

WES ANDERSON: CONTEMPORARY AUTEURISM AND DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGY

by

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ABSTRACT:

Wes Anderson is one of the most readily visible auteurs of a younger generation of Hollywood filmmakers. Anderson's five feature films to this point exhibit a strong narrative preoccupation with concepts of authorship and authority. This study undertakes the reading of his work for the ways in which these films explicitly and implicitly interrogate the notion of the "auteur" through narrative and formal means and in the construction and navigation of cinematic spaces, particularly through one of Anderson's "auteur signatures", the God's-eye close-up. Anderson's narrative structures and formal techniques consistently align authority with Anderson's own auteur-as-narrator position. Following this analysis the thesis examines the "second life" iterations of Anderson's films – specifically his sound track albums and the DVDs created with the Criterion Collection for his films – and the ways in which Anderson uses these formats to further bolster his auteur persona.

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Introduction: Wes Anderson: Contemporary Auteurism and Digital Technology

Since the mid-1990s director Wes Anderson has fashioned a career by creating “indie”-style comedies - both lauded and criticized by the public and critics alike for their quirky and idiosyncratic stylization and repeating narrative concerns - while operating fully within the Hollywood studio system. In this regard, Anderson is hardly alone – his contemporaries include filmmakers such as Sofia Coppola, Spike Jonze, Michel Gondry, Paul Thomas Anderson and David O. Russell amongst others, filmmakers sometimes referred to as the “*New New Hollywood*” for both their strong personal ties to the original “*New Hollywood*” or “*American New Wave*” group of directors as well as similarities in terms of stylization, their collaborative nature, but predominantly for the nature of the relationships they have established with the Hollywood apparatus and the similarities these bear to this older group’s navigation of the terrain between studio concerns and artistic vision during *New Hollywood*’s peak years, from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. Anderson and these colleagues began working in the irony-dominated 1990s but turned out what might be termed post-ironic films; these directors, sometimes alternatively labeled as part of a larger movement termed “*New Sincerity*”¹, display facility with ironic humour but without the intense cynicism exhibited in many contemporary films, as if they were attempting to access some type of sense of lost “purity” which supposedly pre-existed even *Hollywood*’s Classical period.² One of the defining elements of this “*New*” *New Hollywood* generation is their emergence as the first *Hollywood* auteur group to rise to establish themselves through the aid of the new avenues of expression and communication made possible by the advent and rapid

popularization of the DVD format. In the face of the technological reality of current film exhibition, film industry practices, and changes in cinephile culture cultivated through new developments in the distribution of films post-theatrical release, what this project seeks to do is to use the films of Wes Anderson as an acid test for the applicability of more traditional auteurist approaches and the validity of the auteur label itself before examining the ways in which Anderson has utilized new communication technologies to further the development of his auteur persona, as well as examining the potential uses that DVDs and related “second life” formats have for mediating the public’s opinion and reception of directors and their films.

But what is it that marks an auteur in this day and age? Does the “auteur” label carry any currency outside of cinephiles justifying the greatness of a director whose work they already admire? The grounding of my project in auteur studies requires that attention be paid to the way in which auteur studies is conceptualized for this particular project. While Andrew Sarris’ approach to his pantheon of directors showed much enthusiasm for film and encouraged a generation of young cinephiles to study films, his claims of auteurism being a proper “Theory” remained untenable due to its highly subjective approach. As a result of this and a number of other factors which will be discussed later, auteur studies still often operates somewhat in the shadow of his spurious claims and the fall-out between his supporters and those of Pauline Kael.³

Contemporary auteurist scholars such as Brian Michael Goss in his 2004 analysis of Steven Soderbergh's *The Limey* have recourse to a modified version of auteurism which moves far from Sarris’ subjectivity, instead acknowledging the influence and

importance of other factors of production external to the director or writer while focusing on the auteur in order to produce a cohesive study.⁴ While Soderbergh rose to prominence in the years before Anderson began his filmmaking career and Soderbergh's various projects exhibit a much wider range of thematic content and filmic styles, a number of similarities exist between the filmmakers including early support from Robert Redford's Sundance Institute and a continuing tension found between the auteurs' "independent" spirit and (sometime) reliance on major studios. Goss quotes French New Wave scholar Robert Stam:

Auteur studies now tend to see a director's work not as the expression of individual genius but rather as the site of encounter of a biography, an intertext, an institutional context, and a historical moment. ... [Directors] "orchestrate" pre-existing voices, ideologies, and discourses, without losing an overall shaping role. Most contemporary auteur studies have jettisoned the romantic individualist baggage of auteurism to emphasize the ways a director's work can be both personal *and* mediated by extrapersonal elements such as genre, technology, [and] studios...⁵

Auteur studies now stands often as director-based studies but with the flexibility, post-"Death of the Author", to move beyond that early approach and consider producers, composers, collectives, etc. in the same mode.⁶ Under current conceptions, studying the auteur "Wes Anderson" entails studying Anderson as writer and director but also including consideration for the contributions of writing collaborators such as Owen Wilson, Noah Baumbach, Jason Schwartzman and Roman Coppola, actors such as Wilson, Schwartzman, Bill Murray and Anjelica Huston, illustrator and set designer Eric Chase Anderson, cinematographer Robert Yeoman A.S.C., composer Mark Mothersbaugh, music supervisor Randall Poster, etc., without simply focusing on the director himself. Due to Anderson's involvement at each stage of collaboration this

analysis still centres on him - or at least an implied or constructed conception of him - as he marks the point where the efforts of all involved parties are combined into the final film product. Anderson indeed actively promotes this type of collective conception of the production of “Wes Anderson” films⁷, specifically in the supplements available in the films’ “second lives” on DVD format - an increasingly important development in the formation and stability of fan culture according to Catherine Grant⁸ - but in this example one heavily mediated by Anderson himself. As Anderson’s collaborators perform different roles within different projects and are sometimes absent from particular works, the consistencies which *do* continue to appear are more easily traced back to that central auteur figure.

Goss continues: “On this view, auteurs are elaborately wired into their culture; they channel society’s deeply rooted assumptions onto the screen as filtered through their artistic accents, idiosyncrasies, and resultant tensions with convention”.⁹ As Goss formulates this approach to the auteur, one reason a director may be labeled as an auteur is for his or her acute sensitivity to or facility with the culture in which they are creating films. The aforementioned “second life” offered by DVDs plays a very important role in how the films of Wes Anderson are marketed and in the way Anderson has positioned himself as a craftsman and interpreter of current culture as well as cinematic history. In tandem with this, and as will be explored later within this project, Anderson’s films exhibit particular forms of nostalgic fascination with the past. The nostalgic tensions that appear throughout Anderson’s body of work create a consistent tone that makes

Anderson a more readily-labeled auteur by audiences and critics than a more tonally-elusive contemporary such as Spike Jonze.

Timothy Corrigan argues that the auteur becomes a sort of seal of quality for films, reflecting Pauline Kael's concerns about the effect of Andrew Sarris' brand of auteurism on young directors:

The international imperatives of post-modern culture have made it clear that commerce is now much more than just a contending discourse: if, in conjunction with the so-called international art cinema of the sixties and seventies, the auteur had been absorbed as a phantom presence within the text, he or she has rematerialized in the eighties and nineties as a commercial performance of the business of being an auteur.¹⁰

Indeed DVD supplements most often focus on the behind-the-scenes construction of Anderson's elaborate sets, the carefully-chosen wardrobes and accessories of the characters, the set-dressing and the plotting of camera movements, all mediated by Anderson's presence and often featuring Anderson as a performer in his own right. Elements of filmmaking which are shown in supplementary materials¹¹ as direct products of Anderson's design are afterwards seen by the audience as clear instances of Anderson's auteurial control upon subsequent viewings, retroactively justifying the auteur label. While such features began with the Criterion Collection (which has released, to date, four of Anderson's films) and their LaserDisc features, this use of supplements is now the industry standard and Anderson's own uses will be the focus of the third chapter of this project. And while it is true that Anderson's performance on DVD supplements and similar media can increase or decrease his appeal and have economic ramifications for the filmmaker and his studios, this project will openly make a leap of faith away from the cynicism that economic interest is the sole motivation in the

creation of these supplementary texts.

While initial conceptions of the term “auteur” as applied by Francois Truffaut and likeminded French critics focused largely on American directors who worked within the Hollywood studio system and against its restraints to produce works of art seen to emanate from the director’s personal sensibility, this studio/individual relationship has remained an important part of more contemporary auteur analyses. Anderson has worked comfortably within the studio setting in order to produce each of his films, beginning with Columbia Pictures’ financing of his debut feature, 1996’s *Bottle Rocket*. After this he developed a relationship with Touchstone Pictures (one of the brands of The Walt Disney Motion Pictures Group, Inc. and Walt Disney Pictures and Television) beginning with 1998’s *Rushmore* and continuing through *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001) and *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004). Anderson’s most recently released film, *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007), was produced by Scott Rudin Productions in conjunction with 20th Century Fox, whose animation division is producing his animated feature follow-up, 2009’s *The Fantastic Mr. Fox*.¹² Anderson’s own company, American Imperial Pictures, has served as co-producer on each film beginning with *Rushmore* (on which Anderson is credited as executive producer before appearing as producer on each subsequent film), aligning him with the less-publicized and promoted studio side of his films.

As Devin Orgeron expertly examines in depth in his article “La Camera Crayola”, Anderson has shown a consistent preoccupation with characters who are authors or auteurs in their own right. This thematic feature begins with Dignan (Owen Wilson) in *Bottle Rocket* and continues throughout the corpus of his work: in *Rushmore* with the

playwright character of Max Fischer (Jason Schwartzman); in *The Royal Tenenbaums* where Etheline (Anjelica Huston), Margot (Gwyneth Paltrow), Raleigh (Bill Murray), Eli Cash (Wilson) and Henry Sherman (Danny Glover) have all authored books or plays while Royal (Gene Hackman) has “authored” the reunification of the family by creating the story of his illness; in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* where we see Steve as auteur in terms of his films and the Zissou brand at large; and even extending into 2007’s *The Darjeeling Limited* in which Schwartzman’s Jack is a writer who continually writes the actual lives of himself and his family members into his works while unsuccessfully claiming them as fiction, and in the persona of Owen Wilson’s Francis, whose laminated itineraries visually represent the spiritual quest which Francis has “authored” in order to reunite the surviving members of his family after the traumatic loss of their father. This preoccupation is far from unconscious, though, and Anderson shows a heightened awareness of his own construction as an auteur which Orgeron explains in detail.

While Corrigan and Kael’s view of the auteur as self-promoter smacks of a certain cynicism, the auteur certainly does bear some weight in regards to the marketing of films, and, too, the marketing of themselves as a product to studios. My approach to Wes Anderson through this auteurist study then is concerned with the ways in which an auteur may be seen to work as a guiding or unifying force for an audience watching their films, informed by both Kael and Corrigan’s more cynical concerns and the more positive, constructive opinion of auteurism of Goss et al. In order to analyze Anderson in this way I will be applying a framework adapted from narratological study to his films, positing that the auteur in some cases (at least in this one) may function as and be

identified with the highest level of focalisation through which a particular audience views his films. As such some discussion of narratology and focalisation is necessary. On a formal visual level Anderson's films are very much about framing – characters are framed in pictures, in portraits and photographs, in doorways and windows and portholes, and repeatedly enclosed in the frame of an overhead God's-eye close-up as well as the constant "framing" they are subject to by the narratives' auteurs. Much of narratology's penetration into the analysis of film deals with focalisation and the different frameworks presented to the reader or viewer of a text. The act of framing implies a contextualization of the framed at the same time as presenting an isolation of it. It is my contention that the presence of the auteur director, when the film is marketed as an auteurist product and formally shows itself to be marked in auteuristic signatures either narratively or formally or both (especially for an audience aware of the director's persona) functions as a frame outside of the frames which are used within that rectangle of the film screen.

Edward Branigan, in *Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film*, one of his studies of the camera's role in crafting film narratives, states the following: "In film, the narrator is not necessarily a biological person, not even a somehow identifiable agent like in the novel, but a symbolic activity: *the activity of narration*".¹³ Branigan, of course, argues that the camera represents the narrator in terms of the way it directs a viewer's attention. Further on in his discussion Branigan defines narration as: "a set of frames within larger frames leading to a frame which cannot itself be framed within the boundary of the text – an unavoidable and implicit omniscience which may now be called 'effaced'".¹⁴ While some critics find this

“dangerously close” to reaffirming the implied-author of a text¹⁵, I would like to propose that reinstating the implied-author and examining the effects of this author on the text may prove a higher level of fidelity to the way in which certain audiences watch auteur-produced films, that the idea of a unifying auteur such as Wes Anderson presents may be implied by the film texts themselves as well as supporting documents, and that this auteur idea can, in some instances, represent that ultimate frame through which the films are viewed.

The initial framework for this inquiry borrows some of its methodology and theoretical framework from Tom Gunning’s 1994 study of D.W. Griffith, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film*. In his introduction to this work Gunning explains his approach as being somewhat unorthodox in the combination of the theory-based auteurist/narratological approach with a historical consideration for the period in which the films studied were produced.¹⁶ Where this study necessarily diverges from Gunning’s is in the respective cinema environments in which these directors “live”, both technologically and in terms of film history *and*, maybe more importantly, film theory’s history. Cinema’s short history in effect is one of constant technical innovation on some level, of course, but what makes Anderson’s generation particularly interesting for this study is its coming of age alongside that of the DVD format. The interplay between film history, auteurism, and this new technology create, under the umbrella of larger trends in film consumption, a very interesting and self-aware referencing of cinema’s past while using very contemporary tools towards an auteur’s own ends.

Anderson's films are visibly and auditorily recognizable as "Wes Anderson" films in a number of ways. In terms of his films' formal construction, Anderson has worked consistently with cinematographer Robert Yeoman. Together the two have developed a cinematographic grammar that relies heavily on visually-loaded, synecdochally-charged *mise-en-scène* navigated by a number of relatively limited (though at times virtuoso) camera movements and framings chosen for their loaded semantic potential. Again important to the study of Anderson's films is his creation of the diegetic spaces in which his films take place. Increasingly throughout his films a sense of abstraction from the real world exists. With each film he creates, Anderson exerts more and more control over the environments in which he places his characters, from the mostly natural feel of *Bottle Rocket* to the construction of a full-sized cross-section of an oceanographic explorer's ship in 2004's *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* or the ornate customized train in *The Darjeeling Limited*.

A number of themes repeatedly appear in Anderson's films. His narratives centre around the transition from immaturity into adulthood as characters travel from a sort of harmfully-exuberant youth to a more mature, measured grown-up behaviour (though with characters still retaining some of the sweetness that came as a byproduct of their youthful naïveté). As mentioned earlier, Orgeron explores the "auteur" characters in Anderson's work and indeed the majority of his main characters represent different yet similar types of authors or auteurs who need to learn to moderate their individualistic drives in order to produce meaningful art or relationships and to contribute to their communities. Attempts to reconstruct and rebuild a lost sense of Utopia or auteurial promise are also at the heart

of most of Anderson's plots. Some of the retro or vintage items discussed during the examination of Anderson's use of mise-en-scène will be revisited in this section where the retro-fetishism of the set design are shown to reflect upon Anderson's characters and their anachronistic desires, and the need to correct them. Between the two is the self-conscious authorship and awareness of singularity and collectivity in the "authoring" of life, at least as pertains to the films.

After this, however, the project will move in a different direction, examining the "second lives" of Anderson's films in terms of the DVD (and now Blu-ray¹⁷) releases, specifically through the Criterion Collection imprint, and the ways in which his formal and thematic signatures are emphasized or reinforced through the supplements and commentaries found on these releases. It is the position of this thesis that Anderson emphasizes the formal techniques and stylization within his films which set them apart from the films of others, making them appropriate for the auteurist label applied to them, and that he has also been particularly canny in using new formats and to enable a more direct contact with his audience, allowing him to further the image of his control.

Anderson's Films: A Quick Overview

To understand Anderson's formal and narrative signatures and his use of technology it can be helpful to review his career from its beginning. Born in 1969, Wes Anderson was raised in Houston in an upper-middle-class family, attending a private school, which he would go on to use as the primary location for *Rushmore*, while putting on plays in the mode of *Rushmore*'s main character, Max Fischer. While attending the University of Texas as a philosophy major he met Owen Wilson, who would go on to

become his writing partner for a number of films and would achieve Hollywood star status soon after appearing alongside his brother Luke in *Bottle Rocket*. Like other members of his loose group of contemporaries (such as Paul Thomas Anderson, Spike Jonze, and Richard Linklater), Anderson did not attend film school before he began making films, in fact turning down an opportunity to attend NYU's film program to instead work on the feature film version of *Bottle Rocket* following the initial attention 1994's *Bottle Rocket* short received from famed Hollywood producer and director James L. Brooks.

The original short was produced with the aid of the Sundance Institute and through family connections caught the attention of Brooks, who supported the young filmmakers so as to produce a feature film based on the short. This feature version, while not hugely successful, served as an initial proving ground for Anderson, and the film exhibits a number of traits that would reappear throughout his other films. Certain of these traits can be attributed to continuity in production personnel: *Bottle Rocket* marks the beginning of collaboration with Yeoman as cinematographer (Yeoman initially attracted the attention of Anderson and Wilson for his work on Gus Van Sant's *Drugstore Cowboy* (1989) and has worked on each one of Anderson's films released thus far) as well as ex-Devo frontman Mark Mothersbaugh as composer (on each of Anderson's films other than 2007's *The Darjeeling Limited*). Despite the early Sundance support, the feature *Bottle Rocket* was not selected for competition upon completion. The film did, however, attract the attention of such established filmmakers as Martin Scorsese, who listed the film as one of his favorite films of the 1990s.¹⁸

Starring newcomers Owen and Luke Wilson as well as 1970s icon James Caan, the film focuses on a group of twenty-somethings searching for a sense of meaning to their lives and finding it, at least temporarily, in criminality. Not a simple 1990s slacker film, however, Owen Wilson's Dignan is an exceptionally-motivated-if-misguided character, enthusiastically embarking on a life of crime, complete with a 75-year plan for himself and best-friend Anthony (Luke Wilson). The film thematically hinges heavily on self-made characters and their ambitions as well as the pains of crossing the threshold from childhood to adulthood. Anderson's musical concerns, which will become more pronounced through the years, announce themselves here as does his penchant for interesting, somewhat outlandish colour schemes.

Following the success of this film Anderson began work on his second feature, *Rushmore*. Again writing with Wilson, this film centres on the character of Max Fischer (Jason Schwartzman in his first film appearance), a precocious, over-achieving 11th-grade scholarship student at the prestigious Rushmore Academy. Max finds himself a mentor in disaffected steel magnate Herman Blume (Bill Murray) and a love, though unrequited, in the form of 1st-grade teacher Rosemary Cross (Olivia Williams), the widow of a Rushmore alumnus. Again the narrative focuses on youthful exuberance and the tempering of the solitary creative spirit as Max must learn his limitations in order to mature from an angry teen smitten with his own accomplishments (for example leveling "I wrote a hit play! What did you ever do?!" at Blume during a contest for Cross' affections) into a more adult member of his community.

Rushmore shows a much stronger sense of visual stylization than its precursor. Essential here is the pop music score as Anderson worked closely with music supervisor Randall Poster, another constant collaborator whose pre-production input Anderson is quick to emphasize. *Rushmore*, while showing a much stronger hand in directing, is also notable as the first film Anderson made with Touchstone Pictures, the Disney-backed imprint who had developed a close deal with the Criterion Collection for the deluxe release of a number of their films. As *Rushmore* was released as a Criterion Collection DVD, the critical-darling Anderson gained an extra measure of pop cinephile canonization.

This association with Touchstone continued with Anderson's next film, 2001's *The Royal Tenenbaums*. Arguably Anderson's most successful film, narratively and in terms of box office performance, *Tenenbaums* is the story of a family of child geniuses and the complications they have in adjusting to adult, non-genius life. Again written in collaboration with Wilson, the film features a large ensemble cast including Anderson regulars the Wilsons and Murray as well as the mascot-like Kumar Pallana and Seymour Cassel (both seen in *Rushmore* while Pallana also appears as "Kumar" in *Bottle Rocket*), as well as the soon-to-be-regular Anjelica Huston, along with one-time collaborators Ben Stiller, Danny Glover, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Gene Hackman (in one of his last film appearances to date) as the family's delinquent patriarch, Royal Tenenbaum. Whereas *Rushmore* showcased Anderson's adept use at selecting portions of his former school life (in terms of both the physical setting and events from his own schoolboy past) to create the world of Rushmore Academy, *Tenenbaums* shows an increased sense of construction

of place, primarily in the form of the house at 111 Archer St., but extending to the nostalgic-fantasy version of New York that the Tenenbaums call home.

