

# TV Time, Recurrence, and the Situation of the Spectator: An Approach via Stanley Cavell, Raúl Ruiz, and Ruiz's Late Chilean Series *Litoral*

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Tracing out the concerns about audiovisual media shared by the US philosopher Stanley Cavell (1926–2018) and the internationally renowned Chilean filmmaker Raúl Ruiz (1941–2011) would seem to provide a study of significant philosophical commonalities that are nevertheless occasionally refracted by differences in tastes, sensibilities, politics, and frames of reference. What Cavell and Ruiz shared was a sense that the ‘poetry’ afforded to the cinematic image in its automatically produced character—the singular audiovisual moment or involuntary gesture caught on film—meant that film escaped certain notions of hierarchy that have been thought to govern the other arts. Cavell and Ruiz also articulated their understandings of film’s natural poetry via an overlapping set of philosophical concepts, including Walter Benjamin’s *optical unconscious* and Nietzsche’s *eternal recurrence of the same*.

Where they differed, however, was in the forms of films that attracted their attention, and in which they located the most powerful expressions of the medium’s poetry. Early in his writing, Cavell’s receptions of modernism and auteurism informed his focus on complete, autonomous films, with identifiable makers.<sup>1</sup> His concern with the situation of the spectator rather than producer, and the film spectator’s supposed relief from the responsibilities of agency, likewise informed his attention to films in their aspects as ‘finished’.<sup>2</sup> Though Cavell’s attention was not at all exclusively occupied by classical Hollywood narratives, when he came to write his famous studies of Hollywood genres, there remained a thread between his earlier emphasis on ‘complete’

films and the notions of narrative completeness marking those Hollywood films (most obviously in the resolution of conflicts marking remarriage comedies). Throughout these stages of his film writing, Cavell framed the spectator as a reader—or ‘performer’ of interpretations—of complete works rather than as a co-producer of something incomplete.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, Ruiz’s writing on film is perhaps most famous for the criticisms of classical Hollywood narrative—what Ruiz calls ‘central conflict theory’—in the first volume of his book *Poetics of Cinema*.<sup>4</sup> For Ruiz, classical narrative and its stress on conflict resolution served to occupy our attention at the expense of the poetry of the cinematic image. This critique of dominant Hollywood modes was the most vital expression of his opposition to US cultural imperialism. (He was nevertheless attracted to watching Hollywood films *against the grain*, particularly in appreciating the poetic qualities in the imperfections of Hollywood B movies and serials from his youth.)<sup>5</sup> This critique was also bound up with his non-modernist, ‘baroque’ emphasis on the poetic and imaginative possibilities of filmic fragments, particularly individual shots, as well as his later criticisms of auteurism as ‘a regular claim of Western *doxa*’.<sup>6</sup> With these ideas, Ruiz communicated his sense of the spectator as anything but relieved of agency and in fact as something like a co-producer, at least of those films that opened up imaginative possibilities in their imperfections and incompleteness (and especially in their resistance to narrative completeness).

I want to explore a little further the idea that Cavell found the cinematic image’s poetry within classical narratives while Ruiz found that very same thing outside those narratives (or despite them), as well as how the views of each came together with differing conceptions of the spectator. But I also contend that the crux of any encounter between Cavell and Ruiz must lie in their conceptions of *television*, since it was this medium that brought out their strongest points of connection in thinking about seriality, the temporality of an audiovisual medium, and the situation of the viewer. Of prime importance here are Cavell’s brief remarks on soap operas in his 1982 essay ‘The Fact of Television’,<sup>7</sup> since it was precisely what Cavell found bemusing about soap operas from the perspective of his conception of film—their operating according to the principle of ‘series’ rather than autonomous works, their resisting classical narrative resolutions—that allowed, in Ruiz’s case, for soap operas and especially Latin American *telenovelas* to stand as exemplars of the audiovisual poetics that fascinated him.

These possibilities, I will claim, lie in how serial-episode construction facilitates an ‘argument’ between, on the one hand, our repetitive needs and drives and, on the other, the transient stories we tell ‘out of’ those needs and drives. This is the development of an idea that Cavell himself sketches in ‘The Fact of Television’,<sup>8</sup> though I will insist that, in appreciating its consequences, we should pay close attention to Ruiz’s late work for Chilean TV, and especially how Ruiz used televisual formats as ways of examining the nature of storytelling and the recurrent needs at play in our being spectators of stories. Therefore, this chapter will build up to a reading of Ruiz’s late

miniseries *Litoral, cuentos del mar* (*Littoral: Tales of the Sea*, 2008), consisting of fantastic, complexly nested tales told by sailors aboard a Chilean ghost ship. Some of these tales are arguably assimilable to classical narratives, including even a story of remarriage. But by using the series' episodic format to uncover the recurrent needs underlying those same stories, Ruiz aims to lay bare the limits of pictures of spectators as 'outside' narratives (a kind of picture that Cavell's own writing on filmic narratives could, again, be understood as exemplary of). At least, this will be my reading of *Litoral's* poignant conclusion, when a sailor-storyteller finds himself at once the spectator of a scene taken from classical narrative and also having to recognize, with great pain and difficulty, the role of his own recurrent fantasies and needs in its construction.

## Filmic Poetry and the Situation of the Spectator

### *Some Commonalities and Differences between Cavell and Ruiz*

Though Cavell and Ruiz were colleagues at Harvard in 1989–90, the year that Ruiz was Visiting Lecturer in the very department—Visual and Environmental Studies—that Cavell had earlier helped to found, it is difficult to determine whether they had any substantial interaction.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, we can be tempted by thinking they would have had something important to say to each other, since in the period following his stay at Harvard, Ruiz would go on to produce perhaps the most philosophically informed reflection on film ever written by a major international filmmaker: his two-volume (with extant notes for a planned third volume) *Poetics of Cinema*.<sup>10</sup> This is a book striking in its knowledgeable references ranging from strands of contemporary analytic philosophy with which Cavell might have considered himself in 'conflict',<sup>11</sup> to earlier figures like Russell, Moore, and Whitehead,<sup>12</sup> to figures of great significance to Cavell like Benjamin, Kuhn, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein.<sup>13</sup> The references to Benjamin and Nietzsche are particularly notable for their roles in Ruiz articulating the sense he appeared to share with Cavell of cinema's natural poetry—a notion that in the cases of both Cavell and Ruiz grounded their senses of the possibilities of film escaping hierarchies found in other arts, as well as the necessities of a certain indiscriminateness in film taste.<sup>14</sup>

The line connecting these concerns is the camera's ability to capture the involuntary, accidental, and unnoticed—the sort of phenomena broached in Benjamin's references to the camera's access to the 'optical unconscious'<sup>15</sup>—and the natural weight or interest that these phenomena can bear for us. Though it took some time for Cavell to relate these concerns explicitly to Benjamin and the optical unconscious,<sup>16</sup> they are for him major organizing themes beginning with his 1971 book *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*. These include his observations in that book that 'in any film, however unpromising, some moment of interest, even beauty, is likely to appear',<sup>17</sup> as

well as his later expression of a 'natural vision of film' as one in which 'every motion and gesture, however glancing, has its poetry, or you may say its lucidity'.<sup>18</sup>

For these reasons, we can be struck that, for all Cavell's comparative attention to classical Hollywood narratives, he especially emphasizes singular, otherwise 'incommunicable' moments or gestures that could just as well supply the fundamentals of avant-garde films (such as what P. Adams Sitney called 'lyrical' films)<sup>19</sup> that have refused those same structures: 'the curve of fingers that day, a mouth ... spools of history that have unwound only for me now, and if not now, never'.<sup>20</sup> These concerns remain central in his studies of classical Hollywood genres like comedies of remarriage. For example, we find it in his observation that 'The poetry of the final appeals for forgiveness in *The Lady Eve* [Preston Sturges, 1941] is accordingly a function of the way just this man and this woman half walk, half run down a path of gangways ... and how just these voices mingle their breaths together.'<sup>21</sup> We should not neglect the mutual inflection for Cavell of these singular moments and their context within a classical narrative resolution; but neither should we neglect the way in which the latter context typically sends Cavell's fascination straight to those singular, poetic moments.

There are echoes of all these ideas in Ruiz's writing, though often carried by Ruiz's blunter style. In the second volume of *Poetics of Cinema* he asserts that 'cinema is condemned to be poetic'.<sup>22</sup> He also paraphrases with approval the Chilean poet Jorge Teillier's remark that 'any film no matter how terrible ... would have at least five minutes of good poetry'. And he suggests that for these reasons 'cinema breaks out or it seeks to break out from quality criteria which ... can be applied to all the other arts'.<sup>23</sup> In the book's first volume he explicitly relates these phenomena to Benjamin's optical unconscious (to which he devotes an entire chapter): in other words, that 'mass of details which remain invisible to the naked eye and which the lens renders eloquent'.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, we should note how much of Ruiz's concerns about film's capacity to capture involuntary human gestures, and its consequent poetry, is informed by his peculiar reception of Nietzsche's notion of the *eternal recurrence of the same*. (Two of Ruiz's major French films of the 1970s, *L'Hypothèse du tableau volé* [*The Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting*, 1978] and *La vocation suspendue* [*The Suspended Vocation*, 1978], were collaborations with Pierre Klossowski, author of the classic 1969 study of the eternal recurrence, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*.)<sup>25</sup> For Cavell and Ruiz alike, Nietzsche's proposal of seeing one's life as a repeatable cycle played a variety of roles in articulating their visions of film: including, for Cavell, a way of figuring both film's automatic reproducibility and the forms of 'diurnal repetitiveness' and 'festivity' communicated in remarriage comedies.<sup>26</sup> In Ruiz's case, Nietzschean notions of recurrence allowed him to express his attraction to ouroboros- or Möbius-strip-like narratives that refused closure,<sup>27</sup> as well as the distinctive kinds of repetitiveness and circularity manifested by 'immortal stories' and folkloric legends.<sup>28</sup>

In fact, these notions of recurrence are at least doubly related to Ruiz's thinking about the optical unconscious and film's ability to capture the involuntary and accidental. On the one hand, the singular moments caught on film can constitute the concrete particularization of an immortal story or transtemporal legend. On the other hand, a wide collection of such singular moments (which Ruiz connected to Aby Warburg's 'museum of reproductions', or *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*)<sup>29</sup> would 'point out the continuity of the same gestures, the same human attitudes, and the same intensity of feeling throughout history'.<sup>30</sup> In other words, for Ruiz, filmic poetry not only consisted of capturing singular moments, but also of situating them within the wider context of, as Cavell happened to put it, 'the repetitive needs of the body and the soul'.<sup>31</sup> The possibilities of an audiovisual medium communicating those repetitive needs will become especially important when we turn, in the following part, to both Cavell's and Ruiz's thinking about television.

