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CINÉ-TRACTS

A JOURNAL OF FILM AND CULTURAL STUDIES



YOUNG MR. LINCOLN
RECONSIDERED
AN ESSAY ON THE THEORY
AND PRACTICE OF FILM
CRITICISM

LANG, PABST, AND SOUND

SEMIOTICS, FEMINISM,
POLITICS, AND CULTURE:
AN OVERVIEW

THE TRUTH LIES ON THE
CUTTING ROOM FLOOR:
CONCLUSION

APPROACHES TO FILM
CRITICISM

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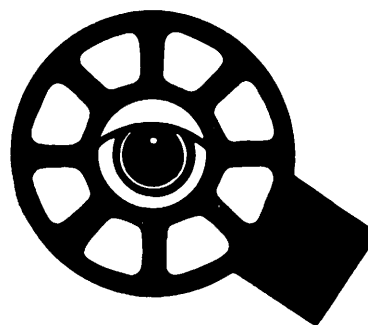
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CINE-TRACTS



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**We would like to thank
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the support that he has
given us.**



The following series of ideas is the outcome of numerous debates that have taken place within the newly constituted editorial collective of **Cine-Tracts**. These ideas have grown out of what was originally to have been a critique of **Jump Cut's** form of film criticism. In attempting such a critique, the issues that surfaced were such that they demanded a clearer more complete analytical position on the part of **Cine-Tracts** itself. What follows is a preliminary attempt on the part of the editorial collective to work upon these problems.

The question that faces those journals involved in producing a left-wing oriented film and cultural criticism is very basic: What does it mean to produce a radical, oppositional magazine in film and cultural criticism? This essay attempts to establish the ground upon which an answer could be formulated.

The debate that has consistently arisen in **Cine-Tracts** straddles two positions — two conceptions of a field of action which the journal enunciated in its first editorial. The first position emphasizes the need for theory in film criticism, which has been, for the most part, theoretically bankrupt. Film criticism has usually adopted the canons of literary and cultural criticism in its epistemological stance. When it has not done this it has consistently opted for models from other interpretive modes, for example, semiotics, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, for its critical positioning and method. The adoption of these models in most film criticism results in an unproblematic totalization of the object, that is, film. This has resulted in the evaporation of the specific properties of the cinema into the categories of various critical discourses which tends to neutralize the present crisis of film theory. The need for theory, then, is identified with the on-going struggle that is concerned with finding and articulating a discourse appropriate to the complexities of the film object domain. This kind of theory opts for a "difficult" language that is reflective of "difficult" theory; language that would somehow open the natural closure of a text, whether it be film criticism or the film itself.

The second position emphasizes the need for the formation of a politically active and committed counter-culture; the need for a journal to function as a context within which a great number of readers can feel able not only to contribute but to participate actively in the diffusion of revolutionary ideas. This stance, which can be identified as a kind of populism utilizes methods already constituted within a body of theoretical discourse, the presuppositions of which are not usually challenged.

It would be an oversimplification to state that these two positions are indispensable to one another. As well, they do not exhaust the range of issues concerned with the theory and politics of film. In practice, however, the two positions may conflict. In **Cine-Tracts** the first position has tended to become dominant or at least privileged. The journal rejected the purely instrumentalist approach to film criticism, that is, its false scientific stance and unambiguous functionalist theory of a film's production of meaning. As a result a theoretical orientation to these problems seems to have absorbed or temporarily precluded the possibilities of cultural and political action. This problem is not resolved by appeals to the "autonomy of theory" or "theoretical interventions" which **Cine-Tracts** itself may have mistakenly supported in earlier editorials.

On the other hand, a criticism which fulfills its own projections and desires to be "political" or "culturally oppositional" without defining what that means results in a largely untheoretical stance. This kind of criticism most often attributes properties to film which are actually properties of the criticism itself.

The privileging of theory is often used as a defence against anti-theoretical (reductionist) and anti-intellectual stances which would dismiss all theory as self-indulgent. The importance of film theory as an aid in generating a crisis about film criticism's categories for interpretation should not be understated. Yet, the emphasis on reading and writing upon which theorizing inevitably depends for its existence may incur attachments (academic standards, professionalization) of which theoreticians are often not aware. A similar problem may also exist with respect to the professionalization of leftist conventions of thought and language.

Should the defence and articulation of a political line take precedence over the articulation of theoretical concerns? Or is there any politically defensible way of separating the unity of theory and practice?

Making a programmatic statement on this problem is difficult within the confines of this essay, but it is, in part, one of the continuing projects of this journal.

As a political journal of film and cultural criticism **Cine-Tracts** is trying to focus upon the way in which sign systems **remember, recover, and represent not only themselves but the complex socio-economic context out of which they grow**. In most film reviews the first mediation, "memory," is rarely a factor in the review itself; neither of import to a reviewer's activity nor to the manner in which the spectators are said to have been "affected" by the film or how they "reacted" to it. The working of memory is complex, as shown by the few attempts to deal with its role as a mediation of all film experience, as well as in the analysis of film (c.f., Stephen Heath). Excluding the notion of memory therefore is theoretically unacceptable. To exclude it when it operates as the dominant feature of a film's diegesis is inexcusable.

Does the theoretical issue of memory inform the interests of a politically committed directive for cultural action? Within film criticism it could be pointed out that both "bourgeois" and self-identified "Marxist" writing has ignored the mediation of memory, which is nothing less than avoiding the relations of **Film and History, Film in History, and History in Film**. The issue of memory, suggests above all, that film displaces and decenters common-sense notions of history; that it conflates history and time in its overwhelming desire to establish presence; but that film can succeed in fulfilling this desire only on the basis of absence. The problem of the **recovery** of the film leads directly from this, in the manner that gaps in our memory of a film continually mediate our desires to **re-view** it, and this never reproduces the film (as a unity) for us, but only as fragments — fragments of what were only fragments in the first instance. And finally, when the film critic speaks with the authority of a scientist (of interpretation), what is he or she speaking about? Fragments of fragments — this constituting the basis for the film's representation in a plot summary (a further fragmentation) that then forms the basis for conclusive aesthetic or political analysis.

