

**DOGMA 95 MANIFESTO and the ORDINARY ACT OF
FILMMAKING**

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ABSTRACT

From the beginning of its conception Dogma 95 manifesto incited several debates related with cinema and other realms of culture. The manifesto became a motivation for a series of internationally acclaimed Danish films alongside it spurred many independent filmmakers from all around of the world. Analyzing the emergence, institutionalization and expansion of the Dogma concept offers many possibilities in understanding the zeitgeist of the last decade of the longest century of history. Politics and aesthetics always went hand in hand in the Dogma program. The main concern of the manifesto was the political economy of filmmaking. Dogma 95 manifesto definitely offered a new filmmaking strategy apart from Hollywood whose visual ideology is determined by the oligopolistic market and international capital structures. Also within the context of the European cinema the Dogma movement was different since it did not closeted itself within a debate between globalization and national cultures. Following Lefebvre's ideas one may argue that Dogma 95 manifesto proposed to construct a new social space for filmmaking which is more inclusive and democratic. Even though the film aesthetics seems to be denied in the manifesto, an analysis based upon the premises of the performance theory shows us the fact that Dogma 95 manifesto proposed a frame within which the political criticism is included, and this frame is not exempt from the realm of aesthetics. Lars von Trier's *Idiots* can be considered as a critical account on the utopian Dogma project. Through its self reflexivity, inclusive yet provocative nature Dogma 95 manifesto spurs an intellectual interrogation about the very basics and the future of cinema.

Keywords: Dogma 95 manifesto, Filmmaking, Trier, Lars von, film, film criticism, Denmark

ÖZ

Ortaya çıkışından bu yana Dogma 95 manifestosu sinemayla ve kültürle ilgili pek çok alanda çeşitli tartışmaların doğmasına sebep oldu. Manifesto başta uluslararası başarılar kazanan Danimarka filmleri olmak üzere pek çok bağımsız filmin üretilmesinde de önemli bir ilham kaynağı olageldi. Dogma kavramının ortaya çıkışı, kurumsallaşması ve yayılmasıyla ilgili bir analiz tarihin en uzun yüzyılıının son on yılını anlamakta bize büyük ölçüde yardımcı olacaktır. Dogma programında politika ve estetik her zaman birlikteydi. Manifesto'nun temel problemi filmin ekonomi politikasıydı demek mümkündür. Dogma 95 manifestosu açık bir biçimde Hollywood'un oligopolistik pazar ve uluslararası kapital tarafından belirlenen görsel ideolojisine alternatif bir film üretim stratejisi öneriyordu. Dogma hareketi Avrupa sineması bağlamında da farklıydı çünkü kendini küreselleşme ve yerel kültürler arasındaki tartışmaya hapsedmiyordu. Lefebvre'in fikirleri ışığında Dogma 95 manifestosunun film üretimi için, daha kapsayıcı ve demokratik bir yapıya sahip, yeni ve taze bir sosyal alan kurgusu önerdiğini söyleyebiliriz. Dogma 95 manifestosu her ne kadar film esteteğini göz ardı ediyor gibi görünse de, performans teorisinin öngörülerine dayanan bir analiz bize Dogma 95 manifestosunun kendi politik duruşunu da içine alan bir çerçeve önerdiğini gösteriyor ve bu çerçeveyi estetikten bağımsız olarak düşünmek mümkün değil. Lars von Trier'in *Gerizekalılar* isimli filmi ütopyik Dogma projesinin bir eleştirisi olarak okunabilir. Dogma 95 manifestosu kendine dönüşlülüğü, kapsayıcılığı ve provakasyonu öne çıkararak sinemanın temelleri ve geleceği ile ilgili bir entellektüel sorgulamanın yolunu açıyor.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

On March 20, 1995 in the Odéon cinema in Paris at the venue for a conference held on centenary of the film Lars von Trier have read aloud the Dogma 95 manifesto and left the salon after he threw the copies of the red leaflet to the audience without giving any further explanation. Even though it was suspected that this event was only another Trier scandal, the manifesto was followed by a series of films committed to it. The films made by the three signatories of the manifesto gained considerable international success. In 1998 first two Dogma films were released and they generated considerable interest in Cannes film festival. First Dogma film, Thomas Vinterberg's *The Celebration* was awarded the Jury Special Prize.¹ Von Trier's *Idiots* was nominated for the Golden Palm and it won the FIPRESCI prize at the London Film Festival. Third Dogma film by Søren Kraugh Jacobsen, *Mifune* won the Silver Bear in Berlin alongside many other awards in several festivals. The international success and recognition of Dogma in international film festivals continued at a diminishing pace afterwards. Lone Scherfig's *Italian for Beginners* and Susanne Bier's *Open Hearts* are examples of these late successes. Dogma concept became a motivation for a series of internationally acclaimed Danish films alongside it spurred many independent filmmakers from all around of the world.

Following its success in cinema Dogma was turned into a label in many diverse fields. Not only the international successes of several Danish films and the concept's influence on independent cinema but also an array of approaches that declared themselves committed to the movement in several arts like dance and theatre were effective in this process. The Dogma label is even broadened through areas like computer programming and business. Therefore, Dogma was not only a film movement occurred in the last decade of the twentieth century but also a label attached to several media, or a concept used to decipher a certain attitude. Analyzing the emergence,

¹ Hjört&MacKenzie (eds), *Purity and Provocation: Dogma 95*, (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 3

institutionalization and expansion of the Dogma concept offers many possibilities in understanding the zeitgeist of the last decade of the longest century of history. International character of the manifesto and its ability to diffuse into many different areas other than cinema indicates the importance of Dogma as an artistic and cultural movement. Since this thesis confined to cinema studies I will mainly discuss Dogma around the issues related with filmmaking and film aesthetics rather than analyzing the Dogma concept in general.

1.2. Dogma 95 Manifesto and its Possibilities

In his essay *Manifest Destinies: Dogma 95 and the Future of Film Manifesto* MacKenzie puts forward that internationalization of Dogma 95 manifesto makes it relevant for a wide array of debates in cinema studies. He argues that:

“Not only does Dogma 95 raises salient questions about national cinemas, film aesthetics and the role of film manifesto in cinema culture, it also functions as a focal point for the debates surrounding the history of the cinema in its 100th year. Questions about the relationship between the avant-garde and the popular cinema, the role of ‘minor cinemas’ and the dominance of Hollywood, and the history and future of art cinema as a means of cultural exchange between national cultures are all relevance to the debates surrounding Dogma.”²

Therefore, institutionalization of Dogma at a conference concerned with the future of the cinema was by no chance. Indeed, Dogma 95 manifesto offered a re-evaluation of the current situation of cinema and it marked itself as a new beginning in the history of film. One may claim that this attempt was spurred by the apocalyptic discourse of the nineties. The last decade of the twentieth century was coincided with the dawn of a new millennium and this historical moment posed or produced questions before and foremost about the history itself. In every field people were eager to declare the death of this or that. It is still hard to determine whether these theories were based on right

² MacKenzie, Scott, Manifest Destinies: Dogma 95 and the Future of Film Manifesto, *Purity and Provocation: Dogma 95*, Hjört&MacKenzie (eds), (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 48

signals or they were merely encouraged by the zeitgeist of the era. However, it is certain that like every field cinema took its share from this apocalyptic accounting.

Indeed, when cinema is concerned something was right about in looking for a drastic change. In other words, there were enough signals to interpret as an end or as a new beginning in cinema. The signals were mostly created by new technologies and their transformative effect on the machines of cinema. For the classical understanding, machines of cinema are constituted of three processes; namely representation, reproduction and exhibition. The process of representation includes the role of camera in capturing the images around us, alongside manipulating and editing of them. Reproduction is duplication and distribution of these images. Lastly exhibition covers the space of cinema itself or the link between the spectator and the light emitted by the projector.³ The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed an accelerated transformation in these processes with the emergence of the internet and development of digital technologies. Many aspects of film making; the ways images recorded, processed, stored, and viewed have drastically changed as a consequence of these developments. In that manner it was quite legitimate to ask whether cinema is dead or was it dead as we know it.

Dogma 95 manifesto was a response to these developments and dominant strategies of filmmaking. The manifesto presented itself in direct contrast with the French New Wave cinema. Its opposition to the French New Wave and auteurism is also apparent in its wording. Although it is not explicitly stated one can deduce that Dogma 95 manifesto is equally critical for a certain mode of production in cinema chiefly represented by Hollywood. Indeed, the manifesto proposed an alternative way of filmmaking, spurred independent filmmakers and it certainly became a phenomenon in cinema since its conception. The rejection of the two established authorities in the realm of cinema was incited not only by artistic intentions but also by political concerns. The politics and aesthetics always went hand in hand in Dogma program. In

³ Utterson, Andrew (ed.), *Technology and Culture The Film Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 1

order to understand the aesthetics procreated by the Dogma program, the political stance proposed by Dogma 95 manifesto should be analyzed first.

MacKenzie claims that the extremism in film manifestos gives them not only their political foundation but also their intellectual appeal. He clearly distinguishes two reasons why a cinema scholar would be interested in a film manifesto. First reason of this interest is the desire to answer how a manifesto circulates in the public sphere and why manifestos are doomed to fail in the long run. Giving a satisfactory answer to these questions for any manifesto in question requires a multi disciplinary approach based on a sharp insight for history. The other reason why a cinema scholar would be interested in a film manifesto is the possibilities offered by the manifesto to reimagine the cinema. Maybe for that reason film manifestos were the earliest form of film theory. At that point MacKenzie gives the examples of Canudo's *Manifesto for the Sixth Art*, Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov's Soviet manifesto on sound and the manifestos of Surrealism and British Free Cinema as crucial texts of film theory. He further argues that the films produced under the auspices of a manifesto are always less interesting than the cinema imagined by the reader of the manifesto. Therefore, considering a film manifesto apart from the films related to it is indeed promising for a theoretical writing concerned with the question of the future of cinema.⁴

The Dogma 95 manifesto creates an intellectual appeal for a film scholar in several ways. First, through its rejection of the dominant strategies in filmmaking it forces the reader to reimagine a new cinema. It problematizes a wide array of issues related with filmmaking including finance, technology, style, authority of the auteur and genre.⁵ The oppositional stance offered by the Dogma 95 manifesto against the Hollywood mode of film production and the auteur understanding prevalent in the national cinemas of Europe deserve attention. The manifesto calls for a complete departure from these two established structures and of course this invitation is

⁴ MacKenzie, Scott, Manifest Destinies: Dogma 95 and the Future of Film Manifesto, Purity and Provocation: Dogma 95, Hjört&MacKenzie (eds), (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 50

⁵ Ibid.

theoretically valuable more than being practical. Thus, the Dogma 95 manifesto spurs the theoretician to question the viability and possibility of such a break. Second, since nothing comes out of blue, the Dogma 95 manifesto and the films committed to it are related with a wide range of other film manifestos and movements like Vertov's *Kino Pravda*, French New Wave, and West German Oberhausen group⁶. Analyzing the roots of the Dogma 95 manifesto may offer us a re-evaluation of the history of cinema. Third, even though its apparent relations with earlier film movements and manifestos it is hard to conceive the Dogma 95 manifesto only as a quotation or repetition. Indeed, it actively deals with current issues in cinema; namely the transformation initiated by the new technologies in the realm of cinema and in the sphere of culture. Therefore, an analysis of the Dogma 95 manifesto also gives us the opportunity to evaluate these contemporary changes within a discussion of cinema.

At this point a methodological strategy should be drawn. Even though in the literature on Dogma, the manifesto, films and the Dogma concept were discussed together and the terms were used interchangeably at times, I rather make a loose distinction. First distinction should be made between the manifesto and the films. The manifesto is a declaration; it proposes an ideal about filmmaking through providing a list of rules. Especially journalistic accounts on Dogma (Jack Stevenson's *Lars von Trier* is a good example of this) have been too much focused on the conformance of individual films to the rules set out in the manifesto and they tried to question Dogma's viability as a movement through such reasoning. In one of his interviews Trier clearly puts that Dogma concept is not about conformance to the rules set out in the manifesto: "I don't think it's necessarily crucial that the Dogme rules be followed. I think the issue of whether you can gain something by throwing away total freedom in exchange for a set of rules is worth discussing..."⁷

⁶ Schepelern, Peter, 'Kill Your Darlings': Lars Von Trier and the Origin of Dogma 95, *Purity and Provocation: Dogma 95*, Hjört&MacKenzie (eds), (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 58

⁷ MacKenzie, Scott, Manifest Destinies: Dogma 95 and the Future of Film Manifesto, *Purity and Provocation: Dogma 95*, Hjört&MacKenzie (eds), (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 54

In the issue of *p.o.v.: Danish Journal of Film Studies* devoted to Dogma, Søren Kolstrup provides a careful analysis of the press reviews of Dogma with several numerical data.⁸ His research indicates how poor the journalistic accounts on Dogma are and how they obscure the ways for analysis. In my analysis I will refrain from the discussions on whether a film should be considered under Dogma label or not. I will discuss the manifesto and films separately aiming to discover the complex web of relations between the two.

Hjört points out that according to the signatories of the manifesto the self-imposed rules set out in the manifesto were anything but arbitrary choices. Hjört claims: “Indeed, von Trier and Vinterberg claim to have generated the rules by following a simple maxim: ‘Identify the very means of cinematic expression on which you habitually rely and then make the technique or technology in question the object of an interdiction.’”⁹ For that reason Dogma movement has been much accused with lack of seriousness. However, the simple formulation of the manifesto is only a part of the game. Dogma 95 manifesto touches many vital issues in contemporary cinema. What Dogma 95 manifesto amounts to at the first level is a set of attitudes and rules that are consciously against what makes cinema as cinema today. A sense of irony was always existent within the context of Dogma. If the analysis focuses too much on the ethics and viability of this “big joke” one can only arrive at elegantly formulated accusations or appraisals. What is needed is a more inclusive approach aiming at to discuss the possibilities offered by the manifesto. Such an inclusive approach necessitates an eclectic style which has its own ramifications and limitations. Therefore, what I intend to do in this thesis is to draw a general map relying upon the existing literature on Dogma movement and to show the nodal points at which the manifesto and films interact with other film theories, movements and discourses.

⁸ Kolstrup, Søren, *The Press and Dogma*, (downloaded from http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_10/section_4/artc3A.html on 16th Nov 2006)

⁹ Hjört, Mette, *A Small Nation’s Response to Globalisation, Purity and Provocation: Dogma 95*, Hjört&MacKenzie (eds), (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 34

In that regard this thesis will be composed of local theories rather than a general and comprehensive one. Noël Carroll argues that considering the film theory as singular burdens us with the impossible task of answering virtually every legitimate question one may have about the film¹⁰. Instead of an essentialist approach creating a lofty and dysfunctional “Film theory” he rather offers producing film theories concerned with specific questions. He argues that question led theory production necessities a multidisciplinary approach:

“Film theorizing, as I have argued elsewhere, should be piecemeal. But it should also be diversified. Insofar as theorists approach film from many different angles, from different levels of abstraction and generality, they will have to avail themselves of multidisciplinary frameworks. Some questions about the film may send the researcher toward economics, while others require a look into perceptual psychology. In other instances, sociology, political science, anthropology, communications theory, linguistics, artificial intelligence, biology, or narrative theory may provide the initial research tools which the film theorist requires in order to begin to evolve theories of this and that aspect of the film.”¹¹

Such a piecemeal approach to theory in the analysis of Dogma is particularly necessary. Since Dogma 95 manifesto presents itself as a total negation of current filmmaking practices, it starts a dialog with many different film movements, structures and discourses. What should be the starting point then? Following Carroll’s idea of local theories concerned with specific questions I want to build my analysis around a very simple question: What was Dogma 95 manifesto was against to and why?

1.3. The Absent Organs of the Dogma Body

Since it is not possible to understand Dogma without analyzing what it was against to, in the following two chapters of my thesis I aim to provide a thorough analysis of the

¹⁰ Carroll, Noël, Prospects for Film Theory: A Personal Assessment, *Post Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, Bordwell & Carroll (eds.), (University of Wisconsin Press: Wisconsin, 1996), 37

¹¹ Ibid., 40

Dogma 95 manifesto and determine what it rejected to include in its body. This rejection has both aesthetic and political implications and as I have stated above they are always interlinked. Hasan Bülent Kahraman discusses this convergence between aesthetics and new forms of politics in the context of modernism. He states that this convergence is realized as a consequence of the dynamics of late modernist era. According to Kahraman this era of modernism is basically shaped by two factors: deconstructionist tendencies emerged in 60s and globalization.¹² I will mainly organize my discussion on the Dogma 95 manifesto around the implications of this statement.

First factor in the formation of late modernism is the deconstructionist tendencies emerged in 60s. Kahraman claims that in the realm of art these tendencies demonstrated their full effect starting from 80s. The deconstructionist discourse enabled a thorough questioning of the artwork as a transcendental object of knowledge. He further argues that in this era of late modernism, the “knowing subject” which was shaped through fundamental predisposition of modernism to disseminate knowledge by an elitist circle ignoring any sort of relativity, has began to be transformed.¹³ One may argue that the elitist nature of the notion of auteur in cinema was shaped by this predisposition of modernism. The auteur was the “knowing subject” of cinema who claimed full responsibility in her creation. In line with these arguments Forbes and Street state that the aesthetic origins of art cinema are undoubtedly to be found in European modernism. They determine the auteur as the kernel of this understanding of cinema. They state that:

“The existential quest, the interrogation of subjectivity, and experiment with narrative form which appear to lie at the heart of art cinema mirror a structure of production in which director is the linchpin of the film. The film is a personal statement by the director, who has himself invented the project, probably written

¹² Kahraman, Hasan Bülent, *Sanat ve Yeni Siyaset Biçimleri*, Mehmet Ali Aybar Sempozyumları 1997-2002: *Özgürleşmenin Sorunsalları*, Gündüz Vassaf (ed.), (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2003), 83-84

¹³ Ibid., 85

the script, raised the finance, and used his house as a location and cast friends and family in the leading roles.”¹⁴

In that context Dogma 95 manifesto’s complete rejection of the notion of auteur or the “knowing subject” of cinema marks a break with the European modernism. However, this break is not disjunctive and groundless. Implications and possibilities of such a break will be examined exclusively.

