Love in the Time of Transcultural Fusion

Cinephilia, Homage and Kill Bill

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I. Introduction

There is an inherent difficulty in defining love. Douglas Hofstadter’s ironic definition lies more in demonstrating the impracticalities of general recursion than in a genuine attempt for perspicuity. Love simply seems too mystical a force to be registered compactly by facile explanation; it is lamely compared – love “like a red, red rose,” or love that “resembles the eternal rocks beneath” – or else shrugged off as inexplicable phenomena: “love without reason... No wisdom, no judgement / No caution, no blame...” It is presumably too complicated an emotion to analyse, too multifaceted for deconstruction, too profound for definitive scrutiny.

The love of cinema suffers from a similar ambiguity. Cast more or less in the word “cinephilia,” the concept of “the love of cinema” has taken on a state of amorphousness that stretches from the vehement “we cannot live without Rossellini’s 1960s film culture to, borne on the growth of the home video, obsessive film collection and solitary, mole-like viewings in dark bedrooms to, simply, a love of the cinema “sous forme de passion exclusive.” Paul Willemen’s baffled exclamation sums it up: “What is this thing that keeps cropping up in all these different forms and keeps being called cinephilia?”

The complication of defining cinephilia is compounded by an element of dogged historicity that writes cinephilia as a past phenomenon and roots nostalgia as the core of its enterprise. Articulated most resoundingly in Susan Sontag’s much-discussed article, “The Decay of Cinema,” Sontag refers to cinephilia as the “special” love that cinema “inspired,” “born of a conviction that cinema was an art unlike any other,” love which evoked a sense of wonder, whereby “people took movies into themselves” and felt liberated by “the experience of surrender to, of being transported by, what was on the screen.” “You fell in love not just with actors but with cinema itself.”

More significantly, Sontag specifically locates the epitome of cinephilia in a targeted historical period, namely, the early 1950s to late 60s. Noting it as a phenomenon which originated in France before spreading to the rest of Europe, the United States and Canada, Sontag recalls cinephilia as a time characterized by feverish,
even ritualized, movie-going and animated film criticism dominated by the editors of *Cahiers du cinéma* and other similar journals and magazines around the world, by the proliferation of cinémathéques and enthusiastic film clubs, and by a body of original, serious films whose proclaimed creative value truly represented cinema as the art form of the 20th century.

Inherent in the pursuit of such an affectedly idealized historicity is the inevitable nostalgia, the “they-don’t-make-it-like-they-used-to” sentiment. Predictably, Sontag mourns that “the love of cinema has waned”: “Cinephilia itself has come under attack, as something quaint, outmoded, snobbish... Cinephilia has no role in the era of hyperindustrial films.” Other naysayers such as Stanley Kauffmann, David Denby, and David Thomson echo her pessimism in varying degrees of abjectness – the good times are gone with the dodo. This lingering preoccupation with the pastness that comes with the cessation of a certain historicity prompts the observation by (once again) Willemen: “There is a kind of necrophilia involved.” Thus is love in this sense of cinephilia infused with so much else: death, nostalgia, regret, bleakness, longing, hopelessness, reminiscence, and – as I painfully felt in Jean-Luc Godard’s *Éloge de l’amour* (2001), itself a filmic summation of recent history and culture, most obviously cinema – more than a trace of tragic bitterness.

