

# Remembering the Future: Terence Davies and the Paradoxes of Time

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For many years I have been tormented by the certainty that the most extraordinary discoveries await us in the sphere of Time. We know less about time than about anything else.

**Tarkovskii, *Time Within Time:*  
*The Diaries 1970–1986*, p. 53**

In the final sequence of Terence Davies's third autobiographical film, *The Long Day Closes* (1992), Bud (Davies's young alter ego) and his friend Albie stare up at the night sky. Bud explains that the stars they are looking at are dead, their brightness having been emitted centuries earlier. The children are therefore watching, in the present, stars that long ago ceased to exist. In an earlier scene in the film, we see Bud sitting on the front steps of his terraced Liverpool home, shining his torch up into the night sky (Figure 1). 'If you shine a torch into the night sky, the light goes on for ever', he tells his mother. These two moments perfectly balance each other: this time it is the light from Bud's torch that will continue to travel through the galaxy long after he himself has ceased to exist. Time, telescoped within the narrative into



• Fig. 1: Bud and his torch, *The Long Day Closes*

the long day of childhood, is thus revealed as simultaneously finite and infinite; both a moment and an eternity.

As these two scenes clearly reveal, Davies is fascinated by the paradoxical nature of time which, indeed, emerges as the real subject not only of *The Long Day Closes* but of virtually all his work. In this, of course, he is not alone; witness the comment by Tarkovskii that opens this article. That a good many directors, including, for example, Davies, Tarkovskii, Angelopoulos, Antonioni, Bresson, Ozu, Resnais and Sokurov are preoccupied by time is scarcely surprising; after all, film itself is a temporal art or, as it is often called today, a 'time-based' art, and from the very first it was valued primarily for its ability to record the fleeting and the transient, in André Bazin's terms, to 'embalm' time.<sup>1</sup> Early film was widely perceived as 'the imprint of time itself'<sup>2</sup> and, as such, was, of course, inevitably bound up with modernism, playing a crucial role in the movement's 'reconceptualization of time and its representability'.<sup>3</sup> Despite the shift of critical focus from time to space that occurred throughout the closing decades of the twentieth century, the fact that filmic space is inextricably linked to time merely serves to highlight the latter's continuing relevance.

At the heart of the relationship between film and time, multiple paradoxes can be discerned: first those characterising time itself which, as Tarkovskii suggests, remains largely mysterious (despite being the ongoing focus of attention in physics, psychology, biology, art, literature, film and any number of other disciplines), but also those characterising filmic time, not least its use of still images (frames) to construct time as flux

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and *durée*, and the multiple and even conflictual times of performance and reception. What is particularly interesting in the work of the directors I have just cited is that their concern with time is self-consciously acknowledged in both content and form. In other words, while their filmic narratives may openly take issue with the paradoxes and ambiguities of time, at a deeper and more complex level, these concerns are simultaneously revealed through their form and textures. Moreover, their treatment of time reveals a common awareness of the close relationship between film and music, not least the ability of music to fragment, extend, or reverse time through its rhythmic patterning. Writing about Messiaen's compositions, for example, Rössler describes a process which could equally well apply to film and its abilities to create new temporal constructs:

By means of his rhythms, he can chop up Time here and there, and can even put it together again in the reverse order, a little as though he were going for a walk through different points of time, or as though he were amassing the future by turning to the past, in the process of which his memory of the past becomes transformed into a memory of the future'.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, music, like film, uses rhythm to deconstruct and reconstruct time differently, and this helps us to understand the idea that music can create 'the indefinite time of the pure event or becoming', a time which, essentially, escapes time.<sup>5</sup> Since this idea is also central to the understanding of how film creates time, it is clear that comparisons between the two may prove both interesting and significant.

Within the broad context of film and time, my particular purpose in this article is to examine ways in which temporal concerns may be articulated through the form and texture of film as much as its narrative content, and to assess the significance of the musical analogy in relation to film's ability to manipulate and represent time and to create, as it were, an image of 'pure time'. In so doing, I shall focus on the work of Terence Davies, with particular reference to *The Long Day Closes*, and to the

relationship in this film between time, memory, and music, and between stasis and flux.