### *An Overly Simple Reconciliation between Cavell and Ruiz*

But before coming to television, I have to address what already suggests itself as an easy reconciliation between Cavell's and Ruiz's thinking about film. The proposed reconciliation would go as follows. Ruiz memorably criticized classical Hollywood narrative via his objections to 'central conflict theory', which he associated with certain applications of Aristotle's *Poetics*, with Ibsen and Shaw, and with the contemporary film scholar David Bordwell.<sup>32</sup> For Ruiz, whose anti-imperialism characterized his earlier documentary work in Chile in support of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government and continued in his exile following the 1973 US-backed coup, this critique was political as well as aesthetic. (In *Poetics of Cinema* he says of 'the globalization of central conflict theory' and US imperialism: 'Such synchronicity between the artistic theory and political system of a dominant nation is rare in history; rarer still is its acceptance by most of the countries in the world.'<sup>33</sup>) Thus, what attracted Ruiz to Hollywood B movies and films like Edgar Ulmer's *The Black Cat* (1934) were not the 'claims' made by their narratives upon him, but rather the non-narrative poetic qualities lying in the imperfections (including continuity errors) that escaped classical narrative impositions.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, Cavell did not share Ruiz's specific political commitments, and his defense of Hollywood's intellectual importance did not take into account those critiques of US dominance, like Latin American Third Cinema, that were integral to the context of Ruiz's early working years.<sup>35</sup> Cavell's filmic frames of reference were much wider than his reputation sometimes suggests, but we cannot deny that even his writing on filmic 'modernism' and 'neo-Hollywood' is mostly framed by works abiding by classical narrative structures of the sort Ruiz criticized.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the proposed reconciliation would remind us of Cavell's comparative focus on singular poetic moments within classical narrative structures. Therefore, once we factor out the differences in politics and tastes, as well as somewhat differing senses of

significant ‘accidents’ on film—continuity errors never seemed to have the poetic significance for Cavell that they had for Ruiz<sup>37</sup>—there is no impediment to understanding Cavell as primarily a reader of Ruizian moments in classical narrative cinema: of those singular poetic moments spilling out of those structures.

What makes this reconciliation overly simple is that it discounts even larger differences between Cavell and Ruiz regarding their conceptions of the forms of bearers of filmic significance, of film’s hold on our attention, and perhaps most importantly of the model spectator. Sketching out some of these differences will be the concern of the rest of this part of the chapter, allowing us to understand better the importance of a possible encounter between Cavell and Ruiz via television.

I have already noted how Cavell’s receptions of modernism and auteurism informed his sense in *The World Viewed*, as well as in some later writing, of films as ‘complete’, ‘finished’, ‘autonomous’ works by identifiable makers.<sup>38</sup> In contrast, commentators have frequently noted Ruiz’s ‘baroque’ or ‘postmodernist’ emphasis on the filmic fragment as both a bearer of significance and of awaiting significance to be added by the spectator.<sup>39</sup> Thus, in Ruiz’s memorable formulation, ‘when we see a film of 500 shots, we also see 500 films’,<sup>40</sup> the 500 films are meant to be products of the viewers’ creative imaginations: Ruiz is adamant in refusing the former, *official* film any ontological priority other than as a springboard for the latter imaginings. Cavell instead associates the filmic spectator with the viewing of a kind of work that does not lack completeness—or rather, if it did, it would raise doubts about the auteur’s commitments and responsibilities to the viewer. Moreover, in *The World Viewed* the model spectator viewing a complete work is understood to be ‘absent’ from the world screened, as well as relieved from the responsibilities of agency that Cavell thinks characterize, say, the procedures of theatre, such as the audience’s participation in the conventions sustaining the performance of a play.<sup>41</sup> Thus, for Cavell it needs to be emphasized that this spectator is absent from a film that is fixed across projections, a relation that contrasts with the variability across performances (including varying relations between spectators and actors) that characterizes live theatre.<sup>42</sup>

While Ruiz hardly denies that something like Cavell’s model might characterize the typical film spectator of classical or well-formed ‘complete’ narratives, he prizes the spectator who operates as an ‘experimental delinquent’.<sup>43</sup> For this kind of spectator, who playfully shirks the claims that a well-formed narrative might make on them, film viewing is neither associated with relief from agency nor with, as Cavell once put it, a ‘moving image of skepticism’,<sup>44</sup> but rather with something approaching an equal encounter between two agencies. According to Ruiz, a film ‘is aesthetically valid insofar as the film views the spectator [eliciting these forms of creative delinquency] as much as the spectator views the film’.<sup>45</sup> Ruiz’s dialogic conception of the relation between film and spectator likewise plays a role in his discomfort with strong emphases on differences in variability between film projection



and theatre performance.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, it appears that Ruiz's attraction to interactive video-discs and arborescent narratives—in 1996 he produced with students an interactive CD-ROM adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Suicide Club*—had to do with their making explicit a way in which there had always been space for the imaginative, 'delinquent' spectator even within older film formats.<sup>47</sup> Also, it is especially in those moments in which we spectators are near-asleep or bored, having lost the story's thread, that, thanks to the resulting oneiric expanse, 'we can finally say that we are *in* the film'.<sup>48</sup> Thus, for Ruiz, who contrasted these oneiric moments with how our attention was seized by well-constructed classical narratives, there was much at stake in opposing models of spectatorship that combined narrative completeness with an image of the spectator as *outside* the film.

### *Consequences of Creative Reading versus Creative Making of Films*

These are some seemingly harsh contrasts—and the present unavoidability of interactivity in digital audiovisual media might anachronistically bias us towards Ruiz's side—so we need to recognize the extreme subtlety and provocation with which Cavell expresses his perspective. The last chapter of *The World Viewed*, in particular, presents a beautiful, finely drawn account of film's hold on our attention as well as an important challenge to easy invocations of the spectator's imagination. But it is also the expression of a very particular sensibility about film. There Cavell notes that, 'Those who miss serious radio will say that, unlike television, it left room for the imagination. That seems to me a wrong praise of imagination, which is ordinarily the laziest, if potentially the most precious, of human faculties.'<sup>49</sup> He then says of the 'world of sounds' projected by radio and the 'world of sights' projected by silent film that '[i]n neither is imagination called upon'.<sup>50</sup> A few pages later, in discussing connections between film and Wittgenstein on aspect-seeing, Cavell does in fact call upon imagination, but with some notable restraints: 'unlike the triangle and the duck-rabbit and all other optical illusions, I must surround the [photographed] face with a reality—as though the seeing of a reality is the imagining of it'.<sup>51</sup> That is, we cannot surround the filmed face with just any imagining: it must be grounded in 'a reality', or one of the many 'incompatible' realities that film presents and that 'vie for my imagination'.<sup>52</sup>

In the same chapter Cavell can even begin to sound like Ruiz in saying that film 'escapes Aristotelian limits according to which the possible has to be made probable'.<sup>53</sup> But following a wonderful list of accepted improbabilities in classic Hollywood stories, he explains our acceptance of, say, filmic 'werewolves and vampires' as grounded in 'the knowledge which makes acceptable film's absolute control of our attention'.<sup>54</sup> Ruiz was no less fascinated by these narrative improbabilities, but—as a champion of the creative possibilities of distracted, oneiric spectatorship—he found little to cherish in our acceptance of them in contexts of absolute attention. Rather, these improbabilities were

important because they allowed our minds to wander, rendering these films' images parts of our very own films.

Cavell is rightly remembered as a philosopher who made the case for wide creative possibilities in reading, and even wide creative possibilities in the attribution of an author's intentions.<sup>55</sup> If he did not allow for the same relative limitlessness in a work's constitution that Ruiz did, this also had to do with his sense of the responsibilities of defining works that would allow for meaningful disagreements in readings.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, some of these differences between Cavell and Ruiz can be attributed to the differences in perspective between a creative reader of films and a creative maker of films. (Cavell might sometimes take the perspective of a film director, but this is always in the course of a reading of a given film, not in the course of appropriating fragments that would yield new films.<sup>57</sup>) It is part of the convenience in contrasting Cavell and Ruiz that they conscientiously articulated these different perspectives through a difference between, respectively, the picture of a spectator being on the *outside* and that of being on the *inside* of a film.

What happens to these perspectives when they are confronted by television?

## Time and Recurrence on Television

### *Ruiz and Television*

Ruiz's filmmaking life was a life of deep involvement with television. Following his earliest filmmaking efforts as well as a period of travel in the US, in 1964–65 Ruiz spent six to eight months in Mexico, where he linked up with Chilean producer of Mexican *telenovelas* Valentín Pimstein, one of the architects of what would eventually become the Televisa *telenovela* empire.<sup>58</sup> By Ruiz's account he was hired to write dialogue for the endings of episodes, into which he would surreptitiously insert lines of poetry by Eliot and Pound.<sup>59</sup> One Pimstein-produced *telenovela* for which he wrote complete episodes was *María Isabel* (1966), a classic of the format, and one to which Ruiz would later make extended reference in his Chilean feature *Palomita blanca* (*Little White Dove*, 1973, released 1992).<sup>60</sup> Ruiz would later also draw on *telenovelas* in his US production *The Golden Boat* (1990) and most conspicuously in *La telenovela errante* (*The Wandering Soap Opera*, 1990, finished and released in 2017).

Beyond his stay in Mexico, Ruiz's formative period in the 1960s also included his involvement in a variety of television programming, including editing sports coverage for Chilean TV.<sup>61</sup> Following his exile in 1973, television was integral to his production. The West German channel ZDF funded the filming in Honduras of *Utopía o el cuerpo repartido y el mundo al revés* (*Utopia or the Scattered Body and the World Upside Down*, 1975).<sup>62</sup> After that, much of Ruiz's work in France in the late 1970s and early 1980s was supported by efforts from L'Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA) to bring non-mainstream film to French television (though only a portion of Ruiz's work



in fact made it to the air).<sup>63</sup> One of Ruiz's major works of the 1980s, *Manuel na Isla Das Maravilhas/Manoel dans l'île des merveilles* (*Manuel on the Island of Wonders* or *Manoel's Destinies*, 1984), was presented in distinct miniseries formats for Portuguese and French television.<sup>64</sup> Also, incorporating elements of television was central to Ruiz's feature films: in *Treasure Island* (1985, which also happened to feature Mexican *telenovela* star Pedro Armendáriz Jr.) the film's plot becomes fantastically melded with the production of a TV action-adventure series.

