

‘Sheer Epidermis’: ‘Face Politics’ and the Films of Lynne Ramsay

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Wrapped in curtains, fishing nets, plastic bags; hidden by hair or completely cut off; faces in Lynne Ramsay’s films are often absent, incomplete or inaccessible. Framed in tight close-up they can be no less remote, distanced by the preference for an opaque performance style. Similarly, motifs of facial doubling, coupled with a tendency to play with point of view, disrupt notions of the face as the guarantor of individual identity and the gateway to subjectivity. Nevertheless, Ramsay’s films are regularly noted for their ‘immersive’ qualities, inviting ‘a proximate, tactile look that produces a sense of intimacy with the image’.¹ This begs the following questions: how does the destabilisation of the face as an expressive focal point in Ramsay’s films intersect with their ability to evoke ‘a visceral spectatorial response’?² And how might this, in turn, reflect on the ‘face politics’ visible from portraiture to film and photography and further complicated by the eminently mutable face of the digital sphere?³ If, as Jenny Edkins and others argue, following Deleuze, the ‘face’ is where discourses of individual subjectivity and sovereignty coalesce, then a politics which ‘dismantles the face’ and replaces a principle of separation with that of relation may be difficult to articulate within current paradigms of representation.⁴ With this in mind, and focusing on Ramsay’s four feature films in the context of her wider filmography, I wish to explore the ways in which Ramsay’s films recalibrate our existing relationship to the face on film through a reimagining of its role in the *mise-en-scène* and, in so doing, move us towards an uncanny encounter with the ‘other’ on screen.

As John Welchman elucidates, as the face of Christ, the face of capitalism (on coins, currency), and the face of bourgeois individualism in humanistic portraiture, the face ‘has shaped the very conditions of visibility.’⁵ Implicit in this history is the metaphysical separation of the representational regime of the face, with its implications of identity, subjectivity, and rationality, from the body and its associations with base, irrational, and instinctual drives. In cinema, the human face is so central to our experience that, as Noa Steimatsky reminds us, it is traditionally used as a measure of shot scale: ‘the face as a whole = close-up; face + upper chest = medium close-up; from the waist up = medium shot, etc. Talking about the close-up with respect to non-body objects, or parts thereof, is basically an extrapolation.’⁶ While narrative cinema thinks mainly in terms of the expressive potential of the face, Tom Gunning identifies twin impulses towards science and spectacle in early cinema, which extended photography’s ambition to capture and categorise the face in stasis to the face in motion.⁷ Early

‘facial expression’ films seem to strip away notions of subjectivity; instead, the elasticity of the face is emphasised via facial contortions or the magnification of everyday actions and expressions. And if in later cinema the eyes are the ‘windows to the soul’, in early film the mouth and its movements could be understood as the portal to the corporeal, fascinating and repulsive in equal measure. Films such as *Fred Ott’s Sneeze* and *The Big Swallow* showcase the grotesque potential of the enlarged mouth in motion or, as Gunning memorably puts it, ‘partaking of the carnivalesque pleasure of the open orifice in a most unseemly manner.’⁸

As Alice Maurice argues, the mobile, mutable, and unruly face that showcases its corporeal status – what Maurice calls the ‘body-face’ – ‘threatens early cinema’s vulnerable status as art by recalling vaudeville and other “low” popular forms – in particular, blackface minstrelsy’.⁹ The transition from the ‘body-face’ to the ‘screen face’ (i.e. the face endowed with subtle expressivity as opposed to engaged in displays of vulgar physicality), depends on ‘a kind of decapitation’; that is, the literal and figurative separation of the face from the body.¹⁰ Literal in that the head, or more specifically the face, is cut off from the body in close up; figurative, insofar as the successful integration of these close-ups into narrative cinema depends on the face acquiring an elevated status, untroubled by connotations of mindless carnality. Indeed, Gilberto Perez suggests that D. W. Griffith’s relative restraint in introducing close-ups of the face into his Biograph films having integrated close-ups of objects almost from the outset was because he considered it ‘a lover’s privilege’ to intrude on so intimate an area.¹¹