### Film, Time and Paradox

If we return briefly to the two scenes quoted above, it is evident that they are self-consciously referencing a number of paradoxes that are both temporal and filmic. The image of the children gazing at the stars illustrates how past, present and future can, depending on the position of the observer, exist simultaneously as a single event, and the image of the children staring up at the stars could be seen as a perfect replica of Hawking's 'past light cone' diagram, by which he illustrates how 'the paths through spacetime of the light rays from distant galaxies [reach] us at the present time'.<sup>6</sup> In these terms, time exists only in relation to consciousness, an idea that neatly articulates the fundamental paradoxes of autobiographical memory and its shifting tenses and realities, since the child we are watching on the screen no longer exists but nevertheless *is*, just as Davies's narrative recreates a personal time that is lost forever and yet still present and 'real'. Davies is also self-consciously establishing an important parallel between the paradoxes of memory and those of film itself, as is most strikingly revealed in the similarity between the torch beam and the projector. In fact, the image of the beam of light streaming out from a film projector recurs a number of times in *The Long Day Closes*, serving to foreground both the centrality of film to the child and the status of the (remembered) self as a filmic construct. Film, such images remind us, is a creation of light and movement, a temporal form in which relative and absolute meet, and past, present and future merge.

As part of Davies's intellectual exploration of temporal paradox, he contrasts the time of individual consciousness with the chronological, 'imposed' time by which social structures are organised. For instance, at the start of the closing sequence discussed above, Bud tells his friend that his older brother has given him a watch for Christmas. This gift, of course, represents the child's transition into the adult



• Fig. 2: Geography lesson,

world which is governed by a rational, chronological form of time that has little to do with the temporalities that shape Davies's memory narrative. It is perhaps significant that in the early twentieth century, as time became increasingly standardised and reified, a watch, embodying the modern impulse 'to wear time', constituted 'a kind of prosthetic device extending the capacity of the body to measure time',<sup>7</sup> and therefore a way of checking and controlling subjective, individual time.<sup>8</sup> Throughout *The Long Day Closes*, the child is subjected to various similar attempts to 'control' and 'rationalise' him, particularly by school and church. In a memorable geography lesson (filmed in 'real' time), the teacher's definition of erosion as 'the cumulative effect of a great variety of processes' seems directly applicable to Bud, not least since such processes occur over time, and since we are further told that 'life also co-operates in the work of destruction' (Figure 2). However, all the attempts to control Bud, to wear down his individuality and creativity, fail, to the extent that dreams, films and imagination offer him both temporal and spatial escape.

The linear, chronological time referenced by the watch scarcely impinges on the narrative of *The Long Day Closes* which, instead, establishes its own confusing and multiple temporalities. This confusion is apparent from the very first, since the opening sequence deliberately frustrates any expectations that it will introduce and set in motion a simple memory narrative. Instead, as soon as the credits end, we are shown a long, static shot of a dark, derelict

street, partly shrouded by heavy rain (Figure 3). The most disturbing quality of this shot is its extreme artificiality which is foregrounded by the fact that the camera focuses on it for almost thirty seconds before any movement occurs. Where is the anticipated visual authenticity? Even more worryingly, what is the temporal status of this scene? It cannot be that we have returned to the remembered past, for the street is derelict, the houses in ruins. The most tempting reading would be to situate it in the present, the street as it is today, its decay signalling the irrevocable passage of time and anticipating the end of the long day of childhood. Such a hypothesis would certainly prepare the way for a nostalgic transition to that past. However, the essential artificiality of the *mise-en-scène* stubbornly militates against any such interpretation. Moreover, while certain objects in the street, such as the gas lamps, appear to serve as memory traces, anchoring the scene in the past, the fact that they are actually functioning undermines any attempts to establish clear-cut temporal boundaries. Since it cannot be fitted logically into either the present or the past, the scene appears to articulate an imaginary time that reflects the fictional space of memory and the hybrid and multiple times and spaces of identity.

