

# As Slow as Possible: An Enquiry Into the Redeeming Power of Boredom for Slow Film Viewers

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## **Abstract<sup>1</sup>**

In this paper, the issue of boredom in slow film - a recent trend in art-cinema that increasingly has gotten critical and scholarly attention – is conceptualised as a paradoxical form of negative affect that can be a possible source of gratification for the viewer. In it, the leading question is thus what are the possible gratifications derived from elicited affects for viewers of the slow film genre? It adds to the debate on the topic by providing an emphasis on the spectatorial, affective engagement of the viewer, a research area that is previously overlooked in the debate that has so far mostly comprised of issues of aesthetics, culture criticism and film history. The paper proposes that boredom can be a source of gratification for some viewers, when it can give rise to contemplation and self-reflexivity and/or meta-emotions such as aesthetic pleasure (A-emotion), moral self-appraisal and identity building. The paper advances towards these conclusions by taking implications from (neo)formalist film studies and genre theory as well as the adjacent fields of psychology and phenomenology – more specifically synthesizing Matthew Flanagan’s aesthetic investigation of Slow Film, Anne Bartsch’ model of emotional gratification and Heidegger’s phenomenology of boredom. By providing a delineation of possible pleasures of the seemingly paradoxical pleasure in the negative affect of boredom, this paper has relevant implications for the philosophical and psychological debate on what is known as the ‘paradox of negative emotions’. Moreover, by adding a phenomenological account of contemplation, it enriches the debate on the Slow Film genre with a distinct audience-orientated approach.

## **Key words**

Slow Film, Genre, Boredom, Contemplation, Heidegger, Emotion, Affect, Psychology, Phenomenology, Time, Aesthetics, Neo-Formalism, Gratification, Audience.

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## Introduction

Following an editorial of Nick James in the *Sight & Sound* magazine, claiming that slow films are 'passive-aggressive' (James 2010) in their demand for the viewer's time and effort, the debate has been heated over the supposed slowness of slow film. Issues of its aesthetics, terminology, history and political significance have been discussed on blogs, in newspapers, by film critics and recently in scholarly circles. There is some consensus over the salient stylistic features: '(often extremely) long takes, de-centred and understated modes of storytelling, and a pronounced emphasis on quietude and the everyday' (Flanagan 2008). Common ground is also held on listing the most pronounced directors of the genre: Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Albert Serra, Pedro Costa, Lisandro Alonsa, Tsai Ming-liang, Hou Hsiao-hsien, to name but a few.

But that's about as far as it goes. The most disagreed upon aspect is the problem of terminology of slow film. What does it mean for a film to be slow? Is it some inherent characteristic of the film's aesthetics? How can we theorize it? It seems that 'slow' presupposes a 'fast' aesthetic to which it contrasts. David Bordwell, for one, has made the case that slow film is a reaction against the ever increasing speed of films in what he calls the 'intensified continuity' editing system of mainstream Hollywood cinema (Bordwell 2011). Others have formulated, in a similar line of reasoning, that the genre fits into wider cultural patterns of slowness. This touches upon the political and ethical aspects that are also included in the debate. It is understood analogous to, for example, the slow food movement. Slow film is thought to be an expression of widespread discontent with and anxiety over the ever-increasing speed of everyday life that is imposed upon citizens of the modern globalized world of neoliberal capitalism. Another political approach to the genre has it that it's a way of giving voice to the suppressed, in a similar way as the 'Third (World) Cinema' in developing countries. This is an interesting thought, taking into account that most films within the genre are coming from Asia, South-America, the Middle-East. One can discern shared interest in thematic features such as the cultural memory of the colonial past, a returned interest in pre-colonial culture or awareness of the problems of a country after a period of dictatorship. Also the stylistic features of the Third Cinema seem very close to the slow film: use of long takes, favouring story over action, shooting on location and the use of non-actors (Gabriel n.d.).

