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# Temporal Bodies: Ageing, *Lieux de Mémoire*, and the Poetics of Delay in Contemporary Cinema

**Abstract:** Building on Bazin's ontology of the photographic image, this article argues that cinema is not merely an archive of chronological time but a practice that performs time: it withholds, returns, and re-situates experience. Two theoretical co-ordinates guide the analysis. First, Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* illuminate how films install sites where private affect and public history crystallize in the present. Second, Laura Mulvey's account of "delayed cinema" clarifies how repetition, stillness, and return allow spectators to reactivate the past within the now. Set against this frame, age-studies scholarship (Kathleen Woodward, Margaret Gullette, Julia Twigg; Heike Hartung & Rüdiger Kunow) is mobilized to challenge the "master plot of decline," showing how screen aging is scripted, gendered, and contested.

The article reads three recent films as a coherent temporal triad. Paolo Sorrentino's *Parthenope* figures youth as both aura and burden, staging the young female body as a site where beauty resists commodification even as it is mourned in advance. Brady Corbet's *The Brutalist* (placed in dialogue with Constantin Vaeni's *Imposibila iubire*—for a much-needed local, Romanian, perspective) confronts late style as ruination: architectural permanence collapses into corporeal fragility, and the builder is expelled from his own polis. Joseph Kosinski's *F1* reimagines mid-life not as decline but as a performance of maturity—ritual, risk, and self-continuity—within hyper-managed technosystems. Read together, the films transform city, construction, and circuit into memory-sites, and their bodies into temporal instruments that negotiate endurance, risk, and loss. The conclusion reframes cinema as a medium that scripts age, resists invisibility, and converts fragility into shared cultural memory.

**Keywords:** Ageing; temporality; *lieux de mémoire*; delayed cinema; embodiment; gender; memory; contemporary cinema; Mulvey; Nora.

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## Introduction

André Bazin famously described cinema as rooted in the "mummy complex," preserving life through appearances and creating "an ideal universe endowed with a temporal destiny of its own" (4–9). Yet if cinema has been thought of as an archive of time, contemporary age studies remind us that ageing itself is not only a biological process but a cultural script. Kathleen Woodward insists that "aging—for ourselves individually and for all of us, no matter our age—is a feminist issue," foregrounding how social pressures, gender norms, and political structures organize our experience of later life (182). Margaret Gullette sharpens this point: "we think we age by nature; we are insistently and precociously being aged by culture" (qtd. in Mellencamp 314). Film thus becomes not simply a passive recorder of chronology but an active producer of cultural narratives about age, loss, and continuity. As Medina and Zecchi suggest, cinema functions as a powerful "technology of age," capable of reproducing ageism but also of proposing more affirmative ways of looking at ageing bodies—beyond the binary of ageing as either decline or success (253–254). Much of Western biomedicine has promoted what Heike Hartung and Rüdiger Kunow call the "decline view ... an evolutionary narrative of old age which depicts the ageing process as completely devoid of positive meaning" (16). This master plot of decline reduces later life to bodily deterioration and social disengagement, often rendering older subjects invisible.

Methodologically, the article proceeds in two moves. First, it treats Claude Lelouch's long-duration trilogy and Michael Haneke's *Amour* as a film-historical model of ageing on screen—cinema as return, sequel, epilogue, and as a testing ground for "self-continuity" against the cultural "master plot of decline." Second, it reads *Parthenope*, *F1*, and *The Brutalist* as a contemporary triad that transposes this logic into new memory-sites (city, circuit, construction) and across three life-stages (youth, midlife, late life), where "delay" becomes not only a technique but an ethics of dwelling with time.

