The Aesthetics of Ugliness in Contemporary Malayalam Cinema

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Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

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This book first published 2024

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-0364-0936-4
ISBN (Ebook): 978-1-0364-0937-1

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PREFACE

Every culture has its concept of beauty and ugliness which is reflected in its visual culture. Though varied from time to time, notions of beauty and ugliness have been important at all points in history. Cultural texts are populated by representations that convey to the viewers what is beautiful and ugly, good and bad, attractive and desirable, preferred and normal. The visual culture creates as well as sustains ideas of beauty and ugliness. The mass reproduction of artworks (literally and figuratively brings it closer to the masses) allows them to be placed in different contexts, thereby altering their connotative possibilities. It disperses a particular image to the masses that absorb it as one of a number of images. A total grasp of the whole 'text' at any one time eludes the audience, and a 'complete' understanding arises only as the act or interpreting comes to an end (or even much later). Aesthetic experience is generated in the encounter between artifacts and specific readers/audience in specific conditions. Popular cultural texts help one understand, negotiate and 'see' the world. Cinema opens up a whole new way of perceiving reality. It has an undeniable power to address large communities. Through its 'depictive potential' (depicts time and space) films manifest an artistic vision. In order to shape a cinematic 'text,' one draws on his/her reservoir of experience with the people and the world, his/her inner linkage of words and things, encounters with spoken or written texts. One participates in the story, identifies with the characters, and shares his/her conflicts and feelings. Perceptually, the viewer sees the image 'as is' on the screen. The film (a cultural artifact) has its own unique connotative ability ensuring that the viewer has to exert almost no mental energy in understanding the film. The ambience of a true aesthetic experience requires the viewer-subject to free himself from all moral considerations, since they threaten to divert the subject from the artistic representation itself. Keeping pace with time and technology, films have witnessed digital sound effects, advanced special effects, choreography, international appeal, further investments from corporate sectors along with finer scripts and performances moving on to OTT platforms. Visual perception (the practice of seeing) is thus a socially and culturally conditioned or discursively determined form of visuality, in which the viewer's perception of cultural norms and representational practices, and their familiarity, become significant (Foster

ix). The film ('text') lies open to interpretations depending on the viewer's ability to produce meaning from his/her encounter with it. To make it communicative, the 'auteur' has to assume that aesthetic notions and the ensemble of codes he/she relies on is the same as that shared by his/her possible reader/viewer who is supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the 'author' deals with them generatively (Eco, *The Role of the Reader* 7). The emphasis is on the power of imagination that can render things artistically acceptable.

The concept of ugliness has long been a topic of philosophical, artistic, and cultural inquiry within Western theory, spanning numerous centuries. The concept has been subject to various interpretations and has undergone changes throughout its development. The establishment of Western aesthetics can be attributed to the contributions of Plato and various other philosophers throughout the period of ancient Greece. Plato espoused the notion that beauty was intrinsically linked to elevated, celestial forms, whereas ugliness symbolized a deficiency in the realms of symmetry and organization. The individual in question regarded physical unattractiveness as indicative of deficiencies in moral or intellectual capacities. The effect of Christian religion on Western conceptions of beauty and ugliness was prominent during the Middle Ages. The concept of ugliness has frequently been linked to notions of sin, malevolence, and impurity. The artistic portrayals of demons and hideous beings served as a means to illustrate moral teachings and the repercussions associated with sinful behaviour. The Renaissance period signified a notable transformation in Western aesthetics. The Renaissance period witnessed a heightened preoccupation with the human physique, which consequently fostered a more intricate comprehension of aesthetic appeal, encompassing the recognition and admiration of defects. During the 18th century, there was a notable emergence of the concept of the sublime, which placed significant emphasis on the profound and frequently fear-inducing elements found within nature and artistic expressions. The concept of ugliness was occasionally regarded as an inherent component of the sublime, eliciting profound emotional reactions. Romanticism progressively embraced the sombre and macabre aspects of existence. During the 18th and 19th centuries, scholars such as Immanuel Kant undertook extensive investigations into the field of aesthetics. Kant's aesthetic theories stated that the appreciation of ugliness in art may be justified, since it served to question established norms and stimulate intellectual and emotional responses. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, there has been a notable emergence of modern and contemporary art movements that have actively questioned and disrupted conventional understandings of aesthetic

beauty and its antithesis, ugliness. Artistic movements such as Dadaism, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism purposefully integrated elements that were deemed unattractive or disconcerting in order to stimulate intellectual contemplation and challenge existing conventions. Postmodernist scholars, drawing inspiration from deconstructionist theory, have critically examined the dichotomous relationship between beauty and ugliness. The authors contend that these conceptions are inherently subjective and shaped by cultural influences, asserting that ugliness might possess its own inherent worth and meaning. The exploration of ugliness is also a subject of inquiry within the realm of social and cultural studies, wherein its connection to many facets of society such as identity, gender, and race is examined. The concept of ugliness can be subject to the effect of cultural and historical variables, alongside power relations. Within the realm of Western thinking, the conceptualization of ugliness has undergone a transformative process, transitioning from moral and religious evaluations to more intricate and individualized viewpoints. The recurrent motif has been a prevalent subject matter in various forms of artistic expression, literary works, and philosophical discourse, functioning as a means of providing commentary, analysis, and delving into the intricacies of the human condition. Perceptions of unattractiveness are inherently interconnected with cultural, historical, and philosophical frameworks. The concept of ugliness in Indian aesthetic theory, specifically within the framework of classical Indian aesthetics, is a multidimensional and intricate notion. The Indian aesthetic tradition has a profound engagement with the essence of beauty and the arts, encompassing a wide range of perspectives on the concept of ugliness and its interconnectedness with beauty. The idea of "rasa" holds significant importance in Indian aesthetics, since it pertains to the emotional essence or aesthetic flavour elicited by a piece of artwork. There exist a total of nine fundamental rasas, encompassing various emotional experiences such as "shringara" (pertaining to eroticism), "hasya" (associated with comedy), "karuna" (evoking feelings of sadness or pity), and "bhayanaka" (eliciting fear or terror), among others. The concept of ugliness might be linked to the bhayanaka rasa, a sentiment in Indian aesthetics that encompasses emotions of fear, horror, and the grotesque. The Bhayanaka rasa holds a significant position among the major rasas, encompassing characteristics that can be perceived as unattractive or fear-inducing. The aforementioned emotional experience, commonly referred to as "rasa," should not be exclusively perceived as bad. On the contrary, it is valued for its capacity to evoke intense emotional reactions among the spectators. Unattractive or intimidating elements in art or performance are perceived as a method of