Anderson's next picture, 2004's *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* was his last with Touchstone. This film was also Anderson's first without Wilson as a writing partner, finding the director instead collaborating with filmmaker Noah Baumbach on the film's script as Wilson had by this time had grown too busy as an actor to be able to write with Anderson in the same manner. Wilson does, however, appear in the film in a starring role as Ned Plimpton, a naively charming Kentuckian pilot who believes that oceanographer Steve Zissou (Bill Murray) may be his biological father. Murray and Huston also return for this film as does Seymour Cassel. This time the central subject of the film is Steve Zissou, a Jacques Cousteau-esque oceanographic explorer who has not had a hit film in ten years and is stuck in an eternal adolescence, obsessively trying to recapture his past glory through a self-centred, Ahab-like quest to kill the Jaguar shark which swallowed his partner Esteban (Cassel). It is not until Ned arrives with the news that he is possibly Steve's son that Steve is able to begin to let go of the fantasy self-image he has constructed for himself and to accept his real station in life, warts and all, which, tempered by tragedy, allows him to make some of the best work of his career.

Again the transition from awkward adolescence to adulthood as a member of a community is central to the plot as are concerns with death, loss, and mourning. Shot at Cinecetta studios in Italy, the "home" of Federico Fellini, this film was not as critically well-received as Anderson's previous efforts. However, in terms of formalist accomplishment, *The Life Aquatic* may stand as his grandest enterprise to date as it

includes the make-over of an entire boat as the principle set for the film and the construction of a life-sized cross-section of the same boat, allowing for unorthodox tracking shots, *and* the compelling use of stop-motion animation for the aquatic life encountered by Zissou's team, creating an interesting "'objectively subjective' fantasy"¹⁹ world.

Anderson's most recent feature film, *The Darjeeling Limited*, again includes a central character who is an author in the form of co-writer Jason Schwartzman's Jack Whitman. Jack is traveling across India with his two brothers on a spiritual quest as oldest brother Francis (Owen Wilson) attempts to "author" the reunification of the Whitman family following the tragic death of the boys' father a year earlier. The attempt to recapture some Utopian ideal of familial connectivity is again central to the plot and turns out to be both misguided and impossible, the Utopia never being achieved in the first place, just imagined - the brothers' eventual meeting with their estranged mother (Huston again) at a Tibetan convent shows the history of absenteeism in her behaviour towards her sons. Much of the first half of the film is confined to the constructed location of the titular train, continuing Anderson's now-customary practice of setting his films in a heavily-stylized, slightly out-of-this-world locale. Indeed even when his characters leave their train the India they encounter is overly bright, calling to mind the explosive colours of Renoir's *The River* (1951), a film screened for Anderson by Scorsese himself and subsequently serving as a major influence behind *The Darjeeling Limited*.

Along with Schwartzman, Anderson co-wrote this film with Roman Coppola - son of Francis Ford Coppola, cousin of Schwartzman, and second-unit director on *The*

Life Aquatic. This film was shot on location in India and was Anderson's first post-Touchstone film following a move to Fox Searchlight. The film also arrived to mixed critical and audience reception as some critics complained of Anderson's stylistic repetition while others leveled charges of racism and colonialism at Anderson for focusing again on upper-middle-class white males who could be seen as neo-colonialists. Such charges are seriously troubled, however, when one considers the fact that the film consistently questions and undermines these colonialist characters and their naïve assumptions of cultural differences and easy-access spirituality.

Currently Anderson is in post-production of an animated feature, an adaptation of Roald Dahl's *The Fantastic Mr. Fox*. This film is both Anderson's first foray into animation - other than sections of *The Life Aquatic*, which featured the skills of animator Henry Selick - responsible for the animation in films such as Tim Burton's *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) as well as his own film *Coraline* (2009) and who again collaborates with Anderson on *Mr. Fox*²⁰ - as well as Anderson's first attempt at adapting a pre-existing work rather than writing the film himself. How these two major changes will effect his film is impossible to forecast at this juncture though one might postulate that Anderson's movement to animation is a logical extension of his increasingly constructed mise-en-scène and idiosyncratic art direction. In other words, animation allows for the establishment of a diegesis that is *wholly* representative of Anderson's (albeit collaborative) vision and no longer tied to the visages of his actors (yet still to their voices) or the preexisting architecture and aesthetic visual properties of shooting locations.

Structure of Analysis for this Project:

The approach of this thesis is essentially three-pronged. First I endeavor to rehabilitate or redeploy more traditionalist auteur study against the films of a contemporary auteur that lend themselves to classical auteurist study thematically and stylistically. This section itself is composed of two major parts: the interrogation of the relationship between authority and the creation of cinematic space in narratives which have the creation of narratives themselves as a central concern, and secondly, the ways in which these diegetic spaces may be navigated in a way which bolsters that sense of authorial control, reconciling the traditional auteurist approach with the more self-conscious construction and auteur-as-industrial-construct views through evidence of particular techniques of focalisation and the effects this has on audience identification. Here the emphasis is on the thematic elements which are at work and at play within Anderson's films. Following this I examine the possibilities included in the DVD (and to a lesser degree, sound track album) format(s) for the furthering of an auteur persona as developed and perpetuated by the film texts themselves. It is the thesis of this project that Anderson uses these other media and forms of expression (mostly self-expression) to explore the ways in which people present self-consciously aware versions of themselves, a possible reflection of Anderson's own self-awareness in regard to film production.

The initial two sections of this analysis will interrogate Anderson's films for what will become his signature filmic traits while acknowledging important differences, oddities and discontinuities across his films as well. These sections will consider the ways in which the formal construction of Anderson's films dictate to some degree the

focalisation of the audience and consistently align and realign the audience with Anderson's way of seeing his films' characters, much more predicated on the identification with some "Wes Anderson" authorial construct than with any of his characters. Of particular interest to the second chapter will be Anderson's atypically-repetitive usage of overhead or "God's-eye" close-ups and inserts and a discussion of the ways in which this influences the viewers' identification with characters and the director.

Finally, in the third chapter the analysis will turn to post-theatrical forms of Anderson's films. Most of the focus of this section will be placed upon the DVD products made of his films, primarily the releases through the Criterion Collection. Within this analysis the history of Criterion will be visited as well as the larger history of special and collector's edition DVDs and the commentary and supplemental features which they provide. The thesis of this chapter is that Anderson has been particularly adept at the utilization of these post-theatrical opportunities in order to further the impression of his auteurial control. This analysis will focus on how some of the formal patterns analyzed earlier within this project are brought to the attention of the supplement-watching audience, and how this in turn reinforces the notion of Anderson as a controlling figure with these films. As DVD sales increase annually, the modes of association that ciné-literate audiences have with particular directors and studios also changes. Now a standard feature for many films and no longer limited to the more art-house and foreign films with which these features emerged, the commentary and supplemental features pioneered by the Criterion Collection have fundamentally changed the way in which audiences appreciate their favorite films and directors.

Relative to other directors of his cohort Anderson has consistently made the best use of these industry developments to further his auteur image. At the same time, as a writer and director he has shown the most consistency in both stylization and narrative concerns. As a whole, this project then will examine the pre-existing stylistic and narrative signatures of Anderson as an auteur which allow for the use of the post-theatrical manifestations of his films to further enhance this auteorial image, concluding with a number of hypotheses as to how these techniques may serve Anderson in the future.

Notes - Introduction

¹ Brannon M. Hancock, "A Community of Characters – the Narrative Self in the Films of Wes Anderson," *The Journal of Religion and Film*, 9.2 (Oct. 2005). This loose movement has also been termed "'Smart' film" by Jeffrey Sconce in "Irony, Nihilism and the New American 'Smart' Film," *Screen* 43.4 (2002): 349.

² Jim Collins, "Genericity in the 90s: Eclectic Irony and the New Sincerity," in *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*, ed. Jim Collins, Hilary Radner and Ava Preacher Collins (New York: Routledge, 1993): 242.

³ Interestingly Anderson's own rise dovetails with this debate. Prior to the release of *Rushmore* (1998) Anderson met with Pauline Kael for a private screening and documented the somewhat disappointing meeting with one of his film critic idols in a piece for *The New York Times*: Wes Anderson, "My Private Screening with Pauline Kael," *The New York Times*, January 31, 1999, sec.2: 20.

⁴ Brian Michael Goss, "Steven Soderbergh's *The Limey*: Implications for the Auteur Theory and Industry Structure". *Popular Communication* 2(4), 2004, 233.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Devin Orgeron, "La Camera-Crayola: Authorship Comes of Age in the Cinema of Wes Anderson". *Cinema Journal* 46.2 (2007): 41.

⁷ Ibid., 42.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Goss, "Steven Soderbergh's *The Limey*: Implications for the Auteur Theory and Industry Structure". *Popular Communication* 2(4), 2004, 233.

¹⁰ Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls* (London: Routledge, 1991): 121.

¹¹ A further, non-supplement example of Anderson's showcasing of his director role is found in his 2006 commercial for American Express, on the "shoot" of a fictional film starring Schwartzman and including many of the stylistic elements repeated in Anderson's actual films.

¹² Scheduled for theatrical release November 18, 2009.

¹³ Edward Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema: a Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film*, (Berlin: Mouton, 1984), 40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁵ Celstino Deleyto, "Focalisation in Film Narrative," in *Narratology*, ed. Susana Onega and José Ángel García Landa (London: Longman, 1996), 219.

¹⁶ Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film* (Champaign IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 4.

¹⁷ Anderson's *Bottle Rocket* (1995) was amongst the Criterion Collection's initial release of films on the Blu-ray format in 2008.

¹⁸ Martin Scorsese, "Best Films of the 1990s," interview by Roger Ebert, *Roger Ebert & the Movies*, Feb. 26, 2000, <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20000226/COMMENTARY/41219001/1023>.

¹⁹ Kirk Boyle, "Reading the Dialectical Ontology of *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* Against the Ontological Monism of *Adaptation*". *Film-Philosophy* 11 (2007): 16.

²⁰ Selick stepped down from a co-directorial role on *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* in order to work on *Coraline*, though continued to work on Anderson's project in a consulting role.

Chapter 1: Constructing Stories / Constructing Spaces - The Intersection of Production Design and Narrative in the Films of Wes Anderson

At the centre of each of Wes Anderson's films is at least one character who attempts to author a life for himself¹ and/or for others based on out-dated and nostalgic notions of home, belonging and genius before inevitable frustration of this drive allows for the finding of more honest, realistic and tenable ways to interact with the community surrounding them. This nostalgia embodied in these characters' faith in their own individual genius and their ability to reconfigure a suitable substitute for a lost or misplaced sense of belonging is not simply confined to the authoring character alone; rather, nostalgia pervades the characters surrounding them as well as saturating the production design of each of these films. Characters encase themselves in protective layers of nostalgia by creating products such as books, plays, or films which are visually marked as older media while attempting to replicate outdated notions of personal achievement or glory, by donning uniforms which harken back to an idealized past, and either finding or constructing spaces out of a nostalgic materials in order to insulate themselves from the prevailing winds of the contemporary which run contrary to their ahistorical and untenable desires. Just as the director's characters engage in this act, the self-aware Anderson creates diegetic spaces for his characters to inhabit that are also steeped in a similar ahistorical past-ness. Anderson's synecdochal mise-en-scène and settings mark two of the most readily identifiable aspects of his auteurial signature and both are indelibly tied, narratively and formally, into the repeating theme of nostalgia within his work. This chapter will examine Anderson's central thematic concern of

author characters' nostalgic drives for personal success and auteur recognition and its connection to the recapturing of some lost or Utopian life while also examining what reciprocal influence this has on the creation of Anderson's diegetic worlds.

In the introduction to his study of production design² and its relation to film history, Charles Tashiro revisits Stephen Heath's essay "Narrative Space" to discuss the two-dimensional nature of the photographic image and its compelling illusion of offering the third dimension, created through organization of that two-dimensional plane. According to Tashiro and Heath, the greater the success in creating this illusion of three-dimensionality, the more conflict is produced as shots are juxtaposed in time since this alternation of space runs contrary to real-lived experience. For Heath, narrative and the desires inherent become the "glue" which bridges the gulf between these rapidly alternating images and the viewer's association with real life.³ Tashiro finds fault with Heath's emphasis on narrative's central role in this arrangement, returning to one of the central theoretical sources of Heath's essay in Rudolf Arnheim's *Film as Art*.⁴ Central to Tashiro's reading of Arnheim's work is Arnheim's assertion that the true purpose of cinema as an art is not simply to replicate reality but rather the goal lies in the artists' ability to overcome that two-dimensional nature of the film image. Instead of production design simply being of service to the narrative as it would be if the replication of reality was paramount, Tashiro finds a tension between the narrative and the artistic expression through the design of the film, with narrative entering as "as set of *principles* to guide the design, not a set of *laws* to straitjacket the way we perceive it" [italics his].⁵

I have chosen to begin this chapter with Tashiro's concerns about the relationship between narrative and production design because these concerns are so important to Anderson's films. Beyond conceiving the stories and writing the scripts for each of his five currently-released feature films Anderson is heavily involved in the production design of each. Critic Joseph Aisenberg rightly notes that Anderson self-consciously employs the metaphors of other media over his films.⁶ This technique begins with *Rushmore*, which is presented as a play replete with "acts" which are introduced by the parting of theatre curtains – a media form aligned with central character Max Fischer's activity of writing and performing plays. Following this film, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, presents itself as a novel including its own narration (voiced by Alec Baldwin) and "chapters" introduced with inserts depicting pages of the book, while *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* takes the form of a film within a film as we are complicit in the filming of Steve Zissou's latest documentary while at certain times walked through the filmmakers' production set-up and at other times thrust into Zissou's previous works as these films fill up the entirety of the screen showing us the story-world.⁷ What is important about these media framing devices is that each necessarily involves the act of authoring a story space believable or cohesive enough to allow narratives to then play out within them. The use of these devices displays an acute self-consciousness of the act of creation as the narratives constructed by Anderson centre on poorly-designed narratives of personal greatness authored by Anderson's auteur characters. Throughout this chapter I will explore the ways in which production design, narrative, and Anderson's repeated themes are incorporated together to present a unified whole in each case which is held

together, in part, by the presence of the mediating auteur director. While Tashiro's concerns are warranted in being wary of narrative's dominance of production design, working with Anderson's corpus presents a special type of case for since Anderson creates both his own stories and his own production design. This shared origin creates, I will argue, a higher level of cohesion between narrative and production design as they develop in tandem. In the following I will examine the tensions and interplay inherent in these elements within Anderson's films.

Nostalgia and Synecdoche/Souvenir

To begin I would like to look at some different configurations of nostalgia as they pertain to my analysis of Anderson's films. On both the visual and auditory levels cultural nostalgia pervades Anderson's work: characters dress themselves in uniforms belonging to a variety of the 20th Century's decades; sound tracks are full of pop and rock music from the 1960s and 1970s; and visual references to the films of European auteurs Jean Renoir, Federico Fellini and Francois Truffaut to American directors Hal Ashby, Martin Scorsese and Stanley Kubrick show up regularly as we navigate a New York compiled from old *New Yorker* magazines and the novels of J.D. Salinger or the repurposed minesweeping ship modeled after the repurposed minesweeping ship commanded by Jacques Cousteau in his documentaries. A different form of nostalgia operates within the minds of Anderson's characters however, and because of this duality and the self-consciousness exhibited by Anderson in his use of characters with a recuperation-needing nostalgia, important formulations of this term as they apply to this analysis is essential.

Nostalgia was initially conceived in physiological terms to describe the pain suffered by Swiss mercenaries as they longed for home. The term eventually moved into the realm of psychology; slippage in location happened with its use as the term morphed from the desire for a specific place to a specific *time* instead, becoming a longing for an idyllic, pre-lapsarian past, for a lost Utopia. One of the most agreed-upon aspects of nostalgia in different formations is the lack of historical accuracy and the inability to truly revisit the “lost” time. We must note, though, that the term is not necessarily divorced from its physical/spatial origins as the nostalgic drive often includes attempts to reconstruct that lost and idealized place-and-time.

The majority of contemporary theorists involved in discussions of nostalgia write back to Frederic Jameson’s popular Marxist configuration of the term. Jameson focuses on the general crisis in historicity brought about in late-stage capitalism, lamenting the “nostalgic mode” and its loss of a genuine sense of history of the past. In the place of his history, Jameson finds that people so affected hold a simulacrum that is “pastness”, a glossy ahistorical version of the past with a sense of cultural amnesia.⁸ Jameson’s conception is strongly based on the psychiatric origins of nostalgia, regarding it negatively as retrogressive and essentially a harmful disease. In a similar mode Fred Davis examines the ways nostalgia is employed by people in order to construct their self-views in *Yearning for Yesteryear*. Taking a Jamesonian view of nostalgia, Davis sees nostalgia employed by people as a way to retract from or protect themselves from painful and disruptive experiences in their lives, enacting an artificial return to the pre-rupture Utopia. Self-identification, in his model, generates the question “Who am I?” indelibly

linked to the question “Who *was* I?”.⁹ This model is concurrent with Jameson’s sense of schizophrenia in the nostalgic subject, and is an accurate description of the problematic splits between past and present seen in Anderson’s auteur characters.

But this conception of nostalgia does not account for the conscious use of it by a director or the reception of an audience made aware of the controlling presence of a director as with the auteur film. Theorists such as Paul Grainge in his study of pop culture nostalgia, *Monochrome Memories*, Linda Hutcheon in her article “Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern” and sociologist Janelle L. Wilson in her monograph study *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning*, however, do not support the sense of amnesia necessary in the experiencing of nostalgia as Jameson explores it. These theorists find Jameson’s conception decidedly modernist, failing to provide room for the creation of meaningful narratives involving a history, especially as nostalgia is recognized as a more social phenomenon instead of an individual psychological one. For them Jameson’s formation is not only biased against any subjectivity, individual or collective, but also discounts too much the ability to recognize nostalgia as such while experiencing it - as a film audience might do - or actively creating it - as Wes Anderson might do in his role as director. Jameson’s nostalgia becomes an unconscious reaction instead of a potentially intentionally-provoked or tacitly agreed to emotion for the person experiencing it, a license for a clearly delineated imaginative exploration of the past. The essential difference is whether or not the subject experiencing a nostalgic reaction to an object/stimulus recognizes the impossibility of the return to the time (time in a loose sense as it is most often a generalized, fabricated time, a simulacra) invoked by nostalgia.

One of the most prominent formulations of nostalgia within film specifically has been Jameson's own concept of the "nostalgia film": "fashion-plate, historicist films"¹⁰ that reveal "the desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past"¹¹. Film theorist Anne Friedberg observes, though, that what Jameson really protests is the distance relation of every film from its historical referent.¹² Similarly Linda Hutcheon finds that Jameson himself is in the process of being nostalgic for a time when history *was* history, mythologizing the more stable, pre-late-capitalist (i.e. modernist) world, and the same critiques apply.

Moving beyond Jameson's conceptualization, Hutcheon's article "Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern" explores the confluence of irony and nostalgia as formerly opposing but brought together in the postmodern context – a desiring, in some form, for the "past" and some sort of emotional experience associated with thinking about that "past" but in a knowing or conscious way – a combination present to a large degree in Anderson's works on the filmmaker/audience side. Because this split is based on the viewer, an object can have purely nostalgic value for a character within a narrative while having ironic nostalgia for the film viewer at the same time - take Richie's childhood tent in *The Royal Tenenbaums*, pitched on the floor of the upstairs ballroom by Richie as an adult. Or, at the same time, a character may assign specific nostalgic value to an object, or their interaction with an object, only to have that change within the narrative, becoming not necessarily ironic later but seen from a more knowing position - for example the recontextualizing of the nostalgic object of Ned's Team Zissou ring by Steve from the hand of Ned early in the film onto the youthful hand of Werner (Leonardo

Giovannelli) at the conclusion, once he has embraced the present, no-longer-amnesiac version of himself.

Within Anderson's films and on the same level as his self-consciousness of auteurs and authors, Anderson plays with concepts of nostalgia in a way which blends nostalgia as Jameson describes it – generally in a narrative sense as traits of his central characters – and in the post-Jameson, Grainge, Hutcheon, et al. configuration in the point of view of the filmmaker and the audience aligned with him and who seek his films out. But how is this shown?

