destroys ideology → achieves reality]

Ideology was the central matter for Rossellini, and the heroic actions of the actors were his means of destroying ideology and achieving reality. For example, the partisan priest (object) sought to destroy the Nazi regime (ideology)

in order to achieve a free and sovereign Rome (reality). The fact that ideology is built and destroyed in order to achieve reality indicates that mankind as represented by Rossellini are readily involved in forming their own destinies, and must be ready to challenge fundamentalist views. *Rome Open City* (1945) can be understood as a structure that was built in order to show the fall of the Nazi regime and the construction process of a liberated post-World War II Rome. According to Gallagher, 'Neorealism was more than exploration. It was making. It no sooner "discovered" or "captured" reality than it reconstructed it, and created a new reality, which bore the maker's mark.'³²⁸

2.1b

Mythologist and NrDA

The fusion of Neorealist and mythologist prepares the NrDA with the capacity to discover, capture and transform images into instruments that can then be explored and reconstructed. Barthes states: 'I must renounce the reality of the picture, it discredits itself in my eyes when it becomes an instrument.'³²⁹ The NrDA will utilize the rich repository of matter in post-war, post-Syrian-occupied Beirut (1976–2005) instrumentally to depict the social and cultural characteristics of the city. The NrDA learns from the mythologist 'because all the materials of myth (whether pictorial or written) presuppose a signifying consciousness, that one can reason about them while discounting their substance'.³³⁰ The means of observation of the NrDA are similar to those of the mythologist and proceed in the following manner: (1) form is located within society; (2) its original substance is discounted and it becomes an instrument for observation; (3) form is then

dismantled into a series of components, and reconstructed for a new use and utility.

The next section, 'Cafés, Hotels and Barber Shops of Beirut', will focus on locating and classifying the various forms of myth and matter found in Beirut. The NrDA has learned from both Barthes and Rossellini; he or she is a synthesis of both mythologist and Neorealist. The primary benefit of combining the two is the ability to understand significations of form both within their context, as demonstrated by Rossellini in *Rome Open City* (1945), and without their original context, as demonstrated by Barthes's analysis of Garbo's face and the Drouet tree. The NrDA observes, collects and deciphers diverse forms of matter, such as photos, images, poems, newspapers, materials and objects, that are all now subjects of matter.³³¹

Along with the method of understanding myth, the NrDA will identify phases and states, intensive and extensive properties, as well as the physical and chemical changes of matter. The NrDA has identified and documented a series of ten case studies that exhibit the various forms of myth and matter in post-war Beirut (*Book Two*/pages 6–43). The case studies range from scents, colours and sizes (*Book Two*/pages 8–9) to poems (*Book Two*/pages 39–43). As NrDA, I have attempted to share with the reader and viewer of this thesis the mythical experience of living in post-war, post-Syrian-occupied Beirut (1976–2005).

2.2a

The Cafés, Hotels and Barber Shops of Beirut

The NrDA has extracted various components from the cafés, hotels, barber shops and streetscapes of Beirut through creative writing, photography, voice and sound recordings, and interviews. The materials have been abstracted from their original context and form in order that they may be considered as myth and matter.

The case studies were carried out in support of my research at the Bartlett, concurrent with my role as an architectural tutor at the Notre Dame University, Lebanon, with a group of students and friends for the duration of the spring semester of 2002, and the autumn and spring semesters of 2003. During this period of time I began to explore the facets of my role as NrDA, as well as those of my collaborators as a combination of Neorealist film-directors and mythologists. At certain instances, the role of my students may also be observed as the cast and crew of a Neorealist film, and how they may be motivated and inspired to perform.

The case studies took place in four types of public and semi-public structures in post-war Beirut, and serve as a learning tool for the reader and viewer of this document to better understand the city. The case studies will introduce the reader and viewer to the forms of matter present in Beirut such as odours, tastes, sounds, textures and colours. The viewer will be able to answer questions such as: What do particular forms of matter weigh in Beirut? What forms of corrosion are present in Beirut? What types of odours, colours and sounds are present in Beirut? What types of lustre and malleability are found in

Beirut? The rationale supporting the selection of these case studies is based on the premise that they signify places that the post-war citizen of Beirut frequents. The case studies serve as signifiers of Beirut's men and women and urban form. The reader and viewer of this thesis will learn about the city of Beirut in the same manner that the world community encountered World War II Rome in Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945).

The case studies are divided into four types: Type 1: Cafés; Type 2: Hotels; Type 3: Barber shops; and Type 4: Streetscapes. The case studies are exhibited concurrently. *Book One* locates and discusses the subject matter and relevant anecdotes of each case study; *Book Two*/page 6 presents the resultant forms of myth and matter.

Type 1: Cafés (*Cases 1–4*)

My curiosity with the café in Beirut is due to the fact that it is the equivalent of a public space or park. Beirut cafés usually comprise a series of glass doors that allow access along the entire length of their façade. The doors are often left open to enjoy the nine months of pleasant weather in Beirut as well being a means of natural ventilation for the community of water pipe smokers. The cafés usually have high ceilings painted either a pale blue or pale pistachio green, which extends the colour and patina of trees and sky into the space. The café is a place where we drink coffee or tea or smoke a water pipe, but it is also a place where stories are vibrantly exchanged with loud resonating voices that bounce off the ceramic-tiled walls and floors, and where during a typical news broadcast patrons discuss ideologies of politics, religion and their significant other.

Upon establishing a guiding concept, Rossellini allowed the input of his actors to inform the evolution of a film. Similarly, upon establishing the parameters of myth and matter, I encouraged the participation of my students in locating and specifying, the cafés and forms of matter that we felt best expressed post-war Beirut. Based on a series of discussions, the students began to select potential cafés and types of matter that showed the evident characteristics of the café of their choice.

Type 1 – Case 1: Abrasion (Book Two/page 7)

Three scenes are considered within Simonidos café. Each scene is defined as per various elements of abrasion; each element is then discussed with regard to its unique particularities.

Type 1– Case 2: Sensation (Book Two/page 8)

One scene is considered at Simonidos café. The scene is sectioned into 36 items, which are labelled and discussed in terms of type, material, colour, size, texture, scent and weight.

Type 1 – Case 3: Game of Tawleh (Book Two/page 10)

The various elements and components involved in playing the game of *Tawleh*, a national café pastime, are presented at the Gemayze café.

Type 1 – Case 4: Components of Cafés (Book Two/page 11)

The El-Basha, Saliba and El-Basta cafés are observed as a variety of constituent

parts, and displayed in parallel with one another; various inferences can be drawn, realizing intimate relations and poignant differences.

Type 2 – Case 5: Hotels (Book Two/page 15)

Hotels of this type, which are not of a grand and sophisticated standard, are usually frowned upon in Lebanese society as places where the less fortunate stay. Such a stereotype is inappropriate as they are the places where a fleeting love affair may occur, where migrant workers may live, or which tourists who want to experience the coarseness of Beirut visit. The Nazih, Talal and Naim are three such hotels within the city of Beirut. *Book Two/page 15* of this thesis exhibits their particular forms of matter such as business cards, principal street elevations, exterior entrance, entry foyer, room accommodations, views from rooms, bathroom facilities, room accessories, pricing and diagrammatic elevation drawings.

Type 3 – Case 6: Barber Shops (Book Two/page 17)

The barber shop in Beirut primarily serves as a community social club. It is where men and women meet their friends, have a drink, and discuss world affairs, national politics and local community news. For no additional fee the barber serves as a community adviser and willingly offers his thoughts on diverse topics such as business investment, real estate, friendship and love to his patrons. A patron may occasionally get a haircut. The Azar, Samir and Bahij barber shops are three such places. *Book Two/page 17* of this thesis exhibits their particular forms of matter that range from the barber himself to chairs, storefront, interior

atmosphere, hot water tanks, electric fans, shaving accessories, floor tiling, pricing and a typical chair drawing.

Type 4: Streetscapes (Cases 7–10)

The streetscape of Beirut can be considered as the datum of connection between the cafés, hotels and barber shops. The streetscape should not be perceived as strictly an outdoor space as it has a relative effect on the adjoining interiors of buildings. For example, in *Rome Open City* (1945) the selling of black market eggs took place in the loggias and hallways of buildings. The loggias and hallways are neither interior nor exterior space; they are the extension of the private into the public space – we can consider such spaces as streetscapes.

Streetscapes are considered as a matrix of complex events and materials. The role of the NrDA is to consider the various materials, and then abstract them into their various forms of matter. The role of the mythologist is to take the various forms of matter and combine them into a comprehensive whole in order to communicate an idea. Streetscapes signify complex forms of myth and matter such as people, text, speech and attitude.

Type 4 – Case 7: Shoe Shiner (Book Two/page 19)

The development of this case study began while I was having a coffee break with two architect friends of mine who were working with me in my office, namely Elie Mahfouz and Mahmoud Alkhudary. We began discussing the phenomenon of the shoe shiner in Beirut, how he is always present in the city, like a lamp post, or taxi cab. As they were about to leave the office, I requested that if they spotted a

shoe shiner along the way they should take some photos, get a shoe shine and have a brief discussion with him. Upon their return to the office Mahfouz and Alkhudary reported that they had found a shoe shiner. Mahfouz had taken the photos and Alkhudary had created the discussion. Mahfouz and Alkhudary are considered as Neorealist actors, who with only basic directions were able to perform their role. My role comprised two facets. The first was as NrDA, in that I directed, collaborated and stimulated Alkhudary and Mahfouz in forming a myth of the shoe shiner. I also acted as a mythologist in that I have prepared the following mythology based on the evidence:

Mythology of the *Shoe Shiner*. Tony is a shoe shiner. He tours the streets of Beirut looking for individuals who by chance or choice want to have their shoes shined. Tony lives in South Lebanon, yet he works in Beirut. He likes the city and the crowd. In principle, Tony enjoys different coloured shoes, although he only has two colours in his shine box – brown and black – and a clear wax; yet when he shines different shoes he realizes an endless variation of hues. Tony enjoys shining shoes as nobody tells him what to do. He can start whenever he wants, he can stop whenever he wants, and he can go in any direction he chooses as long as he thinks he can find someone in need of a shoe shine. His intimate relationship with the shoe comes when he rubs the wax directly with his hands on the leather surface without the mediation of a cloth or sponge. The cloth and sponge also waste the wax; in contrast, his hands do not absorb the wax. His shoe stand is a handmade wooden box, and the chair he sits on is an empty paint can. Regarding his clothing, Tony wears a pair of trousers that were formerly his father's – his mother has made some adjustments to them in order to

reduce their size from a 32-inch waist to a 28-inch waist. Tony wears sandals, leaving his feet exposed, chapped and dry, yet comfortable. Tony loves his mother. In the discourse of a conversation he is constantly referring to her, particularly how she makes him a good meal when he comes back home; that's why he avoids eating outside the house. Tony is proud of what he does as it gives him pleasure and pride in not having to ask for help and support from others. When he is involved in the shoe-shining process the exterior world is nearly forgotten; it is him, the shoe and the pavement.

Type 4 – Case 8: Making Hard and Soft Matter (Book Two/page 20)

The primary purpose of 'Making Hard and Soft Matter' was to allow my students and I to gain a sensibility of how Beirut felt. As NrDA, I proceeded to motivate the students by giving them a very liberally structured assignment, similar in nature to the liberally structured script that Rossellini would give his crew members and actors. That assignment directed the students to collect and assemble various forms of matter, tending either to hard or soft tactility.

As an example of soft matter (*Book Two/page 20*), Abdo Abdel Massih combined the following materials: wooden sub-structure, sheep fur, stainless steel nuts and bolts, synthetic glue, guitar strings, wood and motor. We may then extract various forms of myth and matter from the form that Massih has made. For example: (1) The lamb's wool reminds us that lambs, as well as humans, inhabit Beirut. (2) The lamb's wool has a particular scent that fills the space around it when the object is handled; it smells as if we had handled a lamb. (3) When the guitar strings are plucked, it becomes musical; it becomes melodic and

emanates from the box – the sound suggests the music that a shepherd in Beirut would play for his lamb. The form can be considered a combination of the shepherd, lamb and musical instrument. (4) When the form is caressed, we can feel the lamb's wool; in some places it is shaven; in other places it is still dense. Our fingers detect a variety of sensations.

As a representation of hard matter, Nada Khaled (*Book Two/page 20*) combined the following materials: steel nails, wooden sub-frame, wax and aluminium. We may then extract various forms of myth and matter from the form that she has made. For example: (1) The wax has been unevenly melted within a bed of nails – the form suggests a softness that has been overcome by hardness. Khaled's form suggests the conflict between the soft urban patina of Beirut prior to the war, and the terse, hard patina that has since arisen. (2) The form appears aggressive and repulsive; our hands fear touching it.

Type 4 – Case 9: How do you perceive Beirut? (Book Two/page 23)

The following case study presents a collection of interviews conducted with various persons living and working within the city of Beirut. In keeping with the liberal structure of a Neorealist script, the interview process was to be self-motivated by the student. We had simply agreed on the initial question, 'How do you perceive Beirut?' The rest of the unscripted interview depended on the interests, attributes, curiosities and location of the student interviewer and the interviewee, much as a Neorealist script would be invented with the actual participation of the actors.

The role of the students, in this case, took the form of NrDAs. They

instigated the interview, and encouraged the interviewee to develop and expand on their ideas as the conversation evolved. In addition to recording and later scripting the interview, the students re-listened to the interview and wrote down all of the background noises during the event. The noises signified the city of Beirut. The students took a photo of their subject matter. If the interviewee was not willing to have their photo taken, a photo of their immediate context was taken in order to signify the reality of that particular scene.

Type 4 – Case 10: Poetry (Book Two/page 39)

According to Barthes, through poetry the mythologist appeals to morality, because it is through poetry that we 'search for the inalienable meaning of things'.³³² In response to Barthes, I have written four poems that embody hints and appeals to morality in Beirut. Poem 1: *Salwa's Roses* reflects on how certain war-torn buildings in Beirut have roses and other forms of vegetation growing from them. The value of a rose growing from a physically devastated building is that it reveals that there is always hope and fantasy in Beirut, even in the most disturbing circumstances. The discussion of the 'shadow' and 'inventor's house' reminds the reader of our conscious and inherited cultural values, which can both help and harm us. Poem 2: *Her name is Beirut* is a poetic tale of how the naming of Beirut came about. Poem 3: *Celina Collects* reflects on how 'Celina' is attempting to reconstitute her thoughts and reality by talking to her 'shadow', which refers her war-torn past. Poem 4: *No Time* is a poetic tale that reflects the desire for the city of Beirut to exist in a utopian field of time, where pain, anger and continued destruction cease to exist.

Chapter 2

2.3 Conclusion

Chapter 2 'Myth and Matter in Beirut' has established the relevance of the mythologist and NrDA as researchers, extractors and applicators of myth and matter within the context of post-war Beirut. Rossellini as Neorealist film-director and Barthes as mythologist have thus far served as the primary references in developing the character and characteristics of the NrDA. Through the development of ten case studies that took place in the cafés, motels, barber shops and streetscapes of Beirut, the NrDA has gained a new-found literacy in reading, recording and signifying the myth and matter of Beirut. The reader and viewer of this thesis can now identify various forms of myth and matter in Beirut; he or she has been informed of various scents, weights, colours, textures, stories, events, sizes and forms. The reader and viewer can now better imagine what Beirut is like.