The erotics of Griffith’s close-ups of Lillian Gish aside, what Maurice calls ‘body-centered forms of spectacle and performance’¹² give way to a focus on the face and this, in turn, is supported by a movement from the mouth to eyes. If the face is that part of the body most linked with ideas of individual identity then, as Anne Nesbet suggests, ‘the eyes may be said to be the “face” of the face’, insofar as the eyes are the part of the body that we most wish to dissociate from the fact of their fleshiness.¹³ The disavowal of the fleshy composition of the face, especially the eyes, in favour of notions of expressivity and interiority is supported by the shift from the close-up being ‘read in terms of scale (giganticism)’ to the close-up being perceived in terms of ‘distance (closeness or intimacy).’¹⁴ This sense of an incremental proximity underpins the conventional editing pattern of cutting from long shot to medium shot to medium close-up, culminating in a close-up of the face. As Ellen Gamerman outlines, in classical cinema, the impact of this is managed by being employed sparingly relative to today’s standards. In the current context however, close-ups of faces are deployed much more

frequently, often throughout the entire film. In short, we have arrived at what Gamera calls ‘the age of the enormous head.’¹⁵

Since the 1960s, the ‘intensified continuity’ style of American mainstream cinema has been defined by increasingly close shots, especially of the face.¹⁶ Less expensive than long shots, easier to edit, and more suited to streaming on small screens, close-ups have become the mainstay of mass-market cinema, and a reliance on close-ups of the face for emotional affect has become the calling card of many contemporary filmmakers, such as Barry Jenkins. ‘There’s always a moment’, says Jenkins, ‘where the audience has to look directly into the eyes of the character in order to really feel what they’re feeling.’¹⁷ For Ramsay, too, the face can figure prominently (*Morvern Callar*, for instance, focuses on Samantha Morton’s face in almost every shot), but its role as revelatory is refused. Eyes, also, can be less important for what they reveal than for what they reflect. Elsewhere, Ramsay leaves the face out of the picture entirely, in favour of close-ups of hands, feet, and bodies. For Raymond De Luca, in so doing, ‘Ramsay practices [...] a cinematic form of decapitation. Ramsay’s camera maims her protagonists.’¹⁸ From my perspective, this move is best understood as a reframing of the traditional hierarchy of face and body, which, in turn, facilitates an uncanny encounter with the face *as* body.

If Ramsay’s films do not encourage the conventional investments offered by mainstream cinema in ‘the age of the enormous head’, they cannot easily be identified with modernism’s ‘moments of head-lobbing iconoclasm’ either, which, as Welchman reminds us, force us to reflect on the face as the figure *par excellence* of pre-modern humanism by way of its absence or reconfiguration.¹⁹ Michael Haneke’s first feature, *The Seventh Continent*, denies access to its protagonists’ faces for several minutes at the outset. Instead, the film begins with shots of hands and feet performing banal, everyday tasks; the emphasis is on the repetition rather than the richness of everyday life. Their disengagement from the middle-class world they inhabit provides the immediate context for the family’s decision to commit suicide. Within this, ‘facelessness’ speaks to the alienation and disaffection of the late capitalist condition. Ramsay, on the other hand, could not be accused of ‘anthropological detachment’.²⁰ Less an intellectual reflection on the ‘death of affect’ in the modernist mode (as we might consider Haneke’s film to be in the best possible sense),²¹ Ramsay’s protagonists make intimate, invested contact with their lived environment and the material fact of the face comes into play as a terrain where questions of identity and alterity are envisaged and explored.

Ramsay frequently cites Robert Bresson as an important influence on her own aesthetic.²² While clearly there are significant differences between the two in terms of tone and

style – Ramsay’s mise-en-scène can veer from ‘mesmeric to hard reality,’²³ whereas Bresson rejected the use of professional actors, special effects, and non-diegetic music²⁴ – we could argue that Ramsay shares two crucial things with Bresson: an abiding sense of the extraordinary potential of sound in cinema and a deep regard for ‘the way things are’.²⁵ Bresson’s early reputation for ascetic spiritualism has been replaced with an appreciation of his attention to the ‘sensual details’ of the quotidian world.²⁶ As James Quandt puts it, ‘The elliptical, sometimes clipped rhythm of Bresson’s editing, the physicality of his sound world [...], and his fragmentation of bodies through truncated framing—the focus on torsos, legs, and hands, in particular—amplify this sense of materiality.’²⁷ Famously, Bresson insisted that his ‘models’ (the non-actors he favoured), empty their features of expression. In the words of André Bazin, ‘we have the countenance of the actor denuded of all symbolic expression, sheer epidermis.’²⁸ In Ramsay’s case, the idea of the face as ‘sheer epidermis’ can stretch both ways: that is, the face as opaque, ‘just skin’, blocking our attempts to ‘read into’ facial expression and assign subjectivity, and the face as sheer, transparent, revealing the void, the corpse, that is always already there. In both cases, the effect could be said to create a kind of ‘uncanny valley’, a gap between the familiar and unfamiliar that provokes uncertainty, and reflects on the privileged role of the face in cinema and beyond in determining notions of individuality, identity, and interiority.²⁹

