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The Sophist Body: Billy Wilder's The Lost Weekend *and Plato's* Phaedrus

Don Birnam, dressed in a black suit, is attending a performance of *La Traviata*. On-stage, "Libiamo," a drinking song, begins as servants offer champagne to guests of a lavish ball. The sight of flowing champagne triggers some agitation in Birnam. His mind quickly cuts out the splendid spectacle and focuses on the bottles of champagne, the pouring of champagne into glasses, the toasts, and the raising of glasses to lips. Birnam's own lips respond to the taste of champagne. He becomes unsettled in his seat. He wipes sweat from his brow. Conscious of the agitation of his body he glances around at other more sedate spectators. The song continues and the alcohol continues to flow. Suddenly Birnam's hallucination takes full control of his faculties; the line of performers assembled at the front of stage becomes a coat rack lined with trench coats. Birnam's attention moves along the line of coats and zeros in on one coat. Suddenly a small bottle of whiskey shines out of the inside pocket. Amidst the eruption of applause Birnam flees the theatre to retrieve his coat.

This hallucinatory moment from Billy Wilder's Oscar-winning film *The Lost Weekend* (1945) captures the major concerns of this essay. The sophisticated setting suggests a play on the Lubitsch operetta film, only here the protagonist is a spectator. The rise of images from the spectatorial body into perception and the resultant intermingling of the interior and the exterior, the past and the present gestures towards the power of the body in making sense of the cinematic experience. The displacement of ball gown into trench coats suggests not so much an opposition between cinematic spectacle and realism but an internal shift within cinematic spectacle. Desire remains central but its coordinates have been redistributed from Lubitsch's palaces of Imperial Europe to Wilder's streets of Manhattan.

This essay conducts a close reading of *The Lost Weekend* to draw a theoretical and critical line from cinematic sophistication to film-philosophy. The line begins with Lubitsch's sophisticated spectator, who lends their imagination to the on-screen

image, and culminates in Wilder's philosophical spectator, who lends their body to the on-screen image and then in a vital reflective turn redefines the image-body relation. The instrument used to draw the line is the comic figure of imposture. Imposture is not central to Lubitsch but it is central to Wilder, who takes it from a reflective device within the sophisticated romantic comedy to a device for reflecting on the cinematic experience. At the centre of this process is the desiring body. *The Lost Weekend* is a significant work not only because it presents a protagonist driven by desire (as is the case in Lubitsch's work), but also because it directly inculcates the spectator in the protagonist's desire. The spectator is made to experience a very specific and overwhelming desire—to drink. By foregrounding the desire rather than the action Wilder compels the spectator to experience the madness of addiction.

The experience of "madness" is the point of intersection between cinematic sophistication and film-philosophy. The paper argues that *The Lost Weekend*'s treatment of desire and the narrative mode it devises to create the experience of madness profoundly echo Plato's first dialogue *Phaedrus*, wherein madness of different kinds, including love and rhetorical inspiration, provides the foundation of philosophical thought and speech. The essay does not go so far as to argue that *The Lost Weekend* is a Platonic text. It argues rather that *The Lost Weekend* is anti-Platonic in the specific and limited sense that it does not set cinematic sophistication in opposition to film-philosophy, but rather sets them in a serial relation. Film-philosophy is founded on but does not seek to repress or expel its cinephilic madness. The film-philosopher is a lover of cinema. Without the love of cinema, its intoxications, there would be no centre to film-philosophy, just as Plato's *Phaedrus* would have no centre without love. It is important to note that the film-philosophy advocated here derives from the close reading of *The Lost Weekend* and not from a free-standing philosophical position. At a fundamental level the essay is an extrapolation of the unique cinematic form presented in *The Lost Weekend*. Having said this, the contribution that this essay seeks to make to the emerging sub-discipline of film-philosophy is a call to renewed interest in fantasy, hallucination, and conscious flight as important determinants of the cinematic experience. When Birnam turns the stage performers into a row of trench coats he is seeking a drink of whiskey but at another level he is engaged in

what Edgar Morin considers an act fundamental to cinema after Melies—the metamorphosis of perceptual reality[1].

1. Wilder, Lubitsch, and the Sophisticated Romantic Comedy

Siegfried Kracauer characterises *The Lost Weekend* as a "terror film" and Giles Deleuze locates it in relation to the literature of the "born loser" typified by Jack London, and within the genre of the classical Hollywood "psycho-social problem film"[2]. To some extent Wilder's film is both: "terror" captures the affective dimension of the film's exploration of addiction and draws it into the visual field of German expressionism, and the realist literary classification captures the milieu of the bars of Manhattan frequented by the lone desperate alcoholic on fire with thirst. *The Lost Weekend*, though, is best considered through the prism of the sophisticated romantic comedy, after Lubitsch. Birnam's desire may be "psycho-social" and he may be terrified of his addiction, but his desire is also somehow splendidly isolated. Indeed, Birnam's desire not only writes itself on the outside world, but the outside world is also reduced to the dimensions of desire. The image of Birnam at the Opera suggests precisely a Lubitsch setting of sophisticated leisure. The displacement of attention from the ball gowns to the trench coats, from champagne to whiskey, from palaces and ballrooms to streets and bars announces the precise direction in which Wilder will take Lubitsch sophistication—to the action-image. Importantly, though, sophistication will not be abandoned but, rather, folded into the action-image.

Lubitsch's cinema is synonymous with the concept of sophistication. Sophistication is a property of the settings and the milieu of Lubitsch's films, but it is also a relation between the filmmaker and the spectator, that is, it is a question of both style and address. Various critics have from time to time attempted to

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[1] Edgar Morin, *The cinema, or, The Imaginary Man*, trans. Lorraine Mortimer (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

[2] Siegfried Kracauer, "Hollywood's Terror Films: Do They Reflect an American State of Mind," *New German Critique* 89.4 (Spring-Summer 2003): 110. Giles, Deleuze, "The Action-Image: The Large Form," in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 145.

describe, analyse, and theorise Lubitsch sophistication, or "the Lubitsch Touch," but the consensus tends to be that it is immaterial and intangible, and that is obviously its allure. A central feature of Lubitsch's "touch" is his use of comic equivocation. Lubitsch's jokes are often unstated, or suggested in looks and gestures, or articulated across a scene or even a sequence. The effect of equivocation is to draw the spectator's consciousness into the image itself. By leaving a joke unstated, the film requires the spectator to provide the missing information. The spectator thereby supplies something of their own imagination to the image. This process is greatly assisted by providing sumptuous imaginary settings populated by protagonists possessed of powerful erotic tendencies and imaginings.

On occasion sophistication is treated reflexively. This is most evident in Lubitsch's use of the trope of imposture. Imposture in Lubitsch is an asymmetrical transparency. That is, the imposture is transparent to the spectator but not to the object of the imposture, usually a woman of high social standing. In *Monte Carlo* (1930) Count Rudolph Farriere poses as a hairdresser in order to seduce Countess Helene Mara, who has fled her impending marriage to Duke Otto von Liebenheim. In *Trouble in Paradise* (1932), the paradigmatic example of male imposture, a thief, Gaston Monescu, poses as the *déclassé* aristocrat Monsieur Leval to become the secretary to Marriette Colet, a wealthy but young and beautiful widow to a perfume fortune.