For Kahraman the second determining factor in the formation of late modernism is globalization. He argues that the essence of globalization can be found in two interrelated mottos: localization of the global and globalization of the local.¹⁵ Whereas modernity was closing the artwork on itself through transforming it into an object of knowledge, several factors like AIDS, political and social corruption, environmental pollution, poverty, inequality and segregation were effective in the process of the re-politicization of the artwork in the era of globalization. The feeling of insecurity and the crisis of belief created by these factors forced the artwork to interrogate new ways of representation. The process of re-politicization of the artwork crystallizes in the question of identity and several notions attached to it like nation and memory. The analysis of Dogma 95 manifesto can provide us an insight for the complex routs of this process. Mette Hjört in her comprehensive work on contemporary Danish cinema *Small Nation, Global Cinema: The New Danish Cinema* ascribes Dogma movement a political agenda shaped by a robust questioning of authority in all respects. Throughout her study Hjört argues that New Danish Cinema in general and Dogma movement in particular were a small nation’s responses to globalization. At that point the question of Hollywood as a global institution is at stake. The structural constraints of Hollywood force it to use its relatively unchecked ability of global diffusion to the disadvantage of national cinemas outside US. This structural constraint is based on a simple market principle: as the costs of film-production soar up new markets have to be found to

¹⁴ Forbes&Street, *European Cinema: An Introduction*, (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 36

¹⁵ Kahraman, Hasan Bülent, *Sanat ve Yeni Siyaset Biçimleri*, Mehmet Ali Aybar Sempozyumları 1997-2002: *Özgürleşmenin Sorunsalları*, Gündüz Vassaf (ed.), (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2003), 84

compensate the increase. In that broad context one may claim that with its opposition against the Hollywood, or the agent of globalization in the realm of cinema Dogma 95 manifesto takes a political stance which is mainly based on the issues of inequality and identity. Through the end of my analysis I argue that the Dogma program goes even beyond this political stance and enables us to imagine a new political economy in filmmaking. The politicization process of Dogma movement and the aesthetics procreated by it will be analyzed through a comparison between contemporary Hollywood and Dogma movement.

Therefore Dogma can be thought of as a body, it is clear that it rejects to carry some vital organs to survive namely the adherence to the authority of Hollywood through accepting its mode of production strategies, and the legacy of the auteur which has been the founding stone of European cinemas in the post 60s era. Analyzing the relation between Hollywood and Dogma 95 manifesto first will clear the field for the consecutive analysis since the “European question” in cinema is always inevitably related with Hollywood and the European concern with the culture. In the following chapter I will situate my analysis within the scope of political economy. Through determining the different modes of production in Hollywood and European national cinemas I will be able to point out the distinctive position of Dogma movement in the history of cinema. Relying upon a Marxist trajectory in the analysis and bringing forward Lefebvre’s ideas on the production of space I will discuss filmmaking as a social practice. When the legacy of Dogma is concerned the act of filmmaking is as important as the internal aesthetic dynamics of the film. Indeed, the aesthetics of Dogma is very much bound up to this new understanding of filmmaking as a social practice which is both collaborative and destructive. These two seemingly contradicting features of Dogma filmmaking finds their causes of being in the tremendous changes occurred in the last two decades in the machines of cinema.

In the second chapter I aim to analyze Dogma movement around a very simple question: what Dogma was against to and what are the implications of its stance. I take this question first and foremost as the concern of the political economy of filmmaking.

CHAPTER 2

DOGMA 95: Through a New Political Economy of Cinema?

2.1. Notes on the Methodology of Analysis

Dogma 95 manifesto is apparently and fiercely against the Hollywood mode of film production. In an interview with the Swedish filmmaker and critic Stig Björkman, Lars Von Trier clearly puts forward the opposing stance of the manifesto against Hollywood:

“Stig Björkman: So Dogma 95 didn’t emerge as a protest against Danish film and film production?

Von Trier: No, I stopped protesting against Danish film a long time ago. If you want to articulate a protest, it has to be directed against something that has a certain kind of authority, then there’s really no point in protesting against it. If there’s anything in the world of film that has authority, it is American film, because of the money it has at its disposal and its phenomenon of dominance on the world market.”¹⁶

Although, this discourse may sound romantic or lacking originality it addresses a still prevalent problem in cinema throughout the world. Jameson points out the fact that dominance of Hollywood even restrains the possibility of thinking the different alternatives:

“It was a significant theoretical event, I think, when in their 1985 book, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, Bordwell, Thompson, and Staiger pronounced the death of various ‘60s and ‘70s filmic experiments all over the world and the universal hegemony of classic Hollywood form. This is, of course, in another sense a relatively final death of the modern, insofar as independent filmmakers all over the world could be seen to be guided by a certain modernism; but it is

¹⁶ Hjört, Mette, *Small Nation Global Cinema: New Danish Cinema*, (London: University of Minesota Press, 2005), 39

also the death of the political, and an allegory of the end of the possibility of imagining radically different social alternatives to this one we now live under.”¹⁷

Dogma 95 manifesto clearly offers an alternative and radical position. In order to understand how the manifesto positions itself against Hollywood a brief history of Hollywood should be outlined. My main point in this part of analysis is that the Dogma 95 manifesto’s rejection of Hollywood not only concerns the formal aspects of the filmmaking but also the structural constraints of Hollywood. Through a chain reaction the economic imperatives create the visual ideology in Hollywood. Any strategy of filmmaking challenging these imperatives is inherently political and the aesthetics attached to this political stance offers an alternative visual ideology. What Dogma attempts to do is to attack these chain reactions and to offer a new alternative for filmmaking.

One caution should be made here: considering the economic imperatives as determining factors in the visual ideology carries all the limitations of relying upon the classical Marxist understanding of culture or the superstructure. For the classical Marxist point of view superstructure is always determined by the base structure which is fundamentally economic. Ronaldo Munck argues that this is the orthodox Marxist grip on culture. Indeed, this subordination on culture in the Marxist thought has been widely questioned so far. Munck argues that:

“Culture has made a remarkable move in the story of Marxism from dependent, determined and subordinate part of the ‘superstructure’ of society (the economy being the ‘base’) to the centre-stage in the new Marxist cultural studies and, even more, in forms of Marxism influenced by postmodernism.”¹⁸

I should admit that this part of my analysis does not significantly divert from the orthodox Marxist grip on culture. My aim in this chapter is to formulate different

¹⁷ Jameson, Frederic, Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue, *The Cultures of Globalization*, Jameson&Miyoshi (eds.), (London: Duke University Press, 1998), 62

¹⁸ Munck, Ronaldo, *Marx@2000: Late Marxist Perspectives*, (MacMillan Press, New York, 2000), 98

modes of production in filmmaking and evaluate Dogma filmmaking within this context. Rather than stating that Hollywood is a one to one representation of the capitalist market structure I aim to determine the economic mechanisms creating the phenomenon of Hollywood. Indeed, aesthetics always escapes from determined mechanisms however it always touches to the conditions it has been built upon whether economic, social or contextual. Therefore I assume a tactile relationship between the base structure and the superstructure or the economy and culture rather than determining one. The nature of this tactility, the extent of its intensity and depth differs in every individual work or in different elements of culture. Making generalizations about this tactility, determining the nodal points at which the two intersect for a group of work or combinations of different elements of culture gives us approximations at best. These approximations are useful in the sense of drawing a road map for the analysis. My main aim is to first draw this roadmap through a comparative approach, namely regarding the Dogma 95 program in relation to Hollywood and European cinema.

It is always hard to discuss Hollywood without taking a side obstructive in the way of a rather objective analysis. Maltby points out two fundamental fallacies in analyzing Hollywood as such: “For the vulgar Romantic in us all, Hollywood is not art because it is commercial. For the vulgar Marxist in us all, Hollywood’s enslavement to the profit system means that all its objects can do no other but blindly reproduce the dominant ideology of bourgeois capitalism.”¹⁹ In order to avoid these fallacies he offers to start the analysis from the point of acceptance that Hollywood is a commodity. Such an approach requires discovering the economic imperatives formulate the system. Indeed this is the position taken by the political economist faced with the problem of Hollywood. Wasko notes that:

“Fundamentally the political economy of film must understand motion pictures as commodities produced and distributed within a capitalist industrial structure...Rather than celebrate Hollywood’s success, political economists are interested in how US films came to dominate international film markets, what mechanisms are in place to sustain such market dominance, how the state

¹⁹ Maltby, Richard, *Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*, (Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, 1995), 29

becomes involved, how the export of film is related to marketing of other media products, what the implications are for the indigenous film industries in other countries, and what political/cultural implications may stem from the situation.”²⁰

In my analysis of Hollywood I will stick with a discourse based on the political economy of the cinema. The main issues I will tackle during the first part of my analysis are: the evolution of Hollywood to its current industrial structure, examination of this structure at macro and micro levels, mapping out the relationship between macro level industrial connections and micro level pleasure oriented links and summing up my arguments by a discussion of visual ideology of contemporary Hollywood. I believe such an approach will broaden the context of the discussion and prevent us to situate Hollywood merely as the simulacrum of the international capital.

2.2. Contemporary Hollywood: The Discreet Charm of Oligopoly

The contemporary Hollywood film industry has begun to take shape after the ‘Paramount Case’ in 1949. As a consequence of the anti-trust law suit brought against the prominent film companies of the studio era, the monopolistic practice in film exhibition ended and the exhibition and production-distribution practices were separated. This important break in the history of Hollywood had important consequences for the industry. For a brief period in 50s independent film company productions boomed since under the stress of the circumstances the big studios had to hire their facilities in order to compensate their consequential losses of still keeping an old and expensive infrastructure. The long term consequence of this break for Hollywood was shifting the resources from exhibition to production-distribution. After this shift big Hollywood companies could reclaim their dominance in the market against the small independent film production companies. Moreover, through investing in cinema chains the production-distribution oriented film companies became important stakeholders in the film exhibition sector. Therefore, once again Hollywood gained a

²⁰ Wasko, Janet, *The Political Economy of Film, A Companion to Film Theory*, Miller&Stam (eds.), (Blackwell:Massachusetts, 1999), 227

rather complex oligopolistic nature through diversification and investment. Another break in the history of Hollywood occurred in 50s was the exponential growth of television. However, an important portion of the Hollywood audience shifted to TV and the film industry faced with important losses, the response given by Hollywood was not shrinking. On the contrary, Hollywood has chosen to collaborate with TV through establishing multimedia conglomerates. By the end of the mid-80s the merging process was complete and these large multimedia conglomerates became domineering in the realm of culture both nationally and globally.²¹ .

Visual ideology of contemporary Hollywood was more or less based on the transformed industrial structure described above. In order to understand the formation of this visual ideology it is informative to take a glance at films from 70s onwards. Bordwell and Thompson argue that in Hollywood since 70s talented young directors have adapted classical conventions to contemporary tastes.²² These young directors, the most notable ones as Spielberg and Lucas, created the phenomenon of blockbuster film. Following the examples of *Jaws* (1975), *Star Wars* (1977) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) big hits were created in the 80s by many young directors like James Cameron (*The Terminator*, 1984; *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, 1991), Tim Burton (*Beetlejuice*, 1988; *Batman*, 1989), and Robert Zemeckis (*Back to the Future*, 1985; *Who framed Roger Rabbit?*, 1988). The dominance of mainstream film was strengthened by many other film directors outside US like Tony and Ridley Scott from UK, Paul Verhoeven from Netherlands, and Wolfgang Peterson from Germany. Moreover, several film directors from independent film managed to swift into mainstream like David Lynch (*Blue Velvet*, 1986) and David Cronenberg (*Fly*, 1986). This new surge of commercial films in the 80s or the *New New Hollywood* as Bordwell and Thompson names it absorbed young American directors, foreign directors, independent film directors and

²¹ Nelmes, Jill (ed.), *An Introduction to Film Studies*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 26-28

²² Bordwell, D., Thompson, K., *Film Art: An Introduction*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1997), 471

some minority directors into the mainstream Hollywood.²³ Therefore, one may consider the 80s as a period of Renaissance in Hollywood in which commercial tastes dominated and diversity is melted into the mainstream pot. In this framework the notion of blockbuster film gained substantial importance. Achieving the blockbuster status for a movie can be considered as the utmost aim of the film production in Hollywood. The two most significant films both released in the early 90s as successful blockbusters were *Jurassic Park* by Steven Spielberg in 1993 and *Forrest Gump* by Robert Zemeckis in 1994.

The visual ideology prevalent in the two films particular and in all blockbuster productions in general are inextricably related with the macro level economic imperatives on which the film industry was built. Hollywood wants to protect its oligopolistic structure through indirectly averting other actors entering into film production business. Lewis describes the industrial structure of contemporary Hollywood as such:

“The movie business in the nineties was characterized by an increasing concentration of industrial power among a select group of multinational players. Relevant here are four big mergers – Time and Warner Communications, Paramount Communications and Viacom, The Disney Corporation and Capital Cities/ABC, and Time Warner and Turner Broadcasting. To this growing conglomeration and vertical and horizontal integration, we can add some significant inter-industry developments: strategic alliances between Internet companies, telephone carriers, cable television outfits, and what were once upon a time just film studios.”²⁴

As the American film companies grow larger through vertical integration, their financial resources also increase dramatically. Under the conditions of this oligopolistic structure film production becomes a matter of carefully launching and managing a massive financial investment. Indeed, the question is not how Hollywood represents these macro

²³ Bordwell, D., Thompson, K., *Film Art: An Introduction*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1997),469

²⁴ Lewis, John, The End of Cinema as We Know It and I Feel..., *The End of Cinema as We Know It*, Lewis, Jon (ed.), (Pluto Press: London, 2001), 2

level economic imperatives but how these imperatives leak into the visual ideology of Hollywood.

The investments on film productions are so huge that the US market alone is not sufficient to guarantee the desired profits. Therefore, like any big industry operating in a global market Hollywood also wants to grow internationally. Internationalization of Hollywood can be analyzed at two different planes. First part is, the vertical integration with film companies around the globe. Financial power in the film industry is concentrated within an international web of capital through acquisitions. An American film studio can be purchased by a Japanese, French, Australian, Canadian or Italian company or vice versa. Lewis argues that these vertical integrations at global level make the term “American” film less meaningful if not obsolete.²⁵ Therefore one should consider Hollywood not as the industrial center of a national, or let’s say “American” cinema but as a term or a symbol that summarizes the vast international financial interrelationships between entertainment companies. Second level is expanding the market throughout the world. Massive advertisement campaigns and horizontal integrations are two key strategies to achieve this end. Contemporary Hollywood can be considered as a web of relationships operating with the help of an international and diverse capital structure. The visual ideology of Hollywood is erected upon this base and at the end “money becomes aesthetic.” Now let’s turn to the strategies that Hollywood utilizes to expand its market at global level.

An aggressive advertisement campaign throughout the world is an inseparable part of the blockbuster production. The substantial importance of this strategy was “discovered” with *Jaws*. In his article published in *ArtForum* Hoberman states that the unprecedented success of *Jaws* at the box office was related with advertisement frenzy created around the movie:

“Released in June 1975, at 460 theaters simultaneously, on an unprecedented wave of TV advertising, *Jaws* was everywhere at once. The film needed only 78 days to

²⁵ Lewis, John, The End of Cinema as We Know It and I Feel..., *The End of Cinema as We Know It*, Lewis, Jon (ed.), (Pluto Press: London, 2001), 3

surpass *The Godfather* as the top-grossing movie of all time (at least until 1977, and *Star Wars*). By then, Americans had already purchased 2 million *Jaws* tumblers, half a million *Jaws* T-shirts, and tens of thousands of *Jaws* posters, beach towels, bike bags, blankets, and hosiery, as well as shark costumes, costume jewelry, hobby kits, iron-on transfers, board games, charms, pajamas, bathing suits, water squirters, shark's-tooth pendants, inflatable sharks . . . etc.’²⁶

The advertisement campaign of *Jaws* had started long before the launching of the movie. Through extensive press coverage of the production stage expectation about the film was boosted. One may claim that after *Jaws* a large scale Hollywood production is nothing but a “great expectation”. The blockbuster is so visible in every venue of daily life that you *should* see it. This whole strategy boils down to the idea that creating something so big that cannot be ignored. The spectator is surrounded by the movie before and after the release of it. The blockbuster ensures the audience to be informed about the movie even before its release and after watching it souvenirs of the movie is readily existent at the gift shops. As Hoberman indicates advertisement campaign of a blockbuster movie is not only composed of press coverage or the promotion of the movie; the campaign needs alliances with sectors other than film industry as well. This phenomenon brings us the notion of synergy strategy which has been possible through the horizontal integrations with different companies in the entertainment and service sectors.