evoking this rasa. Ugliness is a recurring theme in diverse manifestations of Indian art, encompassing sculpture, painting, and literature. The aforementioned representations fulfill diverse functions, including the communication of ethical teachings, the portrayal of the repercussions of behaviours, and the emphasis on the transitory nature of existence. Balance and harmony are fundamental ideals in Indian aesthetics. The appreciation of balance and order is evident even in the portrayal of ugliness or dread. The coexistence of unattractive elements with visually pleasing ones has the potential to augment the overall aesthetic encounter. The aesthetic thought has been inspired by Indian philosophical traditions, namely Vedanta and Buddhism. These philosophical perspectives frequently highlight the ephemeral and deceptive characteristics of the physical realm, potentially influencing one's conceptions of aesthetics, encompassing both beauty and ugliness. Within certain forms of Indian art and literature, there exists a notable association between the portrayal of ugliness or grotesqueness and its potential spiritual or symbolic implications. Within the realm of Indian aesthetics, the notion of embracing ugliness is intricately linked with the overarching concept of rasa, as well as the belief that art ought to elicit emotional reactions and engross the observer or reader on a profound plane. The presence of ugliness can manifest in numerous forms, although it is commonly incorporated within a broader aesthetic framework that aims to achieve equilibrium and cohesion among disparate aspects, resulting in a profound and significant aesthetic encounter.

Across history, manifestations of the ugly have surfaced to complicate and shift the concept, even positively, pushing against existing aesthetic standards and social practices. It carries varied social ramifications. Ugliness, its depiction; tangled aesthetic and cultural consequences are of significance as far as a visual text is concerned. The concept of ugliness based in the physical world, remains conceptual—ambiguous, adaptable. Alternative concepts of ugliness arise through varied perspectives, moving beyond the ‘eye’ of the beholder to less visual terms embodied in the beholder’s ‘I.’ Film genres like the horror films and gangster movies lead its audience into the realm of the ugly through unnatural horror, evil and bloodshed. Human bodies are subject to mutilation, decay, degeneration and transformation on screen as in life. Supernatural monsters evoke emotions like fear, terror, disgust, shock and suspense in the audience. Unpleasant experiences appear on screen which the audience ‘enjoys’ despite being frightened. Splatter movies focus on graphic portrayals of splattering of gore through the use of special effects; display a fascination with the vulnerability of the human body and the theatricality of its

mutilation. Most crime thrillers (and horror films), involving bloodshed and death, visualize murder as an 'artistic performance.' In crime/gangster movies the cityscapes (or ugly urbanity) are charged with danger and corruption. Setting, chiaroscuro lighting, shadowy low-key lit interiors, all contribute to creating the claustrophobic and the seedy in cinema.

Cinema renders the beautiful and the ordinary, the wicked and the repulsive as aesthetic pleasure that the viewer's experience. It transforms the (negative) emotions through representations of fear, melancholy, and terror into the 'pleasant' and the 'acceptable,' bringing in a cathartic effect. What is repulsive in 'real' is 'acceptable' on screen (real existence of the object and its representation) even if it evokes revulsion. The disagreeable sensation of disgust/dislike arises by virtue of the power of imagination. It does not arise from the supposition that the evil/ugly are real but from the mental image of it, which is 'real.' Feelings of disgust thus aroused are real. Representation of the beautiful and the ugly are linked to these emotions evoked. The emotions represented within the film interact as part of the film's total system—grimace of pain (giving rise to a similar expression on the audience's face) might be consistent with the character's response to bad news, a character's sly expression prepares the audience for the later revelation of his/her villainous side or a cheerful scene might stand in contrast to a mournful one. The emotions represented on screen (like the impact of demonic laughter) are experienced by the audience. The body (male and female) is one of the prime sites of ugliness. The body as it becomes altered with time tends to become a site socially despised—rendered ugly in appearance, useless in capitalist schemes of output and reproduction, and stigmatized as not worthy and incapable of sexual interest and desire. The process of desexualization affects ageing bodies. Transgender, queer, and non-binary bodies are subjected to scrutiny and control through derogatory terminology rooted in a politics of ugliness. In opposition is the moral world of darkness signifying inner ugliness. Physiognomy (that a person's ugly outward appearance reflects his/her inward nature; also considered an 'inheritable trait') is in addition a site of the aesthetic and the unaesthetic. A close link is traditionally established between a sound body and a sound mind which brings forth happiness. External or physical deformity is considered a pointer towards a vile inner world. Paradoxically, an ugly exterior may also highlight the inner beauty. What is taboo (like sexual explicitness) is considered ugly. Indulgence (in visual culture too) in it is often seen as a sign of rebellion and an attempt at gaining social acceptance for the unaesthetic.

The cinematic representation of the ugly; its politics and the aestheticization of the unaesthetic are woven into the screen space.

Cinematic texts deploy the ugly along with the beautiful (a duality) through the theme or content, characters and makeup, visuals, dialogue, songs and background music, setting, camera angle and lighting as well as the moral world it creates on screen. It may reflect the ugly social reality (like the urban-rural divide), a subaltern existence or draw from tradition and mythology (casting characters in the mould of the *asura* or the *yakshi*). The reaction evoked (disgust) both strikes us viscerally (as 'distasteful') and attracts us despite its repulsive appearance ('disgusting'). Ugliness dis(pleases). One thing can be more [ugly] than another and it involves a comparative note. Hippias Major's mention of ugliness shows that it can 'occur' in an erstwhile beautiful object when that object is compared with a greater beauty. This is the 'ugly by comparison' concept, which upon consideration seems to light a word for ugly if the fault is only 'plainness' or 'commonness'. We ought to observe, however, that sometimes the comparison heralds not only the presence of a superior, but draws attention to flawed features or general failures in the once-beautiful-object. In *Phaedrus* (201-202) we receive the helpful reminder that there is middling ground between beauty and ugliness. While aestheticians endeavour to conceptualize taste in relation to beauty, sociologists associate taste with social acceptance and attractiveness. Good taste in consuming art and commodities serves as a status marker or a means of class distinction. This book purports to analyze the different ways in which ugliness is employed in contemporary Malayalam cinema.