By way of brief digression, on the subject of particular objects that help create a sense of nostalgia but in the context of film theory history, I would like to look back briefly at “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” where Walter Benjamin writes:

By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film... extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives... ”¹³

Jameson also wrote about Benjamin and nostalgia, particularly in an article titled *Walter Benjamin; Or, Nostalgia*. In it, Jameson pays close attention to the way in which Benjamin's preoccupation with machines and inventions does not lead to a theory of historical causality as Jameson would have thought but instead leads to the development of a theory of the modern object and the aura created around it. Benjamin's aura is the same as the “sacred” in primitive societies for anthropologists, what “mystery” is to human events, what “charisma” is to people .¹⁴ Jameson writes:

Thus it is easy to see how in the movies, in the ‘reproducible work of art,’ that aura which originally resulted from the physical presence of actors in the here and now of the theatre is short-circuited by the new technical advance (and

then replaced, in genuine Freudian symptom-formation, by the attempt to endow the stars with a new kind of personal aura of their own off the screen).¹⁵

These items then become “the setting of a kind of Utopia, a Utopian present, not shorn of the past but having absorbed it, a kind of plenitude of existence in the world of things, if only for the briefest instant” though, according to Jameson, “available to the thinker only in a simpler cultural past”.¹⁶ Similarly, in order to explain the sites of nostalgia that people encounter, Hutcheon cites Mikhail Bakhtin’s conception of nostalgia as being a “historical inversion” in which the memory selects precious or Utopian moments from the past and crystallizes them. Benjamin’s close-ups are objects of aura to him in the same way mechanically reproduced pictures and films are. While the ingenious guidance of film can show us aspects of the lives of the objects around us we would normally miss, we are still conscious that we are watching a film, and those objects are removed one step away from our ability to actually obtain them.

As a number of critics have noted, Anderson works repeatedly with a small number of central themes within his films. Devin Orgeron, as noted earlier, asserts that Anderson’s films are about childhood, “literal and prolonged”.¹⁷ Anderson’s films centre predominantly on middle-class white males, often upper-middle class or at least with aspirations to reach that rarefied atmosphere through their successes. Anderson’s characters consistently become mired in their desires for success, either regained or as they have imagined it from their less-successful current positions, and it is the imaginative immaturity and ahistorical, backwards-looking of their desires which consistently fail before the characters are made to realize their individual folly. If

Anderson's films are narratives of reaching adulthood, they are ones that are visually very heavily adorned with nostalgic charms and totems, synecdoches kept by characters to both protect the idealized past while also designed to help their owners attain their childish, imagined successes. Satisfaction, however, is only ever granted to the characters within these narratives when the characters themselves reject their nostalgic goals, effectively transforming those synecdochal objects from totems to souvenirs.

Production Design as Authoring

Anderson is both lauded and criticized at this point in his career for his consistency in both themes and his idiosyncratic production design. From *Rushmore* onward Anderson's films have increasingly taken place in hermetically-sealed "other" places manufactured out of these objects which resemble an ahistorical, visually-saturated version of our own world.¹⁸ These "alternate realities" created within Anderson's films will be interrogated to analyze the ways in which Anderson constructs them to both reflect and inform his narratives. Finally I will look at the ways in which the diegetic space is completed with the inclusion of other media within Anderson's films – these representations of other media most often take the form of the writings/filmings/performing of works created by the author characters within these films and link the creation of the films' diegetic space back to the act of authoring at the heart of the conflict of each of Anderson's plots.

Orgeron places Anderson's thematic concern with "poor, misunderstood, typically male creator" alongside modernist films of the 1960s and 70s such as Fellini's *8 ½* (1963), Godard's *Contempt* (1963), Truffaut's *Day for Night* (1973), and Wenders' *The*

State of Things (1982)¹⁹ - highly personal films taking the creative process of their directors as fodder for their own investigations of the creation of cinematic fictions. As mentioned before, one of the most important aspects of Anderson's central characters is that they are creators – they are playwrights, authors of instructional books, documentarians, short-story authors, etc. – actively engaged in the creation of fictions as attempts to remake their worlds according to their own nostalgic desires, and these texts they create become objects heavily embossed with Anderson's overarching production design. Orgeron's article on the works of Anderson details very well the auteur characters that feature so self-consciously in the first four films of Anderson's corpus. In extrafilmic texts, Anderson takes care to foreground the collaborative element of his filmmaking according to Orgeron²⁰, positioning himself in the rehabilitated position in which his auteur characters finish. As Orgeron also notes, however, these characters retain their centrality after becoming a part of their community as Anderson does with his recognized auteur status.

Bottle Rocket's Dignan (Owen Wilson) is Anderson's first central author character, a sort of fiction writer who attempts to proscribe the future biography of criminality he has created for himself and best friend Anthony (Luke Wilson) onto their actual lives. While Anthony and the pair's other friend and erstwhile gang-member Bob Mapplethorpe (Robert Musgrave) represent directionless, upper-middle-class early twenty-somethings, Dignan is full of drive and desire if not the actual skills and intelligence necessary to achieve his criminal dreams. Dignan has found himself an apprenticeship of sorts under Abe Henry (James Caan), a career thief who also runs "the

Lawn Wranglers”, a landscaping front company that employed Dignan. Mr. Henry represents a potential father figure for Dignan (who makes reference at one point early on in the film to his “mom and Ron”, obviously not Dignan’s father) who shows himself to be equally if not more childish than his fledgling criminal charges.²¹ While Mr. Henry seems to realize Dignan’s potential and admire his enthusiasm for the criminal life Dignan has designed, the older criminal is really using the boys to be able to steal from Bob’s affluent family. Dignan’s authorship proves to be unreliable on a number of counts, including his faulty characterization of Mr. Henry as a mentor/father figure, but primarily in that the robbery of Hinckley Cold Storage not only fails but has been sabotaged by the false mentor; however, there is redemption for Dignan in that he has finally seen his dreams of criminality come to a sort of fruition through the act of *attempting* the robbery and commanding his dysfunctional team, seemingly at his happiest and most vital as he is chased through the warehouse by police officers before his capture and arrest. The film’s denouement has Bob and Anthony visiting Dignan in jail where he remains positive about Mr. Henry despite having been used, pleased in the pulling together of his collective family and realizing, at least in part, his childish dream of being a career criminal.

Bottle Rocket shows itself to be much less formalistically constructed than Anderson’s later works. Nevertheless certain elements of Anderson’s signature production design are apparent. Dignan’s authorship does not have the proper, mass-produced technical incarnation of the proper media products of later Anderson auteurs, however, Dignan has committed his plan to paper in multi-coloured Crayola markers as

we are shown during the film's first five minutes. Dignan, Anthony, and Bob all wear retro-minded fashions but nothing that formally announces itself as definitely of another age or separate from the 1990s vintage-influenced fashions seen in similarly contemporarily-set and produced films such as *Pulp Fiction* (1994) or *Reality Bites* (1994). Dignan also chooses bright yellow jumpsuits as the uniform for his "crew" – a nascent sign of uniforms that various central and supporting characters would adopt in later films. Dignan's choice is particularly interesting as it notably stands apart from the clothing worn by other characters within the film, so much so that Dignan's jumpsuit is mocked by Bob's brother Future Man (Andrew Wilson) and his friend Clay (Brian Tenenbaum) and one of the Hinckley employees held at gunpoint by the gang asks "Why are you wearing those jumpsuits?", a question to which no answer is given.

Four notable settings appear in the film: Bob's family home, the motel room in which the gang hides out after their initial bookstore robbery, Mr. Henry's warehouse-loft apartment and Hinckley Cold Storage. Of the four settings Mr. Henry's apartment alone is consciously overtly-stylized, replete with a fur rug, exposed brick walls, and art deco-inspired furniture, a sort of makeshift swinging bachelor pad and the site of a party with a range of strange-looking attendees prior to the attempted robbery. Filmed in and around Houston but without ever announcing any particular geographic locations, *Bottle Rocket* presents a diegetic reality that is very closely related to contemporary reality and without the fable-like quality of later films.

Max Fischer (Jason Schwartzman) is the central author/auteur in Anderson's second film, *Rushmore*. The precocious Max won a scholarship to the prestigious titular

private school after his mother submitted a one-act play based on Watergate that Max wrote as an 8 year-old. The early promise shown by Max has manifested itself not in his academic pursuits but in his extra-academic pursuits – as we are shown in a montage set to Creation 2 + 4’s “Making Time” early on in the film, Max is seen in every extracurricular club offered at the school. On top of this he heavily self-identifies as a playwright, and this three-act film depicts parts of three of his pop-appeal plays – ridiculous pieces involving cocaine, guns, knives, dynamite and flamethrowers and completely outside of what any school would allow in a more realistic narrative. Max falls for first-grade teacher Rosemary Cross (Olivia Williams), and the budding interest boils over during a dinner party following the premiere of Max’s play, *Serpico*. Max is immediately hostile to Miss Cross’ guest, Dr. Peter Flynn (Luke Wilson), viewing him as a romantic rival and warning: “I wrote a hit play, so I’m not sweating it either.” Max is finally ejected from Rushmore after he attempts to bring real-life authorship to an aquarium funded by Herman Blume and conceived to impress Miss Cross. Max initially attempts to make “a go of it” at Grover Cleveland public school, being tutored by Miss Cross and embarking on educational outings with her, other students, and Blume. Eventually an affair develops between the married Blume and Miss Cross, and, upon finding out about it through his former Rushmore chapel partner Dirk (Mason Gamble), Max breaks down and attempts to sabotage the relationship between Cross and Blume while also beginning an escalating prank war with his former friend, including the releasing of bees into Blume’s hotel suite, Max’s bicycle being run over, and Blume’s Bentley’s brakes being cut before Max is arrested – actions which leave his surrogate

family fragmented. It is not until Max writes one final play (*Heaven and Hell*, which borrows heavily from films such as *Apocalypse Now* and *Platoon* and remains completely outlandish to the film's viewers while garnering a standing ovation and tears from its diegetic audience) that he is able to author, in effect, the reunion of that surrogate family under the view of his formerly-concealed barber father Bert (Seymour Cassel), romantically reuniting Blume and Cross.

Rushmore presents a more heavily-designed space than its predecessor as Anderson begins to exercise much more control over the overall production design of his filmmaking.²² Rushmore Academy, a surrogate for Max's deceased mother, is dressed and filmed as a more surreal place than any of *Bottle Rocket's* locations. Part of what personalizes this location is its position as the film's title as well as the proliferation of personalized signs – many of them made by Max himself in his calligraphic hand or else superimposed by Anderson himself with his favored Futura font over montages of Max's school-based activities. The school's warm, leafy appearance, wood-paneled rooms and old, hand-carved brick lend it a vague Ivy League air while Rushmore also benefits from the contrasting locations of Blume's metals factory, with its stark and barren exterior, and the similarly-shot Grover Cleveland High School, site of Max's exile, and even the surrounding warehouse-district environs of Bert's barbershop.

The majority of the major characters in Anderson's next film, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, are published authors whose literary enterprises include the designing of fictional worlds, as in Margot's plays or Eli Cash's (Owen Wilson) western novels, the design of one's own life as in Henry Sherman's (Danny Glover) financial planning

guides, or the description and investigation of curious oddities as found in Etheline Tenenbaum's (Anjelica Huston) book chronicling the raising of child geniuses or Raleigh St. Clair's (Bill Murray) Oliver Sacks-inspired neurological studies. The film is framed as a novel itself, replete with a narrator (Alec Baldwin), a book cover, and inserts through the film that depict the first pages of chapters with text being a cross between screenplay directions and a transcript of the action to immediately follow with the beginning of the "chapter's" first scene. This film represents much more of an ensemble character focus than the previous films with nearly equal attention (though still favouring the males) given to Royal Tenenbaum (Gene Hackman) and the rest of his family, including estranged wife Etheline, sons Richie (Luke Wilson) and Chas (Ben Stiller), and adopted daughter Margot, as well as Etheline's fiancé Henry and childhood Tenenbaum friend Eli, the successful but deeply troubled Cormac McCarthy-esque western novelist.

This film predominantly deals with the theme of lost success and greatness – each of the Tenenbaum children was a child genius: Margot as a playwright, Chas in real estate, and Richie as a tennis player – yet all have fallen from this Utopian state over the years for a number of reasons both tragic and banal. Along with their loss of early genius comes a loss of agency and frustration at each character's inability to regain control over their own narrative. Royal, though not shown with a book of his own as many of the characters are, decides to author the reunification of the family after hearing of Henry's proposal to Etheline and being thrown out of his longtime hotel suite due to insufficient funds. Faking stomach cancer, he returns to the house at 111 Archer Ave. to affect this reunion just as his children are all returning home to hide from the adult disappointments

that have plagued them as of late. Of course Royal's ruse falls apart and the family is again fragmented before Royal, following Richie's attempted suicide, repents and relinquishes his attempts at what has proved a faltering and impotent control over others. The "new" Royal then begins to undo some of the damage he has caused over the years out of a recognition of the needs and desires of other characters.

One of the key elements of Royal's initial ruse is displayed through his mastery of production design on a micro scale. This is shown through his outfitting of Richie's bedroom as it is transformed into a makeshift hospital room, complete with EKG monitors, a reclining bed, a disconnected IV drip and oxygen tanks. As we learn later in the narrative, Royal borrowed these materials from a defunct hospital and has hired his elevator-operator friend Dusty (Seymour Cassel) to pose as a Dr. McClure. As the audience is made aware of Royal's deception from the near-beginning, this particular "set" is obvious as attempting to *appear* like a serious hospital space without being functional – clearly the outfitting of some form of fictional construction.

The location of Royal's deception displaces Richie in a way that allows for the appearance of a more nostalgically-motivated micro set design as Richie moves into the house's ballroom. Richie sets up his childhood tent whose yellow structure functions essentially as a time capsule for the period we had been shown earlier in the film involving Richie and Margot's running away to the Museum of Natural History. Richie's use of a tent *inside* of a house is initially strange, replete as it is with his childhood plastic record player, tennis trophies, toy cars and a portrait of the family taken while the children were still geniuses. These objects perform a double function, chosen narratively

by Richie for the personal and amnesiac nostalgia he associates them with while also operating in that ironic nostalgic manner as they are recognizably “retro” objects to the film’s audience, marking a sort of shared sense of cultural past-ness. The function of this structure-within-a-structure is explained as the tent provides a tactile link to a time at which he was alone with Margot, who was then and has since remained the primary object of his affections. After Richie’s attempted suicide and his subsequent release from the hospital he and Margot are able, by occupying this nostalgically-loaded setting Richie has prepared, to express their mutual love for each other.

The house at 111 Archer Ave. in which these two pieces of narrative production design occur is the dominant location for this film, representing an even more-hermetically-sealed diegesis. The house retains much nostalgic cachet for the children who return to it, finding it essentially identical to the way it is shown when we see the three children as youths. While the film is set in New York it is replete with many fabricated locations such as the 175th St. YMCA and the Lindbergh Palace Hotel, both locations where Royal makes his residence at various points in the film. Drawing heavily from J.D. Salinger’s Glass Family stories as inspiration, this is a fantasy New York, and the product of a literary imagination, thus fitting with the film’s framing as a novel itself.

For *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* Anderson, along with first-time collaborator Noah Baumbach, created the oceanographic documentarian Steve Zissou (Bill Murray), a Jacques Cousteau-esque, formerly-great filmmaker whose hubris and lack of morals has kept a hit film out of his grasp for the past ten years. This turn to cinematic authorship is minor insofar as it affects Anderson’s focus on auteur characters,

becoming, if anything, more self-referential concerning Anderson's own artistic endeavors on the material level. *The Life Aquatic* opens with a film within a film as we see the premiere of Zissou's latest documentary at the Santo Loquasto Film Festival. While the film includes the (off-camera) death of Zissou's oldest partner Esteban DuPlantier (Cassel), the audience seems nonplussed and hesitant to accept this film as a true document of real aquatic life. Jane Winslett-Richardson (Cate Blanchett), a reporter writing a piece on Zissou for *The Oceanographic Explorer*, even confesses during her first interview with Zissou that elements of his last film seemed fake and that this fakeness may partly account for the film's critical failure. While he is a deplorable character in many ways, Zissou and his wish to live out the action-figure, Cousteau-inspired life he has planned for himself prove to be charismatic enough that Jane is brought into his filmmaking family along with possible-son Ned (Owen Wilson). The process of this collective authorship eventually leads to a romance between Ned and Jane as well as Ned's death during a helicopter accident. But as is often the case in Anderson's films, a death becomes a purifying and sobering event of sorts, and Zissou (and crew) are able to author a redemptive "Part Two" which is much more honest but also much more successful.

Zissou's quest for personal justification and greatness is manifested in part through his ship, the *Belafonte*. This film marks the most ambitious of Anderson's production design, essentially creating one-and-a-half ships for Zissou's purposes: the proper converted minesweeping boat and a to-scale cross-section replica which allows for a textbook-like explanation by Zissou of the operations designed to (and failing to) bring

him once again the glory of his past (as well as facilitating Anderson's own shooting as his camera can move "through" walls to track characters from room to room). Once again the setting is an amalgam of past-ness and boys' adventure fantasy including Zodiac boats, dynamite, a killer whale pool, a toy-like helicopter and cartoonish diving gear, an improbable submarine, and an official "Steve Zissou" pinball machine. This film borders on visual overload and the effect of certain close-ups on particular objects in this film will be examined in the following chapter. The *Belafonte* is in some respects the physical manifestation of Zissou's self-conscious construction of his own auteur status ten years after that status stopped being deserved while also representing his best hope, in his estimation, for the return to that desired greatness and auteur standing. In this regard the ship itself is both a time capsule for Zissou as Richie's tent was, as well as a sort of life raft. That is, until Zissou can realize that it is not the ship itself and its relationship to his own greatness that is important but his relationships with the people who populate the ship and their own idiosyncratic values and desires.

This type of auteur-created space is absent in Anderson's next film, *The Darjeeling Limited* as we instead are returned by the director to a space chosen and fetishized by an auteur. Two of the main characters in *Darjeeling* are still authors of sorts. Francis (Owen Wilson), the eldest of the three Whitman brothers, has conceived of a naïve spiritual journey through India along with brothers Jack (Jason Schwartzman) and Peter (Adrien Brody). For Francis this quest includes the initially-unstated intent of authoring a reunification with Patricia (Anjelica Huston), the boys' absentee mother, now a nun in Tibet and whom none of the boys have seen since she failed to appear at the

boys' father's funeral one year previous. Francis' quest is semi-successful as the brothers bond after the saving of two-of-three young Indian brothers who were attempting to cross a river when the ropes of their makeshift bridge gave way. The boys are also able to confront their mother yet she stays true to form and disappears before her sons can wake.

Jack, the youngest of the three, is a published author, a writer of short stories which he claims contain completely fictional characters who are quite obviously based on the people present in his own life. One of Jack's works of "fiction" vividly recalls an event enough to make Peter cry, once he has removed himself from the sight of his brothers, as well as causing Francis to laugh in remembrance. This film is prefaced with a short entitled *The Hotel Chevalier* introducing Jack and his ex-girlfriend (Natalie Portman) at his Parisian hotel. Their break-up has obviously been hard on Jack, who has fled to Europe as a result. In his exile Jack has occupied this hotel room, turning it into an erstwhile home, decorating it with a number of pictures, a diorama he is seemingly in the process of painting, a collection of small music boxes (one of which is played by his ex-girlfriend in this short and then again played by his mother in the feature), and part of the luggage collection which features more prominently within *Darjeeling*. Jack is certainly not over the break-up, checking his ex's answering machine messages twice as well as making tentative plans to leave his brothers and meet up with her in Italy. While the two appear to be intimate or at least be ready to be so, after the boys' triumphant finding of peace in the mother's absence, Jack presents the ending to a new short story which he has been working on. This short story incorporates a conversation from the short film in which Jack is ostensibly his meanest and the story concludes with the

statement “He would not be going to Italy.” When Peter replies, “I like how mean you were,” Jack begins to protest with his same refrain that “All the characters are fictional” but stops mid-sentence, settling on “Thanks,” instead.

The act of authoring is manifested visually in a number of ways within this film. On Francis’ part, the narrative he has prescribed for his family is seen through the laminated itineraries that Francis has his hidden assistant Brendan (Wally Wolodarsky) slide under the door each morning. The titular train – an entirely Andersonian creation itself - is initially conceived of by Jack and Peter as the means by which to achieve some sort of peace or Utopian restoration with each other and with Francis after the recent trauma. And while the Whitman brothers find themselves as strangers in a strange land they have outfitted their new environment with the embossed set of luggage that had belonged to their father. *Darjeeling* provides an ultra colour-saturated view of India. Ornate decorations adorn the cars that the Whitmans live in and pass through, an efficiently economized collection of cars with many little compartments built for their expansive personalized luggage collection and trimmed with delicate woodwork. Fanciful illustrations, most notably the repeated instances of elephants - literary and folkloric symbols of memory - appear on wallpaper, carved into wood runners or painted along the outside of the train. As noted earlier this film has been criticized by a number of critics for focusing again on white upper-middle-class males instead of the Indians who populate the country in which the Whitmans are traveling. However Anderson’s film, especially in the context of the rest of his body of work, makes no claims to be about anything other than the misguided attempt to gain enlightenment in this country.

