

IAN WOOD

Tsunami Escape – Annotated Bibliography

Film/Video

I. *Mirror*. Dir. Andrei Tarkovsky. Perf. Innokenty Smoktunovsky, Margarita Terekhova Kino Film, 1975.

Mirror is an autobiographical, abstract film from Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky. The film rhythmically blends dream and reality, past and present, color and black and white film, found footage, and sound elements of poetry, voice-over, dialogue, ambience, and music. The cinematography is haunting and amazing, with extremely long and choreographed takes including slow movement and characters reappearing in the foreground after long periods of movement. The effect is a dizzying, stream of consciousness kind of meditation on existence. In *Tsunami Escape*, I plan on creating a similar aesthetic, blending black and white with color film, and the themes/mode of address will also be similar to *Mirror* in that the plot elements will reside in a sort of controlled chaos within an overall stream of consciousness experience about human existence. The cinematographic techniques used by Tarkovsky have inspired me to think more creatively about what I will capture and how I will capture it – what effects these decisions will produce.

II. *8 ½*. Dir. Federico Fellini. Perf. Marcello Mastroianni. Criterion Collection, 1963.

8 ½ is a recursive film about a filmmaker and his struggles in creating a film. It comments on the creative process by using itself as its subject. The film is autobiographical as well as fictional, a result of Fellini's "writer's block." It is also abstract, as it slips in to dreams, memory, and surreality. *Tsunami Escape* is also a recursive project, perhaps more directly than *8 ½* in that it will also include elements of documentary on the creative process of its own creation.

III. *The Wind Will Carry Us*. Dir. Abbas Kiarostami. Perf. Behzad Dourani. 2000.

This film, like many of Kiarostami's films, bends the line between fiction and non-fiction. It is about a documentary filmmaker from Tehran who travels to a remote village in order to document an obscure burial ceremony. The pace of the film is slow and melodic, like a poem. The film comments on the questionable nature of filmmaking, and Kiarostami is reflected in Behzad's character who takes a film crew to a remote, old world village, and captures the locals and their way of life for personal purposes, which is exactly what Kiarostami is doing, for instance, the characters are played by non-actors who are actually from the small village. The film becomes a question about the ethics of film making, as well as a meditation on the human condition and the collision between old world and new world perspectives. In *Tsunami Escape*, I would also like to question the ethics and limitations of filmmaking and documentary film, housed within a larger framework dealing with the contradictions of human existence, which will perhaps create a similar effect as *The Wind Will Carry Us*.

IV. *Close-Up*. Dir. Abbas Kiarostami. Perf. Mohsen Makhmalbaf. 1990.

This film, based on a true story, confuses non-fiction and fiction perhaps more than any of Kiarostami's films. The film is about a man who posed as famous Iranian filmmaker, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, and the man's subsequent arrest and trial. It includes interviews with the parties involved, re-enactments played by the actual real-life people who were involved, and documentary elements such as the eventual meeting between director Mohsen Makhmalbaf and the man who assumed his identity. *Tsunami Escape* will similarly conflate what is real and what is performed, while also commenting on filmmaking, authenticity, and the power and beauty of art and cinema.

V. *Avant-Garde: Experimental Cinema of the 1920s and '30s*. Dir. Man Ray, Hans Richter, Marcel Duchamp, Watson and Weber, Fernand Leger, Joris Ivens, Dimitri Kirsanoff, Jean Epstein and Orson Welles. Kino Video, 1921.

This collection of surrealist, experimental, and avant-garde work spans through two decades across the globe. It includes photographic work as well as direct animation. Although *Tsunami Escape* will not be completely surreal, I would like to include elements of surrealism, as well as direct animation. My conception of *Tsunami Escape* is that it will be very experimental, although hopefully the final product will be more coherent and direct than the work on this collection. I am more interested in using formal aspects of surrealism to alter the balance of the narratives within the whole than in creating an overall surrealist piece.