Cinema as an aesthetic construct exists in a specific historical and political context. Films address the audience by drawing upon culturally intelligible narrative and performance codes. This occurs along with their adaptation and even outright unsettling by introducing new features in the image and soundtrack, and in techniques for the construction of subjectivity. It is a reflection of the particular society (and of its aesthetic and unaesthetic values) in which it is made. It is a combination of numerous aspects like the unconscious eye of the camera and the conscious eye of the director, of the intimate face of things recorded on celluloid and their intentional arrangement during the editing process, of the will of the artist and the silent impression of things. The theatre functions as a 'social space' marked by duality of presence and absence, rootedness and transport—a 'fantasy space.' To construct meaning the audience decodes the film on screen before them. As a viewer, one desires the action on screen and waits for it to happen; even getting disappointed when it does not. All these determine and contribute towards the visual depiction of the ugly and the beautiful. The visual images, sound, colour, lighting, décor, actor's physicality, special effects, camera shots and

angles convey socio-cultural import as well as the aesthetic (beauty) and the unaesthetic (bestiality or ugliness) to the viewer. The demarcation between what is considered aesthetic, or not, is often negotiable and context dependent. Divergent notions of what is defined as aesthetic or unaesthetic also coexist. This visual space unravels a world of paranoia and entrapment; of forces bearing down on the individual which are too overwhelming to resist—the viewer waiting for action to return to order/normalcy. Cinema with its ability to destabilize can be threatening by eroding the cultural distinctiveness of a place. It can also reaffirm and intensify forms of belonging by providing a cultural foil against which local identities (and with it concepts of beauty and ugly) may be hardened.

The intra-aesthetic categories (of Beauty-Ugly) often highlight the role that 'artifacts' play in the political, economic, moral and religious life of society. The Ugly intersects with the material body (male, female and the gender neutral), the profane, the social (violence and corruption) and the mythical (*yakshi*), the subaltern and the hegemonic. It covers the physical, psychological as well as social manifestations of the ugly ('unaesthetic') on screen. The ugly may be incorporated into the cinematic space by way of content/theme, physical representations, use of symbols, the setting, dialogue or the use of camera. The functional significance, the cinematic techniques that have contributed towards it, the ways in which the unaesthetic is configured and manipulated to achieve the desired effect become pertinent in the context. The first chapter provides an introduction, the second, an account of the aesthetic categories of Beauty and Ugly, the third chapter traces the visual culture in Kerala, highlights its significance as well as the framing of the aesthetic and the unaesthetic within the visual culture of the region, the fourth, considers the screen space as occupied by the hero and the villain making the body a concrete physical terrain to etch ugliness on screen. The fragmented self, narrative as well as physical disability and deformity are also taken up. The two 'aesthetic' focal points (Beauty/Ugly) around which the cinematic plot revolves, reveal the numerous visual configurations of the Ugly. The fifth chapter takes up the gendered identity and locates the woman within the 'male' cinematic structure. It takes up the 'politics' involved in the representation of beauty with regard to the female body (a site of sexuality, violence and ugly modernity) in contemporary Malayalam cinema. Ugliness with reference to the positioning of characters in the socio-cultural space forms the crux of the sixth chapter. The dialectical relation between the center (dominant and positive) and the margin (subaltern and negative) reveals the notion of ugliness attached to the subaltern (or 'ugly groups' and their 'habitus'). The seventh section focuses on the different manifestations of the ugly

with reference to the action and horror genre. Violence, mental disability, horror and supernatural fall within purview here. The eighth chapter provides the conclusion.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Aesthetics is concerned with the creation and appreciation of beauty; the nature of art, beauty, and taste. Philosophers have defined beauty in every age, allowing for the reconstruction of the concept of beauty and ugliness over time. Because beauty and ugliness are diametrically opposed, it is difficult to delve into one while ignoring the other. They are relevant to various cultures and historical periods. The earliest Western theory, found in the works of early Greek philosophers, saw mathematics as having a strong connection with beauty. This perspective on symmetry and proportion is closely related to ideas of beauty; with ugliness being associated with what is asymmetrical and disproportionate. The rule of the whole, of the combination of separate elements, of interrelationships and juxtapositions within the object, is viewed as beauty. The various elements (parts) must work together in a 'composition' (without losing their identities) to form a totality/whole. Plato regarded beauty as the Idea (Form) preceding all others. Aristotle saw a connection between beauty and virtue, claiming that virtue strives for the beautiful. Beauty, according to Nietzsche, is no longer part of the world order; it is instead the image and product of our vanity, and it must be supplemented by the realisation that the ugly belongs to the beautiful as an antithesis, and nothing is uglier than a ‘degenerating person’ (Nietzsche 2005, 202). Aesthetic perceptions have always been at the centre of life and art, and it contains both eternal and relative elements. The relative aspect of beauty (and ugliness) is contingent on culture, fashion, morals, and the environment. Standards of beauty and ugliness have evolved over time (in response to shifting cultural values), theoretically progressing from Plotinus, Aquinas, Hegel, Goethe, and the German aesthetes to later Foucault, Baudrillard, Bourdieu, and others. "Beauty is all around you, wherever you choose to look for it," says Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968). Mimesis (in art) entails creative imitation, specifically re-creation, from which something new emerges. In contemporary times, visual media simulacra of events often appear more beautiful than the events themselves. The search for a work's aura occurs

despite the fact that the technical reproducibility of art threatens the aura's very existence as a delicate trace of beauty.

The word "ugly" comes from the Middle English term for 'frightful' or 'repulsive' (from the Old Norse *uggligr*, "to be feared or dreaded"). Though medieval in origin, the concept existed much earlier, as evidenced by mythological monsters (such as Gorgon and Medusa) and severely malformed human and animal figures. Rakshasas or malevolent *asuras* (such as Ravana, Surpanekha, Hidimba and Hidimbi, Bakasura and Mahishasura) were associated with and depicted as ugly (evil) and fierce in the Indian context. The *devas* represented the good, while the *asuras* represented the evil (both indicated even in their physical representation and demeanour). Natural human inclinations frequently transform into the demonic (*asura*); become negative (emotions such as hatred, anger, cruelty, hypocrisy, lust, and conceit) and destructive. Ugly associates itself with everything that needs to be avoided, derided, or ignored; implying its potent negativity. While the Romantics questioned earlier eighteenth-century aesthetics, neo-classical aesthetics was founded on harmony, symmetry, variety within unity, and the rational subservience of parts to the whole. Similarly, Modernism and later, Postmodernism challenged and changed realism's dominant tenets. Marxist, Feminist, and Postcolonial writers argue that opposed and alternative aesthetics based on different versions of beauty and visions of pleasure (more 'inclusive' with representations of labourers, women, gendered, ethnic, subaltern identities) resist or replace stereotypes based on Eurocentric, aristocratic, bourgeois, and patriarchal values that exist within a social sphere. The way Eurocentric aesthetic concepts have been absorbed into Indian (visual) culture demonstrates their influence within a cultural context. The concept of ugliness or unsightliness extends beyond the physical appearance, encompassing a broader range of qualities or attributes. In Western contexts and historical narratives, the concept of ugly has played a significant role as a social construct that delineates an individual's entitlements and opportunities within social, cultural, and political domains.

