

Beautiful and Sublime Kitsch: Framing the Prologue of Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* as Avant-Garde Video Art

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Lars von Trier's film *Melancholia* (2011) begins with a memorable and enigmatic prologue.¹ Distinct from the film's diegesis and played before the title credits, the prologue seems out of sync with the rest of the film's trajectory, and even indicates the narrative's key features before the story commences. Yet, while *Melancholia*'s narrative is representationally presented in this prologue, the film's scenes are allegorical rather than literal; they possess a premonitory, dreamlike quality, which is enhanced by slow motion. For the viewer, these slow-motion effects engender a kind of hypnosis, a feeling that is itself enriched by the film's imagery, which recalls the imagery, poetry and paintings of German romanticism. However, the prologue also evokes a precarious ambivalence concerning the film's aesthetic features.

The power of visual images to evoke both pleasure and disdain has long been documented within the sensual and violent—and

indeed the carnal—realms.² However, many of *Melancholia*'s viewers may also find the film's grandiose imagery lacking in aesthetic credibility, and the digital perfection attained by the film to be uncomfortable or disaffecting. The prologue induces a range of experiences with imagery that is both sublime and beautiful, but also kitsch. By reading the prologue to *Melancholia* as a work of video art, one can see how the film's concerns cross over with those of avant-garde video and digital installations, as well as how it moves beyond these concerns. This article will argue that von Trier preserves something of the avant-garde approach in the very way that he both supplements and challenges traditionalist notions of the sublime and the beautiful.

The film's prologue has much in common with the features of video and new media art. Both make overt uses of intertextuality, both offer nonliteral representations of the world, and both use music to beguile their viewers and heighten their affective states. The prologue consists of slow-motion sequences that both summarise and mythically veil the narrative of the film. *Melancholia*'s narrative is disclosed allegorically; as we learn, Justine (Kirsten Dunst) has come to feel trapped by the idea of her imminent marriage. In one of the prologue's sequences, Justine, dressed in her wedding gown, wanders alone through an empty garden. While this sequence does not itself appear in the film's narrative proper, it foregrounds the broader story, helping to situate Justine's experience of melancholia—as does another sequence in which Justine drifts down a river, again dressed as a bride. In the film's primary diegesis, Justine's sister, Claire (Charlotte Gainsbourg), attempts to help Justine overcome her depression—a fact omitted from the prologue. Claire is married, has a child, and seems better adjusted to the world than Justine. However, when it becomes clear that a planet called Melancholia is headed toward the earth, these characters' positions are reversed: Justine becomes cool and collected, Claire terrified and distraught.

The prologue represents Claire's psychic entrapment, allegorising her feelings in a scene in which she carries her son through a golf course, her feet sinking into the green. And later in the film, we learn that Claire believes in the importance of life, whereas Justine feels



Figure 1. The planet Melancholia destroys Earth.
Image courtesy Zentropa, Denmark.

that life on Earth, and in this universe, can only be evil. At the conclusion of the prologue, we witness the planet Melancholia beautifully destroy Earth (figure 1).

The prologue's aesthetic goes beyond preparing the audience to engage with the main narrative. Set against Wagner's prelude to *Tristan and Isolde*, it uses the score to both involve and distance the audience, rendering the strange affective state of being fully awake, while also permitting us to witness dream imagery and to be well aware of that imagery's derivative qualities. Far from simply marrying and heightening the power of the image, the music abrades and competes with the vision; Justine appears in foreground and stares into the camera as birds fall slowly from the sky. At all times we are conscious of both image and music; it is a dual awareness that might distance some viewers from the film. However, as I will suggest in this article, it is this heightened awareness, this strange viewing experience, that also enhances the film's slow unveiling.