The next chapter demonstrates how the newly acquired attributes of the NrDA as a collector of myth and matter can be appropriated in making architecture. Through Hill's critique of the architectural drawing and the designer-architect, the NrDA has learned that the designer-architect is technically limited and incapable of dealing with the social, political and architectural devastation of post-war, post-Syrian-occupied Beirut (1976–2005). As inspired by Hill, the NrDA has drawn on the communal and social approach of making architecture by referring to the community-focused works of Samuel Mockbee of Rural Studio

and the work of Cedric Price.

The work of Mockbee and Price in rebuilding communities is as much an architectural act as it is a political critique and response against government and the limited capacities of the ill-equipped designer-architect in dealing with complex economical, social and cultural circumstances. Similarly, Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945) is a political act, which utilized working-class citizens as the primary protagonists and showed the world community that the majority of Italians were against the Fascist regime and Nazi occupation. The following chapter develops the various architectural characteristics of the NrDA, through comparisons such as actor and builder as well as film and building. The comparisons presented begin to inform the making of the MSN as an architectural and political reaction against the inadequacies of the designer-architect and a call for the social and communal participation of the Lebanese citizen in making the MSN.

Chapter 3: NrDA and the MSN

3.0 Introduction

Chapter 3 'NrDA and the MSN' describes a set of parallels between Neorealist film, architectural practice and the NrDA. The various parallels allow the reader and viewer of this thesis a particular understanding of how Neorealism, along with Rural Studio, and Cedric Price, have participated in forming the social, cultural and architectural awareness of the NrDA as an alternative to the designer-architect, who is of limited social, cultural and architectural relevance in post-war, post-Syrian-occupied Beirut (1976–2006).

The MSN is presented as both a social and an economic structure that helps and supports the post-war, post-Syrian-occupied community of Beirut. The MSN is codependent on an ongoing process of use and construction, as much as on those actors and builders who occupy it. The MSN's communal purpose is to act as a post-war structure that reconciles the credibility of the citizens of Beirut with one another, Lebanon and the world community – just as *Rome Open City* (1945) was, according to Martin Scorsese, an 'ambassador' that showed the world that the Italians were not Fascists or Nazis, but were people who struggled and upheld the ideas of freedom and democracy.³³³

If the reader of this thesis is not well versed in the urban history of Beirut from 1975 to 2005, it is recommended that they read the following appendix sections in order to gain a broader understanding of the architectural and political critique of the NrDA: a.) *Book One*/page 387: Syrian Occupation of Beirut 1976–2005, b.) *Book One*/page 389: A History of the BCD, c.) *Book One*/page 399: The MSN site: A Strange Rectangle in the BCD.

The Neorealist actor is not required to be something that he or she is not; the actor signifies him or herself. Similarly, the builder or the NrDA is not required to come from a professional architectural or construction background; he or she can be any able-bodied person from the Lebanese community. The NrDA equates actors to builders, and builders to actors, drawing on their own personal history, influences and experiences, constructively contributing to the community that defines them. Hill allows the NrDA to understand, distinguish, and challenge the traditional forms of architects and builders. Hill clarifies that traditional forms of architects and builders have heavily relied on the architectural drawing, 'focusing attention on vision'.³³⁴ The focus on vision has caused the designer-architect, and the community for which he or she designs, to compromise human sensibilities such as touch, taste, smell and hearing, by not participating in the building process.³³⁵

Hill has encouraged the NrDA to go beyond the limited means of the architect-designer and architectural drawing that date back to ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome and the Italian Renaissance.³³⁶ In Beirut, the primary shortcoming of the designer-architect is that he or she is neither trained nor equipped to deal with post-war community rebuilding efforts. The designer-architect and architectural drawing have failed in rebuilding post-war, post-Syrian-occupied Beirut. The reason for their failure is that the drawing and designer-architect, along with the monopolization of a Syrian labour force in Lebanon, have distanced the Lebanese citizen from the building process.

Syrian occupation (1976–2005) had greatly participated in ravaging community efforts in Beirut. Over the course of twenty-nine years, the corrupt Lebanese government had allowed inexpensive, untaxed, Syrian labourers to enter and work in Lebanon. Over a period of twenty-nine years, 1.5 million Lebanese evacuated the country; nearly one third of the Lebanese population had gone. In their place over one million Syrians packed in. Those Lebanese who remained grew dependent on the inexpensive Syrian labour force. During the course of war and occupation, the Syrians who were politically, socially and culturally aligned with Syria were slowly taking the place of the Lebanese.

The Syrian occupation contributed to both the physical and the social destruction of Beirut. The Syrians had a system: they destroyed buildings that they then were paid to rebuild. Beirut served as an ever-expanding job site. Prior to the Syrians, well into the mid-1970s, community-based building efforts such as homes and churches were readily seen in Beirut, as well as within Lebanese villages. The post-war community of Lebanese returning to Beirut perceived a city that they had not participated in making; this is why many Lebanese return to their nearby villages at the weekends. The villages had been, for the most part, physically spared during the war and occupation, and only their crops and resources had been pillaged. The Lebanese return to their village communities because they are places that the Lebanese built, places in their physical and mental memories. A Lebanese returning to his or her village may say, 'I remember carrying that stone to help build the church, I remember dancing on that roof, I remember my mother baking bread in this house.'

The MSN reclaims Beirut by inviting Lebanese citizens, as actors and

builders, to build communally again. The MSN is a structure that reaffirms the need for community participation. Unlike the designer-architect who is isolated between ideas and drawings and detached from a vast amount of sensorial experience, the NrDA has motivated the Lebanese community of actors and builders in Beirut to regain their city and make the MSN. The MSN does not want to be beautiful, but rather wants to define itself as an ever-evolving structure of thought that signifies the evolution of Beirut and the inadequacy of the designer-architect, architectural drawing and Syrian-occupied Beirut (1976–2005).

Rossellini would keep the actor at the centre of attention; the camera would follow the character. 'Had the camera moved first, it would imply that the character was doing the correct thing, that somehow his actions were preordained ... Rossellini's following camera on the other hand, implied that the character was on his own, that there were no right or wrong choices, and that responsibility ultimately rested in the individual.'³³⁷ For the NrDA to absorb such a vision, he/she must not attempt to lead the builder in the process of making a building, but rather take the position of Rossellini: 'it's enough to just follow the actors'.³³⁸ The actor and builder will take a lead role in the making of the MSN based on the general guidelines of operation and use that the NrDA has established. The manner in which different actors take a lead initiative will be dependent on their own personal characteristics. If the actors/builders needed certain directions, they may refer to the NrDA for recommendations on how to proceed in accomplishing a particular task, similarly to how actors would discuss their role and script with Rossellini during the making of a film.

The action of actors and builders reclaiming Beirut is similar to that

of the Neorealist actors reclaiming the image of Italy through making *Rome Open City* (1945). This section first demonstrates the actor selection methods that Rossellini applied within the post-World War II community of Rome during the making of *Rome Open City* (1945). Rossellini's actor selection method drew from his eccentric and diverse entourage of childhood friends, political sympathizers, and collaborators within the theatre and film industry. Rossellini's actor selection method also drew from random people whom he had coincidentally met in the city. I have classified Rossellini's actor's selection method as 'Actors Found in Rome' (AFiR). Like Rossellini's selection of actors, the NrDA's location of the various types of builders in Beirut has been through public and social networks, not through professional building agencies or licensed contractor offices. The NrDA locates the community of Lebanese actors and builders in post-war and post-Syrian-occupied Beirut. I have classified the type as 'Builders of Beirut' (BoB). This section will now provide a list of different types of AFiRs and BoBs and exhibit the various skills, attributes and characteristics that each has to offer.

AFiR/1 of 4/Nazi Commanding Officer:

Rossellini was in need of an actor to play the Nazi commanding officer named Kappler. None of Rossellini's friends was willing to play the role, and none of them looked German. One night when Ameidi, a collaborating writer and friend of Rossellini, went to visit Anna Magnani backstage at the theatre, he spotted an eccentric Austrian male dancer named Harry Feist. After being told of the event by Ameidi the following day, Rossellini felt that Feist, based on his appearance and personality, would suit the role of the Nazi commanding officer, and then

proceeded to recruit him for it.³³⁹

Rossellini believed that the person fit for the role of Pina, the woman who is murdered by the Nazis while running after her lover, was his friend Magnani, a theatre actress. The problem was that she suddenly decided never to act again because she wanted to dedicate her life to her ill son. Rossellini then convinced her, through a gentle phone conversation, that he could help, that he would be able to get her the money to pay for her child's hospital bills; so she finally agreed. Magnani at the time had lost weight and had swollen eyes from crying because of her son's situation. No make-up was used, and she wore her own clothing.³⁴⁰

AFiR/2 of 4/Revolutionary Communists:

Rossellini recruited two of his close friends to play the roles of the communists: the architect Francesco Grandjacquet, and his school friend Marcello Pagliero. Rossellini and Ameidi could not decide which of the two men should play the lead role of Manfredi, the heroic martyr, so they asked Maria Michi to decide (she was the girlfriend of Ameidi, and was playing the role of the informer). Maria's choice was Pagliero because he looked liked someone she would betray; it felt real to her.³⁴¹

AFiR/3 of 4/Pina's son:

Across the street from the office of Countess Chiara Politi, an ex-mistress of Egypt's King Faud, who was helping fund *Rome Open City* (1945), Rossellini discovered a young boy named Vito Annicchiarico, who was working as a shoe

shiner. Rossellini approached this boy and recruited him to play Pina's son. The actual housekeeper and maid of Ameidi would play themselves.³⁴²

AFiR/4 of 4/Building site and building occupants:

Anna Magnani, who played the part of Pina in *Rome Open City* (1945), lived at a workers' tenement building. Rossellini proceeded to utilize this actual building, and all the actual occupants of the tenement building, during the shooting of the scene when the Nazis raided the building and killed Pina. Rossellini had set up the scene and the atmosphere of the shot in which the Nazis raid the building; he even had abandoned Nazi trucks driven to the site. He allowed the characters to become inspired by their surroundings. Rossellini had set up the scene; he did not have to tell the non-professional actors what to say or do – they simply felt it in their bodies and minds, their immediate history. The Nazi's had just left: no one needed to tell them how to act.

BoB /1 of 8/'Under the bridge' builder:

In Beirut, such a builder is usually found standing underneath a bridge, building a canopy, or at a main street intersection. He usually stands there, with all his tools and gear, waiting for someone to come and recruit him for a particular task. The type of builder who stands underneath the bridge may range from a stone mason to a plaster finisher or tile man.

BoB/2 of 8/My cousin the builder:

In certain cases, when the task of the builder becomes more specialized, such as

in the case of an electrician, plumber or painter, the means of locating such persons is through personal contacts, either family members or friends. These types of builders usually require a great deal of price-haggling and negotiation.

BoB/3 of 8/Package-deal builder:

It may happen that you recruit a builder for a given task, such as building a wall. Suddenly, through a conversation with the builder, you will be informed that he is also a plasterer, painter and electrician. Such a builder may end up completing all the tasks of the entire project, which otherwise would have required several persons. It is sometimes risky to use such builders if they have not come through personal recommendation.

BoB/4 of 8/Interpreter-builder:

Performs the role of personally 'interpreting' the information given to him by architects or engineers. He proceeds to look at a drawing and assess its contents, but does not necessarily follow the rules, guidelines or instructions of that drawing. The interpreter-builder would proceed to convince the client or patron that he has a much better solution, and that the architect or engineer does not know any practical facts about construction; for example, a stone mason may say that the architect draws with a pen whereas he forms stone with a chisel, and that the dimension of the pen and the chisel are quite different; he believes himself to be more in touch with the actual reality of construction.

BoB/5 of 8/Consultant-builder:

Such a builder does not actually build. He may visit your construction site, ask many questions, inquire about your means and capacities for the project, discuss politics and current events, and even advise you as to the possibilities of the construction of your project, but the consultant-builder doesn't actually do anything. Although he would like to get the job, he usually demands high prices, believing that he is highly skilled and talented.

BoB/6 of 8/Agent-builder:

The agent-builder is a builder who does not actually build himself, but gets others to execute the work for him; he publicly performs as an agent, but presents himself as an actual builder. This person acts in such a manner for two reasons: the first is because he is under-qualified, but has the connections to get jobs; the second is because he has many jobs and cannot actually execute them all himself so recruits others to complete the tasks for him. The agent-builder also tries to give the impression that he is a big-time contractor, so that he may charge higher prices for his labour.

BoB/7 of 8/Bits builder:

While you are buying actual parts and bits in a hardware store, the owner of the store may approach you and ask whether you need any help with the installation of those parts; if so, he would be happy to offer his services.

BoB/8 of 8/Builder in a bakery:

While you are in a bakery, or in a taxi cab, talking on your mobile or gossiping with a friend or business associate, the baker or taxi driver may hear you talking about an actual building project and reveal that they actually moonlight as a builder and would be more than happy to do your job for you at a discounted rate.

3.1b

Film and Building

Actions of Neorealist film, the *dabke* dance and Rural Studio can collectively be understood in terms of their commitment to rebuilding and educating their respective communities. Rossellini and other Neorealist film-directors empowered the men and women in post-World War II Italy to proactively participate in exposing and recreating their country's image after the fall of the Nazi occupation. An integral part of Lebanese folklore, the *dabke* dance exemplifies the community involvement of families and neighbours in the construction of peasant houses throughout Lebanon. Rural Studio at Auburn University, Alabama, one of the US's poorest states, is also a mixture of knowledge, labour and concern for one's neighbours, founded in 1993 by Samuel Mockbee, a professor in the College of Architecture, Design and Construction, and Dennis K. Ruth, dean of the college. Mockbee clarifies:

Students enrolled in the Rural Studio are exposed to the concept of 'context based learning' where they actually live in

and become a part of the community in which they are working. It is through this process that they learn the critical skills of planning, design and building in a socially responsible manner.³⁴³

Neorealist film, Lebanese peasants and Mockbee's students share comparable attributes through their socially responsible communal actions. In a similar way, the primary goal of the NrDA is to enhance the community of Beirut through directing community-building activities in the MSN. To learn more about how the Lebanese danced the *dabke* as a traditional means to build and maintain their community, the reader may refer to *Book One*/page 413. The NrDA challenges the relevancy of the designer-architect in post-war and post-occupied Beirut. Unlike the NrDA, the designer-architect does not train himself or herself for the communal and/or social consciousness that Neorealism or Rural Studio provide for their actors and builders. Amy Virshup, in her article 'Designer Houses for the Poor', clarifies the deficiency of current architectural education, as compared to that offered by Rural Studio as a community-based, hands-on initiative:

The central experience of architectural education is a studio, in which students, working under an established architect, are given a design problem to solve. They come up with a building design, flesh it out with floor plans and elevations and then defend it in a final public session known as a crit. For years, practicing architects have lamented the 'paper architecture'

turned out in these classes, complaining that architecture graduates can't even draw the construction documents for a structure, let alone actually take power tools in hand and build one.³⁴⁴

Unlike the NrDA, the traditional designer-architect does not possess the necessary skill set to appropriate such complex communal issues, participating on all socio-cultural and economic levels, because his or her background is linked to making 'drawings, models and texts not buildings'.³⁴⁵ The NrDA does not find physical reality in the mind, but rather finds reality through the community that he or she is involved in.

