

The Use of Paintings in Peter Greenaway's Films

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日本語梗概

絵画と絵画的表現の意義は、映画の中で提示される。絵画は作者と監督両者の計画を体現する有能な媒体である。私はこのことを提示するためにグリーンウェイの作品を扱った。彼の映画は絵画と絵画的表現が頻繁に使われているからだ。絵画は単なる装飾ではなく、グリーンウェイの映画の表現を豊かにする。

1章では「コックと泥棒、その妻と愛人」を取り上げた。グリーンウェイはこの映画で「フランス・ハルスの聖ゲオルギウス市警備隊の士官たちの晚餐」(1616)に寓意的な役割を与えた。グリーンウェイは絵画の中の士官を真似し、ギャングを描いた。グリーンウェイは観者に寓意的な意味を探させる為映画の効果を用い、新興階級の変わらない風潮と時代の追従、そしてブルジョワジーとサッチャリズムの批判を絵画を利用して表現し、絵画に寓意的な意味を与えたのだ。

二章ではグリーンウェイが映画の中で絵画のミゼンサーヌを使うことを提示する。グリーンウェイは映画「英国式庭園殺人事件」で、17世紀の絵画的ミゼンサーヌを採用している。昼のシーンはルミニズムが、夜のシーンはテネブリズムが使われている。ルミニズムとテネブリズムは人々の公的生活と私的生活を分別する。公的生活では人々は自分の欲望を隠し、一方で私的生活では人々の欲望が

明らかになる。絵画は写真と違い確固とした時間と繋がりにくい、グリーンウェイは、この絵画の特性を用いて生活の普遍性というテーマを強調した。三章では映画的な絵画を提示する。グリーンウェイはレンブラントの映画的表現に焦点を当てた。レンブラントの光の使い方は現代の映画と共通する。レンブラントは絵画の中の重要な人や物を、光を使って強調し、グリーンウェイはこのレンブラントの表現を「レンブラントの夜警」で再現した。このことは映画的手法がレンブラントの絵画で使われていることを示す。また、レンブラントの現代性はグリーンウェイの作家主義を表明する。グリーンウェイは盲目を比喩的に使い、彼の栄華と没落を描いた。レンブラントの作家主義は彼の生活の役には立たなかったが、彼の作品は現代に残っている。私はグリーンウェイの作家主義の重要性への洞察力を明らかにし、グリーンウェイがこれらの映画で絵画的表現と映画的表現の両者の特徴を使い映画の中のテーマを提示することができることを示した。

グリーンウェイ作品のなかにおける、絵画と絵画的表現の意義を考察することでこの論文は、絵画使用による政治寓意やグリーンウェイの映画の普遍的テーマを指摘する。一章ではヒルやワルシュのように政治的寓意を示した。しかし、絵画を用いて明らかにしている点は彼らとは異なっている。グリーンウェイの映画は政治的寓意、ポストモダンの解釈が標準的である。しかし、二章、三章

では絵画使用と Greenaway 作品の普遍的テーマの関連性を指摘した。この点は新しく、前衛映画は80年、90年に終わったと考える批評家にとっても新鮮である。絵画はグリーンウェイ作品にとって重要な役割をもち、彼の映画を豊かにする。絵画使用により政治的寓意を明らかにした点、普遍的テーマのような新しい解釈を提案する点がこの論文の意義である。

Introduction

This thesis seeks to explore the significance of paintings British film director Peter Greenaway uses in his films. Paintings are a medium for painters and a resource for film directors, as they enable them to actualize or materialize their projects and designs. Through their paintings, painters have tried to express their faith, their emotional responses to objects in front of them, and their feelings. By using paintings, film directors can add a new meaning to their own films. In this thesis, I would like to demonstrate this hypothesis through analysis of Greenaway's films, because he frequently uses paintings and painterly techniques in his films.

Greenaway and his films have been subjects of film studies. Two types of interpretation of his works have been dominant to date. The first is a political reading. In *British Cinema in the 1980s: Issues and Themes* (1999), John Hill interprets *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989) as a satire of Thatcherism. Hill argues that Greenaway's criticism of Thatcherism is cleverly expressed through the characters' attitudes and behaviour. This film is, to borrow Greenaway's expression, "an exemplum of a consumer society" and its monstrosity is "personified" in the thief, Albert Spica (Qtd

in Hill 162). Albert's "materialism and vulgarity" are contrasted with "the artistry, learning, and non-material yearnings of the other characters" (Hill 163). In this respect, Greenaway can be regarded as a critique of Thatcherism in terms of "cultural barbarianism" through his films (Hill 163). Hill discusses not only the cultural impact but also aesthetic aspects of Greenaway's films. Greenaway's films are characterized by "cinematic self-consciousness and self-referentiality of modernism as well as the eclecticism and reworking of aesthetic traditions" (Hill 164). In this way, Hill discusses Greenaway's interest in film as a medium, too. The second trend focuses on artistic aspects of his films. In *British Film* (2004), Jim Leach explores Greenaway's and another British film director Derek Jarman's aesthetics and their relation to the tradition of British films. In his chapter on British avant-garde films, he reads their films as postmodern texts. Unlike earlier "modernist" films, their films try to recycle the past and the traditions (Leach 80). However, this does not mean that they stick to traditional ways. Instead, they try to "rescue the idea of 'heritage' from connotations it had gained under Margaret Thatcher" (Leach 80). In other words, they recycle the "heritage" so that they would illuminate its significance for contemporary art and society instead of indulging themselves in reactionary, Thatcherite nostalgia for the past. They incorporate elements of