Claude Lelouch's trilogy (*Un homme et une femme* [1966], *Un homme et une femme: Vingt ans déjà* [1986], *Les plus belles années d'une vie* [2019]) offers a unique cinematic experiment in narrating age across decades. Unlike films that isolate ageing in late life, Lelouch traces an entire arc of affective continuity, allowing his characters to carry the imprint of time upon their bodies, gestures, and memories. This stands as a practical realization of Gullette's concept of age autobiography—"a critical story of the relationship between at least two temporal selves" (qtd. in Woodward 181). Anne and Jean-Louis are not frozen in a single temporal register; they return every twenty or thirty years to embody precisely the fragile yet essential "self-continuity" identified as the antidote to the cultural "ideology of decline" (Gullette 14). If, as Hartung and Kunow argue, "the cultural experience of senescence has often been organized around practices of neglect, invisibility, even outright denial," Lelouch resists that erasure by foregrounding ageing bodies in cinema—not as spectacle of loss,

but as carriers of memory and desire (17). Woodward, drawing on Twigg, underscores a core ambiguity in representation: a refusal to grow old may read as denial or as resistance to cultural conventions of ageing (Woodward 181; Twigg 285–305). Anne and Jean-Louis continue to love, to misrecognize, to remember; their refusal to give up intimacy can function as resistance to the script that would confine love to youth. Moreover, the trilogy stages what Gullette calls the "master plot of decline" only to dismantle it. Age does not appear as a predictable trajectory toward disappearance, but as an open temporality in which affection and recognition persist. *Les plus belles années d'une vie* (2019) is particularly striking in this respect: far from reducing Jean-Louis's fragility to mere decline, Lelouch affirms the dignity of late love, showing how ageing can still sustain tenderness and continuity. In this way, the films function as counter-narratives—stories that stress possibility, not inevitability. Finally, Lelouch's choice of Anouk Aimée and Jean-Louis Trintignant across half a century exposes what Hartung and Kunow term the "double standard of ageing": the cinematic gaze tends to read women's ageing bodies as decline more readily than men's (Hartung and Kunow 19). Yet in this trilogy, the persistence of Aimée's elegance challenges that asymmetry, offering a counter-image of female ageing that is both visible and dignified. Through these films, cinema affirms its capacity to turn ageing—often imagined as "invisible" or "impossible"—into a narrative of endurance, intimacy, and continuity.

As Pierre Nora argues, modernity dislocates memory from lived continuity, relocating it into *lieux de mémoire*—symbolic sites where collective experience is condensed and preserved (7–12). Lelouch's trilogy functions precisely in this register: the films themselves become *lieux de mémoire*, cinematic monuments to love and ageing, where actors' own bodies serve as archives of history. Gullette warns that the rhetoric of decline is not just about bodies but about entire selves; it is a narrative structure that insists on a predictable trajectory. What films such as Lelouch's *Les plus belles années d'une vie* or Haneke's *Amour* accomplish is precisely a dismantling of that trajectory—affirming that ageing contains dignity, affection, and the persistence of memory. Cinema, in other words, stages "self-continuity"—the fragile but essential thread that ties different temporal selves together: "according to cross-cultural developmentalists, the conservation of self despite change is a condition of any coherent conception of selfhood" (Gullette 14). This resonates with the notion of "age autobiography," "*a critical story* of the relationship between at least two temporal selves" (Woodward 181). Film uniquely dramatizes such relationships, offering spectators an experience of continuity across rupture, a way to reconcile younger and older selves without collapsing into caricature. Of course, age is also a gendered construct: we have to acknowledge that "the double standard of ageing ... depicts women as ageing biologically earlier than men" (Hartung and Kunow 19). Josephine Dolan's account of the "silvering of stardom" is useful here, because it ties ageing not only to representation but also to the economics of exhibition and celebrity—showing how ageing femininity is policed through

a rejuvenation imperative, while ageing masculinity is more readily recoded as "vintage" endurance and even as a desirable improvement (109–10). Woodward sharpens this into a politics of embodiment: as women age, they get thicker in the middle, "it's embarrassing—both being thicker in the middle and being concerned about it" (181). The cinematic representation of female characters—from Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7*, haunted by mortality in youth, to *Parthenope*'s heroine, whose beauty becomes a burden, to Anne in *Amour*, whose fragility is confronted with intimacy—exposes precisely how bodies are culturally scripted as temporal and gendered (Twigg 285–305).