In terms of a critic's **representation**, the language of criticism he/she utilizes is rarely questioned as to whether it is appropriate to the task. "It seems to come down to a question of recognizing the meaning producing function of language (its materiality) as opposed to viewing language as a transparent medium (vehicle) for conveying already constituted ideas. Language (and discourse) is part of social practice and the way in which one regards this fact will inform one's theoretical position." (Sandy Flitterman in a personal letter to the editors.)

The tendency of language is to give the impression of a smooth finality, of establishing syntactically and semantically relations of equivalence between significations and reality.

These concerns are not a displacement of political commitment, but are the ground upon which a film criticism can begin to talk about the meaning of political commitment in filmmaking and in film criticism. It is the beginning of a search for tools of interpretation that can elaborate both the meaning of a revolutionary cultural action and advance the critique of the well established institutions of filmmaking and film criticism.

The Editorial Collective

Semiotics, Theory and Social Practice:

A critical history of Italian semiotics

Teresa de Lauretis

Note: Part of the research and the writing of this essay were done under the auspices of a fellowship at the center for Twentieth Century Studies of the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee.

I also wish to acknowledge my debt and gratitude to my friends Tom Anderson, Samuel R. Delaney, Renny Harrigan, Andreas Huyssen, Judith Mayne, Marcella Tarozzi, and in particular Julia Lesage for their careful readings, critiques, suggestions, and discussions of the manuscript in its several stages.

In the introduction to a special section on theory of **Jump Cut** 12/13, the editor, Chuck Kleinhans, states that "it would be a lot easier to assess the genuine political significance of semiology in Marxist terms if its proponents were not so coy or reticent." He is referring explicitly to Metz and to Eco in whose **A Theory of Semiotics** "the relation of this theory to Marxism and his political allegiance remains unexplained." (p.38).

The criticism implicit in these statements, which anyone familiar with Italian or French contemporary culture could easily dismiss as unfounded, must nonetheless be answered, for several reasons. First. Semiotics has come of age in American academia, is becoming recognized as a legitimate critical apparatus in the humanities at large, mass communication, especially cinema. But for this very reason the objection must be dealt with all the more seriously: there is a real danger in this country that semiotics may be rejected outright and uncritically, by the left, for its bourgeois abstraction if not for its bourgeois extraction — a danger contrary but equal to ideologizing semiotics as an objective "scientific" method of analysis.

Second. All theoretical activity functions within discursive practices (high level of abstraction, conceptual manipulation, specialized terminology, etc.) which engage and require certain social knowledges that were historically the heritage, the possession of the bourgeoisie as a class. Knowledge of Marxist theory is no exception, and to the extent that such knowledges become (as they have in Italy) also the possession and the heritage of the working class, one can speak of social progress. To see theoretical discourse as necessarily mystificatory or coy or elitist is not a progressive stance. On the other hand, theories construct their objects according to criteria of pertinence, for purposes, and by cognitive processes which are not natural but social, historical, and not exempt from the complex mechanisms of ideology.

Hence the risk is always there that a theory may identify its theoretical object with the empirical object, material reality, and so naturalize its concepts and assertions, that is to say project them from the universe of discourse into material reality (which thus appears to be itself systematic when it is merely systematized, i.e., organized conceptually, through a set of concepts or discourses) and then claim to be "explaining" precisely that reality. Because, history teaches us, this idealist danger is the horizon of theoretical discourse in Western cultures, criticism of any and all theories is an indispensable part of political practice.

Third. The object of semiotics is a theory of the modes of production of signs and meanings, which constitute the major component of social reproduction after physical reproduction. Semiotics is therefore not spared the old dilemma of any thought that aspires to be systematic: if there is a fundamental, substantial discontinuity between knowledge and the real, how can a theory hope to bridge the gap, given that the theory belongs to the area of discourse? Historical materialism proposes that, while the gap between thought and reality cannot be filled, its terrain can be mapped. I chose the metaphor carefully to reflect the two domains involved, the natural and the social, as well as the cultural operation performed, i.e., model making, a necessarily reductive operation whose significant feature is that of being projected or aimed toward a communicative purpose, a purposeful social practice.¹ The project of semiotic theory is precisely such mapping: how the physical properties of human beings and of the natural world (voice, energy, body, things, etc.) are socially assumed as signs, as vehicles for social meaning; and how these sign vehicles are culturally organized into sign systems subject to historical modes of sign production. And so the relation of semiotics to historical materialism and its political significance are indeed very important issues.

1. See Luis J. Prieto, **Pertinence et pratique** (Paris: Minuit, 1975).

I do not presume to do more than open the discussion here and hope that others will continue it. I will only discuss Italian semiotics, with unavoidable references to France, and focusing on some recent and still open questions. But even with regard to Italy alone, the topic is enormously complex as is the socio-historical context of a country where one can vote for the Italian Communist Party (PCI) without being a Marxist while certainly not all Marxists vote PCI, and where a Marxian universe of discourse is shared by all intellectuals — right, left, and ultraleft. However limited, my discussion is meant to contextualize semiotic research and theory in the sociocultural reality of Italy and to view it critically — in other words, to historicize it. If any safeguard can be built into theoretical discourse, it should be the possibility for self-criticism and the means to historicize itself.

1. What Semiotics?

Like any other cognitive system, semiotics is subject to historical determinations, or rather overdeterminations. Not only did it rise fully armed from the mind of Saussure or Pierce, Eco or Kristeva, but it was elaborated somewhat differently in different sociocultural areas according to their specific thought traditions and political realities. The term itself has a well known history: at the beginning of the century Saussure postulated a discipline of semiology to study all sign systems, with linguistics as one of its particular domains; in 1964 Barthes' **Elements of Semiology** reversed the plan and proposed that all sign systems should be studied as an extension of linguistics. Rejecting such dependence on the linguistic model, which wider research in non-verbal sign systems had revealed vastly incorrect, the **International Association for Semiotic Studies**,² adopted the term "semiotics," calling attention to an important shift of the theoretical gears from the binary model of Saussure to the earlier triadic models of Pierce and Frege which had largely been ignored in Europe, overshadowed by the success of Saussurian linguistics.

2. Founded in 1969, it held its first congress in June 1974 in Milan. L. Nelson, "Signs of the Times: Semiotics 1974" **The Yale Review**, 64 (1975), 296-320.

