

Mónica Martín Carpio

The Rebirth of Utopia in 21st-century Cinema: Cosmopolitan Hopes in the Films of Globalisation

Director/es

Azcona Montoliú, María del Mar

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THE REBIRTH OF UTOPIA IN 21ST-CENTURY
CINEMA: COSMOPOLITAN HOPES IN THE FILMS
OF GLOBALISATION

Autor

Mónica Martín Carpio

Director/es

Azcona Montoliú, María del Mar

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THE REBIRTH OF UTOPIA IN 21ST-CENTURY CINEMA

COSMOPOLITAN HOPES IN THE FILMS OF GLOBALISATION

PhD Dissertation
MÓNICA MARTÍN CARPIO

Supervisor
MARÍA DEL MAR AZCONA MONTOLIÚ

For Raúl, Marcos and Abril.

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Introduction

Utopia is a highly contested term. It is commonly understood as an imaginary social order whose idyllic delineation makes its prospects of accomplishment as remote as the island of Thomas More's 1516 book, which gave rise to the concept. When its borders are rigidly contoured and its rules unreceptive to dissent, it becomes a passage into totalitarian blueprints, as has been frequently noted in relation to twentieth-century despotic regimes. This alleged authoritarian drift seemed to justify utopia's demise as a mode of speculation about social forms, collective projects and communal spaces in the theories and cultural texts of the late twentieth century, as analysed by historian Gregory Claeys (2011). After the turn of the century, though, utopian social thinking seems to gradually regain its prestige in films, sociology and political activism.

This thesis argues that twenty-first-century cinema illustrates the rebirth of utopia, conceived as an open method grounded in cosmopolitan worldviews and aspirations. Rather than promoting a fixed agenda or depicting an exemplary status quo, contemporary movies such as *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006), *The East* (Zal Batmanglij, 2013) and *The Hunger Games* series (2012-2015), among others, articulate a cosmopolitan utopianism that vindicates egalitarian and sustainable futures. But cinema is not alone in this task. As will be explored in chapter one, contemporary sociologists such as Ruth Levitas (2013) and Zygmunt Bauman (2017) revalidate utopia as a speculative theory concerned with the necessary reformulation of the modes of being, philosophies and institutions that characterise twenty-first-century global societies. Re-staged as a dialogical method for social analysis,

ontological reflection and political propositioning, utopian thinking is defined in the work of these scholars as an essential future-oriented knowledge that must suggest inclusive alternatives to neoliberal globalisation, its economised philosophy and individualist paradigms. From the field of utopian studies, Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (2003) analyse the re-emergence of utopian possibility in 1990s dystopian literature that ties political opposition to diversity discourses. In the movies, the re-encounter of the utopian and the political would come later, in the 2000s, often as a cosmopolitan response to dystopian or unfair global contexts, as explained in chapters three, four and five.

Before dealing with twenty-first-century cinema, chapter two briefly contextualises the rebirth of utopia in contemporary films through a revision of cosmopolitan discourses in three different cinematic periods: early silent films, the sixties and late-century movies (1970s-1990s). First, the analysis delves into the development of cinema as a cosmopolitan art and cultural industry from the 1890s to the 1920s, noting how World War I undermines modern visions of linear progress, and turns hope into a matter of social struggle between countries, classes and ideologies, or against unpromising situations. Then, as in the rest of the chapters, the scope of the research is limited to English speaking cinema and Hollywood films, mainly, to explore the inclusive imaginaries and the countercultural hopes articulated in films released around the sixties, a moment in which equal civil rights, cooperative networks and anti-nuclear discourses find a way into the movies at the same time as they do in political activism. This brief historical overview finishes with an exploration of the anti-utopian bias of late 20th-century cinema: hopeless protagonists, abject societies and catastrophic futures that portray the social as a dystopian burden,

conceive the global as an indecipherable whole, and make utopia recede into individual projects disassociated from politics and collective aspirations.

Yet, from the turn of the century onwards, some films progressively depart from anti-utopian premises by responding to global risks such as climate change with the articulation of cosmopolitan discourses, as happens with recent social theories of globalisation by scholars such as Ulrich Beck (2009) and Gerard Delanty (2006). As will be argued in chapter three, the speculation about the end in apocalyptic cinema can be read as a political statement on the future that tends to be imagined through either apartheid or cosmopolitan solutions. As far as twenty-first-century post-apocalyptic movies are concerned, ecological catastrophes in films like *The Road* (John Hillcoat, 2009), *2012* (Roland Emmerich, 2009), *Into the Forest* (Patricia Rozema, 2015) and *Interstellar* (Christopher Nolan, 2014) convey environmental anxieties in the Anthropocene, but different cinematic representations of space in these and other movies—dead-end roads, wilderness, pastoral and polluted spaces, specifically—can be associated with particular readings of natural disaster (such as anti-capitalist, androcentric, neoliberal, colonial, eco-feminist and cosmopolitan). In the case of *Children of Men*, the film's dystopian representation of 2027 London offers a critical view of ecocidal, nationalist and oligarchic paradigms that calls for cosmopolitan worldviews and attitudes. Amidst the ashes of ecocidal globalisation, the protagonists' quest for hope speaks of utopian speculation as an urgent environmental and humanitarian task, rather than as an escapist evasion. The film's characters, formal devices and uses of space can be said to articulate the rebirth of utopia as a cosmopolitan method whose dialogical approach to Otherness seeks to bring about inclusive and sustainable cartographies of the global.

Beyond post-apocalyptic cinema, chapter four explores twenty-first-century films that endorse philosophies of hope and care in global times of economic, ecological and institutional crisis, as theorised by Zygmunt Bauman (2007b; 2017), Slavoj Žižek (2014) and Michel Serres (2015). Many contemporary film protagonists embody modes of being in the world that care about nature and others, subscribing their individual aspirations to eco-social welfare. As will be argued, non-mainstream survivors in films such as *The Revenant* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2015), *American Honey* (Andrea Arnold, 2016) and *Moonlight* (Barry Jenkins, 2016) prompt utopian outlooks on human resistance that highlight both characters' vulnerability and emancipatory opportunities. The character played by Brit Marling in *The East* is analysed as a case study of twenty-first-century eco-social film dreamers who change their neoliberal worldviews according to ecological and cosmopolitan ideals. As Bauman and Serres propose, this protagonist and others in films such as *The Shape of Water* (Guillermo del Toro, 2017), *Okja* (Bong Joon Ho, 2017) and *Roma* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2018) illustrate dialogical attitudes and nurturing relations guided by an ethics of care that is essential, these movies suggest, for the sustainability of the species.

Cosmopolitan hopes are also central to the egalitarian political cultures articulated by films and global social movements in the 2010s, as argued in chapter five. Reacting against the social inequalities and the ecological damages caused by neoliberal globalisation, 2011 Occupy activists and late 2010s ecological and feminist movements seem to have forged a global ecosystem of cosmopolitan dissent, as theorised by scholars Manuel Castells (2012), Camil Alexandru Parvu (2017), and Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser (2019). Movies like *The Hunger Games* series endorse networked strategies and models of political commitment that

resonate with those enacted by international activists like Greta Thunberg. The eco-feminist leadership that Jennifer Lawrence's protagonist embodies in this film franchise contests hierarchical and patriarchal political forms, rejects utilitarian and dialectical perspectives, and challenges the division of the private and public spheres. In *The Hunger Games* series and other contemporary movies such as *Mad Max: Fury Road* (George Miller, 2015), *Widows* (Steve McQueen, 2018) and *The Nightingale* (Jennifer Kent, 2018) cooperative alliances united in diversity seem to advocate for the development of a politics of the multiple that defends intersectional conceptions of equality and justice, and understands the political as a dimension of the personal.

To sum up, the films, theories and social movements that will be analysed in the following chapters reflect on the risks and opportunities that globalisation brings about. They refuse to conform to neoliberal definitions of the global, economised conceptions of existence, and dialectical visions of progress performed against Others and Nature. Instead, they call for cosmopolitan openness across geopolitical borders and social taxonomies, and prompt individuals to take responsibility for eco-social wellbeing and the future. Emancipated from philosophies of exclusion and extraction, the films explored in the following chapters aspire to an egalitarian and sustainable world that requires both individual commitment and political coordination. The utopian is not detached from the political in these movies, as happened in many late-century films, but vindicated as an open cosmopolitan method and a moral obligation towards future generations. The movies explored in this thesis show that, along with climate change, financial crises, nationalist nostalgia and pandemics, globalisation has harboured cosmopolitan horizons, ecological worldviews and dialogical imaginaries that work against the grain of neoliberal progress and demand coordinated responses to the worldwide challenges above.

Chapter I. The Art of Envisioning Life

Otherwise: Utopia and Cinema

1.1. Utopia: A Contested Concept and its History

Utopia: the good place, the no-place, ideological vision, desire, wishful thinking, blueprint, totalitarian dogma, philosophical attitude, daydreaming, fiction, method? The many meanings around utopia evolve with the times that think of it in one way or another. Thomas More coined the term in his 1516 literary work *Utopia*, opening the concept to contradictory readings from its earliest days. As Lyman Tower Sargent explains in *Utopianism* (2010, 2), More's imaginary state Utopia could imply both a "no-place" (following the negative prefix "ou-" and the Greek *-topos* for place) and "the good place", when appearing under the spelling "eutopia" (the "eu-" prefix meaning "good"). Thereafter, definitional problems have traditionally accompanied utopia, Gregory Claeys and Sargent assert in *The Utopia Reader* (2017). Different scholars define the term in various, at times incompatible, ways from a variety of academic fields including utopian studies, sociology, literature, psychology, cultural studies, political thought and philosophy. Meanwhile, utopia's confluence with dystopia and anti-utopia is also problematic: "portrayals of one person's utopia being another's dystopia", as Claeys and Sargent argue (2017, 4). For these reasons utopia and utopianism are best approached as "essentially contested concepts" like the original 1516 term from which they derive (Claeys and Sargent 2017, 5).

The different understandings of utopia today pre-exist, though, the actual coinage of the term by Thomas More, as Claeys explains in *Searching for Utopia: The History of an Idea* (2011):

[Utopia] has been ‘somewhere’ through much of history, even before the concept itself existed. It is a place we have been to, and sometimes fled from, as well as one yet unknown that we aspire to visit. Without it humanity would never have struggled onward towards betterment. It is a pole-star, a guide, a reference point on a common map of an eternal quest for the improvement of the human condition. (15)

Looking into the representation of ideal pasts, presents and futures in literary works, and in religious, political and social practices, Claeys recognises three distinct phases in the history of utopia: the mythical, the religious and the institutional (2011, 8). As Claeys and Sargent argue, “the changes [utopias] undergo both help bring about and are reflections of paradigm shifts in the way a culture views itself”, but they do not conform to a one-way linear process as “different utopias in any time and place may reflect different stages in the paradigm shift, including reactions against it” (2017, 6). Thus, all three stages still inform present-day variations of utopia, as exemplified with references to contemporary films in the brief summary of Claeys’s periodization below.

Within the mythical phase, past golden ages, eternal afterlives and blessed lands located utopia beyond the reach of mortal humans. According to Claeys, golden ages were portrayed as bygone states of harmony ruled by benevolent gods that later deteriorated into silver, bronze and iron versions in the work of Classical Greek and Roman poets such as Hesiod (8th century BC) and Ovid (AD 8). The “proto-utopia” of golden ages, Claeys asserts, “once lost, is never regained”, only commemorated fleetingly in Saturnalia by slaves and masters feasting together as temporary equals in a way similar to the Feast of Fools or carnival of the Middle Ages (2011, 18). This way, utopian aspirations were displaced to afterlife paradises such as the Greco-Roman “Elysium” or the Norse “Valhalla”, and to unmappable territories like the

pastoral and morally pure Arcadia or the lost island of Atlantis. Nonetheless, Claeys notes how lawgivers and writers concerned with the constitutional norms and ideals that should regulate the Greek *polis* and the Roman Empire were a direct influence for the “realist” utopian thought in subsequent stages and for the literature of Thomas More (2011, 23). The military communal political system of Sparta described by Greek historian Plutarch (1st century AD) and the wise philosopher-king, caste of ruling guards and communal life in Plato’s *The Republic* (c. 370 BC) brought utopian horizons closer, often in the conquerable lands around (25-6). These “mythical” utopian referents still resonate in recent films such as *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009), with moon Pandora working as an exotic Arcadia of pure morals; *Elysium* (Neill Blomkamp, 2013), where an elitist space station offers a paradisiacal life away from a polluted Earth; and *Mad Max: Fury Road* (George Miller, 2015), in which slave soldiers dream of kamikaze deaths for a comfortable afterlife in Valhalla. In the subsequent religious stage, Claeys argues, Western utopian thought revolved around Christian beliefs and spaces (29). The Biblical Eden, the idyllic birthplace of humanity, remains for Claeys “the greatest Christian myth of all, and the fount of much of the Western utopian tradition” (33). Informing the bucolic pastoral retreat, Eden stands against the vice and corruption of Babylon, the City of Man, and its Tower of Babel, built by the over-ambitious descendants of Adam and Eve. Babylon, the Flood, Hell, the Apocalypse and the Day of Judgement continue to inspire dystopian cinema as seen in films from *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927) to *Mad Max: Fury Road* and beyond. The two contrasted utopian and dystopian sets of images—Heaven vs. Hell, virtue vs. sin, Eden vs. Babylon—display, according to Claeys, “a dualism endemic throughout the utopian tradition: (...) the doctrine of the omnipresence of two principles, good and evil, neither able to dominate the other”

(2011, 41). Influential literature such as Dante's *The Divine Comedy* (1320), John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), millenarian sects awaiting the second coming of Christ like the Quakers, and military campaigns as that of the Crusaders' against Islamic rule restated, Claeys asserts, this Manichaean utopian imagery of Christianity. Meanwhile, the legendary Arthurian quest for the Holy Grail and the search for the Fountain of Youth in 16th-century Florida merged Christian mythology and pagan mysticism within "the domain of the miraculous" (Claeys 2011, 42). Utopian agency in these searches for salvation, as in the previous mythical phase, was greatly restricted by the divine. As for contemporary films, environmental visions, in particular, habitually draw on this deeply ingrained Christian imagery, be it in Eden-like utopian retreats or ecological apocalypses. Although most films refer to this religious tradition indirectly, some like *The Book of Eli* (The Hughes Brothers, 2010) and *I am Legend* (Francis Lawrence, 2007) draw rather explicitly on Christian beliefs and Manichaean good/evil worldviews informed by them.

Lastly, the institutional stage of utopian thought secularised the concept of utopia from the 16th century onwards, Claeys argues, as something to be created rather than granted by divinity or found in miraculous paradises afar (such as Columbus' "New World", where natives' decimation and gold soon cornered the myth of primitive virtue) (2011, 81). In the 18th century, the American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution of 1789 and the Enlightenment defined the modern secular concept of utopia, binding it with human progress achieved through politics, social theory, revolutions and scientific research:

In the age of utopia, as it has emerged over the five hundred years since More's *Utopia*, humankind seizes its own destiny. It recognizes human

deficiencies and attempts to contain them within a system of regulations and customs enforced by public opinion. Human beings, not gods, marshal these efforts and define their own systems of order (...) utopia is ultimately defined by the limits of humanity itself, though what these are have always been the subject of great debate. (Claeys 2011, 14)

Voltaire's, Diderot's and Rousseau's praise of reason over religious mysticism, parasitic monarchy and aristocracy contributed to turning the utopian ideals "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" into workable political rights in the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" (1789), which would later inspire the 1948 United Nations' "Universal Declaration of Human Rights". Nonetheless, the Terror under Robespierre, following the Jacobin coup in 1792, also warned that utopian aspirations might result in dystopian effects when ideals are used to guillotine the non-virtuous (2011, 108-109).

In the 19th century, Claeys claims, socialism cast competing utopian visions of more egalitarian societies criticising the unfair distribution of profits and welfare brought by the 18th-century commercial system. Pre-Marxian socialists engaged in hands-on approaches to the utopian reconstruction of their present, such as Robert Owen's co-operative communities New Lanark (in Scotland) and New Harmony (in the United States); Charles Fourier's communes of work and pleasure (*phalansterès*) in France and the US; and Etienne Cabet's communist movement for a Mediterranean egalitarian republic. On their part, anarchist theorists like William Godwin, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin endorsed decentralised societies of free equal individuals with minimum leadership and self-subsistence production (2011, 148). Socialist theorists, on the contrary, proposed political and socio-economic systemic reforms, Claeys asserts, such as Henri de Saint-Simon's federative European state of productive labourers; August Comte's "positivism", a scientific social system of secularised knowledge in an anti-imperial Europe; or, the

most influential socialist utopia of all—though the authors would reject the term “utopian” in defence of their more “scientific” socialism—, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’s *The Communist Manifesto* (1848). In it, they proposed the centralisation of credit, production and distribution through a revolution of the proletariat that would later advance into federalist schemes and a type of cosmopolitanism “based on a sense of common workers’ identity, or proletarian consciousness” (2011, 145). Outside politics, scientific progress and discoveries in medicine, food production, radiation, electricity and refrigeration contributed to constructing utopia as a reachable target also in literary fiction such as Jules Verne’s *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864) and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873), and Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* (1888), which inspired the creation of “Bellamy clubs” in Europe, South Africa, Indonesia and New Zealand for the promotion of just technological and cooperative societies (Claeys 2011, 155). However, the potential dehumanising effects of scientific progress also gave rise to the dystopian fiction of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and to nostalgic gazes at pre-industrial and pre-urbanised modes of living in Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854), Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon* (1872) and William Morris’ *News from Nowhere* (1890) (Claeys 2016, 408). H. G. Wells’s science-fiction novels, in turn, ranged between the dystopian scenarios of *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898), and utopian visions such as *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought* (1901) and *A Modern Utopia* (1905), which introduced the notion of a “kinetic utopia” that evolves, rather than an immutable blueprint (Claeys 2011, 168).

As the 20th century advanced, utopia depended on human political, social and scientific abilities alone for all the good and bad this implied. The past century witnessed the evil effects of once utopian projects turned dystopia in the mass

extermination of communist and fascist totalitarian regimes, the nuclear devastation of the atomic bomb, and the environmental destruction and global inequality brought along by late-century economic expansion. In literature and film, utopias like Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), Frank Capra's *Lost Horizon* (1937), or the ecological utopias *Ecotopia* (Ernest Callenbach, 1975) and *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Marge Piercy, 1976) became utopian exceptions out of the dystopian norm. Claeys explains how "varieties of dystopia" proliferated in fiction (175-181): class conflicts in Fritz Lang's silent film *Metropolis*; political dystopias such as Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949); film alien invasions during the 1950s Red Scare like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Don Siegel, 1956); post-apocalyptic movies like *On the Beach* (Stanley Kramer, 1959); anti-utopian visions of society such as William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange* (1971); dystopian sci-fi movies like Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982); cyber-punk literature like William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1983); feminist dystopias like Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985); and disaster films like *Twister* (Jan de Bont, 1996). Following such a prolific production of real and fictional dystopian scenarios, today, as Claeys puts it, "utopia and dystopia march ever more closely hand in hand, until for many they seem finally to merge indistinguishably" (2011, 207). Thus, once utopia as an idea realised has displayed its great potential for failure, Claeys wonders if our early 21st century days are those of "paradise lost": "Can the quest for utopia be salvaged, or is the very proposition not merely futile but doomed to repeat the atrocious follies of the 20th century? Why bother to try to save utopia if the secular religion of modernity has proven so utterly, monstrously destructive?" (208).

Replicating the weariness of many social theorists and cultural texts dealing with utopia from the late 20th century onwards, Claeys's historical periodisation of utopia discusses at length the dark outcomes of utopian projects in the past century but oversees utopian accomplishment in the arenas of political rights and social welfare. His historical account revisits the totalitarian regimes of communist dictators Stalin, Mao Zedong and Fidel Castro, the Nazi Holocaust and Soviet Gulag prison camps, the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Cambodian massacres by the Khmer Rouge and environmental destruction, among other recent atrocities. Yet, Claeys does not refer to Emmeline Pankhurst and the Suffragette movement in Britain, Mahatma Gandhi and India's independence, Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement in the US, 1968 street protests, Nelson Mandela and the end of Apartheid in South Africa, or the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 signalling the beginning of a new promising era after the Cold War (instead of reading it as the fall of utopia, as Claeys does). Likewise, the constitution of the European Union, welfare policies securing public health insurance and education in many countries, key medicine, scientific and technological advancements such as vaccinations, space travel and the Internet all go unnoticed in the pages Claeys devotes to the 20th century.

Although Claeys eventually claims that he remains on the quest for utopia, the dystopian bias in his historical overview of 20th-century utopia is no exception but, rather, a noticeable trend in the late past century across textual and theoretical manifestations of utopianism. In fact, Claeys's 2017 *Dystopia: A Natural History* devotes a whole volume to the matter, tracing the historical evolution of dystopian imaginaries in religious, political and cultural discourses and practices. Though apocalyptic visions, Claeys explains, were already present in Old Egypt and an essential trope for Christian millennialists, the first use of the term "dystopia" with its

meaning of “diseased, bad, faulty, or unfavourable place” dates back to the mid-eighteenth century and was not widely used until the twentieth, “wedded to secular pessimism” (2017, 4). In all its varieties—political, environmental and technological dystopias—fear is a constant, Claeys asserts. Attached to real and imaginary objects (be it gods, monsters, machines, nature, wars, diseases, urbanisation or antagonist Others), it is not only a basic natural emotion, but also socially formulated, in the historian’s view. Quoting Joanna Bourke’s *Fear: A Cultural History* (2005), Claeys regards fear as “the emotion through which public life is administered” in the early twenty-first century, mentioning the “War on Terror” as an illustrative example (2017, 12). As further explored in chapter two, late 20th-century cinema has played a fundamental role in the formation of such prolific dystopian imaginaries.

Nevertheless, this trend has been progressively shifting during the late 2000s and 2010s, when, as will be argued, utopian thinking vigorously re-emerged in films, sociology, politics and social movements in relation with cosmopolitan aspirations. The following section explores this shift in the field of utopian theory. Drawing on Sargent’s words, the complex, convoluted story of utopia revised in this first chapter “can be read as tragedy or farce, but it can also be read, and this is my intention, as a tale of hope, hope engendered, hope deferred, and hope renewed” (1994, 1). In any case, this dissertation rejects the common usage of the concept as synonym of unachievable perfection—a flawlessness that, according to Sargent, is actually “the exception, not the norm” in the history of literary utopias (1994, 9). Rather than concerned with cinematic portrayals of accomplished idyllic societies and distant fantastic futures, this thesis focuses on a down-to-earth understanding of utopia as method performed “by real human beings”, as Claeys and Sargent put it:

Where utopia is located—on remote islands, in lost civilizations, in galaxies in space, or underground—is here less important than how the new social order is described, how it is introduced, and what it demands of human nature. Respecting utopian fiction, a “realist” definition that takes these factors into account stresses that utopias are imaginary societies defined by the predominance of some form of enhanced sociability, or strengthened sense of community. The majority of such works are tracts on social and political thought cast in fictional form. (2017, 3)

As will be argued, the twenty-first-century films analysed in the following chapters articulate specific discourses about the current global socio-political context. They commonly call for the transformation of neoliberal economic systems, egalitarian social relations and ecological sustainability. Eventually, they illustrate that utopian thinking implies indeed a forward-looking imaginative drive, but, for the desired to actually happen, it must be grounded in present-day social reality and propose specific changes.

1.2. Re-Staging Utopia: From Blueprint to Method—Theoretical Approaches to Utopian Thinking

In the last three decades, utopian scholars like Ruth Levitas, Tom Moylan, Raffaella Baccolini, Lyman Tower Sargent and Gregory Claeys, among others, have vindicated the necessity of utopian thinking beyond repeated announcements of the end of utopia. As Tom Moylan explains, “utopia has been simultaneously condemned, silenced and coopted” (2006, 2). It has been condemned, he specifies, as totalitarian blueprint when linked to authoritarian political regimes, silenced as wishful thinking or daydreaming, and coopted by a neoconservative marketplace that has turned utopia “into a one-dimensional evocation of immediate, and unquestioning, satisfaction. Reconfigured from process to brand (...) drained of its future-bearing energy and repackaged as a signifier of what has already been achieved” (2). The following pages

revise the most significant ideas and debates in utopian social theory: from twentieth-century anti-utopian scholarship to a renovated conception of utopia as method theorised by Ruth Levitas in 2013, which serves as theoretical framework to research the rebirth of utopian discourses in 21st-century cinema.

Anti-utopian arguments gained popularity in the social sciences from the mid-20th century, accompanying the demise of utopia in literature. If late 19th-century sociological works such as Emile Durkheim's *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Women and Economics* (1898) projected critical utopian formulations of egalitarian societies (though sometimes refusing the term "utopia" as unscientific, as Marx and Engels had previously done (see Levitas 2013, 71-73)), this was no longer so in the aftermath of WWII. At that time, classical anti-utopian works such as Friedrich von Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945), J. L. Talmon's *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (1951) and Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) linked utopia with visions of perfect societies that ultimately led to violent totalitarianism. From a completely different standpoint, Francis Fukuyama's 1992 *The End of History and the Last Man* declared utopia useless in the, allegedly already utopian, capitalist liberal democracies of the late-century western world. More recently, John Gray's 2007 *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* read US neo-conservative foreign policy as an evil-cleansing utopian enterprise of the Right, seeking the perfectibility of the world order under its own totalitarian terms and leading, again, to violence.

At the core of these works' anti-utopian theses lies utopia's complex relationship with ideology, which was researched in the first place, and from an opposite angle, by Karl Mannheim's 1929 German publication *Ideologie und Utopie*,

and his later English version *Ideology and Utopia* (1936). In it, Mannheim defined “ideology” and “utopia” as differing ways of understanding and relating to the world: ideology represented the values and ideas of those in power, while utopia stood for the resistance against hegemonic beliefs and practices (at odds, therefore, with the pairing of utopia with totalitarian regimes). Drawing on Mannheim, Paul Ricoeur’s 1975 *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* claims that ideology provides an identity to the group and legitimates it, while utopia is needed to question the prevailing ideology and point at alternatives to the status quo:

The difference between something which is purely an ideology reflecting one particular time and something which opens outward to new times is that the latter does not merely mirror what presently exists. A great part of our culture is nourished by projective ideas which are not only expressions, or even concealed expressions, of the times in which they were set forth. (...) The Utopian element has always displaced the ideological element. (1986, 313)

Investigating further this dialectical relation between ideology and utopia, Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious* (1981) stresses the presence of utopian ideas in the formation of every ideology: “the effectively Ideological is also, at the same time, necessarily Utopian” (in Moylan 2006, 8). This way, a utopia may turn into ideology if politically implemented and adopted by society, point at which it will be challenged by other utopias, as Lyman Tower Sargent illustrates referring to the shift from communism to capitalism in Eastern Europe: “the much heralded ‘end of utopia’ marked by the changes in Eastern Europe turns out to be just the opposite. The Eastern Europeans have overthrown an old utopia become dystopia in the name of a new utopia that is already becoming a dystopia, as it has been for some time for many in the West” (1994, 26). This close interrelation of utopia and ideology is still an ongoing debate in social theory. But, contrary to the equations of utopia with

totalitarian ideologies, utopian theorists consider the problematic dialectics between the ideologically established and utopian possibility to be indispensable for social improvement; affiliating utopianism, as Moylan puts it, “with the notion of progress (however complex and unlinear we take that to be these days)” (2006, 8).

Insisting on the need of a “concrete utopianism” for this progress to actually happen, Ernst Bloch’s *The Principle of Hope*—written between 1938 and 1947, originally published in German in 1959 and first translated into English in 1986—was fundamental in underlining the political potential of utopian dreaming. The utopian impulse, according to Bloch, is ubiquitous in all forms of cultural expression; a drive that looks into the “not-yet” to imagine alternatives that can help shape better futures. However, to produce effective results utopian thinking needs to connect with human reality, so optimism or “abstract utopia”, as Bloch put it, needs to be channelled into “concrete utopia” for the actual improvement of society. Bloch’s work had, according to Moylan, a strong impact on the New Left of the 1960s, feminist politics, liberation theology and scholars like Jameson, helping to counterpoint sceptical and atomised postmodern approaches to utopianism such as the small-scale utopias of minimal state intervention in Robert Nozick’s *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974) and Yona Friedman’s *Utopies Réalisables* (1975). Inspired by Bloch’s philosophy, “utopian thought insisted on the need to generate ‘cognitive maps’ of the global system so that it could be fully challenged, and not just fractionally attacked by the micro-politics of identity formation, single issue campaigns or pragmatic reform” (Moylan 2006, 10).

In the late 20th century, utopian scholars like Zygmunt Bauman, Barbara Goodwin, Keith Taylor and Ruth Levitas further explored the space of confluence between utopia and politics. Zygmunt Bauman’s 1976 *Socialism: The Active Utopia* celebrates utopian thinking as a strategy to “break habitual associations, to

emancipate oneself from the apparently overwhelming mental and physical dominance of the routine, the ordinary, the ‘normal’” (11). For Bauman, Bloch’s “principle of hope” reads critically “the reality in which it is rooted” and “extends the meaning of realism to encompass the full range of possible options”, thus influencing “the actual course of historical events” and “acting from within what is the only substance of reality, motivated human action” (1976, 15-16). Moreover, through the analysis of utopias, Bauman asserts, we can understand “the major divisions of interest within a society”, for they invariably represent “partisan yearnings” in competing horizons for current reality (15).

This idea is also present in Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor’s *The Politics of Utopia: A Study in Theory and Practice*. First published in 1982, this work explores the utopian “remedies (the long-term ends and the means)” that different ideologies offer to the ills of social institutions (2009, 22): socialism (collective welfare), anarchism (no authority), communism (common ownership), communitarianism (small-scale social units), liberalism (slow progress and laissez-faire economics), fascism (future Golden Age of a few), conservatism (preservation of status quo) and positivism (technocratic management of society by experts). Like Bauman, Goodwin and Taylor vindicate “constructive utopia” as a critical method for the “purposeful negation of current social evils” and as a “stimulus to political activity” (2009, 74, 124). In order to be “ethical”, utopia must “have a universal scope and offer benefits to all those within this frame of reference”, seeking “supra-individual” goals without restricting individual freedoms (7, 236). To forsake utopianism, Goodwin and Taylor state, “would be to renounce a large part of what is to be a political animal” (280).

Similarly, Ruth Levitas's 1990 *The Concept of Utopia* confronts the prevailing scepticism regarding utopia at the time, thus contributing to Bloch's politico-philosophical rehabilitation of the concept. Vindicating a broad understanding of utopia as "the desire for a better being", Levitas specifies that this desire should be educated and socially constructed, calling for "the quest for utopia" through criticism and political agency (1990, 199). Her work has been fundamental in the consolidation of utopian studies as an interdisciplinary field, proposing to appraise utopias' content, form and function concurrently in their specific historical and geographical contexts, and reflecting on utopia's three main functions: "compensation, criticism and change" (1990, 180). Levitas's work would later develop into the articulation of utopia as a method labelled "the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society" (2005 and 2013), which will be described below. Nonetheless, back in 1990, when Levitas published *The Concept of Utopia*, her utopian approach to sociology was not the norm whatsoever. Following the disappointed hopes of 1968, the spread of conservative politics and neoliberal economics in the eighties, and the deconstructive turn in postmodernism, social theory generally read utopia not in opposition to established ideology, but as a form of ideology "contrasted with reality and science" (Levitas 2013, 94).

After the turn of the century, numerous publications have explored the reasons for the demise of utopian thought in the late 20th century, such as Susan Buck-Morss's *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Utopia in East and West* (2000), Marianne DeKoven's *Utopia Limited: The Sixties and the Emergence of the Postmodern* (2004), Russell Jacoby's *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age* (2005), and Krishan Kumar's "The Ends of Utopia" (2010). Like Claey's history, they approach wearily the idea of utopia in the 21st century, once "the utopian dream that industrial modernity could and would provide happiness for

the masses” has passed away in East and West (Buck-Morss 2000, xiii), and the “totalizing modern utopian ideals of community” have been replaced by “postmodern, post-utopian modes of commodified, complicit populism” (DeKoven 2004, 23). In the case of Jacoby, his work openly admits to be a paradoxical “anti-utopian utopian essay”, one that denies utopia’s totalitarian and daydreaming accusations and insists on the necessity of hopeful critical dissent of present conditions, yet which refuses the proposition of concrete alternatives for the future (xiv). In a contemporary visual era already overloaded with “multimedia extravaganzas” (xvi), Jacoby’s “iconoclastic” “imageless utopianism” argues against the production of utopian “blueprints” and “seductive imagery”. Thus, his work arguably validates “the widespread belief that nothing distinguishes utopians and totalitarians” (5), an idea he simultaneously criticises and supports. Kumar’s “The Ends of Utopia”, for its part, complains about the exhaustion of utopia as a literary genre and mode of social speculation in the “new world disorder” emerging after the Cold War. For Kumar, the failure of the communist utopia of the East and the free-market utopia of the West justify social theory’s “retreat from utopia”, once the self-certain grand narratives of modernity—of reason, science, progress and revolution—seem exhausted (2010, 559). In the 21st century, Kumar claims, the postmodern scepticism about the old certainties of modernity has been strengthened by a “liquid modernity” (Bauman 2007b) where global capitalism has undermined the nation-state as “sovereign space for utopian imagining” (559). In this context, Kumar sees sound reasons to confirm utopia’s loss, “if only for the time being”; utopia now replaced by an apocalypticism that proclaims “endings without beginnings (...) without any real hope that we will survive” (561-564). Unlike in H. G. Wells’s early 20th-century fiction, Kumar explains, when apocalypse was accompanied by utopian rebirth, now “it is easier to make anti-anti-

Utopian statements than to imagine a utopia, in all the fullness of a realized vision of an alternative society” (552-555).

While this assertion may be precise, Kumar’s 2010 article fails to spot the shift utopia has progressively undergone in the last two decades: from its traditional blueprint form (the exhausted model whose death he investigates) to utopia as open-ended method. The end of utopia as closed blueprint and the demise of the classical utopian literary form imply not the end of utopia itself. Rather, they denote the thorough makeover that utopian thought is undergoing in our days. As manifested in 2010s theory, politics and cinema, utopia is going through a process of aperture (territorial, dialogical, processual) that runs parallel to the development of cosmopolitan worldviews and the challenging of borders (political, economic, socio-cultural) brought along by globalisation.

The evolution of Zygmunt Bauman’s scholarship regarding utopia can be taken as an illustration of the “ups and downs” undergone by the concept. In 1976, Bauman confidently celebrated a utopia that relied on “becoming”: “a uniquely way of being in the world (...) open toward the future, lived, evaluated and revised under the auspices of events which exist so far only ideally”; as opposed to “being”, which is “an attribute ascribable to Nature” (34-35). On the contrary, in his 2003 article “Utopia with No Topos”, Bauman laments the destabilisation of utopia within the volatile and urgency-ridden globalised framework characteristic of liquid modernity. Whereas the territorial and sedentary world of solid modernity encouraged a “sedentary imagination” confined within clearly mapped nation-states, in the early twenty-first century, Bauman claims, a “nomadic imagination” led by a new transnational power elite “disengages” from territorial commitments to promote the privatisation of utopia as the individual pursuit of moments of personal happiness.

This way, Bauman asserts, utopia without the topos “is left homeless and floating, no more hoping to strike its roots, to ‘re-embed’” (22):

In the transgressive imagination of liquid modernity the ‘place’ (whether physical or social) has been replaced by the unending sequence of new beginnings, inconsequentiality of deeds has been substituted for fixity of order, and the desire of a different today has elbowed out concern with a better tomorrow. (2003, 24)

Similarly, Bauman’s chapter “Utopia in the Age of Uncertainty” in his book *Liquid Times* wonders if utopia has completely disappeared:

‘Utopia’ used to denote a coveted, dreamt-of distant goal to which progress should, could and would eventually bring the seekers after a world better serving human needs. In contemporary dreams, however, the image of ‘progress’ seems to have moved from the discourse of *shared improvement* to that of *individual survival*. (2007b, 103)

Most recently, in *Retrotopia* (2017), the sociologist warns about the powerful rise of nostalgic utopianism as a protective device against the uncertainties of liquid modernity and calls, instead, for the renewal of utopian thought away from the privatised imagination he diagnosed in 2003. Quoting Pope Francis, Bauman calls for “moving from a liquid economy to a social economy” and, here using his own words, for “lifting human integration to the level of all humanity” (2017, 166-167). Although Bauman foresees this task as “arduous, onerous and troublesome to see through and complete”, he claims that, more than ever, “we—human inhabitants of the Earth—are in either/or situation: we face joining either hands, or common graves” (2017, 167). There is no alternative to cosmopolitan utopia, Bauman concludes in his late philosophical reflections, thus invoking an inclusive, dialogical and open-ended reconfiguration of the concept of utopia as a global political responsibility to undertake.

Also fundamental to this recent re-conceptualisation of utopia as a method tied to inclusive political aspirations has been the social theory by David Harvey, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Fredric Jameson, Tom Moylan and Ruth Levitas. Harvey's *Spaces of Hope* (2000) and *Rebel Cities* (2012) call for an open-ended utopianism that informs social and spatial planning, political action and anti-capitalist resistance, arguing that "political struggles are animated by visions as much as by practicalities" (2012, xiv). For Harvey, the construction of utopian alternatives to "Wall Street capitalism" is "both an opportunity and an inescapable obligation that none of us can or would ever want to avoid" (2012, 164). Meanwhile, Hardt and Negri's *Empire* theorises a post-national global reality ruled by the US, the G8, international corporations and organisations like the WTO in which an emergent "counterpower" might "reappropriate control over space" and "design the new cartography" (2000, 59, 400). The utopian cartography they refer to is that of a planetary order in which "globality" is not understood "in terms of cultural, political, or economic homogenization" (45), but as a diverse and mobile "global multitude" that should obtain guaranteed income, public ownership of space and democratic control over production. Practical experimentation by this global multitude is the only way, according to Hardt and Negri, in which the possible may become real (411), which implicitly frames utopia as an open-ended and cosmopolitan political method.

Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future*, in turn, explicitly speaks of utopia as "a political issue" that is recovering its vitality in the new century within what he calls "the post-globalization Left". For Jameson, utopia is a fundamental prerequisite for political and social change—"a representational meditation on radical difference, radical otherness, and on the systemic nature of the social totality" (2005, xii). Utopian visions depend on two preconditions, according to Jameson: the perception

of present evils (that is, a negative map to rebuild in Utopia) and “mappable” historical times where causes, consequences and social totalities can be represented. These preconditions can be presumed to exist once utopian preoccupations have reached aesthetic forms such as films and the large social groups they target (13)—as is the case, this thesis argues, of contemporary cinema. But the utopia of today, Jameson points out, cannot respond any more to a fantasy of closure in a postmodern “late capitalism” characterised by cyberspace’s “post-individualistic” subjectivities and “globalizing dynamics” (2005, 20-21); a context in which the “collectivity” resides “inside of us, fully as much as it is outside us, in the multiple social worlds we also inhabit all at once” (214). Neither are the local/global dichotomy and multiculturalism valid to offer utopian solutions, Jameson asserts. Instead, he proposes the vision of “a Utopian archipelago” that combines “the properties of isolation with those of relationship”, under the political form of a federalism “beyond either empire or secession” able to resist “US globalization” and the privatising political plans of the free-market “big business” ruling class (221-229). However, Jameson’s emphasis, in 2005, was not on concretising that federal planetary utopia, but on the utopian process/method itself:

Utopian is no longer the invention and defense of a specific floorplan, but rather the story of all the arguments about how Utopia should be constructed in the first place. It is no longer the exhibit of an achieved Utopian construct, but rather the story of its production and of the very process of construction as such. (217)

This re-validation of utopia as a self-reflective political process of construction of shared democratic futures connects with Tom Moylan’s outspoken defence of “the social value of utopia” (2006). If Jameson’s “anti-anti-utopianism” believes that “the Utopian form is the answer to the ideological conviction that no

alternative is possible” impelling us “to think the break” with the established order (2005, 232-233), Moylan similarly assumes that “our dreams and hopes impact on our present reality and on the actual future into which we, now as a global population, are moving” (2006, 3). According to Moylan, utopia “empties the present of its absolute authority”, adopting a critical “totalizing lens” when “looking at the world” that is better thought “in terms of the epistemology of ecology, rather than the rule of totalitarianism” (3-10). Rejecting, like Jameson, enclosed static visions, for Moylan, utopia “is not simply a matter of place, for it is the process of the utopian vocation, its steady movement towards the horizon of hope, that is its most dynamic quality” (Moylan 2006, 17).

In the 2010s, social theory is becoming more prone to the actual production of utopian alternatives, though insisting on processual openness. Jameson’s *An American Utopia: Dual Power and The Universal Army* (2016) is an example, a work where he defends the invention of the “specific floorplans” he had rejected in 2005. This shift, Jameson explains, follows a renewed utopian sensibility present in contemporary society, especially among young generations (which global social movements have later illustrated, as will be explored in chapter 5):

In the last years, utopia has again changed its meaning and has become the rallying cry for left and progressive forces and a virtual synonym for socialism or communism, now for the moment tainted words or programs. It needs to be said that this is a generational change and that it seems to reflect a wholesale transformation in the social, political, and economic attitudes of those who came to maturity during the 1990s, when the collapse of the traditional left movements made it possible to see just how predatory capitalism was when left to its own devices. (...) [I]t embraces Marxism as a negative and critical analysis of capitalism, without any longer being attracted to the cultural, social, and political traditions established over a century by the communist movement. (2016, 42-43)

Articulating his own utopian proposal under a renovated—and highly controversial—communist paradigm, Jameson elaborates an alternative social system to “transition out of capitalism” (2016, 3): a “dual power” (formed by the “old” state government and a new army of universal conscription) that would implement systemic changes such as the nationalisation of finance and energy sources, a minimum wage and the popular control of the media. Beyond the specifics of his programme, though, Jameson’s most recent move from “anti-anti-utopianism” (2005) to a propositional utopianism is significant. Now utopian proposals are presented no longer as unquestionable blueprints, but thought of as practical alternatives to the given order open to discussion.

This propositional dimension is what Ruth Levitas calls the “architectural mode of utopia” in her seminal book *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society* (2013). This work stands out for, on the one hand, articulating the different operative modes of utopia as method (rather than goal) and, on the other, for vindicating the need of concrete utopian socio-political proposals through the re-fastening of utopianism to both socialism and sociology. As she had previously done in her lecture “The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society or Why Sociologists and Others Should Take Utopia More Seriously” (2005), Levitas’s 2013 work calls for a utopian method “concerned with the potential institutions of a just, equitable and sustainable society” (xviii). Defending a no-alternative-to-utopia argument that finds echo in Bauman’s later *Retrotopia* (2017), Levitas sustains that utopia needs to respond with urgency to the widening economic inequalities and environmental crises of the 21st century: “For those who still think that utopia is about the impossible, what really is impossible is to carry on as we are, with social and economic systems that enrich a few but destroy the environment and impoverish most

of the world's population. Our very survival depends on finding another way of living" (2013, xii).

The utopian method Levitas endorses is holistic and sociological in its specification of alternative institutional and systemic arrangements, "thinking about the connections between economic, social, existential and ecological processes in an integrated way" (19). In fact, one of the main arguments she makes is that sociology needs to get rid of a heavy anti-utopian legacy in public and political discourse in order to re-embrace the holism of utopia, including the environment in its field of analysis and engaging in normativity and actual proposals, rather than in critical analysis alone. Thus, her utopian method brings back together the hermeneutic and constructive tasks that strayed apart with the institutionalisation of sociology as academic discipline, the author explains, when the description of existing social conditions cornered utopian speculation and proposition: "The denial of utopia resulted in a triple repression within sociology: repression of the future, of normativity, and of the existential and what it means to be human. It also meant a retreat from active engagement and involvement with a wider public" (85). Against this constraining framework, Levitas claims, "we must consider sociology as utopia, as well as utopia as sociology", both tackling "what is" and "what ought to be" (2013, 67).

Her own contribution to this utopian sociological theory is a meticulous analysis of the functioning of utopia as method, which she labels "the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society" (IROS). This method results from "the identification of how the utopian mode works as speculative theory" in order to produce "provisional and reflexive models of possible futures open to criticism and debate" (2013, 153).

Specifically, the IROS method formulated by Levitas encompasses three different interconnected modes:

- 1. Utopia as archaeology, which critically analyses the status quo together with the images of society that sustain its political programmes, social and economic policies.
- 2. Utopia as ontology, which questions the kind of human beings and values particular societies develop, and those society should encourage.
- 3. Utopia as architecture, which debates the specific normativity and institutional changes that need to be implemented to develop better futures.

Putting the method to work, Levitas starts with an archaeological reading of the present that confronts utopian images implicit in today's hegemonic political stances, as well as their "significant silences" (154). Those contemporary images that are marginally contested, yet negative in her view are: meritocracy, for defending "fair competition in a radically unequal system" while prompting individualism and the vilification of the poor (163); civil society, for promoting cooperative self-organisation and charitable work to replace social services that should be responsibility of the state (166); multiculturalism, for representing society as a community of communities that reinforces group identification and overlooks class, ethnic, religious and political hybridity (168); and, lastly, economic growth, for presenting GDP (Gross Domestic Product) as an indicator of progress whether or not the economic activity measured is contributing to social welfare or damaging the environment, and disregarding non-paid care work outside the market. Against a GDP model that "does not measure what matters", Levitas calls for reorienting the economy "to need rather than profit" through an "anti-growth strategy" of "international redistribution" that sets new emissions targets, taxation incentives for

good behaviour, greater aid to developing countries, and which educates about overconsumption (2013, 169-174). Thus, Levitas posits eco-social welfare as a measuring parameter for the archaeological evaluation of images of the good society and its wealth.

The second ontological mode of utopia as method comes into action to address what we understand as human wellbeing and the ways in which it can be fostered.

That is, to respond to:

the question of what kind of people particular societies develop and encourage. What is understood as human flourishing, what capabilities are valued, encouraged and genuinely enabled, or blocked and suppressed, by specific existing or potential arrangements: we are concerned here with the historical and social determination of human nature. (2013, 153)

Levitas's utopian method endorses a social theory that engages not only in formulations such as the first article of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights—"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"—but that also reflects on the structural conditions necessary for these rights to be exercised and guaranteed (180). Wellbeing is regarded by Levitas as an objective condition that depends primarily on an egalitarian social order and our relation with others, understanding "the condition of humanity" as "one of shared incompleteness" and incorporating the level of affect in her analysis (181). Drawing on Aristotelian virtue ethics and the concept of individual "flourishing", as well as on Andrew Sayer's and Roberto Unger's processual ontology, Levitas thinks of humans as utopian individuals "becoming" rather than "being" (an idea connected also, as previously explained, to Bauman's call for a utopia that relied on "becoming" as opposed to "being" (1976)). Quoting Unger, Levitas's ontological mode calls for the development of "prophetic identities" able to envision what we might become individually and collectively

(beyond both present and past modes) in order to transform institutions and practices that “make us greater, freer, and more human” (189). Also necessary to understand this processual ontology, Levitas points out, is Bloch’s notion of “the not-yet” and his idea of an undying “quest for grace” committed to human dignity that rescues the existential depth and spiritual intensity of religion for secular use—an urge to transcend into a better, enlightened being that is present in art and the humanities, but most often absent from materialist sociology and politics, Levitas laments.

Lastly, informed by the two previous archaeological and ontological modes, the architectural mode would seek to transform the existing order by reflecting on concrete alternatives, such as policies, laws and education programmes. It implies imagining “the social forms demanded by the principles of dignity and grace”, formulating eco-socially sustainable alternatives that might foster human welfare, and reflecting on the consequences for the people living in that potential arrangement; thus focusing at once on the machinery of society and the lives lived in it (2013, 197-198). Levitas proceeds with actual proposals. In the first place, she calls for distributive equality, visualising a future when open access to food, energy and transport should be provided like health service is in many countries today. In order to achieve this, incomes would have to be more equalised, new goods and services provided, and a basic income assured, setting what Michael D. Higgins’s *Renewing the Republic* (2014) labels a “floor of citizenship”—a poverty threshold under which no individual is allowed to fall in terms of shelter, food, education, freedom and security. The labour market, in turn, would have to improve labour conditions, value non-paid care work and eliminate exploitative trading relations through corporate fair trade, while consumers should reduce consumption. Furthermore, Levitas addresses the need to coordinate local, national and global regulation further through national

and global institutions. The widening income inequality between rich and poor countries should also be reduced, she states, through taxation and regulation of international corporations, which would lessen migration pressures and global warming at once. Here Levitas defends, following John Urry's *Climate Change and Society* (2011), the permanence of the national state in coordination with global institutions, since the collapse of the state would probably result "in enforced localism, possibly dominated by warlordism and certainly making coordination across scales virtually impossible" (212). Finally, she deals with utopian architecture in its non-metaphorical sense, drawing on David Harvey and others to criticise the way cities are built according to the interests of capital, and calling, instead, for a reorientation of urban planning towards collective and individual wellbeing (214-15).

Against claims that may consider all these objectives unfeasible in global capitalism, Levitas asserts that "alternative conceptualizations of human worth and social progress are plainly possible" (2013, 200), stressing that economic activity is never morally neutral and "wants are articulated in particular historical and social circumstances" (215). According to Levitas, the Occupy movement recently acted as an international call to act globally and locally against injustice, to shift the economy towards the needs of the people and the environment rather than corporations. Its effectiveness as a "prefigurative practice" resided, she states, in the opening of autonomous spaces for the utopian envisioning of alternative futures and the cultivation of the capacity to develop these alternatives (219-20). Similarly, Levitas's utopian method declares the current socio-economic system to be open to alternative analytical perspectives and paradigms of practice, welcoming utopian criticism, normativity and change. Ultimately, her utopian method envisions "an imagined future, therefore a present future" that is confessedly socialist, for "the good society

has equality at its core” (215); a future whose inclusive and sustainable foundations entirely fit in the cosmopolitan ecosystem of political dissent forged by late 2010s eco-feminist social movements (as will be analysed in chapter 5).

To sum up, Levitas’s 2013 work vindicates utopia as “a legitimate and useful mode of thought and knowledge-generation” for the criticism of the present and the reconstitution of the future (218-19). Her method reformulates utopia as an inescapable strategy of action for the global citizenship of our day to shape eco-socially fair (unavoidably shared) futures. Thus, Levitas rescues utopia from, firstly, its demise in the late 20th century when it was equalled to totalitarian agendas, blurred by catastrophic speculation, or privatised by neoliberal capitalism; secondly, from its “homeless” status in a liquid modernity that had detached “the faith in progress from the flow of time” (Bauman 2003, 23); and thirdly, from the aversion to transformative politics professed by those satisfied with the status quo. Against these stances, Levitas re-stages utopia in the 2010s not only as an archaeological, ontological and architectural method for political change, but also (as Bauman did in his last work) as a moral obligation for the making of egalitarian and sustainable cosmopolitan futures: “We must live in this world as citizens of another. What is required of us is both specific to our distinctive situation, and the same as for every earlier and later generation: Mourn. Hope. Love. Imagine. Organize” (2013, 220).

Levitas’s recent re-framing of utopia as method can be related to the ways in which 21st-century films are gradually taking distance from the anti-utopian bias of late twentieth century cinema to articulate critical sociological analyses, modes of being and political actions strongly informed by cosmopolitan hopes. Drawing on the modes of Levitas’s utopian method as an anchoring theoretical framework for the

analysis of cosmopolitan utopianism in contemporary films, the following could be argued:

1. Many twenty-first-century films could be read as “archaeological explorations” of present-day neoliberal globalisation that are critical of the social inequalities and ecological damages it causes. Some either envision or call for the formulation of cosmopolitan world orders able to shelter eco-socially sustainable inclusive futures (as will be explored in chapter 3).
2. Some contemporary film protagonists offer an ontological approach to the modes of being neoliberalism endorses, disapproving individualist ethics and material prisms while vindicating cosmopolitan awareness and eco-social commitment (as will be analysed in chapter 4).
3. Some of these films illustrate the utopian potential of inclusive political cultures and cooperative strategies, thus formulating architectural proposals for the construction of an egalitarian cosmopolitan society (as will be argued in chapter 5).

Therefore, along with recent utopian theory by scholars such as Levitas, Bauman and Moylan, contemporary cinema would be contributing to re-framing utopia as an open-ended sociological and political method. Most of the twenty-first-century films analysed in this thesis seem to reclaim the possibility of a promising future that is envisioned as cosmopolitan, disentangling the global from neoliberal definitions and re-staging the utopian as dialogical process.

1.3. Utopia in the Movies: Connecting Film and Utopian Analysis

As an interdisciplinary object of study today, utopia concerns not literary texts alone but also a wide range of cultural forms, academic areas and social practices. Lyman

Tower Sargent's seminal 1994 article "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited" distinguished three different manifestations of utopianism: the literary utopia (by far the most researched), utopian practice and utopian social theory. According to Sargent, utopian practice encompasses intentional communities with common values and purposes, and other forms of socio-political activity seeking personal and collective transformation. Utopian social theory, in turn, is a method of analysis concerned, in Sargent's account, with ideology, social change, religion, colonialism and globalisation, among other areas of interest. Drawing on Sargent's classification, Tom Moylan's 2006 article "To Stand with Dreamers: On the Use Value of Utopia" re-categorised the ways in which the utopian anticipation of improved futures is exercised:

Utopian anticipation can be understood, on the one hand, in terms of hermeneutic method (that is, its way of thinking and reading the world from a critical and forward-looking standpoint) and, on the other, in terms of its various, and varied, productions, both textual and experiential. Deeply dissatisfied with the way things are, utopian thinkers and practitioners reach for a radically different way of knowing, changing and organizing society. (3)

That is, "a tour of the territory of Utopia", as Moylan puts it, would cover, first, utopian social theory; second, practice in the arenas of political movements and intentional communities (both religious and secular); and third, texts including utopian literature, films, songs, architectural planning, speeches and policies.

Although films have been traditionally relegated to a secondary place within utopian studies in comparison to utopian novels, some of the research published on utopian literature enlightens the analysis of film utopianism. This is the case of Sargent's and Moylan's work on the diverse subtypes within the utopian literary

genre (Sargent 1994, Baccolini and Moylan 2003), which are transferrable to cinema.

Drawing on these scholars, utopian texts comprise:

- Utopias (better places and social arrangements)
- Satirical utopias
- Dystopias (worse places)
- Anti-utopias, intended as criticism of utopian thought
- Critical utopias, which describe better societies while being aware of the flaws of utopia; and
- Critical dystopias, which engage critically with the dystopian scenario while pointing at utopian transformation

These subtypes, rather than serving as a clear-cut taxonomy of imaginary societies, illustrate the vast array of angles from which utopian and dystopian visions can be cast and appraised in films and novels.

One of the first academic attempts to focus exclusively on film utopianism was Peter Fitting's 1993 article "What is Utopian Film? An Introductory Taxonomy". Addressing what Fitting refers to as "a largely overlooked area of utopian scholarship", this article speculates on the types of films that could be labelled "utopian", drawing on Sargent's definition of utopia as a non-existent society described in considerable detail (12). The possible categories of the "utopian film" proposed by Fitting—albeit "without specifically invoking a utopian film genre" (1)—are:

- Film utopias and dystopias both based on original scripts and adaptations of literary texts such as *Lost Horizon*, *Things to Come* (William Cameron Menzies, 1936), *Metropolis* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Michael Radford, 1984).

- Science fiction movies with utopian or dystopian settings such as *Blade Runner*.
- “Ethnographic films” that portray vanishing cultures both in documentary and fiction like *Nanook of the North* (Robert J. Flaherty, 1922) and *Dances with Wolves* (Kevin Costner, 1990).
- Documentaries on utopian technological futures.
- Nostalgic films based on Golden Ages such as those set in Camelot or family television shows of 1950s US.
- Films on intentional communities like *La Cecilia* (Jean-Louis Comolli, 1975) and *The Milagro Beanfield War* (Robert Redford, 1988).
- Movies on revolutionary processes, rebellions and strikes grounded “in the utopian ideal of the transformative power of art, and specifically of film and its ability to reach a mass audience” (7), like *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966), *If...* (Lindsay Anderson, 1968), *Strike* (Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1925), *Matewan* (John Sayles, 1987) or *Memories of Underdevelopment* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1968), but also the Nazi propaganda film *The Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935), the radical aesthetics of Dziga Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) and the French New Wave of the 1960s.
- “Body utopias” that refer to emotions and interpersonal relationships as important dimensions of the utopian. Here Fitting includes musicals like *On the Town* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1949), drawing on the previous study of utopian feelings in the film in Richard Dyer’s “Entertainment and Utopia” (first published in 1977); as well as pornographic films made by women that celebrate the subversive utopian potential of sex for feminist

advances, such as those analysed by Linda Williamson in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (1989).