VI. *Hans Richter, Early Avant-Garde Films*. Arthouse, 1996.

This collection includes an interview with Hans Richter from 1972, in which he discusses his experimental films in relation to his painting, scrolls and collages. In it, he distinguishes film as “the conscious articulation of time ... [and] movement” and rhythm as “the essence of filmmaking.” The collection also includes eight of his films from 1921 to 1929, including *Rhythm 21*, *Rhythm 23*, *Film Study*, *Ghosts Before Breakfast*, *Inflation* [and] *Everyone Turns*, *Race Symphony*, and *Two-penny Magic*. I am very interested in rhythm in film, the musicality of image, movement, and editing, and consider these important aspects in *Tsunami Escape*. In this way, Richter’s work was very inspirational in his varying rhythmic techniques and ideas on rhythm. I was also inspired by some of the illusory tricks used by Richter, such as split screening, which is something I will attempt with my project in various ways, as well as ideas on motif, perspective, and juxtaposition.

VII. *One Soldier*. Dir. Stephen Wright. Perf. Stephen Wright, Sandi Caroll. IFC, 1999.

One Soldier is a short, black and white narrative short film about a civil war soldier who struggles with the contradictions of being, and death. It is most outwardly a comedy, but it is also an existential exploration, and perhaps comedy simply reflects the realizations of that exploration. I relate to and appreciate this film so much, and its logic has informed not only my artistic style, but also my very being. I would like for *Tsunami Escape* to not only comment on similar themes, but also do it in a similar tone of irony, contradiction, contemplation, and humor.

VIII. *Masters of Illusion*. Dir. Rick Harper. Harper Films, inc. Home Vision, c1991.

In my studies of perspective and Renaissance art, I came across *Masters of Illusion*, a video that provided insights into the origins of artistic expression dealing with perspective, as well as the evolution and articulation of various methods dealing with perspective. The video is, among other things, about how Renaissance art relates to cinema in its dealings with perspective, and the overall implications of toying with perspective. *Tsunami Escape* is most notably an experiment with perspective, in its use of various media and subjects. I would like to use various perspectives and weave them together in a controlled chaos through which a viewer might come to understand the material in a more deep and complex way. I would also like to use perspective to bring people into the world and ideas of *Tsunami Escape*, to make the spectators become in some ways the subject of the film. These ideas relate very much to some specific Renaissance art, including the work of Andrea Mantegna and Leonardo Da Vinci.

IX. *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*. Dir. Wes Anderson. Perf. Bill Murray, Owen Wilson, Cate Blanchett. Criterion, 2004.

This hilarious film is not only a comedy/adventure/drama with an original structure and approach, but it is also a statement on the absurdity of filmmaking, specifically documentary filmmaking – trying to represent truth with the cinematic apparatus. Whether taking light readings during a near-drowning, scolding the camera operator for cutting the shot too soon and

losing a “goddamn tearjerker,” or watching and editing the documentary film within the framing film, the absurd situations that arise in the creation of their documentary illuminate an overall ridiculousness in manipulating reality in order to represent reality. Anderson also blends perspective in this film in many unique and interesting ways, for instance when Steve Zissou argues with Ned that “it is a documentary, it is all really happening” they are in what appears as a cross section of a boat – a surrealist and fictional set. Like many of the other films I watched for this research project, *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* is a film about a man who is making a film, and, like *A Man With a Movie Camera*, the film is most obviously about filmmaking; It begins in a movie theatre, and ends there as well. Although *Tsunami Escape* is not a narrative comedy, it will deal with similar ideas of absurdity and humor within a story that is surrounded by death, and questionable authenticity.