It seems that the period around 1989–90 (that is, of Ruiz's stay at Harvard, and the time when he was beginning to think through the ideas that would constitute the first volume of *Poetics of Cinema*) was of special importance for his thinking about television. He originally wanted his fall 1989 film-making course to allow students to 'create a simulation of a television schedule', including 'talk shows, news, serial dramas, games', although apparently he did not follow through on this plan.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the feature he directed while at Harvard, *The Golden Boat*, a collaboration in New York with the performance group The Kitchen, incorporated elements of not only Mexican *telenovelas*, but also sitcom laugh tracks and TV crime dramas. Since March 1990 marked the end of Pinochet's military dictatorship, later that year Ruiz returned to Chile to test the new freedom of expression available in his native country.<sup>66</sup> The resulting unfinished experiment, *La telenovela errante* (finished posthumously by Ruiz's wife and collaborator, the accomplished filmmaker Valeria Sarmiento), drew from Ruiz's impression of post-dictatorship Chile as a kind of *telenovela*.<sup>67</sup> Some elements of the unfinished film made their way into the Chilean setting of Ruiz's 1991 contribution to *A TV Dante*, a series for the UK's Channel 4 that originated with Tom Phillips and Peter Greenaway.

Importantly, the last decade of Ruiz's life was often characterized by projects that brought together questions about TV formats, Chilean national identity, 'immortal stories', and folkloric legends. These included his 2002 experimental documentary series for Chile's Ministry of Education, *Cofralandes*, as well as his two late series for TVN (Chile's national public television channel), *La recta provincia* (2007) and *Litoral* (2008).<sup>68</sup> (We might also include here Ruiz's internationally successful 2010 series *Mistérios de Lisboa* [*Mysteries of Lisbon*], in which Portugal arguably functions as a displaced Chile.<sup>69</sup>) In the following part of the chapter I will discuss the special importance that I think *Litoral* has in relation to the issues already raised in the previous part about narrative and spectatorship. For the rest of this part I want to say a little more about Ruiz's thinking on television, seriality, and *telenovelas*, in light of those previous issues, and how it allows for a striking possible encounter with Cavell's writing on television.

### *Delinquent Spectatorship and 'The Fact of Television'*

A large factor in Ruiz's attraction to televisual formats was that, unsurprisingly, they facilitated kinds of delinquent spectatorship. The medium's reliance

on what Cavell called 'switching' between currents or modes of programming allows for a special amorphousness in the constitution of works that would have been attractive to Ruiz's 'baroque' emphasis on the aesthetic potential of the fragmentary and of what spectators can make out of the fragments they encounter in audiovisual media. This is the kind of amorphousness sometimes at play in concerns among TV scholars about where a broadcast work begins or ends, and thanks to which we can find an almost Ruizian style of TV viewing pursued with deliberate seriousness in, for example, a representative 1983 article by Mike Budd, Steve Craig, and Clay Steinman that analyzed a single 1981 broadcast of *Fantasy Island* as though the commercials were inseparable from the episode itself.<sup>70</sup> We of course find this amorphousness, and the attendant opportunities for delinquent spectatorship, even further facilitated when we switch between TV channels. This was of particular interest to Ruiz, who in *Poetics of Cinema* sketches a 'theoretical fiction', in which he imagines switching between channels, finding the same 'little man' in each program, as though he were being followed by this person across the switching.<sup>71</sup> It is important in noting Ruiz's sense of the continuity between channel-switching and delinquent filmic spectatorship—particularly if we recall Ruiz wanting to figure the latter as our being *inside* films—that his vignette ends with the realization that the little man on TV is himself: 'our own image'.<sup>72</sup>

Some of the foregoing might risk overstating the audiovisual anarchism that Ruiz located in television, since in his notes towards the third volume of *Poetics of Cinema* he also associates TV programming with a certain regularity and timelessness that he likens to the popular legends and recipes pervading eighteenth-century almanacs.<sup>73</sup> The idea that TV consists of an 'argument' between 'time as repetition' and 'time as transience' (we might add, between regularity and delinquency) is itself central to Cavell's essay 'The Fact of Television'.<sup>74</sup> But in order to appreciate that idea's importance we have to understand that when Cavell was invited to write that essay in 1982 he was not prepared to display anything like the comfort with televisual formats that Ruiz consistently showed.

There are several reasons for this, including Cavell's avowed familiarity with film and early radio rather than TV, as well as of course the then-widespread distrust of TV among intellectuals that he interrogates in that essay. But another major factor is that TV's aesthetic principles can present problems for Cavell insofar as he views them through what we have already seen as his perspective on the 'autonomy' of films. In other words, Cavell's approach is the exact converse of what makes TV unproblematic from the perspective of Ruiz's views on cinema: they both see the medium's constituent parts as heteronomous. Thus, again, for Cavell the medium is characterized by forms of 'switching' between modes and currents rather than by the forms of narrative 'succession' that he tends to associate with autonomous films.<sup>75</sup> Even when it comes to narrative formats on TV, he understands them to be related to each other not as autonomous works (in the way that autonomous

films might be related to each other through the relation that Cavell calls 'genre-as-medium'), or as parts of an autonomous work (like the stages of a classical narrative), but rather as members of a series, a relation that he calls 'undialectical'.<sup>76</sup>

Despite or because of Cavell's bemusement with some of these features of television, his account of the medium contains great insights, some of which are prepared for by his remarks on soap operas. Early on Cavell notes a relation between soap operas and resistance to classical endings.<sup>77</sup> He later takes an interest in another non-classical feature of soap operas, namely their exceptionally long running spans. (This is in effect Cavell's approach to Dennis Porter's much-quoted observation that, unlike classical Aristotelian narrative's beginning, middle, and end, the soap opera 'belongs to a separate genus that is entirely composed of an indefinitely expandable middle'.<sup>78</sup>) Then, remarkably comparing these long running spans to the ambitions of the French *Annales* historians (their 'getting beyond the events and the dramas of history to the permanencies, or anyway to the longer spans, of common life'), Cavell reconsiders the importance of his earlier remark that 'serial procedure is undialectical'. He says, 'the span of soap operas can allow them to escape history, or rather to require the modification of the concept of history, of history as drama'.<sup>79</sup> What Cavell soon arrives at is the important insight that serial procedure allows for a peculiar relation between 'dramatic, transient' episodes and exactly those 'undialectical', *undramatic* permanencies: 'what is under construction [in serial procedure] is an argument between time as repetition and time as transience'.<sup>80</sup> (Cavell here links this insight to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, presumably thinking of its formulations of the eternal recurrence.) Thus, extraordinarily, having begun with some uncertainty about what to make of TV serialization's heteronomous parts, Cavell arrives at the suggestion that long-running soap operas might have the power to place transient narratives within the wider context of what he elsewhere calls 'the repetitive needs of the body and the soul'.<sup>81</sup>

### *The Fact of Telenovelas*

I have emphasized Ruiz's lifelong relation to *telenovelas*, and much of what Cavell says about soap operas could certainly help to account for this abiding relation in Ruiz's work. The daily serial procedures that Latin American *telenovelas* share with US daytime soap operas relieve expectations about classical endings within individual episodes. (Here we should recall Ruiz's personal relation with writing episode endings for Mexican *telenovelas*.) Also, daily serial-episode procedure can resist the easy application of 'central conflict theory' insofar as the format allows for the proliferation of conflicts, without any single conflict occupying our attention. (It must be admitted that, in the case of *telenovelas*, the fuller possibilities of such proliferation, which Argentine scholar Oscar Steimberg has called the format's late 'postmodern' or 'neo-baroque' style, were not explored in the format until well after Ruiz's work for Pimstein in Mexico.<sup>82</sup>)

In fact, while Cavell locates soap operas' capacity to escape 'history as drama' in their long running spans, this points to a major difference between US soaps and Latin American *telenovelas*. Despite their shared daily serial procedures, while soaps resist closure in their open running spans, *telenovelas* typically have contained running spans (usually about a year) and determinate story arcs and central characters (out of which the proliferation of conflict might still result).<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, the *telenovela* format allows for its own distinctive relation to recurrence and 'immortal stories'—its own way of constructing an 'argument' between transient dramas and repetition—that we can imagine would have particularly fascinated Ruiz. I am referring to the forms of resurrection that take place *between* series.

On the one hand, as Ana M. López puts it, 'Whereas the US soap's lack of closure implies a spectator that is knowledgeable of the history of a specific community, the *telenovela* spectator recognizes actors and stars and awaits their appearance and fictional reincarnation in each new *telenovela*.'<sup>84</sup> This form of resurrection is already familiar from film, indeed from Cavell's writing on stardom, though there are likely unique dialectical possibilities arising between it and daily serial procedures.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, the stories themselves can be resurrected: *telenovelas* have historically relied on both synchronic 'remakes' (production of preexisting scripts for specific national markets) and diachronic remakes (the retelling of established stories). Beyond the many remakes of televisual classics like the Peruvian *Simplemente María* (which shared some basic plot elements with *María Isabel*, itself remade by Televisa in 1997),<sup>86</sup> remakes are regularly produced of stories that stretch back to the *telenovela's* origins in Cuban *radionovelas* of the 1940s.<sup>87</sup> In 2001 Televisa produced its third televisual version of the Cuban radio classic *El derecho de nacer* (1948). In 2010 it was estimated that sixty percent of Televisa's *telenovela* productions were remakes.<sup>88</sup> Thus, whereas Cavell sees in soap operas an argument between transient daily episodes and the recurrences offered by long durations, in *telenovelas* we can often see an argument between transient daily episodes and recurrent, 'immortal' stories.

The late Spanish-Colombian communications theorist Jesús Martín-Barbero is especially known for linking some of these features of *telenovelas* to oral storytelling traditions.<sup>89</sup> For him, the *telenovela* preserved from those traditions the predominance of a 'telling to' relation between program and spectator.<sup>90</sup> I have already presented the differences between Cavell and Ruiz on film spectatorship as differences between a perspective in which it is natural to talk about a spectator's being *outside* a film and one in which it is natural to talk about their being *inside* a film. For all Cavell's willingness in 'The Fact of Television' to note differences between film and television, including the differences in perception that he calls 'viewing' a film versus 'monitoring' TV, he does not explicitly consider the possible inapplicability in television of his earlier picture of our *absence* from a world screened.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, in closing this part of the chapter, I want to note two features

of *telenovelas* and soap operas that raise the question of this earlier picture's inapplicability.

