

‘Waiting as Such’: The Politics of Tarrying Glyn Davis¹

Around four hours into Lav Diaz’s *Death in the Land of Encantos* (2007, hereafter *Encantos*), two friends – Catalina and Teodoro – wait on a hill summit for a third, Benjamin. He is, we discover, already an hour late. Catalina is creating a painting on an easel. Neither Catalina nor Teodoro has a cellphone with which to contact Benjamin, to find out where he is and why he is held up. They fitfully fill the time with conversation, discussing topics such as whether Teodoro’s son might have autism. They eat some rice cakes. The framing of the shot is static. After ten minutes, there is a cut and a reframing to a new unmoving shot; there has been a minor change to Catalina and Teodoro’s location. In the ellipsis, another hour has passed. They both have ways to pass the time: Catalina continues painting, and Teodoro has a book to read. Catalina wonders whether they should give it another thirty minutes. Minutes meander by, and there is still no sign of Benjamin. They continue to wait, but eventually give up and leave.

Watching this sequence, which lasts for almost twenty minutes, is also an exercise in waiting for the spectator. The long duration of the individual shots – themselves components of an extremely long film – force the viewer to share in the temporal experience of the film’s characters. The match of character and audience waiting times is not fully aligned, of course: that cut removes a considerable slice of time. Yet this sequence reveals how filmmakers engaging with long duration – of takes, of running times – can push audiences towards a heightened awareness of the exhausting temporal drag of waiting and its punishing effects. This essay takes as its focus the relationship between cinema and waiting. It argues that some filmmakers have used specific long duration formal tactics to mark the distinction between quotidian experiences of waiting and waiting-seemingly-without-end, to unveil the political forces responsible for some especially arduous waiting times, and to set on-screen and viewer experiences of waiting into relief.

Waiting is a topic rarely discussed by theorists of the moving image, and yet waiting is, and perhaps always has been, a central component of the cinema experience. In relation to the film theatre, for example, audience members often wait in line to buy tickets and snacks, and endure the advertisements and trailers before the main

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feature. Away from the theatre, viewers may wait for a particular title to become available, legally or illegally, in a home viewing format. (Obviously, this does not apply to ‘day and date’ releases.) On digital platforms, spectators regularly wait for the film to download, stream, or bypass a buffering barrier, as discussed in William Brown’s essay in this dossier. Most crucially, in relation to the content of this essay, the time taken to watch a film often features periods of waiting. Mainstream narrative cinema usually deploys the conventions of continuity editing to remove stretches of dead time, propelling the story along swiftly and economically; brief sequences of waiting will only be included when narratively valuable. Despite these intentions, audiences may still find themselves enduring particular parts of such films, willing them to end, whether this is the explosions or fight scenes, the montages, the routine exposition, a particular character narrative arc, or the romantic interludes.

Beyond mainstream cinema, though, it is possible to identify a body of films that are purposefully concerned with waiting: films with content that engages explicitly with the lethargy and stagnation associated with waiting, and which also test the viewer’s patience, coercing them into tarrying and marking time. Examples of such films can be found in both art cinema and gallery installations. In relation to the former, there are a notable number of fictional and documentary films that contain depictions of individuals who endure periods of waiting, people whose waiting, as particular sequences unfold, merges with the spectator’s own. Ira Jaffe (2014, 87-108), for instance, identifies “wait time” as a recurrent theme engaged with by directors that he aligns with the concept of slow cinema. Although long duration tactics and devices have been deployed by a wide array of filmmakers, a marked number of those associated with slow cinema have repeatedly engaged with long duration formally and stylistically. Jaffe discusses *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (Puiu, 2005), *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 days* (Mungiu, 2007), and *Safe* (Haynes, 1995). Other examples from the slow cinema corpus could be added to Jaffe’s examples. Béla Tarr’s films, for example, including *Sátántangó* (1994) and *The Turin Horse* (2011), repeatedly depict characters waiting, and press viewers into sharing their experience through extended sequences composed of lengthy shots in which little of consequence happens.

Sátántangó is seven hours and thirty minutes in length, a marathon running time for a piece of narrative cinema. Admittedly, the film is broken into twelve chapters, which provides structure and eases its consumption. However, the length of the film, Tarr’s characteristic deployment of long takes, and the recurrent narrative depiction of characters attempting to sit out stretches of dead time, mean that waiting surfaces as a key temporal dynamic in *Sátántangó*’s durational texture. In line with the theme of this issue of *Aniki*, it is films such as *Sátántangó* that I intend to concentrate

on: that is, films many hours in length in which waiting manifests as a theme and, for the audience and people depicted on screen, an embodied test of endurance. During encounters with these particular films, forms of waiting that viewers might experience with a conventional cinematic text become remarkably more pronounced. With these films, the experience of watching at times collapses or folds into one of waiting: waiting for a development of detail, waiting for time to elapse. This may be waiting without anticipation: an eruption of incident is not necessarily expected. The only foreseen outcome, in fact, may be that the film viewing will come to an end, in one way or another.