- Independent filmmaking fostered by new technologies like hand-held cameras and dealing with empowerment narratives, such as the Mexican documentary *Weaving Sea and Wind* (Teófila Palafox and Luis Lupone, 1987) and the feminist dystopia *Born in Flames* (Lizzie Borden, 1983).

Fitting's professedly tentative categorisation of the "utopian film" is enlightening in its illustration of the diversity of genres, aesthetics and themes that film utopianism may encompass, rather than as taxonomy *per se*. As far as this thesis is concerned, the critical perspective for the analysis of utopian cinema that closes his article is particularly helpful: "the utopian potential of film lies in its ability to capture moments of revolutionary upheaval and the hopes for social change" (11). As Fitting's film categories illustrate, these hopes for social change and revolutionary moments do not necessarily take place in utopian arrangements but also, and most commonly, arouse from dystopian settings. Thus, the utopian is not tied to perfection in a given or desired social order, but coupled with aspirations for social improvement and transformation arising in however negative or positive social circumstances.

More recent publications have drawn on Fitting's taxonomy of the utopian film, exploring specific film titles and genres in connection to his early categorisation, while still noting the scholarly gap in film utopianism that his article pinpointed two decades ago. This is the case of Phillip E. Wegner's analysis of *The Shawshank Redemption* (Frank Darabont, 1994) and *My Neighbour Totoro* (Hayao Miyazaki, 1988) as films that point at a new historical time of utopian possibility (2014), which could constitute an additional category to Fitting's early taxonomy. Simon Spiegel, conversely, argues that utopian documentaries like *Demain* (Cyril Dion and Mélanie

Laurent, 2015), *Where to Invade Next* (Michael Moore, 2015) and *Zeitgeist: Addendum* (Peter Joseph, 2008) are “better suited” as filmic utopias because they are the closest film analogues to the classic literary utopian genre “‘invented’ by More”—all “literary bastards” that mix reality and fiction (2017, 53-60). Spiegel justifies his approach as follows:

Previous research looking at fiction films has been misguided, since written utopias are simply not fiction proper; it is therefore no surprise that no one could come up with a feature film that even remotely resembles a classic utopia. However, once we turn away from fiction, there are many possibilities for utopian films. (2017, 76)

Contrary to Spiegel’s highly restrictive definition of the utopian film, this thesis is not interested in exploring a utopian film genre that mirrors More’s literary utopian tradition, nor is its object to produce new taxonomies of the “utopian film” or expand existing ones. This dissertation explores cosmopolitan “hopes for social change”, using Fitting’s words, in 21st-century cinema; that is, cinematic aspirations related with egalitarian and ecological cosmopolitan futures, articulated across genres and all along the u-/dystopian filmic spectrum.

Also relevant in Fitting’s article is his reference to Richard Dyer’s 1977 “Entertainment and Utopia” to speak of “body utopias” that incorporate emotions and interpersonal relations as dimensions of film utopianism. In this seminal article, later included in *Only Entertainment* (2002a), Dyer recognises utopia as the “central thrust” of entertainment productions like the film musical, which present “what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized” (2002a, 20). Dyer’s analysis significantly points at the level of sensibility as an essential domain of utopianism along with its best-known intellectual and organisational impulses. Furthermore, he notably spots that utopia in entertainment can be not only escapist, wish-fulfilling or nostalgic, but also potentially subversive and transformative. For although the

musical, as a product of the show business, “responds to real needs *created by society*” by means of defining and delimiting “legitimate needs” and proposing capitalist solutions to them, Dyer notes that “to be effective the utopian sensibility has to take off from the real experience of the audience. Yet to do this, to draw attention to the gap between what is and what could be, is, ideologically speaking, playing with fire” (2002a, 26-27).

Drawing both on Dyer’s study of utopian feelings, Caryl Flinn’s *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (1992) and Peter Ruppert’s “Tracing Utopia: Film, Spectatorship and Desire” (1996) call for the analysis of the role played by spectators in the production of utopian readings, and for a critical reading of the types of utopia present in specific films that is attentive to their ideological inclinations and contradictions. While Flinn notices how utopian feelings of excess in the music score of classical Hollywood melodrama and noir “are not necessarily progressive”, especially regarding gender relations (1992, 155), Ruppert focuses on specific moments of utopian subversion across film genres. Ruppert notes, though, that cinema is “a powerful myth-making machine” that cannot “be expected to be overtly critical of the industrial and ideological apparatus on which their existence depends” (1996, 139-140). Thus, drawing on Stuart Hall’s “encoding/decoding” theory of dominant, negotiated and resistant film readings (1980), as well as on Flinn’s work, Ruppert calls for “a hermeneutics of film that both heightens our awareness of the muffled “strains” of utopia in mass media and makes apparent the obstacles that suppress and contain them” (151).

From the late 1990s onwards, dystopia has occupied most of the scholarly pages devoted to film utopianism in works such as Tom Moylan’s *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (2018) and Fátima Vieira’s edited

collection of essays *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, On Stage*, in which the editor acknowledges that “the tension between utopia and dystopia is instrumental to our cautious, conscious and tentative construction of the future” (2013, 7). Particularly fruitful for this thesis is this textual borderland where utopia and dystopia cohabit, a ground where Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan’s academic research on film and literary “critical dystopias” stands out. In their 2003 co-edited volume *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, they examine the critical dystopia as a type of dystopian text emerging in 1980s novels like Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) and films like *The Terminator* (James Cameron, 1984) that moved beyond the anti-utopian nihilism of cyber-punk to be “critical in its poetic and political substance”, and hold on to a utopian impulse in pessimistic times (3). Most dystopian texts, they argue, open *in media res* and are built “around the construction of a narrative of the hegemonic order and a counter-narrative of resistance”. The clash of these narrative threads generates a didactic critical encounter via characters that move “from apparent contentment into an experience of alienation and resistance” (5-6). However, contrary to classical dystopias like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or *Brave New World*, where the confrontation of narratives has no positive outcome for “awakened” protagonists, critical dystopias “allow both readers and protagonists to hope by resisting closure” or “by rejecting the traditional subjugation of the individual” (7).

Yet, as Baccolini and Moylan assert, critical dystopias are not simply a new type of dystopian text, but a historical paradigm shift in textual utopia that is essential to contextualise the revival of utopian thinking in contemporary cinema researched in this thesis. Referring mainly to literature, these scholars explain how 20th-century texts departed from the strong utopian literary tradition of the late nineteenth century,

traversing the following stages: first, the predominance of dystopia over utopia in the mid century, especially in post-WWII science-fiction; second, the utopian revival of the 1960s and 70s in the form of a literary “critical utopia” that rejected perfected utopian blueprints and focused on social change as informed by the politics of the New Left, feminism and ecology; third, dystopia’s return in right-wing liberalist 1980s and cyberpunk nihilism; and, last, the “critical dystopia” of the late twentieth century, when “the wheel” of textual utopia “turned again” to timidly sketch utopian possibilities once more. They explain it as follows:

Whereas the dystopian genre has always worked along a contested continuum between utopian and anti-utopian positions (that is, between texts which are emancipatory, militant, open, indeed critical; and those which are compensatory, resigned, and anti-critical), the recent dystopian texts are more self-reflexively critical as they retrieve the progressive possibilities inherent in dystopian narrative. (...) In the emerging historical conjecture of the 1990s, the open dystopias resist both hegemonic and oppositional orthodoxies even as they inscribe a space for a new form of political opposition. With an exploration of agency that is based in difference and multiplicity yet cannily reunited in an alliance politics that speaks back in a larger though diverse collective voice, the new dystopias not only critique the present triumphal system but also explore ways to transform it that go beyond compromised left-centrist solutions. These texts, therefore, refresh the links between imagination and utopia and utopia and awareness in decidedly pessimistic times. (2003, 8)

Although Baccolini and Moylan’s periodisation refers to literary utopia, the category of “critical dystopia” does fit a paradigm shift towards the revival of utopian thinking hinted at in some late 1990s movies and manifesting itself more clearly as the new century progresses. However, Fitting’s and Phillip E. Wegner’s articles in Baccolini and Moylan’s edited volume *Dark Horizons* remain sceptical on whether 1990s films could potentially fall in the category of the critical dystopia. Wegner highlights the “resigned pessimism” in *The Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) (2003, 182), while Fitting explores the contradictory coexistence of utopian, dystopian and

anti-utopian drives in *Dark City* (Alex Proyas, 1998), *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998), *Pleasantville* (Gary Ross, 1998) and *The Matrix* (The Wachowskis, 1999), generally missing the “utopian avenues of struggle” necessary to for these films to earn the label of “critical dystopia” (2003, 164). Fitting spots in *The Matrix*, though, that Neo’s (Keanu Reeves) goal is not to escape dystopia “into a personal fantasy world, but the success of a collective struggle to free the human race from oppression” (2003, 164). Today, two decades after its release, the utopian shift in cinema is more evident (as analysed in chapters three, four and five) and the Wachowskis’s film can be taken as milestone signalling the paradigm turn towards utopian possibility put forward by Baccolini and Moylan (2003).

The porous borderland between utopian and dystopian film imaginaries has also been explored from ecocritical perspectives. Pat Brereton’s *Hollywood Utopia: Ecology in Contemporary American Cinema* (2005) and E. Ann Kaplan’s *Climate Trauma: Foreseeing the Future in Dystopian Film and Fiction* (2016) look into environmental representations in Hollywood cinema, discerning a utopian ecological consciousness beyond (and within) film catastrophic visions. For Kaplan, environmental trauma in futurist dystopian films like *The Road* (John Hillcoat, 2009) can induce a “productive state of mourning” among spectators (150)—a “pretrauma” emotional distress that works as a warning of the futures to avoid and which may encourage ethical engagement. Brereton, in turn, proposes an ecological reading of Hollywood films’ sublime natural spaces since the 1950s, suggesting they prompt a holistic, environmentally informed, utopian thinking.

This thesis analyses further the productive relationship between utopia and dystopia in contemporary cinema, researching the significant proliferation of ecological and egalitarian cosmopolitan ideals in the films of globalisation. From the

turn of the 21st century, this thesis contends, cinema increasingly articulates cosmopolitan hopes across genres and u-/dystopian settings. *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006), *The East* (Zal Batmanglij, 2013) and *The Hunger Games* series (2012-2015), among many other films, are all inscribed in that “new form of utopian political opposition” theorised by Baccolini and Moylan in the excerpt above—one that is defined by cooperative ethics and ecological prisms (what they call “alliance politics”), cosmopolitanism and feminism (their references to “difference and multiplicity”, a “diverse collective voice”). These films’ endings do not portray the hopeless closure of their respective social orders—unlike many late 20th-century movies, as will be argued in chapter two—but claim, instead, utopian outlooks on cosmopolitan futures. Their protagonists, in turn, embody an eco-socially informed emancipatory resistance that is determined to clear the political horizon for global future generations. If, as Dyer argues, in the 1949 musical *On the Town* only male agents were engaged in “making utopia” and “making history” through the transformation of New York (2002a, 31), in the twenty-first-century films analysed in this thesis the making of utopia is re-coded as a cosmopolitan task that concerns us all and the totality of the space we inhabit as a species. Rather than concerned with making history, contemporary film protagonists are committed to the future and willing to make their best to transform themselves and their relations to the world according to sustainable and inclusive cosmopolitan principles.

The global occupies a central narrative place in the films analysed. This dissertation looks into how 21st-century cinema engages with manifestations of globalisation such as: late capitalism (Jameson 2003), risk society (Beck 2009), time-space compression (Harvey 1990), global cities (Sassen 1991), cultural flows (Appadurai 1990), information networks (Castells 2010), revolutionary multitudes

(Hardt and Negri 2004), climate change politics (Giddens 2009), “strangers at our doors” seeking refuge (Bauman 2016), geopolitical agents and cosmopolitan imagination (Delanty and Rumford 2007), among others. Film dystopian and utopian imaginaries partake of the global “mediascapes” theorised by Arjun Appadurai—“image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality”—, which can “help to constitute narratives of the ‘other’ and proto-narratives of possible lives, fantasies which could become prolegomena to the desire for acquisition and movement” (1990, 299). To this respect, this thesis argues that 21st-century cinema—that is, the films of globalisation—is a fundamental cultural agent in the articulation of cosmopolitan discourses. Many contemporary films portray the progressive emergence of utopian cosmopolitan imaginaries that also ground the political demands of 2010s global social movements (as will be explored in chapter five). Rather than oppose globalisation in itself, these cinematic texts advocate for alternative conceptions of the global: inclusive and ecological.

Like utopia, cosmopolitanism has vigorously re-entered social theory in the recent years, also undergoing a thorough revision of its aims and re-framed as method (as analysed in chapter three). Within the field of film studies, Celestino Deleyto’s “Looking from the Border: A Cosmopolitan Approach to Contemporary Cinema” (2016) proposes an analytical paradigm that moves beyond national and transnational critical perspectives. Deleyto highlights that space is central to both cinema and cosmopolitanism and points at the fact that movies “may also become performers of cosmopolitanism” (2016b, 4). Particularly fruitful for this thesis is the way Deleyto applies “the cosmopolitan approach” to the formal analysis of specific films in order to explore how their aesthetics and formal strategies articulate “the centrality of borders and borderlands in contemporary global societies” even if they do not

“display openly cosmopolitan concerns” (2016b, 15-16). Space being central to utopia, too, this dissertation approaches the intersecting paths of utopia and cosmopolitanism in the movies of globalisation, analysing how, drawing on Deleuze’s words, films may become “performers” of cosmopolitan utopianism. Bringing together the cosmopolitan approach to film analysis theorised by Deleuze and the utopian method formulated by Levitas, this thesis looks into how, as much as borders and borderlands, many contemporary films articulate the confluence of utopian horizons in present-day cosmopolitanised societies.

This chapter has explored utopia as a contested concept with a long history at its back (1.1.), a debated mode of thinking in social theory (1.2.), and a discourse on social change that is articulated in films (1.3.). As is the case of scholarship on the topic, utopia has an extended and convoluted history in cinema. Before looking into the spaces, protagonists and politics of cosmopolitan utopianism in contemporary films, the next chapter contextualises the rebirth of utopia in twenty-first-century cinema.

Chapter 2. The Rebirth of Utopia in Contemporary Cinema: A Brief Historical Contextualisation

Although cosmopolitan hopes can be certainly found in specific films of any given decade, some periods within the history of cinema seem to have been more prone than others to the articulation of utopian discourses related with cosmopolitan openness, egalitarian societies and ecological sustainability. This chapter offers a brief contextualisation of the rebirth of cosmopolitan utopianism in twenty-first-century cinema. The first part focuses on early silent films, when cinema starts to develop as a cosmopolitan art and cultural industry. Then, limiting the analytical scope to English-speaking films and Hollywood movies mainly, the second part deals with inclusive imaginaries and countercultural utopian thinking in the cinema around the 1960s; pinpointing also some film protagonists of the fifties that can be said to illustrate a growing democratisation of cinematic utopian agency. Finally, the analysis moves into the anti-utopian bias of late twentieth-century cinema (from the 1970s to the late 1990s), exploring how hopeless protagonists, abject societies and catastrophic futures compose a cinematic framework hostile to utopia from which films have progressively departed in the first two decades of this century. This contextualisation does not pretend to provide an exhaustive historical account, and it will certainly leave out many film examples that could also be mentioned. The selection of cinematic periods and titles below fundamentally responds to the thematic scope of the following chapters: utopian aspirations concerned with cosmopolitan futures,

ecological sustainability and socio-political inclusion in the films of the twenty-first century.

2.1. Birth of a Cosmopolitan Art: Early Silent Cinema (1890s-1920s)

The once utopian strive to visually register life on the go becomes a reality in 1893 with the invention of moving images, a novel technology of a time of unprecedented scientific progress and urban expansion. In the United States, Thomas Edison's Kinetoscope, a single-viewer wooden peephole device, offers paying spectators the chance to peek into a hole to enjoy one-shot, one-take, one-minute stories like *Sandow* (William K.L Dickson, 1894) and *Carmencita* (William K.L Dickson, 1894), as part, at first, of travelling exhibitions and vaudeville programmes (Musser 2010a, 15-30). Meanwhile, in France, the Lumières use their Cinematograph—both recorder and projector for public screenings—as a scientific tool to document the outdoor urban sphere, bourgeois civic values and family life in titles such as *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (*La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon*, 1895), *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (*L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*, 1896) and *Baby's Dinner* (*Le repas de bébé*, 1895). Be it realist scenes like workers leaving their factory or spectacular seducing dancers like *Carmencita*, the first film spectators found, Roberta Pearson states, “infinite fascination in the mere recording and reproduction of the movement of animate and inanimate objects” (1997, 17). The flow of film images unravelling before late 19th-century viewers' eyes was utopia realised.

Able to document life as it is and envision it otherwise, films would become, in the twentieth century, one of the most influential cultural manifestations of utopia for their grand popularity among world audiences. The new film technology rapidly grows into a thriving cosmopolitan cinema industry avid to explore its artistic

horizons. Film art is to shift progressively from the early “cinema of attractions” (Gunning 2010) to multi-reel story films that experiment with novel stylistic and narrative forms. In France, the Pathé Brothers take the Lumières’s observational approach to moralising realist dramas like Ferdinand Zecca’s *Alcohol and Its Victims* (*Les victimes de l’alcoolisme*, 1902) and *History of a Crime* (*Histoire d’un crime*, 1901), but also to comedy films such as *Dream and Reality* (*Rêve et réalité*, 1901) and *What is Seen through a Keyhole* (*Par le trou de la serrure*, 1901). Envisioning the tragic consequences of irresponsible social behaviour or providing comic sympathetic looks at unfulfilled sexual desire, Zecca’s early films invite spectators to become empathic observers of the human condition. On the contrary, French compatriot Georges Méliès propels viewers to speculate with distant worlds in trick films and féeries with fairy-tale decors inspired by his magic shows (Abel 2010, 63-75). His science fiction short films *A Trip to the Moon* (*Le voyage dans la lune*, 1902) and *The Impossible Voyage* (*Voyage à travers l’impossible*, 1904) convey the technological utopianism of early 20th century. As French filmmakers export their present-based realism and future-oriented sci-fi outside their national market, the US-based Edison Company looks back, instead, at the country’s national history and subject matter in films like *The Great Train Robbery* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903) (Musser 2010b, 87-102). In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1903), Edwin S. Porter brings to film the popular anti-slavery story by Harriet Beecher Stowe (1852). Pitting the cruel treatment of slaves, the film celebrates the end of slavery with split screens that envision the abolitionist dream of a dying Uncle Tom—probably the first cinematic representation of cosmopolitan hopes connected to equal civil rights in the movies.

Despite the thematic and stylistic differences among film national markets, though, they all contribute to the development of an international film language that is

able to give life to fictional dreams and nightmares. Utopia finds in film a powerfully evocative and immersive medium where aspirations can take the form of entertainment, social criticism, political discourse, nostalgic revisions of the past and speculations about the future, among others. Most importantly, when the first nickelodeon opens in Pittsburgh in 1905, quickly expanding to all US big cities, these exhibition venues provide a space for the communal consumption of an art form that, according to film historian Nowell-Smith, “is ineradicably embedded in the whole history of the twentieth century”, helping “to shape, as well as to reflect, the reality of our times, and to give form to the aspirations and dreams of people the world over” (1997, xxii). From the early 20th century, cinema becomes indeed a prolific cultural field for producers, creators and spectators alike to engage in all three modes of utopia, as articulated by Levitas (2013): the archaeological reading of given social orders, the ontological study of their peoples and the architectural propositioning of enhanced social arrangements.

In the 1910s, the expressive possibilities of the cinematic medium are further explored all around the industrialised world. A thriving international film industry partakes of the technological development, cosmopolitan opening and urban expansion of the early century, contributing to modern utopian visions of historical progress. In the United States, a political progressive era defined by reform, efficiency and the achievement of women’s suffrage in 1920 offers a fertile socioeconomic context for Hollywood’s “factory of dreams” to flourish in the by-then affordable land of California (Gomery 1997, 43-53). World War I, though, severely disrupts this thriving cosmopolitan film industry and confident visions of modern utopian progress. As technology is put at the service of warfare among empires and nations, hope in post-WWI films would most often entail struggle—either for the conquering of

collective agendas against conflicting utopian visions, or for the achievement of individual aspirations against unpromising contexts. In D.W. Griffith's late 1910s films, this utopian struggle is unavoidable to survive and push progress forward, be it in the unification of North and South in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), the fighting of grace and evil across ages in *Intolerance* (1916), or the overcoming of racial bigotry by lovers in *Broken Blossoms* (1919). Utopian aspirations during WWI and post-war years are a fragile promise to protect and defend—delicate and breakable like the kittens of the Southern belle before the war in *The Birth of a Nation*, like the thread under the knife from which the wrongly sentenced prisoner's life hangs in *Intolerance*, or as those flowers given by Richard Barthelmess's Asian immigrant to Lillian Gish's London girl in *Broken Blossoms*. Utopia in late 1910s cinema is no longer a given tomorrow, but a frail possibility to battle for.

Already in the 1920s, following the breaking of diplomatic and commercial ties among European nations during the war, and the disruption of the international circulation of films, wider differentiations in national cinemas result (Thompson 2010, 254-270). In the movies, post-WWI responses to the breakdown of early-century cosmopolitan visions of progress fracture into conflicting political discourses at the narrative level and distinct cinematographic styles. While Soviet cinema tends to concentrate on collective utopian agendas, Hollywood most commonly draws on self-centred utopian aspirations connected to economic success and social prestige, that is, the popularly known "American Dream".

Nonetheless, there are also remarkable exceptions to individualist conceptions of utopia in 1920s silent Hollywood, films that confront the internal contradictions of US capitalist imaginaries. Though a thriving studio system invites audiences in lavish picture palaces to dream big with star-led productions like Douglas Fairbanks's

swashbuckler films and Greta Garbo's romances, some Hollywood films scrutinise the drawbacks of the unbound techno-economic progress and urban expansion promised by the land of opportunity. Charles Chaplin's tramp in *The Immigrant* (1917), soldier in *Shoulder Arms* (1918), fake priest in *The Pilgrim* (1923), clown in *The Circus* (1928), or gold seeker in *The Gold Rush* (1925) outline the hopeful forward-looking drive of the American Dream as illusory chimera. A utopia of economic abundance that is too good to be true—as unlikely as the fortune of that hungry lone prospector eating his boots in *The Gold Rush* who ultimately becomes a multimillionaire married to the dancer of his dreams. Chaplin's improbable overcoming of all obstacles ahead—as much as Harold Lloyd's in *Safety Last!* (Fred Neymeyer, 1923) and Buster Keaton's in *The General* (Clyde Bruckman and Buster Keaton, 1926)—seems to speak of utopian aspirations higher than prospects, which would effectively “crash” in 1929 (figure 1). Similarly, non-comic 1920s Hollywood films such as *Greed* (Erich von Stroheim, 1924), *The Last Laugh* (F.W. Murnau, 1924), *Sunrise* (F.W. Murnau, 1927) and *The Crowd* (King Vidor, 1928) use protagonists who move along their own individual paths, too absorbed in their utopian goals and ambitious targets to care about the welfare of others. Either dramatically or comically, by pointing at the country's obsession with individual riches and success, these films appear to make an implicit call for more socially oriented utopian aspirations; so that welfare becomes a collective public concern, rather than a private affair alone.



Figure 1. Nothing to eat, much to desire: aspirations higher than prospects in Chaplin's *Gold Rush*

More explicit in its vindication of cosmopolitan horizons, egalitarian ideals and cooperative ethics is King Vidor's *The Big Parade* (1925). The film addresses the real war experience and subsequent traumatic recovery through John Gilbert's protagonist Jim Apperson—a rich playful American who will learn about life's real hardships on the European front, side by side a construction worker and a barman. By the time Jim gives his last cigarette to a dying German enemy with whom, by chance, he ends up sharing a trench, he realises both belong to a single front, that of the human race. For Vidor's drama is not about Jim alone, but a whole generation across nations digging separate trenches into nowhere instead of cooperating to build alleys forwards into utopian collective futures. Vidor's extreme long shots and bird-eye angles take distance from Jim's particular situation in order to frame all those faceless victims suffering the war. As an anonymous corpse lies face down in the spotlight while lines of armed men traverse the forest to fight the German, viewers are reminded of the human soul dying in war, of curtailed cosmopolitan aspirations as a common loss to lament and remember (figure 2).



Figure 2. The Unknown Soldier—a cosmopolitan corpse

Vidor's film is a major testimony of the Great War's profound historical break with early-century utopian visions of linear progress. The fracture of utopian confidence is clearly stated not only by the plot, but also by the film narrative structure: from its opening with skyscrapers being built, mills humming with activity, tools and workers moving rhythmically in a country immersed in peaceful progression, to the ending of the film when one-legged Jim comes back home from the European front after seeing his friends die. The missing limb becomes a crude reminder of solidarity and political commitment from past battles fought abroad, far away from the hedonistic evasion and individualism of Roaring Twenties America. Vidor's explicit diagnosis of broken utopian aspirations via Jim ends, though, with a call for hope once the conflict has ended: Jim has undergone great suffering, but he has also learnt about cosmopolitan cooperation and solidarity across social classes and national borders. Crossing bombed rubble with his crutch to meet his French lover after the war, Vidor's film states that life must go on and lessons must be learnt. Utopia, the film ending suggests, has no option but to heal its wounds, revise critically its ideological grounds and methods, and keep looking into the future from cosmopolitan outlooks.

Outside Hollywood, the social masses and urban spaces of Soviet cinema tie utopia to communal—and communist—political aspirations in 1920s U.R.S.S. Unlike the immersive, smoothly flowing classical Hollywood formula, Soviet Montage in Sergei Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *Strike* (1925) blends the aesthetics of documentary realism and dramatic artifice in abruptly edited sequences (Bordwell 2010, 368-388). In *Battleship Potemkin*, the aim is to shock and awaken viewers rather than please them with escapist entertainment: meat worms in the boat’s crew lunch, an old lady shot in the eye, a baby pram falling downstairs, a mother killed with her dead son in her arms. Shots of waves, machines and ships moving forward celebrate cooperative action and the upcoming victory of Marx and Engels’s proletarian utopia. Using radical aesthetics for a radical political agenda, the film is a revolutionary call to class warfare by a film director for whom history, philosophy and every form of art are “always conflict” (Eisenstein 2009, 24). Dziga Vertov’s avant-garde *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) documents, for its part, jubilant masses enjoying their everyday life in Soviet cities like Moscow and Kiev. Workers, machines, urban spaces and the natural cycle are represented as synchronised parts of a mechanical puzzle where every piece fits nicely in its place, contributing to the collective task of making Soviet communist utopia. Vertov’s Kino Eye movement positions itself opposite Hollywood’s studio system: cinema not as a factory of dreams, but as an auterist utopian political tool for socialist propaganda (Vertov 1984) (figure 3).



Figures 3 and 4. Opposite utopian methods: communist dialectics in *Man with a Movie Camera* and dialogical class reconciliation in *Metropolis*

In 1927 German silent films *Metropolis* and *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (*Berlin-Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*, Walter Ruttmann, 1927) the city also becomes a utopian platform: a meeting point where to conciliate differences for the benefit of all parts involved. Placing the focus on social harmony, *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* captures the thrilling rhythm of modern urban progress in public spaces such as streets, train stations and workplaces. It is a festive tour through the civilised order in the city that fleetingly documents social inequalities (children looking for food while a plate of oysters is served in a restaurant, or a lady committing suicide by jumping into the river while others enjoy a fashion catwalk). *Metropolis*, on the contrary, presents a bipolar urban construct divided in two distinct areas for two different groups: a dystopian City of the Workers located underground and a utopian modern city for the ruling establishment. Like Jim in *The Big Parade*, Master Freder (Gustav Fröhlich), the privileged son of *Metropolis*'s top ruler, will move from self-centred hedonism to social awareness and political commitment. Seeking dialogical solutions to a dialectical world order, masters and workers are not to be enemies, as in Eisenstein's, but called to draw affective ties and bring forward inclusive prosperous futures (figure 4). As rich Freder and poor Maria (Brigitte Helm) risk their lives to rescue masses of anonymous children from drowning, this German film casts a

cosmopolitan utopian manifesto that warns against eugenic progress and despotic leaders only a few years before Hitler became Führer and utopia a synonym for totalitarian agendas.

2.2. The Right to Dream: Inclusive Imaginaries and Countercultural Hopes in the Films Around the Sixties

During the 1930s and 1940s, the Great Depression in the United States, the rise of fascist politics in Europe and World War II provide a dystopian contextual ground for the proliferation of gangster films, horror movies and film noir. Hollywood often retreats to colourful nostalgia in films such as *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) and *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, 1944), while utopian protagonists like James Stewart's senator in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (Frank Capra, 1939), Henry Fonda's land worker in *The Grapes of Wrath* (John Ford, 1940) and Judy Garland's Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939) can hardly keep hope alive against the least promising horizons. Cosmopolitan horizons turn distant in *Things to Come* and *Lost Horizon*, located in outer space and a remote Himalayan Shangri-La respectively. After the end of WWII, small town male heroes like James Stewart's George Bailey in *It's A Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1946) and the three returning veterans in *The Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler, 1946) embody the re-emergence of future-oriented US national hopes, as they learn to commit to family and community needs beyond their individual wishes and personal agendas.

Then, some films of the late forties and fifties start articulating more inclusive utopian imaginaries. Emancipated female leads like Katherine Hepburn's in *Adam's Rib* (George Cukor, 1949) and *The African Queen* (John Huston, 1951), and Joan Crawford's in *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945) and *Johnny Guitar* (Nicholas

Ray, 1954) enact self-governing roles that had been traditionally been coded as male. Having built her own saloon where she expects the railroad to pass soon, Joan Crawford's Vienna in the latter title is a utopian female pioneer awaiting a modern world. Amidst conservative neighbours and the arid Western landscape, her gaming saloon and vibrant wardrobe make a utopian statement for inclusion and diversity. Eventually, her dream is to obtain a place of her own beyond patriarchal limitations. Similarly, Jane Wyman's suburban widows in Douglas Sirk's melodramas *Magnificent Obsession* (1954) and *All that Heaven Allows* (1955), like Lauren Bacall's protagonist in *Written on the Wind* (1956) and Barbara Stanwyck's in *There's Always Tomorrow* (1956) and *All I Desire* (1953), deal with desires that clash against rigid patriarchal conventions. Despite all obstacles, though, female dreamers in these films often evolve from repressed to liberated utopian agents. It is their unleashed desire that helps them cross the threshold of an oppressive patriarchal context that is repeatedly evoked by the doorframes and windowpanes behind which they stand trapped indoors.

Along with female utopian agents comes a new generation of young film dreamers in the fifties. Whereas the children in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (Elia Kazan, 1945) and *The Yearling* (Clarence Brown, 1946) represented those generations brought up in harsh times who deserved more promising futures, James Dean's Jim in *Rebel Without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955) embodies a post-war youth that desires to look into the future from perspectives of their own, rather than inherited. Like Crawford's vivid dresses in *Johnny Guitar*, Jim's red jacket seems a claim for his desire to develop his own identity and speak out his dreams. Open spaces like the observatory, the abandoned mansion and the vacant lot in the film provide Jim with some degree of emancipatory room away from controlled repressive settings like the

police station, the school and the family home. The widescreen aesthetics of Cinemascope offer, as Bordwell argues, a greater range of formal choices to deviate from Academy ratio's narrative and stylistic norms and more interpretative freedom to spectators (1985, 18-25). Also searching for spaces of their own, Elia Kazan's youngsters in *On the Waterfront* (1954), *East of Eden* (1955) and *America, America* (1963) struggle resiliently against unions' corruption, family traumas and poverty respectively. Rooftops above the city in the two first titles, and open landscapes in the latter, vindicate for utopian horizons for these young dreamers. Marlon Brando's dockworker Terry Malloy in *On the Waterfront* learns to cooperate with others and stand up for collective rights against the mob's control on unions. As he walks ahead the dock with blood all around his face after defeating a mafia bully at the end of the film, Terry embodies the political potential of utopian resistance and cooperative strategies.

In the sixties, the democratisation of utopian agency progresses further through a greater diversity of film leads who lie outside the WASP cinematic establishment. As Martin Luther King vindicates equal civil rights, racial inclusion gains centrality in cinema. The interracial protagonist couple in musical *West Side Story* (Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise, 1961) dance and fight on New York streets for a utopian "Somewhere" where to overcome social and ethnic segregation. Interracial casts feature too in the horror film *Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero, 1968) and the science-fiction movie *Planet of the Apes* (Franklin J. Schaffner, 1968), where racially different characters unite against an external Other (zombies and monkeys respectively). Anti-racist morals are more explicit in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Robert Mulligan, 1962), where Gregory Peck's honest lawyer educates his children against prejudice as he defends a black man wrongly accused of rape. But

especially significant are Sidney Poitier's protagonists in *The Defiant Ones* (Stanley Kramer, 1958), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Daniel Petrie, 1961), *Lilies of the Fields* (Ralph Nelson, 1963)—for which he became the first African American to win an Oscar for a leading role—, *A Patch of Blue* (Guy Green, 1965), *To Sir, with Love* (James Clavell, 1967), *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (Stanley Kramer, 1967) and *In the Heat of the Night* (Norman Jewison, 1967). As a Northern police detective travelling to a racist South in the latter film, Poitier's Virgil evolves, in the eyes of Rod Steiger's white local police chief Gillespie, from murder suspect to murder solver through witty struggle and resilient dignity. The cotton fields and bigots in the film remind viewers of the Southern bloody past and the persistence of racism. However, as Virgil and Gillespie walk side by side on a train platform and shake hands before Virgil's train leaves for the North at the end of the movie, the two embody the promising prospect of a racially inclusive society (figure 5).



Figure 5. Sidney Poitier's and Rod Steiger's police officers make peace:
Hollywood's "dream factory" makes room for Others

Remarkably, though, feminist emancipation is often traumatically curtailed, either by fathers, brothers, husbands or neighbours, in films such as *Repulsion* (Roman Polanski, 1965), *Bunny Lake is Missing* (Otto Preminger, 1965), *Rosemary's*

Baby (Roman Polanski, 1968) and *Marnie* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1964). In Alfred Hitchcock's films, in particular, self-governing women such as Tippi Hedren's robber in *Marnie* and San Francisco socialite in *The Birds* (1963), and Janet Leigh's runaway swindler in *Psycho* (1960), are ultimately returned to the role of helpless victims, no matter how daring or ambitious their initial intentions. Thus, although emancipated female dreamers had featured prominently in the 1950s films explored above, women would have to confront fierce resistance from a still profoundly patriarchal society in the cinema of the sixties.

Besides dealing with gender and racial egalitarian concerns, some 1960s movies portray collaborative union and cosmopolitan opening as effective political strategies to reform the status quo. As civil rights movements, associations like Students for a Democratic Society and anti-war collectives take their demands to the streets, rebellious groups proliferate in films like *If...*, *The Magnificent 7* (John Sturges, 1960), *The Great Escape* (John Sturges, 1963), *The Dirty Dozen* (Robert Aldrich, 1967) and *The Wild Bunch* (Sam Peckinpah, 1969). At the same time, uncooperative male leads are critically represented in Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns *For A Few Dollars More* (1965) and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966), and Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove or How I Learned To Love the Bomb* (1964). Comic grotesque sketches of violent anti-heroes in these films illustrate what the world can do without—Darwinist competition and fratricidal warfare. Post-apocalyptic films *On the Beach* and *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (Ranald MacDougall, 1959), for their part, cast warnings of global atomic ends to inspire cosmopolitan understanding and cooperation during the Cold War. The three last survivors in the latter title—a black man, a white woman and a white man—walk hand in hand in a deserted Manhattan in the closing shot of the film not under the

classic “the end”, but under the word “beginning”. Utopian possibility lies on the road ahead, the film ending suggests, provided they learn to cooperate despite their different racial and socio-cultural backgrounds (figures 6 and 7).



Figures 6 and 7. Moving on together: post-apocalyptic inclusive imaginaries in *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*

Along with the cooperative groups above, unconventional couples, families and friends make their way in the cinema of the sixties, celebrating social diversity. Coinciding with the replacement of the Production Code by a rating system in 1967, marginal types occupy central narrative roles in some films. Social outcasts and odd couples provide fresh perspectives of reality seen from the fringes, refusing to sketch utopian blueprints of what family and love should look like in the future. Out-of-the-ordinary matches populate the movies: Dustin Hoffman’s college student and Anne Bancroft’s experienced mother in *The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, 1967), the charismatic deadly robbers played by Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty in *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967) or Hoffman’s con man next to John Voight’s Texan hustler in *Midnight Cowboy* (John Schlesinger, 1969). The two latter outsiders could not care less about what “Everybody’s Talkin’”, as the film’s final credits song goes. Voight’s Joe walking at ease amidst hundreds of other New Yorkers, his head easily distinguished by his old-style cowboy hat, does nothing to disguise his singularity (figure 8). The non-normative also deserves a place in an increasingly polyphonic cinema and non-mainstream dreams have the right to be narrated.



Figure 8. The outcast at the centre: John Voight's non-mainstream dreamer in *Midnight Cowboy*

The countercultural utopian thinking of the sixties invites not to cling on the ideals, forms and conventions of the past, but to invent those of the future. Diverse film movements favour exploratory narratives, innovative film forms, non-mainstream subject positions and discourses over the aesthetic, narrative and thematic conventions of industrialised cinema. In the French New Wave, small-budget productions rebel against the classical use of film space, time continuity and acting by shooting with lightweight cameras and portable sound recorders on non-studio locations, and experimenting with long tracking shots, jump cuts, loose narratives and actors' improvisation (Marie 2003, 70-72). The protagonists in *The Red Balloon* (*Le ballon rouge*, Albert Lamorisse, 1958), *The 400 Blows* (*Les quatre cents coups*, François Truffaut, 1959), *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1960) and *My Life to Live* (*Vivre sa vie*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1962) walk the streets of Paris observing their surroundings and dreaming along their way as *flaneurish* utopian explorers. Jean-Pierre L aud's Antoine in Truffaut's, a petty criminal who runs away from parental and school repressive control, walks on the beach towards the open horizon of the ocean at the end of the film. Looking directly at viewers in a frozen closing shot, his bold, hopeful, expectant gaze calls for his dreams to be acknowledged so that the

future might be built beyond established ideological frameworks and inherited institutional rules. In the US, new lightweight film equipment also allows directors like D.A. Pennebaker to experiment outside Hollywood formal and narrative conventions. In the documentary film *Don't Look Back* (D.A. Pennebaker, 1967) a shaky hand-held camera follows Bob Dylan on tour singing “The times they are a-changin’”. As formulated by the *politique des auteurs*, film directors exert their right to free formal exploration and a worldview of their own (Truffaut 1976). In this experimental *auterist* context, science fiction movies *Fahrenheit 451* (François Truffaut, 1966), *Alphaville* (Jean-Luc Godard 1965) and *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962) find in dystopian status quos a fertile field for social criticism and utopian speculation. TV brainwashing, witch-hunting politics and world nuclear warfare in these movies prompt characters and viewers to look for answers outside blinding given contexts and normative viewpoints.

From this countercultural context of the 1960s a new kind of utopian male protagonist emerges: the charismatic rebel. Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper’s bikers in *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969) and Paul Newman and Robert Redford’s train robbers in *Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid* (George Roy Hill, 1969) embody rebellious utopian dissent. As if they were grown-up versions of James Dean’s *Rebel Without a Cause*, these male leads decide to flee away from the establishment, its restrictive rules and deceptive ideals. Free souls undertaking journeys whose destiny is freedom itself make utopia lose its *topos* to take the form of a mobile search. They embody utopia as an exploratory open-ended method, performed on the go and while the ride lasts, that characterises the road movie genre. As Pat Brereton argues, like the western, this genre illustrates “the close correlation between human agency and the struggle to find ontological meaning through travel”, highlighting “the notion of

freedom and the ability to traverse cultural and political boundaries” (2005, 84, 105). Duos aside, Paul Newman is probably the most significant star playing charismatic rebels in 1960s Hollywood: pool player in *The Hustler* (Robert Rossen, 1961), frustrated actor in *Sweet Bird of Youth* (Richard Brooks, 1962), selfish son in *Hud* (Martin Ritt, 1963), brave man raised by Indians in *Hombre* (Martin Ritt, 1967) and chain gang prisoner in *Cool Hand Luke* (Stuart Rosenberg, 1967)—“the man and the motion picture that simply do not conform”, as the film’s tagline reads.

Significantly, though, Newman’s escapes from society, like those by the road duos above, tend to end rather traumatically. The robbers in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, the bikers in *Easy Rider*, and prisoner *Cool Hand Luke* are all shot to their death at the end of the films (figures 9 and 10). Although Newman’s Luke, a traumatised veteran and son, manages to endure uncountable punches in a fight, eat fifty boiled eggs in an hour, and escape several times from his chain gang punishment, eventually his rebellious efforts are all futile. The possibility of mutinous collective action he embodies is brutally curtailed by the guards who shoot him dead in his third getaway. As the camera moves back at the end of the film, swivelling sideways like the chain gang’s arms reaping off weeds along the road, his prison mates remember how “he was a natural world shaker”. Viewers are prompted thus to reflect on the tragic consequences utopian rebelliousness might bring. Like this final receding camera movement in *Cool Hand Luke*, the frozen final colour shot of the robbers turning sepia in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, and the closing bird-eye shot retreating from the road where bikers are killed by rednecks in *Easy Rider*, solemnly convey that the world-shaking countercultural utopianism of the sixties is falling into decay as the decade comes to an end.



Figures 9 and 10. Cool but ineffective: thwarted countercultural hopes in *Cool Hand Luke* and *Easy Rider*

As explored in the next section, the political dimension of utopia recedes acutely in post-1968 cinema. Social criticism gets entangled with anti-utopian perspectives and hope often becomes a signifier of capitalist evasion. Together with the star-crossed utopian rebels above, ill-fated 1969 protagonists like the exhausted Depression marathon dancers in *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (Sydney Pollack, 1969), the deprived English boy who buries his beloved bird prey in *Kes* (Ken Loach, 1969) and the news cameraman in *Medium Cool* (Haskell Wexler, 1969) evoke the dying out of 1960s utopian aspirations. At the end of the latter title, while driving off the Democratic National Convention in Chicago 1968 and listening to a radio report on police violence at the demonstration, the cameraman crashes brutally into a tree. A passing driver stops to take a picture of the accident and then goes away. The film's camera, on the contrary, zooms out from the scene to focus on one of the real-life cameramen working in the movie, while demonstrators' voices coming from the car radio are overheard shouting "the whole world is watching!". Just like the protagonist questions his performance as a journalist documenting the riots, the film's conclusion underlines cinema's ethical responsibility. A "cool medium" that produces entertaining images for worldwide audiences, cinema must move, the film poster suggests, "beyond the age of innocence... into the age of awareness"—a poignantly anti-utopian awareness that conceives hope as a diversion from politics.

2.3. The Anti-Utopian Bias of Late 20th-century Cinema

In the seventies and eighties, Republican US governments by Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan, along with UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, promoted a neoliberal system sustained on free market capitalism, privatisation, de-industrialisation, public expenditure cuts and individualism. The political establishment approaches society with notable scepticism: “[people] are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such a thing!”, Thatcher claims in an interview, “there are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first” (1987). Collective aspirations are seriously undermined in cinema too. Disappointment for 1960s unfulfilled dreams seems to inform nihilistic film visions of the present and the future. The social space is rarely a terrain of possibility where to envision cosmopolitan horizons or make inclusive utopian statements as in the films of the sixties. As argued in the sections below, hopeless protagonists, abject societies and catastrophic futures proliferate in late-century cinema, representing the social as a dystopian burden riddled with post-war traumas, violence, drugs and AIDS; hit by economic recession and institutional corruption.

2.3.1. Hopeless Protagonists

As utopia stagnates, the rebel dreamers of the sixties turn sour and hopeless in early 1970s conspiracy thrillers such as Alan J. Pakula’s *The Parallax View* (1974) and *All the President’s Men* (1976), *Three Days of the Condor* (Sidney Pollack, 1975), *Marathon Man* (John Schlesinger, 1976) and *The Day of the Jackal* (Fred Zinnemann, 1973). Underneath the American Dream façade, a corrupt underworld of opaque corporations, wired back shops, dark basements and deep throats unravels. It is a

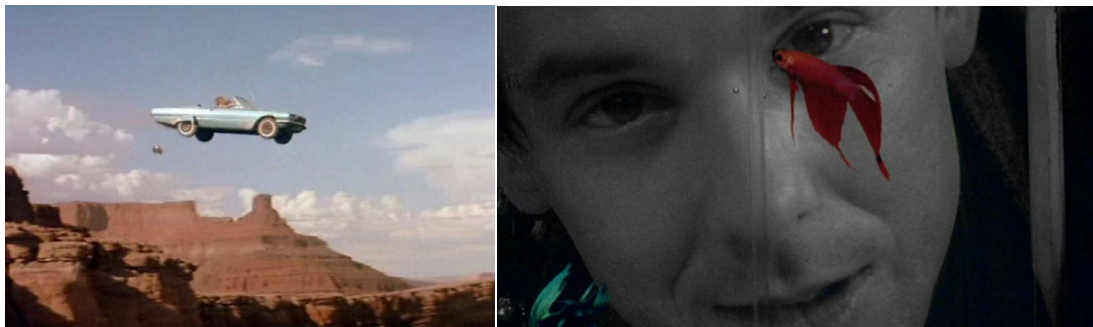
hidden reality “as American as apple pie”, according to *The Parallax View*’s tagline. Strained detectives like Gene Hackman’s in *The French Connection* (William Friedkin, 1971) and *Night Moves* (Arthur Penn, 1975), Clint Eastwood’s *Dirty Harry* (Don Siegel, 1971) and Jack Nicholson’s in *Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974) feel morally bent by their day-to-day survivalist battle in the sewers of an Establishment too obscure and powerful for utopian world-shakers to transform. The times do not welcome outspoken countercultural dreamers like Nicholson’s McMurphy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (Milos Forman, 1975). Pleading insanity to escape prison, the mental institution proves to be a fatal choice for free-spirited McMurphy under the despotic control of Nurse Ratched (Louise Fletcher). Lobotomised in the end, his tragic fate speaks of a radically anti-utopian context that annihilates any seeds of utopian dissent. Now, low-profile non-dreamers like Gene Hackman’s surveillance expert in *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974) seem to be the best equipped to make it through anti-utopia as he calmly plays his saxophone for the ears of whoever has bugged his apartment at the end of the film.

Defeated male entrepreneurs, rogues, preachers and visionaries can be said to embody the demise of old beliefs and ideals in films like *The Last Tycoon* (Elia Kazan, 1976), *Barry Lyndon* (Stanley Kubrick, 1975), *The Mission* (Roland Joffé, 1986) and *The Mosquito Coast* (Peter Weir, 1986). Harrison Ford’s insane inventor in the latter, settling on a Caribbean island with a peculiar ice-making colonising revolution, ties utopia to totalitarian agendas. Similarly disenchanting, early-century US dreamers in *Once Upon a Time in America* (Sergio Leone, 1984) and *Days of Heaven* (Terrence Malick, 1978) look upon the country as a morally rotten land of opportunity. Evolving from 1920s Prohibition Manhattan boy to 1960s criminal in the first title, Robert De Niro’s “Noodles” in *Once Upon a Time in America* binds

economic ascent with moral descent, just like Richard Gere's early-century farm labourer in *Days of Heaven*. The Brooklyn Bridge, a utopian landmark of modernist New York, reveals itself as a fake icon of progress in Leone's movie, while the vast crop fields and Texan mansion set on fire in Malick's discloses the rage felt by those dreamers cast out the American Dream. Ennio Morricone's scores in both films, like Nino Rota's in *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972), provide a highly melancholic backdrop to unfulfilled expectations. Utopian horizons seem to be a matter of gone times and gone dreamers, like those 1920s hopeful young athletes in *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981) running barefoot on the beach in a slow-motion long take—still “with wings on their heels and hope in their hearts”, as its tagline goes.

In the case of women, independent female leads often pay a price for their self-government, as in the case of Diane Keaton's and Gena Rowlands's mafia wives in *The Godfather* and *Gloria* (John Cassavetes, 1980), Jodie Foster's abused teen in *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976), Katharine Ross's cloned housewife in *The Stepford Wives* (Bryan Forbes, 1975), Sigourney Weaver's scientist in *Gorillas in the Mist* (Michael Apted, 1988), Susan Sarandon and Gena Rowlands's emancipated buddies in *Thelma & Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991) and Holly Hunter's mute ill-treated wife in *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993). Meryl Streep's protagonist roles in the seventies and eighties habitually fit this toll-paying female type—externally fragile though emotionally courageous characters whose free choices have dramatic consequences: as a walking-out wife in *Kramer vs. Kramer* (Robert Benton, 1979), a mother at Nazi extermination camp in *Sophie's Choice* (Alan J. Pakula, 1982), a metallurgy worker against company's violations in *Silkwood* (Mike Nichols, 1983), a WWII French Resistance fighter in *Plenty* (Fred Schepisi, 1985), and an Australian

mother wrongly accused of killing her baby daughter in *A Cry in the Dark* (1988). Streep's characters dare to look forward despite unpromising horizons, yet external forces put too big obstacles on their way. As *Plenty*'s tagline puts it: "She wants it all. She takes it all. She pays the price", just like the kamikaze utopians driving ahead over the cliff at the end of *Thelma & Louise* (figure 11).



Figures 11 and 12. Utopia ends in suicide and delusion for the protagonists in *Thelma & Louise* and *Rumble Fish*

Young adults have generally no better prospects in late 20th-century movies. While those still dreaming of revolutions become training material for riot police in *Punishment Park* (Peter Watkins, 1971), the American Dream of upward mobility is hardly graspable for the protagonists in *Mean Streets* (Martin Scorsese, 1973), *Saturday Night Fever* (John Badham, 1977) and *Straight Time* (Ulu Grosbard, 1978), as much as for Al Pacino's main characters in *The Panic in Needle Park* (Jerry Schatzberg, 1971) and *Dog Day Afternoon* (Sidney Lumet, 1975). Family offers no utopian refuge either. Al Pacino's Michael in *The Godfather I* and *II* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972, 1974) and Jack Nicholson's Robert in *Five Easy Pieces* (Rob Rafelson, 1970) struggle to continue a family legacy that haunts them every second, as future Mafia leader and highly gifted musician respectively. Similarly, teens in *Rumble Fish*, *The Outsiders* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1983) and *The Last Picture Show* (Peter Bogdanovich, 1971) face no promising horizon ahead. The group of 1950s

high-school students in the latter come of age in a boring town where economic scarcity and cultural isolation limit their development. The village's decrepit movie theatre, about to close down, and a desert road in the film locate the young protagonists' utopian expectations in the middle of nowhere, misplaced like those colourful goldfish freed by Matt Dillon's teen Rusty James in the unpromising black-and-white industrial town of *Rumble Fish* (figure 12).

At the same time, young psychopaths and traumatised Vietnam soldiers proliferate. Lyrical choreographies of bloody scenes, smoothly voiced narrations and counter-punctual music scores in *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971), *Badlands* (Terrence Malick, 1973) and *Taxi Driver* prompt spectators to come closer to the explosive film offspring of anti-social, anti-utopian times. Malcolm McDowell's ultraviolent Alex, Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek's 1950s rural lovers, and Robert De Niro's psychotic Vietnam veteran Travis embody a hopeless generation ready to point their guns at the outside world (figure 13). Drawing on Jon Savage's comments on De Niro's lead, they are the youth of a "cinema of punk", angry for the lack of prospects granted by a society that, like the NYC neon night in *Taxi Driver*, "promises everything and delivers nothing" (2016, 22). Together with Travis, many other young protagonists play soldiers and veterans unsettled by war: Robert De Niro's in *The Deer Hunter* (Michael Cimino, 1978), Martin Sheen's in *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979), Charlie Sheen's and William Dafoe's in *Platoon* (Oliver Stone, 1986), Matthew Modine's in *Birdy* (Alan Parker, 1984) and *Full Metal Jacket* (Stanley Kubrick, 1987), and Tom Cruise's in *Born on the Fourth of July* (Oliver Stone, 1989), to name a few. "This is the End", by The Doors, in the opening sequence of *Apocalypse Now* (figure 14), and lines of Marines marching

home singing a Mickey Mouse tune in *Full Metal Jacket* suggest that any dreams of world progress led by the United States ended in Vietnam.



Figures 13 and 14. The psychotic offspring of the Vietnam War in *Taxi Driver* and *Apocalypse Now*

Interestingly, a new generation of young self-centred capitalists rises up in mid-eighties Hollywood. Matthew Broderick's self-confident teen in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (John Hughes, 1986) embodies a fresh-faced capitalist dreamer living in a house that could easily accommodate four families, with caring parents and all the commodities an adolescent could desire. Ferris's direct internal narrator explains spectators why he will be skipping the history lesson on European socialism at school as follows: "Ism's in my opinion are not good. A person should not believe in an -ism, he should believe in himself". Ferris's self-centred neoliberal ideals reflects what Tom Moylan labels the "co-optation of utopia"—a shift in late-century global capitalism when utopia starts to be used as a synonym for immediate satisfaction (2006). Like Ferris, Tom Cruise's egotistic protagonists in *Risky Business* (Paul Brickman, 1983), *Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986), *The Color of Money* (Martin Scorsese, 1986), *Cocktail* (Roger Donaldson, 1988) and *Rain Man* (Barry Levinson, 1988) invite young global generations to pursue an American Dream of riches and pretty lovers, and think of society as a resource pool that can be exploited for profit. Like Charlie Sheen's ambitious stockbroker in *Wall Street* (Oliver Stone, 1987), Cruise's

polished white smiles and shiny-gelled hairstyles celebrate the fact that aspirations can be purchased in the *laissez-faire* utopia of the late century.

During the nineties, though, many films like *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999) invite viewers to “look closer”, as its tagline puts it, at the American Dream. As the sexual scandals of an apparently spotless Oval Office come to the spotlight, movies look into the deceptive utopian surfaces of capitalist consumerist societies. Young drug addicts in films like *The Basketball Diaries* (Scott Kalvert, 1995), *The Beach* (Danny Boyle, 2000) and *Requiem for a Dream* (Darren Aronofsky, 2000) portray consumers consumed. “Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a starter home. Choose dental insurance, leisurewear and matching luggage. Choose your future. But why would anyone want to do a thing like that?”, Ewan McGregor’s Renton rhetorically asks in the opening sequence of *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996), hinting at the fact that he finds no real comfort in material possessions. No longer expected to bring up utopian futures in the allegedly utopian capitalist end of century, film youngsters’ lives often revolve around money: either consuming as above, selling their bodies like River Phoenix’s and Keanu Reeves’s hustlers in *My Own Private Idaho* (Gus Van Sant, 1991), or robbing banks like Patrick Swayze’s surfer in *Point Break* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1991).

Old-fashioned non-materialist utopians like Robin Williams’s English teacher in *Dead Poets Society* (Peter Weir, 1989) feel, therefore, utterly out of place. Exercising one of the most utopian of professions, Williams’s kind teacher tells students that dreams define us and life must be seen from diverse perspectives. The results of non-conformist thinking are catastrophic, though, as the plot ends up with a dead student and the educator fired. As illustrated in the film, dreams unendorsed by the system do not put bread on the table, nor do they bring but social marginalisation.

Utopian ideals seem to belong in the realm of dead poets and old times—a picturesque memory of hippy countercultural rolling stones like Jenny (Robin Wright) in *Forrest Gump* (Robert Zemeckis, 1994). Tom Hanks’s Forrest, on the contrary, progresses from Alabama rags to Alabama riches, from single man to married father, from Vietnam soldier to shrimp businessman and Apple stakeholder in a country that seems to provide endless chances for self-reinvention. Leaving complaints and dreams aside, Forrest’s everyday resilience, hard work and pragmatism will save the day through periods of peace and war, economic expansion and crises that come and go like the feather floating up and down at the beginning and end of the film. There is no need to return to old-fashioned collective utopias that do not help you thrive in life, the film apparently contends, but to realise that your fortune depends, to a great extent, on your ability to resiliently adapt to given circumstances and keep on working (figure 15).