*Telenovelas, Soap Operas, and the Limits of 'Absence'*

The first of these features could be understood as alluded to by Martín-Barbero's treatment of the 'telling to' relation in *telenovelas*. When a transtemporal and trans-geographic story is understood as rendered for one's particular historical moment, one's particular demographic,<sup>92</sup> or one's nation or community, that concrete particularization will not seem like an autonomous work available to just any audience, but specifically as *told to 'us'*. These formats can thus stand in for a wider phenomenon of targeted audiovisual material that, when we are made conscious of this relation, can be unsettling in the frank presentation of what is specifically designed to speak to our desires, needs, and fantasies (or authors' interpretations of those fantasies). At the extreme, once we have uncovered something of the recurrent desires that Cavell suggested these serial formats can open up to us, we can find ourselves presented with fictionalized reflections of those aspects of ourselves (our naked fantasies and desires) that, if we were to encounter them in reality—as Freud proposed—might lead us to flee the scene.<sup>93</sup> (As consummate corporate products, both *telenovelas* and soap operas were early adopters of focus-group strategies and of viewer feedback in determining story arcs.<sup>94</sup> Data-collection by digital streaming platforms can now pursue these strategies with alarming precision.)

The second respect in which *telenovelas* and soap operas can be understood as putting pressure on the idea of a spectator's *absence* also connects with Martín-Barbero's 'telling to' relation, but more specifically with the spectator's role in filling in gaps between the series' discrete episodic parts. Discussing Proust's idea that an author ideally gives a reader an optical instrument with which to understand themselves, Gérard Genette says that 'the real author of the narrative is not only he who tells it, but also, and at times even more, he who hears it'.<sup>95</sup> In a similar vein, and drawing on ideas from reader-response theory, the soap opera scholar Robert C. Allen discusses the 'structuring gaps of the text', which 'mark the point of intersection between the horizon represented within the text and the horizon brought to the text by the reader'.<sup>96</sup> For Allen, the soap opera (and here we can include the *telenovela* as well) is a format much of whose interest rests with its extreme dependence on regular structuring gaps—daily gaps between weekday screenings, followed by a weekend gap—within which 'the viewpoint of the reader is free to wander'.<sup>97</sup> Noël Carroll also discusses the special way in which soap operas allow for viewers to take over the storytelling function, facilitating 'gossip' between broadcasts.<sup>98</sup> (These practices continue with broadcasts of *telenovelas* and soap operas to this day, thanks to which they can constitute an interesting contrast to gapless 'binge'-watching on streaming platforms.)

Thus, even though we had earlier understood Ruiz's talk of delinquent spectatorship and the viewer's presence in films as coming from his perspective

as a filmmaker looking to make new films out of audiovisual fragments, we also have reason to think that something in those ideas (which contrast with Cavell's treatment of the film spectator's *absence*) characterizes the typical condition of the spectator of certain gap-based serial formats. Having brought together these elements of serial television (Cavell's 'argument' between repetition and dramatic transience, the spectator's self-recognition via both the presentation of their fantasies and their creative involvement in continuing a story with gaps), we are now prepared to examine the reflections on storytelling presented in Ruiz's late series *Litoral*.

### *Litoral*, Storytelling, and Spectatorship

#### *Introducing Ruiz's Litoral*

In 2006 Ruiz signed a contract to write and direct three series with TVN that would mark the beginning of the channel's celebrations of Chile's bicentennial.<sup>99</sup> Ultimately Ruiz only produced two of these series, both concerned with folkloric and storytelling traditions in Chile: *La recta provincia* (2007), which focused on rural storytelling traditions, and *Litoral* (2008), which focused on, as its subtitle put it, 'tales of the sea', as well as some urban folklore, set in and around the port city of Valparaíso.<sup>100</sup> (Both are period series with fantastic contemporary interventions; *Litoral* appears to be set in the 1930s to 1940s but also allows for modern cars, cell phones, and email.) The four episodes of *Litoral*, which will be my concern for the rest of this chapter, aired on Saturdays at 10pm in September 2008, garnering, as Alejandra Rodríguez-Remedi tells us, 'higher-than-feared (though admittedly unexceptional) ratings'.<sup>101</sup> The two series for TVN not only reflected Ruiz's lifelong attachment to fantasy and folklore but also, it seems, formed his response to what he saw as that era's interest in 'folkloric films', among which he mentioned the film versions of *The Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001–03) and *The Golden Compass* (Chris Weitz, 2007).<sup>102</sup> It also seems that in this period Ruiz was continuing to think about *telenovelas* and their connections to older narrative formats.<sup>103</sup>

According to Ruiz, the stories composing *Litoral* were inspired by those he would hear from his father, a merchant marine captain.<sup>104</sup> Also, for him what set *Litoral* apart from *La recta provincia* was its introduction of a 'formal experiment', in that the later series did not just present stories or their narration by characters but also the process of their 'production'.<sup>105</sup> the process of inventing or retelling stories *to others*, thus incorporating the possibilities of others' interruption, collaboration, and revision. Despite these interesting ambitions, *Litoral* has not received as much attention as other late work for TV by Ruiz (like *Cofralandes* and *Mysteries of Lisbon*), and even somewhat less attention than *La recta provincia*. A major reason for this, I believe, is that it is easy to treat *Litoral* as simply a late rehashing of the elements of one of Ruiz's earlier international successes, his 1983 French film *Les trois couronnes du matelot* (*Three Crowns of the Sailor*). Both the series and the film



concentrate on ghost ships—the *Lucerna* in *Litoral*, the *Funchalense* in *Three Crowns*—based on the legend from Chiloé (the region of Ruiz’s birthplace in southern Chile) of the *Caleuche*, a wandering ship occupied by the souls of disappeared sailors.<sup>106</sup> Also, both works employ metanarratives involving storytelling sailors, just as they both develop the notion of the maritime ‘immortal story’, with allusions to the short story of that name by Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen) and its 1968 film adaptation by Orson Welles.<sup>107</sup>

Nevertheless, according to Michael Goddard, Ruiz was unsatisfied with *Three Crowns of the Sailor*, particularly its overly rigid script, and in a 2004 interview Ruiz said that he found that film’s success ‘grating’.<sup>108</sup> Thus, the question of *Litoral*’s narrative innovations partly turns on Ruiz’s reasons for returning decades later to a work he had somewhat disavowed. My contention is that Ruiz found in episodic, televisual formats possibilities for exploring the narrative open-endedness and repetition that he thought was natural for *Litoral*’s themes (and that, presumably, he regretted not being able to explore fully in *Three Crowns of the Sailor*). From what we know of Ruiz’s ambitions for the series—of showing the ‘production’ of stories—and what we have seen of Cavell’s views on the philosophical possibilities of repetition on serial TV, this would indeed seem like a natural fit: a series that could link different stories to our recurrent needs and desires might also capture our recurrent motivations in telling, receiving, and revising stories. Ruiz was of course limited in a four-episode miniseries as far as the kinds of repetition and openness he could explore. But therein also lies *Litoral*’s inventiveness. The series is one of Ruiz’s most radical experiments in ouroboros- or Möbius-strip-like narratives, so that while the *storytelling* ends after four episodes the *story* itself is revealed never to end, or even to have a determinate beginning. (The series also has a way of suggesting that storytelling can partake in its own atemporality, which I will address further below.) It does this through a proliferation of forms of temporal loops, *mise en abyme* (narratives containing themselves), metalepsis (interactions between characters across narrative levels), and the undoing of any supposedly privileged metanarrative level, so that each storytelling level contains all the others.<sup>109</sup>

*Litoral* is clearly not a *telenovela*, though one of its component stories is a kind of *radionovela*, and its DigiBeta shooting format gives it the distinctive look of inexpensive TV productions of the era, including many *telenovelas* and soap operas.<sup>110</sup> It must be admitted that Ruiz employed variations on the just-mentioned narrative devices throughout his filmic work, and he was obviously inspired by similar devices in films he admired, like the stories-within-stories and *mise en abyme* structure of the Polish director Wojciech Has’s *Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie* (*The Saragossa Manuscript*, 1965).<sup>111</sup> My claim, though, is that *Litoral* represents a special convergence of those narrative devices and episodic televisual formats. This convergence allows, in a Cavellian vein, for the series’ ‘argument’ between transient narratives and the recurrent needs lying behind those narratives. It also allows, as we will see, for a poignant representation of a spectator as ‘inside’ a story of their own making.

### *Litoral and Fantasy*

I am developing the idea that *Litoral* explores the role of fantasy in the construction of stories, and specifically how fantasy mediates a relation between transient, 'classical' narratives and recurrent, 'undialectical' needs. Therefore, before discussing some of the individual stories composing *Litoral*, I want to mention the prominence the series gives to homosocial, heterosexual male fantasy, and specifically its display of how stories about women are constructed by men and for men. On the one hand, the women in *Litoral*'s stories are very frequently represented as supplicating to heterosexual male fantasies in their roles as sex workers, wives, and lovers, and these stories frequently turn on questions of their 'faithfulness' to certain men. On the other hand, we know from the beginning that these stories ultimately originate among the male storytelling sailors aboard the *Lucerna* (even if the series also complicates the notion of a privileged metanarrative level).

A reading of *Litoral* as implicitly feminist would rightly strain credibility: the series shares its world and sensibility with the male world of the *Lucerna*.<sup>112</sup> Still, we know that *Litoral* is in constant conversation not only with *Three Crowns of the Sailor* (for which similar worries arise), but also with a film that gives prominent place to issues of women's subordination, 'unknownness', and unrecognition: the 1990 film *Amelia Lopes O'Neill* by Valeria Sarmiento, Ruiz's wife and editor of *Litoral*, with a screenplay by Sarmiento and Ruiz. Sarmiento's film is consciously a melodrama of a woman's unknownness and unrecognition leading to her death: according to the feminist film critic Françoise Aude, the film 'spells out the consequences of machismo'.<sup>113</sup> (Much more needs to be said about *Amelia Lopes O'Neill*'s connection to Cavell's concept of the 'melodrama of the unknown woman' and its feminist critics.<sup>114</sup>) The film shares *Litoral*'s setting of 1930s–1940s Valparaíso, the same recurring bolero by Sarmiento and Ruiz's frequent collaborator Jorge Arriagada, and a male storyteller–male audience framing device. Most importantly, it shares a protagonist ('Amelia López' in *Litoral*) with several of *Litoral*'s stories, one of which (to be discussed below) is a clear remixing of elements from *Amelia Lopes O'Neill*.<sup>115</sup> Obviously, Ruiz's remixing of elements from his wife's film will raise for many its own questions of unrecognition. My present claim is that *Litoral*'s deliberate remixing of elements of a melodrama of unknownness like *Amelia Lopes O'Neill* makes these questions inescapable for the series' conception of itself: a conception that was itself the product of a remarkable decades-long collaboration between Sarmiento and Ruiz. This claim will be in the background of my discussion of the series' exploration of the role of fantasy in story construction.