The two examples that this essay explores in detail are Lav Diaz's *Encantos* (nine hours and five minutes in length) and Wang Bing's documentary *Crude Oil* (2008, fourteen hours), the second of which takes the form of a gallery installation. Wang and Diaz share commonalities: they have both been linked to the slow cinema movement and, as Tom Paulus notes, both "have in their work continuously straddled the line between documentary and fiction, their films closely tied to the places they depict/narrate." (Paulus n.d., n.p.) Though working in distinct geographical contexts, Diaz and Wang have both used similar formal strategies – extremely long takes, extraordinarily lengthy running times – in order to examine complex and thorny political scenarios. This essay will identify the varied ways in which *Encantos* and *Crude Oil* engage with waiting and its torpid temporalities. It will highlight the distinct dynamics of embodied spectatorial waiting in the cinema and the gallery that these examples reveal. More importantly, however, it will argue that Diaz and Wang have utilized long duration tactics to draw attention to the political ramifications of waiting, in particular by forcing awareness of the distinction between on-screen and spectatorial experiences of waiting. In order to put forward such an argument, it is necessary first to examine the ways in which waiting has been theorized.

Waiting, in theory

How can waiting be described, specified, fathomed? And how can such understandings be related to moving image works? As Harold Schweizer notes in his book *On Waiting*, waiting sits in an interstitial location "between hope and resignation, boredom and desire, fulfillment and futility" (Schweizer 2008, 2). Such a positioning could prevent the possibility of clear-eyed engagement, but Schweizer attempts to capture the distinctive character of waiting. With waiting, he writes, "Time must suddenly be endured rather than traversed, felt rather than thought. In waiting, time is slow and thick." (ibid.) Waiting is a quotidian experience, one we all frequently endure. It is mainly felt to be a frustration, a block to

productivity or creativity, a waste of time. Time is made almost material when we wait: the latent becomes tangible. When occupied with activity, time evaporates and we do not notice its passing; but waiting forces a recalibration, a sudden awareness of yawning minutes, minutes filled with yawning. For Schweizer, however, waiting could be framed positively. He suggests that, “we might think of waiting also as a temporary liberation from the economics of time-is-money, as a brief respite from the haste of modern life, as a meditative temporal space in which one might have unexpected intuitions and fortuitous insights.” (ibid.) Schweizer turns, in particular, to Henri Bergson for support for his views: “Experiences of waiting lead to what Bergson might call enlarged perceptions”, Schweizer argues, “of the strange phenomenon of our own existential enduring. In waiting, such intuitions of enduring, because they are intimate, are vexingly uncomfortable. We fidget, we pace, we complain, we consult our watches.” (18) But through such disquiet, insights occur that potentially spark change.

Here it is necessary to note that Schweizer distinguishes between two different types of waiting: between what he terms “instrumental waiting, waiting with a purpose, waiting for a denouement” and “waiting – waiting as such – just waiting.” (11, 10) Waiting which we know will end (for a flight, for a friend to meet us, and so on) is a minor irritation, an abrasion that will swiftly heal, but ‘waiting as such’ constitutes a different order of waiting. This is not ‘waiting for something to happen’ at all, but a form of dwelling within the temporality of waiting without anticipation of relief or ending. Schweizer does not specify whether ‘waiting as such’ is experienced only or mainly in longer or extended periods of waiting, with ‘instrumental waiting’ linked to shorter stretches of time, but such an association could be expected. Certainly, Schweizer seems to identify ‘just waiting’ as inflected with more political potential and resonance than the mundane forms of ‘instrumental waiting’. And, given the contemporary emphasis on removing all barriers to the 24/7 circulation of global capital – such as, as Jonathan Crary (2013) has highlighted, sleep, or queuing – ‘waiting as such’ can seem like a provocatively indulgent waste of time, a ludic lolling in lassitude.

Schweizer’s distinction between different types of waiting also surfaces in the writings of others. Heidegger’s *Discourse on Thinking* was published in 1959, and is composed of two parts: a Memorial Address in honour of the German composer Conradin Kreutzer, and a dialogue, “Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking”. Both sections of the book engage with a related theme: ‘meditative thinking’, and the role it can serve in everyday life. In the Address, Heidegger distinguishes between ‘calculative thinking’ and ‘meditative thinking’, and states that the latter “requires a greater effort” and “demands more practice” – but that it is accessi-