The Piercian notion of interpretant and his theory of unlimited semiosis as social production of meaning offered a way out of the closed universe of Saussure's *langue*, which is homogeneously constituted of concepts (both signifier and signified are entities of a psychic order), and excludes from its conceptual domain not only material reality or the individual subject but — most importantly — *the social construction of reality through language*. Pierce's semiosis, in which the three terms interpretant, sign, object are not empirical entities but functional positions, endlessly interchangeable, is a process of multidimensional mediation in which the object ("reality") is at any given point inseparable from both the sign and interpretant. Within this triadic framework, the object is qualitatively different from the old referent (the object-in-itself) and therefore a legitimate theoretical object of semiotics.³ Moreover, in concerning itself with both sign *and* meaning production, semiotics opened up, and had to deal with, another can of worms — the question of ideology, including the ideological effects of its own discourse.

3. The triadic models of Pierce and Frege are discussed at length by Eliseo Veron in his forthcoming **Production de sens**. He points out how Pierce's notion of semiosis outlines a process of meaning production not only unlimited but also historical (subject to time, to the future) and social (determined by a "community"). See Eliseo Veron, **La Semiosis sociale**. Working Papers No. 64 (Università di Urbino: Centro Internazionale di Semiotica e di Linguistica, 1977); Veron cites from **The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Pierce** (Harvard U. 1931-58) especially two and five.

4. "Psychoanalysis and Semiotics" *Semiotica*, 16 (1976), 374. Bar cites *La révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1974).

5. Julia Kristeva, *Semiotiké. Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), pp. 38-39.

6. "Kristeva's theory of a semiotic **chora**, at face value a genealogy of signs, may hide therefore a semiotic teleology, namely insofar as signs, besides pointing to the intelligible, also return us to the somatic infrastructure of which they are made." (Bär, 375).

While the term "semiotics" is now fairly consistently used in Italy in reference to the practice of signs and thus to the production, organization and circulation of meaning, both "semiotics" and "semiology" are still used in France. Since North American readers are more likely to encounter French rather than Italian texts, some clarification may be useful. The most clear-cut distinction between the realm and operations of the two textual practices, *sémiotique* and *sémiologie*, is given by Julia Kristeva. As Eugen Bar summarizes,

The perceptual level of the *signifiant* constitutes *le sémiotique* which is investigated by disciplines collectively called *la sémiotique*, whereas the conceptual level of Saussure's sign, *le signifié*, constitutes *le symbolique*, dealt with by *la sémiologie* which cover practically the whole range, in a loose sense, of contemporary semiotics. Kristeva's *terra nuova* is therefore what she calls *le sémiotique*, the ill-defined and -definable presyntactic, presemantic, prelogical space which she baptizes with the Platonic term *chora* Roughly, the semiotic *chora* represents the genesis of semiosis in matter, but a matter ultimately not susceptible to scientific hypothesis and not accessible to scientific investigation, although such methodology may be instrumental along the way.⁴

This is, of course, not merely a terminological difference. It implies both a different conceptualization of the **object** and a different **practice** of semiotic research; it prescribes the necessity to go beyond the communicative moment of meaning circulation to the "other scene that is the production of meaning anterior to meaning," the unconscious.⁵

The references to Freud in Kristeva's language are not incidental but programmatic, underscoring the centrality of psychoanalysis in contemporary French theoretical discourse. Several intersecting lines of thought weaving back and forth from Lévi-Strauss' structuralism to Althusserian Marxist theory, from Freud revisited through Lacan to the revision of Nietzsche, are traceable in French semiology and in Kristeva's semiotics, which Bär not innocently defines "a genealogy of signs."⁶ Whereas in Italy attention has shifted to the area of the social production of meaning, I have the impression that both *sémiologie* and *sémiotique* are primarily focused on the signifier.

7. For example Paolo Valesio, "The Lion and the Ass," *Yale Italian Studies* 1 (Winter 67-82). And it is not a coincidence that Liliana Cavani's latest film is entitled *Beyond Good and Evil*.

8. For an overview of some current evaluations of Italian Futurism, see Stephen R. Sharkey and Robert S. Dombroski, "Revolution, Myth and Mythical Politics: The Futurist Solution," *Journal of European Studies*, VI (1975). 231-247; and My "Futurism, Marinetti and Modernism" in *Appolinaire and Modernism*, ed. by Pierre Cauvin (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978).

9. The debate about (neo) realism still central to Italian film theory, deserves a lengthier discussion than would be possible here, especially in view of the role played by semiotics in it. See, for example, Emilio Garroni *Progetto di semiotica* (Bari: Laterza, 1972); Gianfranco Bettetini, *L'indice del realismo* (Bompiani, 1971); and Eco's critique of iconism in *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., pp. 191-217. Additionally, studies that must be mentioned here are Martin Walsh, "Re-evaluating Rossellini," *Jump Cut*, 15 (1977), 15-17 and Michael Silverman, "Rossellini and Leon Battista Alberti: The centering Power of Perspective," *Yale Italian Studies*, 1 (winter 1977), 128-142.

2. Structuralism and Early Semiotics

When 1968 happened upon the scene of Europe, most of Italy had not been reading Freud or the phenomenologists for long but had a solid acquaintance with Marx and Hegel. Instead of Bachelard, Bataille and Breton, Italians had been debating Gramsci, Lukács and Vittorini. Nietzsche remained highly suspect, like the domestic version of the superman — D'Annunzio — until the last few years.⁷ Even the *neoavanguardia* or *neosperimentalismo* would avow a debt to Surrealism sooner than they could admit any linkage to Futurism which was still, in the mid 60's, a skeleton in the national closet.⁸ Brecht was certainly preferred to Beckett, and despite the extraordinary bloom of the new cinema around 1963, the mortgage of neorealism long defunct was still ponderous.⁹ Through the 60's, the best critical efforts in Italy were devoted to undo the complacent mood of the 50's when the post-war economic boom, the consolidation of Christian Democratic rule, and its reactionary cultural politics had almost succeeded in sweeping under the rug both Facism and the Resistance.¹⁰

At the time when structuralism took hold, in the early-to-mid 60's, primarily in the work of linguists and medievalists, art historians and estheticians, Italy was also re-examining its cultural history within a framework that was more political than philosophical. Marx was not read as a philosopher but as a revolutionary and a political thinker, his words rendered tangible in the praxis of two large Marxist parties. After the bankruptcy of Crocean idealism the influence of new philosophies like existentialism and neo-positivism had not significantly affected the area of literary studies. In a stifling intellectual climate, structuralism meant first of all a rigorous textual method, a scientific habit of thought and a new practice of criticism, all the more appealing since Italy had had no experience comparable to New Criticism or to Russian Formalism. Understandably then, structuralism seemed to be exempt from the teleological overtones of either Croceanism or deterministic Marxism. Moreover its interdisciplinary thrust and sound basis in the social sciences made it possible, theoretically and methodologically, to revise the concepts of high and popular culture and to relate art to the sphere of the mass production and consumption of cultural objects.