Ramsay’s short film, *Gasman*, opens with a shot of a man’s hands polishing a shoe, while a pair of small, bare feet run past in the blurred background. The dense texture of a patterned carpet typical of countless homes in the 1970s comes into focus and the soft, rhythmic sound of the shoe brush blends with the surrounding sounds: a woman’s voice, a child singing, white noise. More hands, those of another child, pour sugar over a toy car; we hear the heightened sound of its swoosh and crunch as the car brakes and swerves and a Christmas song blares from the radio. A drag on a cigarette, a quick kiss, the painful tug of a party dress over a head and finally, a face. In just under two and a half minutes these opening shots capture a sense of the domestic, glimpsed also in Ramsay’s first short film, *Small Deaths*, where family interaction is less about face-to-face exchanges and more about bodies coexisting and coming into contact with each other and their surroundings in small, shared spaces. Pale, bony knees, sharply delineated vertebrae and hands that reach and fail to grasp speak to a presence in the world that is profoundly corporeal and relationships that are fundamentally physical as much as abstract or emotional. One of the film’s few lingering close-ups shows Lynne, (played by Ramsay’s niece, also Lynne Ramsay), the young girl whose face is the first we see, confronted

by her own likeness in a way that suggests there are not only two versions of herself but also two versions of her father. Broadly speaking, in that shift from bodies to faces Lynne's initial familial intimacy is replaced by a sense of loss: of her sense of her father and her sense of her self.

The uncanny encounter with a face that is 'strangely familiar' threatens the foundation of identity. In the Freudian context, an uncanny experience is where feelings of familiarity and unfamiliarity coexist. It is a subject of aesthetics and, in this, the figure of the double is of particular thematic concern: 'originally an insurance against destruction to the ego', once this childlike or 'primitive' belief is abandoned, 'the "double" reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death.'³⁰ The double presents the paradox of encountering oneself as 'other': 'the logically impossible notion that the 'I' and the 'not-I' are somehow identical'.³¹ A sense of the destabilisation of categories also subtends Kristeva's notion of the abject. The abject is 'what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.'³² The distinction between the two resides in their relationship to the (un)familiar: 'Essentially different from 'uncanniness,' more violent, too, abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory'.³³ If the uncanny is something that is strange but feels familiar, the abject is that which is familiar but feels foreign. In *Gasman*, the uncanny, as 'something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light',³⁴ is literalised in Lynne's realisation of her father's 'double life', a betrayal she was barely beginning to intuit in 'Ma and Da'.³⁵ In a broader sense, the doubled face gives up its secret: that the skin that separates the 'I' and 'not-I' is 'sheer' at best.

The sight/site of the (un)familiar face ('She looks like you!') threatens to erode the boundary between the self and other, the response to which is abjection ('No she doesn't, she's ugly!'). The abject can be uncanny when we recognise something familiar within it, before it was 'cast out', such as the corpse. For Kristeva, 'The corpse [...] is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject.'³⁶ In Ramsay's films, uncanny encounters with images of lifeless faces, either dead or drained of affect, recur throughout. During the title sequence of *Ratcatcher*, set in the midst of the binmen's strike in Glasgow in the 1970s, the diaphanous layers of a lace curtain twist in slow motion, beneath which the blurred features of a child's face begin to emerge; with eyes closed and mouth open, it has the aspect of a corpse. In Ramsay's words, this image, 'slightly like a shroud', 'points to the fact that the wee boy's going to die in some kind of subconscious way.'³⁷ The curtain as 'sheer epidermis' covers a face that

already speaks of its own death.³⁸ This is echoed in a later shot of another child with a fishing net over his face, who escapes the same fate of death by drowning (he is ‘fished out’ of the canal by the protagonist’s father (Tommy Flanagan)).³⁹ This motif is returned to and reworked in *You Were Never Really Here*. Joe (Joaquin Phoenix), a traumatised hitman who was abused by his father as a child, repeatedly attempts suicide. In the opening sequence, a plastic bag, animated by Joe’s desperate breaths, is the ‘sheer epidermis’ that covers his face and offers the promise of asphyxiation.⁴⁰