Cinema depicts reality, which is a blend of the aesthetic and the unaesthetic (and the abstract values associated with it); beauty and ugliness, good and evil. The ugly and the grotesque (the presence of the ludicrous alongside the monstrous, disgusting, and horrifying) have become vital in modern life because they allow for the depiction of deformed, horrible, comic, and droll aspects of reality. There is a nearly universal aversion to the ugly (explicitly manifested in visual culture), the manifestation of which varies across cultures and individuals. Ugly exists as a (rather neglected aesthetic category) negation of the beautiful (the

'preferred'). Ugliness should not be relegated to the shadow of beauty as an opposing function; as a (preferred) negation evoking revulsion and consternation. Though ugly is seen as a 'threat' to beauty and is mostly transformed or eliminated, ideas of ugliness are inextricably linked to those of beauty and cannot be separated from it. Although it is associated with everything that is 'unpleasant' and everything that leads to a highly 'unfavourable' evaluation, ugliness positions itself as an 'essential' in the movement/transformation towards the beautiful sublime. When beauty is not attained, it serves as a standard for comparison, causing resentment and dissatisfaction. Ugliness is not limited to the physical realm. It can be discussed in terms of the landscape, moral content, the lack of form or symmetry, the gendered body, or the socio-political context. Individuals and groups are frequently 'classified' as ugly. This is frequently associated with issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, nationality, age, and disability. The 'unaesthetic' is also associated with insights into the self's instability and fragmentation. The ugly contributes to the effect of the beautiful by creating a series of contrasts. As ugliness is a relative concept, it is frequently thought to be better understood in relation to its positive premise/binary, Beauty. Artists like Auguste Rodin speak of Ugly as that which is formless and unhealthy, implying illness, suffering, and destruction that are contrary to regularity (the sign of health). The immoral, the vicious, the criminal, and all abnormality that brings evil are dubbed 'ugly.' "Let a great artist or a great writer use one of these uglinesses, instantly it is transfigured: with a touch of his fairy wand, he has turned it into beauty; it is alchemy; it is enchantment!" says Rodin. (Gsell 19). The odious epithet 'ugly' is used to describe beings and objects that are morally repugnant; it highlights the beautiful and good by contrast. Kitsch and camp fall into the ugly category (lacking true artistic merit). Kitsch represents bourgeois society's alienation, the celebration of the mundane, and the mingling of the bogus and mediocre with bad taste. Whereas beauty excludes ugliness, the comic associates with it. It removes the repugnance caused by ugliness and transforms it into the comic (Linstead 21-22). Caricature is also founded on the relationship between the categories of ugliness and the beautiful and sublime. Ugliness reaches its apogee in the subject's gross and vicious distortion. The 'text' becomes a spectacle, a caricature of the 'particular,' prompting the audience to question seemingly unambiguous conditions.

Philosophers who developed a theoretical explanation for the presence of the ugly in art emphasize that the created universe is a whole that must be valued in its entirety. The Creation is viewed as a whole, with shadows making the light shine more beautifully and the ugly belonging to a

general order (and thus having the potential to look/lead to the beautiful). A positive evaluation (such as the 'beauty of the devil') becomes difficult in the representation of the ugly/evil. This is made possible by a transformative phase in which 'good' and 'positive' are introduced into the represented ugly/evil (or 'enjoyment' of the visual representation). The debate over ugliness reached a climax in 1853, with the publication of Karl Rosenkranz's *Aesthetic of Ugliness* (*Aesthetik des Hässlichen*), considered the first philosophical treatise entirely devoted to the subject. Rosenkranz attempted to develop a system for classifying and categorizing ugliness in art (explicitly correlating ugliness, evil and the diabolical). He saw it as a dialectical foil for the represented beauty, bringing together the beauty of proportions and formlessness (or the absence of 'form'). The nineteenth-century obsession with the ugly resulted in the full development of a 'new' concept of visualization in which ugliness was essential to the representation of modernity. A framework emerged in which the Ugly came to be introduced as a self-sufficient category in the realm of what is 'representable' in art, rather than as an antithetical, subordinate function (Rosenkranz 146). Ugliness has a structure of varying intensity and degree, ranging from lack of form (a 'lack') to deformity and repugnance, which reaches its peak intensity in the diabolic. The deformed and disabled (such as Quasimodo, the hunchback of Notre-Dame) came to occupy a central place in this 'new' frame that welcomed the grotesque and the horrifying. Poets such as Baudelaire proposed a different 'modern' aesthetic in which the beauty of evil, the horrible and disgusting, could coexist with the beautiful (Bettella, "The Debate on Beauty and Ugliness" 70). He recognized the grotesque's aesthetic value and proposed an art form that could broaden its representational scope by including both the ugly and the beautiful. Baudelaire put forward a duality in art that corresponds to the individual's duality. Beauty and ugliness, good and evil, infernal and divine are not alternatives, but coexist—that beauty can lurk in the ugliness, and reality is a mix of the divine and the infernal. Ugliness, according to Baudelaire, provides the opportunity to achieve a new type of ideality. In an attempt to gain "some entry into ideality," his Satanism can be seen as a triumph of evil—"evil devised by intelligence," not "merely animal evil" (Friedrich 28). As Paul Allen Miller puts it, the relationship between the poles (ugly and beautiful) is more of a simultaneous tension, interdependence, and interaction of polarities than a synthesis or coexistence of opposites (Miller 370). It is not a subordination of one pole to the other, nor is it a dialectical sublimation of contradictions, but rather a fruitful interaction and simultaneous mutual determination.

Edmund Burke classified ugliness into three categories. It states negatively that the ugly is that which the beautiful is not, "... the polar opposite to those qualities... laid down for the constituents of beauty" (*The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* 137). Smoothness is regarded as a "very significant part of the effect of beauty... indeed the most significant" (133). Burke contended that if a beautiful object is given "a broken and rugged surface... however well-formed it may be in other respects, it no longer pleases" (133). Cousins and Zizek both implicitly agree with Burke in emphasising the 'broken' surface as a contributing factor to the ugly—"The shock of ugliness occurs when the surface is actually cut, opened up, so that direct insights into the actual depth of the skinless flesh dispels the spiritual, immaterial pseudo depth" (Zizek, *The Abyss of Freedom* 22). While a smooth skin allows the subject to project his or her fantasy of the transcendent human being inside the object of perception, the "shrivelled complexion" (Shelley 45) of Frankenstein's creation or Quasimodo's physical appearance radically disrupts any attempt to elevate him above the "filthy mass" (Shelley 113) of his flesh. In the second part of his (anti-)definition of the ugly, Burke states that "though ugliness be the opposite to beauty, it is not the opposite to proportion and fitness. Because something with symmetry or proportion could be very ugly…" (*A Philosophical Enquiry* 137). Burke distinguishes the ugly from the sublime by mapping the terrain of the unattractive. While the beautiful object elicits pleasure and the sublime object elicits pain, sublime pain, paradoxically, also elicits pleasure—when danger or pain becomes pressing, they are incapable of eliciting delight and are simply terrible; but at certain distances and with certain modifications, they may be and are delightful (45). Beauty entails the concept of good, while ugliness entails the concept of evil. The disgusting is the ugly and it elicits an immediate reaction. While beauty delights, ugly threatens to unsettle the subject; it looms over it and threatens to destroy it.