realism and strange narratives so that they could create new aesthetic principles that disrupt our expectation from the mainstream cinema (Leach 83). As he said in an interview, Greenaway depicts Albert, the antihero of *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, not as “the cliché of the lovable cockney gangster” but a “brutal and philistine” gangster (Qtd in Leach 84). Like Hill, Leach also interprets that film as Greenaway’s critique of Thatcherism or “nightmare vision of a consumer-oriented exploitative society” (Leach 84). Unlike Hill, however, Leach argues that his idea of avant-garde art is linked not only to his critique of the reactionary trends in contemporary society but also to his interest in “reorganizing and scrambling the fragmentary relics of older systems” (Leach 84). Jarman and Greenaway try to visual art and reuse past by avant-garde way, for example Greenaway uses shocking images and bizarre narrative to recycle realist and expressionist tradition in the past. According to Leach, Greenaway attempted to make his avant-garde films move closer to the mainstream, but in vain (Leach 84). Other film directors have made similar attempts in film, but since Greenaway, avant-garde visual artists tend to work in videos than films (Leach 84). In other words, Greenaway is one of the last film directors who experimented with moving images in films rather than in video installations. In this way, Greenaway’s films have been

associated with “expressionist” traditions of British cinema.

Paintings captured in the frame and then projected onto the screen in films do not only serve “ornamental” purposes but they also convey allegorical meanings. European filmmakers began to use art in their films extensively in the 1940s and the 1950s when people started to popularize fine arts (Jacobs 4). Following the success of Kenneth Clark’s *One Hundred Details from Pictures in the National Gallery* (1938), numerous art scholars and critics published books on art encouraging their readers to look at paintings more attentively and expounding the basics of Western iconography. Made up of a succession of images disconnected from the original context, art books prepared viewers for art films and documentaries in which images are rearranged arbitrarily. At that time, Luciano Emmer, an Italian painter and filmmaker, worked with Enrico Gras, another Italian filmmaker, and made one of the first attempts to bring the “narrative aspects” of certain paintings to their own films (Jacobs 7). His pioneering works such as *Racconto da un affresco* (1938), *Guerrieri* (1943), *Il Dramma di Cristo* (1948) and *L’Invenzione della croce* (1949) focus on certain thematic aspects of Early-Renaissance paintings and leave them to a re-interpretation through cinematic techniques (Jacobs 8). Since then, filmmakers have used artworks not only for decorative, atmospheric purposes but also for

narrative purposes notably in art films and biopics of artists. Thus, the director can lead to show the audience the way to watch the artworks that have allegorical meanings.

In this thesis, I would like to reveal the roles of paintings and painterly techniques in cinema through analysis of Greenaway's films. He creates new ways of expressions by combining painterly techniques and cinematic techniques. Through these techniques, he explores his themes in his films. In other words, Greenaway assigns new roles to paintings or painterly compositions in his film. I argue that the use of paintings in cinema enriches Greenaway's expression, as paintings serves as a medium for painters and as a resource for film directors and help them achieve their artistic enterprise. In this study, I would like to illustrate the significance of paintings in films by analysing Greenaway's cinematic techniques and uses of paintings. In chapter 1, I will discuss his most famous film, *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. Greenaway uses Frans Hals's *The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company* in this film. He assigns an allegorical role to this painting. Chapter 2 identifies the painterly mise-en-scène of Greenaway's earlier film, *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982). In this film, he deliberately uses techniques of 17th-century painters to create a singular mise-en-scène. I will identify a theme of this film by focusing on his Tenebrist and Luminist mise-en-

scène. In chapter 3, I would like to explore his fusion of cinema and painting. In *Nightwatching* (2007), Greenaway reveals Rembrandt's cinematic techniques. These cinematic techniques of his indicate his modernity on the one hand and the importance of auteurism on the other. While he identifies modern aspects of Rembrandt's paintings, he explores a more general question of creative artists: should artists work for their patrons or customers? Or should artists work more independently at the cost of comfortable life in modern society? Through this study, I hope to illuminate certain aspects of film directors' uses of paintings that enrich both their cinematic expression and our cinematic experience.

Chapter 1

The Allegorical Use of a Painting in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*

A painting is always on the wall. The camera always captures people at the table with that painting in the background. Does it only serve “ornamental” purposes? Can it carry another meaning? That is precisely what Peter Greenaway does in his movie, *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989). In this film, he uses paintings as an effective vehicle for allegory, not just as an ornament for the décor. No characters talk about the painting on the wall of the restaurant. However, the camera, often fixed on the table, directs our attention to Frans Hals’s painting. It is apparently displayed there on purpose. It encourages the audience implicitly to read the painting as an allegory. It is a black comedy about four main characters. Albert Spica, the “thief”, is an English gangster who has climbed up the social ladder and taken over a high-class restaurant where most action takes place. While the nature of his business is not made clear in the film, he does not behave like a respectable citizen. He resorts to violence and cruelty, showing no scruples or self-discipline. He lacks any kind of sophistication and thinks of everything in monetary terms. Georgina Spica, his “wife”, is a well-bred woman, always frightened at

his violence but unable to escape from his tyranny. Michael, her “lover”, is a well-read, sophisticated bookshop owner who frequents the restaurant and with whom the “wife” begins to have an affair with the help of the staff of the restaurant. Georgina is attracted to him just because he has the kind of tenderness and sophistication that “thief” does not have. Richard Boarst, the “cook”, is the head chef of the restaurant who detests the “thief”, Albert Spica. This film has frequently been read as an allegory of Thatcherism, which, according to critics, enables a thug like Albert to become an entrepreneur, while it accelerates moral degradation and the growling anti-intellectualism (Friedman 296; Hill 162). However, little has been written about the precise roles of Frans Hals’ painting *The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company* (1616) placed on the wall of the restaurant and almost always captured in the frame, although it is easy to see the parallels between Albert and his gangs and the officers depicted in the painting.