Rossellini's reality was found on the post-World War II streetscapes; the Lebanese peasants' reality was the mud or stone bricks made or found in their villages; and Rural Studio's reality was based on whatever resources and materials they could salvage from their community. Reality for the NrDA can be considered as the particular myth and matter dialect of a community. Neorealist films were made by utilizing the various forms of material available. Rossellini would ask men and women off the streets of Rome to be in a film; he would then ask actors to use their own clothes and furniture, and would also use the war-torn conditions of Rome and Berlin as the site of post-war films – he did not need to build a set. Rossellini was an expert at collecting and utilizing the various forms of material in order to build a film. The Lebanese peasant community similarly utilized available materials to build homes. The houses varied in construction, from mud or from stone, depending on the actual region in which they were

made. In the north of Lebanon there were mountains, so people utilized stones from those mountains; in the south there was fertile mud, so people made mud-brick homes. The breadth of the house was determined by the length of lumber acquired from trees surrounding the site. Similarly, through the tutelage of Mockbee, students proceeded by gathering and utilizing rudimentary materials based on 'whatever they could beg or borrow' such as:

A concrete wall studded with soda bottles to let bits of light through. One house has walls made of car tires; another is made of hay bales; yet another of stacks of carpet tiles ... towering glass wall made of surplus Chevrolet Caprice windshields.³⁴⁶

Bernard Tschumi defines the designer-architect as 'the person who conditions design – making beautiful bottles, designing products, conditioning a package'.³⁴⁷ Tschumi implies that the NrDA is rather the 'designer of conditions'³⁴⁸ in which events unfold and develop. In the MSN, the NrDA has designed the conditions for actors and builders to exercise their community-building skills. Neorealist film-directors, Lebanese peasants and Rural Studio are not concerned with making 'designer houses'³⁴⁹ that are controlling to their user. The structures made by Rural Studio are genuinely liveable; the user is allowed flexibility and does not 'feel the burden of living up to them'.³⁵⁰ As an example the Bryant house, as produced by Rural Studio, is very much alive and adaptive to the needs of the user:

Crammed with plastic troughs and buckets filled with turtles and water lilies. An old roller-top washing machine leans against one wall, while a deepfreeze filled with turtle meat and catfish stands nearby. The smokehouse holds another freezer full of meat. Underneath a tree where Shepard Bryant winches up enormous catfish to be gutted, a snapping turtle the size of a German shepherd is held captive in a barrel.³⁵¹

The NrDA, throughout the various scenes of the MSN, beginning in *Book Two*/page 44, presents an attestation to the flexibility and livelihood of the actors and builders within the structure. Like the Neorealist film-director, Lebanese peasant house and Rural Studio, the NrDA has designed conditions of operation and not 'conditioned design'.³⁵² To further understand Tschumi's stance, the reader of this thesis may also refer to an interview I conducted with Tschumi regarding the role of the NrDA, film and architecture in *Book One*/page 425.

As a result of the destruction of *Cinecittà*, along with a faltering economy, Neorealist film-directors took to the streets of Italy to make their films. The conventional method of recording in a studio, with technical rules and conventions, was not applicable. Comparable to the non-conventional rule-breaking attributes of the Neorealist, 'It's an open secret that Mr. Mockbee liked to work in Hale County because there was no building code enforcement – allowing the students to experiment with unconventional materials and forms.'³⁵³ The primary reason for the lack of code and rule enforcement in post-World War II Rome, as well as in Hale County, was the prevailing economic and social

crisis in the respective communities. As an example of beating the rule, Mockbee cites a house that Rural Studio had made with very steep stairs and without a railing. Mockbee decided to understand the flight of steps not as stairs, but as a ladder. Mockbee believed that 'people in Mason's Bend have common sense. If they're afraid to fall off, they just won't go up there.'³⁵⁴ 'Mockbee, a sixth-generation Mississippian, is a kind of double agent, both completely of the South and seeking to undermine its traditions at the same time.'³⁵⁵ Rossellini is similar to Mockbee in the way he first made films for the Fascists, and then made films that undermined Fascist and Nazi ideology.

Mockbee was able to accomplish and sustain Rural Studio by skilfully focusing on community building as its primary objective, materials being secondary, acquiring funding from various national organizations and charities and a great deal of voluntary student labour, and also by resourcefully recycling salvaged materials.³⁵⁶ The NrDA, the MSN and the community of Lebanese citizens as actors and builders have learned from Neorealism and Rural Studio. The actors and builders of the MSN salvage their materials from Beirut; they gather what they can, and proceed to construct their spaces.

3.1c

Script and Blueprint

The Neorealist script and the architectural blueprint are similar in their receptiveness to markings. The blueprint is different from other forms of drawing as it is developed through a chemical photographic printing process that links it to the history of film, having been invented by the British scientist Sir John Herschel

in 1842.³⁵⁷ The Neorealist script is receptive to the development of the actor's role – his or her thoughts, intentions and actions. The actor marks the script, just as the draughtsman's original clear paper becomes marked by the imprints of pencils, various objects that crease the paper, and other factors in the workplace such as strands of hair and fingerprints. Like a film, the blueprint goes through a chemical process that is also sensitive to light conditions. The operator of the blueprint machine must regulate both speed and light during processing in order to get the desired effect, just as the lighting in a film affects the quality of the scene. For additional information on the blueprint process, refer to *Book One*/page 423.

David Lynch has also compared the script to a blueprint. Lynch states: 'The script is more like an indication, a blueprint – it's not the house. You can see the house in your mind's eye when you look at the blueprint, but eventually you're going to get the experience of walking in the house and realize that your blueprint is nothing compared to the real thing.'³⁵⁸ Lynch's comparison to a blueprint signifies the importance of the drawing as an incomplete idea. Blueprints as described by Lynch can be considered as 'ideas-in-form'³⁵⁹ that require translation by others. The NrDA considers Lynch's blueprint description as a metaphor of suggestions that require the interpretation of actors and builders.

The NrDA, not reliant on traditional architectural drawings such as plans, sections, elevations, utilizes Lynch's blueprint metaphor that the drawing can only suggest what a structure will be – and that the blueprint, as it stands alone, like other architectural drawings is not an accurate depiction of the structure to

come, and does not represent those actors and builders involved in the realization of a film or architectural project. Like the ambiguity of the blueprint, Bazin clarifies: 'Neorealism tends to give back to the cinema a sense of the ambiguity of reality.'³⁶⁰ For example, Ubaldo Arata, considered one of Italy's most prestigious cameramen and Rossellini's cinematographer, complained that they never developed any of the film until they had finished shooting; they never knew what *Rome Open City* (1945) was really going to look like until they were done.

The NrDA and the MSN demonstrate an understanding of the ambiguity of the real. The NrDA does not attempted to dominate what the structure will look like; he or she maintains the level of ambiguity by allowing the actors and builders the freedom to choose and utilize materials and programme depending on the needs and desires of their community. The MSN is very similar to a continuous strip of Neorealist film that will yield peculiar and unpredictable results every time a room in the structure is developed.

The unpredictable results generated by the actors and builders in the MSN are similar to those results achieved by the students of Rural Studio. What one group of students does not finish in a particular project, the following year completes; although students are allowed to modify and adjust certain details left from the previous year, they are not allowed to demolish or waste any materials. The continuation and evolution of a project, from one year to the next, greatly aids in developing a sense of continuity in the community. It helps foster hope and great expectations for the citizens that their lives are developing progressively. The actors and builders of the MSN are also encouraged not to waste material. Below the MSN there is a basement where various bits of

material are stored that can be used and reused by the various actors and builders inhabiting the structure. When the basement reaches capacity, the actors and builders must sort out the materials into paper, plastic and metal recyclables and arrange for pickup.

3.1d

Writer and Land Surveyor

A land surveyor's primary task is to map the features of the earth's surface. Professionally, land surveyors may specialize in cadastral surveying (defining or marking boundaries), land development and subdivisions, engineering, mining or hydrographical surveying.³⁶¹ The land surveyor also performs many roles in relation to the building process in conjunction with his primary task, such as:³⁶²

- (a) Discussing surveying or land development projects
with clients, local authorities and other professionals
- (b) Studying existing land records, survey information
and maps
- (c) Assessing what further information is needed to carry
out the survey
- (d) Preparing maps and plans
- (e) Designing and managing land development projects
- (f) Undertaking engineering, mining and tunnelling surveys
- (g) Involvement in city planning
- (h) Preparation of engineering and construction drawings

More particularly, the land surveyor in Beirut plays a highly sensitive role in the world of architecture, both politically and geographically. In certain cases the surveyor may exaggerate certain features of the land, such as depth, height, boundaries, and actual content, such as the presence of trees, lakes, other buildings, in order for the architect to avoid legal pitfalls. Such pitfalls can come in the form of legal constraints such as height and building bulk regulations that enforce restrictions on the building. By doctoring the size and shape of a parcel of land, the surveyor can aid the architect's needs and requirements. However, there are relative limits to doctoring land; the surveyor can only adjust in so far as the building department doesn't notice. If the surveyor's adjustments are too apparent then the architect and surveyor could be legally prosecuted. The surveyor and architect are in effect the instigators of a project, their roles similar to those displayed by the Neorealist film-director and writer. Gallagher clarifies the relation of director and writers as they secretly reworked the territory of the script, as one might rework the territorial boundaries of a parcel of land – each writer attempting to gain territory from the next, while Rossellini was benefiting from both:

Meanwhile Roberto was meeting secretly with Fellini, going over the scenes that Ameidi had written, and the next day presenting rewrites to Ameidi, 'I spent all night on these, Sergio,' ... And Ameidi, knowing Roberto, and suspecting something was afoot, would take the rewrites wordlessly, and then secretly restore his own version, keeping only the changes he liked.³⁶³

Ameidi was to develop the political vision of the *Rome Open City* (1945), its social and cultural message, while Fellini was to develop the artistic qualities of the film, comedy, gags and satire, sometimes greatly upsetting Ameidi. Rossellini played the role of a moderator between the two, particularly when Ameidi would fly into rages over Fellini's presence, claiming that he was hurting the film. Rossellini would then console the two separately, clarifying his own personal intentions that needed to be adhered to.

Rossellini relied heavily on the input of both his writers and assistant directors Ameidi and Fellini. The dual role was essential because the invention of script and action were perpetual; they happened simultaneously, never in a specific order. The role of Rossellini as director was to combine the various thoughts and intentions of both Ameidi and Fellini, then synthesize and suggest various strategies of making the film. Rossellini continuously discussed various ideas with the two men, but not necessarily at the same time. He created a certain tension between the two, taking bits of their respective stories, bouncing one off the other to suit his personal invention, then arranged for a meeting between the three of them in order to propagate his idea further.

3.1e

Set and Site

In the process of making *Rome Open City* (1945), Rossellini rented a makeshift studio in order to stage certain interior scenes. The studio was approximately 60 metres × 20 metres in total size. It was a single semi-basement shared by two large buildings, the Braschi and Tittoni palazzi. Prior to Rossellini's use of the

space, it had housed a dog race arena.³⁶⁴ Within the studio, Roberto had precisely commanded the construction of four sets: the sacristy, Marina's room, the Gestapo office and the saloon. These four sets were placed in a row along the length of the basement wall. Essentially, no props were rented except for particular elements such as the piano. Most of the furnishings came from Roberto's or other crew members' apartments; the costumes were the actors' own clothing.³⁶⁵

Rossellini would decide to film at night, due to the fact that electricity was scarce in Rome directly after the war and he could more discretely steal electricity by tapping into the main line of the *Stars and Stripes* headquarters for the US Army newspaper in Italy. In certain cases, the theft of electricity would fail, depending on the strictness of the US commanding officer, so the crew would have to buy gasoline on the black market to power a generator. The studio did not have extra funds to buy gasoline, or to create sound insulation for the generator. Controlling synchronized sound during shooting was impossible, as well as highly expensive, so the film was shot entirely without sound, which was simply dubbed in at the very end – cutting costs nearly in half.³⁶⁶ Other basic problems would continue to occur, such as Rossellini's not being able to pay the rent for the studio. When the landlord came banging at the door to collect his money, Rossellini had to stop shooting, get into a brief argument with the landlord and convince him that he would pay him in a few days' time once he had raised more funds for the film.³⁶⁷

Apart from the makeshift studio and four sets, the city of Rome served as the larger set for Rossellini. The term 'set' indicates an active role for the persons

involved in making and arranging a specific place. A set is an artificially controlled environment; for example, you can turn the lights on or off in a set, or change the temperature with air conditioning, or control sound quality through acoustic panelling. The persons involved with a set possess an active role in the making of their surroundings. Contrary to set, the definition of site suggests something found or acquired such as a piece of land or the sea. We cannot make a piece of land or make the sea. The persons involved in relation to a site may find themselves in an anticipatory condition, such as searching for a good site for a film, waiting for the sun to rise or set in order to get a particular light quality, or waiting for the right weather, sun, rain or snow.

Rome Open City (1945) utilized the city of Rome as both site and set. Rossellini's understanding of Rome allowed him to appropriate the site into a set. He was to use an actual tenement building and its occupants, actual Nazi prisoners of war, actual apartments in the various buildings throughout Rome, utilizing the condition of a post-war city as a film set. The MSN can be considered both set and site. The principal structural frame, bridges, elevators and electro-mechanical components are site conditions that cannot be modified. They are infrastructural features that the actor and builder can utilize and plug into. The rooms are to be considered sets. The metal-framed rooms are constantly being altered, changed and reconfigured. Actors and builders embellish and build them in order to suit their needs and fancies. Their functions also change; one actor/builder creates a room for love-making (*Book Two*/page 89), while another makes a room for gathering lost angels (*Book Two*/page 69), while another actor and builder still can sell and exhibit vintage Iranian carpets (*Book Two*/page 75).

It is essential to note that along with being the director of *Rome Open City* (1945), Rossellini also played the role of its main producer; the co-producer of the film was Countess Politi, who owned Nettunia Productions. Rossellini dynamically participated in the raising of funds and the complex financial management of the film through various unorthodox methods; he referred to such methods as a *combinazione*, meaning in Italian a type of trick or prank. A common *combinazione* of Rossellini's for raising funds was to temporarily fib. What this means is that he gave promises based on his ambitions rather than on his actual capital – financial or personal – in order to get someone to commit either to a service or to financial backing.