To that extent, “contemporary cinephilia” is an oxymoron in terms – one cannot have contemporariness in a project located specifically in the past. But the pursuit of cinephilia as an undertaking of specific memory overlooks the sheer love that is its core to begin with. And love is myriad, boundless and evincible in a legion of ways: that is the difference between the love of cinema and love of a cinema. Nicole Brenez writes of her students “who think only of cinema, awaiting the releases of films by their favourite authors the same way one awaits a fiancée.” They read, write and breathe cinema, watch films all day and night and have prescient dreams of them even before their releases. That is love. The film *Cinemania* (USA: Angela Christlieb & Stephen Kijak, 2002) documents four fervent moviegoers who plan elaborate daily schedules, right down to toilet breaks, by which they rush between movie theaters (on public transport!) in order to catch every single film screening in New York City. Obsessive as it may sound, that, too, is love. Cinephilia is not just confined to explicit practices either. Willemen, for example, pursues cinephilia in the fetishizing of a moment – “what you perceive to be the privileged, pleasure-giving, fascinating moment of a relationship to what’s happening on a screen” – which Christian Keathley develops as “panoramic perception,” writing these series of moments as “flashes of another history,” and which Roger Hallas applies to his analysis of found footage in Michael Wallin’s *Decodings* (USA: 1988). Adrian Martin locates cinephilia within the larger context of Australian culture amidst questions of, *inter alia*, cultural imperialism and populism. Lalitha Gopalan utilizes
cinephilia as a springboard towards a rationalization of the study of popular culture, leading to the framework within which she analyses Indian cinema. In discussing contingency, Mary Ann Doane frames cinephilia – “a love that is attached to the detail, the moment, the trace, the gesture” – within “the moment when the contingent takes on meaning.” On a slightly different vector, Annette Michelson identifies and examines “a form of cinephilia,” “perverse and highly productive,” in the production, exhibition and reception of works by “American filmmakers of independent persuasion and production.” Jonathan Rosenbaum and Adrian Martin compile letters, interviews, and essays on “world cinephilia” and contemporary films which the contributors, scattered across the globe, all love and cherish. At the heart of all these writings lies the love of the moving image in its study and reflection. Cinephilia does not die; it merely takes a different form. Love is ahistorical.

It is in this thread that my essay proceeds – to wrap cinephilia around a practice, a theory, a manifestation of love, rather than the continual witnessing of a ceaseless, helpless spectacle of loss. The focus of my essay is the filmmaker’s practice of intertextual referencing, especially strategies which specifically evoke “the love of cinema,” such as homages and memorialization. In particular, I argue that a unique thrust of contemporary cinephilia is its fluency of transcultural film literacy, one manifestation of which lies in today’s plethora of cross-cultural filmic intertextuality, born from a diversity of film culture experiences afforded primarily by home video, cable networks and most recently the internet and DVD. Further, I demonstrate – using Quentin Tarantino’s KILL BILL: VOL. 1/2 (USA: 2003/4) – such a transcultural correspondence in a work of homage whose remarkable strategies of cinematic tributes effortlessly fuse love with diversely cross-cultural references, a delivery of the fluid transcultural expressions with which contemporary cinephilia traverses the globalized, amalgamated world of the 21st century.

II. Transcultural Cinephilia

*Transcultural: Transcending the limitations or crossing the boundaries of cultures; applicable to more than one culture; cross-cultural.*

Taking on M.M. Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism – “the necessary relation of any utterance to other utterances” – Julia Kristeva first establishes the concept of intertextuality in her oft-cited conclusion of the coincidence within the textual space of the work between the “horizontal axis (subject-addressee)” and the
“vertical axis (text-context)”: “each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read.” Hence, “the theory of intertextuality proposes that any one text is necessarily read in relationship to others and that a range of textual knowledge is brought up to bear upon it.”

Despite its literary origins, the term has resonated within film studies. Stam et al, for example, apply Bakhtin’s conceptions to cinema qua medium as signifying practice; intertextuality has also been invoked in contexts as varied as the films of Kurosawa, New Wave French cinema, film analysis, stardom, auteur theory and the films of Jean Renoir. The strategies used are varied, as Noël Carroll notes under the “umbrella term” of allusion (his preferred term): “Allusion...[covers] a mixed lot of practices including quotations, the memorialization of past genres, the reworking of past genres, homages, and the recreation of ‘classic’ scenes, shots, plot motifs, lines of dialogue, themes, gestures, and so forth from film history....”

Ranging from spoof to tribute, the motivations for intertextual reference are likewise as diverse, frequently walking knife edges between tribute and being simply, well, too clever. Consideration as to which side a reference falls elicits earnest discussion: a series of posting exchanges on a film forum, for example, reflected the amplitude of responses from enthusiasm to skepticism to the conviction of their being “technically proficient but pedestrian ‘ripoffs.’” Clearly, polemics lie in the way one distinguishes between authentic tribute and the (euphemistically stated) sincerest form of flattery.

Nevertheless, in the context of cinephilia, two strategies may be singled out for their motivations of sheer love and reverence. The first is the homage. As Thomas Leitch explains:

A[n] homage is a remake like Werner Herzog’s Nosferatu the Vampire (1982) whose primary purpose is to pay tribute to an earlier film rather than usurp its place of honor... [H]omages situate themselves as secondary texts whose value depends on their relation to the primary texts they gloss... Homages therefore present themselves as valorizations of earlier films which are in danger of being ignored or forgotten.