ble to anyone (Heidegger 1966, 47). In the 'Conversation', three characters – a scientist, a teacher, and a scholar – discuss different forms of thinking and the relationship of thinking to 'releasement', a slippery concept that the scholar notes "awakens when our nature is let-in so as to have dealings with that which is not a willing." (61) The teacher states that, in order to engage with releasement "we are to do nothing but wait." (62) Different forms of waiting are then distinguished from each other – waiting in which "we always wait for something", and waiting in which "we leave open what we are waiting for." (68) With the latter, "waiting releases itself into openness [...] in whose nearness it finds the abiding in which it remains." (ibid.) This second form of waiting, that is, has the potential to bring us closer to releasement. Or as Barbara Dalle Pezze puts it, in her analysis of Heidegger's *Discourse on Thinking*, when "we rest in the act of waiting... something opens. What we need to do is 'just' wait, wait without expecting." (Dalle Pezze 2006, 98) Heidegger, then, suggests that if we move beyond the expectation of resolution, an end to waiting, and remain open towards something other, dwell in waiting itself, we could experience releasement. This position is echoed in Schweizer's own conclusion: "The instrumental nature of ordinary waiting – where we usually wait for something that is supposed to be better than waiting – conceals [an] intimate, existential aspect of waiting. Waiting, in other words, is an opportunity to encounter those aspects of life deeply, perhaps neurotically, hidden in our busyness." (Schweizer 2008, 128)

Heidegger's notion of a form of waiting in which "we leave open what we are waiting for" also surfaces in the writings of other philosophers, articulated in analogous ways. In a short essay from 1922 entitled "Those Who Wait," Siegfried Kracauer identifies a widespread malaise, a "metaphysical suffering from the lack of a higher meaning in the world, a suffering due to an existence in an empty space." (Kracauer 1995, 129) This suffering, he argues, is due to "exile from the religious sphere", to "the curse of *isolation and individuation*." (130; Kracauer's italics) This stubborn spiritual and intellectual impasse could, Kracauer suggests, be undermined, counteracted, by waiting. "Perhaps the only remaining attitude", he writes, "is one of *waiting*. [...] One waits, and one's waiting is a *hesitant openness*" (138; Kracauer's italics). Anticipating Heidegger's perspective on waiting by decades, Kracauer argues that the sense of waiting he is discussing "signifies an openness." (139) It is a waiting that is without object, but may lead to revelation and change. "Exactly when this transformation will come to pass", however, "and whether or not it will happen at all is not at issue here"; it is the dwelling in waiting that is of significance. (140)

Maurice Blanchot's essay "Waiting," from 1959 (the same year that Heidegger's *Discourse on Thinking* was first published in German, under the title *Gelassenheit*), also reads as a brief but sus-

tained engagement with ‘waiting as such’ – what he terms “only waiting.” (Blanchot 1995, 272) Again, a distinction is made between instrumental waiting and ‘just waiting’: “Whatever the importance of the object of waiting”, he writes, “it is always infinitely surpassed by the movement of waiting.” (ibid.) Blanchot attempts to characterise this particular form of waiting:

To be waiting, only waiting. Unfamiliar waiting, equal in all its moments, like space in all its points, equal to space, exerting the same continuous pressure, not exerting it. Solitary waiting, which was in him and has now moved outside, waiting for him without him, leaving him nothing more to wait for. (Blanchot 1995, 274)

Beyond this formulation, Blanchot engages with the relationship between waiting and thought. Here there are echoes of Heidegger’s examination of the relationships between forms of thinking, types of waiting, and releasement. “The thought of waiting”, writes Blanchot: “thought which is waiting for that which cannot be thought of, thought which is carried by waiting and postponed in this waiting. The calm turning aside of thought, returning from itself to itself in waiting.” (277) ‘Only waiting’, that is, seems to have a marked connection with particular forms of thinking, and offers the opportunity to access these.

For Schweizer, Heidegger, Kracauer, and Blanchot, then, there is a form of waiting, ‘waiting as such’, distinct from instrumental waiting. This ‘waiting as such’ is marked by an ‘openness’ that offers the potential for accessing particular types of thought, opportunities for encounter and for ‘releasement’, and perhaps even revelation and change. But how does this philosophical model of waiting square with that put forward by anthropologists and sociologists? Javier Auyero’s study of the experiences of waiting endured by those with sorely limited economic means in Argentina challenges the line of argument I have outlined so far. Auyero takes inspiration from Bourdieu’s view that waiting is of central importance to the operations of domination and from Foucault’s sustained interrogation of the oppressive workings of political forces on the bodies of a state’s subjects. “Domination works”, writes Auyero, “through yielding to the power of others; and it is experienced as a waiting time: waiting hopefully and then frustratedly for others to make decisions, and in effect surrendering to the authority of others.” (Auyero 2012, 4) The state informs its subjects that they must wait; they “heed this injunction to wait because it is rooted in their reality. After all they are always waiting.” (14) As Auyero summarises, “everyday political domination is what happens when nothing apparently happens, when people ‘just wait.’” (19)