If, as I suggested earlier, a preoccupation with the nature of time runs through almost every discipline, scarcely less universal is the awareness that chronological time is inadequate to deal with human experience. In physics, for example, reassessing Einstein's notion of spacetime as four-dimensional geometry (composed of three



• Fig. 3: Desolate street, *The Long Day Closes*

spatial dimensions and one temporal), Stephen Hawking posits a different sort of time that he names 'imaginary time'. If chronological time is seen as a horizontal line that runs from past to future, imaginary time is positioned at right angles to that line and behaves like a fourth spatial direction, a quality that affords it a 'much richer range of possibilities than [. . .] ordinary real time which can only have a beginning or an end'.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, he explains, the term 'imaginary' does not indicate that the time is unreal, it is simply an *alternative* way of understanding: 'a mathematical model involving imaginary time predicts not only effects we have already observed but also effects we have not been able to measure and yet nevertheless believe in for other reasons. So what is real and what is imaginary? Is the distinction just in our minds?'<sup>10</sup>

While it therefore appears that physics now recognises the existence of this alternative form of time, it is, of course, a concept which has long been fundamental in the arts. And allowing that film can usefully be assessed in relation to Hawking's notion of the spatial dimensions of imaginary time, it is the case that a whole range of other theories (particularly literary) might also be useful. For example, in *Time and the Narrative*, Paul Ricoeur similarly draws attention to the fact that our complex experience of time exceeds both our understanding of linear, chronological time and our awareness of past, present and future, and this alternative time, which he calls 'third time', is composed of the temporal aspects of the world of the text and the way the reader inhabits that world. For Ricoeur, therefore, as for Hawking, our temporal ways of inhabiting 'reality' are largely imagined (since we exist through the text), but are no less real for all that. Thus, the questions posed by Hawking, 'So what is real and what is imaginary? Is the distinction just in our minds?' are just as relevant here. Third time, imaginary time, is situated at 'the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader',<sup>11</sup> which coincides with the intersection of the text's plot with the reader's imagination,<sup>12</sup> and this intersection functions as opening to 'the kingdom of the as

*if*'.<sup>13</sup> It is obvious that, in all sorts of ways, these ideas are applicable to film (and its reception) as a whole, and to the opening sequence of *The Long Day Closes* in particular. Furthermore, as I shall argue, the popular song that accompanies the sequence could usefully be viewed, within Ricoeur's terms, as a point of intersection between the times and worlds of film and spectator.

If we return to the opening sequence, therefore, it is clear that by confronting the spectator with blatant temporal anomalies right from the first, Davies not only clearly signals time and memory as problematic concepts, but also foregrounds an imaginary time and space that is signalled to us as both entirely unreal and entirely real. I suggested a moment ago that it could be that the song that is heard throughout the sequence might act as a point of intersection which operates not only between the director's past and present selves, but also between the filmic narrative and the spectator. The first thing to note is that 'Stardust' (the ironies of the title resound throughout the film), sung by Nat King Cole, performs a nostalgic role for Davies, in that it was very popular in Britain in the 1950s, when he was a child, and that it appears to act as a trigger for the memories that compose the narrative. It is certainly the case that popular songs have a unique ability to bridge temporal and spatial distance, and to recall particular places or people from our past,<sup>14</sup> largely because of their ability of to 'wrap themselves around whatever emotion you happen to be carrying when you first heard them'.<sup>15</sup> Such a song, therefore, may perform a nostalgic function for the spectators too, drawing them into the filmic narrative to which they will, in turn, contribute their own personal memories and emotions, thus providing an opening between the fictional time of the narrative and that of the spectator. However, what is particularly interesting in this example is that the song's lyrics self-consciously address its status as both 'the music of the years gone by' and 'a song that will not die'. In other words, like the stars that feature in the film's concluding sequence, the song belongs to a vanished world while still being part of our

present and future; despite its apparent triteness, it too is both finite and infinite. Therefore, however tempting it might be to posit its function as pure nostalgia, by insistently drawing our attention to the nostalgic processes, its lyrics distance us intellectually even as the song involves us emotionally. Nostalgia is a powerful construct of memory, Davies recognises, but it is inherently dangerous, and while the film repeatedly references nostalgia, it refuses to allow us to remain long within its comforting embrace. In this instance, the combination of the song's 'authoritative' extra-diegetic status and the tension that is created between its smooth romanticism and the desolate atemporal images that it accompanies, force us to perceive the narrative not as a nostalgic trip but as a deconstruction and analysis of the processes of remembering – our own, as much as the director's. Within that process, the song draws the spectators into the imaginary time of the film, and involves them creatively in its reality.

