A cocktail of lunacy and love: poetic dimensions in Fabrice Du Welz's "Ardennes" trilogy

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A Cocktail of Lunacy and Love: Poetic Dimensions in Fabrice Du Welz's "Ardennes" Trilogy

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After a modest attempt to create a national film industry in bilingual Belgium had run aground in the 1950s,[1] Belgian cinema was split into two separate small cinemas – a Flemish and a Walloon (French-speaking) part[2] – from the mid-1960s onward. The francophone film school INSAS (Institut National Supérieur des Arts) had been founded in Brussels in 1962, and later that year, its Flemish counterpart HRITCS (Hoger Rijks Instituut voor Toneel en Cultuurspreiding)[3] started as well, in the very same old decrepit building. A report written

by Jean-Claude Batz in 1963 to stimulate film production in Belgium had collaboration with French production companies as one of its main recommendations. The Flemish, and hence Dutch-speaking, Minister of Culture Renaat Van Elslande interpreted this advice as a strategy to favour francophone Belgian cinema. As a counter-move he successfully initiated a Selection Committee in 1964 to administer a system of selective aid for Flemish-language films.[4] Four years after this initiative, the French Belgian community created its own version of the Selection Committee of francophone film.

In this period when Belgian cinema practically ceased to exist as a national cinema, its first art films were produced.[5] André Delvaux's *De man die zijn haar kort liet knippen* (*The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short*, 1965) is generally considered as a breakthrough, although it took Belgian critics a while to appreciate the film. Delvaux had been one of the founding fathers of the INSAS, but his debut feature film was in Dutch, for the simple reason that it was commissioned by Flemish public television. *The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short* was about a middle-aged teacher (Senne Rouffaer) who becomes so infatuated with one of his pupils that he ends up in an asylum. Since he himself tells the story in retrospect, we are not always sure whether something has happened or not. The film received a cold reception in Belgium when it premiered in 1965, but it was critically acclaimed at international festivals. Owing to positive reviews in French journals, such as *Positif* and *Cahiers du cinéma*, as well as some accolades by Jean-Luc Godard, *The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short* had a rerelease in Brussels. Humbly, Belgian critics admitted that they had misunderstood the film and "had dismissed it partly out of habit, doubting the possibility of such an accomplished Belgian film."[6]

There was something of an upsurge of Flemish art-productions in the late 1960s – *Het afscheid* (*Farewells*, Roland Verhavert, 1966); *Palaver* (Emile Degelin, 1969) – sometimes coproduced with the Netherlands, such as *De vijanden* (*The Enemies*, Hugo Claus, 1968) and *Monsieur Hawarden* (Harry Kümel, 1968). But over the years, Flemish cinema has

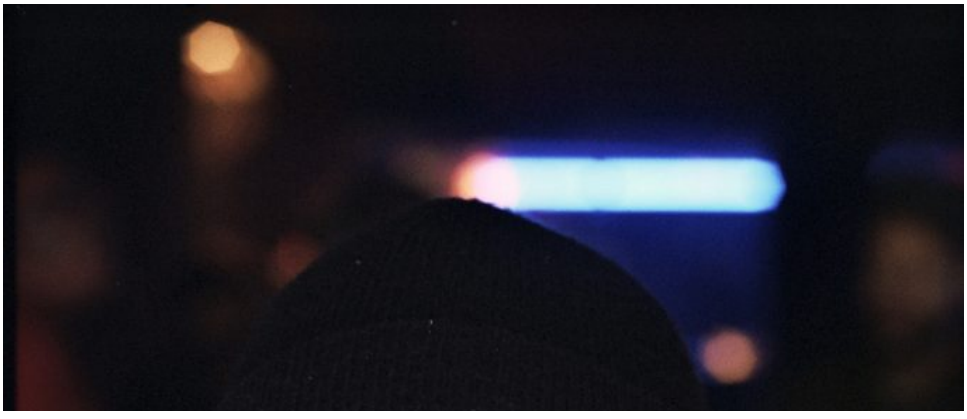
become associated with populair entertainment and classic *heimat*-films rather than art,[7] whereas the francophone-Belgian cinema would develop into a "modern auteur cinema."[8] Not only is the majority of Delvaux's magic-realist films in French, but one can also think of many a Chantal Akerman film, several pictures by Marion Hänsel; the two Oscar-nominated movies by Gérard Corbiau – *Le maître de musique* (*The Music Teacher*, 1988) and *Farinelli* (1994) – the *nouvelle violence* mockumentary about a serial killer *C'est arrivé près de chez vous* (*Man Bites Dog*, Remy Belvaux, André Bonzel, Benoît Poelvoorde, 1992); Jaco Van Dormael's much appreciated *Toto le héros* (*Toto the Hero*, 1991) and *Le huitième jour* (*The Eighth Day*, 1996); the award-winning films by the brothers Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne; and the contributions by a younger generation, such as Bouli Lanners, Joachim Lafosse, Guillaume Senez.