As opposed to Schweizer’s notion of ‘just waiting’ or Blanchot’s ‘only waiting’ as potential routes to access intellectual or agential opportunities, Auyero’s ethnographic explorations of waiting areas, queues, and shantytowns identify how making subjects

wait, just wait, endlessly and without resolution, serves the political interests of the state. Auyero focuses his study on the urban poor in Argentina, but he acknowledges that the complex interrelationships between waiting, power, and the bodies of citizens can be observed in operation much more widely, in various contexts around the world. In particular, he notes that “waiting is stratified, and there are variations in waiting time that are socially patterned and responsive to power differentials.” (27) These variations are revealed, to give just one example, in Sarah Sharma’s study of the temporal dynamics of airports. Sharma identifies the centrality of waiting in such spaces: “Since 9/11”, she writes, “airport waiting times have increased – people are expected to spend more time at the gates. The eighty-six minutes of time that passengers average between clearing security and waiting for takeoff is an unaccounted for time.” (Sharma 2014, 51-2) However, “[w]aiting is a differential temporal experience for the frequent business traveler.” (52) Frequent flyers have access to exclusive lounges with a calm atmosphere which may facilitate productivity; they bypass or move swiftly to the front of queues; they may perform their business even as they approach the aircraft through the terminal, closing a deal by phone as boarding commences. In contrast, those financially and socially outside of this rarefied sphere must endure the extended periods of waiting associated with air travel. Unlike Auyero’s compliant or subjugated subjects, however, the waiting experienced by all of Sharma’s travelers will definitely come to an end: aircraft will be boarded and destinations will be reached.

Philosophical and theoretical models of ‘waiting as such’, as outlined by Heidegger and others, posit a potential within such experiences. In contrast, ethnographic accounts of embodied waiting reveal them to be cut through with the workings of state and social power, with domination and subordination. I would like to argue here that *Encantos* and *Crude Oil* – and, indeed, other examples of films that deploy long duration devices – engage with these different understandings of waiting and enable them to be articulated together. Diaz and Wang’s films feature people, real and fictional, who are suffering through state-imposed periods of waiting; the directors, through long duration tactics, push their audiences to glancingly, partially, share in that experience of wait time. For the viewer, this will have a resultant impact – at the least, a heightened recognition of the discomforts endured by those in the temporal situations depicted. In addition, however, Diaz and Wang’s depictions of waiting are not resolutely bleak: they also reveal other affective possibilities and embodied opportunities that can arise in relation to ‘waiting as such’. Even those trapped by circumstance into endurance tests of waiting may be able to find their way, through ‘just waiting’, to opportunities for release, for thinking, perhaps even pleasure.

Registers of Waiting in *Encantos*

It is common for any discussion of Lav Diaz's films, whether academic or journalistic, to comment on their length.² Though Diaz has made shorter works, most of his films are many hours in length: *Evolution of a Filipino Family* (2004), for instance, is around eleven hours long, *Melancholia* (2008) a less challenging eight, and *Norte, the End of History* (2013) a breezy four. As Diaz has stated, "I don't bend to the conventions of editing, or of length; I [have] refused to follow the dictates of industry." (Diaz 2015a, 38) In terms of running times, commercial films in the Philippines adopt similar lengths to those of other nations around the globe. Diaz's employment of significantly long duration is distinctive within his own national context: sitting through an eleven-hour film is as rare for an audience in the Philippines as it is elsewhere. Diaz believes, however, that audiences can cope with screen works of a long duration – indeed, that they "have the ability to transcend the standards they normally use in apprehending the arts." (ibid.) Allowing long duration films – "works of proportion and beauty" – to develop and flourish, he claims, will foster aesthetic discernment: it will enable the evolution of an audience "with philosophies lofty and profound enough to properly appreciate the art of cinema." (ibid.) Elsewhere, Diaz has articulated his frequent use of extended running times as a political intervention – specifically, an anti-colonial one. He has suggested that his lack of concern about length might be related to "the history of my people", because "we don't really have a concept of time, we just have a concept of space." (Ingawanij et al. 2010, n.p.) Pre-colonization Filipinos – that is, before the introduction of Islam in the 1300s and the imposition of Spanish rule in the 1500s – "didn't really have the kind of conception [of time] we have now. Time is a very Western concept for us." (ibid.) Diaz here obliquely suggests that the experience of enduring one of his long duration films might tap into, evoke, and allow engagement with a sense of time associated with the pre-colonial. Setting aside whether or not he is factually correct about the workings of time in earlier centuries in the Philippines, and the nostalgic haze potentially clouding his argument, Diaz's perspective is a provocative one: long duration films might provide access to politically resonant conceptions of the workings of time and chronology, and embodied experiences of related paces and tempos.