In *Ratcatcher*, close-ups of the boys’ faces operate according to a logic of repetition that blurs the boundaries between self and other, the living and the dead. Edkins quotes artist Suzanne Opton describing how her portraits of soldiers’ heads laid sideways on a flat surface, ‘as if they were dead’, capture the idea of death as an integral part of the soldiers’ identity.⁴¹ Ramsay’s propensity to film her protagonists’ expressionless faces in the same position similarly blurs the distinction between the living person and the dead body. As has been noted, in *Ratcatcher*, the close-up of James (William Eadie) as ‘a picture of serene contentment’, with his head laid sideways as his mother combs lice from his hair, is eerily reminiscent of the close-up of Ryan (Thomas McTaggart) after he drowns.⁴² In *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, repeated shots of Eva’s (Tilda Swinton) evacuated face from this angle demonstrate her own ‘life sentence’ following Kevin’s massacre of his father, sister, and peers.

In *Kevin*, the face as ‘sheer epidermis’ figures as a permeable membrane where identities merge in ways that are intimately connected with the politics of motherhood. The film de-emphasises dialogue in favour of a highly expressive mise-en-scène that layers shards of the past and present, infused with Eva’s recollection. Within this, the enmeshed maternal relationship is crystallised in an image of facial doubling. Eva’s face transforms into Kevin’s (Ezra Miller) when plunged into water, an element that features in Ramsay’s oeuvre as a fluid reminder of death and rebirth. For Kristeva, the inherently violent yet essential separation from the mother’s body is the primary process of abjection: ‘Matricide is our vital necessity, the *sine qua non* condition of our individuation’.⁴³ While the abject can become attached to other objects and experiences – blood, excrement, even the skin on the surface of milk – all abjections are repetitions of this primary repudiation. In *Kevin*, as Sue Thornham argues, Eva’s desire to be self-contained is shattered by the uncontrollable embodiment of pregnancy and motherhood.⁴⁴ Kevin extrudes faeces, snot, saliva; his ‘behaviour insists on the messiness of the body, on the fleshy, the organic, the abject – and insists that Eva recognise this, together with her own rage and fear at her entrapment.’⁴⁵

In this, the corporeal materiality of the face, and especially the eyes, is reasserted in ways that render the (un)familiar face abject. De Luca draws our attention to the moment in *Ratcatcher* when James's mother, (Mandy Matthews), sees Ryan's dead body lying face down by the canal. The dirty window through which she anxiously views the scene is reflected on her iris. De Luca notes that 'A similar shot recurs in *We Need to Talk About Kevin* when an archery target is shown seared onto Kevin's pupil as he plots his bloodbath.'⁴⁶ The eye does not just reflect the target, however; in Ramsay's films, the eye is a target. In *You Were Never Really Here*, a bullet through the eye turns the beloved mother (Judith Roberts) into the abject maternal corpse imagined by the film's allusions to Hitchcock's *Psycho*.⁴⁷ In *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, Kevin's sister, Celia, (Ashley Gerasimovich), loses an eye while in Kevin's care. For Freud, the fear of 'being robbed of one's eyes' can be read as a substitute for the fear of castration, itself the root cause of the uncanny.⁴⁸ In this scenario, Celia is cast in the role of eye-witness, both to the unsuccessful process of subject positioning within the narrative and to the horror of our own exposure to the eyes – 'the "face" of the face' – as 'sheer epidermis'; the empty eye socket is a visceral reminder of the void where the 'subject' should be. The symbolic enucleation of the cinematic face is underlined by a visual pun: an extreme close-up of Kevin's mouth as 'open orifice' sucking obscenely on a lychee, whose resemblance to an eyeball is unmistakable.