### *Recounting Litoral*

I will now present the major events of *Litoral*'s four 45-minute episodes. 'Episode I' opens with words superimposed over a seascape: supposedly found on a hanged sailor who sailed on the *Lucerna*, they describe the ship as

occupied by crew members who were neither living nor dead. We then hear the voice-over narration of Ariel Cortínez (Santiago Meneguello), a new crew member on the *Lucerna* who has passed a week on the ship without seeing anyone; he spends his time reading comics that appear to show him passing time on that same ship, reading those same comics. (*Mise en abyme* self-looping characterizes the series' very first moments.) Finally Ariel is called to a ship's assembly where he meets the other crew members and learns that they spend their time telling stories. Lots are drawn: some members must jump the ship, while another who could very well be Ariel's physical double, Segundo Arrávida (Daniel Kiblsky), finds himself the night's appointed storyteller.

Segundo proceeds to tell the story, which we see played out, of his romance in San Felipe, near Valparaíso, with a woman called Amanda la Triste ('Amanda the Sad', Francisca Walker), three of whose boyfriends have died in accidents. As the story proceeds Segundo learns that Amanda has a 'brother', Ruperto (Juan Pablo Miranda), whose spirit and voice sometimes take over Amanda's body. Outside his wedding with Amanda, Segundo is warned against marrying her by a man (Hugo Medina) who says he is Amanda's father and a former crew member of the *Lucerna*. We see that at night the voices of Amanda and Ruperto have switched bodies, until Amanda's father arrives, shooting the body of Ruperto and causing both to collapse. As we return to the metanarrative on the *Lucerna*, Cabizbajo ('Crestfallen', Julio Silva Montes) expresses his disappointment with Segundo's story since it is no different from the Jewish tale of a *dybbuk* that he used to hear from his grandmother. After Segundo concedes that the story never happened to him, Ariel says that he is ready to continue the tale, and we now see the story of Ariel's romance with Amanda: including some of the same scenes as before, with Ariel in place of Segundo, though with Segundo still present, looking on as jealous witness. Newly married to Amanda in the story, Ariel goes to work with the arrogant Policarpo Parada (Pedro Vicuña), whom we have already seen as a crew member on the *Lucerna*. As Segundo yet again takes over as narrator, closing out the episode, we witness his bonding with Policarpo over the latter's stories, told in a bar for retired sailors.

'Episode II' opens with one of Policarpo's stories, beginning with his arrival on the *Lucerna*. (Though Cabizbajo says this was a different *Lucerna*, it is indistinguishable from the one in the metanarrative.) This story centers on a series of mysterious blank letters that arrived on the ship. Once it is deciphered that they in fact describe the captain's wife's affairs with the entire crew, it is decided to keep their contents a secret from the captain (Marcial Edwards), who nevertheless locks himself in his quarters, reciting poetry and growing literal horns. Though these are Policarpo's stories as told to Segundo, the latter is interrogated about them in the metanarrative on the *Lucerna*, even with Policarpo present. (That metanarrative was itself—we must remember—originally introduced by Ariel's voice-over narration.)

The narrative levels then become even more complicated. As Policarpo describes to Segundo his practice of illicitly reading the ship's mail, the narration is taken over by the sailor Esparta (Roberto Cobían) in a letter describing his mysterious encounter in the port of Caldera with the ghost Amelia López (Chamila Rodríguez), who took him back to 1934 to ask him to father her child. In this first story of Amelia López, Esparta refuses the offer because there would be no novelty in the story he could tell about it afterward. (It is indeed a version of the maritime 'immortal story' that appears in Karen Blixen's short story and Orson Welles' film.) On finishing the letter and disembarking in Valparaíso, Policarpo decides to follow the address marked in the several photos of Amelia López that he has found in the ship's mail, though what he in fact finds is a different haunted house occupied by triplets (Ana Laura Racz). When afterward a retired thief (Dióscoro Rojas) tells Policarpo that this house has been uninhabited for some time, he returns there, only this time to find Esparta and several other sailors gathering around Amelia López. Esparta answers equivocally to Policarpo's question about whether they are living or dead.

'Episode III' opens by reminding us that the previous stories have been relayed by Policarpo to Segundo, who has been relaying them to the 'contemporary' *Lucerna*. Policarpo and Segundo together walk to a teahouse/brothel, where Segundo interrogates Policarpo about the plausibility of his stories. (Ariel is shown following them, now playing the role of outside witness.) Policarpo then tells another story involving Amelia López, this time supposedly dictated by her in a letter to her husband, the ship's Third Officer (Nicolás Poblete)—which Policarpo had again illicitly read—describing her affair in Valparaíso with a man in a blue suit (Nicolás Eyzaguirre). Once word gets out on the ship about this, the Third Officer commits suicide. Again shown disembarking in Valparaíso, Policarpo is hailed from a slow-moving train by Amelia, who confesses that she had invented the story in the letter to make her husband jealous, and as a result of his suicide is now 'selling' her body. After they pass a 'night of love' together, Policarpo goes searching for Amelia, only to be told by a man on the train (Ignacio Agüero) that he had in fact been alone there the day of his supposed encounter with Amelia, and to be shown a newspaper headline of her murder several days earlier. Ultimately Policarpo encounters the ghosts of the Third Officer and Amelia, the latter dressed in a bridal gown, both waving to him from the slow-moving train, reconciled after death: their remarriage accompanied by Jorge Arriagada's bolero.

Policarpo finally parts from Segundo, saying that despite his story Amelia is still alive, and indeed right away Segundo finds her in the teahouse/brothel, with Amelia remarking on Policarpo's practice of incorporating those in his surroundings into his stories. Suddenly Segundo hears a radio program called *The Voice of Chile*, which turns out to be emanating from a real man squeezed inside the teahouse/brothel's radio, Antuco (Arturo Rossel), who also claims that Amanda la Triste works there and that he inherited the blue suit of one

of her dead boyfriends. Antuco then launches into the story of how he, like many others, had received the gift of a perfectly fitting blue suit from Inquilino ('Tenant', Francisco Medina), and after asking about the origins of these suits had found that they were delivered to Inquilino in a cemetery by a dead man, Finado ('Deceased', Eugenio Morales), in exchange for hot dogs. We then hear Finado's own account to Antuco of how this bizarre situation came about, beginning with his having worked with Inquilino as grave robbers when they were offered a large sum of money by Don Nadie ('Nobody', Hernán Vallejos) for the clothes they stole from the dead. But when Inquilino used this money to buy a produce shop, he found that his customers' purchases would spoil before they returned home.

'Episode IV' opens by repeating the scene of Inquilino's interactions with his customers and Don Nadie's explanation that his money is for squandering, not investing—hence cursed. Inquilino decides to accompany his customers to their homes, all while telling jokes (accompanied by laugh tracks). This moment leads to a remarkable exchange among narrative levels, as following his joke to a woman (Valentina Muhr), they both register their extradiegetic interruption by the voice of a customer in the teahouse/brothel (Daniel Isler), who insists that he knows the rest of their story, and whose story is in turn interrupted by Antuco's voice in the radio, and again by the extradiegetic voice of Cabizbajo on the *Lucerna*, who objects to the bewildered customer that they are telling stories, not giving classes on telling stories. As we return to Finado's story as told to Antuco, we learn that Finado's new taxi business had no more luck than Inquilino's produce business, again because the money from Don Nadie was cursed. Don Nadie then explains to Finado and Inquilino how he started buying up the clothes of the dead: it was work offered him by the demonic 'angel of tailors' Otto Carisma (Héctor Aguilar), whom he met at a magic show when he was financially ruined and near suicide, and who hinted to him that suits can contain souls. Following Finado's account of his own random murder, we now have the full story of how he began magically yielding blue suits from his grave. And with the story of his blue suit finally complete, Antuco leaves the radio, 'cramped' from his time inside there.

As we finally return to the metanarrative on the *Lucerna*, Segundo and Ariel are uncertain about which of them should continue the 'story'—we soon understand that they are referring to the story of Amanda la Triste that began in the first episode—and so it is suggested that they continue it together. We then see both Segundo and Ariel in the teahouse/brothel, witnesses to an exchange between Amanda and Amelia, uncertain whether this 'theatre scene' is meant 'for you or for me'. Ariel's voice-over narration gives way to Segundo's, describing his following Amanda and Amelia outside only to be hailed from a house by a man (Alvaro Rojas) who introduces himself as Ortega Calera, Amanda's dead first boyfriend. As Amanda's two other dead boyfriends enter the room (Maximiliano Golberg and an uncredited actor), they are introduced to a very perturbed Segundo ('Amanda's

current boyfriend') and examine petitions on the wall: this peculiar space includes not only photos of scenes from previous stories in the series, but also letters asking for miracles to be performed by the boyfriends, as if they were Catholic saints. Most importantly, the lights suddenly dim and behind a screen the boyfriends watch a scene acted out for them by Amanda and her father ('Father and daughter: the never-ending story', as Ortega puts it), set to sweeping dramatic music. As Amanda asks for her father's advice about a secret she is keeping from her husband, he pulls out a miniature model of the *Lucerna* that he bought from a supplier of items robbed from graves. This was, of course, Don Nadie, and in a scene of the sale we learn that it had belonged to a sailor of the shipwrecked *Lucerna* (on which Amanda's father had also sailed).