Laura Mulvey reframes cinema as an art of "delay," where technologies of repetition and return allow spectators to hold time still, to reactivate past moments within the present (2006, 54–66). This notion resonates strongly with the practice of sequels and epilogues in cinema: films like *Les plus belles années d'une vie* or *Amour* re-stage intimacy across temporal ruptures, turning the screen itself into a site of return. Thus, to consider cinema's relation to ageing is to recognize that film does not merely capture the passage of time but performs age, negotiates cultural scripts, and constructs counter-narratives to decline. French cinema in particular—from Truffaut's Doinel cycle through Lelouch and Haneke—has offered some of the richest explorations of temporality, love, and mortality, culminating in influencing old and new global trends, among which are the recently released *Parthenope*, *The Brutalist*, and *F1*. In what follows, I treat them as a life-stage triptych: *Parthenope* (youth), *F1* (midlife), and *The Brutalist* (late life / late style). This selection is anchored in a shared thematic horizon rather than in mere coincidence. All three works address, in distinct cinematic registers, the relationship between the body and temporality, and in doing so they resonate with broader cultural debates on memory, ageing, and posterity. As Nora argues, modernity displaces lived memory into *lieux de mémoire*—sites where temporality crystallizes and resists oblivion (7–12). These films may be read as such sites: each of them monumentalizes a different stage of embodied time, staging cinema itself as an archive of transient experience. What links this contemporary triad to the earlier model is not genre similarity but a shared temporal operation: each film constructs a situation in which the present is "held" long enough for the body to become legible as archive. If Lelouch and Haneke literalize return through sequels and end-of-life intimacy, Sorrentino, Corbet, and Kosinski relocate return into spaces—Naples, the building site, the racing circuit—turning them into lieux de mémoire where ageing is staged as burden, ritual, and ruination.

In *F1*, the mature body of Brad Pitt's character confronts the hyper-technological system of contemporary Formula 1. Aging here is not reduced to decline but reframed, in Gullette's terms, as resistance to the master narrative of decline. The film invests maturity with dignity, reintroducing the seasoned body into history and reasserting its value within a system dominated by speed and youth. By contrast, *Parthenope* positions the young and beautiful female body as both a blessing and a curse. As Twigg notes, aging is gendered: women are culturally perceived

as ageing earlier and more visibly than men, and beauty becomes both a capital and a prison (285–305). Paolo Sorrentino dramatizes precisely this ambivalence: Parthenope's youth paralyzes her, her beauty isolates her, and her search for knowledge becomes a way to resist being reduced to image alone. Mulvey's reflections on cinematic time illuminate this paradox: film can "delay" and "return," staging beauty as both ephemeral and eternal, simultaneously freezing and exposing its transience. *The Brutalist* extends this exploration to the ruins of old age. Its protagonist, the Hungarian architect László Tóth, embodies what Woodward calls the performance of ageing: his fragility is not merely lived, but enacted and perceived against cultural expectations of strength and endurance. The monumental project he undertakes mirrors his own bodily erosion. Here, Nora's idea of posterity as illusion becomes starkly evident: architecture, conceived for eternity, collapses under the weight of mortality, with the architect himself becoming a ruin. Hartung and Kunow's observation that Western culture organizes ageing around invisibility is directly challenged: the film forces viewers to confront decline not as marginal but as central, monumental, and inescapable. Taken together, the three films trace a coherent temporal triad—youth (*Parthenope*), maturity (*F1*), and old age (*The Brutalist*). They articulate different negotiations with posterity: the desire to inscribe oneself into history (*F1*), the ambivalent flight from one's own image (*Parthenope*), and the tragic collapse of legacy (*The Brutalist*). At the same time, they foreground the cinematic medium's unique capacity to hold time: to archive, monumentalize, and expose the passage of life. In Mulvey's words, cinema becomes a "time machine" (2006, 52), delaying the inevitable and yet making it visible. That these films are also very recent—celebrated at Cannes, Venice, or in global mainstream distribution—underscores their cultural urgency. They show how, across diverse modes of production (blockbuster spectacle, auteurist meditation, European arthouse), contemporary cinema converges on the same fundamental question: how does the body inhabit time, caught between the longing for permanence and the inevitability of fragility? Together, they compose not just a sample of current film production, but a collective *lieu de mémoire*, a site where cultural anxieties about ageing, posterity, and mortality are staged, negotiated, and, in part, resisted.