In *Kevin*, the 'countenance as flesh' reasserts the fact of its corporeal existence to uncanny effect.⁴⁹ Within this, the female face, in particular, defies gendered expectations of emotional expressivity. In terms borrowed from Lauren Berlant, Jackie Stacey describes Tilda Swinton as 'the mistress of flat affect'.⁵⁰ Swinton's 'capacity for flatness', she writes, 'unmakes and remakes more conventionalised femininities, especially as articulated through popular genres in which the woman's interiority is so frequently the register of legible affective intensity.'⁵¹ For Sarah Louise Smyth, this provides a framework within which to read Swinton's 'muted' performance in *Kevin*, 'as a performance of socio-political maternal ambivalence.'⁵² In a grotesque corroboration of this thesis, film critic Alexander Walker claimed to be so enraged by Samantha Morton's 'barren face of affectless catatonia' in *Morvern Callar* that he 'ached to smack some life into it'.⁵³ Walker's language is revealing; the 'barren' female face, unwilling to perform the conventional female labour of expressing emotion on screen, is not permissible within a paradigm that conflates female performance with 'feminine' expressivity.

In *Morvern Callar*, the intense concentration on Morvern's face is not rewarded with revelation. The politics of resistance inherent in placing her impassive face at the centre of the film, unmoored from conventions of eyeline matching or a consistent point of view, reflects on questions of identity and interiority that are posed from the outset. The film begins with Morvern embracing the corpse of her dead lover. Elliptical close-ups of her face laid sideways – recalling her fellow protagonists in Ramsay's filmography who are similarly situated on the cusp of life and death – shift to extreme close-ups of her hands as, eyes closed, she gently traces the slashes on his skin, her fingers coming so close they blur as they stretch to intertwine with his. The intimacy of this exploration is abruptly shattered; Morvern's separation from the traumatic reminder of her own materiality is echoed by our sudden estrangement from the scene as a result of a more distanced perspective, our eye drawn to the bright red blood in the centre of the frame. While this 'makes sense' of the preceding shots, it does so at the expense of our proximal attachment to their tactile properties.

Ramsay's fascination with the irruption of the abject – the scab on Margaret Anne's (Leanne Mullen) knee that captivates James in *Ratcatcher*, or the bloodied tooth that Joe examines closely having strenuously extracted it from his own swollen mouth in *You Were Never Really Here* – allows for an acknowledgement of the corporeal as irreducible to a regime of representation. Following her boyfriend's suicide, Morvern touches blood, bodies, water, worms, earth, insects. Morvern's attention does not discriminate – the urbane publishers think she is joking when she responds to their question about her stay in Spain by saying 'It's really beautiful [...], I like the ants' – and this creates a space for the viewer to adopt a similar perspective in relation to the physiological fact of her 'affectless' face. At the end of the film, Morvern's face flashes up, surrounded by music and moving bodies and once more illuminated by pulsing light. Briefly, she looks back at us, but in the final shot she turns away, eyes closed, immersed in her own environment. As 'sheer epidermis', her face refuses to fix any of the identities (Morvern Callar? Jackie? Olga?) she has slipped in and out of along the way, and the irony of her being identified as the 'distinctive, female voice' of her (faceless) boyfriend's dead body is not lost.

Relieving the female face of the burden of expressivity allows for a critical reappraisal of the role of the female body as abject/object on screen. In *You Were Never Really Here*, the female face attests to a history of cinematic, social and sexual violence; either inscribed on the skin (as on the bruised face of the unidentified woman who stares back from the subway station) or as 'cinematic' spectacle. Young girls' faces, smiling in photographs, scream when seen

through a camera lens, and presage the rictus grins frozen on the faces of victims of sex trafficking glimpsed in the splinters of Joe's recollection. The uncanny doubling of the mother's face articulates cinema's history of casting (off) the ageing female body as abject. Joe's mother sits in a rocking chair, eyes closed, mouth open, a photograph of her as a young woman placed prominently beneath a picture of a bird; her face is 'strangely familiar' to us from film history. Her later emergence from the bathroom in a satin slip, her white hair around her shoulders, reveals Marion Crane and Mrs. Bates to be one and the same, and doubles back to Nina (Ekaterina Samsonov) – now 'the [Hitchcock] blonde is a trafficked kid' – whose 'affectless' face bears witness to women's abjection within popular genres of mainstream cinema.⁵⁴

