

The Allusive Auteur:
Wes Anderson and His Influences

By

Timothy Penner

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English, Film and Theatre
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg

Copyright © 2011 by Timothy Penner

Abstract

Writer, producer and director Wes Anderson's unusual and idiosyncratic films take place in world which seems to be entirely his own. Often anachronistic and highly stylized, the Andersonian universe looks like little else being shown in contemporary cinemas.

Yet, Anderson is also one of the most allusive filmmakers working today. Littered throughout his oeuvre are endless allusions to films, directors, authors and books which have had significant influence on Anderson as an artist. In fact, Anderson's films can only be fully appreciated when viewed through the lens of his many sources, since his films emerge as he carefully collects, compiles and crafts his many influences into a sort of collage.

In order to understand how this dichotomy operates in Anderson's work I examine the influence of several key directors, authors, and films. Through this study I show that one of the things that make Anderson unique is the very way in which he interacts with the sources to which he is alluding. It is his uncommon ability to weave homage and critique together which makes him a truly allusive auteur.

Acknowledgements

It is impossible to embark on any project of this sort without a great deal of guidance from those who have journeyed this road before. With that in mind I would like to thank my thesis advisor Dr. Jonah Corne, who despite taking me on quite late, provided invaluable advice and encouragement through numerous drafts and revisions. Thanks as well to Dr. Eugene Walz who offered a great deal of advice early on and proposed excellent questions as a member of my defence committee. Thank you to Dr. Kenneth MacKendrick, who served as the external member of my committee and whose questions and advice helped me to reshape some of the fundamental ideas within my thesis.

A special thanks to members of the University of Manitoba Film Department Dr. George Toles, who introduced me to the often daunting world of Robert Bresson in addition to many other great filmmakers, and Dr. Steve Snyder who first put the idea in my head that I could take on a project such as this. Thanks also to Dr. David Watt whose consistently positive advice kept me from falling into despair as I wandered through the many hurdles one must navigate on the way to a graduate degree.

Thanks are also in order for my family and friends, who despite an inability to always understand my obsessions, have offered a great deal of support and encouragement through many years of academic study. Finally, thank you to my wife, Jane, who in addition to offering every kind of support imaginable, is also one of the best researchers any graduate student could hope to be blessed with.

For Jane.
“She’s my Rushmore, Max.”

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract | i |
| Acknowledgements | ii |
| Table of Contents | iv |
| List of Figures | v |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 1 | |
| Scorsese, Bresson and Schultz | 15 |
| Chapter 2 | |
| Orson Welles, Francois Truffaut and the Reintegration of the Family | 46 |
| Chapter 3 | |
| White Whales, India and the Trap of Adolescence: Anderson's Adventure Cinema | 66 |
| Chapter 4 | |
| Suitcases, Strongboxes and the Spectre of Salinger | 90 |
| Conclusion | 106 |
| Works Cited | 110 |

List of Figures

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Figure 1.1..... | 24 |
| Figure 1.2..... | 33 |
| Figure 2.1..... | 52 |
| Figure 2.2..... | 52 |
| Figure 2.3..... | 54 |
| Figure 2.4..... | 54 |
| Figure 2.5..... | 59 |
| Figure 2.6..... | 60 |
| Figure 2.7..... | 61 |
| Figure 2.8..... | 62 |
| Figure 2.9..... | 63 |
| Figure 2.10..... | 63 |
| Figure 4.1..... | 98 |

Introduction

“Whenever I am getting ready to make a movie I look at other movies I love in order to answer the same recurring question: How is this done, again?”
Wes Anderson

A highly stylized conversation between three accomplices plays out in front of a grand European manor house. The dialogue is clichéd, something about a data processor, and ends with the explosion of a car bomb. Suddenly a director is heard calling cut from somewhere off screen and the full artifice of what we are viewing becomes clear. The sound of Georges Delerue’s “Le Grand Choral” drifts in on the soundtrack as the director, a slight man with long hair and a suit that seems a size too small, appears from behind a battery of cameras, monitors and other assorted film equipment. He calls out some instructions for his crew before turning his attention to the camera directly. He is about to give his audience a crash course on the art of making a film, but before he can get a full sentence out, he is interrupted by endless questions from actors, writers and technicians who need his approval on dialogue, props, technique and budget items. Finally, he offers his credit card to pay for an expensive helicopter shot before taking a seat on a large crane which elevates him high above the pandemonium of the film set.

This scene is from a 2005 commercial directed by and starring American director, producer and screenwriter Wes Anderson, which ran as part of the American Express “My Life, My Card” ad campaign. Despite being one of the more interesting TV spots to come out of the campaign (which also saw commercials from the likes of Martin Scorsese and M. Night Shyamalan) the ad reveals a great deal about how allusion operates in Anderson’s films because while the commercial is recognizably Andersonian,

the ad is a also masterful homage to French director Francios Truffaut's 1973 film *La Nuit American*.

Anderson is widely recognized for the unique nature of his films. His set design, costuming, camera movements, acting style, narrative form, musical choices and attention to detail all work together to create one of the most distinctive directorial approaches from an American director in many years. However, despite how singular his films seem, it is also the case that Anderson is one of the most highly referential directors working today. Littered throughout his oeuvre are endless allusions to films, directors, authors and books which have had significant influence on Anderson as an artist. This is not to say that his films are derivative or lazy, but rather that they are skilfully created pieces which depend on a framework made up of the filmmaker's influences. In fact, Anderson's films can only be fully understood and appreciated when viewed through the lens of his many sources, since his films emerge as he carefully collects, compiles and crafts his many influences into a sort of collage which then becomes his own. The notable traces of Martin Scorsese's idiosyncratic and highly stylized approach to filmmaking; of Robert Bresson's unusual acting style; of Orson Welles and Francois Truffaut's stories of familial decline; of Herman Melville's meandering storytelling and egomaniacal heroes; of George Steven's thirst for male adventure; and of J.D. Salinger's disenfranchised youth work to evoke the source material in order to create something new and uniquely Andersonian. The purpose of my thesis is to understand the way in which Anderson manages to tread the line between these two seemingly opposite methods since it is this balancing act which makes him a truly allusive auteur, a title only a handful of filmmakers have held.

In recent years a handful of critics have performed studies of Anderson's use of allusion, the results of which have run from interesting and well argued (Dyalan Govender's comparative study of *Moby Dick* and *The Life Aquatic*) to underwhelming (Mark Browning's book-length study of Anderson's films). What seems to be a constant theme of these studies, even amongst Anderson's admirers, is the idea that his use of homage is simply a matter of style over substance. For instance, Browning comes to the following conclusion about Anderson's use of allusion at the end of a chapter spent pointing out allusive connections:

In essence, Anderson is not evoking previous films in order to subvert, deny, critique, or compare them. He is gently riffing on previous work, in a tone of polite homage rather than irony, which may deepen our appreciation of his films if we spot the references but will not interrupt our understanding of them if we do not. (116)

It is my intention to counter this sort of surface level reading of Anderson's films by performing a deeper study of his use of allusion than has been done in the critical literature on Anderson thus far. I will show that Anderson uses allusion not just to align himself with the sources he is referencing but also as a means for critique. At times, these critiques fall in line with the criticisms the referents are making in their own works, but more interestingly Anderson's allusions also work to distance the director from those filmmakers, authors and works to which he is alluding, by questioning and undermining the validity of their worldviews. I will show how this dichotomy operates by examining the way in which Anderson adopts the visual coding, characterization styles and thematic concerns of earlier artists in order to weave a tapestry which becomes a unique film environment of both homage and critique.

I feel that it is important at this point to clarify my use of the term critique in regard to Anderson's way of operating. Oftentimes the word critique (within the realm of the arts) is reserved for works of criticism wherein an author creates a carefully argued evaluation of a given work of art. Anderson's allusions are not operating in the same way as these exhaustively detailed and meticulously documented essays; such an approach would be rather detrimental considering that he is, after all, a narrative filmmaker. The criticisms that Anderson levels through his films tend to be incorporated with a great deal of subtlety. When Anderson alludes to the work of Robert Bresson he is bringing to mind the earlier director's thematic and stylistic concerns in order to bring those ideas into his own film, in turn levelling Bresson's criticisms against his own time. Conversely, when Anderson highlights *Gunga Din* (1939), he does so to question the dangerous and unrealistic machismo on display in the film. Because these allusions lack the sort of overt argumentation that is common to a fully fleshed out critique, Anderson allows for a great deal more involvement from his audience who are encouraged to fill in the gaps that he leaves open. In a way, Anderson is only suggesting a criticism in order to force his audience to participate in asking the questions he is asking. Hence, although critique is not a perfect term for how Anderson's allusions operate, I will continue to employ it throughout this essay due to the lack of something more apt.

Additionally, it is important to establish what is meant by the word allusion, which can take on various meanings. To do this I will borrow from critic Wendell V. Harris who defined allusion as:

The evocation of a person, character, place, event, idea, or portion of a text through quotation (exact or approximate), implicit reference through similarity, explicit reference, or echo. Such evocation or suggestion is

intended to lead the reader to bring some aspect of the referent to bear at that point of the originating text. (10)

Allusions are common throughout literature and have been written about by theorists for many years. One literary figure whose use of allusion is well studied is poet and theorist T.S. Eliot whose poems “The Waste land” and “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” are laden with innumerable common and esoteric references to other works. These allusions are meant to complement the understanding of the themes that Eliot is exploring. In fact, although one can enjoy “The Waste Land” without knowing the many works it is alluding to, understanding the poem fully is far more difficult. In his literary criticism, Eliot espouses the belief that no text can be understood on its own but only makes sense in light of the many works that have gone before. In his seminal 1922 essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” Eliot writes that “no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead” (538). This idea is important when considering Anderson since both the characters and the themes found in his films expand greatly when viewed through the lens of allusion. This thesis, in fact, will be an exercise in setting Anderson “for contrast and comparison, among the dead.”

Despite the frequency of cinematic allusion, when compared to the wealth of critical work done on allusion in the field of literature, similar work in the academic study of film is scarce at best. However, there are a few rather insightful essays which deal with the use of allusion in American cinema from the late 1960s and ‘70s from which some important theories can be gleaned. Noel Carroll in his 1982 essay “The

Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (And Beyond)” persuasively describes the way in which many filmmakers of that decade used allusion as an expressive device in their movies. He writes:

[Allusions] are a means for projecting and reinforcing the themes and the emotive and aesthetic qualities of the new films. By referring to a film by Howard Hawks, contemporary filmmakers assert their possession of a Hawksian world view, a cluster of themes and expressive qualities that has been (ever so thoroughly and repetitiously) expounded in the critical literature; by such an allusion, the new filmmakers unequivocally identify their point of view on the material at hand and thereby comment, with the force of an iconographic symbol, on the ongoing action of the new film. Observing the same phenomenon from the opposite side of the screen, we can say that the invocation of the Hawksian world view serves as a privileged hermeneutic filter for informed film viewers, who can use it to bring into sharp focus the filmmaker's attitude or ethos. (53)

The sort of allusory filmmaking that is described here can be found in every era of filmmaking dating back to the earliest days of the silent cinema. In the late 1950s, for instance, when the French New Wave filmmakers exploded onto the international film scene, the clever inclusion of nods to earlier films and filmmakers became an important factor in a director’s attempt to prove his or her credibility as a viable filmmaker. Directors such as Jean-Luc Godard and Francois Truffaut would often recreate scenes from films they admired, sometimes going so far as to give cameos to actors or directors who were viewed as important. One needs only to view Godard’s first feature film *Breathless* (1960) to see references to numerous American Film Noir classics, French films he admired as well as many references to directors like Alfred Hitchcock and Jacques Rivette. Although Godard’s use of homage worked to impress those fellow cinephiles who watched the films with an eye for references, the allusions also worked in

the manner that allusions have for many centuries in literature, namely, to draw a connection between the two pieces of art.

The trend of self-conscious allusions made by filmmakers with vast knowledge of film history became prominent in America during the late 1960s. Directors such as Martin Scorsese, Peter Bogdanovich and Woody Allen, who had spent large portions of their formative years in cinemas before entering film schools as young men, began to make films which deliberately paid homage to other directors and literary figures which they admired. One can find references to filmmakers as varied as Ingmar Bergman and Charlie Chaplin all over Allen films like *Love and Death* and *Sleeper*. Some films such as Bogdanovich's *What's Up, Doc* (1972) borrow heavily from the films of Howard Hawks and Warner Bros. Cartoons. Scorsese, a crusader for the cause of film preservation, has woven images from films as far back as *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) into his movies. As the 1970s came to a close, so did the influence of the auteur filmmaker in Hollywood. With a few notable exceptions, it would be the early nineties before directors with a penchant towards allusion would regain prominence on American movie screens. A new generation of cinephiles, trained by film schools and VHS tapes, began to make movies which paid tribute to the films they loved. Directors such as Quentin Tarantino, the Coen Brothers and Wes Anderson began making films which, while highly original, are nonetheless the products of the vast number of movies these directors have ingested throughout their lives. According to critic Richard Blake, "today's directors, many of them coming out of film schools, are self-conscious historians of cinema. Their homages deliberately pay tribute to giants of the past. Like true postmodern artists, they rely upon earlier works as much as "reality" for their self-expression" (15). What is important to

this new generation of allusory filmmakers is not just quick nods to important films or traditions; rather, these directors allow the referents to comment on their films, while at the same time subverting the tropes and traditions found in the earlier works. When Tarantino has his character Mr. White in *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) echo a line from James Cagney's character in *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938) he does so to draw a connection to the tradition of mob movies which he working to subvert through his film. When the Coen Brothers recreate a scene from *The Big Sleep* (1946) in their similarly titled film *The Big Lebowski* (1998), it is a self-conscious attempt to draw a connection between their film and the Hollywood detective movies of the 1940s which they are emulating. It is no longer the case that a film has a Hawksian worldview or a Hitchcockian sensibility just because references to those directors appear in the movie. An overt allusion can be a signal of separation just as easily as it could be meant to create an association. This is certainly the case in Anderson's films where he manages simultaneously to show respect to his sources while questioning their validity and usefulness.

As a short example, consider how Anderson deals with Mike Nichols 1967 film *The Graduate* in his own film *Rushmore* (1998). Anderson borrows heavily from Nichols film through the use of similar narrative elements, thematic concerns and visual cues. The most obvious connection between the two films, besides the similar narratives about a young man in a relationship with an older woman, can be found in a shot of Harold Blume (Bill Murray) floating at the bottom of a swimming pool, not wanting to go back up to the surface where his ungrateful teenage sons are having a birthday party. The shot strongly echoes a similar one from *The Graduate* wherein Dustin Hoffman's character, Ben Braddock, lies at the bottom of his parent's pool dressed in a scuba outfit. The scene

(in *The Graduate*) is meant to represent the feeling Braddock has of being fully submerged under the weight of wealth, privilege and materialism. It is interesting that when Anderson chooses to evoke this scene it is not his hero who is submerged in a pool of materialism; rather, Anderson sinks Blume, the middle-aged industrialist, who remains completely unsatisfied despite his many successes. Anderson's protagonist, Max Fisher (Jason Schwartzman), although similar in some ways to Braddock, is a paragon of optimism by comparison, even given his numerous obstacles. It is Max that Anderson wants his audience to align themselves with, not Blume. Anderson's purposefully associates Blume with his allusions to *The Graduate* in order to personify Blume as a grown up Braddock figure in order to critique Nichols' idealization of the sort of disenfranchised youth culture that Braddock represents.

Although it is important to consider *The Graduate* when thinking about Anderson as an allusive filmmaker, it is also vital to understanding him as a personal filmmaker. After all, it is because of the profound personal connection Anderson has with Nichols' film that the movie looms so heavily over much of Anderson's tonal and stylistic choices. Since Anderson is first and foremost a personal filmmaker, I think it is important to understand something of Anderson the person, which will shed light on how he approaches the creation of his films and specifically how allusion finds its way into his storytelling. His films often include autobiographical elements which make their way into his films as anecdotes, thematic concerns and on occasion as a key component of the main narrative.

Anderson, who grew up in Houston, Texas, was an avid movie-watcher from a young age. Around age ten Anderson began making his own silent films using his father's Super-8 camera and some friends from his neighbourhood. "The movies included 'a study in a murder,' [Wes' brother] Eric recalled. 'The steps leading up to a murder, the murder itself, the aftermath, things like that. Very visceral moment-to-moment storytelling. They weren't that violent, but they were stylishly violent'" (Brody 52).

As an undergraduate, Anderson attended the University of Texas at Austin where he studied Philosophy amongst other things. There he met Owen Wilson who would go on to star in many of Anderson's films, as well as co-write the first three. The two became fast friends based on their mutual appreciation for film and a similar sense of humour. After graduation, Anderson took a job as a projectionist at a reparatory theatre while the pair collaborated on a script. Their work eventually yielded a short film titled *Bottle Rocket* that caught the attention of producer James L. Brooks when it appeared at the Sundance Film Festival. Under Brooks' mentorship, Wilson and Anderson hewed their gargantuan screenplay into what became Anderson's first feature. Of the writing process Anderson told Richard Brody of the *New Yorker* that:

He and Owen had filled it with 'things we've seen in movies that we like.' As a result, he said, 'it became a sort of choreographed thing. There were more comic set pieces, and other parts were just personal, from our own experience, and the movie took shape in a way that wasn't realistic. That made me free to say that the details can really be anything that feels right.' Brooks taught Anderson and Wilson how to pull their "details" together into a coherent script. (53)

This explanation of Anderson's method is extremely useful in finding a way to approach his films in terms of their use of allusion since it reveals how Anderson uses both his own life as well as art which he admires in order to craft his narratives. This can best be seen through Anderson's second film *Rushmore*, the story of a precocious young student who is kicked out his elite private school due to his overindulgence in extracurricular activities such as elaborate stage plays and clubs. The film was born out of both Anderson's experience of private school and a short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald. As a young man Anderson found himself attending a public school for a time where he continued (just like Max Fisher) to wear his private-school blazer. "Later, he transferred to the august, traditional St. John's Academy, where much of *Rushmore* was filmed" (Brody 52). The Fitzgerald story in question is entitled "The Captured Shadow" and deals with a prep-school student named Basil Lee who attempts to stage an elaborate play. Once we consider how the influence of *The Graduate* and Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* factor in, it is easy to see that *Rushmore* is a prime example of the way in which many of Anderson's films exist as a perfect coalescence of his own personal experiences and the films that have influenced him. It is as though Anderson's films are what comes about when his memories are projected through a filter made up of the cinema that has inspired him as a filmmaker.

Anderson also occupies an unusual place within the Hollywood system, as he manages to be both an insider and an outsider. In terms of popular film, Anderson would hardly be counted amongst the great financially successful filmmakers. He has yet to have a film which approaches the status of blockbuster, in fact some of his films have struggled to even make back their costs. Yet, due to his connections with high-profile

actors such as the Wilson brothers (Owen and Luke) as well as veritable Hollywood royalty like the Coppolas, Anderson has the support he needs to keep making films. Plus, his status as a prestige filmmaker, the sort of director who gets a great deal of plaudits from critics, means that many A-List actors will take pay cuts in order to work for him, which in turn gives studios the star power they require to produce his movies.

Interestingly, Anderson has come to this status in many ways through a series of accidents. His relationship with Owen Wilson, as I have stated, came about through a friendship in college. Anderson became friends with Sophia and Roman Coppola (the children of film legend Francis Ford Coppola) because he cast their cousin, a then unknown Jason Schwartzman, in his film *Rushmore*. Incidentally, Anderson found Schwartzman through an exhaustive, nationwide open casting call rather than through inside connections.

The dual nature of Anderson's reputation comes to bear quite often in the creation of his characters. Consider how often Anderson's characters find themselves in the liminal space between fame and obscurity: the faded glory of Tenenbaum children or Steve Zissou; Max Fischer's role as a well known, yet disliked figure at Rushmore Academy; or Mr. Fox's struggle between his adult responsibilities and his desire for the adventure and glory of his youth. Each of these characters reflect the discouraging, and always difficult terrain that Anderson navigates as a artistically minded auteur filmmaker working within the commercially driven Hollywood system.