This would include waiting. As with many of his other films, waiting manifests in manifold ways across the running time of Diaz's *Encantos*. Paramount among these is the waiting endured by survivors of a natural disaster. *Encantos* was made in the wake of a

² As William Brown notes, for instance, "[Diaz] is best known as a maker of long films." (Brown 2015, 112).

real-life event: in November 2006, super typhoon Durian, in combination with an eruption from the Mayon volcano, left the Bicol region on Luzon, the central island of the Philippines, devastated, with thousands dead. Diaz had shot other films in the area, including *Evolution of a Filipino Family*, and returned in the aftermath of the devastation: "It was unbelievable; horrifying", he later wrote, "Gloom and sorrow were all over the place. [...] I decided to make a film, a memoriam, and share it to the world; share our grief." (Diaz 2015b, 42) The story that Diaz created centres on three characters: Benjamin, a poet, recently returned after seven years in exile, Teodoro, a fisherman and former poet, and Catalina, a sculptor. Significant stretches of the film feature these characters, in isolation or various combinations, sitting beside or walking across desolate and damaged landscapes: swollen rivers, scrappy trees, eddies of sloppy mud, submerged and ruined dwellings, parched riverbeds. A number of documentary sequences are intercut which feature interviews with those affected by the typhoon, talking about those they have lost and the ineffectuality of the emergency services and the government. Layered onto this physical trauma is Benjamin's backstory: he has been tortured as a dissident and incarcerated, his mother went insane, and his sister committed suicide. Wandering the shattered landscape, he psychologically unravels and eventually kills himself. The film ends with a flashback of him being tortured, shot in a single static fifteen-minute take. *Encantos* is shot in Diaz's regular black-and-white (he has only rarely deployed colour), and the palette of grey tones contributes to the film's stark affective register, its forlornness and bleakness.

In the several documentary sequences of *Encantos*, shot by Diaz in the first week of his return to Bicol, the victims of the typhoon wait in vain for help and reparation. Though not always formally distinct from the fictional components of the film, the documentary scenes tend to be marked by the wobbly hand-held filming style regularly used to denote 'authenticity' in documentary practice. In one sequence, roughly ninety minutes into the film, two women are interviewed about relief from the disaster. "After a week", says one who is from the village of Maipon, dressed in a white t-shirt with a small purse slung over her shoulder, "we got two packs of noodles and one and a half kilos of rice only. [...] We're waiting for the promised government aid of tin roofs and lumber." She expresses concerns that the rains might return, or that the volcano could erupt again. In her waiting, she has come to a personal spiritual understanding of the storm: "This is nature's wrath", she states, "People are so sinful." Evidently, there is no end to the victims' waiting for assistance. These scenes reveal problems with the government's handling of the fallout from the typhoon, bureaucratic blockages, barriers preventing access to benefits and resources.

Waiting emerges as a key trope of the film's content across its full span: the lead characters wait for rain to end, for each other, for other significant individuals to reappear. This waiting is variously quotidian, exhausting, exasperating, and occasionally tense. Early in the film, Benjamin and Teodoro shelter in the exposed attic of a ruined house and catch up with each other while they wait for the rain to abate. The static shot lasts for almost nine minutes. The damaged building is surrounded by debris: rags, stumps of wood, a fridge, a plastic basket, pedestal fans. Wind blows consistently with some force through palm trees in the background of the shot. A stray dog enters the frame and takes up residence by Benjamin's side. The conversation between Benjamin and Teodoro is halting, peppered with pauses. Eight minutes into the shot, Teodoro checks the weather: "It's still raining. We'll stay here for a while." Conversation does not resume, the men do not move, and the shot comes to an end. In contrast, in the scene described at the start of this essay in which Teodoro and Catalina wait for Benjamin, they eventually halt their lingering when he fails to appear. After almost twenty minutes of screen time, Teodoro and Catalina pack up their things and move on. It could be argued that, as poets and artists, all three of the main characters have a particular faculty for waiting, a capacity that emerges from regularly waiting for the creative urge to manifest. There is also a suggestion in *Encantos* that waiting occupies a vital position in Benjamin's mental disintegration. In a scene mid-way through the film, Benjamin, sitting in a café and reading, is approached and intimidated by one of his former torturers. "I know this meeting is not a coincidence", Benjamin says. "You wait and watch me." Having been subjected to torture, Benjamin endlessly waits for one or more of his tormentors to reappear, and believes that his persecutors are waiting to spring. The scene is shot from a static position without a cut, and is twenty minutes in length: Benjamin is joined by his tormentor after six minutes, and their conversation lasts for a further fourteen. The lack of camera movement and editing forces the viewer to endure the scene's complex combination of waiting and threat.