His depiction of India is unrealistic, true, but this fantasy comes both from remaining within his stylistic interests as well as narratively, through portraying an auteur-idealized India too loaded with colour and detail to be hemmed in by the imagined or authored version Francis and his complicit brothers initially think will heal their psychic wounds.

In practice Anderson's films never show themselves to be set in any time other than the present yet the production design for each almost completely eschews contemporary media and associated devices almost wholly. In the few instances where new technology and media do appear in the texts they stand out for their oddness as they are omitted by the auteur characters by virtue of not belonging to the idealized pre-lapsarian past that they wish to regain access to. The first such example comes from *The Life Aquatic* as Team Zissou breaks into the mid-ocean research station of Zissou rival Alistair Hennessey (Jeff Goldblum). During previous scenes on the *Belafonte* we have been privy to the equipment of Zissou's crew, composed of articles such as reel-to-reel recorders, archaic cameras, old-fashioned film editing tables and projectors and the like, monochromatic, green-on-black tracking monitors, and laboratories filled with bubbling Ehrenmeyer flasks reminiscent of the movie laboratories of films such as *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931), or a 1950's educational filmstrip. In contrast Hennessey's laboratory is replete with contemporary-to-futuristic equipment including colour monitors, advanced tracking devices, and even a Hennessey-branded espresso machine. The laboratory's exterior, shown to us through a brief clip of Zissou's unfinished film, brings to mind the spaceship in Fellini's *8 1/2* and is a visual paragon of the retro-futuristic.

Darjeeling holds what can be considered the most interesting eruption of contemporary technology in any of Anderson's films to date. In both the feature and the short *The Hotel Chevalier*, Jack makes use of an Apple iPod to play Peter Sarstedt's "Where Do You Go My Lovely" during scenes in which he plans to impress his ex-girlfriend and train attendant Rita (Amara Karan). Notably both of these instances fail partially as Jack's ex-girlfriend laughingly asks "What is this music?" and Rita simply uses Jack briefly for a cigarette and as a sounding board before leaving him. The iPod reappears at two of the more disappointing sections of the films as far as the brothers are concerned as Jack plays Debussy's "Suite Bergmanesque: 3. Claire de Lune" as the brothers sit around a campfire after being ejected from the train, and then playing the Rolling Stones' "Play with Fire" prior to the brothers confrontation of their mother in which they interrogate her about her absence from their lives.

More briefly featured is the compartment of Francis' assistant Brendan. As designed by Francis, Brendan is supposed to be unseen by his brothers during their spiritual journey, concealed in a compartment in a different car of the train. As Francis visits Brendan to find out if word has been received from his mother, we are privy to Brendan's berth where a large Apple iMac computer dominates the space along with a printer, a laminating machine and a number of maps, posters and office-type equipment. What is so significant about this brief glimpse of contemporary technology is how out of place the large computer screen looks on the left side of the screen as Francis speaks with Brendan. Francis' decision to have these reminders of contemporary life hidden away is to add a sense of nostalgic purity to the spiritual quest he has authored for his brothers

and himself. Anderson's choice to show this jarring reminder of contemporary technology shows self-consciousness as to the effacement of similar elements throughout the rest of his body of work; it is notable that the computer belongs to a supporting character and not a major player; when in the service of a major character, such as Chas in *Tenenbaums*, a mid-1980s Apple IIe is the computer of choice while playwright Max utilizes an old Underwood typewriter for his work.

As a way of interrogating whether one watches film or participates in it, Tashiro (expanding a framework of affective space from architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz into one for the consideration of film) proposes costume, make-up, and jewelry as the first, most immediate of a series of affective circles extending from the human subject which mediates the viewing of film.²³ Beginning with *Rushmore*, costuming becomes a very important element of the overall production design. Max Fischer wears his Rushmore Academy blazer and tie proudly with a white shirt and khakis, even after he is ejected from the school and must attend Grover Cleveland High School instead. After his arrest and breakdown Max dejectedly adopts the pocketed shirt of his barber father. It is not until he has been rehabilitated and realized that he must use his individual gifts to repair the damage he has done in his quest for auteur recognition that he again finds a proper and properly outlandish uniform - stepping off a bus outside his father's shop to meet the disheveled Blume, Max sports a green velvet suit with a monochromatic combination of bowtie and dress shirt underneath in direct imitation of Blume's pre-depression style. Max's green suit functions both as a visual symbol of his acceptance of

his separation from the maternal Rushmore (while still using its merit pins as an offering to Blume to initiate their reconciliation) and as a particularly-Andersonian dress oddity.

The costumes in both *The Royal Tenenbaums* and *The Life Aquatic* have the most nostalgic weight attached to them for the characters as well as for the audience aligned with the director. Adopted siblings Margot and Richie Tenenbaum don uniforms seen on their childhood counterparts during the film's introduction in a symbolic gesture towards their nostalgic desires. It is notable that their brother Chas does not replicate his grown-up child style as an adult but instead clothes both himself and his sons in matching red Adidas tracksuits. All three costumes are visually intriguing and culturally nostalgic: the bright red tracksuits, Margot's Lacoste shirt-dresses and fur coat, and Richie's Bjorn Borg-inspired Fila tennis gear under a camelhair suit. Eli Cash also dresses in a sort of discursive drag; the New York-raised author costumes himself in designer western chic to compliment his burgeoning career as a pop-Western novelist but accented with items such as velvet loafers instead of cowboy boots. Other characters do not have the same historical attachment to their clothes as Richie and Margot but are shown to dress in idiosyncratic and somewhat abnormal uniforms including Pagoda's consistent pink pants and white shirt or Henry Sherman, despite being referred to as "that big ol' grizzly bear" by Royal at one point, always looking dapper in blue sports coats and gingham shirts.

For the members of Team Zissou donning the blue Speedos and suits along with their signature red caps is a sign of belonging to the fraternity that is their oceanographic team, buying into the collective authorship that at times is nothing more than a narcissistic manifestation of the desires of the sometimes-despotic Steve. These uniforms

are iconic within this diegesis to the point that they are seen on action figures positioned beside a television which plays an old Zissou film from a more successful time. Another part of the uniform is the Zissou signature shoes from Adidas, manufactured for the film by Anderson's art department by modifying an existing style from then 1970s.

By the time of *The Darjeeling Limited* Anderson has relaxed in terms of his costuming, having the Whitman brothers dressed in Marc Jacobs-designed suit combinations. Uniforms do still appear on the staff of the eponymous train as well as at the airline the brothers almost patronize but not in the same manner. The brothers are instead saddled by choice with their dead father's luggage set. These suitcases perform a function almost identical to that of the uniforms worn in other films as they appear in essentially all of the shots of the brothers in their train compartment and then after their ejection as burdens the boys (and helpful Indians) cart around, loading and unloading from carts, buses, and taxis, before the brothers finally "let go" of the literal and metaphorical baggage while running for their new train at the film's conclusion.

A tension remains within Anderson's films due to his self-consciousness and his preoccupation with auteur characters. While he recognizes a large part of his own auteur construction in his idiosyncratic and imaginative creation of these hermetically enclosed, cultural nostalgia-based spaces, he can never really move beyond them into a full incorporation with the larger world as a whole as his characters must. Instead he becomes increasingly closed-off and formal in his construction. But this works within his films precisely because we are distanced as viewers from his characters' narrative struggles through the realities of this type of formalist film-watching experience. As this

project moves into its next chapter we will examine the ways Anderson signals shifts in narrative identification through his usages of music and cinematography, showing how these aspects of his films further cause his audiences to identify with him as watchers of these narratives and not participants – a distinction which causes these meditations on the same theme of nostalgic authorship to remain interesting.

Notes – Chapter 1

¹ Margot Tenenbaum in *The Royal Tenenbaums* represents the one exception to Anderson's primarily male auteur central characters, though she is less prominent of a figure than most central male characters in the film, hence the masculine article here.

² It should be noted that Tashiro's conception of "production design" is broader than conventionally meant by the term, encompassing the majority of the visual elements of film including mise-en-scène, setting, props, costuming, etc., and this inclusive use of the term will be used within this exploration.

³ C.S. Tashiro, *Pretty Pictures* (Austin: University of Austin Press, 1998), xiv-xv.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Joseph Aisenberg, "Wes's World." *Bright Lights* 59 (2008).

⁷ Aisenberg affirms, *The Darjeeling Limited* refuses a similar framework as the plot itself is a figurative device.

⁸ Paul Grainge, *Monochrome Memories* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002): 12.

⁹ Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesteryear* (New York: The Free Press, 1978): 35-6.

¹⁰ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991): xvii.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹² Anne Friedberg, "Les Flaneurs du Mal: Cinema and the Postmodern Condition." *PMLA* 106.3 (1991): 426.

¹³ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. (New York: Schocken Books, 1968): 236

¹⁴ Frederic Jameson, "Walter Benjamin; Or, Nostalgia," *Marxism and Form* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971): 76.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 77.

¹⁷ Devin Orgeron, "La Camera-Crayola: Authorship Comes of Age in the Cinema of Wes Anderson", *Cinema Journal* 46.2 (Winter) (2007): 42.

¹⁸ For example the New York portrayed in *The Royal Tenenbaums* with its Green Line buses and gypsy cabs and obscured Statue of Liberty, *The Life Aquatic's* invented geography and stop-motion animation sea life, or the colour-saturated outsiders' view of India, heavily influenced by Renoir's *The River* (1951) in *The Darjeeling Limited*.

¹⁹ Orgeron, "La Camera-Crayola: Authorship Comes of Age in the Cinema of Wes Anderson", 44.

²⁰ Ibid., 59.

²¹ Ibid., 46.

²² The development of Anderson's framing and camera movements as well as music usage will be discussed in the following chapter.

²³ C.S. Tashiro, *Pretty Pictures*, 18.

Chapter 2: Visual Narration and the Implied-author

While the first chapter of this thesis concentrated on Anderson's self-conscious use of authorship within his narratives and the relationship between his auteur position and the diegetic worlds he creates for his films, this chapter will concern itself with Anderson's presence as a narrator-auteur within his films and the ways in which this narrator-auteur construct is evidenced on the visual level through "signature" camera use – specifically the repeated motif of God's-eye¹ overhead close-ups which equate characters with the synecdochal objects that populate his frames. What is essentially examined within this chapter is how one sees the constructed diegeses of Anderson's films from an auteur-aligned position. This chapter will argue that Anderson's use of those particular shots – the God's-eye close-ups of actors and inserts of objects – show shifts in narration that continually realign the audiences' perceptions with those of the implied-author/narrator construct represented by Anderson himself. Given the degree to which these features were developed early on in his career and used across the corpus of his work, this examination will suggest that the relatively unpopular idea of the auteur/author/implied-author may be recuperated and applied to Anderson's self-consciously author-invoking work in order to provide fodder for a profitable analysis. While this study will suggest that this form of analysis works for directors such as Anderson who exhibit a high degree of anti-realist stylistic uniformity from film to film, it will not attempt to universalize this approach to other directors who may exhibit more readily shifting and less consistent approaches to elements such as those God's-eye close-up and insert pairings and the slow motion long-take shots that bolster Anderson's visual auteur signature in an attempt to

avoid the pitfalls which have hobbled certain auteurist analyses in the past. The highly-repetitive structural elements of Anderson's films, I will argue, exhibit an internal logic that instructs viewers on how to observe these narratives from a particularly auteur-centred position.

One key element of this analysis is the contention that restoring some of the centrality of the author/auteur to certain films and directors allows for a profitable form of analysis, however, without restoring absolute authority to a director and instead interrogating the ways in which a proxy of the director may be formed and put to use in the telling of these stories. This author-character takes the form of "Wes Anderson" in conjunction with the films discussed – the name is presented in quotations here as not to confuse this character with the flesh-and-blood Wes Anderson. This "Wes Anderson" represents a constructed notion of authorship and authority anchored mainly in the cinematic signatures/signifiers found in Anderson's films and the narrative obsession with author/auteur characters, much in the same manner as Peter Wollen in his auteurial analysis of John Ford/"John Ford" and Howard Hawks/"Howard Hawks" in *Signs and Meanings* as Wollen notes the "decipherment" of what he calls the "directorial factor" against the "noise" from the rest of the people involved in a film's making.² This "Wes Anderson" then exists as an author-character who functions as a narrational lens through which these films are viewed.

Whether considering an "auteur" the first reader or the creator of meaning behind a text, these concepts of authorship and author identification persist in popular culture and within film studies. These concepts endure, never disappearing despite the

popularity of the post-structuralist argument for the “death” of the author and the acknowledgment of the collective production of film texts. Something about certain films makes us *want* to attribute the creation of those particular texts to particular directors. Or, rather, certain texts *ask* us to attribute texts to particular directors and repeatedly draw our attention back to the notion that there is a central organizing force behind the narrative we are watching, and implying that an auteur or author exists as an authority over that text, through which an important level of meaning is derived. Directors with a distinctive style can and do take advantage of this in order to further their auteur persona and claim an authority over texts which strengthen their autonomy as declared auteur directors with dedicated followings in the industrial/marketing reality of the cinematic world.

The concept of the “implied-author”, essentially representing the conception of the auteur in neo-auteurist, post-“Auteur Theory” analysis, has been a divisive issue in narratological study since Wayne Booth introduced the term in 1961 in an attempt to explain ideological and moral stances found in a text without attributing them back to the biological author, specifically in the cases of unreliable narrators.³ In response to this ongoing discussion Mieke Bal drew a line of distinction between the often-conflated concepts of the “implied-author” and the actual narrator of a text. Bal found the implied-author to be “the result of the investigation of the meaning of a text, and not the source of that meaning...only after interpreting the text on the basis of a text description can the implied-author be inferred and discussed.”⁴ Bal’s desire for a split between the implied-author and the narrator of the text is rooted in the observation that within texts, literary or

filmic, one may have a sense of the implied-author without this construct representing the narrator throughout the whole of the text as there may be an incongruity, either large or small, but which sets the two invariably apart. Bal defines the narrator as “that agent which utters the linguistic signs which constitute the text”⁵, explicitly rooting the narrator to *a* particular text. For Bal, the “author/implied-author”, “narrator” and “focaliser” are distinct concepts, the latter two working together in order to create narration - the narrator chooses different means of focalising elements of the story (including third-person viewpoints, omniscient views, particular characters’ views etc.) - while the implied-author is an extra-textual construct which may be informed by the contents of this particular story but remain on the outside of said story’s meaning.

While Bal is careful to show that the implied-author and the narrator of a text can and often do function separately, she fails to recognize that the two can be collapsed into one in the case of particular texts. This latter possibility is one that this project will suggest is accomplished in the work of Anderson. The centrality that Bal accords to *a* text in her analysis removes too readily the extra-textual context(s) that shape how we as viewers may encounter texts. Put another way, as we watch films we are generally conscious of related-but-extra-textual elements such as other roles particular actors have played, familiar settings, other films by the same director or written by the same screenwriter or adapted from novels by the same author, etc. A further troubling of Bal’s theory arises in each instance where the audience has a concept of the implied-author *before* the reading of the text, augmented further in those cases in which the text bolsters

the conceptualization of the implied-author by reinforcing key elements of the implied-author's existence, insofar as these are known by the audience consuming the text.

In Chapter 1 we examined the ways in which both the narrative and the combination of setting and production design as part of the *mise-en-scène* in Anderson's films call into consideration the act of authoring and while simultaneously creating spaces by an author in a self-conscious and visually recognizable style. Susan S. Lanser's 2001 essay "(Im)plying the Author" provides an avenue for re-collapsing the implied-author of a text with the narrator. In a refutation of the assertion that the implied-author is an element of the text, Lanser points to the chicken-and-egg dilemma created by the author-text relationship: there are no texts without authors and there are no authors without texts, and to locate the implied-author within the text it must be inferred and imagined, becoming a reading effect, to which Lanser asserts: "This effect cannot be guaranteed, for the implied-author is essentially a matter of belief, existing only when and where readers construct it."⁶ Lanser's most salient point regarding this analysis is found as she asserts that the "implied-author" is a matter of belief, but that certain texts "ply and imply", to use her terms, "a range of strategies that may evoke different notions of authorship".⁷ For Lanser, it is quite natural that some readers will construct an author to whom they attribute the text's creation, especially in how this construction is bolstered by extratextual aspects/properties of the director, selectively applied to the text being examined/read/watched and reinforced instead of challenged by the text itself.

Lanser speculates further that there is an Ur-principle governing the reading of texts by these viewers in terms of the relationship between the implied-author and the

narrators and other focalisers found within a text. As a result she poses a new axiom such that “insofar as implied-authorship is a function of textual personae, under ordinary circumstances a text's implied-author will be associated with the persona(e) occupying the text's highest level(s) of authority.”⁸ Within the context of film, this position is typically given to the director insofar as the texts themselves supply evidence that supports this identification. Lanser further separates this author function into the categories of “diegetic” and “mimetic” authority, describing the function of diegetic authority as such:

Diegetic authority encompasses the type and level of narration, and I would argue that in the absence of countervailing conditions, extradiegesis will hold higher authority than intradiegesis, and heterodiegesis prevail over homodiegesis. Readers are thus more likely to equate the implied-author with a voice both extradiegetic and heterodiegetic than with an intradiegetic and homodiegetic voice; certainly we have all been well trained to separate homodiegetic narrators from those who created them. I will nonetheless argue that where a text's highest level is homodiegetic and even intradiegetic, implied-authorship will normatively be allied to the highest diegetic authority when conditions support it.⁹

Auteurist signatures then may be said to function as intradiegetic markers that draw attention to the extradiegetic author outside the text. Perhaps the strongest example of this relationship in Anderson's work comes from *The Royal Tenenbaums*, which includes two distinct types of framing narration in the forms of the extradiegetic director and the intradiegetic narrator role. Both utilize the voice of Alec Baldwin, who never appears onscreen but instead is present in the film only as a disembodied non-diegetic storyteller. Visually, Anderson frames this film as an eponymous book that his Baldwin-narrator speaks from, illustrated to the viewer initially during the film's opening credits and then repeatedly as the plot is broken down into chapters with inserts depicting pages from this

book. These pages contain both lines from Baldwin's narration as well as descriptions of the visual compositions that follow immediately after the inserts, generally concentrating on sketching the setting or *mise-en-scène*, or providing a script-like description of the action beginning the new scene. Given that the text on the page contains the narrator's dialogue but surpasses it by also containing advanced descriptions of what is to come in the film, the audience attributes the film and the higher narrator position to an author figure who exists apart from (while containing) Baldwin's narrator as well as the "book" *The Royal Tenenbaums* and the film that it contains (or rather, that contains it). Certain visual markers, such as the use of the Futura font on the book's cover or the Eric Chase Anderson drawings adorning the book's pages (which would be recognizable to viewers familiar with the DVD versions of Anderson's films), already invoke Anderson on the stylistic level. It remains important to note that the other films, while not containing narrators in the form of Baldwin's voice-over, do contain texts created by authors within the narratives that still perform the same function of calling authorship and narration to mind.

Lanser explains the functions of mimetic authority in this mode:

[A] second hierarchy operating in tandem with, and probably outstripping, the first: the authorization emerging internally as the narrative establishes the credibility, wisdom, and reliability of various narrators and characters. Voice(s) with the greatest mimetic authority, I suggest, are more likely to be equated with, or to coconstruct, implied-authorship; voices carrying both diegetic and mimetic authority will have the edge. I may construct an implied-author not simply from one voice, but synthetically, from an amalgam of a narrator and a particular character, or dialogically, from the interplay among several characters, or privatively, from a negative or ironic rendering of diegetically authorized narrators or characters.¹⁰

Lanser claims that it is a combination of both diegetic and mimetic factors in literature that encourage the reader to identify authorial positions with particular narrators and characters. She also proposes that such combinations allow for instances when we “know” that the biological/historical author is different from the “authorized” narrator, we may nonetheless accord that authorized narrator a privileged relationship to the author’s consciousness, so much so that we do not need to distinguish between the two.¹¹ If we are to return to the example of the Baldwin-narrator in *Tenenbaums*, this narrator is never contradicted by the narrative itself, giving it a high level of credibility and wisdom. However it only provides part of the story as shown in the shots of the pages of the “book” which frames what follows in the sections in which this narrator does not appear sonically. The Baldwin-narrator then is contained by the book which is recognized as a creation of Anderson’s through those aforementioned markers, and thus one level of focalisation utilized by the implied-author narrator for the purposes of telling this story.