Figure 15. An ode to resilient adaptation: Forrest Gump waits for the bus

2.3.2. Abject Societies

As explored above, collective utopian ideals of social justice and equality of opportunity are cornered away in the benefit of individualist progress and survival from the 1970s onwards, which results in the deterioration of the public space. According to Macek (2006), US right wing discourses blame the urban underclass for

inner cities problems and exploit the dystopian panorama depicted in the news, adverts and films to support reactionary policies. As a media mogul puts it in *Network* (Sidney Lumet, 1976): “There is no America, there is no democracy, just TV stations. There are no nations... The world is a business, Mr. Beale!”. This film and others illustrate what Guy Debord labelled “the society of the spectacle” in 1967—a society in which citizens’ reality is replaced with media conglomerates’ representation of that reality. As Mark Shiel argues, *Network* portrays “the atomization of the television audience and, by extension, of the American public in the regressively privatised, anti-collective, 1970s”; that is, “the replacement of the vanguard utopianism and radical politics of the 1960s by a postmodern micropolitics of disassociated lone individuals” (2003, 173-174).

In these anti-utopian times of the “homo spectator” (Debord 1967, 9), the hopes of tormented individuals like the ageing TV presenter in *Network*, Pacino’s bank robber in *Dog Day Afternoon* or the terminally ill woman in *Death Watch* (Bertrand Tavernier, 1980) become profitable emotional pornography to air on TV. Meanwhile, protagonists in *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg, 1983) and *Poltergeist* (Tobe Hooper, 1982) get literally consumed by screens. The fear society exploited by media sensationalism and neoliberal politics prompts citizen-spectators to stay safe at home next to their television screens, away from an increasingly abject social body in which even neighbours become threatening Others, as seen in *Straw Dogs* (Sam Peckinpah, 1971), *The Visitors* (Elia Kazan, 1972) and *The Tenant* (*Le locataire*, Roman Polanski, 1976). There is nowhere to be safe.

Menaces proliferate in cinematic public spaces, harassing commuters in *Duel* (Steven Spielberg, 1971), holidaymakers in *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), or suburban families in the remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Philip Kaufman,

1978). Paranormal threats also multiply in films like *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973), *The Omen* (Richard Donner, 1976), *The Changeling* (Peter Medak, 1980), *The Fog* (John Carpenter, 1980) and *Christine* (John Carpenter, 1983), to name but a few. Not even nature escapes the viral fear of its time in *Deliverance* (John Boorman, 1972), as four urbanite friends taking a weekend canoe trip are attacked and raped by locals in the Appalachian Mountains. “One day the system is gonna be down, and there’ll only be survival”, Burt Reynolds’s team leader contently announces while holding his arch and arrows in the film (figure 16). Small-town America, for its part, is not much safer in *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978). Horror films make their particular bloody sketches of the Darwinist big-eats-small society of the time in films like *The Texas Chain Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974), *The Hills Have Eyes* (Wes Craven, 1977), *Friday the 13th* (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980), *Cannibal Holocaust* (Ruggero Deodato, 1980) and *The Evil Dead* (Sam Raimi, 1981). As Christopher Sharrett puts it, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* presents “a desert wasteland of dissolution where once vibrant myth is dissected (...) yards of dying cattle, abandoned gasoline stations, defiled graveyards, crumbling mansions, and a ramshackle farmhouse of psychotic killers”—all making “a statement about the dead end of American experience” (2004, 318).



Figure 16. Burt Reynolds’s archer defends his urbanite team from rural predators in *Deliverance*

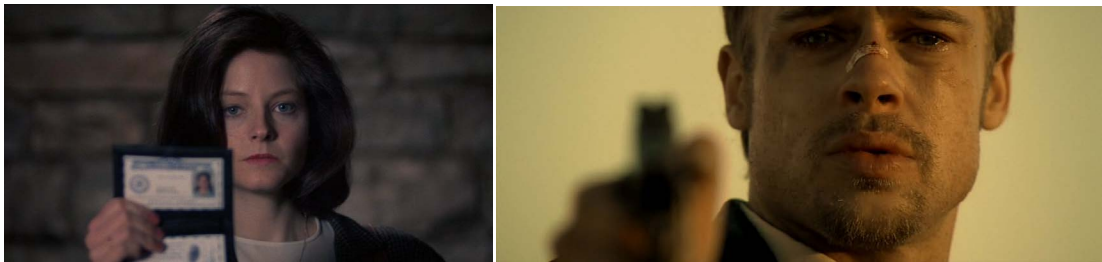
In the early eighties, the outbreak of AIDS contributes to the anti-utopian film panorama by representing physical contact with others as potentially lethal. Films like *The Thing* (John Carpenter, 1982) and *The Fly* (David Cronenberg, 1986) deal sideways with the epidemic via infectious abject creatures that offer, according to Edward Guerrero, allegories of AIDS spreading through society and the body (1990, 87). AIDS aside, sex also feeds the terrain of fear in the conservative seventies and eighties, as illustrated in films like *The Wicker Man* (Robin Hardy, 1973), *Rabid* (David Cronenberg, 1977), *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980), *Dressed to Kill* (Brian De Palma, 1980) and *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, 1986). Increasingly liberated women are pigeonholed either as preys or predators: semi-naked young victims in exploitation slasher films like *Black Christmas* (Bob Clark, 1974), *The Last House on the Left* (Wes Craven, 1972), *I Spit on Your Grave* (Meir Zarchi, 1978) and *Inferno* (Dario Argento, 1980); or professionally successful mature females playing the role of deadly mantis such as Catherine Deneuve's bisexual century-old bloodsucker in *The Hunger* (Tony Scott, 1983), Glenn Close's editor in *Fatal Attraction* (Adrian Lyne, 1987) and Sharon Stone's writer in *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1992). Intimidating their male companions (like Michael Douglas's protagonists in the two latter titles) both in bed and the workplace, emancipated women are stigmatised as "abject"—a category theorised by Julia Kristeva that threatens to break down the social order by crossing the border between self and other, between normative culture and animalism (1982) (figures 17 and 18). In sum, film sexual relations of different kinds also reproduce the social panic and predatory logics of conservative neoliberalism.



Figures 17 and 18. The perils of close relations: deadly women in *The Hunger* and *Fatal Attraction*

In the nineties, as US capitalist economy thrives during Bill Clinton's presidency, psychotic loners take by force the ideal lives and family units they have not been able to create in family thrillers like *Misery* (Rob Reiner, 1990), *Pacific Heights* (John Schlesinger, 1990), *Cape Fear* (Martin Scorsese, 1991), *Single White Female* (Barbet Schroeder, 1992) and *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (Curtis Hanson, 1992). Concurrently, young murderers in *The Good Son* (Joseph Ruben, 1993), *Scream* (Wes Craven, 1996), *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994) and *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Anthony Minghella, 1999) feed into what Barry Glassner labels "the culture of fear", in a 1990s US society convinced "that just about every young American male is a potential mass murderer" (1999, xiv). Violence *per se* becomes an object of aesthetic fascination in films like Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994), *Crash* (David Cronenberg, 1996) and David Fincher's *Se7en* (1995) and *Fight Club* (1999)—possibly expressing through physical carnage the countercultural rage that finds no utopian political channel in the neoliberal end of century. Serial killers like Kevin Spacey's religious fundamentalist in *Se7en*, Anthony Hopkins's intellectually brilliant Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991) and Christian Bale's executive in *American Psycho* (Mary Harron, 2000) dispose of human lives as if they were another commodity of the consumerist system, yet another source of capitalist entertainment.

As Morgan Freeman’s world-weary detective Somerset puts it in *Se7en*, in these abject violent societies of late 20th-century cinema utopia feels like an out-of-place futile exercise—as if “picking up diamonds on a deserted island, saving them in case we get rescued” (figures 19 and 20).



Figures 19 and 20. Hunting games: ingenious killers and vulnerable detectives in *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Se7en*

2.3.3. Catastrophic Futures

The future would not harbour utopian solutions either in late-century films. 1970s and 80s science fiction cinema does not offer the comforting exploratory *chronotopes* that Michel Foucault labelled “heterotopias” (1984), but what could be referred as “heterodystopia”—that is, an unpromising cinematic elsewhere. 1969 film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick) already denies the possibility of utopian tomorrows. H.A.L.’s artificial intelligence celebrates the dehumanised evolution of an insignificant human species within the universal scheme of things. Representing the end of humanity under the triumphant chords of Richard Strauss’s “Also Sprach Zarathustra”, Kubrick’s science fiction film would not display traces of sympathetic lament. Equally unhelpful is the future in 1970s post-apocalyptic films *No Blade of Grass* (Cornel Wilde, 1970), *The Omega Man* (Boris Sagal, 1971), *Soylent Green* (Richard Fleischer, 1973) and *Mad Max* (George Miller, 1979). Overpopulation, violence, pollution and plagues push protagonists into predatory survival. Not even

Charlton Heston's and Mel Gibson's lead characters in the two latter titles can dispel the gloomy outlook of an ecocidal and fratricidal human species that makes food out of dead bodies in the films. Meanwhile, socio-political dystopias such as *THX 1138* (George Lucas, 1971), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Terminator* envision futures ruled by totalitarian governments and powerful corporations. Solitary rebellious leads like Robert Duvall's THX, John Hurt's history re-writer and Linda Hamilton's pregnant visionary Sarah Connor in the films cannot clear, on their own, the bleak horizons ahead. The future no longer heralds collective utopian progress, but dystopian involution via ecological disasters, alienated individuals and despotic rulers.

The great cities that once embodied modern civilised utopia are now the epicentre of a dystopian postmodern civilisation in 1980s films such as *Escape from New York* (John Carpenter, 1981), *Blade Runner*, *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam, 1985) and *Akira* (Katsuhiro Ôtomo, 1988). The days when New York skyscrapers represented dreams of endless progress are a thing of the past. New York, Los Angeles, London and Tokyo feature as modern metropolises burnt down to ashes. The chaotic and polluted post-industrial L.A. in *Blade Runner* illustrates, according to Giuliana Bruno, the postmodern condition theorised by Fredric Jameson: one "characterized by a schizophrenic temporality and a spatial pastiche" that is disconnected from history and reality (1987, 62). Unable to dream of collective futures other than self-paid new beginnings on spatial colonies, Harrison Ford's Rick and Sean Young's Rachael have no utopian horizon to walk into as a couple (figure 21). The film's hindered capacity to envision hopeful prospects might respond to the disorientation that, as theorised by Jameson (1984), arises from a yet-to-chart global totality—an unmappable

postmodern technological order under the “cultural logic of late capitalism” detached from past ties with nature, history, myths and religion.



Figure 21. Nothing to look forward to: Rachael and Rick's bleak horizons in *Blade Runner*

In the “world risk society” theorised by Ulrich Beck (2009), 1990s cinema speculates with ends of the world provoked by pandemics, alien invasions and natural disasters in blockbusters such as *Outbreak* (Wolfgang Peterse n, 1995), *Independence Day* (Roland Emmerich, 1996), *Twister*, *Starship Troopers* (Paul Verhoeven, 1997) and *Armageddon* (Michael Bay, 1998), to name a few. Technology also becomes a threatening force in *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990), *Terminator 2* (James Cameron, 1991) and *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993). These films seem to agree on the fact that “in the 21st century nobody will be safe”, as *Safe*'s tagline forecasts (Todd Haynes, 1995); not even affluent individuals like Julianne Moore's homemaker in the movie, who develops a life-threatening chemical sensibility illness. Rather than expectant about the utopian possibilities the new millennium might bring to an increasingly interconnected world society, the cinema of the nineties is busy with anxious visions of menaces uncontainable by national borders. As Susan Sontag puts it, late-century apocalyptic imagination feels like “a long-running serial: not “Apocalypse Now” but “Apocalypse From Now On”” (1989, 88).

Fragmented narrative temporalities in the movies further hinder, in turn, future-oriented utopian speculation. Film leads get lost in labyrinthine timelines in titles like *Dark City*, whose unambiguous anti-utopian tagline reads “where the night never ends. Where man has no past. And humanity has no future”. Main characters struggle, without much success, to locate themselves within coherent narratives in films such as *12 Monkeys* (Terry Gilliam, 1995), *The Game* (David Fincher, 1997), *The Fifth Element* (Luc Besson, 1997), *The Sixth Sense* (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999), *The Matrix* (The Wachowskis, 1999) and *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000), among many others. Scrambled plots riddled with temporal jumps, alternative realities, time travel and memory gaps in these films disorient characters and spectators alike. In a digital global era of expanded technological possibilities, moving borders, shortened distances and accelerated time, narrative schemes as disconcerting as the body tattoos on Guy Pearce’s amnesiac protagonist in *Memento* undermine linear conceptions of historical progress and utopian visions of the future.

These anxious cinematic approaches to the future can be read under the light of David Harvey’s “condition of postmodernity”: an acceleration of production, consumption and everyday life in global capitalism that provokes a sense of restless automation and has a disrupting impact on “the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life” (1990, 284). In the movies, the disruptive “time-space compression” Harvey refers to is illustrated by “countdown” narrative structures where fretful protagonists need to solve whatever the equation in the last minute, before a tragic crumbling down of all things around. This happens to Harrison Ford’s characters in 1990s films such as *Presumed Innocent* (Alan J. Pakula, 1990), *Patriot Games* (Phillip Noyce, 1992), *The Fugitive* (Andrew Davis, 1993), *Clear and Present Danger* (Phillip Noyce, 1994), *Air Force One* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1997) and *Six*

Days Seven Nights (Ivan Reitman, 1998). Younger generations like Sandra Bullock's and Keanu Reeve's protagonists in *Speed* (Jan de Bont, 1994) seem better equipped to make it through rush hour. In order to get through the new time-space compressed context, this movie hints at, one needs to learn to play under its fastened rules.

Socio-spatial unmappability, for its part, is a key added obstacle to utopian planning. 1990s thrillers such as *The Firm* (Sydney Pollack, 1993), *The Client* (Joel Schimacher, 1994), *Mission: Impossible* (Brian De Palma, 1996), *Conspiracy Theory* (Richard Donner, 1997) and *The Insider* (Michael Mann, 1999) draw complex networks of sinister corporate interests intricately tangled on a global scale. As power structures grow larger and national politics become increasingly influenced by international affairs, protagonists' agency downsizes. Digital technologies also contribute to the spatial disorientation of film characters in a late 20th-century world that, according to Jean Baudrillard, replaces original referents with symbols, simulations, reproductions and signs (1994). The hyperspace, video games and virtual reality inspire the dystopian Russian-doll worlds in *Johnny Mnemonic* (Robert Longo, 1995), *Strange Days* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1995), *Cube* (Vincenzo Natali, 1997), *The Matrix* and *eXistenZ* (David Cronenberg, 1999). Meanwhile, surveillance technologies and digital data allow governments and corporations to monitor more closely specific citizens like Sandra Bullock's programmer in *The Net* (Irwin Winkler, 1995) and Will Smith's lawyer in *Enemy of the State* (Tony Scott, 1998). According to Peter Fitting's "Unmasking the Real? Critique and Utopia in Recent Science Fiction Films", unmappable artificial realities as those in *The Matrix* and *Dark City* work "as a trope or figure for the many ways in which government and media collude to obscure any significant discussion of the real economic workings of contemporary society, a process that leaves us confused and unsure of how to act to change that

situation” (2003, 157). In this same direction, María del Mar Azcona asserts that the multi-protagonist narrative form and the thriller collude in the late 90s and early 2000s “highlighting that old certainties—if they ever existed—are gone and that easy solutions are no longer possible, not even in Hollywood”; for the world is now “a risky and indomitable place where nobody is entirely innocent and nobody is completely safe” (2010, 139)—an unstable ground where utopian speculation on the future can hardly take root (figure 22).

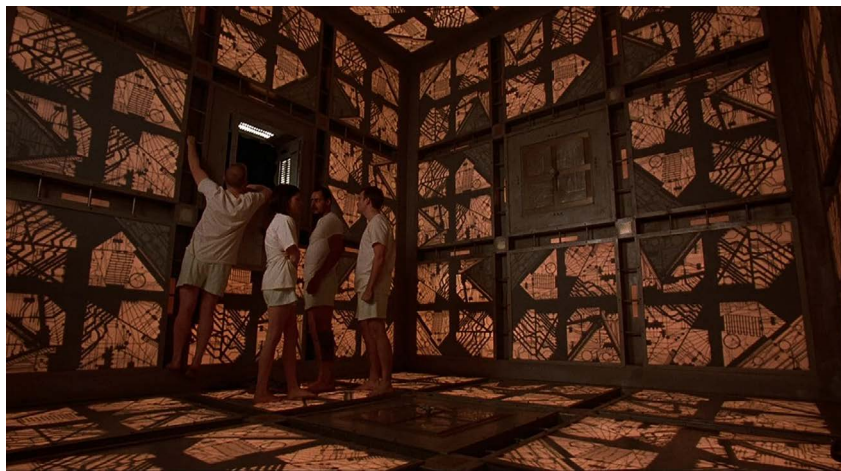


Figure 22. Strangers placed together in a deadly maze: unmappability and social weariness in *Cube*

Yet, as explored in the following chapters, in the new century the Internet and globalisation also enable citizens to access information and connect with distant others more easily than ever in what sociologist Manuel Castells labels “the network society” (2010). The so-called “anti-globalization” 1999 Seattle protests signal the incipient re-emergence of eco-social awareness, utopian non-conformism and political activism in times of the global. As Ulrich Beck argues in *World at Risk*, global threats like climate change “unexpectedly liberate a world-historical ‘*cosmopolitan moment*’ (...) they make the anticipation of collective extinction into an everyday experience, release moral and political impulses by way of counterbalancing economic, political and cultural globalisation across boundaries and divisions” (2009, 20). Global risks

become, therefore, a “glue for diversity” for communities based “neither on descent nor on spatial presence”, generating “a kind of ‘compulsory utopianism’” (Beck 2009, 188).

The risk-propelled cosmopolitan utopianism theorised by Beck starts to find cinematic echo in critical dystopias like *The Matrix* franchise (1999-2003) (as explored in 1.3.). Keanu Reeves’s Neo in the film—an androgynous young man attracted to an also androgynous Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss), under the orders of black Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) and the advice of a female Oracle (Gloria Foster)—embodies, along with his hybrid team, a cosmopolitan and political re-conception of utopia (figure 23). Neo awakens from his virtual reality to, paradoxically, acknowledge the power of political dreams and cooperative action. His cosmopolitan team fights back the neoliberal co-optation of utopia theorised by Moylan (2006), which is represented by the Matrix Corporation and Mr. Smith’s eye-glassed replicants in the film series. Thanks to the group’s cooperative rebelliousness, ecocidal power elites can be gradually unmasked, the contours of their present reality mapped and utopian directions progressively sketched. This way, utopia reawakens out of the darkest, most unreadable dystopia—a highly individualist ecocidal context where virtual players sleep in hibernation pods, unaware of the devastated natural world outside. Interestingly, all the team’s achievements are made possible by means of the same programming tools the system provides. That is, they counter-programme the border-crossing risks of neoliberal globalisation into interconnected opportunities for a cosmopolitan future. “I don't know the future. I didn't come here to tell you how this is going to end. I came here to tell you how it's going to begin”, Neo’s last lines go in the film. Shifting the focus from ends to beginnings, *The Matrix* re-frames

utopia as an open-ended political method that many other films would endorse in the following years.



Figure 23. Counter-programming the neoliberal co-optation of utopia:
awakening cosmopolitan networks in *The Matrix*

As will be argued in the following chapters, twenty-first-century cinema illustrates the rebirth of utopia, staged as a cosmopolitan method for the development of egalitarian and ecological futures. Whereas late 20th-century films portray hopeless protagonists, abject societies and catastrophic horizons, many 21st-century movies show characters' quest for hope in post-apocalyptic ecocidal spaces (chapter three), film leads self-awakening to eco-social dreaming (chapter four) and the political potential of inclusive and cooperative cultures (chapter five).

Chapter 3. Hope Amidst the Ashes: Cosmopolitan Horizons in Contemporary Post- apocalyptic Cinema

This chapter explores utopia as archaeology, drawing on Levitas's utopian method, to analyse the spaces of the global—and the u/dystopian discourses attached to them—in contemporary post-apocalyptic cinema. More specifically, it looks into the ways in which post-apocalyptic films reflect on globalisation, its risks and opportunities, focusing on environmental concerns and cosmopolitan utopian thinking. In order to do that, the chapter examines cinematic representations of three interrelated spaces within the global—the economic, the ecological and the social—, and how they engage with existing ideological systems in each of these spaces—capitalism, environmentalism and cosmopolitanism respectively. As will be argued, the archaeological scrutiny of global spaces made by post-apocalyptic films today often can be read as a call for new cosmopolitan cartographies of globalisation that may enable sustainable progress in its economic, ecological and social spheres.

The first part of this chapter (“From Risk Society to Cosmopolitanism”) analyses some fundamental social theories on globalisation from the late-twentieth century to the 2010s. As far as utopia is concerned, this section pinpoints the evolution of theoretical approaches to the global in the recent years from threat-centred perspectives to opportunity-oriented methods. Then, a second part entitled “Post-Apocalyptic Films and the Politics of the End” revises briefly the ways films have articulated apocalypse at different moments in the history of cinema, paying attention to the anxieties raised, how these are represented and, fundamentally, the diversity of

political and utopian responses offered. Through this analysis, two main divergent tendencies—apartheid and cosmopolitan—are identified. As will be argued, each of these trends advocates for distinct types of post-catastrophe world societies, trusts different agents for post-apocalyptic reconstruction, and relates in its own way to the environment and Others. Rather than analysing particular texts in detail, this section argues that, beyond offering spectacles of disastrous futures, apocalyptic films are political texts that engage in utopian speculation of desired worlds. As happens with recent social theories of globalisation (3.1.), cosmopolitan discourses are also gaining presence in contemporary post-apocalyptic cinema.

The following two sections focus on specific 21st-century apocalyptic films. “Ecocritical Archaeologies of Global Ecocide in Contemporary Apocalyptic Movies” analyses the ways film spaces portray environmental damages in the Anthropocene. Dead-end spaces (3.3.1.), wilderness (3.3.2.), pastoral (3.3.3.) and polluted spaces (3.3.4.) usually prompt different political and utopian perspectives on the global. Pastoral and polluted film spaces, in particular, frequently shelter cosmopolitan aspirations. The final section (3.4.) is a case study of *Children of Men*. It considers the dystopian representation of 2027 London in the movie as a global city whose social body and environment are acutely damaged by nationalist politics, ecocidal economics and oligarchic elites. Beyond this apocalyptic scenario, however, the film’s protagonists and narrative advance, against all odds, towards the possibility of hope. The analysis spots “markers of hope” in the film—formal features (of mise-en-scène, framing, editing, sound and space) that disrupt the dystopian context to open up breathing gaps for utopian speculation and articulate cosmopolitan horizons.

3.1. From Risk Society to Cosmopolitanism: Visions of Globalisation and its Spaces—Economic, Environmental, Social

Interdependence. This one word could be used to define globalisation's multifaceted manifestations in the twenty-first century. Interacting flows of information, peoples, goods, ideas, risks and capital cohabit and depend on each other at a global scale today. Evidently, though, nations still rely on accurately defined geographical borders to, among other ends, set up trade barriers, implement policies and constitutional laws, legitimise armed conflicts, and exclude illegal migrants from their territory. The difficult coexistence of these national regulatory frameworks with supra-national phenomena such as climate change, social mobilities, the hyperspace and international corporations make globalisation a highly complex reality and a contested concept in social theory. Following George Ritzer's definition, globalisation can be understood as "an accelerating set of processes involving flows that encompass ever-greater numbers of the world's spaces and that lead to increasing integration and interconnectivity among those spaces" (2007, 1). Markets, data, climate, peoples, cultural texts, ideologies and politics operate within the limits of the global as much as they still depend on their respective national and local regulatory contexts. However complex and contested, a global cartography is necessary, therefore, to understand and work upon cross-border realities such as multicultural societies, global warming, pandemics, online communities or the late 2000s Great Recession.

As A.G. Hopkins argues, this supra-national cartography might be traced back to historical phenomena previous to the rise of the nation state and Western industrialisation of the 1800s, such as the diasporas and migrations of an "archaic globalization" stage, or "proto-globalization" practices like the American slave system

(2002, 1-9). According to James and Steger's "A Genealogy of 'Globalization': The Career of a Concept" (2014), although the term was rarely used until the 1990s, the global existed before that as an "icon" and idea in diverse fields such as cinema. They refer, for instance, to Universal Pictures' logo of the Earth, which was already in use in the 1910s (2014, 422). Nevertheless, as a concept, James and Steger assert, "globalization" actually takes off once it becomes "embedded in the formation of meaning" across four levels—"ideas, ideologies, imaginaries, and ontologies"—and now it is often used to express political understandings of the world (423). Besides historical and terminological debates, scholars engage with and map out the cartographies of globalisation from diverse, often conflicting academic paradigms (economy, sociology, politics, ecology and culture, among others), as well as from different ideological perspectives, which backs James and Steger's claim on globalisation as a politically charged concept.

Globalisation is commonly understood as an economic process linked with the development of global capitalism in the late twentieth century, and its determining impact on social, cultural, ecological and political spheres. While some works like Johan Norberg's *Progress: Ten Reasons to Look Forward to the Future* (2016) celebrate economic globalisation under capitalism as harbinger of prosperity and democratic freedom across the world—drawing on quantifiable data of positive historical progress in spheres such as health, poverty and education—, other scholars stress the rather pernicious effects of global economic neoliberalism. Among the most commonly cited are: the unequal distribution of wealth among nations and social classes, exploitative work conditions in the outsourced factories and economies of developing countries, environmental damages, the lack of control of national governments over international corporations, or the individualism of capitalist

consumerist societies. Although economists like Thomas Piketty (2013) and Joseph Stiglitz (2015) have recently published critical works on these matters, economy-centred readings of globalisation are often made from fields other than economics, such as sociology (Zygmunt Bauman, Ulrich Beck, Saskia Sassen, Manuel Castells), anthropology (Arjun Appadurai), geography (David Harvey), political philosophy (Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri) and cultural studies (Fredric Jameson). Remarkably, these scholars frequently frame their analyses through theories of space, which may be read as a manifestation of the extent to which globalisation and its spatial logics are, as James and Steger claim, “embedded” in the formation of ideas (2014, 423)—even those critical with the phenomenon itself.

Fredric Jameson’s 1991 work *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* already speaks of a new global space shaped by multinational late capitalism that has colonised “Nature and the Unconscious” (2003, 36). This economic system, according to Jameson, promotes a postmodernist cultural logic that displays an acute historical and spatial disorientation within the novel global order. Saskia Sassen (1991), for her part, introduces the concept of “the global city” to explore world metropolises like London, New York and Tokyo as organisational and financial centres in a global economy characterised by decentralised production, transnational interactions and migrations. David Harvey (1990) investigates the speeded-up “postmodern condition” and “time-space compression” produced by the global capitalist system. In later works, Harvey strongly criticises the “new imperialism” practised by the United States in countries like Iraq, using “accumulation by dispossession” strategies typical of neoliberal politics to gain control over oil resources and keep the hegemony of the global system in the name of international peace (2003). Zygmunt Bauman (1998), in turn, scrutinises “the human consequences” of globalisation. Bauman examines a

capitalist society of consumers in which an “extraterritorial” economic ruling elite takes decisions affecting the lives of locals, though it neither bears responsibility nor suffers the results of its own acts. Meanwhile, national states lose power to regulate the activity of these globally mobile economic agents (1998, 18-20). More recently, in his book *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age* (2011), Bauman continues to censure a consumer-centred global economy of growing social inequalities, whose supporting philosophy stigmatises the poverty it thrives on and helps sustain.

Other approaches to globalisation have concentrated on spheres such as communications, mobilities, media, politics, ideologies and culture (though still considering the capitalist system an essential actor of globalising processes). Arjun Appadurai’s “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy” (1990) analyses five interrelated dimensions of the “global cultural flow”—“ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes”—produced and experienced by nation-states as much as by regional actors, diasporic communities, movements, families and individuals. These interacting “landscapes” of moving persons, technologies, capital, information, images and ideas form the fluid “imagined worlds” of peoples across the globe, according to Appadurai’s cultural analysis of globalisation (1990, 296-297). Meanwhile, Manuel Castells’s *The Rise of the Network Society* (2010) posits late-century globalisation as a new age of information and communication that operates under the spatial logic of the network as “the new social morphology of our societies”. This network society, Castells claims, allows simultaneous action from distant geographical locations, building up a “space of flows” where interconnected political, economic and media power nodes function (2010, 500-502). Gerard Delanty and Chris Rumford, for their part, approach “political globalization” as “a tension” between three interrelated processes: a global geopolitics with many centres of power

(mainly states); a global normative culture beyond the state with expressions such as human rights, cosmopolitanism and sustainable development (which affect global political discourses); and polycentric networks of political influence formed by international institutions and a global civil society of cosmopolitan individuals, NGOs and social movements (which they call “globalisation from below”) (2007, 414-416). The most pervasive manifestation of political globalisation, they claim, is the spread of national parliamentary democracy across the world. Yet, Delanty and Rumford warn, globalisation can both fragment and enhance democracy: fragment it if a social world of disassociated individuals makes politics lose autonomy in favour of capitalism; or enhance it, instead, through transnational political actions and “cosmopolitan collectivities” that advocate human rights and challenge neoliberal policies (416-426).

The scholarly references above illustrate how, in social theories of globalisation, threats and negative consequences (like growing economic inequalities) cohabit with progress and opportunities (such as the emergence of transnational communities and ideologies, and the potential formation of a new, also globalised, political space). Jameson, for instance, calls for the creation of an “internationalism” whose political culture raises “spatial issues as its fundamental organizing concern”, providing a “global cognitive mapping” that “endows the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system” (2003, 50-54). For Sassen, denationalised, yet “place-bounded”, urban spaces enable transnational agents to engage in new forms of contestation and “a new type of transnational politics” (1998, xxi). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* (2000) and *Multitude* (2004) portray globalisation as the decentred global political order of capitalism, but also as the site of a potentially revolutionary “multitude” growing within “the Empire’s” global hegemony and working against it to build a democratic global society. Similarly, Harvey’s *Spaces*

of Hope (2000), *Rebel Cities* (2012) and *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (2014) draw on urban sociology and revolutionary politics to encourage the utopian propositioning of alternatives to global capitalism—a system whose contradictions are compelling enough “to foster many grounds for hope” (2014, 293). Rather than attacking globalisation *per se*, early and recent critical accounts most often condemn the economic organisation of the world under the logic of neoliberal capitalism. However, since the earliest approaches to the global usually grounded their analysis in the central role played by the capitalist system, and the so-called “anti-globalization” movements of the late nineties used the term as a synonym of eco-socially pernicious extractive economics, the concept of globalisation was wedded, until recently, to global neoliberal capitalism.

However, from the turn of the century, academic readings of the multifaceted realities of globalisation are turning more attentive to utopian possibilities, especially when framed through ecological and cosmopolitan analytical outlooks. Drawing on Bauman (2007b), it could be argued that an endemically uncertain “liquid” global age defined by profound institutional, social and ontological transformations is accepting the fact that this is “a period marked by more questions than answers” to seek global solutions to its global problems. As seen in chapter one (1.2.), in Bauman’s view the solutions must aim at lifting “human integration to the level of all humanity”, confronting “retrotopian” discourses grounded in Hobbesian authoritarian logics, separatist tribalism, exclusion or individualism (2017, 167). Following Bauman, nostalgic and apartheid reactions to the uncertainties of globalisation seen in recent political phenomena like Brexit in the United Kingdom or Trump’s Mexican Wall policies in the United States—paradoxically two of the leading nations in the history of

colonialism and neoliberalism—would be unfit and counterproductive for the global challenges lying ahead.

A conclusion similar to Bauman's is reached in Anthony Giddens's *The Politics of Climate Change* (2009), this time from an ecological prism that stresses the way environmental risks created by modern society map out a common global framework for political decision-making. In Giddens's—as in Beck's previous *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk* (1995) and, more recently, in Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (2014)—the pressing urgencies of climate change force contemporary global society and institutions to channel the uncertainties and complexities of globalisation towards utopian political concreteness. Global warming, pollution levels or the ozone layer are quantifiable realities (though also contested) affecting the whole planet, humanity at large and its future generations. Therefore, as Steve Yearley argues, the global environment demands socio-political approaches to globalisation that invalidate the reduction of the phenomenon “to the worldwide spread of the unregulated market” to concentrate on “new opportunities and resources for myriad non-state actors” (2007, 252). This way, ecological perspectives might be helping social theory avoid “the trap”, as Manfred B. Steger puts it, “of technological and economic reductionism” (2007, 367). While chapters four and five will explore further the articulation of ecological philosophies, ontologies and political cultures in twenty-first-century theory, social movements and films, sections 3.3. and 3.4. of this chapter will look into ecocritical cinematic spaces in contemporary post-apocalyptic cinema, noting how ecological risks often serve to endorse cosmopolitan political solutions.

Ulrich Beck's work, in particular, illustrates the cosmopolitan and utopian turn within globalisation studies: from threat-centred readings of an extremely dynamic late-

century “world risk society” to opportunity-oriented visions of global futures grounded in cosmopolitan attitudes and politics. Thus, if in *World Risk Society* (1999) Beck advocates for a transnational political “consciousness of cosmopolitan solidarity” on which to build the future institutions of global civil society, in *World at Risk* (2009) he sees a “cosmopolitan moment” already emerging from shared global dangers that “connect actors across borders” and produce an “enforced enlightenment” and “cosmopolitanization” (61). This cosmopolitan awakening, Beck states, may be able to inform a cosmopolitan politics that empowers states and civic movements, while disempowering globalised capital (2009, 66). What is more, Beck endorses cosmopolitanism as a critical theoretical paradigm for the analysis of “new actors and actor networks, power potentials, strategies and forms of organization of debounded politics” that are functioning beyond the nation-state framework in the twenty-first century (2007a, 175).

In this line, Gerard Delanty’s “Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory” (2006) argues for post-universalistic cosmopolitanism as “a methodological approach” to examine budding social realities and transformative processes. It starts with a revision of the diverse political, social and moral understandings of cosmopolitanism, mainly: as universalist vision of a world political community, influenced by Immanuel Kant’s philosophy; as intellectual elites’ cultural contestation; as a universal morality; as a post-national world polity; or as a social form created by global networks, mobilities and hybrid multicultural societies. Then, Delanty articulates what he labels as “critical cosmopolitanism”—a method grounded in the idea of a cultural “world openness” that may lead to social transformation. Particularly interesting for this thesis is the utopian inclination of Delanty’s methodological approach to cosmopolitan sociology, since his theory of a

“cosmopolitan imagination” stresses its transformative potential—“a form of cultural contestation”—, while he advocates a “conceptualization of the social world as an open horizon” and of cosmopolitanism “as a cultural medium of societal transformation that is based on the principle of world openness” (2006, 27). Cosmopolitan sociology, Delanty claims, should refuse to see the social world as “empirically given”. Instead, it should look into “emergent cultural forms and the vision of an alternative society”, while assuming “that culture contains capacities for learning and that societies have developmental possibilities” (39, 44).

In fact, drawing on Delanty’s observation of the “repudiation of cosmopolitanism” in the twentieth century (2006, 26), it is interesting to note the parallel journeys the utopian and the cosmopolitan have undergone in social theory: from their thriving in the nineteenth century when linked to modern progress, intellectual enlightenment and universal openness, to their 20th-century demise. In the case of cosmopolitanism, it was contested, according to Delanty, for its apparent incompatibility with the national political order. As for utopia, its decline followed the world wars, economic crises, totalitarianisms and nuclear threats of the past century, which severely undermined the premise of utopian modern progress, as seen in chapter one. Most interestingly, now, in the twenty-first century, cosmopolitanism and utopia are also enjoying parallel “rebirths” as self-reflective critical methods that involve political propositioning: a post-universalistic cosmopolitanism that does not “presuppose the separation of the social from the political or postulate a single world culture” (Delanty 2006, 27); and a processual understanding of utopia as method that refuses earlier blueprint conceptions and engages in socio-political analysis and action (Levitas 2013). Thus, both utopia and cosmopolitanism today—as formulated by Levitas and Delanty respectively—accentuate dialogical openness, combine

sociological criticism and political commentary, and vindicate the exploration of alternatives for the development of fairer world societies.

Remarkably, too, at the time of their rise and demise both cosmopolitanism and utopia were linked to modernity. As described by Delanty, modernity believes that “human agency can radically transform the present in the image of an imagined future” and concerns “the realization that certainty can never be established once and for all” (2006, 38). Patrick Hayden reaches a similar conclusion in “Globalization, Reflexive Utopianism, and the Cosmopolitan Social Imaginary” (2009), stressing how interconnected globalisation, cosmopolitanism and utopia are:

[T]he cosmopolitan vision is not mere ‘wishful thinking’ about a desired feasibility that is wholly absent, but a *reasonable* expectation of its viability based upon modernity’s own historical legacy—initiated by the then ‘utopian’ introduction of the modern state and inter-state system, as well as first modernity’s own promise of rights, justice, freedom, equality, and democracy for all (...) All socio-political transformations, all fundamental reconfigurations of polity, identity and citizenship, are driven not merely by matter of feasibility but, perhaps even more significantly, by processes of creative imaginary: politics is less ‘the art of the possible’ than it is the art of what we *imagine to be possible*. [emphasis in the original] (2009, 66-67)

Attending to the parallel evolution of cosmopolitanism and utopia referred above, and of the theories of globalisation previously seen, it could be argued that in a risk-driven global late century sociology reflected the state of its time (like late-century films did (2.3.)). Separating itself from hope and normativity (see Delanty 2006, 44; Levitas 2013, 85), and drawing on a severely undermined conception of modern progress, late twentieth-century social theory kept morality, ideology, utopia and globalisation under the veil of totalitarian suspicion. Yet, in the 21st century, social theory seems to vindicate ever more explicitly utopian frameworks and methodologies tied to cosmopolitan political aspirations. Levitas’s utopian method, Delanty’s world-open critical cosmopolitanism, Bauman’s anti-retrotopia theses and Beck’s enforced

cosmopolitanisation do not skew what Delanty refers to as “an unavoidable degree of moral and political evaluation” (2006, 44), while they all claim, in one way or another, that “we must live in this world as citizens of another” (Levitas 2013, 220). Their archaeological analyses of the global present do not disconnect either from political propositioning. Approaching globalisation as a dynamic process open to change that is always “imagined in some particular manner and from some particular standpoint” (Hayden and el-Ojeili 2009, 9), these sociologists reclaim the utopian possibility of re-shaping the global according to cosmopolitan principles.

Beyond “globophilias” and “globophobias” (Ritzer 2007, 2), globalisation is regarded in this thesis as a developing historical phenomenon implying both risks and opportunities that can be regulated according to ecological and egalitarian aims—a cosmopolitan outlook on the global that many films articulate today. This section has briefly reviewed the recent evolution from risk-centred approaches to globalisation to opportunity-oriented analyses inscribed within cosmopolitan methodological perspectives. The following section moves on to post-apocalyptic films to trace two distinct political discourses attached to “the end”: apartheid responses that stress the need of borders to contain risk and which are often driven by “retrotopian” impulses, *versus* cosmopolitan hopes that rely on world openness and cultural transformation.

3.2. The Politics of the End: Apartheid Solutions and Cosmopolitan Visions in Post-apocalyptic Films

By positioning humanity, its institutions and the environment in the most extreme of situations, cinematic apocalypses provide a rich textual ground for moral, political and ideological discussion. According to Susan Sontag’s 1965 essay “The Imagination of Disaster”, apocalyptic speculation is a constant in history, but one that illustrates

shifting political and moral positions from one period to another while reflecting on the major anxieties and dilemmas of each time (1966, 224). For instance, Sontag holds that 1950s cinematic apocalypses reflect on nuclear threats and a dehumanising technological life represented by a menacing “thing” that is “excluded from the category of the human” (be it a monster, alien or any other type of “freak”) (215). These vilified creatures in films like *The Thing from Another World* (Christian Nyby, 1951) and *The War of the Worlds* (Byron Haskin, 1953) provide, according to Sontag, a “target for righteous bellicosity” and an excuse for a United Nations “utopian fantasy” where international experts reach coordinated solutions against the shared threat (1966, 215, 220). Sontag strongly criticises the “extreme moral simplification” of these science fiction films and their “dispassionate, aesthetic view of destruction and violence”. In her view, they evade social criticism (even implicit references) by displacing all causes of disaster onto the alien (216-16, 223). Nonetheless, Sontag notes how, unlike in earlier science fiction and superhero comic books and films, some of the protagonists in apocalyptic movies of the fifties “no longer seem wholly innocent” in the times of the atomic bomb (1966, 215).

In the apocalyptic cinema of the subsequent decades, the issue of human responsibility for disaster continues to gain centrality. As the movies relocate their attention from aliens to human societies and extend beyond the realm of science fiction, apocalyptic films progressively incorporate the type of social criticism Sontag missed in the film titles mentioned above. Even in the more “simplistic” filmic approaches to the end of humanity (those stigmatising an evil thing, as Sontag puts it), apocalypse is loaded with political appraisals of the present and the u-/dystopian possibilities ahead, as well as with moral evaluations of the agents responsible for disaster and recovery. As Barbara Gurr claims in *Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Post-Apocalyptic TV and Film*

(2015), film narratives of the end “ask us to consider what it means to be truly human” and speculate with varied political scenarios: either the reestablishment of the old order of things, or an exploration of the “potentiality” of new futures and new social configurations (1-2). Apocalyptic films, Gurr argues, pose political questions such as: “who has the power to produce an apocalypse and who can only hope to survive it (...) whose survival takes precedence and whose survival is judged unnecessary, or worse dangerous, and how resources get shared or hoarded”. Therefore, she concludes, apocalypse is heavily “marked by race, class, gender, and sexual boundaries as well as notions of “ability” and “disability”” (2015, 7). It is precisely the decision to distribute (or not) the available resources and redefine (or not) a more inclusive post-apocalyptic order that configures the two tendencies of film apocalypse analysed below.

According to the ways in which post-apocalyptic recovery is envisioned, two divergent trends can be identified: film apocalypses that call for an inclusive cosmopolitan future—that is, for world openness and intercultural relations—vs. those that endorse apartheid solutions through the settlement of borders (material, geographical or emotional), to exclude certain collectives and favour the survival of a few. Though contradictory discourses may co-exist in a single text, one of these tendencies tends to stand out over the other, as already illustrated in the earliest apocalyptic titles. European films *The End of The World* (*Verdens Undergang*, August Blom, 1916), *Metropolis* and *Things to Come* reflect on social exploitation and conflict between different classes, creeds and collectives as detrimental for human survival and global welfare. Instead of stigmatising an external evil agent, survival is guaranteed by openness towards the Other and coordinated social action: a stranded couple embracing on the dry depopulated land of *The End of The World*; a mediator reconciling enslaved workers and despotic ruler in *Metropolis*; or the international government seeking world

peace after decades of warfare and plagues in *Things to Come*. On the contrary, the Hollywood film *Deluge* (Felix E. Feist, 1933) presents a tsunami as an evil-cleansing opportunity that echoes the Biblical apocalypse of its title. The post-flood family reunification can only take place after a father's new lover swims away in search of another piece of dry land, letting the male lead rebuild his nuclear family with the wife he thought dead and their children. The new beginning is presented as an insular fortress to be protected from external intruders like the lover, a new city upon a hill whose destiny depends on divine will and exclusion of the Other (figure 24).



Figure 24. New world, same rules: the father looks at her lover as she swims away in *Deluge*

In the fifties, the cinematic picture of disaster was more complex than Sontag makes it sound in the article mentioned above (1966). Films such as *Five* (Arch Oboler, 1951), *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* and *On the Beach* depict a self-destructive world society that plays irresponsibly with the possibility of global atomic devastation. As described in chapter two, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* replaces the customary “the end” title with the word “beginning” as a multiracial triad walks forwards on a road in depopulated Manhattan. According to Vivian Sobchack, a film like *Five* foregrounds human accountability and raises complex moral issues like “what ‘survival of the fittest’ might mean in actual postapocalyptic practice” (2005, 264-5). Even a film like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Sobchack asserts, conveys “a contradictory yearning for both a

United Nations fantasy of peaceful global coalition and another morally clear-cut (...) world war” along with discourses of “radical xenophobia” (264).

From the sixties, though, late-century post-apocalyptic cinema rarely hints at promising horizons beyond the end, neither cosmopolitan nor apartheid, as explored in the previous chapter. As Cold War tensions rise in the early sixties, nuclear holocausts continue to ground the film apocalypses of *Panic in Year Zero!* (Ray Milland, 1962), *Planet of the Apes*, *La Jetée*, *The War Game* (Peter Watkins, 1966) and *Dr. Strangelove*, whose bleak endings either negate or have strong reservations about the possibility of post-apocalyptic recovery and cosmopolitan understanding. In the seventies, the attention turns towards environmental catastrophe in films such as *Silent Running* (Douglas Trumbull, 1972), *Soylent Green*, *Mad Max*, *No Blade of Grass* (Cornel Wilde, 1970) and *The Omega Man*. Focusing on the devastating ecological consequences of the greenhouse effect, the decimation of natural resources, biological weapons and overpopulation, these titles portray humanity not as the victim of an alien menace, but as a pest to Earth—a predatory and fratricidal species that exploits the ecosystem and, ultimately, consumes itself (explicitly so in the case of the food manufactured from corpses in *Soylent Green*). “Yesterday, they were decent people letting their environment die. Now they are savages, killing to keep themselves alive”, claims the tagline of *No Blade of Grass*. These films picture a future of Darwinist survival that can be said to illustrate the demise of 1960s collective hopes in the increasing individualist neoliberal societies of the seventies. Cosmopolitan aspirations are nowhere to be seen and apartheid solutions are often reduced to its absolute minimum: isolated individuals fighting for their survival. The only way ahead seems to be a cleansing deluge that frees planet Earth from a polluting and conflictive humanity, which points at the decay of utopian politics.

During the eighties, apocalyptic films such as *Escape from New York*, *Mad Max 2* (George Miller, 1981), *The Terminator* and *Blade Runner* retreat further to anti-utopian positions and individualist agendas. Dealing with ecological and technological anxieties, these movies feature hopeless alienated protagonists struggling to stay alive in societies afflicted by crime, pollution and aggressive competition. High-tech corporations, rather than governments, design the destiny of humankind in *The Terminator* and *Blade Runner*, using their machinery to exploit and control natural and social resources alike. Robots and android replicants in these two titles turn out to be, paradoxically, more humane than humans in their cooperative performance. Annette Kuhn comments on this inhuman human/humane machine paradox, and on the displacement of governmental power to private corporations, as characteristic of many 1980s science fiction films like *The Terminator*:

[I]t is no longer assumed that human beings are superior to humanoid machines or alien creatures. To this extent, the human technologies which create humanoids and discover and investigate alien creatures are revealed as dreadfully flawed (*The Terminator* (1984)): in such circumstances aliens, far from menacing humankind, may hold out a promise of redemption (*Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977)). (...) [P]ower in these fictional worlds is typically constituted as invisible but all-pervasive, institutional rather than personal, corporate rather than governmental (*Alien*). (2003, 8-9)

The proliferation of corporate power bodies in 1980s cinematic apocalypses seems to be making a critical statement on politics' retreat from public welfare issues, and act as a warning against neoliberal laissez-faire logics dominating the political arena. Cosmopolitan hope seems a ludicrous effort for film leads abandoned by their governments and concerned with day-to-day survival.

In the nineties, global issues move ever more centre stage in the narratives, spaces, and aesthetics of apocalyptic and disaster films. On top of traditional international worries such as war among nations, nuclear catastrophe and ecological disasters, apocalyptic cinema displays a wide range of global anxieties related to climate

change, multinational corporations, pandemics, terrorism, virtual reality and digital surveillance. In films such as *Outbreak*, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*, *Twelve Monkeys* (Terry Gilliam, 1995), *Waterworld* (Kevin Reynolds, 1995) and *The Matrix*, threats of diverse sorts point up the increasing porosity of national borders in the “world risk society” theorised by Ulrich Beck (2009). With the heightened mobility of goods, people, viruses and data, and the international spread of intricate webs of transnational corporate interests, risks are more difficult to trace and contain—diffused in an unmanageable global order that disorients film protagonists. Equally unsettled, the politics of the end in these filmic apocalypses often raise questions about the global future rather than hinting at cosmopolitan or apartheid solutions to its challenges (figure 25).



Figure 25. Where to head after apocalypse? Seeking new utopian horizons in *Waterworld*

According to some scholars, apocalyptic visions of the world are characteristic of the years around the turn of the new millennium. Martin and Petro, for instance, explore the “culture of fear” fostered by economic agents and political leaders like George W. Bush, who warned of “a world of terror and missiles and madmen”; an era of “car bombers and plutonium merchants and cyber terrorists and drug cartels and unbalanced dictators” (Bush’s speech on 23 September 1999, cited in Martin and Petro 2006, 4-5). Focusing on cinema, Kirsten Moana Thompson’s *Apocalyptic Dread: American Film at the Turn of the Millennium* claims that “a free-floating anxiety and ambivalence about the future” explains the proliferation of uncanny figures like the

serial killer or monster in films like *Cape Fear*, *Se7en*, *Signs* (M. Night Shyamalan, 2002) and *War of the Worlds* (Steven Spielberg, 2005) (2007, 2-3). Meanwhile, Wheeler Winston Dixon's *Visions of the Apocalypse: Spectacles of Destruction in American Cinema* reads the flourishing of disaster films as symptomatic of "a global cultural meltdown, in which all the values of the past have been replaced by rapacious greed, the hunger for sensation, and the desire for useless novelty without risk", so that "in all our contemporary cultural manifestations as a worldwide community, we seem 'eager for the end'" (2003, 16).

Yet, as the 21st century develops, apocalyptic film imaginaries advance progressively from anxious disorientation onto a culture of responsibility for the end that traces causes of disaster and articulates the need to reform eco-social spaces, ontologies and political outlooks—that is, which takes responsibility for the future, too. Although alien creatures continue to wreak havoc in films like *Cloverfield* (Matt Reeves, 2008), *Oblivion* (Joseph Kosinski, 2013) and *Edge of Tomorrow* (Doug Liman, 2014), ecocidal and fratricidal socio-economic systems, agents and attitudes become, ever more explicitly and frequently, the human origin of apocalypse in movies such as *Children of Men*, *The Happening* (M. Night Shyamalan, 2008) and *Interstellar*. Even zombies in film apocalypses such as *28 Weeks Later* (Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, 2007), *World War Z* (Marc Forster, 2013) and *The Maze Runner* (Wes Ball, 2014) embody an abject humanity that is responsible for the deterioration of the world and its own condition—even if not all humans are responsible at an individual level, and not all nations equally responsible for the end. As Baccolini claims in relation to feminist dystopian literature like Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), the highlighting of the protagonists' "responsibility and accountability" for their situation allows to "lay the foundations for utopian change" (2004, 521). Gurr, for her part,

considers that in the “post-9/11 post-apocalypse world” film visions of the end that are critical of governmental action may offer a pedagogic “epistemology for survival”: “if we can behave in the right way, we will make it to tomorrow” (2015, 6). Rather than using disaster to “release one from normal obligations” or fantasise with “starting all over again”, as Sontag criticised in relation to 1950s apocalyptic films (1966, 215), *Children of Men*, *The Road*, *28 Weeks Later*, *Blindness* (Fernando Meirelles, 2008), *Interstellar* and *Mad Max: Fury Road* exploit the end as an opportunity for the cosmopolitan reworking of apartheid systems, behaviours and ideas (figure 26). These films provide protagonists with no unspoiled corner from which to start again or monstrous creature to exterminate. Yet, they trust the characters’ capacity to reverse the apocalyptic situation and clear out the horizon for younger generations, tying utopian possibility to cosmopolitan reformulations of the global.



Figure 26. Cosmopolitan cooperation as a way out of global apocalypse in *Blindness*

Nevertheless, the apartheid and cosmopolitan tendencies revised in this section still coexist in contemporary apocalyptic cinema. As will be explored in the following pages, now the global often appears as a given order of things whose ecological non-sustainability needs to be analysed, tackled and reversed. Ecological disasters show that no borders can block pollution effects on health and crops, prevent the rise of waters and global warming, or contain pandemics that might be propagated by animals, while

those without resources will continue to seek refuge in fertile land. Still, the analysis of dead-end, wild, pastoral and polluted natural films spaces in the next section will illustrate that, although most apocalyptic films worry about ecology, their ecocritical archaeologies ultimately foster radically differing alleys away from global apocalypse. The politics of the end in contemporary film apocalypses continues to pivot on exclusion and inclusion, but, either way, it tends to reaffirm the possibility of hope through the reworking of the given.

3.3. Film Spaces in the Anthropocene: Ecocritical Archaeologies of Global Ecocide in Twenty-first-century Apocalyptic Movies

According to Timothy Corrigan's *American Cinema of the 2000s*, the first decade of the 21st century—and the films released in the period—can be described as “a turbulent series of rapid movements and turnabouts (...) alternately sensationally progressive and sensationally regressive” (2012, 1-3). Referring to the global political sphere in these years, sociologists Gerard Delanty and Christopher Rumford hold that the “proliferation of sites of political conflict” around concerns such as “governance, identity, mobilities and community prominent” imply that “the idea of a ‘borderless world’, once seen as emblematic of globalization, is now revealed as a chimera” (2007, 425-26). The second decade of the century can be said to be witnessing further manifestations of global political unrest, such as the emergence of Occupy movements after the 2008 financial crisis, the rise of anti-refugee policies in some European countries, the Obama-Trump relay in the United States, or Brexit in the United Kingdom.

Yet, as far as apocalyptic cinema is concerned, ecological matters stand out as the most frequent and pressing cause of global disaster. The environment occupies a central narrative and aesthetic place in 21st-century post-apocalyptic movies such as

Children of Men, *I am Legend*, *The Road*, *The Happening*, *Interstellar*, *The Day after Tomorrow* (Roland Emmerich, 2004), *Melancholia* (Lars Von Trier, 2011), *Snowpiercer* (Bong Joon Ho, 2013), *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *Blade Runner 2049* (Denis Villeneuve, 2017), among others. These films articulate ecocritical archaeologies of global ecocides that posit nature in the Anthropocene as a determinant crossroads for global society and its future. Popularised by climate change researcher Paul J. Crutzen (2010), the “Anthropocene” refers to a geological age starting around the mid eighteenth century, when the environment is progressively altered by human activities that have potentially irreversible impacts on the biosphere like global warming.

Ecocriticism, in turn, is also gaining relevance in Film Studies. Recent works like Paula Willoquet-Maricondi’s edited collection *Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film* (2010) looks into the recent paradigm shift “from an unquestioned anthropocentric perspective to an ecocentric one” (5). Pat Brereton’s *Hollywood Utopia: Ecology in Contemporary American Cinema* (2005), for its part, states that ecological concerns are traceable in Hollywood movies since the 1950s, stressing how sublime natural film landscapes provide spectators with a “utopian spatial aesthetic” that may “reconnect audiences with their inclusive eco-system” (11-12). In the case of the post-apocalyptic movies analysed in this section, the spatial aesthetic is mainly dystopian: polluted rivers and dead cattle in *Children of Men*, dead trees falling in *The Road*, fruitless harvests and contaminated dust in *Interstellar*, frozen seas and mountains in *The Day After Tomorrow* and *Snowpiercer*, or sterile contaminated valleys in *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *Blade Runner 2049*. Rather than prompting human “reconnection” with nature, as Brereton asserts on sublime landscapes, the deteriorated natural spaces in the films above remind viewers of their dependence on nature and declare economised visions of progress as the main cause for eco-disaster.

However, not all cinematic approaches to environmental catastrophe agree on this economic reading and the political directions to take to prevent human extinction. As Robert Gottlieb claims, nature might be “described as a threat, felt as a loss, or seen as a life-giving and healing force, and each approach can influence certain kind of outcomes” (2007, 49). Likewise, Joanna Zylińska explains in *The End of Man: A Feminist Counterapocalypse* (2018) how the Anthropocene is triggering divergent narratives “about ourselves and about the world around us”:

[T]he Anthropocene can be used to establish an inherent link between capitalism and the modern way of life, and thus alert us to the injustices of the ever-encroaching neoliberal market logic that has now absorbed nature and climate under its remit. But it can also be mobilized to praise human ingenuity and problem-solving skills, and to promote capital-driven solutions to climate change such as nuclear fission, carbon offsetting, and geoengineering”. (4-5)

As will be argued in the following pages, recent film discourses on eco-disaster include: nihilistic negations of the possibility of ecological recovery; apartheid solutions proposing the salvation of an elite; escapist exits away from disaster; nostalgic returns to pre-domesticated natural contexts; and cosmopolitan outlooks that call for sustainable and inclusive socio-economic paradigms. These different responses will be explored in relation with specific cinematic spaces: dead-end roads (3.3.1.), wilderness (3.3.2.), pastoral (3.3.3.) and polluted spaces (3.3.4.).