Now that we've established a general understanding of how allusion operates in film; gained some insight into Anderson's penchant for both homage and critique; and

learned, through a biographical study, a little bit about how Anderson approaches filmmaking, we will move on to examine Anderson's films more closely through the lens of allusion. Rather than doing a chronological reading of each of Anderson's films, I have chosen to analyze his works using an approach that better reflects his role as an auteurist filmmaker. My chapters are broken into different influences, and I will drift between Anderson's six films, referring to specific scenes, shots, characters and themes as they pertain to the influence I am examining in any given chapter. Since Anderson often returns to ideas or themes throughout his oeuvre, I feel that it would be limiting and not in the best service of my topic to simply move linearly through his films.

It should be noted that the artists whose work I have chosen to examine in this thesis were deliberately chosen from dozens of others who Anderson often makes reference to. After all, a study of this nature could include directors such as Jean Renoir, Satyajit Ray, Mike Nichols, Hal Ashby, Louis Malle, and James Ivory; authors such as Jack Kerouac, Roald Dahl, Marcel Proust and F. Scott Fitzgerald; as well as personalities like Jacques Cousteau and Jacques Henri Lartigue. However, I have narrowed my focus in the way that I have because Anderson's complex interaction with the sources I have chosen exemplifies the unique way in which he manages to bury critique (whether a critique of the source, or a furthering of the source's own concerns) inside what appears to be innocuous homage.

In regard to the ordering of this study, I have chosen to begin by looking at the influence of Martin Scorsese, Robert Bresson and Bill Malendez/Charles Shultz because Anderson's interaction with them represents the more traditional practice of film allusion:

that is, as a tool for the alignment of worldviews. I then move on to consider cases where Anderson's allusions are used to critique the sources he is evoking. Finally, I examine the work of author J.D. Salinger in relation to Anderson in order to gain an understanding of the sort of complicated optimism that permeates Anderson's oeuvre.

Chapter 1

Scorsese, Bresson and Schultz

“What the hell kind of way to act is that?”
Royal Tenenbaum

As I have pointed out in the introduction, Anderson tends to use film references nearly as frequently as he uses personal stories when shaping his narrative, therefore the breadth of his film knowledge is an important factor when considering his use of allusion. Throughout numerous interviews it is clear that even Anderson’s speech is littered with film references. He often compares experiences in his life to events from films, or he will discuss his working method and approach to a scene in contrast to how someone like Hitchcock or Spielberg would work (Desplechin 211). He is also quite well-versed in film history, discussing certain directors, eras or movements in an almost scholarly manner. He has been known to opine over dinner about Truffaut’s sympathy for his characters (Kirschbaum NYT 1999) or how Jean Cocteau's *Les Enfants Terribles* was the true beginning of the French New Wave (Brody 52).

Interestingly, Anderson’s obsession with movies has grown due to his friendship with one of his biggest cinematic influences, Martin Scorsese (Desplechin 210). Scorsese, who declared Anderson’s debut film *Bottle Rocket* to be one of the top ten movies of the 1990s (Ebert), introduced Anderson to the work of filmmakers such as Michael Powell and Satyajit Ray, as well as to films like Jean Renoir’s *The River* (Kenny). However, despite the many viewing recommendations Scorsese has provided, his greatest influence can be seen through the prominent cinematic techniques Anderson has borrowed from the elder filmmaker.

One of Scorsese trademarks is his ability to articulate both violence and pathos with his expert use of music, whip pans, tracking shots, quick zooms, break-neck editing and slow motion. Arguably, how Scorsese shoots is as important to his movies as what he shoots.

Before closely examining a scene from Scorsese's film *Mean Streets*, I am going to discuss a technique which is integral to its construction, slow motion photography. Although slow motion is rather ubiquitous in filmmaking today, in 1973 when Scorsese released his film, the technique was still relatively new to American cinema. Its use as a method of articulating violence can be traced back to the Japanese director Akira Kurosawa who first included it in his film *Sugata* (1943) and a few years later, to even greater effect, in the highly influential *Seven Samurai* (1954). Kurosawa used the technique to accentuate the moments of violence and create a more stylized image of death. This technique arrived in America in the late 1960s through director Arthur Penn who borrowed Kurosawa's idea to add poignancy to the final shot of his film *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967). A few years later filmmaker Sam Peckinpah pushed Kurosawa's technique even further when he used slow motion to draw out the incredibly violent shootouts which took place at the beginning and end of his film *The Wild Bunch* (1969). From that film onward, slow motion photography became a staple of action filmmaking. To quote Stephen Prince "It is not an exaggeration to say that the device has now become a canonic structure of contemporary cinema, widely dispersed across a range of films and filmmakers on an international scale. The device has become an enduring rhetorical form, the essential rhetoric of contemporary movie violence" (341).

Interestingly, by 1973 it seems that Scorsese had already realized the clichéd nature of slow motion as a device for accentuating violence since his employment of the technique is wholly unique when compared to his contemporaries. Although Scorsese is known for his violent films, *Mean Streets* being no exception, he tends to speed up the film during violent sequences, or articulates the sequences with the sort of rapid fire editing that has become his signature. When Scorsese does employ slow motion it is usually meant to articulate relationships or character nuance, as can be seen in one of the more iconic shots from *Mean Streets*, wherein the two main characters watch each other from across a packed nightclub. The scene as directed by many other filmmakers might have played quickly and without significance, but Scorsese's unique approach makes this scene one of the finest set-pieces of the film.

In the scene we are witness to the first on screen meeting of Charlie, played by Harvey Keitel, and Johnny Boy, played by Robert De Niro. Johnny Boy is Charlie's friend, but their relationship is constantly strained by the former's irresponsibility. Charlie is constantly trying to protect his friend, but it is getting to the point where he is running out of options. Just prior to this scene Charlie is told by another gangster that Johnny Boy has not been paying his debts. Charlie, as usual, stands up for his friend, but even he knows that there is little more he can do. Scorsese accentuates the strain of this relationship through slow-motion tracking shots. Rather than simply watching Johnny Boy enter, we are forced to slowly take in his every action. We watch him move with an unmistakable swagger; we witness the careless glee exhibited on his face; we see the machismo of his handling of not one, but two young women; and most importantly we see no evidence of concern for the amount of trouble he is in. Nearly everything that will

be revealed about Johnny Boy's character is already present in this one shot. Throughout the film he will move with a glib indifference toward the danger he is in. Even in the moments when Charlie has to physically strike him, Johnny Boy responds with his signature smirk and lack of acceptance over the severity of his circumstances.

On the other side of the room Scorsese shows us Charlie, whose closely examined body language reveals the immense weight of responsibility he feels with regard to Johnny Boy. Charlie's face is the total antithesis of his friend's. Charlie's stance is rigid with one arm resting on the bar while the other is at his hip, his brow is furrowed and his mouth is clenched projecting a mix of anger, disappointment and annoyance as he watches his friend parade across the room. When Scorsese cuts back to Charlie after showing us Johnny Boy, we watch as he raises his glass to his mouth for a short, awkward sip of his drink before turning his back to the camera.

Scorsese further articulates a connection between the two characters by intercutting a shot of Tony, the bartender, at normal speed. The shift feels awkward and works to disrupt the pacing of the scene. By doing this Scorsese is emphasising the fact that this scene, and this film as a whole, is about the connection between these two men. The shot of Tony is Scorsese's way of letting his audience know that no matter who else he introduces throughout the film, these two men, and their relationship to each other, is paramount.

Scorsese's unique use of slow motion to articulate emotion could be called a sort of kinetic close-up in that he manages to achieve the ultimate goal of any good close-up while adding urgency by way of increased intensity (the result of active camera movement), which is difficult to achieve through the stasis often associated with a

traditional close-up. This urgency is achieved because the kinetic close-up allows the viewer to observe the face along with the added stimulus of the camera's movement. By making this move, the kinetic close-up can more effectively attract a viewer's attention while simultaneously focussing that attention on the performance of the actor. The increased interest generated by this type of shot is then focused onto the details of the scene, including the emotional cues on the actor's face. The observation of these cues is, of course, paramount to the affective impact of the scene. Film theorist Béla Balász wrote that "close-ups are often dramatic revelations of what is really happening under the surface of appearances" (315). In effect, what Scorsese has managed to do is push the affective qualities of the close up even further. The kinetic close-up is a device which enhances one of cinema's most potent weapons. Charlie's face in this scene is a perfect example of this theory in action. Throughout the film to this point, Charlie has been portrayed as a level-headed mediator for the various characters he has encountered. During his conversations with Michael (the gangster to whom Johnny Boy owes the most) Charlie does not reveal the frustrations he has with his irresponsible friend. Instead he speaks of Johnny Boy's situation with a cool air, as though the whole situation were not that dire. It is as though Charlie really believes that Johnny Boy will come through with the money and break his cycle of irresponsibility. The illusion of this confidence is shattered under the scrutiny of Scorsese's probing lens. Balász goes on to say that:

The film has brought us the silent soliloquy, in which a face can speak with the subtlest shades of meaning without appearing unnatural and arousing the distaste of the spectators. In this silent monologue the solitary human soul can find a tongue more candid and uninhibited than in any spoken soliloquy, for it speaks instinctively, subconsciously. The language of the face cannot be suppressed or controlled...It is much easier to lie in words than with the face and the film has proved it beyond doubt. (317)

This last sentence becomes glaringly true in the shot that follows directly behind the slow motion sequence. With an exchange that could be nearly written off as a caricature of Italian-American stereotypes, Charlie and Johnny Boy embrace as though the pair has been apart for a long time. Charlie's words are happy, his tone is jubilant and his demeanour is welcoming. In this case, Charlie's words once again belie the true nature of his feelings. The expression on his face shouts the words that his mouth refuses to utter. Even in the exchange that follows this scene, when Charlie finally gets a chance to level with Johnny Boy, the intensity of his words do not match that of his gaze. This has to do with the one-two punch of Scorsese's kinetic close-up, the use of which makes it nearly impossible for a viewer to avoid considering and feeling the importance of the moment being articulated. It is for this reason that Anderson borrows the technique so often throughout his oeuvre.

With the exception of *The Fantastic Mr. Fox*, Anderson employs Scorsese's kinetic close up in each of his films. By taking a look at a few of the more prominent and interesting examples from Anderson's films I will show that he has learned to perfect Scorsese's style while at the same time adding a unique personal touch.

The earliest example of Anderson appropriating Scorsese's kinetic close-up technique can be found in the only Anderson film that could even be broadly described as a gangster film, 1996's *Bottle Rocket*. The film is the story of three young men (Dignan [Owen Wilson], Anthony [Luke Wilson] and Bob [Robert Musgrave]) with ambitions of becoming career criminals. In an attempt to impress a local criminal by the name of Mr. Henry (James Caan), Dignan, the guileless and clueless ringleader, cooks up a scheme

wherein the three will rob a bookstore. After successfully completing their mission, the trio go on the lam in Mexico. While there the partnership breaks up and the three friends return to Houston separately. After some time apart, the “gang” gets back together to pull off a heist planned by Mr. Henry. The shot in question comes near the end of the film while Dignan, Anthony and Bob are in the midst of their ill-fated caper in which they are to rob a cold storage plant. Anderson cuts away to Mr. Henry who is in the driveway of Bob’s house. Clearly Mr. Henry, whose crew is busy loading all of the items from Bob’s upper class home into a moving van, has double-crossed Dignan, Anthony and Bob. The connection to the gangster genre has been made quite clear already through the use of Caan in the picture since it was he that played the most reckless of the Corleone children in Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather*; however, by giving him the name Henry, Anderson is also making a connection to another major work of the gangster genre, Scorsese’s *Goodfellas* (1989), the main character of which is named Henry Hill.

The connection becomes solidified in this scene as Anderson deliberately echoes a shot from *Goodfellas* to show Mr. Henry. The shot being re-created is of Jimmy (Robert Di Niro) who, after pulling off the Lufthansa heist at JFK Airport, is shown smoking at a bar. He looks around the room at the members of his crew who we find out later he is planning to kill off because he wants to keep all of the money for himself. As the camera slowly pans in, we are shown Jimmy’s face as he silently considers each member of the crew and how difficult it would be to be rid of each one. Once again this silent soliloquy provides much more information about who Jimmy is and what he plans than any monologue could do. Anderson repeats this shot in order to evoke the character of Jimmy which works to project the seedy nature of his character onto Mr. Henry. In this

way, Anderson's character becomes associated with the types of amoral, untrustworthy and at times cruel characters we see in Scorsese's film. Anderson has also included a quick homage to another film populated with gangsters and other characters of less than impeccable moral judgements, Fritz Lang's *M* (1931), when he photographs Mr. Henry from an extreme low angle as he puffs on his cigar. The image is immediately recognizable as being highly reminiscent of many shots from Lang's film about the underworld and the authorities working to capture of a child murderer. Both of these allusions work together to inform the viewer's reading of Mr. Henry who up until this point in the film has been suspicious but always a bit too eccentric and congenial to the three friends to ever seem overly malevolent. Hence, Dignan, Anthony and Bob, appear all the more innocent because of their having been duped by this corrupt character; however, innocence, for Anderson, is hardly a liability. Anderson wants to make it clear that the childlike naiveté of his characters is their best attribute. Innocence only becomes a problem when it gets too close to a corrupting force. Anderson's characters lose their innocence, but only because they cannot conceive of any other way to reach maturity other than through some adventurous act.¹

Anderson is dealing with the problem of corruption and innocence when he returns again to the kinetic close-up in his second feature, *Rushmore*. The scene in question occurs just after Max has discovered that his friend Harold Blume and his love interest, Rosemary Cross (Olivia Williams) are having a secret affair. Max goes on a crusade to ruin Blume's life. He tells Blume's wife about the affair; he releases bees into

¹ These adventurous acts rarely pan out in practice, but this dilemma, which recurs throughout Anderson's oeuvre, will be covered more extensively in Chapter 3.

Bloom's hotel room; and he cuts the brakes in Blume's car. In retaliation Blume drives over Max's bike and has his young rival arrested. Anderson shows this series of events in a montage set to The Who's "A Quick One While He's Away." In the middle of the montage Anderson cuts to a shot of Max exiting a hotel elevator, dressed as a waiter and carrying a wooden box labelled "Rushmore Beekeepers." We watch in slow motion as Max picks up the box and walks towards the camera which dollies backward. The look on Max's face is a mix of anger, arrogance and rebellion. For the first time in his life Max is enacting a revenge plot. He has ceased to be the overachieving precocious young man who puts on elaborate plays and runs far too many after school clubs. Anderson chooses to film him with Scorsese's kinetic close up in order to once again personify his character as a Scorsese-type. By doing this, the attributes of a character such as Johnny Boy (irresponsibility, delinquency and maliciousness) are projected onto Max. As well, because the allusion is to such an iconic image, even a viewer who may not automatically recognize the Scorsese connection can glean a great deal of understanding about the character through the shot. Therefore, Anderson's use of the kinetic close-up, like Scorsese's, works as useful shorthand for character exploration.

The closest Anderson has come to recreating an entire Scorsese scene while using the kinetic close up can be found in his 2001 film *The Royal Tenenbaums*. The scene concerns two of the Tenenbaum children Richie and his adopted sister Margot Tenenbaum (played by Luke Wilson and Gwyneth Paltrow, respectively) who have been apart for over a year. The two are reunited outside a boat dock where Richie is waiting for Margot to meet him "by way of the Green Line bus." Anderson, like Scorsese wants us to spend some time looking into the faces of these characters. Anderson employs the

film's introduction to provide some back-story on Richie and Margot; however, it is in this moment that Anderson chooses to reveal a great deal about them through a silent soliloquy. The film is slowed so that we can notice every shift in Margot's facial expression as she moves closer. We watch as her face shifts from confusion to concern to resignation and finally to relief at the site of her estranged brother. Although on a first viewing it is difficult to tell, the entire story of their relationship is being told through these subtle expressions. The labyrinthine nature of their forbidden affection is summed up through this one close-up (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1

Although Margot's face takes up the lion's share of the screen time during this encounter, Anderson does cut away to Richie for one revealing second during which the camera gets much closer to Richie than it ever does to Margot. Richie's face fills the screen with an image of a man who is in hiding. His thick beard and over-sized sunglasses act as a metaphorical mask, hiding the vulnerability of the man below. He

wears the same haircut and headband he wore in the scenes we saw of him as a child, revealing his state of suspended adolescence. About half way through the shot Richie half-blinks. The move is subtle enough, but has the effect of unnerving the viewer, which works to accentuate the unease Richie is feeling as he waits for Margot to be close enough to speak to.

Like Scorsese's scene, the kinetic close-up has a separating effect. The slow-motion works to form a connection between Margot and Richie, which in turn lifts them above those around. The characters move through emotional time rather than actual time. It is not until they shift from the transcendent act of staring to the banal act of conversation that their time catches up to real time. The act of conversation in *Tenenbaums* is not unlike the superficial interaction between Charlie and Johnny boy in *Mean Streets*. Margot makes a few attempts at small talk which Richie does not verbally answer. Nothing of their conversation reveals the intensity of their feelings towards each other; it is only in the close-up that we get even a hint of the complex emotions both are feeling. Even the hug that follows the conversation, with its hesitant approach and stilted embrace, belies the intensity and taboo nature of their relationship.

The question of why Anderson is so meticulously evoking Scorsese becomes important at this point. His reasons go beyond simple homage and he means to do more than just use a similar device for the purpose of a similar end. Anderson wants his viewers to draw a direct line between Richie and Margot and Charlie and Johnny Boy so that the astute viewer will find a connection between the forbidden natures of each relationship. By knowing *Mean Streets* one is able to recognize the destructive elements at play in *Tenenbaums*. Once it is recognized that Anderson's characters have the same

impossible to avoid, yet impossible to maintain relationship that Scorsese's characters have, the film takes on a tragic subtext due to the hopelessness of Richie and Margot's relationship. This scene, which on the surface is quite beautiful, is actually a harbinger of the heartbreak to come.

Although not all of Anderson's uses of the kinetic close-up are as directly related to Scorsese's films as the one from *Tenentbaums*, all of them tend to evoke the same sort of emotional resonance that Scorsese manages to display through his use of slow motion. Near the beginning of Anderson's 2007 film *The Darjeeling Limited*, we are introduced to Peter (Adrian Brody), the second oldest of the three Whitman brothers who have set out across India in search of spiritual fulfilment and familial reconciliation. As the film begins, we witness a character that is credited as merely the Businessman (played by Bill Murray) in the midst of a frantic attempt to arrive at an Indian train station before his train leaves. Once his taxi arrives, the businessman chases after the train while it is still in motion before being overtaken by a much younger man. The younger man is Peter, who is also late for the train, and who, upon seeing the face of the older man does a quick double take as though in disbelief at what he is seeing. When the shot changes, so does the speed of the film and we watch in extreme slow motion as Peter reaches the back of the train and throws his luggage onboard before jumping onto the train himself. He has reached his goal, but is still taken by the man whom he just passed. Anderson shows us a kinetic close up of Peter's face in slow motion as he looks at the businessman who clearly will not be able to reach the train.