It is important to understand the role of structuralism in Italian research because it was the generative force from which and against which, dialectically, semiotics developed: in the first instance, whereas structuralism was developed mainly as an analytical tool for the study of literary textual systems, early semiological studies (as they were called after Saussure and French usage) were mostly concerned with non-literary and pluricodic systems for which no methodological and critical instruments existed — comic strips, folklore, architecture, cinema, television and mass media. Umberto Eco's *La struttura assente* (Milano: Bompiani, 1968), certainly the most comprehensive work of early Italian semiotics, consists of five sections representative of the range and vitality of the semiotic project: A. notions of general semiology; B. visual signs and codes; C. architectural signs and codes; D. a critical discussion of structuralism as both methodological and philosophical construct; E. a survey of the semiological field. The last two chapters in particular indicate another important aspect of semiological studies, namely their theoretical component.¹¹ In the second instance, early semiotic theory and practice were directly involved in the neo-marxist critique of structuralism.

At the end of the 50's, the new left's literary and cultural debate was led in journals like *Officina*, *Il Verri*, and *Il Menabò* (edited by Italo Calvino and Elio Vittorini) by people like Pasolini, Leonetti, Scalia, Roversi, the so-called "critical marxists." Following Vittorini in his polemic with Palmiro Togliatti after the Soviet invasion of Hungary, the new Marxists assumed a

10. I hope not to offend the readers of *Ciné-Tracts*, sometimes viewers of American war movies, if I make the perhaps obvious point that the Resistance was for Italy a successful war of national liberation and, as such, gave the country's socio-political consciousness an irreversible push to the left. This fact, however has been suppressed not only by the banalities of the 50's war movies but, with more serious effects, by the ideological mystifications of most Anglo-American historiography. For a concise and well informed account of the Italian resistance see Frederico Chabod, *A History of Italian Fascism* (Fertig reprint, 1975).

11. The difficulties encountered by semiologists dealing with cinema and theatre in light of the Saussurian langue/parole model are a good example. See Stephen Heath, "Film/Cinetext/Text," *Screen* 14 (Spring/Summer 1973), 102-1 27.

12. Romano Luperini, "Traccia del dibattito teorico-letterario nell'ultimo decennio in Italia" *Che Fare* 8/9 (1971), 268-288. (*Che Fare*, a journal of the revolutionary left devoted to theoretico-political analysis, was founded in 1967 by R. Di Marco and a dissident wing of Gruppo 63.)

13. See Umberto Eco, The Death of the Gruppo 63, "20th Century Studies," 5 (Sept. 1971), 60-71. For Luperini's critique of structuralism, see his *Marxismo e letteratura* (Bari: De Donato, 1971 which I reviewed in *Clio* 4 (Oct. 1974) 129-134.

highly critical stance vis-à-vis the Soviet oriented cultural politics of the PCI under Togliatti's leadership. They objected to its instrumentalization of Gramsci's "esthetics" and its normative and historicistic view of literary practice along the lines of socialist realism. If it succeeded in reassessing and definitively closing the post-war period, the work of these journals was not able to re-define radically, and thus to bring forth a new conception of, the relationships binding writers and intellectuals to society, art and literature to political action. Romano Luperini argues that, throughout the 60's, the failure of neo-marxism and of the artistic/literary **neoavanguardia** was their inability to see and define the role of intellectuals in a society which had reached the stage of mature capitalism (in 1958-63).¹² According to Luperini, they failed not to perceive but to analyze the total absorption of bourgeois thought and of all "creative" work by capital, as well as the integration of workers into the system through unions, parties, and the ideological consensus procured via the neocapitalist mass media. By not seeing themselves as part of the capital's apparatus, Luperini states, the artists and intellectuals of the **neoavanguardia** believed in a revolutionary function of art as, essentially, disruption; and while they saw the artist as disinterested creator of non-ideological experimentation, they held an equally incorrect view of neocapitalism as monolithic, all-powerful, in total technological and ideological control of social reality. This was unexpectedly disproven by the events of '68, which brought about very different views of social reality and of political practice, as I will try and show later. But, regardless of these failures, as interpreted by Luperini, the neo-marxists and the **neoavanguardia** (especially Gruppo '63 to which Balestrini, Sanguineti, and Eco belonged among others) were the most effective voices in Italian cultural theory and the most lucid opponents of structuralism.¹³

Very briefly stated, the neo-marxist objections to the "structural method" were: 1) its idealist premise: positing an a priori structure as immanent in the text, 2) the tautological fallacy of a criticism solely directed at verifying the existence of formal structures already assumed to be in the object, and 3) the ideological stance behind the structuralist approach to the text as a system or totality unrelated to other sociocultural formations. These crucial questions acted as a critical goal for those who, like myself, had realized the valuable aspects of structuralism toward a renovation and de-provincialization of Italian culture. In the changing historical situation that culminated in the political events of 1968, structuralism came to denote a reactionary and narrow view of the critical activity, while its early innovative charge and conceptual tools were assumed, developed, and sharpened by semiotics.