For Lubitsch, imposture must be voluntary to succeed. Involuntary imposture does not and cannot hold.[3] A woman of higher class cannot impose a false identity on a man of a lower class. That is, the man cannot be commanded to be other than he wants to be. Narratives of failed or delayed consummation result from forced imposture. In *The Love Parade* (1929) Queen Louise seeks to turn her soldier husband into a consort, but he refuses to sleep with her until finally she submits to

[3] The exception here is *The Man I Killed* (aka *Broken Lullaby*) (1932), wherein a French soldier responsible for the death of a German soldier is forced to take the German man's place so that the dead man's parents can believe that they once again have a complete family. Interestingly, the involuntary imposture can hold only because any suggestion of a romantic relation between the dead German's fiancé and the Frenchmen has been extinguished.

his demands for equality. In *The Smiling Lieutenant* (1931) a princess is unable to coax her husband into her bed until she remakes herself in the image of his ex-girlfriend. Only once this happens does the husband accept the terms of his forced marriage.

Imposture relies on a parallelism of the sexes in Lubitsch. The operetta films and the romantic comedies are often set in two distinct locations. In the case of forced imposture, a woman summons a man from one location to her own location; often he is a fixture of the bars and nightclubs of Paris or some other bourgeois city, and she is cloistered in the palace of an obscure, fictional, Eastern European Imperial city such as "Marshovia" or "Flausenthaum". In other cases, including voluntary imposture, the woman and the man encounter each other in one location. Interestingly, in all cases the man is not identified with any single location—the man is place-less, his mobility is a condition of existence. This mobility of the man is important as it figures him as the place of desire. The woman summons him as a fantasy summons its object. *The Love Parade* opens in Paris with a dramatic scenario of infidelity. It cuts to Queen Louise waking from her sleep. She reveals to her maids in waiting that she has just had a very luxurious and pleasurable dream. Once she commences her sovereign duties for the day, she reads a report on the events in Paris presented in the infidelity scenario, whose central protagonist is her very own envoi, Count Alfred Renard. Louise summons Renard to the palace, demanding answers. Over the course of their meeting the couple fall in love and quickly marry. Conflict arises when Renard learns that, despite marriage, he remains a subject with no duties, titles, or responsibilities.

Parallelism then serves a fantastic function: it enables the equivocal articulation of the desires of the sovereign woman. The consort, the man summoned by her, belongs to her own desires and fantasies. The spatial separation of the woman from her desires must be overcome by an effort of imagination on the part of the sovereign woman and of course also on the part of the spectator. The narrative then converges on a moment of consummation. There is then only one sex, a sovereign woman possessed of common desires. In the operetta films these desires are most often expressed through dance, especially the waltz, or in song, or more

diffusely in the mise en scène.[4] For the most part, imposture remains a static form in Lubitsch. It is by no means the central feature of sophistication, though it is used as far back as *I Don't Want to Be A Man* (1918), one of Lubitsch's early silent German features.

For his part, Wilder makes imposture central to his films and substantially develops its dramatic, formal, and stylistic possibilities. Imposture is a central figure in every Wilder film and takes on historical, philosophical, and political dimensions. Wilder's first four films trace a very specific impostural trajectory, from the invention of false identity, through the misappropriation of the identity of another and the mutual annihilation of the identity of self and other, to the falsification of identity. These four scenarios—invention, misappropriation, annihilation, and falsification—can be plotted precisely against each of the first four films. What we find is that the sovereign woman gives way to the modern man (man of enterprise), erotics gives way to sociality, and the spatial order of imposture becomes a distinctly temporal order. Imposture thereby goes from being a static to a dynamic form.

In Wilder's first film, *The Major and the Minor* (1942) Susan Applegate invents an identity for herself, Su-Su, a twelve-year-old girl travelling alone from New York to her home in Iowa. Susan has saved the train fare required to return home if her life in New York does not work out. She learns upon her arrival at the train station that the fares have since increased and she does not have enough to pay for a ticket. She then retreats into a bathroom and moments later reappears as Su-Su. Susan does not become Su-Su but rather through the invention of Su-Su her life changes. That is, through her imposture Susan Applegate acquires a new mode of existence, one free of the sexual exploitation she experienced in New York and during her sojourn in the Military Academy. In other words, the invention of false identity serves as a device for existential change.

[4] Alexandra Seibel in "The Sound of Make-Believe: Ernst Lubitsch and the World of the Operetta" discusses at length the relation between the desiring body in Lubitsch and the waltz as a specific performance of erotic attraction. Alexandra Seibel, *Visions of Vienna: Narrating the City in 1920's and 1930's Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 163.

In Wilder's second film, *Five Graves to Cairo* (1943), corporal Bramble, an allied soldier caught in retreat from the Nazis, finds himself stranded in the British Empress Hotel and forced to appropriate the identity of a hotel waiter, Davos, killed in an allied air raid. But when the Nazis arrive and set up headquarters in the Hotel, Bramble discovers that Davos had only been impersonating a hotel waiter. He was in fact a Nazi spy. Bramble then finds himself in close quarters with Field Marshall Rommel and privy to Nazi strategy, and must risk exposure by stealing Rommel's plans. Bramble's identity remains clear throughout, and indeed the suspense of the film derives from the potential of exposure, which would lead to certain death. Bramble's identity also clearly returns once he has thwarted Rommel. So, while the same structure of a self, visible under or through a false identity, marks the present, the appropriated identity brings with it a past that must be lived in part by Bramble. A backstory is unearthed in all the scenes in which Bramble plays Davos. The key point of contrast with *The Major and the Minor* is that no transformation of self takes place. Bramble must live Davos's life, but his own identity is not in any way affected by the imposture.

This is not the case in Wilder's third film, *Double Indemnity* (1944), wherein Walter Neff, a life-insurance salesman, steals the identity of one of his clients, Mr Dietrichson, with the explicit purpose of murdering him, taking his place, and claiming the life insurance money with Dietrichson's wife, Phyllis. The specifics of Neff's imposture as annihilation are important. While Neff steals Dietrichson's identity in order to dispose of it at a later time, Dietrichson persists in a way that Davos does not. Neff cannot and does not simply perform Dietrichson; something else happens: Dietrichson starts to become Neff. In other words, Neff begins to vanish beneath his imposture and the dead man's identity takes a hold of his life. In a crucial scene Neff boards an inter-city train dressed as Dietrichson, whom he has already murdered. He moves to the rear of the train where he intends to annihilate Dietrichson a second time by "falling" to his death. The plan is to lay Dietrichson's body on the tracks and claim the insurance due to this "accident," except that someone is already at the back of the train and starts a conversation wherein Neff must introduce himself as Dietrichson. In a later scene at the insurance offices Mr Jackson, the man from the train, partially recognises Neff as Dietrichson. Wilder is careful to position Neff's and Jackson's bodies in the frame in a pattern that reminds us of the scene on the train. This scene powerfully renders Dietrichson's haunting of Neff. Dietrichson becomes Neff in other ways as

well. Lola takes him into her confidence and he offers her advice about Nino her mercurial fiancé. And, of course in a black comic twist Neff/Dietrichson is murdered by "his wife" Phyllis.