Plato, one of the first authors to explicitly advance theories of beauty and ugliness, embodies many enduring attitudes while proposing radically different, if not incompatible, models. Socrates, on the other hand, inquires and eventually fails to find definitions for concepts such as virtue, goodness, and beauty in the early, 'aporetic' dialogues. The search for a definition in *Hippias Major* is stymied by the observation that the same objects and people are both beautiful and ugly. Plato's *Symposium* exhibits and dissects a wide range of then-current views on love and beauty before Socrates advances what may be considered the genuine Platonic view—beauty is love, or more precisely desire, which extends from the animal instinct to procreate, to the highest mode of experiencing beauty and love.

Consistent with this, ugliness is defined as that which prevents conception, that ‘in which one does not propagate’. In the later dialogues, Philebus advances a more ‘classical’ view of what makes things beautiful, while still distinguishing beauty from pleasure, utility, and goodness. Kant introduces a second category, disgust, which has the opposite effect—when confronted with a repulsive scene, even in a work of art, the viewer is so disturbed that he considers it to be real and therefore non-art. Between the sublime, the revolting, and the beautiful artistic representations of the ugly, it becomes more difficult to explain ugliness as an aesthetic fact. Throughout history, ugliness has been associated with a variety of negative terms, including evil as described by the philosopher and theologian Augustine of Hippo. Augustine believed there was no such thing as ugliness. Pierre Bourdieu in the twentieth century argued that it is merely an ideological fiction used to enforce the judgements of elite consumers. *The Politics of Ugliness* examines the concept of ugly within the context of society and public life. From ritual invocations of mythic monsters to the scare tactics of the early twentieth-century avant-garde, and from the cabinet of curiosities to contemporary identity politics, ugliness has been present throughout art history. It has been as active as beauty, and frequently much more of a reality, although much less frequently a conclusion. It is an organized opposition to the canon of beauty. The experience of ugliness encompasses the beholder's frequently overwhelming thoughts, emotions, and sensations, the repercussions of which extend to the political, social, and moral spheres.

As a response to the exhaustion of mass imagery in pop art, 'Abject Art' overtook the art market and its theoretical organs at the end of the 1980s. Abject art, visceral, direct, and widely publicized, employed 'low' bodily products and their simulacra. Abject art was more of a direct return to representation, reminiscent of the strategies of high modernists such as T.S. Eliot, despite being considered a radical break with modernism. It aimed to expose viewers and artists to psychological and political realities that the dominant visual culture was incapable of representing. To transcend ‘mere’ aesthetic categories, abject art brought to the fore issues of aesthetic experience implicit in notions of the beautiful and the ugly. According to Elaine Scarry, Theodor Adorno, Karl Rosenkranz, and Mary Shelley, the ugly is neither nature nor culture, purely in the mind nor in the world, and neither a solid fact nor an unfounded opinion. It appears to be intriguing due to its position between concept and reality.

The emotional effects of texts on their readers/viewers have been the primary focus of emotive issues. The reader’s/viewer’s sympathetic identification with the feelings of characters in a text is the simple but

powerful question of 'objectified emotion,' or unfelt but perceived feeling. The lack of attention paid to this way of discussing feelings and literature highlights a long-standing problem in philosophical aesthetics: an overemphasis on feelings in terms of purely subjective or personal experience turns artworks into "containers for the spectator's psychology" (Adorno, AT, 275). Multiple things colour an affective experience at the same time, making it temporally and spatially complex. Affect is linked to both bodily sensation and language. When discussing Spinoza's affections in "The Autonomy of Affect", Massumi emphasizes that they form bodily 'traces' and suggests that ideas about them are generated through secondary 'conscious reflection,' which amounts to a 'abstraction' process. Deleuze, on the other hand, takes a different approach, claiming that the bodily 'image' of affection is inherently a type of 'idea'. As he points out, affections form another type of affect (*affectus*), which is a felt idea of how one's affective state has shifted—"The *affectio* refers to a state of the affected body and implies the presence of the affecting body, whereas the *affectus* refers to the passage from one state to another." Ugliness reflects a deeper emotional state that cannot be reduced to dirtiness or waste. The concept of "dirt" establishes social boundaries and specifies what belongs within and what should be removed from the social body. Dirt and dirty bodies emerge as perilous and reviled manifestations of social marginalisation and anxiety. It refers to 'waste' in the form of extra fluids in the body as well as excess in society. Dirt is also a historically racial and class related concept, and the expulsion of what is dirty corresponds to empire building and white supremacy goals. Despite their symbolism, dirt and ugliness cannot stand in for one another—an affective 'disposition' like 'visual injustice,' i.e. a system of discrimination that relies on the politics of appearance and visuality to render and deny privilege, access, and resources such as power, money, work, and love. Siebers claims that these reactions, along with the taste reaction (finding something 'tasteful'), "reveal the ease or disease with which one body might incorporate another," establishing aesthetic effects as inherently political (*Disability Aesthetics* 1). One's visceral reactions (to dirt, the grotesque, plainness, and/or monstrosity and other 'ugly feelings') are manifestations of culturally and materially shaped attitudes toward the world around us, which are based on the 'ease or disease' with which we relate to one another. "It is thus not a lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection," wrote Julia Kristeva. It is what ignores boundaries, positions, and rules—"The composite, the ambiguous, the ambiguous" (*Powers of Horror* 4). To her, abjection is an ill-defined liminal or hybrid state that exists just on the outskirts of life or death, neither subject nor

object, or rather before the subject exists as such (as with embryos or maternal womb fluids) or after the subject has ceased to exist and turned into an object (as with corpses and body parts). Abjection is a visceral reaction that addresses the disintegration of boundaries between the self and the other, implying that reacting with horror to unpleasant smells or appearances is a socialised body response rather than an innate one. She continues by saying that the dirty body serves as a reminder that everyone can and will become ugly, unruly, and out of place at some point in their lives.