Trying to add to the debate, I will approach the slow film genre in this essay from the perspective of the paradoxical pleasure of negative emotions. This means that I will leave other issues largely out of consideration, such as the ethical and political aspect of the debate or the historical context of the genre. The main concern of this paper will be the understanding of the paradoxical situation of willingly giving oneself over to boredom when watching slow films. I take Anne Bartsch' model of *emotional gratification* as a theoretical basis for this understanding. She delineates six types of possible gratifications that can be derived from emotions. She names the pleasantness of emotions, the need for the novel, intense and sensational, realizing goals and strategies of perception, challenge of emotions, moral evaluation of emotions and lastly the implication of emotion for identity and social status. On the basis of these types of gratifications she claims to enhance understanding of genre preference of viewers. However, I prefer, for reasons I will explain later on, to use the wider term affect over emotion here. Therefore, my main research question will be *what are the possible gratifications derived from elicited affects for viewers of the slow film genre?*

To answer this question, I will first try to outline what is exactly slow film. In this section I will give an overview of the stylistic features of the genre to find out what are the gratification cues in the narrative and stylistic conventions of the genre slow film. My hypothesis here is that a central feature of watching slow film is the experience of time. I argue that this is both a possible source of gratification for the genre fans and, at the same time, also the possible reason for the supposed boredom of slow film. To answer the main question, I will focus in particular on the notion of boredom, because I consider this to be one of the key terms in the debate about slow film. I will elaborate on boredom by taking a phenomenological approach as given by Lars Svendsen in his book *The Philosophy of Boredom*. Following this, I will use Bartsch' gratification model and come up with some preliminary notes on the possible attractions that the slow film genre can have.

### **Slow Film as a genre**

To understand what I hold to be the key characteristics of the slow film genre, I will first shortly introduce some of the main aesthetic and thematic aspects of the genre and give a short film historical context to understand these aspects. I take slow film to be a genre, although not everyone might agree with me on that. Nonetheless, I do so because I believe that this type of films has crystallized into rather stable aesthetic and narrative patterns, is distributed along familiar lines (i.e. film festivals) and has thus consequently raised certain generic *expectations*. In his recent dissertation on slow film, Matthew Flanagan states that the

'label 'slow cinema' refers to a model of art or experimental film that possesses a set of distinct characteristics: an emphasis upon *extended duration* (in both formal and thematic aspects), an audio-visual depiction of stillness and *everydayness*; the employment of the *long take* as a structural device; a *slow or undramatic form of narration* (if narrative is present at all); and a predominantly *realist* (or hyperrealist) mode or intent. This conception of slowness has been present in modern cinema since its emergence after the Second World War, but has become increasingly prevalent as an institutionalised mode of film practice during the last three decades' (Flanagan 2012: 4, my emphasis, JB).

For me, his book gives the best outline of the heretofore understudied genre that has been given to this date. The first facet of the genre that Flanagan highlights is the extended duration of films. This can be understood as both a slow *pace* in the narrative progression, and consequently the length of the shot, and the representation of mundane reality as leading theme. David Bordwell claims that slow film is a reaction against the increased speed of films in what he calls the 'intensified continuity' (Bordwell 2002) editing system of mainstream Hollywood cinema (Bordwell 2011). Moreover, the extended duration can also be thought of more literally in terms of an extended duration of the film as a whole: the *screen time*, in other words. Most slow films do not adhere to the mainstream cinematic norm of a ninety minute film. The films of Lav Diaz are a case in point here, with films running up to ten hours - but they are also, one needs to be aware, exceptionally long, even for slow film standards.

Secondly, an important stylistic characteristic of slow film is the extended use of the *long take*. By hyperbolically extending the length of the shot one becomes very aware of both the temporal and spatial aspects of the cinematic image.<sup>2</sup> To understand the function of the long take it is helpful, I feel, to take into consideration Kristin Thompson's notion of excess. The duration of the long take can be considered excessive to the storytelling function of the plot, it is not narratively motivated per se and does not necessarily bear a symbolic meaning (Thompson 1999). This foregrounds the materiality and the temporality of the image. Flanagan writes that the long take shot is 'by any putative standard of classical narration [...] purposely limited in its content and simply *too long*, meaning that the intensity or indifference of our gaze in contemplating its spatial and temporal aspects assumes a prominent role' (Flanagan 2012: 14).