Once Rossellini gathered several commitments from people, he utilized them as leverage in order to acquire real assets. For instance, he promised to pay the actor Aldo Fabrizi 1,000,000 lire, but in reality Rossellini did not have 10,000 lire in the cash reserve of the film. However, once he got Fabrizi he was able to convince the countess to give him an advance of 250,000 lire. Rossellini would eventually haggle Fabrizi down to a total of 200,000 lire, getting a total investment of nearly 1,600,000 lire from the countess.³⁶⁸ According to Gallagher, Rossellini was a capable and dynamic producer because of his personal character and natural charisma:

No matter how fanciful or improbable his ideas, he entranced his listeners, not only convincing them that the dream could and

would come true, but, like a coach, engaging them in the dream, making them share it, making them believe it was their own, making them want it to come true. 'Are you with me?' he would ask, plaintively; and, if he didn't, people would wish he had.³⁶⁹

The definition of 'client'³⁷⁰ suggests a status of dependency and reliance for services, while that of a 'producer'³⁷¹ suggests rigorous involvement and connectivity. The client is a person in search of a result or the fulfilment of a particular task, while the producer is concerned with process, coordination and financial strategy. The producer concerns himself or herself with the entire process of how a film is made, from conception to financial management and execution. In the case of the NrDA and MSN, Beirut is the client being served, similar to how Rossellini would serve in the socio-cultural rebuilding of post-war and post-occupied Rome in making of *Rome Open City* (1945). The NrDA, in order to concisely coordinate a production, may also have to engage the role of a producer if he desires to be involved in such an intimate manner as Rossellini was in the making of *Rome Open City* (1945). Only by taking the dual role of producer and director could Rossellini take full control of his film. He would fire and hire actors and staff as he chose; he would negotiate and broker deals concerning the distribution and financing of the film, and he would select the specific sets and sites that he saw fit. As producer, Rossellini could also relieve his stress by halting the film for a week and race an Italian cargo train in his Ferrari.

By securing the position of main producer Rossellini was liberated from

the confines of reporting to others. Rossellini developed the production techniques in accordance with the means and talents available; for instance, when he needed to convince his two main writers, Amedei and Consiglio, to help him on *Rome Open City* (1945), he stated:

These days a film in episodes is the only thing feasible. We'll shoot one episode, close down, and edit it. If there are money problems or production problems we'll work them out and then start shooting again. The script, of course, has to be iron tight. So you see the problems are minor, easily solvable one at a time. And besides, I know where to find film stock.³⁷²

The NrDA as director and producer exercises the right to manipulate and change the overall structure of a project based on his or her intuitions and needs. The NrDA, unlike the designer-architect, should not entirely release control to the occupants of a structure once it is complete. The NrDA can come to an agreement with the occupants concerning his or her level of involvement after the completion of a project. The NrDA can also be commissioned to maintain, adjust and develop the structure as required, as one might maintain a bicycle or mechanical device. The NrDA may see fit to modify certain parts and details in a project, endowing the occupant of the structure with fresh and invigorating conditions, relieving them from mundane non-adaptive architectural form.

In the case of the MSN, the occupant is transitory, and the very nature of the structure is susceptible to change. The NrDA and the MSN can ultimately be

more interesting than a Neorealist film. A film is technically made once, but the NrDA can continuously participate in making and re-making the MSN. The various rooms in the MSN can be considered a series of evolving plots that meld into the overall conversation of the structure, building a sense of community for the Lebanese citizens in Beirut.

3.1g

Cinematographer and Designer

The cinematographer of *Rome Open City* (1945) Arata; had been making movies since 1911. Throughout his professional experience he had never supervised the shooting of a film with such highly problematic technical conditions, mainly due to the fact that there was never enough light, and, according to Rossellini, there was never any room in the budget to purchase or rent proper lighting equipment. Arata would repeatedly say to Rossellini, 'I want light! I can not do this! You can't see anything, anything, anything!'³⁷³

In order for *Rome Open City* (1945) be realized, it was important that Rossellini kept reminding Arata that not enough lighting was exactly what he desired for the film. Rossellini wanted everything thrown away – the lighting, the recitation, the framings – and the last thing he wanted was the usual polished studio appeal. Rossellini only wanted Arata to focus on the idea of the story and people.³⁷⁴ This sounded like pure blasphemy to Arata. Owing to the increasing creative conflicts, a great deal of tension arose between Arata and Rossellini.

Arata did not believe that Rossellini was conveying an authentic set of values, but rather that he was compromising the artistic integrity of the film. Arata

eventually agreed to go ahead and continue shooting the film because Rossellini convinced him that it would not damage or embarrass his career, as most probably the film would never be finished at the rate they were going, owing to the lack of funding and film stock; and he simply needed Arata.

Arata's tensions continued to rise as a result of various forms of ambiguity; for instance, he seldom had a chance to develop the film he was shooting – Rossellini could not afford to get it processed at a lab. Scene upon scene was recorded and amassed, but never reviewed, only to be compiled and tersely edited several months after they had begun shooting owing to the fact that Rossellini had not yet found enough funding. After Arata's continued demands to see some of the film he was making, Rossellini convinced the countess to grant them 250,000 lire.³⁷⁵

In considering the potential role of a designer in the realm of the NrDA, it is helpful to refer to Tschumi, who believes that the architect should 'design conditions' as opposed to 'conditioning design'. Rossellini acted in such a manner; he was basically manipulating the atmosphere in which Arata had to shoot the film, to the extent that in certain scenes Rossellini would suddenly and without notice change the set-up of a shot, the furniture, the actors and the shooting order; 'sometimes there wasn't even a door in a set where a door was supposed to be'. The conditions that Rossellini designed forced Arata, as a cinematographer, to constantly adjust and re-adjust according to the particular situation.

The NrDA does not replace the designer-architect; he or she rather directs design as one of the forces in a project. The NrDA is the leader of all forces and

talents that contribute to the making of architecture, such as production, direction, cinematography, technical requirements, actors, sets, sites, scripts; and design is one of them. The NrDA manipulates the environment of the designer-architect in order to motivate the direction of a project, potentially by limiting his choice of technique – such as by computer or by hand – and limiting the material choices, swatches and sources he may work from. For instance, if there is only wood and concrete available, the designer would have to operate within these conditions in order to realize the project that the NrDA is seeking. In Rural Studio, the students of Mockbee can be considered designer-architects under the direction of Mockbee as NrDA. Mockbee instructed the student designer-architects that they must utilize salvaged materials from Hale County as the primary source in making architecture. Mockbee also recommended that the designer-architect students stay away from curves and focus on geometric and planar forms due to the limited time and budget allocated.

Conditions such as time duration and budget can be defined by the NrDA to affect the design development of a project. If, for instance, there is only a three-month schedule for the development of a large-scale project, and a limited amount of staff to assist in its development, the NrDA is forced to carefully consider the project's form and level of complexity in order to be able to successfully compile the project package within the means and budget available. The strategy developed by Mockbee was that whatever one semester's students did not complete, the following semester's would. Changes to detail were permissible, but waste was not. Rural Studio was based on an additive and adaptive process of making. Mockbee retained the right to have the final say,

whether a certain bit of scheme or building should go or stay. Like a Neorealist producer and film-director, Mockbee maintained the right of final decision and final cut.

The following section (3.2) is a testimony to how the MSN is a model structure for the NrDA, a structure that will signify the various forms of myth and matter that define post-war/post-Syrian-occupied Beirut (1976–2005). In addition to the text in *Book One*, Section 3.2 is also detailed in *Book Two*/pages 44–105 visually; the various components of Section 3.2, a through h, in *Book One* also refer the reader to various components of 3.2, a through h, in *Book Two*.

3.2a

Premise

In understanding the MSN, it will prove beneficial to consider the basic geopolitical disposition of Lebanon, a fairly small country with just over 10,400 square kilometres of land. There are 815 municipalities and 994 villages in Lebanon; some villages remain without a municipality owing to the fact that their population is less than the government requirement of 600 Lebanese citizens. According to the most recent World Bank study conducted by Sami Attalah, the average population of a registered municipality ranges from a low of 2,419 in the District of Nabatiyeh to a high of 6,222 in the District of the South, excluding Beirut Municipality, which has a population of 357,403 and a district population of approximately 1.2 million.³⁷⁶ Even those municipalities that are legally recognized do not necessarily have the resources and tax base to sustain their local development needs, such as health facilities, welfare support, clean water

supplies and free public schooling, to effectively support their resident population in a healthy manner. The role of the municipality is critical in Lebanon because the central government has actually very little to offer owing to a significant level of financial corruption and moral decay.

Adding another layer to the municipal complexity, the Lebanese citizen is not necessarily empowered within the municipality in which he or she lives. For instance, if a child was born and registered in municipality X and currently lives and works in municipality Y, he or she is not entitled to vote in municipality Y although he or she may have resided there for over fifteen years. To belong to a certain municipality, a person must be registered there at birth by their parents, who must belong to that particular municipality. This condition is so important that a newborn child will be registered by his or her parents in their municipality of origin, regardless of where the child is born.

Technically, an adult possesses the right to legally change the status of his or her municipality, but this process requires a very tedious and controversial legal and social procedure owing to the fact that Lebanon is still a sectarian society with deep tribal affinities that are usually maintained through economic and social dependencies. Such tribal conditions may create a sense of alienation in the residents of a municipality. A person may never have the privilege of participating in or contributing to the actual place where they work and live; such a condition may breed an atmosphere of carelessness and distance from local events and neighbourhood affairs.

The current population of Lebanon is approximately 3,777,218 persons. This total comprises approximately 1,000,000 foreign workers who are mainly

Syrian, 394,532 Palestinian refugees and 2,382,686 Lebanese nationals.³⁷⁷ It is interesting to note that with over 50 per cent of Lebanese citizens living abroad, the majority of the country's citizens are actually outside the country. The geopolitics of Lebanon extends its complexity, as it is located between Israel and Syria. Lebanon's land border is 495 kilometres in length, 79 kilometres of which is shared with Israel and 375 kilometres with Syria. Lebanon possesses a 225 kilometre coastline on the Mediterranean Sea, linking it to the greater European community and further dividing the country's periphery nearly in half between those persons living near the sea and those living farther inland, creating the politics of a sea-bearing western influence versus a desert-bearing eastern influence.

Being 'Middle Eastern' and/or 'Arabian' usually suggests a person who is both socially and religiously connected to the peninsula of south-west Asia between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, geopolitically defined as Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait – predominantly Muslim and facing east towards Mecca. Being 'Mediterranean' usually suggests a person who is both socially and religiously connected to the Mediterranean Sea, and identifies him/herself with some of the most ancient civilizations in the region such as those of Phoenicia, Carthage, Greece, Sicily and Rome. Being 'Mediterranean' – politically described as European – suggests being predominantly Christian and facing the Vatican.

I, as NrDA, have realized the complex geopolitical context of Beirut as a city that has suffered a twenty-nine-year Syrian occupation from 1976 to 2005. As NrDA, I am offering the MSN to the citizens of Beirut as a constructive

architectural effort in dealing with the tragic effects of post-occupation Beirut. *Book Two*/page 45 presents in visual terms the way in which citizens of Beirut are both actors and builders who can participate in the re-making of their city, just as the citizens of Rome participated in *Rome Open City* (1945) as a film that sought to signify the method of Neorealism as a means of rebuilding the character and identity of war-torn Rome.

3.2b

Strategy of Integration

The name of the MSN comprises three components that integrate it within the city and cultural structure of Beirut. They are defined as follows:

Component 1: Municipal

The term 'Municipal' has been selected because it defines an entity that is self-governed and suggests a focus on the internal workings of a system. The MSN is a type of structure that will fundamentally be governed by the actors/builders who are also its occupants. Programmatically, the term 'Municipal' is chosen because the role of this structure will be to work closely with all of the municipalities throughout Lebanon in promoting social and cultural development in Beirut.

Component 2: Structure

Because of the historical association of the term 'tower' with a

religious, military or corporate identity, I have instead utilized the term 'structure', suggesting a more worldly understanding and treatment on the part of the occupants who inhabit and utilize it. The notion of structure may lead to a broader value system, suggesting notions of organization, arrangement and interrelation.

Component 3: Negotiation

By definition, the term 'negotiation' suggests notions of conferring, discussing and/or bargaining in order to reach agreement. The MSN will require its occupants to be skilled in the art of negotiation due to the fact that the structure is to simultaneously house different types of programme and will be inhabited by many different people from diverse communities in Lebanon. The factor of negotiation is necessary in that the MSN is a type of community where the occupants will need to rely on the skills and capacities of one another in order to get things done. The skill of negotiation is highly valuable and widely practised in Beirut, as it has enabled the Lebanese to exist among opposing ideologies within their own communities as well as those from neighbouring regional countries.

The naming of the MSN was made possible through reference to the twentieth-century English architect Cedric Price's Potteries Thinkbelt (1964) in which he

was careful not to call his structure a university, owing to the weighty politics and bureaucracy involved with such established institutional names and modes of identification. The Potteries Thinkbelt (1964) was developed in response to the traditional university campuses that were sprawling throughout England in the 1960s, by designer-architects incapable of addressing the needs of social and cultural change. Price's proposal offered an itinerant educational structure, in support of 20,000 students, by making use of the infrastructure of a dwindling industrial zone. Price's scheme altered the dilapidated Staffordshire Potteries infrastructure into a structure of higher learning. The transformation occurred by utilizing the railway tracks and promoted an all-encompassing community of culture and scholarship, as well as encouraging financially viable development.³⁷⁸

According to Price, his scheme 'took advantage of local unemployment, a stagnant local housing programme, a redundant rail network, vast areas of unused, unstable land, consisting mainly of old coal-working and clay pits, and a national need for scientists and engineers'.³⁷⁹ The 'Potteries Thinkbelt' (1964) presented a resolution for learning facilities, and also offered a solution to the economic and social disintegration of the Potteries. Such an all-encompassing task as proposed by Price is neither the function, nor within the capacity, of the traditional learning institution, nor is it conceivable in the form-loving mind of the traditional designer-architect.

Just as the Potteries Thinkbelt, through the salvaging and reuse of available forms of matter in the community, anticipated social and economical change, the MSN will help to meet the socio-economic developmental needs of Lebanese citizens who have experienced the twenty-five-year war 1975–2000

and the twenty-nine-year Syrian occupation 1976–2005. As a result of the constant turmoil and chaos caused by nearly three decades of war and occupation, the majority of Lebanese citizens are faced with a development gap in their careers, personal ambitions and financial means. A leading problem caused by the war is the corrupt government of Lebanon; rather than being supportive in the re-construction of socio-economic life, the current government is failing to take tangible actions to improve community building structures such as public schools, state universities and museums or to promote the development of markets for national goods.