Crucially, the experience of watching *Encantos* (and other films by Diaz) itself involves waiting. Within individual long takes, characters' time equates to that of the viewers: when they wait, we have to wait with them. Diaz often uses conversation to fill this tarrying time – but is it sufficiently engaging to distract the characters, and the audience, from the temporal chasm they are enduring their way through? The spectator may engage tactics they use to make waiting bearable: reverie and daydreaming, attempting to find something of interest in the visual or aural field worthy of scrutiny, mental list-making, and so on. Or, like the characters, they might just sit out the long minutes, hoping for possible relief. Diaz also repeatedly uses a stylistic device that delivers an encounter with waiting to the spectator: his fixed camera will depict a location

empty of bodies, then, after a period of time has elapsed, one or more people will move into the frame and pass through the shot. As a characteristic example of this dynamic in operation, *Florentina Hubaldo CTE* (2012) opens with a long-held static shot of a deserted rural road which a solitary figure eventually perambulates through; the device is also used several times in *Encantos*. As Robert Koehler correctly identifies, this “signature effect” articulates the sensation of waiting, “recreating what happens if one were to stand in a large landscape and wait for a person to arrive from the extreme distance.” (Koehler n.d., n.p.) Koehler links this device to other forms of waiting in *Encantos*. He identifies a trace of Samuel Beckett in the film, specifically *Waiting for Godot* and “the endless wait for the thing that will never transpire.” (ibid.) Diaz’s innovative contribution to cinema, Koehler proposes, is “the wait, the wait... the bliss in that wait, [and] the physical stamp – exhaustion, giddiness, discomfort – felt by watching that wait”. (ibid.) Koehler suggests here that Diaz’s depictions of waiting, and the audience’s engagement with that waiting, can be framed as pleasurable. However, this is a difficult position to adopt in relation to *Encantos* as a whole, in which much of the depicted waiting is markedly frustrating, difficult, even unpleasant.

The individuals in *Encantos*, fictional and real, experience both of Schweizer’s types of waiting: ‘instrumental waiting’ and ‘just waiting’. They wait for the rain to end (a given); they wait for relief from suffering caused by the typhoon to be provided (uncertain). Diaz sets two experiences of ‘waiting as such’ off against each other: the trio of characters, and those featuring in the documentary segments, who are waiting for state assistance amidst the fallout of a natural disaster, and the post-interrogation-and-torture temporality that Benjamin endures, in which he waits for his persecutors to emerge, threaten, terrify. Both of these could be read as analogues for Auyero’s examples of the ways in which state powers subjugate their citizens through experiences of waiting. Certainly, there is little sense in the film of how waiting could be a positive experience, might offer access to enlightenment, particular forms of thought, and so on. Teodoro and Catalina end their wait for Benjamin, but they have lingered for hours and been stood up. Benjamin only eventually ends his own threat-suffused waiting through suicide. Beyond the content of the film itself, the viewer of *Encantos* also waits. Might this wait be, as Koehler suggests, giddy and blissful? Despite the bleak content of the film, its slow tempo of long takes and infrequent cuts could perhaps engender a pleasant sensation of drift. Glimpses of Schweizer’s ‘waiting as such’ or Blanchot’s ‘only waiting’ might be found in a contemplative zone of retort or repose. Of vital significance, however, is that the film comes to an end and the audience leaves the auditorium. The endurance of waiting by the characters in *Encantos*, that is, may be mimicked or touched glancingly by the film’s audience as the film unfurls, but as they exit the

screening space they return to their own time. One of the productive effects of the film's long duration, then, is to reveal the space between those waiting without relief, without end, and those merely abutting, grazing, glimpsing such an experience. How, the film's audience may ask themselves, can those trapped in such waiting be assisted? Is intervention ever feasible, and if so, what forms could that take beyond the tokenistic?

Loitering in the Gallery: *Crude Oil*

Around three hours and thirty minutes into Wang Bing's documentary *Crude Oil*, a small group of men who work as oil extractors are killing time in a cramped recreation room. The space is sparsely decorated: a line of flags is suspended from the ceiling, and a number of paper documents are attached to one of the walls. A worker snoozes, his head down on a table. Some of the men are listening to popular music, made to sound tinny by being played through a mobile phone. One urges another, "Put the last song back on. We still have an hour to wait out in the cold." Fifteen minutes later, several of the workers – and by proxy those people watching in the gallery – venture outside for the first time in the film. The claustrophobia of the rec room is exchanged for the desolate openness of the Gobi Desert. A time of ostensible leisure gives way to one of labour. Yet the temporal dynamics, and the filming style, do not change: shots of incredibly long duration depict routine movements and behaviours stretching out to fill hours. The workers wait for their shift to start; they wait for it to end. The viewer shares the experience.