Leitch cites examples such as “the compilation films of Robert Youngson (The Golden Age of Comedy [1958], When Comedy Was King [1959], etc)” as the earliest works “informed” by the “impulse behind homages,” as well as more well-known works such as Woody Allen’s tributes to Ingmar Bergman (Interiors, USA: 1978; A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy, USA: 1982) and to Federico Fellini (Stardust Memories, USA: 1980).

The second strategy is identified by Noël Carroll as the practice of memorialization – “the loving evocation through imitation and exaggeration of the way genres were.” Referring to Star Wars (USA: George Lucas, 1977), Superman I (UK: Richard Donner, 1978), Superman II (UK: Richard Lester, 1979) and Rai-
ders of the Lost Ark (USA: Steven Spielberg, 1981), he remarks on how memorialization is “the filmmaker’s reverie on the glorious old days,” where plot implausibilities... and its oxymoronic, homemade surrealist juxtapositions... are not forsaken but defended as homage duly paid to the very source of charm in the originals. Despite all the thunder and fury, Raiders uses its allusions to produce a sense of wistfulness and yearning.

Thus transpires the cinephilic impulse of intertextual referencing: love shown in tribute and celebration inherent in the practices of homage and memorialization, conveying an uncanny mixture of admiration and affection – the former in implicit acknowledgement of a unique superiority of the original; the latter in the complicity of unspoken recognition deep in an affected and subjective memory.

One reason for the high degree of cine-literacy and film-historical awareness which grounds the practice of filmic intertextuality is the pact of “secret sharer” understanding between filmmaker and film-viewer, which in the 60s and 70s was underpinned by a frenzy of film-viewing from a generation of audiences who, as Carroll puts it, “went movie mad.” My first argument is that a similar movie-mania is taking place today, albeit with two vital differences: (i) it operates primarily on unprecedented technological development; and (ii) it is marked by an extraordinary diversity of cross-cultural film experience. Whereas the film connoisseurship referred to by Carroll is confined primarily to films from the Western world watched mostly in the cinema hall, the contemporary viewer, however, is able to access films from all cultures, usually from alternative sources. Thus, I argue that the film experience of viewers today – a crucial driver of contemporary cinephilia – has become fluently transcultural in reception and unprecedentedly global in appetite. Surfing on a wave of movie watching first brought about by the videocassette in the 1980s, the “domestication of film” has been subsequently amplified by cable movie channels, refined in quality (albeit briefly) via laser disc and VCD before coming into fruition in the format of the DVD and, in the near future, the internet via movie streaming. No longer bound by a rigid film schedule of the week’s new releases dictated by the (commercial intents of the) cinema hall, access to films – what, when, and how (s)he wishes to watch – is now the consumer’s prerogative. Via Amazon.com and eBay, viewers from any part of the world are also able to obtain any film they desire. Postal DVD services like Netflix and Movietrak – a savvy combination of the power of the internet and the supreme convenience of DVD – add further to the ease of access not just to films, but also movie spin-offs, cartoons, and television serials. Modes of film discussion and criticism have also been revolutionized via extraordinary databases like imdb.com and countless other online film review websites, journals and e-zines, where surfers are able
to discuss and read up on the obscurest film. Ultimately, film consumption, like the rest of our borderless world, has become adeptly cross-cultural, diverse and global— a paradigm of access sans geography. Freed from the pragmatic shackles of territorial distance, the film cultures of the world are now fluid commodities— rentable, downloadable or simply available for purchase.

Following this, my second argument is that, like the film directors of the 1970s and 1980s whose work imbibed so much of the film history of the previous decades, today’s films (and by extension, film practices) likewise reflect the medley of cross-cultural influences that come with the radical changes of the cine-scape. While intertextual references thus far, such as those cited above by Leitch and Carroll, have been almost completely transatlantic, the films of the 90s and millennium, on the other hand, reflect to a significantly greater degree a transculturally mutable buffet of East-West cinema influences, made by and comprehensible to only a film generation who had grown up with the surfeit of film cultures gleaned from the luxuries of DVD, cable TV and internet technology. As a sampling, Lalitha Gopalan lists an almost alarming number of Western films in the 1990s that refer to Indian cinema:

... In both Srinivas Krishna’s Canadian production MASALA (1992) and Gurinder Chadda’s British film BHAIJI ON THE BEACH (1994), we find lengthy quotations from Indian cinema: protagonists express desire by resorting to song and dance sequences.... In a more abrupt manner, Rachid Bouchareb’s French-Algerian film MY FAMILY’S HONOUR (1997) uses Hindi film songs on the soundtrack and even splices an entire musical number from HUM KISISE KUM NAHIN/WE ARE NUMBER ONE (1977) into its narrative... Terry Zwigoff’s GHOST WORLD (2000), narrating traumas of the summer after high school, opens with a song and dance sequence, “Jab jaan pechachan/When we got to know each other” from GUMNAAM (1965), intercutting with the main narrative... Baz Luhrmann confesses to not only having seen Indian popular films, but also being mesmerized enough to deploy several song and dance sequences in his film MOULIN ROUGE (2000). Benny Torathi’s Israeli film DESPARADO PIAZZA... splices in a song sequence from SANGAM (1964) to map a different history of migration for ethnic Jews...49

Undoubtedly, each of us can think of numerous other examples, such as the unmistakable influences of Hong Kong kung fu films and Japanese anime in THE MATRIX (USA: Andy & Larry Wachowski, 1998) and its sequels. Nor are the intertextual/cultural references a one-way East-to-West traverse: Tsai Ming-Liang’s WHAT TIME IS IT THERE? (France/Taiwan: 2001), for example, makes numerous references to François Truffaut’s LES 400 COUPS (France: 1959, THE 400 BLOWS) in terms of scene recreation (Hsiao Kang’s father who, like Antoine on the beach, looks straight at the camera for a few seconds in the middle of JARDIN DES TUILERIES); narrative motifs (Hsiao Kang hiding a clock in his jacket before
hurrying inside a dark movie theater, compared to Antoine’s theft of a milk bottle before darting into an alley to drink it); and ultimately a bodily embodiment in Jean-Pierre Léaud’s cameo (who played the teen protagonist of Les 400 coups). There is even a direct screening of the film itself, as Hsiao Kang watches two scenes from Les 400 coups in his bedroom, a Western-film-within-Asian-film reference which itself places the viewer as a simultaneous, doubly ambiguous (in a horizontal sense – watching both What Time Is It There? and Les 400 coups; (as well as in a vertical “Chinese boxes” sense watching a little screen within a big screen) cross-cultural sampler of two (and, judging from Tsai’s stature in Taiwanese cinema, significant) polarities in film cultures.

III. A Love Supreme

The Bride: And what, pray tell, is the Five-Point-Palm-Exploding-Heart-Technique?

Bill: Quite simply, it is the deadliest blow in all of the martial arts. He hits you with his fingertips at five different pressure points on your body. And then, he lets you walk away. But once you’ve taken five steps, your heart explodes inside your body, and you fall to the floor dead.

Until this juncture, however, the most prominent example to date of intertextual/cultural referencing has yet to be mentioned. Indeed, it is difficult to find a review of Kill Bill which does not refer to the potluck party of Japanese samurai films, Shurayukihime (Japan: Toshiya Fujita, 1973, Lady Snowblood) revenge flicks, anime aesthetics, Japanese monster classics, Shaw Brothers kung fu productions, Sergio Leone spaghetti westerns, etc. that the film happily hosts. A quick trawl through the trivia section of imdb.com will more than suffice to fill one in on the mixed bag of Quentin Tarantino’s borrowings (even some from his own films): the split-screen de Palma sequence of Elle Driver (Daryl Hannah) walking down the hospital whistling Bernard Herrmann’s Twisted Nerve, the old-style kung fu of Shaw Brothers films, the spaghetti western flashback, the Red Apple cigarettes, the yellow suit of the Bride, to name just a few.