Owing to the fact that these directors received a considerable share of funding for their films from large neighbour France, it is fair to say, as Niels Niessen concludes, that "francophone Belgian, and by extent Walloon cinema, still has stronger ties to French than to Flemish cinema."[9] An illuminating case was Delvaux's second feature *Un soir, un train* (*One Night … A Train*, 1968). As if to illustrate that he considered the language question in his home country as tiresome, Delvaux adapted a novel about a professor of linguistics who ends up in a village whose inhabitants he does not understand at all. It was not subsidised by Belgian funding bodies, because the topic was considered too controversial. French producers, on the contrary, had so much confidence in the project on account of the quality of Delvaux's debut that even Yves Montand and Anouk Aimée came on board as star actors.[10] Naturally, the film was predominantly in French, even though the novel had been in Dutch.[11]

Apart from a linguistic split, there was another seminal split in Belgium. Harry Kümel had received subsidy for his 1968 debut feature *Monsieur Hawarden*, while he was already part of a cultural elite. He had written for film magazines, he had been making portraits of among others John Huston, Roman

Polanski and Vincente Minnelli for the Flemish public television broadcast service, and he had made some promising shorts, one of them based on a text by Franz Kafka. He was so frustrated by the lukewarm response for his *Monsieur Hawarden* that, as Ernest Mathijs reports, he decided to do "something nasty."[12] Kümel was above all annoyed by the clear-cut distinction in Belgian cinema between state-funded artistic/auteurist cinema and non-subsidised commercial/pulp. For his second feature, he did not apply for state support, since his new picture was supposed to become "undignified trash."[13]

In terms of genre, *Les lèvres rouges*, aka *Daughters of Daughters* (1971), is a lesbian vampire film, and thus a lowbrow exploitation picture, but at the same time, Kümel's movie is littered with highbrow references. Apart from the fact that "Mother" in the film was played by the then prolific Dutch male director Fons Rademakers, the role of the Countess was performed by none other than Delphine Seyrig, who had starred as the female protagonist in the European art classic *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (*Last Year in Marienbad*, Alain Resnais, 1961). Moreover, the surreal settings and the superb cinematography, as Mathijs mentions, turned the shots into "postcards of paintings, inviting not only evident comparisons with René Magritte and Paul Delvaux, but also with James Ensor and Léon Spilliaert, both resident artists in Ostend."[14] *Les lèvres rouges* – produced in three language versions (English, French, Dutch) – was regarded as "too raunchy to be art, too chic to be exploitation." The inability to categorise Kümel's film in terms of high/low has ultimately assured its status as an "underground cult hit."[15]



Fabrice Du Welz © Photo: Kris Dewitte

Delvaux and Kümel are the two directors who have, like no other after them, tried to bridge the gap between Flemish and Walloon cultures.[16] Of the filmmakers working in Belgium today, I think the work of Fabrice Du Welz – born in the suburbs in Brussels in 1972 and an alumnus of INSAS – is closest in spirit to both Delvaux's magic-realist cinema and Kümel's indifference towards the high/low distinction. His first two "survival horror" pictures in the 2000s had disappointed those critics who had used genre conventions as a yardstick: according to them, these movies were not really menacing and horrifying. But over the years, his reputation has grown among a circle of cinephiles who admire the spooky atmosphere in his cinema. This article aims to explore how a cocktail of lunacy and love in Du Welz's so-called "Ardennes"-trilogy can have "poetic" dimensions too.