## Case studies – Bodies in Time: *Parthenope*, *The Brutalist*, and *F1* in Dialogue

What follows sutures three case studies into a single arc about how contemporary cinema stages the negotiation between bodies and time. Read together through Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, Mulvey's delayed cinema, and age-studies (Woodward; Gullette; Twigg; Hartung and Kunow), these films map a continuum—youth's ambivalent aura, maturity's ethical return, late-life ruination and endurance—without collapsing into the "master plot" of decline.

***Parthenope* – Youth, Beauty, and the Weight of Time**

As the youth pole of the triad, *Parthenope* figures early life as both aura and burden, staging the young female body as a memory-site—fetishized in the present and mourned in advance. Paolo Sorrentino once again creates a world of nostalgia, a lost Mediterranean spirit of reflection, longing, and warm summers on the seashore. Reflection and loss are now carried on the shoulders of an overwhelming woman: Parthenope (Celeste Dalla Porta). Born from the sea, she is more than a name and a reference to Naples—she is a state, a contradiction, a lived poem. Her figure condenses Pierre Nora's *lieu de mémoire*: a site where identity and history crystallize, yet remain elusive, layered, and fragmentary. Her beauty makes her desired, yet isolates her. Youth fills her with possibilities, yet paralyzes her. She chooses to flee—but from what? Her own potential? Her own image? Her inability to feel fully? This paradox is central to Sorrentino's construction. Parthenope belongs to a realm beyond reason, where grace, imagination, and miracle intervene, but her body becomes both fetish and prison. Woodward's notion of the "mirror stage of aging" is particularly relevant here: Parthenope's beauty is culturally fetishized, yet already inscribed with the shadow of decline. The refusal to capitalize on her appearance dramatizes what Gullette calls a resistance to the cultural narrative of "aging-as-decline".

This is where the film's temporality matters: the camera does not simply admire youth; it delays it, stretches it, and in doing so makes its disappearance audible. The film is structured as a slow panorama of her soul's coastlines. Much like the camera movement that sweeps across Naples, trying to contain its vastness but ultimately proving it impossible, Parthenope too resists capture. Some souls refuse to be framed; Parthenope is one of them. Despite her goddess-like appearance, she perceives herself as small, insignificant. She believes she is only losing, that nothing will ever truly move her. But what lies beyond the spectacle? What remains after the performance? Sorrentino places his character at the boundary between grand truths and aestheticized surfaces. At a symbolic wedding of southern Italy's most powerful families, young and still impressionable, she witnesses rituals of public display, exercises in harmony and chaos. Yet she departs last, already estranged. Here, the cinematic gaze itself comes into question: Mulvey's classic argument about cinema's tendency to fetishize and immobilize women (1975) echoes strongly. Parthenope's beauty is precisely what alienates her, turning her into a spectacle that denies her agency. At one point, she is tempted by the easy path ("I thought I could become an actress"), but ultimately chooses the unglamorous academic road: anthropology. This decision may be read as an attempt to move from image to knowledge, from spectacle to analysis. She seeks refuge in theory, in what systematizes chaos. Yet this too becomes ambiguous: she wonders, "I cannot teach anthropology if I do not know what anthropology is." Here the paradox is complete. Anthropology, which should illuminate the human, becomes for her another mirror, opaque and deceptive.