In this chapter, I would like to explore the allegorical use of Frans Hals’ painting in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. Frans Hals’s painting, *The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company*, is a group portrait that represents the power and vanity of the bourgeoisie, regardless of the painter’s intention. *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* is not only a black comedy about a jealous gangster

nouveau riche but also a satire of neoliberalism and meritocracy under Margaret

Thatcher's premiership. The similarity of Frans Hals' painting to *The Cook, the Thief, His*

Wife and Her Lover directs our attention to the instability or ephemerality of

neoliberalism, as the former serves as an allegory of the latter. Indeed, it is easy to detect

parallels between *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* and Frans Hals' *The*

Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company at least in terms of the subject.

Both the film and the painting focus on an emergent class of people and their confidence

or complacency. While Hals' painting is a group portrait of affluent people of the

emergent bourgeoisie of 17th-century Haarlem, the Netherlands, one of the European

centres of commerce in Hals' lifetime, Peter Greenaway's film explores a bunch of

underclass gangsters who have become wealthy through some kind of "business"

characterized by ruthlessness, cruelty and violence in Margaret Thatcher's Britain.

Caught behind Greenaway's gangster "businessmen", Hals' painting highlights those

bourgeois men's arrogance and presumptuousness.

Despite the painter's rather simple intention, *The Banquet of the Officers of the St*

George Militia Company ironically suggests the models' desire for power and

complacency. While Hals apparently tried to produce a group portrait in a typical style of

the time, his painting can be interpreted more ironically. First, portraits are usually representation of one person, not a group. In addition, these men appear relaxed, while they wear the uniform that represents power. It is hard to detect rigour or dignity in those men, despite their costume. The contradiction between their clothing and their relaxed manner invites us to suspect that these officers are not really upper-class or those rulers that everyone can recognize instantly; rather, they are petit bourgeois who seek power and want to look powerful, but only afford a group portrait. Because of their lack of self-consciousness, they do not see how they really look.

The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover also points to the antihero's desire for power and complacency, although in a different context. Being a gangster-capitalist, Albert Spica belongs to an emergent affluent class of the time. His possession of the high-class restaurant, wealth and a well-bred wife, as well as his greed and jealousy, is contrasted by his lack of sophistication or any sort of gentlemanliness. He does not speak or behave like gentlemen of the old school. His lack of sophistication is emphasized by his habit of belching and complaining to his gangs in a loud voice. In one scene, he reveals his ignorance and lack of education by reading the basic French word "poisson" as "poison". He does not even know how to greet guests. He forces the man to do as he

tells him, while he and his followers are beating him in the car park of the restaurant.

They take off all his clothes and hold him so violently that he cannot even resist. This

indicates that he is not a gentleman because he leads his gang to attack a weak man

brutally. Despite this, he tries to teach the manners to this beaten man:

Albert: Learn to appreciate your food, eh? Compared to what you serve up

in that dirty little canteen of yours, this is a three-star supper. You

must learn the rules. I need to eat and drink the very best and that's

expensive. (*The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*)

As is shown in his words above, Albert does not adapt himself for the upper class in terms

of speech and manners. He begins with "Learn to appreciate your food, eh?" The

interjection "eh"¹ does not sound "standard" or upper-class in Britain. The manner in

which he talks looks highly oppressive, suggesting his coarse, violent personality.

Moreover, he calls the food "a three-star supper" in comparison to the food served in a

"dirty little canteen". This crudeness and abusiveness points to his rough, inconsiderate,

unsophisticated personality. The use of "three-star" as an adjective for something good

indicates his lack of vocabulary and, by extension, education. More impressive is the use of the word “expensive”. He considers everything only in monetary terms. His power comes from violence and intimidation, not from more “authentic” things such as status or family lineage. Although he behaves like a gang, he preaches about the manners. The contradiction of his words and deeds reveals his lower-class upbringing as well as the violent, barely legal nature of his business. All this suggests that Albert is a wealthy capitalist who does not deserve such wealth.

Albert is not only a typical nouveau riche but also a greedy, arrogant capitalist who seeks power:

Richard: If you spent as much money on the meal, Mr Spica, as you waste on the décor, your taste in good food must surely improve.

Albert: You’ll check me once too often, Boarst. You rely on me, don’t forget. Without me, you, a foreigner, you wouldn’t last long around here. Look out there, see what I’ve brought you. Two vans full of good stuff, just right for your kitchen.

Richard: I would not touch it.

Albert: Why on earth not?

Richard: I insist on buying my own food, Mr Spica. Then I can be sure of its quality.

Albert: I represent quality round here, my name is known for it. I offer quality and protection. (*The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*)

Albert regards Richard as just another employee, not as a special, talented and devoted chef. Richard has good taste, while Albert does not. He sometimes criticizes him in order to improve or maintain the quality of the restaurant, while Albert does not listen. Being a xenophobe, Albert despises him on account of his nationality. He believes the décor with his name on it is more valuable than the good quality of food. He believes that power is more important than quality. According to him, only his name that suggests his economic power assures the customer of the restaurant's quality; its real quality does not matter to anyone. He believes his name protects his restaurant from food poisoning, rats and public health inspectors. In addition, he also believes people obey his orders, as people think he is an authority. He intends to show his power; he has no intention to improve his own

restaurant. That is where he looks close to officers in *The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company*. Both Albert and Frans Hals's officers believe by themselves that they have the authentic power, while their fake authenticity only comes from their wealth. Viewed in this way, Albert is a typical uneducated nouveau riche who overestimates his own abilities, although his power comes from violence and intimidation, not from anything more "authentic". Albert is misled by his own vanity and complacency so much that he cannot use his wealth or handle his new status properly. Frans Hals's painting serves as an allegory of the complacent bourgeoisie: neither Hals' officers nor Albert can be an authentic ruler whom all people can recognize as such.