The important point here is that the very sense of imposture has begun to change by the time Wilder creates his third film. Whereas there was a clear difference between the real person, Susan or Bramble, and the invented or appropriated person, Su-Su or Davos, now, despite the clear difference between Neff and Dietrichson (we see Dietrichson, whereas we never see Davos), they necessarily share the same fate. Imposture starts to become falsification. That is, there is no simple superimposition of one identity (invented or stolen) on top of another, but rather identity itself transforms through representation. Neff cannot shed Dietrichson like a coat or a costume. When Neff steals Dietrichson's signature he takes on Dietrichson's identity. Permanence has shifted from social class to language. Dietrichson's name takes over Neff. This changed structure of imposture strongly suggests that in *Double Indemnity* identity is no longer something outside language, something that uses language but rather that identity is constituted through language. This I would argue is a fundamental change to Lubitsch's figure of imposture. While the asymmetrical transparency persists—Su-Su's prospective lover does not discover her imposture, Field Marshall Rommel does not see through Bramble's imposture, and Keyes does not deduce Neff's imposture—emphasis shifts from the representation of self, to the very relation of representation and self.

It is perhaps not surprising that this new mode of imposture affects a distinct change in narrative mode. In *Double Indemnity* first-person, post-mortem, voice-over, flashback narration is used for the first time. The film opens with Neff returning to the Offices of Pacific All Risk Insurance to dictate a memorandum to his boss Barton Keyes that details the events behind "the Dietrichson case." For the entirety of the film the action cuts back and forth between Neff in the office and the events that he dictates. The relation of events and representation now take centre stage and as a result imposture becomes "mnemonics," that is, representation seeks to affect past events. Neff seeks to be rid of Dietrichson through language, but as he and many other Wilder protagonists will learn, the past is never where we left it. There is no return for Neff, who has decisively signed his name "Dietrichson."

2. The Lost Weekend *and falsification of the body*

In Wilder's fourth film, *The Lost Weekend*, imposture turns decisively toward falsification. The retrospection attached to imposture in *Five Graves to Cairo*, which develops imposture into a mode of narration in *Double Indemnity*, becomes introspection in *The Lost Weekend*. Representations do not affect the body so much as the body exudes representations. These representations take centre stage. Thus, the narrative mode devised in *Double Indemnity* changes again in *The Lost Weekend*. Instead of a parallelism of present and past, there is a "co-existence" of the past and the present.

The Lost Weekend centres on Don Birnam, a writer caught in the grips of alcohol addiction. For some time Birnam has been trying to write a novel, *The Bottle*, about his drinking spells. But the very thought of alcohol instantly turns to a thirst for alcohol. The action follows the course of one of Birnam's drinking sprees from Thursday afternoon to Tuesday evening. Of the many such bouts that Birnam has endured over the last six years, this one is singular, as it culminates in a graphic hallucination of a vampire bat biting the head off a mouse that comes straight out of the imaginary of Weimar cinema. The hallucination is ironically the only writing that takes place across the weekend, though Birnam is oblivious to the irony.

The action closes on a curious note. After cleaning himself up Birnam pauses to imagine people's reactions when the novel is published: "a great big pyramid of my books. A novel by Don Birnam." At this point the scene that opens the film reappears, this time accompanied by Birnam's voice-over announcing the onset of the drinking spree that he has just endured. This final moment suggests a happy ending wherein *The Bottle* has been written and the drinking spells are past. As Helen, Birnam's fiancé says, "you couldn't find the beginning because you didn't know the end." Furthermore, it suggests that everything we have just seen has indeed been *The Bottle*, the novel. We have been privy not to an event that is narrated but rather to an event of narration. The alcoholic has all along been a novelist.

This ending that throws us back into the beginning is vital, as it suggests that *The Lost Weekend* needs to be viewed twice in order to be seen once: first as chronicle

and second as memoir.[5] The chronicle is a third-person (objective) account of the weekend spree. It begins on Thursday and ends on Tuesday. The memoir is a first-person (subjective) recount of the events of the weekend. The beginning of the memoir concludes the chronicle. The very last words uttered in the chronicle are the first lines of the memoir. The body is defined as memory in both the chronicle and the memoir, though memory is different in each. The difference can be considered in terms of direction. The chronicle moves backwards as it moves forwards—that is, the drinking spree takes place over five days, but the body becomes captive of past events. The chronicle re-lives—as if in a film—its own past. The memoir moves forwards as it moves backwards—that is, the four days of the drinking spree and the images that besiege the body become subject to an act of narration that descends into the body and extracts a specific set of events.

The distinction between temporal movements also gives rise to a distinction between bodies. In the chronicle, time is external to the body and the past returns of its own accord through the body. This is most apparent in the hallucination, as Birnam believes the events played out before him are real. An hallucination is by definition a fictional image perceived as real. In the memoir, the body is reclaimed from the past. *The Bottle* must be seen not as text but as gesture, as a work of the body. Whereas the chronicle describes a passive body, determined by a passion for alcohol, the memoir inscribes an active body by describing alcohol as a passion. It also subjects the passion for alcohol to the power of the mind. The relation between the chronicle and the memoir is therefore *anamnesic* because the memoir diagnoses and remedies the temporal disorder detailed in the chronicle. In so doing it reorients the body, redirecting its efforts and its passions. Anamnesis affects the causality of the body. The body goes from effect of time to cause of

[5] John Thomas McGuire remarks that the general consensus was and is that the ending of *The Lost Weekend* is too optimistic. It is plausible to argue that the optimistic ending is merely a response to the censors because one so versed in comic equivocation would have clearly been aware of the incredulity such optimism would provoke. It is clear to me that the ending is a trap and, as I show, it holds a number of startling narrative and philosophical implications. John Thomas McGuire, "Exploring the Urban Milieu: Billy Wilder, Four Films, and Two Cities in the United States, 1944-1960," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 30.5 (2013): 435-48.

time. The body goes from passive to active, from effect of the past to cause of the future.

The complicating factor here is that *The Bottle* remains an imputation, a suggestion presented in the final moments of the film. The memoir materialises only when the film is viewed a second time. The same on-screen events will replay but they will be designated differently. Birnam will not be a desperate drunk possessed of fantasies of authorship but will be an organising consciousness reflecting on a troubled past. The moment-by-moment passage of events will have been thereby subsumed in a notional first-person voice-over flashback narration. The images themselves will thereby also have changed their sense: third-person images will be indiscernible from first-person images, the present tense indiscernible from the past tense. What belonged to the world will now belong to memory. More than this, though, the entire transformation relies on the imagination and memory of the spectator. The images will change their sense *for* the spectator who has already seen the weekend unfold, who has already endured the spree from Thursday to Tuesday. It is only *by* the spectator that the images can change their sense.