Another aspect, that is closely tied to this extended duration, is the *undramatic narrative form* of slow film. It is known for its representation of dead time or *temps mort*. Flanagan traces the slowness of the genre back to the modernist film current in the post-war period in Europe. This modernist art film is characterised, by David Bordwell, as positioning itself 'explicitly against the classical narrative mode, and especially against the cause-effect linkage of events' (Bordwell 1979: 57). The art film favours psychological depth of character over action plots. With this preference also came more ambiguous narrative plotting and less emphasis on causally linking of shots. Moreover, the post-war art cinema is characterised by a realist mode of representation, that is to say: it focusses on materiality and duration of time (Flanagan 2012: 7). It is in this legacy that the slowness of slow film is best understood. Or, put in the more eloquent formulation by Yvette Biró: 'the *real core*, the *true heart of things* uncovers the invisible, *shedding light* on the not customary features. Here are *revealed* the always unique and individual forms, the unknown faces of odd potentials, lending them a subversive power' (Biró 2008, my emphasis, JB). What is real core, or true hart of things that is revealed, uncovered or shed light on then? Surely, Biro isn't arguing a supposed enhanced realism of slow film. She argues instead that the slow tempo and subdued narrative style 'do not create distant coolness, but, on the contrary, in this withdrawal a new suspense may come to life' (Biró 2008). What she is getting at in her essay is that slow film has a specific aesthetic system that should be taken on its own terms, if one wants to get at a pleasurable viewing experience – and not ending up bored.

Flanagan revisits the *realist* film theory of André Bazin to understand the tendency of slow film towards the depiction of everydayness with an interest in the materiality of reality. By noticing these concerns it becomes evident that the use of the long take in combination with deep focus photography, as advocated by Bazin, is to be considered as an aesthetic choice of the directors

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<sup>2</sup> The long take aesthetics can be divided *grosso modo* into two categories: the static long take and the mobile long take. The former category consists of a camera that is mounted on a tripod, whereas the latter has a mobile camera, making use of steady cam movements, tracking shots or dolly shots. Somehow, the first category seems even more undramatic than the second one, because that latter has by virtue of its movement always even the slightest promise of action, however unforeseen, that can serve as a distraction from the otherwise undramatic narrative. It can evoke, in other words, the off-screen as theorized by Noel Burch (Burch 1981). Also the mobile camera can be conducive to the generation of A-emotions, when the movement is considered beautifully crafted – think, for instance of the characteristic long sequence shots in Bela Tarr film. A wonderful exception tot this division would be Roy Andersson's *Songs From the Second Floor*. This film consists (almost) entirely of static long takes. In this film the consistent use of this strategy and the elaborate and intricate use of staging-in-depth can be considered to be an important source of aesthetic pleasure of the film.

working within the slow film genre (Flanagan 73-74).<sup>3</sup> A slightly different angle, that I wish to take here, to come to an understanding of the slowness of slow film, is to appropriate Marshall McLuhan's distinction between hot and cool media. Hot media are high in perceptual intensity, they are overwhelming and 'numbing' the senses. Cool media are the opposite in terms of perceptual intensity and need more perceptual completion of the user. For McLuhan film is a hot medium of this kind (McLuhan 1964). Surely, this is a useful way to distinguish between different signifiers in different media, for example the difference in perceptual impact of reading a book versus watching a film. However, I would argue, media tend to have a way of *cooling down* themselves. In other words: we become habituated to them, we are not in a perpetual state of 'shock' (Benjamin 2008). I take slow film to be a way of lowering the cinematic temperature even further, by means of its aesthetic and narrative features. In a recent article on 3D cinema Francesco Casetti argues that a change in temperature leads to a 'liberation of hybrid energies' (Casetti 2013: 420). This means that a medium becomes conducive to developing a 'reflective consciousness of what media are and do' (420).