Calvaire

Of his six feature-length films to date, number 1, 3 and 6 constitute Du Welz's "Ardennes"-trilogy, named after a region in Wallonia of "extensive forests, rough terrain, rolling hills and ridges."[17] This area, which can be "splendid" (in the summer) and "chilling" (in the winter),[18] is the setting for his debut feature *Calvaire* (*The Ordeal*, 2004). It opens with the *artiste-chanteur* Marc Stevens, adorned with a purple flowing cape, who performs French love songs (*chansons d'amour*) in an elderly home. From the second scene onwards, he becomes the object of a series of misperceptions, which have increasingly gruesome consequences. First, the old Madame Langhoff (Gigi Coursigny) visits him in the dressing room, presuming that he was courting her, for, as she tells Marc, she had the feeling he looked at her. Then, the female director of the retirement home, Madame Vichy (Brigitte Lahaie) flirts with him, and we can gather from the sexy Polaroid-pictures she has given him that she fancies their interest is mutual. The haste with which Marc tries to drive away in his blue van makes evident that her illusion is in vain. On his way "to the south," Marc gets lost in heavy rain, but a sign pinned to a tree – "Auberge Bartel" (Motel Bartel) – leads him to a forest path where the motor of his van malfunctions. Suddenly he is startled when the face of a man pops up and seems eerily glued to the windowpane. The confused Boris (Jean-Luc Couchard), who is desperately searching for his female dog Bella and ends up with a young calf in his arms (another misperception), leads him in the dark to the *auberge*. Allusions to *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) are never far off in *Calvaire*, for all the rooms are vacant in the motel and the bearded innkeeper Paul Bartel (Jackie Berroyer) offers his guest a meal, just like Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins) prepared one for Marion Crane (Janet Leigh).

Since Marc is a singer by profession, Bartel calls him a colleague-artist, for he used to be a comedian, until the moment when his wife Gloria left him. His gaiety and sense of humor had gone as well, but Bartel tells a joke nonetheless. Thereupon he insists that Marc sing a love song

in return, which might comfort him because Gloria was according to his account a very talented singer. Reluctantly, Marc gives in to the demand, but the effect of his singing takes a downward turn the next day, for Bartel has started to misperceive Marc for Gloria. The innkeeper knocks the guest out with a punch, changes his clothes into one of Gloria's dresses and cuts the singer's hair short in a quite long take. The shooting of this shaving scene, while Marc was tied to a chair, was so nauseating that two crew members fell sick, but for Du Welz, it was a key scene because the viewer is left to wonder whether Marc is screaming or laughing, "so you don't know if he's completely insane, or if he has a sado-masochistic streak."[19]

Calvaire (Fabrice Du Welz, 2004) © Photo: Luca Etter

After Marc's failed attempt at escape, Bartel goes to a nearby pub, only to warn the villagers to leave him and his wife in peace. Later the café customers go, as a true posse in the presence of a pig, to the motel. The intrusion will be fatal to Bartel, whereas Marc will be anally raped by one of the men. In the ensuing chaos, the singer runs away, still dressed in Gloria's clothes. The posse goes after him, but only the old man Robert Orton (Philippe Nahon) dares to enter dangerous territory. When he is close to Marc, he is caught

into quicksand. The singer turns around, and Robert asks him, while slowly going down: “Why did you return, Gloria? Tell me that you loved me.” Marc gives in to the wish of the disappearing man and whispers, identifying himself as Gloria: “I have loved you.”