### Autobiographical Time

The fact that the temporal complexity of this film cannot be contained by a linear, chronological structure is in keeping with theoretical understanding of the nature of autobiographical discourse, whose fundamental concerns are the unstable relationship between the multiple temporalities of the self and the multi-layered processes of remembering.<sup>16</sup> It is therefore useful to situate Davies's fluid and elliptical narratives within these parameters. Davies believes that the narrative structures of autobiographical film must reflect the mobile circularities of the process of remembering, given that, for him, form and content are perceived as inseparable. Describing *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1988), he writes that 'the film constantly turns back on itself like the ripples in a pool when a stone is thrown into it. The ripples are the memory'.<sup>17</sup> He thus recognises the phenomenon whereby almost anything may trigger a memory and transport one directly to the past, and each memory, once recalled, may lead to other deeper, less accessible memories in a fluid, spiralling

process of association.<sup>18</sup> The narrative of *The Long Day Closes* functions in this way: it is elliptical and circular, fragmented and erratic, reflecting a subjective temporal logic in which time is in turn stretched and compressed, speeded up and slowed down, and presented as both flux and stasis.

### Compressed Time

One particularly fascinating example of temporal compression in the film is the Christmas sequence that occurs about a third of the way into the narrative. It opens with Bud sitting alone on the stairs as his mother and siblings prepare for Christmas. Gradually, his expression changes from reflective sadness to joy, culminating in the moment when the dining room door, rather than merely opening, appears to glide open in front of him like curtains parting before a film or theatre performance, revealing the family seated at the table, facing him, as if on a stage (Figure 4). As they smile at Bud and wish him Happy Christmas, they speak directly to camera in a deliberate presentation of memory as performance or construct. The scene the child discovers is indeed fantastic; he appears to have stepped into a Christmas card. His mother and sisters are wearing beautiful dresses, the table is laden, and there is a large and lavishly decorated Christmas tree (which has nothing to do with the 'reality' of the little artificial tree, stored all year in the attic, and lovingly brought out each Christmas). However, what marks the scene as a moment of epiphany, removing it entirely from any chronological time, is the confusion of



• Fig. 4: Family celebrations, *The Long Day Closes*

signifiers that it contains. For example, while the majority of the signs clearly indicate Christmas (tree, decorations and so forth), on the table is displayed a birthday cake, decorated with brightly lit candles. Moreover, the dining room is transformed into a space that is simultaneously inside and outside: snowflakes drift down onto the table, street lamps shine near the decorated tree, and the interior wall is also the façade of the house. In other words, the scene condenses into a few brief minutes *all* the celebratory occasions and fantasies of childhood: Christmas and birthdays, parties and presents, anticipation and desire, films and music are all concentrated in this one brief tableau.<sup>19</sup> So powerful is this moment that its multiple temporalities generate multiple and overlapping spaces and again create what we now recognise as imaginary time, a form of subjective, inner time which, as has already been noted, is both entirely impossible and absolutely real. It is interesting that in his analysis of the theories and processes of autobiography referred to earlier, one of the anomalies mentioned by Gusdorf is that, in our memories, 'temporal perspectives [. . .] seem to be telescoped together and to interpenetrate one another', for this is precisely what Davies achieves in this remarkable scene.<sup>20</sup>