The look on Peter's face is a mixture of surprise and disappointment. He lifts his sunglasses in order to get a clearer view and casts his gaze downward in an expression of

grief before he turns away and moves toward the entrance of the train. Anderson shows us the face of a young man who is also standing on the back deck of the train. The man is clearly Indian, and his facial expression is hard. He glares at Peter with a mix of curiosity and suspicion. It is clear from the look that Peter is out of place, a fact which is accentuated by Peter's movement through the third-class train car on his way to the private cabin he and his brothers occupy. Although it is not obvious at this point in the film, it will become clearer later on that Murray's character is the Whitman patriarch who, we are told, died a year prior. In fact, the brothers have not seen each other since the day of his funeral. We are also told that Peter was the last one to see his father alive. In a way this moment is a visual metaphor for the narrative of the father's death which is not shown on screen. This shot is echoed within the film near the end. The three brothers are finished their journey and are ready to return to their real lives when they too arrive late for a train. Anderson mimics the camera angles and scene progression exactly at the end of his film, except that the characters are in a different location, and Murray's character has been replaced by the brothers. Even the one line of dialogue "that's my train" is repeated by the eldest brother Francis (Owen Wilson). As the brothers near the train it becomes clear that they will not catch their train if they continue to lug their father's heavy luggage, which has acted as a prominent visual metaphor throughout the film for the emotional baggage the characters are toting around. The three drop the bags and catch the train. Once again Peter is shown staring out from the back of the train, but this time he is joined by his brothers. Rather than one brother witnessing the death of his father, the scene is now three brothers bidding farewell to their father, a reading solidified when Jack (the youngest brother, played by Jason Schwartzman) waves goodbye. The baggage

handlers who were helping the brothers with the luggage have taken the place of the father from the earlier scene, and they act as pallbearers holding up the father's remains.

It is difficult to imagine how Anderson would form the empathic bond between his characters and the audience that he does in scenes like these without aligning himself with Scorsese. Clearly Anderson is attempting to reclaim the use of slow motion (which has quite often been used in clichéd and cringe-inducing ways) as a tool for genuine emotional expression. The reason the kinetic close-up works so well for Anderson is because it affords him the time to focus his audience's attention on what might be the most important piece of his filmmaking arsenal, the face. In some circles, Anderson has been criticized for the fact that his films are populated with under-expressive and seemingly unnatural performances. Truth be told, these critics are somewhat correct in their assertions if one is to understand notions of expression and naturalism in terms of general Hollywood-style acting. When compared to the average film performance, Anderson's characters seem to fall into their own sort of "Uncanny Valley." Often Anderson's characters appear to be in some sort of torpor as they move through comedic films that are often fully devoid of smiles, let alone laughter. Critic Ryan Gilbey has coined the term "melanchomedy" to define Anderson's films and those like them.

The fact is that it is nearly impossible to understand what Anderson is attempting to accomplish through the acting in his films without taking into account the allusions he makes to two major influences, Robert Bresson and Charles Schultz. I will begin by looking at Bresson, the French filmmaker whose otherworldly films have had similar criticism levelled against them. In addition to stating his admiration for Bresson, (even placing *Au Hasard Balthazar* on his list of favourite films from the Criterion Collection),

Anderson also makes subtle nods to the elder director numerous times throughout his films. Consider how Royal Tenenbaum fakes stomach cancer, the affliction which overtakes the Priest in *Diary of a Country Priest*; Anthony makes his “escape” from a mental health facility using a makeshift rope of bed linens at the beginning of *Bottle Rocket* a la Fontaine in *A Man Escaped*; and there’s more than a little of Michel’s clueless Nietzschean figure from *Pickpocket* in Max Fischer, Dignan, Eli Cash, Steve Zissou and Mr. Fox.

Although Bresson’s films cannot be placed anywhere near Anderson’s in a discussion of genre, the two share many stylistic and even thematic elements. For instance, like Anderson, Bresson places his characters in a vision of the world which, although recognizable, feels unfamiliar. In Amedee Ayfre’s “The Universe of Robert Bresson,” she makes the statement that “Bresson’s universe is not that of everyday reality. It is distinct from it not only because it is an artistic universe, but because as such it makes no attempt to pass for the everyday universe” (42). Most directors attempt to populate their films with tropes of everyday life: pedestrians shuffling down city streets; couples carousing in restaurants; groups of friends having coffee in cafes; the sounds of traffic; children at play; persons on phones; and numerous other slices of life which when layered on a screen give the audience the illusion that the fabrication being projected is in fact real life being captured. Bresson eschews these well established conventions of filmmaking in order shift the attention of his audience to what is most important. When he does include the sounds of life (car engines, turnkeys shifting, the noise of the city) the sounds seem unnatural, overdone and out of place. Consider the nearly painful noise given off by the cars at the beginning and end of *Les dames du Bois de Boulogne*, or the

repeated sound of the prison lock in *A Man Escaped*. These sounds are pronounced, strange and usually repeated ad nauseam because “there is nothing incidental in Bresson’s use of sound. Each sound has a meaning and function in the narrative” (Hanlon 309). Since sound is a major factor in an audience believing the reality of what is shown on a movie screen, Bresson’s refusal to use realistic sound-scapes works to keep a wall of artifice permanently erected between his films and his audience.

The same can be said of the visual elements of Bresson’s films. His actors do not wear costumes as much as they wear uniforms which say something about who they are. Consider the ragged, oversized jacket Michel wears throughout *Pickpocket*, or the dirty and bloodstained shirt that covers the back of Fontaine in *A Man Escaped*. The eponymous character from *Mouchette* is rarely seen without her peasant dress and greasy pigtailed hair, and the Priest of Ambricourt from *Diary of a Country Priest* would hardly be the same without the torn sweater he often wears over his habit. It is hardly realistic, in the film sense of the term, that any of these characters would so constantly be adorned in the way they are, but because these clothes say so much about the characters who wear them, Bresson keeps his actors in their makeshift uniforms.

Bresson’s minimalist approach extends into nearly every realm of his films. In terms of set design, Bresson tends to allow only the least amount necessary in order to identify a space and not a single prop more. In his *Notes on the Cinematographer*, Bresson wrote a note that reads “Don’t let backgrounds (avenues, squares, public gardens, subway) absorb the faces you are applying to them” (Bresson 39). For Bresson the characters are paramount, and backgrounds should always serve them. Therefore, his

sets are almost always bare of extraneous objects and when he works in colour, often his palate is quite muted.

It is in relation to performance, however, that Bresson's style becomes most prominent as well as most closely connected to Anderson's own acting sensibilities. Bresson's characters move like automatons as they traverse their assigned paths. Rarely do Bresson's models (as he called them) show emotion and they always deliver their lines with a flatness rarely seen on film. To say that Bresson's characters are emotionless is unfair; by the above statement I mean that in comparison with the average film experience one might encounter in the often overly-dramatic realm of commercial cinema, the acting in Bresson's films can seem stiff. However, the acting style is all a part of what Bresson is attempting to accomplish with his films as he continually works to move away from theatre. Ayfre makes a case in her aforementioned article that this movement away from naturalistic acting breeds genuineness in the performances which cannot be accomplished when actors rely on the facial expressions or actions common to most cinema in order to denote what the characters they are playing are feeling (46). This is because audiences have become so accustomed to the tropes of acting that seeing an actor walk through the same old gestures evokes the same old reactions. When one of Bresson's models performs a scene in a completely unusual way it forces us as an audience to take pause and consider the actions more deeply.

A perfect example of this can be found in *Pickpocket* where Michel attends the funeral of his mother. Most other directors would fill a scene like this with all the tropes of melodrama. The death of a mother in any film can elicit a powerful emotional response from an audience, but add to that the fact that Michel has never fully reconciled with his

mother and has caused her a great deal of pain could make this scene particularly poignant. Consider the funeral scene from Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life* (made the same year as *Pickpocket*: 1959) wherein a daughter weeps bitterly over the dead mother with whom she was never able to reconcile. Bresson avoids the type of melodramatic filmmaking Sirk employed. Instead the scene goes by quickly and seemingly uneventfully. Yet it is the terseness of the scene which makes it more powerful. In Sirk's film, the daughter character does exactly what we expect her to do and so, although emotionally powerful in the moment, the scene leaves us with no reason to contemplate her actions further. In contrast, throughout the funeral scene Bresson shows us only the backs of Michel, Jeanne and Jacques. When Michel's face is finally shown he retains the same stony visage with the addition of one single tear. The sheer unusual nature of this portrayal forces us to consider the character far more than we would if he were to react in a way that we are accustomed to seeing characters react in other films. The astute viewer is forced to ask: what kind of character is Michel that he can remain so detached during such a difficult experience? The answer is not as important as the fact that Bresson is able to get us to ask the question. After all, only a character with depth is worth asking questions about. Somehow by stripping away layer after layer of cinematic convention Bresson is able to imbue his film with enough mystery to make his characters endlessly intriguing.

The influence of this "Bressonian Face" as some critics have called the style of acting found within Bresson's films is found throughout Anderson's oeuvre. Much like in Bresson, Anderson's characters project an otherworldly ethereality and often deliver their lines with the sort of flat inflection common to Bresson's films. Of course, it could be

said that this is due to Anderson's fondness for deadpan comedy, but I would contend that he is up to something far more intriguing through the torpor of his character's performances.

A strong example of Anderson employing the Bressonian face can be found during the scene in *The Royal Tenenbaums* where Raleigh and Margo have their first conversation after she has left to move back into the family home (Figure 1.2). The conversation takes place over tea in the backyard of the Tenenbaum home. The dialogue in the scene is important because as a written text it reads like an average post-breakup conversation from any other movie.



Figure 1.2

Raleigh: How long do you intend to stay here?

Margo: I don't know.

Raleigh: Are you ever coming home?

Margo: Maybe not.

Raleigh: You're joking.

Margot: No.

Raleigh: Well I want to die. (Picks up a cookie)

Margot: Raleigh, please. (touches his arm)

Raleigh: Have you met someone else?

Margot: I couldn't even begin to think about knowing how to answer that question.

This scene could be played for either comedy or drama, but Anderson, decides to go for neither. Instead he has his actors deliver their lines with only the slightest inflection which forces the words, rather than the voices to be of the utmost importance. He also leaves long pauses between each line in order to allow the words to settle in. Bill Murray (who plays Raleigh St. Clair), with his pitch perfect deadpan delivery, represents the ultimate Anderson actor. When he says “Well, I want to die” his reading is so flat that one could laugh or cry at the emotions expressed and so it is impossible to know how to understand the character outright. Is he being sarcastic or sincere? Does Anderson want us to empathize, or to laugh? Anderson never allows his actors to give the audience the cues they are accustomed to from other films. Hence Raleigh, in the scene, forces us to ask the same kinds of questions we asked of Michel in *Pickpocket*. What kind of character is this? How are we supposed to relate to him? Is he a jester or a tragic figure? The question can be broadened: what kind of family are the Tenenbaums? What kind of film are we watching? Anderson never answers these questions for us, which in turn gives his films the same enigmatic quality that hovers over Bresson’s work as well.

Anderson once said that “usually when I’m doing a scene, I don’t want it to feel specific—I want to make something that different people will feel in different ways” (Desplechin). This ideology is most clearly expressed through the Andersonian face and the way in which it forces questioning through confusion. However, the face is not the only way in which Anderson cultivates questions; his films, like Bresson’s, take place in a slightly askew universe. As I stated earlier, Anderson’s films fall into their own uncanny valley filled with seeming anachronisms, unusual locations, oddly costumed characters (Anderson has said that what his characters wear are more like uniforms than

costumes²), and inconsistent geography. Consider the address of the Tenenbaum house: 111 Archer Avenue, an address that does not exist in Manhattan; the 375th Street Y where the Tanenbaums exercise; Port-au-Patois (Port of Jargon) in *The Life Aquatic*; the imagined version of India in *The Darjeeling Limited*. The Andersonian universe feels more like a fairy tale than reality because it adheres to its creator's nostalgic and idealized vision rather than to the reality of a place. Anderson's world is a place where personal computers and iPods coexist with rotary phones and telegrams; where it is acceptable to smoke in a hospital; where lavish Italian film festivals run third-rate nature documentaries to crowds draped in formal evening attire; and where three brothers of indeterminate wealth can afford to wander around India for an indefinite amount of time. Anderson's characters are constantly adorned in uniforms, as well. Like Bresson, this is not because Anderson thinks this is how people dress in the real world, but because it is the best way for him to express a great deal of information about his characters in the quickest way possible.³ In many ways, Anderson labours as a student in Bresson's school of filmmaking as he applies many of the theoretical concepts the elder director proposed through both his films and his writing.

Yet, it would be difficult to imagine a situation in which an Anderson film would be mistaken for one by Bresson. Clearly, on the surface the two make vastly different directorial and stylistic choices, and yet connections can be found. The connection becomes even clearer, however, when we consider the influence of a short 1960s

² Taken from the commentary done for the Criterion editions of *Bottle Rocket* and *The Royal Tenenbaums*

³ Anderson's use of costuming for the purpose of character development will be examined more closely in the discussion of J.D. Salinger's influence in chapter 4.

Television special which despite being only twenty minutes in length, casts a long shadow over all of Anderson's films and creates a bridge between the austerity of Bresson and the whimsy of Anderson. The special in question is Bill Melendez's "A Charlie Brown Christmas" based on the *Peanuts* comic strip by Charles Schultz. The program has been identified as one of the more unusual children's programs ever to have been produced, and yet it has remained a perennial favourite for multiple generations. Unlike most Christmas specials which rely mostly on sentimentality and idealized visions of childhood, the title character, Charlie Brown, is a depressive prepubescent who is having trouble accepting the commercialization of Christmas in 1960s American culture. Despite the fact that all of the characters are voiced by actual children (mostly non-professionals), their words are dripping with a cynicism that belies the young ages represented. In fact, the hyper self-aware characters, who discuss with confidence topics such as psychoanalysis, economics and the Bible, could be mistaken for adults trapped in the bodies of children.

On a stylistic level, the short program has a decidedly low-fi aesthetic. The animation is choppy, the sound is inconsistently mixed and the continuity is consistently off. The use of mostly non-profession child voice actors means that much of the dialogue is stilted, under-enunciated and delivered awkwardly. The film's musical score, despite the fact that it has, over the course of fifty years, become quite ubiquitous holiday music, is hardly what would have been considered appropriate for a children's program. The Jazz score was written and performed by Vince Guaraldi and bears none of the tropes generally associated with Christmas music. The acting consists of mostly subdued readings accented with occasional outbursts from various characters. These outbursts are

all the more effective due to their contrast with the flat performances throughout the rest of the program. As well, Melendez uses longer than normal gaps of silence between spoken dialogue where characters seem frozen in place as they wait for responses. The colour palette of the film mixes reds, yellows, purples, blues and whites into a sort of muted vibrancy which perfectly captures the area of limbo between childhood and adulthood which the characters occupy.

The closest connection between Anderson and Melendez can be found in *Rushmore*. Matt Zoller Seitz who interviewed Anderson on the subject of “A Charlie Brown Christmas” wrote that “Anderson cited Melendez as one of three major influences on his work.” Seitz goes on to say that:

He [Anderson] and his screenwriting collaborator, Owen Wilson, conceived *Rushmore* hero Max Fischer as Charlie Brown plus Snoopy. He said that Miss Cross, the teacher Max adores and will draw into a weirdly Freudian love triangle with the industrialist Mr. Blume, is a combination of Charlie Brown’s teacher and his unattainable love object, the little red-haired girl. Anderson and Wilson even made Max a working-class barber’s son, just like Peanuts creator Charles Schulz, and gave Seymour Cassel, the actor playing Bert Fischer, glasses similar to Schulz’s.

In addition, Anderson draws his viewers’ attention to the *Peanuts* connection in his other films by including pieces from Guaraldi’s score on his own soundtracks. In each case the music drifts in at moments wherein his characters are struggling to cross the separation between their suspended childhood and the adult life they are attempting to simultaneously enter and avoid. In the *Bottle Rocket* short film, the song “Skating” adds an air of juvenile playfulness to a scene that finds the three would-be gangsters testing guns in an open field. Although the scene involves deadly weapons, both the music and the fact that Anthony has drawn a cartoon of a man running on his target give the scene a

sort of “boys will be boys” feel. In *Rushmore*, the sound of “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” appears as diegetic music playing in the barbershop where Max and Blume finally settle their rivalry. We watch as Blume transforms from a dishevelled shadow of a man to a proper adult ready to deal with his life. In *The Royal Tenenbaums*, Guaraldi’s “Christmas Time is Here” plays over a scene of Royal attempting to reconcile with Margot in an ornately decorated ice cream parlour. Again we can see the struggle between childhood and adulthood being played out as both characters begin to realize that their state of suspended adolescence has been detrimental to their lives. It is interesting to note that by using these songs in the way he does, Anderson is putting two of his most prominent themes in direct conflict with each other. Clearly Anderson prizes the innocence of his characters, as epitomized through the use of Guaraldi’s music; yet Anderson’s films also possess an inescapable drive toward character maturity. It is in these moments that the near impossibility (and undesirable nature) of “growing up,” a struggle present throughout Anderson’s oeuvre, is best exemplified.

Beyond these films, a similarity to the visual presentation of *Charlie Brown* can be found. The sort of muted vibrancy which I have already discussed appears regularly in his films. Consider the light blues, yellows and reds of *The Life Aquatic*, which despite their unusual mixture, somehow manage to avoid being garish when filmed through Anderson’s lens. Or one could think of the way in which the India of *The Darjeeling Limited* with its plethora of exotic colours remains contained under a consistently curry-hued tint. It is also difficult to discuss the acting in Anderson’s films at any length without considering the influence of *Charlie Brown*. The emotional outbursts which follow long passages of subtle and downplayed delivery which I have mentioned have

become a trademark of Anderson's films. Charlie Brown in the Christmas special remains mostly subdued throughout his interaction with Lucy who is attempting to psychoanalyze Charlie by listing off a number of phobias which she hopes her patient will recognize in himself. After naming and defining panophobia (the fear of everything), Charlie shouts "that's it!" loud enough to send Lucy reeling backward. The outburst of (small scale) violence affects the viewer because of the general languor that Charlie has been displaying up until that point. Were Charlie to have been portrayed in the more flamboyant style of most characters designed for children, it is debatable whether or not the moment would have captured his frustration as effectively.

Anderson does something similar in many of his films. The best example can be found in *Bottle Rocket* during a scene in which the small gang is planning their first real heist. Anthony, Dignan and Bob are sitting around a table upon which sits a collection of papers, some maps and a large gun. While the gang discusses their plans, Bob picks up the revolver and examines it. This angers Dignan who feels his authority is being undermined and he eventually blows up and calls off the caper. This scene in most films would feel tame, but the violence is accented by the fact that throughout the rest of the film the characters are so consistently laidback. The restraint of the actors keeps the characters from becoming caricatures since their performances do not reach the over-the-top level often seen in film comedies. The outbursts also reveal the struggle of the characters as they work through problems of identity. Anthony, Dignan and Bob are not inherently violent men; rather, in their attempts to understand themselves, they are exploring the world of crime and violence as a means to move from their suspended

adolescence into adulthood. It is usually in the moments of contrition which follow the outbursts that we see the true natures of Anderson's characters.

Both sides of these characters are important because without the outbursts we would miss the genuine innocence of Anderson's characters which is made much clearer when viewed in contrast to violence they want to be capable of. Furthermore, the outbursts reveal the deep seeded longing within these men to find an identity. The violence of the outburst is a reaction against the fear of slipping too far into the apathy which has been born out of their privileged lives. Dignan, Anthony and Bob are far too old to be looking to join a gang, but their juvenile behaviour is a direct result of their arrested development. In many ways Anderson's characters are children in adult bodies as opposed to Schultz's adults in children bodies.

It is important to note that violent outbursts are not the only way in which Andersonian characters break free from their predominant state of emotional torpor. More often these stoic characters drop the stony visage which covers their faces to allow pathos through. These moments are often far more important for developing character and evoking resonance with the audience. In order to fully appreciate the affective qualities of these moments, we must return to Bresson and his use of a similar technique.