Ugliness (viewed as both a social phenomenon and a manifestation of some underlying reality) has long been a social category that defines one's rights and access to social, cultural, and political spaces, especially in Western contexts and histories. People who are deemed unattractive are not only deemed unworthy of being seen or having their attention drawn to them, but they are also the target of interventions designed to reduce the likelihood that they will cause others discomfort and repulsion. 'Ugly Laws' or 'Unsightly Beggar Ordinances,' which were prevalent in Europe by the late nineteenth century, barred certain individuals from the public sphere on the grounds that their body polluted public spaces because they were 'dirty,' 'deformed,' or 'unsightly'. Emerging as a state instrument, Ugly Laws protected wealthy, white, able-bodied, and hetero-dominant settler subjects from the perceived aggressions of the exploited and exhausted impoverished working classes and other 'burdensome' subjects. According to these laws, appearance (how we appear to one another, but more specifically to those with the 'ability to see') is a significant determinant of the type of life one expects to lead. The Ugly began to be represented in serious contexts and emerged as an aesthetic entity in its own right during the nineteenth century (not as an expendable and undesirable binary). Hugo subverted the system of traditional aesthetic values in the Preface to *Cromwell* by recognizing the role of the grotesque and the ugly in modern literature. He believed that nature was composed of variety and multiplicity, and that art should imitate nature rather than the ideal. While ugliness was primarily depicted in classical art as a contrast to beauty, it eventually came to be regarded as an 'autonomous' category (Burwick 246). The environmental impact of industrialization generated national desires for 'beautiful' spaces in a context that mechanized bodies to cultivate an industrialized, productive workforce. They influenced the design of institutional spaces for housing the unattractive, such as prisons, asylums, and hospitals—"Ugliness in this era acts as a way to identify aesthetically those who present a social or cultural danger to the nation," writes Unger (125). Furthermore, this 'ugly panic'

extends to the abolition of not only ugly bodies, but also ugly things and spaces, because ugliness is defined as 'violating the aesthetic norm of a streamlined nation.' Modern art has created a peculiar fetishization of ugliness in the contemporary era. High-resolution photographic exhibitions now focus on abandoned locales. The use of monstrosity against marginalized bodies such as women, people identified with particular races, gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals has a long history. Transgender, queer, and non-binary bodies are policed and disciplined using derogatory language based on 'ugly politics.' Ugliness is formed relationally when bodies come into contact with other bodies, discourses, and ideologies. An analysis of Ugliness involves examining the social meanings, symbols, and stigmas associated with it, as well as how they relate to systems of exclusion and oppression that are enforced. Another aspect is the notion of ugliness as an intrinsically negative quality of particular bodies, features, gestures, and behaviours.

Ugly and Beauty are dialectic opposites that form the basis of Western aesthetic and moral thought. As the 'centre' and 'canon,' beauty represented the ideal, the good, order, and harmony, as well as humanity's loftier aspirations. The ancient Greek ideal of *kalós k'agathós*, or beautiful and good, embodied these qualities. Ugliness, on the other hand, served as a catchall for everything that did not quite fit this centred and elevated norm: mundane reality, evil, disorder, dissonance, deformity, the marginal, the Other; an antithesis to the aesthetic canon that it opposes. According to Geoffrey Galt Harpham, beauty is the constant and identical shape of a circle. Instead, ugliness was compared to a shapeless mass of conflicting and heterogeneous characteristics engaged in a 'civil war of attraction/ repulsion.' This polysemy reflected the heterogeneous physiognomy of unattractiveness. Sometimes, terms such as grotesque, horrific, abject, burlesque, comic, caricature, and formless have been used as synonyms or antonyms for 'ugly.' One of the most prominent sources of ugliness became hybrid fusions that produced monstrous, unnatural, and even degenerate creations. Ugliness is a powerfully and eloquently contested concept that has had an inexplicable hold on the artistic imagination long before the cultural practise of modernism. Karl Rosenkranz's *Aesthetic of Ugliness* is the seminal departure from Kant's tradition in recognising ugliness as an essential element of art. In "Ugliness: Revisited," Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer provides a comprehensive history of the philosophical, literary, and art historical understandings of the term. She positions ugliness as a category of marginality and demonstrates how it is 'shaped by issues of hierarchy, value, and power.' Rosenkranz's

theorization of ugliness within the context of capitalist modernity can be traced back to Theodore Adorno who points out that:

> …in the dialectics of the beautiful, ugliness was appropriated through negation, its sheer opposition to the desire for beauty generating an inherent tension within the work of art that was an essential, if implicit, component in the production of its structural harmony: the ugly is that element that opposes the work's ruling law of form; it is integrated by that formal law and thus confirms it. (281–2)

Adorno's critique sees ugliness as an invisible fulcrum in classical aesthetics, whose apparent pull provided the impetus to push towards beauty as the dominant force in art. For him the modern industrial city, its mobilities, masses, and proactive temporalities, presented the classical aesthetic model with a challenge. Individual conceptions of body dysmorphia and cultural constructions of unattainable beauty standards have dominated studies on ugliness. According to Adorno, ugliness is a 'category of prohibitions.' Ugliness has been haunted by repression since the dawn of time. It was metaphorically present in Western origin myths. According to Diderot, ideas of ugliness vary as much as those of beauty, depending on the times, places, climates, and national and personal characteristics. He asserts that these ideas are not absolute. In contrast to the reactionary establishment's veneration of classical antiquity and Ideal Beauty, the ugly came to represent the avant garde's cult of modernity.

In *Rabelais and His World*, Mikhail Bakhtin, whose views were influenced by his rejection of Stalinism and its authoritarian cultural policies, employs the grotesque as a symbol of the fearless, freedom-loving people who rebel against the dominant political and cultural forces aligned with classicism. Bakhtin contextualises his analysis within two distinct, antithetical, and antagonistic cultural spheres: a 'high' official realm associated with repressive state ideology and a 'low' popular, folkloric realm. Using the model of the medieval carnival and the study of the French writer François Rabelais, he locates techniques of resistance to the norm in the people's use of humor, parody, vernacular, and folkloric behaviours that are prohibited by official culture. Bakhtin emphasizes the popular tendency towards repulsive physicality (what he calls 'the lower bodily stratum'), such as the use of graphic or scatological language and actions, as a deliberate breach of the rigid decorum imposed from above. The grotesque is defined as "a heterodox merging of elements normally perceived as incompatible, and this latter version of the grotesque unsettles any fixed binaryism" (Stallybrass 44). The grotesque was thus articulated to underpin the structure of a diverse range of 'domains,' cultural sites

with complex ideological, social, and economic profiles that marked them as profoundly ambiguous. The fair or marketplace was one such location, as was Bakhtin's uniformly rebellious carnivalesque. On the other hand, Stallybrass and White view the fair as a cultural, social, and economic crossroads, a hybrid place that brought together opposing elements such as conservative and progressive, domestic and cosmopolitan, familiar and exotic, bourgeois and plebeian. They contended that blended grotesque sites served as a bridge "between a classical/classificatory body and its negations, its Others, what it excludes in order to create its identity as such" (44). The grotesque generates deformity and the horrifying on the one hand, and comedy and burlesque on the other.