3.3.1. Roads Leading Nowhere: Exhausted Paradigms of Progress

Dead-end spaces, damaged infrastructures, deteriorated maps and shattered landmarks abound in contemporary post-apocalyptic movies, and they often comment on the exhaustion of ecocidal paradigms of progress in the neoliberal global order. Roads leading nowhere proliferate, such as the network of freeways that connect depopulated wastelands in *The Road* and vast green toxic areas in *The Happening*; or the circular railway that goes around a frozen world victim of climate change in *Snowpiercer*. First-

class passengers in the latter title may insist on maintaining the exploitative logics that caused apocalypse in the first place, but the endless circularity of their train journey pictures the futility of continuing ahead on ecocidal routes. If in 1986 the science-fiction novelist James Graham Ballard questioned whether the internal-combustion automobile culture could be defined as “Autopia or Autogeddon” (cited in Wollen 2002, 10), the post-apocalyptic films above clearly make the case for Autogeddon. They expose the catastrophic effects of fuel-based “progress” and the need to devise sustainable technologies, spaces, cultures and ideals (figure 27).



Figure 27. Curtailed visions of capitalist progress in *The Road*

Besides denouncing the unfeasible prolongation of ecocidal development, escape and immobility also tend to be rejected as valid responses to eco-disaster. The dusty escape route amidst the desert landscapes in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, and the labyrinth exit teenagers have to reach in *The Maze Runner* series (2014-2018) do not lead to salvation. In order for these protagonists to succeed in their survival missions, they have to access the operative core of their societies’ power structures. Furiosa (Charlize Theron) and her accolades in *Mad Max: Fury Road* and the teen pack in *The Maze Runner* need to occupy and transform cities dominated by despotic elites—patriarchal in the first title, corporate in the second—that exploit slaves and nature. If the seeds of the future are ever to grow again on the spoilt arid land that lies around

elites' apartheid fortresses, it will happen through social revolution and political reform of the status quo, these films suggest (figure 28). Meanwhile, *Melancholia* and *Take Shelter* (Jeff Nichols, 2011) portray immobility as a deadly answer to environmental risks. Neither a privileged suburban retire in the first title nor a secluded bunkered family home in the latter provide safe conducts to protagonists away from Earth's expected destruction.



Figure 28. Escape where? Acknowledging the need to confront the status quo in *Mad Max: Fury Road*

Specific mise-en-scène elements and settings map out the exhaustion of given socio-economic systems: deteriorated infrastructures, inhospitable spaces, unreadable maps and ruined landmarks, among others. *The Road*, in particular, offers very illustrative examples of allegoric dead-end film spaces. Abandoned highways in the film evoke the collapse of capitalist progress. Deserted and neglected, the road of the title stands for immobility, disorientation and scarcity—a paradoxical reversal of the promises of social mobility, economic growth and personal freedom that highways represented when they were built. Empty stores and gas stations dispel, in turn, consumerist aspirations of material happiness. Pushing their rusted shopping trolley along endless empty highways, the father (Viggo Mortensen) and son (Kodi Smit-McPhee) in the film evoke, according to Susan Balée, “the worst fear of the world's ultimate consumers: being consumed themselves” (2007, 518). Nameless and aimless,

father and son work as prototypes of a vanished urban capitalist culture and a wrecked global neoliberal society. Usually shown in close-ups or in extreme long shots, they are rarely related to their damaged environment in medium shots. Alienated from both their urbanite background and the natural world their species originally springs from, they seem to embody the defeated exponents of what could be labelled *homo capitalist*, wandering, on foot, deserted roads that lead nowhere. The infertile landscapes in the film, meanwhile, devoid of recognizable landmarks and locations, function at the highest figurative level to denounce the global-scale effects of our ecocidal behaviour as species. According to Kapur and Wagner's edited volume *Neoliberalism and Global Cinema* (2011), even if set in local contexts, contemporary films are characterised by "a global sense of space" that allows the critical reading of "the wreckage wrought by capital" and neoliberal politics (6, 15). Drawing on this statement, the lack of references to specific locations, causes and even protagonists' names in *The Road* would further highlight our collective contribution to the Anthropocene and the dreadful environmental inheritance left to global young generations like the child in the movie.

Using a different spatial strategy to emphasise the global outreach of ecocide, *The Happening* explicitly refers to specific global cities like New York and Paris. From the opening credits the film warns of the catastrophic ecological consequences of an insatiable capitalist progress by displaying fast-paced clouds fading to black that speak of nature's forced submission to accelerated productive logics. Under this looming sky, worrisome New York citizens jog and walk their dogs on the polished greenery of Central Park, until a gust of toxic wind suddenly paralyses them (figure 29). Right afterwards, they start speaking nonsense, walking backwards, committing suicide with whatever tool they have at hand—an involution to pre-civilised states as irrational as ecocidal development, the scene seems to suggest. Corpses lying on the motorways amidst

paralysed cars ironically comment, like the two pedestrians in *The Road*, on the dead ends neoliberal paradigms can push global society into. New York shiny glass skyscrapers behind the dead bodies point at the faceless global corporate agents that may be behind ecological disaster—those inscrutable forces moving the threads of extractive economic systems that are also echoed by the intricate cable networks milking cows in *Children of Men*, pumping mothers' breasts and slaves' blood in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, and tying little boys to machine train parts in *Snowpiercer*. Suburban areas in *The Happening* do not escape capitalist logics either. An abandoned suburban model home full of plastic furniture, manikins and mock home utilities illustrates the family life ideal that capitalism sold to city commuters, which now only serves to provide a precarious refuge from the ecological risks capitalism has actually provoked. Bird-eye shots display disoriented urbanite groups fleeing to rural areas, as human flocks being re-submitted to nature. Ecocide in the Anthropocene, the film asserts, implies humanity's suicide rather than the end of the world. As this toxic air spreads across borders, humanity at large is threatened: a single species united by risk beyond race, gender or nationality, as Beck theorises. Stressing the global scale of climate change, the film ends in the same way as it begins, except for the fact that, this time, the trees that release the deadly toxins are not in NY Central Park but in the Jardins du Louvre, Paris.

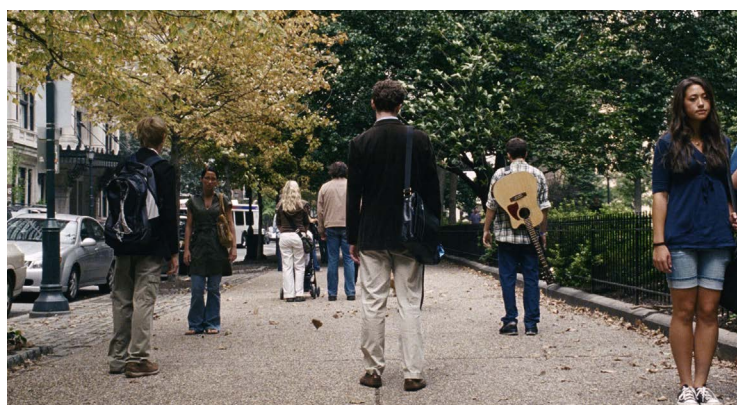


Figure 29. *The Happening's* ecological warning: urban life suddenly arrested in New York Central Park

Deteriorated maps and landmarks, in turn, depict the deteriorated and disorienting contexts protagonists inhabit: a worn-out road chart segmented into different pieces and ordered with handwritten numbers in *The Road*; computerised cartographies of the areas affected by the toxic disease on the news in *The Happening*; or a pocket map of New York full of red crosses warning of zombie hideouts in *I am Legend*. According to Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* (1960), a clear understanding of urban surroundings is fundamental for citizens' mental balance, especially via those urban landmarks around which societies build their collective myths (4). Thus, the bombed Brooklyn Bridge in *I am Legend*, New York's Central Park riddled with corpses in *The Happening*, the frozen Statue of Liberty in *The Day after Tomorrow*, or London's Trafalgar Square occupied by religious fanatics in *Children of Men* are ruined iconic spaces that seem to speak of the demise of collective utopian referents and modern visions of progress. In their place, renovated ideals and cartographies must be formed—their political orientation varying greatly often according to the different approaches to nature (as wilderness, pastoral refuge or polluted space) each apocalyptic film text articulates, as will be argued in the sections below.

3.3.2. Wild Spaces: Male Settlers, Adrenaline and Apartheid New Worlds

Filmic visions of uncontrollable natural forces such as earthquakes, tsunamis and ice storms, and those presenting wild nature spreading over a depopulated world, have proliferated in recent post-apocalyptic movies like *I am Legend*, *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (Matt Reeves, 2014), *The Day After Tomorrow*, 2012 and *Oblivion*. According to Greg Garrard's definition of "wilderness" as a metaphor, images of wild nature often convey "the settler experience in the New Worlds—particularly the United States,

Canada and Australia—with their apparently untamed landscapes and the sharp distinction between the forces of culture and nature” (2004, 60). This colonial perspective—tied to patriarchal paradigms—can be observed in many of the aforementioned post-apocalyptic titles, all of which trust male protagonists to lead survival schemes, reconstruct post-catastrophe New Worlds and adapt to the laws of pre-civilised wilderness. As early settlers did, Will Smith’s scientist in *I am Legend* hunts animals and basic provisions in a deserted Manhattan; Jason Clarke’s mediator tries to reach peaceful consensus with speaking monkeys in the forests of *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*; Dennis Quaid’s and John Cusack’s fathers in *The Day After Tomorrow* and *2012* run and climb to save their children from eco-disasters; while Tom Cruise’s patriotic veteran and his duplicates in *Oblivion* fight alien invaders on a devastated Earth. Whenever zombies, monkeys, aliens, magical circumstances, or natural forces threaten their territory, they are in charge of “resettling” and “re-taming” the land and its resources (figures 30 and 31).



Figures 30 and 31. Alpha-male survivors in *I am Legend* and *Oblivion*: in shape, in control

Despite sharing this colonial and patriarchal outlook, though, the representation of wilderness in these movies engages with the Anthropocene in different ways. *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* and *The Day After Tomorrow* explicitly criticise human violence and economic exploitation of nature respectively. On the contrary, *I am Legend*, *Oblivion*, and *2012* offer a much more indirect and subtle socioeconomic criticism (if any). As the protagonist in *I am Legend*, the military scientist Robert

Neville (Will Smith), races across Manhattan in his noisy potent car or competes with a lion for a hunt piece, viewers are invited to share his adrenaline in post-apocalyptic *wild* New York. At home, a treadmill, laptop, camera, television, DVD, radio and CD player help the scientist and his dog endure their solitude while trying to find a cure for the pandemic using zombie guinea pigs in his basement. Through Smith's protagonist—a predator and consumer—as well as via the *mise-en-scène*, this text still cherishes the consumerist, resource-exploiting capitalist culture. New York, for its part, remains a promising modern metropolis waiting for its recovery—all the more exotic for being devoured by greenery. Though traumatised like the real New York after 9/11, the city still holds on to its old utopian landmarks and collective myths in the film: dead neon signs, rusted yellow cabs, an empty McDonalds, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Grand Central viaduct crossing over 42nd street remain magnificent despite their solitude. Even the remaining half of Brooklyn Bridge stands for resistance rather than defeat as Neville pays it a visit every afternoon to send radio messages to potential survivors. Similarly, car, helicopter and ship rides in *2012*, and the many technological gadgets, guns and automobiles Tom Cruise's veteran uses in *Oblivion* stress the thrill provided by eco-disaster. Unlike the static shots and predominant silence that accompany the father and son's slow footsteps in *The Road*, fast editing, noisy explosions and powerful engines make the end of the world feel like a stimulating and challenging video game in these films. Displacing responsibility for catastrophe onto zombie epidemics, alien species and millennialism in that order, *I am Legend*, *Oblivion* and *2012* present apocalypse as a spectacular and entertaining mission for their male leads to solve. As Pablo Gómez argues, *2012* “never explicitly links human action to the disasters that appear in it”, which “undermines the cosmopolitan attempt of the film of making environmental impacts and their transnational dimension visible” (2018, 145).

Burning the same gasoline that provokes global warming, these films continue to indulge in the permanent movement forward and endless reinvention that capitalism promises.

Remarkably, many of these testosterone-driven, capital-friendly apocalyptic films, which draw on wilderness metaphors for the representation of eco-disaster, offer apartheid solutions to the end. Though at first sight concerned with the end of the human species as a whole, the cosmopolitan unity imposed by a globally shared disaster is not necessarily present as the way to salvation. In *2012*, for example, amidst rising waters, large ships are prepared for the evacuation of those able to pay one million dollars per seat, with the complacency of political leaders. This manifestly elitist escape, it could be argued, is criticised by the narrative as Cusack's protagonist eventually manages to open the ships' gates for others to board on at the last minute. Yet, as the three only surviving "Sister Arks" head towards African land at the end of the movie—under a beautiful sky, amidst receding waters and accompanied by a hopeful music score (figure 32)—, the promising multicultural beginning can be also read as a new ride of colonisers (most of them wealthy and white), ready to settle in Africa like the three ships of Columbus did in the Americas. A hopeful *whitish* post-apocalypse is supposed to take place on the ground where colonies and apartheid politics have taken lands, lives and resources away from black natives for centuries. The perspective provided is that of the new settlers arriving, not of the African hosts receiving newcomers. Spectators, thus, can wonder whether the latter will welcome the arrival of the arks as a promising new beginning too, or if European and US thriving will involve, once again, native apocalypse. Likewise, in *The Day After Tomorrow* Southern countries accept, suspiciously swiftly, to host northern survivors in their warmer climate after a frost, in exchange of the debt they need to pay back to the United States—that is,

even salvation has a price. Those who, right before apocalypse, were often negated entrance into the land of opportunity, will, paradoxically, rescue and welcome the rich northerners responsible for ecological disaster.



Figure 32. The perspective of white colonisers heading to an African New World in *2012*

Thus, post-apocalyptic wilderness is presented in these films as a fascinating New World for male settlers to explore and tame. The male leads in *I am Legend*, *The Day After Tomorrow*, *Oblivion* and *2012* traverse wild natural spaces (jungle, frozen, arid and flooded respectively) confident of their ability to make it in the end, as those early settlers travelling to the new worlds who believed in their Manifest Destiny. They lament what is lost, but also experiment exhilaration for the unwritten future ahead for the chosen few left. After apocalypse, international experts may express their views, but the main global actors and leaders remain the same: US pioneers surviving the chaos they have created and leading a new stage of humanity in lands abroad, yet again. The Anthropocene, these films seem to assert, is not a final stage for humanity, at least not for *them*. The inexhaustible drive of modern capitalism remains intact after eco-disaster, re-emerging from its ashes once and again like Tom Cruise's endless duplicates in *Oblivion*. Unaware of the Other—Mexican, African, women—, these films take for granted their ideological stance as beneficial for humanity at large and often eschew ecological accountability by displacing responsibility onto zombies, stars and aliens.

Furthermore, they assume there will always be an unspoilt New World in which to settle (or colonise) to start again. At the end of *I am Legend*, a reserve protected by US military forces illustrates this apartheid New World. A young woman and a little boy, guided by God's voice, arrive safely with the cure to the virus causing the zombie pandemic, which has been discovered by Neville before his death. A high-angle shot shows the reserve area, featuring a Christian church and surrounded by high walls. This secluded space heralds the promise, like *2012*'s three Sister Arks, of a fresh start after Deluge, once all risk has been contained. After all, these films seem to declare, apocalyptic trauma and rubble have served, as for the Biblical Noah, to purge the Earth from its pollution, clean the slate and start anew. As *2012*'s tagline puts it, "the end is just the beginning".

3.3.3. Pastoral Spaces: Natural Refuges Shelter Eco-Feminist Tomorrows

Drawing on Garrard's definition of pastoral metaphors, pastoral spaces in contemporary apocalyptic films could be said to display nostalgia for an "Old World construction of nature, suited to long-settled and domesticated landscapes" (2004, 60). Unlike the exciting wild New Worlds above, silent pastoral settings offer a protective shelter for the female leads in post-apocalyptic films *The Survivalist* (Stephen Fingleton, 2015), *Into the Forest*, *Time of the Wolf* (*Le temps du loup*, Michael Haneke, 2003) and *Interstellar*. In natural spaces, protagonists need to learn survival abilities typical of the pastoral Old World Garrard describes: they make fire with wood in the absence of electricity, grow their own vegetables and obtain water from natural sources, and heal themselves and others when injured or ill. Through their adaptation process, these films often praise the habits, behaviours and relations traditionally associated with non-urban small communities, such as cooperation, solidarity, self-subsistence or resilience.

Against these stand the negative features that characterise modern capitalist urban life and citizenship—individualism, alienation, competition, consumerism or the dependence on polluting technologies for everyday life. Thus, the “back to basics” situation imposed by apocalypse is, paradoxically, welcomed as far as social relations and sustainability are concerned. The return to Old World customs appears to be, at first, beneficial for ecology and individuals alike.

However, after an initial acclimatisation, the protagonists of *The Survivalist*, *Into the Forest* and *Interstellar* cannot adapt for long to a pre-civilised natural order that is alien to them. Reaching the point when the pastoral honeymoon comes to an end (after conflicts with neighbours arise or due to the scarcity of resources), the futures anticipated by the films vary. In the case of *Time of the Wolf*, a naked child facing a fire on the railroad questions, at the end of the movie, our ability to reinvent ourselves through conceptions of progress other than fratricidal and ecocidal. The child, whose father is shot by another father that wants to take their house for his own family, embodies young generations brought up in a Hobbesian world ruled by man-is-wolf-to-man logics, as the film title points up. The boy’s nakedness in the closing scene suggests that modes of being and evolutionary paradigms must be thoroughly revised if the human species wants to have any prospects at all.

On the contrary, the more recent films *The Survivalist*, *Into the Forest* and *Interstellar* allow more positive readings of the future by tying humanity’s survival and ecological welfare to feminist empowerment quite explicitly. Unlike the male-centred post-apocalypses explored above, women in these pastoral apocalyptic films hold the key to the future thanks to their cooperative, non-violent and caring approach to the world around them and others (figures 33 and 34). In fact, hope follows a shift from male leaders at the beginning of the narratives to female surviving pioneers at the end of

the movies. The mother and the newborn in the depopulated Britain of *The Survivalist* reach a female-led military camp right before the ending credits roll. Ellen Page and Evan Rachel Wood’s resilient sisters in *Into the Forest* manage to escape into the woods at the end of the film so that the latter can give birth to a child conceived after being raped. Jessica Chastain’s world-saving scientist in *Interstellar*, for her part, manages to build up a spatial station for humanity to move into before the resources on Earth get exhausted as the movie comes to an end. These films seem to agree with Joanna Zylinska in calling for the overcoming of male-driven apocalyptic visions of the Anthropocene—what she calls “Armageddon for the White Man”—through “an alternative micro-vision: the prospect of a feminist counterapocalypse that takes seriously the geopolitical unfoldings on our planet while also rethinking our relations to and with it precisely as relations” (2018, 38).



Figures 33 and 34. Sorority and ecological survival in *Into the Forest* and *The Survivalist*

As will be further explored in chapter five in relation to egalitarian political discourses, eco-feminist protagonists have proliferated in apocalyptic and dystopian films. Post-apocalyptic movies often present maternity, sorority and female resistance as utopian indicators of eco-feminist cosmopolitan futures. The baby girl and mother floating in the Thames in the closing scene of *Children of Men* (3.4.), self-governing Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* series (2012-2015) (see 5.2.2.), and the cooperative pack of mothers and daughters returning to the city to kill patriarchal despot

in *Mad Max: Fury Road* embody utopian alternatives to ecocidal patriarchal capitalism.

As Zylinska argues:

The feminist counterapocalyptic framework creates a space for an ethical opening onto the precarious lives and bodies of human and nonhuman others—including the male bodies and minds that have been discarded in the downsizing process of disruptive semiocapitalism. In doing so, it promises liberation from the form of subjectivity pinned to a competitive, overachieving, and overreaching masculinity. It also prompts us all to ask: If unbridled progress is no longer an option, what kinds of coexistences and collaborations do we want to create in its aftermath? (2018, 44)

The fact that the female survivors in *The Survivalist*, *Into the Forest* and *Interstellar* represent the utopian exploration of systemic alternatives that Zylinska mentions above indicates that pastoral images do not involve a nostalgic return to patriarchal social structures in these movies. Instead, they call for eco-feminist paradigms of progress grounded on inclusion and sustainability (figure 35). In order to survive, protagonists ultimately need to leave their pastoral refuges back, confront the world outside and embark on utopian journeys that might bring forward more promising horizons *for all*.



Figure 35. *Interstellar's* wasted crops: ecocide demands eco-feminist perspectives

3.3.4. Polluted Spaces: Human Accountability, Eco-fathers and the Politics of Ecology

The need to explore alternatives is also stressed in contemporary post-apocalyptic movies that put an emphasis on pollution: the dust spreading all around as crops die in the fields of *Interstellar*; the chemicals that provoke an ice age in *Snowpiercer*; the contamination that precedes an infertility pandemic in *Children of Men*; or the deserted wastelands in *Blade Runner 2049*. Highlighting human accountability in the ecocidal process, these films ground future global apocalypses in the mistreatment of nature. Like the dead-end roads explored above (3.3.1.), polluted spaces portray the exhaustion of extractive economic paradigms, but they also point at the responsibility that every one of us holds to reverse non-sustainable habits in the Anthropocene.

As for the post-apocalyptic horizons they envision, some texts (especially those belonging to the science-fiction genre) such as *Elysium*, *Passengers* (Morten Tyldum, 2016) or *Interstellar* seek solutions in outer space and regard the loss of Earth as a given, while many others reject escapism and out-of-this-world schemes. Beyond settler fantasies and apartheid solutions to a globalised world subject to a shared eco-sphere, post-apocalyptic pollution narratives like *Children of Men* insist on the need to confront ecological risks through down-to-earth cosmopolitan strategies. Rather than confirming that “the idea of a ‘borderless world’, once seen as emblematic of globalization”, is now “a chimera” (Delanty and Rumford 2007, 425-6), polluted spaces call for cosmopolitan imagination and political agreement across nations since contamination makes no racial, class or gender discrimination, and it respects no borders.

As mentioned in chapter one, E. Ann Kaplan holds that environmental catastrophes in films such as *Take Shelter*, *The Happening* and *The Road* can be said to provoke a “pretraumatic stress disorder” on viewers that might result in ecological

conscience and action (2016). In the same way, Brereton's *Environmental Ethics and Film* (2016) explores "the precautionary principle" in end-of-the-world films *Melancholia* and *The Tree of Life* (Terrence Malick, 2011), which reflect the urgency "to respond well in advance to upcoming catastrophic changes to our planet" (186). Gerry Canavan, in turn, reads the end of *Snowpiercer*, when the train finally stops after a rebellion of the underclass, as a reminder of "a future we might yet choose against, a freight train with a head of steam but one that we can yet derail" (2014, 24). Mark Fisher, for his part, claims that films like *The Road* act "as a kind of negative inspiration—after living with such horror in fictional form, we feel that we would do anything to avoid it occurring in actuality" (2010, 17). Yet, Fisher also argues that films like *The Road* and *Children of Men* are "a symptom of the inability to imagine alternatives to capitalism's entropic, eternal present" (2010, 15), which he explores at length in *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (2009).

Rather than serving as negative inspiration alone, films like *The Road* and *Children of Men* can be seen as early cinematic representations of the emergence of utopian cosmopolitan imaginaries inscribed in ecological outlooks—which late 2010s social movements have expressed on streets across the world (as will be analysed in chapter five). Fisher's analysis seems to miss the transitional ground on which protagonists in these films stand. Clive Owen's Theo in *Children of Men* and Viggo Mortensen's father in *The Road* assume that they will most probably not see better horizons (in effect, they both die at the end of the films), but, still, they re-embrace hope and commit to utopian possibility so that the next generations can bring forward the concrete utopian alternatives Fisher misses. After the exhaustion of ecocidal capitalist strategies, and previous to the formulation of alternatives, these ecocritical post-apocalypses reside in the moment when a new form of utopia emerges amidst the ashes:

an inclusive and sustainable cosmopolitan utopia whose expanding borders are represented by the open sea horizons in the films' closing scenes.

This renewed cosmopolitan imagination aims to overcome not only capitalist exploitative approaches to nature, but also patriarchal paradigms and border-based strategies for universal problems. Theo in *Children of Men* and the father in *The Road* embody the budding transformation of values, ideals and modes of being in the world necessary to transition from polluted and fratricidal status quos to cooperative and sustainable futures. These male leads are neither invincible machines nor brilliant scientists expected to save the world as those in *Terminator* and *I am Legend*. Instead, these eco-fathers represent the everyday man who has to reform his approach to the world, nature and others so that improved post-catastrophe futures are feasible (figures 36 and 37). Determined to move forwards despite the bleak prospects, caring for others beyond their individual welfare, committing to fair causes and willing to change their attitudes, their self-sacrifice for the sake of a possible better future provides positive inspiration rather than negative, as Fisher states.



Figures 36 and 37. Eco-fathers: post-apocalyptic hope and care ethics in *The Road* and *Children of Men*

Furthermore, though ecocritical film apocalypses centred on pollution like *Children of Men*, *Interstellar*, *The Road*, *The Happening* and *Blade Runner 2049* do not explicitly articulate concrete socio-economic alternatives to global capitalism, their critical scrutiny of ecocidal global societies points quite clearly at a specific political

shift: the prioritisation of the politics of ecology over the politics of economy (figures 38 and 39). Drawing on Jonathan Porritt's taxonomy of the politics of industrialism vs. those of ecology (1984), an ecological paradigm shift in the political arena would favour, among other principles: flexible visions of the future over determinism, cooperation over individualism, holistic thinking over reductionism, biocentrism over anthropocentrism, feminism over patriarchy, sustainability over economic growth, non-hierarchical over hierarchical structures, and internationalism over the sovereignty of the nation state (cited in Brereton 2005, 27-28). Many of these principles are illustrated in the films above: the open sea horizons at the end of *Children of Men* and *The Road* advocate for open-ended approaches to the future; the cooperative eco-fathers in *Children of Men*, *Interstellar*, *The Road* and *The Happening* take care of children and embody non-patriarchal masculinities; while all these titles offer bio-centrist portrayals of a deteriorated humanity that needs international political solutions.



Figure 38 and 39. The devastating effects of the politics of economy in *Blade Runner 2049* and *Children of Men*

From the social sciences, Slavoj Žižek's *Living in the End Times* (2010) and David Harvey's *Seventeen Contradictions and The End of Capitalism* (2014) also sustain that the end and substitution of ecocidal global capitalism is possible and foreseeable. Like the aforementioned apocalyptic films, both works stress the centrality of the environment when it comes to the reworking of global neoliberal paradigms, the emergence of a global consciousness and the surfacing of utopian aspirations and

proposals. Against capitalism's "alienating" commodification of nature, Harvey endorses a "secular revolutionary humanism" that forces us "to think hard about how to become a new kind of human" through a series of "mandates" such as: the placing of necessity over profit-making, limiting the accumulation of money, ensuring the provision of basic needs like education, health or housing, favouring common ownership of land and knowledge, and slowing down daily life (2014, 263, 287, 294). Likewise, Žižek asserts that the global neoliberal order is reaching "an apocalyptic zero-point" based on four pillars—ecology, inequalities, biogenetics and social divisions. The identification of these critical realities enables an "emerging emancipatory subjectivity" that should bring about transformative proposals provided we are able to undertake "the ruthless work of self-censorship and autocritique—not of reality, but of one's own dreams" (2010, x-xv, 401). Ecological threats, in particular, are prompting "a new sense of "we"", Žižek argues, in which the "species" is "an emerging universal subject" (2010, 332).

Post-apocalyptic films like *Children of Men* encourage global spectators to engage in the emancipatory self-reflective processes that Harvey and Žižek refer to in their works: a socio-economic critique fostered by ecological damage and prompting cosmopolitan imagination and utopian agency. The dead-end roads and polluted spaces of contemporary ecocritical film apocalypses make characters like Theo and viewers worldwide question their complacency with the system as it is. Rather than merely pointing at external neoliberal powers to blame, *Children of Men*, *Interstellar* and *The Road* call for the reformulation of individual dreams through the politics of ecology. This paradigm shift from the neoliberal "I" to an ecological and cosmopolitan "we" takes place across film genres, as will be argued in chapters four and five. Before leaving the spaces of apocalyptic cinema, though, the next section will analyse further

Children of Men as a case study of the rebirth of utopia in 21st-century cinema and, more specifically, of ecocritical film apocalypses that serve to make the case for cosmopolitan aspirations. It will look into the ways formal devices such as mise-en-scène, framing, editing and sound, as well as the film's use of spaces and protagonists, articulate utopia as a cosmopolitan method.

3.4. *Children of Men*: Daring to Envision the End of Dystopia

Children of Men portrays an undeniably dystopian 2027 London afflicted by terrorism, pollution, anti-immigration policies and governmental surveillance. One of the most recognisable “global” cities in the world, the British capital in the film stands for an ecocidal neoliberal society that has turned infertile and is now unable to give birth to future generations. This catastrophic backdrop seems at odds, at least at first sight, with any utopian aspirations. But, against all odds, a pregnant illegal immigrant named Kee (Clare-Hope Ashitey) brings in the possibility of hope to a dying human species and also to Theo (Clive Owen), a pessimist middle-aged Londoner who will try to help Kee and her baby reach human rights activists in international waters. Like Kee, there are many other utopian disruptions to the prevailing dystopian order in the film—breathing gaps for hope that progressively articulate the rebirth of utopia as a cosmopolitan method. The following pages examine, first, a stressed sense of directionality forwards and elsewhere in the evolution of the narrative and the protagonists. Then, the analysis focuses on how the film's aesthetics and use of spaces argue against exclusion and locate utopian aspirations outside the borders of the national. Finally, mise-en-scène and sound will be explored, tracing specific moments when the film places the marginal in the spotlight and celebrates the utopian potential of dialogical and inclusive cultures.

3.4.1. Articulating the Rebirth of Utopia: Narrative and Protagonists Move Forwards and Elsewhere

The film's narrative journey through dystopia is not an end in itself aiming to justify the retreat to nihilism and individualist agendas or to underpin anti-utopian visions of the global future. On the contrary, as the film develops, its protagonists further engage in a search of solutions to the catastrophe. Meanwhile, the narrative progressively accelerates its rhythm building up a remarkable sense of urgency around a last call for hope. Theo, the main character, undertakes a journey of political awakening into utopian possibility: from his passive observation of events at the beginning (watching bad news on TV, hiding from perils, succumbing to fear and submitting to the rules) to his confrontation with dystopia (investigating its injustices, taking part in its overturn and seeking alternatives). Theo's enlightening passage—towards utopia through dystopia—is illustrated by the multiple trips he takes from London to the ocean. Closely monitored by a handheld camera from the beginning of the film, he evolves from an alienated spectator of disaster to a mobilised utopian actor, as will be explained below.

In the film's opening scene, a news reporter's voice is heard over a black screen informing about the siege of Seattle, the deportation of immigrants and closure of borders, and the death of 18-year-old Diego Ricardo, the youngest person on Earth. The first shot in the film shows a diverse group of people of different ages, genders and races standing in a coffee shop, rubbing shoulders against the others, though oblivious of the company around while fixing their eyes on the TV screen (figure 40). The camera remains practically still in front of these petrified spectators until Theo makes his way to the counter and orders a coffee, apparently less affected than the others. As he briefly looks at the screen, an eye-line-match allows spectators to see the sentimental

broadcasting of Diego's death from his perspective. It is Theo's outlook and approach to the world that matters, the editing suggests, and, most particularly, his way of relating to, or disengaging from, his surrounding context. At this early point in the film, Theo is a sceptical spectator of global dystopia—a global citizen consuming, though reluctantly, the everyday reality of the “world risk society” theorised by Beck (1999).



Figure 40. The dystopian every day of global citizens: Theo watches the news on Diego Ricardo's death

As Theo moves to the door, the handheld camera follows him out of the place, leaving him off-screen for some seconds to show, without cuts, a main street of “London, 16th November 2027” (according to a caption). Panning left back to Theo, the camera moves behind the protagonist as he walks by Bobbies, heavy traffic, waist bags and other pedestrians, waiting then, by his side, when he stops to pour some whiskey into his coffee. Yet, after an explosion blasts in a building nearby and the protagonist retreats to the wall seeking protection and spilling his drink on the road, the handheld camera moves away from him in order to get closer to the source of the detonation. Among debris and injured bodies, a woman walks towards the camera holding her amputated arm, while the post-blast whirring sound in Theo's ears becomes louder. The whirring bridges a cut to the title of the film on a black screen and then to a different scene in which Theo submits to rigorous identity checks at the entrance of his workplace in the Ministry of Energy. More distant from its subject now, the handheld

camera shows Theo passing by governmental posters that sponsor “Jobs for the Brits”, co-workers crying for Diego Ricardo’s death and, as the whirring decreases, calling on the boss’s office to ask for a day off, pretending to be affected by the tragic news. This way, spectators make the transition from the opening scene to the one after the title through Theo’s aural focalisation (the post-blast whirring), but, rather than figuring as a victim of circumstances whose perspective of the world is privileged—white, male, middle class, British—, he is critically introduced as an emotionally detached contributor to the sustainment of the dystopian status quo: a civil servant that tries to oversee and overhear his hopeless everyday reality (figure 41).

The apocalyptic surrounding context, though, is going to affect him little by little. After the scene at his workplace, we see Theo on a train trying to ignore governmental TV ads asking to “report all illegal immigrants”. Suddenly, an object thrown by protesters to his barred window wakes him up from his self-imposed lethargy. The blow hits the protected glass at the same moment as the train passes by a graffiti that states “The last one to die, please switch off the light”—a sarcastic apocalyptic joke that illustrates his cynical hopeless attitude so far. Then, after he steps out of the train and walks along a platform crowded with jailed illegal migrants and military police, he hugs his friend Jasper (Michael Caine) outside the station. The first ray of sunlight in the film shines upon the two friends’ faces as they embrace, welcoming the protagonist’s first true display of affection. The warmer *mise-en-scène* outside the militarised station evokes the ontological turn that awaits the protagonist once Jasper asks him to help Kee, an illegal migrant: Theo is about to move beyond his nihilist “comfort zone” as a *flaneur* of dystopia to embark on an eye-opening voyage to underprivileged realities. As his outlooks and attitudes become less self-centred, the camera will get closer to him, often documenting empathically, at an eye-level angle,

his efforts to get his feet in the mud and walk in others' shoes (explicitly so since he will find his toes deep in mud at one point, and will need to borrow shoes from an illegal migrant). At first carried by others (in Jasper's car, a van, a double-decker bus, a governmental vehicle, Julian's car and two military vehicles in that order), Theo will then accept the responsibility to help Kee reach international waters safely to bring her baby into the world. After Jasper and Julian (Julianne Moore), his ex-wife and leader of the pro-refugee terrorist group "The Fishes", are killed, he will have to drive the car himself and lead the mission to guide Kee through a refugee camp and into the ocean. In the camp, at last, Theo eventually becomes the Other in the eyes of the military officers (figure 42) and spills his blood (rather than just his coffee as he did at the beginning) for a cause worth his sacrifice—the welfare of Kee and her newborn, who embody the possibility of hope for a dying humanity.



Figures 41 and 42. Theo's evolution: a sceptical civil servant turns into a committed world citizen

In the foggy waters of the closing scene, the narrative journey, which so far has followed a stressed directionality forwards, now reaches its final stage by heading elsewhere. Fatally wounded at this point, Theo rows a small wooden boat through a dark tunnel and into the open waters while Kee holds her baby in her arms. In the grey foggy mise-en-scène, we see Theo holding Kee's hand and asking her to keep her baby close "whatever they say". It is their survival, not his, that matters to him. Bleeding and in pain, he smiles as he shows Kee how to make her baby pass wind and also when she

tells him she is going to name her girl Dylan after Julian and Theo's son, who passed away due to a flu pandemic. With that last smile on his face, Theo loses consciousness or dies, while the boat starts to take distance from the camera. However, Theo's death does not signal the end of the story, but the beginning of another: a possible cosmopolitan future now seen from the perspective of Kee. A point of view shot that displays the ship behind Theo's bent head on the horizon, from her perspective, and another shot where she tells her baby "you are safe now", points at a utopian directionality elsewhere embodied by the black female illegal migrant and her baby girl. The last shot in the film—a low-angle shot of the crew on a ship clearly named "Tomorrow"—is followed by the title of the film on a black screen, accompanied by a score of children laughing instead of the post-blast whirring of the beginning. This time, the ending seems to suggest, the future should not lie in the hands of white men conquering and spoiling wild "promised land", but in the arms of a black woman who stands for the dispossessed and the marginalised. If Theo has passed away being a radically different man from the hopeless and passive Londoner we saw at the beginning of the film, utopia, likewise, re-emerges amidst the ashes of ecocide and bigotry reformulated as a cosmopolitan method, as will be analysed below.

3.4.2. Expanding Utopia: Filming Cosmopolitan Openness

The way Theo's journey ends and baby Dylan's starts—in international waters—illustrates the opening process that accompanies the rebirth of utopia in the movie. Hope resides, like baby Dylan's survival in the film, in the crossing of borders: geographical (Kee is an illegal migrant who needs to escape the confinement of the refugee camp) and interpersonal (Theo and Kee have cooperated as equals beyond gender, national, class and racial differences). As the ship's name in the closing shot

suggests, a prosperous global tomorrow requires international institutions like the Human Project in the film able to place social welfare and ecological sustainability before particular economic interests and apartheid outlooks. As will be explored below, the film's use of spaces, and its editing and framing strategies, endorse cosmopolitan openness.

The apartheid spaces of London in the film (prison-like refugee camps, detention areas and elitist inner city neighbourhoods, among others) operate under the logics of what Beck defines as a “risk regime”, one which “is not national, but global” and conforms the “world risk society” (1999, 3). Risk contention legitimises the restriction of liberties (the surveillance of public spaces, for instance), the militarisation of the government and the closure of borders in the movie. London 2027 hosts a “fear society”, which, as defined by Macek, exploits “deviant, threatening, or troubling objects (...) produced by particular social agents in particular contexts for specific purposes” (2006, xiv). The main deviant objects in this case are illegal migrants, portrayed, by neoliberal nationalist power elites and the media, as criminal parasites of a nation with limited resources (figure 43). The privileged, meanwhile, enjoy pleasant everyday lives in restricted spaces such as St. James's Park (which shelters music parties and exotic animals for the rich) and the exclusive building where Theo's high-rank cousin lives. When Theo pays him a visit to ask for transit papers for Kee, the spotlessly white interiors of the cousin's living quarters and the magnificent works of art inside—Picasso's *Guernica* and Michelangelo's *David*—stand for an extractive Western global neoliberalism that has appropriated common resources. This economic elite controls public institutions like the military, uses violence to protect its interests (as conveyed by the cousin's growling dogs) and ignores eco-social welfare. Like the piggy-bank balloon work of art that contently floats in the air outside the cousin's

residence, Theo's cousin is unaffected by the crowded dirty slums and polluted Thames waters at the other side of his walls (figure 44).



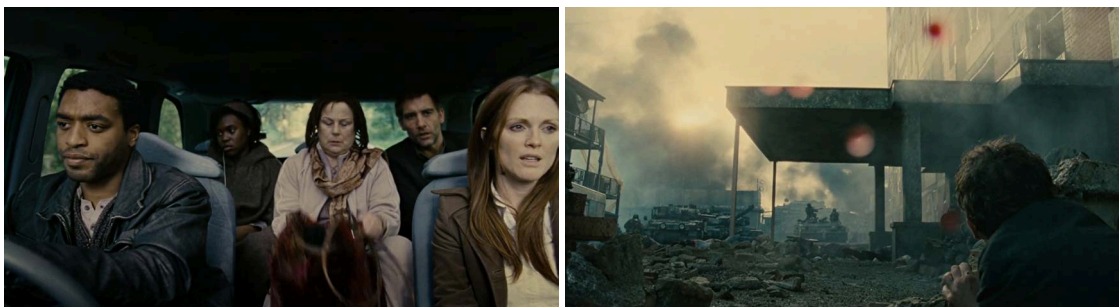
Figures 43 and 44. The apartheid spaces of a risk society: jailed migrants and privileged neoliberal elites

The terrorist strategy that “The Fishes” employ to fight for the rights of refugees proves, in turn, as sterile for eco-social progress as the neoliberal paradigm described above (figure 45). When Theo is kidnapped by some members of this terrorist group (which is directed by his ex-wife Julian) and taken to their hideout in an old church attic, the roofless dome structure above their heads can be read as a spatial metaphor of the moral holes and ineffectiveness of the terrorist project (figure 46). Grounded on solid ideological foundations and aspiring to good causes, the terrorists use, though, the same violent means and utilitarian tactics as the government. Their terrorist actions and internal struggles for power within the group (Julian is killed by members of her organisation) eventually turn out to be as useless to society as the naked dome is to protect those inside from the cold and the rain.



Figures 45 and 46. The Fishes's hideout: dogmatic worldviews and questionable morals

Against the enclosed apartheid spaces of power elites and terrorists described above, the editing and framing call for dialogical openness in social relations and socio-political outlooks. As Theo learns to connect and cooperate with others, the framing changes. If at the beginning of the film, medium and long shots of the protagonist highlight his social alienation when walking in the city, entering his office and waking up at home, two-shots of Theo and Jasper laughing in the car, and the long take inside Julian's car after he meets Kee, convey the affective bonds he is forging with others (figure 47). At the end of the movie, another long take in a battle scene at the refugee camp, in which different armed factions fight for diverse reasons, endorses holistic approaches to convoluted conflict issues. While the military attack a rebel refugee group and the Fishes shoot Theo to capture Kee, the cut-less editing and crisscrossing bullets articulate the interconnection of the different agents and issues involved in the struggle. As happens with the film's opening scene, the long take ties individuals and actions to the space around them, but now Theo takes responsibility for the apocalyptic situation rather than trying to evade it, as he did at the beginning (figure 48). The fragility of the newborn in such a hostile environment points at the pressing necessity to abandon dialectical aggressive relations with the Other to develop, instead, dialogical and cooperative cosmopolitan cultures. The future of humanity depends on it, according to the film.



Figures 47 and 48. Long-take dialogics: holistic representations of social relations and shared spaces

Commenting on how the film's blend of ethics and aesthetics results in a piece of political protest similar to Picasso's *Guernica* in the movie, Samuel Amago holds that "Cuarón turns *Children of Men* into a call for *individual action*, a hopeful prayer for peace, and an encouraging example of what cinema might do to change the world" (my emphasis) (2010, 231). Yet, although the narrative focuses on Theo's personal transformation and growing engagement, the long takes described above and the borderless oceanic waters in which the film ends can be said to call for collective cosmopolitan action, rather than individual alone. Shifting the protagonist's perspective to Kee's and naming the Human Project's ship "Tomorrow" in the last scene, the film claims the allegorical nature of the narrative and its main character. Individuals' ethical actions and everyday politics are consistently vindicated throughout the movie. But *Children of Men* ultimately calls for a change of political and ethical paradigms that transcend the individual realm, the tribe and the nation (figure 49). Theo's sacrifice and Kee's baby alone cannot guarantee humanity's fertility in the same way Britain cannot effectively manage pandemics, pollution and migratory movements. If individuals' actions can reform the world it will happen thanks to intercultural cooperative strategies like Theo and Kee's and cosmopolitan institutions like the Human Project in the film.

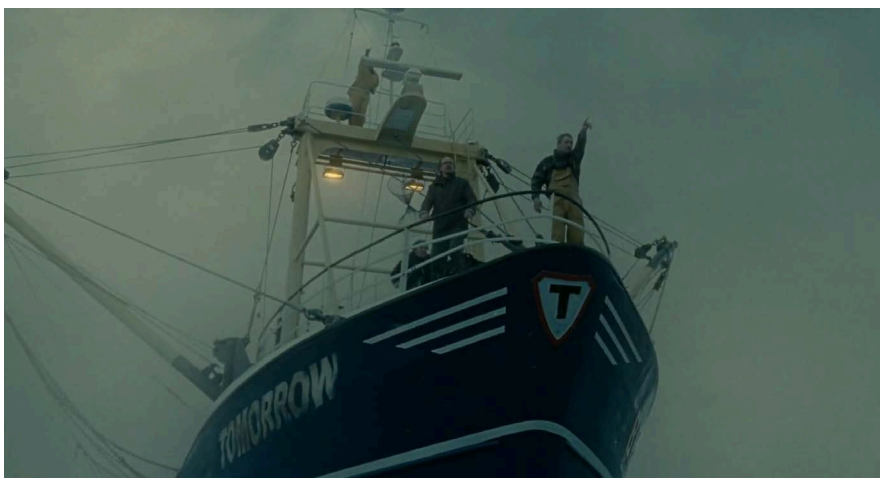


Figure 49. "Tomorrow": heading towards cosmopolitan horizons

Utopian aspirations are to be framed from cosmopolitan prisms, the ending hints at. The fact that *Children of Men* refers critically to early 21st-century neoliberal globalisation—its extractive economics, post-9/11 fear discourses and environmental crises—does not imply the film supports anti-globalisation stances. Rather, the film calls for the rebirth and expansion of utopia in a global society that already shares an environmental framework in crisis and can no longer prevent effectively the mobility of underprivileged people. If at the beginning of the film utopia seems to have “no topos”, as Bauman put it (2003, 19-23), and hope is a luxury only a few can afford, the end of the movie relocates utopia in the global topos and redraws hope from a cosmopolitan point of view. Against fear-ridden apartheid solutions and anti-utopian perspectives of the global that foreclose political speculation, *Children of Men* argues that the hope for a better life should be retrieved as a political task tied to inclusive and ecological progress. This implies that imaginaries need to shift from neoliberalism, nationalism and economic materialism to ecology and cosmopolitanism.

As Steger and James assert in “Ideologies of Globalism” (2010), in the early twenty-first century “competing ideologies of globalization [“globalisms”] articulate a tangled, but generalizing, global imaginary that, more readily than ever before, cuts across class, gender, race, and state-based, geopolitical and cultural differences, postcolonial divides and other social boundaries”. This global imaginary, they argue, “has become relatively encompassing, translated into differing political programs by competing *globalisms*”—market globalism, justice globalism, religious globalism, imperial globalism—and including many of the previously called “anti-globalization” movements, which now “describe themselves as part of the ‘alter-globalization’ movement” (2010, ix). In line with earlier theories on the global flow of ideas such as Appadurai’s “ideoscapes” (1990), the “globalisms” Steger and James propose would be

“woven” into a *global social imaginary* that constitutes “the dominant social imaginary of our time (albeit still contending with the weakening national imaginary) from within all contemporary political belief systems must be understood and analyzed” (2010, xvi-xvii). Contemporary social imaginaries, they explain, are “patterned *convocations* of the lived *social whole*” that used to be tied to national communities alone (national imaginaries), but now call together “meanings, ideas, sensibilities” around “an almost pre-reflexive sense that at one level ‘we’ as individuals, peoples, and nations have a common global fate” (2010, xvii). Thus, “normative contestations continue, but they tend to have a common implicit point of reference—the global” (2010, xxvii).

Drawing on Steger and James, *Children of Men* partakes of the global social imaginary that permeates contemporary life articulating what could be labelled as “cosmopolitan globalism”; or, using these authors’ terminology, “justice globalism”—“an alternative vision of globalization based on egalitarian ideals of local-global solidarities, distributive justice, and ecological sustainability” (2010, ix). Only recently, Steger and James argue, “the global imaginary has congealed sufficiently to provide the deep meaning structures for various movements for social justice and human rights to recognize themselves as part of a process of globalization, even as they continue to draw on older ideologies such as cosmopolitanism and internationalism” (2010, x). While chapter five will address how this cosmopolitan or justice globalism has manifested itself more emphatically in political terms in 2010s social movements and films such as *The Hunger Games* series, *Children of Men* expresses an earlier moment in the mid 2000s when the criticism of neoliberal globalisation prompts the emergence of cosmopolitan imaginaries. The film’s closing scene advocates for the consolidation of a cosmopolitan alternative to a “market globalism” with imperial undertones, as Steger and James call it, which is unequivocally portrayed as dystopian, making critical

references to early century global politics (such as images of tortured prisoners in the refugee camp that echo the pictures taken by US soldiers in the Iraqi Abu Ghraib prison during the Bush administration). Besides, the cosmopolitan outlooks in the film also confront a nationalist globalism that, though opposing globalisation, relies on risk-based global imaginaries to justify its anti-immigration politics (as more recently seen in Trump's border policies and discourses).

This way, although *Children of Men* illustrates the anxieties and eco-social crises of early-century neoliberal globalisation—as explored by Julia Echeverría's analysis (2015) of long takes in connection with Bauman's "liquid fear" (2006) and Hardt and Negri's "global state of war" (2004)—, the cosmopolitan dimension of the ending's location and the film's formal highlighting of relational bonds among characters and their environment (especially through the use of long takes) endorse the utopian opening process that characters undergo. The film's use of spaces and formal choices prompt viewers to expand their utopian horizons and desire cosmopolitan futures, regardless of how bleak the international panorama might look, as suggested by the foggy open waters of the closing scene.

3.4.3. Reformulating Utopia as Cosmopolitan Method: Mise-en-scène and Sound Embrace the Stranger

The cosmopolitan aspirations articulated in *Children of Men* involve the reformulation of utopia as a holistic and dialogical method. As happens in Ruth Levitas's social theory (see 1.2.), *Children of Men* conceives utopia as an open-ended speculative sociology concerned with the world, nature, others and the future. The cosmopolitan attitudes Theo and Kee perform in their apocalyptic everyday feature as a utopian, yet effective, method to transform the world. In line with the "cosmopolitan imagination"

theorised by Delanty (2006), the protagonists' utopian cosmopolitanism replaces the us/them dialectics of apartheid conceptions of utopia (be they nationalist, oligarchic, patriarchal or xenophobic) with dialogical relations with the Other that bring about self-transformation.

The film narrative and formal devices locate the “strangers at our door”, as Bauman referred to the rising numbers of “migration crises” (2016), in a central cinematic place (as happens with the non-mainstream survivors that will be analysed in chapter four). Kee, as her name's phonetics hints at, is a “key” to Theo's conversion. This way, the Other is repositioned from a marginal object of fear outside the nation's borders into an essential subject for narrative continuity. Kee's pregnancy, the first in the last two decades, states that humanity's survival depends on lifting up the borders that separate us as a species, as Bauman did in *Retrotopia* (2017).

Lighting insists on this matter helping create breathing gaps for utopian speculation that tie hope to inclusion. In three crucial moments in the movie, key warm lighting is cast upon Kee while she stands right in the middle of the frame, breaking with the otherwise cold illumination that pervades the film. When she shares the news of her pregnancy with Theo for the first time, we see a medium shot of her naked body surrounded by wired milk cows in a yarn, with her belly contour illuminated by the warm light of fluorescent lamps (figure 50). As she comments on how their teats are cut to fit the milking machine, the *mise-en-scène* interconnects cosmopolitan, feminist and ecological aspirations as part of a single utopian agenda. Later, there is a long shot of her sitting on a playground swing under the sunshine, seen through a broken window from Theo's perspective. Framed by the sharp angles of the broken glass, in what used to be a school, the shot composition conveys the hostile context illegal migrants face and the carelessness of a social order that has not been able to protect children. The

lighting, though, sustains that hope can resist the harshest circumstances and picture, once again, the possibility of post-apocalyptic futures from a cosmopolitan point of view (figure 51). Likewise, when she gives birth to baby Dylan in the refugee camp, a lamp next to her draws a circle of illuminated exception within the total darkness around, which provides a tangible look at the hot air emerging from the bodies of the mother and her newborn. In the middle of the frame and under the spotlight, her black pregnant body, assisted by Theo's white hands, heralds the cosmopolitan promise of a human future able to overcome the dialectics of the Other.



Figures 50 and 51. Lighting ties hope to the inclusion of the Other

Meanwhile, harmonic and pleasant sound breaks disrupt, in some scenes, the otherwise intrusive, unidirectional and violent daily score of governmental propaganda, police shouts and explosions. One of the most remarkable examples is the harmonic entanglement of three different languages in a scene when Kee, her baby and Theo stay at a Russian lady's home in the refugee camp. Although the characters do not share a common language, they participate in a shared emotional conversation that associates cosmopolitan dialogics with the ethics of care (figure 52). Another key moment as far as utopian uses of sound go takes place in the battle scene at the refugee camp, when bombs and shootings are suddenly interrupted by the newborn's cry. As the people inside the building and the soldiers outside stop their fighting to hear the baby's unmistakable wailing, they open up a spontaneous silent humanitarian corridor for them

to get out of the battle (figure 53). Though warfare is swiftly resumed, the brief relieving parenthesis of silence signals that cosmopolitan understanding can only happen when one is willing to listen to the Other.



Figures 52 and 53. Cosmopolitan sound breaks: the universal language of care

Once Kee, her baby and Theo effectively reach “the light at the end of the tunnel” and access the open sea in the closing scene, there is a noticeable absence of background noise (except for the low rumour of water) and a bare mise-en-scène where the boat floats in a thick fog and diffuse light. The end features as a blank canvas that, at first, seems to herald unpromising prospects for the characters: there are no safe points for the fragile wooden boat to cling on amidst the inhospitable humid atmosphere and Theo passes away, leaving Kee and Dylan floating adrift. Yet, as the big sturdy ship “Tomorrow” moves steadily ahead to rescue Kee and her daughter, the blank mise-en-scène can be also read as the empty space of a future that is yet to be drawn. It is a space of utopian possibility occupied by characters that embody intersecting underprivileged positions—a female, poor, black illegal migrant and her baby girl.

As argued by Azcona and Deleyto, many contemporary films build their narratives around the “pervasiveness of border experience in contemporary societies”, documenting its injustices and how borders play a central role in a developing “transnational consciousness” (2010, 118). In *Children of Men*, the relay of

perspectives in the final scene (from Theo's to Kee's), and the sound and lighting formal choices described above, articulate what Mezzadra and Neilson call "seeing like a migrant": displays of "the subjective viewpoint of border crossings and struggles" that can serve to develop "border as method" in order to rethink "questions of organization, political action, and contestation" in an emergent "political world beyond the nation-state" (2013, 166). According to James M. Hodapp, the migrant's baby in the film represents "a postcolonial, fragmented, and contested subject" that is proclaimed "the true globalized citizen" (2015, 172, 177). If, as Debbie Olson states, the child in post-apocalyptic cinema "is the intersection of our past, present, and future, the manifestation of who we were, who we are, and who, or what, humanity can become" (2015, xiv), baby Dylan would be imbued with cosmopolitan aspirations critical of colonial histories of oppression and ecocidal, economised global presents.

Despite the best efforts of xenophobic nationalist politics to shield the nation from strangers or confine them in refugee camps, Dylan's birth on British soil embodies a transnational present lacking the regulatory frameworks needed by "cosmopolitan natives" whose modes of being in the world can no longer be framed through borders. Like the three characters sharing a boat in the open fluid waters at the end of the film, the global future is seen as a common human project whose hospitality depends on cooperative dialogics and inclusive cultures (figure 54). This way, utopia is reformulated as a cosmopolitan method of analysis and action guided by egalitarian and ecological ideological principles. *Children of Men* hopes and asks for a cosmopolitan re-mapping of the global beyond the frameworks provided by anti-utopia, nation, risk and neoliberalism.



Figure 54. Cosmopolitan horizons yet to be sketched: daring to hope beyond borders and dystopia

Therefore, the film ends posing a political global challenge: the construction of a cosmopolitan social space. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's definition of social space as a "social product" that materialises and reproduces particular ideological visions of society, the cosmopolitan social space that *Children of Men* articulates as desirable would substantiate cosmopolitan ideals. As Lefebvre argues:

What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies? What would remain of a religious ideology—the Judaeo-Christian one, say—if it were not based on places and their names: church, confessional, altar, sanctuary, tabernacle? (...) [W]hat we call ideology only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and its production, and by thus taking on body therein. Ideology *per se* might well be said to consist primarily in a discourse upon social space. (1991, 44)

Space functions, thus, "as a tool of thought and of action" used for ideological and political domination, but also apt, according to Lefebvre, for ideological and political contestation (1991, 26).