As mentioned earlier, Anderson tends to present scenes ambiguously in order to coax a greater amount of audience involvement. Only rarely does Anderson break this tactic by allowing direct emotion to break through. Like Bresson, these breakthroughs are rendered all the more effective because of how subtle the emotions have been up until that moment of emotional release. The best example of this release in Bresson can be found in the transcendent ending of *Pickpocket*. Michel has been a man alone throughout

the film. He has refused to allow anyone in. The coldness of his face works as a perfect visual metaphor for the seemingly impenetrable brick wall he has built around himself. Michel considers himself a Nietzschean *ubermensch* and therefore will not even allow Jeanne, who is clearly in love with him, to get close. Like Raskolnikov from Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Michel continues to degenerate under the strain of his solitude and guilt until he can finally atone for his sin by being caught by the authorities. In the same way that Raskolnikov experiences grace through Sonya's love for him, Michel, in the final moment of the film, opens himself up to the love of Jeanne. The impact of the scene comes through the fact that, despite the separation of prison bars, Michel becomes closer to Jeanne than he has been to anyone else throughout the film. It is this outpouring of emotion from such a stoic character that creates a beautifully memorable moment. This level of pathos would be unimaginable were it not for Bresson's stripped down, august and highly controlled approach to performance throughout the rest of the film.

Anderson employs a similar technique to maximize the emotional effect in many of his films. Consider Chas from *The Royal Tenenbaums*, the eldest son of the titular family, and the most resistant to his father's attempt at reconciliation. Although Ben Stiller's performance of Chas is more animated than most of the other characters in the film, his delivery is generally far more subdued and ambiguous than what is common in contemporary Hollywood films. Chas is mostly hardened in his feelings towards the others. We are told early on in the film that his wife died a year earlier in a plane crash and in that time Chas has become extremely safety conscious and exceedingly protective of his two sons, Uzi and Ari. In moments of anger Chas' first response is to explode, or to

resort to sarcasm. In scenes involving the death of his wife, such as a visit to the cemetery, or the discussion of her death with his family, Chas remains cold as though he is protecting himself from feeling. This is understandable considering Royal's glib and insensitive response to Chas' pain. At first Royal forgets about his daughter-in-law completely, and then he refers to her as "another body." Chas, in a fashion similar to Michel, is putting up a wall to protect and separate himself from the rest of the family. Chas is the last person to rejoin his family at the end of the film, but once he does the moment is by far the most significant.

The moment of Chas' emotional breakthrough and connection with his father comes near the end of the film. Eli Cash, clearly inebriated, drives his sports car into the side of the Tenenbaum home. Royal manages to save Chas' sons, Uzi and Ari, from being hit, but their dog Buckley is pinned beneath the car. Royal, feeling bad for his two grandsons purchases a Dalmatian for the boys from the firefighters who have come to the accident scene. With a word or two about how he has bought the dog for the boys, Royal hands the leash to Chas who then bends down to pet the dog. In a moment of tenderness unlike any that have been presented in the film thus far, Chas looks up at his father and says "I've had a hard year, dad." To which Royal responds, "I know you have, son." For the first time in the film the father and son who have been the most at odds have connected. The pathos of the moment would not have been nearly as effective if it were not for the coldness of the rest of the film. It is only after Chas lets actual emotion break through the stony façade of the Andersonian face that a connection can be established between him and his father, and between the audience and the two characters.

Now that it is understood just how much of the tonal qualities of Anderson's films are based on the stylistic elements of these three filmmakers, the question becomes one of why these references appear so consistently. The answer lies in Anderson's unique use of allusion for the purpose of critique. In the case of Scorsese, Bresson and Melendez, Anderson has aligned himself with these outsiders in order to critique the mainstream from which they have diverged.⁴

Bresson began making films in the 1940s in France where melodrama and sleek production values ruled the movie business. His films were stark and difficult by comparison and generally not accepted by the broader movie going public. In a review of one of Bresson's films Truffaut relates a story about one of his teachers describing *Les Dame de bois du balonge* as the worst film he had ever seen for all of the reasons that Truffaut claimed it was great (Truffaut 582). It was not until the French New Wave came to prominence in the 1960s that Bresson's work was appreciated as visionary and ahead of its time for the way it flouted the conventions. Bresson had no interest in making a film that looked like everything else showing in cinemas, and his brazen singularity worked to critique those films which held to the rules. Because of this rebellion, Bresson became a highly original auteur and an effective critic of the mainstream.

A Charlie Brown Christmas as well bucked every convention of traditional children's programming in the 1960s. It resisted the use of a laugh track, avoided overly sentimental music and presented a story that directly attacked the consumerism of the time despite the protests of the network and the show's major sponsor, Coca-Cola. Yet,

⁴ This alignment is not the case for all of Anderson's allusions, as I will show in the subsequent chapters.

the program became immensely popular and has become one of the most replayed specials in television history. More than that, the special's genuine approach acts to critique the overwrought sentimentality of nearly every special made since.

It is for this reason that Anderson associates himself with Bresson and Melendez. He wants to be one of the rebels who can, through his work, shed light on the fact that there are other ways to tell stories on film: ways that do not resort to the broadest and basest needs of an audience. Restraint is hardly a major value of Hollywood filmmaking. Whether it be action films, melodramas or comedies, the thought is often that the broader the better. The subtle approach to characterization and performance found in the films of Melendez, Bresson and Anderson flies in the face of convention. These three directors have created enigmatic films which require the participation of the audience to suss out important things like character development, and underlying meaning. By alluding to these two sources, Anderson is pointing the attention of his viewers to what they have accomplished. Anderson is aligning himself with the critiques that these filmmakers were making against their times in order to make the same critique today.

In this way, we are able to see Anderson's overarching control over all of his films and the way in which returns to similar concerns, criticisms and themes which are partially his own and partially those of his influences. Anderson's unique ability to absorb three strikingly different influences, which when synthesized through his camera turn into something equally original, shows his uncommon skill for constructing something new out of a cacophony of existing material.

In the next chapter I will continue to consider the influence of some key filmmakers on Anderson's films by looking at a few references Anderson makes to Orson Welles and Francois Truffaut.

Chapter 2

Orson Welles, Francois Truffaut and the Reintegration of the Family

"I always wanted to be a Tenenbaum."
Eli Cash

Orson Welles has been quoted as saying "I want to give the audience a hint of a scene. No more than that. Give them too much and they won't contribute anything themselves. Give them just a suggestion and you get them working with you" (Rosenbaum). We have already seen how this minimalist approach to filmmaking works in regard to the acting in Anderson's films, but this same concept applies to how Anderson incorporates allusion as well. Oftentimes, the allusions in Anderson's film either go unobserved, or are seen as mere stylistic flourishes because of Anderson's tendency for only hinting at their importance. Like Welles, Anderson coaxes the participation of his audience through restraint.

In this chapter, I will examine the numerous, subtle visual clues Anderson uses to point the attention of his viewers to both Welles and Francois Truffaut. The purpose of the visual allusions I will look at are to point to the prominent themes of two specific films, Welles' *The Magnificent Ambersons* from 1942 and Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* from 1959. Both of these films share a common theme regarding the downward trajectory of families. I will show that Anderson returns to these films and filmmakers so often not to reinforce the familial decline presented by each, but rather because he is primarily interested in exploring the notion of familial reconciliation. By reminding his viewers of the pain of the dysfunctional families he is alluding to, Anderson is able to lay some vital groundwork for understanding the emotional states of his characters.

Once Anderson has infused his films with these themes, he sets out to break away from the worldview to which he has connected himself. Rather than present characters and families that are trapped in a downward spiral with no hope of escape, Anderson's characters typically have the agency to save themselves and only require some inspiration to veer from their destructive trajectory. With regard to Welles and Truffaut, Anderson veers away from the sort of aligned critique he employs when making allusions to Scorsese, Bresson and Schultz which are described in the previous chapter. Instead, Anderson's allusions to Welles and Truffaut manage to undermine the negativity of the referents with a level of optimism which tends permeate his narratives. To tip us off to this change, Anderson often employs a sort of reverse visual quoting which works to upend the allusion. It is this reverse quoting and the optimism it works to indicate that will be the focus of this chapter.

Although it is possible to spot Welles' influence through Anderson's use of intricate set design, expertly staged extended takes and an uncommon amount of confidence displayed by such a young filmmaker, I will restrict my examination to the connection between Welles' *The Magnificent Ambersons* (based on the Booth Tarkington novel from 1918) and Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums*. *Amberson's* is the story of a wealthy Midwestern family from the later part of the 19th century to the early part of the 20th century. The film is primarily concerned with George Amberson Minifer, a confident young man whose inherited wealth has given him a sense of self-worth that has made him the scorn of the town he lives in. When the forces of modernity begin to encroach on the comfortable aristocratic life George has grown accustomed to, the young man becomes increasingly hostile towards those that he calls "riffraff." The main object of George's

anguish is the inventor Eugene Morgan, who also happens to be attempting to court his widowed mother. In the end, George ends up alone and penniless, forced to work manual labour because he has avoided acquiring the skills he would need to live a professional life. Finally, in a moment of irony, George is run over by an automobile, the very modern invention he had viewed throughout the novel as unacceptably egregious. In an ending tacked onto the film version without Welles' approval, George finally apologizes to Eugene for the way he has treated him, and for refusing to let his mother accept the older man as a suitor. It is well documented that this ending was not a part of Welles' vision for the film, and hence, cannot be considered as a part of the downward trajectory Welles' had planned for his film.

The first and most obvious connection between *Amberson's* and *Tennenbaums* can be found in the choice of titles. Both works use superlative descriptors for family names which are just slightly off from common words (Amberson is one letter from the common name Anderson, and Tenenbaum is quite similar to the German word for Christmas Tree, Tannenbaum). It quickly becomes apparent that not only are each of the families introduced through the titles as unusual as their names, but the descriptors used are clearly ironic. Although magnificent and royal could have described the Ambersons and the Tenenbaums at one time, those days are either nearly over or completely gone by the time we join each family. In addition, Anderson gives Tenenbaum patriarch the name Royal which adds to the irony since he clearly lacks the sort of kingly attributes associated with such a name.

Of course, the matter of the title has much more to do with Tarkington than it does with Welles, but it is still important in understanding the influence of the earlier

work. The most prominent feature of Welles' film to appear in Anderson's appears as soon as the film begins. Both films use a lengthy, yet fascinating introduction before launching into the narrative proper. Welles spends a full ten minutes tracing back the history of the "small midland town" wherein the Ambersons gained wealth and prominence. Through the narration, much of which is lifted directly from Tarkington's book, Welles (as narrator) describes changes in fashion, transportation, social gatherings, architecture, courting rituals and even plumbing through a whirlwind of short scenes and expertly succinct narration. The introduction is so effective that by the time Welles moves into the narrative proper we already have a feel for the milieu of the film as well as many of the characters, despite having yet to be formally introduced to many of them.

Anderson takes nearly sixteen minutes at the opening of his film to accomplish a similar task as he recounts the sordid and fabled history of his central family. Just like Welles, Anderson uses an eloquent, yet terse narrator (Alec Baldwin), and a series of short scenes to tell not only the story of the Tenenbaums, but to give the audience a feel for the sort of universe the characters occupy as well as an idea of the kind of neuroses suffered by each one. Anderson connects his story with Welles' in this way because he wants to bring to mind one of the many themes of Welles' film, that being the association of success and progress with decline and disintegration. In *Ambersons*, Welles' makes it clear that the technological progress seen during the time the story takes place is detrimental to the sort of aristocratic life built around family and social events that the film glorifies. Welles shows us an early form of public transportation at the beginning of the film and waxes nostalgically about how in the days of the old horse drawn street cars people had more time. The narrator tells us:

The only public conveyance was a street car. A lady could whistle to it from an upstairs window and the car would halt at once and wait for her while she shut the window, put on her hat and coat, went downstairs, found an umbrella, told the girl what to have for dinner, and came forth from the house. Too slow for us nowadays, because the faster we're carried, the less time we have to spare.

Within both the film and the novel, the character of Eugene Morgan, an inventor and industrialist who makes his fortune from the automobile, represents the encroaching threat of modernity which will spell the ruin of the Amberson family and their way of life. Both Welles and Tarkington use Morgan's invention, the automobile, as a prime example of how technology has changed society for the worse. When challenged by George about the usefulness of automobiles, Morgan responds: "With all their speed forward they may be a step backward in civilization – that is, spiritual civilization. It may be that they will not add to the beauty of the world, nor to the life of men's souls. I am not sure. But automobiles have come, and they bring a greater change in our life than most of us suspect" (Tarkington 275). In the end it is these automobiles which cause the Amberson's town to "spread and darken into a city" (Tarkington 3). Progress in *Ambersons* brings with it isolation and ruin.

Anderson is exploring this same theme with his film. Throughout his introduction he is showing how the destruction of the Tenenbaums corresponds with their success. Although the children grow more famous and rich, their lives are falling apart. Ethaline and Royal separate, and none of the children are able to lead normal lives owing to the increased attention and celebrity they each have acquired. By the time each child has reached adulthood they are hardly able to deal with the world around them. Chas has become an overprotective father obsessed with the safety of his family; Margot (the

adopted child playwright) is in a loveless marriage with a much older man, and can no longer write; and Richie (a once promising professional tennis player) is emotionally debilitated by his secret love for Margot. Anderson, like Welles, is showing through his introduction that with progress and success come misery, isolation and ruin.

At the beginning of the film Anderson wants his story to adopt the Wellesian worldview of familial disintegration and societal decline. In this way Anderson's use of allusion is operating in a similar manner to how Noel Carroll states film allusion tends to work: as a technique for aligning a film to the worldview of the filmmaker it is alluding to. However, Anderson is really working to undermine the Wellesian worldview even as he pays homage to the elder director. Anderson makes reference to this impending shift by staging several subtle reversals in the presentation of his film.

In order to understand how these reversals works we will need to examine in more depth some of the visual clues Anderson provides. In both films, this sort of introduction seems strange to contemporary audiences due to the fact that it presents so much information about a series of characters that viewers have yet to meet. Generally, characters are developed through the course of the narrative. Elements of their pasts are revealed through dialogue and their behaviour is shown rather than talked about. By opting to open their respective films with lengthy narrated introductions, both Welles and Anderson are invoking traditions closely associated with a more antiquated form of the novel. This nostalgia for a bygone form of writing keeps in line with the constant nostalgia that tints both films. The association with the novel is made all the more clear through the inclusion of images associated with the novel throughout each film (Figures

2.1 and 2.2). In *Tenenbaums*, the film is broken up into clearly defined chapters, each new section starting with an image of a page from a book complete with a chapter heading, the few sentences from the first paragraph and a drawn image related to the story. As well, Anderson begins his film with an overhead shot of a book called *The Royal Tenenbaums* being passed across a library counter. The book is opened; the check out card is removed and stamped before the book is passed back to the patron. This image not only sets up the framing technique Anderson will use throughout the film, it also draws a connection to Welles' film.

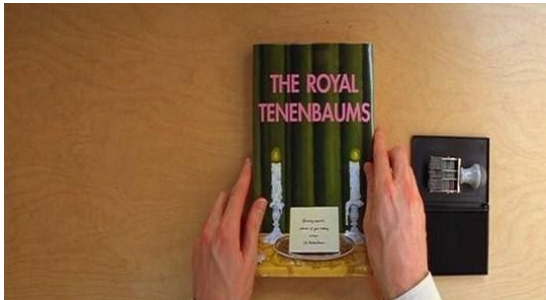


Figure 2.1

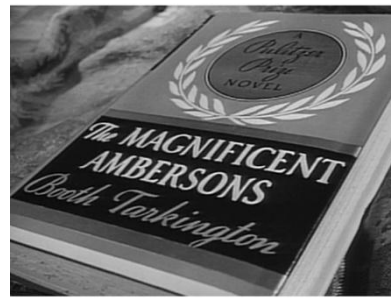


Figure 2.2

Directly following the final scene of *The Magnificent Ambersons*, an image of Booth Tarkington's novel is shown. Over this image, Welles pronounces the name of his film and the fact that it is based on the shown novel. After this, Welles continues to speak the ending credits aloud mentioning all of the main actors and important technicians involved in the film. This unusual presentation has a lot to do with the fact that Welles is evoking his first attempt at adapting Tarkington's novel which was done on his radio program "The Mercury Theatre on the Air," with many of the same actors, a few years prior. What is important to recognize here is the placement of this book image in both films. Anderson has clearly established an allusion to Welles' film through his use of a

similar introduction. This allusion creates a connection between the two works which allows Anderson to bring the themes of *Ambersons* into his own film. Even before the narrative has started it is clear that *Tenenbaums* is a story about a family on the decline whose isolation and resistance to change will cause their eventual downfall. While this is true, Anderson's film is not nearly as pessimistic as Welles', hence, he clues us into the fact that he will be approaching the story from a different ideological place. Anderson is reversing the order of the presentation of the introduction in order to make it clear that while he wants us to think about Welles' worldview, he wants it to be clear that he does not entirely share Welles' pessimistic vision. This clue is subtle but it clearly demonstrates that Anderson is coming at his story and his characters from the opposite ideological direction.

Anderson tips us off to this fact again by crediting the actors in *Tenenbaums* in the same way Welles does in *Ambersons*. Both directors present filmed portraits of each actor in character rather than simply listing their names during a credit sequence. Welles chooses to speak each actor's name before stating which character he or she plays (Figure 2.3). Anderson accomplishes the same thing, however, he decides to drop the conceit of the narrator and simply have the names and characters listed at the bottom of the screen (Figure 2.4).



Figure 2.3



Figure 2.4

This is Anderson's way of tipping us off about the connection between his film and the earlier one. His reversal, however, tells us that he plans to upend the established worldview with his film. Rather than *Tenenbaums* being a look at a family disintegrating like *Ambersons*, Anderson's film is about the possibility of a family just as broken finding its way toward reconciliation.

Throughout the rest of the film, Anderson employs this reverse visual quoting in a few other subtle ways. Both films have at their centres large familial homes wherein much of the action of the films take place. A great deal of Welles' film is located in the Amberson mansion, and often, scenes of emotional intensity take place on or around the prominent staircase which winds up the middle of the house. The Tenenbaum home at 111 Archer Avenue contains a similarly prominent staircase. Although not nearly as ornate as the Amberson staircase, Anderson chooses to stage many of his important scenes around the stairwell: Royal confronts Margot about her affair with Eli; Royal speaks to his children on the stairs after being kicked out of the house for faking stomach cancer; Chas runs down the stairs after Eli crashes his car into the building followed by Chas chasing Eli through the house. Interestingly, whereas Welles films his characters constantly moving up the stairs, even following them with a camera that seems to float up through the set, Anderson's characters, and his camera are constantly moving downward.

Through these reversals, Anderson is again making subtle references to the fact that he wants to reverse the ideology that Welles lays out in his film. In Welles' film the characters constantly grow more repressed by moving their problems from the public realm of the dining room and drawing room to the private realm of bedrooms and studies; conversely, Anderson's characters drag their issues from the private to the public spheres. It is largely this repression, and refusal to deal with problems out in the open, that leads to the destruction of the magnificence of the Ambersons. The Tenenbaums manage to avoid this fate by dealing with their buried tensions when they finally spill out into the public realm. The emotional climax of the film, the scene wherein many of the characters are able to reconcile with each other, takes place on the street outside the Tenenbaum

home. The camera again moves, in one long take, in a downward trajectory to the ground level where Chas (arguable the most wronged of all the Tenenbaum children) is finally able to forgive his father.

Anderson employs this same reversal homage technique in an even more direct manner in many of his allusions to Francois Truffaut. The best examples of this technique can be found in his first two films *Bottle Rocket* and *Rushmore*. Both of these films owe a great deal to Truffaut's first feature film *Les quatre cents coups* (*The 400 Blows*). All three films are about young males who are stalled on their journey from childhood to adulthood. Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre Léaud) is a Paris schoolboy who struggles to stay out of trouble both from his overly strict teachers and his dysfunctional parents. In reaction to the constant discipline he suffers, Antoine begins to act out in increasingly drastic ways: he skips school and runs away from home; he gets in trouble with the father of a friend with whom he stays; he begins stealing, taking milk, books and a typewriter which belongs to the office where his step-father is employed. Finally Antoine's parents are forced to enrol him in a military school with the hopes that extreme discipline will correct his incorrigible behaviour.