Melancholia's slow unveiling is not unlike the mode of disclosure deployed in Bill Viola's video installations. In Viola's 2004 video series *The Tristan Project*, for instance, the American video artist uses slow motion and allegorical imagery to illustrate the themes of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, just as von Trier does in *Melancholia's* initial sequences. But a more general similarity connects *Melancholia's* prologue and Viola's installation: in both works, the images are

slowed down, almost frozen, so as to appear as static tableaux. This near-frozen state creates a sense in which both the objects and people in the frame seem to float, as in one shot in *Melancholia* where butterflies hover around Justine. David Haines and Joyce Hinterding similarly use slow motion to simulate the appearance of levitation in their four-channel video installation *The Levitation Grounds* (2000). In this work, trees detach from the earth and begin to rise, seemingly suspended in air. *Melancholia's* prologue features a similar sequence, showing Justine crossing through the woods, perhaps fleeing from something, and then becoming encumbered by roots from trees, which coil around her threateningly. Both in the feature film and in these examples of video art, then, slow motion creates a sense of magic and mystery. But the effects of slow motion are particularly sublime in *Melancholia*, made so by the film's special emphasis on nature and the elemental.

The beautiful and the sublime frequently feature in the writings of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, two important theorists in the history of aesthetics.³ For Burke, beauty is associated with smoothness, delicacy, pleasure and love; while for Kant, beauty comes from the pleasure derived from form, from contemplation, from the lack of usefulness, and the visceral. Beauty in both theorists' conceptions creates a sense of union with nature—or, at least, an intimation of being “at home” in the natural environment. The sublime, by contrast, involves a disjuncture between the human and the natural. Where Burke asserts that the sublime emanates from terror and threats of annihilation, Kant recasts Burke's conception of the sublime as the “dynamically sublime”—an instant experience of being overcome with awe. As I will argue, the Burkean sublime is almost completely absent from *Melancholia*. Indeed, its absence prompted Steven Shaviro, in a 2012 essay on *Melancholia*, to assert that the film's beauty constitutes a type of “anti-sublime” aesthetic, a visual idiom that exhibits none of the spectacular violence usually on display in disaster and end-of-the-world films.⁴ But it also remains difficult to maintain that *Melancholia* is completely bereft of sublime elements. For instance, Kant also writes of a “mathematical” sublime, which is constituted by the sense

of awe we experience when our minds comprehend or encounter the limits of reason. *Melancholia*'s images of cosmic expanses reflect this "mathematical" sublime, which pushes reason to its limits, sketching the boundaries of our powers to comprehend "the real" through representational images. The cosmic shots in *Melancholia* are also carefully composed and beautiful—just as in the scenes that Burke and Kant describe—and it is in this way, too, that the expansive and overpowering presence of nature in the film's prologue gently intimates these senses of the sublime. Finally, the film's various images of the universe, including the striking scene in which the planet Melancholia and Earth collide, invite a contemplation of the temporality and transience of life—one that is itself sublime.

But *Melancholia* permits not only an experience of the beautiful and sublime, but suffuses many works of contemporary art, especially those classified variously as video and new media art. Indeed, both contemporary video art and *Melancholia*'s prologue attest to what Jacques Rancière describes, in *The Future of the Image (Le Destin des Images)*, as an important shift in contemporary art. This was a move from what he terms "the dialectical sentence-image," which is didactic and immediate, to "the symbolist sentence-image," which has led to a "great fraternity or community of metaphors."⁵ As Rancière observes, "the immateriality of the electronic image has quite naturally rekindled the enthusiasm of the Symbolist era for immaterial states of matter."⁶ Here, by the expression "sentence-image," Rancière means that which founds, contains, or measures the gap between what is visual and sensual, on the one hand, and what is non-visual and linguistic, on the other. Sentences, which are linguistic and non-visual, imply order and control—indeed, they suggest communality and consent—since a listener or reader is usually expected to understand what they mean in the social contexts of their utterance. The modernist image, by contrast, is disruptive and chaotic; it disavows social and communal meanings in favour of sensual enjoyment and explosive power. Thus the "sentence-image" creates, even forces, a relation between registers of communication and expression in the social world, whereas modernism celebrates what Rancière calls "the great parataxis": a move-

ment that dissolves an object's meanings and relations, abolishes its "systems of rationales," and evacuates its social meanings—the "emotions and actions" associated with it.⁷