This chapter has argued that twenty-first-century apocalyptic films illustrate that, though not yet materialised in institutional terms, cosmopolitan cartographies have become a prevalent utopian topos in the cinema of globalisation. The cosmopolitan imaginaries articulated by contemporary films like *Children of Men* show "the power of real places and constructed spaces to convey socially significant meanings in a global

world” (Deleyto 2016b, 15); and ultimately invoke, as Lefebvre put it, “the space of the human species”: “a planet-wide space as the social foundation of a transformed everyday life open to myriad possibilities” (1991, 422-423). Toward this cosmopolitan horizon—an ecological and egalitarian global space for the “children of men” and women, of all races and origins, for other species and habitats across the world and into the future—many contemporary film protagonists advance, as will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Reformed Ontologies: Cinematic Philosophies of Hope and Care in Global Times of Crisis

This chapter draws on Levitas's ontological mode of utopia as method in order to explore how many contemporary films articulate philosophies of hope and modes of being that care about the world and others. Despite disadvantageous individual circumstances or discouraging socio-economic contexts, numerous film protagonists aspire to a moral self, a fair society—local and global—and a sustainable planet. Endeavouring to find opportunities for personal and eco-social improvement, these characters are open to change their worldviews, willing to resist inequitable social orders, reform their way of life or commit to just causes. In global times of crisis (with challenges like climate change, economic recession and nationalist politics), film leads illustrate cosmopolitan attitudes inspired by inclusive and sustainable conceptions of human progress.

The first part of the chapter explores contemporary theories by Zygmunt Bauman, Slavoj Žižek and Michel Serres that propose alternatives to neoliberal philosophies. Though they all coincide in reading the global present as a time of crisis, each theorist frames his critique from a distinct angle that prompts, in turn, dissimilar politico-philosophical propositions. While Bauman criticises neoliberal “hunter” types and retrotopian stances to call for cosmopolitan awareness, Žižek's dialectical analysis of capitalist ideology advocates for a global communist horizon. Serres, for his part, puts forward a post-anthropocentric perspective that posits

ecology and the global dissemination of information as key factors for sustainable “soft” models of progress. Like Bauman, Serres relies on anti-dialectical sociological critique and calls for the development of inclusive global institutions.

The second section analyses how 2010s non-mainstream film survivors articulate a desirable cosmopolitan re-conception of the human. It argues that the emancipatory resistance of the main characters in *Gravity* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2013), *The Revenant* (Alejandro G. Iñárritu, 2015), *Room* (Lenny Abrahamson, 2015), *Moonlight* (Barry Jenkins, 2016), *American Honey* (Andrea Arnold, 2016) and *The Florida Project* (Sean Baker, 2017) call for utopian views of human resistance that stress individuals’ relational vulnerability as well as their capacity to transform contextual limitations.

The last part of the chapter looks at the transformation of the main character in the movie *The East*: from a neoliberal individualist worldview to ecological and cosmopolitan awareness. The character played by Brit Marling in this film is used as a case study of a present generation of cosmopolitan film dreamers who embody nurturing and dialogical modes of being. Their individual responses to particular circumstances, in specific local contexts, are inherently connected to global ecological challenges; intercultural relations in diverse societies; and existential questions concerning the human condition that transcend characters’ selves and immediate surroundings. This type of character seems to be arguing that, in some 21st-century movies, the desire for arranging the global space otherwise (chapter 3) is co-dependent on the desire for being otherwise in the world.

4.1. Changing Modes of Being in the World and Thinking of Our Place in It: Global Alternatives to Neoliberal Philosophy—Bauman, Žižek, Serres

According to Levitas, “defending utopia entails insisting that the identification and expression of the deepest desires of our hearts and minds, and those of others, is a necessary form of knowledge and of truth” that is subject to socio-historical determination and, therefore, change (2013, 3). Drawing on the ontological mode of utopia as method, which addresses “the question of what kind of people particular societies develop and encourage” (153), this section explores how recent philosophical theories by Bauman, Žižek and Serres evaluate present-day individual desires, worldviews and modes of being in transformation. In an “age of persistent instrumental crises” under the hegemonic philosophy of global neoliberalism (Bauman 2017, 153), the three theorists call for worldviews that are not based on self and capital. However, their critical perspectives on the present and their proposals for a post-neoliberal politico-philosophical reorientation differ. These philosophical prisms will provide a theoretical framework for the analysis of contemporary film ontologies in the rest of the chapter.

According to Bauman’s *Liquid Times*, turn-of-the-century “open societies”, anxious about migrants, dispossessed classes and cultural diversity, are the result of a “negatively globalized planet”: “a selective globalization of trade and capital, surveillance and information, violence and weapons, crime and terrorism, all unanimous in their disdain of the principle of territorial sovereignty” (2007b, 7). The global framework produced by global capitalism, Bauman asserts, lacks the political tools to regulate supra-national phenomena like corporate power, which renders individuals increasingly exposed to market fluctuations in highly competitive, ever-changing societies. This weakening of national politics, added to the dismantling of

public welfare, makes hope for collective progress recede in favour of uncertainty, individual objectives and defensive strategies: “‘Progress’, once the most extreme manifestation of radical optimism and a promise of universally shared and lasting happiness (...) now stands for the threat of a relentless and inescapable change that instead of auguring peace and respite portends nothing but continuous crisis (...) [and] nightmares of ‘being left behind’” (2007b, 10-11).

Out of this negatively globalised context, new modes of being in the world emerge, Bauman states. Whereas the pre-modern “gamekeeper” tried to maintain the world order determined by God or Nature; and the modern “gardener” sought to design and care for a harmonious social arrangement of its own making; the “age of uncertainty” has harboured a “hunter” type, according to Bauman. Unlike gamekeepers and gardeners, hunters “could not care less about the overall ‘balance of things’, whether ‘natural’ or designed and contrived. The sole task hunters pursue is another ‘kill’, big enough to fill their game-bags to capacity” (2007b, 100). Thus, reading Bauman’s “postures” under the light of Levitas’s ontological mode, hunters would be the type of people encouraged by a deregulated and individualised global society of consumers that has seen “the invasion, conquest and colonization of the web of human relations by the worldviews and behavioural patterns inspired by and made to the measure of commodity markets” (Bauman 2007a, 24). Familiarised with proclamations of “the demise of utopia”, Bauman asserts, we are compelled to act as hunters and to reject “utopian musings” other than “*individual* satisfaction and *individual* escape from *individually* suffered discomforts”, displacing “progress” from “the discourse of *shared improvement* to that of *individual survival*” (2007b, 100-103, emphasis in the original).

In the 2010s, new nostalgic “retrotopian” postures towards the world have emerged, according to Bauman, once modes of being have “retreated into the deceptively safe shelter of self-concern and self-reference”, in mistrustful atomised life experiences where collective consciousness and socialising skills have significantly declined (2017, 121-139). Retrotopia encompasses diverse social, existential and political manifestations such as: online “fenced-off mini-universe[s]” of like-minded lonely individuals (2017, 147-151); “back to the womb” Nirvanas of isolated rest for those leading competitive and overstrained everyday lives (118); and “tribal” worldviews—nationalisms and nostalgic political discourses “locked in a superiority/inferiority loop” of us/them dialectical antagonism (51). For Bauman, these options have been able to read the critical condition of the time but are unable to provide valid sustainable responses to the challenges of our globalised present and future (153).

Against these retrotopian ontologies and worldviews, Bauman calls for a more inclusive rising of social integration to the level of all humanity: a cosmopolitan “we” that solves the “divorce of power and politics” and responds to the needs “of planet-wide interdependent humans” (2017, 153, 159). Drawing on Beck, Bauman advocates for the sound development of a (still immature) “cosmopolitan awareness” of the (already advanced) “cosmopolitan condition” (154). Unlike nostalgic philosophies, cosmopolitan perspectives should retrieve utopian aspirations in order to inform the configuration of cosmopolitan politics and institutions able to regulate—through dialogical strategies—a globally integrated human society (Bauman 2017, 153-167).

Still, Bauman’s philosophical appraisal of the present as an anti-utopian age of uncertainty (2007b) and nostalgia (2017) mainly consists of a problem-oriented,

anthropocentric sociology that remains highly unconfident about the cosmopolitan order it aspires to:

So here we are: the denizens of an age of disruptions and discrepancies, a kind of age in which everything—or almost—may happen, while nothing—or almost—can be undertaken with self-assurance and with certainty of seeing it through; an age of causes pursuing their effects and effects tracing their causes with a minimal and constantly shrinking degree of success; an age of apparently tested means squandering (or being depleted of) their usefulness at an accelerating pace, while the search for their replacements seldom manages to reach beyond the drawing-boards stage—its achievement being no more impressive than those of the hunt after the remnants of the Malaysian Airlines Flight 370. (2017, 153)

Such an emphasis on uncertainties and crises, without a comparable analytical stress on the positive aspects of globalisation, could be said to hinder, rather than prompt, the utopian move into cosmopolitan philosophies and politics that Bauman thought imperative and urgent (2017, 167). The sociologist's highly sceptical utopian call helps maintain, to some extent, the dialectical confrontation between realism and utopia that a critical yet constructive speculative sociology must overcome, according to Levitas, if it wants to be of any use for future generations.

Žižek's *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism* (2014) can be said to share Bauman's critical vision of a negatively globalised capitalist world order. After the financial crisis has undermined the foundations of liberal capitalist democracy, Žižek argues, contemporary societies display a "cynical conformism" that continues to indulge in capitalist dreams (2014, 6-7). But, contrary to Bauman's vindication of dialogical cosmopolitanism, Žižek's critique of global capitalism relies on belligerent ideological dialectics to reclaim communist worldviews and political agendas. What Žižek proposes is an overturn of the "worldless ideological constellation" of global capitalism through the refurbishment of a communist political philosophy that regards communism as: "the

problem of *commons* in all its dimensions”—natural, biogenetic, cultural, and social—, “commons as the universal space of humanity from which no one should be excluded” (10, 244). The “communist horizon”, Žižek states, should be understood “not as an inaccessible ideal, but as a space of ideas within which we move” (244).

However, this inclusive description of the communist agenda clashes against Žižek’s Marxist dialectics and material analysis. *Trouble in Paradise* sees contemporary global reality as a struggle between two sets of opposite ideological forces that run either along the grain of capital (perpetuating the capitalist global order and its sustaining ideology), or against it (fostering communist emancipation). Žižek’s work criticises pro-capital phenomena and actors as diverse as: the “Gangnam Style” music video (a 2012 song by South Korean musician Psy that referred ironically to the capitalist lifestyle in Seoul’s Gangnam District) (2014, 12); commoditised celebrities (15); and optimist revisions of human progress like Steven Pinker’s *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (2012) whose data, though accurate, can easily fall in “naïve progressivism” (25-26). Besides, Žižek also censures “New Age” anti-patriarchal “commonplaces” against “the male/paternal principle of domination, discipline, struggle”, which, while focusing on the patriarchal Master, forget about the “late-capitalist narcissistic Protean Self” that has replaced it (2014, 18-19)—patriarchy being, it can be read between lines, less detrimental for “the commons” than capitalism. On the contrary, Žižek praises “emancipatory” examples of anti-capitalist “revolutionary dreaming” such as: Wikileaks’s revelation of “the way state mechanism and agencies control and regulate us all”, which he reads as communist resistance (60-61); the Pussy Riots’ acts against Russian nationalism (69); “traces of utopia” in Hollywood pro-establishment films like the revolutionary masses invoking the Occupy movement in *The Dark Knight Rises* (Christopher Nolan, 2012) (220-221,

229); and the “sign of hope” offered by “high-class prostitutes” in Sao Paolo’s Café Photo, who, apparently coming from educated and comfortable backgrounds, are able to “choose their customers”, thus performing, in Žižek’s words, “prostitution with a feminist twist, if ever there was one” (2014, 20).

A feminist reading of *Trouble in Paradise* can be used to question the inclusivity of Žižek’s conception of “the commons”. Grounding his philosophy on Marxist material dialectics and Freudian psychoanalytical theories whose epicentre was the male European intellectual and worker, Žižek holds that “authentic emancipatory events always involve ignoring particular identities as irrelevant” (2014, 160-161). In effect, his emancipatory call can be said to ignore, for the most part, female particular identities, rights and perspectives, as seen through his critique of anti-patriarchal discourse (18-19); his reading of high-class prostitution as a feminist utopian sign for the commons (19); and his praising of Julian Assange as a representative “of the new ethics that befits our digital era” despite the fact that he escaped for years accusations of sexual abuse (“a minor sexual misconduct”, in his view) in the Embassy of Ecuador (59, 67).

Moreover, Žižek’s call for dominant leaders (a “Thatcher of the Left” or “Master” that clarifies to others “their own position” and “innermost need” (2014, 210-216)) and his comments on violence as an unavoidable strategy to attain emancipation challenge his early definition of the communist horizon as an open space of ideas (164-169, 227, 232). Although his work criticises failed communist regimes like Stalinism, the Khmer Rouge’s or 1950s’ China militarised poverty, Žižek seems to read them as necessary historical rehearsals for a future communist “Great Rupture” (169):

Every historical situation contains its own unique utopian perspective, an immanent vision of what is wrong with it, an ideal representation of how,

with some changes, the situation could be rendered much better. When the desire for radical social change emerges, it is thus logical that it first endeavours to actualize this immanent utopian vision—and this endeavour is what characterizes every authentic emancipatory struggle. Here, however, problems begin: why have all attempts hitherto to do this, to actualize the utopian potential immanent to a historical situation, ended in catastrophe? (...) Marx's fundamental mistake was to conclude (...) that a new, higher social order (Communism) is possible that would not only maintain, but even raise to a higher degree and effectively fully release, the potential of the self-increasing spiral of productivity which, in capitalism—on account of its inherent obstacle (contradiction)—is again and again thwarted by socially destructive economic crises. (...) This is why a revolution has to be repeated: only the catastrophic experience can make the revolutionary agent aware of the fateful limitation of the first attempt. (2014, 166-167)

Paradoxically, Žižek's view on past communist revolutions can be said to draw on creative-destruction conceptions of progress similar to those in capitalist crises—“catastrophic” revolutionary experiences bringing about learning opportunities to perfect the communist agenda, rather than suggesting the need to find alternative paradigms.

Serres's philosophy, conversely, rejects material dialectics and proposes the invention of integrating and ecological “soft” paradigms of progress. In *Times of Crisis: What the Financial Crisis Revealed and How To Reinvent Our Lives and Future* (2015), Serres supports a non-economised and non-anthropocentric philosophical shift to ground the development of dialogical and sustainable modes of seeing the world, being in it and ordering it. For Serres the 2008 stock market crisis was a surface movement that reveals profound historical “ruptures” whose management demands the formulation of new perspectives and methods before “the new enters by force” (2015, ix-xiii). Just like earthquakes cause superficial fissures whose igniting cause lies in huge tectonic plates clashing underground, the financial crisis illustrated, according to Serres, the widening gap between “volatile stock market casinos” and “the slower reality of labor and goods”. But, most significantly,

it pointed up the breach between “the media-political spectacle” and “a new human condition”—“the hominiscent”—that lacks appropriate political paradigms to meet the challenges it faces (2015, 1).

This new human condition has resulted, Serres contends, from the great systemic changes undergone by humanity in the course of the twentieth century:

The last few decades have seen the radical transformation of our relations to the world and nature, of the body and its suffering, the environment, the mobility of humans and things, life expectancy, control over reproduction or sometimes death, global demography, virtual space, the nature of relationships in collectivities, and knowledge and power. (...) Here, changes stop or end periods that are as long as the one separating us from the Neolithic, or even from our own emergence—in other words, tens of thousands or even millions of years. (...) Have women and men ever changed more since they emerged? (...) In other words, it is not enough to talk about the recent financial disaster, whose loudly proclaimed importance derives from the fact that money and the economy have seized all power, the media and governments. It would be better to accept the fact *that all our institutions clearly and globally are experiencing a crisis going far beyond the scope of normal history.* (2015, 15-17, emphasis in the original)

The institutional bodies, theories and systems that were conceived for a rural world of short-living peasants and manual workers are unable to manage, according to Serres, the globalised present (2015, 19). Today we must develop, Serres asserts, a “new relation of humans to the world” different from the economised approach introduced by post-Enlightenment modernity, which needs to come to an end like the military order of the Middle Ages and the religious worldview of antique theocracies did before (2015, 20-23).

In the anthropocenic era, the world’s “*non plus ultra*” warnings force us to create solutions from alternative perspectives (2015, 24):

Facing a new type of necessity, a hominiscent is emerging whose numbers, bodies, strength, circulation, relations with others, science, and capacity to intervene transform both his nature and nature itself, as well as his profound relations to things and his own humanity. Today he has at his disposal tools or machines whose dimension or dimensions are equal to one of the world’s dimensions. Whether they be weapons of mass

destruction or mass construction, global techniques in space, duration, volume, speed, nanotechnologies for small things, *the hominiscient rises to the level of the world*. It is therefore urgent to reconsider the respective status of those two active subjects and the respective roles of this couple that have so far been considered as aggressive or polemical opposites (25-26, my emphasis)

The biosphere (what he calls “Biogea”) turns now into a political subject that disrupts anthropocentric dialectics, be they those between “Master and Slave” or left and right (2015, 30-32). Here, Serres seems to coincide with Bauman in the need to develop philosophies grounded on “integration without separation to rest on” (2017, 161). But Serres inscribes cosmopolitan paradigms within an ecological perspective that reminds us that, regardless of the “ephemeral human nations” and “temporary borders” that “made us into strangers to one another”, we all belong to a single human species and depend on a single natural habitat (2015, 31-33).

Ecology, thus, would provide us with the methodological framework to rethink and regulate contemporary globalisation, which, in Serres’s view, is the result of a long historical process of human interactions:

We have globalized ever since our emergence by leaving Africa, travelling through Eurasia, sailing towards Australia or travelling alongside the Rockies and the Andes. (...) Such expansions that have occurred for millennia will only grow with our contemporary technologies. This globalization dates from the emergence of *Homo sapiens*, but today we are no longer dealing with the same type of expansion. The new type requires that we think, act, and live facing the world. The hominescent (...) is globalizing as he forges the globe and builds up his power to face that of the world. (2015, 35-36)

Serres argues that, unlike earlier philosophical visions (like Kant’s) that placed the Ego-subject as centre of the world-object, we must now think of humans as “both the subjects and objects of science” and look at the world “again as a totality” through cross-disciplinary analyses that integrate science, social theory and the humanities (2015, 40-42, 55). Moreover, Serres also proposes the creation of a global institution—the “WAFEL” (the acronym of Water, Air, Fire, Earth and Life)—where

natural scientists would speak in Biogea's name after taking voluntary oaths (similar to doctors' Hippocratic version) on: the cosmopolitan ethics of their work, the secular nature of their research, its independence from military, industrial and economic sectors, and its open accessibility and pedagogical purpose (2015, 64-65). The WAFEL would become, Serres states, an ecological power body whose democratic operative and cosmopolitan scope would radically differ from the hierarchical organisation of the religious, military and capitalist institutions that have managed Indo-European history so far (2015, 49-55). Essentially, what Serres puts forward is that philosophy, politics and scientific research look at the world through the inclusive perspective of ecology—one which “does not dissect anything: it associates, allies, and federates” (2015, 61).

Together with ecology, Serres reads the rising universal access to information, and the growing opportunities for public intervention it enables, as signifiers of a global historical moment where the “soft” (information) is taking over the “hard” (institutions, machines, tools) as harbinger of progress (2015, 69). In this contemporary global context of increasingly extended knowledge, Serres calls intellectuals to seek “the Reform of Understanding” through “soft” (informational) paradigms of progress and dialogical strategies, as opposed to “hard” (material) creative-destruction logics and dialectical methods:

Homo Sapiens has intelligence. He never stopped using its power, but mostly to dominate, to go first, become the strongest, to crush everything and everybody on his way and to win. With intelligence as a weapon, he conquered nature and his miserable peers in the course of a warring evolution that is ending with a victory, however so paradoxical it might in turn lead to the species' eradication. How can this defeat be avoided? By changing this defective weapon: yes, I mean intelligence (...) from will to power to sharing, from war to peace, from hatred to love[,] (...) [which] defines a set of knowledges, technologies, and practices, precisely those related to intervention and access. They quickly become more important than the *hard* techniques we use, whose praise we sing but that destroy our habitat since the industrial revolution at least and at most since the

Stone Age. The three soft revolutions of writing, printing, and the computer have transformed history, behaviors, institutions, and power in our society more fundamentally than hard changes such as labor techniques. (2015, 70-71)

Hence, Serres's work concludes, what the present multi-faceted crisis is actually revealing is that "a kind of Paleolithic Age is ending"—"it is the end of the hard and the beginning of the soft" (2015, 72). As will be argued in the following sections, many contemporary movies can be said to articulate the "soft"-driven philosophical shift Serres theorises in his work: modes of being in the world informed by ecological sustainability, cosmopolitan outlooks, care ethics and dialogical relations.

Remarkably, though, Serres's historical account above fails to mention patriarchy as an underlying framework of hierarchical power bodies (clergy, nobility, military, capitalists); their corresponding "hard" institutions, industries and technologies; and their accompanying dialectical worldviews. When Serres uses the "he" masculine pronoun to refer to the Homo Sapiens, he makes no overt reference to the fact that the female Sapiens have neither been the priests, nor the soldiers or wealth creators, who, to date, have used their intelligence "as weapon" to "dominate" or "conquer" nature and others (2015, 71-72). Kept busy giving birth, breastfeeding and raising others, women have historically lacked rooms of one's own for the creation of knowledge, as Virginia Woolf's feminist essay argued (1929), and have enjoyed scarce chances to hold institutional power for destructive ends or otherwise until very recently. Thus, drawing on Serres's eco-utopian philosophy, yet incorporating a feminist critique to his historical account, the following could be argued: a kind of—patriarchal—hard-driven Paleolithic Age would be declining due to the ecological crises and cosmopolitan awareness that result from globalisation. Rather than "the beginning of the soft" (Serres 2015, 72), which has arguably

presided women's private life for ages, we would be looking forwards to the beginning of the soft as a sustainable paradigm for human progress *also* in the public institutional domain (as further explored in chapter five in connection with eco-feminist politics). The following sections will analyse some 21st-century movies that articulate the human under such nurturing and inclusive utopian perspectives.

4.2. Emancipatory Resistance: Non-Mainstream Survivors Re-envision the Human Beyond the Boundaries of the Normative

Beyond post-apocalyptic scenarios, resourceful white male protagonists that do what it takes to overcome traumatic experiences have proliferated in post-recession films: James Franco's stuck climber cuts his own arm in *127 Hours* (Danny Boyle, 2010); Tom Hanks's characters manage to escape Somali pirates at sea in *Captain Phillips* (Paul Greengrass, 2013) and to land a plane on the Hudson river in *Sully* (Clint Eastwood, 2016); Matt Damon's astronaut is able to grow vegetables on Mars in *The Martian* (Ridley Scott, 2015); and Jake Gyllenhaal's runner learns to walk with prosthetic legs after the Boston Marathon bombing in *Stronger* (David Gordon Green, 2017). Although *Captain Phillips* and *Stronger* could be said to challenge US patriotic readings of the terrorist attacks, these tough male heroes seem to embody a rhetoric of post-9/11 US national endurance in a moment when the country's world leadership is being undermined by other global superpowers like China, and as its economy recovers from the 2008 financial crisis. Taking this post-recession context into account, their celebrated stamina can be read under the light of Sarah Bracke's definition of "resilience": a "risk management" neoliberal ethos that, in "precarious times" of cyclical disaster, supports self-adaptation to austerity and forecloses the imagination of alternatives (2016, 57-63). Despite distressing interims and global

threats like terrorism, these film narratives suggest, heroic resilience can bring about a relieving restitution of the usual order of things.

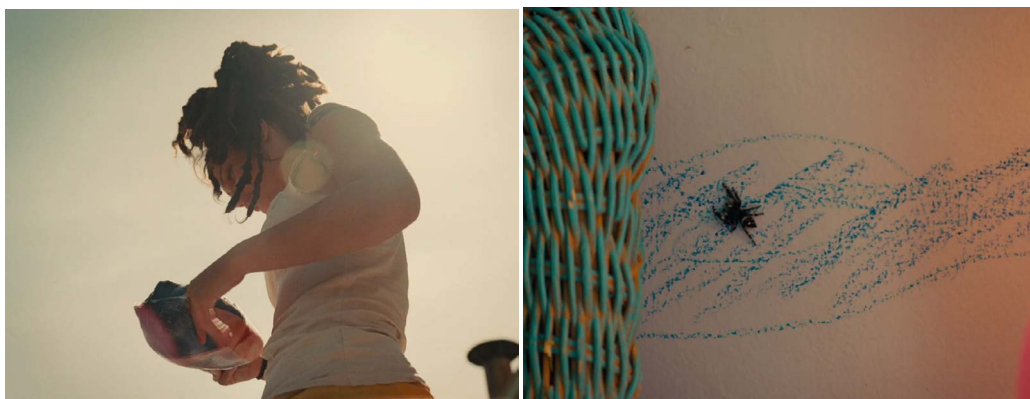
Yet, as the final scene in *The Impossible* (J. A. Bayona, 2012) points up, although everybody is exposed to risks (like the natural catastrophe in the film) some are more vulnerable than others. While Maria (Naomi Watts) and her family can return to their safe British home after their harrowing experience in a Thai resort hit by a tsunami, other survivors must remain on the devastated land seen from the window of the plane that is taking the protagonists back to their UK residence. For the otherwise privileged family in the movie, post-traumatic healing is a restorative enterprise. But for many others, survival is an ordeal tied to aspirations for a life otherwise. Endurance, in such cases, would involve emancipatory hopes and the utopian exploration of alternatives, rather than adaptative resilience.

Contemporary film survivors with racial, gender or class traits that lie on the margins of what counts as mainstream in Hollywood often perform transformative modes of resistance and utopian heroics that call for more inclusive cosmopolitan imaginaries. Rather than focusing on the male-white-affluent-heterosexual leads that, as Dyer explains in relation to cinematic “whiteness”, dominate Hollywood (2002c), this section explores six films of the 2010s that celebrate the long-term endurance of highly vulnerable, non-mainstream cinematic subjects: Sasha Lane’s destitute female teen in *American Honey*; Brooklynn Prince’s poor 5-year-old girl in *The Florida Project*; Brie Larson’s kidnapped young woman in *Room*; Alex R. Hibbert’s black homosexual child in *Moonlight*; Sandra Bullock’s stranded astronaut in *Gravity*; and Leonardo DiCaprio’s 19th-century fur trapper in *The Revenant*. Even mainstream film stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Sandra Bullock in the latter two titles play roles in which inclusion narratives are central to their identity construction: Bullock’s middle-

aged space mission female leader has been a rarity in science fiction cinema and NASA expeditions until recently, while DiCaprio's frontiersman challenges the border between the white coloniser and the Native American Other. Thus, the survivors in the films above would illustrate what Celestino Deleyto calls "the irresistible push of the diversity discourse", "in a technologically globalized world in which borders, whether geographical, political, or, indeed, textual, will inexorably be crossed" (2016a, 271). In times of economic and ecological global crises, these 21st-century survival films seem to argue that, as Bauman and Serres contend, we need to develop cosmopolitan worldviews and rethink utopian aspirations through nurturing and dialogical philosophies.

The non-mainstream survivors in *American Honey*, *The Florida Project*, *Room*, *Moonlight*, *Gravity* and *The Revenant* can be said to embody a type of "resistance" that, as theorised by Judith Butler, is "informed by vulnerability", and based on the assumption that individuals are at once "exposed" (to social relations and infrastructure) and "agentic" (able to respond in different ways to circumstances) (2016, 24-26). Star (Sasha Lane), the 18-year-old female lead in *American Honey*, embodies such vulnerable resistance. Her precarious situation is explicitly displayed in the opening scene, in which she grabs a wrapped chicken from inside a dumpster (figure 55) and hitchhikes to take it home for lunch with her boyfriend's little children. "Are we invisible?" she complains while waiting for some car to take them onboard, thus making reference to the overlooked place she fills in society. Later, after she joins a misfit teen gang that sells magazine subscriptions door to door, the moving Midwest landscapes that they see from their van expose the open horizons of a vast territory unreceptive to their dreams. With no economic, social and educational resources to count on, and called to fulfil others' needs and desires (her boyfriend and

his children's, the crew's manager and men with money trying to buy sex from her), Star—"a real American honey", as boss Krystal (Riley Keough) tells her—illustrates "the shaping forces of history on our embodied lives" (Butler 2016, 24). Still, just like the film invites viewers to appreciate the beauty and tenacious mobility of moths, spiders and lightning bugs in a world in which they occupy an overexposed miniscule position, Star is portrayed as a vulnerable and ill-treated, yet highly resistant and skilful woman (figure 56). Shot in the Academy ratio in order to "get rid of some of the surroundings" and "home in on the person", film director Andrea Arnold argues (in Hans 2016, 21), constant close-ups of Star's face in shallow-focus show her observant gaze, her sided smile and wild dreadlocked hair. The energetic soundtrack that accompanies the road scenes—mostly rap and electronic songs that they sing and dance to—, and the film's warm colour palette put across Star's keenness for adventure. According to the movie, this female lead is a shining star (as her name suggests) regardless of her destitute background—a vulnerable nomad whose resistant hope and mobility in the precarious fringes of society are emancipating and inspiring.



Figures 55 and 56. Star in *American Honey*: overlooked and vulnerable like a tiny spider, yet highly resistant and skilful

The physical and emotional exposure of the protagonists in the rest of the survival films mentioned above is also highlighted in particular scenes such as: the one that shows the body of Dr. Stone (Sandra Bullock) floating in a foetal position inside the spaceship in *Gravity* (after she has almost died for the lack of oxygen) (figure 57); the bathtub games played by 6-year-old Moonee (Brooklynn Prince) in *The Florida Project* while her mother is having paid sexual relations at the other side of the door; the playing-dead rehearsals performed by 5-year-old Jack (Jacob Tremblay) as instructed by his mother (Brie Larson) in *Room* (figure 58); the naked and beaten body of Glass (Leonardo DiCaprio) getting inside an eviscerated horse corpse to survive the freezing night in *The Revenant*; or the slow-motion yell of a drug-addict mother (Naomi Harris) at her motionless 9-year-old son, Chiron (Alex R. Hibbert), in *Moonlight*.



Figures 57 and 58. Exposed bodies and closed spaces in *Gravity* and *Room*

Yet, as happens with *American Honey*, these films reject determinist discourses, allowing their characters to have a say in the course of events and reach a sort of utopian new beginning at the end of the movies. Breathing fresh air again under the open sky, Dr. Stone, shown in a high-angle shot in the final scene of *Gravity*, stands for a heroic human being that has been able to re-emerge from her own physical and emotional ashes (after losing her daughter some years earlier and seeing the members of her spatial crew die) (figure 59). Reborn, too, is Glass at the end of *The Revenant* after surviving countless attacks and killing his son's murderer. In *Room*'s last scene, once Joy and her son Jake have managed to escape their kidnapper, they go back to the claustrophobic shed where they were held captive to say good-bye forever to all the objects that conformed the scenery of their past of abuse. In the last scenes of *Moonlight*, an adult Chiron (Trevante Rhodes)—named Black now and making a living as a drug trafficker—drives to Miami to meet his beloved school friend Kevin (André Holland), who has been, he confesses, his only sexual companion to date. As the two embrace, the film ends with a shot that shows 9-year-old Chiron's naked back on a beach, and then turning back his head to look directly at the camera. After all the traumatic experiences Chiron has confronted, this ending suggests, he is now prepared to explore his identity according to his own standards. Moonee in *The Florida Project*, for her part, manages to access Disney World after she escapes with her motel neighbour from police officers willing to take her into foster care. Although the children's exhilarant running inside the theme park does not promise a happily ever-after, Moonee's *joie de vivre*, much more genuine than the monetised happiness the park sells, prompts viewers to share her utopian resistance (figure 60).



Figures 59 and 60. The camera has their back: endings endorse protagonists' aspirations in *Gravity* and *The Florida Project*

According to Dyer, “the Endurance of the People is one of the great socialist themes” in film genres like the musical, where protagonists endeavour to reconcile contradictions between individual aspirations and the social order they must fit in (2002b, 59). In the case of contemporary survival films such as *American Honey*, *The Florida Project*, *Moonlight*, *Gravity*, *The Revenant* and *Room*, the endurance of the protagonists can be considered a cosmopolitan statement. If cinema, as Dyer argues, responds in different ways to the “promises” made in each historical moment and their degree of fulfilment (1998, 18-19), the survival movies above, produced in the cosmopolitanised present, can be said to call for an inclusive re-conception of the human beyond the boundaries of the mainstream and the normative.

In fact, in these survival films the possibility of hope is tied to the defiance of social taxonomies (based on race, class, gender or sexuality) and hierarchical human relations. *The Revenant* argues that ethnic and cultural hybridisation (embodied by Glass’s son in the movie) runs along with the species’ evolution (figure 61). In *Gravity* cosmopolitan visions of the human are vindicated via the astronauts’ perspective on Earth from outer space and the international spatial infrastructure Stone uses to survive. In *Room* the care ethics and solidarity embodied by Joy and her son, who is also her rapist’s offspring, stand up against the abusive patriarchal mindset of the kidnapper. *American Honey* and *The Florida Project*, in turn, call for the social protection of vulnerable citizens like the destitute young girls in the movies.

Moonlight, for its part, claims Chiron’s right to define his own identity beyond social conventions. These survivors illustrate that, even if class lacks any moral justification, as Andrew Sayer argues, the “accident of birth” still plays a crucial role in our everyday social relations, expectations, life-chances and identity formation (2005, 2). As in George Kateb’s political theory, human dignity is presented in these movies as an “existential value” inherent to the identification of a person as a human being—but often yet “to be translated into established rights” (2011, 1-16).



Figure 61. Glass and his son: existential dignity regardless of ethnic and cultural background in *The Revenant*

Mobile representations of human experience reinforce, in turn, cosmopolitan discourses in these survival movies. The main characters in *American Honey*, *Moonlight* and *The Florida Project* need to move in order to survive, thus fitting the “vagabond” type, rather than the “tourist”, in Bauman’s critical reading of the identities shaped by our highly mobile world (1996). These protagonists are physically and emotionally homeless, lacking a stable family shelter: Moonee lives permanently in a weekly-paid motel in *The Florida Project*; Star has no fixed residence for the most part of *American Honey*; while Chiron prefers to stay in a drug dealer’s place than at his mother’s flat in *Moonlight*. For different reasons, protagonists in *Gravity* and *The Revenant* are homeless too, emotionally rootless amidst the immensity of outer space and North American wild forests respectively. As

for the kidnapped woman in *Room*, she manages to escape, together with her son, the very reduced space she has been confined to for years. For the protagonists in these films mobility often comes as an imposition (to find better life conditions, overcome family traumas, or escape captivity), yet it invariably involves an emancipatory transformative potential that puts forward a processual understanding of the human condition.

According to Serres, those excluded or displaced from the social structure have been historically obliged to become “prophets”: third parties in exile whose “meandering” deviations outside redundant dialectics have often made human culture progress (1995, 78-80). Glass and his son in *The Revenant* can be said to embody such third party in exile. They are nomadic survivors in-between the colonisers and the colonised, translators in-between races, languages and cultures. Based on a real story, DiCaprio plays a “figure of frontier resilience” that departs “from the ethos of self-reliance and individualism that classic frontier tales have thrived on and perpetuated” (Lawrenson 2016, 25). The film contests this classic frontier film type through the heightened display of Glass’s relational and environmental vulnerability: his physical and emotional integrity is conditioned by his encounters with others, wild animals and natural spaces, with both positive and negative consequences. According to the film’s director, Glass experiences the competitive framework of “the beginning of deregulated capitalism” (in Lawrenson 2016, 25), and his revenge against John Fitzgerald (Tom Hardy) can be read as a critical testimony of the destructive logics of colonisation, rather than a reparative celebration of historical justice. Cutting each other into pieces, Glass and Fitzgerald’s final fight represents fratricidal conceptions of human progress. Glass’s Pyrrhic victory equals that of the red flag presiding a mountain of buffalo skulls at whose feet he stands at one point in the movie (figure

62). Contrary to the dialectical blood spilt by the contenders on the ground, which is swiftly covered by snow, the meander flowing peacefully beside it in a still shot in the final scene points, like Serres's words on "meandering" deviations above, at a borderless dialogical understanding of human evolution (figure 63). As illustrated by multiple positive interracial encounters throughout the movie (such as the love relationship between Glass and his wife, the son they have together, and the chance encounter with a Native American that helps Glass survive, among others), mobility across social and geographical borders can bring about intercultural human relations beneficial for all parts involved.



Figures 62 and 63. Ecocide and fratricide: the deadly methods of colonial capitalist "progress" in *The Revenant*

In the final close-up shot, in which Glass looks directly at the camera, his eyes convey a complex blend of emotions. With long hair, a beard covered by the falling snowflakes, and surrounded by the vapour emanated by his body, Glass stands for a hybridised human figure: a homeless migrant trying to take roots in Native American territory. His conduct and looks challenge the dividing line between the "savage" indigenous and the "civilised" coloniser. He is able to loathe and kill but also to love the Other and become integrated in a new land. "This has been us", he seems to say while looking at the camera, as if history itself were addressing contemporary viewers to tell them we should do better (figure 64). The film ending suggests that if this has been the way history has proceeded so far—the aggressive "hard" history Serres's

philosophy criticises (2015)—, we should now look towards the future from inclusive paradigms conscientious of the voices silenced so far, including women like Glass’s deceased wife and colonised peoples like the Native Americans in the film. The appearance of the ghost of his wife, gently smiling at him in the forest, his straight look at the camera before the screen fades out, and his breathing sound over the final credits prompt spectators to aspire to cosmopolitan futures. As Glass tells his injured son earlier in the movie, “as long as you can still grab a breath, you fight”—and so, in times of wall building projects between neighbouring nations, unwelcomed migrants drowning in the sea and separatist political agendas, the film’s open ending calls for utopian resistance against border logics.



Figure 64. You must do better: History addresses viewers in the closing shot of *The Revenant*

The long take—an editing resource that frequently implies “a liberation from the constrictive spatial and temporal regime of tradition”, according to Bruce Isaacs (2016, 476)—articulates, in many of the survival films explored above, seemingly borderless cinematic spaces emancipated from dialectical worldviews. In *The Revenant*, the opening long take offers a dialogical representation of fratricidal dialectics that negates partisan readings of the human. The boundless fluidity of water flowing calmly amidst the woods in the first seconds of the film contrasts with the subsequent violent confrontation between Native Americans and Glass’s team. A highly mobile camerawork conveys the immersive experience of first-person video

games, transgressing both traditional film aesthetics (continuity editing) and traditional historical accounts of the “New World” narrated from the perspective of Western settlers. The opening long take in *Gravity*, for its part, can be read as a cosmopolitan and ecological statement that stresses individuals’ vulnerability to global phenomena and the environment. In a few seconds a debris shower coming from a Russian satellite ends with NASA’s space mission and makes Dr. Stone lose control of her body movements. All alone in outer space, Stone stands as the representative of a single humanity with a common origin, habitat and fate on Earth—no matter “where you pitch your tent”, as her crew mate, Kowalski (George Clooney), puts it when asking her about her home (figure 65). Mise-en-scène elements like the cable that joins Stone and Kowalski, and the spaceships offer allegoric maternal images that underline humans’ affective needs and relational nature regardless of nationality (the specific flag on the spacecraft) and culture (the protagonist is comforted by the voice of a man on the radio who is singing to a baby in a language she cannot understand). In the final scene of the movie, Stone’s first steps back on Earth hint at humanity’s desirable cosmopolitan rebirth. Unlike the technological foetus floating in space at the end of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (the post-human culmination of predatory “hard” progress), the reborn female lead in *Gravity* seems to embody a cosmopolitan future forged through intercultural bonds and eco-feminist methods.



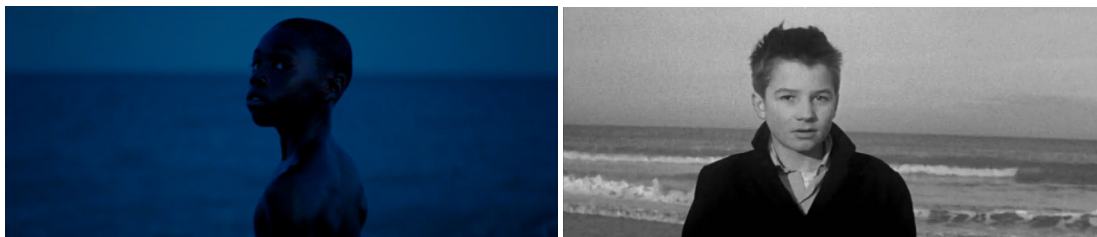
Figure 65. Interdependent spheres: an eco-feminist view of humanity’s survival chances in *Gravity*

Handheld long takes in *Moonlight*, *American Honey* and *The Florida Project* also highlight the characters' exposure to social spaces and agents, while giving them unrestricted room for utopian agency. Standing closely by the protagonists' side or behind them, the camera in these movies films uninterrupted fragments of the characters' everyday life from their eye-level perspective: the little Chiron playing football with friends and escaping from bullies in the opening of *Moonlight*; Star partying with her crew mates in motel park sites in *American Honey*; and Moonee's daily adventures with her neighbours around the Magic Castle motel in *The Florida Project*. This handheld camerawork, the close camera distances and the warm colour palettes in the three films reflect the three young protagonists' intense emotional interpretation of a world they do not fully comprehend, which treats them harshly most often, yet one they are eager to explore and enjoy. In the words of Sean Baker, the director of *The Florida Project*, these stylistic strategies intend to make the audience "have the senses of a child", making the kids in the movie "the kings of their domain" (in Concannon 2017, 29) (figure 66). Likewise, as Simran Hans states, the cinematography in *American Honey* makes even the "grimiest" moments "jewel like sheen" to highlight youngsters' "genuine joy" (2016, 22) (figure 67).



Figures 66 and 67. Camera angles, handheld long takes and warm colour palettes convey the utopian drive of the young protagonists in *The Florida Project* and *American Honey*

In *Moonlight*, meanwhile, the saturated colour gradation puts across Chiron's acute sensitivity in a social environment dominated by hyper-masculine African-American references. The last shot in this movie, which displays the back of 9-year-old Chiron facing the ocean and then turning his head to gaze directly at the camera, reminds of Antoine Doinel's direct look at the end of *The 400 Blows* (figures 68 and 69). In both films, the young boys' confident staring at the camera on the seashore vindicates open utopian horizons for the protagonists: a future in which, despite the specifics of their backgrounds, they can shape their identities freely without being excluded.



Figures 68 and 69. Young boys on the seashore at the end of *Moonlight* and *The 400 Blows*: a vindication of their right to utopian horizons of their own

Rather than narrating marginal lives through normative prisms and mainstream aesthetics, these films' formal choices choose to stress their protagonists' subjective experience of the world and utopian resistance, thus prompting viewers to hope for a world in which their dreams count as much as those of any others. According to Davina Quinlivan, unconventional formal choices such as the final freeze-frame close-up in *The 400 Blows* pose an ethical disruption of film convention that "demands an openness to the potential for change, hope for a better society, for a revolution that is, as history tells us, certainly on the horizon" (2015, 153). Quinlivan argues that the cinematic evocation of bodies "in crisis" has a cathartic potential since it enables viewers to respond "ethically" to human suffering and displacement (144).

Drawing on Quinlivan's interpretation of the film medium as a transformative "object of hope" that can be ethically disruptive (2), the cinematic survivors in *The Revenant*, *Gravity*, *Room*, *The Florida Project*, *American Honey* and *Moonlight* would embody cosmopolitan aspirations that disrupt dialectical philosophies. Like the ending of *Children of Men* (analysed in chapter three), these 2010s survival films compel viewers to look at the world and the future from non-mainstream prisms, arguing that, in these times of global crisis, hope is to be wedded to resistance and inclusion.

4.3. *The East*: Awakening to Eco-Social Dreaming

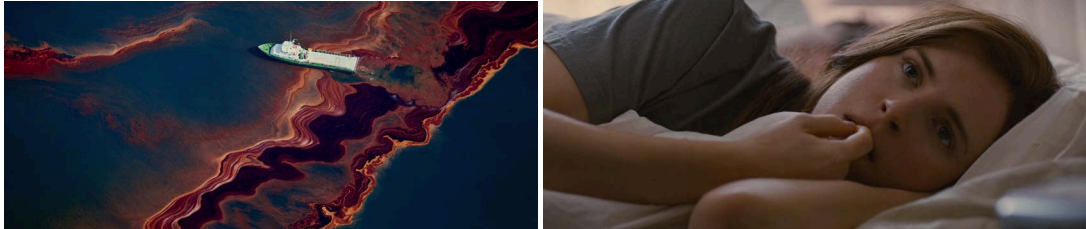
Contemporary film protagonists comfortably settled in the status quo often grow aware of cosmopolitan theses similar to those articulated in the survival films explored above. In *The East* Brit Marling plays Jane Owen, a young and ambitious private intelligence operative who leads her life according to norm: she is a law-abiding US citizen in a stable relationship, a Christian believer, and a highly committed professional willing to take risky assignments in the intelligence firm she works for. However, after she infiltrates "The East", an eco-terrorist organisation that threatens the interests of powerful corporations, Jane experiences a profound ideological conversion. As Sarah Moss, the drifter alter ego she plays to get access to The East's hideout, Jane learns to care about environmental disasters and public health crises caused by the companies her firm protects. The group's social commitment, cooperative relations and environmental consciousness make her reflect on the immoral logics upon which the neoliberal Establishment operates. The following sections look into how Jane embodies the exploration of cosmopolitan perspectives that care about the world, others and nature. The analysis focuses on the three stages of Jane's ontological transformation: first, her complicit participation in

the neoliberal order; second, her growing critical awareness of an ecocidal, anti-social status quo; and, last, her cosmopolitan commitment to eco-social welfare and dialogical utopianism.

4.3.1. Numbed by the Neoliberal Status Quo: Jane, the Undercover Agent

The East sets out a dialectical opposition between pro- and anti-Establishment worldviews and modes of living from its opening scene. The film starts with a promotional video by the eco-terrorist organisation The East that puts together images of contaminated seas and wildlife with a recording in which hooded activists are sneaking into a CEO's mansion to "poison" it with the same crude his oil corporation dumps into the ocean (figure 70). A voice-over speech accompanies the images: "It's easy when it's not your home; easy when it's not your life, the place where you sleep, your kids, your wife. But when it's your fault it shouldn't be so easy to sleep at night". Right after the video and the film's title shot, Jane, the protagonist, is introduced to viewers in a close-up. She is a young woman in her mid-twenties, lying on her bed with her gaze lost in a distant spot and biting her nails as she waits for the alarm clock to beep—an image that resonates within the reference to sleep troubles mentioned in the opening video (figure 71). The following shot shows a man hugging her as he says: "No matter what happens today, you're still a winner for me". "I'm only a winner if I get it", she replies with a nervous smile, turning to face him as he jokes about her "mysterious assignment" and how he knew more about her when she worked for the FBI. With a serious expression that rapidly turns into a playful smile, she suggests meeting in a pub later, asks him to wish her luck and kisses him. Comfortably settled in her bed, Jane's competitive mind frame and FBI curriculum

posit her as a pro-Establishment ideological antithesis to The East's anti-establishment activism in the former video.



Figures 70 and 71. “It shouldn't be so easy to sleep at night”—an appeal to ecological conscience

Remarkably, although Jane's focalisation is privileged in the film from this early point onwards (mainly via close-ups and point-of-view shots), the mise-en-scène and the actor's performance in the first scenes prompt spectators to keep an ethical distance from the individualist and competitive values she embodies. After the introductory scene described above, a cut to a wall full of academic diplomas and medals follows, one of them visibly stating: “Jane Owen, Federal Bureau of Investigation Advanced Training in Counter Terrorism” (figure 72). Then, Jane enters the frame, as she moves towards her wardrobe with her dark brown hair tied up over her naked shoulders, and slides a door. An eye-line match cut shows a point-of-view shot of an extremely organised wardrobe with hangers and shelf boxes evenly distributed, and laundry plastic wrappings covering shirts and suits of a strikingly sober white, black and ochre palette (figure 73). The slight but noticeable hand-held camera movements of the POV shot convey her tension, which is confirmed by a frontal close up that shows her sighing while she analyses her outfit options for what seems a very important occasion for her. From behind her neck then, we see her pick a suit and inspect it briefly with a rapid look. In one single scene, the film provides intimate access to the protagonist's key personality traits: her anxiety (biting nails in silence before her boyfriend gets up); her determination (she is awake before the

alarm clock goes off); her reclusive character (she does not tell her boyfriend what the assignment is about); her performance skills (engaging in a rapid mood change to shift his attention on something else); her efficiency (conveyed by her wall diplomas); and her methodical work-centred personality (disclosed by her neat wardrobe and sober professional clothes). Jane is presented as a woman who wants to fit in the status quo, follow its rules and thrive in her career as much as possible. According to her own words, she can only be a winner if she gets the assignment. So her view of success consists of work merits rather than personal relations and emotional life—a productivity-driven philosophy that her lost gaze in bed and her sober closet depict as alienating.



Figures 72 and 73. Jane's diplomas, medals and sober suits: an alienating workaholic life

Still, a shot of a herd of horses racing freely on a green valley, seen from Jane's perspective while driving her car in the following scene, implies that there is a softer emotional side hidden beneath her tough and spotless professional cover. A slow-paced opera music score highlights the metaphorical meaning of the horses' shot, which will appear twice more throughout the movie punctuating Jane's liberation from neoliberal dogmas and growing ecological awareness (figure 74). "Serving the nation's capital, you're listening to Washington D.C.'s premier Christian Radio", a male voice announces, clarifying at once the intra-diegetic origin of the music, Jane's city of residence and her religious beliefs. Her grey suit and sober expression while driving match the diffused greyish lighting coming from a cloudy

sky outside (figure 75). Fixing her eyes back on the road ahead, and on a high office building in the distance after the horses' transcendental parenthesis, the actor's determined expression states that duty and professional goals come first and leave little room to any philosophical digressions she is not willing to give voice or name at this point.



Figures 74 and 75. Racing horses on her way to work: a green relieving parenthesis for repressed emotions

The following scene at Hiller Brood's, the private intelligence firm Jane works for, reveals the highly competitive neoliberal world where she intends to thrive, and the amoral professional referent she looks up to, her boss Sharon (Patricia Clarkson). Looking at herself in a graduation poster while she patiently waits to be called in by her boss, Jane comes across as an obedient disciple willing to follow her mentor's commands. Inside the office, Sharon, a middle aged, smartly dressed woman, stands by a desk while comparing several candidates' profiles on a screen. Without looking at her employee or saying hello, though being very much aware of her presence, Sharon observes Jane's profile onscreen, which includes private details such as her cover name (Sarah Moss), speciality (green terrorism), family background, and a GPS map indicating her location. A big picture of a shipwreck violently sketched in red and black tones on the wall conveys Sharon's proficiency at dealing with risky hostile situations. The sober brownish tones of the decoration, international sculptures and fine furniture give an elegant yet sterile look to an office that, like its owner, seeks to

make a power statement rather than make guests feel cosy. Once Sharon decides to turn towards Jane for the first time to ask her “Who would you choose?”, the boss’s arrogant expression and emotional detachment epitomise the uncaring elite of a neoliberal establishment that very much enjoys its dominant position over others (figure 76). Ironically enough, in the shot-reverse-shot sequence that follows, Sharon stands in front of a seated Jane and, looking down at her in a low angle that reinforces her patronising attitude, she warns her that her ego can kill her out there while working undercover. Then, giving Jane a wrapped box that contains a pair of Birkenstock sandals, Sharon confirms that she has been selected for the assignment. At odds with the high heels and spotless outfits both are wearing, those brown sandals stand for the counter-culture values, ecological ethics and community ideals that Jane will have to perform in her mission. Thus, she will have the opportunity to try out an ideological framework frontally opposed to Sharon’s Darwinian worldview, which thinks of people and nature as resources to exploit for individual profit.

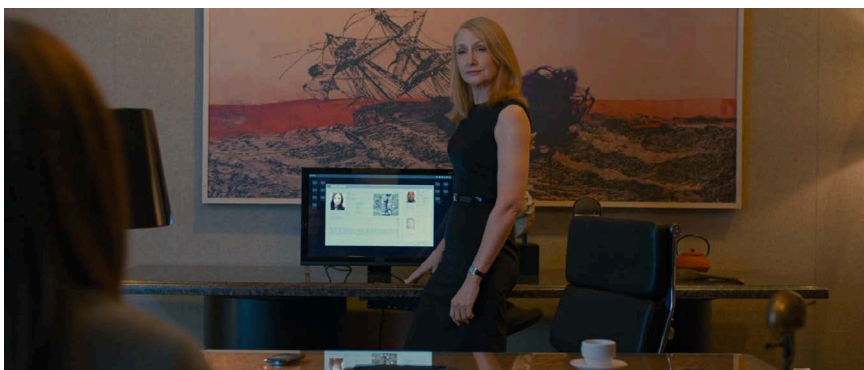


Figure 76. Sharon: an arrogant, detached and amoral professional referent

At this early point in the film, though, Birkenstock sandals and eco-terrorist groups simply belong in the realm of an anarchist Other that endangers the status quo she has worked so hard to thrive in. Jane has no moral reservations about the social order she has comfortably settled in: she follows Sharon’s orders, competes against

her colleagues for the assignments, accepts to have her private life monitored, and takes part in the surveillance of others. Playing by the system's rules, she also believes and trusts its governing religious and political discourses: she listens to a Christian radio station on the road and watches Fox News at home. Point-of-view shots, close-ups and eye-line matches give viewers access to her "settled" lifestyle and environment. However, the fact that her first appearance in the film is preceded by the promotional video of *The East* implies that her pro-Establishment worldview is challenged from the start, as explained above. The way *The East* employs the term "terrorism" to refer to corporations' polluting activities conflicts with Fox News and Jane's understanding of the concept. After seeing agonising animals covered in crude in the opening video, Sharon and Jane's pristine looks come across as an attractive façade whose underlying morals spectators should remain wary of. This way, from the very beginning of the film, the editing prompts viewers to develop the moral reservations that Jane lacks about her neoliberal work ethics and worldview.

Like Jane in *The East*, many other 21st-century film protagonists embody individuals numbed by competitive, self-absorbed and utilitarian neoliberal philosophies, including, among others: Michael Fassbender's sex-addict executive in *Shame* (Steve McQueen, 2011); Sandra Hüller's workaholic business consultant in *Toni Erdmann* (Maren Ade, 2016); Claes Bang's arrogant museum curator in *The Square* (Ruben Östlund, 2017); Javier Bardem's writer in *mother!* (Darren Aronofsky, 2017); Colin Farrell's parricidal surgeon in *The Killing of a Sacred Deer* (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2017); Maryana Spivak and Aleksey Rozin's divorcing parents of lost son in *Loveless* (Andrey Zvyagintsev, 2017); and Christopher Plummer's rich patriarch's family in *Knives Out* (Rian Johnson, 2019). These characters represent individualist modes of being and profit-centred lifestyles unconcerned about others and eco-social

welfare—neoliberal ontologies characterised by their “moral blindness” and “hunter” logics, drawing on Bauman’s terms (2013, 2017).

The childless workaholic loners in *Toni Erdmann* and *Shame*, and the murdered and abandoned children in *The Killing of a Sacred Deer, mother!* and *Loveless* seem to illustrate the non-sustainable effects of an anti-social economised progress that endangers the future (the absent offspring). Meanwhile, the precious stone that survives after the mansion’s fire in *mother!*, and the egalitarian ideals that an expensive modern art piece invokes in *The Square*, display the creative ways in which capital can survive its own contradictions. Grotesque situations like the naked party in *Toni Erdmann*, the parricidal Russian roulette in *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*, the endless welcoming of uninvited guests to a home whose pregnant host wants no visits in *mother!*, and the outraged reaction of the forgotten inheritors in *Knives Out* refer sarcastically to the social estrangement and destructive competition neoliberalism thrives on. As suggested by the thread mill on which the childless mother runs at the end of *Loveless*, these 2010s international films point up that neoliberal paradigms of global progress imply no real development as far as ontological flourishing, social relations and ecological sustainability are concerned.