Text

I. Finkelstein, Haim, ed. *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dali*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

The collected writings of Salvador Dali include a diverse cross-section of literary forms including theoretical essays, art historical explorations, manifestoes, philosophical treatises, poetry, and film scripts. Although I am interested in all of his writings, I focused more on theoretical essays involving surrealist rhetoric and theory of surreality. Dali’s writing is dense, rich, and sometimes wanders off into fantastical and bizarre tangents, but it is always interesting. I was particularly intrigued by Dali’s ideas on photography (also in regards to cinematic photography) and its representation of reality vs. surreality, and the psychological, subjective implications therein. Although I have not read the entire book, it has provided me with many insights and new perspectives on artistic creation, which will be helpful in creating the sort of semi-surreal dreamscape of *Tsunami Escape*, and in understanding the scope of implications in manipulating reality with art.

II. Allen, Richard. *Projecting Illusion*. New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

This collection of essays provides a systematic analysis of the impression of reality in cinema, as well analysis of film spectatorship. The section of the book I focused on, which makes up one quarter of the book, is called “Representation, Illusion, and the Cinema.” Allen proposes a new definition of “projective illusion,” arguing that many contemporary film theorists correctly identify the significance of the impression of reality, although their explanation of it is incorrect because of an invalid philosophical understanding of the relationship between the mind, representation, and reality. His writing on the seeing-aspect phenomenon, as well as projective illusion in regards to cinematic narration was of particular interest to me. With *Tsunami Escape*, I hope to explore the seeing aspect and try to contradict it in some ways, and the ideas on what he terms “cinematic narration” caused me to rethink how I want to present and blend the various perspectives into a cohesive, yet challenging and subversive, whole.

III. Kesey, Ken. *Sometimes A Great Notion*. New York, New York: The Viking Press, Inc. 1964.

This book is a fictional and epic tale of a logging family from Oregon in the early to mid 20th Century. I chose to read this book again as an exercise and study on perspective, as well as because it is an amazing book that touches on similar themes that I will be exploring in *Tsunami Escape*. In the book, perspective is used in very unique and original ways to tell a story that is consequentially enriched and enlivened. By changing form in his writing (from *italics* to BOLD to “quotations” ... and back to normal), Kesey toggles between perspectives and characters in a constant controlled chaos that is both challenging and rewarding. By using the contrast of form

and context of character, Kesey allows the reader to follow through the constant and poetic weave of perspective until one becomes fully immersed in the story – the characters and the place. *Tsunami Escape* is my attempt to use similar techniques of denoting perspective with form, and translating them to the visual/aural and perhaps more complex medium of cinema. My hope is that I can enrich the ideas within *Tsunami Escape* by allowing various perspectives to come through in a sort of chaos that makes sense.

IV. Smith, Alexander. Dreamthorp: A Book of Essays Written in the Country. Freeport, New York: Books For Libraries Press, 1972.

This book was written by Scottish poet of the “Spasmodic School,” Alexander Smith, just before he died in 1864. I used this book primarily for two of the essays within it, “On Death and the Fear of Dying” and “On the Importance of Man to Himself.” The style of these essays is very poetic and philosophical, full of wisdom and contemplation. If *Tsunami Escape* were to be an essay, I would use a very similar tone and mode of address as that of the essays within *Dreamthorp*. I chose to read these essays because *Tsunami Escape* will touch on the same ideas, and, as it turns out, in a similar style.

V. Vaughan, Dai. For Documentary: Twelve Essays. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1999.

This collection of essays on documentary filmmaking provided some interesting insights into the documentary aspect of my project, although much of it did not necessarily pertain to what I will be attempting with *Tsunami Escape*. “From Today, Cinema is Dead” is probably the essay of most pertinence to my project that can be found in this collection. In it, the contradictory conclusion reflects many of my views about documentary, the kind of absurdity of film making, and the impending doom, all of which are themes within *Tsunami Escape*. “If I am right, then documentary is the taproot of cinema, even of those forms most remote from it; and if this were allowed to die, all else would wither. It is more possible that the cause is already lost, along with that of social progress with which photography and documentary have throughout their existence been strongly identified – perhaps out of nothing more theoretically defensible than a gut feeling that if people were allowed to see freely they would see truly, perceiving their world as open to scrutiny and evaluation, as being malleable in the way film is malleable (192).” The fact that I am going to New Orleans to film (exploit?) what is also someone else’s strife, and I am not making a socially relevant piece, may reflect this idea of hopelessness, and the documentary element in contrast within *Tsunami Escape* may both allude to that as well as contradict it.