Contemporary Hollywood cannot be considered solely in the terms of film industry. Through the synergy strategy it has established links between media and entertainment sectors. Today Hollywood means “a vast empire of media and entertainment properties that amounts to a global distribution system.”²⁷ The synergy strategy enables Hollywood to regain its huge investments on films from many different sectors effective on the popular culture like advertising, consumption, fashion and toys. Elsaesser points that the restaurant scene in *Jurassic Park* uncannily shows the connotations of the synergy strategy on the issue of reality and illusion. In the scene

²⁶ Hoberman, J., *Don't Go Near the Water*, (downloaded from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_n8_v32/ai_16109590/pg_1 on 1 May 2007

²⁷ Nelmes, Jill (ed.), *An Introduction to Film Studies*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 42

two main characters of the film sit and talk about the nature of illusion at a restaurant while the scene opens with the camera straying around in the nearby gift shop. Elsaesser argues that at this moment film turns round and looks at us.²⁸ As the memory of the film re-circulates through a number of merchandising products like toys, games and gadgets, like in the film the spectator/consumer will find herself visiting a gift shop filled with products designed on *Jurassic Park* theme. This doubling in this scene is indeed tied with the excessively exploited relation between consumption and memory. The scene turns out to be a metaphor of the way Hollywood films invite the spectator/consumer into a continuous illusionary space. The fiction characters in the film including dinosaurs leak into our everyday lives as objects and images. In this economy, memory of the film is a product as valuable as the film itself.

Elsaesser analyzes the notion of blockbuster at two different levels: at the macro level synergies which hold today's media culture together and the internal or at the micro level links. At the macro level the profit oriented relations I have described above are at stake. Moreover, these macro level connections can be further distinguished as vertical and horizontal ones as I did in my previous arguments. Elsaesser puts forward that:

“More broadly speaking, the macro-level points to the relations that exist between the film industry and other forms of modern capitalist business practice, where the strategies of the multinationals do not differ all that much, whether they produce/sell cars or movies, silicon chips or television programs, computer software of stars, soft drinks and junk food or sound and images.”²⁹

So looking from the macro level the vulgar Marxist in us is right since: “Hollywood's enslavement to the profit system means that all its objects can do no other but blindly reproduce the dominant ideology of bourgeois capitalism.”³⁰ However, staying at this level may provide us further insight about the structure of culture industry I want to pass

²⁸ Elsaesser, Thomas, *The Blockbuster, The End of Cinema as We Know It*, Lewis, Jon (ed.), (Pluto Press: London, 2001), 11

²⁹ Ibid.,13

³⁰ Ibid.,29

through a micro level analysis in the light of my previous arguments in order to stay within the scope of film studies.

Elsaesser states that the focus of micro level analysis is the pleasure oriented connections. At this level the theorist is interested in questions concerning the exchange between the spectator and the film rather than industrial relations. He argues that it is insufficient to think of film only as a commodity and defines film as a service supported by commodities. What is offered to the audience in this service economy is the expectation, fulfillment of this expectation and enough gadgets to remember the experience. Commodity and service exist side by side, and as going to a movie promises the viewer a memorable experience, the experience of movie going itself is commodified. Therefore, one may claim that Hollywood sets up its micro links with the spectator through two channels: expectation and memory. These micro links are the fundamentals that turn Hollywood into a meaning-making machine as Elsaesser puts.³¹

Two arguments about the micro links between the Hollywood and spectator should be made here. First, macro level connections and strategies help to create the expectation of the film and then to present it as a memorable event. The massive advertisement campaigns and the synergy strategy create a mental and social space to be filled by the expectation and memory of the film. Theme parks, toy stores and restaurant chains are some examples of concrete spaces through which the memory of the film is put into circulation. Second, through which the micro level links the cultural capital of Hollywood is founded and maintained. This cultural capital aims to touch some key nodal points in the collective memory of Western mind. In most of blockbuster productions the main aim is to tickle the collective memory with constant references to the archetypal heroes from Western mythology and to Christian values. All the high-tech gear, million dollar sets and props complete the make up and movie is

³¹ Elsaesser, Thomas, The Blockbuster, *The End of Cinema as We Know It*, Lewis, Jon (ed.), (Pluto Press: London, 2001), 19

presented to the audience as the “latest” sublime. The legitimacy of this strategy can be discussed but apparently it works.

Zemeckis’s *Forrest Gump* is an excellent example to examine the way Hollywood’s cultural capital is constructed. A latest review of the film in the *Entertainment Weekly* magazine says: “Robert Zemeckis’ ode to 20th-century America still represents one of cinema’s most clearly drawn lines in the sand. One half of folks see it as an artificial piece of pop melodrama, while everyone else raves that it’s sweet as a box of chocolates.”³² Apparently a more cooled down analysis is needed; *Forrest Gump* is neither just artificial nor a box of chocolate. Forrest can be considered as a tragic hero whose destiny is to change the course of history without realizing it. Throughout the movie Forrest unintentionally instigates several politically and culturally significant events in the actual history of United States; he teaches Elvis his trademark dance, puts a stop to segregation, inspires the lyrics to John Lennon’s *Imagine*, halts Watergate, starts the jogging frenzy, invests the money he has earned from shrimping business to a company later known as the Apple computers to name a few.³³ Apart from the trite message of the movie: “anybody can be a part of American dream even an idiot”, Christian aspirations are also apparent. The innocence of Forrest connotes having a child like faith which is highly praised by the Bible. Through his obedience and sacrificial giving Forrest deserves to be a beloved movie character of devoted Christian spectators. A strictly Christian view on the movie is explanatory here: “For mature Christians, *Forrest Gump* can serve as a challenging reminder of the blessings and opportunities that flow from simply wanting to do the right thing without seeking gain or personal glory.”³⁴ Through a seamless combination of tragedy, Christian aspirations and hope *Forrest Gump* achieves both to tickle and manipulate the collective memory of its audience.

³² Bal, Sumeet et. al., [Cry Hard 2 The Readers Strikes Back](http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,570497,00.html), (downloaded from <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,570497,00.html> on 5 May 2007)

³³ Wikipedia, [Forrest Gump](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forrest_Gump#_note-4), (downloaded from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forrest_Gump#_note-4 on 5 May 2007)

³⁴ Dickerson, John, [Forest Gump: Movie Review](http://www.christiananswers.net/spotlight/movies/pre2000/i-gump.html), (downloaded from <http://www.christiananswers.net/spotlight/movies/pre2000/i-gump.html> on 5 May 2007)

Hollywood's relation with expectation and memory leaks into the visual and narrative elements of *Forrest Gump*. As I have stated advertisement and synergy strategies based upon the macro level industrial relations are connected with micro level links which have been created with the expectation and the memory of the film. If the terminal points of the relation between spectator and Hollywood are the traces of expectation and memory, than *Forrest Gump* is definitely a Hollywood movie on Hollywood. *Forrest Gump* not only creates expectation but also it feeds the expectation. If Forrest could take a part in a glamorous American dream than anybody can, so one should continue to wish. *Forrest Gump* not only wants to be remembered through best selling books, CDs, caps and shrimp restaurant chains opened after the movie, but also wants to manipulate the remembrance of the American history through a satirical or a "smiley" way. Therefore, the film transforms the structural links into narrative motivations and visual manipulations in a genuine way. Zemeckis definitely plays the game as it should be played and the huge success of the movie can arguably be linked with this Hollywood wisdom.

In this part of my analysis I have started with a brief history of Hollywood and traced out the process through which Hollywood gained its oligopolistic structure today. In analyzing the strategies under two different levels: macro economic profit oriented relations and microeconomic pleasure oriented links, I argue that oligopolistic structure necessitated certain economic strategies to preserve itself. I have pointed out how these two levels interact and produce the visual ideology of Hollywood today by giving examples from significant blockbuster movies like *Jaws*, *Jurassic Park* and *Forrest Gump*. I want to conclude with a discussion of Douglas Gomery's analysis of new media economics. Gomery predicts that the current oligopolistic structure of Hollywood will be a stable one. He argues that:

"Idealists will never find that world of small direct-revenue creative entrepreneurs; nor will we have to put up with a single evil monolith. Analysis of the mass media industry through time tells us that we ought to seek to understand corporate oligopolists and then find a way, through governmental

action, to prod them to optimal performance. To hope for more is to hope for a world which never comes to be, for performance that will never happen.”³⁵

Indeed, Gomery is a “hopeless” realist and he reasonably points out the two forces within which the cinema is closeted: the requirements of the oligopolistic industrial structure and the government action. Hollywood and European cinema operates on the different edges of this closet. Transgression is an option that is always available. But can there be an organized and sustainable one for the cinema? I want to discuss this possibility around the context of Dogma 95 manifesto following a comparative approach.

2.3. The European Question on Film: Hollywood Candy or Euro Pudding?

Positioning itself against to the giant Hollywood for a European or a Third World cinema is not a brand new idea of course. Fighting with unfair competition and struggling to be visible in international venues are the most important problems national cinemas had to face with especially after the Second World War. The dialog with Hollywood whether rejecting it or being influenced by it was always an indispensable part of film making in European cinema.

Hollywood started to exercise its hegemony over European film markets especially after the Second World War. The justification of this exercise of hegemony presented as the promotion of democracy and freedom. US definitely used the aftermath of the war to expand its influence on the European film market. The strategies varied from using General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) for the benefit of the American film industry, ransoming German government to use American films for education and propaganda purposes, and establishment of the Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEA) whose main aim was to lobby on behalf of American interests. European countries responded these impositions and strategies with market

³⁵ Gomery, Douglas, *Toward a New Media Economics*, *Post Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, Bordwell & Carroll (eds.), (University of Wisconsin Press: Wisconsin, 1996), 417

regulation rules, screen quotas, extra taxation for export movies, and controlling the distribution of foreign films. By the late 50s as European economies started to overcome the depression of war and more effective direct state aid mechanisms for cinema started to develop.³⁶

Forbes & Street argues that in the late 50s and 60s a “new cinema” has emerged all around the Europe. Young directors which included Chabrol, Godard, Rohmer and Rivette created the surge of New Wave in France. Also in Italy Antonioni and Fellini, in Britain Anderson, Richardson and Reisz, and in Spain Saura produced many still acclaimed films. However, this new surge in cinema did not turn into commercial success. 70s was a period of significant decline for national cinemas all around the Europe. The audience has been lost to a great extent as the cultural and financial influence of Hollywood increased. For example British film industry became so dependent upon American investment that 90 percent of investment in British cinema came from United States.³⁷ The way national cinemas of Europe have found was to increase and consolidate the state support they give for their film industries. By the 80s state support for film production became a significant cultural concern for European cinemas and they were subsidized in the same however, less generous manner than the other art forms like theatre, literature and opera are subsidized.³⁸ A recent example shows the permanence of this policy. If we look at EU policy on audiovisual and media policies we can see that this understanding is still prevailing. This June European Commission adopted a Communication extending to support the cinematographic and other audiovisual works one more year.³⁹

³⁶ Forbes&Street, *European Cinema: An Introduction*, (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 17-20

³⁷ Ibid., 19

³⁸ Ibid., 21-22

³⁹ Audiovisual and Media Policies, State Aid to Cinema (downloaded from http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/reg/cinema/index_en.htm, on June 14, 2007)

The question of European cinema is mainly conceived as a matter of culture and the debate is based on the dichotomy between the globalization and national cultures. As I will discuss further, this debate has its own limitations and closure points. In his essay “Globalization as a Philosophical Issue” Jameson addresses the two sidedness of the debate on globalization and national cultures. According to Jameson the judgment on the effects of globalization on the national culture should be given considering the level at which a malign and standardizing or despotic identity is discerned.⁴⁰ As he points out this malign identity can belong to the nation state:

“If this is to be found in the existence of the State itself, as a national entity, then to be sure, a more micropolitical form of difference, in markets and culture, will be affirmed against it as a force for the resistance to uniformity and power: here, then, the levels of the cultural and the social are summoned to stand in radical conflict with the level of the political.”⁴¹

However, this malign and standardizing despotic identity can belong to the transnational system itself: namely Americanization of national cultures through free circulation of American cultural products and most important among them the Hollywood films. At that point Jameson ascribes the nation state a positive role in challenging the standardizing effect of the transnational system.⁴² If this is the right diagnosis in the globalization versus national cultures debate, finding the cure is not an easy job. Some questions inevitably follow Jameson’s statement: in which particular conditions one can detect the operation of a standardizing and hegemonic power on culture and who is legible to detect it? Jameson does not give a satisfactory answer to these questions. Wayne offers a detailed discussion about the paradoxes and blindfolds in Jameson’s

⁴⁰ Jameson, Frederic, Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue, *The Cultures of Globalization*, Jameson&Miyoshi (eds.), (London: Duke University Press, 1998), 74

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

essay. He finds Jameson's uncritical support of the nation state as problematic.⁴³ Wayne also reminds Tomlinson's criticism of Jameson's idea of cultural domination. Tomlinson formulates the question as such:

“...media texts of Western origin are massively present in other cultures. But the key question is, does this presence represent cultural imperialism? Clearly sheer presence alone does not. A text does not become culturally significant until it is read.”⁴⁴

Indeed, Tomlinson is right in stating that Jameson's view to a large extent ignores the fact that new readings of media texts produces new meanings and these new meanings might be out of the sphere of the original text. One should remind here the relation between the French New Wave cinema and Hollywood. It is apparent that the auteur theory of filmmaking on which French New Wave heavily relies upon is basically produced from a robust criticism of Hollywood films. The basic requirement for such an intellectual endeavor organized around the journal *Cahiers du Cinema* was of course the presence of Hollywood films in movie theaters of France. Therefore one may argue that the degree and the quality of critical discourse on the foreign cultural products determine the national culture's capacity to transform and “digest” that foreign element. The hegemonic presence of Hollywood in the world aided by its international distribution system seems to transgress the possible limits of digestion for any national culture unless a robust and dynamic critical discourse is in operation.

It is interesting to note that both Gomery and Jameson point out at different levels a two edged axis on which filmmaking supposed to operate. Filmmaking should either accept the imperatives put by the oligarchic Hollywood industry -accepting to compete with it in unequal terms- or expect the relief from the national culture chiefly organized and dominated by the state. The clash between US and European countries (chiefly represented by France in the debate) in GATT agreements on the free

⁴³ Wayne, Mike, *The Politics of Contemporary European Cinema: Histories, Borders, and Diaspoars*, (Bristol: Intellect, 2002), 2

⁴⁴ Tomlinson, John, *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction*, (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 42

circulation of cultural products was a culmination point in the tense relation between globalization and national cultures of Europe. Wayne clearly articulates what GATT meant for the European cinema:

“Essentially, GATT represents the institutional face of expansion of the principles of neo-liberalism into every corner of social, cultural and economic life. If film were to be included in the GATT’s terms of trade, then that would outlaw any protectionist measures which countries might adopt towards their own threatened film industries.”⁴⁵

Jameson claims that GATT crisis which reached its peak point in 1993 represents the American film and television fall under base and superstructure meaning that they are fully economics as much as they are culture. From the American perspective opening the barriers on film in foreign countries is a hardheaded business necessity since film and television are indeed, along with agribusiness and weapons, the principal economic export of the United States.⁴⁶ At the end of the GATT talks cultural products were excluded from the agreement and the debate was resolved with a clear victory for the European side. However, Wayne is critical about considering the exclusion of cultural products from GATT agreement as an unquestioned victory for European cinema. Reserving the right for using protectionist measures to protect the national culture when it is necessary is definitely a plus and if Europe is concerned the national state’s domination on culture seems at least in practical and comparative terms less restraining on the production of a critical discourse in different realms of culture. However this critical capability now seems to carry no use in the current situation. As Elsaesser puts forward:

“One upon a time, European nations could afford a film industry. Today with the possible exception of France, none can: not Italy, not Spain, not Britain, not Germany. Once upon a time, second-run cinemas and art houses would show

⁴⁵ Wayne, Mike, *The Politics of Contemporary European Cinema: Histories, Borders, and Diaspoars*, (Bristol: Intellect, 2002), 12

⁴⁶ Jameson, Frederic, *Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue*, *The Cultures of Globalization*, Jameson&Miyoshi (eds.), (London: Duke University Press, 1998), 60

independent productions. Now, not even the multiplexes keep one screen out of their fifteen for the art crowd, unless it happens to be for a movie that has garnered a prize at Cannes, Venice, Berlin, or Rotterdam.”⁴⁷

The European solution to solve this practical impossibility of affording a national film industry is relying upon the cooperative mode of production in filmmaking. However, as Wayne argues pan-European ambitions and its institutionalized forces in cinema can be as limiting as a domineering nation state on the production of a critical discourse.⁴⁸

The drawback in the critical discourse in contemporary European cinema chiefly emanates from the fact that even an average medium budget film production in Europe needs so many different sources of cash and multiple stakeholders have diverse interests for investing in the project. Wayne analyzes the financial composition of a typical European co-production around the example of *The Disappearance of Finbar*. The story of the film is about the disappearance of Finbar from a housing estate in Ireland and the effect of this has on the community. Three years later a pop video is made about the disappearance of Finbar. Finbar calls his friend Danny to warn the community to forget about him. However, the phone call produces the opposite effect and Danny leaves for Sweden in search for Finbar. At the end his search leads him towards the deserted lands of Lapland.⁴⁹

Wayne argues both the story of the film and the way production developed is exemplary for a typical European co-production. The story travels through different geographies and social groups. From its script development stage to the production, the project was supported by different institutions to name a few: MEDIA program’s European Script Development Fund, Irish Film Board, Channel Four, Eurimages, Swedish Film Institute, TV2 (The main Danish Broadcaster) among many others. At

⁴⁷ Elsaesser, Thomas, *The Blockbuster*, *The End of Cinema as We Know It*, Lewis, Jon (ed.), (Pluto Press: London, 2001), 17

⁴⁸ Wayne, Mike, *The Politics of Contemporary European Cinema: Histories, Borders, and Diaspoars*, (Bristol: Intellect, 2002), 5

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 16

the end the production was realized with ten different sources of cash. The diverging interests of this high number of stakeholders in the production made many aspects of the film, like the use of Swedish language and including flashbacks in the narrative, matters of conflict between investors. Wayne states that such multiple voices, interests and pressures ended in the production of a confused Euro-pudding.⁵⁰ The critical tone in the original script has been cropped off as the result of the endless negotiations with different stakeholders. One example Wayne provides in this vein is the exclusion of a scene in which Danny talks with a Moroccan origin immigrant in a suburban area in Sweden. In the scene while the immigrant tells Danny that Swedish authorities have made him watch Ingmar Bergman films a white racist is shouting in the market square at the immigrants telling them they are not really Swedish. This scene was found too blunt and inconsistent with the “magical realist” tone of the film and it has to be dropped as a result of investor pressure.⁵¹

On the other hand, one should not consider the pressure of pan-European ideals reflected through diverging interests of multiple investors as a grip impossible to break. One counter example is Haneke’s *Code Unknown* which narrates multiple immigrant stories not necessarily based upon a coherent structure. The critical tone in the film and the way it questions the ideals of Europe from within and without is actually worth of mentioning. Even though it was also a co-production (French, German, Romanian) *Code Unknown* emerges as a recent example that achieves to present a striking critical view on the different communities in Europe. However, Wayne’s statement still preserves its validity. If we consider again Tomlinson’s criticism we can argue that the weakening of the critical discourse in European filmmaking makes the European cinema more vulnerable to the influence of Hollywood. Paradoxically as the European capital tries to create a pan-European culture that is “politically correct” in European terms, the critical discourse is wounded.