Drawing on David Harvey, capitalism’s contradictions in these films can be said to spark hope for an “unalienated” post-neoliberal “relation to nature, to each other, to the work we do and to the way we live and love” (2014, 264-269). Of course many contemporary film characters such as the LA wannabes in *La La Land* (Damien Chazelle, 2016) continue to dance to the luring rhythm of self-and-work-centred aspirations despite the unsustainable eco-social congestion they bring about, as depicted in the traffic jam musical number that opens the movie. But growing numbers of film protagonists in the recent years self-awaken to eco-social dreaming

as Jane does in *The East*. Gaining awareness of the self as part of an environmental and social whole, Jane undertakes an ontological transformation away from individualist and competitive neoliberal philosophies, as analysed in the following section.

4.3.2. Learning to Care about Others and Nature: Sarah, the Activist Alter Ego

As soon as Jane embarks on her undercover mission, her transformation process begins—a conversion that is purely external first (blonde hair, casual clothing, Birkenstock sandals, bike and backpack) but that soon involves a profound reshaping of her moral principles. While Jane is dying her hair in a motel’s room to impersonate Sarah, her fake activist identity, the editing still prompts viewers to remain ethically distant from the protagonist by crosscutting her images with another scene in which her boss Sharon is having an elegant dinner with potential clients. Intertwined with Sharon’s speech on how her undercover operatives protect corporations’ “good names” against eco-terrorists, Jane’s dying process conveys her capacity for deceit and the way both boss and disciple are drawn by profitable risky assignments, disregarding their moral implications. Yet, Jane’s contented expression when observing her new blonde hair in the mirror (a pale yellow tone that suits her blue eyes more than the brown polished brushed hair does in the first scenes) points at the positive transformative process she is about to undertake. Lying on the motel bed, Jane removes a golden cross from her neck and holds it in her hands while praying: “Please give me the strength to do well. To not be arrogant, but to not be weak. Amen”. In a close-up, her head rests on the left side of the bed contrary to the first time she appears in the film. Her change of perspective, together with the golden

cross she takes off and her new hair tone, suggests her divestment of what Jane is and stands for (figure 77)—externally speaking now, emotionally and ideologically later.



Figure 77 . Jane's 180° degree shift: getting ready to impersonate Sarah, the activist

The film aesthetics formally support Jane's makeover into Sarah as soon as she starts building confidence with dropouts and counterculture types. Open natural settings like the beach where she parties with a group around a fire in the moonlight contrast with Jane's enclosed home and office interiors at the beginning. Her smiley face and freely moving blonde hair while she rides next to others under the sun, or listens to banjo music on a train ride differ from the tense expressions, immaculate make-up, polished hair brushing and cloudy skies the day she has the assignment interview with Sharon. As happens with the new blonde hair tone, the unregulated and cooperative rider lifestyle of her undercover mission seems to suit her far better than the competitive high-heeled neoliberal routine (figure 78). Many of the roles actor Brit Marling is known for contribute to making the turnover into Sarah look more natural on her than the uptight Jane looks do: strong, independent and enigmatic protagonists with alternative lifestyles, doppelganger experiences and unconventional perspectives in *Sound of My Voice* (Zal Batmanglij, 2011), *Another Earth* (Mike Cahill, 2011), *I Origins* (Mike Cahill, 2014), and *The OA* series (Zal Batmanglij and Brit Marling, 2016-2019). Against Sarah's casual looks, open-air ventures and

cheerful social gatherings, it is Jane's immaculate aspect and seriousness that seem rigidly imposed on her—an alienating neoliberal disguise that should be replaced for her own psychological and emotional welfare, according to the film's mise-en-scène and the actor's performance.



Figure 78. A liberating change that opens up her horizons

Once Jane manages to be taken to The East's hideout by Luca (Shiloh Fernandez) to get stitches on an arm injury she has secretly self-inflicted for that purpose, Luca's untying of a wrapping covering her sight (so that she cannot know the location) illustrates the eye-opening experience she is about to undergo. In the middle of a forest at night, a point-of-view shot of the hideout's front door stands for the threshold into an unknown world ruled by ecology, solidarity and community values. Right after her arrival, Jane gets first-hand access to personal stories like Doc's (Toby Kebbell), a young doctor who suffers terrible side effects from Denoxin, an anti-malaria medicine he prescribed to himself while doing voluntary work in Africa. Listed on the side of the box and therefore legal, those effects made Doc's sister commit suicide, but the pharmaceutical company that sells it (a potential client of Sharon's firm) chooses to ignore them given the profits they obtain from the drug, mainly from a contract with the armed forces. "That's how they rape you in broad daylight", Doc explains to a worried Jane whose fake identity does not prevent her

from feeling a genuine empathy for his distress. Despite a tense first encounter with Benji (Alex Skargaard), a longhaired young man whose sect leader aesthetics, enigmatic speech and initiation rituals Jane dislikes at first, she will develop an unexpected emotional attachment to the group and the causes they fight for in the days following her arrival. Unusual experiences such as a communal dinner with straitjackets (where the best way to eat is to let others feed you), the evisceration of a deer (a “thrill hunt” abandoned in the woods that the group honours by using its meat), and “freeganism” (eating wasted food to avoid unnecessary consumption of resources) make Jane adopt environmental and cooperative prisms alien to her individualistic capitalist frame of mind (figures 79 and 80). Moreover, the racial, gender, class and sexual diversity of the activist group, including Luca’s cross-gender aesthetics and homosexual members like Izzy (Ellen Page), makes Jane live together with perspectives that lie outside her conservative upbringing. Those imagined as a deviant eco-terrorist threat unravel now before her eyes as congenial ecological activists with noble principles; utopian youngsters who care for each other and try to repair the damages made by an ecocidal status quo.



Figures 79 and 80. The art of cooperation: a valuable skill Jane learns with the group

The protagonist’s doppelganger game—a fictional figure with utopian potential given the “cognitive and affective displacement” it entails, according to Levitas (2013, 123)—allows Jane to rehearse a lifestyle whose everyday politics are contrary to her own. She participates in a “jam” against the pharmaceutical company

that sells Denoxin that consists in poisoning the champagne of the corporation's executive board with their own unsafe drug. Against Sharon's lack of concern for non-clients (she forbids Jane to warn the board about the poison since their firm does not pay for her intelligence services), Doc, Benji and Izzy's vengeance has at least an ethical objective: the medicine's dropout from the market. Driving back to the hideout after the jam, the three simultaneously repeat one of the promotional mottos The East uses in their YouTube videos to gain public sympathy for their activism: "We are your wake-up call". Jane's sorrowful expression when she hears these words in the car suggests that the causes the group defends, her friendship with Doc and the attraction she feels for Benji make her "soft", against Sharon's advice, displacing her emotions and logical thinking to stances that used to be alien to her (figure 81). During a break from the assignment, while Jane sits again in front of the telly with his boyfriend, she explains that she has been in an unfamiliar country for so long (Dubai, she told him) that now home "feels like a foreign country". Right after she says so, Paige Williams (Julia Ormond), the vice-president of the pharmaceutical firm The East targeted in their last jam, appears on the news explaining the side effects she is suffering after drinking from a glass poisoned with Denoxin. Williams relates the symptoms of "prosopagnosia", the same mental illness that made Doc's sister kill herself. Unable to recognise her face in the mirror, Williams feels her mind and body "taken hostage"—a self-estrangement that resonates with Jane's foreigner sensation back home. Both Jane and Williams used to be active promoters of a neoliberal Establishment that felt secure and prosperous, but are now conscious of its concealed eco-social side effects thanks to their forced displacement ventures (as ecological activist and drug user respectively).



Figure 81. Self-estrangement: the doppelganger game makes Jane soft and changes her worldview

Since the Denoxin case media coverage makes Jane's mission more valuable, Sharon sends her back to The East's hideout. The secret place has now turned into a "heterotopia"—an exploratory space that escapes the rules of the status quo, drawing on Foucault's use of the term (1984), where the dividing line between Jane's two identities starts to actually blur. During her second stay with the group, a communal bathing ritual illustrates Jane's ontological rebirth: her emotional conversion into the cooperative and ecological values that The East believes in and which the *mise-en-scène* formally endorses (figure 82). As Benji, Luca and Tess (Danielle Macdonald) wash Jane's naked body in a lake surrounded by trees, a close-up of her face looking up into the sunlight while Benji pours some water over her head represents a secular baptism into a community guided by ecological and cooperative ethics (figure 83). Following a conversation with Benji on how "money corrupts everything" (a lesson he learnt after his rich parents died and everybody started treating him differently due to the mansion he inherited, which he burnt down and now hosts The East's hideout), Jane's nakedness conveys her detachment from material perspectives and elitist worldviews like Sharon's. Her physical intimacy with the others inside the water and the clip hanging from her necklace (where a golden Christian cross used to hang) underpin the down-to-earth nature of her rite of passage: an ontological renaissance informed by an eco-humanist faith in environmental and social welfare. Together with the *mise-en-scène*, the editing also suggests that Jane's ideological conversion is

morally correct. Her bathing ritual is followed by video footage of an ill boy who died due to the arsenic levels in his home water, after the town river was poisoned by the illegal dumping of Izzy's father's petrochemical company. There are good environmental and social reasons, the film states, for a profound existential and systemic cleansing process like the one Jane is undergoing.



Figures 82 and 83. An ontological renaissance: Jane's eco-humanist conversion

However, the members of The East have different opinions on the best ways to awake people from their moral lethargy and make justice to innocent victims like the deceased boy in the video. While Jane (playing Sarah) argues for a non-violent public denounce of the petrochemical company's illegal activities, Izzy, for whom the case has strong family implications, defends "an eye for an eye" strategy that holds individuals (i.e. her father) "accountable" for their actions. The next jam finally involves drugging Izzy's father and forcing him and his company's vice-president inside the lake where the illegal dumping takes place every night. "You make your living poisoning the habitat and then separate yourselves in gated communities", Izzy shouts at her father, who eventually accepts his guilt and gets in the toxic water. Then, as shots from the company's guards make the group abandon the place, one of the bullets reaches Izzy in the stomach. This turn of events underlines the way ecocidal paradigms of progress threaten the survival of future generations, including the elites' offspring, as denounced by young ecological global activists in the late 2010s (a cosmopolitan political phenomenon that is further explored in chapter five). Back in

the forest hideout, while Jane tries to remove the bullet from Izzy's stomach following Doc's indications, the whole group, standing around the operation table, confront the dead-end results of their eye-for-an-eye policy (figure 84). Close-ups of Jane's hands covered by Izzy's blood put across the undercover agent's emotional and physical involvement with the activists and their causes, which is stressed by her sexual encounter with Benji in the forest the morning after. Coming right after the sex scene, though, Izzy's burial cools down Jane's connection to Benji and his belligerent dialectical worldview. Surrounded by flowers deep in the ground while her mates cover her face in soil, Izzy's naked lifeless body silently disputes Benji's end-over-means revolutionary politics and backs, instead, the non-violent strategies that Jane advocated for at the meeting previous to the tragic jam (figure 85).



Figures 84 and 85. The tragic consequences of ends-over-means dialectical politics

After Izzy's burial, Jane becomes a drifter between two foreign worlds: the neoliberal status quo her boss Sharon epitomises, on the one hand, and the eco-terrorist counter-culture that Benji embodies, on the other. Her time in The East has thoroughly altered her life aims: she is no longer interested in her boyfriend (who

leaves her because he cannot cope with her secrecy); a comfortable life (she sleeps on the floor rather than on her bed at home); or becoming a winner in the professional realm as she was at the beginning. But Benji's eye-for-an-eye utilitarian philosophy does not satisfy her either, especially after she realises what his final jam is about: the publication of the undercover identities of all the agents working in Sharon's firm except for Jane's, whose surveillance Benji knew about from the start of her mission. "Spy on us, we'll spy on you", Benji reminds Jane, recalling a motto used in The East's online videos. Reaching the last stage of her doppelganger mission, the sudden reversal of spying roles makes her wonder, once again, what her place is in the "us"/"them" dialectical game both Sharon and Benji call her to play from opposite sides of the ideological board.



Figures 86 and 87. Opposite prisms on herself: Jane looks at her picture in a promotion poster next to Sharon's office at the beginning and end of the film

Jane resolves to take sides with Benji this time and sneak into Sharon's office to get the agents' names list. A profile long shot of the protagonist looking again at her promotion picture in the corridor that leads to Sharon's office is an inverted replica of an earlier shot in the movie previous to her first meeting with Sharon (figures 86 and 87). Taken from her left hand side this time (the previous displayed her right profile), while her distorted image is reflected in a wavy glass surface at her back, the change in the angle suggests that the high-heeled agent is the fake identity at this moment. Inside Sharon's office, Jane gathers the operatives' data while the

editing crosscuts to another scene in which Doc is writing an apology letter to the CEO he poisoned with Denoxin, moments before FBI agents raid The East's hideout and arrest him. Jane's and Doc's dialogical compromise of their initial ideological positions are equated by the parallel editing and contrasted, in turn, to Benji's unbending dialectics. In the end, Jane opts out of the pro-/anti-Establishment dialectics embodied by Sharon and Benji respectively. Instead, she chooses to develop a dialogical ethics guided by eco-social welfare, as analysed in the following section.

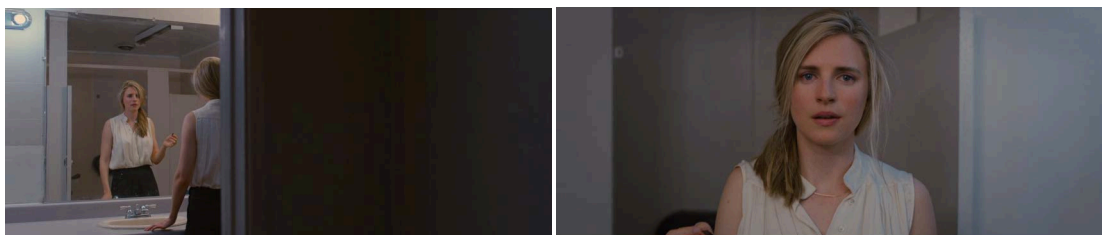
4.3.3. Neither East, Nor West: Dialogical Ethics, Nurturing Worldviews

The film's final scene and end credits support the dialogical ethics and care-driven philosophy that Jane has decided to develop. Once Benji refuses Jane's plan to seek her colleagues' ethical "turn" (she wants to inform them of the eco-social damages their work helps to hide), she chooses to step out of Benji's plan to publish other undercover agents' identities regardless of the grave consequences they might suffer. To protect her colleagues' lives, Jane lies to Benji about how she failed to get the agents' register and then refuses to get in a truck with him to leave the country together, even if that means she can be arrested at any moment for stealing the data from Sharon's office (figure 88). Taking off her high heels in the middle of a truck park site, she walks towards the camera with a resolute pace away from Benji's side and his dialectical worldview (figure 89).



Figures 88 and 89. Jane rejects Benji's dialectical worldviews and utilitarian morals

Next, in the park site's restroom, she throws up the memory card she swallowed in Sharon's office, which contains the operatives' identities, and raises her head to smile at herself in the mirror (figure 90). A cut to a frontal close-up of Jane simulating the mirror's viewpoint follows (figure 91). Her humid eyes and transcendental expression project a self-reflective, non-narcissistic self that is proud of her decision to care about others' welfare beyond her own personal desires (she felt attracted to Benji) and professional aspirations (she is quitting her job at Hiller Brood's). The whispered words she prayed in the motel scene at the beginning of the movie are heard again over her close up: "Please give me the strength to do well, to not be arrogant, but to not be weak. Amen". This time, however, with no Christian cross or counter-cultural clip hanging from her bare necklace, and looking at herself in the mirror rather than talking to a distant god, her words sound as a self-encouraging mantra to consolidate her eco-social commitment. After the close-up, a final montage sequence intertwined with the end credits shows how Jane reaches out to other undercover operatives and tries to "awake" them too. The film's closure portrays thus the political efficiency of Jane's dialogical strategies and eco-social awareness.



Figures 90 and 91. Self-reflection in the mirror: Jane is proud about her decision to follow a dialogical philosophy guided by eco-social welfare

The East's poster can be interpreted as a graphic illustration of Jane's ontological recalibration (figure 92). Highlighted in warm tones in the centre of the

composition, Jane's close-up stands between two discarded opposites—Sharon's and Benji's—that are downplayed by greyish tones in separate bands at the top and the bottom of the image respectively. As suggested by the fast-paced traffic at Sharon's back and the way she looks to the left, the ecocidal neoliberal philosophy she embodies should be a thing of the past. Meanwhile, the eco-terrorist alternative that Benji and Izzy represent at the bottom of the poster involves revolutionary dialectics whose violent utilitarian strategies are also to be discarded, according to the burial image at their side (which reminds of Izzy's funeral in the woods). Looking towards the right—the future to be written—with the blond hair that symbolises her ideological conversion, Jane's forward-looking reflexive expression represents a “self-awakened” individual that, beyond nihilism and dogmatic views, commits to “the perpetual invention of the future”, as vindicated by philosopher Roberto Mangabeira Unger (2009, 171). Hers is a “dialogic imagination”, drawing on Beck's definition of the cosmopolitan perspective, that internalises cultural contradictions to produce “an imagination of alternative ways of life and rationalities” (2002, 18). She turns neither East, nor West, opting instead to nourish a dialogical and nurturing self that aspires to a green and fair cosmopolitan future; as happens with Theo in *Children of Men* and Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) in *The Hunger Games* series (chapter five).



Figure 92. Disrupting belligerent dialectics: Jane’s dialogical utopianism

Jane’s ontological awakening from a self-centred neoliberal lifestyle to eco-social awareness is common among contemporary film protagonists. Matt Damon’s gas company salesman in *Promised Land* (Gus Van Sant, 2012) and occupational therapist in *Downsizing* (Alexander Payne, 2017), and Ethan Hawke’s priest in *First Reformed* (Paul Schrader, 2017) make life-changing decisions in response to pressing ecological issues like fracking, over-consumption and global warming. Self-absorbed workaholic protagonists like Sean Penn’s architect in *The Tree of Life* and Jake Gyllenhaal’s investment banker in *Demolition* (Jean-Marc Vallée, 2015) self-awaken from emotionally sterile lifestyles alienated from nature and close human relations (figures 93 and 94). Sandra Bullock’s reluctant mother-to-be in *Bird Box* (Susanne Bier, 2018) and Julianne Moore’s optometrist’s wife in *Blindness* manage to survive apocalyptic circumstances in sightless individualist societies by cooperating with others and committing to common wellbeing. As *Demolition*’s tagline holds—“LIFE: Some Disassembly Required”—, the contemporary protagonists above illustrate the need to undo neoliberal modes of being that are detrimental to individuals’ emotional

wellbeing, social relations and the environment. Individual aspirations, these film characters suggest, should be inscribed within cosmopolitan philosophies attentive to others' welfare and ecological sustainability.



Figures 93 and 94. *The Tree of Life* and *Demolition* re-think what matters: film posters undo non-sustainable self-centred ontologies

Most notably, carers of all kinds have proliferated in late 2010s films—protagonists who embody dialogical and nurturing ontologies like the one Jane is determined to develop, such as: Adam Driver's kind bus driver and poet in *Paterson* (Jim Jarmusch, 2016); Annette Bening's single mother and boarding house owner in *20th Century Women* (Mike Mills, 2016); Casey Affleck's uncle parenting his nephew in *Manchester by the Sea* (Kenneth Lonergan, 2016); Viola Davis's homemaker in *Fences* (Denzel Washington, 2016); Viggo Mortensen's and Ben Foster's eco-fathers in *Captain Fantastic* (Matt Ross, 2016) and *Leave No Trace* (Debra Granik, 2018); Salma Hayek's eco-conscious practitioner in *Beatriz at Dinner* (Miguel Arteta, 2017); Seo-hyun Ahn's beast caretaker in *Okja* (Joon-ho Bong, 2017); Sally Hawkins's janitor and amphibian lover in *The Shape of Water* (Guillermo del Toro, 2017); Viggo Mortensen's chauffeur in *Green Book* (Peter Farrelly, 2018); Yalitza Aparicio's live-

in maid in *Roma* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2018); Awkwafina's worried granddaughter in *The Farewell* (Lulu Wang, 2019); and Ana de Armas's nurse in *Knives Out*, among others.

Roma's poster, a still from a scene near the end of the movie (figure 95), encapsulates the nurturing reformed ontologies that the film carers above represent. After risking her life to rescue two of the family children who almost drown in the sea, Aparicio's Cleo sits on the sand as the founding pillar of a compact human mountain made of interlaced arms; one she helps sustain and grow strong with her everyday care. Like the poster, the film positions Cleo in a central narrative and aesthetic place, documenting in detail her house chores, personal relations and tragedies, while the members of the family and key historical events like the 1971 Corpus Christi Massacre in Mexico City gather subsidiary attention. Like *The East* and the non-mainstream survivors analysed before, *Roma* articulates the need to reorient our attention towards undervalued care ethics that are fundamental for the development and sustainability of the species.



Figure 95. Cleo in *Roma*: a nurturing model of conduct

This chapter has analysed film protagonists who embody philosophies of hope and care in the cinema of the 2010s: non-mainstream survivors (4.2.) and eco-social

dreamers (4.3.) that represent reformed ontologies in a moment that philosophers Bauman, Žižek and Serres refer to as a time of global crisis (4.1.). The protagonists in these movies can be said to belong with a contemporary cohort of cinematic types that inscribes individuals in an eco-social cosmopolitan context whose equity, diversity and sustainability must be looked after. Moving on from ontological to political analysis, the following chapter explores the egalitarian political cultures articulated by 2010s global social movements and *The Hunger Games* film series.

Chapter 5. Cosmopolitan Politics: Egalitarian Cultures Occupy the Streets and Movies

This chapter analyses how contemporary films articulate ideological discourses informed by cosmopolitan ideals that resonate with the demands and methods of 2010s global social movements. Drawing on Levitas's architectural mode of utopia, the chapter looks into "the [cinematic] imagination of potential alternative scenarios for the future, acknowledging the assumptions about and consequences for the people who might inhabit them" (153, 2013). As will be argued, many 21st-century films address the need to undertake systemic political reforms in order to target economic inequalities, authoritarian regimes, social discrimination (on the basis of gender, race, origin or sexuality) and environmental damages. Hegemonic political paradigms are usually contested in these movies: hierarchical, patriarchal and dialectical models recede in favour of cooperative alliances, collective actions, inclusive leadership and dialogical methods. Illustrating the cosmopolitan scope of contemporary film politics, cinema raises political awareness on issues like feminism, the precarious life conditions generated by a neoliberal economy, racism and ecology—universal causes that have mobilised global citizens in coordinated demonstrations across the world, international strikes, occupied squares and online protest campaigns in the 2010s.

The first part of the chapter explores the global wave of protests and networked social movements that have proliferated in the 2010s, drawing on socio-political theory by Manuel Castells (2012), David Harvey (2013), Manfred B. Steger and Paul James (2013), Camil Alexandru Parvu (2017), Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser (2019), among others. It argues that, reacting to glocal

pressing issues like climate change, social inequality, gender discrimination and economic recession, the Occupy, feminist and ecological movements have recently consolidated a cosmopolitan ecosystem of political dissent characterised by: networked strategies and discourses, intersectional conceptions of equality and justice, and renovated political cultures that challenge economic worldviews, national perspectives, patriarchal power structures and the division of the private and public spheres.

The second part of the chapter explores how contemporary cinema participates in this cosmopolitan ecosystem of political dissent, establishing discursive links with global social movements. Drawing on film analysis and contemporary political theory, it looks into the political models, agents and strategies represented in *The Hunger Games* film series (2012-2015), and related twenty-first-century movies. First, it explores the franchise's critical representation of two despotic material paradigms: a militarised oligarchy that oppresses impoverished masses, and a communist totalitarianism that represses individual liberties and democratic elections in the name of the commons (5.2.1.). Then, the analysis delves into the eco-feminist political leadership that the film protagonist, Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence), embodies (5.2.2.). The last section comments on the renovated political cultures that the film series endorse: cooperative strategies, inclusive paradigms and cosmopolitan outlooks that, forged across established geopolitical borders and social taxonomies, aspire to construct an egalitarian and sustainable world hospitable to future global generations (5.2.3.).

5.1. A Cosmopolitan Ecosystem of Political Dissent: 2010s Global Social Movements Forge Intersectional Conceptions of Equality and Justice

From the late 20th century, the global has become a fundamental subject matter for many social movements—a dimension that defines both the geographical outreach of the social, political and ecological phenomena they contest, and the worldwide articulation of their dissenting actions. Near the turn of the century, international activists and NGOs protested against the pernicious impacts of neoliberal globalisation on local labour and the environment, especially during politico-economic summits like the one held in Seattle by the World Trade Organization, on November 30, 1999. In 2003, massive demonstrations in cities across the world objected to the military invasion of Iraq, its underlying economic interests and preemptive doctrine against alleged weapons of mass destruction, which did not count with the United Nations' approval (MacAskill and Borger 2004). Identified at first as “anti-globalization” movements, social theorists object to this label. They pinpoint that, rather than opposing globalisation, these are social movements that look forward to “democratizing globalization” and “globalizing democracy” (Gills 2002) through methods distinct to those of neoliberal globalisation, such as “the globalization of human rights” (Sklair 2006, 35) or “globalization from below” (Gills 2002, 165; Porta et al. 2006). Accordingly, alternative terms have been suggested: “global justice movements” (Chomsky 2006), “anti-corporate globalization” movements (Juris 2008) or “alter-globalization movements” (Steger and James 2013, 28), among others.

In the 2010s, social activism concerned with equality issues and environmental sustainability has become a defining feature of the global socio-political order, including movements such as: the 2011 anti-government Arab Spring protests in Tunisia and Egypt; the 2011 Spanish Indignados (the outraged) movement

against austerity measures and political corruption; the Occupy Wall Street movement in opposition to rising economic inequalities and neoliberal globalisation in the same year; the online protest movements Black Lives Matter (2013) and Me Too (2017) against systemic racism and sexual harassment; the 2017 Women's March for equal rights that followed the election of US President Donald Trump; the International Women's Strikes for gender equality celebrated annually on March 8 since 2017; and the student movement Fridays for Future, which promotes the implementation of international political measures to reduce the impact of global warming.

These 2010s social movements are characterised by their global articulation: they organise coordinated mobilisations in cities across the world, gather international resonance through social media channels and, very frequently, defend interconnected egalitarian political demands grounded in cosmopolitan outlooks. The Spanish Indignados, Greek anti-austerity protests and the Occupy movement, for example, relied on analogous critical rationalities over rising economic inequalities and political bodies' compliance with global corporate interests, sharing slogans such as "We are the 99%", "Real Democracy" and "No nos representan" (They do not represent us). They employed similar activist strategies too: the occupation of public spaces (like New York's Zuccotti Park, the area outside St Paul's Cathedral in London, Athen's Syntagma Square and Puerta del Sol in Madrid); the use of social media to spread their messages beyond mainstream media channels; processes of participatory democracy to agree on statements and goals; synchronised international demonstrations (such as the "Global Action Day" that took place simultaneously in 951 cities in 82 countries, on October 15 2011 (Tejerina et al. 2013, 382)); and the support of renowned intellectuals in publications like *Time for Outrage!* (Stéphane Hessel 2011) and *Occupy* (Noam Chomsky 2012). The Black Lives Matter and Me

Too movements, for their part, came to light on social media with Twitter hashtags that raised global awareness on individual cases of racial discrimination and sexual harassment (such as the acquittal of Travon Martin's shooter, and the abuse allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein, respectively). Hence, particular experiences of abuse, occupied urban squares and social protests that originated in specific national contexts are gathering a global dimension by means of tracing argumentative and organisational ties with coetaneous neighbouring movements worldwide.

The Me Too movement, in particular, can be inscribed within a recent wave of feminist movements (a "fourth wave" for some theorists, as will be explored later) that encompasses international protest actions such as: the "Ni una menos" marches ("not one woman less") against *machista* violence held since 2015 in Argentina, Chile, Spain and other countries; the aforesaid annual Women's Marches in the United States and March 8 International Women's Strikes; and the emergence of feminist organisations like Time's Up, which fights gender discrimination and abuse in the workplace.

Parallel to this ongoing global wave of feminist movements, ecological activism has experienced a worldwide reinvigoration, too. The global articulation of environmental movements like Fridays for Future responds to the global dimension of climate change challenges and the globally coordinated political measures needed to contain its effects, as argued by ecological activist Greta Thunberg in her speech to the United Nations Climate Summit on 23 September 2019. The Global Climate Strike held in the same week gathered 7.6 million demonstrators across 185 countries, according to one of its organising partners (350.org), thus becoming a paramount

example of the global outreach and cosmopolitan character of numerous social movements in our day.

The “global” concept, in fact, is used to name protest actions such as the Global Climate Strike and consistently reclaimed in the name of universal justice, egalitarian societies and environmental sustainability—unlike turn-of-the-century “anti-globalisation” movements for which the term was rather a negative signifier synonymous with neoliberal globalisation. Cosmopolitan ideals and connections with other movements are explicitly invoked in statements and campaigns. The organisers of the US 2017 International Women’s Strike, for instance, stated: “in embracing a feminism for the 99%, we take inspiration from the Argentinean coalition Ni Una Menos” (Alcoff et al. 2017). Previously, in a statement entitled “United for Global Democracy”, the 2011 Occupy London movement highlighted its bonds with international neighbouring movements and the global outreach of their political perspectives and aims as follows:

On 15 October 2011, united in our diversity, united for global change, we demand global democracy: global governance by the people, for the people. Inspired by our sisters and brothers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, New York, Palestine-Israel, Spain and Greece, we too call for a regime change: a global regime change. (...) Undemocratic international institutions are our global Mubarak, our global Assad, our global Gaddafi. These include: the IMF, the WTO, global markets, multinational banks, the G8/G20, the European Central Bank and the UN security council. (...) We are all born equal, rich or poor, woman or man. Every African and Asian is equal to every European and American. Our global institutions must reflect this, or be overturned. Today, more than ever before, global forces shape people’s lives. Our jobs, health, housing, education and pensions are controlled by global banks, markets, tax-havens, corporations and financial crises. Our environment is being destroyed by pollution in other continents. Our safety is determined by international wars and international trade in arms, drugs and natural resources. (...) The citizens of the world must get control over the decisions that influence them in all levels – from global to local. That is global democracy. That is what we demand today. (Suarez and Zameret 2011)

Social theorists have analysed the global character of contemporary social movements from miscellaneous perspectives. Previous to the emergence of Occupy, Jeffrey S. Juris held that, following the networking cultural logic of informational capitalism and digital technologies, network norms and forms were also becoming a political and cultural ideal for “anti-corporate globalization movements”: a decentralised democratic model of political organisation and social transformation that, guided by values such as open access, coordination, diversity and autonomy, commits to socio-economic and environmental justice (2008, 11-17). Manuel Castells’s *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (2012) also draws on the network trope—the social structure representative of the technological Information Age (Castells 2010)—for the analysis of social movements that emerged after the 2008 financial crisis to seek “new forms of being us, the people” (2012, 1). Despite their particular geographical origins and political backgrounds, Castells holds that the Arab uprisings, the Spanish “Indignadas” and the Occupy movements are branches of a “multi-faceted rebellion” that operates simultaneously on the local and global spheres to demand political recognition of human dignity and institutional reconstruction (primarily, the broadening of democratic participation and the limitation of lobbies’ influence) (2-3, 220-222, 236). According to Castells, the “mass self-communication” that takes place on the Internet is a harbinger of “counterpower” networks—horizontal, decentred, autonomous and interactive networks that are able to bring about political changes through the production and dissemination of alternative messages, values and goals in cyberspace. Besides, the urban spaces occupied in 2011, Castells claims, strengthened community bonds and created alternative political spaces outside institutions, carving out, in coordination with online networks, the “hybrid” public space (online and urban) of contemporary social movements (6-11).

Interested in the movement's urban articulation and economic arguments rather than its online communicative strategies, David Harvey's *Rebel Cities* (2013) inscribes the 2011 global protests within a historical tradition of urban activism that posits cities as essential sites for political action. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's critical inquiry of urban life in *The Right to the City* (*Le droit à la ville*, 1968) and its invocation of a diverse urban working class as agent of revolutionary change, Harvey argues that claiming the right to the city is "a way-station" to the replacement of an exploitative capitalist system and its alienating urban effects (homelessness, gentrification, criminalised poverty and a fragmented "precariat", among others) (x-xviii). From a material dialectical Marxist standpoint, Harvey reads youth-led urban movements like the Spanish Indignados and Occupy Wall Street as manifestations of a growing political dissatisfaction with the neoliberal capitalist system and its control of the political apparatus. With its "We are the 99%" motto, Occupy clearly exposed, in Harvey's view, the dialectical actors at play ("the People" *versus* "the Party of Wall Street"), their struggle terms (collective rights *versus* "money power") and the imperative need to politically construct a systemic alternative for and by "the people" (2013, 160-164).

From a similar anti-capitalist perspective, Slavoj Žižek's *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (2012) holds that, unlike the 2011 Paris and UK riots—violent outbursts that reflected the "post-ideological society" of global capitalism (60)—, the Occupy Wall Street movement signals a search for global systemic alternatives to capitalism that, beyond the anti-racist and feminist struggles that have occupied the Western left of late, repositions class differences at the centre of the socio-political discussion (77). Žižek, nonetheless, is more sceptical than Harvey about the transforming potential of horizontal civil society movements like the

Spanish Indignados. These movements waste efforts in “apolitical” messages and “ethical revolutions” (2012, 78-79), Žižek contends, when they should be structuring a “strong” political body that fills the ideological “vacuum” created by the protests with a communist alternative to the state multi-party system (2012, 88-89). Likewise, Japhy Wilson and Erik Swyngedouw consider the 2011 global mobilisations as “spectres of radical politics” in a “post-political” time produced by neoliberalism and technocratic politics that demands the re-imagination of the communist hypothesis (Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014, 5-11, 16; Swyngedouw and Wilson 2014, 310). Tejerina et al., for their part, argue that socio-economic inequality was “the main force” propelling the 2011 global cycle of “occupy social movements”—a type of inequality, they highlight, that is not centred on culture and collective identity issues like the feminist and civil rights movements, and which requires the comeback of political economy for the analysis of mobilisations (2013, 381, 384).

On the contrary, Paul Mason claims that the zeitgeist of the “new global revolutions” cannot to be understood from the point of view of traditional materialist accounts of class struggle alone, but as a contestation of traditional hierarchical power relations (2012, 130-133). The young “networked individual” educated in “info-capitalism”, who has scarce future opportunities in the post-crisis context, is the key agent behind the mobilisations, according to Mason. These young political actors use digital technology to produce “communities of resistance” against inequality and elitist monopolised power (Mason 2012, 66, 79-81, 211). Mason argues that, thanks to the combination of freedom of action and thought, technological progress (accessible to the masses) and globalisation, the utopian ideals of human solidarity and democracy that informed the 1962 Port Huron Statement (a political manifesto written

by the US activist movement Students for a Democratic Society) are resurrecting (2012, 145, 209-211).

Manfred B. Steger and Paul James (2013) also look into the ways globalisation has modelled the ideals expressed by the Occupy movement. Our identities, sense of belonging, sensibilities and values, Steger and James assert, are affected by globalization as much as the material world is; and failing to acknowledge the subjective dimensions of globalisation (ideologies, imaginaries and ontologies) implies that alter-globalisation movements may not succeed in effectively transforming neoliberal globalisation. Drawing on Charles Taylor's definition of "the social imaginary"—a social background of taken-for-granted normative ideas and images upon which people's expectations arise, and individuals assess their selves and relations (Taylor 2004, 23)—, Steger and James hold that an emergent "global social imaginary" contests national (and international) imaginaries grounded in nation-state communities, and also "methodological nationalism" as a scientific approach (as argued by Beck 2007b). Yet, whereas national political ideologies are destabilised, Steger and James sustain that a modern social imaginary remains in operation; one built, as described by Taylor, on the demarcation of the economy as a separate domain; the division of the public and private spheres; and the sovereignty of the people as a collective agent while individuals seek self-affirmation in other spheres (cited in Steger and James 2013, 31). Moreover, Steger and James contend, the "modern" ontologies that sustain "market globalism" are still prevalent—modes of being in the world grounded in a temporality and spatiality alienated from Nature: "contemporary globalization is predominantly lived through a modern conception of spatiality linked to an abstracted geometry of territory and sovereignty, rather than as a traditional cosmological sense of spatiality held together by God, Nature or some

other generalized Supreme Being”. Likewise, temporality is still conceived through “empty” calendar-and-clock “linear time-lines that can be filled with the details of the past and present as well as events *made by us* with an eye toward a “better” future”, only that at the present moment “the modern sense of the “now” is increasingly linked to a growing global consciousness” (Steger and James 2013, 32-36, emphasis in the original).

The global justice movement, Steger and James conclude, must critically address these taken-for-granted modern imaginaries and ontologies by means of reviewing, for instance, “the dominant relationship between culture and nature that has seen much of humanity alienated from nature as a source of being”, and “challenging the fetishism of consumption and the centrality of growth capitalism that has among other things contributed to a dual global crisis of work intensification and labor redundancy”. Only then movements like Occupy will be more than “a mere expression of utopian hopes for the overthrow of what they do not like” and able to “set up”, instead, “the ideological, imaginary and ontological conditions indispensable for the creation of “another world”” (2013, 38).

Concerned with the ideological substrate of these social movements, Camil Alexandru Parvu (2017) analyses whether the 2011 wave of protests worked outside a normative “neoliberal rationality” that, as theorised by Wendy Brown, has economised existence and democracy (2015, 10). Beyond the movements’ horizontal strategies (non-hierarchical organisation, assembly decision-making and transnational networks) and the diversity of their political backgrounds (democratic or authoritarian, as in the case of the Arab Spring), Parvu highlights that protests shared equality and dignity claims against the austerity policies and inequities produced by neoliberalism (2017, 781-785). Drawing on theories that understand cosmopolitanism

as a self-reflective exercise of cultural “translation” that opens up the imagination of alternatives by bringing forth the presence of “the other” (Delanty 2009), Parvu claims that recent protest movements “redefine the contours of political action and imagination” through “cosmopolitan translations” (vs. neoliberal translations), contestatory vocabularies and organisational instruments that recognise both difference and interconnectedness (2017, 786-787). According to Parvu, in a world that is undergoing the cosmopolitanisation of reality (Beck 2016), the 2011 global protests expressed the emergence of a “cosmopolitan political rationality” that, drawing on a “post-foundational social imaginary”, contests neoliberal strategies (such as the economisation of politics and the permanence of borders), national prisms and ingrained political divisions that foreclose alternative thinking (2017, 777, 788-789).

The late 2010s ecological and feminist movements continue to nourish the “post-foundational” imaginaries and non-neoliberal cosmopolitan political rationalities that Parvu theorises in relation to 2011 Occupy protests. At the same time, they consolidate increasingly intersectional conceptions of equality that challenge economised and patriarchal political cultures—hegemonic and counter-hegemonic. The contemporary flourishing of feminist movements, in particular, has been analysed from multiple perspectives that concentrate on aspects such as: activists’ reaction against a sexist “rape culture” (Cochrane 2013); the role of social media in the diffusion of feminist concerns (Munro 2013) and “hashtag feminist activism” (Dixon 2014); the affective dimension of initiatives like “The Slut Walk” and the “Everyday Sexism” Twitter account that denounce misogynous everyday practices (Chamberlain 2017); the contestation of neoliberalised feminism (Grosser and McCarthy 2019); the collaborative leadership model that the Women’s Marches

represent against Trump's male heroic leadership (Just and Muhr 2019); the growing support of feminist positions among college students (Crossley 2017); and the coexistence of an intersectional feminist "fourth wave" with an ongoing postfeminist rhetoric, on the one hand, and a tide of misogynist "retro-sexism", on the other (Rivers 2017, 134-136).

Beyond discussions concerning the emergence of a feminist "fourth wave" (Dean and Aune 2015) and the appropriateness of the "wave" metaphor for historical feminist perspectives that often operate simultaneously (Rivers 2017, 133), the intersectional character of contemporary feminist movements is often highlighted in recent feminist theory (Dean and Aune 2015, Munro 2013, Evans 2015). Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser (2019) consider international feminist movements and women's strikes like the one held in Spain on 8 March 2018 (which joined 5 million marchers) as embodiments of a novel promising phase of intersectional class struggle led by the global feminist movement (2-3). Taking the relay from weakened trade unions that have historically disregarded the work "social reproduction" involves, intersectional global feminist movements overcome, according to Arruzza et al., the separation of identity and class politics through demands such as: the reconsideration of unpaid care work as labour (8-9); the non-subordination of social reproduction to production for profit (20); and the defence of "the rights of the many" (poor, working-class, middle-class, non-white, migrant, queer, trans, disabled women, etc) via the re-funding of health care, education, pensions, housing, and the articulation of laws against abuse and discrimination (14-15). Further than the claims for equal representation (popularly known as "cracking the glass ceiling") that characterise a meritocratic, elitist and individualist "corporate feminism", Arruzza et al. call for the confluence of anticapitalist, eco-socialist and

anti-racist political ideologies within a militant “feminism for the 99%”. Such intersectional feminism, Arruzza et al. state, must look for transversal equality—economic, environmental and social—and build alliances with all the movements that fight for “the 99 percent” to solve a “crisis of society as a whole” that is not only financial but also economic, ecological, political and social-reproductive, and deeply rooted in capitalism’s exploitative logics (2019, 1-2, 11-13, 80-85). Arruzza et al. advocate for an open and contestatory universalist feminism that calibrates individual freedom “on the basis of freedom for all” (2019, 83-85).

Intersectional outlooks, demands and operating models also inform current ecological movements and theory. Like Arruzza et al., Brinda Sarathy calls for an intersectional reappraisal of the environmental-justice movement that acknowledges overlapping dimensions of marginality (race, class and gender) within its ecological perspectives; noticing how contemporary social movements inscribe anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist and anti-oppression politics within a common frame of global inequality (2019). Jeanine M. Canty comments on a contemporary “movement of movements where the interlocking systems of social and ecological injustice are no longer parcelled out into single issue platforms”; arguing for boundary-crossing approaches to socio-ecological crises and intersectional healing strategies (2017, x). Richard Grusin, for his part, explores the coalescence of the ecological and feminist methods through the concept “anthropocene feminism”, proposing an alternative feminist and queer prism “to the too often unquestioned masculinist and technonormative approach to the Anthropocene” (2017, x). As Grusin explains, ecofeminism has pointed out “the structural homologies between patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and technoscience, each of which depends on enforcing

hierarchical dualisms between dominant and oppressed entities, often on behalf of the mutual liberation of women and nature” (2017, ix).

In effect, the growingly intersectional outlooks of recent ecological and feminist movements and theory concern political means and structures as much as ends. Hierarchical, competitive, nationalist, dialectical and economised political methods are discarded in favour of inclusive, cooperative, cosmopolitan, dialogical and sustainable political paradigms. As Bill McKibben claims (2019), the current climate struggle is not only an environmental battle, but also “an all-encompassing fight over power, hunger, and the future of humanity on this planet” that is carried out by a multitude of “small l-leaders”. For McKibben, the “leaderless” activism of environmental organisations like 350.org (a global grassroots NGO that he co-founded to fight for the transition to renewable energy) offers a promising intersectional political model of resistance and social change that resonates with Juris’s and Castells’s network theories: one grounded in horizontal leadership, coordinated local organisations and ecologically engaged citizens that works efficiently without a “face of the fight” (2019, 16).

Although from 2018 the teenage activist Greta Thunberg has arguably become a “face of the fight” for the ecological movement, she does not challenge the horizontal political methods that, according to McKibben, characterise environmental activism. In fact, Thunberg—an underage female activist diagnosed with Asperger syndrome that promoted the school climate strike movement “Fridays for Future” along other students—can be said to embody a consolidating renovation of political cultures, rationalities, imaginaries and ontologies within both the institutional and civil activist spheres. Contrary to Donald Trump’s illustration of a hegemonic political leadership model—one characterised by sexist, racist, nationalist, neoliberal

and anti-ecological discourses and measures (as seen in the United States' dropout from the 2016 Paris Agreement on Climate Change announced in June 2017)—, Thunberg represents the emergence of an alternative type of political agency. This alternative is informed by: ecological sustainability principles, non-economised care-centred analytical paradigms, inclusive and cooperative strategies, dialogical resistance, institutional engagement, and cosmopolitan outlooks grounded in intersectional conceptions of equality and justice (across races, genders, national origins, as well as between present and future generations).

In addition, Thunberg's comprehensive commitment to environmental sustainability—in local and global campaigns, civil and institutional spheres, online and offline activism, her public and private life (she is a vegan and endures long train and boat journeys to avoid flight emissions)—offers a model of political activism distinct from the anti-government anarchist discourses, material dialectics and unsigned “hacktivism” that WikiLeaks and “Anonymous” protesters wearing Guy Fawkes' masks symbolised in the early 2010s. Rather than drawing on Marxist revolutionary imaginaries and community actions where the individual disappears under the common, Thunberg's contestatory politics is forged in street community protests and online campaigns but also articulated in international summits and representative bodies like the United Nations—global institutional channels where recognizable ecological activists like her denounce the personal, local and environmental impacts of neoliberal forms of globalisation to demand cosmopolitan political agreements and eco-socially sustainable models of global democratic progress.

The dialogical and intersectional ecofeminist political cultures explored above can be said to contest the “modern” ontologies and imaginaries that, according to

Steger and James, still inform both neoliberal globalisation and alter-globalisation movements (2013). The ecological movement, on the one hand, challenges what Steger and James call modern conceptions of time and space abstracted from nature: non-anthropocentric ecological prisms re-subscribe human lives and spatial arrangements to natural laws and spaces; while they project a cosmological time that might supersede that of humans on Earth if climate change effects are not contained in the Anthropocene (figure 96). Feminist movements, on the other hand, disagree with the public/private divide that, according to Steger and James, characterises modern imaginaries (figure 97). Contemporary feminist activism raises awareness on particular “private” cases of sexual abuse and gender discrimination in public street demonstrations and online campaigns that denounce the patriarchal order of both private and public spheres to demand legislative and judiciary changes. At the same time, care politics concerned with the value that “social reproduction” involves (drawing on Azzurra et al.’s terminology) disputes the demarcation of the economy as a separate domain from the social, challenging thus what is another defining trait of modern imaginaries in Steger and James’s view. Care-informed perspectives oppose economised readings of the socio-political, putting forward nurturing outlooks that place, as Butler vindicates, the material needs of the body at the centre of political demands, presuming there is “a shared condition of precarity that situates our political lives” (2011).



Figures 96 and 97. Eco-feminist cosmopolitan imaginaries in the 2017 Women's March in Washington (21 January 2017), and a Global Strike for Climate rally celebrated in Melbourne (20 September 2019, *The Guardian*)

In a post-recession global warming context that has exposed the unequal non-sustainable foundations of neoliberal globalisation and the inefficiencies of national political paradigms, 2010s social movements and activists like Thunberg are articulating re-politicised global networks of hope that depart from the post-political and post-utopian “civilizational despair” on which the “homo oeconomicus” thrived, according to Wendy Brown (2015, 33, 79, 221). The Occupy, ecological and feminist movements have recuperated a mobilising utopian drive (Tejerina et al. 2013, 383-385; Langman 2013, 517; Miller and Crane 2019, 4) that is essential for transformative political theory and practice since it prompts the exploration of lateral possibilities outside the status quo (Goodwin and Taylor 2009). They are contemporary “levers of social change” (Castells 2012, 218) generating utopian political spaces that “keep society open to alternative practices and futures” (Levitas 2013, 205). These social spaces of political dissent display the vitality of utopia as a critical form of systemic opposition (Tally 2013, 12) and forge inclusive sites where “the marginalized, the excluded and the indignant” can articulate “utopian visions of collective benefit” (Langman 2013, 516, 521).

Drawing on Prudence Chamberlain’s understanding of feminist waves as “periods of affective intensity” that prompt mobilisation (2017, 6-9, 187, 73-76), 2010s global movements can be said to reflect an ongoing cosmopolitan wave that is uniting global political subjects around egalitarian and ecological ideals, sensibilities, practices and aims. Their networked strategies (Juris 2008; Mason 2012; Castells 2012), shared social imaginaries (Steger and James 2013), cosmopolitan political rationalities (Parvu 2017) and horizontal structures (McKibben 2019) replicate the

global outreach and dynamics of climate change (Beck 2009), social inequalities (Harvey 2013; Tejerina et al. 2013) and pandemics (such as the 2009 swine flu and the 2019-20 coronavirus, most recently). The late 2010s ecological and feminist movements, in particular, expand material readings of the global through care-informed intersectional perspectives of equality that stress the private dimension of politics and the overlapping of gender, economic, racial and environmental injustices (Arruzza et al. 2019; Sarathy 2019; Cauty 2017; Grusin 2017). This way, in a “cosmopolitanized” moment when “‘humanity’ and ‘world’ are not only thinkable, but unavoidable moral categories for humans the world over” (Beck 2012, 309), 2010s global social movements manifest the budding consolidation of cosmopolitan political rationalities, imaginaries, affectivities and ontologies sustained upon growingly inclusive and dialogical cultures.

This “cosmopolitan wave” reaches contemporary movies as well. Many 2010s films reflect critically on marked social inequalities, ecocidal systems, corrupt governments, extractive economic elites, neoliberal ontologies and dialectical cultures, as seen in chapters three and four. Against unjust non-sustainable eco-social backdrops, contemporary movies often articulate alternative political cultures: egalitarian imaginaries, horizontal strategies and cosmopolitan outlooks analogous to those enacted by the Occupy, ecological and feminist movements in the 2010s. Cooperative networks, female leaders and inclusive revolutionary processes have proliferated in the movies at the same time as networked world citizens have occupied squares, participated in international strikes and engaged in online activism. Global protesters, in turn, are using film props and symbols—such as *V for Vendetta*’s Guy Fawkes’s mask, *The Handmaid’s Tale* series’ (Bruce Miller, 2017-) red robes and District 12’s three-fingered signal in *The Hunger Games*—as iconic emblems of

egalitarian demands in mobilisations across the world (figures 98 and 99). This way, the films and social movements of globalisation are engaging in cosmopolitan political conversations that not only contest hegemonic political models and cultures (neoliberal, patriarchal, nationalist, hierarchical and dialectical), but also formulate alternative political paradigms grounded in egalitarian and ecological tenets.



Figures 98 and 99. Cinematic symbols of utopian resistance: a Thai demonstrator protests against the military coup in Thailand (3 June 2014, *The Guardian*) and US feminist activists demonstrate against cuts to Planned Parenthood outside the National Capitol (30 June 2017, Hauser 2017)

The following sections analyse political models, prisms and strategies in *The Hunger Games* film series (2012-2015). It is a case study of contemporary filmic texts that expose the need to reform both the status quo (an oligarchic patriarchal system in the franchise) and established counter-power revolutionary paradigms (a communist alternative that shares material perspectives, tyrannical forms of leadership and utilitarian methods with its political opposite in the series). The possibility of egalitarian and sustainable futures, *The Hunger Games* films suggest, depends on the thorough renovation of political cultures. Dialogical, inclusive and ecological methods are to transform a centralised and economised unjust enactment of politics grounded in sealed borders and social hierarchical divisions. In its place, a cosmopolitan democracy of federated territories and equal citizens is to be articulated by cooperating communities and committed individuals who, like Katniss Everdeen,

move freely, care about others outside their birthplace, and understand the political as a dimension of the personal.

5.2. *The Hunger Games*: “The Revolution is About All of Us”

The Hunger Games film franchise (2012-2015) stars Jennifer Lawrence as Katniss Everdeen, a young woman who struggles to survive with her 12-year-old sister and mentally unstable mother in one of the oppressed and deprived districts of Panem. Under the totalitarian control of the tyrannical President Coriolanus Snow (Donald Sutherland) and a police body of so-called “Peacekeepers”, the inhabitants of twelve segregated districts are forced to work in diverse productive areas such as mining, fishing and transportation for the benefit of an extractive elite that resides in a wealthy and high-tech city known as The Capitol. Following a civil war that took place 74 years before the start of the plot, a female and a male “tribute” from each of the rebel districts that upraised against the Capitol must compete to their death in a televised arena during the annual “Hunger Games”. The event serves a double purpose: it is a forced penitence for the insurgent districts that warns about the consequences of challenging the established order and also an entertainment for idle flamboyant Capitol citizens who gamble on the contenders’ survival chances and can sponsor life-saving provisions for them. From the moment Katniss volunteers to take the place allocated to her sister Prim (Willow Shields) in the 74th Hunger Games, and following her broadcasted joint victory with District 12 male companion Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson) in the first film of the series, *The Hunger Games* (Gary Ross, 2012), the protagonist becomes a revolutionary icon. In the second film of the series, *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (Francis Lawrence, 2013), dictator Snow strives to wipe out the rebellious potential Katniss embodies by convoking the winning couple to a further edition of the games that only increases her popularity across the districts.

Then, in the third and fourth movies of the franchise, *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 1* (Francis Lawrence, 2014) and *Part 2* (Francis Lawrence, 2015), underground District 13's rebel leader Alma Coin (Julianne Moore) schemes to exploit Everdeen's emblematic resistance to sponsor an armed revolt against the Capitol and reach the presidency of Panem.

Neither Snow, nor Coin, nonetheless, will succeed in bending Katniss's will into their respective absolute power agendas. The series' protagonist will progressively enact a political agency defined by cooperative, inclusive, dialogical and cosmopolitan values along with Peeta, and a diverse plethora of new friendships forged across the districts' borders, such as: Capitol stylists Cinna (Lenny Kravitz) and Effie (Elizabeth Banks), District 11 ill-fated tribute child Rue (Amandla Stenberg), District 12 former victor Haymitch (Woody Harrelson), rebel gamemaker Plutarch (Philip Seymour Hoffman), District 4 tribute allies Finnick (Sam Claflin) and Mags (Lynn Cohen), and Coin's military assistant Boggs (Mahershala Ali). In opposition to the utilitarian totalitarianisms that Snow and Coin represent in the franchise, Katniss's eco-feminist stance articulates the political as a facet of the personal and advocates for sustainable and intersectional conceptions of cosmopolitan democratic justice.

The following sections look into the political systems, perspectives, agents and methods represented in *The Hunger Games* film series and their discursive links with 2010s social movements. The first part explores the two political paradigms portrayed by the series as invalid alternatives toward a fair and sustainable future (5.2.1.): on the one hand, the despotic plutocracy under dictator Snow against which the oppressed impoverished districts rebel, and, on the other, the totalitarian communist alternative commanded by Alma Coin, which relies on amoral utilitarian

strategies similar to Snow's. Next, the analysis moves on to the eco-feminist leadership that Lawrence's protagonist embodies in opposition to the discarded political agents above (5.2.2.). The last part of the chapter explores the inclusive and cooperative political cultures that the film franchise endorses—a cosmopolitan “politics of the multiple” that many other 2010s films and global social movements vindicate too (5.2.3.).

5.2.1. Beware, We Dream (in Colours): Fighting for the Rights of “the 99%” Beyond the Reductionist Confines of Material Dialectics

After three decades in which neoliberalism has been “undoing the demos” through the economisation of governance politics, education, public resources and people's lives (Brown 2015, 9-11), early 2010s post-recession films such as *Elysium*, *In Time* (Andrew Niccol, 2011), *The Maze Runner*, *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *The Hunger Games* series offer dystopian representations of widespread social inequalities and politics subservient to economic elites. The bipolar socio-economic structures in these films illustrate the polarising effects of neoliberal globalisation that 2011 Occupy movements denounced under the “We are the 99%” motto and which economists Thomas Piketty (2014) and Joseph Stiglitz (2015) critically assess in their works.

The Hunger Games film franchise, in particular, is set in the radically unequal nation of Panem, which consists of a plutocratic elite bathed in material excess (the Capitol) and dispossessed exploited masses (the districts) living under the authoritarian control of President Snow and his military body of Peacekeepers. Emphasising the scarcity, brutality and repression that district residents like Katniss Everdeen must endure, the two first movies in the series posit the prospect of a revolution by the subjugated 99% (drawing on Occupy's terminology) as a just cause.

Yet, the last two movies of the franchise decline the utilitarian strategies and communist totalitarian agenda that rebel leader Coin embodies as an unsuitable political alternative for a fair and sustainable future. This section analyses how the series' formal devices and the evolution of Katniss's political perspectives throughout the franchise endorse, in agreement with late 2010s ecological and feminist movements, the renewal of cosmopolitan political cultures built outside the reductionist confines of long-established material dialectics.