The similarity of the gangsters' appearances indicates those capitalists' quintessential hollowness or conformity to the trends. Albert and his gang wear similar clothes to those of Hals' officers, even though the former is modernized. Hals' officers wear a shirt with a white collar, a red or orange sash and a black jacket. Greenaway's capitalist gangsters wear slightly different clothes, as Hals' officers do. Their seat arrangements are almost the same. This similarity is emphasized in the first scene inside the restaurant. In both the film and the painting, the person on the right end of the table wears the shirt with a frill collar and does not wear the sash. Albert wears a white apron

like the fifth officer from the right in Hals' group portrait. Greenaway's gangsters and Hals' officers choose not only similar clothes but also similar hairstyle and moustache.

Albert is bald on the top of his head and wears a beard like the Dutch officer sitting in his position. Those gangsters alone wear the same clothes as the officers in the painting.

Importantly, the connection between the bourgeoisie of the 17th century and gangsters under Margaret Thatcher's premiership is also apparent in the way they wear: members of each group wear the same clothes. As their clothes function as a uniform, that points to those gangsters' obsession with their appearances or their uniformity. Like the officers of the 17th century, those gangsters take advantage of social changes to secure their wealth.

They are social climbers of the lower-class origins, while the nature of their businesses is unclear. To stay in power, they seek to exhibit their strength ostensibly. This equates capitalists' nature with that of gangsters. The nouveau riche attaches great importance to their appearances. In any period in history, people who suddenly rise to power like them invest much energy in dressing themselves up in a vulgar, unimaginative way. In other words, the uniformity of their appearances indicates the blind conformity of the nouveau riche to the trends and lack of self-consciousness.

In addition, Peter Greenaway uses lighting as a special effect to enhance this

allegory by illuminating Albert's superego and unconsciousness desire in this film. In the opening, the entire interior is clearly seen because of bright lightning. This represents Albert's clear consciousness. Even though he is not a sophisticated man, he manages to control himself in the restaurant. In the opening, he does not appeal to force. He is aware of how other people see him. In the middle of the film, white lighting is used when Albert treat the guest. The whole of the décor is still clearly seen. Albert stays calm while the white light is on. When he snaps his finger, the light turns red. Once the light becomes red, Albert becomes violent and attacks the customers because things does not work just as he wants. He loses himself and his unconscious desire appears. The final scene is darker than the penultimate scene. Only two figures—Albert and an officer in the painting—are shown clearly in the frame. Everything else is hardly visible. No customers are seen. Throughout this scene, Albert thinks only of himself. He tries to force Georgina to return to him. When his superego fails to work, his desire dominates him completely. In this way, lighting represents Albert's feelings. His consciousness controls him when his superego works. When his superego fails to work, his unconsciousness desire overwhelms him. The lighting is used as a special effect to enhance the allegory that the blind conformity of the nouveau riche to the trends and lack of self-consciousness by

illuminating Albert's superego and unconsciousness of his desire.

In the film's famous ending, Albert's insatiable desire is compared to that of a cannibal. Albert has destroyed respectable and traditional businesses. He does it without hesitation. He is not aware of his predatory nature until the last scene where Georgina forces him to eat the cooked body of Michael. He cannot eat Michael and vomits. That indicates that he has done what even he is disgusted at. This scene evokes the shared disgust of neoliberalism. Neoliberal capitalists practise a kind of cannibalism. They would not even try to face up to this reality. In addition, Greenaway chooses Michael as the victim. The intellectuals fear Thatcher's neoliberalist "reform", as she tried to diminish the academic sector. Thus, the lighting is used effectively to reinforce the allegorical meaning of the film by visualizing Albert's superego and unconsciousness desire. When capitalists' unconsciousness desire surface, they gratify their desires by any means. Based on this observation, Greenaway compares capitalists to gangsters; they both practise a kind of cannibalism, even though they would not even try to face up to this reality. In this film, Greenaway criticizes the predatory nature of Thatcherism and neoliberalism.

In conclusion, paintings captured in the frame and then projected onto the screen

in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* do not only serve “ornamental” purposes but they also convey allegorical meanings. Greenaway invites the audience to find the similarity of the painting and his film first and then to understand the allegorical meaning. He accomplishes this by cinematic techniques. Being a nouveau riche, Albert shares many things in common with the officers portrayed in *The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company*. The parallel between the portrait and Albert points to the allegorical meaning of the film: it is an allegory of criticism of Thatcherism and neoliberalism and the capitalists’ quintessential hollowness or conformity to the trends.

Chapter 2

Painterly Mise-en-Scène in *The Draughtsman's Contract*

While Greenaway uses the painting to add an allegorical meaning in *The Cook, the Thief, the Wife and the Lover*, he uses the painterly mise-en-scène to present a new theme in *The Draughtsman's Contract*. In this film, he intentionally uses techniques of 17th-century paintings such as Luminism and Tenebrism. These techniques are the effective uses of light and shadow, often observed in Vermeer's and Caravaggio's paintings respectively. The mise-en-scène in the daytime scenes is characterized by luminism, while that of the night-time scenes is characterized by Tenebrism. The film's peculiar mise-en-scène or contrast of light and shadow that evoke 17th-century paintings accentuates the invariability of everyday life including private life and sexual activities that are not explored in 17th-century paintings. Using old techniques, not new ones, to contrast public life and private life, the film reminds us that we have led a life in a quite similar way since the 17th century. In this way, Greenaway uses the painterly mise-en-scène to present a new theme that the life in a quite similar way since the 17th century in *The Draughtsman's Contract*. In this chapter, I would like to illuminate this aspect of

Greenaway's film first by charting Greenaway's painterly techniques and then by exploring their effect on the film.