⁵⁰ Wayne, Mike, *The Politics of Contemporary European Cinema: Histories, Borders, and Diaspoars*, (Bristol: Intellect, 2002),17

⁵¹ Ibid., 16-18

So far I have discussed the European question of cinema in relation with the hegemony of Hollywood and contemporary dynamics shaping the political economy of filmmaking in Europe. In order to arrive a better understanding the significance of Dogma 95 manifesto I want to narrow down my scope and briefly discuss Danish cinema. Indeed, the recent success of Danish cinema can be considered as a small nation's successful attempt to gain visibility in the international arena. One may claim that Danish cinema was mobilized by a sense of nostalgia which was always present in European film movements. Before the Second World War the international film industry was more competitive and European cinemas could assert themselves against Hollywood. Same was valid for the Danish cinema in its early years. Danish cinema of the 90s was very far away from its golden-age past filled with the memories of Asta Nielsen's erotically charged performances and Dreyer's ground breaking films.⁵² In her work *Small Nation, Global Cinema* Hjört explains in extensive detail how Danish cinema has born again from its ashes. The formula of the success was a group of enthusiastic young directors led by Lars Von Trier and carefully managed state support to the film sector. Hjört argues the role of the state was crucial in building the success.

The success story of Danish cinema has started with individual successes at international film festivals. After a long period of stagnation Danish cinema got its first important international award with Lars Von Trier's *Element of Crime*. The film was awarded with the Prix Technique at Cannes in 1984 and Trier emerged as the new *enfant terrible* of European cinema. In 1988 Gabriel Axel's *Babette's Feast* enjoyed a surprising victory at the Oscars ceremony and won the Best Foreign film award. The consecutive year same Oscar has gone to another Danish director Billie August's film *Pelle the Conqueror*. Hjört observes that: "The fact of two Oscars in successive years was, however, the kind of statistically unimaginable and thus quasi-prophetic event that could truly galvanize an entire milieu and make it an irresistible magnet for new talent."⁵³ The Danish state responded promptly to the growing enthusiasm about

⁵² Hjört, Mette, *Small Nation Global Cinema*, (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2005), 1

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 5

cinema. The government introduced a new film act in 1997 that attempts to consolidate different film-related institutions under one roof: The Danish Film Institute. In line with the vision of building an effective national film culture, National Film School of Denmark has been restructured. Success of the English-language films produced by Danish directors –mainly by Trier- convinced the government to pass a new film act in 1989 that would allow state support for Danish productions that are not using Danish language. This de-nationalizing gesture paved the way for the other English-language Trier films like *Breaking the Waves*, *Dancer in the Dark* and *Dogville*. Providing financial support for the young film directors –even for their short film projects- and establishing a Nordic cultural alliance mainly based in Øresund region (comprising Copenhagen, Malmö and the rest of the Southern Sweden) were other strategies to support the film industry. Private sector also provided its support in the re-vitalization of the Danish film industry. The Talent Development Program realized with the collaboration of Danish Film Institute and the two main Danish TV stations DR and TV2, Lars Von Trier’s and Peter Aalbæk Jensen’s “Project Open Film Town” established in the former army barracks in a suburb region in Copenhagen are some examples of private sector support and initiatives.⁵⁴

The Danish story tells us the fact that achieving visibility for a national cinema is possible under contemporary conditions in filmmaking. Danish film industry could provide a sound answer to the European question on filmmaking through establishing a national cinema culture apart from the hegemony of Hollywood and the ambiguity of the European co-production logic. It is obvious that this positive environment helped the Dogma 95 manifesto to assert itself more clearly. The Danish success story can be considered as a possible resolution in the tension between globalization and national cultures debate. In line with Jameson’s arguments Danish state could effectively use its force to create a distinctive national cinema culture in the country. For that regard not only Dogma 95 manifesto but also New Danish cinema in general is strictly political. Hjört constructs her book on this argument and analyzes the political nature of Dogma 95 manifesto from the stand point of a small nation’s answer to globalization. I totally

⁵⁴ Hjört, Mette, *Small Nation Global Cinema*, (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2005), 6-19

agree with her statements and ideas however, I believe something was in excess in Dogma 95 program. Apart from benefiting from a carefully managed cultural policy and being a part of it, Dogma movement could achieve something more than a national success. The breadth and duration of its immediate effect on filmmaking in the global context can be a matter of discussion –and it will be discussed in several different contexts in the rest of my analysis- however, the possibilities Dogma 95 manifesto offers for imagining a new way of filmmaking exceeds the actuality of Dogma movement.

2.4. Dogma's Fabric, Lefebvre's Skeleton: A New Outfit for Cinema?

Although, it was not a rule mentioned in the manifesto the practical needs led the Dogma directors to use handheld digital cameras in their shootings. One obvious reason for this practice was the interpretation of the third rule in the manifesto: the camera must be handheld (it does not mention a digital one should be preferred). Using digital cameras which are cheap and available in everywhere seems like a very simple and plausible choice and one may not even think that it is worth to discuss. However, this simple choice has its important ramifications about the nature of the Dogma movement. Of course handheld cameras were utilized in filmmaking since the French New Wave; however in Dogma using the handheld digital camera becomes a matter of political economy of film. In French New Wave and in Cinema Verité the utilization of handheld cameras was more for aesthetic purposes and cameras were still the technical gears of filmmakers rather than readily available consumer products. However, as the digital technology developed camera became a product for everyday use, getting cheaper and more available everywhere. Use of handheld digital cameras definitely freed the director from the financial burden of filmmaking to a great extent.

At this point I want to question various ramifications of the use of handheld digital camera within the context of political economy. Not surprisingly, however, this question carries us to the shores of Marxist thought. In his analysis of capitalism Marx

distinguishes between the big bourgeoisie international in character, petty bourgeoisie destined to be proletarianized and proletariat who has nothing to offer than its labor power. The big bourgeoisie owns the means of production and develops them.⁵⁵ Marx starts his critique of capitalism from a thorough analysis of commodity. He states that the wealth in the capitalist societies comes into existence through the accumulation of commodities. Commodity is anything that satisfies human needs whether it springs from stomach or fancy makes no difference.⁵⁶ So from the “vulgar” Marxist point of view the film is also nothing but a commodity and Hollywood system represents the big bourgeoisie who own the means of production. Indeed this is not a very novel argument. The question waiting for an answer is whether the economic ramifications of digital camera technology can challenge the existing modes of production in cinema. And if it challenges it which ways?

From a Marxist point of view the use of handheld digital cameras can be considered as a challenge to the dominant mode of production in filmmaking. In the Marxist thought, mode of production is comprised of productive forces and social and technical relations of production. The use of digital handheld camera is apparently an attempt to transform the technical relations of production. Implications of this radical transformation are significant both for the filmmaker and the audience. The Dogma movement strategically utilized the economic ramifications of this technological advancement in order to offer an alternative to different modes of film production namely Hollywood mode of film production shaped by the imperatives of an oligopolistic industrial structure and its counter solution produced in Europe: the co-production logic. I will call these two modes of production in filmmaking as investment intensive ones. As I have discussed above the structural requirements of these investment intensive production strategies put certain limits on the critical discourse in cinema. In that regard one may argue that Dogma 95 manifesto raised an objection to

⁵⁵ Marx, Karl, *The Portable Karl Marx*, Kamenka, Eugene (ed.), (Penguin: New York, 1983), 432-465

⁵⁶ Ibid.

these structural constraints on cinema. Viability and general applicability of Dogma's challenge to the dominant modes of production in filmmaking will be analyzed further.

Now let's start with an analysis of the attack of Dogma in the means of production in filmmaking. It should be noted that this feature of the Dogma program is first and foremost concerned about economics of filmmaking. Hjört points out the significance of the issue:

“What is established is a counter-practice that significantly changes economic requirements for participation in the world of filmmaking. This counter practice was further reinforced when the Dogma brethren agreed, with a vote of three to one, that rule number 9 (which specifies that ‘The film format must be Academy 35mm) should be interpreted as a distribution rather than a production requirement. The resulting emphasis on digital video has clear economic implications.”⁵⁷

Dogma 95 manifesto aims the ultimate democratization of filmmaking as a social practice. The rules are designed to make possible for everyone to be able to participate in the activity of producing a film in a non-traditional sense. In an interview with Peter Rundle Trier suggested that:

“Mainly [the interpretation of rule 9] has made the process much cheaper which of course also pleases me. And it has led to a trend where people around the world have started making these cheap, cheap Dogme films... people who used to be limited by a notion of how a proper film should be... now feel that they can make films.”⁵⁸

One may argue that the international appeal of Dogma movement comes from this interpretation of the rule 9 in the manifesto. This interpretation and its ramifications are not arbitrary indeed. When we inspect the manifesto closer we see that this interpretation is almost inevitable. Rule 3 in the manifesto strictly requires the camera

⁵⁷ Hjört, Mette, *A Small Nation's Response to Globalisation, Purity and Provocation: Dogma 95*, Hjört&MacKenzie (eds), (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 39

⁵⁸ Rundle, Peter, *We are All Sinners*, (downloaded from http://www.dogme95.dk/news/interview/trier_interview2.htm, on June 16, 2007)

to be handheld⁵⁹ and as it is mentioned above rule 9 was put to ease the distribution and exhibition of the film. The only technical possibility to conform both rules is to shoot the film with a digital handheld camera and transfer it to the 35 mm film format because 35 mm cameras are simply not convenient for handheld use. This inevitable interpretation helped the production costs to lower down significantly. Another technical note is that the price 35 mm cameras are continuously decreasing after the emergence of digital cameras in the market. Purchasing a 35mm camera does not require skyrocketed budgets. However, the post production costs of producing a 35 mm film are so high that no low budget production can afford it and therefore technically it is the preferred format of the Hollywood production films. All these technical reasons and seemingly unimportant details led the Dogma filmmakers to change something very basic yet fundamental in filmmaking.

At this point I want to examine the implications of Dogma 95 manifesto's proposal for an arguably new political economy of cinema. I will remain within the context of a Marxist analysis bringing forward Lefebvre's arguments on space. Lefebvre's work can be considered as an elaboration of Marxist thought applied to matters of everyday life. During the time he spent in US he influenced to great extent Californian Marxist geographers and literary theorists who would popularize the concept "postmodernism" such as Frederic Jameson, Edward Soja and the critics of the idea like David Harvey.⁶⁰ The common consensus among these two poles was the importance of the spatial character of capitalism:

“...a capitalism that increasingly relied on long distance linkages and attenuated social relations ('distanciation'), bringing places together in one sense at the same time as compressing the time allotted for almost every task – a shift that Harvey tries to sum up in the phrase 'space-time compression.’”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Dogma 95 Manifesto, Appendix I

⁶⁰ Shields, Rob, *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics*, (Routledge: London, 1998), 142

⁶¹ Ibid., 143

Any argument based on the mode of production can be extended through Lefebvre's notion of space. Indeed, his ideas not only covers the economic base structure but also carries an insight about the relationship between global and the local in spatial terms.⁶² Relying upon Kahraman's observations I consider the relation between Hollywood, European cinema and Dogma movement as inherently political since these set of relations are very much bound up to the dialectic between the global and the local. Furthermore, the developments in the digital camera technology carried the act of recording, sharing and exhibiting moving images into the realm of everyday culture. In that regard Lefebvre's elaboration of Marxist thought on the issues of everyday culture promises a new insight to my study.

First of all I want to question whether cinema and the Lefebvre's concept of space can be considered together. Lefebvre's own work does not provide an explicit answer to this question. Indeed, the word "cinema" is mentioned only once in Lefebvre's book and this mentioning is referential rather than analytical. In order to justify the idea that cinema operates in a social space and it creates its own linkages and relations within this space I want to start from Lefebvre's criticism of the discourse on space. Lefebvre is critical about the over usage of the term space in theoretical practice. Indeed, in his book he takes an overly manipulated and abused term and puts it into a more organized and defined framework. He argues that the over manipulation and abuse of the term space is part of a certain theoretical practice. This practice attempts to create a *mental space* in which epistemology is divorced from the social and the result is the production of an extra-ideological discourse.⁶³ He clarifies this argument as:

"In an inevitably circular manner, this mental space then becomes the locus of a 'theoretical practice' which is separated from social practice and sets itself up as the axis, pivot or central reference point to knowledge."⁶⁴

⁶² Shields, Rob, *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics*, (Routledge: London, 1998),

⁶³ Lefebvre, Henri, *Production of Space*, (Blackwell: Massachusetts, 1991), 6

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 6

Against this pure epistemological mental space, Lefebvre offers a thorough analysis of space based on a Marxist understanding. He argues no space can be considered divorced from the social practice and that “every society – and hence every mode of production with its subvariants (i.e. all those societies which exemplify the general concept- produces a space, its own space.”⁶⁵ In line with Lefebvre’s thoughts I want to use the term space regarding its social implications. One may be tempted to discuss Dogma filmmaking within a mental space of which Lefebvre is critical about. However, such an approach may misdirect us and lead the analysis to undermine the political stance of Dogma 95 manifesto. Indeed, Dogma movement has been criticized as being apolitical on several accounts. Hjört sets her detailed study on Dogma against this misconception. She summarizes her intention in the analysis as:

“My own reading of the deeper aims behind Dogma 95 involves taking issue with a common misapprehension of the movement as profoundly apolitical. What commentators have systematically overlooked, I argue, is the connection between Dogma 95 and small nationhood, which is where the politics of Dogma lie. My claim, in brief, is that the rules imposed by Dogma 95 amounts to a novel and insightful response to the inequities of globalizing process.”⁶⁶

In complete agreement with Hjört in this chapter, I intend to extend her ideas within a Marxist framework. Before explaining on which spatial relations Dogma 95 manifesto positions itself I want to assert the distinctive position of Dogma movement among other film movements occurred in Europe. This comparison would provide an insight to us about the uses of auteur concept within the context of political economy of film.

I argue that Dogma movement’s distinctive position among the other European film movements in post 60s period comes from two reasons. First of all it directly attacks to the means of production upon which the spatial relations of Hollywood film industry and European co-production system are built. This attack creates an excess

⁶⁵ Lefebvre, Henri, *Production of Space*, (Blackwell: Massachusetts, 1991), 31

⁶⁶ Hjört, Mette, *A Small Nation’s Response to Globalisation, Purity and Provocation: Dogma 95*, Hjört&MacKenzie (eds), (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 31

force in several dimensions. First of all it escapes from the imperatives of investment intensive modes of production in filmmaking. Both of these modes of production strategies undermine the critical capability of filmmaking in different ways. While Hollywood mode of production excludes the other strategies of filmmaking through raising the budget of film production to an impossible amount, European co-production system excludes the critical discourse by turning film production to an endless zero-sum game of negotiations between multiple investors and the filmmaker. Dogma movement's attack aimed to redefine filmmaking as a social practice freed from these pressures. This has created the wide ranging impact of Dogma in the cultural arena at international level. As I have mentioned at the beginning of my thesis Dogma concept circulated in many diverse areas from theatre, dance, computer programming and business. This wide ranged influence and adaptability of the Dogma concept proves the fact that Dogma 95 manifesto was dealing with something very fundamental about the mechanism of production. Secondly, although Dogma 95 movement was also considered as an important project to promote the national culture by the Danish government and financially supported both by the private and public monies, it did not remain local but obtained a considerable degree of international appeal. Of course other national film movements in Europe were also influential outside their borders like Italian Neo-Realism, French New Wave and New German cinema however; Dogma movement could develop a mechanism of which foreign filmmakers can take part.