The opening scenes of *The Hunger Games* introduce viewers to the opposite agents and worldviews that are going to clash throughout the film series: the Capitol's plutocratic patriarchal elites and the subjugated district dwellers, who, as later illustrated by Katniss Everdeen, might push forward inclusive progress and cosmopolitan democracy. Following an intertitle describing the post-uprising context and Hunger Games dynamics for spectators unfamiliar with Suzanne Collins's literary trilogy (2008-2010), two men wearing extravagant suits and hairstyles appear onscreen sitting comfortably in a TV set decorated with glistening colourful light bulbs. Gamemaker Seneca Crane (Wes Bentley) talks about the deadly yearly event as a healing "tradition" that "knits" Panem's citizens back together after the "painful" historical rebellion led by the districts decades earlier. TV presenter Caesar Flickerman (Stanley Tucci) nods in agreement, looking intermittently at his interviewee and the implied applauding audience in the set, while the shifting camera angles replicate the live broadcasting of their conversation. Their assertive voices and arrogant face gestures convey the egotism of those in power. Still, their tightly closed shirt necks and gelled hairstyles hint at the stiff authoritarian regime they are obliged to, while the echo of their amplified voices and the set harsh key lights play down their authority as fabricated performance. As Seneca grasps some air to elaborate on

what he considers is his creative “signature” as a Gamemaker, a cut to a remote outdoor location and a female voice screaming “No!” interrupt his delivery. This disruptive editing choice brusquely shifts spectators’ attention from the Capitol’s official discourse (the broadcasted political propaganda previous to the 74th Hunger Games spectacle) onto a looming shot that displays old electricity lines hanging by derelict wooden houses and a dismantled horse cart abandoned under a grey sky. A caption at the bottom of the image indicates it is District 12. This way, the film mutes Seneca in order to introduce viewers to a neglected and deprived context that contradicts his discourse on a unified and healed Panem (figure 100).



Figure 100. District 12: the derelict social backstage of the Capitol's broadcasted propaganda

Following District 12’s establishing shot, Katniss Everdeen appears in the film for the first time wearing an old pyjamas and an uncombed sided braid. She hushes her scared sister Prim on bed and whispers comforting words to calm her down after a nightmare. Contrary to the stable and more conventional shot-reverse-shot dialogue between Seneca and Caesar, a shaky camera, multiple cuts and repeated breaks of the 180° degree rule show Katniss and Prim united within the frame. While Prim mutters nervous words about a dream in which her name was picked up (a premonition of her “reaping” as Tribute for the Hunger Games in the ceremony that takes place later that morning), the instability of the camera and brisk editing points up the girls’ social

vulnerability and precarious life. Katniss caresses her sister's hair and sings a mellow lullaby. As they sing together "Deep in the meadow", their voices, bodies and expressions convey a cooperative, ecological and feminist humanism that is the antinomy of the competitive, material and Darwinist social culture that Seneca and Caesar stand for. The intimate and dimly lit bedroom *mise-en-scène* radically departs from the harsh spotlights and extravagant costumes in the prior TV setting. The close camera distances and the loving care that Katniss expresses towards her sister (a true and warm affection unlike Seneca's perverse discourse on the Hunger Games as a socially healing tradition) establishes the moral and political inclination that the films are going to take throughout the franchise: the districts' fight for justice against the Capitol is rendered a right cause from this moment onwards and Katniss is taken as an inspiring representative of renovated eco-feminist cultures that position private particulars and care relations in the centre of the public political arena.

The disparity of characters, camera movements, performances and *mise-en-scènes* in these two opening scenes not only highlights the bipolar makeup of Panem, but also couples together neoliberalism and patriarchy as an unfair political Establishment that is represented by two men comfortably sitting on riches generated by others' suffering. The series' opening suggests that, beyond the given economised patriarchal conformation of the public space—resulting from a profoundly unjust mode of doing politics—, there is an alternative conception of the social that is still confined within the private realm: a care-driven, ecological and inclusive understanding of human relations that will inform Katniss's utopian resistance and eco-feminist cosmopolitan politics throughout the series.

Lawrence's concerned expression in her first close up points at the crude and sombre dystopian reality they live in. It is a significantly dark close-up, very subtly

illuminated by the light of a foggy early morning, in which Katniss's profile resembles the penitent sculptured face of Michelangelo's *Pietà* (1499) when holding her son's dead body in her arms (figures 101 and 102). With a lost lowered gaze while her chin rests on Prim's head and the latter cuddles against her chest, Lawrence's grave, tranquil, melancholic and cryptic expression reveals a young yet mature, strong yet nurturing woman that is committed to protect her loved ones, as happens later when she volunteers to take Prim's place in the reaping ceremony. Similarly contrite close-ups of Katniss taking care of injured others are recurrent throughout the franchise, as in the scenes where she consoles young District 10 tribute Rue right before her death and when she looks after an extremely ill Peeta in their first edition of the Games. Lawrence's sober performance and paused body movements in these critical moments shows how familiar Katniss is with enduring suffering and protecting others.



Figures 101 and 102. Lawrence's first close-up in the series: a young woman used to suffering

According to Shonni Enelow (2016), Lawrence's "restrained" performance in the series (and also as a deprived teenager in *Winter's Bone* (Debra Granik, 2010)) is exemplary of the resilient and reserved modes of being forged in an anxiety-ridden late 2000s context defined by economic recession, extended surveillance and excessive mediated self-exposure in social life. Whereas Method actors effusively

dramatised teenagers' desire to escape their parents' oppressive context, "recessive" understated performances by young actors such as Kirsten Stewart, Rooney Mara and Jennifer Lawrence in early twenty-first-century movies respond, in Enelow's view, to a hopeless "violent or chaotic environment (...) that doesn't offer an alternate vision of an open and embracing future". Katniss's "vacant" mother, Enelow states, illustrates such inhospitable background, while the protagonist's unsuccessful calls for her attention would work as "a metaphor for the continued commitment to systems that don't work by people who have been abandoned by them" (2016).

Nevertheless, the outdoor sequences that follow the opening bedroom scene soon elucidate that submissive conformity to hopelessness and resilient martyrdom are not in Katniss's DNA. After telling Prim to finish the lullaby on her own, the protagonist goes downstairs with an energetic pace, responds to Prim's hissing cat with a daring "I'll still cook you" and leaves the house with determination. With her hair tied in a braid, wearing loose dark shirt and trousers, a brown leather jacket and flat boots, Katniss's confident movements contrast with a sequence of shots that, accompanied by a gloomy humming score, show the harsh daily life for citizens in District 12: the back of a woman dressed in grey clothes carrying two metal buckets with water; the worried face of another looking through a broken window with her hand on the cheek, which echoes the "Migrant Mother" photography (1936) taken by Dorothea Lange during the Great Depression; boys playing with sticks in the mud; a silent column of exhausted miners walking in their work uniforms; and an old man licking the bare bones of a little animal, among others. Heading in a direction opposite to that of the miners, Katniss runs by trees and crosses over a huge water dam in extreme long shots. Her trespassing of an electric fence with warning banners forbidding passage outside the district's boundaries further outlines the protagonist's

free-spirited unwavering personality (figure 103). Her skilful movements in an outlawed forest area where she hides her hunting bow and arrows, and her concentrated face while aiming at a deer prey in the woods, put across an unyielding resistance that refuses to resiliently submit to circumstances (figure 104). Katniss's grave facial expressions and vigorous body movements suggest an emancipatory resistance that refuses to be bent by discouraging prospects, precariousness and authoritarian repression.



Figures 103 and 104. Utopian resistance: Katniss crosses her district borders to hunt in the forest

From this moment onwards, the protagonist will maintain the spark of emancipatory resistance alive at all times, even when temporarily forced to fit in roles and play by rules devised by others, as symbolised by the assorted outfits she is obliged to wear (such as the lady dress she puts on for the reaping ceremony, the spectacular fire costumes Cinna designs for the Games, the wedding outfit that Snow arranges for her enforced marriage with Peeta, and the Mockingjay military uniforms she uses in Coin's revolutionary propaganda). Katniss's brave volunteering to take Prim's tribute place in the Games during the reaping ceremony stands out amidst hundreds of likely dressed, blood-scanned, numbered youngsters in a perverse ritual whose human sorting dynamics and military procedures remind of WWII Nazi concentration camps (figures 105 and 106). Though the dystopian scenario makes it clear that, paraphrasing Effie's favourite line in the reaping ceremonies—"May the odds be ever in your favour"—, the odds are never in Katniss's favour, the

protagonist's persistent unruliness keeps her alive in the Games and turns her into a rebel icon across the districts. At the end of the 74th Hunger Games she threatens to commit suicide with Peeta and thus forces Snow to allow their joint victory at the end of the first movie in the series. Then, in *Catching Fire*, she brings about the breakdown of the Quarter Quell arena during her second Games by shooting her arrow at the dome instead of at other tributes. Lastly, in *The Mockingjay-Part II*, Katniss unexpectedly redirects her target from Snow to Coin after the revolution succeeds, refusing to play a conformist Mockingjay part in Coin's totalitarian agenda. In all the extremely unfavourable environments above, Katniss insistently resists and transgresses imposed roles and normative frameworks with the skilful and agile feline elusiveness that her name evokes.



Figures 105 and 106. Transgressive solidarity: Katniss volunteers to take her sister's place at the reaping ceremony previous to the Hunger Games

Contrary to a liberal conception of resistance motivated by self-interest and the defence of freedom of choice *per se*, however, Katniss's rule-bending autonomous performance is often motivated by others' needs and welfare. Though being a skilled hunter in the forest, she consistently refuses to follow the survival-of-the-fittest logics imposed by a context of scarcity and risk: she takes care of Prim to compensate for the ineffective protection that her mother provides at home and cooperates with those supposed to be Others—tribute competitors like Finnick, allies that may hinder her survival chances in the Games like elderly Mags, and friends forged across districts

and Capitol's borders, such as stylist Cinna, mentor Haymitch and Coin's military officer Boggs. Everdeen is initially motivated by a strictly personal cause (preventing her sister's participation in the Games), and is reluctant to play the revolutionary icon part designed by Alma Coin, but her rebelliousness is progressively informed by the needs of those she meets outside her District too. Her loving protection of 12-year-old tribute Rue represents the spreading out of the protagonist's solidarity. A white young woman from District 12, Katniss sings to a little black girl from District 11, who is presumed to be her enemy in the arena, the same lullaby she sang to Prim after a nightmare in the opening to offer the child some consolation as she dies in her arms. When Katniss places flowers around Rue's corpse and raises three fingers to make a sign of solidarity to those mourning her loss in District 11, what is at stake in the arena is not Darwinist survival anymore, but the embryonic unity of the oppressed and diverse 99% outside the Capitol within a common intersectional fight for justice (figures 107 and 108).



Figures 107 and 108. Cosmopolitan bonds forged against injustice: Katniss and district 11 mourn Rue's death making the three-finger sign

But Katniss's political engagement has to surmount first her wariness of political agents and discourses in a film series that still reflects what Erika Gottlieb defines as the "nervous vacillation of the utopian-dystopian axis of our times": a guarded approach to utopian politics that follows the disappointing results of "the Soviet attempt at socialism" and which informs the satirical representation of

Messianic dictators in 20th-century dystopian fiction such as George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* (Gottlieb 2001, 7). Unlike Winston in Orwell's novel, though, Katniss is aware of the Capitol's deceitful discourses from the beginning of the series when she laughs with Gale (Liam Hemsworth) at the propaganda video on the civil war that they are obliged to watch every year during the reaping ceremony. Besides depicting satirically communist and fascist totalitarian imaginaries, which spotlessly dressed arrogant despots Coin and Snow embody respectively, the series incorporates more contemporary implicit references to the unreliable messages and images produced by sensationalist media, reality shows, virtual reality and political campaigns. The name of Panem and the cruel entertainment offered by the Hunger Games evokes, according to Suzanne Collins, the Latin "Panem et Circenses" (bread and circuses) metonym that Juvenal formulated to refer to Imperial Rome's use of spectacles like gladiatorial contests to divert citizens' attention away from political affairs (cited in Fisher 2012, 29). In opposition to Snow's and Coin's grandiloquent gestures and allegoric speeches to the masses, Katniss's reserved and quiet performance is defined by actions rather than words and paused self-reflection rather than dramatic expression, which makes the two despots' utilitarian and manipulative discourses more apparent. Katniss's distrustful view of politics only increases once she and Peeta win the Games at the end of the first movie in the series. The couple become, against their wishes, political symbols that Snow and Coin seek to exploit for their respective agendas, getting first-hand knowledge on the tricks and traps of political communication.

In *Catching Fire*, the second film in the series, the "girl on fire" and her lover, as TV presenter Caesar refers to the couple, are coerced to act as an engaged couple on a Victory Tour conceived by Snow to appease the various uprisings that Katniss's

rebelliousness during the Games inspired across the districts. However, following Katniss's broadcasted confrontation with a high-rank Peacekeeper that is whipping Gale in public and her eulogy for Rue at District 11, Snow resolves "she's become a beacon of hope for the rebellion and she has to be eliminated". With that objective in mind Snow schemes Katniss's participation in the Quarter Quell, a 75th edition of the Games that "reaps" tributes from the pool of previous victors as advised by undercover rebel and Gamemaker Plutarch Heavensbee. Back to the arena, the protagonist allies with other victors and unknowingly reinforces her utopian rebel status also among Capitol spectators like Snow's granddaughter, who now styles her hair in a sided braid like Katniss's. Remembering "who the real enemy is", as Haymitch advises her before the Games, Katniss eventually brings about the collapse of the arena's power system by shooting an electrified arrow at the dome. The discharge leaves her unconscious on the ground and she awakens on a hovercraft where she finds out that she was part of the plan: "you have been our mission from the beginning. The plan was always to get you out. Half the tributes were in on it. This is the revolution and you are the Mockingjay". When she is told that Peeta was left back in the arena and held hostage in the Capitol, her furious physical response against Haymitch for failing to protect Peeta and omitting the rebel scheme under way is swiftly put down with a sedative Plutarch injects in her back, which hints at the acquiescent dummy position she is expected to fill, once again, in the upcoming revolution.

Thus, in a way similar to the "Victor" role fabricated by Snow, Katniss is propelled to fit in a revolutionary leading part that has been moulded for her at her back in a pre-scripted mission no one asked her about. Awakened a second time while lying on a monitored medical bed in the last scene of *Catching Fire*, Gale lets

her know that Snow's army has obliterated District 12 in revenge for the rebel plot. The cold bluish and metallic tones of the medical furniture and lighting, Lawrence's flat position and ignorance of key events, and the fact that viewers learn of the rebel plan details at the same time as Katniss does, highlight the demeaning passive puppet role she has been assigned. The discovery shocks, hurts, and enrages her. It also motivates her wary political engagement in the revolution that unfolds in the last two films of the franchise.

In *Mockingjay-Part I*, Katniss meets rebel leader Coin in District 13. Its highly regulated underground life, residents' grey outfits, scarce lighting and beehive architecture make the place feel like a panoptic prison; especially to Effie, who struggles to customise her uniform and misses her colourful wigs. Moreover, Julianne Moore's "Madam President" Alma Coin displays aloof arrogant manners akin to Snow's and a utilitarian political philosophy that her own name and surname insinuate. The two women dislike each other but Plutarch, Coin's closest adviser, convinces District 13 leader about Katniss's utility as "a lightning rod" and "face of the revolution". Coin and himself, Plutarch argues, can "redirect" Katniss's "anger-driven defiance" in the arena to inspire an effective collective uprising against Snow. Although Katniss soon comprehends that the staged propaganda Coin and Plutarch expect her to star in assimilates the Capitol's montage videos, her first-hand encounter with District 12's horrific skulls and bones landscapes (a visit planned by Plutarch to make the rebellion feel "personal" to her) and Snow's broadcasted public shootings of rebels induce her to get involved in the revolution. "I'll be your Mockingjay", she lets Coin know, on the condition that Peeta and Finnick's girlfriend Annie (Stef Dawson) are rescued from the Capitol and that her sister Prim gets to keep her cat. Accompanied by a full audiovisual team ready to record the emotional reactions she is

unable to fake in staged virtual settings, Katniss visits District 8 injured victims who treat her like an idol (figure 109). Snow's bombing of the wounded pavilion when Katniss is about to leave propels her direct engagement in combat. She shoots an explosive arrow at one of Snow's military aircrafts and subsequently addresses the dictator by shouting to the camera: "You can torture us and bomb us and burn our districts to the ground. But do you see that? Fire is catching... And if we burn... you burn with us!".



Figure 109. Katniss, the Mockingjay: a reluctant revolutionary icon

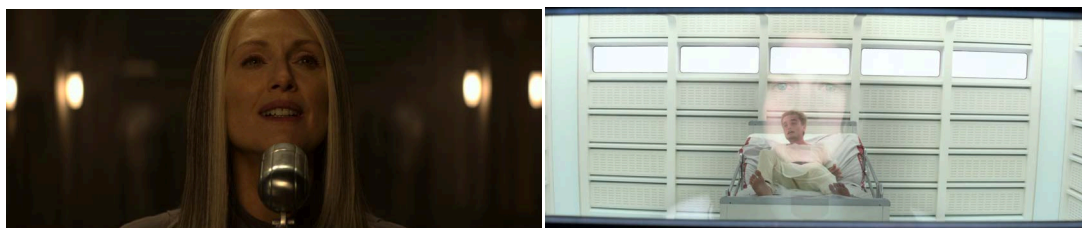
Yet, the fact these images are later seen from the perspective of a film editing console that puts Katniss's crying clips together for a promo video redirects viewers' attention to the potentially pre-arranged nature of the tragic event and the moral appropriateness of its strategic media exploitation. "There is no progress without compromise", Coin assures after watching the clips. But those bombed were not asked about their compromise or views on progress and their role in the revolution was pre-decided for them, as happened to Katniss, the Mockingjay. Even if the rebel cause is just and urgent, Katniss remains at all times wary of Coin's dialectical utilitarian politics, which her beloved friend Gale fully embraces to Katniss's regret. For the protagonist of the franchise, the ends do not justify the means and every

decision must be calibrated on the consequences it will have for specific local communities.

Favouring Katniss's focalisation of events and employing remarkably dark colour gradation, the last two *Mockingjay* films in the series state that the rights of the commons should not be achieved through amoral utilitarian politics that consider individuals as faceless members of a large community ("Individuals don't make demands in 13", Coin affirms). A truly democratic alternative to fascist oligarchies, the movies suggest, cannot be attained via authoritarian strategies, reductionist material analysis and a destructive dialectics of "moves and countermoves", as Plutarch puts it. Besides, Gale's full conversion into Coin's political creed and Peeta's mental "high-jacking" in the Capitol—a fear conditioning therapy that makes him hate Katniss and attempt to choke her to death—comment on the manipulative power of political bodies and the brainwashing effects of totalitarian ideologies. The rebel cause might be soaring, but Katniss Everdeen lies once again, at the end of the third film in the series, immobilised on a hospital bed and literally muted, with her vocal chords severely injured after Peeta's unexpected attack.

The crosscutting sequence that follows Peeta's attack on Katniss at the end of *Mockingjay-Part I* stresses the need to pay attention to specific political effects and strategies rather than pompous discourses and final agendas alone. In the central square of District 13 underground headquarters, Coin delivers a celebratory speech on the Victors' liberation from the Capitol making no reference to the fact that Snow freed "high-jacked" Peeta so that he could end with Katniss's life and omitting they are both hospitalised as she is speaking. The "Madam President" to be promises an exhilarant mass audience "a new Panem where leaders are elected, not imposed upon us" while Plutarch mums the same words he scripted sitting by Effie among the

public (figure 110). Intertwined with the scene above, a sequence set in a lonely medical area nearby shows Katniss leaving her bed and approaching Peeta's room while the sound of the cheering masses and Coin's speech goes on. Muted, barefoot, wearing a patient's robe and a cervical collar, Katniss's weak body movements and loneliness contrast with Coin's stiff standing posture as she affirms "we are one people, one army, one voice". The cheers and hurrahs at the leader are juxtaposed with Katniss's terrified expression when she sees, through a window, Peeta's enraged body movements on the hospital bed he is tied to. Peeta and Katniss's suffering and absolute isolation while everyone else cheers at the promising democratic horizon ahead censures a material utilitarian understanding of the common for which collective ends always justify the means, however painful and damaging to specific people those means are. The final shot in the movie shows Katniss's reflected close-up on the window glass, superposed onto a full shot of Peeta's shaking body while the hurrahs recede in favour of an intense operatic score with chorus voices (figure 111). This multi-layered dramatic image hints at the alternative eco-feminist politics that Katniss embodies, one that conceives the political as an extension of the personal and relates collective and individual rights and welfare.



Figures 110 and 111. Utilitarianism and care ethics: opposite approaches to common welfare

In *Mockingjay-Part II*, the last film of the franchise, Katniss fully commits to the military operations that seek to bring down Snow's despotic regime. But her views on warfare strategies continually clash with Coin's and Gale's, who are fully

devoted to the rebellion's success at the expense of personal relations and moral judgments. On the contrary, Boggs and (female) Commander Paylor, who will be democratically elected President of Panem at the end of the series, show ethical concerns similar to Katniss's on the sacrifice of rebel troops as a decoy to pillage Capitol's weapons and any attacks that involve civilian casualties. In order to avoid further killings among "neighbour" district "slaves", Katniss moves on to the frontline to sway District 2 loyalists against the Capitol and, after surviving a shot for which she is officially proclaimed dead for a while, resolves to kill Snow herself without asking for Coin's permission. In the Capitol, which is riddled with cameras and hidden deadly "pods" devised by Snow's Gamemakers to record the rebels' defeat, Katniss ignores the non-combat propaganda mission assigned to the Squad she joins. She also learns from Boggs, the unit's first-in-command, that Coin never intended to rescue her from the Games' arena for "she doesn't like anybody or anything she can't control", Boggs admits. The protagonist manages to survive attacks of all kinds (including a black tar flood, Peeta's "hijacked" assaults and zombie-like genetically engineered "mutts" in the Capitol's sewers) but witnesses the tragic deaths of Boggs, Finnick and other members of her team, as well as a final bombing of the area around Snow's residence that kills her sister Prim and many innocent Capitol children invited by the dictator to take refuge in his mansion. The bombing, Katniss later learns from a captive Snow following the rebel victory, was actually ordered by Coin to make Peacekeepers turn against him for killing Capitol's infants, and thus clear her way to power.

Such turn of events makes Katniss realise that, although the black planes and outfits of Coin's rebel army offer a patent visual counterpoint to Snow's white hair and roses, and the fascist eugenic politics and cold-blooded mentality that his surname

evokes, both black and white dialectical opposites concur in their amoral utilitarian strategies, creative-destruction logics and despotic agendas. As a result, Katniss must confront not one but two “Messianic dictators”, drawing on Erika Gottlieb’s words (2001), and their respective political models: despot Snow, whose plutocratic order and exploitative colonial treatment of the districts can be said to replicate the extractive discriminatory functioning of patriarchal neoliberalism, and communist despot-to-be Coin, who aims to bring about a totalitarian order of the commons that was “experienced as historical reality in the USSR and in Eastern and central Europe” (2001, 7-8), and which informs non-democratic regimes like the North Korean or Chinese still today.

In the closing scenes of the franchise, Katniss’s political commitment eventually steps out of Coin and Snow’s dialectical framework seeking to deter the rebel leader’s plans to declare herself “interim President of Panem” while people remain “too emotional for rational decisions” and celebrate a Hunger Games edition with Capitol’s youngsters to “balance the need for revenge”. Katniss’s refusal to choose between the two available dialectical political alternatives is illustrated in the massive public execution ceremony of former President Snow. Following Coin’s premonitory grandiloquent words to the masses—“Today, the greatest friend to the revolution will fire the shot to end all wars. May her arrow signify the end of tyranny and the beginning of a new era. Mockingjay, may your aim be as true as your heart is pure”—Katniss unexpectedly redirects her arrow from a tied up Snow, who is calmly waiting to be executed by the rebel Mockingjay, onto Coin, who is exhilarant in her self-proclaimed President role while directing the ceremony onstage in a spotless grey uniform and cape reminiscent of V’s Guy Fawkes outfits in *V for Vendetta* (James McTeigue, 2005) (figures 112 and 113). Once the rebel leader lies dead on the floor,

Katniss attempts to take a suicide pill but Peeta stops her and takes her out of the furious multitude. Later on, locked in a cell, she receives a letter from Plutarch saying that there will be free elections and she will be shortly pardoned for her crime. Katniss's unforeseen redirection of her arrow towards Coin eventually implies, as Dorothy Noyes claims, that "the heroine contrives ultimately to destroy the game itself rather than the opponents pitted against her" (2015, 21), putting an end to a political tradition guided by utilitarianism, materialism, dialectics and authoritarianism.



Figures 112 and 113. The arrow that puts an end to totalitarian material dialectics

Drawing on Marxist analytical perspectives, some scholars read the series' political conclusion as populist ideological vagueness, escapist capitalist entertainment or apolitical personal melodrama. Departing from the premise that populism is "a non-Marxist politics", Rebecca Hill alludes to the miscellaneous political interpretations of the franchise in the context of Donald Trump's and Bernie Sanders's 2016 election campaign to argue that the film series works as "a universal allegory" for a "neoliberal populism" that reduces "materialist discourses to a story of good people and bad government", thus appealing audiences and voters across the political spectrum (2018, 5, 8, 23). Hill thinks that the series' weariness of revolutionary agendas is "anti-utopian" since it envisions no alternative to "capitalist realism" and positions spectators "in the position of Katniss standing in the arena, where it can be surprisingly difficult to distinguish between friends and foes" (2018,

20-23). De Lissovoy et al. reproach the fact that “Katniss’s political engagement renders the line between the personal and political invisible”, thus “depoliticizing” global conflict as the protection of “the home(land), the family, and White domesticity” rather than raising awareness on the violence that “capitalism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism” inflicts “on (global) others” (2017, 450-452). Joe Tompkins, for his part, criticises the series’ contradictory mobilisation of “revolutionary desire as a commercial strategy” in multimedia marketing campaigns that, by replicating ironically the Capitol’s propaganda, cultivate “cynical awareness” of its blockbuster status and class war altogether (2018, 70-74). Besides, Tompkins contends that, although the franchise’s representation of the inequalities produced by capital and its endorsement of the districts’ “class-conscious” resistance fits Marx and Engels’s account of history as class struggle, Katniss’s redefinition as a married woman “beyond class politics” in the series’ conclusion “fail[s] to deliver on the promise of revolution” (2018, 80).

In disagreement with the Marxist critical readings above, the franchise’s ending can be understood as a non-dialectical utopian statement in favour of a renovated cosmopolitan politics that surmounts the private/public divide and reductionist material prisms (neoliberal or communist) that economise existence. Despite the fact that Katniss’s aesthetics are abruptly redefined as a mother of two in the series’ closing epilogue (as will be explored below), the series’ political resolution—an inclusive and democratic federal republic presided by a black woman—suggests that hope resides in the transformation of neoliberal political systems ruled by rich extractive elites (the Capitol) and patriarchal actors (Snow, Gamemakers, Peacekeepers) through political cultures other than material, dialectical, utilitarian and dogmatic (Coin’s totalitarian communism). Like Theo in *Children of*

Men and Jane in *The East*, who reject to take sides with extractive nationalist and neoliberal Establishments, but also with violent and utilitarian terrorist groups, Katniss aspires to just and sustainable cosmopolitan futures built outside the creative-destruction material dialectics that Snow and Coin represent. The three case studies articulate a dialogical and processual cosmopolitan utopianism that, unlike anti-utopian closure, nostalgic retrotopia, apartheid utopianism and utopian blueprints, relies on egalitarian and ecological socio-political prisms, methods and cultures to meet the challenges and opportunities of global societies. Like Theo's and Jane's, Katniss's political agency manifests itself as a dimension of the personal, aspiring to reconcile the idea of progress with sustainability and inclusion and the welfare of the common "99%" with the wellbeing of free and diverse individuals irrespective of their condition and origin. The following section argues that, in line with the philosophy of 2010s global social movements and activists, Katniss's eco-feminist leadership embodies the emergence of such an alternative political culture against resilient patriarchal and ecocidal paradigms that still hold on to their power in real-life world politics and the Hollywood film industry.

5.2.2. Time's Up for a Change of Political Focus: Katniss Everdeen's Eco-Feminist Leadership

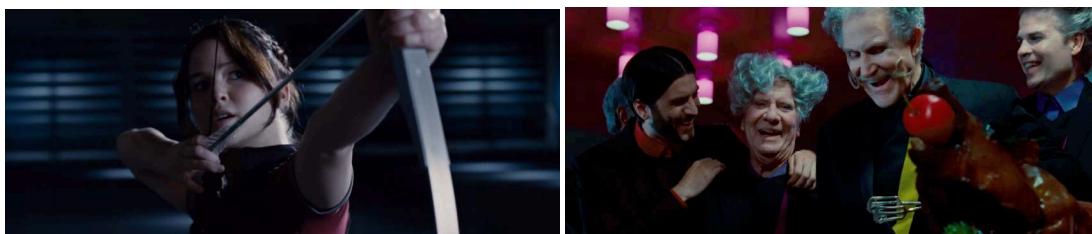
In the cosmopolitanised 2010s—a time when borders, gender, race and birthplace define less and less people's worldviews and aspirations though still determining social mobility and life chances to a great extent (as articulated by global social movements), when the communication with Others (digital and physical) challenges the boundaries of the familiar, and the non-sustainable global effects of neoliberal "growth" demand internationally coordinated policies—Katniss Everdeen embodies

the cosmopolitan potential of eco-feminist political cultures. As opposed to ecocidal and patriarchal conceptions of politics as the conquering of Others and nature, Katniss enacts a type of political agency informed by the care ethics and nurturing relations traditionally associated with family and community life. She conceives the local and the global, the private and the public as interrelated dimensions of a diverse yet unitary eco-socio-political habitat we should all look after and contribute to.

The Katniss Everdeen that made an impression among world audiences from 2012 to 2015 (the worldwide box office for the first film in the series alone amounts to \$694,394,724 in 2012 (IMDb)) is, as Haymitch celebrates after seeing her audacious performance in the preparation tests for the 74th Hunger Games, the rule-bending girl who has “the guts” to unsettle the foundations of Panem’s military dictatorship with the only help of a bunch of arrows: a young eco-feminist hero that dares to defy the long-established patriarchal oligarchic status quo. In order to grab the attention of the tribunal who are judging tributes’ value according to their killing abilities, bold Katniss dares to shoot her arrow at an apple inserted in the mouth of a piglet served to the all-male jury standing in a gallery above her head (figures 114 and 115). The scene’s props have great symbolic value in gender, economic and ecological terms. The apple Katniss traverses with her arrow is reminiscent of the sinful fruit Eve prompted Adam to eat, thus bringing pain and mortality to the human species. The dead piglet that holds the apple, for its part, alludes to the ecocidal effects of greedy extractive economics. Gamemaker Seneca, a godlike male authority that designs life conditions for tributes in the Hunger Games and whose ear is slightly slashed by the passing arrow, stands, together with the rest of the male judges being served by a female waiter, for oligarchic patriarchal elites that thrive on the scarcity and exploitation of the commons. Traversing from side to side the heart of the

infamous apple of the Holy—patriarchal—Scripts, the series’ unruly protagonist hints at her intention to undo the gender prejudices and masculinised conceptions of power that, as Mary Beard argues in *Women and Power* (2017), dominate socio-political life and culture since Classical Greece:

You cannot easily fit women into a structure that is coded as male; you have to change the structure. That means thinking about power differently. It means decoupling it from public prestige. It means thinking collaboratively about the power of followers not just leaders. It means, above all, thinking of power as an attribute or even a verb (“to power”) not as a possession. What I have in mind is an ability to be effective, to make a difference in the world, and the right to be taken seriously, together as much as individually. (86)



Figures 114 and 115. Katniss defies the patriarchal oligarchic Establishment

Katniss’s “piercing” statement for an inclusive conception of power in the scene above is tied to the ecological concerns that her physical characterisation and performance bring forward throughout the series. Wearing no make-up and discarding any artifice in her manners and outfits, her humble outlooks, frugal conduct, preference for natural places and cooperative solidarity in the Games result in a downsized ecological counterpoint to the lifestyle in the Capitol, which is characterised by: extravagant costumes (dyed wigs, fake eyelashes, extremely high heels and tight clothes are the norm), affected etiquette and language (hyperbolic expressions and exaggerated facial gestures), excessive consumption (citizens take vomit pills to continue tasting delicacies), concrete urbanisation (an urban grey architecture makes Katniss miss the woods) and Darwinist individualism (the Games being its clearest cultural exponent). Privileging the protagonist’s perspective, the

series sees no utopia in “cornucopia”—a synonym of abundance that names the epicentre area of the arena in the Quarter Quell: a place full of goods and provisions essential for survival but also a deadly encounter spot for the tributes that works as a metaphor for ecocidal consumption and fratricidal neoliberal societies. In opposition to the Capitol’s aversion of greenery, eugenic white roses, inorganic décor and engineered landscapes (waterfalls are used as an hydraulic press and defence wall), wild nature is the space where Katniss shines at her brightest, an unfenced, benevolent environment that provides her with vital resources and privacy, which inspires her song lyrics and gives her the hopeful horizons and freedom she lacks anywhere else.

The opening of *Catching Fire* visually ties the protagonist’s welfare and future to the sustainability of her natural habitat. A drone tracking shot of huge burnt forest areas at dawn is followed by a shot of Katniss kneeling by a lake with her bow and arrows at her back while the feeble winter sun appears on the horizon (figure 116). The camera approaches her slowly, replicating the direction in which it advanced over the woods, and then cuts to a sided close-up that displays her concerned frown and humid eyes while she observes the landscape. Before Gale makes a noise at her back, scaring her and interrupting her thoughts abruptly, the subtle whistling melody of a Native American wind instrument contextualises the protagonist’s budding heroics within a magnificent natural setting that has endured a history of brutal political genocide and ecocidal economic progress: the almost extinct Native American culture and endangered environment that the score, Katniss’s outfit and the naked trees allude to. The protagonist’s political cause, this scene suggests, is as much ecological as it is social—a cosmopolitan fight for eco-social justice that seeks new open horizons away from its fratricidal ecocidal inheritance. Katniss’s meditative gesture and moving gaze at the sunrise in this opening scene prompts critical reflection about the

interconnected histories of oppression undergone by women and nature (Grusin 2017; Arruzza et al. 2019; Sarathy 2019), and their joint relation, too, with racial and ethnic domination narratives that occupy a subsidiary political discourse to eco-feminist concerns in the film series.



Figure 116. An eco-feminist perspective on the future that acknowledges the interconnection of patriarchal, ecocidal and colonial histories of oppression

Feminism and gender roles are central topics in the franchise. Contrary to Effie’s movement-restricting tube skirt and clumsy high-heeled steps on the gravel as she walks towards the stage to present District 12’s reaping ceremony, Katniss’s flat boots and loose tomboy garments allows her to jump and run with agility in the forest. Unlike “a postfeminist neoliberal culture in which we are cued to undertake routine physical and emotional work on the self while cultivating imperviousness to the decline of social health, democratic institutions, and meaningful manifestations of citizenship” (Negra and Tasker 2014, 25), the film series holds that Katniss’s freedom is defined by her ability to determine, by herself, her conduct rules, ontological development and existential aspirations outside consumerist and competitive market logics. She finds no allure in a mode of femininity defined by material empowerment and ignores female likeability standards much to Haymitch’s regret, since “self-

branding” garners sponsors during the Games. The protagonist’s gender performance also departs greatly from the fragile inactive role her mother plays at home. The latter’s distorted face on an old mirror as she combs her daughter’s hair before the reaping ceremony highlights Katniss’s aloofness from the patriarchal housewife her mother represents. Both her mother’s silent family angel type and the high-pitched entertaining and exotic female Otherness Effie parodies feel alien to self-governing Katniss (figures 117 and 118). Running free in the woods, she challenges the postfeminist aversion of “off-script” femininity and the idealised “hyperdomestic” type (Negra 2009, 152).



Figures 117 and 118. Katniss refuses consumerist and patriarchal definitions of the feminine

The low-angle close-up of Katniss’s disgusted face expression at the prospect of wearing a good-girl white dress for the reaping event, her reluctant performance of the girlish fiancée role Snow compels her to play, and the painful waxing and skin peeling beauty rituals she has to endure on a surgical metal bed before her participation in TV shows stress the constructed and performative nature of femininity. The series’ sustained foregrounding of gender concerns in scenes such as the latter revokes the “dismantling of feminism” that, according to Angela McRobbie, popular cultural texts such as *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001) reflected: “a process which says feminism is no longer needed, it is now common sense, and as such it is something young women can do without” (2009, 8). As argued

by Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), the protagonist learns that one "becomes" a woman often following others' expectations and reproducing deep-seated cultural conducts; but she insists, nevertheless, in bending gender rules according to her will as she does with her own plait—sided over one of her shoulders instead of straight along her back, for she prefers to comb it herself rather than having her mother style it.

Framing, mise-en-scène and Lawrence's performance in the series tend to reinforce the feminist values Katniss embodies: she occupies the same space as her male interlocutors in balanced shot compositions, wears identical outfits to those of her male partners (jumpsuits for the Games in the two first movies and military clothes in the two last *Mockingjay* parts) (figure 119) and plays leading roles in action scenes where men occupy secondary positions (she remains the shooter when hunting with Gale in the woods and fighting with Peeta in the arena). Perhaps due to her non-compliance with normative femininity—but also replicating stereotypical representations of female shallow competitive relations in young adult dystopian literary fiction (Childs 2014, 199) and mainstream Hollywood films (Bechdel Test 2020)—Everdeen seems to prefer male friendship (Gale, Peeta, Cinna and Boggs) and, as opposed to Effie's "as usual, ladies first!" axiom, the protagonist dislikes any condescending treatment. A proficient hunter by necessity (she hunts to feed herself and others), she does not fit in the prey part in sexual terms either. Unlike the "hypersexualized" female leads of early 2000s action films like *Tomb Raider* (Simon West, 2001), *Catwoman* (Pitof, 2004) and *Aeon Flux* (Karin Kusama, 2005) (Heldman et al. 2016), Katniss is barely sexualised throughout the series (even in a bathing scene and wearing tight fighting suits that would easily allow objectifying framing choices for an audience whose 40% was male (Heldman et al. 10)), which

disrupts the passive-female/active-male binary of classical cinema theorised by Laura Mulvey (1975). Physically, she features as an equally strong, equally vulnerable soldier to her male companions and she is the one that chooses her male lover between two options (Gale and Peeta), rather than waiting to be chosen.



Figure 1 | 19. Egalitarian aesthetics: Katniss and her male allies in the Quarter Quell arena

As far as the love triangle plot is concerned, Katniss finally opts for Peeta (the humble baker, loving gardener and uncompetitive admirer of her shooting skills) over Gale (the more handsome and taller of the two, a bread provider, playfully patronising family protector and cold-blooded soldier). The latter’s condescending first line in the franchise—“What are you gonna do with that when you kill it?”—makes Katniss lose her deer prey, while the former acknowledges her superior survival skills in the Games from the start and follows her lead in the arena. When Katniss bends over Peeta and places her hand on his neck to kiss him in *The Hunger Games*, the moment she handcuffs him after his mental high-jacking until he re-learns from her what is “real or not real”, and as she gets inside his bed in the last *Mockingjay* film, viewers learn that, also in love issues, Katniss prefers to take the initiative regardless of gender conventions.

This way, the series' formal choices and Katniss's characterisation and performance relate the protagonist's heroics to behaviours traditionally associated with both masculinity (risk-taking boldness, shooting skills, family provider roles) and femininity (nurturing social relations). Katniss's mixture of gender codes "gives her increased agency as she has a wider range of responses at her disposal" (Pulliam 2014, 175, 181). As Manohla Dargis argues, Lawrence's character is not "locked into gender", she "doesn't shift between masculinity and femininity; she inhabits both, which may mean that neither really fits (...) Katniss nurtures and kills" (2012). Her in-betweenness allows her to fit in multiple genre characters—"a western hero, an action hero, a romantic heroine and a teen idol"—outside the "mother, girlfriend, victim" types (Scott and Dargis 2012). The limited life options of these female cinematic types have been shown in Hollywood movies from *The Reckless Moment* (Max Ophüls, 1949), *The Stepford Wives*, *Thelma & Louise*, *The Bridges of Madison County* (Clint Eastwood, 1995), to *Revolutionary Road* (Sam Mendes, 2008), *mother!* and *Tully* (Jason Reitman, 2018), among others. As illustrated by Lawrence's ill-fated protagonist in *mother!*, the perpetuation of patriarchal cultures is not only detrimental to women's personal development as free individuals, but also to society as a whole and ecological sustainability since the private/public divide that grounds the politics of patriarchy implies that care ethics are often constrained to the domestic family sphere alone.

However, the series' concluding scene, which is set four or five years after the rebellion, surprisingly remoulds Katniss's looks and environment as a married mother of two. With her back facing the camera, the protagonist appears on the right hand side of the shot, sitting on a picnic blanket in the midst of a yellowish sundrenched green valley, while Peeta and their elder son play in the sunny grass further away

from the camera and birds chirp cheerfully around (figure 120). According to Kathryn Strong Hansen, the fact that she decides to have offspring “demonstrates her faith that the world has changed enough to be a safe place for children” (2015, 176). The lush mise-en-scène displays the fertile future (in ecological and family terms) that lies ahead of Panem’s democratic conversion. In the following medium shot, Katniss looks ahead, with a slightly smiley but also cryptically pensive expression, holding her baby in her arms. Responding attentively to her whimpering as she does with Prim in the series’ opening, Katniss’s yellow flowery dress and loose hairdo radically depart from the braided Amazon outfits she used to wear to hunt in the woods. No longer androgynous, her looks fit the conventional feminine standards that once disgusted her, as she calmly addresses the following final lines to her baby: “Did you have a nightmare? I have nightmares, too. Someday I’ll explain it to you, why they came, why they won’t ever go away, but I’ll tell you how I survive it. I make a list in my head of all the good things I’ve seen someone do. Every little thing I can remember. It’s like a game. I do it over and over. It gets a little tedious after all these years, but... there are much worse games to play”.



Figure 120. A pastoral ending that celebrates family values

Given the consistent stylistic and lifestyle choices that Katniss makes throughout the series, her sudden aesthetic “locking” (drawing on Dargis’s terms) into a long-established stereotype of maternal femininity in a pastoral scenery makes the series’ conclusion look forced and artificial—almost as if it were one last propaganda clip that the protagonist has been coerced to star in, similar to those arranged by Snow and Coin but now selling the virtues of a nuclear family life. The *mise-en-scène* can be related to the “retreatist” postfeminist self-recovery narratives that Diane Negra describes as characteristic of early 21st-century popular fiction like the *Desperate Housewives* TV series (Marc Cherry, 2004-2012): one which “trades on a notion of feminism as rigid, serious, anti-sex and romance, difficult and extremist” to celebrate “the pleasure and comfort of (re)claiming an identity uncomplicated by gender politics”, often through a “romanticizing alibi” and “hometown fantasy” that evades the pressing “social and economic realities” that disproportionately impact on women (2009, 2, 46). If Katniss owns the discourse (she delivers the last lines in the series and owns the historical narrative) and the privileged perspective (the camera stays by her while she observes Peeta playing with their older son), could she not have kept her customary androgynous style as a mother of two in a wilder setting closer to her pre-maternal preferences for woods and lakes and her unruly personality?

This sudden aesthetic redefinition of the protagonist in the series’ epilogue does not cancel out, though, the eco-feminist discourses she embodies throughout the four films. As Peter Brooks states in *Reading for the Plot*, it is in the middle part of the plot, not in its “acquiescent” beginning or end, where “the narratable” happens: a prolific middle ground in which tensions and deviations from the norm can be explored before the final resolution takes place (1992, 96, 103-109). Celestino Deleyto, for his part, argues against readings of romantic comedy that concentrate

excessively on the happy ending convention while overseeing the “variety, contradiction and complexity” found in the middle of film narratives (2011, 3). Drawing on Brooks and Deleyto, it is in the very long middle part of the series where the potential of Katniss’s eco-feminist agency develops and meets its obstacles (political opponents and moral choices), emerging as a cosmopolitan alternative to material and patriarchal political cultures regardless of the more conventional pastoral finale. Moreover, the ending remains true to the the-personal-is-political premise that informs the protagonist’s politics all through the series. Katniss’s invocation of the harrowing past she has survived and the fact that she shares care duties with Peeta challenge de-politicised readings of the protagonist’s family life (as those in De Lissovoy et al. 2017 and Tompkins 2018). Bringing up and educating children in egalitarian democratic values is a political task too: “the invisible infrastructure sustaining a world of putatively self-investing human capitals” in the society the “homo oeconomicus”, as Brown puts it (2015, 106-107); “the ground zero of revolution”, according to Silvia Federici, for a “politics that doesn’t separate the time of political organizing from that of reproduction” (2019, 196, 5).

On the other hand, the tension between the eco-feminist cosmopolitanism that Katniss embodies throughout the series and her retrotopian aesthetic redefinition in the epilogue is illustrative of the sociocultural context of the series: one at crossroads between the global emergence of inclusive, ecological and cosmopolitan politics (as articulated by late 2010s global social movements (5.1.)), and the resilience of long-standing patriarchal, neoliberal and nationalist politico-economic cultures (as illustrated in the discourses of first-line world leaders like US President Donald Trump and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, among others). The two political trends respond differently to the global post-recession context and the ecological risks

of climate change, and they both display the close interconnection of gender, economics and utopia in their respective political agendas and methods. As Lucy Sargisson puts it,

[f]or some, utopia is interpreted as desiring the death of politics and the end of change, in return for which it offers perfection. I have suggested that this can be read in terms of masculine economics of social exchange, and that the perfect gift of death which is the blueprint utopia be rejected in favour of the more difficult and slippery, open-ended vision which contemporary feminist utopianism represents. (1996, 230)

As far as gender politics is concerned, the Hollywood industry of the 2010s stands at this crossroads too. This decade has witnessed the rise of collective anti-abuse initiatives sponsored by women in the film industry like “Time’s Up” and #MeToo, projects like Geena Davis’s “Institute on Gender in Media” for the research of women’s underrepresentation in the movies, public denounces of unequal payment to female actors by stars like Jennifer Lawrence (Lawrence 2015) and vindictive award speeches for gender inclusion by actors such as Meryl Streep, Frances McDormand, Oprah Winfrey and Patricia Arquette, among others. At the same time, self-governing female leads have notably proliferated across genres in cinematic texts: in science-fiction movies like *Interstellar*, *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Gravity* and *Arrival* (Denis Villeneuve, 2016); superhero and adventure titles like *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (J.J. Abrams, 2015), *Wonder Woman* (Patty Jenkins, 2017), *Captain Marvel* (Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, 2019) and *Alita* (Robert Rodriguez, 2019); action thrillers like *Lucy* (Luc Besson, 2014), *Atomic Blonde* (David Leitch, 2017) and *Red Sparrow* (Francis Lawrence, 2018); comedies like *Frances Ha* (Noah Baumbach, 2012), *The Heat* (Paul Feig, 2013), *Lady Bird* (Greta Gerwig, 2017), *I, Tonya* (Craig Gillespie, 2017) and *Long Shot* (Jonathan Levine, 2019); Disney films such as *Brave* (Mark Andrews and Brenda Chapman, 2012), *Frozen* (Chris Buck and

Jennifer Lee, 2013) and *Moana* (Ron Clements and John Musker, 2016); teen dystopias like *Divergent* (Neil Burger, 2014) and *The Hunger Games* series; biopics such as *Denial* (Mick Jackson, 2016), *Hidden Figures* (Theodore Melfi, 2016) and *Harriet* (Kasi Lemmons, 2019); and dramas like *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (Martin McDonagh, 2017), *Phantom Thread* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 2017) and *Widows*. Independent female protagonists also star in many contemporary TV series such as *Top of the Lake* (Jane Campion and Gerard Lee, 2013, 2017), *Big Little Lies* (David E. Kelley, 2017-2019), *Fleabag* (Phoebe Waller-Bridge, 2016-2019), *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Sharp Objects* (Marti Noxon, 2018), *Killing Eve* (Phoebe Waller-Bridge, 2018-) and *Euphoria* (Sam Levinson, 2019-).

Yet, as Helen Warner and Heather Savigny note, although growing numbers of female-led top grossing films might prompt celebratory readings, these movies “remain the exception” and their treatment in the press “reveals longstanding cultural anxieties and ambivalence towards women” (2015, 112-113, 128). According to “The Geena Benchmark Report: 2007-2017”, male leads vastly outnumbered female leads (71.3% compared to 28.8%) in the top 100 grossing family films released in that decade despite the facts that women represent half of the film-going population and gender diversity has proved to translate into higher box office revenues (Geena Davis Institute 2019a). Besides, women in top-grossing films of 2014 and 2015 consume roughly a half of the speaking time of male characters (Geena Davis Institute, n.d.), and gender stereotypes prove to be resilient: female characters are six times more likely than male characters to be shown in revealing clothing (27.3% compared to 4.6%), while male characters are more likely to be shown as violent (44.0% compared to 24.5%) and criminal (29.9% compared to 17.0%) in the top 100 grossing films of 2018 (Geena Davis Institute 2019b). As exposed by the figures above, patriarchal

cultures continue to prevail in the movies, but the trend for gender parity is upward—female leads reach the 39.1% and account for 36% of speaking time in the year 2018 (Geena Davis Institute 2019b).

Within this cinematic panorama, the rebellious female character Katniss Everdeen might be particularly fit to embody the intersectional egalitarian targets sponsored by Hollywood actors and social activists in the last decade. If Sigourney Weaver's Ripley in *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979) and Linda Hamilton's Sarah Connor in *The Terminator* “were vessels of maternal rage, grown-ups weaponizing their protective instincts” (Scott and Dargis 2012), Katniss represents an awakening political actor that brings maternal and ecological care ethics into the public political terrain. In Dargis's view, Katniss is “an American Eve, battered, bruised and deeply knowing” that, unlike the optimistic and innocent “American Adam” national archetype, “scrambles through a garden not of her making on her way to a new world”, inhabiting “a new kind of frontier that is a dystopian nightmare but one that has its utopian moment (...) in that race and gender stereotypes have become seemingly irrelevant” (Dargis 2012). Drawing on this idea, Katniss can be defined as a cosmopolitanised secular Eve, rather than American, for the space of democratic possibility she helps bring forward in Panem traverses the borders imposed (geographic, political, gender, racial, economic) and breaks with a long-standing patriarchal legacy that situates women as vehicles for male-led religious, cultural and socio-political discourses and goals. Rather than asking for an equal share of power in plutocratic ecocidal systems like the mature female leaders played by Julianne Moore, Jodie Foster, Patricia Clarkson and Kate Winslet in the dystopian worlds of *The Hunger Games*, *Elysium*, *The Maze Runner* and *Divergent* (filmic representatives of “the equal opportunity domination” Arruzza et al. argue against (2019)), Katniss

embodies a renovated feminism tied to cosmopolitan imaginaries—ecological and egalitarian—that seeks to transform socio-political cultures.

Recent scholarship has noted the growing eco-social awareness and political commitment enacted by young film protagonists like Katniss Everdeen in 2010s cinema and how they target the sensibilities and utopian aspirations of new generations of viewers. For Elissa H. Nelson “franchise teen films” like *The Hunger Games* series blend teen movies’ conventions with the epic heroic journeys of high-concept blockbusters, casting coming-of-age heroes “needing to balance personal growth along with being saviours and the hope for a better world” (2017, 132-133). Analysing the franchise’s fairy-tale plot in relation to the post-2008 recession context, Dorothy Noyes explores, for her part, how the series retrieves collective concerns and “models for action” that were central to nineteenth-century oral fairy-tales (those thought for “peasant cooperatives, unions and mass emigration in times of scarcity”), but which later declined in favour of individualist concerns—social mobility, free choice, self-fulfilment and recognition, among others—in the “mass-produced fairy tales” of capitalist and liberal Western societies (2015, 4, 10-15, 21). Similarly, Mark Fisher reads the proliferation of political “Young Adult Dystopias” like *The Hunger Games* in the post-crisis years—and following *Harry Potter*’s and *Twilight*’s magic and vampire series—as indicative of a cultural shift experienced by a generation that was “asked to accept that its quality of life will be worse than that of its parents” but who is now awaking to “revolutionary consciousness” (2012, 27-29). Whereas initially, Fisher argues, Katniss and Peeta “think like slaves, taking it for granted that the Capitol’s power cannot be broken”, the protagonists’ threat of suicide against one-victor Game rules and the districts’ resistance articulate the incipient emergence of a politically engaged “Multitude” rising against the “Empire”, drawing on Hardt and

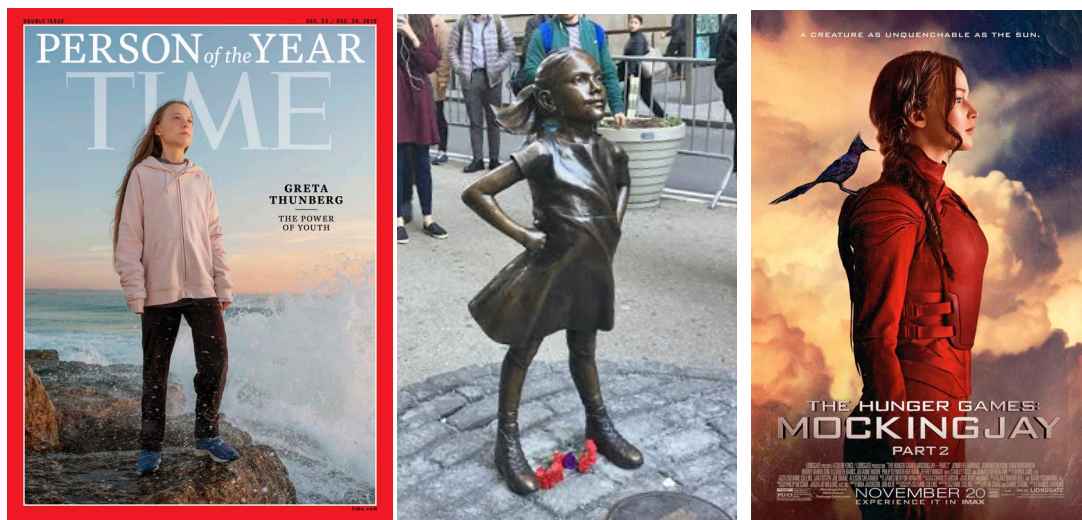
Negri's terms (2004). Fisher states that, in comparison to the "fatalism" of *Never Let Me Go* (Mark Romanek, 2010) and the utopian hesitation of the ending of *In Time*, *The Hunger Games* points at the insurrectionary world of solidarity that could be about to replace a decayed neoliberal dystopia (2012, 30-33).

If, as Noyes argues, the fairy tale—"the story of a young person who leaves a problematic home, encounters tests and obstacles, accomplishes a task, and is recognized, rewarded, and installed in a new home"—is "our touchstone for articulating the normative life course of the individual" (2015, 4), Katniss's rebellious eco-feminist politics would address and speak of a youth for which eco-social welfare and egalitarianism are tied to personal growth and wellbeing. This is a new generation of political actors emerging simultaneously in the social activist sphere (Parvu, Mason, Castells) and the cinematic (Nelson, Noyes, Fisher) who are unwilling to think, act, imagine and plan the future through an inherited politics of exclusion. Katniss's political commitment challenges the divides between identity and class politics, the personal and the political, the local and the cosmopolitan, the ecological and the social, the moral and the political. She is a young female confronting a repressive patriarchal socio-political structure, but also a low-class deprived citizen exploited by the Capitol's oligarchic elites. She is concerned with the wellbeing of her closest District 12 relatives and friends, but also cares for acquaintances made across borders, natural habitats, and unknown citizens as those she propels to rebel against Snow. Her non-utilitarian political choices always follow moral deliberations on the potential effects of strategies that, though pursuing a just end, put people's lives at risk. "A creature as unquenchable as the sun", as *The Mockingjay-Part II* poster refers to the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen defies a plethora of hegemonic socio-political

paradigms at once in the name of intersectional conceptions of equality and justice similar to those defended by late 2010s global social movements (5.1.).