In *The Draughtsman's Contract*, Greenaway frequently uses the Tenebrist mise-en-scène for night scenes so that this film looks like paintings of the Old Masters. This film opens with a close-up shot of a character lit by the candles. This effective use of darkness instantly reminds us of Caravaggio's technique (Miyashita 71). Even after this opening, Greenaway continues to use the painterly mise-en-scène characterized by the cinematic version of tenebrism, the technique often associated with Caravaggio's and Georges de La Tour's paintings (Miyashita 71). As the background is dark, everything but the figure is invisible in the opening scenes. The characters' faces are visible because of the candlelight. The shot produces a sharp contrast of light and shadow. This contrast has a lasting influence on the viewers of this film. Lighting by candlelight is carefully used to direct the viewer's attention to particular elements on the frame. The use of the candlelight to focus on characters' subtle changes in their expressions helps the viewer to understand more easily not only who they are and where they are, but also what they are up to and how they are feeling. Like Georges de La Tour's paintings, the film directs our attention to the interior of the characters' mind. In this way, Greenaway uses Tenebrism in

the film's mise-en-scène, such as the use of candlelight, so that this film looks like—and can be “read” like—a 17th-century painting.

On the other hand, Greenaway uses Vermeer's techniques, especially his Luminism, for day scenes for the same purpose—so that this movie will look like a 17th-century painting. Vermeer uses natural light impressively in his paintings. Vermeer did not paint night landscapes, although it was technically possible to depict the presence of light clearly in night landscapes by that time (Miyashita 164). Luminism is a way that emphasize lights and makes high contrast. It appeared after night landscape was used frequently (Miyashita 40). In this film, not only exterior shots but also interior shots are filled with natural light in day scenes. While there are no spotlights or any artificial lights on particular actors or actresses, Greenaway lets natural light in so that not only gardens but also the rooms are filled with lights. Because of this brightness of frames, the viewer can easily understand what or who is there as if the viewer were an omniscient god. These scenes are so greatly characterized by natural light that, seen from a more aesthetic point of view, light itself, not the characters who are captured at the centre of the screen, becomes the most important object. Compared with the night scenes using candlelight, these day scenes have less intense, even weaker light in terms of brightness, but natural

light are much stronger in that it makes everything in the frame clearly visible. This extensiveness cannot be achieved by candlelight. Greenaway does not use close-up shots in day scenes. Instead, he uses long shots so that natural light makes a greater impression on the viewer and thereby invites us to compare these scenes with Vermeer's paintings. As we have seen, day scenes are so greatly characterized by Luminism that this film looks like 17th-century paintings.

In *Draughtsman's Contract*, Greenaway uses the *mise-en-scène* that evokes Vermeer's as well as Georges de La Tour's paintings. That not only emphasizes the formal connection but also the thematic connection between this film and the 17th-century painting. Greenaway uses these painterly techniques not only to create an artistic impression but also to contrast private and public life. Although Greenaway represents 17th-century life from a modern point of view and with modern hindsight, he chooses to avoid modern techniques. This avoidance invites us to think upon the film's theme, or the invariability of everyday life: people lead a double life hypocritically throughout history.

This film is marked by night scenes where characters are lit by candles. These scenes are marked aesthetically by the use of Tenebrism in the *mise-en-scène* and thematically by its focus on private life. Instead, those scenes focus on their private lives:

they make contracts secretly and spend time gossiping. Furthermore, Greenaway frequently uses close-up shots in the night scenes to capture characters gossiping in the glow of the candlelight. Even in long shots in the night scenes, candles are always placed near the characters. In these shots, high contrast is used so that nothing can be seen outside the glow of the candlelight. The contrasts let the viewer focus on the characters and the candlelight automatically. By encouraging the viewer to focus on the characters' faces, these long shots produce a similar effect to close-up shots. This technique is typical of the Tenebrist painting: by contrasting figures lit by candles and darkness, the painter manages the viewer's attention to the details of those figures (Miyashita 71). This Tenebrist technique is found in many scenes of *The Draughtsman's Contract*. For example, it is apparent when Neville is talking with Mrs Herbert, lit by the four candles alone (Figure 1). The candles are not arranged regularly so that everything can be seen. Instead, they are arranged to shed strong light on certain objects or persons. Nothing is visible in the background because of this peculiar lighting. Only the characters, their clothes and dishes are visible by the candles, while all the rest is invisible in the dark shadow. This shot is aesthetically similar to Georges de La Tour's: nothing in the background is visible, while the light illuminates figures. The candlelight directs the

viewer's attention to the point where the artist would like to. To imitate Georges de La Tour's painting by using candlelight emphasizes the characters' secrets. Greenaway use Tenebrist technique to expose these secrets to the viewer. In *Draughtsman's Contract*, Greenaway uses Tenebrist mise-en-scène to explore private life, or disorderly impulses we tend to hide in the daytime.

Figure 1



By contrast, daytime scenes are aesthetically marked by the use of luminism and thematically marked by public life. People do some work or some public activities in daytime, often caught in long shots (Figure 2). Greenaway emphasizes the Luminist mise-en-scène that recalls Vermeer's paintings to the viewer's mind. It is characterized by the

constant use of natural light and the frequent use of long shots. This emphasizes the formal connection between Vermeer's painting and this film. This technique is seen in the scene where Neville prepares for drawing and servants rake the ground. The use of long shots reveals the characters' positions and actions to everyone. There are no secrets. On the other hand, the shadow looks so dark in high-contrast shots that nothing is visible in the shade. People in this scene engage in work and lead their public lives. This Luminist *mise-en-scène* that contrasts the scenery filled with light and the dark shade illuminates the public sphere. Anything important is rendered visible, and anything unimportant invisible. In another scene, Vermeer's other technique is adopted. Neville finishes painting and has a tea time with Mrs Herbert. Sunlight shines on the characters and illuminates the room from the window (Figure 3). Tableware and paintings are clearly visible by the use of plentiful light and long shots. Important characters and things are placed near the light. Despite high-contrast cinematography, everything is visible. This scene is presented as a moment from their public life not only because of the clearness of the shot but also because of the characters' tones and the volume of their voice. In the scenes of private life, characters are close to each other, and speak in a low voice. Neville and Mrs Herbert keep a distance in this scene, talking in a moderate voice. Thematically,

this scene does not represent their public lives. They are talking confidentially about what they would rather prefer not to tell anyone. However, these aural elements, as well as the mise-en-scène, help the viewer take this scene as part of their public life. These aural elements help the viewer take this scene as part of their public lives. Greenaway uses the Luminist mise-en-scène to emphasize the degrees of publicness of people's life.