In order to stress the distinctive feature of Dogma 95 manifesto I want to compare it with Oberhausen manifesto written by twenty-six young German filmmakers in 1962. Both manifestos were concerned about the economics of filmmaking however, their ramifications are significantly different. This comparison will also give us a deeper insight about why the old solutions are not viable anymore to deal with the hegemony of Hollywood. After the war Hollywood had established a complete hegemony in the German film market. This hegemony was indeed legitimized with the motto of educating the bad Nazis and teaching them democracy. All the remnants of Nazi film industry which had been centralized and state-controlled through a giant

conglomerate UFA was demolished by the Allies.⁶⁷ Under the favorable political circumstances American film companies could get the privilege of directly transferring their profits back to the US. There remained little incentive to invest in West German film productions. Under these conditions *Oberhausen Manifesto* emerged as a rescue action for the West German cinema.⁶⁸ After long debates and public discussions the government was persuaded to establish the *Kuratorium Junger Deutsch Film* (Commission for the Young German Film) in the early 1965.⁶⁹ Although most of the films that are made by signatories of the manifesto and supported by the Kuratorium enjoyed a short lived success; Oberhausen manifesto could persuade the government to provide sustained state subsidy for cinema in the long run. The effective state subsidy system gave its fruits in the following years. By the early 80's the spectacular examples of German cinema produced since the 60s began to be discussed under the unifying title of New German cinema with positive critical acclaim. However, the films constituted the New German cinema are much diverse; one common denominator for many important films adhered to the movement is their bitter taste for recent history. Films like Kluge's *Yesterday Girl*, Fassbinder's *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, Schlöndorff's *Tin Drum* and these directors' collective film with Reitz *Germany in Autumn* questioned the recent history of Germany with a sober critical view. With these films, which could not be realized without state support, Germany proved to be a democratic nation unafraid from facing with its past. Therefore, through translating its own story of democratization into film Germany could reassert its role in film production after long years of unquestionable dominance of Hollywood in the homeland.

If we examine the history of German cinema more closely we can deduce that it has evolved from a more escapist cinema occurred in aftermath of the war to a more contemplative and artistically inspiring cinema coincided with the restoration of

⁶⁷ Nelmes, Jill (ed.), *An Introduction to Film Studies*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 454

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Thompson & Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994), 535

Germany. After the war, as a consequence of the lack of investment in cinema, films had to be produced with very low budgets. Demolishing of the remnants of the Nazi film industry and Hollywood's unchecked power over the market helped the American film to establish a complete hegemony. Financial difficulties made the German films unable compete with large budget Hollywood spectacles therefore filmmakers turned their face to the local audience and their film production was mostly consisted of *Heimatfilme* which can be translated as 'homeland films'. *Heimatfilme* was mostly comprised of dramas depicting simple country life in rural Germany, adventure films based on popular German novels, historical films set in imperial Austria, together with romantic adventures and comedies set in picturesque locations.⁷⁰ These films were far from being relevant with the current political situation in Germany. The escapism of these films became popular in mid 50s among Germans who are eager to forget their bitter recent history. Oberhausen Manifesto emerged as a rescue action for German cinema under these circumstances. It did not offer a complete and detailed program however, its signatories were conscious of the fact that the main reason for the decadence of the German cinema was the lack of investment. The films produced after the spur manifesto has created were called *Rucksackfilme* (backpack films) which are mostly relied upon the shock of novelty. Thompson & Bordwell describes these low-budget films as: "They depicted contemporary Germany as a land of broken marriages, soured affairs, rebellious youth, and casual sex. They suggested that the legacy of Nazism lingered into present."⁷¹ The respectable examples of New German cinema such as *Yesterday Girl* has taken the atmosphere of the *Rucksackfilme* and turned into films with a higher literary and visual quality. Therefore the pathway from *Heimatfilme* to *Rucksackfilme* can be considered as the transformation from the popular to art cinema. The crucial link here was Oberhausen manifesto and the sustained state support for the film industry it has incited.

⁷⁰ Nelmes, Jill (ed.), *An Introduction to Film Studies*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 455

⁷¹ Thompson & Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994), 535

The conditions within which Oberhausen manifesto and Dogma 95 manifestos have been written were not similar of course. Although, Danish cinema has already developed a state subsidy system for cinema in the 90s and was enjoying several individual international successes, it was far from determining the agenda of filmmaking at international level. The success of Dogma 95 project was a result of careful cultural policy and the international appeal of Lars von Trier as the *enfant terrible* of the European cinema. Therefore conditions for the contemporary Danish cinema were much better than German cinema in the 60s. However, their emphasis on the economics of filmmaking make these two manifestos comparable, they signify different strategies of achieving visibility. While Oberhausen manifesto became the incentive for creating an art cinema absorbed in the issues of nation and nationality, Dogma 95 manifesto rapidly infused beyond the borders of Denmark.

The legacy of the German art cinema was relied upon to a great extent the highly regarded auteurs like Fassbinder, Schlöndorff and Herzog each having their unique styles. Even though the idea of auteur considered strictly related with film aesthetics I want to discuss it within the context of political economy. In this vein I will provide a brief analysis of contemporary French cinema and position of the auteur. Danan examines the strategies of French cinema to cope with globalization. Alongside with the traditional state support policies, like the Danish government France has also eased its state support policy for English-language French films. France is the only country who can support films that has a claim to compete with Hollywood blockbusters. However, Danan argues that the “Frenchness” of these movies like *The Fifth Element*, do not go beyond superficial and stereotypical images. Alongside these post-national productions (as Danan terms it), French state also supports the auteur films which are branded for their complexity and intellectual depth. French cultural policy aims at to promote the art film against the standardizing effect of globalization. This two sided audiovisual policy indicates French state’s desire to promote a heterogeneous film culture.⁷² Within this strategy the auteur signature is nothing more than a constituent of

⁷² Danan, Martine, *French Cinema in the Era of Media Capitalism*, Media, Culture & Society, Vol. 22: 355-364, (London: SAGE publications, 2000), 355-359

audiovisual policy of French state. Danan argues promotion of the auteur cinema and exporting it to a highly elite niche market is part of France's "diplomatic arsenal" to support French nation's struggle for political rights and recognition in the world economy.⁷³ It is interesting to note that how the auteur cinema with ideas of intellectual independence and individual creativity attached to it absorbed by national cultural policies and put into the service of the nation state. Defending the auteur cinema in European context does not mean to defend the unlimited critical capability of filmmaking now. The auteur carries the role of promoting the national culture and the right to assert one's opposition against the standardizing effect of globalization. This position also carries a capacity to produce a critical discourse; however Dogma 95 manifesto puts the stakes higher.

The strategies of different European countries to deal with the hegemony of Hollywood shows the fact that Europeans take the issue fundamentally as a problem of culture. Even though it is productive and it will continue to be productive this approach has its own limitations. One may criticize this way of looking to the problem of cinema as misaddressing the real problem which is fundamentally economic as Jameson has stated.⁷⁴ The possibility of regarding the question of cinema from a strictly economic point of view within a general framework of culture is of course a question of ideology and this question well transgresses the boundaries of this thesis. However, the production of culture always carries the possibility of questioning and transgressing the boundaries of imperatives put on society by capitalism and cinema is no exception. We know that cinema can problematize capitalist structures and imperatives; it already did through different forms and understandings. Constantly monitoring and flourishing the critical capacity of cinema is a necessity since the strength of any critical discourse is doomed to wane in the long run. The co-production system is one answer found in Europe to compete with Hollywood mode of production; and one may argue that this

⁷³ Danan, Martine, *French Cinema in the Era of Media Capitalism*, Media, Culture & Society, Vol. 22: 355-364, (London: SAGE publications, 2000)361

⁷⁴ Jameson, Frederic, Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue, *The Cultures of Globalization*, Jameson&Miyoshi (eds.), (London: Duke University Press, 1998), 60

strategy directly targets the economics of filmmaking. However, the negotiations between investors and the filmmakers generally undermine the critical stance of the end product. The auteur understanding in cinema, once upon a time the guarantee for the originality and individual expression of creativity of the film is now part of national culture policies in Europe. Therefore, if the limitations of these two solutions in operation are considered to make a critical cinema in European context is harder than ever. Dogma 95 is indeed against to these closures in European cinema. Its counter stance against auteur understanding in cinema and French New Wave is explicitly stated. The manifesto accuses the French New Wave which clearly defended an anti-bourgeois stance, as being bourgeois now. To note -Danan states in his analysis- that the highly controversial and critical French films of 60s are now luxury products demanded by a small, highly educated and affluent elite.⁷⁵ So even Danes were blunt, they were right to a certain extent.

The art cinema of Europe presented itself as the more complex, more intellectual and more resistant to popularity, this image is now being exported through different venues and export of the art film is part of a nation's cultural policy. Cinema among other areas of culture is a matter of protection for Europe for a long time. In a way European cinema closed itself within a Euro-centric space within which concern for the national culture and dissemination of it is the main concern. Within this framework Dogma movement could transgress the economic imperatives of the Hollywood mode of production and Euro-centric space of the art cinema. Another important point is that apart from being political through taking its side in the globalization versus national culture debate Dogma program is ideological at the last resort. It was proposing and ideal for filmmaking that is based upon new social links and relationships which has its own inclusion and exclusion mechanisms.

Now we can analyze Hollywood, European cinema and the distinctive position of Dogma 95 manifesto altogether. As I have stated above Lefebvre's framework is most suitable for such a demanding analysis. Indeed, providing a full comparison

⁷⁵ Danan, Martine, *French Cinema in the Era of Media Capitalism*, Media, Culture & Society, Vol. 22: 355-364, (London: SAGE publications, 2000), 362

within the framework Lefebvre offers, transgresses the limits and aim of this thesis, however I aim to widen scope of the debate on Dogma with my remarks. Expectantly, these remarks will conclude my arguments and incite new ones.

Bringing forward the ideas of Lefebvre on space in a discussion of Dogma 95 movement is fruitful in several respects. It is not very productive to analyze Dogma 95 movement merely within the context of film aesthetics. Most Dogma films are apparently badly produced and cinematographically very weak. After the enthusiasm the first few Dogma films have created the movement has went under an apparent decline with few exceptions like *Italian for Beginners* and *Open Hearts*. This feature of the Dogma films should be considered as a part of the movement's nature-and paradoxically as part of its aesthetics. As it is indicated in the manifesto every attempt to achieve a personal style is strictly banned. At the end of the manifesto the signatories even denies being an artist and swears to undermine any aesthetic considerations. Even though this manner is by definition paradoxical and at the last resort impossible, it is apparent that Dogma 95 considers filmmaking as a social practice as well as by definition, while it is officially denied by the signatories, it is an aesthetic endeavor. It is apparent that Dogma 95 manifesto offers an alternative way of filmmaking. Consequently this is where I discuss filmmaking as a social practice. The question remains: how it creates its own linkages and on which spatial relations it operates.

Film is not just the relationship between the spectator with its audience and the dynamics of desire circulating within this relationship. If the Hollywood is concerned the dynamics of desire is represented with the micro links the film establishes with its spectator. However, as I have stated above these micro links are inextricably related with the macro industrial relations, synergy and advertisement strategies followed by Hollywood. Lefebvre's discussion on space can encompass both of these levels and carry our discussion around the well defined concept of space. He bases his whole work on a conceptual triad to which he continually references and discusses throughout the analysis: spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces.⁷⁶ This

⁷⁶ Lefebvre, Henri, *Production of Space*, (Blackwell: Massachusetts, 1991), 38-39

framework and the forking of these concepts can be considered as the skeleton of Lefebvre's book. Indeed, I will try to put my arguments and analysis on this skeleton in order to conclude my comparative analysis. When we consider cinema within this conceptual triad we can find new ways to evaluate cinema evolving within a dynamic social structure. One may argue that cinema touches upon all three parts of the conceptual triad Lefebvre has put forward. It takes an active role in producing the spatial practice, and it both represents and represented by the social space.

Filmmaking is definitely a spatial practice since it results in the production of a work being realized and viewed in a definite space. In the case of Hollywood this spatial practice extends the borders of the national film sector and connects different geographies as the logic of international capital requires. Furthermore through synergy strategy Hollywood widens the experience of film viewing and turns it into a continuous memorable event. Every blockbuster creates representations of its own space to be remembered. The shrimp restaurant chains opened after *Forrest Gump*, beaches filled with *Jaws* themed bathing suits, towels and inflatable sharks, and sections in toy stores and gift shops dedicated to *Jurassic Park* are some examples of concrete spaces in which the experience of watching a blockbuster is solidified. In those spaces these whole web of macro and micro relations are immediately visible. Lefebvre argues that: "from the analytical standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space."⁷⁷ The spaces I have mentioned so far gives us the opportunity to decipher the relations film establishes with the society and contemplate on the nature of film operating under the imperatives of capitalism.

The spatial relations of filmmaking necessitate representations of space which are in their nature certainly abstract and can be considered as the possibilities of the extension of the film space itself. Lefebvre considers the representations of space as the dominant space in any society (or mode of production).⁷⁸ Lefebvre finds the relation between representations of space and representational spaces as a curious one. He argues

⁷⁷ Lefebvre, Henri, *Production of Space*, (Blackwell: Massachusetts, 1991), 38

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 139

the link can be a culture and the work of artistic creation. The film as art is definitely the representational space.⁷⁹ In the spatial practice of neocapitalism, representations of space facilitate the manipulation of representational spaces. This framework indeed, gives us the classical Marxist grip on culture if Hollywood is concerned. However, it would help us to decipher the invisible mechanisms through which Hollywood leaks into our everyday lives. The scope of this thesis is not enough to discover these invisible relations; however Lefebvre's insight can at least show the influence of Hollywood on our daily lives is always more than we think.

Despite that- Dogma 95 manifesto's apparent lack of seriousness and seemingly arbitrary choice of using handheld digital cameras in all Dogma productions, Dogma kicks off from a total negation of Hollywood through an ironic way. One cannot argue that this pure opposition was systematic at the beginning but the supposed abstention from the investment intensive modes of production in cinema that makes Hollywood and European cinema as it is today consequently led the Dogma directors to follow an unwritten law namely using handheld cameras in production. The technical necessities that led the Dogma filmmakers have been explained above. At this point one should interpret the use of hand held camera in Dogma films as an attack to the filmmaking strategies upon which Hollywood and its European rivals construct themselves. Through this unwritten rule Dogma attempts to attack the economic imperatives that determine the visual ideology of Hollywood and Euro-centric space of European co-productions.

What are the elements of Dogma "style" filmmaking as a social practice then? First, of all as I have mentioned earlier even though it is not explicitly stated in the manifesto Dogma filmmakers consistently use readily available digital handheld cameras. This is a clear attempt to transform the means of production in cinema. A comparison of this practice with Hollywood mode of production helps us to reconsider filmmaking as a social practice with issues of hegemony and inequality attached to it. I consider Hollywood not only as the hegemonic power in the global film industry but also as the most successful example the other cinemas try to emulate. Dogma 95

⁷⁹ Lefebvre, Henri, *Production of Space*, (Blackwell: Massachusetts, 1991), 43

manifesto is apparently defiant about this impossible project. Dogma filmmaking operates in a more inclusive and democratic social space than Hollywood mode of film production does. The inclusive and democratic approach of Dogma 95 manifesto even defies the auteur understanding in cinema which has turned into a tool for promoting the national cultures in Europe. Dogma 95 manifesto seems as the most consolidated and direct attack to the hegemony of Hollywood within the current context of European cinema. Indeed, through rejecting the existing solutions so far tried the manifesto attempts to create new spatial practices for filmmaking. Lefebvre argues examination of the transitions between modes of production will reveal that a fresh space is indeed generated during such changes, a space which is planned and organized subsequently.⁸⁰ Dogma 95 manifesto attempts to make this transition and create a fresh space for filmmaking.

In sum, I argue that Hollywood cinema, European art cinema and Dogma movement operates in different social spaces. With this operation I mean the linkages and relations these different cinemas establish with their audience and the means of film production. Through the macro links Hollywood extends through different geographies and different clusters of culture very easily and rapidly. The willingness of the international community to be situated within these spatial relations as the producer, audience or the critic creates the hegemony of Hollywood with which any national cinema has to tackle with in order to exist.

The readily available European solutions can tackle the problem from the perspective of protecting of the national culture. This protectionist stance has its own limitations and at the last resort the critical capability of European cinema is constantly deteriorating. Although, the discourses attached to auteur cinema and co-production logic still promotes individual creativity combined with multiplicity, their legacy are questionable. These two approaches that are tried to be used together in the current European filmmaking context are indeed, incompatible. And the future for the European cinema does not seem rosy. Through attacking the exclusion mechanisms of Hollywood and European cinema Dogma 95 attempts to widen the scope of filmmaking

⁸⁰ Lefebvre, Henri, *Production of Space*, (Blackwell: Massachusetts, 1991), 47

as a social practice. The viability of this utopian understanding of cinema is of course questionable. However, what is positive is Dogma 95 manifesto helps us to re-imagine new possibilities that we are afraid of.