Put differently: the slowness of the genre can be considered to be conducive to a phenomenological foregrounding of the *experience of time*. In this sense boredom can be understood as an opportunity for contemplation, it is a sufficient condition for the elicitation of a positively appraising moral meta-emotion, viz. favouring an intellectual challenge over mass entertainment. This is a line of reasoning that is analogous to the hedonic debate on horror, where it is thought that the negative emotion themselves generate the pleasure.<sup>4</sup> Slow film, I argue, can be thought of as a way to come to awareness of an existential feeling<sup>5</sup> through aesthetic means. It offers a phenomenological experience of time that diverges from the standardized, homogenized clock-time of modern Western capitalist culture. In the next section, I will elaborate further on the notion of boredom and I will formulate how it can be thought to be a source of contemplation when the viewer experiences this diverging time regime of slow film.

### **How strange a boredom**

Lars Svendsen's central claim in his book *The Philosophy of Boredom* is that modernity has brought with it a characteristic type of boredom that he dubs *existential boredom* (Svendsen 2006: 26). Boredom is typified by the author as a type of elementary experience that inevitable brings with it doubts about one's being (15). Following Doehlemann, the author proposes a typology of types of boredom. He distinguishes between four types: situational boredom, boredom of resent, existential boredom and creative boredom (48-49). Svendsen simplifies this into the cruder distinction between situational and existential boredom. In his book he is mostly interested in the third type of existential boredom. He distinguishes these types by noting that situational boredom ensues from the longing for something desired, whereas existential boredom is the longing for desire as such (49). Another way of putting it is that the former type is an emotion, while the latter type is a mood. Or put

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<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, he harks back to Gilles Deleuze's notion of the crisis of the action-image and the introduction of the time-image to understand both the depiction of stillness and gazing protagonists as well as the narratively undramatic form of the genre.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Julian Hanich's chapter 'Moments of Intensity' in his book *Cinematic Emotions in Horror Films and Thrillers* (2010). Also see Goldstein (2009) and Andrade and Cohen (2007) for results from psychological studies that hint at validation of the hedonic value thesis.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Matthew Ratcliffe, 'The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling.'

differently: one can be bored with something or one can be in a feeling of boredom about the world. A mood is general, lacking an intentional object, it concerns the world as a whole and lasts longer than an emotion. An emotion, on the other hand, is always about something, it does have an intentional object (128-129).<sup>6</sup>

Relying on Heidegger's phenomenology of boredom, Svendsen argues that boredom, in the second existential type, can also be understood as a source for contemplation. In other words: because boredom brings about a reflection on one's experience (of time), it can be considered an opportunity to contemplate one's existence. To understand this, Svendsen first elaborates on the possible function of moods or feelings. He claims that moods are a necessary condition for meaning (129). They are feeling states attached to situations, objects, persons etc. in order to understand these situations (they are an integral part of a gestalt). In this sense they are appraisals (but not necessarily of the cognitive kind), they indicate for ourselves the values or interests we hold towards the world as we experience it being in a mood. Put differently: they are not just feeling states, but precondition for knowing (130). Existential boredom as a mood is a heightened awareness of the relationship of a human-being (*dasein*) with the world deriving from a lack of meaning.

Heidegger discerns between a sort of superficial and a sort of *deep boredom*. Interestingly enough, he holds it that this superficial boredom can lead one to the more deep and substantial boredom (136). For Heidegger, this latter type of boredom is breeding ground for philosophy. It can have a redeeming power, a potential for understanding, an entrance into creativity. This positive evaluation of boredom opens up interesting opportunities for my defence of the slow and boring. If the situational boredom – being bored by a slow film – can lead to an existential boredom, then watching a slow film, despite that it is boring, can be considered a sufficient condition for a positive meta-emotion. Heidegger uses the Greek notion of *kairos*, meaning the instant or the moment. This is an experience of time that he opposes to *kronos* or the normal flow of time, that is regulated by clock time in the Western world. *Kairos* is, in Heidegger's thinking, the instant of epiphany (the return of Christ), a sudden insight that emerges from the instant of existential crisis. Being in a deep boredom is such an instant for Heidegger, a moment to relate oneself anew to one's existence (144-145).