Beyond the diversity of Kill Bill’s intertextual references, however, is the sheer love that underpins them. Tarantino is explicit, even emphatic, about his “lifelong obsession with Asian cinema” (including television shows such as Kage no Gundā and Kung Fu) and Kill Bill is a frank homage to them. The deep affection behind the memorialization of the genre (as construed by
Carroll) can be seen in Tarantino’s insistence on creating a 70s aesthetics, eschewing a slicker, smoother style easily afforded by today’s technology (“that shit [digital effects] looks good, but it looks like a computer did it”). He specifically replicates the filmmaking practices of the era, most notably “low-tech innovations” such as the timely puncturing of “Chinese condoms filled with fake blood,” “a nod to the recently deceased Chinese director Chang Cheh, who Tarantino says invented the technique for his 1970 film Vengeance.”55 Kill Bill is thus such a completely cinephilic work of homage and celebration because it remains utterly true: from the imposition of the Shaw Brothers opening logo (with its almost self-abasing implication that one is, rather, watching “a Shaw Brothers movie”) to the washed-out colors and use of the “Shaw Brothers’ snap zoom” in the “The Cruel Tutelage of Pai Mei” chapter to the faithful yet quintessentially Tarantinoian quirks regarding fake blood, as he expresses in an interview:

I’m really particular about the blood, so we’re using a mixture depending on the scenes. I say, “I don’t want horror movie blood, all right? I want Samurai blood.” You can’t pour this raspberry pancake syrup on a sword and have it look good. You have to have this special kind of blood that you only see in Samurai movies.56

Besides replicating aspects of 70s filmmaking, I argue further that Tarantino employs a unique strategy to pay tribute to the era’s Asian films and genres: he continues their stories as legends to inform the mythological world of Kill Bill, thus invoking nostalgia not as a petulant lament but as a force to be called up via the echo of mythic power, whereby the stories of the era became the cosmic vision of his film. This is achieved in two ways (albeit related): the first is by direct reference to the character. For example, the character of Hattori Hanzo (Sonny Chiba), the retired Japanese swordmaker and former master of Bill who subsequently makes a samurai sword for the Bride as her weapon of revenge, is taken directly from the same-named character (also played by Chiba) in the popular Japanese television series, Kage no Gunda (Shadow Warriors) of which Tarantino professes to be a fan. The mythic force of “Hanzo steel” in the world of Kill Bill is evident in numerous ways: it is the weapon for which the Bride journeys to Okinawa and insists upon; for which Elle Driver meets Budd (Michael Madsen), later double-crossing him; without which the Bride was lost in her fight against Elle Driver until she spots Budd’s own Hattori Hanzo sword; whose edge is gorily testified (“that is truly a Hattori Hanzo sword”) by a decapitated (and initially disbelieving) Oren Ishii (Lucy Liu). Thus is homage (with its inherent love and reverence) extended by linking the historical significance of “Hattori Hanzo” from Kage no Gunda to the mythic force of the “Hattori Hanzo sword” in Kill Bill, a reverence doubly amplified through the employment of Sonny Chiba to play Hanzo, both in terms of Tarantino’s own
admiration of the actor (he has described Chiba as “the greatest actor to ever work in martial arts films”\textsuperscript{57}) as well as the double resonance of Chiba which encompasses both the historical and mythic resonances in one actor and one character.

The second way in which Tarantino links his film to the celebrated bygone era is by direct reference to the actor. In much the same way as he draws upon the historical significance of Sonny Chiba playing Hattori Hanzo, Tarantino trades on a similar resonance in casting David Carradine as the title character of Bill. Carradine, as the hero Kwai Cheng Caine, was the star of the TV series \textit{Kung Fu}, of which Tarantino is also a fan. Unlike the character of Hattori Hanzo, however, Tarantino does not utilize a mythical structure around the character of Bill, for there is no weaving of an earlier story (i.e., of Kwai Cheng Caine) into a thread through the current film. But Tarantino pays a different kind of homage, embodied by Carradine, to the TV series. Here tribute is made not via Carradine as the character he played in the series, but as the actor that he is who played the character. This is clear from Tarantino’s own comment on the subjective significance of Carradine: “What’s cool is, for an entire generation, who doesn’t know about \textit{Kung Fu}, who doesn’t know about \textit{Death Race 2000}..., doesn’t know about \textit{The Long Riders}, he won’t be David Carradine, he’ll be Bill. \textit{But he’ll always be Kwai Cheng Caine to me}...”\textsuperscript{58}

A different strategy of tribute is thus pursued here – not, as is the usual case, in relation to an earlier work (as with \textit{Kage no Gunda}) but its \textit{subjective memory}, a memory which is carried \textit{through} and attached \textit{beyond} the work. Tarantino, of course, does pay homage to \textit{Kung Fu} vis-à-vis Carradine-qua-Kwai Cheng Caine: the flute played by Carradine as Bill, for example, is the same instrument which was used in \textit{Kung Fu}. However, I argue that the greater significance in his employment of Carradine does not so much involve the \textit{objective} facts of \textit{Kung Fu} or Kwai Cheng Caine as the \textit{subjective} memories of the television series and in particular Carradine as its star. In light of the signification of Carradine as the \textit{actor} in \textit{Kung Fu}, by casting him as the eponymous character Tarantino thus pays unique tribute by carrying into his film the power of his memories and their inherent affection over and above their inspiration.