Rancière, of course, is conscious of how these gaps in meaning can attenuate art's significance, particularly by reducing its powers of signification.⁸ He notes that the sentence-image "reins in the power of the great parataxis and stands in the way of its vanishing into schizophrenia or consent."⁹ Thus, if the sentence-image continues to suspend the great parataxis, it does so in a precarious way, reducing its power but also rescuing it from abject meaninglessness. The sentence-image can thus serve as a point of political formation or creation. By establishing a paratactic uneasiness, the sentence-image creates a range of political meanings to engender a new type of humanism. The sentence-image discloses an apolitical or anti-political fascination with the spiritual, transcendent, and hidden qualities of the human being and its psyche, nurturing a new enchantment with humanity and its environs. As Rancière goes on to suggest, in this context, the digital screen reflects a sense of experience beyond the "flesh" of paint, and outside the grainy, "degraded" materiality of the projected filmic surface. Indeed, the digital screen, far from inviting a posthumanist aesthetic, implies the potential for a humanist, even mystical, reimagining of cinema. In this way, examples of contemporary video art on digital screens can be understood as works of neo-humanism—that is, as works in which the human can find a shared place in an enchanted world.¹⁰

Rancière's neo-symbolist vision may be readily applied to *Melancholia's* prologue. However, it is notable that the film does not share in the neo-humanist tendencies of contemporary video art. *Melancholia's* primary message, as Justine herself says in the film, is that "the Earth is evil; life on Earth is evil; no one will miss us because we are alone." While Justine utters nothing like this in the prologue, what is striking about the prologue's conclusion is the image we see of the universe purified of all human contamination. The prologue imitates those traits associated with the beautiful and the sublime, envisioning a kind of distance more extreme, more cosmological, than the aesthetic distance engendered by "Kantian disinterest." The themes of



Figure 2. Energy seems to emerge from Justine's fingertips. Image courtesy Zentropa, Denmark.

Melancholia's prologue seem too theatrical to be entirely sincere. The grandiosity of the subject matter—the end of the world—juxtaposed with its various melodramatic images of Justine, Claire, and Claire's son, seem to deride as much as to reflect a “neo-symbolist” tendency. In this respect, the prologue does not share in all of the sensitivities expressed by the aforementioned digital media artists. Ann Finegan, for instance, detects intimations of the occult and the mysterious in the works of Hinterding and Haines.¹¹ And similar intimations may be found in Viola's works (which often explore supernatural themes) and even in Gary Hill's works, such as the twelve-channel *Tall Ships* (1992), which depicts the ghostly, lingering traces of the human.

Turning, then, to *Melancholia's* prologue, we may note how it suggests that Justine possesses some sort of supernatural power: in one image, for instance, energy emerges from her fingertips (figure 2). The allusion to Justine's unique abilities suggests a link between the planet named *Melancholia* and Justine herself. However, the allusion does not intimate human continuance, as in the images of Viola or Hill; and neither does it depict nature surviving in an unnatural technological state, as in Hinterding and Haine's *The Levitation Grounds*. Indeed, such contrasts are even more apparent as between von Trier's prologue and Hinterding and Haine's more recent work, *The Outlands* (2011), an interactive videogame in which players explore mysterious worlds, at once natural and otherworldly. Unlike *Melancholia's* pro-

logue, where nature appears to suffer as it approaches death, *The Outlands* shows us how nature can be enriched by digital technology; in the world of the game, even the human subject is able to transcend the body in order to explore digital world of wonder. As Haines remarked about his and Hinterding's work, "what's different to the typical idea of a game [in *The Outlands*], I suppose, is that the death has somehow been pushed away."¹² By contrast, *Melancholia*'s prologue does not push death away but embraces it, conceiving life's end as the ultimate purity.

Another distinct feature of *Melancholia*'s prologue is its sublime and beautiful sequences. However, the hyperreality of many of these sequences also renders them kitsch, which in turn suggests the death or impossibility of the sublime in a contemporary context. At times, the hyperbeautiful and hypersublime visuals seem to yearn for a return to romanticism; and yet this visual nostalgia also establishes a critical distance from the past, reworking those bygone signifiers into a hyperreal parody. *Melancholia* is thus aesthetically uncertain, and an apt reflection of von Trier's own ambivalence about the film: "I've worked on the film for two years [and] with great pleasure," he stated in his Director's Statement of 2011. "But perhaps I've deceived [that] myself."¹³ On first seeing the film's trailer and stills, von Trier was aghast: "This is cream on cream," he exhorted. As he confirmed, his aim was not to render a specific visual image, but to capture the mental state brought about by the void or "abyss" in German romanticism:

But what was it I wanted? With a state of mind as my starting point, I desired to dive headlong into the abyss of German romanticism. Wagner in spades.¹⁴

And yet, *Melancholia* problematises the very credibility of the German romantic aesthetic, experimenting with the mode in ways that few video or new media artists have attempted. To borrow an expression from Walter Benjamin, the prologue offers an example of "dream kitsch," bringing to life a fantasy world in which the sublimity of imagination and of dreaming is not enhanced but *dulled* by the com-

commonplace nature of artifice.¹⁵ As Benjamin writes, “The dream has grown grey,” and is now little more than “a shortcut to banality.”¹⁶ But as others have attested, it is this same commonplaceness—this same banality—that is central to kitsch and its powers of attraction. In his 1939 essay “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” Clement Greenberg observed how kitsch had become “a universal culture,” even “the first universal culture ever beheld.”¹⁷ Greenberg’s schema of art points to two divergent cultural phenomena: the one is avant-garde, which challenges mimetic identification, and the other is kitsch, which, like a parasite, affirms both extant and extinct modes of representation. Greenberg proposes that any figurative, non-abstract approach to art risks becoming kitsch. By returning to the figuration and theatricality of Wagner and romanticism, then, von Trier plunges less into the void of abstraction—and less still into the abyss of romanticism—than lands in the figurative world of kitsch. Von Trier, like Greenberg, realises that “Romance is abused in all sorts of endlessly dull ways in mainstream products.” Hence his conclusion: that romanticism itself is in danger of losing its grand power.¹⁸

However much von Trier’s film becomes a work of kitsch, though, the director hopes that “there may be a bone splinter amid all the cream,” so “that [it] may, after all, crack a fragile tooth.” Indeed, von Trier seems to favour a “tough kitsch” over Benjamin’s soulful but confectionary kitsch.¹⁹ Perhaps where von Trier succeeds in his aim to go beyond the “cream” of romanticism and humanism, then, is in embracing the very *anti-humanism* of parody, by which we see beauty overcome by beauty. The splinter amid the cream turns out to be only another kind of cream—except that the latter cream, in the form of kitsch, has ossified and hardened into a splinter. Unlike the understated works of Viola and Hill, then, which allow the audience to enter into the art itself, the hypervisual, hypersensory experience of *Melancholia*’s prologue erases the substance of beauty and sublimity through simulation. As Burke observed regarding the sublime, sometimes the most “dark, confused, [and] uncertain images have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passions than those which are more clear and determinate.”²⁰ In a sense, the visual clarity *Melancho-*

lia's images erase any of the attachments felt and any of the meanings understood by the film's audience—only to replace them with the “hard” power of uncertainty. No longer immersed in beauty and sublimity, the audience senses only the film's empty aestheticisation, its high definition (together with prologue's aestheticised displacements, such as its beautiful scenes shot against golf courses), suggesting only the loss of the real, the severity of the postmodernist's mockery.

But the film's grandiose kitschness eviscerates not only beauty; it also does away with the saccharine-sweet nostalgia commonly associated with kitsch. *Melancholia*'s prologue no longer expresses a sentimental and loving regard for the past, as does Benjamin's kitsch, but instead recodes privileged historical meanings as hollow ones. For Burke, beauty evokes love; but in the universe of *Melancholia*, there is no humanity and there is no love—nothing to arouse the softness of the sentimental kitsch. The prologue thus attests to an emptying of meaning, allowing the ideal to become its own disfigurement. Here beauty takes on all of the characteristics, referents, and cyphers of the beautiful, so much so that beauty no longer seems beautiful, nor reflects a nostalgia for the beautiful, but instead is emptied out and stripped of its value.