Anderson’s narratives are comedies whose humour and central conflicts derive from the irony generated by the contrast between the central characters’ idealized lives and conceptions of self and the reality of the worlds in which they live. While we do see through these focalisers at times, they are challenged by the overarching narrator/chief focaliser in ways that the Baldwin-narrator is not. This creates that “negative or ironic” rendering of authorship that Lanser describes, and that contrast necessary for that irony to be available comes from the disparity between these characters’ flawed internal attempts to author their stories against the affectionate-yet-knowing auteur-aligned position, identified with Anderson, which the viewer is prompted to adopt.

Lanser's points are very compelling and present a realistic reading of the viewing and interpreting habits of informed audiences. While her ideas emerge from the field of literary study, it is quite easy to see how they may be applied to film texts. When considering film, of course, the concept of visualization moves beyond the minds' eye conception of events and actors to actually-visually-received information, which is the most immediately obvious difference between the two modes of narrative storytelling.

One aspect of a narrative's establishment of credibility is the creation of a consistent diegetic space in which the narrative takes place - the filmic relevance of this and its connection to Anderson was explored in part in Chapter 1. Another important aspect of the establishment of that type of credible, believable and/or cohesive space concerns how such a space is presented or navigated within a film. The importance and impact of the visual should not be discounted by any means, especially in a culture and art form dominated as it is by this manner of perception. While a director seated in a director's chair or crouching behind a camera may be as easy to imagine as a writer typing at a desk, what concerns this analysis at this point is not the specific visualization but the ways in which a film director (or specifically Anderson at this point) may direct the ways in which we receive visual information in an instructive manner as his films become those works which, in Lanser's terms, "ply and imply" different forms of authorship and narration. As an implied-author and narrator, "Anderson" becomes manifest via focalisations which work in a different way than do similar figures discussed in literary narrative theory. To proceed beyond this literary-based inquiry into one that accounts for the nature of narrative cinema and its visual dominance, I will turn to the

theoretical work of Edward Branigan and his account of the relationship(s) between the narrator, author, and the camera in film. First, however, I will offer a brief digression into the metadiegetic functioning of auteur-associated labeling in Anderson's films.

Proto-filmic Authority Stamping: Futura as Signature

At the crossroads between the textual and visual recognition of an authorial signature in Anderson's films is his use of the Futura font as a typographical symbol. German font designer Paul Renner developed this typeface between 1924 and 1926, and it became a favorite of Stanley Kubrick in his films, as well as finding employment in a number of French New Wave films. While Futura is a popular font in a number of iterations and has been used in many films, it is the extent to which Anderson has made use of it that has solidified it as one of his auteur signatures. Each of Anderson's films, beginning with *Bottle Rocket*, employs the font for its title sequence, introducing the name "Wes Anderson" alongside the film's title and the names of the films' stars. The font appears in the extra-filmic promotional materials as well (beginning with *Rushmore*), although here the usage moves beyond this surface labeling by appearing in the diegesis of his films.

Futura, while largely absent from *Bottle Rocket* other than on the sign outside of the motel hideout reading simply "MOTEL" and in the opening and closing credits, appears in *Rushmore* again in titles as in the label for each one of Max's Rushmore clubs during a montage containing all of them as well as labeling Grover Cleveland High School where Max serves his exile from Rushmore Academy. *The Royal Tenenbaums'* aforementioned framing book motif uses Futura as its cover font, denoting the film as an

authored product of Anderson's while the font shows up within the diegesis as the method of labeling the Green Line buses, the Royal Arctic cruise line, the Natural History Museum and the school bus used to convey the young versions of Eli Cash, Margot and Richie there, as well as the 375th St, YMCA to which Royal and Pagoda are relegated, and even labeling the hospital Richie is brought to after his suicide attempt. Steve Zissou makes use of the font in *The Life Aquatic* for the branding of his team as well as for the text within his own movies, of course after Anderson again uses it in his opening credits and for a number of titles throughout the film. Finally *The Darjeeling Limited* employs the font again to impose Anderson's name and the rest of his credits as well as appearing on the side of the eponymous train as well as in the itineraries created by the family auteur Francis as he attempts to control the brothers' spiritual quest.

While title sequences are completely standard in most forms of cinema, it remains rare for a filmmaker to be so strongly identified with one font in the manner which franchises may be – Anderson's uses are cited on the Wikipedia entry for "Futura" and countless websites, magazine features, and fan art pieces have used the font as a visual shorthand relating to the director's autorial signature. Because of the strong association with the font created through the initial advertising for these films, then through the credit usage, as the font appears again within the diegesis or in a nondiegetic labeling function, Anderson's author role is repeatedly recalled and reinforced.

God's-eye Close-ups as a Signature Technique

In his 1984 study *Point of View in the Cinema* Edward Branigan discusses cinematic authorship in relation to the act of narration in narrative film. Influenced by

the post-structuralist argument, Branigan denies the *auteur* in film as a mediating presence, noting that the artwork provides no context within which to locate the real-life author of a text.¹² Branigan uses the example of two of the original auteur directors, citing Hitchcock and Renoir's appearances within their own films as *not* the auteurs themselves made manifest within these films but instead appearing as figures "trapped as an object of a film process".¹³ Branigan follows this assertion with the idea that the notion of a biological narrator is irrelevant and that critics might approach narration as a symbolic activity, "the activity of narration".¹⁴ Furthermore he asserts that the author of a text, in relation to the codes of narration, "exists as a subcode" - a hypothesis constructed by the reader to make artworks intelligible - so that, in essence, it is culture that creates that image of the author.¹⁵ In short, Branigan proposes a construction similar to Bal's citation of Booth's "implied-author". Branigan's subcode function is virtually indistinct from the implied-author conceived as a consequence of the audiences' faith that Lanser had advanced while its reliance on "culture" to create that image of the author creates that same chicken-and-egg situation which Lanser addresses in her initial discussion of authorship.¹⁶ Within the films studied here Branigan's subcode is represented in the implied-author "Wes Anderson" who, I will argue, functions as a dominant, repetitive feature of these texts which instruct a particular type of viewing, most strongly noticed through particular audio and visual techniques.

Branigan's removal of the author from that central organizational role of narrator prepares the way for the claim that the camera functions in this position instead as a "construct of the spectator" and a "hypothesis *about space* - about the production and

change of space”.¹⁷ The centrality of the camera to Branigan’s theory of cinema makes much sense when considering the dominance of the visual in the cinema, and the impersonality of the camera also denies the agency attributed to an author who, whether implied or not, tends to suggest a biological personage or at least a composite closely related to a human agent. If the narrator essentially works as a conductor of different focalisations in the creation of a narrative, then when taking into account the centrality of cinema’s “showing”, the coordination of camera shots logically follows as a major determinant in narration of a film. In this context the camera may be held to be film’s organizing force. In the following, I will examine how this organizing force, then, may provide the viewer with multiple levels of focalisation within a film yet consistently returns to that of Anderson-as-implied-author, which proves to be these auteur’s films’ highest levels of narrative authority.

While taking into account a modified-for-film version of Lanser’s consideration of the possible relationships between author and narrator, I would like to focus on Anderson’s camerawork and the ways in which certain repeated shots within these films bolster the impression of authorial control and the identification with the narrator rather than characters at certain points, continually detaching the viewer’s possible identification with these films’ central characters and instead associating the viewers with the position of that Anderson author/narrator. While this section will briefly consider a number of the visual techniques employed by Anderson and his cinematographer Robert Yeoman, of particular importance will be the employment of bird’s-eye or God’s-eye

shots within these films and their relationships to close-ups of Anderson's actors and the synecdochal objects which feature to a high degree within these films.

Anderson has worked consistently with Yeoman as his cinematographer/director of photography since *Bottle Rocket*. Together the two have created a consistent visual style in regards to both framing and camera movement, utilizing wide-angle lenses almost exclusively and combining these with a relatively limited and repetitive set of camera movements with the occasional virtuoso shots "so logistically impressive that they momentarily and perhaps purposefully take the spotlight off the movie and shine it on the director".¹⁸ For the purposes of the analysis I will be referring to camerawork as "Anderson's" despite the contribution of Yeoman to the shooting and staging of the films for the sake of brevity.

Anderson is a particularly cinephilic filmmaker insofar as his compositions and shot selections are often influenced by the work of directors he seems to admire. In regards to his compositions and shots, Anderson is often compared to Martin Scorsese and uses many of the same elements Scorsese employs in his camerawork, specifically whip-pans, slow motion, and God's-eye-view inserts.¹⁹ Scorsese, far from being a realist filmmaker with his manipulations of space, time and subjectivity, is one of the predominant New Hollywood auteurs, often cited as the least-commercially-compromising of the group of the foremost members of this collective (including Coppola, Spielberg, and Lucas most predominantly). The two filmmakers have had a reciprocal relationship in some sense, with *Bottle Rocket* making Scorsese's list of top ten films of the 1990s and Scorsese handpicking Anderson as "the next Martin Scorsese" for

an *Esquire* magazine feature in 2000.²⁰ While obviously influenced by filmmakers like Scorsese, Anderson has turned these elements to his own service within his films as reminders of his authorial presence.

By nature realism in film attempts to disguise or suppress the fact that the film is a construct, allowing the viewer to focus more of their attention on the narrative than the nature of the film as a constructed text. Formalist films, however, contain a number of elements that instead emphasize the manipulations of reality that the medium allows. What Anderson and Scorsese have in common is their tendency away from realism and towards formalist filmmaking in their camerawork. While asserting this it is important to note that Anderson's films are still very narratively-based in their construction and rarely delve into heavy abstraction.²¹ His ensemble pieces still focus heavily on multiple characters, utilizing multiple close-ups on characters and shot-reverse shot structures to maintain continuity and replicate the cinema's most dominant approximation of the way in which audience members experience conversations in real life (though often utilizing the aforementioned whip-pans as a stylistic accent on techniques like the shot-reverse shot).

The foremost formal element of Anderson's films that draw attention to his authorial position is his use of the God's-eye close-up and insert. These feature throughout his films in the depiction of both characters and carefully-arranged objects. Each instance of this technique reinforces Anderson's authorial position through a very particular and recognizable type of focalisation that denies the point of view of anyone but Anderson and those aligned with him.

The possessive aspect of the close-up is discussed by Laura Mulvey in *Death 24x a Second* as she dissects the impulses behind the possessive spectator and that drive to capture the fetishized and objectified star. Mulvey cites Mary Anne Doane in her observation that the close-up is a key figure for *photogénie*: “the ecstatic contemplation of cinema in its uniqueness,”²² as it essentially freezes time, abstracting it from the present. While Mulvey focuses her attention on the role of the spectator in this freezing of time and the way in which this ability is achieved through newer viewing technologies such as videotapes and DVDs, it remains important to note that these technologies give the spectators the control which the directors are already exercising. If we regard the director as narrator with *the* most comprehensive level of focalisation, controlling the focalisations of these other characters, this possessiveness is built into this relationship from the start. This type of character objectification includes the “Team Zissou” action figure toys seen beside the television displaying the “Trapped in the Arctic Ice” video in *The Life Aquatic*, or in elements such as the models of sets shown with the young Margot in *Tenenbaums*, as noted by Matt Zoller Seitz in his video-essay,²³ in Max Fischer’s model for Rushmore’s proposed aquarium, in Jack Whitman’s habitual rendering of real-life associates as short story characters who are “all fictional” despite the fact that the viewer, along with the other characters and Jack himself, know that they are not.

In his early work *Film as Art*, Rudolf Arnheim discusses the effects and potential of still photographs inserted into film. While he is careful to note how the effect of these is different from the close-up of an actor because of the impossibility of attaining actual stillness in time as well as the difficulty in making and maintaining the types of

expression which may be found in the still photograph, Arnheim does write of the “very curious sensation”²⁴ created by the technique – a sensation which I would argue is similarly disorienting to the God’s-eye shot’s property of moving the gaze from the familiar horizontal plane to the vertical one. God’s-eye close-ups and inserts appear in each one of Anderson’s films and represent an important level of focalisation with each appearance. These shots involve the same framing utilized in normal close-ups and inserts of actors and objects within these films and fit with conventional narrative cinema standards – presenting various focalisations belonging to characters either subjectively in the shot-reverse shot structures or through the expressive qualities of that actors’ faces. *Because of* this similar framing, yet as a result of the immediately-registered difference in the shift from the horizontal to the vertical plane, God’s-eye shots disorient the viewer and have the effect of arresting the forward flow of the narrative.

Anderson’s films centre around male author figures, as Chapter 1 explained and numerous critics have noted. Because these comedies are about the characters’ necessity of learning the obsolescence of their mythic and nostalgic conception of themselves as the solitary auteur, they are often physically frustrated as well, and are shown frequently either knocked down or laying down, and framed from a God’s-eye angle in close-up. These disorienting overhead shots of objects are repeated here, working to disempower the characters while objectifying them at the same time, undermining their assertions of authorial dominance over their diegetic worlds and the communities in which they are involved while asserting the control of the implied-author/director construct by privileging its view on the action within the narrative. The fetishistic spectator wishes, in

this formulation, to hold and repeat these iconic images, relegating the actors to a more objectified and thus controllable position.²⁵ However, the effect is mediated here in the foregrounding of Anderson's own presence in both his visual signatures and the viewer's awareness of his mediating presence – essentially this upsetting of the normal view of these central characters establishes the dominance of the implied-author's level of focalisation and framing over that of the characters once again. Mulvey asserts that with these pauses or delays of the film, the male protagonist's command over the action is undermined²⁶ and indeed it is at these points in the narrative where the central characters are at their most undermined that Anderson shows us them as agency-less objects in comparison to his knowing position, from that God's-eye angle.

The use of this type of close-up framing began in *Bottle Rocket* in a less-refined form than in later films. Still, even here Anderson uses these shots to undermine Dignan's attempts at authoring a criminal future for himself and Anthony. The initial God's-eye close-up used in the film depicts Anthony beside the motel pool, denying Dignan's command that he cut his hair as part of a disguise. Anthony also has the last such shot in the film with little narrative weight as he climbs a ladder on the roof of Hinckley Cold Storage during the failed final robbery. Anthony does feature in two more sequences, however – his future relationship with Inez is forecasted through the synecdochal use of the pair's hands pushing Inez's housekeeping cart. Soon after the pair is filmed in this manner as they consummate their relationship in a motel bed – the significance of this development is that it is one of the foremost developments frustrating and challenging Dignan's authorial control.

Dignan features centrally in the other two series of such shots later in the film. The first of these show his bloodied face after being beaten up in a bar while Anthony was busy with Inez outside. In the second such sequence, comprised of five shots and intercut with shots of Anthony from below, Dignan lays on the ground in frustration after the stolen car breaks down and Anthony reveals that Dignan unknowingly gave the proceeds of their bookstore robbery to Inez before parting. Dignan lays at a slight horizontal angle so that his cut and bruised face dominates the screen, except when he hides it with his hands and arms in frustration.

The Life Aquatic features the fewest of these God's-eye close-ups with only two, both of Steve Zissou and taking place seconds apart – their placement, 89 minutes into the film, comes after Steve falls down the stairs during the rescue operation in the Ping Islands. It is at this point when Steve – the filmmaker character most dominant as a focaliser after the author-narrator as the leader of Team Zissou and the author of the nature documentaries which form a major framing device for the film – realizes that his auteur control is unfounded and he is literally upended.

The Darjeeling Limited contains five such shots. The middle three of these close-ups happen quickly, 1.5 seconds, 1 second, and 1.5 seconds respectively, within 10 seconds of each other and focus on Francis and Peter as they fight in their car on the Darjeeling Limited just prior to the brothers being kicked off the train, essentially representing one shot despite the dramatic intercutting. The final God's-eye shot is of a baby in a cradle in the village in which the brothers find themselves after rescuing two of three of the young Indian boys who fell into the river while attempting to cross it. This

shot lasts a total of 54 seconds and is focalised immediately afterward from the point of view of the traumatized and disrobed Peter, the brother who failed to save the young Indian boy he grabbed in the river. The central hole left in the narrative by the death of the boys' father resonates here as does the death of the Indian boy (whose funeral procession segues into a flashback in which the Whitman brothers stop on the way to their father's funeral) and in part equates the characters previously held in the same type of shot with the baby who remains more of an object than anything else due to its infant powerlessness.

The first God's-eye close-up marks the most interesting in this film as it frames a silent and contemplative Francis in his train berth. This shot lasts 19.5 seconds and is unaccompanied by any music. Within the space of this shot, Francis tries on the glasses belonging to his father that Peter has been wearing for most of the film. Peter, it should be noted, is the one brother who is *not* an author in some regard (other than the unintentional "authoring" of an unborn child), but the trip's author attempts to understand his brother by trying on these unnecessary glasses. He quickly removes them, however, as this form of focalisation does not benefit him in his non-narrator role.

Rushmore presents ten such shots in five sequences. The seventh-through-ninth such shots depict Dr. Guggenheim (Brian Cox) in an overhead shot as he is lying in a hospital bed post-stroke and represent the least interesting to this analysis, again essentially re-presenting the same shot as in the aforementioned fight sequence in *Darjeeling*. Shots one through three, however, introduce the viewer to the disconnect between Max's fantasy conception of himself and the reality of his situation as he shifts

from a dream in which he's celebrated for solving the "world's hardest algebra equation" to the reality of having fallen asleep during chapel. The inequality between the fantasy version of the triumphant genius and the harsher reality to which they must adapt to is introduced here on these multiple levels as the viewer associates herself with the director's God's-eye omniscient perspective on the folly of Max's self-perception. This sequence is also interesting as it provides the introduction of Herman Blume to the audience as well as to Max, who sees Blume as a kindred spirit and attaches some of his hopes for future greatness to Blume and cultivates his association with him while the two act as double for each other in the film as well.

Max features in another important series of three overhead close-ups beginning 56 minutes into the film as he is knocked down by Magnus Buchan (Stephen McCole) upon his return to Rushmore. Max's motivation in returning is to win back Miss Cross and reestablish his link with Rushmore (or his chosen romantic/motherly substitute) and after being harshly turned down by the object of his desire who exposes him to an adult level of sexual/emotional reality, shattering his romantic notions while knocking him to the ground as he trips over boxes, he encounters Buchan who teases him for claiming to have received a "hand job" from the mother of his chapel partner Dirk. Max attempts to attack Buchan in classic tough-guy style and is quickly knocked to the ground with a punch to the face. Preceding and interspersed with the three shots of Max upside down and from the God's-eye perspective are shots of Dirk and his anonymous classmates, most of them dressed in Halloween costumes and also shot upside-down.

The second God's-eye close-up Anderson provides us with is of Blume, framing him on the diving board of his backyard pool. This sequence is set to the Kinks' "Nothin' in the World Can Stop Me Worryin' 'Bout That Girl" with limited diegetic sound and introduces Blume's dissatisfaction with his life. From the disorienting overhead angle Blume looks small and powerless before he defiantly cannonballs into his pool, splashing the party guests at his ungrateful twin sons' birthday party. Following his entrance to the pool Blume allows himself to sink to the bottom in a brief homage to Benjamin Braddock's (Dustin Hoffman) backyard pool scuba-diving in Mike Nichols' *The Graduate* (1967), which repeatedly makes use of water and glass to distort the focalisation of its central character, an obvious influence on Max Fischer himself.

Blume is given another privileged God's-eye close-up with the last one featured in the film. This 16.5-second shot captures Blume at his lowest point within the narrative. Blume's level of focalisation is suspect at this point due to a number of factors, chiefly his appearance which is disheveled and augmented by Bill Murray's deadpan and depressive face and the fact that he has just found out that Max's father Bert is not a brain surgeon as previously claimed but instead a humble barber. Bill Murray's supine form in the tilted-back barber's chair again establishes a hierarchy of the omniscient implied-author view over this particular character.

The Royal Tenebaums employs eleven of these shots throughout its narrative. This film contains more surface stylistic flourish in this regard such as the initial overhead close-up of the young Chas (Aram Aslanian-Persico) lifting weights in his

bedroom or the pair of overhead close-ups seen as Royal catches Eli Cash leaving the house on Archer Ave. through Margot's window from Richie's room above.