When shooting his survival horror, Du Welz had in mind to walk the middle ground between Hitchcock’s *Psycho* and Tobe Hooper’s *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), in other words between a respectable horror classic and a gory slasher. But *Calvaire* had some self-imposed restraints: there should be no extradiegetic music to increase the tension; the bloodshed on screen should be limited. Further, Du Welz did not want to offer the viewer the conventional satisfaction of a pay-off, in which Marc would give his predators their due. What’s more, Du Welz’s aim was to portray his protagonist in such an unfavorable light that the viewer does not have compassion for him, despite his unfortunate fate. Agreeing with the suggestion by a French critic, Du Welz claimed that *Calvaire* can be taken as a “kind of prequel” of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, for Marc “could become Leatherface after what he goes through.”[20]

By “deboning” several of the conventions of a survival horror movie – no tenseful music; no redemption; no sympathy for any character – the cinematography of *Calvaire* becomes at least as relevant as the actual narrative. Director of photography Benoît Debie worked for every scene with only one lightsource, so that faces are often only lit from one side. The camera goes around in circles in a scene in which Marc makes loud noises, either screams of despair or hysterical laughter, while the scene is intercut with disorienting extreme close-ups of one eye. The camera captures the anal rape with slow circular top-shots while a reddish filter is used. The viewer has to undergo *Calvaire* as a visceral experience, which is one of the reasons why Du Welz continues even now to shoot on celluloid, for he prefers the grainy texture of analogue film over the smooth surface of the digital.[21] The most unorthodox scene of *Calvaire* is the one after Bartel has warned the villagers and left the pub. They remain silent, but then one of them, Gaánt (Alain

Delaunois, a giant of 2 meters 30 cm) starts to make slow rhythmic movements. A man begins to play the melody from a scene in Delvaux's *Un soir, un train* on a piano, and the villagers with their pretty unathletic bodies, start to dance increasingly more energetic. It is a direct copy from Delvaux's magic-realist film, and it helped Du Welz to avoid an elaborate discussion among the café guests, for the ominous undertone suffices to herald the upcoming attack on Bartel and "Gloria."[22] Instead of verbal explanations, Du Welz prefers the amplified sounds of nature (rain, wind) and the screeching of pigs. At the end, the haunting beauty of the Ardennes resonates, for, as a bonus to the narrative, the camera is roaming, for some thirty seconds, the foggy landscape, bereft of any character.

Calvaire (Fabrice Du Welz, 2004) © Photo: Luca Etter

The immediate successor to *Calvaire* was another visceral and almost hallucinatory experience, but because it covers a journey by the married couple Paul (Rufus Sewell) and Jeanne Bellmer (Emmanuelle Béart) in Asia in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004, the English-language *Vinyan* (2008), obviously, is not a part of the Ardennes trilogy. Nonetheless, I briefly mention it here, because a certain overlap with *Calvaire* sheds some light on

Du Welz's obsessions, if not "signature". *Vinyan* – the title refers to the angry spirit of those who have met a gruesome death – shows how husband and wife explore the Burmese jungle and deserted villages, after Jeanne is convinced that she saw video footage of their vanished son Joshua, wearing a Manchester United T-shirt. The film turns into a "muddled visual fantasy," including a cacophony of sounds and a plethora of "water-related imagery such as shores, rain, and mud."[23]