Greenberg disparages the easily identifiable as kitsch, arguing that our consciousness is pushed back when we falsely return to the recognisable past.²¹ But in the case of *Melancholia*'s prologue, the imagery is at once overpowering and distancing. The image of Justine walking past a sundial is reminiscent of *Last Year in Marienbad* (1961)—a film about sensory and temporal disorientation; and the image of her sinking down the river is a clear reference to John Everett Millais's painting, *Ophelia* (1851). The film's many self-conscious allusions go further than this, however. When von Trier cuts to Brueghel's *Hunters in Snow* (1565), in reference to a largely unsuccessful hunt, and then later alludes to two of Tarkovsky's films, *Solaris* (1972) and *The Mirror* (1975)—the latter of which features Brueghel's painting—these references detach the signifier from the diegetic signified, disrupting any “pure” mimetic experience of the narrative.²² One may either experience these sequences emotionally, or one may instead think

“that was a reference to this or that melancholic work,” so as to think and to recall rather than to feel and to inhabit. In another shot, we see a horse fall to the ground at twilight. The image is so associated with romanticism as to be no longer credible, its authenticity all but eroded. Indeed, von Trier’s soulless aestheticisation seems almost to mock these images, employing what von Trier himself has called a “Nazi” aesthetic to effect a grandiose, even a monumentally uncaring, kitsch.²³

Yet, there is also a double-movement at work here, both in *Melancholia*’s prologue and in the film more generally. Beauty is retained, but only as an enemy of humanity; and humanity is retained, but only as a contamination of the beautiful. As aesthetic spectacle, the prologue makes an enemy of itself, and yet continues to function as aesthetic spectacle, becoming, for some audience members, more involving, and even more moving. As von Trier observes, “German romance... leaves you breathless. But in Visconti, there was always something to elevate matters beyond the trivial... [to] elevate it to masterpieces!”²⁴ This is surely Shaviro’s experience of *Melancholia* too, since for him “*Melancholia* offers at least one possibility for a new aesthetics of the 21st century.”²⁵ The film’s artistic and aesthetic contaminations of kitsch, baroque, and romanticism allow us to escape one shallow spectacle through another shallow spectacle. But in so contaminating these traditions, the prologue preserves a truly aesthetic experience in a gesture towards humanism. But what is human or humanistic amid this turmoil also brings us back to the softness of kitsch, which Benjamin detects. The abyss and the chasm move us to new heights of emotion. The horse falling at twilight—spectacular, meaningless, and evocative—touches the viewer profoundly. And the same could be said of Claire as she tramples through the green of the golf course, carrying her son across the plane, or of Justine being carried by the currents of the river.

The innovative approach von Trier takes to contaminating beauty allows the prologue to serve an avant-garde function. The sheer meaninglessness of the spectacle creates an uneasiness that is overcome by meaning. This critique allows us to be engorged by the same cream that

we might otherwise ourselves unknowingly engorge in contemporary popular culture. The shallowness of the merely aesthetic, of the simply beautiful, opens up a sublime sense of wonder, establishing a chasm between our tragic destiny and its meaningless beautification. In his analysis of the postmodern, Jean-François Lyotard claims that what constitutes the postmodern sublime is a gulf between signifier and the signified.²⁶ Like the “postmodern world” that Lyotard describes, von Trier’s prologue offers us “new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable.”²⁷ Of course, pleasure *may* be derived from the images, but their power also lies in their ability to unsettle, to reformulate the rules of pleasure, and even to cause pain.

Lyotard identifies postmodernism with the experimental “avant-gardes.”²⁸ The gulf between signifier and the signified engenders what Lyotard describes as a kind of “jubilation,” one that is the result of “the invention of new rules of the game.”²⁹ New identifications are made possible by discarding the old, accepted forms. In a Kantian manner, Lyotard asserts that the “real sublime sentiment” of the postmodern involves a commingling of pain and pleasure as regimes of aesthetic knowledge are opposed. Here, form is dissolved through the experiment of forms so that “reason should exceed all presentation,” doing away with realist and romantic modes of figuration.³⁰ What Lyotard is arguing for is the dissolution of representation, of known modes, where reason goes beyond established visual parameters. However, in von Trier’s film, formal “presentation” in fact exceeds reason; we discover an excess of beautiful, identifiable imagery—an excess of acceptable forms. Lyotard argues that such defined forms conjure a nostalgic longing, preventing a truly sublime experience and presenting to us instead a contaminated, modernist sublime. However, in *Melancholia*’s first sequences, the beautiful pushes back against the conceptual in a self-conscious way, both adhering to and challenging the constraints and regimes of aesthetic knowledge.