Wang Bing has directed significantly lengthy documentaries, including his monumental exploration of the decline of heavy industry *Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks* (2002, nine hours and eleven minutes) and a sustained study of a mental institution, *Til Madness Do Us Part* (2013, three hours 47 minutes). His engagement with long duration strategies, however, is not merely about running time. He also habitually uses long takes that focus on mundane, routinised and everyday activities. Though primarily working within the global art cinema festival and exhibition circuit, Wang has also exhibited work in galleries. *Father and Sons* (2014, 87 minutes long), for instance, was shown at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, accompanied by a series of black and white photographs that extended the palette of the work and broadened its contextual frame. The focus of *Father and Sons* is the stonemason Cai Shunhua and his two teenagers, Yongjin and Yonggao, and the tiny hut that they share as a domestic dwelling. One long, static shot in the film features Yongjin lying on a bed, drinking tea, and texting on his cellphone while a TV bumbles away in the background. Tom Paulus has described the film component of the installation as "an oddly subdued exercise in *waiting*, in anticipation of [an] epiphany that

never really occurs.” (Paulus n.d., n.p.; Paulus’ italics) Indeed, like Lav Diaz, Wang frequently engages with waiting in his film work.

Crude Oil was commissioned by the Rotterdam Film Festival, and was first shown in January 2008 at the city’s former Fotomuseum. Planning to have a portion of the festival devoted to installation cinema, Wang was offered funding by the event’s organisers to make a new piece of work. As he was filming in the northwest of China at the time, for the sake of convenience Wang decided to focus on a local subject, the oil field and those who work to extract the fuel resource (see Wang Bing 2013, 124). Although Wang originally intended to make a seventy-hour film, the final project ended up being considerably shorter, but conceptually neat: its fourteen hours trace, in something close to real time, a working day in the lives of the extractors. The sun comes up around four hours into *Crude Oil*, and the film ends with a sustained shot of the moon visible through clouds.

There is a significant amount of waiting in *Crude Oil*, for both the people featured in the film and the audience watching. Between the crew leaving the recreation room and their operating the rig, for instance, there is a ten-minute shot, from a distance, of a landscape at night. The only visible elements within the frame are a sparse horizontal row of lights, and a lit pillar – the oil rig that the film concentrates on, seen from a distance. Slowly, murkily, the image seems to grow progressively lighter as wind batters the camera’s microphone. The shot bears affinities with the opening minutes of Carlos Reygadas’ *Silent Light* (2007), as both depict the dawn of a new day; in both cases, the audience waits for the sky to lighten. After the sun rises, outside on the rig the workers manipulate components of the extraction machinery: pulleys, poles, levers. Wrapped up against the cold, they engage in repetitive labour for hour after hour. Although there are occasional cuts in the film, slight reframings, and shifts of perspective, a persistent tempo of industrial labour is established. Wrapped up against the cold, the workers wait for the next iteration of a particular procedure, each person a cog in a process. Individual shots last for many minutes, each contributing to a composite picture of manual labour that involves substantial stretches of ‘waiting as such’.

For Guido Pellegrini, *Crude Oil* needs to be understood as an installation: “Despite its colossal length”, he writes, “*Crude Oil* is built for fragmentary engagement.” (Pellegrini 2014, n.p.) Gertjan Zuilhof, however, who commissioned the film, is more circumspect. He reveals in his programmer’s notes that he suggested to Wang that *Crude Oil* could be shown in cinemas as well as in a gallery. When *Crude Oil* was exhibited in Hong Kong, notes Zuilhof, compared to Rotterdam “the presentation was a little closer to a film screening. [...] The idea was obviously that the whole work should be seen.” (Zuilhof 2008, n.p.) He concludes that the question of whether

Crude Oil is meant to be viewed as an installation or exhibited in a cinema is ultimately “not that relevant. What is relevant is how an exhausting work like this can best be presented.” (ibid.) Certainly, for those who have sat through the entirety of some of Wang’s other long duration films, a 14 hour screening time does not seem insurmountable. It is clear from written accounts that a number of people have sat all the way through *Crude Oil* when it has been exhibited. Undertaking such a viewing experience enables reflection on the place of waiting in the gallery, as distinct from the cinema.

I watched *Crude Oil* at the A/V Festival in Newcastle, in north-east England, in March 2014. The film was shown at Stephenson Works, a post-industrial building that once housed the factory of the locomotive engineers Robert and George Stephenson. The film was shown in two portions, with the first seven hours shown on one day and the second on the following. Entering the venue, stone stairs were climbed to the first floor, in which the film was projected on a wall. A doorway to offices on the right of the ‘screen’ was blocked off with a dark curtain. A sofa was positioned to face the film, with a smaller seat to the left of the sofa turned at ninety degrees to the screen. The left wall of the screening space was partly made of glass, enabling views of what would at one time, presumably, have been the factory floor. I took up residence on the sofa, surrounding myself with detritus: snacks and water, notebooks, pens. During the film’s screening, I was intermittently joined in the space by other viewers. Most of them stood, rather than taking a seat. None stayed longer than fifteen minutes.