Unlike the shortcomings of the Lebanese government, the airport patrol tower located in Beirut International Airport plays a helpful role in Lebanese society. In addition to directing all planes that enter and depart from Beirut, the airport tower provides various forms of information regarding international security, and facilitates proper spacing and timing of aeroplane take-offs and landings, in order for the multitude of pilots and personnel to have the right coordinates and guidance. The airport is also a space that is perpetually being reconfigured. Different planes land on different runways at different times; the contents of the planes – both baggage and passengers, and including crew members – are also changing. In much the way that the airport patrol tower moderates various intertwining activities, the MSN moderates various activities in support of the social, cultural and economical needs of Beirut, exhibited in the following 8 examples:

1. Culture and Vocational Skills – the MSN offers a variety of

vocational, formal and informal school-based and work-based learning opportunities for young people to develop skills and achieve recognition. The MSN will give Lebanese citizens a place/platform/room in which to discover various crafts, trades and professions, giving them the opportunity to imagine and draw their potential future. Through utilizing the informative and educative resources of the MSN, Lebanese citizens will benefit from training workshops and seminars that cover a wide range of topics, ranging from knitting to computer technologies and agricultural techniques.

2. Health and Wellbeing – the MSN will provides health and fitness services, such as nutrition counselling and organizing marathons and decathlons, that promote physical activity and healthy living.
3. Security and Safety – the MSN offers groundbreaking work with young people in prisons and ex-offenders by creating the necessary educational and instructional tools that can reinstate them as positive elements in society. Through promoting culture and education, by teaching an array of professional and technical skills, the MSN will work vigorously to help reduce the risk of young people either turning to crime or becoming victims of crime.

4. Money and Work – the MSN offers a range of services, such as peer to peer counselling, and professional employment counselling designed to help increase the employability and financial awareness of young people, helping them to find and keep meaningful jobs.

5. Citizenship and Personal Development – the MSN empowers the young, and the young at heart, through activities that stimulate, challenge and enable them to participate in the rebuilding of war-torn communities throughout Lebanon. Their participation will aid in activities such as the cleaning of polluted beaches, aiding the elderly, and being charitable to those in need in so far as their means allow

6. Community Values – the MSN offers a variety of services that help promote positive family relationships and friendships. These services will be in the form of communal activities such as museum visits, city tours, group sports, family counselling, group lunches and picnics, as well as providing childcare to parents in need of support.

7. National Values – the independency and sustainability of the MSN depends on its power to unite all types of partners who are implicated and concerned in the development and education of

the country. The partnerships will draw on governmental ministries, professional syndicates, elementary schools, universities, embassies, social welfare associations, artisans, and all active and dynamic persons.

8. Detecting Change – annually, the occupants of the MSN assess and update the set of goals and objectives that address current needs and future trends in Lebanese society

The MSN allows many users to conduct different types of activities at the same time. One user might choose to learn about how to become a shepherd (*Book Two/page 73*), while another user chooses to learn painting (*Book Two/page 77*). The MSN will also constantly change its form and materiality; for instance, one year an occupant of a certain space might choose to create a cage to study the habits of angels in Beirut (*Book Two/page 69*), while another year he or she might choose to clad their space with railway carriage remnants (*Book Two/page 67*). The NrDA offers the user of the MSN a variety of choices; Rossellini's similar theory of choice-making is described in *Book 2/page 46*.

3.2c

MSN Standard Features

Within the MSN there are seven standard features that are created by the NrDA. These features form the infrastructure of the MSN and facilitate the future activities of the users. The basic features are equivalent to a Neorealist film in

that they provide a basic scenario for those actors/builders participating in its process.

Neither building materials nor tools are supplied to the users beyond the seven standard features listed below. The limited amount of tools given may be compared to the way in which the Neorealist actor was not given any accessories, such as make-up or wardrobe, for his or her role. The actor had to utilize his or her own personal belongings, or those borrowed from friends, in order to construct and fit the part. Like the Neorealist actor, the user of the MSN will have to be highly imaginative and creative – even the furniture in *Rome Open City* (1945) was borrowed from the home of Rossellini and other staff members in the film. In order to gather necessary tools and materials for their space, the occupants must become adept in utilizing their local environment.

Through its dedication to the re-construction of the fractious cultural tissue of Beirut, and with minimum means and high social and moral goals, the MSN seeks to learn from the Rural Studio as well as the principles of Neorealism. The seven items listed below and visually presented in *Book Two*/page 48 constitute the main structural features of the MSN:

1. Structural Frame

The frame is conceived as a web-like steel section. The form of the frame has been appropriated from Beirut and designed by the NrDA in order to accommodate the various loads and activities that the actors/builders may require. For more information regarding the conceptual development of the Structural Frame, the reader may refer to *Book Two*/page 116.

2. Promenade Stairs

Protected from rain, wind and sun, it wraps around the exterior perimeter of the structure allowing access to the various rooms of the users. As a user strolls up or down the stairs he may encounter various events, such as a lion on the loose, a prostitute, or street peddlers selling coffee. The stairwell in Beirut culture has historically been a place of encounter and surprise where persons would arrange 'unintentional' meetings.

3. Electro-Mechanical Core

Connected to the government's utility lines, it facilitates electricity, drinking water, drainage, heating and cooling, as well as digital communication. As it passes along the entire length of the structure, each room will be able to plug into designated outlets. Although government utilities are provided, the MSN will also possess an independent energy and communication system.

4. Rooms

The rooms are engineered with a structural steel grid that allows the user of each room to fill and design their space as they see fit. The horizontal surfaces of the room have received an opening grid size of approximately 5 centimetres × 5 centimetres. The tightly spaced steel grid will allow the actor/builder to easily walk across the surface, but will also allow him or her to fill in the grid spaces with the materials of his or her choice. It is recommended that the actor/builder wear rubber soled shoes so as to ensure a secure grip on the steel grid surface. The vertically inclined planes may receive a larger opening of 15 centimetres ×

15 centimetres, allowing the user to climb up onto them. Each user may plug in the bits and parts of their liking, each re-configuring the appearance of their room and, consequently, the MSN. One user may use the room a seasonal tea and coffee house, leaving the vertical surfaces entirely open for natural ventilation, and install wooden planking on the floor (*Book 2/page 87*), while another actor/builder may turn their room into a dry cleaning service for the MSN community.

5. Scanning Lift and Bridges

Located on the exterior of the structure, the lift carries the user up to their particular level while commanding a view over the skyline of Beirut. These bridges will serve as the link between the various forms of circulation in the MSN to the various rooms. The bridges also animate the flow of people horizontally across the MSN before they enter their particular rooms.

6. Cranes and Baskets

Users utilize the cranes and baskets to hoist up various materials and tools to their rooms. They are the sole means by which any material is carried and brought into the rooms (*Book Two/page 61*) in order not to endanger the safety of persons in the elevator or on the stairs. The basket system is similar to the traditional Lebanese scene in which a person gets his or her groceries from a street vendor to a third-floor apartment; without their having to go down the stairs, food goes up and money comes down.

7. Scaffolding Screen

The scaffolding screen protects the community outside the MSN from the potential hazards of continuous construction, as building materials and various products are being hoisted in the baskets.

3.2d

Financial Support

The MSN will require financial sponsorship for physical construction, event-hosting and technical maintenance. It will be a not-for-profit structure that aims to benefit the local villages of Lebanon, the city of Beirut and the world community. Through helping the youth of Lebanon, and those young at heart, the MSN participates in the formation of Lebanese citizens who are assets to themselves and society, both at home and abroad. The financial structure of the MSN principally relies on five types of funding: (1) public and private funding; (2) organization funding; (3) payroll giving; (4) room sponsoring; (5) one-time gifts. The five types are explained below.

Type 1: Private and Public Funding

Local community businesses and national government agencies are interested in funding the MSN because their contribution will in effect be an investment in themselves and the organizations they represent. For example, the Lebanese Ministry of Higher Education realizes that it has a deficiency in philosophy instructors. The ministry may invest funds, seminars, learning tools, international guest lecturers and technical equipment that will aid in the formation of men and

women who are interested in becoming philosophy instructors. The MSN provides the Ministry with a structure that attracts individuals who are interested in the particular profession.

Type 2: Organization Funding

Organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the World Bank (WB), who invest in Third World developing countries, support the MSN based on the fact that it is a structure that promotes practical skills as well as contributing to the cultural and social well-being of a great many individuals throughout Lebanon.

Type 3: Payroll Giving³⁸⁰

This is a flexible scheme that enables individuals to make charitable donations straight from their gross salary before tax has been deducted. This means that the individual benefits by immediate tax relief on the value of his or her donation to the MSN. A tax break is available for donations made to the MSN as it is a not-for-profit structure.

Type 4: Room Sponsoring³⁸¹

The MSN room sponsor programme gives an individual or business the chance to help a needy Lebanese municipality get back on its feet by sponsoring a specific room in the MSN. The MSN then sends the sponsor regular updates on the various activities occurring in the room they are sponsoring.

Type 5: One-time Gifts³⁸²

Helping to finance activities in the MSN does not have to be a difficult task – almost anyone can help. A contribution of:

- \$20 could provide an hour of counselling
- \$40 could help pay for a half-day job search workshop to get a young person back into work or training
- \$100 could help finance the acquisition of tools and building materials
- \$500 could provide a training course to enable someone to build confidence and gain skills

3.2e

The Urban Peasant

The study of peasants has historically been tied to the change in the nature of anthropological inquiry, from a focus on distant primitives, stemming from tribal societies, to a concern with rural populations in the developing world. The change in focus is primarily due to the rich social and cultural characteristics that the peasant class demonstrates in society – in comparison to the primitives, who have demonstrated an inability to merge with changing societal and economic demands. Peasants, unlike primitives, have exhibited their characteristics of extracting energy from the environment as a means of adaptation, and dynamically adjusting and negotiating their relation to new environmental circumstances. An example of the peasant's characteristics is exemplified in the rural to urban migration of Lebanese into the city of Beirut.

The primary reason for this migration was the twenty-nine-year Syrian

occupation of Lebanon from 1976 to 2005. The social and political forces exerted by this occupation had displaced rural Lebanese villagers from their places of origin. Villagers moved to Beirut to seek improved living conditions and escape the horrors of war and poverty. The willingness and ability of the Lebanese villagers to relocate and adapt to Beirut demonstrates their peasant capacity; primitives, on the other hand, would have stayed in their villages of origin and become isolated and socio-economically recessive. Anthropologist Dr Jane Eleanor Granskog defines the adaptive peasant society: 'A rural agricultural part-society whose members are villagers with their own strongly embedded sets of tradition, who are simultaneously intricately tied economically, politically and socially to a larger urbanized society.'³⁸³

The peasants newly arrived in Beirut would continue to visit their villages for vacations and weekends, especially during harvest time as many still owned agricultural land, or for as long as their financial resources allowed them to. The newcomer to Beirut usually took up residence near fellow villagers and co-religionists. Such migration circumstances created both positive and negative results. Neighbourhoods in the city acquired the distinctive characteristics of their occupants, such as the flavours of food and the scents of cooking floating in the air, women's aromatic perfumes, and the echoing accents of particular villages among the city blocks. The city became an agglomeration of miniature villages that were transposed from the rural mountains of Lebanon. Such neighbourhoods also brought a sense of uncertainty and even despair. Citizens would at times feel alienated when they left their particular urban territory, to the extent that their urban 'village of origin' would seem more familiar than other

parts of the city.

The war and occupation of Lebanon resulted in considerable compulsory and voluntary displacement of people. Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese left their country – some as permanent emigrants, others for what they hoped would be temporary exile. Such a discourse of migration was stimulated by the repetitive redrawing of militia lines of control, and the repeated fears of members of one community living in enclaves dominated by people of a different religious, national or political persuasion. The constant displacement and adaptability exhibited by the Lebanese, as a result of a twenty-five-year war (1975–2000) and a 29 year Syrian occupation (1976–2005), has led to the formation of an urban peasant. Prior to the war, approximately 80 per cent of the Lebanese lived and worked in their villages, and the city was predominantly utilized by those individuals and families who had sea-bearing businesses and jobs, as well as cultural structures such as the National Lebanese Opera. The villages of Lebanon sustained and prospered before the war, as they provided tourist destination spots for the world traveller, as well as a variety of vegetable and fruit farms that supplied the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula. The war caused the tourists to stop coming to Lebanon and the farms to be ravaged and pillaged by the Syrian military forces.

The term ‘urban peasant’, which I have defined, has come to refer to a type of person in the city of Beirut who originate from a peasant background. As the Lebanese saying goes, ‘Once you have the particles of mother earth under your nails, you can never wash them away.’ When the villagers came to the city and became part of the urban community, they could never really rid themselves

of their roots because the peasant phenomenon in Lebanon is not separated by newly acquired social class or economic borders. For example, if a Lebanese citizen, from Lebanese village 'X', is fortunate enough to acquire an education, become wealthy or achieve a seat in parliament, they are still referred to by their village and/or region of origin; they are still etymologically rooted to their peasant past.

In the making of Neorealist film, the societal type of men and women that Rossellini, in *Rome Open City* (1945), and other Neorealist directors focused on were the struggling working-class citizens of Rome, who after the war, with the Italian economy in ruins, were left without jobs and with few dim prospects for progress.³⁸⁴ *Rome Open City* (1945) revealed the struggle of the working-class citizen in scenarios such as the bakery raid that the women staged in order to get food, the struggle to purchase simple staple foods such as eggs, and the way that a simple cup of espresso was considered a luxury. Other films of the period such as De Sica's *Bicycle Thief* (1948) showed how an unemployed father was struggling to get a bicycle in order that he could work at the post office; after he had the bicycle it was stolen and the financial security of his family ruined. Like the working-class of Neorealism, the societal type of men and women that serve as the actors and builders of the MSN are the urban peasants who are contributing to the reconstruction of Beirut's community.

3.2f

An Additional Lesson from CP

According to the Design Museum in London, Price believed that 'architecture

should be enabling, liberating and life-enhancing'.³⁸⁵ Price's projects reinforced the belief that architecture is obliged to 'enable people to think the unthinkable'.³⁸⁶ Through his various projects he sought to socially, culturally and economically contribute to the communities that they served. Just as the NrDA perceives the MSN as a social structure that will support the Lebanese urban peasant, Price believed that 'further education and re-education must be viewed as a major industrial undertaking and not as a service run by gentlemen for the few'.³⁸⁷

In adherence to Price's vision, the NrDA presents the MSN as a structure that will constantly be able to reconfigure itself as Lebanese society sees fit. The ability of the MSN to change and adapt allows it to become a sign of continuous community involvement in Beirut. Each user in the MSN will re-envision their territory as their programme sees fit. The territory of an actor and builder is not limited to the interior space, but extends to the exterior skin of the structure. The MSN's goal is to provide a viable source of social and cultural regeneration in Beirut – such a desire for change may, like the Potteries Thinkbelt, also be compared with Price's advocacy of the 'metropolitan farm', which he believed was a more valid regenerator of city-centre activities than a marina or opera house.³⁸⁸

The metropolitan farm would serve as a source of economic regeneration for city-centre life, bringing together the community of farmers and the community of city dwellers. The metropolitan farm challenges the designer-architect's pursuit of the predetermined 'beautiful object'³⁸⁹ in many ways: (1) it smells of fish; (2) it does not conform to rules of proportion or style, but rather to the way that

fisherman lay out and present their wares; (3) the fishermen may bring whatever fish they choose to the market – they are not restricted by design regulations and conditioning, and a fish can be small or big, alive and flapping, or still; (4) the community can go to the metropolitan farm for free – there is no charge or ticket, and the farm becomes a communal gathering spot. As recommended by Price, the metropolitan farm is more of a community magnet than the opera; it does not require a ticket or money to attend it, and visitors can pass through and actively participate in the various transactions among people, occurrences and events. The ticket required to attend an opera performance causes a societal break based on financial means and status. The metropolitan farm does not.