Thus, in *Melancholia*’s prologue, form overcomes form, preserving meaning through its seeming effacement, and yet taking us beyond identification. The sequences place respondents in an unsettling

position: we become uneasy participants somehow involved in the sublimely unthinkable destruction of the planet, facing all the precarity of the Earth's demise. The cold, indifferent aesthetic of von Trier's beautiful and kitsch prologue contrasts with humanity's vulnerable position on Earth—a vulnerability that invites some reflection about whether mercy must be administered mercilessly. Thus this part of the film marshals our sympathies against the cold, galactic viewpoint that these slow-moving images produce.

The prologue's division between art and humanity—control and artifice on the one hand, and life on the other—may captivate us, and create a sense of beauty that engages our sympathies. But the prologue also allows for a return to representation, as well as gestures to that which is still unrepresentable: the ultimate destruction of thought. Given the innovations of *Melancholia's* prologue, we may concur with Greenberg that the avant-garde's "true and most important function was not to 'experiment,' but to find a path along which it would be possible to keep culture *moving*..."³¹ While von Trier's film returns to a past aesthetic, it is reconfigured through Rancière's "immateriality of the electronic image," and so nonetheless reflects the avant-gardist's disdain for the past, together with their desire to go beyond the sheen of artifice. The aesthetic of the film's prologue achieves this through a process of self-overcoming, using artifice to conjure a new aesthetic experience, one that not only critiques itself but goes beyond its own critique. If we can understand *Melancholia's* prologue as a form of video art, then, we can see how it not only continues but supplements and transcends the category itself—so much so that the "cream" of the film's first sequences become as deep as they are rich.

Notes

1. *Melancholia*, directed by Lars von Trier (Hvidovre: Zentropa, 2011).

2. See, for instance, Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), particularly the first chapter, "The Noblest of the Senses: Vision from Plato to Descartes," 19–82.

3. See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of*

the Power of Judgment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

4. Steven Shaviro, "MELANCHOLIA or, The Romantic Anti-Sublime," *SEQUENCE* 1, no. 1 (2012): 6, <http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/sequence1/1-1-%20melancholia-or-the-romantic-anti-%20sublime/>.

5. Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London: New York: Verso, 2009), 63.

6. *Ibid.*, 65.

7. *Ibid.*, 43.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, 46.

10. *Ibid.*, 64–67.

11. Ann Finegan, "The Levitation Grounds" (2000), <http://www.haineshinterding.net/2000/03/08/the-levitation-grounds/>.

12. Art Gallery of NSW, "Unguided tours—Artists David Haines & Joyce Hinterding on their work *The Outlands*," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdstMcTGijE>.

13. Lars von Trier, "Director's statement," 2011, http://www.melancholiathemovie.com/#_directorsstatement.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Walter Benjamin, "Dream Kitsch: Gloss on Surrealism," in Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, Thomas Y. Levin (eds.), *The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, trans. Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA; The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 236.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review* 6, no. 5 (1939): 41.

18. Trier, "Director's Statement."

19. *Ibid.*

20. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 58.

21. Shaviro also compares *Melancholia's* aesthetic to Greenberg's conception of the falsity of kitsch: see Shaviro, "MELANCHOLIA," 26.

22. For more on von Trier's artistic allusions, see *ibid.*, 26–27.

23. *The Telegraph*, "Lars Von Trier's 'Nazi' gaffe at Cannes Film Festival as he jokes about Adolf Hitler," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LayW8aq4GLw>.

24. Trier, "Director's statement."

25. Steven Shaviro, "Melancholia: First Attempt," (2003): n.p., <http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=1019>.

26. See, for instance, Lyotard's remarks about James Joyce having make the "unpresentable... presentable in his writing itself, in the signifier": Jean François Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?," trans. Régis Durand, in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 80.

27. *Ibid.*, 81.

28. *Ibid.*, 75–82.

29. *Ibid.*, 79.

30. *Ibid.*, 81.

31. Greenberg, "The Avant-Garde and Kitsch," 36, emphasis in original.