### Expanded Time

'Whole periods of time are elided into a few seconds of screen time while other moments [. . .] are expanded into whole sequences', Davies writes of the structure of *The Long Day Closes*.<sup>21</sup> The stretching of time, just like its compression or elision, may be created in a number of ways and for a number of reasons. For example, the time Bud spends at school seems endless for the spectator too, because of the static camera and the claustrophobic spaces that create an overwhelming sense of entrapment. We therefore share the child's relief when he escapes into a fantasy or day dream, often signalled by a dramatic change of lighting that situates him within the beam of a film projector, and by the camera's sudden mobility. Another key technique used by Davies, one that is highly characteristic

of his directing style, consists of the creation of long, fluid shots that seamlessly weave together divergent times and spaces. One of the most beautiful examples is the transition sequence in *The House of Mirth* (2000), in which the constantly mobile camera, focusing entirely upon the changing light and texture of the surface of water (stream, river, ocean), transports us through time and space on an imagined voyage from America to Monte Carlo.<sup>22</sup> However, equally striking examples can be found in *The Long Day Closes*, one of these being the 'Tammy' sequence. The sequence begins as Bud, solitary as usual, swings by his hands from the railing over the cellar steps, and is structured as a continuous right to left to track, with the camera looking vertically down on its subjects from a high crane (Figure 5). The trajectory of the shot follows Bud's street, then moves along the projection beam through the smoke-filled cinema auditorium, down the aisle of the church, reaching the altar just as the priest is celebrating mass, through the classroom as the boys get up from their desks and turn to face the door, and finishes where it started, looking down at Bud in his street. What is so amazing about this single, continuous take is that in it inner and outer spaces blend, and the apparently discrete times and places of childhood are brought together in a single movement. The retrospective right to left track, of course, clearly indicates the process of remembering, while the vertical angle of the camera's viewpoint suggests the eye of the remembering adult looking back at the temporal and spatial construct of his childhood world. As a child, Davies/Bud was trapped within



- Fig. 5: Swinging on the rail, *The Long Day Closes*

that world; as an adult, he is able to bring to his memories a sense of perspective and distance. Disparate times, spaces and viewpoints thus fuse through the movement of the camera, while the impossible logic of a shot which enables the camera to return to its starting point without changing direction, both articulates and critiques the autobiographical process. The tracking shot simultaneously constructs and deconstructs the topography of childhood and, in so doing, positions it entirely outside time.

### Arrested Time

In all the examples we have considered so far, time is expressed as flux. However, as was remarked earlier, movement in film is based on illusion since it is composed of static frames. An interesting consideration of filmic time therefore arises from the inclusion within a narrative of static shots in which the film renounces the illusion of movement and seems to pause. In *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, such shots, in which the characters themselves are posed as still life studies, frozen in time, reflect the deep trauma that haunts them. 'Still life' shots are also found in *The Long Day Closes*, but these need to be seen as a reflection of Davies's concern with the nature of time, and thus their function is somewhat different. One interesting example occurs as the camera pauses for several seconds, without moving, on a medium close-up of the corner of a patterned carpet. What we are faced with is an apparently static shot, framing an empty time and space, in which, quite literally, nothing happens. As in other sequences we have considered, this shot actively constructs and deconstructs time, but in this case, it draws attention to the fact that its subject is time. There *is* visual movement, although it is neither the physical movement of the camera nor representational movement based within the geometric composition of the screen. However, as we gaze intently at the carpet, we gradually become aware of the changing patterns of light on its surface; it therefore seems that we are watching the *texture* of time; time passes before our eyes. Moreover, this is an incalculable period

of time: it cannot be measured: is it real time, a matter of seconds, or the whole time of childhood? Is it perhaps remembered or imagined time, stretching from the adult director to his childhood? Or is it our time, the time of reception? One of its fascinating aspects is the way it reveals Davies's ability to transfer movement away from montage or editing (the traditional tool with which film creates its temporal rhythms and spatial flux), to create tension and change within a single frame, using a combination of light, texture and sound. The shot might usefully be approached in relation to what Deleuze, quoting Marcel Proust, refers to as 'a fragment of time in its pure state', in which we can discern 'becoming, change, passage'. In other words, this shot constitutes what Deleuze terms a direct time-image, 'which gives what changes the unchanging form in which the change is produced'.<sup>23</sup>