### **Genre preference and emotional gratifications**

With the use of the outlined aesthetic characteristics of slow film and Heidegger's phenomenological notion of boredom, a tentative understanding of the possible gratifications of the slow film genre is imminent. This framework will enable me, in other words, to articulate some conjectures about why the genre is so beloved by some and hated by others. The theory of meta-emotions in relation to genre preference, as outlined by Anne Bartsch in her article 'Meta-Emotion and Genre Preference', is a useful heuristic tool to discern these gratifications. She writes:

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<sup>6</sup> For a programmatic introduction to the debate about the distinction between emotions and moods, Cf. Noël Carroll. 'Art and Mood: Preliminary Notes and Conjectures.'

'Genre-related emotions are not gratifying in and of themselves. The gratification potential of genre-related emotions critically depends on a set of gratification cues that are implicit in the narrative and stylistic conventions of the genre. The gratification potential of emotions does also depend on individual viewers' predispositions – their needs, desires, skills and expectations – that make the susceptible to genre-typical cues to emotional gratification' (Bartsch 2007: 133).

She delineates six types of gratifications that can be derived from emotions. Following this typology, I will try to pinpoint several possible gratifications that the viewer can derive from watching slow film. However, it is my hunch that investigating the slow film genre is also aided by taking into consideration the broader term affect. I take it that the possible gratifications of the genre derive more from the experienced moods and rhythms of the represented worlds than full blown emotions.<sup>7</sup> This is, I argue, largely due to the aforementioned undramatic narrative and minimalistic stylistic traits.

First of all, *affects can be pleasant* (Bartsch 126). Note that individual viewer's susceptibility to arousal comes into play here. Although slow film is characterized by 'de-centred and understated modes of storytelling, and a pronounced emphasis on quietude and the everyday' (Flanagan 2008), it is not unlikely that some viewers will find just this understatement of emotions a welcome counterbalance to the overblown emotionality of mainstream Hollywood genre of melodrama. It is maybe a little problematic to speak of emotion here, because it is debateable whether boredom should be considered an emotion or a mood. So I prefer to use the wider term affect here. Slow film can lead via a superficial being bored with the film to a deeper, existential boredom or contemplation for some viewers. Others can be just plainly bored with a slow film and hence derive no net pleasure in the end.

Moreover, *affects can satisfy a need for novel, intense and sensational kinds of experiences*. Bartsch relies here on Zuckerman's research on sensation seeking. He states that 'sensation seekers prefer being frightened and shocked to *being bored* (as quoted by Bartsch 2007: 127, my italics, JB). The lack of narrative progression in slow film can, on the contrary, also be preferred over the suspenseful narratives of thrillers and horror films. So here again, the viewer's predisposition come into play. The slow film aficionados are probably not at all, or at least not on the whole, bored by the slowness of the film. They will most likely not enjoy high levels of arousal, like for example fans of the horror genre do.

Furthermore, *affects can be helpful for realizing specific goals and strategies of perception*. Emotional involvement supports diegetic involvement (in the story world), socio-involvement (with characters) and ego-involvement (relating to one's own life) (Bartsch 127). Again, the understatement of emotions doesn't mean that there's no emotional involvement at all. There is involvement with the story world and the characters, but the structuring patterns of identification, empathy and sympathy are different than in mainstream Hollywood. Slow film for example doesn't rely on the use