Margot and the post-suicide-attempt Richie bask in the afterglow of their mutual declarations of love in three God's-eye close-ups taking place in Richie's tent in the upstairs ballroom. The scene is reconstructed so as to replicate the hiding of the young Richie (Amedeo Turturro) and Margot (Irene Gorovaia) at the museum. However for the adult siblings the orientation is rotated 90 degrees so that they are held together in that same overhead framing, presenting a more objectified view of the siblings once they have lost the genius agency of their youth and are frozen in an extended and ineffectual form of adolescence.

Royal Tenenbaum features in the two most important pairings. The first set of three close-ups depict Royal's initial fooling of his family by faking cancer as he collapses to the ground. Royal supplicates himself to the camera, acting out the role of objectified powerlessness while actively putting in motion the narrative he has designed which will reestablish him at the centre of the Tenenbaum family. Royal's next God's-eye close-up is the film's final such shot as Royal is filmed again from above in the ambulance in which he dies after his reunion with Chas has been successfully completed (a reunification which depended on his removal of himself from the centre of the family's structure). This is one of the few instances in Anderson's films in which a character is shown dying – the other instances are limited to Ned Plimpton after the helicopter crash in *The Life Aquatic* and the Indian boy in *Darjeeling*. Other than these instances, photos of Rosemary Cross' dead husband Edward Appleby and Chas' deceased wife Rachael

Tenenbaum are the closest approximations. However, the dying Royal – here at the end of his abilities as an active-if-recuperated focaliser – is the only near-death character framed in this type of close-up.

Within these films close-ups of particular objects are featured to an abnormally high degree as another part of Anderson's auteur signature. Often these objects are filmed from that God's-eye position also used to frame characters, replicating the views of these aspiring auteurs at the points of their most powerless, frustrated, and agency-less. *Bottle Rocket* contains 20 such close-up inserts of objects, representing 2.4 minutes of the film; *Rushmore* features 18 inserts for 2.7 minutes; *The Royal Tenenbaums* contains 48 inserts taking 6.1 minutes of screen time; *The Life Aquatic* features 63 inserts representing 9.3 minutes of screen time; and finally, *The Darjeeling Limited* contains 11 inserts in this manner, representing 4.8 minutes of screen time. Along with these shots, these films feature many God's-eye close-ups: *Bottle Rocket* contains 32 overhead inserts of objects representing 3 minutes of screen time; *Rushmore* includes 36 overhead inserts for 4 minutes; *The Royal Tenenbaums* features 22 overhead inserts for 3.4 minutes; *The Life Aquatic* contains 20 overhead inserts of objects for 2.4 minutes of screen time; and *The Darjeeling Limited* contains 14 such shots for 2.5 minutes of screen time. The sheer number of these inclusions and the amount of time they fill the screen is notable in these films alone – across Anderson's five films close-up inserts of objects occupy just over 8% of his total screen time, 40.6 minutes out of a total of 492 minutes - but what is most interesting is the hierarchical owner-object relationships they represent.

These objects are elements of the alternate reality created by Anderson and which constantly refer back to his idiosyncratic vision, thus reinforcing his authorial power over the films. The objects within these close-ups operate essentially as extensions of the characters closest to them – often symbols of their enterprise or of recognition of their value or their genius in the past, physical objects chosen for their nostalgic value to the character, often personalized – essentially carrying that Benjaminian aura, and becoming the film in its entirety at those points that they fill the screen in close-up, arresting the narrative in the same way as the close-ups of actors and intentionally blurring that line between actor and object. These synecdoches are as important as the uniforms that the characters wear and many of them represent texts authored by the characters within the films: Dignan's 75-year plan notebook, Max's plays, the books and plays written by the various members and friends of the Tenenbaum family, the films produced by Team Zissou, Jack's book of short stories and the laminated itineraries designed by Francis and laminated on the train by his assistant Brendan.

A common critique of the films is that many of his characters are not well-rounded and instead represent a collection of character quirks or that they are essentially pastiche set-dressings moved about by the director. This confusion arises from the tendency in Anderson's films to elevate the status of the fetishized nostalgic objects and leveling them with the actors within the film, while the actors are often presented to the viewer in the same manner as objects of aura. As the actors are essentially *equated* with these objects – deemed worthy of arresting the narrative in the same manner as the characters – the characters in return become objects of a sort again, dominated and/or

controlled by the implied-author once again. Just as the objects shown to the viewer in those visually-jarring God's-eye inserts are connected to specific characters in a hierarchical owner-object or creator-creation relationship, when Anderson presents these characters to the viewer in the same manner they become identified in a similar manner, as the objects or creations of a beholding owner or creator in the form of Anderson.

One Closing Reminder of the Narrator-Auteur's Control: Anderson's Slow Motion Cudas

One related manipulation of the camera that again shows the imposition of the auteur as a controlling narrator in these films is found in the use of slow motion. Slow motion's roots precede cinema itself if one looks back to Eadweard Muybridge's experiments with sequences of photographs to determine the nature of a horse's run. Still today the technique remains one of the most easily noticed and readily available techniques of film for manipulating time in narrative film, more obvious than the compression of time in editing yet also more jarring insofar as it calls attention to itself rather than deriving its utility through its self-effacement – slow motion represents an augmentation compared to editing's omission. Siegfried Kracauer compared slow motion shots to regular close-ups on the grounds that “temporal close-ups achiev[e] in time what the close-up proper is achieving in space”.²⁷ Slow motion arrests time in a parallel way to the close-up by using the properties of the cinema's apparatus to physically manipulate time instead of the suggestion of arrested time found in the close-up, though once again invoking a sense of the controlling author on a level closer to that of the God's-eye close-up than the conventional horizontal close-up usage.

Anderson has employed slow motion in each one of his films and to similar ends. The conclusion of each of Anderson's films provides a synthesis of pop music usage and the formal arresting of film through slow motion. Each of these instances once again reinforce the implied-author/narrator's control over the narrative by manipulating time for one final instance in order to hold the film's central characters once again as objects subservient to their creator, retroactively reinforcing auteurial control over each film as a whole while tying each into Anderson's other films. Anderson's use of slow motion is not restricted to the closing of each film. Indeed it is employed within *Rushmore* as Max, his nose bloodied and stuffed with tissue after being struck in the face by one of his actors, takes his curtain call after the performance of his "Serpico" play, in *Tenenbaums* as Royal initially sizes up Henry Sherman, the chief obstacle to goal of reintegrating himself with the rest of the Tenenbaum family and as Margot steps off the Green Line bus to meet Richie upon his return to New York, in *The Life Aquatic* as Steve smokes marijuana on the bow of his ship after his disastrous film festival showing, and in *Darjeeling* as the Whitman brothers walk in the funeral procession for the young Indian boy they could not save from the river. Each one of these examples focuses on the emotional life accorded to a limited number of characters - three or fewer in each case and always a central character - at particularly emotionally-heightened periods. At these points slow motion is a stylistic flourish and an element of the auteur's signature.

Anderson's film-ending uses of slow motion serve a different purpose, influenced by the similar narrative arc calling for the recuperation of the singular auteur into a constructive community. In contrast to slow motion's emphasis of characters' internal

emotions as used at other times in these five films, Anderson's closing use of slow motion serves to bring back his creations one final time and show his control over them while leaving his recuperated communities intact. While each film does not end with a slow motion shot (neither *The Life Aquatic* nor *Darjeeling* fade to black from slow motion), slow motion is prominent within the last few minutes. *Bottle Rocket* presents a fractured farewell to the film's main and most important characters as Abe Henry supervises the looting of the Mapplethorpe's house against the music of the Rolling Stones' "2000 Man". The film itself does not end for another four minutes, after Anthony and Bob visit Dignan in jail. As the film does end, Anderson slows time while Dignan gives a final wave to his former partners and walks off with the new criminal fraternity of convicts into which he has been initiated through his arrest. *Rushmore* and *Tenenbaums* bring all major characters back together around an important event – the post-show party for Max's "Heaven and Hell" play in the former, Royal's funeral in the latter – as Anderson presents a slow motion tableau set against nostalgic rock music (The Faces' "Ooh La La" in *Rushmore* and Van Morrison's "Everyone" in *The Royal Tenenbaums*). Characters are once again shown in their iconic and synecdochal outfits and are seen here without the agency they may have exhibited earlier in the film as individuals, augmented as Anderson removes their ability to act in real time. *The Life Aquatic*'s penultimate sequence includes slow motion beginning with the first strains of David Bowie's 1971 "Queen Bitch" as the recuperated Zissou, now almost literally giving up his individual agency as he has physically combined himself with Klaus's (Willem Dafoe) nephew Werner as he piggybacks the boy down the stairs from the film

festival along with the rest of Team Zissou. Following this, the entire Team Zissou marches down a dock to board the Belafonte where Ned's silhouette is visible standing at a top look-out position.

The Darjeeling Limited's final use of slow motion is employed as the Whitman brothers run for the Bengal Lancer, their replacement train after being kicked off the titular train and having visited their mother Patricia (Anjelica Huston) at a mountain nunnery. This usage of slow motion departs from Anderson's employment of the technique in his other films however. Being "others" in a strange country, the brothers present their own rehabilitated community, and as they run to catch the train (set against the Kinks' "Powerman"), they gleefully toss aside the monogrammed luggage belonging to their dead father that had been such a burden and symbol of their fractured relationships before. While the film continues for another few minutes, the brothers have effectively found their resolution at this point, but it also remains similar to their slow motion funeral walk in the Indian village after the boy has died. This particular near-end use creates a sort of bookend as well when combined with a similar sequence near the film's beginning as the unnamed Bill Murray character races to catch the Darjeeling Limited. He is not fast enough and is passed by Peter Whitman as they both run for the train. Peter does a double-take as he passes the older man - Murray's character may be understood to represent the ghost of the boys' businessman father or at least a doppelganger of sorts – and after passing this surrogate ghost, time is slowed while the Kinks' "This Time Tomorrow" begins and a slow motion Peter hops aboard the train. One might argue that this final example presents itself as more self-referential and

representative of slow motion as a signature technique more so than it replicates the film-closing use of slow motion itself. If we include the pre-feature short film *Hotel Chevalier*, however, Anderson's more typical ending style is seen in the penultimate slow motion long take shot of Jack and his ex-girlfriend walking to the balcony through his Parisian hotel suite, accompanied by a reprise of Peter Sarstedt's "Where Do You Go To (My Lovely)", before the wordless final shot from outside.

In conclusion, while authorship is embedded in each one of Anderson's narratives and his creation of a recognizable and cohesive alternate realities for his films' diegeses reinforce his authorial control, the technical and formal elements of Anderson's films also serve to repeatedly reinforce the sense of a controlling author. These films repeatedly invoke the question of authorship through narrative means while they visually instruct the viewers as to which focalisers should be invested with the most authority, repeatedly using elements such as slow motion and God's-eye close-ups to remind the viewer of the auteur's presence and shaping narrator role. Moreover they do so in a way that fits strongly with the possibilities prescribed by Lanser's theory of implied-author construction, which makes it possible to see how an auteur label is so readily applied to Anderson and his body of work.

Notes – Chapter 2

¹ My use of “God’s eye” to describe these close-ups is drawn from Matt Zoller Seitz’s use of the term to describe the overhead shots of characters and objects repeatedly found in Anderson’s films: “The Substance of Style”, *Moving Image Source*, April 3, 2009: <http://www.movingimagesource.us/articles/the-substance-of-style-pt-2-20090403>.

² Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* 4th Edition (London: British Film Institute, 1998): 70-1.

³ Mieke Bal, *Narratology* 2nd Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997): 18.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Susan S. Lanser, “(Im)plying the Author.” *Narrative* 9.2 (2001): 154.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 154-5.

¹⁰ Ibid., 155.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Edward Branigan, *Point of View in Cinema* (New York: Mouton, 1984): 40.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 40-1.

¹⁶ Lanser, “(Im)plying the Author”, 154.

¹⁷ Branigan, *Point of View in Cinema*, 54.

¹⁸ Matt Zoller Seitz, “The Substance of Style”, *Moving Image Source*, March 30, 2009: <http://www.movingimagesource.us/articles/the-substance-of-style-pt-1-20090330>.

¹⁹ Zoller Seitz, “The Substance of Style”, *Moving Image Source*, April 3, 2009: <http://www.movingimagesource.us/articles/the-substance-of-style-pt-2-20090403>.

²⁰ Martin Scorsese, “Wes Anderson” *Esquire* March, 2000: http://web.archive.org/web/20071012115758rn_1/www.esquire.com/features/ESQ0300-MAR_SCORSESE_6.

²¹ The two most abstract sections of Anderson’s films take the form of rapid jump cuts: Richie’s suicide attempt in *Tenenbaums* and Zissou’s pirate-induced rage in *The Life Aquatic*.

²² Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006): 164

²³ Zoller Seitz, “The Substance of Style”, *Moving Image Source*, April 13, 2009: <http://www.movingimagesource.us/articles/the-substance-of-style-pt-5-20090413>.

²⁴ Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (1933) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968): 118.

²⁵ Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, 173.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 165.

²⁷ Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film* (1960). Trans. Miriam Hansen, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997): 53.

Chapter 3: Wes Anderson, the Criterion Collection and Contemporary Second-Life Film Products

Introduction: Authorship/Auteurism outside of films

“Wes Anderson is currently working with us on Rushmore, and by the time we’re done, he will have been involved in absolutely every aspect of the disc, transfer, commentary, supplementary video, selection of stills and storyboards, even the look of the package and interface. It’s a great example of what a Director Approved edition can be.”

- Peter Becker, Criterion Collection President, 1998¹

As explored in Chapter 1, the films of Wes Anderson self-consciously eschew new technologies within their narratives and instead fetishize objects invested with culturally-produced nostalgic cachet. Jack’s iPod in *The Darjeeling Limited* is outnumbered by the record and cassette players which create diegetic music from vinyl and magnetic tape everywhere else in Anderson’s world while the only hint of access to the internet is from marginalized-character Brendan’s iMac screen in his hidden-away train berth in the same film. Films themselves make appearances in Anderson’s world predominantly on celluloid, shown on white screens through rickety old projectors as we see Max and Dirk researching aquatic life in *Rushmore* or Steve glancing at the day’s rushes on an old Steenbeck aboard the Belafonte in *The Life Aquatic*.² Chapter 2, in concert with the narrative focus on authorship also included in Chapter 1, explored the ways in which framing techniques, some common to film in general and others associated with particular auteurs in previous generations, have been deployed on a formal level by Anderson within his narratives to show shifts in narration which consistently recall and privilege the auteur’s authority in regards to the ways in which we see and hear Anderson’s films. However both of these analyses with their focuses on the composition of the films themselves omit an important aspect of Anderson’s canonization as an auteur

director as they do not include the extra-filmic elements of Anderson's body of work. This aspect of Anderson's work is instrumental in his standing as a contemporary auteur director in a model that I believe will become more and more influential in the way films are produced and distributed in contemporary cinema culture.

Anderson's own films have been anything but shackled to their cinematic exhibition despite the more conservative or nostalgic aspects of his signature. More than any other director from his generation of American filmmakers Anderson has been able to use the now-ubiquitous DVD format to his advantage, due in large part to his relationship with the Criterion Collection. Much discussion has been devoted to the massive sea change in viewing habits and exhibition practices of contemporary film since the advent of home video technology in film study's past three decades, less so to the establishment of the LaserDisc format, and still more in regards to the development and popularization of first DVD and now Blu-ray technology. Of particular interest to this study is the development of the "special edition" disc and the ways in which Criterion has been instrumental in popularizing this style of "second life" release to the level it is at today. Along with the consumable DVD incarnations of Anderson's films are his film's sound track albums, which will also be examined in brief as a sort of "cousin" format to DVD discs and a minor form of a film's "second life".

Digital culture scholar Richard Grusin has described cinema in the early 21st century as a "cinema of interactions", a play on Tom Gunning's paradigmatic conception of early cinema as a "cinema of attractions".³ Grusin contends that cinema spectatorship

is entering a period of increased engagement with these newer, digitally-mediated forms of cinema:

This engagement will be marked not (as many digital enthusiasts contend) by the emergence of a distinctively new digital medium (and the concomitant abandonment of the technologically outmoded medium of celluloid film), but rather by the emergence of multiply networked, distributed forms of cinematic production and exhibition... [N]ot as a distinctly new medium but as a hybrid network of media forms and practices.⁴

While Grusin's discussion proceeds from this point more towards the ramifications of this interactivity with digitally-produced images such as those found in *The Matrix* (1999) and *Star Wars: Episode II* (2002), he also finds an "analogous perceptual continuum" between his "cinema of interactions" and Miriam Hansen's observations of the remediation affected in early cinema as older modes of entertainment (such as magic lantern shows and plays) were remediated by film without the separation between the screen and spectator as enforced by "so-called" classical cinema.⁵ This interactive cinema, then, imagines an "interactive spectator in a domestic or other social space rather than an immobilized spectator in the darkened dream-space of apparatus or gaze theory," as digital "artefacts" have allowed for and indeed on some level *ask for* the "viewer's/user's" interaction.⁶ While Anderson's films include a number of types of cultural and cinematic nostalgia they without a doubt exist as products of this period of early digital cinema where it no longer holds to consider the cinematic experience as beginning and ending at the theatre.

The dictates of this new cinema of interactions informs to a great degree how Anderson's films are consumed. Grusin finds one of the most compelling examples of the ways in which new digital media participates in fundamental changes to mainstream

contemporary cinema in the increased importance and consideration of the DVD release of feature films and the ways in which these releases are often conceptualized even preceding the production of the films themselves (as was the case with Anderson's initial three releases with Criterion), evidence of a "fundamental change in the aesthetic status of the cinematic artefact", a change which "is not simply a change in the technological basis of cinema, but rather a change that is distributed across practices of production, screening, exhibition, distribution, interaction, use and spectatorship".⁷ Considering this proposition I would like to begin with a brief look at the commercial sound tracks of Wes Anderson's films before proceeding into a discussion of the form and impact of DVDs as an important aspect of the existence of these films.

The Auteur's Mix Tapes: Personalizing the Sound Track Album

Anderson's film's soundtracks present one of his most easily recognized and oft-commented upon auteur signatures. These songs chosen and created for these films, however, continue to impact Anderson's audiences beyond their usage in the films as they are distributed further as soundtrack albums along with contemporary Hollywood practice. A soundtrack album has been issued for each one of Anderson's feature films as well as a recent digital release of the soundtrack to the *Bottle Rocket* short, and *The Life Aquatic Studio Sessions featuring Seu Jorge*, a collection of the David Bowie covers by Seu Jorge created for *The Life Aquatic* during filming, and released almost a year after the original soundtrack for the film.

As is the case with a number of soundtrack albums, songs will be licensed for use within films but not for the soundtrack albums released.⁸ Anderson's soundtrack albums

do display the majority of preexisting songs utilized within the films while also containing Mark Mothersbaugh's scored works. As with other film soundtracks these albums provide fans with auditory cues which trigger the remembrance of the films with which they are associated and allow those fans to then apply these songs invested with another level of meaning to their own lives, depending on their penchant for self-narrativization. While *Bottle Rocket*'s soundtrack album was released 11 months after the film's release almost as an afterthought and with the omission of both "7 and 7 Is" and "Alone Again Or" by Arthur Lee and Love and the Rolling Stones' "2000 Man," and *Rushmore*'s soundtrack album appearing four months after the film's release and approximately a month after the film's release on DVD as a part of the Criterion Collection, Anderson's other soundtrack albums have been released in conjunction with the theatrical releases of his films, preceding them by up to ten days in the case of *The Life Aquatic*. Anderson, however, has utilized this form of film-related artifact to once again communicate with his audience to foreground those two auteur signature elements in his personal and idiosyncratic relationship to the music he chooses for his films and to foreground the collaboration as cited in the work of Devin Orgeron previously.⁹

Beginning with the *Rushmore* OST (Original SoundTrack), Anderson has included a small written introduction to each album. *Rushmore*'s OST includes a typewriter-written (recalling Max's use of typewriter in the composition of his plays) mini-essay with hand-written addendum signed by Anderson explaining his rationale behind choosing first the Kinks as soundtrack music before broadening that scope to include other British Invasion bands with the rationale that they all dressed in a manner

similar to how the “loud and angry” Max Fischer himself was envisioned and play “loud, angry, teenage rock songs”, as well as an anecdotal recounting of the playing of this music on set and the resignation of Anderson’s assistant in part because of the hassle of arranging the extension cords needed to play this music. This note ends with Anderson directly addressing his listening audience with the statement: “Thanks very much, and I hope you enjoy this album.”