Naples itself functions as another *lieu de mémoire*, constantly reframed by Sorrentino. The city is both stage and memory, overexposed yet endlessly elusive. It embodies Nora's insight that memory is not transparency but accumulation, a layering that resists closure. For Parthenope, Naples is at once suffocating and indispensable. She despises it, yet cannot detach herself from it. The professor's remark—"simplicity is deceptive"—frames the film's epistemological dilemma. Anthropology, like cinema, teaches us to see; yet what we see is always mediated, belated, marked by loss. Mulvey's reflections resonate here: cinema preserves the aura of youth even as it foreshadows its vanishing. Nostalgia is inscribed in Parthenope's very body, which the camera both idolizes and mourns. Her trajectory can thus be read within age studies as a drama of resistance to cultural scripts. Twigg's account of embodiment and fashion, or Hartung and Kunow's theorization of age in contemporary media, help situate her refusal of commodification: she does not exploit her beauty, nor does she escape its burden. She seeks authentic suffering, believing truth resides there—"but truth is indescribable." Her search is endless, condemned to belatedness. Like Jep Gambardella in *La grande bellezza*, she embodies the solitary fate of those too exceptional to belong. Both figures wander through memory landscapes, trapped by their own aura. Sorrentino stages these reflections with irony, suggesting that in the end, knowledge may not liberate but rather deepen the awareness of loss. The magnificent dilemma remains: how should life be lived, when beauty and time are both unbearable gifts?

If *Parthenope* refuses to be only an image, the next film asks how freedom can still be lived as gesture and risk once youth's aura has faded—and how cinema can "delay" the present long enough to let a life be rewritten.

***The Brutalist* and *Imposibila iubire* – Late Life, Late Style**

As the late-life / late-style pole of the triad, *The Brutalist* confronts ageing as ruination and endurance: architecture dreams of permanence while bodies fissure, and posterity turns into a violent illusion. Watching *The Brutalist* immediately evoked in my mind *Imposibila iubire* (*Impossible Love*, 1983), Constantin Vaeni's adaptation of Marin Preda's *Intrusul*. Despite emerging from distinct historical contexts, both films are linked by a common trajectory: the protagonist who believes he can shape life and the world through construction, yet ultimately becomes rejected, exiled, and undone by the very utopia he seeks to materialize. Both narratives dramatize the figure of the builder of society, who carries the burden of idealism and the desire to mold a better future, only to collide with systemic obstacles that erode his aspirations. In *The Brutalist*, the Jewish émigré architect László Tóth (Adrien Brody) arrives in postwar America with the ambition of erecting monuments that will resist the passage of time. Yet his vision is fragmented by the demands of his patron, the pressures of a ferocious capitalist system, and his own status as an outsider. What begins as a story of reinvention turns into one of compromise and alienation. In *Imposibila iubire*, Călin Surupăceanu (Șerban Ionescu), initially a church-painter's apprentice, joins an engineer

(Amza Pellea) in the construction of a socialist city, viewing the project as a chance to escape suffocating bureaucracy. But his dream is quickly undone by opportunism and corruption. From the leader of a grand endeavor, he ends as a marginalized outcast, abandoned by the world he helped to erect. Both films illustrate that the act of building, initially imagined as boundless, immediately encounters constraints—economic, institutional, and human. The representation of lived space as a locus of promise, gradually suffocated by contradiction, resonates with Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*: architectural and urban projects act as repositories of collective memory, while simultaneously revealing the fractures of the societies that construct them.

For a brief moment, Tóth imagines he has regained the possibility of restoring what Europe denied him. Yet America, imagined as a *tabula rasa* for creation, imposes rigid restrictions—prejudices, conventions, and the patron's incapacity to detach from the past. In *Imposibila iubire*, the initial blank field of the socialist city represents a utopian horizon of purity and equality, but is swiftly exposed as another stage for entrenched mechanisms of power. The protagonists' exclusion from the very spaces they helped inaugurate recalls Mulvey's reflections on cinematic temporality and the politics of looking: the camera frames their downfall not only as social failure but as visual erasure, rendering their presence spectral within the very monuments they once imagined. The collapse of the projects is mirrored in the collapse of the body. Both men become ruins of their own ideals, their corporeality bearing the scars of utopia's implosion. Surupăceanu is left crippled, dragging himself through streets that no longer recognize him. Tóth watches his wife's body ravaged by osteoporosis, while his own ageing face at the Venice Biennale of 1980 carries the weight of his compromises. From the perspective of age studies, their physical decline is inseparable from the disintegration of their visions: the body emerges as a site where temporal fragility and social collapse converge.