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<sup>7</sup> Matt Hills has made a similar claim in relation to the horror genre that Bartsch takes as a starting point for her typology of emotional gratifications. He advocates an affective theory of horror in addition to the common cognitive-based approach of emotions in film studies. Hills proposes that the viewer of horror films is for large parts of the film mostly engaged in anticipatory moods that can transform into emotions. He therefore speaks of film, with reference to Ed Tan, as a 'dialectical affect-emotion machine' (Hills 2005: 28).



of the close-up as much. Also, slow film in general doesn't make use of non-diegetic music, which is a very important means for eliciting emotions - or more precise: affects that support emotions. This implies that one needs to become attuned to or acquainted with the generic stylistic and narrative conventions. A growing gap between the narrative pace of mainstream Hollywood and slow film means that one doesn't easily enjoy the latter when being used to the former. A PhD candidate in film studies Nadin Mai has argued that the temporal structure of slow film is more suitable for watching it within the museum. Mai argues that museum visitors are more prone to contemplating on the image than cinema viewers, because whereas the former is used to active interpretation of the image, the latter is habituated to fast-paced, forward driven narratives of Hollywood blockbuster action movies. Therefore, the cinema viewer will, according to Mai, not properly value the specific stylistic traits of slow cinema (Mai 2013).<sup>8</sup>

Also, *affects can be perceived as a challenge*. Coping with intense emotions can be a gratifying experience in itself, for example the coping with terror, shock and suspense by horror fans (Bartsch 127). In the case of slow film, however, the most challenging emotion seems to be boredom. Perhaps the experience of boredom can be thought of as a valued type of challenge for slow film fans. Again, they are likely to have a low level of tolerance for arousal. Keep in mind, however, that Bartsch comes up with these different types of gratification in the context of horror films. So, naturally, not all of them can be transposed onto the slow film genre without difficulty. The challenge thesis seems to be the least apt option to explain the gratifications of affects elicited by slow films.

What is more, and in a sense related to the former point of emotions as a challenge, *affects can be morally valued*<sup>9</sup>. The feeling of culturally appraised types of emotions for certain types of viewers can be considered to add to self-enhancing thoughts and feelings, for example women crying over tear-jerkers (Bartsch 128). In relation to slow film one can think of the moral self-enhancement that

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<sup>8</sup> Although I do agree with Mai that a better understanding of slow film can be gained from taking into consideration the field of the fine arts, I have several problems with this position. First of all, these broad and sweeping statements indicate an underlying assumption of a virulently persisting dichotomy of 'active versus passive'. For me, this doesn't do justice to a variety of possible viewing attitudes that can already exist within the cinema *dispositif* itself. Put differently: it underestimates the agency of cinema viewers. Secondly, as I've already argued in my BA thesis, I think the museum is not the best suited for watching slow film. The basic problem is that the museum is in its set-up more distracting than conducive to contemplation. The architecture of the museum enables the viewer to stroll and the design of exhibition adds to this mobility of the viewer. This mobility, furthermore, means that every viewer is confronted with a series of choices: if and for how long he/she will stay engaged with an artwork. Added to this comes the distraction of other viewers with their own tempo in navigating through the museum. What is more, the form of the artworks differs from cinema: paintings, photographs and film loops are all characterized by a lack of temporal demarcation. In all these aspects the museum differs significantly from the cinema, where we sit still, immersed in the temporal flow for the period of the fixed duration of a feature film. I argue that this cinematic viewing position is perfectly suited for Slow Cinema with its central phenomenological feature being the experience of time. Lastly, the examples that Mai comes up with, like James Benning and Sharon Lockhart, are, in my view, not prototypical instances but borderline cases within the slow film genre. I take the works of these artists as hybrids, more akin to video installation art than to the typical festival film. Also, one needs to distinguish types of work that artists make. This makes sense, because it is likely that they have adapted their works to the *dispositif* in which they exhibit.