During the trip, Paul, as the more rational of the two, wants to persuade his wife to let Joshua go, but Jeanne is adamant that they find their son, which results in a mental divide between husband and wife. Since Du Welz's eco-traumatic thriller "demonstrates a structural complicity" with Jeanne's behavior, as Georgiana Banita argues in an excellent analysis, *Vinyan* displays a "masochistic aesthetics."[24] As a consequence of the focus on the mentally disturbed Jeanne in the second half of the film, the chronology is chopped-up in the form of random flashbacks and hypothetical flash-forwards. Moreover, the camerawork, by Debie again, becomes gradually more hectic and the editing disorienting. As the film progresses, the adventure gets intermingled with hallucinatory visions, triggered by the grief over a missing person, as in *Calvaire*. At the end of *Vinyan*, Jeanne stands as a mother among a wild bunch of children – but Joshua is still missing – and, as a token of her disarray, she witnesses with an approving glance how these savage kids literally tear her husband apart. Thereafter, the children surround her and tenderly cover her naked body in mud, a ritual which gives her an ecstatic feeling. And just as *Calvaire* transgressed the boundaries between high and low in the vein of Kümel's *Les lèvres rouges*, *Vinyan* alludes on the one hand to the "descent into madness" of *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979) and the frantic search for a lost child in *Don't Look Now* (Nicolas Roeg, 1973),[25] and on the other hand to the graphic violence in exploitation horror.

Alléluia

Unlike *Calvaire* and *Vinyan*, *Alléluia* (2014) was made in a

period when, owing to a tax scheme from 2009, Walloon films were increasingly coproduced with Flemish funds (i.c. VAF) and companies (i.c. Savage Films), and vice versa: Flemish films sponsored by parties from Wallonia. *Alléluia*, as the second film in the Ardennes-trilogy, is loosely based on the history of Martha Beck and Raymond Fernandez who committed some twenty murders between 1947 and 1949.[26] Du Welz changed the original setting of the South in the US for the remote Belgian backwoods.

Alléluia (Fabrice Du Welz, 2014) © Photo: Kris Dewitte / Panique 2013

Michel Dellmère (Laurent Lucas) does a little prayer, hoping that Gloria (Lola Dueñas), mother of a young daughter, will succumb to his charms. Whether her unbridled passion frightens him or not, he does not return after the one-night stand. She finds him flirting with other women, but takes care of him when he suffers from a migraine attack. Recalling the moments from *White Heat* (Raoul Walsh, 1949) in which criminal Cody Jarrett (James Cagney) has severe headaches when his Ma (Margaret Wycherly) does not give her son enough attention, Michel tells Gloria he used to be mama's boy, until one of her boyfriends threw him out of the house. Since then, he has specialised in seducing women. She does not leave him, but wants to be his accomplice and aims to

cure his “migraine.” While Gloria takes the identity of his “sister,” despite her Spanish accent, Michel marries the rich woman Marguerite (Édith Le Merdy) for her money. Gloria, however, cannot repress her jealousy, and in a rapidly edited sequence of extreme close-ups, she strangles Marguerite, initially to the dismay of Michel, but then to his excitement. In a musical interlude, Gloria sings that other people will not be able to see the magnitude of their endless love. In another interlude, we see them dance rapturously as dark silhouettes against a big fire.

Aware of Gloria’s capricious nature, Michel imitates a silly gesture by Charlie Allnutt (Humphrey Bogart) upon witnessing rhinoceros in *The African Queen* (John Huston, 1951) in an attempt to curb his sister’s brutal enthusiasm. Alas, Gloria kills another wealthy woman in a deeply staged, low-angle shot. Michel then gets acquainted with the young mother Solange (Héléna Noguerra). After Michel has drugged Gloria with tea, we get some disorienting point-of-view shots: the children’s game of Twister comes across in Gloria’s eyes as erotic play. When Solange tells Gloria that she is pregnant, Gloria gets so furious that she orders Michel to kill Solange with an axe: “If you can fuck her, you can kill her.” He gives in to her command, but he helps Solange’s young daughter Eve (Pili Groyne) to escape from Gloria’s frenzy. Thereupon Gloria phones her own daughter that she will come back, but first she and Michel go to the cinema, shot in a red-tinted – the first (deep) red in the film – slow-motion scene. There are searchlights in the dark auditorium in the final scene: are the police perhaps looking for the murderous couple?