3. The Third Copernican Revolution

Whereas one has the impression that in France 1968 and its aftermath brought about a reversal, a total denial of structuralism by its very proponents (with the exception of Lévi-Strauss), as witness the editorial history of *Tel Quel*, it seems appropriate to say that in Italy structuralism was transformed into semiotics by a conscious political shift. (And this is at least one of the reasons for the obvious differences between French and Italian semiotics in what may be called their politics of enunciation: the discursive practice of Italian semiotics is much less flamboyant or self-reflexive than that of the French heirs of Artaud and Mallarmé; terminology tends to be more stable, its use much less fetishistic. Many Italian semioticians, like Eco, seek wide reception through the newspapers and the media; they analyze mass cultural phenomena and do not disdain the low prestige roles of popularizer and textbook writer. This is, of course, in line with the Italian left's traditional populist commitment to pedagogy, and has its roots in Gramsci's original analysis of the political importance of cultural hegemony.) In his recent *Produzione del senso e messa in scena*, Gianfranco Bettetini states that the crisis in the traditional concept of the sign, as unitary entity

or elementary unit capable of conveying meaning, is at the basis of the transition from early semiotic research, restrictively focused on the formal aspects of signification and on the sign systems, to its current concerns with the operations of meaning production and their ideological and economic supports.

Like psychology and linguistics, semiotics initially sought to establish itself as a scientific discipline, a universal science of signs, in a climate of persisting positivism and under the empiricist banner. Thus the methodological necessity to define levels of analysis and criteria of pertinence, which is a legitimate requirement of all theoretical research, and was confused with so-called "scientific neutrality." Had it remained within the dominant scientific tradition, semiotics too would have come to identify methodological needs with ontological foundation. Fortunately semiotics was just getting on its way in the late 60's when the problematic of ideology erupted in the human sciences and opened to question all their operations — from the initial choice of hypotheses to the reading of the data and to the social impact, utilization or manipulation of the findings. This third Copernican revolution (as Bettetini calls it) placed the subject of ideology squarely at the center of any research into social structures and relations; voiding the claims of scientific neutrality, it stressed the role of ideology in "overdetermining not only the communication models used in infrasocial exchanges, especially in the area of mass communication, but even the instruments used to analyze their structures and their effects."¹⁴

14. Gianfranco Bettetini
**Produzione del senso e
messa in scena** (Milano:
Bompiani, 1975), p.13;
my translation. An Eng-
lish translation is supp-
osed to be published
soon by Mouton.

If the older and more established human sciences continued, for the most part, along a strictly experimental path, without seriously questioning their own practices, semiotics was still relatively unofficial — open territory, as it were. And so it was able to subject its epistemological premises to self-criticism, for example the notion of the sign, the ideological implications of a purely "descriptive" intentionality, the fragmentation of the social sphere into discontinuous systems, etc. By abandoning altogether the hypothesis that a text or a message could be studied in itself and by means of a meta-language (that is to say that a language could be isomorphic with, and therefore able to translate, either "reality" or a metalanguage), semiotics research ceased to be a kind of linguistics applied to verbal and/or non-verbal messages; from the formal study of signification systems, it turned to examining the modes of sign production and the previously ignored area of meaning (the semantic field). Since the expression "modes of sign production" may sound blasphemous to some readers, I must justify it and explain how it is used by Eco, from whose **A Theory of Semiotics** I lifted it.

Communication and signification, Eco maintains, function in a complex and dialectical relationship. One cannot really conceive of signification systems (the phonemes of a language, road signals, a set of semantic contents like the system of kinship, etc.) outside the social purpose of communication. Vice versa, it is impossible to study communication processes independently of the underlying systems of signification. Which also means that the elements of each system must be, and in fact are, understood by someone, i.e. must be correlated to a culturally assigned content or meaning. The rules that establish the correlation between a physical or material sign vehicle and a content are historically and socially determined, and therefore changeable. These operational rules (and not the sets of elements constituting each system) are what Eco calls codes.

Properly speaking there are not signs, but only sign-functions. . . . A sign-function is realized when two **functives** (expression and content) enter into a mutual correlation; the same functive can also enter into another correlation, thus becoming a different functive and therefore giving rise to a new sign-function. Thus signs are the provisional result of coding rules which establish **transitory** correla-

15. It seems to me that these notions of code and sign function define possibilities of research in, for example, cinema (as industry as well as apparatus) that could not be envisaged by a semiotics of the signifier or by a semiotics of the system (which is what was generally meant by the term code as in Metz). But this must be the topic of another essay.

16. I will not discuss at length **A Theory of Semiotics** because I have already done so in my review article "Semiosis Unlimited," **PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature**, 2 (1 977), 367-383. For additional information on Eco's view of his own work and of semiotics see my interview recorded in Feb. 1976 in **The Canadian Journal of Research in Semiotics** 4 (Spring-Summer 1977), 107-1 14.

tions of elements, each of these elements being entitled to enter — under given coded circumstances — into another correlation and thus form a new sign Therefore the classical notion of "sign" **dissolves** itself into a highly complex network of changing relations. (p.49)¹⁵

The codes as socially established relationships between signs and meaning, change whenever new or different contents are culturally assigned to the same sign-vehicle or whenever new sign vehicles are produced. A different interpretation of a text (a sign for Eco can be any significant unit, from a single word to a string of signs, a text or even a macrotext, depending on one's level of analysis) or a new text sets up a new content, a new **cultural unit** that becomes part of the semantic universe of the society that produces it. So that, in studying the codes, semiotics also studies the production of signs, which requires labour, both physical and intellectual, of different types for different signs. The expenditure of physical or intellectual energy in order to produce signs is, of course, interrelated with the social utilization of the semiotic labour and thus with the social relations of sign production — hence the term "modes of sign production" is not a mere formalistic echo of the Marxian concept. For Eco, semiotics is a critical discipline "concerned with signs as social forces" (p.65).¹⁶