There is a very complex process of embodiment enacted through the two viewings. In the first viewing we can refer to Birnam as an on-screen presence. The spectator is deeply affected by the events that befall Birnam, but a separation of sorts remains. We can then designate a cinematic situation or instance marked by the present, a screen on which images are projected and a perceiving subject for whom the images are projected. In the second viewing this situation changes. The separation of on-screen image and perceiving consciousness diminishes. The images are as embodied recollections. Birnam's desire effectively inveigles itself into the spectator's very awareness of the images. Birnam's desire haunts the spectator as Dietrichson haunts Neff because Birnam's voice (nowhere actually audible) sounds in the spectator's memory. What was designated as voice-over is converted into interior monologue. In what follows I want to think through this process of embodiment first as an experience of the film then as a concept of the cinematic event.

3. Chronicle of a weekend lost

In what follows I discuss first the chronicle then the memoir. The chronicle very precisely creates an experience that calls for the memoir through the systematic erosion of the distinction between third person and first person. Attentiveness to point of view is thereby crucial, as the spatio-temporal form of any given shot is uncertain.[6] This process is instantiated from the very first shot and scene. The film opens on a moment of conscious flight. From a wide shot of the Manhattan skyline the camera tracks left to right across the face of an apartment building. It settles on a window from which is hanging a bottle of whiskey. Birnam is inside the window packing a suitcase. The camera dollies toward the window and comes to rest above the bottle and at the threshold of the widow frame. A theremin warbles as Birnam turns his head, suffusing the shot with anxiety and agitation. Birnam's turned head, his anxious eyeline, and his desultory gesture give the theremin's sound a bodily source and these opening shots a clear narrative sense: the drinking spree is about to begin. The desire to drink has returned. From this moment forth Birnam's bodily gestures and facial expressions constitute the central expressive feature of the narration. Birnam's body exists along a continuum between two poles, wanting alcohol (before) and having had alcohol (after). The period of drinking itself is largely elided from the on-screen image. Only Birnam's first drink, a shot of whiskey at Nat's Bar, is shown.[7] And in this scene, it is clear that Birnam throws his whole being into the act. He first lets the glass sit on the bar for a moment before launching himself at it and tossing it back in a way that registers his thirst more than the act of drinking. When Nat goes to wipe away the ring of condensation from the bar Birnam stops him and says "Let me have my vicious circle." With no distinct present to separate them, the before and after become indiscernible.

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[6] Christopher Beach's essay "Peering into Corners: Billy Wilder, John Seitz, and the Visual Style of Film Noir", in *A Hidden History of Film Style: Cinematographers, Directors and the Collaborative Process* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2015), addresses Wilder's working relationship with his cinematographer John Seitz. This is valuable work, as most discussion of Wilder's collaborations focuses on his screenwriting partners.

[7] A later, much more despairing shot of Birnam begging Nat for a drink is also shown. This shot registers Birnam's desperation more than his thirst.

The two poles of the body also determine two orders of facial expression that can be thought in terms of Deleuze's notion of the face as either active or expressive, as power or quality. When alcohol is wanting, the face is active, it seeks, it grasps, it searches, its features are extensive. At critical moments, when alcohol is almost in its grasp, it stares straight past the camera (indicating that the camera stands, like the consort in Lubitsch, in the place of desire). When alcohol has been consumed or, if alcohol is to hand, the face is relaxed, its extension dissolved. This face does not hold its expression for very long.

The poles of the face determine different orders of space. The active, searching face is often shot in depth in such a way that eyelines become trajectories that organise the shot. Bottles of whiskey stand at the end of the eyeline or the eyeline has such clarity that it takes on narrative force. In one early scene Wick discovers the bottle hanging from the window, he moves out of the bedroom into the kitchen, and he pours the bottle down the sink. Wick's move from the bedroom to the kitchen is shot in depth from within the kitchen, with the sink in the foreground and Birnam and Helen in the background. A direct line is drawn from Birnam's face to the sink. Wick moves along and around Birnam's eyeline and when he pours the alcohol down the sink the entire foreground becomes a close-up of the bottle. The spectator is of course nearest to the bottle and held along Birnam's eyeline. Birnam's desire and spectatorial viewpoint are here (and in many other instances) directly connected.[8] The narrative force of the action is that Wick's gesture echoes Birnam's desire: pouring alcohol into a cavity is precisely what is about to happen—the sink becomes an orifice. Moments such as these take on real specular power once the spectator's attention shifts into the memoir. Shots and actions in depth such as these provide the space with a hallucinatory pressure. The face affected by alcohol is shot without this depth. This face has no geometrical order. If the extensive face is "micro-physiognomic," the intensive face is "macro-

[8] Shots such as these, wherein space is disposed as desire, represent a powerful elaboration of Sabine Hake's notion that Lubitsch's films work as "maps of desire." Sabine Hake, *Passions and Deceptions: The Early Films of Ernst Lubitsch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

physiognomic." It exudes a global quality free of detail regardless of how closely it is framed.[9] As I will show, this face is the bearer of images.

A similar polarity applies to the visualisation of the body. The body that feels the absence of alcohol is on-screen and in motion. The body that feels in the wake of alcohol is off-screen, at least for the most part, and is motionless. For instance, when Birnam returns to his apartment with two bottles of Rye we see him settle into his armchair and pour the alcohol into the glass. At this point the camera, now directly above the glass, slowly descends into its shimmering contents. The camera then immediately cuts to the next day as Birnam exits his apartment in search of more alcohol. The narrative therefore progresses (if this is the right term) by a series of ellipses that link the body before alcohol to the body after alcohol. Interestingly, the ellipses cannot be treated as periods of non-existence or nothingness because the effects of drinking are more and more legible in the motions and postures of the body. As the weekend rolls on Birnam's gait loses its composure to the point where he tumbles down the stairs to Gloria's apartment only to wake the next day within the depths of the drunk tank. The ellipses are then expressed in gestures that become more and more torporific: the body off-screen comes more and more to bear on the on-screen body, the quality of intoxication comes to overwhelm the power of locomotion. The less the body moves the more it becomes the bearer of fantastic images.

This is evident in two scenes that bookend the weekend and take us into the ellipses—into that which is lost.