The body is inextricably linked to one's identity and sense of self and aesthetic consideration of bodies raise serious ethical concerns. Worryingly, the aesthetic evaluation of bodies can perpetuate various forms of oppression. Aesthetic standards thus serve a disciplinary function, perpetuating oppressive racial, gender, and sexual norms. They also sentence those deemed 'ugly' to punishments in fields seemingly unrelated to attractiveness. Furthermore, temporal and cross-cultural variability in aesthetic standards may call into question the viability of objective standards of aesthetic value when it comes to the body—and possibly other objects as well. Body aesthetics includes evaluations of the body's performance and functionality in addition to physical appeal. This is especially true in the arts, where the performer's movement style and physical presence can be critical to the work's artistic success. Body aesthetics is more than just how people look on the outside. It is also about how aesthetic experience is perceived 'from within'. While philosophical debate about aesthetic experience has long focused on the visual and auditory domains, with other senses dismissed as too crude to be of interest, contemporary aestheticians have defended the idea that deeply somatic experiences involving the tactile and proprioceptive senses can also be genuinely aesthetic (Irvin 2008; Korsmeyer 2002; Montero 2006; Saito 2007; Shusterman 2008, 2012). The body's representation in art, media, and culture shapes identities and oppressive practises, but it can also be used to resist, reform, or undermine such practises. As Deborah L. Rhode argues in "Appearance as a Feminist Issue," appearance discrimination is widespread, with women bearing a disproportionate burden. Beyond passing aesthetics, one must investigate the specific aesthetic effects that result from the incorporation of crippled bodies in performance, leading to the recognition of disability as a positive aesthetic value. Aesthetic body practises include the cultivation of somatic aesthetic experiences, modes of aesthetic self-constitution, purposeful reshaping of

our aesthetic judgements of bodies, and practises of manipulating the body aesthetically to achieve moral goals.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari used ‘ugliness’ in their clothing, stage personae, artwork, and lyrics to question conventional beauty norms and scripts of ‘pretty’ femininity. Contemporary artists use ‘ugly’ performance practises to challenge hegemonic codes of beauty, appearance, and identity. Aesthetics and technological modification—including Photoshop and cosmetic surgery—towards new heights of narcissism in the digital era also need to be considered in the present context. Sianne Ngai has addressed similar concerns in her work on the cute, arguing for a historical re-evaluation of ‘minor taste concepts.’ In “The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde” Ngai claims that:

> [W]hile prestigious aesthetic concepts such as the beautiful, sublime, and ugly have spawned numerous theories and philosophies of art, comparatively new ones such as cute, glamorous, whimsical, luscious, cosy, or wacky appear far from doing so, though ironically, given the close relationship between their emergence and the rise of consumer aesthetics, they appear all the more suited for the analysis of art’s increasingly complex relationship to market society… (*Critical Inquiry*/Summer2005, 811-12)

The pretty, like Ngai's minor terms, is undeniably entwined in the consumer aesthetics of popular and art cinema, not to mention industrial design, art, tourism, and the like. As she goes on to point out, simply condemning these categories as co-opted or secondary is insufficient. She maps the rhetorical antagonism of the sharp and pointed avant-garde to the soft and infantile charming to offer a political analysis of Gertrude Stein's language in terms of gender, sexuality, and modernity. Despite being a recurring theme in both commercial and avant-gardist cinema, the attractive, like the cute, is rarely regarded as deserving of close scrutiny. Insofar as commercial cinema is occasionally chastised for being overly lovely—as an empty spectacle devoid of depth—pretty can be regarded as the aesthetic concept that best captures cinema's articulation of visual culture and twentieth-century capitalism. However, the lovely also refers to the excluded images that film theories and, on occasion, cinema's economic mechanisms have found difficult to accept. Cinema relies on a certain nexus of consumerism and aesthetic seduction.

Ugly appears in the formlessness and abjectness that disturbs the viewer. The existence, significance, and value of the beautiful and the ugly are certainly projected and questioned in contemporary visual culture. Apart from a stable disposition of the soul, which conditions the exercise of all its faculties, an actor’s acting abilities are also essential and a

determinant in the creation of the (un)aesthetic. These are required for a satisfying aesthetic experience. Immanuel Kant, in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, introduced the idea that the experience of beauty is related to a person's mental state (*Gemüth*). It entails a corporeal awareness of sensation as well as self-affection. An aesthetic experience (as opposed to a normal perceptual experience) is accompanied by a sense of gratification/pleasurable experience/sensation of delight that has subjective universality, entails disinterested contemplation, is purposeful, and is neither cognitive nor logical. *Rührung* (being 'touched') is essential. Kant makes a distinction between the monstrous (*ungeheuer*) and the colossal (*kolossalisch*), shedding more light on the ugly. According to him, an object is 'monstrous' when it completely paralyses the mind due to its formlessness. While the colossal (the monumental, the gigantic) evokes a sense of the sublime, the monstrous, like ugliness, paralyses and impairs the mind. Kant also distinguishes two kinds of'magnitudes--*magnitudo reverenda* and *magnitudo monstruosa*. The *magnitudo reverenda* is a magnitude that commands respect, as in the passion of astonishment—the kind of 'magnitude' that has a sublime effect. The *magnitudo monstruosa*, on the other hand, is a 'magnitude' that causes deterrence (*abschreckung*), dread, and intense anxiety. He refers to this as the monstrous (*ungeheuer*), whose violence is so intense that the pain is unbearable. This is the domain of 'ultimate ugliness,' which is actually unimaginable and elicits disgust (*ekel*) or loathing (Doran 238).

The perception of beauty and ugliness is a matter of subjectivity, as individuals may hold differing opinions on what is considered ugly or lovely. The determination of what is deemed unattractive is heavily influenced by cultural and individual tastes. The concept of ugliness extends beyond mere physical attributes, encompassing metaphorical applications to characterize conduct or deeds that are morally or ethically objectionable. Both the terms 'grotesque' and 'ugliness' pertain to features that are unappealing or unsettling. However, grotesque typically encompasses a degree of distortion or exaggeration, and it may carry artistic or satirical implications. The term ugliness is a broader concept employed to characterize something that lacks aesthetic attractiveness or is morally disagreeable. The unaesthetic thus characterizes something that does not possess aesthetic appeal or fails to meet traditional criteria of beauty. Both challenge conventional concepts of aesthetic appeal or allure. Within the domain of art and literature, the deliberate deployment of the grotesque serves as a means to question established aesthetic conventions. Artistic practitioners and literary creators often employ the incorporation of grotesque aspects as a means to stimulate intellectual reflection, elicit