Ramsay's treatment of the face as doubled and/or emptied of affect opens onto an uncanny encounter with the 'other' on film. If the face has a privileged position in the formation and circulation of enlightenment ideals of personhood, the uncanny, as scholars have argued, can be read as the 'the obverse side of the modern subject and its scientific, secular rationality.'⁵⁵ Or, as Julie Park puts it, 'the uncanny represents the dread return of excess and indeterminacy.'⁵⁶ In Ramsay's films, the face as 'uncanny' both exceeds and resists its role in determining individual identity. As engorged mouth and eyes that are 'only pits of blackness'⁵⁷ we come up against the face as both corporeal materiality and structuring absence. The doubled face casts doubt on notions of individuality based on a differential system of identification, and the face as opaque reflects back on systems of social and sexual signification. And yet, Ramsay's films are oddly optimistic, ending with glimpses, whether real or imagined, of alternative futures for her traumatised protagonists. Edkins traces how 'a fear of closeness of contact with or merging into other people' is embedded in the idea of the person as a separate individual: 'The face then is the primary means of separation.'⁵⁸ Perhaps, in 'undoing' the face, Ramsay allows us to reimagine – however briefly – the relationship between 'I' and 'not-I'.

¹ Tina Kendall, "'The in-between of things': intermediality and *Ratcatcher*,' *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 8, no. 2 (2010): 183.

² Raymond De Luca, 'Dermatology as Screenology: The Films of Lynne Ramsay,' *Film Criticism* 43, no. 1 (March 2019), <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/fc.13761232.0043.102>

³ Jenny Edkins, *Face Politics* (London: Routledge, 2015).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁵ John Welchman, 'Face(t)s: notes on faciality,' *Artforum International* 27 (1998): 131.

⁶ Noa Steimatsky, *The Face on Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): 3n2.

⁷ Tom Gunning, 'In Your Face: Physiognomy, Photography, and the Gnostic Mission of Early Film,' *Modernism/Modernity* 4, no. 1 (1997): 1-29.

⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁹ Alice Maurice, *The Cinema and its Shadow: Race and Technology in Early Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 90.

¹⁰ Ibid., 70.

¹¹ Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost: Films and their Medium* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 349-50.

¹² Maurice, *Cinema and its Shadow*, 88.

¹³ Anne Nesbet, *Savage Junctures: Sergei Eisenstein and the Shape of Thinking* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 28.

¹⁴ Mary Ann Doane, 'Scale and the Negotiation of Real and Unreal Space in the Cinema,' in *Realism and the Audiovisual Media*, eds. Lúcia Nagib and Cecília Mello (London: MacMillan, 2009), 66.

¹⁵ Ellen Gamerman, 'Hollywood's Extreme Close-Up,' *The Wall Street Journal*, January 21, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-close-up-close-up-1485000003>

¹⁶ David Bordwell, 'Intensified Continuity,' *Film Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (Spring 2002): 16-28.

¹⁷ Barry Jenkins quoted in Zack Sharf, 'Paul Thomas Anderson, Master of the Close-Up, Is Jealous of Barry Jenkins' Shots,' *Indiewire*, November 23, 2018, <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/11/paul-thomas-anderson-jealous-barry-jenkins-close-ups-1202022891/2018>

¹⁸ De Luca, 'Dermatology.'

¹⁹ Welchman, 'Face(t)s,' 131.

²⁰ Peter Bradshaw, 'Haneke's House of Horrors,' *The Guardian*, April 30, 2008,

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2008/apr/30/hanekeshouseofhorrors>

²¹ Christopher Sharrett, 'The Seventh Continent,' *Senses of Cinema* 34 (February 2005),

https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2005/cteq/seventh_continent/

²² See for instance Lynne Ramsay quoted in Annette Kuhn, *Ratcatcher* (London: BFI, 2008), 82.

²³ Ramsay quoted in Kuhn, *Ratcatcher*, 85.

²⁴ Richard Hell, 'Consuming Passion: Bresson and *The Devil, Probably*,' in *The Films of Robert Bresson: A Casebook*, ed. Bert Cardullo (London, New York: Anthem Press, 2009), 169.

²⁵ Ibid., 171.

²⁶ Kent Jones, *L'Argent* (London: BFI, 1999), 91.

²⁷ James Quandt, 'On *Au hasard, Balthasar*,' in *The Films of Robert Bresson: A Casebook*, ed. Bert Cardullo (London, New York: Anthem Press, 2009), 83.

²⁸ André Bazin, 'Le Journal d'un curé de campagne and the Stylistics of Robert Bresson,' in André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* Vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (California and London: University of California Press, 1967), 136.

²⁹ The phrase 'uncanny valley' was coined by Masahiro Mori to describe the dip between attraction and repulsion that lifelike robots can inspire.

³⁰ Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', in Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XVII, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1919), 235.