<sup>9</sup> At this point, due to the requirements of this paper, I am not able to fully develop this thought, but it seems to me that our culture takes the challenge of certain emotions as a condition for moral appraisal. This connectedness is rooted in modern, bourgeois conceptions of art. I am thinking of the notion of the sublime that has shared roots with a religious experience of struggle. For a more elaborate account of the sublime see: Brillenburg Wurth, *The Musically Sublime*.

comes with sympathizing with the ill fate of the protagonists who are overcome by their surroundings. The common themes of alienation, colonialism and poverty can evoke specific kinds of emotional bonding with the protagonists. For example one can think of grief or anger over the represented, or inferred, injustice done to the developing countries by the imperialistic Western world. Here the emotional bonding with characters enhances evaluation of cognitively more complex reasoning about social (in)justice, issues of the global economy or the history of capitalism. Moreover, people who enjoy the genre, defend their preference in terms of cultural elitist moral values. They claim a sort of cultural benefit that can be gained from watching slow film.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, *affects have implications for the viewer's identity and social status*. Mares and Cantor studied the phenomenon of downward social comparison. They found that people with low esteem value depiction of people who are even worse off than them (Bartsch 128). So here again, the depiction of alienated and poor characters can function as a case in point. Also, the case of genre fandom is relevant to consider here. Being able to value a relatively obscure film genre that is eschewed by cultural 'barbarians' can add to self-enhancement. Organized online around weblogs and forums or visiting specialized festivals, the global slow film fan culture can definitely be thought of as a major source of gratification for the viewer.

## Conclusion

These categories shouldn't be understood as mutually exclusive. On the contrary: there can be complex interplay between these gratifications at work. The pleasure of slow film can be derived from both aesthetic pleasure (an A-emotion), moral self-appraisal or identity building. What is common for all these gratification is that personal preference or predisposition seems to be important for the emergence of meta-emotions. With Bartsch' model as a guideline one can, however, discern certain narrative and stylistic cues in the slow film genre. So her model functions as a heuristic to be able to see more clearly why some do and others don't like the genre. However, one needs to be aware of the context of the horror genre in which her model finds its origin.

Taking Flanagan's analysis of the aesthetics of slow film as a guide, I've argued that the central characteristic of extended duration, the long take, the thematic of everydayness and subdued narrative seem to be the most important gratification cues of the genre. For one viewer they lead to boredom with the film, for others the slow pace and ambiguous narrative are a possibility for contemplation and are thus conducive to a positive, pleasurable meta-emotion as a gratification.

Following Svendsen's notion of existential boredom as a decisive affect in viewing slow film, I've furthermore argued that one of slow film's major gratifications is that it can function as an opportunity to become aware of one's own experience of time. Taking this argument one step further, one could argue that it affords a reflective stance towards the ever accelerating pace of modern life and the ubiquity of mediated representation in our contemporary culture. However, one needs to be cautious with these types of generalized statements. To be sure, it is not an inherent

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<sup>10</sup> A case in point here is the debate on the 'Unspoken Cinema' blog following an editorial in a 2010 issue of the Sight & Sound magazine by Nick James. A recurrent theme in the debate is slow film as a kind of 'cultural vegetable'. See the entry 'Slow films, easy life (Sight & Sound)' at the blog. <<http://unspokencinema.blogspot.nl/2010/05/slow-films-easy-life-sight.html>>

quality of the genre at large, nor is it embedded in the text of a particular film. The same type of meta-reflection can be achieved by other genres or even other art forms. Again, the personal disposition, or the mental frame one adopts in relation to an art work is decisive. Yet this doesn't fully disprove my argument that boredom can indeed be considered as a possible aggregate for positive meta-emotions for viewers of the slow film genre.

My tentative and preliminary notes on the gratifications of the genre or no more than just that. Hopefully, they raise new questions for the reader. One interest of mine would be to find out how the appreciation of the genre differs between cultures. So far, I've taken a rather one-sided approach to the film experience from the point of view of my own Western cultural background or habitus. Is the slowness of slow film also perceived as such in cultures that differ in terms of their experience of time? What does this imply for the possible gratifications of the genre? Also other sociological data that I've not been able to address - like gender, social class and education - could be relevant for the discussion.

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