The film is a fictionalized retelling of Truffaut's own trouble childhood, and so its sympathies, understandably, side with young Antoine. His behaviour is shown to be a reaction to his unfair treatment at the hands of authority figures and his clearly being unwanted by his parents. Antoine is a character attempting to forge an identity. He tends to be easily swayed by friends who want him to join them in misdeeds; and he has few interests besides comic books and the cinema. As the film progresses we see an interest begin to grow in authors such as Balzac, although this interest gets him in a great deal of

trouble after he plagiarizes one of Balzac's stories for an assignment and then sets up a shrine to the author which nearly burns down the family apartment. At the centre of this film is the story of Antoine's attempt at self-discovery through whichever means is of the utmost interest to him at any given time. Rarely does Antoine continue down one specific path, often abandoning the cursory interest he has in a subject in favour of some new endeavour. Antoine is most clearly a model for the character Max Fischer in *Rushmore*, (played by Jason Schwartzman, an actor who bears a striking resemblance to a young Jean-Pierre Léaud), as both possess a similar precocious attitude and wanderlust for new adventure and experience. However, traces of Antoine (a role Léaud would reprise in five subsequent films directed by Truffaut) can be found in both Dignan and Anthony in *Bottle Rocket*.

It should be noted that Anderson's technique for recreating Truffaut's shots in reverse was first observed by critic Matt Zoller Seitz in his article "The Substance of Style" written for *Moving Image Source*, the online branch of the Museum of the Moving Image. It should also be noted that although Seitz identifies the occurrences of these references, he does little by way of analysis. It is my intention to examine the purpose of these shots and to explore why they are important to Anderson's films.

It is with *Bottle Rocket* that I will first deal, before returning to Truffaut's influence on *Rushmore*. The characters in *Bottle Rocket* are much like Truffaut's young characters in *The 400 Blows*. All of the characters have grown bored, unsatisfied or frustrated with their lives and familial situations. Even though Anderson's characters are significantly older than Antoine and his friends, they seem to share roughly the same emotional age and hence are wrestling with similar struggles to find identities, vocations

and peers. In Antoine's case, much of his antisocial behaviour stems from a dysfunctional home life and antagonistic and nearly sadistic school teachers. Dignan and Anthony's attempts at a life of crime are driven primarily by ennui. When Anthony is questioned as to why he wound up in a mental institution, he replies that:

One morning, over at Elizabeth's beach house, she asked me if I'd rather go water-skiing or lay out. And I realized that not only did I not want to answer *that* question, but I never wanted to answer another water-sports question, or see any of these people again for the rest of my life.

Dignan's motivation for pursuing a life of crime are less clearly laid out; however, it seems clear that his yen from criminality is borne of the same boredom with his comfortable middleclass life that spurs on Anthony. Although both films begin from different places, each have characters that enter downward spiral narratives. However, Anderson's characters move through their trials with a much more light-hearted tone in comparison to those in Truffaut's film. Whereas Antoine ends the film alone on an abandoned beach after having run away from a military academy, Anderson's characters are considerably better off when the credits role. Although Dignan has wound up in prison after getting caught attempting to rob a cold storage plant, he is not entirely despondent about his fate. It is as though Dignan views being caught, tried and convicted as a relief. This is not a relief in the Dostoevskian mode as though Dignan, like Raskolnikov, needs to be captured in order to assuage the guilt he feels for his crime. Rather, for Dignan, getting caught gives him the sort of criminal credibility he was looking for throughout the film. He is finally a bona fide criminal because he is doing "hard time." Anthony and Bob both get away without being caught for their crimes and

when they visit Dignan in prison they have positive news for him. Anthony's relationship with Inez (the chambermaid he met while the gang was on the lam in Mexico) has progressed and become more serious. Bob has reconciled with his older brother Future Man (Andrew Wilson) and the two are getting along much better than they were throughout the rest of the picture.

Anderson gives us a clue about the upcoming narrative and tonal shifts near the end of his film by recreating two shots from *The 400 Blows* with reversed screen direction. The first scene that Anderson recreates involves police returning a runaway to the military academy that Antoine has been placed in. The young boy is being led by two police officers who hold the boy by either arm as they march across the school yard. At one point the three of them (moving from right to left) pass by the camera and we get a very close look at the left side of the boy's face (Figure 2.5). After this, the camera follows from behind for a few more seconds.



Figure 2.5



Figure 2.6

Anderson version of the scene from *Bottle Rocket* involves Dignan being led by police officers toward the exit of the plant he was trying to rob. Once again two officers stand on either side of him and each grasp his arms as they walk. As the group moves (this time from left to right) by the camera again there is a close up profile shot, but this time the camera is examining the right side of the face (Figure 2.6).

Later in *Bottle Rocket* Anderson again quotes Truffaut's film with a shot of Anthony and Bob through a chain link fence (Figure 2.8). The shot is reminiscent of one of Antoine locked in a small cage in the police office after having been arrested for stealing a typewriter from his stepfather's office (Figure 2.7). In both films the characters are removed from the audience by a crisscrossing of metal bars behind which they stare off past the camera. It should be noted, however, that in Antoine's case, he is locked in, whereas Bob and Anthony are locked out. This is an important distinction when considering how Anderson deals with his main character. It is clear that Anthony is portrayed as more closely linked to Antoine than the other characters; after all, the two characters share the same name (albeit with different spelling due to the language

difference). While Dignan may be the more memorable character in the film, Anderson clearly makes a closer association between him and those characters from *Blows* that act as bad temptations for Antoine. It is interesting to note, as well, that while Antoine sits alone, Anderson shows us the two friends together. Unlike the misfits in Truffaut's film, Anderson's misfits find the acceptance from others that they have longed for. In terms of stylistic choices it is important to recognize that while Truffaut dollies his camera backwards, moving away from his subject, Anderson, in his recreation, chooses to move closer to Bob and Anthony as they watch Dignan being led back to his cell.



Figure 2.7



Figure 2.8

A third example of Anderson's reverse referencing of *The 400 Blows* can be found near the opening of *Rushmore*. The shot occurs during what we later discover is a dream sequence in which Max confidently solves what his teacher claims to be "probably the hardest geometry equation in the world." Just after the same teacher makes a lofty claim about what he would do if someone could solve the problem, we get a shot from the back of the class showing all of the students excitedly discussing the possibilities (Figure 2.9). A sideways tracking shot slides us across the back of the room before stopping behind Max who is reading a newspaper and appears to be uninterested. This shot is important because of its similarity to one used by Truffaut to show Antoine's teacher moving through the classroom (Figure 2.10). The main difference once again being the placement of the camera and the direction in which it is moving. In Truffaut's

films the camera moves from right to left and is placed at the front of the room; in Anderson's film the camera moves from left to right and is positioned in the rear.



Figure 2.9



Figure 2.10

These instances of reversal of screen direction are important in considering Anderson's use of allusion. They work in a similar manner to how Anderson's allusions to Welles' work. The reversals themselves do not mark a reversal in ideology, but they are Anderson's way of cluing us in to the fact that he intends to upend his referent through his own narrative. Anderson wants us to recognize Truffaut's images and

therefore Truffaut's influence. When seeing the similar shot the viewer knows to consider the Truffaut worldview in understanding this film. However, by reversing the screen direction Anderson is pointing to the fact that he wants to flip that worldview around. Although Anderson's characters suffer through similar situations as the ones Antoine must endure, ultimately Anderson's worldview does not share the negativity that can be found in Truffaut's film. Whereas Antoine at the end of *Blows* finds himself separated from his family, expelled from school and finally completely alone, Bob, Anthony, Dignan and Max are able to find reconciliation and community. By approaching allusion in this way, Anderson is able to infuse his film with thematic concerns and his characters with characteristics of Truffaut's film while at the same time staking a claim for his differing view of the human condition. He is able to pay homage and respect to those filmmakers he values while simultaneously critiquing their more negative outlook. In this way, Anderson is able to maintain originality even in the midst of an allusion.

This is not to say that Anderson's films are naive or simplistically optimistic. In fact, most of his endings are far more ambiguous than they initially appear.⁵ The positive aspects of Anderson's endings have everything to do with the dispositions of his characters. Unlike many of the characters in the films by Welles' and Truffaut, it is difficult to identify any character in Anderson's oeuvre that is either as corrupt as George Amberson Minifer or as unilaterally oppressed as Antoine Doinel. Therefore, Anderson's characters have a hope for redemption, and a chance to find their way to a positive resolution that is not extended to the characters in *Ambersons* and *Blows*. It is the

⁵The topic of ambiguity will be taken up with far more detail in chapter 4.

upending of this lack of hope that Anderson is pointing toward with his use of reverse homage; and it is this constant underlying hope which allows Anderson to arrive at his positive endings honestly.

In the following chapter, I will continue to examine the liminal space between childhood and adulthood which many of Anderson's characters occupy by examining how his many allusions to adventure cinema and literature create a framework for understanding the innate urges of his male characters to form an identity through risk.

Chapter 3

White Whales, India and the Trap of Adolescence: Anderson's Adventure Cinema

*"You know, you and Herman deserve each other. You're both little children."
Ms. Cross (Rushmore)*

The term 'Adventure Cinema' as a descriptor of a genre type is rarely attributed to the subdued, off-kilter films Anderson tends to create; however, the influence of films and novels about world travelling adventurers who face danger and death at every turn can be found throughout Anderson's oeuvre. In this chapter I will explore the way in which Anderson deals with the notion of the arrested development of his characters by associating them with the archetypes of adventure cinema. Through this examination I will show that Anderson's engagement with the adventure genre is done in order to question the notion of the extended childhood and the act of making meaning through the engagement of risk and adventure.

Near the beginning of *The Royal Tenenbaums*, we see Richie in the middle of the ocean aboard a ship populated with uniformed men. He is responding to a telegram from his mother that has informed him of his father's alleged illness and imminent death. His presence on that ship has a lot to do with the sort of adventure fiction and cinema that quite often finds its way into much of Anderson's work. A major influence on Anderson's sensibility with this regard is a 1939 RKO release which has become a sort of archetype for the numerous action films which have followed it. Directed by George Stevens, *Gunga Din*, loosely based on the Rudyard Kipling poem of the same name, amongst other stories, stars Cary Grant, Victor McLaglen and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. as

three adventurous sergeants in the British Army. Stationed in India during the late 19th Century the three sergeants have a thirst for action that often outweighs their best interests and baffles the minds of their superiors. Although the notions of war and colonialism can be complicated and sombre, in Stevens' film "all seriousness gives way to romance and adventure as the three heroes, Ballantine, MacChesney, and Cutter, enter the action and proceed to jump out of windows, run up and down stairs, punch out enemies, and generally destroy sets and scenery" (Moss 60). It is easy to spot the influence this film has had over the action/adventure genre, particularly the Indiana Jones films, but on a thematic level, the echoes of Stevens' story of machismo in search of every sort of adventure can be found all over Anderson's oeuvre. Most particularly in Anderson's work we see the notion of arrested development or sustained adolescence and in some cases sustained childhood and its relation to a sort of male adventure drive; a masculine need to find oneself through danger. "The soldiers do battle with the enemy as the film's sheer joy and animation reflect a boy's adventure yarn. *Gunga Din* is purely a young man's film, reflecting the young man who directed it" (Moss 60).

Although in every one of Anderson's films there exists some notion of the adventure cinema found in *Gunga Din*, on a thematic, narrative and characterization level, Stevens' film looms most prominently over his first film. The story of *Bottle Rocket* with its three childlike men in search of the sort of adventure that will bring purpose to their lives reflects the boyish enthusiasm of *Gunga Din* more than any of Anderson's subsequent films. Anthony, like Ballantine, falls in love which in turn forces him to question the sort of life he has been leading. Dignan and Bob, like Cutter and MacChesney are irritated by this romance because of its potential for breaking up the

gang. It should be noted, however, that Anderson's characters hardly go to the lengths that Stevens' do to end the relationship. That being said, Anthony's relationship with Inez and the expression of his commitment – giving her the last of the gang's heist money – causes the temporary end of Anthony and Dignan's friendship. The boys even have a Gunga Din-like Indian cohort in Kumar; however, rather than being the saviour of the mission as in Stevens' film, Kumar's ineptitude at safecracking means that the gang gets away with nothing at all.

This sort of role reversal is common throughout *Bottle Rocket* since Anderson is frequently parodying the acts of heroism in Stevens' film. Often what plays as heroic and altruistic in *Gunga Din* comes off as misguided and comedic in *Bottle Rocket*. For instance, when Ballantine postpones his marriage to go off with MacChesney to rescue Cutter and once and for all finish off the Indian murder cult that has been causing the British colonialists so much trouble, he is portrayed as gallant and brave for putting his fellow soldier and his country before his own safety and happiness. When Dignan similarly sends the rest of his gang away so that he can run back into the crime scene to rescue Applejack, who suffers a heart attack mid-heist, his selfless act is played for laughs. He gets Applejack back to the getaway van but winds up being locked out when the police arrive. Dignan gets sent to prison while Applejack we hear is acquitted either because of Mr. Henry's intervention or because of his heart condition.

Anderson has worked to set up these connections between his movie and *Gunga Din* (as well as many other movies like it) in order to undermine one of its most returned to tropes: the selfless sacrifice for a comrade. Dignan only loses due to his valiant act;

chances are that if he were not there when the police arrived, Applejack still would have gotten away without punishment. Anderson also pokes fun at the convention of keeping a tight lip. Dignan tells his friends that he told the DA that he had CRS, which he says stands for “Can’t Remember Shit.” Dignan refuses to talk about his partners or his boss in the hopes that he will be recognized for commended for his dedication to his gang. However, just after his boast Anthony and Bob tell him about how Mr. Henry set them up so that he could rob Bob’s house while they were attempting to rob the Cold Storage Plant. Each one of the adventure tropes that Dignan is trying to act out comes back to make things worse for himself. In this way Anderson is showing the fallibility and ridiculousness of these tropes and in the idea that one could somehow find validation or maturity through adhering to them.

Anderson again evokes *Gunga Din* in his own film about India, *The Darjeeling Limited*. In the film three brothers (Jack, Francis and Peter) meet up aboard the Indian train of the title at Francis’ request. Francis, the eldest, has recently suffered a major motorcycle accident and wants to reconnect with his brothers. He feels that this shared adventure will help them “become brothers again, like [they] used to be.” Francis near death experience (hinted to be the result of an attempted suicide) has spurred on a spiritual search to find some meaning in his life. His two brothers are also at difficult impasses: Jack, the youngest, is struggling to get over an ex-lover who keeps returning to his life; and Peter, the middle child, has left behind his very pregnant wife because of his own anxieties over becoming a father.

Although Anderson uses the characters to upend the sort of adventure tropes found in *Gunga Din* just as he did in *Bottle Rocket*, in *The Darjeeling Limited* Anderson is much more interested in countering Stevens' portrayal of India. In the film version of *Gunga Din*, as well as in the Kipling poem it was based on, India is a wild nation full of Godless savages that is in desperate need of Western colonial intervention. When the eponymous character gives his life in the film to save further the British cause, it is seen as a surprise because the white characters have a hard time imagining that an Indian could act so selflessly. In Kipling's poem, Gunga Din's heroism is attributed to the fact that he is not as Indian as he appears to be. "An' for all 'is dirty 'ide/'E was white, clear white, inside" (Kipling 28). The racism of this sentiment is obvious and represents a worldview that Kipling presented in many of his poems, not least of which being his treatise poem "White Man's Burden." The theme of India as corrupt and in need of Western civilization remains prominent in Stevens' film, after all the conflict comes down to a sort of missionary expedition wherein the British (and presumably Christian) army must squash the uprising of a murderous cult that worships the goddess Kali and kills defenceless soldiers in their sleep.

The racial message of the film is...clear. It takes a horde of Thugs to overpower a single white man. The Indians die without dignity. Their efforts to run from sticks of dynamite are presented comically as though in a cartoon. Although the Thug Guru (played by Edward Ciannelli in heavy black-face) is allowed to explain his cause, he is nevertheless represented as a madman, and is photographed so as to highlight glinting teeth, fanatical eyes and an exaggeratedly black face... In contrast, Gunga Din cringes before the white characters. He initially appears only as comic relief, like MacChesney's pet elephant, Annie. Yet while Annie is nurtured as 'Daddy's little elephant girl,' Gunga Din is merely patronized. (Chapman and Cull 40)

Unlike the characters in *Gunga Din*, Anderson's characters, having become disillusioned by the religious and social structures of the West, venture into the heart of Indian culture and spirituality in order to find redemption. It is now the white characters who, in their ignorance, are made to look ridiculous in the face of the long and rich Indian tradition. It is the brothers who recklessly bring a poisonous cobra onboard the train; who cannot carry out a simple religious rite; and who lack the focus to pray before a shrine for more than a few seconds before devolving into petty bickering over a borrowed belt. Moreover, Anderson is completely reversing the Christian missionary aspect of colonialism by having his characters go in search of spiritual fulfillment. Rather than the white travellers bringing enlightenment to the heathen natives, Anderson has his characters very eager to learn from the customs of India, and to find meaning through it. Francis states near the beginning of the film that "I want us to make this trip a spiritual journey where each of us seek the unknown, and we learn about it... I want us to be completely open and say yes to everything even if it's shocking and painful." In fact, despite their short attentions spans, the brothers live up to this challenge as best they can. They make an effort to understand, participate and enjoy the Hindu spiritual customs. The film itself treats these customs with far more respect and dignity than many films about Westerners visiting India, and certainly a great deal more than does *Gunga Din*.

When the brothers do encounter Catholicism, a spiritual system closer culturally to their own, it comes filtered through their mother who has asked that they not visit her, and abandons them shortly after their arrival. For the brothers, Catholicism, one of the high water marks of Western spiritual evolution, leaves them empty and alone. Their mother, like many Christian understandings of God, is mostly absent and difficult to

connect with even when present. This is contrasted constantly by the ubiquitous images of the Hindu gods which appear throughout the film; as well as through the images of community which characterize the funeral rites for the young Indian boy who drowns.

It could be stated that Anderson is simply re-stereotyping India as a place of spiritual redemption for Westerners a la *Eat Pray Love* or fetishizing its peculiarities in the same way as *Slumdog Millionaire*. In that case, the question must be asked: is Anderson doing anything more for India than Stevens or Kipling did, or is he just reinforcing new, somewhat positive, but equally reductive stereotypes about a complicated and robust culture? The answer can be found in the actions of the brothers in the final scene of the film. In a sequence that almost identically mirrors the brothers' arrival on the train at the beginning of the film; the characters are greeted with a traditional Indian ritual involving spots of paint being placed on their foreheads and decide to exit the car for a cigarette. The ceremony has become commonplace to the brothers who are neither awed nor fazed by the ritual as they were at the opening of the film. Instead they simply accept the gesture for what it is. For the brothers India is no longer a mystical and strange land, it is simply a place like any other. The fact that India was the locus of their change is not as important as the change itself. It is who they are rather than where they are that is important in the end.

In the same way that the brothers' reaction to the ritual shows that they no longer see India as a spiritual height to be ascended to, the fact that they voluntarily exit the cabin to smoke shows that they no longer see themselves as culturally superior as they did at the beginning when they glibly lit up in the cabin. After all, it is unlikely that the

brothers would have thought it was acceptable to smoke inside a train car in the United States, yet at the beginning of the film they light up right in front of a no smoking sign. At the end of the film the brothers have learned to behave the same in India as they would stateside. This change acts as an indicator of the characters' new appreciation of India as an equal rather than a subordinate nation.

It is also important to note that the major turning point in growth of the characters occurs through the death of a young boy. Although this death occurs in India, it is hardly specific to the nation as death is a universal. The death is shown in contrast to the death of the Whitman patriarch which took place a year earlier; however, the brothers' more healthy reaction does not come from the advice of a sage or as the result of a ritual, but is the product of their increased readiness to confront their own conflicted emotional states. What this emphasizes is the fact that their redemption is the product of one's own initiative. Although the change takes place in India, Anderson is not making a claim about the mystical power of the country. In this way he is both removing the "heathen" stigma of Stevens' film while avoiding the cliché of India as messianic saviour which has been found in many recent Western films set in India.