3.2g

Kowloon and MSN Parallels

Kowloon Walled City (KWC) was once a walled fort guarded by a Manchu magistrate. The characteristics of the walled fort changed when the British gained sovereignty of Hong Kong in 1841 and expelled the Chinese troops and officials, who then took refuge at the walled fort. KWC also served as a place of refuge at the end of World War II (1945) for displaced Chinese agricultural families and factory workers. In 1987, a Chinese community located just outside the city walls also relocated to the KWC because their homes had been bulldozed for the sake of a new park and residential tower block. English journalist Peter Popham clarifies the importance of community and refuge provided by the KWC:

It was a place where they got their breath back: where they could live as Chinese amongst other Chinese, untaxed, un-counted, un-tormented by governments of any kind. Here the rents were mercifully low and no colonial busy bodies snooped around asking questions about visas or licenses, or working conditions, or wages or anything else.³⁹⁰

By the late 1980s there were more than 35,000 inhabitants in KWC and the density continued to increase over time. Despite the strict building height limit of 14.5 metres, because of the proximity of Hong Kong International Airport the city kept growing – not upwards, but rather inwards, without crossing its walled borders. The occupants of the KWC proceeded to constantly adapt and change their environments. For example, they would add to their existing structures, tear down old sheds when they were deemed inadequate, and build new multi-storey structures. As a result of this complex growth pattern, a web of pedestrian circulation networks evolved – in between buildings and on top of adjoining rooftops. Popham clarifies:

What fascinates about the Walled City is that, for all its horrible shortcomings, its builders and residents succeeded in creating what modern architects, with all their resources of money and expertise, have failed to: the city as 'organic megastructure', not set rigidly for a life time but continually responsive to the changing requirements of its users, fulfilling every need from

water supply to religion, yet also the warmth and intimacy of a single household.³⁹¹

Along with Rural Studio, and Price's Potteries Thinkbelt and Metropolitan farm, the KWC has also served as an example for the MSN and NrDA: foremost in precedent as a community building, as well as having the ability as a structure to satisfy the changing needs and requirements of its actors and builders. The KWC is also a critique of the architecture produced by the designer-architect who is not equipped to engage such complex social, cultural and architectural forms through his or her limited tools of design and drawing. In order to achieve a complexity similar to KWC, the MSN and NrDA set the basic parameters of the structure, similar to those of the wall that framed KWC, and then allow the various actors and builders the opportunity to modify and change the space within the structure as they deem appropriate.

The KWC continued to evolve up until the time when it was entirely demolished in 1992. Eight months prior to its demolition, the Chinese authorities stopped all water and electricity from reaching the city in an attempt to force the KWC occupants to move out. Consequently, the occupants of the KWC managed to survive in their community over those next eight months by the illegal tapping of water and electricity lines from the surrounding residential estates that had arisen near the KWC limits – the Chinese government had to exercise military force to evacuate the occupants.

Based on the above events that describe the KWC, I have established a set of five tangible comparisons with the MSN:

1. The actors and builders that occupy and construct the various rooms of the MSN, through utilizing both new and salvaged materials, are similar to the inhabitants of KWC that utilized their available resources in the making of their homes and workplaces.
2. The MSN is a structure; KWC is a city. A structure is a system that has precisely defined components. The fact that the KWC possesses a tight and consolidated perimeter, the wall, also suggests that it is a structure similar to the MSN. The KWC is approximately 200 metres in length \times 100 metres in width \times 14.5 metres in height = 280,000 cubic metres. The MSN is approximately 30 metres in width \times 30 metres in length \times 100 metres in height = 90,000 cubic metres.
3. Although the KWC is just over three times as large, the MSN has learned from the densely packed variety of activities present in the KWC such as carpenters, dentists and community care groups for the elderly. The MSN and KWC serve their immediate community as well as their respective cities. The MSN participates in the education of Lebanese citizens for the benefit of Beirut, while the KWC was regularly visited by Chinese citizens from outside the walled city for dental services, as well as being a place to send their children to school, because it was a cost-effective solution.
4. Unlike the KWC, the MSN is not the home of the builders and actors

but a place of social, cultural and technical education. After acquiring and developing their skills the actors and builders re-enter society to benefit their community. The Chinese inhabitants of the KWC sought it as a place of refuge, where they lived their lives and practised their professions and careers.

3.2h

Scenes from the MSN

3.2h Scenes from the MSN are located in *Book Two*/pages 54–105. In order to understand how to navigate the various forms of visual information, political and social texts, images and anecdotes that describe the scenes, the reader and viewer should consider their structure, as described in *Book Two*/pages 54 and 55.

Conclusion

Rossellini, the founding father of Neorealism, influenced many contemporary film-directors in their quest to authentically capture and represent reality. Reality and truth according to Rossellini were only possible through taking a moral position. A moral position was attainable only by 'critically looking at the obvious'. Neorealism was film spoken in dialect, local and close to the people that it represented. Neorealism was also multilingual: it connected with the men and women all around the world; it appealed to their emotions, asking for sympathy and support for the struggling post-World War II Italians as portrayed in *Rome Open City* (1945).

As arguably the first Neorealist film, *Rome Open City* (1945) signified the struggle faced by the Italians during the final year of Nazi occupation. *Rome Open City* (1945) serves as an intimate diary, chronicling the day-to-day events that defined the film. The spectator is drawn in; he or she becomes engaged in the verisimilitude of the performance. In particular, Rossellini has allowed me as NrDA the necessary means of 'looking critically at the obvious'.

In considering the terms (a) reality, (b) realism, and (c) Neorealism, the following relationships are established. Reality is achieved by considering the subject's actual state of matter as perceived by the senses. The director does not attempt an interpretation; reality is the documentation of a subject excluding the director's personal reflection and relation to the subject matter. Realism is the personal interpretation and rendition of a particular subject from a single point of view. Realism exhibits the ideological stance of a particular subject matter,

privileging one point of view and not granting contrary views a chance to present their intentions and/or beliefs. Neorealism is the director's ability to remain authentic to the subject matter, personalize communication as if from a private diary, and simultaneously consider multiple, and often dissimilar, points of view.

Through Neorealism, Rossellini has instructed the NrDA that the post-war city is a rich repository of information. Paying heed to Rossellini, the NrDA has developed the MSN in Beirut, where ordinary working-class citizens, similar to those in post-World War II Rome, participating as the actors and builders in the MSN, have the ability to rebuild their community, which had been destroyed by the effects of war and Syrian occupation. Along with Rossellini, Rural Studio and Mockbee allow the NrDA to learn how ordinary citizens are able to achieve extraordinary results. Mockbee, before his death in 2001, helped rebuild several sites throughout Hale County. His influence is so intense that even after his death Rural Studio continues to help the greater Alabama community. Both Rossellini and Mockbee serve as excellent examples for the NrDA. They give a precedent for how very basic means and materials, salvaged or begged, can be the major ingredients for rebuilding a community.

The social and cultural initiatives in Rossellini and Mockbee have caused the severing of ties between the NrDA and the traditional designer-architect who does not have the historical background to help rebuild post-war and economically struggling communities. The traditional designer-architect is still reliant on '*disegno*' that does not involve or indicate a place for communal participation; design is in the mind of the architect, isolated between him or her and the sheet of paper, leaving a world of real and tangible crisis outside their

limited range.

Book Five of Plato's *Republic* has cautioned the NrDA not to be seduced by beauty.³⁹² Plato acknowledges the difference between beauty and ugliness, but suggests that they are one; their correlation is based on the inability of the opinionated viewer to discern the idea from the object being represented. The object is fundamentally a shadow of the idea and not its equivalent. Plato suggests that the person in search of beauty is a dreamer, 'sleeping or waking, one who likens dissimilar things, who puts the copy in place of the real object'.³⁹³

Similar to Plato's concept is Wigley's likening of the designer-architect to a dreamer.³⁹⁴ Designer-architects, referred to by Wigley as paper-architects, 'commit their ideas to paper'³⁹⁵ and 'paper has long been a standard support of dreams'.³⁹⁶ It can be assimilated that the designer-architect, a dreamer-on-paper, has long been concerned with 'fine tones and colours and forms and all the artificial products made out of them, but their minds are incapable of seeing absolute beauty'. Absolute beauty is defined by Plato as the ability 'to distinguish the idea from the objects which participate in the idea, neither putting the objects in the place of the idea nor the idea in the place of the object'.³⁹⁷ Over the past seven centuries the designer-architect has continued to confuse idea and object, drawing and building.

Hill clarifies that the designer-architect's work suggests that drawing and building are similar but in fact they are not; the idea is different from the object it represents.³⁹⁸ The means and methods of making a drawing are significantly different from those involved in making a building. Hill states that designer-architects 'draw buildings and do not physically build them, the work of the

architect is always at a remove from the actual process of building'.³⁹⁹ The twenty-first-century architectural historian Adrian Forty clarifies:

The pervasiveness of 'design' is to do with the polarities it set up: 'design' provides a means of creating opposition between 'building' and all that it implied on the one hand, and everything in architecture that was non-material on the other hand ... In other words 'design' concerns what is not construction.⁴⁰⁰

Post-war/post-Syrian-occupied Beirut is not beautiful, but to the discerning viewer/reader it possesses absolute beauty. Plato's writings, as clarified by Hill, have allowed the NrDA the ability to abstract the matter of Beirut in search of absolute beauty, defined by Hill as immaterial ideas.⁴⁰¹

Barthes has participated in expanding the NrDA's perceptual abilities. Through Barthes, the NrDA does not only see, but also has the ability to discount matter and material from their original substance, and rework the object at hand to signify value far beyond its original form. Chapter 2 'Myth and Matter in Beirut', in both *Book One* and *Book Two*, has served as a testing ground for Barthes's lesson of reading reality and making myth. Myth-making has served as a means of expanding the vocabulary of the NrDA, enabling him or her to communicate through text, drawing and model. Hill reminds the NrDA that 'independently or together, drawing, writing and building are all examples of architectural research

and means to consider and develop architectural design and the architectural discipline. The relations between them are multi-directional. Drawing may lead to building. But writing may also lead to drawing, or building to writing.⁴⁰²

The NrDA, unlike the designer-architect, is not a 'twin of the drawing'.⁴⁰³ The designer-architect and the drawing are 'interdependent, they represent the same idea: that architecture results not from the accumulated knowledge of a team of anonymous craftsmen but from individual artistic creation of an architect in command of drawing who conceives a building as a whole at a remove from construction'.⁴⁰⁴ The NrDA, with roots in film, particularly with Rossellini as Neorealist film-director, cannot envision producing a building without the avid participation of the community of actors/builders participating in the building process. Rossellini was dependent on actors to make a film; without actors a Neorealist film could not be made; without actors/builders the MSN could not be fully realized. Just as Rossellini was not the centre, nor the lead actor, in the film, the NrDA is not the star of the building process. The actors/builders are the ones who receive, appropriately, the credit of the building.

The NrDA, like Rossellini, is on the site/set behind the building/scene. The NrDA, much as Rossellini coached and prompted actors on the set of a film, coaches and prompts the actors/builders on site during the construction process. The NrDA, in contrast to the designer-architect who is 'distanced from construction and the construction site',⁴⁰⁵ must be present, as it is not practical, nor possible, to direct a site and/or film from a distance apart from the action. The designer-architect, focused on drawing as an 'individual artistic creation',⁴⁰⁶ in the limits of his or her office, has distanced himself or herself from the building

site and process.

The designer-architect produces 'Contract Documents' (CDs) prior to construction. CDs are legally binding to the builder and require strict adherence; any change in the execution of the CDs requires consent and authorization by the designer-architect. The drawings produced by the NrDA do not attempt to conceive the MSN as a contractually binding project but, like a Neorealist script, conceive the drawings as a series of illustrated events and circumstances that encourage change and improvisation in the construction process.

To conclude this thesis politically, what differentiates Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (1945) from the NrDA's MSN (2007) is that when World War II ended the Nazis withdrew and Italy was allowed to prosper. In the case of Beirut, the Syrian armed forces have withdrawn but they still linger through corrupt allies in the Lebanese government. Lebanon is not yet free. I hope that the MSN will act as an 'ambassador' to the world community in helping to rally support around those Lebanese individuals in search of sovereignty. The various scenes of the MSN in *Book Two*/pages 44–105 serve two primary purposes: the first is to illustrate the construction process of the MSN, and the second is to politically critique the Syrian occupation.

The appendix comprises eight entities, A1–A8, that perform as supporting evidence for the core text and visual presentation of the thesis. The appendix is found in both *Book One* and *Book Two*. Throughout the text of the thesis, the reader has been directed to certain appendices in order to further develop an understanding of a particular idea, such as Beirut, the BCD, Syrian occupation, the blueprint and the *dabke* dance. In line with the structure of this thesis, the appendices in *Book One* are text based while those in *Book Two* are primarily visual. Below, I have re-introduced the appendix, as in its original location in the table of contents. This has been done in order to remind the reader and viewer of and reintroduce them to the various components involved. The principal table of contents is located in *Book One*/page 11.

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A.2

Syrian Occupation of Beirut 1976–2005

After twenty-four years of peace from 1950 to 1974, civil war in Lebanon began in 1975 as the result of conflicts between the Lebanese and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Upon the request of the Lebanese government, Syria intervened and keep the peace but, contrary to expectation, Syria would actually participate in the war against Lebanon for the next twenty-nine years until its forced withdrawal in 2005. The American reporter Ferry Biedermann further clarifies the role of Syrian actions on Lebanon:

The Syrians sent troops to Lebanon during the civil war on the request of the Christian-dominated government. The civil war ended with the Taif Agreement negotiated in Taif in Saudi Arabia by members of Lebanon's parliament. The agreement covered political reform, the ending of the war in Lebanon, the establishment of special relations between Lebanon and Syria, and a framework for the beginning of Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. It was signed 22 October 1989.

By then Syria held sway over most of the country through its military presence, through alliances with militias such as the Hezbollah movement in the south, or through the control that its security services exerted.

Under the Taif agreement, Syria was to have withdrawn its troops and curtailed its influence in Lebanon, but it never

completely did either. This led to resentment among the Christian minority but also among large segments of the Muslim population⁴⁰⁷

Upon Syria's unwilling withdrawal from Lebanon there was a series of assassinations, of members of the Lebanese Parliament such as Gebran Tueni, and Walid Eido, and former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. In 2007, less than two years after the withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon, there was again a civil war between the Lebanese and the terrorist group of *Fatah al-Islam*, who had sought refuge and security in the Palestinian camps of Lebanon.