The gallery exhibition of a moving image text has distinct dynamics in comparison with a screening in a cinema. Guido Pellegrini notes that Wang engages with both forms, and that his films and installations “play with duration, not only through gargantuan running times, but also across prolonged takes in which, it seems, not much happens.” (Pellegrini 2014, n.p.) In the cinema, this duration “is something to endure”, but in the gallery we can walk away. (ibid.) The freedom and mobility of the gallery-goer “deemphasizes the fact of duration”, and instead “foregrounds more architectural elements, as the moving image becomes part of the space that contains it.” (ibid.) This distinction between the black box cinema and the white cube gallery as screening spaces has been discussed by a number of theorists, including Erika Balsom (2013), Thomas Elsaesser (2011), and Volker Pantenburg (2012). Like Pellegrini, all three highlight that the relations between cinemas and galleries need to be thought through in relation to issues of architecture and space, as well as considerations of time and duration. Pantenburg’s comments on temporality, for instance, inevitably return to questions of location: “In the aesthetic experience [with the moving image] at least three different temporalities meet or collide: First, there is the time of the work and its duration; second, there is the temporal

economy that the visitor brings with him or her; and third, there is a form of temporality that is 'built into' the institution and its temporal conventions. 'Going to the movies' and 'visiting a museum' are subject to very different temporal agendas." (Pantenburg 2012, 84) Certainly, my own waiting within Stephenson Works watching *Crude Oil* seemed out of kilter with the dominant temporalities associated with viewing moving images in a gallery. Despite Zuilhof's assertions, taking up residence in the space for two days felt inappropriate and improper. Sitting through all of *Encantos* is necessary for full interaction with its content, textures, and themes; enduring the entirety of *Crude Oil* carried with it a sense of misbehaviour.

However, there are engagements with waiting in *Crude Oil* that are distinct from those in *Encantos*, and arguably these can only be perceived by watching the whole film. In its focus on a single working day in the lives of the oil extractors, *Crude Oil* serves as a depiction of one drawn-out example of 'just waiting', the temporality of routinized industrial labour. The texture of this temporality, its subtle modulations and flows, is made tangible in the extraordinary length of some of the takes. About ten hours into Wang's film, there is a single shot that lasts for 107 minutes; as with others in *Crude Oil*, it depicts individuals waiting for their next shift to begin. As the journalist Neil Young summarises the content of this shot, "colleagues come and go; daylight slowly fades; not much happens; illumination is elusive; the drillers' zonked-out lassitude osmoses its way steadily through the screen and envelops the viewer in a miasma of torpor." (Young 2014, n.p.) In this shot and many others in *Crude Oil*, the viewer's time merges with that of the oil extractors; the space the spectator sits or stands in bleeds into the recreation room. The ambient lighting of the gallery space facilitates the merge. Unlike *Encantos*, many viewers have only experienced *Crude Oil* in fleeting fragments, minutes sampled from the larger work. Gallery exhibition facilitates and excuses such encounters, but it also prevents sustained, reflective viewer engagement with the ways in which waiting dominates the experiences of the extractors the film focuses on.

The audience that spends longer in the rec room with Wang's workers is privy to their banter and bicker, their jokes and grumbles. These individuals complain about their wages, their bosses, the Communist Party. Wang states that *Crude Oil* depicts "the changing China": he notes that, in the past, factories had "a collective spirit" but that this has been replaced by a contract-labour system centred on practices of temporary, precarious hire, a system that affects those working the oil fields. (Wang Bing 2013, 124) Again, as with *Encantos*, the film focuses on a group of people who are subjected to waiting, waiting as such, their experience of time shaped in significant part by those with more power. Watching the entirety of *Crude*

Oil reveals how living within a regulated system of leisure-time and labour-time can seem like incarceration: one block of time rolls into the next, both forms of time need to be waited through, and there is no escape from the cycle. Even the gallery viewer, such as myself, who sat all the way through the film is able to finally emerge from the experience, to step away, to break from the waiting; the workers remain, locked into a punishing clock without relief.

Or are they? There are moments of extraordinary beauty in *Crude Oil*, each of which seems to offer a glimpse of something beyond the aching mundanity of the labour and downtime that the film mainly depicts. The film ends, for instance, with a fourteen-minute shot of the moon obscured by clouds. Once again, wind batters the microphone of the camera. Light levels shift and wane; clouds block the light from the moon, reducing it to a faint smear; traces of light become barely perceptible; the moon itself seems to be diminishing in size; deep, rich colours emerge then dissolve. It's the end of the work day, this shot states. I can't guarantee that tomorrow will be any better than today. In the meantime, I can offer you this. Why not just wait here?

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Received in 21-01-2017. Accepted for publication in 24-04-2017.