In fact, drawing on the “symbiotic” relation between social performance and professional performance (Enelow 2016), Katniss Everdeen’s self-reflection, solidarity, resistance, self-sacrifice and caring commitment to others’ wellbeing is reminiscent of the young ecological activist Greta Thunberg’s persona, who has been named 2019 “Person of the Year” by *Time* magazine. Their Spartan relations with material goods (Everdeen dislikes the Capitol’s excessive consumption in the same way as Thunberg censures polluting consumerism) and their voluntary downsizing (Katniss renounces the power of first-line politics while Thunberg has given up flights for their contaminating effects) exemplify ecological values contrary to fossil capitalist growth. Their reserved behaviours differ from the bravado of male leaders like Snow and Trump, and their honest succinct deliveries contrast with the pompous manipulative rhetoric of some political leaders. Taken as “a barometer of cultural modes, themes, and ideas”, as Enelow proposes (2016), Lawrence’s restrained acting style in *The Hunger Games* series shows, in ways similar to Thunberg’s speeches in international summits, anxiety about the inherited state of affairs, familiarity with lasting crises and wariness of unreliable political bodies whose games are not willing to buy. Still, rather than hopeless resilience, Everdeen’s and Thunberg’s grave gestures, emotional courage and stubborn vindications convey the long-run resistance and cosmopolitan determination necessary to make the world fairer, greener and more promising to future generations. Holding their heads up and looking obstinately at fairer horizons ahead (as represented in film posters and magazine covers), these eco-feminist leaders call for a major shift of political focus that, like the bronze *Fearless Girl* (Kristen Visbal) facing the *Charging Bull* sculpture (Arturo Di Modica) in

Manhattan's Financial district, frontally defies the given patriarchal and ecocidal Establishment (figures 121, 122 and 123). However, unlike the “corporate feminism” that funded the *Fearless Girl* sculpture's installation the day before the 2017 International Women's Day (it was commissioned by a financial services company to promote an index fund of gender diverse companies with higher numbers of women on directing boards than usual (Zacks 2017)), Everdeen and Thunberg call for an eco-feminist politics that renounces neoliberal logics.



Figures 121, 122 and 123. Fearless girls and the promising potential of eco-feminism: Greta Thunberg, the *Fearless Girl* sculpture, and Katniss Everdeen

As Sara K. Day, Miranda A. Green-Bartlett and Amy L. Montz argue on rebellious adolescent womanhood in recent dystopian young adult literature, Katniss Everdeen's “Future Girlhood” illustrates “the potential of liminality as a path to empowerment” that the “New Woman” type embodied in the early 20th century with her transgression of gender norms and the personal/public divide (Day et al. 2014, 2). Like her predecessors, the “Future Girl” aims to define her identity and agency beyond social limitations attached to gender and age, but she also aims to “recreate” society, making it “more egalitarian, more progressive, and ultimately, more free”

(Day et al. 2014, 3). Katniss Everdeen calls for the concomitant regeneration of patriarchal gender roles and ecocidal myths of progress that science fiction writer Joanna Russ argued for in her 1972 essay “What Can a Heroine Do?”:

Our traditions, our books, our morals, our manners, our films, our speech, our economic organization, everything we have inherited, tell us that to be a Man one must bend Nature to one’s will—or other Men. This means ecological catastrophe in the first instance and war in the second. To be a Woman, one must be first and foremost a mother and after that a server of Men; this means overpopulation and the perpetuation of the first two disasters. The roles are deadly. The myths that serve them are fatal. Women cannot write—using the old myths. But using new ones—? (1995, 93)

Illustrating how much a 21st-century eco-feminist film heroine can do, Katniss’s “Future Girl” eventually represents the utopian potential of an intersectional cosmopolitan politics forged across the rigidities of inherited single-focus prisms (class, gender, racial, national) and beyond the dialectics of exclusion, competition and exploitation that have grounded patriarchal ecocidal progress so far: a “politics of the multiple” that is performed by cooperative networks in *The Hunger Games* series and many other 2010s movies, as will be argued in the last section.

5.2.3. The Politics of the Multiple: Cooperative Networks United in Diversity

Further than gender equality, questions related to social diversity and the inclusion of discriminated identities gained momentum in the movies during the decade in which the first African-American President of the United States, Barack Obama, took office (2009-2017). Global social movements occupied squares across the world, and private experiences of abuse and bigotry entered vigorously the political and cultural public arenas (5.1., 5.2.). Claiming the role played by identity politics in the development of egalitarian societies, many fact-based films released in the 2010s revisit biographical

stories of social exclusion on the grounds of race—*The Butler* (Lee Daniels, 2013), *12 Years a Slave* (Steve McQueen, 2013), *Fruitvale Station* (Ryan Coogler, 2013), *Selma* (Ava DuVernay, 2014), *A United Kingdom* (Amma Asante, 2016), *Loving* (Jeff Nichols, 2016), *Detroit* (Kathryn Bigelow, 2017) and *BlacKkKlansman* (Spike Lee, 2018); sexuality—*Milk* (Gus Van Sant, 2008), *Dallas Buyers Club* (Jean Marc Vallée, 2013) and *The Danish Girl* (Tom Hopper, 2015); gender—*Suffragette* (Sarah Gavron, 2015) and *Bombshell* (Jay Roach, 2019); or a combination of the latter, as in the case of the female African-American mathematicians in *Hidden Figures* and the African-American homosexual pianist in *Green Book*. Concurrent to the proliferation of non-mainstream film survivors (3.3.3., 4.2.) and self-governing female protagonists (5.2.2.), the biographical films above illustrate that the cinema of the 2010s openly acknowledges and seeks to overcome historical legacies of social segregation and discrimination.

Many 2010s films also vindicate cosmopolitan outlooks able to trace intersectional collaborative connections among miscellaneous identity categories, as seen in the large number of diverse cooperative networks in cinematic casts. Diverse cooperative networks celebrate the common benefits involved in collaboration across social differences in joint fights against: plutocratic elites—*The Hunger Games* series, *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Snowpiercer*, *The Purge: Anarchy* (James DeMonaco, 2014); wicked corporations—*The Matrix* trilogy (1999-2003), *The Maze Runner* series (2014-2018); and pandemics—*Children of Men*, *28 Weeks Later*, *Blindness*, *Bird Box*. Even cinematic superheroes and villains who used to act in the most secret loneliness seem to enter more crises when isolated—*The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008), *Birdman* (Alejandro G. Iñárritu, 2014), *Joker* (Todd Phillips, 2019)—, while becoming more powerful as part of cooperative alliances in films like *The Avengers*

(Joss Whedon, 2012), *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (Bryan Singer, 2014), *Guardians of the Galaxy* (James Gunn, 2014) and *Suicide Squad* (David Ayer, 2016). In the knowledge that battles are better fought when united, women of different races and social backgrounds join forces against common threats in *The Keeping Room* (Daniel Barber, 2014) and *Widows*, as happens with the Irish female convict and Aboriginal male tracker who come together against a cruel English officer in the colonised Australia of *The Nightingale*. At the end of this film, as the sun rises on the open sea horizon while the two protagonists sing together in their respective native languages on the beach, their aching chants for their brutally repressed cultures and slaughtered families invoke a single call for human justice that aspires to cosmopolitan futures lived in peace and dignity. The scene's soundtrack and mise-en-scène stress the promising potential of the crossbreed dialogical alliance the two characters have forged across allegedly alien identities. Echoing the coordinated strategies of contemporary global social movements, these film cooperative networks assert that the demarcation lines among social groups that used to defend their respective rights for equality in isolation are progressively blurred within common intersectional fights for justice also in the cinema of the 2010s.

Although most of these films privilege the perspective of one or two of the characters over the rest of the group, a reading of 2010s film cooperative networks under the light of María del Mar Azcona's analysis of early twenty-first-century multi-protagonist films (2010) illustrates a shift in cinematic approaches to interconnected global societies. As an alternative to the single-hero structure, Azcona describes how ensemble casts and multi-sided narratives in multi-protagonist thrillers such as *Traffic* (Steven Soderbergh, 2000) and *Syriana* (Stephen Gaghan, 2005) offer a wider complex cinematic canvas where to approach the clashing interests, risks and

anxieties “that come with living in a bondless world” regulated by intricate power connections which characters “hardly understand and over which they have no control” (2010, 130, 139). In *Syriana*, Azcona notes, viewers are offered no privileged ideological perspective, but multiple, at times incompatible, subject positions within a society that is looked upon from the pessimistic prism typical of the thriller genre, and which is unequivocally constructed as male despite the global dimension of the themes invoked (132, 137, 143). Beyond the thriller, Azcona explores how ensemble casts in films like Alejandro González Iñárritu’s *Amores Perros* (2000) and *Babel* (2006) highlight the paradoxical coexistence of complex social connections and disjunctions in an early-century global world that, though apparently shrinking, has ever increasing socio-economic gaps and provides citizens with limited agency and control over their own lives (2010, 142). As Deleyto and Azcona claim in their book on Alejandro González Iñárritu, *Babel*—a transnational multiprotagonist production that tells four non-simultaneous transnational stories set in three different continents (Africa, North America and Asia)—“became an almost literal example of global cinema” that illustrates “the cultural relevance of the concept of the border, in its material and metaphoric dimensions” (2010, xi-xii). Through the scrambled juxtaposition of different locations and timelines, the film portrays an “intricate worldwide tapestry” woven by “huge divisions and close connections among human beings across the globe” (Deleyto and Azcona 2010, 53).

In spite of the films’ narrative and generic differences, a comparison of the posters of *Syriana* and *Babel*, on the one hand, and the series of posters for *The Mockingjay - Part 2*, on the other, illustrates the cosmopolitan turn that 2010s film cooperative networks have undertaken regarding global interconnectedness in the course of a decade. As Azcona asserts, George Clooney’s blinded C.I.A. agent in the

poster of *Syriana* (figure 124) depicts the “conscious detachment from and ignorance of inconvenient facts or events” performed by the “no longer heroic inhabitants” of a ruthless global order where “everything is connected” (as the tagline reads in reference to the film’s obscure plot links among Persian Gulf oil resources, Chinese companies, Pakistani immigrants and U.S. secret agents) (2010, 127-8). *Babel*’s film poster, for its part (figure 125), structures the graphic space in five separate horizontal bands that display the different protagonists and geographic locations in the film. The slightly tilted letters that make up the film’s title, written vertically across the photographic bands, erect an unbalanced central pillar that seems to hold the graphic pieces precariously together over the word “listen”. The fated finale of the Biblical tower, the composition hints at, might be avoided if the different actors are able to trace the close human links they need to survive in remote yet connected corners of the world.



Figures 124 and 125. The risks and complexities of global interconnectedness: disorientation, detachment, inequalities and borders in the posters of *Syriana* and *Babel*

Meanwhile, in the series of posters of the last movie in *The Hunger Games* series (figure 126), the translucent red Mockingjay war paint over the frontal close-ups of a network of rebels coming from across the districts and the Capitol signals

their joint political commitment to a universal cause (the democratic conversion of Panem), and their shared cosmopolitan values despite dissimilar upbringing contexts, races and genders. The sided captions on each poster make subject variations preceding the verb “unite”—such as “brothers unite”, “sisters unite”, “husbands unite”, “soldiers unite”—next to the logo of rebel District 13 and over the film’s tagline “The revolution is about all of us”. Despite the fact that this motto is a line Coin delivers, it is Katniss’s dialogical eco-feminist politics that eventually materialises its cosmopolitan aspirations, bringing forward the celebration of free elections and Panem’s conversion into a federal democracy. Rather than non-heroic or disoriented, as the protagonists in *Syriana* and *Babel*, the characters’ bold gazes and daring expressions evoke heroic resistance and political determination. Social connection among diverse individuals features here as a political opportunity for an eye-opening intersectional alliance forged across the district borders that empowers the oppressed 99% and helps them fight for equal rights more effectively. The red mockingjay paint works in the posters as an inclusive cosmopolitan lens that has been willingly adopted by the rebels. Thus, if early twenty-first-century multi-protagonist films portrayed individuals “as part of a network plagued by forces beyond their control” in a global society where concepts like freedom and individualism needed to be rekindled “in terms of our interconnectedness at all levels” (Azcona 2010, 142, 145), cooperative networks in 2010s films like *The Hunger Games* series perform the inclusive and collaborative reformed political cultures required to bring forward fairer cosmopolitan societies—an agenda that is morally necessary and possible to achieve, according to the franchise.



Figure 126. A cosmopolitan turn: cooperative networks united in diversity in the posters of *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay—Part 2*

The series' diverse cast and their collaborative performance put forward a politics of inclusion and cooperation that, as argued by Parvu in relation to recent global movements, recognise “both difference and interconnectedness” (2017, 786-787). As far as diversity is concerned, there is a wide array of female characters occupying chief positions across the rebel faction (Katniss, Coin, Commander Paylor, film director Triss and Lieutenant Jackson). Although white characters are a clear majority in the series, black characters like Rue, Boggs and Cinna figure among Katniss’s most loyal companions, and it is Paylor, a black female from the poor districts, who becomes the elected President of Panem after “marching” into the Capitol, as she puts it—thus evoking the 1963 March on Washington where Martin Luther King delivered the historic “I Have a Dream” speech for racial inclusion. As opposed to Snow’s patriarchal plutocratic despotism and eugenic conception of social progress (“nothing says perfection as white”, he claims looking at his roses), Paylor embodies crossbreed cosmopolitan futures grounded in intersectional conceptions of justice and inclusive democratic principles, which handicapped rebel allies like

Beetee (Jeffrey Wright) and tongueless Pollux (Elden Henson) evoke too. The franchise also celebrates empathic relations forged between individuals with different worldviews and lifestyles, such as the friendship that Effie and Katniss develop. Against the competitive Darwinism that informs the Hunger Games and the Capitol's apartheid politics, disinterested cooperative solidarity beyond the family and tribal communities is endorsed from the moment a gentle old woman gives Katniss the mockingjay pin she will later be known for. As Katniss does when volunteering for her sister Prim, characters like stylist Cinna and old rebel tribute Mags put their lives at risk to protect the protagonist and give the revolution a chance. Teamwork, for its part, is the strategy that enables tributes to effectively defy the Capitol's repression in the Games' arena and that allows Katniss to survive the final battle against Snow. The protagonist's collaborative circles expand progressively: first, she cooperates with Rue and Peeta in the 74th edition of the Games and then, in the Quarter Quell, she takes part in a larger inter-district rebel alliance.

The success of the diverse rebel coalition in the film series illustrates the political potential of self-organising horizontal networks similar to those social movements have enacted in "the Internet age" (Castells 2012). As Richard Sennett defends in *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation*, the series portrays cooperation as a "craft" to nourish in a multi-dimensionally diverse society of great inequalities where individuals are called to withdraw to themselves or homogenise differences according to the economic interests of a global consumer culture (2013, 7-8). "The cooperative frame of mind", as described by Sennett and portrayed in *The Hunger Games* franchise, is grounded in "responsiveness to others" and a willingness to act together in everyday life beyond tribal dialectics, embracing the complexities that cohabit within societies and individual selves and managing

potential conflicts dialogically and empathically; that is, recognising, respecting and trying to understand differences (Sennett 2013, 3-6, 18-21).

The series' use of space endorses the border-crossing inclusiveness and dialogic cooperation enacted by the protagonists in contrast to Snow and Coin's dialectical and hierarchical conception of politics. The two despots detach themselves from the people they govern in the elitist palace chambers of the Capitol and the panoptic underground headquarters of District 13 respectively. From the isolation of their office desks and the bird-eye centralised perspective of megalomaniac stages, they devise vertically enforced political blueprints unconcerned with specifics and disagreeing postures. Instead, Katniss and her allies conform, from the down-to-earth prism of the Games' arena and first line of combat, horizontally coordinated decentralised strategies they voluntarily commit to. Enclosure—spatial and ideological—is rejected in the series in favour of the opening of borders, the cooperation among the different and open-ended democratic processes.

Drawing on Gerard Delanty's *The Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Social Theory*, the cooperative political strategies enacted by those originally called to be enemies in the Games' arena represent "critical" post-universal articulations of cosmopolitanism distinct to the picturesque "superficial cosmopolitanism" that Capitol citizens embody and the elitist mobility their high-speed train symbolises (2009, 36, 253). The cosmopolitan cooperative networks in the film series perform dialogical encounters with Others that involve self-transformation, a "fusion of horizons" (Delanty 2009, 253) and, eventually, the political formation of a common cosmopolitan federal democracy (figure 127). Overcoming the fear of the different that Snow exploits to his benefit ("they are coming to destroy our way of life", he warns in a broadcasted message when the rebels enter the Capitol), Katniss's

“cosmopolitan alliance” illustrates how globalisation dynamics establishes, as Delanty argues, the preconditions for the development of “the cosmopolitan imagination”. Even if social encounters initially take place in a Darwinist arena under surveillance (that of the Hunger Games and neoliberal globalisation), the sustained contact with Others can bring about the relativisation of one’s position in the world, the questioning of existing borders and political alternatives to market definitions of global society (Delanty 2009, 250-3, 261-2).

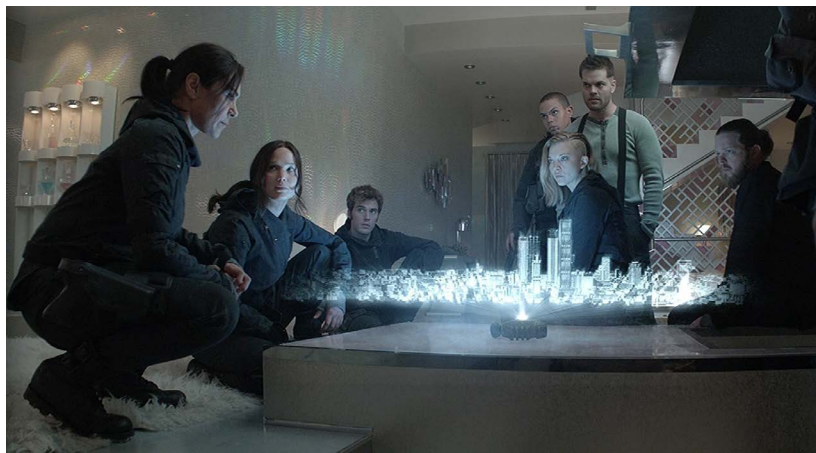


Figure 127. A dialogical “fusion of horizons”: Lieutenant Jackson discusses the occupation of the Capitol with her team, using a holographic map

“We need to stop seeing each other as enemies”. This sentence, a response by rebel tribute Beetee to Coin’s vengeful plan to re-stage the Hunger Games with Capitol youngsters, hints at the cooperative and affective socio-political shift necessary to make the world of Panem a better place. In opposition to the sterile surfaces of the Capitol’s buildings and Coin’s and Snow’s spotless outfits and detached behaviours, affective bonds with others and the environment are highlighted throughout the series in close-ups of caressing hands, hugs between friends and dirty fingers in contact with soil. The protagonist is willing to “stain” herself by getting in direct touch with the reality around, ready to take risks if necessary to care for the

wounded rebels and eager to learn from others. Even if Katniss's focalisation prevails, the series also prompts viewers to share other characters' perspectives such as Rue's (whose death is presented by means of a point-of-view shot of tree leaves fading to white), and to understand the reasons behind specific behaviours (as in the moment Katniss learns that Coin lost her daughter and husband during a smallpox epidemic or when she listens to Cato lament how he was raised to kill others in the arena). Affect for the different and a desire to comprehend others should guide the dialogical cooperative politics of the future, the franchise suggests. Violent attitudes, even when motivated by a just and urgent cause, should be avoided. Unlike the 2005 film *V for Vendetta*, which celebrates the allure of revolutionary dialectics, charismatic leaders and violent actions, the Capitol's grotesque festive display of human deaths during the Games in the first two movies of the series, and the remarkably sombre representation of the rebellion in the last two *Mockingjay* films, censure war, cruelty and aggression. Rather than a violent escapist spectacle for spectators whose "docility and indifference" reminds of the Hunger Games Capitol audiences (Keller 2013, 40), or "a cruel, brutal film for an era of dead dreams" (Dixon 2012), *The Hunger Games* film series advocates for an alternative to the politics of uncaring exclusion, fear of the Other and aggressive competition.

United in diversity, the series' cooperative networks articulate a renovated cosmopolitan conception of politics that connects with the intersectional demands made by contemporary global social movements, and which displays many of the methodological shifts international philosophers have called for in the recent years. It is a politics, in the first place, grounded on affective relations—"a love-infused compassion" used as "vehicle of political principles", as Martha Nussbaum proposes in *Political Emotions* (2013, 313). While recognising difference and individual

liberties, the characters' cooperation unequivocally invokes a "politics of the common good", which, as theorised by Michael J. Sandel, cultivates community bonds and solidarity, seeks distributive justice beyond market interests and attends to cultural disagreements in its search for a shared just society (2009, 261-9). It is also "a politics of optimism and hope", as Daniel Innerarity calls it (avoiding the "utopian" concept as synonym of impossible ideal and naivety), which "makes the future its fundamental task" on the principle of "intergenerational justice", and from the assumption of our responsibility to care for a "fragile" human life, planet and polis (2012, 6, 14-15). The series' diverse and rebellious cooperative networks agree with Innerarity's call for a "repoliticized" future that demands "wide-ranging perspectives", "institutional innovation" and "collective learning and deliberation", in a complex world of interdependent actors that challenges "the heroic as a source of legitimacy or mobilization", dialectical disagreements and absolute certainties in favour of "democratic pluralism" and "civilized management of disagreements" over public interests (Innerarity 2012, 19-22, 53-54, 90-93). Politics, Innerarity asserts, "is not a guarantee of unity but a champion of difference" (2012, 95). As a cosmopolitan hero for the 21st century, Katniss Everdeen embodies the dialogical and horizontally flattened "post-heroic" politics Innerarity advocates, one which learns from the "disappointed hopes" of failed "messianic visions" of the past (represented by communist and neoliberal projects in the series (5.2.1.)) and moves beyond apocalyptic closure with "cautious" democratic hopefulness (2012, 125).

Katniss's eco-feminist leadership and the cooperative intersectional alliance she takes part in emancipate from territorial, patriarchal, material and dialectical methods to endorse "the politics of the multiple". That is, drawing on Michel Serres's vindication of "the multiple" as a new object for philosophy in *Genesis*, the series

calls for a form of politics that moves beyond the unit, taxonomies, single-principled systems and redundancy to accommodate and integrate diversity, multiplicity, plurality and open processes (1995, 2-3, 73, 137-8). As Serres puts it, “reason makes use of concepts, under whose unities are sheltered multiplicities that are most often highly dispersed” (1995, 3). Like the networked activists of global social movements (5.1.), the diverse cooperative network in *The Hunger Games* series rebels against this taxonomic rationalism to bring forward a cosmopolitan politics by and for the multiple—a revolution that is “about all of us”, hence one in which we are all encouraged to engage.

Conclusion

At the time of writing this conclusion, I am facing the third week of the home confinement imposed by the Spanish government to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Countries such as Italy, Russia, France, India, United Kingdom, Argentina, Ruanda and the United States have also told their citizens to shelter. This means that one third of the global population is under coronavirus lockdown at the moment. The quarantine of whole regions, the interruption of international air travel, and the closing of schools, universities, stores, restaurants, libraries, museums and cinemas, among many other “non-essential” services, has brought daily life to a halt of undetermined duration. The worldwide outreach of the pandemic and its paralysing effects on the economy echo the impact of world wars in history books. The ever-growing data of infected world citizens and casualties, mostly elderly, is desolating, while the prospect of collapsed health systems and future epidemics is terrifying. This global dystopian panorama, totally unexpected some weeks ago, seems to be the plot of one of the films analysed in this thesis. Sadly, it is not. Yet, as sociologist Ruth Levitas argues (2013), it is in critical situations like this when utopia—conceived as a holistic sociological method to analyse our global social order and propose alternatives for its transformation according to ecological and inclusive principles—is most needed.

The coronavirus is a global challenge for the whole of the human species—one that is already present in streets around the world. In this highly interconnected global society, contagion is crossing borders at ease, reaching all the continents and affecting individuals regardless of their birthplace, gender, ideology, class, occupation or ethnic background. It is a highly democratic disease, it could be argued. Yet, as is

usually the case, economic resources can enable better access to health services (especially in countries with weak public sanitary systems) and more or less comfortable home quarantines. The emptiness of public spaces in densely populated global cities like New York is an unprecedented image, yet one familiar to global cinematic viewers of post-apocalyptic movies like *Children of Men*, which, as analysed in chapter three, explores the ecological threats humanity faces and calls for cosmopolitan cartographies of the global. Our shared vulnerability to the COVID-19 pathogen can be read under the light of Ulrich Beck's (2009), Michel Serres's (2015) and Zygmunt Bauman's (2017) theories about a time of global risks and crises that demands cosmopolitan solutions. The simultaneous home confinement of billions of citizens, who are finding out on the Internet how the virus makes its way across the world, is one more networked experience in the Information Age described by Manuel Castells (2010). Given the foreseeable long-lasting impact of this disease on the social, cultural, economic and political global arenas, the present pandemic might become a fundamental episode for the consolidation of cosmopolitan worldviews—one that, hopefully, will prompt us to nourish the cosmopolitan imagination, future-oriented politics and utopian social thinking that Gerard Delanty (2009), Daniel Innerarity (2012) and Ruth Levitas (2013) explore in their writings.

This thesis has argued that twenty-first-century films such as *Children of Men*, *The East* and *The Hunger Games* series, among others, articulate cosmopolitan hopes, philosophies and political discourses similar to those formulated by the scholars above and 2010s global social movements. These contemporary texts and social practices also contend that, even if ecological and egalitarian worldviews are defining many cultural, academic and social expressions, as explored in the previous chapters, cosmopolitan awareness is still to take hold at the institutional level. Rather than

ensuring that peoples and habitats can put up with the extractive performance and social inequalities of neoliberal globalisation, the films above suggest that the world must be re-arranged according to cosmopolitan, cooperative and dialogical ethics. The global dystopian backgrounds and personal crises that the characters in these movies confront illustrate the unfair, non-sustainable eco-social effects of hegemonic paradigms of thought and action—neoliberal, patriarchal, dialectical and territorial. But the protagonists have a say in these matters. Separating from the anti-utopian bias of late twentieth-century cinema, the films above celebrate the transformative potential of utopian resistance and nurturing modes of being, re-vindicating utopia as a cosmopolitan method for the development of inclusive and sustainable world futures.

The cosmopolitan imaginaries articulated in contemporary movies can also be read as a corollary of transnational film productions and global cinematic audiences. In February 2020, shortly before the coronavirus disease paralysed the world, *Parasite* (Bong Joon Ho, 2019) became the first non-English language film to win “Best Picture” in the 92nd Academy Awards—a cosmopolitan milestone for a global cinematic industry that, though still dominated by Hollywood, has seen transnational productions become the norm rather than the exception. This South Korean movie also won accolades in the categories of “Best International Feature Film”—no longer “Foreign”—, Best Original Screenplay and Best Director. *Parasite* is a film about the class inequalities and competitive relations that capitalism promotes. Its title refers to the parasitical dependent roles that the destitute family in the movie are forced to play, while working as servants in a rich household, in order to thrive in a neoliberal global society whose alienating economised philosophy we have come to accept as normal.

As happens in *Parasite*, other films such as *Get Out* (Jordan Peele, 2017), *Ready or Not* (Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett, 2019), and *Knives Out* prompt viewers to look at the senseless prejudices and immoral rules of conduct of arrogant economic elites. At the same time, these movies call spectators to side with those suffering the most the bigotry and Darwinist logics of the Establishment: an African-American meeting his white supremacist in-laws in *Get Out*; a newlywed brought up in foster homes forced to endure her in-laws' hunting ritual during her wedding night in *Ready or Not*; and a nurse of a wealthy novelist, and daughter of an illegal migrant, bullied by the writer's offspring after being named sole testamentary heir of his fortune in *Knives Out*. Like *Children of Men*, *The East*, *The Hunger Games*, *Roma* and many other twenty-first-century films, the late 2010s movies mentioned above speak against established social hierarchies and inequalities. In ways similar to non-mainstream film survivors such as those in *American Honey* and *Moonlight*, the young protagonists in *Get Out*, *Ready or Not*, and *Knives Out* do well in their respective survival ordeals when they dare defy narratives of exclusion and oppression. On the contrary, the basement of the rich household that the father in *Parasite* still secretly inhabits at the end of the movie comments on his compliant entrapment in a system regulated by extractive logics insensible to human needs and hopes of inclusion. From their particular generic configurations, these late 2010s films seem to be asking viewers to reflect on how longer we are willing to accept the dialectical philosophies of exclusion and containment that have grounded "progress" for centuries. Most significantly, they place utopian possibilities outside the enclosed and economised frameworks that the morally corrupted oligarchic elites in the films represent. Untying utopia from neoliberal upward mobility myths, these movies wed

hope to the inclusion of the Other—destitute, black, woman or migrant—and to social configurations guided by solidarity and care.

In a time of global quarantine, when borders have been useless to deter the spread of the coronavirus and elites are not immune to the disease, the parasitical might offer, after all, a constructive allegory of the cosmopolitan methods and solutions we need to explore. Before Bong Joon Ho's 2019 film, *The Parasite* (*Le Parasite*) is also the title of a book Michel Serres published in 1980. This work holds that parasitism—that is, guest-host “intersubjective” symbiosis—is the relational system under which humans operate as a species and relate to the habitat: “We parasite each other and live amidst parasites” (1982, 7-10). Serres highlights the interdependencies of individuals within the diverse collectives that make up reality (what he calls “the multiple” in *Genesis* (1995), as explained in the analysis of cooperative networks in *The Hunger Games* franchise), and he stresses the value of dissenting elements inscribed within the norm for the introduction of novel perspectives that bring about evolution (the deviant “meanders” mentioned in chapter four in relation to *The Revenant*). If subject-to-object dialectical hierarchies (national-to-foreign; man-to-woman; white-to-black; coloniser-to-slave; rich-to-poor; and humans-to-Nature; among others) have brought about wars, inequalities and ecological damages so far, while they have proved ineffective to contain global threats like climate change and the COVID-19 disease, the guest-to-host parasitical dialogics that Serres endorses might be more useful to tackle the cosmopolitan challenges ahead.

Although the parasite metaphor has rarely enjoyed cultural prestige (since it is usually found in the form of vampires, aliens or pests), host-guest nurturing interdependences can also be explored, as analysed in chapters three, four and five,

from the methodological perspective offered by: cosmopolitan theory (the self-transforming encounter with the Other theorised by Delanty and illustrated by Theo in *Children of Men*); ecological philosophies (as those Jane embodies in *The East* and Serres defends in *Times of Crisis*); or eco-feminism (as articulated by Jennifer Lawrence's protagonist in *The Hunger Games* series and 2010s global activists). Rather than hiding from the perils of togetherness and diversity through enclosed social frameworks—such as individualism, tribalism, nationalism, white supremacism, neoliberalism or patriarchy—, the movies and theories analysed in this thesis suggest we should embrace and learn from Otherness, care for each other and the environment, acknowledge our interdependence and vulnerability, and commit, jointly, to egalitarian and sustainable progress. As Levitas contends, this cosmopolitan reconstitution of society will only be possible if we believe it to be possible and engage together in its formulation. That is, if we commit to utopia as a cosmopolitan method.

As illustrated in *The Farewell*, the process of cosmopolitan openness undergone by cultural practices, the economy, information channels, urban spaces and mobile individuals in the last three decades has brought about many changes whose complexity needs narrative frameworks and perspectives of its own—distinct to those of historical moments that could still be narrated through the family unit and the nation mostly, and alternative to the economised account that neoliberal globalisation offers. This film tells the story of Billi (Awkwafina), a young female New Yorker of Chinese descent that travels to China to attend a fake wedding her relatives have arranged. The ceremony intends to put the family back together one last time before Billi's grandmother, who has been diagnosed with a terminal cancer, passes away. For Billi, who moved to New York with her parents as a child, the journey back to her

“homeland” is a bittersweet re-encounter with her beloved grandma, Nai Nai (Shuzhen Zhao), and the memories she holds of a country whose spaces, habits and language now feel foreign to her. The journey helps Billi come to terms with the impossibility of keeping cultural roots and memories intact, and to accept the in-between condition that her migrant experience grants. That is, to face the passing of time, spatial mobility and difficulties with “an open mind”, as her grandma advises: “Don't be like a bull hitting his horns all over the walls of the room. Life isn't just about what you do, it's more about how you do it”. At the end of the movie, the farewell of the title is not really so, as the grandma does not die as diagnosed. This unexpected happy ending prompts viewers to keep an open mind and a utopian approach, as Nai Nai advises, to the difficulties that our cosmopolitan condition, which Billi embodies in the movie, will surely bring. Rather than enclosing ourselves in walled hostility (like the bull in Nai Nai's metaphor) or hiding trouble (as they try to do with the fake wedding in the film), we should acknowledge cosmopolitan interdependence and care about doing things right together.

As many of the twenty-first-century films explored in the previous chapters, *The Farewell* holds that the cosmopolitan is not to be seen as a tragedy to fight, a loss to mourn, or a risk to evade. Instead, contemporary films argue, it is a reality that we need to analyse from dialogical prisms; one we must take responsibility for through utopian—yet political—action; and which we have to improve by means of inclusive and ecological methods. A cosmopolitan way of looking at and understanding the world is already consolidating in combination with utopian discourses, as articulated in contemporary films, theories and social movements. Now this utopian cosmopolitanism must solidify at the institutional realm too. The responses to the coronavirus crisis will determine whether our political bodies take the way of the bull

raging against the wall, or decide to develop the cooperative cosmopolitan solutions that cosmopolitan challenges demand. Let's hope for the best, and work together to see it happen, for many lives depend on it.

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Films and Television Series

12 Years a Slave (Steve McQueen, 2013)

127 Hours (Danny Boyle, 2010)

2001: A Space Odyssey (Stanley Kubrick, 1969)

2012 (Roland Emmerich, 2009)

20th Century Women (Mike Mills, 2016)

28 Weeks Later (Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, 2007)

400 Blows, The (*Les quatre cents coups*, François Truffaut, 1959)

Adam's Rib (George Cukor, 1949)

Aeon Flux (Karin Kusama, 2005)

African Queen, The (John Huston, 1951)

Air Force One (Wolfgang Petersen, 1997)

Akira (Katsuhiro Ôtomo, 1988)

Alcohol and Its Victims (*Les victimes de l'alcoolisme*, Ferdinand Zecca, 1902)

Alien (Ridley Scott, 1979)

Alita (Robert Rodriguez, 2019)

All I Desire (Douglas Sirk, 1953)

All that Heaven Allows (Douglas Sirk, 1955)

All the President's Men (Alan J. Pakula, 1976)

Alphaville (Jean-Luc Godard 1965)

America, America (Elia Kazan, 1963)

American Beauty (Sam Mendes, 1999)

American Honey (Andrea Arnold, 2016)

American Psycho (Mary Harron, 2000)

Amores Perros (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2000)

Another Earth (Mike Cahill, 2011)

Apocalypse Now (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979)

Armageddon (Michael Bay, 1998)

Arrival (Denis Villeneuve, 2016)

Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat (*L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*, Auguste Lumière and Louis Lumière, 1895)

Atomic Blonde (David Leitch, 2017)

Avatar (James Cameron, 2009)

Avengers, The (Joss Whedon, 2012)

Babel (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006)

Baby's Dinner (*Le repas de bébé*, Louis Lumière, 1895)

Badlands (Terrence Malick, 1973)

Barry Lyndon (Stanley Kubrick, 1975)

Basic Instinct (Paul Verhoeven, 1992)

Basketball Diaries, The (Scott Kalvert, 1995)

Battle of Algiers, The (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966)

Battleship Potemkin (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)

Beach, The (Danny Boyle, 2000)

Beatriz at Dinner (Miguel Arteta, 2017)

Berlin: Symphony of a Great City (*Berlin-Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*, Walter Ruttmann, 1927)

Best Years of Our Lives, The (William Wyler, 1946)

Big Little Lies (David E. Kelley, 2017-2019)

Big Parade, The (King Vidor, 1925)

Bird Box (Susanne Bier, 2018)

Birdman (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2014)

Birds, The (Alfred Hitchcock, 1963)

Birdy (Alan Parker, 1984)

Birth of a Nation, The (D.W. Griffith, 1915)

Black Christmas (Bob Clark, 1974)

BlacKkKlansman (Spike Lee, 2018)

Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982)

Blade Runner 2049 (Denis Villeneuve, 2017)

Blindness (Fernando Meirelles, 2008)

Blue Velvet (David Lynch, 1986)

Bombshell (Jay Roach, 2019)

Bonnie and Clyde (Arthur Penn, 1967)

Book of Eli, The (The Hughes Brothers, 2010)

Born in Flames (Lizzie Borden, 1983)

Born on the Fourth of July (Oliver Stone, 1989)

Brave (Mark Andrews and Brenda Chapman, 2012)

Brazil (Terry Gilliam, 1985)

Breathless (À bout de souffle), Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)

Bridges of Madison County, The (Clint Eastwood, 1995)

Bridget Jones's Diary (Sharon Maguire, 2001)

Broken Blossoms (D.W. Griffith, 1919)

Bunny Lake is Missing (Otto Preminger, 1965)

Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid (George Roy Hill, 1969)

Butler, The (Lee Daniels, 2013)

Cannibal Holocaust (Ruggero Deodato, 1980)

Cape Fear (Martin Scorsese, 1991)

Captain Fantastic (Matt Ross, 2016)

Captain Marvel (Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, 2019)

Captain Phillips (Paul Greengrass, 2013)

Carmencita (William K.L Dickson, 1894)

Catwoman (Pitof, 2004)

Changeling, The (Peter Medak, 1980)

Chariots of Fire (Hugh Hudson, 1981)

Children of Men (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006)

Chinatown (Roman Polanski, 1974)

Christine (John Carpenter, 1983)

Circus, The (Charles Chaplin, 1928)

Clear and Present Danger (Phillip Noyce, 1994)

Client, The (Joel Schimacher, 1994)

Clockwork Orange, A (Stanley Kubrick, 1971)

Close Encounters of the Third Kind (Steven Spielberg, 1977)

Cloverfield (Matt Reeves, 2008)

Cocktail (Roger Donaldson, 1988)

Color of Money, The (Martin Scorsese, 1986)

Conspiracy Theory (Richard Donner, 1997)

Conversation, The (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974)

Cool Hand Luke (Stuart Rosenberg, 1967)

Crash (David Cronenberg, 1996)

Crowd, The (King Vidor, 1928)

Cruising (William Friedkin, 1980)

Cry in the Dark, A (1988)

Cube (Vincenzo Natali, 1997)

Dallas Buyers Club (Jean Marc Vallée, 2013)

Dances with Wolves (Kevin Costner, 1990)

Danish Girl, The (Tom Hopper, 2015)

Dark City (Alex Proyas, 1998)

Dark Knight Rises, The (Christopher Nolan, 2012)

Dark Knight, The (Christopher Nolan, 2008)

Dawn of the Planet of the Apes (Matt Reeves, 2014)

Day After Tomorrow, The (Roland Emmerich, 2004)

Day of the Jackal, The (Fred Zinemann, 1973)

Days of Heaven (Terrence Malick, 1978)

Dead Poets Society (Peter Weir, 1989)

Death Watch (Bertrand Tavernier, 1980)

Deer Hunter, The (Michael Cimino, 1978)

Defiant Ones, The (Stanley Kramer, 1958)

Deliverance (John Boorman, 1972)

Deluge (Felix E. Feist, 1933)

Demain (Cyril Dion and Mélanie Laurent, 2015)

Demolition (Jean-Marc Vallée, 2015)

Denial (Mick Jackson, 2016)

Desperate Housewives (Marc Cherry, 2004-2012)

Detroit (Kathryn Bigelow, 2017)

Dirty Dozen, The (Robert Aldrich, 1967)

Dirty Harry (Don Siegel, 1971)

Divergent (Neil Burger, 2014)

Dog Day Afternoon (Sidney Lumet, 1975)

Don't Look Back (D.A. Pennebaker, 1967)

Downsizing (Alexander Payne, 2017)

Dr. Strangelove or How I Learned To Love the Bomb (Stanley Kubrick, 1964)

Dream and Reality (*Rêve et réalité*, Ferdinand Zecca, 1901)

Dressed to Kill (Brian De Palma, 1980)

Duel (Steven Spielberg, 1971)

East of Eden (Elia Kazan, 1955)

East, The (Zal Batmanglij, 2013)

Easy Rider (Dennis Hopper, 1969)

Edge of Tomorrow (Doug, Liman, 2014)

Elysium (Neill Blomkamp, 2013)

End of The World, The (*Verdens Undergang*, August Blom, 1916)

Enemy of the State (Tony Scott, 1998)

Escape from New York (John Carpenter, 1981)

Euphoria (Sam Levinson, 2019-)

Evil Dead, The (Sam Raimi, 1981)

eXistenZ (David Cronenberg, 1999)

Exorcist, The (William Friedkin, 1973)

Fahrenheit 451 (François Truffaut, 1966)

Farewell, The (Lulu Wang, 2019)

Fatal Attraction (Adrian Lyne, 1987)

Fences (Denzel Washington, 2016)

Ferris Bueller's Day Off (John Hughes, 1986)

Fifth Element, The (Luc Besson, 1997)

Fight Club (David Fincher, 1999)

Fight Club, The (David Fincher, 1999)

Firm, The (Sydney Pollack, 1993)

First Reformed (Paul Schrader, 2017)

Five (Arch Oboler, 1951)

Five Easy Pieces (Rob Rafelson, 1970)

Fleabag (Phoebe Waller-Bridge, 2016-2019)

Florida Project, The (Sean Baker, 2017)

Fly, The (David Cronenberg, 1986)

Fog, The (John Carpenter, 1980)

For A Few Dollars More (Sergio Leone, 1965)

Forrest Gump (Robert Zemeckis, 1994)

Frances Ha (Noah Baumbach, 2012)

French Connection, The (William Friedkin, 1971)

Friday the 13th (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980)

Frozen (Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee, 2013)

Fruitvale Station (Ryan Coogler, 2013)

Fugitive, The (Andrew Davis, 1993)

Full Metal Jacket (Stanley Kubrick, 1987)

Game, The (David Fincher, 1997)

General, The (Clyde Bruckman and Buster Keaton, 1926)

Get Out (Jordan Peele, 2017)

Gloria (John Cassavetes, 1980)

Godfather II, The (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974)

Godfather, The (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972)

Gold Rush, The (Charles Chaplin, 1925)

Gone with the Wind (Victor Fleming, 1939)

Good Son, The (Joseph Ruben, 1993)

Good, the Bad and the Ugly, The (Sergio Leone, 1966)

Gorillas in the Mist (Michael Apted, 1988)

Graduate, The (Mike Nichols, 1967)

Grapes of Wrath, The (John Ford, 1940)

Gravity (Alfonso Cuarón, 2013)

Great Escape, The (John Sturges, 1963)

Great Train Robbery, The (Edwin S. Porter, 1903)

Greed (Erich von Stroheim, 1924)

Green Book (Peter Farrelly, 2018)

Guardians of the Galaxy (James Gunn, 2014)

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner (Stanley Kramer, 1967)

Halloween (John Carpenter, 1978)

Hand that Rocks the Cradle, The (Curtis Hanson, 1992)

Handmaid's Tale, The (Bruce Miller, 2017-)

Happening, The (M. Night Shyamalan, 2008)

Harriet (Kasi Lemmons, 2019)

Heat, The (Paul Feig, 2013)

Hidden Figures (Theodore Melfi, 2016)

Hills Have Eyes, The (Wes Craven, 1977)

History of a Crime (Histoire d'un crime, Ferdinand Zecca, 1901)

Hombre (Martin Ritt, 1967)

Hud (Martin Ritt, 1963)

Hunger Games, The (Gary Ross, 2012)

Hunger Games: Catching Fire, The (Francis Lawrence, 2013)

Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 1, The (Francis Lawrence, 2014)

Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 2, The (Francis Lawrence, 2015)

Hunger, The (Tony Scott, 1983)

Hustler, The (Robert Rossen, 1961)

I am Legend (Francis Lawrence, 2007)

I Origins (Mike Cahill, 2014)

I Spit on Your Grave (Meir Zarchi, 1978)

I, Tonya (Craig Gillespie, 2017)

If... (Lindsay Anderson, 1968)

Immigrant, The (Charles Chaplin, 1917)

Impossible Voyage, The (Voyage à travers l'impossible, Georges Méliès, 1904)

Impossible, The (J. A. Bayona, 2012)

In the Heat of the Night (Norman Jewison, 1967)

In Time (Andrew Niccol, 2011)

Independence Day (Roland Emmerich, 1996)

Inferno (Dario Argento, 1980)

Insider, The (Michael Mann, 1999)

Interstellar (Christopher Nolan, 2014)

Into the Forest (Patricia Rozema, 2015)

Intolerance (D.W. Griffith, 1916)

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Don Siegel, 1956)

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Philip Kaufman, 1978)

It's A Wonderful Life (Frank Capra, 1946)

Jaws (Steven Spielberg, 1975)

Johnny Guitar (Nicholas Ray, 1954)

Johnny Mnemonic (Robert Longo, 1995)

Joker (Todd Phillips, 2019)

Jurassic Park (Steven Spielberg, 1993)

Keeping Room, The (Daniel Barber, 2014)

Kes (Ken Loach, 1969)

Killing Eve (Phoebe Waller-Bridge, 2018-)

Killing of a Sacred Deer, The (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2017)

Knives Out (Rian Johnson, 2019)

Kramer vs. Kramer (Robert Benton, 1979)

La Cecilia (Jean-Louis Comolli, 1975)

La Jetée (Chris Marker, 1962)

La La Land (Damien Chazelle, 2016)

Lady Bird (Greta Gerwig, 2017)

Last House on the Left, The (Wes Craven, 1972)

Last Laugh, The (F.W. Murnau, 1924)

Last Picture Show, The (Peter Bogdanovich, 1971)

Last Tycoon, The (Elia Kazan, 1976)

Leave No Trace (Debra Granik, 2018)

Lilies of the Fields (Ralph Nelson, 1963)

Long Shot (Jonathan Levine, 2019)

Lost Horizon (Frank Capra, 1937)

Loveless (Andrey Zvyagintsev, 2017)

Loving (Jeff Nichols, 2016)

Lucy (Luc Besson, 2014)

Mad Max (George Miller, 1979)

Mad Max 2 (George Miller, 1981)

Mad Max: Fury Road (George Miller, 2015)

Magnificent 7, The (John Sturges, 1960)

Magnificent Obsession (Douglas Sirk, 1954)

Man with a Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, 1929)

Manchester by the Sea (Kenneth Lonergan, 2016)

Marathon Man (John Schlesinger, 1976)

Marnie (Alfred Hitchcock, 1964)

Martian, The (Ridley Scott, 2015)

Matewan (John Sayles, 1987)

Matrix, The (The Wachowskis, 1999)

Maze Runner, The (Wes Ball, 2014)

Mean Streets (Martin Scorsese, 1973)

Medium Cool (Haskell Wexler, 1969)

Meet Me in St. Louis (Vincente Minnelli, 1944)

Melancholia (Lars Von Trier, 2011)

Memento (Christopher Nolan, 2000)

Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1927)

Midnight Cowboy (John Schlesinger, 1969)

Milagro Beanfield War, The (Robert Redford, 1988)

Mildred Pierce (Michael Curtiz, 1945)

Milk (Gus Van Sant, 2008)

Misery (Rob Reiner, 1990)

Mission, The (Roland Joffé, 1986)

Mission: Impossible (Brian De Palma, 1996)

Moana (Ron Clements and John Musker, 2016)

Moonlight (Barry Jenkins, 2016)

Mosquito Coast, The (Peter Weir, 1986)

mother! (Darren Aronofsky, 2017)

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (Frank Capra, 1939)

My Life to Live (*Vivre sa vie*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1962)

My Neighbour Totoro (Hayao Miyazaki, 1988)

My Own Private Idaho (Gus Van Sant, 1991)

Nanook of the North (Robert J. Flaherty, 1922)

Natural Born Killers (Oliver Stone, 1994)

Net, The (Irwin Winkler, 1995)

Network (Sidney Lumet, 1976)

Never Let Me Go (Mark Romanek, 2010)

Night Moves (Arthur Penn, 1975)

Night of the Living Dead (George A. Romero, 1968)

Nightingale, The (Jennifer Kent, 2018)

Nineteen Eighty-Four (Michael Radford, 1984)

No Blade of Grass (Cornel Wilde, 1970)

OA, The (Zal Batmanglij and Brit Marling, 2016-2019)

Oblivion (Joseph Kosinski, 2013)

Okja (Bong Joon Ho, 2017)

Omega Man, The (Boris Sagal, 1971)

Omen, The (Richard Donner, 1976)

On the Beach (Stanley Kramer, 1959)

On the Town (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1949)

On the Waterfront (Elia Kazan, 1954)

Once Upon a Time in America (Sergio Leone, 1984)

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (Milos Forman, 1975)

Outbreak (Wolfgang Petersen, 1995)

Outsiders, The (Francis Ford Coppola, 1983)

Pacific Heights (John Schlesinger, 1990)

Panic in Needle Park, The (Jerry Schatzberg, 1971)

Panic in Year Zero! (Ray Milland, 1962)

Parallax View, The (Alan J. Pakula, 1974)

Parasite (Bong Joon Ho, 2019)

Passengers (Morten Tyldum, 2016)

Patch of Blue, A (Guy Green, 1965)

Paterson (Jim Jarmusch, 2016)

Patriot Games (Phillip Noyce, 1992)

Phantom Thread (Paul Thomas Anderson, 2017)

Piano, The (Jane Campion, 1993)

Pilgrim, The (Charles Chaplin, 1923)

Planet of the Apes (Franklin J. Schaffner, 1968)

Platoon (Oliver Stone, 1986)

Pleasantville (Gary Ross, 1998)

Plenty (Fred Schepisi, 1985)

Point Break (Kathryn Bigelow, 1991)

Poltergeist (Tobe Hooper, 1982)

Presumed Innocent (Alan J. Pakula, 1990)

Promised Land (Gus Van Sant, 2012)

Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)

Pulp Fiction (Quentin Tarantino, 1994)

Punishment Park (Peter Watkins, 1971)

Purge: Anarchy, The (James DeMonaco, 2014)

Rabid (David Cronenberg, 1977)

Rain Man (Barry Levinson, 1988)

Raisin in the Sun, A (Daniel Petrie, 1961)

Ready or Not (Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett, 2019)

Rebel Without a Cause (Nicholas Ray, 1955)

Reckless Moment, The (Max Ophüls, 1949)

Red Balloon, The (*Le ballon rouge*, Albert Lamorisse, 1958)

Red Sparrow (Francis Lawrence, 2018)

Repulsion (Roman Polanski, 1965)

Requiem for a Dream (Darren Aronofsky, 2000)

Reservoir Dogs (Quentin Tarantino, 1992)

Revenant, The (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2015)

Revolutionary Road (Sam Mendes, 2008)

Risky Business (Paul Brickman, 1983)

Road, The (John Hillcoat, 2009)

Roma (Alfonso Cuarón, 2018)

Room (Lenny Abrahamson, 2015)

Rosemary's Baby (Roman Polanski, 1968)

Rumble Fish (Francis Ford Coppola, 1983)

Safe (Todd Haynes, 1995)

Safety Last! (Fred Nymeyer, 1923)

Sandow (William K.L Dickson, 1894)

Saturday Night Fever (John Badham, 1977)

Scream (Wes Craven, 1996)

Se7en (David Fincher, 1995)

Selma (Ava DuVernay, 2014)

Shame (Steve McQueen, 2011)

Shape of Water, The (Guillermo del Toro, 2017)

Sharp Objects (Marti Noxon, 2018)

Shawshank Redemption, The (Frank Darabont, 1994)

Shoulder Arms (Charles Chaplin, 1918)

Signs (M. Night Shyamalan, 2002)

Silence of the Lambs, The (Jonathan Demme, 1991)

Silent Running (Douglas Trumbull, 1972)

Silkwood (Mike Nichols, 1983)

Single White Female (Barbet Schroeder, 1992)

Six Days Seven Nights (Ivan Reitman, 1998)

Sixth Sense, The (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999)

Snowpiercer (Bong Joon Ho, 2013)

Sophie's Choice (Alan J. Pakula, 1982)

Sound of My Voice (Zal Batmanglij, 2011)

Soylent Green (Richard Fleischer, 1973)

Speed (Jan de Bont, 1994)

Square, The (Ruben Östlund, 2017)

Star Wars: The Force Awakens (J.J. Abrams, 2015)

Starship Troopers (Paul Verhoeven, 1997)

Stepford Wives, The (Bryan Forbes, 1975)

Straight Time (Ulu Grosbard, 1978)

Strange Days (Kathryn Bigelow, 1995)

Straw Dogs (Sam Peckinpah, 1971)

Strike (Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1925)

Stronger (David Gordon Green, 2017)

Suffragette (Sarah Gavron, 2015)

Suicide Squad (David Ayer, 2016)

Sully (Clint Eastwood, 2016)

Sunrise (F.W. Murnau, 1927)

Survivalist, The (Stephen Fingleton, 2015)

Sweet Bird of Youth (Richard Brooks, 1962)

Syriana (Stephen Gaghan, 2005)

Take Shelter (Jeff Nichols, 2011)

Talented Mr. Ripley, The (Anthony Minghella, 1999)

Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, 1976)

Tenant, The (Le locataire) (Roman Polanski, 1976)

Terminator 2: Judgement Day (James Cameron, 1991)

Terminator, The (James Cameron, 1984)

Texas Chain Massacre, The (Tobe Hooper, 1974)

Thelma & Louise (Ridley Scott, 1991)

There's Always Tomorrow (Douglas Sirk, 1956)

They Shoot Horses, Don't They? (Sydney Pollack, 1969)

Thing from Another World, The (Christian Nyby, 1951)

Thing, The (John Carpenter, 1982)

Things to Come (William Cameron Menzies, 1936)

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri (Martin McDonagh, 2017)

Three Days of the Condor (Sidney Pollack, 1975)

THX 1138 (George Lucas, 1971)

Time of the Wolf (Le temps du loup) (Michael Haneke, 2003)

To Kill a Mockingbird (Robert Mulligan, 1962)

To Sir, with Love (James Clavell, 1967)

Tomb Raider (Simon West, 2001)

Toni Erdmann (Maren Ade, 2016)

Top Gun (Tony Scott, 1986)

Top of the Lake (Jane Campion and Gerard Lee, 2013, 2017)

Total Recall (Paul Verhoeven, 1990)

Traffic (Steven Soderbergh, 2000)

Trainspotting (Danny Boyle, 1996)

Tree Grows in Brooklyn, A (Elia Kazan, 1945)

Tree of Life, The (Terrence Malick, 2011)

Trip to the Moon, A (Le voyage dans la lune) (Georges Méliès, 1902)

Triumph of the Will, The (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935)

Truman Show, The (Peter Weir, 1998)

Tully (Jason Reitman, 2018)

Twelve Monkeys (Terry Gilliam, 1995)

Twister (Jan de Bont, 1996)

Uncle Tom's Cabin (Edwin S. Porter, 1903)

United Kingdom, A (Amma Asante, 2016)

V for Vendetta (James McTeigue, 2005)

Videodrome (David Cronenberg, 1983)

Visitors, The (Elia Kazan, 1972)

Wall Street (Oliver Stone, 1987)

War Game, The (Peter Watkins, 1966)

War of the Worlds (Steven Spielberg, 2005)

War of the Worlds, The (Byron Haskin, 1953)

Waterworld (Kevin Reynolds, 1995)

Weaving Sea and Wind (Teófila Palafox and Luis Lupone, 1987)

West Side Story (Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise, 1961)

What is Seen through a Keyhole (*Par le trou de la serrure*, Ferdinand Zecca, 1901)

Where to Invade Next (Michael Moore, 2015)

Wicker Man, The (Robin Hardy, 1973)

Widows (Steve McQueen, 2018)

Wild Bunch, The (Sam Peckinpah, 1969)

Winter's Bone (Debra Granik, 2010)

Wizard of Oz, The (Victor Fleming, 1939)

Wonder Woman (Patty Jenkins, 2017)

Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory (*La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon*, Louis Lumière, 1895)

World War Z (Marc Forster, 2013)

World, the Flesh and the Devil, The (Ranald MacDougall, 1959)

Written on the Wind (Douglas Sirk, 1956)

X-Men: Days of Future Past (Bryan Singer, 2014)

Yearling, The (Clarence Brown, 1946)

Zeitgeist: Addendum (Peter Joseph, 2008)