Ultimately, both films insist on the tragic paradox of construction: the builder is excluded from the *polis* he has imagined. Tóth ends exiled from his architectural ideal, America functioning less as a site of fulfillment than of corruption. Surupăceanu, once the initiator of a grand city, becomes a bicycle guard, his idealism rendered absurd by historical realities. As both Mulvey and Nora remind us, cinema preserves these figures as both memory and absence: traces of the utopian impulse, but framed within narratives of fragility and erasure. Today, when urban and social experiments—gentrification, smart cities, technological utopias—dominate global debates, the resonance of these films becomes strikingly contemporary. They force us to ask: who builds the present, and how are such figures absorbed or rejected by the systems they seek to transform? *The Brutalist* and *Imposibila iubire* articulate, through architecture and the city, the enduring limits of utopia. In doing so, they remind us that construction is never mere background, but an active character in the drama of human aspiration—one that defines, consumes, and ultimately outlives those who imagine it.

From stone and steel, we pivot to carbon fiber and wind tunnels: the arena changes, but the question persists—how does a body, no longer young, perform time against systems that would measure, manage, and neutralize it?

***F1* – Midlife as Ritual and Risk (when *Top Gun* met *Senna*)**

As the midlife pole of the triad, *F1* recasts maturity as ritual, risk, and self-continuity inside hyper-managed technosystems, where freedom survives less as ideology than as embodied practice. Although it does not rely on an established franchise, *F1* reprises the narrative pattern of the great pop stories of the 1980s–1990s—the solitary outsiders, romantics of risk, who confront the world through tenacity and instinct. Reality is once again fused with an alternative history: the production shot during official races, with real single-seaters and real crowds, facilitated by real-life F1 pilot Lewis Hamilton (co-producer). The result is a stratified realism, in which the boundary between documentary and fiction is intentionally blurred. It is as if the artistic endeavor grafted itself directly onto the live flow of the races—an enormous logistical effort, a live-cinema experiment in which two dimensions unfold simultaneously. In Nora's terms, Formula 1 becomes a *lieu de mémoire*: the film preserves not only images but the affective memory of a global sport, curating a shared past while renewing it in the present. An epicambition fiction, *F1* plugs itself into a glorious past. Here, Sonny Hayes (Brad Pitt) once shared the track with legends like Senna, Prost, or Schumacher, but impulses and recklessness prematurely broke his career. Now he is offered an unexpected chance at rehabilitation, with the APXGP team—the last in the standings in a sport where tenths of a second separate success from failure. Hayes does not merely accept danger—he seeks it, turning it into fuel for a repair job that is no longer about the podium but about dignity. The story is also an open question: where does freedom still fit in an era of insurance, procedures, and controlled simulation? Read through age studies, this is precisely the pivot Gullette identifies: ageing as a narrative one can rewrite rather than a biological decline one must submit to; and, with Mulvey, cinema as the art of delay—a return that suspends linear time so a character can rework the past in the present.