The Royal Tenenbaums OST’s note from Anderson ends in a very similar, direct-to-audience entreaty as Anderson writes again in typewriter print: “I hope you enjoy the record” before he signs his name. Anderson’s mini-essay this time addresses his collaboration with Mothersbaugh exclusively, providing a number of odd details about the composer’s unorthodox recording studio, Mutato Muzika, including brief sketches of a number of related collaborators and music supervisor Randall Poster’s description of Mothersbaugh’s music as “charmed, magical, and sort of innocent”. The *The Royal Tenenbaums* OST marks a peculiarity amongst Anderson soundtrack albums as it was released twice – initially on December 18, 2001, ten days before the film’s wide North American release and then again on July 2, 2002 with the addition of Paul Simon’s “Me and Julio Down by the School Yard” and John Lennon’s “Look at Me” as well as Mothersbaugh’s Mutato Muzika Orchestra’s cover of the Beatles’ “Hey Jude”¹⁰ and both omitted on the initial OST release.

Anderson foregrounds collaboration once again in the liner notes for *The Life Aquatic*’s OST. This mini-essay recounts Anderson’s introduction to the music of Sven Libaek by cast member Noah Taylor and the subsequent choice to use some of Libaek’s

music as the music composed by Taylor's character Wolodarsky within the film.

Anderson includes a second paragraph detailing the choice to have Seu Jorge translate iconic David Bowie songs to Portuguese and perform them for the film, including making light of his own inability to understand the translated and changed lyrics yet ending with a statement as to his conviction of Jorge's faithful capturing of the spirit of Bowie's originals. Five of these covers are included on the soundtrack album while *The Life Aquatic Studio Sessions Featuring Seu Jorge*, produced by Anderson and Poster, was released in November 2005 and collects all thirteen covers recorded by Jorge during the filming as well as "Team Zissou", an original song written by Jorge on set in collaboration with a number of cast members. While this secondary release utilizes the film's colour scheme and continues the use of Anderson's favored Futura font, the customary Anderson note is absent and instead replaced by a brief laudatory quote from David Bowie in praise of the cover versions operating as a seal of quality and authenticity.

The soundtrack album for *The Darjeeling Limited* performs a similar linking of Anderson's filmmaking ideology to older and more established art in Anderson's mini-essay's explanation of his use of music found in and created for previous Indian films. As mentioned earlier Mothersbaugh did not collaborate with Anderson on this film and in place of Mothersbaugh's scored pieces Anderson has employed songs from the films of Satyajit Ray as well as Ismail Merchant and James Ivory. In this mini-essay Anderson writes of the influence of these films on *The Darjeeling Limited* as a whole after openly stating that he does "not know much about Indian music". The track listings for this

album continues this theme of citation and linkage to older, more established and canonical filmmakers as each entry for one of these Indian film soundtrack songs lists the film for which the song was originally written in bold and all capitals along with the filmmakers' names in bold as well, and the composers in plain text.

Finally, in conjunction with the Criterion Collection's reissuing of *Bottle Rocket*, the DVD and Blu-ray versions containing the original *Bottle Rocket* short for the first time, jazz label and home to Anderson favorite Vince Guaraldi Fantasy Records released an online album of the jazz songs featured in that initial project. This project marks an interesting digital artifact now as compact discs continue to lose ground against online forms of music distribution, but given the time between the film's release and the appeal of this more hardcore-fan-oriented album, the *Bottle Rocket* short's soundtrack represents a minor concern to this analysis.

As a whole, these soundtrack albums serve to further support Anderson's auteur persona through his privileged mini-essays. These mini-essays provide the opportunity to remind the audience once again of the organizing logic behind these songs which they liked enough to purchase the soundtrack album, to provide another Anderson-centric set of themes which the audience may apply onto the films upon subsequent watching, to further Anderson's neo-auteurist foregrounding of collaboration, and finally to make a direct link in a number of cases to pre-established cultural authority figures, whether they be rock stars such as David Bowie or auteurs such as Ray or Merchant-Ivory.

DVDs and the Home Video Market

March 1997 marked the DVD's entrance into popular film consumption as the first films were released on this format. While the appearance of home video revolutionized the way films were consumed in a way unlike any other technological change before or after, the appearance and subsequent dominance of the DVD format has had equally important ramifications for the relationship between audiences and the films they choose to consume. The introduction of the DVD to the mass market occurred after much consideration of the issues that arose from the introduction of its earlier relatives, the VHS (and Betamax) format(s) as well as the LaserDisc, a more direct precursor in terms of format and abilities. The specifics of the format and its capabilities for data storage and exhibition allowed DVDs to become *the* dominant feature in home cinema entertainment with great rapidity. While the DVD is now challenged by its progeny in the form of the Blu-ray disc, DVDs are projected to fare much better than either videotape or LaserDisc fared in the face of DVD's arrival on the market due to Blu-ray's advantages being degrees different from DVD's rather than a switch in kind, as well as DVD's entrenchment in contemporary culture and its flexibility in regards to exhibition, working as it does with the multiple millions of now-relatively-cheap players in homes everywhere as well in most recent computers. Blu-ray's manufacturers have recognized the strength of this format and the likelihood of its continued use and designed Blu-ray players to retain DVD-playing abilities.

DVDs exhibited a faster growth than any other comparable home entertainment format, quicker than the adoption of tapes as a replacement for vinyl records or the adoption of CDs over tapes.¹¹ Videotape's saturation of home video markets readied

audiences for the shift to the DVD format, aided by the players and discs themselves being of comparable price to VCRs and VHS tapes, avoiding the major roadblock to mass adoption of DVD's most direct technical precursor, the LaserDisc. By 2002, VCRs were present in approximately 90% of U.S. household as home video was bringing in more than double the take from theatrical sales, representing approximately 58% of Hollywood's income.¹² DVDs, following VHS's lead, became the "hottest selling consumer electronics product in history", present in 30% of U.S. homes within five years of their appearance on the market and close to 80% by the end of 2005.¹³ By 2001 DVD sales revenues surpassed those of VHS, representing 52% of the \$10.3 billion (USD) spent by U.S. consumers on home video.¹⁴ These numbers stand in stark contrast against LaserDisc's peak market penetration of two-percent.¹⁵ DVDs exhibited huge growth for a number of reasons, quickly overtaking all other formats. Studios were quick to reissue movies from their back catalogues as consumers remade the libraries they had already begun to compile out of VHS tapes.

Videotape distribution shattered the theatre-bound aura of film through the offer of a more democratized availability. While many scholars tended to continue to link cinephilia strictly to a big-screen, theatre-bound notion of film appreciation, based in large part on assumptions that film's pleasure results from being "submerged in the darkness of the theatre" in the words of Roland Barthes,¹⁶ the economic importance of the home video market and the sheer popularity of these newer and more varied modes of exhibition have displaced this outmoded way of thinking. Film fans were no longer restricted to viewing favorite films when they were re-exhibited in second-run and

repertory theatres or in more cinephile-gearred cinematheques, or to waiting for the films to be shown on television. The new format allowed the viewer to view and re-view her favorite films repeatedly, at home, and with her in control of the ways in which she viewed them, specifically whether she chose to view them from start to finish as they would have been seen in theatre showings (of course aside from tape switches for longer films, which maintain their own similarity to the intermissions common in certain genres and in certain Hollywood epics). "Home theatres" began to be constructed by some film viewers as they were able to provide an approximation of the cinematic exhibition apparatus in miniature for their families and friends and for themselves and while this represents an important part of home video's development, it is the lack of an enforced viewing environment that gives home video its power.

Laura Mulvey delves further into the ways in which this format changed the manner of viewing for home audiences, allowing fetishistic pausing and rewatching of choice scenes, a manipulation of cinematic time and thus the narrative itself. In essence, what this change did was allow the home viewer to perform the act of editor or director in changing the way the film exists by manipulating its necessary time dimension. This slowing or arresting of time in turn gives rise to contemplation about the construction of the films themselves and a certain awareness of the constructed nature of film which in turn leads to a contemplation of the act of construction. This constructive act is attributed to some type of creative force, and usually personified in an implied-author as Chapter 2 discussed through Susan Lanser's narratological consideration of the nature of authorship.

The introduction of the DVD format provided a number of marked improvements over the use of magnetic tape. VHS tapes suffered from their “cheap, shoddy availability; their ability to be erased and reused”¹⁷ degrade over time as they are used, creating a more distorted image and sound presentation with each showing of a videotape. While some may argue that this degradation may approximate more closely the degradation of celluloid with repeated viewing, this degradation is a fetishized weakness of the celluloid material itself and is not sufficiently mirrored in the magnetic information’s distortion over time. On the contrary, DVDs may be argued to more precisely provide the original audio and visual experience designed by the filmmakers, a position which once again reiterates the submission to the author(s)’s authority over the texts and also provide a more stable version of each film for archival purposes. David Chute notes that there are roughly 50 types of errors that may be and are corrected in films through the digital restoration processes commonly used to present films in the DVD format¹⁸ – errors which are caused by the properties of film material itself, leaving Chute’s number open to increase when films are transferred to tape. Provided the continued production or usage of machines capable of decoding these digitized forms, these films are arguably stored with a very high level of fidelity to their original forms, providing texts ready for both archival purposes and the closely-related task of canon-formation.¹⁹

While enhanced audio and visual presentation represent the chief advantages of the DVD format over VHS, trade association DVD Entertainment Group reports that DVD extras are a major drawing card to the format after the superior picture and sound.²⁰

Now standard on most DVD releases, these features originated with the practices of the Criterion Collection.²¹

Auteurs and Archives: An Overview of the Criterion Collection

The post-theatrical life of Anderson's body of work has been indelibly tied to the Criterion Collection and their practices of film packaging and marketing in accordance with Criterion's stated goal of creating a living archive of films. Since the company's formation in 1983-4 as a joint venture between Janus Films and the Voyager Company, Criterion has been influential in the realization of the cinephilic usages of first LaserDisc and then DVD formats.²² According to James Kendrick in his discussion of Criterion's archive-building practices, Criterion "has become *the* standard by which all other releases are judged"²³ amongst video collectors due to their comprehensive collections and impressive attention to detail and quality in restoring and transferring to the digital medium.

Key to Criterion's success in Kendrick's view is the company's ability to balance new technologies in digital home video as well as more "traditional notions" of the creation of a film archive.²⁴ Criterion was originally a part of the Voyager Company as formed in 1983 under Bob and Aleen Stein, who partnered with Janus Films, who had since the 1950s secured the distribution rights to a number of notable foreign and art films from directors such as Ingmar Bergman, Jean Cocteau, Francois Truffaut, Akira Kurosawa, Federico Fellini, and Michelangelo Antonioni, representing a readymade library of post-World War II art films along with a number of films from Hollywood

studios.²⁵ The company originally started initially by producing versions of films which had already been widely legitimized as “art” or “cinematic milestones” by film theorists and scholars - canonical texts such as *Citizen Kane* (1941) and *The Third Man* (1949) - before expanding into “more potentially radical and controversial films”.²⁶

According to a 1999 interview with Criterion’s president Peter Becker the company was formed “by a group of people in California who had some ideas about how to use the capacities of the new LaserDisc format” including the ability to hold still frames as well as the capacity to hold two analog mono soundtracks which allowed for the inclusion of both the film’s original soundtrack and the application of some extra-textual form of commentary:

Screen-specific commentary was one of the ideas around which Criterion was founded. The idea was that you could bring in a scholar, or a film director, or even the entire cast and crew, and you could either script or, in a more documentary fashion, compile a shot-by-shot commentary on the film.²⁷

While LaserDiscs provided the impetus and ability to apply these types of extra-textual materials to superbly-reconstructed films, Criterion moved away from releasing on that format as the market and functional superiority of the DVD became more and more apparent²⁸: DVDs proved much more popular, cheaper to produce and transport, and capable of providing all of the features which made LaserDisc an interesting and advantageous format for the purposes of Criterion’s archive-building project.²⁹ It is important to note, however, how the coming of the DVD format effected Criterion’s operations in a more complicated manner. As Criterion does not produce their own films but instead exists as a home video distributor, it is dependent on securing distribution

rights from other filmmaking companies – a task which was easier when the company was producing films in the small-niche-market and limited-profitability LaserDisc format.³⁰ During the period prior to their production of DVDs, between 1984 and 1998 Criterion developed working relationships with a number of Hollywood studios such as Columbia/Tristar, New Line, Warner Bros., Universal, Orion, Miramax, and MGM – relationships which changed once the studios realized that with a form as popular as the DVD was early proving to be that they could make much more money themselves without licensing competing editions of their films.³¹ This industrial change has left Criterion with a number of limited licensing agreements with studios such as Miramax, Universal, and Orion³², as well as with former Disney-owned label Touchstone pictures, which allowed for releases such as *Rushmore*, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, and *The Life Aquatic* as well as more-contentious canon inclusions as Michael Bay's *Armageddon* (1998) and *The Rock* (1996). Criterion continues to add films, however, and one of their strategies for gaining access to more films has been to cultivate relationships with contemporary auteur directors such as David Fincher, Lynne Ramsay, and Wes Anderson by releasing multiple films by these directors, often in spite of changing associations with major studios.

With access to the archive already compiled by Janus, Criterion from its inception had strong ties to a body of established canonical texts further bolstered through their associations with both filmmakers and notable scholars, aligning them with both the authorial intention of directors and traditions of scholarly analysis. Criterion dedicated itself to releasing the “best possible version” of films according to Kendrick, meaning

transfers as close as possible to the filmmaker's "uncut, original vision digitally transferred from only the best film elements available and presented in the film's original theatrical aspect ratio" whereby "best" is implicitly linked to the director's or auteur's vision.³³ Criterion's reputation has been built on both the quality of the films which they release and the quality of their releases in particular, suggesting the formation of a canon of "Criterion-approved" films. The Criterion "brand" links new films by contemporary filmmakers with established, canonical auteurs such as Fellini, Kurosawa, Bergman, Godard, and Truffaut while these new directors show Criterion to be actively creating a film archive and not simply mining the ever-shrinking catalogue of past cinematic classics to which they hold the rights for material, *and*, maybe most importantly, providing new opportunities for the label as those Janus-acquired rights dry up - a double-edged process of legitimization which proves itself to be mutually beneficial to the Criterion Collection and these contemporary filmmakers.

Criterion has a long-standing and deeply-rooted connection to auteurist discourse when analyzing the label's practices. In her examination of the films of Whit Stillman³⁴, Claire Perkins discusses the relationships between auteurism, European art cinema, and contemporary American auteur structures. Near the end of her introduction Perkins discusses the more industrial-construct bent of much contemporary auteur studies, noting how the "celebrity" auteur figure "necessarily changes auteurism as a process insofar as the practice of decipherment [of the auteur's desires from evidence in the film texts] is entirely eluded [as] directors openly reveal their 'desire' in interviews, profiles, DVD

commentaries, trailers, and advertisements”.³⁵ Criterion is very much based around this type of auteur reverence.

In the practice of building an archive of sorts Criterion operates very much in an auteurist mode as well. Looking at the label’s DVD releases to this point, Criterion has released 476 titles on the format with another 9 scheduled for release in the next few months. Of those 485 titles, 370 or 76% are the products of directors who are represented with at least two films in the catalogue. Solely including the DVD and Blu-ray releases then, the films of 96 directors make up more than three-quarters of an archive of 485 “important” films.³⁶ A portion of this is due to Criterion’s relationship with Janus, as evidenced in the 18 Bergman or 17 Kurosawa films in the Collection, yet this does not account for the multiple inclusions of directors such as the action-centric John Woo or Michael Bay or directors such as David Cronenberg, Alex Cox, Lars Von Trier, Steven Soderberg, Jim Jarmusch, Whit Stillman, Richard Linklater, or Wes Anderson. Criterion’s fostering of relationships with contemporary auteur directors represents a smart move when considering the changes in the home video market with the advent of DVD and the above-mentioned newfound unwillingness of studios to loan out the rights to films they own when they can create their own DVDs of comparable quality without sacrificing any potential profit to Criterion. While not all of the directors represented would be unilaterally accepted as auteur filmmakers – as the inclusion of Michael Bay, for example, would evidence - there is a strong bias towards the director when the Criterion Collection is examined in this way.

Anderson and the Criterion Collection

Anderson's own history with the Criterion Collection began with the production and release of *Rushmore* as one of Criterion's earliest DVD-only films. *Rushmore* was the first of three films Anderson made with Touchstone Pictures under the umbrella of the Walt Disney Corporation after working with Columbia for *Bottle Rocket* and before moving to 20th Century Fox for the production of *The Darjeeling Limited*. As part of a package deal between the two companies *Rushmore* was given "the Criterion treatment" along with other Disney properties *The Rock* and *Armageddon*. Criterion's *Rushmore* disc was released on January 18, 2000 and was preceded by a simpler Disney Home Video DVD release on June 6, 1999, roughly nine months after the film's October 9, 1998 theatrical release. Following the critical success of the Criterion *Rushmore* release, on July 9, 2002 *The Royal Tenenbaums* was released approximately seven months after its theatrical release on DVD solely as a Criterion disc though priced to fit with more mass-market DVDs at approximately \$25 as opposed to Criterion's average \$40 release. *The Life Aquatic* was released straight to Criterion disc³⁷ in the same manner five months after its own theatrical release as well. As Anderson moved to 20th Century Fox for the production of *The Darjeeling Limited*, however, the deal struck under his partnership with Touchstone/Disney did not apply and Fox produced and released its own version of the film five months after the film's theatrical release, providing a behind-the-scenes featurette detailing some of the challenges faced and peculiarities found while filming in India but none of the other, more Criterion-esque touches such as filmmaker commentaries. Finally, in early 2008 it was announced that *Bottle Rocket* would be amongst the first films Criterion would issue on the Blu-ray format in conjunction with a

DVD released containing the same features. This version of the film was released on November 25, 2008.

These Criterion releases as a whole perform a number of important functions in regards to Anderson's auteur configuration. Hallmarks of Anderson's visual style inform the consumers' first encounter with these films through their packaging before these and other formal elements of Anderson's signature are expanded upon through the discs' contents while also marking them as a rather "elite" form of consumable product. These releases also serve to emphasize or impose notions of intention onto the films showcased, as well as foregrounding Anderson's acts of collaboration, and finally they display an increasingly self-conscious level of control over the way in which the director's image is presented and mediated for his audiences in conjunction with older and more established auteur filmmakers.

The initial contact the audiences have with these films in this post-theatrical incarnation is mediated through the packaging in which the audiences purchase these films and the differences in their covers show themselves to split along basic marketing lines as *Tenenbaums* and *The Life Aquatic* DVDs are the only DVD versions of each film display photographic representations of the star members of their ensemble casts on cardboard sleeves over the plastic DVD cases. These stand in a marked contrast to their rarer and arguably more fan-oriented editions of either *Rushmore* or *Bottle Rocket* which feature drawings of Max Fischer and Bob, Anthony and Dignan, respectively, as executed by Anderson's younger brother, illustrator Eric Chase Anderson – covers which stand in marked visual contrast with the more contemporary, less idiosyncratic initial

DVD release covers with more conventional photographs and without elements such as Anderson's favored Futura font in their titles. This schism between the two modes of cover style represents that duality of both the Criterion archive and Anderson's own work as products are made to appeal to both cliquish collector and cinephile sets as well as bubbling over into the realm of more mass market presentation. Unsheathed, however, both *Tenenbaums* and *The Life Aquatic* feature the more idiosyncratically Andersonian drawings of the younger Anderson.

Eric Chase Anderson's illustrations continue inside each DVD in terms of both cases and menus of the actual discs: *Rushmore* contains a stylized map featuring drawings of a number of important, synecdochal objects featured within the film; *Tenenbaums* contains detailed floor plan-illustrations of each of the house at 111 Archer Ave.'s main rooms, *The Life Aquatic* features a drawing of Zissou's ship in cross-section again, couched in the printed transcript of the Anderson brothers discussing Eric's illustrations and their contribution to Anderson's process, and *Bottle Rocket* contains a hand-drawn reproduction of Dignan's "75-Year Plan" and heist-planning notebook. The quirky and quaint hand illustrated style is showcased.

This is just one example of the way Anderson has employed collaboration almost ironically as an element of his auteur signature. Devin Orgeron points to this paradoxical structure in Anderson's work:

...[T]he reborn auteur as exemplified by Anderson *appears* more prominent than ever; but his centrality – one might say his celebrity, his authority – remains *in spite* of attempts [in the extrafilmic supplemental materials] to document the many collaborative layers of the filmmaking enterprise.³⁸

Examples of collaboration appear throughout the supplemental features on these discs. Anderson's taste in sampling the work of others or collaborating is shown as well through such supplemental features as *Tenenbaums'* inclusion of a STUDIO 360 radio piece which discusses Anderson's use of Mexican artist Miguel Calderon's "Bad Route" series of paintings as part of the decoration of Eli Cash's (Owen Wilson) apartment, including sound-bites from both the artist and the filmmaker, or in features such as the 20 minute interview and profile of Mark Mothersbaugh or the 10 complete video performances of David Bowie covers by Seu Jorge included on the supplemental disc of *The Life Aquatic*. Beyond these examples each disc showcases slideshows of the various crews at work and numerous featurettes focusing on behind the scenes contributions such as Henry Selick's team of stop-motion animators with *The Life Aquatic* or discussions with the films' stars about the development of their characters for both that film and *Tenenbaums*.