The first scene takes place on the Friday morning. After exiting his apartment Birnam heads directly to Nat's Bar on 3rd Avenue. Nat challenges Birnam about his drinking so Birnam tells Nat the story of *The Bottle* in two detailed first-person voice-over flashbacks that take us back to the day he met his fiancé Helen at the Opera and to the day Don is to meet Helen's parents. The voice-over flashbacks function as first-person interruptions of the third-person narration. Birnam seated

[9] Ed Sikov points out that John F. Seitz's extreme close-up of Birnam's eye as he wakes on Saturday morning to empty bottles of alcohol was, at 10 inches, the closest facial close-up to date. The move out of Birnam's eye and into the apartment actualises this relation of depth and surface. Ed Sikov, *On Sunset Boulevard: The Life and Times of Billy Wilder* (New York Hyperion, 1998), 225.

at the bar, furnished with alcohol, recollects events from his past. Although the events took place three years ago, they arise pre-formed, automatic, and impervious to modification each time he drinks: "that's my novel Nat". Charged with a sense that the novel is at his fingertips, Birnam rushes back to his apartment to type out his recollections, but he gets no further than the title, *The Bottle*, and the dedication, "To Helen with all my love," before the agitation that we witnessed at the Opera and at the window frame begins. What becomes clear in this sequence is that the events from the past do not belong to Birnam. They belong to the act of drinking. Drinking is an instrument of writing and the body is the medium.

The second scene takes place on the Monday afternoon. After four days of drinking Birnam, seated in his armchair, looks up at the white-rectangle of his wall. In close-up we see the head of a mouse appear out of a hole it has just gnawed in the wall. Suddenly the scene cuts to a wide shot of the room. A bat hovers momentarily at the window then swirls around the room; Birnam wards off the sight with his arm. The bat sets upon the mouse biting its head off. Birnam begins to scream uncontrollably. The room is now completely dark except for the illuminated terror on his face. His breathing is more like convulsions of fear. The hallucination functions as a third-person narration within a first-person perspective. Birnam believes that the events that play out before him are real, are part of the world. We can say these events are purely imaginary. But they are not marked off as such. They seem to belong to the world. There is no formal indication of a first-person perspective, and there is no division between events and representation as there is in the flashbacks. We see what Birnam sees but more importantly we see *as* Birnam sees. The implication here is that the world has been reduced to fantastic images. Birnam's body has become the author of images that are written on his own senses. These images have overtaken the world. The body and representation have become indiscernible. Moreover, representation is now an event of the intoxicated body. Having consumed copious amounts of alcohol, Birnam's body starts producing images, images that exist in the elliptical void. It is not until Helene forces Birnam to touch the wall (in an uncanny re-rendering of the mythic origins of film spectatorship) that he returns, and we return, to the solidity of the "real world."

Across the weekend a reversal has taken place between the relation of the body and the world. In the flashbacks the present is interrupted by images that issue

from the past. The presence of the voice and the fade-in and fade-out of the flashbacks all refer these events to the present. No such demarcation happens in the hallucination. A time lapse track moves to the window as the light of day slowly fades and tracks back to Birnam seated in his chair, exactly where he was earlier in the day. The widening scale of the scene clearly places Birnam's stationary body within the expanse of the lounge room. And the shot-reverse shot pattern clearly binds him to the wider field of vision. Except the entire field is or has become Birnam's sensate experience of the hallucination. The body and the world have become indistinguishable. The other noteworthy element here is that the hallucination, in contradistinction to the flashbacks, is an original composition. This is his first hallucination—though he quickly realises that such events will be more frequent. Bim the psychiatric nurse, warned him that this would happen, that he would progress soon enough from a "freshman" to a "sophomore."

The reversal also pertains to the spectator's relation to the on-screen events. The clear demarcation of difference that frames the flashbacks allows the spectator to remain simply that, a spectator, external to the events themselves, and the various spectacles, including the vision of the whiskey bottle in the overcoat pocket, do not lose their specularity. The submersion of the hallucination in conventional narrative patterns of wide/close, shot/reverse-shot, and objective/subjective point of view supresses specularity and emphasises embodied experience. Thus, the course of the weekend can be characterised as a descent into Birnam's own sensorium—this is clearly why Kracauer saw the film as a horror film. I would suggest it could equally be seen as an experimental film. Tarkovsky says in *Sculpting in Time* (1981) that each of his films was concerned with exploring a single emotion and in doing so each film is able to explore all its facets.[10] Through *The Lost Weekend* Wilder makes us endure one state of being—addiction. Moreover, he compels us to experience this state of being in an original cinematic form.

The notion of a chronicle of the weekend suggests a progressive narrative from Thursday to Tuesday. The passing of days is in fact only marked by the increasing number of milk bottles at Birnam's door, bottles that everyone steps over on their

[10] Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*, trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 17.

way in and out of the apartment. But the progression of the chronicle is not a narrative progression. Rather, as I have shown with reference to filmic style, it is a progressive dissolution of the distinction between the body and the world.

Point of view is such an important stylistic feature of the film because it is responsible for establishing the relation of the body to the world but also of the spectator to the image. Single shots quickly change their sense and meaning: an objective wide shot becomes an eyeline either by establishing a spatial relation between the body and objects of desire or by a movement of the body through the shot that brings Birnam's face from the background to the foreground and into direct relation with the camera. Shots such as these conclude with a palpable sense of awareness on the part of the spectator of Birnam's look and of the coincidence of the spectator's look with the look of the camera—in other words a shot of the body in the world quickly converts into a shot of the world of the body.

Given that eyelines often lead to alcohol, which then leads to oblivion, we can say that eyelines lead to ellipses and that the camera therefore stands in the place of the bottle, of desire, and of oblivion. Logically, then, the spectator responds to these changes of sense, to these sudden transformations of body-world relations and comes more and more to occupy a void or ellipse. The spectator experiences torpor, oblivion. The chronicle does not present a narrative but rather it creates for the spectator a destructive bodily experience. The stylistic order and narrative sense of the film is directed to registering this bodily experience. In the end, the spectator experiences a protracted event of disembodiment.

If *The Lost Weekend* ended with the return to the solid world after the fall into oblivion we could characterise the weekend in terms of a Lubitsch hiatus, wherein the real world recedes and a fantastic world takes its place, a world where desire is given free reign. But *the Lost Weekend* as noted above only appears to offer spectators an opportunity to free themselves from the terrible destructive body they have been forced to inhabit. The films ends, as it began, with a moment of conscious flight. Birnam takes a seat on his bed and imagines "a great big pyramid of my books" placed behind the glass of the bookshop window. As he begins to recount the desperation he felt at the beginning of the weekend, the image cuts to a shot that retraces the first camera move, this time from the turned head to the window frame to the bottle and to the Manhattan skyline. This conscious flight

can be read positively as the opening lines of the memoir and as initiating a grand reversal of narrative type and sense. But it also bears the stylistic signs of something more pessimistic, the commencement of another binge; Birnam is seated, his head is tilted, and his voice is separated from the image. The tension between the Hollywood optimistic ending and the "experimental" pessimistic ending is enough to leave spectators where they began, on a profound note of equivocation: are we in the memoir or are we in the chronicle?

What are we to make of this ending? At the very least it suggests a realistic sense of the fate of the alcoholic, infused with some sense of hope after the bender has exhausted itself but also destined to lapse at some unspecified point. The opening scene makes it clear that it has only been ten days since the conclusion of Birnam's last spree. And so, the Hollywood ending is somewhat unbelievable. As if not wanting to give in to the dictates of the censors and the usual sense of enforced hope, Wilder and Brackett cloud the final moments, but only for those who want to see the equivocation.