A.3

A History of the BCD

In 1976, assuming that the war had ended upon the intervention of Syria, the Lebanese government established the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) to plan and administer the reconstruction of Beirut Central District (BCD). An intensive collaboration of Lebanese governmental and private agencies coupled with Lebanese architects and planners and a French consulting firm, L'Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme (APUR), had established the first master plan, recognized by Lebanese Decree 1163 of 15 April 1978. According to the Lebanese urban sociologist Samir Khalaf, the agenda of AUPR's master plan was developed by five 'compelling considerations'⁴⁰⁸ cited below:

1. To maintain, where possible, the original urban tissue as well as the pre-existing tenure of property holding.

2. To encourage the legal owners and occupants of the BCD to return and reclaim their previous enterprises.
3. To facilitate the return of the BCD to its traditional role as a unifying and homogenising setting for the country's multi-confessional and communal composition.
4. To introduce the necessary infrastructural improvements to the BCD as a way of expediting its rehabilitation.
5. To revitalize, through the establishment of conventional real estate companies and other viable strategies of post-war reconstruction, targeted areas which had been badly damaged.

This plan had been widely accepted by the Lebanese population as a positive contribution to Beirut's urban growth. The reason for its acceptance, as clarified above by Khalaf, is that it had mindfully considered social and cultural values that had focused on re-building what had been damaged, rather than destroying the city and creating it anew. After nearly six years of peace, 1976–1981, war had erupted again in 1982 when Israel attacked the Syrians and Palestinians in Beirut. Because of renewed fighting, the Lebanese government halted the CDR master plan that had been drafted to rebuild Beirut from the previous 1975 war. The intensity of civil war continued to steadily escalate in Beirut for the next ten years from 1982 to 1991 between Syrian-allied Muslim fundamentalists and Christians.

Owing to the sectarian and religious formation of Lebanon, the war caused a split between east Beirut, predominantly Christian, and west Beirut, predominantly Muslim. The spatial division between east and west is referred to as the Green-line. The Green-line is a hypothetical line projected from the northernmost tip of Beirut, signified by Martyrs' Square, to the southernmost tip of Beirut, signified by the Syrian border with Lebanon. The space demarcated by the Green-line became a no-man's-land, where green vegetation grew wildly. The war-ravaged buildings on either side of the Green-line that were greatly affected by the war became known as Green-line architecture.

In 1991 the Commander in Chief of the Lebanese Army, Michael Aoun, demanded that the Syrians immediately withdraw from Lebanon. The Syrians refused, and blatantly engaged in a war against the Lebanese Army. The results were devastating in terms of the social and economic situation of Beirut. The Lebanese Army had been defeated, and Aoun went to Paris as a political refugee. The Syrians reasserted their control of Lebanon through military aggression.

In 1994, the Lebanese company for the development and reconstruction of Beirut Central District, Solidere, was formed. The main investor spearheading the project was the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. Solidere had reactivated the 1976 CDR master plan for the BCD, not as it was initially conceived as a governmental initiative, but as a business venture that sought to develop and reconstruct the war-torn BCD, a surface area of approximately 1.8 million square metres.

Solidere was able to undertake this venture on the basis of two conditions: firstly, that the government was not able to fund such a large-scale project; and secondly, that the former Prime Minister had significant financial means, as well as political relations with Syria. Based on the 'Main Features and Objectives'⁴⁰⁹ of Solidere's interpretation of the CDR master plan, I have deduced the following five objectives:

1. The preservation and reconstruction of historical and governmental buildings, souks, residential neighbourhoods and traditional Lebanese homes.
2. Development of a seaside park on the landfill zone, including cultural facilities, such as a national library and centre for the arts.
3. Integration of archaeological sites into modern developments.
4. Adoption of a policy that limits the number of high-rise buildings and restricts their locations to areas along major BCD gateways, the existing hotel district and the new financial district.
5. Provision of service roads and underground public parking facilities in key locations, so as to minimize vehicular traffic inside the BCD.

Solidere's goals and objectives touch on the installation of modern infrastructure,

including roads, utilities, marine works, public gardens, recreational areas and office space. Solidere had, to a great extent, succeeded in accomplishing their professional services. However, Solidere were unsuccessful in their goal to preserve and restore a large portion of the BCD, and failed to respond to the socio-cultural criteria of the CDR master plan. Lebanese Architect Hashim Sarkis clarifies Solidere's capitalistic interpretation of the initial CDR master plan:

Thousands of articles and hundreds of books and reports were written against the clearing of downtown Beirut. Many critics argue the razing of about 85% of the buildings in the old center was unnecessary ... the painful but necessary process of social healing – is what the urban planners and architects neglected to respond to.⁴¹⁰

The war had not completely destroyed the apartment buildings, souks, cinemas and neighbourhoods that defined the character of the BCD. Photo documentation dating from 1992 represents a condition that it is seemingly feasible to repair. The Solidere master plan had finished the destruction that the war had left undone. The Solidere initiative to build new cultural structures such as a national library or centre for the arts has also gone unrealized for over twelve years (1994–2007). Based on the fact that Solidere is a construction and development company, and not a governmental body interested in social and cultural welfare, and that the Lebanese government is not financially empowered to fund places such as museums or a centre for the arts, it is my belief that the realization of

such socio-cultural structures in Beirut will require personal initiatives such as the MSN.

A.4 **The MSN Site: A Strange Rectangle in the BCD**

Within the Beirut Central District is a very 'Strange Rectangle' (SR) that borders the Mediterranean Sea. The SR is approximately 1,000 metres deep × 300 metres wide. A primary reason for the rectangle's strangeness is its capacity to retain an ever-amassing repository of myth and matter. The SR dates back nearly 5,000 years, and is still evolving in present-day Lebanon. The SR has been constantly shifting in use, name and form; its aliases are 'Place des Canons' a.k.a 'Place de l'Union' a.k.a 'Sahat l'Burj' a.k.a 'Place des Martyrs' a.k.a 'Place of Liberty'.

The SR is located on the northernmost tip of the Green-line that defines east (Christian) and west (Muslim) Beirut. The SR is the site where many foreign rulers and occupiers in the history of Beirut have placed their mark, such as a tower or cannon. The MSN's location in the SR is based on the fact that the MSN is a sign and structure of reconciliation between east and west Beirut, as well as between Beirut and the world community. The body of this section will be divided into a series of scenes (Scene I to Scene X) that historically narrate, like the scenes of a movie, relevant dates that convey pertinent spatial, social and cultural developments in the history of Lebanon. The SR may act as a tool to further understanding of the overall complexity of Beirut and the MSN. For additional information on how the form of the MSN was selected and extracted from Beirut and the SR, the reader/viewer may go to *Book Two*/page 116.

Scene I: A Phoenician City

The site which is today commonly known as Martyrs' Square was an important centre in Phoenician times. The remains of a major Phoenician city and its workshops are found underneath the actual site. Within this setting the Phoenicians excelled in the development of textiles, ivory carvings, metalwork, the making of glass objects, and trade by sea. Among the many developments of the Phoenicians, the most significant was a twenty-two-character alphabet, from which the Greek alphabet then derived around 1400 to 900 BC, and the Roman, Latin twenty-six-letter alphabet by around 1200 BC.

Scene II: Tower and Garden

Fakhreddine II (1598–1635), Prince of Lebanon, was a progressive and energetic ruler. His visit to the court of Florence gave him a favourable impression of Italian architecture. 'He summoned Italian architects and landscape artists to build him a magnificent palace'⁴¹¹ amidst his enchanting gardens in Beirut. 'English clergyman and traveller Henry Maundrell'⁴¹² visited the palace of Fakhreddine II in 1697. Maundrell writes that the Palace consisted of several 'courts, stables, yards for horses, dens for lions and other savage creatures'.⁴¹³

According to Maundrell, the most remarkable display was the orange garden. The quadrangular parcel of land had been 'divided into 16 squares, 4 in a row with walks between them shaded by orange trees. In the stone-work were troughs for conveying water all over the garden with little outlets cut at every tree for the stream of water, as it passed by, to flow out'.⁴¹⁴ At the far corner of the

garden stood a tower, sixty feet in height, from which Fakhreddine would gaze upon Beirut.⁴¹⁵

Scene III: Russian Cannon Balls

In 1772, during the reign of Emir Youssef Chehab, the Russian fleet sailed from the Baltic through the Straits of Gibraltar to the Eastern Mediterranean, to support any adversary of the Sultan. The Russians arrived at the coastline of Beirut, and began to bombard the city on 18 June in alliance with the Ottomans. This went on for five days. More than 500 cannonballs from Russian ships were fired off on Beirut. On 23 June, the Russians landed and unloaded one of their heaviest pieces of artillery which they set in the middle of the SR. The inhabitants of Beirut called it 'Place du Canon' (Place of the Cannon).⁴¹⁶

Scene IV: Petit Serail

In 1881 the 'Petit Serail' (Governor's residence) was built in the 'Place du Canon' on the initiative of the Wali of Syria, Hamdi Pasha, and the President of the Municipality, Fakhry Bey. An adjacent public garden was also made there in 1883 for the inhabitants of Beirut, named 'Hamidie' after the reigning Sultan.

Scene V: Ottoman to French

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Ottoman Empire allied itself with Germany and the Central Powers. In October of that year, Jamal Pasha appeared in Damascus as commander of the Fourth Turkish Army and proceeded to occupy Lebanon. In the summer of 1915, Jamal Pasha, now the

Governor-General of Lebanon, who had been forced to dissolve the administrative council, was replaced by Ali Munif, the second Turk ever to rule Lebanon. Lebanon's constitution was abolished, and the country was put directly under Ottoman military rule. Hoping to put an end to the Lebanese, the Turks commandeered Lebanon's food supplies and so caused hundreds of thousands of deaths from widespread famine and plague, resulting in the loss of over one-third of the Lebanese population. The Turkish army cut down trees for wood to fuel their trains; Lebanon lost over 60 per cent of its forests. In May 1916 Turkish authorities murdered twenty Lebanese citizens through public hangings on the site of the Strange Rectangle for alleged anti-Turkish activities.⁴¹⁷

As World War I was drawing to an end and the defeat of the Ottomans was at hand, the Ottoman ruler Prince Faysal sent a group of about a hundred commandos to Beirut where they raised the Hejaz (Arabian) flag on 5 October 1918 in the area of the SR. This action alarmed the French who sent warships to Beirut harbour. On 8 October, the English General Edmund Allenby, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, entered Beirut, took the Hejaz flag down and forced the Ottoman commandos to withdraw. The SR was then renamed Martyrs' Square. In 1930 a monument was erected on the site of Martyrs' Square, crafted from brass and comprising two women – one Muslim, one Christian – clasping each other's hands over an urn. In 1937, a second statue replaced the first monument which had been attacked with an axe. The original is stored in the Sursok Museum.⁴¹⁸

In December 1946, French troops were completely withdrawn from their occupation of the country and the French flag of mandate removed from Martyrs'

Square. Lebanon was once again a free republic. Petit Serail was pulled down in 1950 to enlarge the Place des Martyrs and became an even more active public space, swarming with masses of people as well as being engulfed and surrounded by cultural structures, such as a national opera, theatres, concert halls, art galleries and cafés. The city flourished intensely in the period 1950 to 1975, creating much of Lebanon's reputation as the Paris of the Middle East.⁴¹⁹

Scene VII: Martyrs' Square becomes the Green-line

During the early 1990s Martyrs' Square became the northernmost tip for the demarcation line between east (predominantly Christian) and west (predominantly Muslim) Beirut. The spatial division between east and west would be referred to as the Green-line, as it hypothetically projected to the southernmost tip of Beirut and became a no-man's-land where (green) vegetation grew wildly. The war-ravaged buildings on either side of the Green-line that were greatly affected by the warring factions became referred to as Green-line architecture.⁴²⁰

Scene VIII: An Empty Place for Tourists

In 1992 the war had come to a close. Martyrs' Square was the site of air-conditioned buses, with French, British, German and Japanese tourists circulating between the ruins and rubble of Beirut. Solidere had demolished the greater part of the built form defining Martyrs' Square; the communities, souks and civic structures had all been literally dumped into the sea in favour of a modernist agenda.

Scene IX: A Place of Protest

In the year 2005, which began with the assassination of the Prime Minister, the city of Beirut has once again become a place of explosions. Sometimes, there are as many as two attempted assassinations a week. If the culprits do not succeed in murdering their victim, they succeed in destabilizing an already fragile social and economic state. On 14 March 2005 two waves of protests filled Martyrs' Square and the streets of the BCD. The first wave was promoted by those in favour of the withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon, the other by those in favour of the Syrians' stay.

Scene X: Place of Tents

As of 3 December 2006 thousands of Hezbollah supporters set up camp in the heart of Martyrs' Square, starting an open-ended sit-in with a festival-type atmosphere intended to pressure the US-backed government, led by Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Saniora, into resigning. Six pro-Hezbollah ministers resigned from the Lebanese cabinet after Saniora and his anti-Syrian majority in Parliament rejected the group's demand for a new national unity government that would effectively give it and its allies the power of veto. The current government is largely backed by Sunni Muslims and Christians who oppose neighbouring Syria's involvement in the country's affairs. Syria was forced to end a nearly three-decade military occupation (1976–2005). Saniora and his supporters call Hezbollah's campaign a coup attempt led by Syria and Iran, with the aim of influencing Middle East politics.

The governmental electricity in Beirut is only available for approximately six hours a day at irregular and unspecified intervals. Citizens are forced to rely on local generator subscriptions in order to maintain the functioning of both their household and their professional duties on a variety of scales, from turning on a light bulb in the kitchen to the functioning of milling machines in an aluminium factory.

On a residential scale, the generator subscriptions are run by individuals who charge a monthly fee to provide a connection to a home or office. The basic fee is a \$100 installation charge and a \$10 to \$25 monthly charge (depending on the affluence of neighbourhood) for 5 amps of electricity. Considering that the minimum wage in Lebanon is \$350 per month, this is quite a significant amount for the Lebanese citizen. What is even more interesting is that 5 amps can barely power a refrigerator and a few low-energy light bulbs, so the user of the electricity must be creative. For instance, if the user plans on 'taking a hot shower' they must turn off their refrigerator, and turn on their hot water heater for about an hour in order for the water to reach the desired temperature, after which they have to turn off their water heater and re-plug in their refrigerator in order for food not to spoil.

If we continue to consider the event of taking a shower, the complexity further articulates itself. The user must first turn on the water-pump in order for the water to rise from the water-tank on ground-floor level to the water-tank at roof level. The problem with this is that if the user keeps their water-pump on too

long and all the water rises from the water-tank below, the pump is liable to burn out. The governmental water company seldom releases water to the community, so each citizen must secure their own water supply by contacting a water-dispensing truck which will come and fill a water tank for a fee of approximately \$15 for 2,000 litres of water; the water-dispensing truck will give you a reduced rate if the entire residential building of eight to ten apartments is willing to fill their tanks at the same time.

Usually all water-tanks on both ground floor and roof level have locks because certain types of neighbours may attempt to steal water from a tank and place it in their own. Water is also a loanable item, in that if a certain neighbour is using their washing machine and suddenly runs out of water, he or she may ask you for a few litres in order to finish their wash load, or to complete their shower if they still have a significant amount of soap on their body.