Anderson shares the authoritative and authorial commentary position on three of the four films' commentary tracks with collaborators: co-writer Owen Wilson joins Anderson for both *Bottle Rocket* and *Rushmore*'s commentaries (the latter also including Jason Schwartzman) while co-writer Noah Baumbach is present on the commentary track for *The Life Aquatic*. While these commentary tracks foreground, on the one hand, the collaborative aspects of film production – including numerous examples where Anderson himself, cued by visual or audio aspects of the films, names particular crew members and their contributions to the finished product – in practice Anderson dominates these conversations; Schwartzman's contributions to the *Rushmore* commentary are mainly in the form of descriptions of the scenes being viewed at the time or discussions of his own

personal preparation for this role while Owen Wilson tends to wax more philosophically about thematic elements of the film, relating Herman Blume's disaffection to a Talking Heads song (whose music is not used in any of Anderson's films) or comparing Max's mention of piranhas as a feature in his planned aquarium to Wilson's own childhood fascination with petrified wood. Anderson on the other hand provides numerous details of technical aspects of filming as well as thematic discussions, citing the sources of inspiration for different characters, music choices or shots, providing an overall organizing logic and intention for the film as a whole. Each of the three contributors was recorded separately for this feature and they do not interact with one another in what is a relatively common practice on the now-ubiquitous DVD commentary tracks. Anderson performs in a very similar mode for the commentary track to *Tenenbaums*, this time appearing by himself and elaborating on formal and thematic choices as with *Rushmore*.

The commentaries recorded for both *The Life Aquatic* and *Bottle Rocket*, however, are much more collaborative. *The Life Aquatic's* commentary was recorded at the restaurant where Anderson and co-writer Baumbach wrote most of the film's script. Background noise permeates the recording and the two converse with each other, posing each other questions about particular elements of the film including name origins for minor characters. As Baumbach was not present for most of the filming, the technical details of the shoot are left to Anderson; however due to the conversational set-up and Baumbach's familiarity with the project he is able to prompt Anderson to speak to a number of production details.

Finally the *Bottle Rocket* commentary track presents an interesting contrast when compared with the others as it was recorded 12 years after the release of the film. This discussion, recorded between Anderson and Owen Wilson once again during a Transatlantic phone call includes fewer technical details of the production itself – almost none of these are recalled by Wilson when mentioned by Anderson as the writer/actor seems to have forgotten many of the particularities of shooting. The overall tone of this commentary track is nostalgic, and Anderson comes off as a more seasoned professional taking an affectionate-yet-slightly-cripping look at what is in fact a rather amateurish film, insofar as concerns the level of control exercised by Anderson. Many of Anderson’s questions to Wilson about whether or not he remembered particular aspects of filming are either met with an awkward silence, with a noncommittal response, or met with laughter. The contrast between the writing partners shows Wilson to live up, somewhat, to his non-serious, quirky and laconic public persona while Anderson maintains his rather nerdy, bookish appearance. Essentially the balance between the two “characters” presented in these comedies shows Wilson to be aligned with the charming and charismatic dreamers presented by some of the films’ central characters earlier on while Anderson represents the more practical and self-aware, post-crisis auteurs those characters become after their rehabilitation.

The establishment of the image of a control is particularly evident when comparing three similar interview segments from the *Rushmore*, *Tenenbaums*, and *The Life Aquatic* Criterion discs. *Rushmore* includes a segment of *The Charlie Rose Show*, the long-running syndicated PBS program focusing on *Rushmore* itself. The first section

of the show is devoted to an interview with Bill Murray, addressing his involvement with the film but also focusing much of the time on Murray's career and the then-topical return of Murray's former agent Mike Ovitz to artist management, resulting in much discussion of the business side of acting. Anderson is interviewed in the second half of the program. In his appearance Anderson is competent if awkward as an interview subject, markedly nervous, responding quickly to questions before they are completely posed and sipping water repeatedly.

This awkwardness is playfully made fun of in a staged supplement found on the *Tenenbaums* DVD. The film itself casts actor Larry Pine as Peter Bradley, the host of the Peter Bradley Show on which Eli Cash has a breakdown mid-interview. The Criterion release features in its supplements an episode of the Peter Bradley Show. While Anderson himself does not appear in this segment, "Peter Bradley" interviews Anderson's long-time friends Brian Tenenbaum, Sanjay Mathew, Stephen Dignan, and Kumar and Dipak Pallana, all of whom Anderson has cast in supporting roles in his films. The mock interview is very awkward as Peter Bradley continually mispronounces the interviewees' names and appears unfamiliar with any of Anderson's previous films, instead asking Mathew, a practicing psychiatrist, what his favorite drug is or pursuing a line of questioning with the jovial Brian Tenenbaum about his approach to acting, the joke being that Tenenbaum is a non-actor who has appeared with few-to-no lines during his appearances, before the interview digresses into a discussion of his work as a steel salesman. This staged segment proves itself to be more awkward than Anderson's own *Charlie Rose Show* appearance while poking fun at that very awkwardness.

The Life Aquatic features a similarly awkward and staged segment. Anderson has cast Italian filmmaker and critic Antonio Monda, known for asking deeply existential and profound questions of interview subjects, in the film as the host of the Loquasto Film Festival that opens the film. For the supplementary features, Anderson has created a fake talk show, “Mondo Monda”, hosted by Monda, with himself and Baumbach as guests. The show is staged as an Italian television show and is filmed so as to look like a 1970s talk show. Anderson and Baumbach are comically unable to understand the questions posed in Italian and their translator appears to be absent despite repeated entreaties to him to help while Monda asks questions about the influence of British theologian and author G. K. Chesterton, whom neither Anderson nor Baumbach have heard of. The co-writers decide to address issues surrounding the film without understanding the questions posed, seemingly arbitrarily deciding which question their bilingual host likely asked them in Italian.

While these interviews function on the one hand as a parody of Anderson’s own awkwardness, their function does not simply stop there. By illustrating that Anderson understands his own awkwardness his self-awareness is reinforced. As well, these features show a deft touch at homage through a number of styles of film and/or television making which Anderson has not showcased within the structure of his films to any large degree.

One final way in which Anderson utilizes the Criterion Collection structure to his advantage is through his associations with established auteurs. This association takes shape in a number of ways.

Behind-the-scenes documentaries are included with each of the first three Anderson Criterion releases. While amateur filmmakers/collaborators such as Eric Chase Anderson (for *Rushmore*) and Matthew Gray Gubler (Anderson's own former intern and an actor playing one of Zissou's interns in *The Life Aquatic*) have short features showcased, Anderson has also collaborated with Albert Maysles for the production of behind-the-scenes featurettes for both *Tenenbaums* and *The Life Aquatic*. Famous for his career (initially with brother David yet continuing after David's death in 1987) as a leading cinema vérité documentarian with such films such as *Salesman* (1969), *Gimme Shelter*³⁹ (1970) and *Grey Gardens* (1976)⁴⁰ Maysles adds a particular gravity to Anderson's own Criterion DVD releases. While the contributions of Anderson's brother and former intern illustrate the degree to which he allows for quirky collaborations within his work, the association with the Maysles name and recognizable style adds a cinephilic gravity to Anderson's works.

Bottle Rocket presents a particular problem once again in comparison to Anderson's other Criterion works as the creation of a similar behind-the-scenes documentary is precluded due to the film's age. In its place is included a revisiting documentary by Barry Braverman which includes interviews with the film's stars recorded in 2008. In part to legitimize this choice as well as in a move to associate Anderson's own work with film history again, Braverman's own intensely personal short documentary portrait of his father, *Murita Cycles* (1978), is included with *Bottle Rocket*. This feature serves the twin functions of relating Anderson's own first film to Braverman's own early work and excusing any awkwardness of the film by relating it to

the very personal subject matter of Braverman's piece. *Bottle Rocket* is further legitimized as a text worth the Criterion treatment through the inclusion of two reprinted essays, both from 1999: Martin Scorsese's rationale for choosing Anderson as "the next Martin Scorsese" for a feature from *Esquire* magazine appears as does James L. Brooks' introduction to the mass-market print version of the screenplay of *Rushmore*.

More than any other director in his "New" New Hollywood set Anderson has been able to mediate his auteur presence through extrafilmic materials. Given the amount of critical attention Anderson's films garner for themselves upon release it remains difficult to say to exactly what degree these extrafilmic elements serve to create his persona. However, maybe most importantly, he has attained a mutually beneficial relationship with the Criterion Collection. The archive-building practice and canon formation that this collection is involved in assures Anderson's films and the director so strongly associated with them an assured place in a developing canon for years to come. While a film such as *The Darjeeling Limited* may remain outside of this collection due to industrial elements, the high level of interfilmic cohesiveness in Anderson's films as explored earlier will continue to allow a similar-if-reflected level of reverence to be shone on this other project with a secondary level of Criterion (or Criterion-esque) approval.

Notes – Chapter 3

¹ Gary Crowds, “Providing a Film Archive for the Home Viewer: An Interview with Peter Becker of the Criterion Collection.” *Cineaste* 25 (1999): 50.

² One notable exception comes from *Hotel Chevalier* as *Stalag 17* (1953) is seen on a television in the background. It should be noted that while the television is contemporary, the film, of course, is of an older generation.

³ Richard Grusin, “DVDs, Video Games and the Cinema of Interactions,” in *Multimedia Histories*, ed. James Lyons and John Plunkett (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007): 210.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 212-3.

⁶ Ibid., 213.

⁷ Ibid., 214.

⁸ For example the Rolling Stones’ longtime label ABKCO Records has historically been notoriously stingy with such licensing – despite the strong association between the band and Martin Scorsese’s repeated use of their songs in his gangster films, it is not until *The Departed*’s soundtrack album that lesser-known “Let It Loose” appears while only the soundtrack album for *The Darjeeling Limited*, produced in partnership with ABKCO, contains a Rolling Stones’ song (“Play with Fire”) while *Bottle Rocket*, *Rushmore*, and *The Royal Tenenbaums* contain four Rolling Stones’ songs between them.

⁹ Devin Orgeron, “La Camera-Crayola: Authorship Comes of Age in the Cinema of Wes Anderson”, *Cinema Journal* 46.2 (Winter) (2007): 59.

¹⁰ The second release's version of George Enescu's "Sonata For Cello And Piano In F Minor" as covered by the Mutato Muzika Orchestra appeared on the initial OST release as "Lindbergh Palace Hotel Suite".

¹¹ James Kendrick, "What is the Criterion? The Criterion Collection as an Archive of Film as Culture," *Journal of Film and Video* 53 (2001): 130.

¹² Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 58.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 59.

¹⁵ Bradley Schauer, "The Criterion Collection in the New Home Video Market: An Interview with Susan Arosteguy," *The Velvet Light Trap* 56 (2005): 32.

¹⁶ Quoted in Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 55.

¹⁷ Charles Tashiro, "The Contradictions of Video Collecting," *Film Quarterly* 50.2 (1996-7): 12.

¹⁸ Cited in Nathan Carroll, "Unwrapping Archives: DVD Restoration Demonstrations and Marketing of Authenticity," *The Velvet Light Trap* 56 (2005): 19.

¹⁹ It is important to note that many archives still retain a 35mm print of films even after digital transfer as prints' effectiveness as a storage medium is known while digitization's, long term, is still uncertain.

²⁰ Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 70.

²¹ Kendrick, "What is the Criterion? The Criterion Collection as an Archive of Film as Culture," 128.

²² Fall 2008 marked Criterion's foray into the Blu-ray format with the releases of *Bottle Rocket*, *Chungking Express* (1994), *El Norte* (1983), *The Third Man* (1949), *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976), *The Last Emperor* (1987), *The 400 Blows* (1959), *Gimme Shelter* (1970), *The Complete Monterey Pop Festival* (1967), *Contempt* (1963), *Walkabout* (1971), *For All Mankind* (1989), and *The Wages of Fear* (1953).

²³ Kendrick, "What is the Criterion? The Criterion Collection as an Archive of Film as Culture," 125.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 126.

²⁷ Crowds, "Providing a Film Archive for the Home Viewer: An Interview with Peter Becker of the Criterion Collection," 47.

²⁸ Kendrick, "What is the Criterion? The Criterion Collection as an Archive of Film as Culture," 129.

²⁹ Kendrick provides the example of Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985), which retailed for \$149.98 USD as a 5-LaserDisc release compared to the 3-DVD release with the same supplementary materials retailing at \$49.98 USD. *Ibid.*, 129-30.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

³¹ Kendrick notes that a number of Criterion releases have gone out of print due to limited licensing agreements, contributing to their collector value as well. *Ibid.*, 130-1.

³² *Ibid.*, 131.

³³ *Ibid.*, 128.

³⁴ A noted Anderson influence, Stillman's *Metropolitan* (1990) was released on the DVD format through Criterion in 2004.

³⁵ Claire Perkins, "Remaking and the Film Trilogy: Whit Stillman's Authorial Triptych," *The Velvet Light Trap* 61 (2008): 19.

³⁶ If LaserDisc releases were included a number of American auteurs such as Stanley Kubrick, John Waters, Spike Lee, and David Fincher would be added to the group of directors represented by multiple works in the collection as would the anti-"Auteur" Michael Curtiz.

³⁷ Both *The Royal Tenenbaums* and *The Life Aquatic* were available in single-disc or two-disc "Special Edition" versions presenting the same Anderson-supervised transfers but with supplements available only with the two-disc versions.

³⁸ Orgeron, "La Camera-Crayola", 59.

³⁹ Anderson wears a shirt with the image of Mick Jagger from this film's original artwork while speaking to Maysles' camera during an editing scene in the documentary featurette.

⁴⁰ All three of these films as well as 2006's *The Beales of Grey Gardens* have been released through the Criterion Collection.

Conclusion: Anderson's Animated Future

Authorship, authority, and the concept of the auteur have so far been consistent narrative obsessions of Anderson's work as this project has explored. Beyond the consistent inclusion of these themes on the narrative level, Anderson has formally maintained a presence within the act of telling or narrating each one of these films, consistently troubling and undermining his misguided central characters' attempts at asserting their own authority over the narratives and reasserting Anderson's own control. Acutely aware, as Devin Orgeron points out, of the danger of believing in one's own solitary-auteur construction, Anderson emphasizes the collaborative nature of his filmmaking in a number of ways, most notably in the inclusion of these collaborators in his film's "second life" products by either sharing screen or audio-track time with them or praising their contributions to the films in other ways. However as Anderson remains the sole consistent feature across the "special features" included with these alternate versions of his film texts, he retains a centrality and authority in regard to each film he creates, and this authority is further enforced by his apparent benevolence, shown through the aforementioned supplemental feature-sharing and the personalized "album notes" he creates for his audience on the soundtrack albums associated with his films, and through his characterization in these supplementary features as an affable, awkwardly nerdy but always intensely-involved presence, seemingly for every aspect of each film.

When viewed together each of Anderson's narratives seems to borrow inspiration from the director's own biography. This sense is enhanced by not only the DVD and soundtrack album materials studied in Chapter 3 but in the press surrounding these films,

in television and print and online interviews and articles about the films and their director. Indeed, as I have shown, patterns and consistencies, along with the inconsistencies demanded of different narratives, appear throughout Anderson's body of work and can logically be sourced back to the director himself as he has been the constant organizational force behind each one of these films. Critics cite the repeated narrative tropes along with his recognizable formal signatures – most commonly his overcrowded *mise-en-scène*, flush with nostalgic synecdoches, his characters who don old-fashioned outfits as regimented uniforms in their vigilant-if-flawed defense against acceptance of their non-classical-auteur reality, the vibrant Technicolor settings, the semi-obscure 1960s pop and rock sound track songs and the like – and Anderson's repeated use of white, American, middle-to-upper-middle-class males as central characters, characterizations which share a number of traits with Anderson himself, to make the point that with recent films he has been borrowing from his own films to tell us the same story again and again.

Whether one is criticizing Anderson's filmmaking or not, these approaches still rely to some degree each on a matter of faith. Indeed Lanser directs us to this when discussing the implied-author as she compares the imagined construct to the authority invested by believers in a religious leader as a point of access to God whereby the believers may conceive of God in that leader's image as a way to construct some helpful conceptualization while recognizing that the leader in question is not *really* God, in the implied-author's case realizing concurrently that the historical author (for our purposes the flesh and blood Wes Anderson) is different from the authorized or implied narrator.¹

Why this remains important is because, while the films may fit together as a whole “film” of which it is the task of the critic to construct, contradictions and consistencies together, as once remarked by Renoir², each one of these films may stand alone and be experienced by audiences who have no idea nor any cares about Wes Anderson, the living, breathing writer/director or his implied-author doppelganger “Wes Anderson”, despite the narratives’ invocations of central questions of the act of authorship.

The November 2009 release of Anderson’s sixth feature, *The Fantastic Mr. Fox*, will prove very interesting as an addition to Anderson’s body of work as it promises to present a number of important contrasts to Anderson’s other films. As mentioned earlier in this thesis this film is an adaptation of Roald Dahl’s 1970 children’s novel of the same name and so *Fox* will be Anderson’s first adaptation of another writer’s work instead of creating an original screenplay. Anderson has partnered with Noah Baumbach again for the writing of the adaptation, and it remains to be seen if the writers will have transformed the titular central character into a more classically Andersonian auteur protagonist.

As well this next film has been made through the use of stop-motion animation, initially in partnership with *The Life Aquatic* collaborator Henry Selick who left as co-director to make *Coraline* after initial funders Revolution Studios folded, but who continued to consult for Anderson while the animation team employed by Selick for Tim Burton’s *Corpse Bride* (2005) produced the visual components of this new film. This change is notable for a few reasons. Foremost, animation removes the physical presences of Anderson’s actors, though many past cast members return to do voice work, including

Bill Murray, Jason Schwartzman, Anjelica Huston, Willem Dafoe, Michael Gambon, Brian Cox, and most-consistent collaborator Owen Wilson. But now instead of having the object-ified and powerless human characters trapped in those God's-eye close-ups at their most powerless, Anderson will be presenting us with actual objects in the form of his puppet "actors". Whether or not Anderson returns to that repeated form of framing his characters to establish his authorial control remains to be seen as does the effect upon the viewer when seeing a puppet instead of a human actor captured within that frame God's-eye framing.

Also important to note is a changing of the guard in regards to two of Anderson's most consistent collaborators: Mark Mothersbaugh and Robert Yeoman. Mothersbaugh's signature score was absent from *The Darjeeling Limited* and will be absent again from this new film. Yeoman has been replaced for this film by cinematographer Tristan Oliver, who has worked in the past on animated films such as *Chicken Run* (2002) and two of the "Wallace and Gromit" films, *Wallace & Gromit in The Wrong Trousers* (1993) and *Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* (2005). How the absence of Yeoman's input in framing and shot construction influences this film in concert with the particular demands of the stop-motion technique will effect the film's cinematography will as well prove to be interesting.

Finally *Fox* has been produced through 20th Century-Fox Animation, a division of 20th Century-Fox, who produced *The Darjeeling Limited*. With this arrangement it is very unlikely that 20th Century-Fox will license the film to the Criterion Collection for DVD release, most likely choosing to produce their own DVD as they did with

Darjeeling. While *Darjeeling*'s DVD included a substantial behind-the-scenes featurette, the DVD was far less elaborate than any of Anderson's releases through Criterion, providing Anderson with far less mediating power over that second life version of his film. Likely the success or failure of *Fox* at the box office will influence 20th Century-Fox's choice of DVD production – the film, while stacked with the vocal talents of Hollywood stars George Clooney and Meryl Streep as well as the aforementioned previous-film cast members who would appeal to adult audiences, is arguably geared more towards children and thus skews away from Anderson's usual audience. Ultimately, whether or not the film is a box office success *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* will no doubt prove enlightening in regards to Anderson's work as a whole for the consistencies and contradictions it presents to the rest of his body of work, moving fans and critics alike one step closer to establishing the auteur's life "film" as posited by Renoir.

Notes - Conclusion

¹ Susan S. Lanser, "(Im)plying the Author." *Narrative* 9.2 (2001): 156.

² Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* 4th Edition (London: British Film Institute, 1998): 70.

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