In stylistic and formal terms, the ending gestures toward Lubitsch's equivocation. The "equivocation" of the Lubitsch narrative works as a reflexive strategy that calls attention to the image as site of the production of identity and desire, and to spectatorship as consumption, as it obliges the spectator to fill in the gaps or to interpret gestures, looks, framings, and objects. The sophisticated spectator is precisely one who is in possession of the comic intelligence required to fill in the gaps. The ending of *The Lost Weekend* goes beyond this form of sophistication. It takes equivocation and extends it to the film as such. The film begins when Birnam enters the void and ends when he exits. But as just demonstrated, the exit may or may not throw the spectator back to the beginning. This means that the spectatorial interpretation of "gaps" takes on a whole new meaning. Comic intelligence becomes something else. The spectator does not lend their imagination to the film but rather the spectator supplies their body to the film. By going back again, the spectator's experience of the state of being of addiction becomes a point of reflection. The film is thereby reconstituted in the spectator as embodied memory. This is not merely an advance on Lubitsch's "equivocation," but also reconstitutes the narrative mode of the sophisticated romantic comedy. The trope of imposture is being converted into an operation of falsification. And this falsification is not

simply something that happens to a fictional character on screen, but also something the cinema enacts in and for the spectator.

4. Memoir of a life returned: Phaedrus *and* The Lost Weekend

The concept of falsification can be further elaborated by comparison of *The Lost Weekend* and Plato's first dialogue *Phaedrus*. This is admittedly a peculiar use of Plato's text but it's a productive coupling. Indeed, I would argue that *Phaedrus* can readily be considered as a prototype of *The Lost Weekend*. Key features of *The Lost Weekend* are also present in *Phaedrus*, which uses imposture to set-up (or stage) the problem of sophistication as a temporal disorder[11]—specifically as an equivocal relation of the body and memory. *Phaedrus* defines the body in terms of memory, but it distinguishes two forms of memory and therefore presents two distinct but interrelated bodies. It defends the power of narrative action to rectify the relation of the body and memory. *Phaedrus* also provides a prototype of the relation of the first viewing and second viewing, a philosophical turn. It characterises the philosophical turn as anamnesis, thereby associating philosophy with medicine, something invaluable for Birnam and entirely plausible when we consider that the memoir is a remedy for drinking. *Phaedrus* then allows me to think through the implications of the concluding reversal of *The Lost Weekend* and therefore also to conceptualise the relation of the second viewing to the first.

A brief summary of Plato's dialogue is in order. Socrates happens upon Phaedrus, who is absorbed in the task of memorizing a speech by Lysias. A dialogue ensues, in which Phaedrus asks Socrates to comment on a provocative speech that Lysias has written about love. Socrates refuses to listen to Phaedrus's account of the speech and insists that Phaedrus read the text of Lysias's speech in full. Socrates's lukewarm response to the speech provokes Phaedrus to challenge Socrates to write a better speech on the same topic. Socrates obliges with a similar speech but then becomes concerned that he has offended the Gods and so he composes a palinode

[11] Plato links sophists not only to speech-writing but also, through his dialogue with Phaedrus, to the problem of written-speeches. Plato provides an account of writing that insists on its deleterious effect on memory and thought. Derrida makes the point that the sophists were especially interested in memory and were highly critical of artificial memory. Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination*, trans. and intro. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 62-171.

that retracts the sentiment and the argument of his previous speech. The palinode ("literally again-ode") rejects Lysias's argument that "it is better for a beloved to grant favours to a non-lover (that is to someone who does not love the beloved) rather than a lover."[12] The dialogue then turns to a protracted discussion of the virtues and dangers of the art of rhetoric and ends with the famous myth of the invention of writing, wherein the merits and limitations of writing as an aid to memory are discussed.

The critical element of the dialogue, for our purposes, is the palinode. The palinode initiates a philosophical turn. A palinode is defined as a song or poem in which a poet retracts or recants a view or sentiment from a previous poem. A palinode can be considered to be an act of atonement, appeasement, or purification, or a means of setting the record straight. Socrates's palinode has even been described as an "apotropaic ritual," as it aims to ward off divine retribution.[13] Socrates's palinode is the key operation of the dialogue not only as it enacts a reversal of the terms and sentiments of Lysias's speech but also because it initiates the anamnesic movement of philosophical embodiment. How does the palinode do this? First, it distinguishes the God-given consciousness of the madman from the rational consciousness of the sane man. It then classifies four different kinds of God-given madness. 1) Foretelling the future from "divine dispensation" (244*c*). 2) Madness that comes from "horrendous illness and suffering as a result of guilt incurred in some time in the distant past" (244*d*). This madness draws its strength from prayer, worship, and ritual. 3) Madness that comes from the Muses. This madness stirs delicate souls into "a frenzy for composing lyric and other forms of poetry" (245*a*). Any aspiring poet must have the inspiration of Muses to be effective; skill and technical craft will not "make him a competent poet (245*a*). 4) Finally, there is the madness of love, of intoxication. Without this form of madness *Phaedrus* would have no centre, no subject. Next Socrates offers "proof" of his argument that "some of our greatest blessings come from madness, when it

[12] Daniel S. Werner, "The Palinode: Soul and Eros," in *Myth and Philosophy in Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 46.

[13] Marian Demos, "Stesichorus' Palinode in the *Phaedrus*," *Classical World* 90.4 (March-April 1997): 245.

is granted to us as a divine gift" (244*a*) by detailing the "truth about the nature of the soul" (245*c*).

The palinode also distinguishes between self-movement (repetition) and recollection. Self-movement is an attribute of the soul: "[i]t is only something which moves itself that never stops moving, because it never abandons itself" (245*c*). The soul which moves itself is a source of motion "for everything else that moves" (245*c*). A source or soul is also "ungenerated" and "imperishable" (245*d*): "self-movement is the essence and principle of soul" (245*e*). The self-movement of the soul is a defining characteristic of living creatures but not of the human being. Any solid body with a soul is a "living creature." The human being is filled with a soul that has "seen the truth." A soul that has seen the truth is imbued with memory. Memory of the truth defines the human soul. Humans souls though are distinguished between those who remember and those who forget. Writing emerges at the end of the dialogue as a technology of memory. But again, a division appears, this time between two forms of writing, writing that encourages memory and writing that encourages forgetting or recollection. Some forms of writing encourage memory while other forms of writing under the guise of memory induce forgetting. This is a crucial distinction as it sets out plainly Socrates's antagonism towards the sophists and towards written texts. The dialectical relation is between en-souled or embodied writing and soulless or disembodied writing. The writings of the sophist are soulless as they are devoid of self-movement. (For Socrates this is apparent in the form and content of Lysias's advocacy of the interests of the non-lover.)