In addition to the spiritual themes that Anderson is reversing, he also manages to upend the idea from Stevens' film that self-discovery and fulfillment are found in risk and adventure. At the end of the film, it is when the real world seeps back into the brothers' fantasy of adventure that they are able to traverse the gap between adolescence and adulthood. When Francis finally reveals the scars on his face that he has been hiding literally under bandages and figuratively behind this escapist journey, he comes to the

realization that he has more healing to do. He understands that picaresque-style adventuring and forced reconciliation with his family will not correct the problems in him which drove him to attempt to take his own life. Peter is able to come to terms with his impending fatherhood when he reconnects with the domestic realm of his life by finally calling his wife to let her know where he is. He also purchases a vest for the child, an expression of his acceptance of the role of provider. Jack, who has spent the film turning his real life into fictional stories, is able to admit that his stories are actually retellings of the events of his life. In that moment, he is able to accept the reality of his life rather than reassigning it as fantasy through the act of writing it into fiction. For the Whitman brothers resolution is found in the return rather than the adventure.

In exploring the theme of adventure, Anderson is not only borrowing from Stevens' film, but is in fact tapping into a major theme in American literature. Consider the following diatribe from Captain Ahab found in Herman Melville's 1851 novel *Moby Dick*, a novel which has a large thematic and narrative presence in Anderson's film *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*.

The prophecy was that I should be dismembered; and – Aye! I lost this leg. I now prophesy that I will dismember my dismemberer. Now, then, be the prophet and the fulfiller one. That's more than ye, ye great gods, ever were. I laugh and hoot at yet, ye cricket-players, ye pugilists, ye deaf Burkes and blinded bendigoes! I will not say as schoolboys do to bullies, – Take some one of your own size; don't pommel *me*! No, ye've knocked me down, and I am up again; but *ye* have run and hidden. Come forth from behind your cotton bags! I have no long gun to reach ye. Come, Ahab's compliments to ye; come and see if ye can swerve me. Swerve me? Ye cannot swerve me, else ye swerve yourselves! Man has ye there. Swerve me? The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. Over unsounded gorges, through the rifled hearts of

mountains, under torrents' beds, unerringly I rush! Naught's an obstacle,
naught's an angle to the iron way! (139-140)

Here Ahab reflects his feelings about the role of adventure and risk in defining what it means to be a "man." Here he speaks with the sort of monomaniacal tone which at once frightens his crew and inspires them to follow him. With a great deal of audacity, Ahab makes significant claims about his own powers: he has overcome his dismemberment, and in doing so has proven to be more powerful than a prophecy; he has made his own prophecy that he himself will fulfill by "dismembering his dismemberer;" and he shows a great deal of hubris by mocking the gods. It is in this mocking that we get a sense of what Ahab views as valid masculinity. He calls the gods "cricket-players" and "pugilists," in essence, ones for whom action is a thing of sport, a game. Although athletes may be strong and full of action, in Ahab's mind, because they act for the purpose of sport, their actions lack the passion that a man who would (in the case of the pugilist) fight for honour or out of anger. He takes this one step further when he calls the gods "deaf Burkes and blinded Bendigos." He is referring to Jem Burkes and William Thompson (also known as Bendigo), two prominent boxers of the time. Hence, Ahab is not only reducing the gods to mere sportsmen, he even goes as far as to make the gods impotent versions of popular athletes.

Ahab goes on to elevate his own strength by making the claim that he will not back away from an obviously stronger opponent. "I will not say as schoolboys do to bullies, – Take on some one your own size; don't pommel me!" Here Ahab is distancing himself from the realm of childhood, a realm that, in his view, no man should have any

part of. After this Ahab makes the claim that his return has caused the gods to run and hide in fear. He then challenges them to swerve him from his path, a path that will lead through multiple perils. Despite these perils, Ahab is confident that nothing can change his course. To have that course changed would be a sign of weakness; it would be something a child would do. For Ahab, his masculine power is wrapped up in his iron will and ability to face and overcome adversity; his fearlessness in the face of perilous adventure. For Ahab, to avoid, or to sublimate these adventures would make him as weak as the gods which he imagines are now cowering in his presence.

Ahab's quote exemplifies, much like Stevens' film, the idea that truth resides in risk; that a boy can only become a "real man" through adventure. In Stevens' film it is suggested that what is even more detrimental than sublimated urges is the danger of a man becoming domesticated, or worst of all, for him to become dominated by a female. In the male dominated understanding of *Gunga Din*, falling in love is tantamount to going insane. Both of these ideas, at their roots, operate within the logic of boyhood. Despite the fact that Ahab clearly sees his actions as being more evolved than the frightened actions of schoolboys, in actual fact, neither he nor the characters of *Gunga Din* are acting as rational adult males, but rather, are refusing to leave behind the ideals of their youth.

This sort of convention can be traced back into fairytale storytelling and even Greek Mythology, wherein males are often called upon to perform heroic feats in order to find redemption. In her book, *Violent Adventure*, Marilyn C. Wesley describes the journey of the male hero of fairytales in the following way:

An inadequate child...sets out to correct an injury or repair a lack. On his way he passes tests that give proof of his own masculine adequacy, and he meets helpers who provide gifts from the powerful world beyond his control. At the conclusion of the adventure, secure in his own powers and in conformity with the communal norms modeled through his encounters with those who come to his aid, he returns to the paternal kingdom to rule in the father's stead. (47)

The ideas of this quote coalesce with Ahab's worldview and Stevens' *Gunga Din* in *The Life Aquatic*, which captures what Anderson sees as the follies of the male adventure drive. When asked once how he would describe his 2005 film *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*, Anderson called it a European art film in the shell of a Hollywood epic.⁶ The film's plot, put succinctly, is as follows: Oceanographer Steve Zissou and his band of adventurers set out on a revenge mission to kill the shark that ate their comrade; however, it quickly becomes clear that this description leaves out a great deal of what the film is actually dealing with. Much like *Moby Dick*, from which *Zissou* borrows some plot elements, the digressions from the main plots are as, and in some cases more, important than the events which make up the main storyline.

The unusual structure of *Moby Dick* has long frustrated readers and confounded scholars because the numerous digressions full of esoteric knowledge have little to do with the main narrative of Melville's tome. These digressions provide an encyclopaedic knowledge of everything from the anatomy and migratory patterns of whales, to the

⁶ This is the description that Anderson and screenwriting partner Noah Baumbach arrive at after struggling to answer the questions of an awkward Italian talk show host. Found in the special features on the Criterion edition of *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*.

social structures and responsibilities of every crewman on board a whaling ship during the mid-nineteenth century.

Once the narrative has carried the action out to sea, these digressions become chapter-long explorations of the symbolic power of the objects of the whaling industry. Thus Ishmael's narrative voice repeatedly deviates from the task of describing the hunt for Moby Dick. In his digressions, he becomes more than simply a narrator, also becoming: a lawyer defending the nobility of whaling in Chapter 24 "The Advocate," a zoologist in Chapter 32 "Cetology," a philosopher in Chapter 42 "The Whiteness of the Whale," as well as historian and anthropologist, not only in these digressions, but also within other chapters seemingly focused on narrative exposition. (Govender 64)

Critic Walter E. Bezanson states that Ishmael's digressions act as a critique of the genius of the individual. Ishmael uses nearly every academic discipline known at the time to understand whales and whaling. Ultimately his inability to fully understand the animals is meant to prove that the creatures and their ways are unknowable. This unknowing in turn characterizes Ahab, who professes to be some sort of superman and expert on all matters concerning whales, as foolish in his arrogance. Melville is making the point that the increasing amounts of knowledge on all subjects at that time means that no one person can know everything and that a society must work together. These notions, then, directly comment on the main plot where Ahab's egomaniacal and dictator-like leadership, in which he eschews the advice of his crew, leads not only to his own death, but to the death of nearly everyone on board his ship.

Similarly in *The Life Aquatic*, the main plot becomes secondary so that Anderson can use the digressions to undermine the authority of his own Ahab, Steve Zissou (Bill Murray). Within the first five minutes the revenge plot of the film's narrative is laid out

when Zissou states his intention to find the shark that ate his closest friend, Esteban, and kill it. When asked why he, an oceanographer, would want to kill an endangered species, Zissou earnestly gives his reason as: revenge. Immediately following this declaration Anderson shifts to a series of scenes in which we are introduced to the real Steve Zissou (as opposed to the confident version he projects through his documentary films).

Anderson shows us Zissou as a washed-up celebrity who has trouble getting financing for his adventures. We learn of his complicated marriage which is fraught with infidelities. Ned Plimpton (Owen Wilson), who may or may not be Zissou's estranged illegitimate son, is introduced along with Jane (Cate Blanchet), a pregnant British reporter assigned to write a profile on Zissou. Aside from a few fleeting mentions of the mission, it is nearly forty minutes (a third of the film's running time) before the characters embark on their voyage. The narrative hardly stays on course even after the crew has departed for their voyage. There are so many digressions in the story telling (relationship subplots, a pirate attack and Ned's death) that by the end of the film, when Zissou announces that he has found the Jaguar Shark, it feels more like an afterthought than the penultimate moment of the film.

Upon the film's release, Anderson was criticized heavily by reviewers who felt that the picture's unusual narrative structure was simply the result of poor filmmaking. What these reviewers failed to realize, however, is that, like *Moby Dick*, the meaning is in the meandering. The meaning of Pequod's destruction at the end of *Moby Dick* cannot be fully appreciated without understanding what Melville has been saying about democracy and specialization throughout the endless encyclopaedic digressions. Likewise, without the numerous digressions in *Life Aquatic* which cover everything from Zissou's

relationships, failures, triumphs and pettiness, the importance of the film's poetic ending would be completely lost.

When Zissou does finally come into contact with his nemesis, he cannot kill him as Ahab attempts to. Yet, his act of mercy towards the Jaguar Shark does represent the death of a part of Zissou, namely, the constructed public persona which he has been labouring to maintain throughout the film. At his most vulnerable moment, Zissou wonders aloud whether or not the shark remembers him before nearly breaking down in tears. This is followed by the remaining members of his crew reaching out their hands to comfort him. For the first time those around him are in contact with Zissou the human rather than Zissou the personality. Like Melville with Ahab, Anderson is making it clear that the sort of single-minded man-child adventurer figure that Zissou is attempting to be, can no longer exist.

This idea is explored more in the final scene of the film which finds Zissou outside of the theatre where his latest documentary is having its world premiere. A young boy who has been introduced as Werner, the nephew of one of the members of Team Zissou, sits down beside Steve. Zissou hands the boy the Zissou Society ring that had belonged to his now deceased son before enigmatically stating: "This is an adventure." As the crowd exits the theatre, Zissou hoists Werner onto his shoulders and they make their way down the stairs leaving behind the award he's just won, and the throngs of admirers. This final scene is a representation of the fact that Zissou is finally able to abandon everything that his life has been about thus far (fame, women, awards) and embrace responsibilities such as children and family as a new "adventure." His refusal to

make this leap throughout the rest of the film has led to the alienation of his wife and the death of his son.

As the final credits roll, Anderson shows us Zissou returning to his ship with Werner, the surrogate Ned, by his side. One by one each member of Team Zissou, as well as his “nemesis” Hennesey, joins him as he walks. The final person to join the group is his wife Eleanor who enthusiastically runs to his side revealing a renewed enthusiasm for their marriage and work. When the crew reaches the Belafonte, a wide shot reveals the whole of the ship. At the highest point on the boat stands a figure in a pilot’s uniform with a pipe in his mouth. We can only assume that this is Ned, or rather the idea of Ned, haunting the boat like a spectre; a visual representation of Zissou’s new set of priorities. Zissou has made the journey shared by all Andersonian characters as he moves from childhood to adulthood. He has abandoned adolescence in favour of the real responsibilities of adult life and his world has been irrevocably changed because of this. Whether or not it is true in life, in Anderson’s films redemption is found through the abandonment of childhood adventures in favour of adult responsibilities.

This shift in values is fully solidified in the last shot of the film: once the characters have arrived on the boat, Zissou, Eleanor and Werner move to the front of the ship where the three occupy an elevated and separated position from the rest of the crew. The constructed Zissou, the man-child adventurer and Ahab-like captain of his documentary films, is now gone. The man who remains is the Zissou who we have watched change and grow in the digressions. He is a man who no longer sees himself through the wonder-filled eyes of a child, but one who is willing to embrace the

responsibilities which have crept in unnoticed through the digressions in his story while he was busy trying to act out the main plot.

I will return now *The Royal Tenenbaums* in order to show how this movement from adolescence to adulthood works in Anderson's film that is most ostensibly about growing up. Through Richie Tenenbaum, Anderson is exploring all of the themes I have been discussing so far in this chapter. It is Richie who operates under the male adventure drive of *Gunga Din*, the male-redemption fairytale structure and Ishmael's yearning for the adventure of seafaring to solve the ennui of the modern man.

Richie clearly sees himself as "an inadequate child...[who]sets out to correct an injury or repair a lack" (Wesley 47). His unrequited love for Margot caused him to suffer a very public nervous breakdown after which he escaped his family and home by embarking on a sea journey of indefinite length. It is not unimaginable that Richie took this journey expecting to pass "tests that give proof of his own masculine adequacy" (Wesley 47); however, Anderson's character does not find redemption in adventure, rather the home is the site of his redemption. Richie returns to his family less like a conquering hero than a still-broken sojourner. This is exemplified by his appearance. When we first see him he has become unkempt, allowing his beard and hair to grow untrimmed. Anderson has set up Richie to look like a wild prophet coming out of the wilderness, still devoid of answers.

Anderson, through Richie, is showing what becomes of a person who attempts to escape the perils of life as defined by *Gunga Din* by embarking on the sort of adventure prescribed by *Moby Dick*. After all, it was in order to break away from the domination his

sister had over him that Richie left his family and career behind to spend a year travelling the world aboard a ship called the Côte d'Ivoire. During the voyage we are told he has "seen both poles, five oceans, the Amazon and the Nile." It is important to note that the ship shares its name with the West African nation (known in English as the Ivory Coast) which conjures up images of exotic locales. This imagery is then compounded by the description of the far reaching places Richie has visited. As I mentioned, it is aboard the Côte d'Ivoire that we first see the adult Richie. Although he is planning to return to his real life, Richie is far from readjusted. Rather than being the cure for his restlessness, Richie's adventure has left him in a worse place than before. Rather than being freed from the domination Margot has over him, he is now so immersed in his romantic feelings that he confidently expresses them in a telegram to his friend, Eli Cash.

What is important about Anderson's use of the male adventure theme is how he manages to invert the convention. Although Anderson's characters "yearn obsessively to regress into a childhood of freedom that is obviously unobtainable" (Olsen 13), his films do not revel in the sort of wonton destruction (a la *Gunga Din*) which should result from wilful immaturity. Rather, in all of Anderson's films maturing emotionally is vital to his characters finding redemption. Richie must leave his life at sea and return to his familial home in order to reconcile his relationship with Margot. For Anderson's characters self-realization never occurs through adventure, but through the abandonment of adventure. It is the only way that any Andersonian characters find their way out of the suspended childhood each of them begins their respective films in.

The fullest realization of these themes in any of Anderson's film can be found in his latest movie, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. The film is an adaptation of Roald Dahl's classic children's novel of the same name. Anderson's first foray into both the animated and children's market sees him approach many of the same themes of adulthood and responsibilities, and in many ways dig deeper into them due to the fact that he is no longer encumbered by human actors. His characters in *Fox* (brought to life through stop-motion animation) are anthropomorphized woodland creatures struggling against a group of human farmers that want revenge for their stolen merchandise. As in all of Anderson's films, the main character, Mr. Fox, must come to terms with his own adulthood by ending the sustained immaturity which got him in trouble to begin with. In the case of this film, it is Mr. Fox's innate urge to risk his life stealing chickens, geese and cider rather than to settle down as a domesticated father and newspaper columnist.

In their adaptation, Anderson and his screenwriting partner Noah Baumbach have added a great deal of character back story to Dahl's tale. This in turn adds some complexity to the mostly black and white story of a fox doing battle with some bitter farmers found in the original source. This complexity comes through Anderson forcing the question of who is culpable for the events that transpire. In Dahl's book the farmers are portrayed as nasty and greedy, unwilling to allow a poor fox the means he and his family need to survive. Stealing chickens is portrayed as Mr. Fox's profession in the book, and the only way he can provide for his family. In Anderson's film the animals have a much more complex economic system which means that none of them have to steal food in order to survive: Mr. Fox is a newspaper columnist, Mr. Badger is a lawyer and Mr. Weasel is in Real Estate, for example. The trouble begins for these creatures

when Mr. Fox becomes restless with his domesticated life and returns to his life of stealing. Hence, the retaliation of Boggis, Bunce and Bean is the result of Mr. Fox transgressing the domestic realm that provides him and his family safety. Therefore, Anderson has turned Mr. Fox into both the hero and the villain of the film.

Anderson introduces this dichotomy in the first scene of the picture. Mr. and Mrs. Fox have met up in order to steal some squabs for dinner. After successfully collecting their prey, Mr. Fox triggers a fox trap and the two are encaged. Mrs. Fox makes her husband promise that if they get out of that predicament, he will stop stealing and will find a regular job. Anderson has chosen to score this scene with the Beach Boys song “Heroes and Villains” which examines the thin line between these two roles. A verse from the song states:

Stand or fall I know there
 Shall be peace in the valley;
 And it's all an affair
 Of my life with the heroes and the villains.

The hopelessness of the above passage, that the outcome of a situation (even if it is peace) will be the same whether one sides with the heroes or the villains, carries into Anderson's film. Directly following the scene I've described above, Anderson transports us to 12 fox years in the future where we see Mr. Fox return to his life of stealing due to the fact that his animal urges are not being sated by his domesticated life. Through the series of “master plans” Mr. Fox becomes more animalistic and brings on the wrath of the three farmers that he has been robbing. Hence, Anderson removes culpability from being

solely in the domain of the human characters and places a great deal of the blame on Mr. Fox's immaturity.

Anderson complicates this black and white resolution again by not allowing his characters to entirely lose their animal sides. The fact is that these characters are animals, and no matter what they do as a day job, they are not fully living if they cannot act on their urges. Hence, when the characters eat, they do so in an animalistic way, tearing and gnawing at their food in bursts of energy. When the characters fight, they scratch and paw at each other until one gives in. These moments are when the wild animal breaks through the domestic veneer.

In addition, Anderson also has his extremely self-aware characters discuss their ongoing struggle between the two sides of their personalities. During a moment labelled by Mr. Fox as existential in nature he asks the question: "Who am I, and how can a fox ever be happy without a, and you'll forgive the expression, without a chicken in its teeth?" Later on he explains his irresponsible actions by stating: "I'm a wild animal!" The problem for Mr. Fox becomes that it is his ingrained animalism that keeps getting him into trouble. His urge to steal leads to the retaliation of the farmers; his urge to dig when in trouble forces him deeper and deeper underground; and his slyness causes more innocent animals to risk their lives. Mr. Fox begins to make his journey back to domesticity when he begins to accept responsibility for his actions. After the underground lairs where the animals have sought refuge have been flooded, Mr. Fox realizes that he must sacrifice himself to save his family and the rest of the creatures. After coming to this realization, he affirms his insecure son by telling him how proud he

is of him, before taking all of the blame for the situation on himself. In that moment, Mr. Fox becomes the mature father figure that he has avoided becoming all through the film and appears to be on the way to finding redemption through a selfless act, that is, giving himself up to the farmers to be killed.

While this action may have worked to bring resolution for other characters in Anderson's films, in Mr. Fox's case simply returning to domesticity will not be enough for the animals to live fulfilled lives and so a balance must be struck. It is for this reason that Mr. Fox delivers a rousing speech to his fellow animals in which he reminds them of the fact that while they are professionals with real jobs, they are also wild animals with the sorts of skills that can overcome their human oppressors.