In a demonstration of the model's powers, Don Nadie blows on it, initiating a slow whispered version of the voice-over narration by Ariel with which the series began.<sup>116</sup> This model is the very same *Lucerna* as that in the metanarrative that has 'contained' the story of the model. Both living and dead, the crew members are also revealed to be both inside and outside this story, both miniature and large. Amanda's father has in fact been listening at night to the stories emitting from the model, and he now uses a magnifying glass to show Amanda the ship's crew members gathering to take a group photo (from which Segundo is strikingly excluded). Over close-ups of Segundo and Ariel, her father mysteriously says, 'There I am, and there is your current husband.' Following a deceptive 'The End' title (in English, hence Ruiz's mischievous nod to a Hollywood ending) and the music's swelling, the scene ends to the applause of the boyfriends, who talk about seeing other plays together ('a romance, a swashbuckler'), but also to Segundo's continued confusion and disturbance: he is now faced with being at once the spectator of a scene and stranded in a story of his own telling. Finally, over close-ups of the wall's photos and letters, we hear the voice of Policarpo reading a poem about the life and death of yet another sailor on the *Lucerna*, with Arriagada's bolero taking us out of the series one last time.

### *Litoral as an Argument between Different Temporalities*

This synopsis should make clear that *Litoral* is no ordinary series, though I am also arguing that its extraordinariness lies in its attention to the wider contexts for the telling of individual stories ('the repetitive needs of the body and the soul') that commonly arise for serial televisual formats. I am again referring to the way that soap operas can move beyond dramatic history towards undialectical 'permanencies', as Cavell suggests, as well as how *telenovelas* can constitute their own 'argument' between transtemporal, trans-geographic 'immortal stories' and their concrete particularizations for specific audiences. *Litoral* achieves this effect not only through its forms of temporal looping and its attention to the construction and revision of stories, which I have already mentioned, but also through its presentation of storytelling as something that takes place in realms located outside of time.



Thus, the series begins and ends with stories told in atemporal spaces occupied by the living dead: the *Lucerna* and the room shared by Amanda's 'sainted' boyfriends. The suggestion that storytelling originates in such realms could mean several things. For example, the generation of these atemporal spaces, especially the *Lucerna*, could be Ruiz's attempt to create audiovisual equivalents to the paradox formulated by Gérard Genette that, while we know that telling takes time, fictional narrators typically occupy nothing but the 'atemporal space of the narrative as text': a 'miraculous syncope' freed from time.<sup>117</sup> While there is strong reason to take this proposal seriously as a reading of *Litoral*, it still does not make contact with the series' specific character as a televisual series. Thus, I think there is even more promise in emphasizing the series' atemporal spaces as ways of figuring the first half of the 'argument' between 'time as repetition' and 'time as transience' that Cavell thinks characterizes serial formats like soap operas.

The other half of that 'argument' would, of course, be captured in the series' individual stories, many of which constitute a contrast with the above-mentioned atemporal spaces in their allowing for classical narrative structures. Some of these even participate in the classical narrative structures important to Cavell, most obviously in the story of remarriage between Amelia López and the Third Officer (which also happens to be the story that draws most heavily on elements from the melodrama *Amelia Lopes O'Neill*). The latter story also shows that the effects of Ruiz putting a classical, transient narrative in a wider, 'atemporal' context need not be ironizing or dismissive. On the contrary, even within the context of Policarpo's inventions and revisions, I find that story's final image of Amelia and the Third Officer on the slow-moving train, newly remarried after their deaths, accompanied by Arriagada's bolero, to be one of the most genuinely poetic and haunting images of remarriage, and its own distinctive way of 'inhabiting time', in either film or television.<sup>118</sup>

As that last point brings out, Cavell also associated those classical genres with their own distinctive temporalities: 'the melodramas [sketch] a past frozen and compulsively active in the present, the comedies [propose] an openness to the future'.<sup>119</sup> For Cavell these genres even displayed their own distinctive forms of recurrence, like the compulsion to repeat supposedly characteristic of the melodramas (and here we might connect that feature to Esparta's refusal, in *Litoral's* first Amelia López story, to be drawn into the compulsive repetitions of an 'immortal story'); or like the sense of 'diurnal repetitiveness' and 'festivity' characteristic of the remarriage comedies.<sup>120</sup> (The image that occasions Cavell connecting remarriage comedy to Nietzsche's eternal recurrence, the human figurines skipping into the clock at the end of *The Awful Truth* [Leo McCarey, 1937], is a natural companion to the image of Amelia López's posthumous remarriage.<sup>121</sup>) This observation fits well with the earlier proposal that Cavell locates moments of Ruizian poetry inside classical narratives: Ruiz was clear in his expectation that filmic poetry communicate temporal recurrences. Nevertheless, in 'The Fact of Television'

Cavell himself had to make the distinction between dramatic transiencies and the more radical, 'undialectical' permanencies communicated by long-running serial formats. These are the recurrences that are more difficult to grasp without moving outside classical notions of dramatic progression, including those structuring Hollywood genre films.<sup>122</sup> *Litoral* is remarkable in how it puts certain classical structures (including their respective notions of recurrence) in explicit conversation with the more radical permanencies underlying the impulse to tell stories, which the series communicates via its forms of temporal looping and its generation of atemporal spaces.

### *A Sideways-on View of Fantasy*

It is important to clarify the role of fantasy in the notion of an 'argument' between 'time as repetition' (or even atemporality) and 'time as transience' that I am claiming *Litoral* makes explicit. An interesting formulation of this role is provided by Slavoj Žižek when he says, 'Fantasy is the primordial form of narrative ... [and] narrative as such emerges in order to resolve some fundamental antagonism by rearranging its terms into a temporal succession.'<sup>123</sup> In a commentary on this passage given in the course of a compelling Lacanian reading of the work of David Lynch (whose temporal loops have sometimes been compared with Ruiz's), Todd McGowan says, 'we do not employ fantasy to escape from the horrors of time, [but rather] we employ fantasy to construct time as a respite from the horrors of repetition ... By providing a narrative and temporal structure through which we can have experiences, fantasy delivers us from the timeless repetition of the drive.'<sup>124</sup> In other words, it would be too horrible for us to face what Cavell calls 'the repetitive needs of the body and the soul' without some mediation by fantasy and the temporal, narrative categories that fantasy makes out of those needs.

The previous considerations are friendlier to Cavell's style of thinking (the existential seriousness he assigned to psychoanalysis, his own writing on fantasy in film) than they are to what was apparently Ruiz's habit of wanting to puncture certain psychoanalytic pretensions.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, in closing, I want to suggest how naturally these considerations fit with the very Ruizian idea of a spectator being *inside* an audiovisual story—or at least fit with how Ruiz expressed that idea at the end of *Litoral*. I should note that ideas of mediation can also seem to inform Ruiz's visual style, such as in his conspicuous uses of distorting, stretching anamorphic lenses, which in *Litoral* happen to be combined with shots mediated by liquids like water and even (at the beginning of the Amanda la Triste story) the traditional Chilean summer drink of wine with peaches.<sup>126</sup> These effects typically raise the question of from which fantasy-mediated perspective a given moment is being seen. Likewise, the notion of the spectator, thus drawing the viewer's attention to their own condition as such, is raised not only by the various recipients of the stories in *Litoral*, but also by the series' representations of Segundo and Ariel as witnesses *within* each other's stories.<sup>127</sup>

As I have repeatedly mentioned, the series ends with the poignant image of Segundo stuck within a story of his own creation (or a story somehow created between himself and Ariel). His perturbation throughout this moment only partially has to do with his realization that he has entered the ranks of Amanda's dead boyfriends and is now stuck within their shared atemporal space. Even more important is that, having passed through the various forms of story construction and atemporal spaces composing *Litoral*, he is now prepared to look sideways-on at the role of his own fantasies in his relation to the scene (again, presented behind a screen) between Amanda and her father. Segundo recognizes that the only thing standing between this 'transient' story and the more difficult questions about our permanent, 'undialectical' needs (represented by the *Lucerna*) is the rather frail—because revealed to be created by him—impositions of his own fantasies.

This is why Segundo is visibly troubled by the other boyfriends' easy acceptance of this scene, their treating it as no different from any of the other entertainments that, it is suggested, they regularly enjoy together. Knowing his role in the construction of the surrounding story, Segundo recognizes that the present entertainment could not exist without him: it is *for* him. Furthermore, if we are to understand the other boyfriends to have arrived at that same space via a learning process similar to Segundo's, then what is disturbing for him is not just their easy acceptance of the scene as entertainment, but their doing so knowing full well the role of their own fantasies in its making. Likened to saints, the boyfriends' cool acceptance of these clashing perspectives might be exactly what takes them outside of ordinary troubles and sensibilities. And then, the ordinary troubles and sensibilities represented by Segundo would be those that can lead to philosophical questioning.

For Ruiz, a philosophical-filmmaker, there was always a special impetus to give us an *image* of what it meant for a spectator to dream themselves inside a story. Cavell's own writing on film and television gives us a further sense of what that could mean, and what it could contrast with. The fact that *Litoral* relies steadily but idiosyncratically on recognizable televisual formats is a large part of why we can open ourselves up to its concluding image of Segundo placed permanently as a spectator within a narrative of his own creation, just as those same formats allow us to see ourselves in his situation, leaving us as haunted in this recognition as he is.<sup>128</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film, Enlarged Edition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), xiv, 7, 9, 108, 231n2.
- 2 Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 118, 160, 229.
- 3 Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 34–38.
- 4 Raúl Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, trans. Brian Holmes (Paris: Éditions Dis Voir, 1995), 9–23.