Figure 2



Figure 3



Public life and private life are contrasted not by contemporary cinematic techniques but by the film's anachronistic painterly *mise-en-scène*. This foregrounds its theme, the invariability of everyday life. In the night scenes, the *Tenebrist* *mise-en-scène* emphasizes private life and the characters' desires that should be hidden. On the other hand, the *Luminist* *mise-en-scène* is used in the daytime scenes. Everything looks clear as if there were no secret contracts, or indeed nothing to gossip about—as if murder did not take place, because such things always happen in night scenes and are caught in the *Tenebrist* *mise-en-scène*. In public life, people's desires are hidden, while they surface in private life. This pattern is unchangeable throughout history, except for superficial particulars. For example, what motivates the murderer to kill Mr Herbert is not clear in

this film, but he or she does it is to get something this absent lord possesses: wealth, title, estate, etc. Such motivations are quite common in the present, too. This film chooses not to shy away from 17th-century people's sexual activities, the theme not openly explored in the 17th century. Sexual activities are part of the secret contract in *The Draughtsman's Contract*. Taking advantage of this contract, Neville has an affair with Mrs Herbert and with Mrs Talmann. He is frequently caught engaging in adultery. This explicit coverage of adultery is decidedly modern. Produced about the same year as *The Draughtsman's Contract*, James Ivory's *A Room with a View* (1985) represents upper-class life of the late Victorian era. In this film, even kiss scenes are at least partly hidden by the use of shade and camera angles as if the viewer were reading a Victorian novel. Upper-class life seems decent and morally immaculate. On the other hand, Greenaway represents the characters' sexual activities vividly as in contemporary films. This modernization foregrounds the unchangeable nature of human life. He modernizes the 17th century by focusing on sexual life on the one hand, and renders this modern aspect of the past with the techniques of 17th-century painters. In this way, he emphasizes the unchangeable nature of life in all ages. This effect derives from the fact that 17th-century paintings are not a mechanical reproduction of reality, but a representation that requires varying degrees of abstraction.

Photography mechanically reproduces reality. By contrast, a painting is an image created by an artist. No matter how much the artist tries to make it look real, it cannot be a mechanical reproduction of reality. 17th-century paintings are predominantly representational and realist, but they are products of artists' creativity rather than the exact copy of real objects in front of them. Paintings are characterized by certain levels of abstraction and stylization. For this reason, paintings attract viewers across periods in history. Paintings can convey more universal meanings, detached from specific time and place, than photographs. Photographs cannot be detached from specific time and place in which they are taken. By imitating paintings rather than photography, Greenaway manages to explore such a universal theme as the invariability of everyday life.

In conclusion, Greenaway's painterly techniques successfully connect the film's aesthetics and central theme. He uses techniques associated with Luminism and Tenebrism painting to depict the contrast of light and shadow. By representing modern aspects of 17th-century life in techniques similar to 17th-century paintings, not modern techniques, he suggests implicitly that people's life is quintessentially unchangeable throughout history. The use of paintings in this film is quite comparable to the use of a painting in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. As we have seen, Greenaway

adds allegorical meanings to one particular painting he keeps captured in the frame and projected onto the screen, instead of just using it for “ornamental” purposes. In *The Draughtsman’s Contract*, he refuses to use paintings—or painterly mise-en-scène in this case—as an ornament. By using painterly techniques, he adds a new dimension to the film, but in a different way from *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. He employs these techniques to attain universality in *The Draughtsman’s Contract*. He does not represent 17th-century life as something old-fashioned, quite far away from us. Nor does he try to expose modern aspects of 17th-century life. Instead, he reveals universal human constants like the painters he admires.

Chapter 3

Greenaway's Insight into Rembrandt's Cinematic Techniques

Greenaway focuses on cinematic techniques in Rembrandt's paintings. He detects Rembrandt's modernity in his use of light and his free expression as an independent artist. Interestingly, he associates this modernity of Rembrandt's with his auteurism. In *Nightwatching* (2007), Greenaway explores such universal theme by representing and reconstructing Rembrandt's cinematic techniques. Rembrandt uses lighting artistically as if using artificial light. Rembrandt's use of light is quite original; no such things existed before him. Greenaway reproduces Rembrandt's lighting techniques in *Nightwatching*. By doing so, he draws our attention to cinematic aspects of Rembrandt's lighting techniques. Also, Rembrandt's modernity is confirmed by his insight. He not only painted his models' physical appearances but also their being. Importantly, these aspects of Rembrandt's art indicate that he was an "auteur" in the sense of the word used in contemporary film studies. Greenaway turns to Rembrandt's modernity by foregrounding Rembrandt's techniques and obsession with portraits. Besides Rembrandt's modernity, Greenaway identifies one of Rembrandt's themes, blindness in its metaphorical sense, by

adapting Rembrandt's cinematic techniques for cinema. In this chapter, I would like to illuminate Greenaway's insight into importance of auteurism in *Nightwatching*.