While the ability to present an image of time itself is, in many ways, unique to cinema, the way that Davies's dense and beautiful image uses stillness to create a network of virtual images and sensations associated with time and space needs to be considered in greater detail. In general, the complex relationship between still and moving images is addressed with reference to the difference between photographs and film. For Barthes, this essential difference is primarily mechanical: 'in the Photograph, something *has posed* in front of the tiny hole and has remained there forever [. . .] but in cinema, something *has passed* in front of this same tiny hole: the pose is swept away and denied by the continuous series of images'.<sup>24</sup> The consequence of this basic difference, in his terms, is that whereas the photograph testifies to the past by freezing time, the constant flux of filmic images, each in turn interrogating and modifying the previous one, accords them all a transitory and unreliable status. Further differences follow: the static, unchanging time-slice of the photograph cannot play an active role within the ongoing process of remembering since, frozen in time, it can neither restore memory<sup>25</sup> nor transfer grief into mourning, its active equivalent.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the perceived present tense of film allows

it to function as memory, arguably making it an ideal form for the creation of autobiographical discourse.<sup>27</sup> As I implied earlier, this association of the photograph with frozen time certainly helps us to understand the significance of the still images in *Distant Voices, Still Lives*. However, in the shot we are discussing, something quite different seems to be going on, despite the stillness of the image. It is therefore essential to find a different approach, and it seems to me that one possibility is to explore still images in relation to the still life in art. The static camera, with its long, patient close up, removes the subject from the narrative flux, 'framing' it, and thereby setting it apart from the rest. Because of this, it becomes the entire focus of the spectator's gaze for the time that it is on screen and, since nothing appears to be happening, he or she is obliged to engage directly with the image in an essentially creative way. In other words, although it may represent an entirely unexceptional object, the very fact of removing it from the narrative flux intensifies and opens it up to interpretation. Another result of the close-up attention with which we view a still-life composition is the intensification of the act of looking which, in turn, draws our attention to the essential materiality of the image.

In *Shimmering in a Transformed Light: Writing the Still Image* (2005), Rosemary Lloyd studies what happens in a literary text when the narrative 'pauses' to compose the verbal equivalent of a still life, and a number of her findings can helpfully be applied to film. She recognises that when the still life represents an object perceived in childhood and then remembered in adulthood, as is the case in the scene we are discussing, that object becomes something around which 'crystals of memory' (both 'real' and imagined) accumulate. Lloyd's use of 'crystal' in this context is interesting in that it appears to pick up on Deleuze's notion of the 'crystal image' or time-image, which he sees as a meeting point of the actual and the virtual, the present and the virtual past.<sup>28</sup> It would seem entirely appropriate to view Davies's still-life image of the carpet in these terms. As representation of a moment when 'the child's

observation was so intense as to allow the sponge of memory to absorb an image that can then be interpreted in adulthood', the object articulates the (virtual) past while, at the same time, being given substance by the remembering present; ultimately the image is situated outside time.<sup>29</sup> In Lloyd's opinion, such images also speak of the child's sense of wonder which can turn the banal into a source of intense experience, as 'the basis of never-ending storytelling'.<sup>30</sup> This too is important, since it addresses the relationship that forms between the spectator and the static image that requires a creative interpretation, thus constituting a further point of intersection.

Since the still life creates a sense of time passing as we look at it, and represents within its frame a whole range of real and virtual temporalities, we can conclude that its subject is always time. Lloyd compares its multiple temporalities with the 'invisible labyrinth of time' found in Borges's *The Garden of Forking Paths*, because since the image escapes mechanistic or narrative functions, and cannot be situated in time, it offers endless readings and interpretative trajectories.<sup>31</sup> In other words, it is no less fluid and open to interpretation than other, more obviously mobile shots, something that implies that the still life is a source not of stasis but of movement. However, the key to this process is that the movement primarily occurs not on screen, but in a constant two-way flow between screen and spectator and since it unfolds in 'real' time before the static camera, its temporalities are imbricated within those of the individual spectator into whose imagination it is projected, and where it proliferates and expands to encompass individual memories and desires. Thus the ultimate time articulated in scenes such as this one is the infinite time of individual creativity.