The Lost Weekend stages this very same dialectical struggle between the sophist text and body, the chronicle, and the philosophical text and body, the memoir. The sophist text is a "soulless" set of recollections whereas the philosophical text is "en-souled" continuous movement. But an important difference between Plato's text and Wilder's text must be noted and examined. Whereas *Phaedrus* divides human beings according to memory and forgetting, *The Lost Weekend* makes memory *and* forgetting "coexist" in the one human. Instead of an opposition between the emptiness of forgetting and the repletion of memory there emerges the question of the relation of memory and forgetting in writing. It is important to recognize that whereas in *Phaedrus* two separate bodies (Phaedrus and Socrates) come together around a disputed text (Lysias's speech), in *The Lost Weekend* a

single body (Birnam) is constituted through the dispute of two texts ("the bottle" and *The Bottle*).

Let me explain this. "The bottle" is the weekend (the spree) in which the world is reduced to Birnam's desire for alcohol. Birnam's desire comes out of the past. The past is expressed in an extensive face that envisages the bottle and only the bottle everywhere it looks. The first time he tries to get his hands on some alcohol he rummages through all his usual hiding places, the vacuum cleaner, the book shelf, the waste paper bin. But the bottle is not there. Once the alcohol is to hand an intensive face momentarily appears and registers its material effects. The intensive face does not envisage the bottle but rather is struck and assailed by visions from the bottle. These visions supply the content or substance of *The Bottle*, but it is clear that they do not belong to Birnam. They are strictly disembodied. "The bottle," then, has the structure of forgetting, a past returns through Birnam's body but he does not live it because he cannot remember it. What is more he cannot capture it; he cannot consciously recall the past. The images flow through Birnam's body though they are not part of, or contained by, Birnam's body.

The Bottle is the palinodic novelisation of "the Bottle." If we strip the palinode of its mythic mode for a moment, we see that the palinode is essentially a text that takes another text as its object. More than this, it adopts a very particular attitude to the text it takes as its object. It seeks to reverse the sentiment and values, but it also seeks therefore to re-write the previous text or, better, to overwrite the previous text. *Phaedrus* is composed via this very process. In the discussion of the rules and virtues of rhetoric Socrates dissects Lysias's speech and comments on its organisation. His chief criticism is that it has not an organic structure; it is rather composed of parts that are interchangeable. Lysias's speech then does not have the form of an organic body; it is not structured as a body with a soul. It is rather pure artifice. The palinode therefore adopts a critical, reflective attitude to the speech it seeks to over-write. So far as Socrates is concerned this a form of self-critique for his imposture as a sophist, but in so far as the dialogue as a whole is concerned it represents the very differentiation of sophistry and philosophy. *Phaedrus* is itself a palinodic work in so far as it performs a philosophical reversal of the practice and seductions of public rhetoric.

Given that *The Bottle* appears at the very end and then overwrites the weekend—that is, that the memoir overwrites the chronicle—we can argue that the very same movement characterises *The Lost Weekend*. *The Bottle* is indeed a text that takes another text as its object. It adopts a similar attitude, seeking to overturn the sentiment and values of the previous text, effectively overwriting it but also engaging in self-critique and self-examination. The object of self-critique is to impose an organic form on the text, to create as it were a *zoon*. On a number of occasions Birnam makes it clear that the purpose of the novel is indeed introspective. The very act of writing is as important as what is written. One of the principle aims of *The Bottle* is to redistribute the relation of the body and representation. The "presence" of *The Bottle* suggests a relation wherein the speaking body encompasses and provides a source for the images that unfold. The reversal suggests a reorganisation of time in which the body comes before the voice, in which the body provides a source for the voice. Such a reorganisation of time clearly suggests (and mobilises) the distinction between self-movement, or true repetition, and recollection, or formal repetition (simply repeating the text already repeated). It therefore suggests the presence of a soul as source or generative principle of the text. The significance of the reversal in the final moments of the film is precisely that Birnam's body is installed as a source of the text and not as the bearer of a text, as it is in the chronicle.

As pointed out above, something fascinating happens here, if only at the level of narrative logic, though I maintain that it is the necessarily lived effect of beginning again (of "again-ode"). If *The Bottle* must return to "the Bottle" it must return to the sophist void. But how can it retrieve from the void that which is already lost? The chronicle makes it very clear that it is precisely Birnam's body that is missing. The style, technique, and form of the narrative ensure that Birnam's past is disembodied. *The Bottle* can only do this, therefore, with reference to the spectator who has just witnessed the events of the weekend. *The Bottle* is therefore inculcated in the spectator's memory. The "soul" that generates the memoir belongs to the spectator. I would argue that this is precisely what is at stake in the philosophical turn initiated by the palinode: the film goes from being an on-screen image to an embodied memory-image; the film becomes a *zoon*. The body in question is no longer simply "Birnam" the fictional figure on screen, but the spectatorial body considered now as a writer, as a possessor (or student) of rhetorical expertise. The spectator then does not simply witness a palinodic

operation as part of the film's complex narration but the palinodic operation becomes a philosophic event of the cinema. The spectator is thrown into the position of writer. Writing is self-reflection, self-criticism. It reflects on and critically appraises the pleasures of public rhetoric. It examines the way rhetoric moves the soul, not simply with words but with words and images. The significance of the philosophical turn, its facilitation of a conversion of a third-person narration, in which the past returns to the present, into a first-person narration that returns to the past, is not simply to remember that which is forgotten so that it will not return, but also to "re-write" the passions or desire of the body. Just as Phaedrus's body is the site of a struggle over writing, the spectator is the site of a struggle over cinema.

5. Film-Philosophy

This sense that philosophy takes its lead from cinematic sophistication is important in the current context of film-philosophy. Much of the film-philosophy produced at present clearly embraces a cinephilic impulse to free sensation from signification. Current film-philosophies therefore do not necessarily seek to set the cinema on a more rational or more correct intellectual course, though there are some theories that consider a scientific foundation to be more rigorous and defensible. Rather, most film-philosophies advocate or assume a powerful allegiance or "friendship" between the two disciplines. The allegiance that I have set out here between *Phaedrus* and *The Lost Weekend* is intended to make a specific contribution to those film-philosophies that seek to reinstall the body in the concept of the cinema. Just as Socrates writes the body along the two axes of the body seduced by words that act "in the world of men" (273*e*) and of the body "educate[d]"[14] by "speeches that are pleasing to the gods" (273*e*), film-philosophy seeks to overcome the tension between pleasure and knowing, between seduction and education that has been a formative opposition in film theory since Christian Metz declared the film theorist to be one who loves and does not love the cinema.[15]

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[14] Walter Omar Kohan, "Plato and Socrates: From an Educator of Childhood to a Childlike Educator," *Studies in Philosophical Education* 32 (2013): 313-25.

[15] Christian Metz, Introduction to *Psychoanalysis and the Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Briton (London: Macmillan, 1982), 3-16.