However, I think the most astute act of homage in \textit{Kill Bill} is Tarantino’s canny awareness of the limitations of his tribute, a self-aware sensibility of his qualifications as a fan simply on the basis of his being a Western viewer, a foreigner to the culture. When Beatrix Kiddo arrives to face Pai Mei, the first act of the latter is to castigate the former’s foreign-accented attempt to call him “Master” in Mandarin. This frank and completely unexpected slight on the inabilities of a Westerner to grasp the tonal inflexions of Mandarin and its dialects (including Cantonese) is not only a keen observation of an Occidental’s difficult attunement to the Chinese culture but also, in a way, a humble admission of his limita-
tions as an admirer – not of his affection, but of his understanding. Through just
the first two lines of dialogue between Beatrix and Pai Mei, Tarantino acknowl-
edges the simplest of issues about watching foreign films – that of language.
Yet, at the same time, it is an acknowledgement of questions more profound
than accents or vocabulary, for “to speak a language is to take on a world, a
culture.” Indeed, it is an incredibly self-reflexive acknowledgement of a lim-
ited love, always to be curbed by translations, prisms of understanding, limita-
tions of assimilation, and cultural barriers.

Yet it is not to be a forlorn conclusion. Wittily, Tarantino manages to make a
clever joke out of the issue while at the same time turn ignorance into insight: he
creates the “Five-Point-Palm-Exploding-Heart-Technique,” the super kung fu
move which is, as Bill explains to Beatrix, “quite simply, the deadliest blow in
all of the martial arts.” It is, of course, the move which the Bride eventually used
to, well, kill Bill. Taking advantage of the comicality of translation (particularly
of kung fu moves, such as “Hammer of the One Thousand Generous Queens”
and “Imperial Thrust of the Short-Tempered Warriors” – believe me, they
sound much better in the original), Tarantino plays to the hilt the inadequacy of
translation by inventing the similarly hilarious “Five-Point-Palm-Exploding-
Heart-Technique.” In one sense, Tarantino has paid full tribute to the kung fu
films he loves, right up to and including the ridiculous translations. Yet in
another sense, he has achieved more than that. George Steiner once wrote that
great translations are “not an equivalence, for there can be none, but a vital
counterpoise, an echo, faithful yet autonomous, as we find in the dialogue of
human love. Where it fails, through immodesty or blurred perception, it tra-
duces. Where it succeeds, it incarnates.”

What Tarantino has done via his “Five-Point-Palm-Exploding-Heart-Techni-
que” is to turn the (simultaneously self-aware) limitations of his understand-
ing into an endearing target, to synapse the liminality of linguistic translation
by a transferral of affection. Not that the love for the original has been elimi-
nated, for the translation has only been translated – not into another language,
but into another object of love. And therein lies the incarnation.

IV. Conclusion

I have endeavoured through the essay to connect filmmaking practice and inter-
textuality to love, because I am convinced that it is the touchstone of cinephilia,
based on the elementary meaning of its root suffix, “philia,” meaning “love of
or liking for.” To that extent, I disagree with Kent Jones’s comment: “I think
that whether or not we all agree about [Olivier] Assayas or Wong [Kar-Wai] is
less important than the fact that our respective responses to them are passionate and informed. In the end, that’s what distinguishes cinephilia from connoisseurship, academicism or buffery.” Besides the obvious syllogistic fallacy (might connoisseurship not be informed? Might buffery not be passionate?), Jones has also omitted the element of love which is the basis of “philia” (although being passionate and/or informed may be, though certainly not the only, evidence of love). Love may, of course, take different forms – as Michelson writes: “…there exists, however, no one such thing as cinephilia, but rather forms and periods of cinephilia” – but ultimately, its existence is unmistakable.