Hayes/Pitt's youth corresponds, in the film culture of the 1980s–1990s, to the emergence or consecration of two mythologies: on the one hand, the franchise; on the other, actors turned into emblematic figures [*Karate Kid* (John G. Avildsen, 1984), *First Blood* (Ted Kotchheff, 1982), *Mission: Impossible* (Brian De Palma, 1996), *The Fast and the Furious* (Rob Cohen, 2001)], etc., are built around the outsider who wins. And *Rocky* (John G. Avildsen, 1976) can be seen as a crucial precursor to this genealogy: essentially, stories of the one who fights with his heart. A romantic era, where logical rigor was secondary and the force of the message dominated. Hayes does not seek to defeat the young or to defy the system; he wants to become, just once more, the master of his own fears. Thus, the script shifts the classic underdog-to-overlord formula from the external register into the affective, spiritual, and sensorial one. Victory becomes a state. Woodward would call this "performing

age": Hayes performs maturity as a style of embodiment—skill, ritual, restraint—rather than surrender to decline. He is idealist, romantic, nostalgic: running in the rain, connecting with the earth, pulling on the same lucky socks, he cannot drive without the poker card in his pocket—even if it once betrayed him. He seeks to reach, at least once more, the zone where time suspends and the car, instead of biting the asphalt, lifts. Where space and time fuse and fly. A state of grace. This is Mulvey's temporality made visceral: the "stilled" instant inside motion—the cinematic delay that lets sensation be re-felt, not just recorded.

His personality is constructed in contrast with another kind of arrogance—colder, more impersonal—embodied by the young Joshua Pearce (Damson Idris), who strikingly recalls the actual footballer Ousmane Dembélé, just as emotionally opaque, gnawed by uncertainty and premature labels. For a long time he was considered an enigma, a squandered talent—but here he is now, reinvented, a Champions League winner, Ballon d'Or favorite, and the leader of a PSG that seems to have found its identity along with him—*enfin, ici c'est Paris*. Fascinatingly, for years, Dembélé was one of the most popular players in the FIFA videogame simulator—thanks to ambidexterity and technical attributes that performed even better in virtual space. Like Joshua, he seemed freer there. Both are products of the same phenomenon: enormous potential, but unstable—hard to channel in reality, where pressure, randomness, and the body's fragility cannot be gamed. And Hayes, of course, is the opposite; nothing in his attributes would make him the favorite, but he performs precisely because he refuses to stop at equations on paper. Placed alongside *Parthenope*, you get the other face of youthful myth: where Parthenope treats beauty as a burden that resists commodification, Joshua embodies the digitized promise of talent that risks dissolving into simulation. The contrast is evident in how they appear after an accident: Joshua—fragile, disoriented, monitored in a high-tech center; Sonny—calm, in a simple hospital where the body naturally resumes its functions. At the same time, Joshua's spaces are vast, aseptic, minimalist; Sonny's are narrow, messy, loaded with objects, tattoos, scars. A subtle ideological line: the two characters function like shattered mirrors of the same aspirations, but coming from different eras. Sonny is visceral, connected to gesture, matter, earth. Joshua is digitally native, dependent on the system. The two states oppose not only two ages but two regimes of truth. Read with *The Brutalist*, the cockpit here is a micro-architecture of speed—an apparatus that shapes bodies—just as Corbet's buildings sculpt and finally consume László Tóth. Across the three films, environment is never neutral: it memorializes, disciplines, and eventually marks the body with time.

The soundtrack, signed by the legendary Hans Zimmer, proposes a mix of affective nostalgia and contemporary style—a combination meant to reach audiences from different generations. From the Gen X-DNA country song "Bad As I Used To Be" (Chris Stapleton), as Hayes's emotional confession—*I can't change the way I am, you see / I'm just as bad as I used to be*—to Gen Z titles like "Messy" (Rosé) or "Just Keep Watching" (Tate McRae), and up to millennial-vibe interventions like "D.A.N.C.E." (Peggy Gou), each track works as a