CHAPTER 3

Dogma Frame

3.1. Althusser's Break

In this chapter my main aim is to analyze the constituents of Dogma frame. I use the term Dogma frame to refer the frame proposed by the Dogma 95 manifesto. It does not reference to an actualized one or a particular frame in a Dogma film. It is rather a conceptual category within which the aesthetics proposed by the Dogma 95 manifesto can be analyzed. In that regard I need a theoretical break from my previous analysis. Although, Lefebvre's discussion enables us to see the link between filmmaking and different spatial structures upon which Hollywood cinema, European cinema and Dogma program operates; this discourse is certainly limited with the traditional Marxist grip on culture. Lefebvre's framework is apparently not helpful in transgressing this theoretical cluster and reaching to a robust understanding of the Dogma frame. Although, highlighting the notion of social space helps us to consider how different mode of production systems create their own spatial relations, in order to determine the operation of these spatial relations in the realm of aesthetics one should ask the question Althusser was curious about:

“It is interesting to recall that Louis Althusser had begun ‘to wonder whether art should or should not be ranked as such among ideologies, to be precise, whether art and ideology are one and the same thing.’ Thankfully, he concludes that ‘I do not rank real art among the ideologies’ although art does have a quite particular and specific relation with ideology.”⁸¹

⁸¹ Munck, Ronaldo, *Marx@2000*, (New York: MacMillan Press, 2000), 100

In the short letter he wrote to André Raspre, Althusser pointed out the possibility of thinking art out of the establish dichotomy of ideology/science in the Marxist thought. So far I tried to place cinema in general and Dogma 95 manifesto in particular within the context of the *science of space* as Lefebvre puts it. However, Althusser's questioning would help us to consider the aesthetics of Dogma without undermining its ideological stance. In his letter Althusser states that:

“When we speak of ideology we should know that ideology slides into all human activity, that it is identical with the ‘lived’ experience of human existence itself: that is why the form in which we are ‘made to see’ ideology in great novels has as its content the ‘lived’ experience of individuals. This ‘lived’ experience is not a given, given by a pure ‘reality’, but the spontaneous ‘lived experience’ of ideology in its peculiar relationship to the real.”⁸²

Althusser's emphasis on the relationship with the lived experience and the real is significant within the context of Dogma movement. The concept of lived experience cannot be thought divorced from the notions of temporality and performance. I believe Dogma frame establishes a special relationship with both of these notions. At the last resort Dogma frame has a claim in the authenticity of the image. It is clearly stated in the manifesto that: “My supreme goal is to force the truth out of my characters and settings. I swear to do so by all means available and at the cost of any good taste and any aesthetic.”⁸³ This claim in truth is not novel of course and the genesis of it –if we confine ourselves to the history of cinema- can be found in many movements and works of directors like Dziga Vertov's *Kino Pravda* and Italian Neo Realism. I will not take this claim as a given and question whether Dogma frame can force the truth out of the filmic space. I consider this claim as a trajectory upon which Dogma frame construct itself. I'll approach the ramifications of this claim from two perspectives. The first is the relation of Dogma with the digitally manipulated image and the second is Dogma's relation with performance. In this chapter my main aim is to analyze the constituents of Dogma frame. Therefore, the concept of Dogma frame will be both my object of analysis and my guide in drawing the theoretical path I will follow.

⁸² Althusser, Louis, A Letter on Art, (Downloaded from <http://courses.essex.ac.uk/LT/LT204/althusser.htm>, on June 25, 2007)

⁸³ Dogma 95 Manifesto, Appendix 1

3.2. Reading the digital image, reading the film with the digital...

Dogma 95 manifesto's disdain for the digitally manipulated image can be thought within the context of its opposition against Hollywood. Although, any filmmaker can use digitally manipulated image, the required human resources and technology for successfully integrating the digitally manipulated image into a mainstream commercial film is definitely under the control of Hollywood. Now let's remember the famous meetings of Forrest with former US presidents to understand the way *Forrest Gump* interacts with the collective memory. With the aid of the computer generated imagery we see Forrest together with John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon in several scenes of the film. These carefully produced scenes which have no referent in real life contribute to the "alternative" history of United States the film narrates. These scenes which have created great enthusiasm raise salient questions on the relationship between the photographic image and its real life referent.

The use of digitally generated imagery poses still unresolved problems to the film theoretician. Prince argues that these difficulties arise from the assumptions about realism in film theory which are commonly tied to the concepts of indexicality prevailing between the photographic image and its referent.⁸⁴ He explains this understanding of film realism as such:

"This approach to film realism – and it is, perhaps, the most basic theoretical understanding of film realism – is rooted in the view that photographic images, unlike paintings or line drawings, are indexical signs: they are casually or existentially connected to their referents."⁸⁵

The indexicality of photographic image is a strongly defended assumption that constitutes the basis for the works of the film theorists defending realism. Both in André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer the relation between the photograph and its referent in real life is a direct one.

⁸⁴ Prince, Stephen, True Lies: Perceptual Realism, digital images and film theory, *The Film Cultures Reader*, Turner, Graeme (ed.), (Routledge, New York, 2002), 115

⁸⁵ Ibid.,116-117

In the introduction of his much acclaimed book *What is Cinema* André Bazin discusses the ontology of photographic image. In this short text Bazin reevaluates the history of visuality in the Western culture considering the notion of preservation. He claims that psychoanalysis of plastic arts would reveal mummification of the dead would be the underlying factor of its creation. Therefore, the history of visuality continuously evolved through the aim of capturing the outside reality within the image. From that perspective he accuses any attempt to achieve the illusion of reality i.e. perspective in painting as a sin. Alongside he regards the history of painting as the gradual discovery of its limitations. Bazin praises Picasso and the Cubists for resolving the crisis in painting through renouncing their claim in reality. For him any kind of human intervention ultimately distorts the image. The power of photography emanates from its exclusion of the human element from the image.⁸⁶

“The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space which govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it is the model.”⁸⁷

Even when he is analyzing the surrealist photography Bazin does not stray from his main thesis. He explains the interest of surrealists in photography with their attempt to blur the line between the image and the object. In that regard the image becomes the object and the object becomes its image. He arguably states that the direct relation between the photograph and its real life referent is preserved in the works of surrealists. In this view of the history of visuality in the Western culture photography is a culmination point at which time is mummified. For Bazin cinema which has been created through putting photographs in sequence with equal time intervals becomes the objectivity of time itself.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Bazin, André, *Sinema Nedir?*, (İzduşüm Yayınları, İstanbul: 2000), 15-18

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 19

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 20-21

If we consider the Dogma frame under the light of these arguments we can see that Dogma 95 manifesto is attached to Bazin's idea of the indexicality of image to a great extent. No matter how fuzzy, how blurred or unfocused the Dogma frame never ceases to be the model of its real life referent. This is true as long as we leave Dogma's claim in authenticity and disdain for the film as illusion unquestioned. However, I believe the main discussion on Dogma frame can begin only if we question these claims and determine what was excess in Dogma frame-or what was in shortage. One crucial argument is the Dogma frame's relation with temporality. Bazin's account would never give us any insight about the question of temporality in filmic image since he considers photography as the mummification of time and he does not see a main ontological difference between photography and film. His lack of an understanding of temporality in filmic image has began to be questioned in the film theory and this questioning will be one of the departure points through which I will attempt to analyze the Dogma frame. Now let's continue to interrogate the theoretical roots of indexicality of photographic image with Kracauer.

Kracauer is not at odds with Bazin when the indexicality of photographic image is concerned. He constructs a more detailed argument on photography stating that the medium was always captivated in the tension between realism and formalism.⁸⁹ According to Kracauer the question whether photography captures reality in its pure objective sense or it intentionally or unintentionally transforms it for the sake of art was the main axis around which debate on photography was made. He argues that these two tendencies: realism and formalism are not necessarily at odds when photography is concerned. The formative tendency helps to fulfill the realistic aspirations in a way that it includes the selectivity of the photographer. Although, this selectivity is considered as weak compared to the total creative freedom that the other traditional art forms supposed to possess, Kracauer thinks it's not right:

“Yet much as the concept of art or creativity behind these statements applies to the traditional arts, it fails to do justice to the high degree of selectivity of which

⁸⁹ Kracauer, Siegfried, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1997), 11-12

photographic records are susceptible. To be more precise, it overshadows the photographer's peculiar and truly formative effort to represent significant aspects of physical reality without trying to overwhelm that reality – so that the raw material focused upon is both left intact and made transparent.”⁹⁰

Kracauer resolves the tension between the objective nature of the medium and human intervention through shifting the focus from the photography itself to the act of photographer. In his view the human element does not undermine the indexical relation between the photograph and its real life referent. On the contrary selectivity of the photographer enhances the quality of this indexical relationship since the photographer is supposed to highlight the significant aspects of physical reality in his/her work. Kracauer considers cinema as the extension of photography. In that regard he sees cinema as the redemption of the physical reality as the title of his book suggests.

Indeed, Kracauer's theory is more explanatory when the nature of Dogma frame is concerned. By underlining the act of photographer in the creation of the photographic image Kracauer embraces the performative quality of photography. Also within the Dogma frame the performative act of the camera is crucial and determining. However, the relation between the performative act of the camera and the claim in the indexicality of the frame is much more complex than Kracauer offers us. Kracauer considers a fixed and unquestionably reciprocal relation between the photograph and its object. One may argue that although, he brings the idea of performativity forward he undermines the effect of performative act on the image. Therefore what Kracauer reminds us is the performative nature of the recording device. The operation of this performativity will be analyzed within a broader context in the rest of this chapter.

Prince argues that classical film theory which is based on the assumption of the indexicality of photographic image is unable to answer the questions posed by the digitally created imagery which can be subject to infinite number of manipulations. In digitally created imagery even the mechanical resemblance to the referent is not a limit. Images generated by computers can joyously shift between existing or non-existing real

⁹⁰ Kracauer, Siegfried, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1997), 23

life referents. The only bound they have is the limits of the complex algorithms they are subject to.⁹¹ Indeed, defiance of the digital manipulation in Dogma frame helps us to consider it within the context of classical film theory. Therefore, on the surface we do not need Prince's interrogations about a new theory of the frame which can embrace the operation of the digital. It is true that Bazin's and Kracauer's theories of film can be starting points for an analysis of the Dogma frame. However, as I have stated above Dogma frame is always in excess to the indexicality of the photographic image. Its relation with temporality, namely its problematic relation with the present tense of filmmaking and its reliance upon the performative act of camera exceeds the deterministic approach in Bazin's and Kracauer's theories.

What does contemporary theory suggest then? Although, the discourse of psychoanalysis and semiotics on film theory broke down the direct relation between the image and its real life referent through suggesting that image is always coded, they preserve the dichotomy between recording and reorganizing the filmic reality. Prince argues that contemporary film theory also preserves the dichotomy between realism and formalism in its own terms.⁹² At this point what we need is a new ontology of the photographic and filmic image. This new ontology ultimately necessitates a shift of focus in theory. Prince suggests that rather than taking the relation between the image and its correspondent referent as the basis, perception should be placed at the center of film theory.

One point should be reminded here of course. The use of digital imagery is not under the monopoly of Hollywood it is of course a world wide phenomenon now in creating moving images. However, it should be noted that the use of digitally generated imagery is an indispensable part of the visual ideology of Hollywood today. Not only just because of aesthetic choices but also from financial restraints. It is obvious that with its huge financial power Hollywood can attract the human resources and

⁹¹ Prince, Stephen, True Lies: Perceptual Realism, digital images and film theory, *The Film Cultures Reader*, Turner, Graeme (ed.), (Routledge, New York, 2002), 118

⁹² *Ibid.*, 120-121

technological novelties required to produce high quality films with digitally manipulated images. Therefore, this issue has also its links with the political economy of filmmaking.

Computer generated imagery is now prevalent in any big blockbuster production now and a more consolidated and generally accepted theory should be developed to explain this phenomenon. This theory should consider the realism in film not only as a matter of reference but also as a matter of perception. Prince use the term “perceptual realism” to name this possible theoretical move. The theory of perceptual realism deals with the following fundamental question: under which conditions we think the image is more legible and loyal to the lived experience? From such a point of view the analyst would have the opportunity to analyze the visual effects created by computer tricks and the visual strategies through which a claim on the authenticity of the image is stated on the same theoretical plane. In other words, Prince’s suggestion of a new film theory putting perceptual reality in its center does not exclude Dogma, although Dogma 95 manifesto excludes digitally manipulated image. The assumption of this new theory would be this: establishing a direct reference to the lived experience with the image is already impossible. Within that context analyzing the claim in realism in Dogma frame from the viewpoint of perception offers us new possibilities to re-consider the ontology of the raw digital image.

When we look at an image and say that this image is closer to reality it does not necessarily mean that the image in question and the supposed reality has a direct link which can be proven. We say so because we *think* that way. We *think* that the image is closer to reality; we *think* that the supposed link between the image and reality is a direct one. In saying that the image is closer to reality we also assume a quantifiable relation between the image and its real life referent. This image is closer to reality, but that one is even closer... Such judgments are based on accepted arbitrary categories. Therefore, the question is not whether we are right or wrong in our claim about the degree of referentiality between the image and its real life referent. The question should be why we think in that way. Why do we think the link between the image and its real life referent has a/ny relation that can be quantified? One may argue that the

enthusiastic philosophical project of Deleuze contains the possibility of carving out a new film theory taking perception and thought at its center. Maybe this new film theory will replicate a now common wisdom in philosophy: this is not a pipe, this is a film about the pipe. We don't know yet.

In the second volume of his work Deleuze presumes a dynamic relation between cinema, brain, body and thought. Deleuze starts with stating that body is not an obstacle for the way of thinking. On the contrary it is the locus of the thinking activity. "It forces us to think, it forces us to think what is concealed from thought, and it forces us to think about life."⁹³ In that vein life cannot be bound with the categories of thought, but thought should be thrown into the categories of life.

"To think is to learn what a non-thinking body is capable of, its capacity, and its postures. It is through the body (and no longer through the intermediary of the body) that cinema forms its alliance with the spirit, with thought. 'Give me a body' then is first to mount the camera on the everyday body."⁹⁴

After these remarks Deleuze searches for the capabilities of body articulated through its attitudes and postures in cinema. The body with its all available articulations becomes the locus of the time-image for Deleuze. Body expresses waiting, fatigue, tiredness, vertigo and depression. For Deleuze with its capabilities of theatricality even surpassing the theatre, the body in film carries the heaviness of time.⁹⁵

Indeed, Deleuze sets a trajectory in this part of his work and he employs this trajectory to deepen his discussion about the time-image in cinema. However, the shift Deleuze proposes in regarding body, thought and cinema together may also lead us to arrive a new understanding in realism in film. If the body is the center for all activity of thought, or let's say criticism, than Prince is right in claiming that the encompassing theory of film should take the perception at its center but not the categories of thought.

⁹³ Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema 2*, (London: Continuum, 1989), 182

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 183-188

In that regard categories of thought becomes a matter of analysis rather than ontological units whose existence, non-existence or the degree of existence have to be discussed in order to arrive at a legitimate discourse on film. In that vein my previously stated question gains a new weight: why we perceive particular images as having a/ny relation with their real referents? I want to examine this question within the context of Dogma frame underlining its relation with the concepts of performance and performativity.

3.3 Dogma and performance: Filmmaking as an Ordinary Act

If we look at the Dogma manifesto we see that it has a strong relation with the idea of performance. As I have stated above Dogma based its claim in the authenticity of the image through its vow to force the truth out of the characters. This vow fundamentally contains the idea of using performance as a reference to truth. Secondly the third rule which states that: “The camera must be handheld. Any movement of immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. (The film must not take place where camera is standing; shooting must take place where the film takes place.)”⁹⁶ This rule raises salient issues about the idea of performance. The permit given for the immobility of the camera brings the idea of performativity of the camera. The camera and the act of the cameraman in recording the image is an indispensable part of the image itself. Furthermore, by stating that shooting must take place where the film or in other words action is in place the rule recognizes the significant primacy of the performance of the actors and this imperative also adds the question of temporality to the Dogma frame. The action which is always happening in the present tense is underlined and privileged over any other temporal relations that can be imagined for the film. For all these reasons the Dogma frame is inevitably connected with the idea of performance. Now I want to examine the nature of this relationship through searching among the texts on performance theory and actual performances by several artists.

⁹⁶ Dogma 95 Manifesto, Appendix I

I want to start my analysis with a discussion of the ontology of performance. In her influential book *Unmarked* on the theory of performance Peggy Phelan attempts to draw a trajectory to explore this new ontology. The relation she presupposes between performance and temporality is indeed crucial here:

“Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance’s being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance.”⁹⁷

Phelan argues that documenting the performance is always an excess to the performance itself. In that vein Dogma 95 manifesto’s claim in forcing the truth out of the characters is dubious. If the supposed truth is bound to the performance of the actress performing - always- in a present tense within particular temporal and spatial conditions, her performance is already lost. In this economy of absence can we talk about a referential relation between the performance and its recording that secures the claim in realism of the former? I don’t think so. The only relation that can be presumed between the actual performance and its recording could be based on memory rather than the mental category called realism. The recording of the performance exists to create a remembrance of it. At that point one may argue that Deleuze is right in claiming that any postulate of the image in present is destructive for cinema.⁹⁸ Cinema which is crudely the recording of a certain present tense always operates through the memory. In that regard Dogma 95 manifesto’s claim in forcing truth out of the performance of the characters is fundamentally flawed. Performance itself cannot be an anchor point for the image to base its authenticity since the performance always exists within an economy of disappearance.

In that regard we may talk about an effect of realism rather than an aesthetic category. The strategies to create this effect in the history of cinema are diverse indeed.