‘When I look down this table with the exquisite feast set before us, I see two terrific lawyers, a skilled paediatrician, one wonderful chef, a savvy real estate agent, an excellent tailor, a crack accountant, a gifted musician, a pretty good minnow fisherman and possibly the best landscape painter working on the scene today. Maybe a few of you even read my column from time to time, who knows, I tend to doubt it. I also see a room full of wild animals; wild animals with true natures and pure talents.’

For the characters of *Fantastic Mr. Fox* it is not enough to make the movement from childhood to adulthood, they must find a balance between their natural desires and what responsibility expects of them. In this scene, Anderson creates a new paradigm that has not existed in his other studies of maturity where his characters have had to simply leave behind the pleasures of youth in order to take on the responsibility of being grown up. This working dichotomy is illustrated through the creatures' newly adopted habitat. Due to the destruction of their animalistic homes, all of the animal characters are living in

the sewer system. Thus, the animals have literally moved into the constructs of humanity; however, their very act of living there is a sort of infestation which represents the rebelliousness of their animalistic natures.

Furthermore, in the film's final scene, Anderson reveals a new source of food for Mr. Fox and his family. After a quick glimpse of the "Fox About Town" newspaper article which shows that Mr. Fox has not entirely abandoned his adult responsibilities, we are lead into the Boggis, Bunce and Bean supermarket where everything the animals could want is packaged, organized and available for the taking. In this way, Anderson has set up the balance: Mr. Fox can still sate his urge to steal, but the location of the theft is highly domesticated and sterilized. He can take food without getting so dirty. And because, as we are told, the store closes early on weekends, Mr. Fox can perpetrate his crime with a great deal less risk. The compromise is not perfect. In a toast he makes atop a soap box, Mr. Fox mentions that all foxes are allergic to linoleum, but then adds it's cool to the touch. What this odd bit of dialogue is actually revealing about Mr. Fox is that although he does not see the situation as perfect (he clearly wants to indulge his urges more fully), it has its benefits and eventually he will get used to it. Additionally, in the shot of his column Anderson's reveals that Mr. Fox is finally able to come to terms with his more balanced life. The last line of the meandering and non-sequitur filled article reads: "I'm not the fox I used to be. Not by choice. But these days, when I look at myself in the mirror, I try to keep a straight face. At some point, maybe I won't feel the need to turn away."

Finally, it is important to note that this new sort of resolution has implications that stretch across Anderson's entire oeuvre with regard to the resolutions of his previous films. The balance that the characters in *Fox* have been able to find forces one to question even further what are, at best, the tenuous conclusions for Anderson's characters in his previous films. For instance, has Max really left behind his elite private school in favour of a more grounded reality at the end of *Rushmore*; and just how solid is Richie and Margot's quasi-incestuous relationship at the end of *Tenenbaums*? I will consider this dilemma in greater depth in my following chapter by examining the influence of J.D. Salinger on Anderson's work. More than any other author, Salinger's influence can be felt in much of the stylistic and thematic concerns that Anderson is dealing with from film to film, including the question of his many seemingly happy endings.

Chapter 4

Suitcases, Strongboxes and the Spectre of Salinger

“I don't think your happiness is quite appropriate.”
Anthony, *Bottle Rocket*

In an interview from 2009 between Anderson and French filmmaker Arnaud Desplechin, the latter stated to the former that he was “to American cinema what J.D. Salinger is to American literature.” This statement is hardly unique in regard to Anderson’s films. The connection between Anderson and Salinger has been noted by critics and film reviewers since the release of his first film in the mid-1990s. Anderson makes numerous allusions to Salinger’s work by quoting specific scenes, borrowing thematic concerns, giving his characters similar names and by placing them in similar positions or situations. In nearly all of Anderson’s films (but especially in the first three), it is possible to find references to Salinger; however, Anderson’s connection to Salinger runs far deeper than surface level homage. This chapter will examine how much of Anderson’s methods for character building, narrative development and even mise-en-scene are influenced by Salinger’s stories and novels. As well, I will show that a careful understanding of Salinger’s work in relation to Anderson’s films reveals that Anderson is, in fact, actively undermining and critiquing the conclusive nature of his own films.

For the purpose of this chapter I am going to break Anderson’s films into two eras: Salinger and Post-Salinger. Anderson’s Salinger era is comprised of *Bottle Rocket*, *Rushmore* and *The Royal Tenenbaums*. These films fit into this category due to the numerous and overt references to Salinger’s work which are absent from the films of the

Post-Salinger era: *The Life Aquatic*, *The Darjeeling Limited* and *Fantastic Mr. Fox*.

Although it should be noted that many of the Salingeresque techniques for narrative and character development which Anderson perfected over the course of his first three films are carried forward into the Post-Salinger Era.

To gain an understanding of just how ubiquitous Salinger's work is throughout Anderson's oeuvre, I'll point out a sampling of the more obvious Salinger allusions. *Bottle Rocket* begins with Anthony checking out of a mental health facility where he has spent a number of months recovering from what he claims was exhaustion. Through conversations later in the film we discover that Anthony went through a minor nervous breakdown after which he no longer wanted to see any of the people he knew as friends. These clear connections to Salinger's Holden Caulfield from *The Catcher in the Rye* only get more cemented when Anthony goes to visit his young sister, Grace, at her prestigious private school. The conversation plays out much like the one between Holden and his sister Phoebe. Grace, like Phoebe, looks up to her older brother, but acts as a voice of reason, providing a more pragmatic perspective than Anthony or Holden can manage. The two separate conversations have the effect of pointing out the immaturity of the older sibling in the face of a more thoughtful younger one. As well, this conversation, and the one I've previously mentioned wherein Anthony expresses his aversion to water sports, connects Anthony to what we know about Holden Caulfield in the cynicism they share for the "phonies" of the world.

In *Rushmore*, Anderson inserts a number of subtle connections between Max and Holden. Max is a member of the school fencing team; Holden was the manager for his

school's team. Both characters are expelled from prestigious schools for their poor grades. Max and Holden share an affinity for older women: beyond Max's affections for Ms. Cross, he is also drawn to his friend Dirk's mother, Mrs. Calloway, in the same way that Holden is drawn to his classmate Ernest Morrow's mother. Anderson even dresses Max in a similar fashion, giving his character a hat similar to the one Holden wears and endlessly comments on. As well, both characters are portrayed as clumsy Casanova types whose attempts to woo women usually end badly due to their inability to move outside of their own selfishness. Critic Mark Browning claims that these allusions do not amount to much because of the fact that Max and Holden are quite different in terms of character motivation and general disposition; however, Browning's very surface level reading of Anderson's films and characters does not consider Anderson's penchant for thematic reversals which I have been describing throughout this work. Anderson creates these connections because understanding Holden is important to understanding the way in which Max is able to overcome the sort of clichéd pessimism which could easily overrun a story like this.

The Royal Tenenbaums is by far Anderson's most Salingeresque film. The screen is literally bursting with endless references to the author's work. For instance: the concept of a family of prodigious children who go on to lead miserable adult lives is a direct reference to Salinger's Glass family who were the subjects of a number of his short stories. In fact, the name Tenenbaum is similar to the married name, Tannenbaum, of Beatrice "Boo Boo" Glass. Early in *Tenebaums*, Anderson uses Margot and her mother, Etheline, to make a direct visual quote of a scene from Salinger's story *Zooey* in which the eponymous character has a lengthy conversation with his mother while he sits in a

bathub. This scene helps to form a connection between Mrs. Glass and Etheline, both intelligent women who nevertheless struggle to understand their children. During this scene Mrs. Glass remarks to her son that she wants her daughter Franny to see a psychiatrist, a sentiment that Anderson alludes to by having Margot married to the psychologist Raleigh St. Clair. Both Zooey and Richie have major revelations about their situations while shaving in front of a mirror. Much like Zooey and Franny, Richie and Margot have a lengthy conversation about their innermost feelings while they lay down, not looking at each other. There are similarities between the name of the Glass family cat – Bloomberg – and Uzi and Ari’s dog – Buckley. “Like the Glass family, the Tenenbaums, when they converse at all, often do so in a way that those outside the family might find pretentious or even difficult to understand” (Browning 36). In both families, there is the looming spectre of suicide. For the Glass family it is the remembrance of the eldest son, Seymour, who killed himself while on vacation (as told in Salinger’s short story “A Perfect Day for Bananafish”). For the Tenenbaums it is Richie’s explosive attempt to take his own life later in the film. Both families live in Manhattan homes decorated in such a way that they act as monuments to the many achievements of the families. The relationship between Richie and Margot is reminiscent of the one between Franny and Zooey in its closeness and exclusivity. Although the theme of incest is not as explicit in Salinger’s work as it is in Anderson’s, “there is, however, a hint of this in Salinger’s description of Mrs. Glass’s scrapbooks on the children’s achievements, which lie in a pile ‘in almost incestuously close juxtaposition’(121).” (Browning 36). There are, as well, a few similarities between Lane (Franny’s boyfriend) and Eli Cash, the outsiders of each respective family. Both seek acceptance by characters that they begrudgingly see

as their betters: Lane wants to read his English literature paper aloud to Franny (12), and Eli sends his clippings and grades to Etheline. Anderson is also working his reverse homage by inverting specific lines of dialogue. Such as when Franny tells Lane that she has missed him, the narrator tells us: “the words were no sooner out than she realized that she did not mean them at all” (10). Anderson inverts this line when he has Royal state that the “last six days have been the happiest of his life.” The narrator then tells us that “immediately after making this statement, Royal realized that it was true.”

In Chapter one I spent some time examining the scene of Margot and Richie’s reunion from early in *Tenenbaums*. The purpose of my analysis in that section was to understand the way in which Anderson was performing an homage of Scorsese through visual mimicry. I would like to return to that scene again in order to show that it is not only one of the clearest examples of Anderson quoting Salinger, but also because it reveals a great deal about how he adopts and integrates some of Salinger’s key themes. Before delving into the “Green Line Bus” scene, we will take a look at the scene from Salinger’s short story “Franny” to which it is alluding:

Lane himself lit a cigarette as the train pulled in. Then, like so many people, who, perhaps, ought to be issued only a very probational pass to meet trains, he tried to empty his face of all expression that might quite simply, perhaps even beautifully, reveal how he felt about the arriving person.

Franny was among the first of the girls to get off the train, from a car at the far, northern end of the platform. Lane spotted her immediately, and despite whatever it was he was trying to do with his face, his arm that shot up into the air was the whole truth. Franny saw it, and him, and waved extravagantly back. She was wearing a sheared-racoon coat, and Lane, walking toward her quickly but with a slow face, reasoned to

himself, with suppressed excitement, that he was the only one on the platform who really knew Franny's coat. He remembered that once, in a borrowed car, after kissing Franny for a half hour or so, he had kissed her coat lapel, as though it were a perfectly desirable, organic extension of the person herself. (7)

In the same way that Anderson evokes Scorsese so that his audience will draw a connection to the characters from *Mean Streets*, Anderson wants us to think about Lane and Franny, another relationship fraught with destructive tendencies and insurmountable differences. More importantly, however, is the fact that this scene works to make a connection between Anderson and Salinger on an important stylistic level. This connection comes through a technique critic Matt Zoller Seitz calls "material synecdoche" which he describes as "showcasing objects, locations, or articles of clothing that define whole personalities, relationships, or conflicts." In actuality this technique would be closer to metonymy since synecdoche generally refers to parts of the object itself (hands, brain, etc.) whereas metonymy refers to associated material objects. In fairness, neither term is totally apt, but for lack of anything better, I will continue to use metonymy to describe the way both Salinger and Anderson use objects in order to express character attributes. To understand how this plays out, think of Holden Caulfield's hound's-tooth jacket or his red hunting hat which he obsesses over for much of *The Catcher in the Rye*. Salinger returns constantly to these items because they express aspects of Holden's personality. Conversely, we only hear once that Holden has grey hair at his young age. Salinger is far more interested in the aspects of appearance which are

chosen as opposed to the ones genetically imposed, because items such as clothing tell far more about how a person sees him or herself.

This fixation on clothing is clear in the passage I just read. Salinger writes about Lane's thoughts as he sees Franny's coat and remembers kissing her lapel one night "as though it were a perfectly desirable, organic extension of the person herself" (7). Earlier we read about Lane's "Burberry raincoat [which] had a wool liner buttoned into it" (3) and his "maroon cashmere muffler" (4). Nothing is mentioned about Lane's hair colour, facial features, weight or height. All we know about Lane is given to us through the choices he makes about himself. In a way, the same is true of nearly every Anderson character. In all of his films, Anderson uses rather famous and therefore recognizable actors (Owen and Luke Wilson, Gwyneth Paltrow, Bill Murray, Ben Stiller, etc). By doing so, Anderson is able to make sure that the faces of his characters are familiar enough to never seem unique to his audience. Thus Anderson is able to create his characters out of the clothes he dresses them in. Through metonymy, Anderson is able to reveal a vast amount of information about Margot by just showing her step off the bus. If one knows "Franny," it becomes clear that Margot is wearing the same type of coat. After making that connection we can begin to see the many other similarities the two characters share.

Franny feels like a prototype Margot, pale, thin, eating very little, usually smoking and having a passionate interest in the theatre...which is suddenly dropped...Salinger states that "it was as though at twenty, she had checked back into the mute, fisty defences of the nursery," and there is something of this in Anderson's film in the speed with which Margot moves back into the family home and in the numerous locks keeping unwanted guests from her bedroom. (Browning 36)

Anderson emphasises this lack of maturity through Margot's unchanged haircut which reveals the fact that although physically she has grown, emotionally she is in the same place she was when we saw her as a child. The same is true of Richie whose appearance has changed very little from his childhood, the only addition being a beard and sunglasses he has adopted to act as a mask. In both cases, the retro design of the costuming places these characters, as well as the others who populate the film, in a world which is simultaneously recognizable and unfamiliar. It is as though Anderson's characters are operating under the sort of "obsolete vernacular" that Owen Wilson's author character, Eli Cash, describes his books as being written in.

Anderson and Salinger's use of metonymy does not only apply to the clothing their characters wear, but also to the objects which are connected to them. If we look at Salinger's short story "Zooney," we come upon the aforementioned scene wherein eponymous character and his mother have a conversation while he is in the bathtub. Near the beginning of the conversation Zooney's mother goes to look for something in his medicine cabinet. In the page or so that follows, Salinger lists in detail everything that is found in the above-the-sink compartment. The objects range from the mundane and expected (razor blades and hairbrushes) to the unusual and out-of-place (two tickets to a musical comedy and a woman's gold wristwatch). The list at first seems like a bit of superfluous writing on Salinger's part until we realize that he is in fact describing his character by examining the objects he chooses to keep around him. Anderson performs a similar feat visually by employing long panning shots which scan the contents of a character's room or house before focusing on the character. As well, Anderson quite

often cuts away to short overhead shots of what his characters are looking at (Figure 4.1). This technique has also been used by Scorsese and Alfred Hitchcock, but for different purposes. Whereas Scorsese employs these overhead shots (sometimes referred to as a “God’s-eye-view” shot) for expressive purposes, it is the shot itself, rather than what is being shot that is being expressive. Consider the moment in *Taxi Driver* wherein Travis Bickle looks over the collection of guns. Scorsese has employed this shot in order to reveal the fact that Travis now sees himself as a god-like figure, hovering over the instruments he will use to exact his vengeance. For Anderson, the objects are more important than the how they are filmed.



Figure 4.1

Anderson’s “God’s-eye-view” shots give us a glimpse into the personalities of the characters because we can view the sorts of things they choose to keep around them. This

technique works as an effective short-hand for explaining what might take pages of dialogue to suss out.

At times, both Salinger and Anderson will use one specific object to explain something about a character's disposition at a given moment. In the scene being discussed, and in *Catcher*, Anderson and Salinger place a great deal of importance on luggage, which is an easy metaphor for the emotional baggage both Holden and Richie tote with them throughout their respective stories. To direct us toward this visual idea Anderson not only shows us Richie carrying a few bags as he exits the doors of the Royal Arctic Line, but he is literally surrounded by and moving through an enormous amount of luggage. What is more interesting, however, is that the narrator tells us that Richie's trunks will not arrive for another eleven days. What this small detail reveals is that although Richie has returned home, he is not yet ready to deal with the trunks full of emotional issues which tail behind him. The eleven days is not a literal timeline for the events within the narrative, but it denotes the fact that Richie will continue to sublimate his feelings for Margot until the point where he attempts to take his own life later in the film. The literal act of opening his veins corresponds metaphorically to the opening of his emotional trunks. This act is what finally allows Richie to be honest with Margot about his feelings.

In *Catcher*, Holden locks his bags in a strongbox for nearly the entire second half of the novel because he has checked out of the hotel he was staying in and has nowhere to keep his things until he can go home. The topic of his bags comes up periodically throughout the rest of the text, but they only become really important during moments of

stress, the most prominent of these moments being Holden's encounter with his old teacher Mr. Antolini, who has agreed to allow him to stay the night in his home. In the middle of the night Holden awakens to find Mr. Antolini patting his head. Holden is startled and disturbed by the incident and immediately makes an excuse to leave. He says, "Nothing's the matter, it's just that all my money and stuff's in one of my bags" (192). Mr. Antolini tries to reason with him, but Holden runs out of the apartment without even finding his tie. When he gets back to Grand Central Station, Holden checks to make sure his bags are still there and then finds a place to sleep for the rest of the night. Before long Holden begins to think about his bags more and we gain some insight into what sort of latent feelings might be stored up in that strongbox.

I started thinking maybe I *should've* gone back to his house. Maybe he *was* only patting my head just for the hell of it. The more I thought about it, though, the more depressed and screwed up about it I got. (195)

The actual intention of Mr. Antonlini's action is not given to us in the text, but it is clear that Holden perceives it as a homosexual advance; which, in the upper-class 1950s world Holden occupies, is a major sexual taboo. Holden knows this and has apparently wrestled with these sorts of advances before. He states that he knows "more damn perverts, at schools and all, than anybody you ever met, and they're always being pervery when *I'm* around" (192). The word 'pervert' is important here because Holden tends to use it as a synonym for homosexual. This is firmly established through Holden's encounter with his former student advisor Carl Luce earlier in the book: Holden, who claims that Luce is gay, shifts back and forth between the epithets 'flit' and 'pervert' when talking about Luce. Holden hides behind the word pervert because using the word

homosexual would give dignity to the thing that he is afraid that he might be. The word pervert allows him to demean homosexuality and thereby distance himself from it.

Salinger has provided many episodes within the text which suggest Holden's sexual confusion. Duane Edwards, who has written on this topic, points out that:

Holden fails to complete most of his phone calls to females, but he easily completes phone calls to two homosexuals: Mr. Antolini and Carl Luce. Secondly, *he seeks them* out; he is the aggressor if there is one... Thirdly, Salinger links Holden to the two homosexuals by letting the reader know (through the narration) that all three of them respond sexually to older women: Luce is dating a woman in her late thirties (145); Antolini is married to a woman who "looked pretty old and all" (185); Holden responds sexually to Ernest Morrow's mother (56). (560)

No single one of these incidences is enough to force the conclusion that Holden is gay, but when they are looked at in combination, it becomes clear that Salinger at least wants us to consider the possibility that one of the things that Holden has locked up in his suitcase may very well be his own latent homosexuality. When looked at this way, we realize that Holden's dilemma about returning to Mr. Antolini's home has to do with Holden exploring this aspect of who he is with a man that he trusts. Ultimately, Holden makes the decision to keep his feelings locked up; he says "I didn't feel like taking [the suitcase] out of that strong box and opening it up right in public and all" (195). Holden then leaves the train station and his luggage behind – he is not yet, and may never be, ready to deal with what is in those bags.