With the redefinition of its object in view of a materialist but non-deterministic practice, Eco's theory steers clear of the claim to scientific status that other semiotics inherited from structural linguistics and, in Italy, from the dominant Marxist tradition, a claim evident for example in the work of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi. The two scientific frameworks of linguistics and Marxist economism provide the foundation of Rossi-Landi's work. Translator of Charles Morris, on whom he wrote a monograph as early as 1953, Rossi-Landi has been concerned primarily with the relation between sign systems and ideologies. In **Il Linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato** (Milano: Bompiani, 1968) he postulates an homology between linguistic production and material production based on the homology between message (énoncé) and industrial artefact; if language products can be seen as artefacts and, vice versa, material artefacts function as non-verbal systems, his task is to prove that commodities may be interpreted as messages, and messages as commodities. The scope of his work is "a global semiotics of social codes" and, complementarily, the "interpretation of all social codes, including verbal codes, in terms of work and production" (**Semiotica e ideologia**, Milano: Bompiani, 1972, p.207). In **Linguistics and Economics** (The Hague: Mouton, 1975) he applies deductively the labour theory of value and the Marxian concept of alienation to linguistic production, equating value with meaning. By considering "human language as the principal object of linguistic science" and "economic exchange as the principal object of the science of economics" in a unitary way, Rossi-Landi intends "to begin a semiotic elaboration of the two social processes which we can identify provisionally as 'the production and circulation of goods (in the form of commodities)' and as 'the production and circulation of sentences (in the form of verbal messages)'" (p.5). A look at the table of contents of **Linguistics and Economics** indicates that the parallelism is worked out in great detail from "Utensils and sentences" and "Use-value and exchange-value, from word to message, to "Linguistic capital" (constant and variable), "Linguistic private property" and "A hint at linguistic alienation." The role of semiotics, concludes Rossi-Landi, is to mediate between the dimension of the modes of production and the dimensions of ideologies:

With the rise of industrial capitalism in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there emerged also the means for studying the capitalist mode of production and its relative ideologies, and lastly for projecting scientifically a better society, that is new programmings destined to substitute the capitalistic ones. This also allowed for the emergence of a general doctrine of man in which

the importance of modes of production and of ideologies was for the first time placed in a proper light. All the same neither the first nor the second dimension, even if added together, gives us a complete description of the social programming of human behaviour, if we do not add to them the dimension of the programmings which govern both verbal and non-verbal communication. This third dimension which mediates between the first two, making possible among other things, their reciprocal influence, had also been glimpsed by Marx's genius. It is, however, only with the arise of neo-capitalism that the means have emerged for a frontal study of the models and programs of communication. And since there is no communication without sign systems, this study belongs to semiotics, the general doctrine and science of signs and their systems. Semiotics finds its proper place, its significance, and its foundation alongside the study of the modes of production and of ideologies, within the sphere of the social programming of all behaviour. (pp.202-203)

Since, according to Rossi-Landi, both the economy (modes of production) and ideologies are to be treated as sign systems and postulated as homologous to language, it seems to me that his semiotics is not a **mediation** (or a way of mapping) between material reality and the social construction of reality; on the contrary, from his argument semiotics appears as a kind of universal key to the entire spectrum of phenomena, which are thus precisely homologized by semiotics.¹⁷ It is by relinquishing the claim to a **scientific** knowledge of material reality that semiotics, as formulated by Eco, can provide a **critical** knowledge of what might be called social reality, i.e. the conditions of production, circulation and consumption of social discourses (in the broadest sense) from which representations, beliefs and values are engendered.

4. The Writing on the Walls

How did the theoretical and ideological shift from a semiotics of signification systems (now called "classical semiology") to a semiotics of sign production come about? The re-reading of Pierce, who had been known earlier mostly through the work of Morris, marked a crucial theoretical step forward in this direction, as indicated above. Whatever may have been the influence of Pierce on Anglo-American thought, its recovery by Italian and European semiotics at that historical moment was neither coincidental nor without consequences that must be assessed in the specific socio-historical context. A similar recovery, which may have been under way for some time in the United States, need not proceed in a similar direction or bring similar consequences. For the thrust and the impact of a theory are historically overdetermined, i.e. conditioned by, and in turn conditioning, in a very complex interaction, all kinds of social practices. Thus to claim that the European discovery of Pierce caused "the crisis of the sign" and the demise of structuralism and Saussurian semiology around '68 would be a gross idealist simplification. It was, most likely, the events in the real world that made people look for better models, more useful interpretants of the writing on the walls. Bettetini writes:

A rightful attention to the problems of meaning and the complementary discourse on neutrality and on the non-innocence of formal structures were not brought about simply by the internal difficulties that the object analyzed kept posing to a structuralist methodology, but were also urged by external events which in turn forced (semioticians) to re-think the problematic of ideology and to study its interconnections with all communication phenomena. (p.22)

17. But it may well be that the monumental tautology I perceive in this argument and in Rossi-Landi's entire enterprise is only my failure of understanding. Similar doubt however, are also expressed by Giorgio Patrizi, "La critica del segno: Appunti per una ipotesi politica della semiologia in **Marxismo e strutturalismo nella critica letteraria italiana** (Roma: Edizioni Savelli, pp.211-237. On the question of Marxism as science, see Lucio Colletti, "Marxism: Science or Revolution?" in Robin Blackburn, ed., **Ideology in Social Science** (New York: Vintage, 1973), pp.369-377.

The external events were those of 1968 in Europe, the student movement in the United States, the crisis of all types of bourgeois rationalization, the recall of the values of the imagination and poetic productivity. Such events, he continues, which could not be foreseen by previous semiotic practice, warranted that the contradictions of our social system existed in reality, and were evident to many people and groups; they were described not only at the theoretical level by a few prophets, semiotically or otherwise, but at the level of a new social consciousness, in the light of a new idea of possible relations between people and between people and things. The crisis denounced by the cultural revolution could not be reduced to a crisis of the semantic field, where ideology had been conveniently tucked away. It obviously had to affect the entire process of meaning production inclusive of the semiotic activity by which signs and codes are elaborated and transformed — a production in other words, that continuously intersects both expression and content planes and that is itself historical and ideological.¹⁸

18. The notions of expression and content are derived from Luis Hjelmslev, whose **Prolegomena to a Theory of Language** (Madison University of Wisconsin Press, 1969) has had a determining influence on Italian semiotics. Hjelmslevian semiotics is the basis of much of Eco's and Garroni's work and of Maurizio Grande's work in **Filmcritica**.