Alléluia (Fabrice Du Welz, 2014) © Photo: Kris Dewitte / Panique 2013

Alléluia can be categorized as a lovesick horror movie, but it plays with its conventions by both understating and exaggerating the couple's violent rapture. Understating, because Du Welz's film has lustreless colors throughout (except for the deep red scene) and its shots are grainy and often unfocused. At the same time, *Alléluia* deliberately risks being "disqualified" as hysterical. Just as Cody's migraine attacks border on parody in the overall classic gangster picture *White Heat* and Charlie's silly gesture is a comic detail in the overall classic *The African Queen*, the outbursts by Gloria as well as her singing next to a corpse are so outrageous that it undermines the earnestness of the story. And though *Alléluia* is inspired by true events, it explicitly challenges its viewers to appreciate the violent scenes as a grotesque spectacle. According to Philip Thomson, the grotesque concerns the '*ambivalently abnormal*':[27] there is an incongruous juxtaposition of comic and disgusting elements. Gloria's raging attacks in *Alléluia* are presented in such a manner that the viewer does not know whether to shiver or to laugh.

Adoration

After he had two disappointing experiences with *Colt 45* (2014) in France and *Message from the King* (2016) in America, Du Welz returned to Belgium for the third in the trilogy, *Adoration* (2019), a remarkably light film by his standards, or so it seems. The 14-year-old Paul (Thomas Gioria) lives next to a mental institution, because his mother (Anaël Snoek) works there. The unruly Gloria (Fantine Harduin) is one of her patients. Gloria meets Paul during her attempts to escape, and leaves behind a note: I think that we could be friends. Paul is a kid in harmony with nature: he communicates with an unfortunate chaffinch; he nurtures two barn owls, and like

the camera, he has an eye for the beauty of the forest surroundings, underscored by Terrence Malick-like shots of the sun through the leaves. From the moment Gloria's face is presented in a slow-motion close-up, he is fascinated by her wildness. His mother warns him not to spend time with her, for she lives in a parallel world: she hears and sees different things than we do, she tells her son. After Gloria has pushed one of the doctors down the stairs, she and Paul run away. They traverse the woods, they travel by train, a Flemish family permits them to stay at a houseboat, but she sets the place on fire, since they supposedly have "snake eyes". Paul lends a receptive ear to Gloria's stories (her parents died in a plane crash), her conspiracy theories (they locked me up because my uncle – a role by regular Laurent Lucas – is after my inheritance), and her whimsical convictions: I can just sense when people wish me harm; the stars see everyting, and they tell me when people are lying, so no one can deceive me. Impressed by her uncommon frankness, Paul looks up at Gloria, and she rewards him for his adoration with sweet words and French kisses.

Adoration (Fabrice Du Welz, 2019) © Photo: Kris Dewitte / Panique 2018

Things take a turn for the worse, once he has caught a hen for dinner. As soon as Gloria sees a ring on the chicken leg –

shown in close-up – the girl becomes paranoid. She thinks that the hen has been sent by her evil uncle William. Paul is so flabbergasted that he lets the chicken run off. Gloria repeatedly begs him to kill the hen, but the animal has gone. They go with a small boat through a cave, and here they seem to "trespass a certain frontier,"[28] which is visually marked. There are superimpositions, anamorphic shots, colour filters. In the cave, Gloria's behavior is erratic and she hits Paul, which she later denies. Paul wakes up in a bed in an abandoned campsite, managed by the widower Hinkel (Benoît Poelvoorde). The sudden transition from the cave to his waking up concerns the "*passage* from reality to fantasy's 'other place'."[29] Hinkel tells Paul that he wanted to die after his wife Jeanne's death, but then the posthumous Jeanne leads him to a beautiful open space where common cranes gather. He comes to visit the place regularly to see the cranes who live as couples until they die. At the same time, Hinkel wants to bring back Paul to reality: phone your Mum; this girl is too big a responsibility since she is sick. Gloria, however, yells at Paul that she has abandoned him. She causes a car accident that is fatal to Hinkel. Paul leaves with Gloria in a boat and in one continuous camera-movement we see that they are accompanied by a flock of common cranes. Paul has chosen the fantasy of his infatuation, but the esoteric piano music on the soundtrack includes a slightly sinister tone as well.