A.6 **The *Dabke* Dance and Community Building**

There is a certain folklore dance in Lebanon called the *dabke*. Just as the making of the MSN is based on a combination of architectural and social values, so the *dabke* signifies a process of architectural construction and social unity among the actors and builders involved. The significance of the *dabke* dance is related to architecture, in that it is intrinsic to the construction and continued maintenance of the peasantry mud or stone houses scattered throughout Lebanon, particularly in their feature of mud-thatch roofs. The social significance is located in the communal structure of the dance that is enacted with the participation of

neighbours and family members. The movements of the *dabke* indicate a very dynamic process involving the movement of the entire body of an individual in synchronization with the entire group of dancers. The synchronized movement of all the dancers involved is very similar to the bodily movements involved in constructing the original mud-thatch roofs.

The houses varied in construction from mud or stone depending on the actual region in which they were made. In the north of Lebanon there were mountains so people used stones from those mountains; in the south there was fertile mud, so people made mud-brick homes. What unified the two types of peasant houses were their mud-thatch roofs and the *dabke*.

Once the walls of a home were built, raw tree lumber was placed across the breadth of the house in order to support the mud-thatch roof above it; this lumber was also acquired from trees surrounding the site. The size of a home was often regulated by the length of trees available, in much the way that for Rossellini the length of the particular roll of film would dictate the length of a scene. When the tree lengths were short, many adjoining rooms were built; when the tree lengths were long, large rooms were made, creating an open space where a tree trunk might be used as a vertical prop to support deflection of the trunks above due to the weight of the mud-thatch.

The roof's surface was then compiled from the various forms of thatch available in the region. Water-diluted mud from the soil surrounding the house was used as a natural adhesive paste and insulator against inclement weather. The diluted mud that served as a natural paste can be compared to the softly malleable Neorealist script linking the various plots of a Neorealist film in a

naturally cohesive manner. The script is considered malleable and naturally cohesive because the narrative was developed through discussion with the director and the input of each actor. The Neorealist script, like the mud paste of the mud-thatch roof, was not a pre-written script or an imported glue external to the nature of the endeavour and imposed on the actor or the architecture.

Once the mud-thatch was dispersed above and in between the lumber, it required kneading in order for the mud-thatch composition to stay in a compact state throughout heavy rain and snow seasons, neither falling into the house nor being carried away by the wind. In order to compact the mud-thatch surface, neighbours and families would visit each other and communally dance upon the individual roofs, moving in procession from one house to the next regardless of weather conditions – at certain times dancing in the rain or wind. The determination of the dance to continue is similar to the persistence in filming despite the technical difficulties faced by Neorealism such as a lack of lighting, funds and studio.

The movement of the dance was performed holding hands, standing shoulder to shoulder; the dancers would then rhythmically move up and down, while rotating around the perimeter of the roof in a circular motion. The roofs were typically rectangular, and the dancers' movements were circular, so that in order to assure a comprehensive compacting of the roof, certain dancers would break out of the circle and dance independently in the mid-regions of the roof as well as in the corners, which the general circle did not engage. The dancers in the circle are similar to the cast of Neorealist actors in *Rome Open City* (1945) who were utilized in scenes such as the Nazi raid of the tenement building. The

massive crowds of Italians gathered in front of the tenement building were the actual inhabitants – they are the core value of the scene, and similar to the circle of dancers. The independent actions of the priest, boy and mother that tightened the plot and gave it uniformity can be compared to those individuals who broke out from the circle to dance in the critical areas of the roof that the circle did not cover, creating a comprehensive kneading of the roof's surface. The fully kneaded surface of the roof is equivalent to a successful and tight scene, without any air pockets.

The dance would come to a conclusion when the mud and thatch roof revealed a compact material state, protected against the natural elements. After the initial dance, it would then be the duty of each home-maker to seasonally maintain their roof by rolling a large stone cylinder called a *mahdalle* to and fro on the roof's surface to maintain the compactness of the mud-thatch from that original dance. In essence the dance was the first step; the stone cylinder was its memory/maintenance policy. The *mahdalle* also played a symbolic role in a young boy's transition to manhood. Before the young boy was allowed to marry and leave his parents' home, he should be able to lift the *mahdalle*, usually located atop his father's roof, over his own head and then return it carefully to the roof's surface without dropping it, in order not to cause harm to himself or his family's home. When the attempt was successful, it would indicate that his movements and performance were balanced and controlled, symbolizing that the young man's future would be secure and blessed by God. The *mahdalle* signifies the capacity of Neorealist film-direction to lead the way for other endeavours that sought to utilize Neorealist values. The lifting of the *mahdalle* can be considered

similar to the NrDA's initiative of appropriating Neorealist values and leaving the house of Rossellini, who is the father of Italian Neorealism.

The mud and thatch roof was also a place where certain things were made. Mothers would usually climb up a ladder and lay out various fruits and vegetables to be dried by the sun in order to make winter rations for the families. The area of vegetables and fruits would then be covered with a beige cotton veil that would still permit the sun's rays to fully enter, but would keep away ants or birds. At night during hot summer months children would usually go up to their roof-tops and sleep on the pad of cool mud-thatch, surrounded by the tactile and aromatic environment. The usage of the roof as a shelter for the home as well as an event place signifies the manner in which Neorealist film both served its purpose as film, and also served to educate and entertain.

The connection between the *dabke* dance and Neorealist film-making merges in the space of folklore, relying on a particular set of local events, rituals and conditions. This relationship between *dabke* dance, peasant mud-thatch roofs, availability of resources and community participation suggests an association with the method in which Neorealist films were made.

When the price of concrete became more affordable in Lebanon owing to a wave of industrialization and the opening of cement factories during the 1950s, a great many mud-thatch roofs were removed; in their place concrete slabs were cast and the dance lost its place of origin. The dance was moved down to ground level and became a means of recalling peasant strength and cultural roots. It is still performed today in various Lebanese ceremonies such as weddings, baptisms and protests. The Neorealism movement largely ended in

1952, approximately seven years after *Rome Open City* (1945), but like the *dabke* dance, Neorealism still serves as a model for film-makers concerned with signifying the circumstances of war, post-war, and social and cultural challenges that are faced by a particular community under oppression. The form of oppression could be economic, political, social or cultural.

A.7

Making a Blueprint

The proper making of a blueprint demands that the original line work of a drawing be executed on a clear transparent cloth or paper sheet in a neat and orderly manner. The original line drawing is then placed over blueprint paper, prepared with a mixture of potassium ferricyanide and ammonium ferric citrate. When the attached drawing and the blueprint paper are exposed to a strong light, the unprotected ferric salt not lying beneath the lines of the drawing is changed to a ferrous salt that reacts with the ferricyanide to form Turnbull's blue. This blue is the background of the finished print. The ferric salt under the lines of the drawing, protected from the light, remains and is dissolved during the washing in water that follows exposure. As a result, the lines of the original drawing appear white in the finished blueprint.

When an original drawing was worked on for several weeks, by different draughtsmen, a grey film would have settled on that original transparent sheet from the minute dust of tracing leads. Such a grey film allowed for the recording of ghost marks, smudge marks and other indications of usage and residue information, and physical tears. When the sheet was put through the

photographic process of becoming a blueprint described above, all the subtle agitations that were not necessarily visible to the human eye on that transparent sheet would be vividly revealed, in some cases overpowering the drawing.

A.8

Interview with Bernard Tschumi

The following interview took place on 2 July 2004. The reason for the interview was to inquire about two particular issues: the first was the relation between Bernard Tschumi, film and Neorealism; the second was to what extent Tschumi considers himself a NrDA, and his making of Fresnoy, an international centre for contemporary arts in Tourcoing, France, a challenge to the traditional role of the designer-architect. Interviewee: Bernard Tschumi (BT), Interviewer: Chadi Chamoun (CC).

CC: Why do you particularly credit Dziga Vetrov and Sergei Eisenstein?

BT: If you start asking yourself 'What is architecture?', which is how I started, not wanting to rely on pre-existing definitions, history books, treaties of architectural theory, you should look at other disciplines around you. For example, architecture can be literature, philosophy, mathematics and film. Film was particularly fascinating to me because in the early period of the invention of film, an enormous amount of devices were developed that I found were telling me more about architectural theory than the theory written by architectural historians. For example, Eisenstein utilizes, as well as invents, montage techniques. I found montage technique more pertinent to architecture than what architectural historians were talking

about such as composition, about a series of rules that were simply trying to erase any conflict, or trying to find an overall synthesis. Contrary to the theories of architectural historians, Eisenstein and Vetrov were able to develop devices that were allowing either narrative, or a series of functional artefacts, or programmes, to collide with one another in constantly novel ways. Their devices were teaching me about architecture. Then in the case of Vetrov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) I was introduced to the relation of scale and of context. The combined devices of Vetrov and Eisenstein were an eye-opening moment for me in terms of architecture.

CC: *Do the historical precedents of the shadow play, silhouette, magic lantern and early glass slides have relevance to your way of making architecture? And if so, does Fresnoy intentionally engage the qualities of silhouette and shadow play?*

BT: Yes and no. On the one hand, one may share a culture, common sensibility and certain interests – you don't work in a vacuum – there are certain things that I am interested in which touch upon the interests of others at other moments in history. For example, when you try to invent certain things which are not architecture, I need allies, I need friends, and my friends may be in other fields, in the arts scene or in history. Lotte Reiniger's book on impressionist cinema had a significant impact on me – I perceive it as architecture.

CC: *How has the material of celluloid, in and out of film-making, influenced architecture in your mind and practice?*

BT: The celluloid era is only a moment in a culture. Then the technology evolves, but this does not alter the culture. I cannot at the moment feel that there is more celluloid sensibility, or a more contemporary one in my architectural practice. The important aspect in my practice is the reference to film, a reference to the idea of architecture as a dynamic art and not a static one.

CC: *What is a film in relation to architecture?*

BT: A film is a space, a protagonist in the space, but on a two-dimensional screen. In architecture I also deal with spaces and with a number of protagonists. It is important for me to never forget that architecture is about movement, movement of people in space.

CC: *Which particular building materials, techniques and practices do you believe embody cinematic qualities? And in which manner?*

BT: I often describe architecture as the materialization of a concept or idea – there is no preference to what materials you utilize. Even if you perceive me as a film-maker, I can make a beautiful movie in the sunshine of the Mexico desert or I can make a great movie in the Swedish Alps. I don't think the material is a preference, not at all.

CC: *David Parkinson, a contemporary film-historian and critic, states that the power of the Georges Méliès's camera is that it could lie. Is there an equivalent in architecture?*

BT: Yes, but in a very different way. Architecture is also about representation – other ways to represent the world. It is not really lying, but it's about transporting you elsewhere, and of course Méliès was transporting you

elsewhere.

CC: *In Illuminations, Walter Benjamin says that 'storytelling' is dying because people are losing their ability to listen and tell, because of the isolated world of the novel. But is there still room for storytelling in architecture?*

BT: Yes, but not in a conventional sense. I am going to quote Jean-Luc Godard. When a journalist asked Godard 'Do your stories have a beginning, middle and end?' he responded, 'Yes, but not necessarily in that order.' It is the same thing for architecture – do my buildings have a bottom, middle and top? Yes, but not necessarily in that order.

CC: *Would you consider Fresnoy as a narrative-architecture, historically aligned with the seminal narrative-film of Georges Méliès?*

BT: No, because it is not sequential. A narrative has a beginning, middle and end; Fresnoy is far more. There is a very useful text by Barthes, 'The structural analysis of narratives', where he shows us how to re-combine different parts, and the linearity of the narrative can be challenged. Fresnoy is exactly that. It is a number of parts, and some are subservient to others – there is no linearity to it. Architecture is rarely linear in my case.

CC: *Fresnoy is a critically established manifesto for the removal of the designer in architectural practice, suggesting the position of a Director-Architect – do you agree? What are the roles that a progressive architect must possess in the making of architecture today?*

BT: Yes. At various moments in history, especially now, the architect is seen as the person who conditions design – making beautiful bottles, designing

products, conditioning a package. This is exactly what I try to go against. I am much more interested in designing the conditions, the conditions in which other things are going to take place. So yes, I see myself much more like a film-director rather than I will see myself as an actor doing a piece of design. The designer is an actor.

CC: Can you describe your particular roles in the making of Fresnoy? And in what sense do you feel they differ from the familiar roles of the architect?

BT: The role comprised considering several existing buildings on a site that had been issued a demolition permit. The competition was organized, with three groups of architects competing for it, and the two others did what was expected of them – they made a beautiful package, a beautiful design. I visited the site and realized that the existing buildings and spaces were quite extraordinary, and already had large spaces inside. I thought that with the limited budget allocated for the competition, I could not have such big spaces if I were to make a new building. I also considered the fact that the purpose of Fresnoy will be a school for film-makers, musicians, sculptors, painters – a school for multi-media artists, a cross-over and juxtaposition of art – so what could be a better cross-over than bringing a very contemporary structure over the old structure, having them play with one another in an endless dialogue. Fresnoy would become an architectural cross-over, and that's what happens.

CC: The Lumière Brothers, together with Georges Méliès, may be credited with the invention of cinema. Would it be appropriate to credit Fresnoy and yourself with the invention of architecture, free from the designer?

BT: History will see.

CC: *David Forgacs, a critically acclaimed film-historian and critic, states that Roberto Rossellini was a 'magician of the real' for cinema, particularly through Rome Open City. Could I appropriately locate you as the 'magician of the real' for architecture in Le Fresnoy?*

BT: History will see.

CC: *Would you consider yourself a Neorealist architect in any manner?*

BT: I don't mind the title at all. I would have to think a little more about it, but it does not de-stabilize me.

CC: *What are your thoughts on Plato's cave: could it have been the first cinematic space/experience?*

BT: Yes, it is certainly one of them.

CC: *Do you perceive the usage of bin liners as curtains in Le Fresnoy as a positive act? Would you align this action with Neorealism?*

BT: Yes. The management did not order the blinds in time for them to be installed, so the real story is that we had designed the real electric blinds but they were never ordered.

CC: *A Neorealist film cannot be made again because the city has changed; for instance, when Cedric Price's 'Interaction Centre' in London was threatened with demolition, Cedric Price did not resist if the community felt it was no longer useful. Could you imagine a similar situation with Fresnoy?*

BT: Yes.

CC: *While walking in the in-between, the ramps tremble; the user is not sure*

about their position in space. Was the fragility of the ramps expected?

BT: Yes.

CC: *What is the role of the user in architecture, and do you think this is different from that of the audience in film?*

BT: The user is part of the story; the viewer is outside the story.

CC: *If you were to give Architecture another name, what would it be?*

BT: Architecture.

The above interview with Tschumi participated in the formulation of both theoretical and physical features of the MSN. Theoretically, Tschumi has supported the role of the NrDA, and the correlation of architecture and film. Tschumi has also acknowledged the fact that the designer-architect is similar to an actor in a film, concerned with the making of beautiful objects and products rather than the pursuit of ideas. Tschumi, like Rural Studio, KWC and Price, has supported the notion that materials are not as important as ideas, and the ability of the NrDA to utilize any form of matter available to communicate an idea allows a greater capacity of usage for both actor and builder.

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