- 5 Ibid., 9–10, 60, 84–86. See also Michael Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz: Impossible Cartographies* (New York: Wallflower Press), 17, 90, 109, 119. Also Raúl Ruiz, *Entrevistas escogidas—filmografía comentada*, ed. Bruno Cuneo (Santiago: Diego Portales, 2013), 123–25, 140.
- 6 Raúl Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 2, trans. Carlos Morreo (Paris: Éditions Dis Voir, 2007), 61.
- 7 Stanley Cavell, ‘The Fact of Television’, in *Themes Out of School: Effects and Causes* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984).
- 8 Cavell, ‘The Fact of Television’, 265.
- 9 Personal correspondence on this question with Alfred Guzzetti, Robb Moss, Richard Peña, and William Rothman.
- 10 The two volumes and the material for the third volume are collected in Raúl Ruiz, *Poéticas del cine* (Santiago: Ediciones Diego Portales: 2013).
- 11 See Ruiz’s applications of Donald Davidson’s and Judith Jarvis Thomson’s theories of action in elaborating his opposition to ‘central conflict theory’: *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 13, 15, 18. See also Ruiz’s application of Jaakko Hintikka’s distinction between ‘recursive’ and ‘strategic’ linguistic paradigms to filmic narratives: *ibid.*, 85. We also know that Ruiz read a variety of contemporary Anglophone philosophers that included David Lewis (*Poéticas del Cine*, 367), Joshua Knobe (*ibid.*), Michael Dummett, Richard Rorty, and Alva Noë, among others: Ruiz, *Diario*, ed. Bruno Cuneo (Santiago: Ediciones Diego Portales, 2017), vol. 1, 127, 183; vol. 2, 569, 586. On Cavell and ‘conflict’, see Toril Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary: Literary Studies after Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 9–12.
- 12 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 7, 21, 22, 27, 70, 90, 114; vol. 2, 49, 58; *Poéticas del cine*, 408.
- 13 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 32, 48, 50, 51, 57–71; vol. 2, 77, 39, 87.
- 14 For Cavell on indiscriminateness, see *The World Viewed*, 3–15.
- 15 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 37, 278.
- 16 Stanley Cavell, ‘What Photography Calls Thinking’, in *Cavell on Film*, ed. William Rothman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 126.
- 17 Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 104, cf. 7.
- 18 Stanley Cavell, ‘The Thought of Movies’, in *Themes Out of School*, 14.
- 19 P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also Rebecca Sheehan’s use of Cavell in approaching Stan Brakhage’s lyrical films: *American Avant-Garde Cinema’s Philosophy of the In-Between* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 112–67.
- 20 Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 148.
- 21 Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 52.
- 22 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 2, 22.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 24 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 32.
- 25 Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

- 26 Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 263. The eternal recurrence is also a point of connection between Cavell and Deleuze that D.N. Rodowick emphasizes throughout *Philosophy's Artful Conversation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).
- 27 For example, forms of temporal looping characterize all the episodes of *The Twilight Zone* that, according to Alejandra Rodríguez-Remedi, Ruiz would show in his classes at the University of Aberdeen (2007–08): 'Walking Distance' (Robert Stevens, 1959), 'Young Man's Fancy' (John Brahm, 1962), and notably two different versions of 'Shadow Play' (John Brahm, 1961; Paul Lynch, 1986). See Rodríguez-Remedi, 'Raúl Ruiz, Speculative Bricoleur: Pedagogical and Televisual Ruptures', in *Raúl Ruiz's Cinema of Inquiry*, ed. Ignacio López-Vicuña and Andreea Marinescu (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 92. Another film that Ruiz would show, *Dead of Night* (Alberto Cavalcanti, Basil Dearden, Robert Hamer, Charles Crichton, 1945), in part fascinated him for having a looping structure that supposedly inspired Bondi, Gold, and Hoyle's cosmological hypothesis of a universe without beginning or end: *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 2, 108.
- 28 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 82, 120; *Poéticas del cine*, 417–35.
- 29 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 50–51. A Warburg-inspired Mnemosyne also makes an appearance in Ruiz's film *Généalogies d'un crime* (*Genealogies of a Crime*, 1997).
- 30 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 50–51.
- 31 Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 262.
- 32 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 14; *Entrevistas escogidas*, 144. For Bordwell's response to one of Ruiz's characterizations of his work, see 'Ruiz, Realism, and ... Me?', *Observations on Film Art*, August 7, 2011, [www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/08/07/ruiz-realism-and-me/](http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/08/07/ruiz-realism-and-me/) (accessed August 27, 2022).
- 33 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 21.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 84–86. See also Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz*, 109. For Ruiz on continuity errors, see also *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 23, 60, 109.
- 35 See Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, 'Towards a Third Cinema', in *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures*, ed. Scott MacKenzie (Berkeley: University of California Press); Jorge Sanjinés, 'Problems of Form and Content in Revolutionary Cinema', in *ibid.* Ruiz's own relation to Third Cinema was extremely complicated: see Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz*, 13, 23, 25, 106–07. For Ruiz's descriptions of his relation to Third Cinema, see *Entrevistas escogidas*, 29–35, 146–47, 184–85, 248, 301.
- 36 Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 76, 82.
- 37 See Cavell on shifts in continuity across reverse shots, and his question about whether anything could be meant by them: *The World Viewed*, 143.
- 38 See for example Stanley Cavell, 'On Makavejev on Bergman', in *Themes Out of School*. On this aspect of Cavell in relation to filmic fragments, see my 'Found Footage at the Receding of the World', *Screen*, vol. 63, no. 1 (Spring 2022), 123–29.
- 39 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 116–18; vol. 2, 72. One widely cited essay on Ruiz and the baroque is Christine Buci-Glucksmann, 'The Baroque Eye of the Camera (Part 1)', in *Raúl Ruiz: Images of Passage*, ed. Helen Bandis, Adrian Martin, and Grant McDonald (Melbourne: Rouge Press, 2004). See also Valeria de los Ríos, *Metamorfosis: Aproximaciones al cine y la poética de Raúl Ruiz* (Santiago: Ediciones Metales Pesados, 2019), 44–58.

- 40 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 2, 10.
- 41 Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 23, 26, 102.
- 42 Ibid., 228–30. On this theme in Cavell, see my ‘Accidents Made Permanent: Theater and Automatism in Stanley Cavell, Michael Fried, and Matías Piñeiro’, *MLN*, vol. 135, no. 5 (2020), 1283–314.
- 43 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 60. See also Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz*, 91, 109.
- 44 Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 188.
- 45 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 2, 10. A similar idea of a co-emergent and bilateral seer–seen relation between viewer and film is also central to Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
- 46 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 2, 110.
- 47 Ruiz, *Poéticas del cine*, 322–23. Ruiz’s *Suicide Club* CD-ROM was a collaboration with students from Duke University, Piedmont Community College, and the North Carolina School of the Arts. Patricia Yeh, ‘Epworth Becomes Stage for New Video Disk’, *Duke Chronicle*, November 25, 1996, <https://dukelibraries.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15957coll13/id/107701/rec/13> (accessed August 27, 2022).
- 48 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 119, my emphasis. This is also one of the major structuring ideas of Ruiz’s film *Mémoire des apparences* (*Life Is a Dream*, 1986).
- 49 Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 150. Here Cavell appears to be speaking from views on the imagination represented by Pascal: *Pensées and Other Writings*, trans. Honor Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16–20.
- 50 Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 150. For discussion of these passages in connection with Cavell’s views on sound in film, see Kyle Stevens, ‘The World Heard’, *Discourse*, vol. 42, nos. 1–2 (2020), 32–33.
- 51 Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 158.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid., 156.
- 54 Ibid., 157.
- 55 See Cavell, ‘A Matter of Meaning It’, in *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 225–37.
- 56 This idea is related to Cavell’s concerns with the grounds for pointing out what a divergent reading may be missing. See Cavell, ‘The Avoidance of Love’, in *ibid.*. Thanks to Joshua Kortbein for his suggestions on this question.
- 57 Cavell is often interested in characters serving as surrogates for the film director, though he usually emphasizes the director’s ability to stand back from a finished work. See *Pursuits of Happiness*, 66, 107–08, 218, 221.
- 58 Personal correspondence with Bruno Cuneo. Ruiz’s accounts of this period’s timeline would sometimes differ: see *Entrevistas escogidas*, 68–69, 125–26.
- 59 Ibid., 126.
- 60 On *María Isabel*, see Luis Reyes de la Maza, *Crónica de la telenovela: México sentimental* (Mexico City: Clío, 1999), 54–58.
- 61 According to Bruno Cuneo in personal correspondence, Ruiz worked for the program *Goles y marcas* (*Goals and Scores*), hosted by Sergio Brotfeld on the University of Chile’s Channel 9. On Ruiz’s other work for Chilean TV at this time, see *Entrevistas escogidas*, 125–26.



- 62 Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz*, 32.
- 63 Ibid., 37–58.
- 64 Ibid., 82.
- 65 Personal correspondence with Ruiz's former student, the filmmaker Laura Colella. The above quotations come from the official description of Ruiz's course: Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences, *Courses of Instruction 1989–1990*, vol. 11, no. 5, August 21, 1989, <https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.ARCH:100359777> (accessed August 27, 2022).
- 66 Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz*, 94. On a previous visit to Chile during Pinochet's dictatorship Ruiz did manage to make a short film for French television, *Lettre d'un cinéaste ou le retour d'un amateur de bibliothèques (Letter from a Filmmaker, or The Return of a Library Lover)*, 1983).
- 67 Ruiz, *Entrevistas escogidas*, 250. Despite the reference to *telenovelas* in the film's title, here Ruiz uses the more typically Chilean term '*teleserie*'.
- 68 Rodríguez-Remedi, 'Raúl Ruiz, Speculative Bricoleur', 86.
- 69 Compare with Adrian Martin, 'Displacements', in *Raúl Ruiz: Images of Passage*, 48, 49.
- 70 Mike Budd, Steve Craig, and Clay Steinman, "'Fantasy Island": Marketplace of Desire', *Journal of Communication*, vol. 33, no. 1 (1983), 67–77. These scholars' analysis focused on the televisual unities that Raymond Williams called 'flow': *ibid.*, 73. This article's approach has been criticized by one of the major defenders of the applicability of classical narrative models in television, Kristin Thompson. See her *Storytelling in Film and Television* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 15–16, 147–48.
- 71 Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema*, vol. 1, 70–71.
- 72 Ibid., 70.
- 73 Ruiz, *Poéticas del cine*, 417–18, 421.
- 74 Cavell, 'The Fact of Television', 265.
- 75 Ibid., 257–58.
- 76 Ibid., 258.
- 77 Ibid., 244–45.
- 78 Dennis Porter, 'Soap Time: Thoughts on a Commodity Art Form', *College English*, vol. 38, no. 8 (1977), 783.
- 79 Cavell, 'The Fact of Television', 263. The perspective offered here might be contrasted with Cavell's sketch in *The World Viewed* of how it became natural to think of history as dramatic: 90–94.
- 80 Cavell, 'The Fact of Television', 265.
- 81 Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 262.
- 82 Oscar Steimberg, 'Estilo contemporáneo y desarticulación narrativa. Nuevos presentes, nuevos pasados de la telenovela', in *Telenovela: Ficción Popular y Mutaciones Culturales* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1997), 17–28, 22. Steimberg's model for the 'neo-baroque' *telenovela* is the Argentine series *Antonella* (1992). See also André Dorcé, 'Latin American Telenovelas: Affect, Citizenship and Interculturality', in *The SAGE Handbook of Television Studies*, ed. Manuel Alvarado, Milly Buonanno, Herman Gray, and Toby Miller (London: SAGE, 2014), 257, 264.
- 83 Ana M. López, 'Our Welcomed Guests: Telenovelas in Latin America', in *To Be Continued . . . : Soap Operas Around the World*, ed. Robert C. Allen (London: Routledge,