Adoration (Fabrice Du Welz, 2019) © Photo: Kris Dewitte / Panique 2018

Cinema of Poetry

Asking himself what the conditions are under which a film can be called poetic, the Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini advocated, in his famous essay "The 'Cinema of Poetry'" (1965), experimenting with cinematic equivalents of the free indirect discourse in literature.[30] In free indirect discourse, the literary narrator paraphrases words by a character without using quotation marks. In a standard case, it is still clear who has said what despite the absence of inverted commas. Pasolini, however, is interested in the possibility that the reader cannot decide whose discourse is spoken: the text can be attributed to the character but to the external narrator as well. Pasolini pointed out that then contemporary directors like Michelangelo Antonioni and Bernardo Bertolucci used stylistic devices which make the viewers hesitate whether an excerpt represents the character's vision of the world or whether it conveys the view of the film narrator.[31] In Antonioni's *Il Deserto Rosso* (*Red Desert*, 1964), Giuliana (Monica Vitti) is sitting next to a cart with grey fruit. The unusual greyness could be an indication of the woman's depressive state of mind, but it can also be related to the film narrator's wry comment upon the urbanization in Ravenna. In the case of poetic cinema, the either/or gives way to the option of a both/and. There is a convergence of views: the shot/scene is filtered by the vision of the character and also by the perspective of the film narrator.

The films by Du Welz I have discussed here, have as their common denominator that the viewer is made privy to the 'parallel worlds' the main characters perceive. We are encouraged to take the perspective of characters who either are deranged or on the brink of becoming insane. Characters (have) run amok in *Calvaire*, because they are obsessed by a lost object of desire (Gloria), who is never diegetically present. Initially, Marc functions as our 'normal' point of reference, or so we think, but at the end we are no longer

sure whether he himself has not also surrendered to the madness that surrounds him: perhaps he really (thinks he) has become 'Gloria,' as much as Jeanne in *Vinyan* (thinks she) has become the 'mother' of the feral children that caress her. Was Michel in *Alléluia* always-already lunatic, or has Gloria's lovesickness triggered this to unprecedented heights? Do we take Paul's decision in *Adoration* to stick with Gloria as a deeply romantic gesture or as a sign of insanity foretold?

My point is that there resides a "poetic dimension" in Du Welz's cinema because of the option that the film narrator does not just register the crazy loves of these protagonists, but that the narrator's position/perspective has become infected by lunacy as well. The cinematography underscores this suggestion by way of its increasingly odd devices: the lighting, disorienting close-ups; (top-shot) circular movements; superimpositions; color filters; low-angle positions; the tracking shots that show the great beauty as well as the haunting darkness of the Ardennes. Watching a Du Welz film is a visceral experience that asks its viewer to (temporarily) sacrifice their frames of "sanity". Only on that condition can one truly enjoy his cinema.

Endnotes

1. Strictly speaking, Belgium is trilingual, since about one percent of the population speaks German. About 60 per cent speaks Flemish, a variant of Dutch, and close to 40 per cent is francophone. ↩
2. To be more exact, Walloon cinema is a major part of francophone Belgian cinema as a whole. Inhabitants of Wallonia – the southern half of Belgium – speak French, but Wallonia does not include Brussels, and most of the citizens in the main capital of Belgium speak French. ↩
3. HRITCS was renamed RITCS in 2015: Royal Institute for Theatre, Cinema and Sound. ↩
4. See for excellent descriptions of this history, Niels Niessen, *A North Wind: The New Realism of the French-Walloon Cinéma du Nord* (PhD, University of Minnesota, 2013), pp. 210-212, and Gertjan Willems, *Subsidie, Camera, Actie! Filmbeleid in Vlaanderen (1964-2002)* (Gent: Academia Press,

2017), pp. 42-43.