As Greenaway suggests, Rembrandt uses cinematic lighting in his painting.^{17th}-century paintings imitate reality in realistic manners. Light and shade are depicted as they are supposed to exist in reality. Painters did not arrange or change lighting as they liked it to be. Artificial lighting had not been used in paintings until the 17th century. Rembrandt uses this artificial lighting, which has nothing to do with what actually existed around his models, to describe the interior of the models' minds and their thought process (Bonafoux 75). This use of light is common in cinema. Light is frequently added, arranged and changed intentionally by film directors. Rembrandt gives his paintings cinematic expression. In *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* (1644), for example, light falls on the woman, while the rest is painted dark (Figure 4). Mary Magdalene caught and taken in front of Jesus Christ wears white clothes and light shines on her. Because of this unusual light, she stands out from the background. Through this contrast, Rembrandt directs the viewer's attention to the woman. Rembrandt constructs his own world through the use of artificial light, casually ignoring the law of nature. This special effect is rather commonly used in cinema to spotlight actors or certain parts of the décor.

Figure 4



This cinematic technique can be seen in *Militia Company of District II under the Command of Captain Frans Banninck Cocq* (1642), commonly known as *The Night Watch*. Greenaway seeks to reproduce his cinematic techniques in *Nightwatching* and by so doing draws our attention to the modernity of Rembrandt's lighting techniques. In *The Night Watch*, Rembrandt gives depth to the night landscape (Figure 5). Frans Banninck

Cocq and Willem van Ruytenburch, painted at the centre, stand out because of the light coming diagonally from above. This light cannot be explained by the conventions of realism. Like a spotlight, it directs our attention to these two persons. As light does not shine on other members of the militia, they blend in with the dark background.

Controlling light in this way, Rembrandt gives depth to produce a dramatic effect. The girl behind two officers and one man is mysteriously in the spotlight. This unusual light literally comes from nowhere; it is neither natural light nor any lighting devices people in the painting have. This indicates the strength of authorial control. It is Rembrandt who controls lighting. Greenaway reconstructs Rembrandt's light through lighting in

Nightwatching. Frans Banninck Cocq and Willem van Ruytenburch stand out from the crowd, when Rembrandt shows the customer the paintings he has finished. Spotlight coming diagonally from above shines on them as in Rembrandt's painting. By contrast, light is not on the other members. Greenaway reconstructs Rembrandt's depth through the use of spotlights. It is only through this method that one can reproduce this diagonal light from above. Natural light diffuses, so it cannot shine on an extremely limited space.

Rembrandt's light can only be reproduced in the filming set with spotlights. In

Nightwatching, Greenaway illuminates this cinematic aspect of Rembrandt's masterpiece

by using 21st-century cinematic techniques.

Figure 5



In *Nightwatching*, Greenaway reproduces not only Rembrandt's lighting techniques but also his insight into the models' being. His move away from the patron's request to his pursuit of being signals his anachronistic attempt to be an auteur. In the 17th century, group portraits were created to pander to the tastes of the commissioners. However, Rembrandt chose not to comply with the commissioners' request when painting *The Night Watch*. He chose not to lay equal weight on the models by making them stand

in line. Instead, he tried to capture their free movement at the cost of equal treatment of the models. As the models are not standing in line, they appear in different sizes. The commissioners criticized Rembrandt for treating them unequally (Bonafoux 84). At that time, Rembrandt's disregard of the commissioners was not considered acceptable.

However, his choice can be compared with auteursim from a modern point of view.

Greenaway captures the moments when Rembrandt's creative work as an autonomous artist comes close to film directors' auteurism. When Rembrandt shows *The Night Watch* to the commissioners, he exposes their scandals through his ability to see through the disguises necessarily reveals what they want to hide—in this case, the scandals the militia wants to hide. Greenaway deliberately films the moment when Rembrandt's insight shocks his viewers. His painting denounces the commissioners. A painting is a product of an artist's creativity, not a product of commissioner's request. By focusing on the exposure of the scandals, Greenaway reminds the viewer that it is Rembrandt's creative expression, not the commissioners' request, that created *The Night Watch*. With this painting, Rembrandt virtually declares his own independence from the commissioners.

This not only liberates him from the fetters of the conventions of that time but also allows him to represent human nature in a way other painters did not represent it. In this respect,

Rembrandt's modernity meets Greenaway's auteurism in *Nightwatching*.

Nightwatching not only reveals Rembrandt's modernity and his closeness to auteurism but also explores universal themes such as blindness in its metaphorical sense. Blindness refers to his inability to foresee the future. It is represented by the darkness he sees in his nightmare. This film starts with and ends with the moment Rembrandt goes blind in his nightmare. In these two scenes, Greenaway foregrounds the darkness that Rembrandt sees. Rembrandt faces two kinds of darkness. The first kind of darkness refers to darkness as opposed to light. At the beginning, Rembrandt has a nightmare in which he goes blind. Greenaway places two shots of Rembrandt looking at light and darkness when he has the nightmare and awakes from it. Only white light is used in the opening sequence, while the rest is surrounded by darkness. The contrast is so sharp that there is no light in front of Rembrandt. He stares into darkness. When Hendrickje Stoffels, his long-time lover, appears, light appears in front of Rembrandt. After she opens the curtains, a red light and a yellow light flood into the scene. Rembrandt stares into light and shadow before he sees colour. In this way, Greenaway reminds us of Rembrandt's mastery of light and shadow. The second kind of darkness refers to his decline and fall, as opposed to prosperity. In *Nightwatching*, Greenaway follows the rise and fall of