### Time and Music

At the beginning of this article, I spoke of the relationship that exists between film and music and suggested that this might play a useful role in understanding filmic time. We have already

noted some of the temporal functions of music within *The Long Day Closes*: its ability to access the past and situate it in the present, for example, and to act as a point of intersection not only between the different temporal spaces of autobiography but also between its narrative world and the individual realities of the spectator. To this extent, its role is seminal. However, music structures the film in other ways too.

Davies frequently argues that film is closer to music than to any other art form, and insists that his own work is modelled on musical rather than traditional narrative structures, citing, as his particular model, the symphonies of Bruckner and Sibelius.<sup>32</sup> Central to this claim is his concept of the indivisibility of form and content, since this suggests the way in which film approximates to the entirely self-contained discourse of music. He argues that the use of musical structures: rhythms, cadences, dissonance and climax, not only gives the film its coherence and power but also enables it to explore sensations, emotions and desires that lie beyond language and that cannot directly be expressed or represented. It is certainly possible to argue that the patterns of images, themes and rhythms that recur in shifting combinations and modulated forms throughout all Davies's work do construct meaning in a musical rather than a narrative sense, while traditional hierarchies of meaning are deconstructed by the way that music and images perform throughout as equivalent and independent signifiers.

Interestingly, Barthes maintained that the best way of understanding modernist (and modern) culture was by studying the relationship between music and other art forms and, of course, there have been numerous attempts to do so, with critics approaching film, writing, painting and sculpture in relation to musical structures.<sup>33</sup> However, the reason that the link between film and music is particularly appropriate is that both are fundamentally concerned with, and structured by time. Like film, music is above all a temporal art, and both can therefore represent human emotional processes in a way that other, more static arts are unable to emulate.

While music does structure time, our perception of it as movement through space is basically an illusion. That is to say that a tune is really a succession of separate tones although we hear it as a development that creates the illusion of movement.<sup>34</sup> In other words, in music, time acquires an (imaginary) spatial dimension. Similarly, we might argue, the concept of moving images in film, also rests upon an illusion. What we see on the screen is a series of still images which, when projected at a precise rate (24 frames per second) are interpreted as continuous movement. Nevertheless, the sensation of time as movement is fundamental to our intellectual and emotional response to both music and film. The inevitable disjuncture imposed by editing, the gaps between the images, is overcome by our tendency to link events that follow each other in quick succession to form a coherent pattern in our minds, in just the way that we link the separate musical tones to form a melody. In these terms, it is clear that rhythm is absolutely fundamental to both, since it organises (and is itself organised by) all the other elements which create and shape our perception and understanding. And in both film and music, rhythm is used to create mood and tension and to structure and maintain our individual perception of, and involvement in, time.

### Extraordinary Time: A Brief Conclusion

It is clear that the fundamental relationship between film and time is both fascinating and complex, and that a short article such as this can only begin to explore its surface. While I have concentrated on a number of examples selected from Davies's *The Long Day Closes*, a film which self-consciously foregrounds its preoccupation with time, many of the techniques and strategies that this film reveals could, of course, also be identified in the work of a whole range of other directors, particularly those cited earlier, who share Davies's fascination with time. For example, spaces that are simultaneously interior and exterior, landscapes that are both real and imaginary, and overlapping temporal worlds are common in films such as *Mirror* (Tarkovskii,

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1974), *Nostalgia* (Tarkovskii, 1983), *The Red Desert* (Antonioni, 1964) and *Landscape in the Mist* (Angelopoulos, 1988) as are the empty spaces, still life compositions, and 'dead time' that allow the temporal worlds of spectator and narrative to merge. Long tracking shots that weave together disparate times, places and realities are widespread in all their work. At the start of *Ulysses' Gaze* (Angelopoulos, 1995), for example, a slow tracking shot brings together characters, events, conversations and memories that span over half a century, to create precisely the sort of imaginary, atemporal landscape that is found in Davies's work. Later in the film, a New Year's Eve celebration ball in Bucharest is filmed in one continuous take that lasts for over fifteen minutes, transporting us, and the characters, from 1945 to 1950.<sup>35</sup> More recently, Sokurov's *Russian Ark* (2002) extends this technique to possibly its furthest extremes, since the entire film is composed of a single, continuous shot that encompasses more than two hundred years of narrative time. Moreover, none of these films develops the linear structure of classical narrative; none of them reflects a simple chronological time. Indeed, we could argue that all of them occupy the imaginary/real space that is a characteristic of imaginary/real time. The 'extraordinary discoveries' that await us in the sphere of Time, can be recognised as all the more extraordinary, given that time in film is shaped by the multiple subjectivities of director, narrative and spectator, and thus will always remain unpredictable, potent and fascinating.