5. The cosmopolitan drama *Meeuwen sterven in de haven* (*Seagulls Die in the Harbour*) (Rik Kuypers, Ivo Michiels, Roland Verhavert, 1955) is generally considered as the first Belgian art film. Made in a period when there was hardly any government funding for cinema, it is an exceptional case, preceding Delvaux's film with some ten years.
6. Philip Mosley, "*De man die zijn haar kort liet knippen* / *The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short*," in Ernest Mathijs (ed.), *The Cinema of the Low Countries* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), p. 79.
7. Of course, there are notable exceptions, such as *Brussels by Night* (Marc Didden, 1983); *Crazy Love* (Dominique Deruddere, 1987); *Rosie* (Patrice Toye, 1998).
8. Niessen, *A North Wind*, p. 216.
9. Ibid., p. 223.
10. Mosley, p. 79. In "A Dream That Was Not All a Dream: The Films of André Delvaux," Santiago Rubín de Celis writes that all the familial, linguistic and emotional conflicts the male protagonist in *Un soir, un train* undergoes "reappear like a dark and distressing dream, but this dream of his is presented with an absolute appearance of reality." *Bright Lights Film Journal* 73 (2011)
11. The novel was written by Johan Daisne, *De trein der traagheid* (*The train of inertia*, 1950). Delvaux's debut feature was also based on a novel by Daisne, *De man die zijn haar kort liet knippen* (1947).
12. Ernest Mathijs, "*Les lèvres rouges* / *Daughters of Darkness*," Ernest Mathijs (ed.), *The Cinema of the Low Countries* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), p. 100.
13. Kümel, quoted in Mathijs, "*Les lèvres rouges*," p. 101.
14. Ibid., p. 103. Mathijs writes that Kümel produced three different language versions and "found himself in conflict over the final cut of the film, resulting in two different versions (one English-language version of 87 minutes, and a French-language version of 96 minutes)" (p. 101).
15. Ibid., p. 104.
16. KM/RV/JVS, "ZED sprak met Fabrice Du Welz," *Cinema ZED* (January 2020), p. 11.
17. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ardennes

18. Du Welz, quoted in KM/RV/JVS, “ZED sprak met Fabrice Du Welz”. ↩
19. Du Welz, quoted in Milos Jovanovic, “Fabrice Du Welz Interview,” *Horror DNA* (22 July 2009) ↩
20. See the interview with Jovanovic. ↩
21. See Niels Ruëll, “In de werkkamer van *Adoration*-regisseur Fabrice Du Welz,” *Bruzz* (14 January 2020) ↩
22. See Jovanovic. In the interview, Du Welz describes the dance scene in *Un soir, un train*: “At one moment, a beautiful woman who probably represents Death invites Yves Montand to dance in a very Flemish pub.” The scene is not with Yves Montand, but Adriana Bogdan invites François Beukelaers. ↩
23. Georgiana Banita, “The Spirits of Globalization: Masochistic Ecologies in Fabrice Du Welz’s *Vinyan*,” Anil Narine, ed. *Eco-Trauma Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 147. ↩
24. Ibid., pp. 156, 146. ↩
25. Banita mentions both titles, p. 152. ↩
26. This history was already brought to the screen a few times: *The Honeymoon Killers* (Leonard Kastle, 1970); *Profundo Carmesí* (Arturo Ripstein, 1996); *Lonely Hearts* (Todd Robinson, 2006). ↩
27. Philip Thomson, *The Grotesque* (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 27. ↩
28. Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 114. Žižek discusses such a trespass in relation to Fritz Lang’s *noir* western *Rancho Notorious* (1952). ↩
29. Ibid., p. 115. ↩
30. Pasolini, Pier Paolo, “The ‘Cinema of Poetry’,” in John Orr and Olga Taxidou (ed.), *Post-war Cinema and Modernity: A Film Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), pp. 37-53. ↩
31. The film narrator is the external narrative agent who organises the coordination between the sound and images of a film. See Peter Verstraten, *Film Narratology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 7-8. ↩