In "What My Fingers Knew" (2004) Vivian Sobchack provides a brief but formidable list of works that she considers foundational in this regard: Laura U. Marks's *The Skin of the Film* (2000); Steven Shaviro's *The Cinematic Body* (1993); Linda Williams's work on "the body genres," to which must be added her work on melodrama, a mode of cinema that Williams considers to be a "visceral sort of ethics" (74); Elena del Rio's essays that seek to "undo the rigid binaries between demarcations of externality and internality" (56), to which must be added her more recent work on Deleuze, including *The Grace of Destruction: A Vital Ethology of Extreme Cinemas* (2016), in which she sets out a non-phenomenal body composed of forces and affects; and Jennifer Barker's *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (2009). Sobchack's own essay has instigated a surge of interest in rethinking the cinematic situation from a phenomenological-neuroscientific perspective, resulting in work such as Jane Stadler's "Experiential Realism and Motion Pictures: A Neurophenomenological Approach" (2016).[16]

As with these foundational works of film-philosophy, *Phaedrus* clearly aligns epistemology with the pleasures of the body; indeed, these pleasures are the seat of epistemology. The benefit for film-philosophy of the detailed examination of *Phaedrus* is precisely the way the body is accorded centrality. While current film-philosophy installs the body in the unfolding of the image, it tends to introduce memory from outside the cinematic event, as something that comes to bear on, rather than constituting, the event. And while *Phaedrus* inaugurates a long-standing suspicion of the illusion of reproduction, it nonetheless defines the body

[16] Vivian Sobchack, "What My Fingers Knew: The Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in the Flesh," in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 53-84; Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, Theory Out of Bounds, vol. 2 (Minneapolis, London: Minnesota University Press, 1993); Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44.4 (1991): 2–13; Linda Williams, "Melodrama Revised," in Nick Browne, ed., *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory* (Berkley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 42-88; Elena del Rio, *The Grace of Destruction: A Vital Ethology of Extreme Cinemas* (New York, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Jennifer Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009); Jane Stadler, "Experiential Realism and Motion Pictures: A Neurophenomenological Approach," *Studia Phaenomonologica* 16 (2016): 439-65.

according to competing concepts of memory. The presence or absence of an original is less than apparent across the entire dialogue—repetition that erases repetition is a more accurate summation of its movement. *Phaedrus* works not with the present-image and the past-memory but with the representations of two forms of memory. On the one hand, memory is a technical medium populated with marks or "topoi" that are vivified from outside, and on the other hand, memory is a living body possessed of "truth". This "truth" is not anchored in physiological sensation, or rather physiological sensation does not guarantee truth. Philosophy then does not operate in a present tense, but it is also not the past tense of re-presentation. Sobchack's essay is indicative of a range of film-philosophies that make the body the present tense of the cinema. Even Shaviro's cinematic body, perpetually confronted by the "violent more-than-presence" (46) of sensation, tends to use the moment of material-sensory collision as the principle means to extricate film theory from the bonds of representation, ideology, illusion, and cognition. Memory becomes imbricated in the circuitry but no great weight is given to its intrusion or consideration given to the notion that it may indeed precede the instance of perception.

Birnam's tactile (or labile) response to champagne bottles is suggestive of Sobchack's cinematic body. His agitation is "cinesthetic" due to the evident "transmutation" of sense perception between sight and taste. However, Birnam's cinesthesia evokes a lived body that precedes and exceeds the immediate situation of the cinema. When the bottle appears through the jacket-pocket the cinema is installed within a theatrical event, but not so much in technical or historical representational terms but rather in terms of the force of the body itself, as if the cinema did not simply bind or vivify the lived body but rather thrived on the imaginary and compulsive powers of the body. Birnam's response suggests that the cinema is made from what the body wants, from what it desires. The cinema is memory made into sensation. When Birnam hallucinates the bat and the mouse memory is accentuated and allegorized. The unmistakable evocation of *Nosferatu* (1922) and especially of *Tartuffe* (1925),[17] which insists that one needs to employ a fiction in order to expel a fiction, suggests that Wilder's own cinematic past is

[17] A profound but as yet unexplored relation exists between Murnau and Wilder. The relation resides in narrative style and form more than in visual style.

in play, that the tension between Hollywood and Berlin, between Paramount and Ufa is permanent though enlivening and debilitating at the same time.

Jacques Derrida's extended essay on *Phaedrus*, "Plato's Pharmacy", articulates precisely Wilder's cinematic logic. Derrida argues that the sophists' suspicion of artificial memory compels Socrates to imitate or mimic the sophists' concept of memory, thereby making his own concept a simulacrum. Derrida's argument is evinced in the structure of *Phaedrus*, whereby Socrates first imitates Lysias then recants via the palinode. This originary presence of sophistication in dialectics determines the central concept of the pharmakon. The pharmakon takes on different, sometimes opposing senses in Plato's philosophy. Sometimes it is poison; sometimes it is cure. In *Phaedrus* the pharmakon is poison rather than cure, recollection rather than memory. At least, this is the case in so far as written language is concerned. However, and perhaps paradoxically, the entire movement of *Phaedrus* can be considered as pharmako-logical in that Phaedrus's encounter with Socrates proves to be a cure of his dependence on the false wit and intelligence of Lysias. Phaedrus is made to see the implications of his own passion for speeches and his love of orators. From Derrida's perspective the pharmako-logical movement is a kind of forgetting of the relation of dialectics and sophistry. The philosophical reversal that takes place through, or which is initiated by the palinode, is not simply a process of embodiment, of inculcation of the true into the sophist body. Rather, it is a repetition of the same.

The Lost Weekend questions the pharmako-logical movement of *The Bottle*, the palinodic reversal of drinking. When the film's ending throws us back to the beginning and thereby suggests that we and Birnam are indeed writing or re-writing *The Bottle*, the structural and thematic homology to *Phaedrus* is unmistakable. After all, the memoir is indeed a form of writing that seeks to erase the past, so that a new past may be installed. *The Bottle*, like *Phaedrus,* not only recollects the past but it changes the past—it seeks to live a different future, or to live the future differently—hence its pharmacological dimension. At the centre of this, though, is incredulity at the notion that all that has transpired across the weekend and across many other weekends of the last six years can simply be turned around. When Birnam imagines his novel in the window of the book store we confront the indiscernibility of before and after: the drinking is ended and the writing begins, but equally, writing ends and drinking begins. *The Lost Weekend*

thereby creates a simulacral relation between the bottle and *The Bottle* that anticipates Derrida's argument that Socrates must imitate Lysias so as to distance himself from Lysias. *The Bottle* must imitate the bottle so as to forget the bottle. In so doing, writing and drinking become as cure and poison, intoxication is reinscribed in sobriety, pleasure is fundamental to knowledge. Knowledge then becomes a form of intoxication.

Conclusion

In this essay I have attempted to demonstrate the importance of *The Lost Weekend* to film-philosophy. *The Lost Weekend* is many things: it is an adaptation of an autobiographical novel, it is an homage to and a development of the sophisticated romantic comedy after Lubitsch, it is a reflection on the relation of Weimar cinema and Hollywood cinema. Most importantly, it offers a concept of the classical cinematic body. The originality of this concept is that the cinematic body is not simply a site of sensory receptivity nor straightforwardly a source of figurative projection. Instead, the cinematic body is a point of indiscernibility, at once receptive and projective—a temporality wherein the past and present come before *and* after each other.