VI. Warner, Rex. Poems and Contradictions. London, England: Unwin Brothers Limited, London and Woking for John Lane The Bodley Head Limited, 1945.

In my search for other forms of artistic expression that explore similar ideas as *Tsunami Escape* in terms of human experience and existence (not in terms of filmmaking and formalist approaches), I was pleased to come across this collection of poems by Rex Warner – a fairly obscure figure in the realm of poetry. I don’t usually read (or enjoy) poetry, and I was surprised to really enjoy his poems – specifically “Contradictions” – especially since they are written in a classic style I usually would not really gravitate towards. “Contradictions” is about the life span and the contradictions of being, but it is not necessarily either romantic or depressing. It is both and neither, and that is the kind of work I tend to create, and the way I perceive the world, life, and death, all the big questions and answers – as complex and contradictory, ugliness is beauty, etc, etc. Warner’s poetry, and just reading poetry in general, made me think about the use of narration and poetry, as well as how to present poetry visually, without words – which is something I think my original conception of *Tsunami Escape* would naturally tend to do. I am still debating how I will use language in the piece.

VII. Petric, Vlada. Constructivism in Film: *The Man With the Movie Camera*; Constructivism in Film. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

I have not read a lot out of this book yet, but I will continue to use it as a source for inspiration. Since *The Man With The Movie Camera* relates to my project in many ways, I focused mostly on the section of essays dealing with the various thematic meanings in that particular film. Of particular use and interest were theoretical and analytical commentary on experimentation, segmentation of structure, the “difficult” process of filmmaking, self-referential associations (and humor), negation of narrative, the nature of film image, cinematic illusion, and point of view. These short essays help to synthesize formal and thematic ideas on the film, and filmmaking in general (being that the film is *about* filmmaking!) Many of these ideas seem more pertinent to editing, although reading about these things before shooting has been instrumental in the planning of the shoot. Had I not been exposed to many of these ideas before shooting, even though they apply more to editing, it would have been impossible to apply many of the ideas in editing because the material would not be there.

Online Sources

I. Wikipedia Contributors. Main Page, etc. Updated constantly. Pub. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. February – March, 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page>

I probably did most of my reading on or from this site. Wikipedia – an online encyclopedia full of uber amounts of information – is a very useful resource, which I have used constantly in finding things to research, and in the researching itself. Beginning with one thing, like a movie, or a director, or an artist, or a term, I would read about the given information, and link to new information in a sort of endless cycle, linking internally and externally. Eventually, I was able to narrow down my resources with the help of the overall synthesis that a concise and accurate encyclopedic site can provide. Wikipedia was the hub of most of my research, along with the Evergreen library, a backbone to my research. I will continue to use this site for further research.

II. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, U.S. Dept. of Commerce. NOAA. Last Updated: August 9, 2005 12:24 PM. NOAA, USDC. February – March, 2006 <<http://www.tsunami.noaa.gov/>>

I searched through this site to educate myself on the Tsunami Warning System, which will play a part in my piece, as well as on information about tsunamis in general. I also found contacts/resources for gathering information about shooting locations (ie: where sirens exist, tsunami damage from past Cascadia quakes, etc.) The website also provided helpful links to other historical and informational sites.

III. Tyler, Tim. Cinematography.com. Updated constantly. Pub. Tim Tyler, Cinematography.com. February – March, 2006 <<http://www.cinematography.com/>>

This site is a comprehensive site about cinematography and filmmaking. It provides excellent technical support and information in regards to all things cinematography. I primarily used this site to research film stocks, filters, camera tricks, and technical elements of my production. I also used the site for its forum, and recommendations on cinematographers and directors to check out. I will continue to use this site throughout production.