⁹⁷ Phelan, Peggy, *Unmarked*, (London:Routledge, 1993), 146

⁹⁸ Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema 2*, (London: Continuum, 1989), 38

One example is Italian Neo-Realist directors using of non-professional actors. Through using actors without a formal education in acting Italian Neo-Realist directors aimed at to transgress the established conventions in acting in their films. In a way that was an important part of the authentic atmosphere these films have created. One crucial example of this is the non-professional actors in De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*. This is now a common strategy and it cannot explain the authenticity of Dogma frame since already in many Dogma films at least in the internationally acclaimed ones professional actors were used. Thus one should look for other components of the Dogma frame to detect the founding stones of the authentic atmosphere in the films. The use of hand held camera, inclusion of the act of cameraman into the image seems as the right departure points.

Indeed, it would be wrong to state that the aesthetics of using small handheld cameras was discovered by Dogma filmmakers. With the emergence of 8 mm and 16 mm cameras which were easy to purchase and hire many independent filmmakers who are coming from different circles of art started to experiment with this new medium. Rush outlines a brief history of the use of hand held lightweight cameras in the experimental filmmaking. Rush states that:

“Often neglected by critics until recently, 8-millimetre films, introduced in 1932 and the cheapest alternative available, became quite popular after the war. Following in the footsteps of 16-millimetre, the 8-millimeter film became even more of a protest against the excess of Hollywood. Compact, cheap, and easy to hold, this camera became the means of personal expression for the artists shut out of the commercial system.”⁹⁹

From that point view using cheap and handy cameras to object the hegemony of Hollywood to promote individual creativity is nothing new at all. However, something what in excess in the Dogma frame. Even though 8 mm and 16 mm cameras spurred creativity and democratized the realm of filmmaking to an extent they were still equipments used by filmmakers. The important point here is that the digital handheld cameras are ordinary consumer products. Everybody whether aiming to create an

⁹⁹ Rush, Michael, *New Media in Late 20th Century Art*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 32

artwork or not do purchase these equipments and they have an experience in using them or viewing images that are produced that has been created with a handheld digital camera – presumably a daily event just recorded for the purposes of remembrance. Therefore, one may consider the experience of the non-artist, if such a category exists after Beuys, with the digital handheld camera within the context of the ontology of Dogma frame.

As I have stated above the only link between the performance and its recording can be memory. I have also referenced to Deleuze's theory of film which to a large extent based upon the notion of memory so far. In that vein I argue that the audience's experience with the handheld digital camera creates a sense of familiarity with the Dogma frame. Christensen points out the the peculiar nature of the familiarity effect Dogma frame has achieved through the use of handheld digital camera as such:

“The use of the home video style minimizes the distance between the story and the telling of the story in that the position of enunciation becomes, if not equivalent to, then very close to that of the spectator. The complicity between camera and spectator is caused by the film's style, which mimes that of the spectators' own videotaping of their children and other everyday experiences.”¹⁰⁰

The audience is most probably interacted with that shaky, grainy, unfocused image before in different contexts. Seeing the same image on the film screen indeed spurs the audience's own activity of using the handheld camera. I do not assume here everybody has a handheld camera and every audience can feel this sense of familiarity with the images in a Dogma film. However, the authenticity of the Dogma frame very much relies upon its familiarity and its ordinary nature. It does not have to be in actuality but at least the possibility of this familiarity is worth to discuss. In that regard one of the components of the Dogma frame is the democratization process it assumes. Dogma frame points to an everyday life activity as an aesthetic endeavor. In that regard it pays its homage to Beuys and in a way Dogma 95 manifesto was the most enthusiastic

¹⁰⁰ Christensen, Ove, Spastic Aesthetics, p.o.v. No: 10, online magazine (downloaded from http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_10/section_2/artc3A.html, on July 25, 2007)

program that aimed to carry Beuys dictum of everybody is an artist into the realm of cinema.

The manifesto's disdain for any attempt to achieve a personal style or aesthetic approach can be linked with its desire to set itself apart from the closed circle of experimental cinema. The aesthetic limits and possibilities which became available with cheap and handy cameras have been explored so far to a great extent. Rush reminds the works of several artists coming from backgrounds different than cinema like Beavers, Brose, Gehr, and Warhol. These artists truly experimented with the aesthetic limits of using the 16 mm camera. Some examples are Gehr's twenty-three minute film which is merely consisted of the shooting of a corridor without any action happening except the zoom setting. The effect created is even though no event takes place throughout the film the ground seems shaking.¹⁰¹ If we compare Gehr's zoom settings with the ones we see in Dogma films, the latter merely seems as a sign of incompetence. Gehr definitely aims to explore the perceptual shift between the actual space and the recording of the space. In Dogma frame zoom setting is a matter of transition. Or in other words, in Dogma frame the image is in a continuous transition.

The comparison between the experimental cinema and Dogma 95 program gives us a valuable insight in the discussion of the aesthetic qualities of the Dogma frame. I believe turning to Marx's theory of value would be enlightening in the sense that it would wrap up the arguments on Dogma frame and the concept of performance. In her essay entitled, "Searching for Value: Does Capitalism Pay a Visit to Art?" Eser Selen analyzes prominent contemporary artist Hans Haacke's work using Marx theory of value.¹⁰² Selen's main question is the relation between the exchange value and the display value in a work of art. Her analysis is worth to remind in this discussion since Dogma 95 manifesto apparently calls for a shift in the display value of film. Through

¹⁰¹ Rush, Michael, *New Media in Late 20th Century Art*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 28

¹⁰² Selen, Eser, *Searching for Value: Does Capitalism Pay a Visit to Art?*, Unpublished Essay.

abstaining from any stylistic endeavor and abhorring film aesthetics Dogma 95 manifesto offers a redefinition in the display value of film. The question always lingers in the audience's mind while watching a Dogma movie: is this really a film or is it just a joke. Trier clearly puts forward the banalization of the idea of film as such:

“But then I'm very glad that some people in Argentina, I think, have suddenly done a whole lot of Dogma films – ten, I think. One of them in just two days... Just like 'Let's go', you know? And if that is the only thing that comes out of these Rules, then I think it's fantastic – that people in countries like Estonia or wherever can suddenly make films, you know? ...Because they look at Dogma and think, 'If *that's* a film, then we can make films too.' Instead of just thinking, 'Oh, if it doesn't like Star Wars, then we can't make film.’”¹⁰³

The whole history of contemporary art can be read as evolving through this questioning and devaluing of the artwork itself. I will not make these readings since the aim of this thesis is not to discuss the history of contemporary art. The main point is through stripping the film from its presumed display value the Dogma frame shows the audience the display value itself. Or in Selen's words it displays the display value.¹⁰⁴ Dogma frame achieves this through the negation, through creating a negative frame. By the negative frame I mean the frame stripped from the common expectations of the audience from a film. At this point a comparison between Haacke's works and Dogma frame is relevant since Selen reaches her conclusion through an analysis of Haacke's work around the framework of Marx's theory of value.

I want to discuss one of Haacke's works which was rejected to be exhibited in the PROJECT'74 which was supposed to present “aspects of international art at the beginning of the seventies” in Wallraf Richertz Museum's occasional 150th year

¹⁰³ Kelly, R., *The Name of this book is Dogme 95*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 145-146

¹⁰⁴ Selen, Eser, *Searching for Value: Does Capitalism Pay a Visit to Art?*, unpublished paper

anniversary.¹⁰⁵ Basing on the information she relies upon one of Haacke's catalogs *Framing and Being Framed* Selen analyzes the Manet-project in extensive detail:

“The overall work consists of 10 panels and one color reproduction of Eduard Manet's painting titled, Bunch of Asparagus in its original size (52x 80 cm) and frame. Haacke's in his proposal suggested using the original Bunch of Asparagus, 1880 on easel surrounded with these 10 panels that presents the social and economic positions of the people who owned, bought and sold this painting over the years, starting with Manet. The information that Haacke gathered for each person also reveals of that person's socio-economic status, religious-ethnic background, his/her innermost secretive relations but more importantly how much money exchanged when the painting is transferred one from another.”¹⁰⁶

This work is indeed important to show that how an exchange value is created through presumed increase in the display value of an artwork. The painting which had worth 800 frank once worth \$260, 000 many years later...¹⁰⁷ The whole project aims to show how the display value of the work of art is appropriated and boosted by the international art market, and through social relations it has been turned into a mere exchange value.

The way the project makes transparent this fact is actually related with how Dogma frame constructs itself as a negative frame. The Dogma frame makes us to question the current market structure of the film industry through its questionable display value as a film. While watching a Dogma film, the audience is subtly invited to think about their expectations from a film viewing experience. Anyone can accept or reject this subtle invitation. Accepting this open call of Dogma frame can lead us to rethink the less discussed yet the most determining factor in filmmaking: financial matters. Dogma frame achieves to carry this almost too banal discussion into the realm of aesthetics. The analysis that Dogma frame lead us within the context of cinema is indeed very parallel with the analysis Haacke aims to incite in his Manet-project. In

¹⁰⁵ Selen, Eser, *Searching for Value: Does Capitalism Pay a Visit to Art?*, unpublished paper

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

that regard one may argue that Dogma frame operates through its abstention rather than its fullness.

One other work which also has a performative quality is Sophie Calle's work which has been exhibited in Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. Phelan analyzes this work within context of the ontology of performance. Calle has photographed the galleries before several valuable paintings have been stolen from the gallery. She interviewed various visitors and members of the museum staff, asking them to describe the stolen paintings. She then transcribed these texts and placed them next to the photographs of the galleries.¹⁰⁸ In her work she aims to incite notion as the work of art as memory. Through replacing the real works –indeed this can be considered as an obligated replacement- she raises salient questions about the image and the memory of the stolen works. In the interviews and the interpretations of the paintings people combine their own experiences with the work of art with what they remember from the image.

Indeed, the fact that through using the digital handheld camera image as the kernel of its filmmaking strategy Dogma frame bases itself on a similar debate. The Dogma frame inevitably reminds the audience the actual or the possible act of using the handheld digital camera. The ordinariness of the activity, the fact that it has been experienced by many of the audiences cannot be considered apart from the film itself. Therefore through inciting the memories of the audience's own image recording activates the Dogma frame achieves to obtain a certain degree of authenticity. This claim in authenticity is not a formal category neither it is meaningful to discuss this feature of the Dogma frame around the context of referentiality. The authenticity of the image is created through containing the ordinariness of the activity of making a film within the frame. In that regard not only the program but also the aesthetics of Dogma can be considered as an inclusive one.

¹⁰⁸ Phelan, Peggy, *Unmarked*, (London:Routledge, 1993), 146-147

CHAPTER 4

IDIOTS

4.1. Idiots and Utopia: Bullying, resentment and catastrophe

So far I have discussed the utopian project of Dogma 95 manifesto as presenting filmmaking as a social activity and I analyzed the constituents of the Dogma frame without straying from a Marxist trajectory. However, some questions are still begging for a clear response. To what extent the utopian project of Dogma 95 manifesto is possible? What are the limits of Dogma frame? If the Dogma frame is positioning itself as the negative frame for the cinema what can it achieve to tell other than the literal criticism of cinema? These are salient questions indeed. And I do not think they have single answer. I believe the second Dogma film by Trier is one of the strongest answers given to these questions. For many commentators it is perceived as the ultimate Dogma film. I believe *Idiots* operates on different overlapping planes. It is a film about Dogma 95 manifesto as well as it is a film about making of itself as Christensen put it in his essay *Spastic Aesthetics*.¹⁰⁹

Where does the *Idiots* stand for as a film? How can we read the act of behaving like an idiot when one is not? Does acting like an idiot liberate oneself as Stoffer claimed, if it does, it liberates from what? Indeed, it seems hard to find coherent and satisfying answers for each of these questions. One can take the issue from the point of view of psychology and find individual reasons for the transgressive behaviors of each particular character in the film. That would require digging in (or inventing) childhood stories, family histories, diagnosing fears, complexes and wrapping up all these half

¹⁰⁹ Christensen, Ove, *Spastic Aesthetics*, p.o.v. No: 10, online magazine (downloaded from http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_10/section_2/artc3A.html, on July 25, 2007)

legitimate, half made up stories and statements under one single premise: anomaly has its individual reasons. If we focus on these individual reasons the critical view of the film would be undermined. I believe *Idiots* can be best discussed around the concepts of utopia and dystopia. Stoffer's project -or should we say Trier's- contains all the paradoxical elements of utopia and dystopia. In the rest of my analysis I will engage in a reading of the film *Idiots* under the light of the concepts utopia and utopianism.

First of all one should note that the film operates on multiple planes; indeed there are multiple projects in the film operating at the same time. First is Stoffer's project which is the motivating force behind the narrative. This project can be thought as independently from the narrative itself through discussing the possible explanations on the behavior of a group of people acting like idiots to liberate themselves. Second plane is Trier's project. The film is not just composed of the narrative motivations of Stoffer and his friends' actions but also interviews made with the actors and actresses after the film. In this plane the film gains a self-reflexive dimension and takes its peculiar place among other Trier films. The last plane is the *Dogma* project which have been discussed in extensive detail in the previous chapters. I argue that these three projects overlap at certain points and they create an artistic totality.

Jameson describes utopia as: "an always ambiguous ideal, urging some desperate and impossible realizations about which it reassured the others that they could never come into being in the first place."¹¹⁰ In that regard Stoffer's project definitely starts as a utopian one. In his mind Stoffer has an idea of community which refuses to be a part of the reproductive economy. At the first instance Stoffer's community choose complete idleness instead of hiring their labor. One thing is important here. They do not engage in this activity to change the existing social dynamics. They have a certain belief in the idea -mainly defended and propagated by Stoffer- that the individual will have to act like an idiot in the future in order to survive. So she should start to act like an idiot now to liberate herself and survive. However, at the end the whole experiment turns out to be a hell. The joyous atmosphere at the beginning of the film continuously evolves through an infernal one. The perverse prophecy of Stoffer offers a strange

¹¹⁰ Hardt & Weeks, *The Jameson Reader*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000), 382

combination of dystopia and utopia. At this point I want to discuss why Stoffer's project evolves from a utopian vision to a dystopic space.

Stoffer's project with claims in individual liberation, collective happiness and the vision for a calm and peaceful future -Stoffer claimed everybody will be an idiot at the last stage of capitalism so there will be no conflict- presents itself as a utopian ideal. The point is Stoffer and his group do not consider this act as a negative one, rather they take it as a relieving one. One may argue that the vision for the future and the group ideals of Stoffer have some parallels with the early socialists. Relying upon Reybaud's categorization of Fourier, Saint-Simon and Owen together under the name of "utopian socialists", Webb analyzes the relation between utopian socialism and Marxism.¹¹¹ A thorough discussion of the ideas of the utopian socialists transgresses the boundaries of this thesis. In his analysis Webb attempts to find some common denominators in the ideas of these theorists. One common feature of the utopian socialists is quite relevant for Stoffer's project. Webb argues that "utopian socialists were pompous, patronizing and elitist theorists who each believed themselves to be some form of messiah."¹¹² Stoffer's can also be considered as an elitist propagator of a utopian ideal.

Indeed, Stoffer's project includes the evils of any utopian project that aims to create a new society from the scratch. Jameson argues that in every utopian effort to create a new society or even the fantasy of doing so a Burkean Jacobinism and Stalinism are implicit and inevitable.¹¹³ In Stoffer's community we can see the reflections of the Jacobin-Stalinist state order with acts of bullying, inviting violence and forcing people to an impossible momentum. Stoffer exercises his power on the community through trying to arouse feelings of guilt and resentment among them whenever they act or express their ideas against the utopian project he has offered. In that regard, Stoffer can be considered as a patronizing utopian socialist who aims to

¹¹¹ Webb, Darren, *Marx, Marxism and Utopia*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 4-36

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 15

¹¹³ Hardt & Weeks, *The Jameson Reader*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000), 383

disturb the existing social order through acts of bullying and manipulation of conscience.

Jameson argues the examples of this bullying which both operates in sentimental and intellectual levels can be found in the realm of modern aesthetics also. In the works of high modernists like Le Corbusier who bullies his clients into a healthy and strenuous high-modern life style or in Joyce and Mallarmé who are forcing the reader to an interminable exegesis we can detect a similar patronizing attitude.¹¹⁴ One may argue that at this point Stoffer's exercise of power over his community links with the work of Trier as a director. There is no wrong in saying that especially in the *Breaking the Waves* and in the *Dancer in the Dark*, Trier aims and achieves to create a sentimental inferno for the audience through the cruel manipulation of the woman characters. The viewer in a way forced to empathize with these protagonists who were directed to excessive debauchery or man slaughter with a questionable will. According to Christensen the audience is also forced to empathize with Karen in the *Idiots*: "The empathy with the protagonist, Karen, is forced upon the spectator by the character's vulnerability, her naive 'goodness' and not least by the embarrassing sequence with her family at the end of the film."¹¹⁵ The same sentimental weight is also a significant part of the *Dogville*. In that regard one may argue that in most of his films Trier aims to create an ethical disturbance among the audience through a patronizing attitude. Does Trier try to question his own strategy of bullying the audience over Stoffer's project? I will return to this question later.