I believe it is the simultaneity of these two aspects – amorphousness yet enduring legitimacy – which relegates scholars to analyzing the practices of cinephilia, as opposed to its concept. I return to my comments, with which I started this essay, on the myriad aspects of love: its mysticism, its conceptual difficulties, its contiguity to insanity and, yet, its manifest, almost palpable, presence, its patent demonstration in a gaze, a gesture, a word, a practice, an act. How can we theorize love? It is ultimately a phenomenon that is deeply subjective and personal. It cannot be fully contained in objective theory, and that is its glory. We love as we dream – alone.

Notes

1. In writing about general recursion, Douglas Hofstadter illustrates the concept by replacing the main words in the dictionary definition of “love” with, in turn, their definitions. His result: “A morally powerful mental state or tendency, having strength of character or will for, or affectionate regard, or loyalty, faithfulness, or deep affection to, a human being or beings, especially as distinguished from a thing or lower animal.” The process may be repeated indefinitely. See Hofstadter, Douglas R. Metamagical Themas: Questing for the Essence of Mind and Pattern, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985, pp. 434-5.


11. Ibid.

12. She is not the only writer to do so; in his introduction to the 2002 A New Biographical Dictionary of Film, David Thomson similarly reminisces about “the early 1970s, when it was easy to be in love with cinema” [emphasis added].


18. Paul Willemen comes closest to this when he comments: “Cinephilia itself describes simultaneously a particular relationship to cinema (and the question then opens up
of [sic] what kind of relationship that might be) and it also describes a particular historical period of relating to cinema [emphasis added].” Ibid.


27. Ibid., p. 3.

28. Rosenbaum, Martin, Movie Mutations, op. cit.


34. See, in general, Stam et al., New Vocabularies, op.cit.


42. Ibid.
44. Ibid., p. 54. Significantly, Carroll points out that this “movie mania” includes, beyond thriving film clubs and enthusiastic film viewing, the flourishing of film schools and, most importantly, the introduction of film studies in universities.
45. To that end, it is noted that every single filmmaker or film referred to by Carroll in his essay is either American or European. For example, Carroll describes the vocabulary of the film-historically aware American audience as one “including catch phrases such as ‘Langian paranoia’… – ‘x (some new film) has a Fordian view of history, a Hawksian attitude toward women, an Eisensteinian use of montage, and a Chuck Jones approach to the body’” [emphasis added]. Ibid., p. 54.
48. There are, of course, exceptions, most notably Akira Kurosawa’s films such as HAKUCHI (Japan: 1951, The Idiot) adapted from Dostoevski’s novel, KUMO-NO SUJO (Japan: 1957, Throne of Blood) and RAN (Japan: 1985) from Shakespeare’s Macbeth and King Lear respectively. Nevertheless, the argument made here is one of degree. To that extent, the films of Kurosawa can be considered sui generis, whereas the broader point here is that cross-cultural referentiality is a more common and pervasive phenomenon today.
51. I am grateful to Malte Hagener for having pointed this out to me.
53. As the work was released in two parts, there are technically two films: the first being KILL BILL: Vol. 1 and the second KILL BILL: Vol. 2. However, as both volumes are required to constitute the film in its proper three-act entirety, I have thus chosen to refer to the film as simply KILL BILL, rather than by its volume number.
54. The Bride is a character that can, logically, only be so called after the El Paso massacre (i.e., when she was attired in her wedding dress, which gave rise to her character name). By the same logic, she could not have been The Bride before the massacre (i.e., when she was not a bride). It is a small point, but for this reason I have decided to use “The Bride” only for Uma Thuman’s character post-massacre and “Beatrix Kiddo” pre-massacre.
56. Ibid.


60. Tarantino’s awareness and exploitation of this issue is patent. In the early script of Kill Bill, one of his specifications is that, in the first meeting between Pai Mei and Beatrix Kiddo, “whenever Mandarin is supposedly spoken, it comes out of their mouths as dubbed English like in a 70’s Shaw Brothers Chop Socky Flick” [emphasis added]. See the early draft script of Kill Bill, available at <http://www.tarantino.info> (visited 2 December 2004).


63. Rosenbaum, Movie Mutations, op.cit., p. 11 [emphasis added].

64. Michelson, “Gnosis”, op.cit., p. 3.

65. With apologies to Joseph Conrad.