intense affective responses, or question established social norms. The intentional choice of the unaesthetic and grotesque elements can be employed as an artistic or literary device to examine the ridiculous, the macabre, or the discomfiting. When an object or concept is characterized as 'unaesthetic' it signifies an intentional deviation from traditional standards of beauty within a specific framework that accentuates the peculiar, twisted, or disconcerting elements, typically as a component of a creative or expressive pursuit. The process of converting ugliness into a state that is deemed aesthetically unpleasing frequently entails a change in viewpoint, setting, or artistic objective. Aesthetic evaluations are inherently subjective and can exhibit significant variation across individuals. The perception of ugliness in an object or entity can vary among individuals, as what one person may first regard as unattractive, another person with a contrasting perspective may deem as lacking aesthetic appeal. A shift in perspective can also be facilitated through educational experiences or exposure to diverse cultures, art forms, and individuals. Consequently, individuals may have an enhanced appreciation for the distinctive attributes of something they previously regarded as unattractive, so acknowledging its value from a fresh standpoint. The concept of ugliness can undergo a transformation into an aesthetic quality when it is situated inside a certain creative or cultural framework. Elements that may be deemed unattractive when viewed individually have the potential to have aesthetic significance when they contribute to a broader artistic expression. The juxtaposition of unattractive qualities with attractive qualities or other factors can generate a sense of contrast, tension, or intricacy that contributes to the overall aesthetic encounter. The intentional incorporation of unattractive elements within a specific framework might render it aesthetically unappealing in a manner that stimulates contemplation or artistic appreciation. Artists at times purposefully integrate components of ugliness within their artistic endeavours with the aim of questioning established aesthetic norms and stimulating contemplation or emotional responses. Through intentional utilization of ugliness as an artistic strategy, artists possess the ability to communicate profound messages, foster dialogues, and question prevailing society conventions. In instances of this nature, the deliberate ugliness is employed with the intention of fulfilling a certain artistic objective. The concept of ugliness can undergo a transformation into the aesthetic as a result of changes in perspective, contextual modifications, and deliberate artistic decisions. The perception of ugliness can vary depending on the context or individual, as what may be deemed unattractive in one scenario can be regarded as lacking aesthetic appeal or

even possessing beauty when examined from an alternative perspective or within a certain framework that accentuates its distinct characteristics or underlying objectives.

Since Schiller, romantics have defined beauty as the desire for subjective perfection—that beauty leads to a 'aesthetic paradise,' and a desire for beauty consumes one's entire existence. The mind that is moved by beauty is 'directed' towards the super sensible, which Kant defined as 'that which transcends.' Artists such as Antonin Artaud, Chaim Soutine, and Francis Bacon, on the other hand, transform 'beauty' into *cruauté* and sadomasochism. The experience of the beautiful and the ugly is frequently associated with conservative political positions, bourgeois culture, and a regressive social taste. The concept of modernity (particularly in art) is fundamentally linked to the condemnation of the beautiful as an aesthetic value and norm. A particularly fashionable and seductive yet suspicious conception of the beautiful (and of the ugly) can be found in Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Sociology of Taste. A Social Critique of Taste Judgment*— Taste categorizes, and it categorizes the classifier. Bourdieu focuses on the beautiful, arguing that aesthetic 'taste' is nothing more than a way for the social elite to demonstrate its superiority—that beauty is a 'political' means of structuring social relationships. The distinctions they make between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed, distinguish social subjects classified by their classifications (*Distinction* 6). Following the turn of the century, figurations of beauty gradually gave way to more traditionally ugly-associated artistic expressions. In his analysis of ugliness, Umberto Eco argues that depictions of disfigured, horrifying beings (such as Priapos, Minotaur, and Cyclopes) are positively valued in numerous cultures. He, like Aristotle, observes that art can depict ugly beings in a beautiful manner, and that it is the beauty of the confrontation that makes the ugly acceptable—"ugliness that repels us in nature exists, but it becomes acceptable and even pleasurable in art that expresses and shows 'beautifully' the ugliness of ugliness" (Eco, *On Beauty* 133). Much of Roger Scruton's writings emphasize the connection between the beautiful and the spiritual. The reception of aesthetic values (the value that an object, event, or state of affairs possessesbecause of its ability to elicit pleasure [a positive value] or displeasure [a negative value] when appreciated or experienced aesthetically) is also a component of socialization. Values relate to cultural norms (which may be more global and abstract) and define what should be judged as good or evil (Herman 21-34). Janet Wolff emphasizes the importance of incorporating aesthetic considerations into sociological

analysis (108-09). Arnold Berleant offers phenomenological insight, claiming that "...the phenomena of aesthetics reach to the very source of perception and meaning in direct experience" (Berleant 109-10). He defines the aesthetic field as "the total situation in which the objects, activities, and experiences of art occur" and contends that "...despite modern aesthetics' tendency to build barriers against the incursions of political uses, social conventions, moral orthodoxies, and cognitive significance," the experience of art is fundamentally bound up with the social world (Berleant 109-10). Studies on social psychology have frequently focused on directing our understanding of aesthetic experience toward social-psychological conceptions of the self and its sense of being in the world. The interaction with a cultural object generates the aesthetic field. These studies reveal four dimensions of an aesthetic encounter--perceptual (an experience of physicality), emotional (including a wide range of emotional responses), intellectual (an experience of a relatively closed or open-ended meaning) and communication (in the form of a kind of dialogue with the artwork or information about an era or culture). The unique nature of these aesthetic perceptions and experiences distinguishes an aesthetic field from other fields. Objects in the environment generate aesthetic fields as people engage in cognitive play with them.

Apart from physical disfiguration and the monstrous, the representation of the ugly includes scenes of torture, agony, and sorrow (in cinema as well). Each aesthetic category is descriptive as well as having an axiological 'value'—it values either positively or unfavourably and negatively. The ugly has an unfavourable and negative value with no progression towards the constructive (unless and until it undergoes a transformation process to be 'accepted'). Marking an object as ugly not only confirms how it is, but also 'its value.' An object's 'ugliness' is an 'aesthetic sentence'—that it failed because of a technical deficiency or flaw. Ugliness is an evaluative category with an emotional connotation. It lacks form, internal structure, equilibrium, or symmetry. The beautiful and the ugly are polar opposites (they exclude each other). Not only must the ugly be understood in relation to the beautiful, but also in relation to the inner splendour. In the universe of ugly, mutilated flesh, human life is surrounded by corruption and evil. In this domain, the spontaneous reaction is predominantly axiological. Films, as a mass entertainment medium and a cultural artefact, provide a unique source of insight into a society's socio-cultural milieu. They reflect popular attitudes and indicate people's values and concerns, making them a potential source of information about the group's shared collective concerns. Because visual images are interpreted differently in different cultures, culturally derived