vector of empathy. Music is not just background, but an instrument of affective marketing: if you recognize yourself in a sonic fragment, the film is speaking to you. Nora again: pop cues operate as micro-sites of memory, stitching generations into a shared affective register. With a huge budget (~$200 million), *F1* is to Formula 1 what *Top Gun: Maverick* (also directed by Joseph Kosinski) was to the US Navy, which provided access to military means and facilities, receiving in exchange what has often been cited as one of the most effective recruitment boons of the last two decades (enlistments reportedly rose by around 8%). Cinema thus functions as a soft-marketing instrument—a form of attraction through spectacle and charisma. Even economically, the impact is measurable: Liberty Media's (FWONK) shares reportedly rose by about 10% in 2025, a jump linked at least partially to the film's appearance. In a corporate world, *F1* is a strange animal: made with the resources of an ultra-controlled blockbuster but carrying a story about freedom, instinct, and the stubbornness of being yourself. The film sells an old dream into a new world, preserving the glimmer of an era that will not return. Hayes is a pathological romantic who avoids modernity not out of hate, but out of loyalty to a lost ideal. Taken together with *Parthenope* and *The Brutalist*, the triad maps a full temporal arc: youth's ambivalent aura, maturity's ethical return, late-life ruination and endurance. All three are less about defeating time than about performing it—cinema as the space where bodies negotiate memory, risk, and decline outside the "master plot" Gullette warns against.

## Coda:
## Cinema as the Practice of Time

Threaded across these three works is a shared conviction: film does not merely archive time; it performs it. *Parthenope* renders youth as aura and burden; *F1* recasts mid-life as a choreography of ritual and risk; *The Brutalist* confronts late style as a contest between memory cast in stone and bodies that fissure. With Nora, each film installs its own *lieux de mémoire*—city, circuit, construction—where private affect and public history co-inhabit the frame. With Mulvey, each cultivates a poetics of delay—moments of suspension in which movement reveals its own stillness and the past insists within the present. And with age-studies, each resists the inevitabilism of decline, insisting instead on self-continuity as a lived, filmed negotiation.

Taken together, these films ask not how to outpace time, but how to dwell within it—ethically, attentively, against erasure. In their very different registers (arthouse, mainstream, historical drama), they compose a single lesson: cinema's most enduring monument is not the building or the trophy, not even the youthful face, but the gesture that holds in one frame beauty and wear, risk and care, loss and return.

## Conclusion

Ageing on screen is never merely biological but always mediated by cultural scripts. As Woodward and Gullette have shown, later life is not simply lived but also performed—shaped by gendered expectations, by the "master plot of decline," and by the need for self-continuity across temporal rupture (Woodward 181–82; Gullette 8–13). Twigg's insight that it is often "exceedingly difficult to distinguish denial of ageing from resistance to cultural conventions of aging" reminds us that cinematic characters may appear to resist age even as they embody its cultural inscriptions (285–305). At the same time, Hartung and Kunow have emphasized how the cultural experience of senescence has often been organized around neglect and invisibility, with women especially subjected to the "double standard of aging" (17–19). Cinema, however, from *Amour* to Lelouch's trilogy or *Parthenope*, resists such invisibility: it foregrounds ageing bodies as visible, desiring, and capable of sustaining intimacy.

Cinema's capacity does not stop at representation. As Nora argued, modernity dislocates memory from lived experience and relocates it into *lieux de mémoire*, symbolic sites that condense and preserve collective memory. Films such as *The Best Years of a Life* or *Amour* function precisely in this way: the actors' ageing bodies are not only characters but also archives, carrying half a century of cinematic and cultural history. Mulvey reframes this archival function by seeing cinema as an art of "delay" and repetition—a technology that allows us to hold time still, to return to what has passed, to reconcile younger and older selves in a single frame. Sequels, epilogues, and remakes intensify this experience: they turn the cinema into a medium of return, where ageing is not disappearance but reappearance, not decline but memorialization.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that cinema does more than depict the passage of time: it scripts ageing, negotiates its cultural asymmetries, and resists the ideology of decline by staging continuity, intimacy, and memory. At the same time, it functions as collective archive, a *lieu de mémoire* where ageing bodies become both personal narratives and cultural monuments. To study ageing in cinema is thus to grasp a double movement: the way films perform and gender age within cultural scripts, and the way they simultaneously transform those scripts into shared memory, preserving fragility and permanence in the same gesture.

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