This notion of production of meaning is not to be understood as Kristeva's "other scene" of a productivity **anterior** to meaning, i.e. on the level of the Freudian drives, but in a more literal sense, and on the level of consciousness. Historically it seems to be directly related to the political situation of present-day Italy, to the new forms of class composition that have emerged since the early 70's, and to the recent analyses of the role of the cultural worker in the class struggle. Briefly, and with the inevitable simplification of any summary, the question of a contemporary definition of social classes and productive forces is at the heart of a debate between the "ultrared" groups and the PCI. Examining the events surrounding the occupation of the University of Rome in February 1977, **Lotta Continua** states:

The relationship between mass workers (*industrial workers in the old class composition*) and tertiary (*clerical workers, information workers, students — all with higher education*) is a decisive strategic pivot on which turn a) the restructuration project supported by big capital, b) the "new model of mediation" being experimented with by the PCI, and c) the possible class recomposition which may blow up a) and b). It is not by chance therefore, that both the bourgeoisie and the PCI have deployed, in the last few years, a capillary offensive aimed at dividing the industrial work force from the tertiary work force, promoting the corporative ideology of the "worker-producer" against the "parasites" opposing manual to intellectual labour The new level of cooperation and combination of the work force required by mature capitalism both in the factories and in the tertiary activities . . . is the crucial point. Not only does it erase the clear dividing line between productive and unproductive labour, which an entire tradition of Marxist scholasticism has unsuccessfully tried to hold up; but, above all, it defines a new quality of living labour (*intellectual labour incorporated into the capitalist reproductive machine*) as the first of the productive forces, the source of the accumulation and valorization of capital (*i.e. of exploitation*). The extraction of surplus value extends to the entire complex of manual-intellectual activities in which capital combines living labour changing the very content of the workers "toil".¹⁹

19. F.D., "Quale unità operai studenti?" **Lotta continua** (19 Feb. 1977) p.4. For this new analysis of living labour, LC cites Romano Alquati, "L'università e la formazione. L'incorporamento del sapere sociale nel lavoro vivo," **Aut aut**, 154 (1976).

Thus, the article concludes, to insist on the (early capitalist) division of labour for which manufacture workers are the legitimate productive work force, while students and "intellectuals" can only overcome their "petty bourgeois parasitism" by becoming functionaries of the mediator-state, is an ideological mystification. By insisting to see the productive forces as those strictly related to machinery, plants, or things, the PCI is playing along with

the counter-offensive of big capital, wholly concentrated on destroying the principal productive force, which is precisely living labour, and the political class composition that unites industrial and cultural workers.

I do suggest that this new concept of living labour, and the qualitative shift in the conception of productive forces that it implies, parallels the current semiotic concept of meaning production. As living labour, defined in relation to a higher level of class composition, comprises both the intellectual and the manual activities at work in industrial as well as cultural/service production, the semiotic concept of sign production refers to the work of producing intellectual meaning through material, physical sign-vehicles. The emphasis is no longer on the sign systems as mechanisms that generate messages (i.e. on the sign systems seen as the "machinery plants" of semiotic processes); instead, semiotic research focuses on the work performed through them, which constitutes and/or transforms the codes, the subjects using the codes (i.e. performing the work), and, however slowly, the systems themselves. Thus, the subject of the semiotic activity is no longer the transcendental subject of structuralism, "the human mind" but an historical subject, and therefore a class subject (at least as long as the theoretical concept of class is a useful interpretant of social reality). In the last chapter of **A Theory of Semiotics**, Eco asks:

Since it has been said that the labour of sign production also represents a form of social criticism and of social practice . . . what is, in the semiotic framework, the place of the **acting subject** of every semiotic act? . . . (What is) the role of the "speaking" subject not only as a communicational figment but as a concrete historical, biological, psychic subject, as it is approached by psychoanalysis and related disciplines. (p.314)

He agrees with Kristeva that the subjective determinants of a text, the biopsychological processes that Freud labelled drives, are indeed part of the signifying process; but, like ideological and economic motivations, they can be studied by semiotics only insofar as they are expressed through texts, i.e. multiply levelled and relayed interactions of signs and meanings.

The most reliable grasp that semiotics can have on such a subjective activity (Kristeva's **le sémiotique**) is one provided by a theory of codes: the subject of any semiotic enquiry being no more than the semiotic subject of semiosis, that is, the historical and social result of the segmentation of the world that a survey on Semantic Space makes available. This subject is a way of looking at the world and can only be known as a way of segmenting the universe and of coupling semantic units with expression-units: by this labour it becomes entitled to continuously destroy and restructure its social and historical systematic concretions. (p.315)

This is a more cautious, perhaps more narrowly bounded, definition of the subject than is found in Kristeva and in recent film theory, for example Stephen Heath's.²⁰ Nevertheless, in my opinion, it has the advantage of being solidly anchored to history and to verifiable social practice — an advantage that becomes indispensable at the times when social practice is changing, as it now clearly is in Italy.

20. Stephen Heath
"Film Performance,
Cine-Tracts 2 (Summer
1977) 7-17.

5. How Political is the Private?

The picture painted by the North American liberal press of an Italy en route to social democracy, with the moral rewards of the historical compromise slight outweighing the (endemic?) ills of social violence and economic crisis, is inadequate as well as condescending. But an overly optimistic view as might be put forward by official or unofficial left apologists would be at

best wishful thinking, at worst, anti-historical. Since the 1975 and 1976 elections, new or newly avowed issues have emerged which are not contemplated by the present social system and for which as yet there seems to be no useful theorization. I am referring to a mosaic of marginal and heterogeneous groups who enjoy the economic status of unemployed or underemployed but whose needs and demands and private-political practices are vastly different. Radical women, the workers of **Autonomia Operaia**, the student movement, and other facets of the new left do not merely question the validity and the operations of all institutional apparati (the family, the educational system, the party, etc.), but explicitly refuse to function within them. Moving into the wide theoretical gap to the left of the traditional Marxist left, these groups have brought about a new polarization of the sociopolitical sphere. At the same time by virtue of their very differences and diversity, they have set in motion a process of radical cultural change that challenges the most established values of Italian culture, both bourgeois and socialist.

If we take at face value semiotics' claim to be a critical discipline vis-à-vis all social communication, we must expect it to be prepared to deal with these emerging needs and the social discourses that express them. If indeed the possibility of self-criticism and the means to historicize its own discourse have been built into semiotic theory after 1968, as was suggested earlier, a further political shift may be due shortly. And I suspect, solely on the basis of a personal bias, that the early signs of any theoretical reshuffle to come will be found in the personal-political practices of the semioticians themselves. Let me give two examples.