Richie too has left a significant sexual taboo in his absent luggage; namely his romantic feelings for his adopted sister, Margot. Anderson is once again using this link to

make a connection between his character and another; this time between Richie and Holden Caulfield. This connection is more significant than the fact that both characters have sexual confusion locked away; Anderson wants to connect his film to Caulfield because of the inherent uncertainty this link creates. At the end of *Catcher*, Salinger provides an ending that while on the surface seems to bring resolution, is nevertheless wrought with uncertainty. Sure Holden has wound up in an institution, but at least he has finally gotten the help he needs. He remains cynical, but he is now claiming that he thinks he will make an effort in the next year. If we view the future of Richie and Margot's relationship through the lens of *Catcher's* ending, their relationship becomes equally uncertain. When Richie goes to talk to his father about the relationship, Royal says "Who knows, maybe it'll work...No one knows what's going to happen." The last sentence is key to understanding the subverted happy ending that both Anderson and Salinger are working with. Even in the off-kilter world the Tenenbaum's occupy, quasi-incest is certainly frowned upon; a fact Royal acknowledges before glibly shrugging it off and that Margot recognizes when she tells Richie that they will have to keep their love a secret. By having *Catcher* and *Tenenbaums* end in the ways that they do, Salinger and Anderson are able to allow for enough ambiguity to sate the need for resolution that popular audiences demand while at the same time having the contrivance of the "happy ending" undermined by allowing for immutable questions to survive.

This inconclusiveness could be called a sort of complicated optimism because it presents an ending that, although seemingly resolved, is fraught with unanswered questions about what will become of the characters after the ending of the films. Essentially, the optimism of the endings are complicated by the fact that within the

resolution is the subtle, yet present, possibility that the characters have not changed at all, and hence, will regress back to who they were at the opening of the film. This occurs because Anderson avoids the sort of perfunctory Hollywood endings in which convenient changes, or unrealistic coincidences take place that allow characters to reconcile and stories to resolve despite mounting improbability.

In order to understand this complicated optimism, it is best to examine the differences that can be found between the Salinger and Post-Salinger eras of Anderson's work, with regard to the endings. It appears that in his first three films Anderson had yet to find a way to successfully conclude the themes he was working with and so infused his films with the Salingeresque confusion described above. This leaves his films open to many questions which work to undermine what appear to be happy endings. For instance: What will become of Dignan? Since it is obvious that he views his incarceration as a badge of honour rather than a punishment, has he changed or grown at all? Upon his release will he simply try to round up the gang for another heist? Will the whole story simply repeat itself? What about Max? The play that he puts on at Grover Cleveland could have just as easily been put on at Rushmore were he given permission, so has he changed anything other than his venue? Is he the same old Max in new surroundings? And what should we make of the fact that the film ends with an image of him dancing with Ms. Cross even though he has a new girlfriend? Has Max really gotten over his feelings for the elder teacher, or has he simply buried them, hoping that they can stay subverted enough for him to go on with his life? As I have shown already, Richie and Margot's relationship will clearly run into the sort of obstacles that will keep it from surviving "happily ever after."

In contrast, we can see that in the Post-Salinger era, Anderson has used his last three films to develop much more conclusive endings, the ending of *Fox* being the fullest realization of new ability to wrap things up. At the end of *The Life Aquatic*, Zissou has successfully shifted his priorities and is now placing family ahead of his own ambitions for fame. The ending of *Darjeeling* finds the Whitman brothers reconciled with each other, resigned to the shortfalls of their mother and collectively ready to face the reality of their lives as evidenced by the fact that the three are finally returning to the States after a long period of absence. Mr. Fox, at the end of his story, is finally able to find a balance between his animalistic urges and his domestic responsibilities unlike any of the Andersonian characters before him.

In effect, what Anderson is doing by employing Salinger-like ambiguity to the endings of his first three films is critiquing the general demand (both from audiences and from himself) for positive conclusions – the ubiquitous Hollywood happy ending. The Salinger era Anderson, as a commercial filmmaker working in the Hollywood system, knew that he had certain obligations to audiences, but rather than provide implausible endings that would not fall in line with the themes he was exploring, he infused his endings with enough questions to keep the fate of his characters on the minds of his more observant viewers. In the Post-Salinger films Anderson seems to have gained a lot of confidence in the endings of his films and so the Salinger ambiguities (along with the direct Salinger references) have disappeared. This change has coincided with Anderson's penchant to explore more adult themes. His characters are no longer disenfranchised youth searching for a place in the world, but rather, older characters on the other side of

success, characters that look back on their greatest achievements and have to come to terms with the realities of life.

For Anderson, *Tenenbaums* represents a major turning point in his career. Richie, Margot and Chas are unlike most of the characters that populate the Anderson universe because they represent a middle ground between the Salinger and Post-Salinger eras. The Tenenbaum children, unlike Anthony, Dignan, Max, Zissou, The Whitmans and Mr. Fox are simultaneously stunted adolescents searching for identity *and* has-beens in search of new purposes. So for Anderson, the increased presence of Salinger is not a signal of further interest in the author, but rather a final send off of his influence. The Post-Salinger Anderson has left the author's concern with adolescence behind in order to further explore the adult themes of his later films. The Salinger saturation of *Tenenbaums* is Anderson's way of saying goodbye to a treasured influence that he will be leaving behind in pursuit of new adventures.

Conclusion

“The crickets and the rust-beetles scuttled among the nettles of the sage thicket. “Vámonos, amigos,” he whispered, and threw the busted leather flintcrow over the loose weave of the saddlecock. And they rode on in the friscalating dusklight.”
Eli Cash, *The Royal Tenenbaums*

To conclude I would like to return to the four Anderson characters who are most closely associated with the art of writing: Max Fischer, Margot Tenenbaum, Eli Cash and Jack Whitman, in order to consider the connection between Anderson’s use of allusion and the redemptive nature of his films.

Max, much like the teenaged Anderson, stages elaborate plays at his elite private school. The two plays that are featured in the movie are a direct adaptation of the 1973 film *Serpico* and another play called “Heaven and Hell,” which appears to be an amalgam of numerous Viet Nam films such as *Full Metal Jacket*, *Apocalypse Now!*, *Platoon* and the film he seems to have borrowed the title from *Heaven & Earth*. Even though these plays are hardly original works, Max vehemently protects the integrity of his work, going as far as taking a punch to the face after chastising an actor for changing the dialogue. If nothing else, this protectiveness reveals the passion Max has for the material he has chosen to direct and additionally tells us something important about how Anderson sees the relationship between an artist and the work that he chooses to deal with, even if those work is not his own.

Unlike Max, Margot, a celebrated playwright from a young age, and Jack, a short story writer, find the inspiration for their stories from their own lives. Although both try to maintain that their stories and characters are fictional, the sampling of each writers’

work that is shown in their respective films reveals just how much is borrowed from life. Eli Cash describes his own book as being written in “a sort of obsolete vernacular” which tips us off about how Anderson views his own nostalgic and anachronistic films. This, of course, ties into his use of allusion as well, since it is his constant revelry in things of the past which creates the obsolete vernacular of his movies.

It is important to consider how Anderson represents writers in his films, since these roles are so closely related to his own vocation. Anderson is revealing something of himself as a writer through these characters. To explain, it is best to quote from Woody Allen, another of Anderson’s clear influences and an allusive auteur in his own right. In a scene near the end of *Annie Hall*, Allen’s character, Alvy Singer, is rehearsing a scene from a play he has written. The scene is an exact re-enactment of his recent breakup from the eponymous character, with one major difference: instead of breaking up with him, the female character cedes to his argument and the two reconcile. Alvy then turns directly to the camera, saying: “You’re always trying to get things to come out perfect in art, because it’s real difficult in life.”

This quote works as a perfect summation for the way Anderson weaves together allusion and autobiography in his films for the purpose of finding redemption for his characters. This is what separates Anderson from fellow filmmakers such as Noah Baumbach or Charlie Kaufman who often find themselves wallowing in the morose tones of their films right up to the point where their movies end on a sad note.

Anderson’s approach is an amalgam of his four writer characters. He seeks to find a balance between the events of his own life and the art that inspires him, which will allow him to create situations wherein the pain of real life is never overly far from

redemption. Like an avid filmgoer who returns to the cinema for a chance to escape the reality of life, it seems that Anderson returns to making films with the hope that he too will find the redemption that permeates his films. This becomes clearer when we consider the fact that all of his films follow a similar trajectory. He introduces his audience to a set of broken people who by the end of the film find their ways to redemption. In addition, Anderson creates a filmic milieu built out of a combination of allusion and autobiography. By reinforcing those aspects of this milieu that he sees as positive while critiquing those aspects which are problematic, Anderson moves his films toward the redemption which invariably arrives just before the final credits role.

Over the last four chapters I have shown how Anderson makes this redemption possible through his complex blending of homage and critique which works to make him both one of the most highly referential and highly original filmmakers working today. I have shown that, by melding the influence of Scorsese, Bresson and Melendez/Schultz Anderson has created a unique cinematic landscape that works to reinforce his referents by pushing their critiques even further. I have also shown that through reverse quoting Anderson is able to evoke the themes of Orson Welles and Francois Truffaut while making it clear that he plans to invert their more pessimistic narratives about familial relationships. By examining references to the adventure cinema/literature of George Stevens and Herman Melville, I have shown how Anderson consistently subverts the masculine adventure drive in order to show its impossibility in a time of increasing domesticity. Finally, by looking closely at Anderson's references to Salinger I have shown that these frequent allusions are being used to point us toward the fact that

Anderson wants to infuse his films with the sort of confusion and ambiguity common to Salinger's narratives.

Above all, I have shown that Anderson's use of allusion is rarely simple; rather, tracing his influences leads one down a rabbit hole of increasingly sophisticated cinematic techniques which reveal a surprisingly complex approach to exploring the ever deepening nature of Andersonian redemption. Like many of Anderson's characters who must overcome their grievances with the world that they have become isolated from in order to find redemption, Anderson as a filmmaker must overcome what is problematic in both his life and in art in order for his films to find the same redemption. It is, after all, his ability to craft stories of redemption out an environment of critique that best showcases how Anderson manages to be simultaneously referential and original; a truly allusive auteur.

Works Cited

- Aisenberg, Joseph. "Wes's World: Riding Wes Anderson's Vision Limited." *Bright Lights Film Journal* 59 (2008): (no pagination). Web. 1 April 2011.
- Amsden, David. "The Life Obsessive with Wes Anderson." *New York Magazine*. 24 Sept. 2007. Web. 8 Dec. 2010.
- Anderson, Wes. "Wes Anderson on *The Last Detail*." www.good.is. 18 June 2008. Web. 29 April 2011.
- Angels with Dirty Faces*. Dir. Michael Curtiz. Perf. James Cagney, Pat O'Brian, Humphrey Bogart. Warner Bros., 1938. Film.
- Ayfre, Amedee. "The Universe of Robert Bresson." *Robert Bresson*. Ed. James Quandt. Toronto: Toronto International Film Festival Group, 1998. 41-56. Print.
- Balász, Béla. "The Close-up." *Film Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. 314-321. Print.
- Bezanson, Walter E. "*Moby-Dick*: Document, Drama, Dream." *A Companion to Melville Studies*. Ed. John Bryant. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986. 169-210. Print.
- The Big Lebowski*. Dir. Joel Coen, Ethan Coen. Perf. Jeff Bridges, John Goodman, Julianne Moore. Working Title Films, 1998. Film.
- The Big Sleep*. Dir. Howard Hawks. Perf. Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, John Ridgely. Warner Bros. 1946. Film.
- Blake, Richard A. "Allusions of Grandeur." *America* 182.8 (2000): 15. *MasterFILE Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 18 Jan. 2011.
- Bonnie and Clyde*. Dir. Arthur Penn. Perf. Warren Beatty, Faye Dunaway, Michael J. Pollard. Warner Bros., 1967. Film.
- Bottle Rocket*. Dir. Wes Anderson. Perf. Luke Wilson, Owen Wilson, Ned Dowd, Shea Fowler. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1996. Film
- Bresson, Robert. *Notes on the Cinematographer*. Los Angeles: Green Integer Books, 1975.
- Brody, Richard. "Wild, Wild Wes." *New Yorker Magazine*. 2 Nov. 2009: 48-57. Print.

- Carlson, G. *The Cinema of Wes Anderson as Rhetorical Text: Implications for Teaching Rhetoric, Film Appreciation, and Ethics in the Film Studies Classroom*. Ph.D. North Dakota State University, 2007 United States -- North Dakota. Web.
- Chapman, James and Nicholas J. Cull. *Projecting Empire: Imperialism and Popular Culture*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2009. Print.
- Dairy of a Country Priest*. Dir. Robert Bresson. Perf. Claude Laydu, Jean Riveyre, Adrien Borel, Rachel Bérendt. Union Générale Cinématographique, 1951. Film.
- The Darjeeling Limited*. Dir. Wes Anderson. Perf. Owen Wilson, Adrien Brody, Jason Schwartzman, and Amara Karan. Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2007. Film.
- Desplechin, Arnaud. "Wes Anderson." Interview Magazine. 26 Oct. 2009. Web. 25 Nov. 2010.
- Donnelly, Joe. "The Road Wes Travelled." *L.A. Weekly*. 27 Jan. 1999. Web. 8 Dec. 2010.
- Ebert, Roger. "Ebert & Scorsese: Best Films of the 1990s." rogerebert.com (2000). Web. 15 Feb. 2011.
- Edwards, Duane. "Don't Ever Tell Anybody Anything." *ELH* 44.3 (1977): 554-565. Web. 2 Nov. 2010.
- Eliot, T.S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*. Ed. David H. Richter. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. 537-541. Print.
- Fantastic Mr. Fox*. Dir. Wes Anderson. Perf. George Clooney, Meryl Streep, Jason Schwartzman, Bill Murray. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 2009. Film.
- Gilbey, Ryan. "21st-Century Fox." *The New Statesman*. 26 Oct. 2009: 46. Print
- Gooch, Joshua. "Making A Go of it: Paternity and Prohibition in the Films of Wes Anderson." *Cinema Journal* 47.1 (2007): 26-48.
- Govender, Dyalan. "Wes Anderson's "the Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou" and Melville's "Moby Dick": A Comparative Study." *Literature Film Quarterly* 36.1 (2008): 61-67. Web.
- Gunga Din*. Dir. George Stevens. Perf. Cary Grant, Victor McLaglen, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., and Sam Jaffe. RKO, 1939. Film.
- Hanlon, Lindley. "Sound as a Symbol in *Mouchette*." *Robert Bresson*. Ed. James Quandt. Toronto: Toronto International Film Festival Group, 1998. 307-323. Print.

- Harris, Wendell V. *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992. Print.
- Hill, Derek. *Charlie Kaufman and Hollywood's Merry Band of Pranksters, Fabulists and Dreamers: An Excursion Into the American New Wave*. London: Oldcastle Books, 2008. Print.
- Irwin, William. "Against Intertextuality (Allusion)" *Philosophy and Literature* 28.2 (2004): 227-242. Web. 20 Jan. 2011.
- Kenny, Glen. "Goodfellas." New York, 2002. Blog – The Playlist. Web. 15 Feb. 2011.
- Kipling, Rudyard. *Gunga Din and Other Poems*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1990. Print
- Kirschbaum, Susan M. "A NIGHT OUT: With Wes Anderson; Dissecting Films And Serial Killers" *New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 22 Aug. 1999. Web. 15 Feb 2011.
- Lally, Kevin. "Aquatic Anarchy: Wes Anderson Reunites with Bill Murray for Seafaring Comedy." *Film Journal International* 107.12 (2004): 12-4.
- Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*. Dir. Robert Bresson. Perf. Paul Bernard, María Casares, Elina Labourdette, Lucienne Bogaert. Les Films Raoul Ploquin, 1945. Film.
- The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*. Dir. Wes Anderson. Perf. Bill Murray, Owen Wilson, Cate Blanchett, Anjelica Houston. Touchstone Pictures, 2005. Film
- Machacek, Gregory. "Allusion." *PMLA* 122.2 (2002): 522-536. Web. 20 Jan. 2011.
- Magnificent Ambersons, The*. Dir. Orson Welles. Perf. Joeseeph Cotton, Deloris Costello, Anne Baxter, Tim Holt. Mercury Productions, 1942. Film
- A Man Escaped*. Dir. Robert Bresson. Perf. François Leterrier, Charles Le Clainche, Maurice Beerblock, Roland Monod. Gaumont, 1956. Film.
- Mean Streets*. Dir. Martin Scorsese. Perf. Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel, David Proval, Amy Robinson. Warner Bros., 1973. Film.
- Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick*. 1851. London: Wordsworth Classics, 1993. Print.
- Moss, Marilyn Ann. *Giant: George Stevens, A life on Film*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004. Print.

- Mouchette*. Dir. Robert Bresson. Perf. Nadine Nortier, Jean-Claude Guilbert, Marie Cardinal, Paul Hebert. Argos Films, 1967. Film.
- Olsen, Mark. "If I Can Dream: The Everlasting Boyhoods of Wes Anderson." *Film Comment* 35.1 (1999): 12-17. Print.
- Orgeron, Devin. "La Camera-Crayola: Authorship Comes of Age in the Cinema of Wes Anderson." *Cinema Journal* 46.2 (2007): 40-65. Web. 10 Oct. 2010.
- Oria Gomez, Beatriz. *The Contemporary Auteur in United States Cinema: Wes Anderson and the Commerce of Independence*. D.E.A. Universidad de Zaragoza (Spain), 2005 Spain.
- Past, Elena. "Lives Aquatic: Mediterranean Cinema and an Ethics of Underwater Existence." *Cinema Journal* 48.3 (2009): 52-65. Web.
- Pickpocket*. Dir. Robert Bresson. Perf. Martin LaSalle, Marika Green, Jean Pélégri, Dolly Scal. Compagnie Cinématographique de France, 1959. Film.
- Prince, Stephen. "Genre and Violence in Kurosawa and Peckinpah" *Action and Adventure Cinema*. Ed. Yvonne Tasker. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Reservoir Dogs*. Dir. Quentin Tarantino. Perf. Harvey Keitel, Tim Roth, Michael Madsen. Dog Eat Dog Productions Inc., 1992. Film.
- Rosenbaum, Jonathan. "Fill in the Blanks." *Firouzan Films.com*. No Date. Web. 5 May 2011.
- The Royal Tenenbaums*. Dir. Wes Anderson. Perf. Gene Hackman, Anjelica Houston, Ben Stiller, and Gwyneth Paltrow. American Empirical Pictures, 2001. Film.
- Rushmore*. Dir. Wes Anderson. Perf. Jason Schwartzman, Bill Murray, Olivia Williams, Seymour Cassel. American Empirical Pictures, 1998. Film
- Salinger, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1951. Print.
- Salinger, J.D., *Franny and Zooey*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1961. Print.
- Salinger, J.D. *Nine Stories*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1953. Print.
- Seitz, Matt Zoller. "The Substance of Style." *Moving Image Source*. Museum of the Moving Image. 3 April, 2009. Web. 1 Nov. 2010.

- Seven Samurai*. Dir. Akira Kurosawa. Perf. Toshirô Mifune, Takashi Shimura, Keiko Tsushima. Toho Company, 1954. Film.
- Sobchack, Vivian C. "Tradition and Cinematic Allusion." *Literature Film Quarterly* 2.1 (1974): 59. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 18 Jan. 2011.
- Tarkington, Booth. *The Magnificent Ambersons*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1918. Print.
- Truffaut, Francois. "Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne." *Robert Bresson*. Ed. James Quandt. Toronto: Toronto International Film Festival Group, 1998. 582-584. Print.
- Turner, Daniel Cross. "The American Family (Film) in Retro: Nostalgia as Mode in Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums*." *Violating Time: History, Memory, and Nostalgia in Cinema*. Ed. Christina Lee. London, England: Continuum, 2008. 159-176. Web. 14 January 2011.
- "Wes Anderson's Top 10." www.criterion.com, n.d. Web. 10 Mar. 2011.
- Wesley, Marilyn C. *Violent Adventure*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003. Print.
- The Wild Bunch*. Dir. Sam Peckinpah. Perf. William Holden, Ernest Borgnine, Robert Ryan. Warner Bros., 1969. Film.
- Zabriskie, Philip. "Who's Laughing Now?" *Icon Thoughtstyle* 2.4 (1998). Web.