Rembrandt's fate. When he is at the height of prosperity, Rembrandt and his wife Saskia live with many servants, surrounded by luxury furniture. His prosperity declines with Saskia's death. Then, Rembrandt stares into darkness. He completes a painting that implicitly denounces the commissioners. That infuriates the commissioners. Rembrandt flirts with Geertje and ends up becoming penniless. This time, Greenaway films Rembrandt with his canvas. He possesses nothing but a canvas. This image encapsulates Rembrandt's decline. In the final scene of his blindness, Greenaway uses white light again. Attacked by the militia, Rembrandt goes blind. There is no light in front of him. The absence of light suggests his ruin—that he has no hope or future any longer. Rembrandt brings ruin upon himself by painting as an independent, autonomous artist. Both his rise and fall come from his paintings. In *Nightwatching*, Greenaway depicts not only Rembrandt's rise but also his fall. However, this does not mean that he criticizes Rembrandt's disrespect for the commissioners. On the contrary, Greenaway reminds us that Rembrandt's paintings attain immortality, while no one remembers his commissioners. Even though Rembrandt died in misery in reality, his art does not die away. Second-rate artists who complied with patrons' tastes may have lived a wealthy life, but their art withered. In this respect, *Nightwatching* is Greenaway's affirmation that

artists must be auteurs, not flatterers.

In *Nightwatching*, Greenaway reveals Rembrandt's originality as an artist. While his use of light suggests the modernity of his art, his independent attitude comes close to Greenaway's auteurism. He considered his painting as his own work, not merchandise to sell the commissioners. Greenaway directs our attention to this auteur aspect of Rembrandt. This aesthetic theme is inseparable from the film's theme: blindness. Rembrandt's blindness, as well as his misery, comes from his defiant attitude as an independent artist or auteur. However, that reminds us that his art remains—or more precisely, prospers, while the artist died in misery in reality. With this film, Greenaway expresses his uncompromising attitude towards art as an independent artist.

Conclusion

Greenaway's films remind us of the significance of paintings. Paintings in films are not mere elements of the décor, but they broaden film directors' repertoire of cinematic expression. Painters achieve their goals through their own paintings, while film directors may carry out their design by using someone else's paintings. Peter Greenaway's uses of paintings are particularly significant. He uses paintings and painterly compositions in his films to extend the trajectory of his works.

In this thesis, I have examined Greenaway's three films, *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, *The Draughtsman's Contract* and *Nightwatching*, and the ways paintings are used in these films. As we have seen in chapter 1, Greenaway adds an allegorical dimension to *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* by using Frans Hals' *The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company*. Placed on the wall of the restaurant, this painting appears several times in this film. Greenaway draws our attention to the parallels between the gangs and Frans Hals's officers by making the former imitate the latter. Through this allegorical use of the painting, he conveys his criticism of Thatcherism and neoliberalism, equating the capitalists' quintessential

hollowness or conformity to the trends. As we have seen in chapter 2, *The Draughtsman's Contract* is marked by its painterly *mise-en-scène*. Greenaway deliberately adopts the composition similar to 17th-century paintings. Luminism is used in daytime scenes, while Tenebrism is used in night scenes. This aesthetic difference marks the distinction between people's public life and private life. People hide their desires in public life. On the other hand, people's desires appear in private life. Greenaway adds thematic depth to his film through painterly techniques. Unlike photographs, paintings entail a certain degree of abstraction that enables us to separate them from the actual time and places they refer to. This abstraction makes it easier for paintings to explore universal themes across historical periods. Greenaway pursues such universal themes through the use of painterly techniques. As we have seen in chapter 3, Greenaway pursues the possibility of paintings, especially that of Rembrandt's works, in his film *Nightwatching*. Rembrandt manipulates light like film or lighting directors so that the viewer would easily understand how the models are feeling. In his turn, Greenaway reproduces this effect by actually using cinematic techniques. In this way, he draws our attention to cinematic techniques used in Rembrandt's paintings. Furthermore, Greenaway reveals that Rembrandt's modern awareness of artists' independence is close to his own auteurism. Rembrandt's spirit of

independence may have brought him to poverty in reality, but manages to immortalize his works. *The Night Watch* is treated as Rembrandt's masterpiece that remains important even today. As I have argued, Greenaway identifies a kind of auteurism in Rembrandt's paintings and suggests its importance in *Nightwatching*. Also, Greenaway explores universal themes such as blindness in its metaphorical sense. Like photographs, films serve as audio-visual records of certain places in certain periods in history. However, they can explore universal themes in timeless, ahistorical ways like paintings.

This thesis points out not only the allegorical use of paintings but also the more artistic uses of paintings as a vehicle for universal themes in Greenaway's "painterly" films. Chapter 1 comes to a similar conclusion to Hill and Leach in the sense that we all identify political, allegorical aspects of *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. It is standard now to interpret this film either as a political satire or as a postmodern movie. In this respect, I have corroborated this rather widely accepted interpretation through my study of Greenaway's use of the painting in this film. However, I have found out other points Greenaway tries to make by using paintings in his films. That is where my study differs from Hill's and Leach's. I have revealed Greenaway's attempts to pursue more universal themes through his use of paintings. To put it the other way round, his use of

paintings is deeply related to his exploration of universal themes. I hope that this new interpretation will give critics a chance to reconsider their hasty conclusion that avant-garde and arthouse films have finished by the 1980s or 1990s. Greenaway's films still remain important and fresh for contemporary viewers. They not only allegorize particular historical moments in films like *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, but also introduce more universal themes such as the boundary between private and public life and the artist's independence in films like *The Draughtsman's Contract* and *Nightwatching*. In this way, Greenaway's films illustrate that paintings can enrich films, as the paintings Greenaway uses enrich his films. They serve as a reminder that there can be a meaningful interaction between paintings and films.

Notes

¹ “Eh” is an “interjectional interrogative particle” that “often invit[es] assent to the sentiment expressed” (*The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*).

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