- 1994), 258. Ruiz did remark on his fascination with long-running *telenovelas* like those of 300 or 600 episodes produced by Brazil's Rede Globo: *Entrevistas escogidas*, 125. But Cavell likely had in mind US soaps like *Guiding Light* (1952–2009) and *Days of Our Lives* (1965–present) that would go on to run for tens of thousands of episodes.
- 84 López, 'Our Welcomed Guests', 258.
- 85 Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 25–29. On Ruiz's childhood fascination with this kind of 'resurrection' on film, see *Entrevistas escogidas*, 140; Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz*, 17, 90.
- 86 The extremely popular 1969–71 Peruvian version of *Simplemente María* was in fact a remake of the much less popular 1967–68 Argentine version. See Arvind Singhal, Rafael Obregon, and Everett M. Rogers, 'Reconstructing the Story of *Simplemente María*, the Most Popular *Telenovela* in Latin America of All Time', *Gazette*, vol. 54 (1994), 1–15.
- 87 López, 'Our Welcomed Guests', 270–71. Jesús Martín-Barbero, 'Memory and Form in the Latin American Soap Opera', in *To Be Continued*, 277–78.
- 88 Mercedes Medina and Leticia Barrón, 'La telenovela en el mundo', *Palabra Clave*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2010), 86. See also Dorcé, 'Latin American Telenovelas', 255.
- 89 Jesús Martín-Barbero, 'Introducción', in *Televisión y melodrama: Géneros y lecturas de la televisión en Colombia*, ed. Jesús Martín-Barbero and Sonia Muñoz (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1992).
- 90 Martín-Barbero, 'Introducción', 30.
- 91 Cavell does implicitly consider this possibility at the end of 'The Fact of Television', when he notes that 'the medium of television makes intuitive the failure of nature's survival of me', which is the opposite of the sense of the world's being 'complete without me' that, in *The World Viewed*, he had claimed that film communicates. 'Fact of Television', 267–68; *The World Viewed*, 160.
- 92 Dorcé, 'Latin American Telenovelas', 257–62. As López points out, *telenovelas* are explicitly class-based in a way that contrasts with the more typical gendering of US soaps: 'Our Welcomed Guests', 260.
- 93 Sigmund Freud, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 101.
- 94 Dorcé, 'Latin American Telenovelas', 256. Robert C. Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 50–51.
- 95 Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 262.
- 96 Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas*, 78.
- 97 *Ibid.*, 80.
- 98 Noël Carroll, 'As the Dial Turns: Notes on Soap Operas', in *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- 99 Rodríguez-Remedi, 'Raúl Ruiz, Speculative Bricoleur', 71, 86. Felipe Larrea Melgajero, 'El narrador Raúl Ruiz y la *invención* de Chile', *Hybris*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2017), 94.
- 100 According to Rodríguez-Remedi, the series was shot 'over two months in and around Santiago (Melipilla), Valparaíso (Quilpué), and Chiloé Island with the support of the Chilean Navy' ('Raúl Ruiz, Speculative Bricoleur', 88).

- 101 Ibid., 87. The entirety of the series is currently available on YouTube, though unfortunately without subtitles. Episode I: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrXZDYEmGw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrXZDYEmGw); Episode II: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ck7oesY0xQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ck7oesY0xQ); Episode III: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxjT41DIz6k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxjT41DIz6k); Episode IV: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmNWaNX-rNZY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmNWaNX-rNZY) (accessed August 27, 2022).
- 102 Ruiz, *Poéticas del cine*, 417. Larrea Melgajero, 'El narrador Raúl Ruiz', 93.
- 103 Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz*, 172.
- 104 Ibid.
- 105 Interview with Diego Brodersen, '¿Por qué no jugar con el cuento infantil?', *Página/12*, April 3, 2009, [www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/espectaculos/5-13403-2009-04-03.html](http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/espectaculos/5-13403-2009-04-03.html) (accessed August 27, 2022).
- 106 See Zuzana M. Pick, 'The Dialectical Wanderings of Exile', *Screen*, vol. 30, no. 4 (1989), 56. The *Caleuche* also plays a role in Ruiz's short film about Chile for the UK's Channel 4, *Las soledades* (1992).
- 107 For a comparison between *Three Crowns of the Sailor* and Welles' *Immortal Story*, see Catherine L. Benamou, 'Inter-*auteurial* Itineraries and the Rekindling of Transnational Art Cinema: Raúl Ruiz and Orson Welles', in *Raúl Ruiz's Cinema of Inquiry*, 109–12.
- 108 Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz*, 71. Ruiz and Benoît Peeters, 'Annihilating the Script', in *Raúl Ruiz: Images of Passage*, 24.
- 109 On 'metalepsis', see Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 234–36.
- 110 Rodríguez-Remedi, 'Raúl Ruiz, Speculative Bricoleur', 88.
- 111 On the significance of Has's film to Ruiz, see Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz*, 97, 99, 128, 131, 169; Rodríguez-Remedi, 'Raúl Ruiz, Speculative Bricoleur', 92.
- 112 This also constitutes part of the series' difference from *La recta provincia*, in which several female storytellers are shown to occupy the same metanarrative level as the male storytellers.
- 113 Françoise Aude, *Cinéma d'elles, 1981–2001* (Lausanne: L'âge d'homme, 2002), 105. Quoted in Adrian Martin, 'Amelia López O'Neill', *Film Critic: Adrian Martin*, [www.filmcritic.com.au/reviews/a/amelia\\_lopez\\_oneill.html](http://www.filmcritic.com.au/reviews/a/amelia_lopez_oneill.html) (accessed August 27, 2022).
- 114 Cavell, *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Tania Modleski, *Feminism without Women* (London: Routledge, 1991), 8–11.
- 115 In Sarmiento's film, Amelia Lopes is played by Laura del Sol. 'Amelia Lopes' is also the name of the *telenovela* actress played by Kate Valk in *The Golden Boat*. It appears that Ruiz and Sarmiento used several variations on the name's spelling: see also Ruiz, *Diario*, vol. 2, 513.
- 116 Ruiz also noted the influence on *Litoral* of the stories of Hans Christian Andersen: *Entrevistas escogidas*, 216. This moment in the series recalls Andersen's miniature toy characters, as in 'The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep' and 'The Steadfast Tin Soldier'.
- 117 Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 223. Genette's principal formulations of this idea come from Proust. According to Ruiz, one of whose most popular films is an adaptation of *Le temps retrouvé* (*Time Regained*, 1999), part of what attracted him to filming Proust was the possibility of capturing kinds of atemporality on film: *Entrevistas escogidas*, 236.
- 118 See Cavell, 'The Thought of Movies', 7.

- 119 Stanley Cavell, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 109. See also Rodowick, *Philosophy's Artful Conversation*, 274–75ff.
- 120 Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 263.
- 121 *Ibid.*, 256–63; Cavell, 'The Thought of Movies', 7. Within the category of atemporal or transtemporal remarriages, we might also add the reconciliation between Genjūrō (Masayuki Mori) and the spirit of his dead wife Miyagi (Kinuyo Tanaka) at the end of Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu* (1953), which Cavell discusses in 'What Becomes of Things on Film?', in *Themes Out of School*, 180–81, and 'The Fantastic of Philosophy', in *In Quest of the Ordinary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 188. Within Ruiz's filmography, we can also add the remarriage between William (Jean-Marc Barr) and the spirit of Anne-Marie (Elsa Zylberstein) that concludes *La maison Nucingen* (*Nucingen House*, 2008), which Ruiz filmed in Chile some months prior to filming *Litoral*.
- 122 Cavell could also be understood as approaching this point when he contrasts the film *Dead of Night*, based on temporal looping (and, as I noted above, significant to Ruiz for that reason) with those horror films like *Night of the Living Dead* (George Romero, 1968) that, based on human transformations across classical narrative progressions, 'form a shadow genre of remarriage comedies' (*Pursuits of Happiness*, 222–23). In other words, on this reconstruction of Cavell's contrast, temporal looping ends up being closer than classical narratives to the undialectical permanencies proper to long-running serial TV, a proposal that I am arguing Ruiz also develops in *Litoral*. James McFarland has helpfully raised the question of whether Cavell is referring to the 1945 film or the 1974 Bob Clark film also called *Dead of Night*, but this proposed focus on temporality might help us to see what would be at stake in his referring to the former. See James McFarland, 'When There's No More Room in Hell, Should We Read Stanley Cavell?', *Discourse*, vol. 42, nos. 1–2 (2020), 140–72, 170n21.
- 123 Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (New York: Verso, 1997): 10–11.
- 124 Todd McGowan, *The Impossible David Lynch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 202. McGowan also quotes in a similar connection the statement by Freud on fantasy that I paraphrased at the end of the previous part of this essay (218). On Ruiz's impressions of Lynch, see *Entrevistas Escogidas*, 166–67; Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz*, 172–73.
- 125 See Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz*, 135. For Cavell on fantasy in film, see *The World Viewed*, 80–97; 'What Becomes of Things on Film?', 177–83; and 'The Fantastic of Philosophy', 181–88. McGowan also cites Cavell's views on fantasy in film: *The Impossible David Lynch*, 252n3.
- 126 On Ruiz's use of anamorphic lenses, see Goddard, *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz*, 161–64.
- 127 This device can be compared with the placing of witnesses and eavesdroppers in windows and doorways throughout *Mysteries of Lisbon*.
- 128 I am grateful to the audience for my online presentation of this paper at the 'Art and Knowledge' lecture series at the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenburg in June 2022, and I thank Anke Breunig for the invitation to give that talk. I want to acknowledge Bruno Cuneo, director of the Archivo Ruiz-Sarmiento in Valparaíso, Chile, for addressing my many questions about Ruiz. Others who helped me with my questions about Ruiz included Laura Colella, Alfred Guzzetti, Adrian Martin, Robb Moss, Richard Peña, Jonathan Rosenbaum, and Daniela Salazar. Thanks also

to William Rothman for correspondence about Cavell and eternal recurrence. This essay also benefited from a conversation with Gordon C.F. Bearn about Cavell and the baroque. Other friends who helped in my research and in the development of these ideas included Antonia Alarcón, Ignacio Azuceta, Marcela Cuevas Ríos, Joshua Kortbein, John McCurley, Javiera Núñez Álvarez, and Laura Núñez Álvarez. I also want to acknowledge a discussion group in Mexico City in 2020 that took up Ruiz and *Poetics of Cinema*; members of that group with whom I have stayed in touch about Ruiz include Jorge Negrete, Mariana Dianela Torres, and Abraham Villa.