³¹ Gry Faurholt, 'Self as Other: The Doppelgänger,' *Double Dialogues* 10 (Summer 2009),

<https://www.doubledialogues.com/article/self-as-other-the-doppelganger/>

³² Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia, 1982), 4.

³³ Ibid., 5.

³⁴ Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' 241.

³⁵ 'Ma and Da' is the first of three vignettes that comprise Ramsay's short film, *Small Deaths*.

³⁶ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 4.

³⁷ Ramsay quoted in Eileen Elsey, 'Her Stories: Lynne Ramsay talks about narrative structure and the gender of storytelling,' *Vertigo* 2, no. 4 (Spring 2003), https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/volume-2-issue-4-spring-2003/her-stories/

³⁸ With thanks to Alice Maurice for drawing my attention to Deleuze's work on Ingmar Bergman in this context. See Gilles Deleuze, 'The affect as entity,' in Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Haberjam (London: Continuum, 1986), 97-104.

³⁹ Annette Kuhn makes this observation also. Kuhn, *Ratcatcher*, 57.

⁴⁰ Several critics have highlighted the repetition of this motif across *Ratcatcher* and *You Were Really Here*. De Luca, for instance, notes that 'In the opening sequences of *Ratcatcher* and *You Were Never Really Here*, physical materials (lace, plastic) intermediate characters' corporeal experiences of life and death.' De Luca, "Dermatology." Similar images recur across Ramsay's films; for instance, the billowing curtain at the beginning of *Kevin* that acts as a thin 'skin' between Eva's current life and the realisation of death, or the towel that drapes like a death mask over Joe's face in *You Were Never Really Here*.

⁴¹ Suzanne Opton quoted in Edkins, *Face Politics*, 16.

⁴² Kuhn, *Ratcatcher*, 33.

PRE-PRINT, final version published in *Faces on Screen: New Approaches*, edited by Alice Maurice.

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022.

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- ⁴³ Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 38.
- ⁴⁴ Sue Thornham, “‘A Hatred So Intense...’: *We Need to Talk about Kevin*, Postfeminism and Women’s Cinema,’ *Sequence 2*, no. 1 (2013): 1-38.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.
- ⁴⁶ De Luca, ‘Dermatology.’
- ⁴⁷ De Luca also notes the striking resemblance between Joe’s mother’s corpse and Mrs. Bates in *Psycho*. He writes: ‘Indeed, what shocks us most after Hitchcock unveils Mrs. Bates at the end of *Psycho* is her hollowed-out eye sockets and, in *You Were Never Really Here*, Joe’s mother is killed by a shot to the face, which gouges out one of her eyes. The image of Joe’s dead mother with her mouth agape directly recalls Mrs. Bates’s toothy leer.’ De Luca, ‘Dermatology.’
- ⁴⁸ Freud, *The Uncanny*, 230.
- ⁴⁹ Bazin, ‘Bresson,’ 133.
- ⁵⁰ Jackie Stacey, ‘Crossing Over with Tilda Swinton – the Mistress of “Flat Affect”,’ *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 28 (2015): 243-271.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 252.
- ⁵² Sarah Louise Smyth, ‘Postfeminism, Ambivalence and the Mother in Lynne Ramsay’s *We Need to Talk about Kevin* (2011),’ *Film Criticism* 44, no. 1 (2020), <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/fc.13761232.0044.106>
- ⁵³ Alexander Walker, ‘*Morvern Callar*,’ *Mail Online*, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-145422/Morvern-Callar-Cert-15.html>
- ⁵⁴ Several critics have noted the film’s revision of *Psycho*. J. M. Tyree, ‘Anti-*Psycho*-Logical: Notes on Lynne Ramsay’s *You Were Never Really Here*,’ *Bennington Review* 6 (2018), <https://www.benningtonreview.org/jm-tyree-anti-psycho-logical>
- ⁵⁵ Ewa Ziarek, ‘The Uncanny Style of Kristeva’s Critique of Nationalism,’ *Postmodern Culture* 5, no. 2 (January 1995), <http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/text-only/issue.195/ziarek.195>
- ⁵⁶ Julie Park, ‘Unheimlich Maneuvers: Enlightenment Dolls and Repetitions in Freud,’ *The Eighteenth Century* 44, no. 1 (2003): 46.
- ⁵⁷ E. T. A. Hoffmann quoted in Park, ‘Unheimlich,’ 59.
- ⁵⁸ Edkins, *Face Politics*, 166.