## Notes

- 1 André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* (University of California Press, 1967), p. 14.
- 2 Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time. Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 22.
- 3 Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, p. 4.
- 4 Almut Rössler, *Contributions to the Spiritual World of Olivier Messiaen* (Gilles and Francke, 1986), p. 41.
- 5 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Minuit, 1980), p. 322.
- 6 Steven Hawking, *The Universe in a Nutshell*. (Bantam Press, 2001), pp. 36–41. My emphasis.
- 7 Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, p. 4.
- 8 It is interesting to compare the significance of the watch in *The Long Day Closes* with one of the final scenes in Ozu's *Tokyo Story* (1953), in which an elderly man gives a watch to his daughter-in-law before she returns to her home in Tokyo. While the watch assumes quite different connotations linked with journey and movement, it still references modernist ideas of time, both in its function within the woman's return to the modern, industrialized city of Tokyo, and because it forms a metaphor for change and the passing of time.
- 9 Hawking, *The Universe in a Nutshell*, pp. 61–3.
- 10 Hawking, *The Universe in a Nutshell*, p. 59.
- 11 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and the Narrative* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 71.
- 12 Ricoeur, *Time and the Narrative*, p. 76.
- 13 Ricoeur, *Time and the Narrative*, p. 64.
- 14 Paul Monaco, *Ribbons in Time* (Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 110.
- 15 Dennis Potter, *Potter on Potter* (Faber and Faber, 1993), p. 84–5.
- 16 Georges Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography', in James Olney, (ed.), *Autobiography: Essays Critical and Theoretical* (Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 43–4.
- 17 Terence Davies, *A Modest Pageant* (Manchester University Press, 1992), p. xi.
- 18 Davies is also referring to the famous moment in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*) when the taste of a madeleine dipped in a cup of tisane acts as a trigger in a spiralling recall of the forgotten times and places of the narrator's childhood, experienced as if in a virtual present. See Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, vol.1. 'Du côté de chez Swann' (Gallimard, 1954), pp. 65–6.
- 19 Among the many references to films that Davies includes in this sequence are *Holiday Inn* (Mark Sandrich, 1942) and *Meet Me In St Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, 1944). Such references, to which individual spectators are free to respond in different ways, serve to open still further the multiple temporalities of the film.
- 20 Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography', pp. 43–4.
- 21 Davies, *A Modest Pageant*, p. xi
- 22 For a detailed analysis of this shot and, indeed, the entire film, see Wendy Everett, *Terence Davies* (Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 37–66; 188–95.
- 23 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image* (Athlone Press, 1989), p. 17.
- 24 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Fontana, 1984), p. 78.
- 25 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 91.
- 26 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Penguin Books, 1979), p. 73.
- 27 Wendy Everett, 'Timetravel in European film', in Wendy Everett (ed.), *European Identity in Film*

- (Intellect, 2005), pp.107–15, p.107.  
Second edition.
- 28 Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, p. 81.
- 29 Rosemary Lloyd, *Shimmering in a Transformed Light. Writing the Still Life* (Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 40.
- 30 Lloyd, *Shimmering in a Transformed Light*, p. 40.
- 31 Lloyd, *Shimmering in a Transformed Light*, pp. 138–40.
- 32 Everett, *Terence Davies*, p. 204.
- 33 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 819.
- 34 Anthony Storr, *Music and the Mind* (Harper Collins, 1997), pp.171–73.
- 35 Wendy Everett, 'Between Here and There, Between Then and Now': The Theme of Border Crossings in the Films of Theo Angelopoulos', in Peter Wagstaff (ed.), *Border Crossings. Mapping Identities in Modern Europe* (Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 55–80, pp. 74–77.