The connection between Stoffer's and Trier's project is indeed a vital one. If we consider Stoffer's project as apart from its actual realization in the film or if that project was not put into a narrative structure but formulated as a manifesto it would remain as a utopian one. However, situating Stoffer's project as the narrative makes his utopian project a dystopic subtext Trier uses and manipulates. At this point I want to remind

¹¹⁴ Hardt & Weeks, *The Jameson Reader*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000), 383

¹¹⁵ Christensen, Ove, *Spastic Aesthetics*, p.o.v. No: 10, online magazine (downloaded from http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_10/section_2/artc3A.html, on July 25, 2007)

Jameson's ideas about the difference between utopia and dystopia. He argues that utopian text is mostly non-narrative without a subject position; on the other hand dystopia is essentially narrative since its main aim is to tell a near disaster being it an ecological one, overpopulation, plague, drought, the stray comet or nuclear accident.¹¹⁶ Of course these stories fundamentally belong to the form of science fiction novel and it is apparent that *Idiots* is far from being a science fiction narrative. If we accept that *Idiots* is also a dystopic text the question we should answer is which disaster does it point to? I believe the disaster characters had to face at the end is helplessness. At the beginning they all choose to act as if they are helpless following Stoffer's directives but at the end when they are forced to spass in front of the public what they felt and experienced at the first hand was real helplessness. Except Karen they all had to face with the fact that they could not behave as if they had nothing to lose. None of them could carry their own personal project of liberation into their "real" social lives. Karen's case is of course different since she is the only one who had the courage to spass in her normal social environment. However, what Karen could get as the prize for her project of liberation, her project of oblivion is exclusion. Stoffer was wrong at least for now.

At this point *Idiots* can be considered as a criticism of the Dogma project itself. I want to explain this relationship within the context of the clash between utopian socialism and Marxism. Webb offers a detailed analysis of the counter position of Marx to the ideals of utopian socialism:

"All that needs to be said is that, for Marx, because one cannot know the form that the future will take, the 'scientific' derivation of it by the utopians was not scientific at all but 'utopian'. This is why, in the *Manifesto* (1848), Marx and Engels take pains to explain to emphasize that the utopians' new social science was nothing more than an organization of society specially contrived by these inventors; this is why in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), Marx emphasizes that utopians seek science in their minds; this is why, in his obituary to Proudhon (1865), Marx tells us that the utopians are hunting for a so-called science by which the formula for the solution of the social question is to excogitated *a priori*; this is why, in *Political Indifferentism* (1873), Marx refers

¹¹⁶ Hardt & Weeks, *The Jameson Reader*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000), 384

to utopian systems as 'idealistic fantasies concocted by doctors in social science, and so on and so forth.'¹¹⁷

Stoffer is also a utopian who seek the release in his mind. His dystopic vision of the future, namely everybody will have to act like an idiot is not based upon a concrete analysis. It is rather an insight, and Stoffer forces to organize his community around this intuitive vision for the future. Within that context spassing can be considered as a revolutionary act. However, the project itself carries its own contradictions in itself. Choosing helplessness or dependency in order to liberate oneself are at odds. What remains after is catastrophe. Through showing us the failure of Stoffer's project -the whole film can be read as the story of this failure- Trier shows us his critical stand against utopia. If its boldness and the vision it offers for the future of filmmaking are concerned Dogma 95 manifesto can also be considered as a utopian project. However, the manifesto offers the filmmaking activity to be democratized, like Stoffer's community it aims to create a closed society of filmmakers who are presumed to conform the stated rules. But the rules of the game, both in Stoffer's project and in Dogma 95 manifesto are awaiting to be transgressed. Stoffer's community was dissolved and Dogma movement was not about conforming to the rules at the end as Trier has suggested. Both projects were destined to dissolve and transform themselves something less restraining. They are not projects for salvation, they were destined to fail if that was the sole intention. But they were projects of provocation to re-imagine something new.

In that regard *Idiots* can be read as a film on the Dogma movement itself. Abstention from any aesthetic consideration can be as spassing in filmmaking. All the Dogma directors does that. If the visual quality of previous Trier films is concerned, also in *Idiots* Trier intentionally spasses. Through this way Trier both achieves to question the nature of Dogma 95 manifesto which is based on a utopian social organization of filmmakers, and he also challenges his own authority as a director. Challenging the authority can be regarded as one of the most dominant features of Trier's work in general. As I have mentioned above Trier intentionally forces the audience to an ethical disturbance through creating a pathos weaved around his woman

¹¹⁷ Webb, Darren, *Marx, Marxism and Utopia*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 19-20

characters in his several films like *Dancer in the Dark*, *Breaking the Waves*, *Idiots* and *Dogville*. Through this way he offers a challenge to the audience. He also challenges his own authority as a director through intentionally limiting his venue for intervention. Dogma 95 manifesto through rejecting the notion of auteur and vowing to abstain from any personal taste aims to limit director's authority to a significant extent. Also in his last film *The Boss of It All* by leaving the control of choosing the frames to a computer program Trier tries to impede his directorial authority. In the Five Obstructions Trier turns his weapon to another director Jørgen Leth whose work was one source of inspiration for him. In that regard challenging the authority of several aspects of the institutions of cinema whether it's directorial, inspirational or financial is the trademark of Trier's work in general. Trier poses his challenges to the institutions of cinema in a reciprocal manner. In the *Idiots* the narrative is combined with the interviews of actors and actresses. In these interviews the actors get the chance of questioning the very idea of making this movie. One may argue that Trier reformulates and redefines the notion of self reflexivity in cinema in each of his works.

4.2. Von Trier and Fuit Hic

At this point one might be inclined to think that Dogma program was only another sensational project of Trier. However, the validity of this easy found explanation should be questioned. In the documentary *Tranceformer: A Portrait of Lars von Trier* by Stig Björkman the well-acclaimed Danish director says with an uncanny smile “I’ll gladly assert that everything said or written about me is a lie.”¹¹⁸ It is apparent that Trier wants to present himself as an enigmatic character. Questioning the sincerity and authenticity of his claim would be to fall in a trap von Trier skillfully prepared for the critic. I believe the ludic character of his work and his continuous questioning of the reality about himself and his own work should be regarded as the most significant feature of his filmmaking. One thing is apparent: the question “why” does not work if

¹¹⁸ <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/02/vontrier.html>, (downloaded on June, 10, 2007)

Trier's persona and his work are considered. His taste for provocation, his contempt for any intellectual authority, his bitter sense of playfulness makes it hard for the critic to evaluate his work for the existing criteria. Indeed, there are numberless ways to go out of the paradox Trier masterfully created as long as the critic accepts the fact that she is only betting.

I would like to open a brief parenthesis here about writing on an artwork relying upon Derrida's criticism of Shapiro's and Heidegger's accounts on Van Gogh's *Shoes*, in order to question my analysis on Trier. Derrida's discussion is indeed relevant here since it skillfully shows us the limits of criticism. After presenting the views by Heidegger and Shapiro on the same artwork Derrida de-constructs their discourse. What does Shapiro do Derrida asks. He gives the shoes back to Vincent after a scientific police investigation. He follows the steps of a ghost and gives the stolen artefact to his rightful owner. But in order to accomplish his task he detaches Vincent from his past, excludes him from peasantry since there is no space for peasantry in Paris, he limits the artist's space with the city Paris. He mixes the internal and the external evidence. It is interesting to note that Derrida does not use the term interlacing here to refer the intermixture between internal and external evidence in Shapiro's argument. He draws a line between his method and Shapiro's, since Shapiro's method leads to a conclusion that the shoes are those of Vincent's own. On the other hand, after a detailed discussion about the experience of the reliability upon the art work – here Heidegger uses the term *Verlässlichkeit* which is loosely translated as reliability by Derrida – Heidegger observes in Van Gogh's painting the belonging to the earth and ascribes the shoes those of a peasant woman. For Derrida this interpretation is equally questionable since nothing proves that they are peasant shoes.¹¹⁹

If both of these accounts are flawed in different respects what is left then? How can we reconstitute Van Gogh's painting again? In order to find an answer Derrida de-constructs the desire that leads to identification, attribution and reappropriation. Shapiro is overwhelmed with a desire of identification because he is certain that the

¹¹⁹ Derrida, Jacques, *Truth in Painting*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 342-364

painting is a copy, because he is certain that there is a right shoe size which fits somebody (in this case the painter, the rightful owner), because he is certain that there is a right combination of time-space in which the real owner of the shoe can be situated.

It should be noted that Shapiro had constructed his arguments on Van Gogh's shoes against Heidegger. While accusing Heidegger, Shapiro rules out any possibility of projection on his side says Derrida.¹²⁰ But this notion of projection now calls for discussion. Can Shapiro be discharged of making a projection? Derrida says no. Since the objectivism Shapiro seems to adhere himself calls for a projection of a certain system of subject-object relations. Shapiro relies on the premises on the Western metaphysics. His argument is based on *fait hic*, the celebration of the artist's existence, the celebration of the artist's persona. The artist able to depict, able to express *himself*, the artist as the genius... A whole discussion of Western metaphysics is at stake here. Now Heidegger's relation with the whole Western metaphysics is more illuminated. He *attempts to overcome it*, through not adhering himself to the sacred subject.

The differing views of Shapiro and Heidegger is crucial in the debate on writing on an artwork. While Shapiro bases his arguments upon the idea of *fait hic*, Heidegger tries to overcome it in an attempt to re-attach the subject to a greater whole. I believe the accounts on Trier can also be weighed upon this theoretical cluster. It will always be simplistic to reduce Trier's work to his own fears, phobias or his desire to present himself as an enigmatic persona. It will always be an excess for the criticism to state that through his continuously transforming self-reflexivity, his obsession with the questioning of his authority he transgresses the boundaries of the subject. What is apparent is that as Derrida concluded at the end of his account any writing on the artwork is an excess and can only be a bet. I believe this bet is worthwhile to take if the Dogma 95 manifesto and Trier's work is concerned since they opens us a fresh venue to reconsider cinema.

¹²⁰ Derrida, Jacques, *Truth in Painting*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 366

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this thesis my aim was to analyze the Dogma 95 manifesto around several debates like the clash between the hegemonic power of Hollywood and European national cinemas, relation between Dogma frame and performance and finally the interlaced texts of utopia and dystopia in Dogma 95 manifesto and Trier's film *Idiots*. The methodological approach I have chosen for such a wide scale project was Noël Carroll's proposal for the piecemeal approach to film theory. In that vein my thesis is indeed composed of local theories rather than a comprehensive and a single one. As Carroll proposed I have followed a question led approach in determining the trajectory of my thesis. The main question I have dealt with in the introduction chapter was the possibilities of Dogma 95 manifesto. In the second chapter I have analyzed the inimical nature of Dogma 95 manifesto around a debate based on the political economy of filmmaking. In the third chapter I looked for possibilities of theorizing the Dogma aesthetics around the notion of Dogma frame. My analysis led me through the theory of performance and performativity. In the last chapter I tried to illuminate the relation between utopia and Dogma project as a whole taking Trier's film *Idiots* as the main object of my analysis. In this chapter I want to summarize the connections I have established between these local theories.

In the introduction chapter my main departure point for the further analysis of Dogma 95 manifesto was Kahraman's statements about the re-politicization of artwork in the postmodern era. Following his observations I found that Dogma 95 manifesto is strictly political since it actively deals with the inequities of the globalization process in cinema. It has also another political dimension which is more salient for a debate on European cinema. Through its rejection of the existing ways of combating with the hegemony of Hollywood in European national cinemas; namely the promotion of individual creativity with the auteur understanding in cinema and relying upon multiple

resources of financing through co-production logic, Dogma 95 manifesto is further politicized in the European context. The manifesto stresses the possibilities of reconsidering filmmaking as a social practice. As I have stated oligopolistic structure of Hollywood cinema and co-production logic in European national cinemas can be considered as investment intensive filmmaking strategies. Dogma 95 manifesto promotes a cheaper way to make films which touches upon the basics of the political economy of film. Through this move Dogma 95 manifesto aims to create a more inclusive and democratic social space for cinema. Relying upon Lefebvre's arguments on space I pointed out the distinctive feature of the vision proposed by Dogma 95 manifesto.

The aesthetic implications of this politicization are discussed in the third chapter. In order to analyze the question what Dogma refused to include in its body I have chosen a Marxist trajectory. The reason for this was Dogma 95 manifesto's rejection of Hollywood and French New Wave as reference points in conducting a filmmaking activity and this stance mainly concerns the political economy of film. At the beginning of my second chapter I have outlined the limitations of using a Marxist trajectory in such a topic. The main limitation was of course the classical Marxist grip on culture: namely the supremacy of economics of superstructure over culture. I tried to overcome this grip by relying upon Althusser's understanding of art in the third chapter.

Since the Dogma program as a subject matter does not give the analyst enough venue to discuss its stylistic –even though achieving any style was rejected by the manifesto completely- elements purely in an aesthetics context I have offered a social theory of cinema in order to understand the components of the Dogma frame. This social theory of cinema takes the audiences' habits of using the available technologies in filmmaking as well as it regards the audiences' expectations from a film. I could theorize this approach relying upon the aesthetic and theoretical explorations incited by the notions of performance and performativity.

The main question I have tackled with in the third chapter was the claim of authenticity in the Dogma 95 manifesto. I did not take this claim as given and I

questioned it around the notions of performance and performativity. I argue that this claim has its own contradictions. Since performance operates on an economy of disappearance, basing the claim on authenticity upon the performances of the actors is not actually reliable. However, through playing with the display value of the film, Dogma 95 manifesto achieves to attain a degree of authenticity. The home video appearance of the frame creates a certain familiarity for the audience. Through constructing itself upon an aesthetics which founds its base in ordinariness and banality the Dogma frame links itself with the audience's experiences and memory. Such a strategy is not of course what the audience would expect from a film. Therefore one may argue that Dogma frame attempts to play with the expectations of the audience. Using Selen's arguments as my trajectory I argue that Dogma frame actively dealt with the issue of display value of film. Under the light of my analysis of the works of performance artists like Haacke and Calle I claimed that Dogma frame has operated through its absence rather than its fullness. The intellectual interrogation the Dogma manifesto invites and the political stance of the movement cannot be thought apart from the aesthetics it proposes.

In the last chapter I discussed the relation between Dogma 95 manifesto around an analysis of the film *Idiots*. I mainly base my arguments upon Christensen's argument that *Idiots* was a film on the Dogma movement itself. Through Jameson's observations I have discovered the complex relation between utopia and dystopia in the *Idiots*. I have analyzed the film on multiple planes namely the Stoffer's project, Trier's work and Dogma 95 manifesto. I argue that through its self reflexive nature *Idiots* achieves to question the ideals posed by the Dogma 95 manifesto. I believe what remains after such a questioning is not the strict rules of the manifesto but the intellectual interrogation it proposes. In that regard Dogma 95 manifesto in general and *Idiots* in particular achieves to present a fresh critical view which is not in abundance in European cinema for a long time.

In the last part of my analysis I discussed writing on Trier's work around Derrida's account on Shapiro's and Heidegger's criticisms of Van Gogh's painting.

There are several temptations in writing on an artwork and these temptations are also the points to be considered while analyzing Trier's work. I believe the bet Derrida talks about is worth to take when Trier's work is concerned since it invites us to re-evaluate the basic notions in cinema and filmmaking.

APPENDIX

Dogme 95

is a collective of film directors founded in Copenhagen in Spring 1995

DOGME 95 has the expressed goal of countering “certain tendencies” in the cinema today.

DOGME 95 is a rescue action!

In 1960 enough was enough! The movie was dead and called for resurrection. The goal was correct but the means were not! The new wave proved to be a ripple that washed ashore and turned to muck.

Slogans of individualism and freedom created works for a while, but no changes. The wave was up for grabs, like the directors themselves. The wave was never stronger than the men behind it. The anti-bourgeois cinema itself became bourgeois, because the foundations upon which its theories were based was the bourgeois perception of art. The auteur concept was bourgeois romanticism from the very start and thereby ... false! To DOGME 95 cinema is not individual!

Today a technological storm is raging, the result of which will be the ultimate democratisation of the cinema. For the first time, anyone can make movies. But the more accessible the media becomes, the more important the avant-garde, It is no accident that the phrase “avant-garde” has military connotations. Discipline is the answer ... we must put our films into uniform, because the individual film will be decadent by definition!

DOGME 95 counters the individual film by the principle of presenting an indisputable set of rules known as [THE VOW OF CHASTITY.](#)

In 1960 enough was enough! The movie had been cosmeticised to death, they said; yet since then the use of cosmetics has exploded.

The “supreme” task of the decadent film-makers is to fool the audience. Is that what we are so proud of? Is that what the “100 years” have brought us? Illusions via which emotions can be communicated? ... By the individual artist’s free choice of trickery?

Predictability (dramaturgy) has become the golden calf around which we dance. Having the characters’ inner lives justify the plot is too complicated, and not “high art”. As never before, the superficial action and the superficial movie are receiving all the praise. The result is barren. An illusion of pathos and an illusion of love.

To DOGME 95 the movie is not illusion!

Today a technological storm is raging of which the result is the elevation of cosmetics to God. By using new technology anyone at any time can wash the last grains of truth away in the deadly embrace of sensation. The illusions are everything the movie can hide behind.

DOGME 95 counters the film of illusion by the presentation of an indisputable set of rules known as [THE VOW OF CHASTITY](#).

THE VOW OF CHASTITY

"I swear to submit to the following set of rules drawn up and confirmed by DOGME 95:

1. Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in (if a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found).
2. The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot).

3. The camera must be hand-held. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. (The film must not take place where the camera is standing; shooting must take place where the film takes place).
4. The film must be in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera).
5. Optical work and filters are forbidden.
6. The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, weapons, etc. must not occur.)
7. Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now.)
8. Genre movies are not acceptable.
9. The film format must be Academy 35 mm.
10. The director must not be credited.

Furthermore I swear as a director to refrain from personal taste! I am no longer an artist. I swear to refrain from creating a "work", as I regard the instant as more important than the whole. My supreme goal is to force the truth out of my characters and settings. I swear to do so by all the means available and at the cost of any good taste and any aesthetic considerations.

Thus I make my VOW OF CHASTITY."

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