First, the recent polemic stirred up by Félix Guattari and other French intellectuals who accused the PCI and the Communist mayor of the city of Bologna in particular, of taking totalitarian measures in the repression of dissent. The polemic was set off by the arrest Francesco Berardi, a prominent member of the Bologna "autonomist" collective **A/traverso** and of the independent Radio Alice; he was arrested last July in Paris on several charges of inciting to riot during the student-police confrontation of March 11, 1977 in Bologna. The French newspaper **Le Monde** of July 12 and 13, 1977 reports that a group of well known French intellectuals, among them Sartre, Foucault, Sollers, Deleuze, Guattari, and Wahl (who is the editor of the Seuil series that is publishing Berardi's book) formed a Comité contre la répression en Italie and signed an appeal, which they sent to the Belgrade conference, denouncing the consequences of the historical compromise and the undemocratic measures employed by the Bologna PCI in the repression of the far left dissenters. The strong response in **Le Monde** of July 13, by Bologna mayor Renato Zangheri, professor of political economy and member of the central committee of the PCI set off an avalanche of debate.²¹ Although it would be silly to say that Eco **speaks** for semiotics, his work is to date the most comprehensive formulation of the field and of the reach of its conceptual instruments. Moreover, for the Italian general public and press readership, Eco does represent semiotics as Sartre represented existentialism to North American readers some years ago; therefore, at least in terms of broad cultural practice, Eco's position in the debate with Berardi and the authors of **Anti-Oedipe** Deleuze and Guattari, is an indication of the relationship of semiotics to current sociopolitical issues. For the politics of semiotics, like the politics of any other cognitive instrument, is to be looked for not only in its theoretical object and analytical method, but certainly as much in its general and specific practice **at all levels of discourse**, from the concrete or the "technical" to the abstract.

To say that Eco's stance is that of a realistic mediation between the PCI and the "Amazonian forests" (his metaphor for wide area) at its left, is to say nothing new and, in the present Italian situation, almost nothing at all. But

21. For different views on the left, see Giorgio Amendola's interview with **Paese sera** of July 17, 1977 and Enrico Deaglio's recap "Allineati e coperti" in *Lotta continua* of July 16, 1977 (LC was the only ultraleft paper which, supporting Bernardi's views, was not solidly against the French manifesto). In Italy this action was read in the context of the anti-marxist spiritualist positions of the **nouveaux philosophes** — see Lucio Colletti's debate with André Glucksmann and Bernard Henry Lévy published in **L'espresso** (July 24, 1977), pp.45-51 and 107-110. For a well informed account of the political action of independent radios, see Suzanne Cowan, "The Unhappy Adventures of 'Alice' in Blunderland," **Radical America**, 11/12 (Winter 77-78), 67-77.

22. "Il caso Guattari:
Due chiacchiere fra
barbari," **L'Espresso**
(July 31, 1977),
but also Eco's "No, per-
dio, non mi suicido,"
L'Espresso (April 1977)
pp.52-63.

to present his many arguments, semiotic of course, would involve writing another article. So instead I will translate a few passages of his article, "Chatting Among Ourselves Barbarians."²²

When I received the text of Guattari's appeal, after some hesitation, I did not sign and explained my reasons to my French friends. It was just fine for me to protest against the warrant-less search of certain publishing companies and the private homes of the writers who had published the Radio Alice texts. But such protest was preceded, in the French manifesto, by a catastrophic scenario of the Italian reality, dominated by a single party repressive of all dissent. I briefly thought of what use the document might be put to by DeCarolis and his friends during their coming trip to the United States. Nothing more was needed to invite CIA intervention against the communist coup in Italy, guaranteed by the French intelligentsia. Not only toothpaste salesmen, I believe, must watch out and calculate the effects of their sales pitch on different strata of the population.

I discuss with some movement students. They complain that most of those intellectuals who are always signing appeals for imprisoned South Americans or for every Pole under investigation did not protest the closing down of Radio Alice. . . . The students are right, but I try to explain why the people who could have protested did not do so. They feared that, by defending the independent radio, they would be considered supporters of the sharpshooters. Exactly the students reply, that is precisely Cossiga's and **L'Unita's** blackmail. I respond: are you sure that you did not contribute to the setting of the premises for their blackmail? Look at the university wall: on one side I read "Mao Dada" and "Free Alice." On the other side I see "Pig policeman we will shoot you in the mouth." Of course I know that two different people did the writing. But ... you expect public opinion to distinguish them when it hardly sees a distinction between two extra-parliamentary groups? Public opinion does not read according to the rules of avant-garde vertical writing. It reads as it read in the 19th century, as it reads the railroad timetable. How do you expect it to distinguish metaphors from programs, or one type of program from another? You should have made the distinction clear. . . . You have a right to the space for your dissent: but define it more clearly. Now, however, I address this same question to the PCI: how do we define the space for dissension at the moment when the largest force of the Italian left approaches the exercise of power?

Is it true that in Italy people are arrested for crimes of opinion? No, replies the Judge, those who incite to a crime are arrested, and incitement is not an opinion but a criminal act. No problem, if incitement is translated as the expression "Kill So and So!" But if it is manifested as theorization of the armed struggle against the state? And how soon? Now, or in a few years? Or in a distant future? Where is the threshold between inciting to revolt and utopistic fabulation? The affair is very delicate. It had to do not only with public safety or the administering of justice, but also with political science and the administering of the law. Taking the concept of incitement very broadly, one must prohibit the printing and sale of the classics of Marxism. . . . What is the difference between an opinion that produces immediate effects, one that produces long term effects, and one that will never produce any effects? The liberal ethic was very clear if naive: the poet is irresponsible, the philosopher talks and does not act. Even pornography was absolved, so long as it was redeemed by art. But, are

we still thinking within the ethics and philosophy of liberalism? Marxism has taught us that there is a very strict nexus between theory and practice, and that ideologies are weapons. Those who do theory are also doing political action What is happening forces us to a redefinition of the theory-practice nexus. But also to a redefinition of the notion of freedom of expression in a society dominated by the rapid circulation of the mass media.

To conclude my first example, there is some evidence that semioticians are willing to take seriously the emerging social issues of group autonomy vs. party organization, subjective needs vs. state controlled productivity demands, the unconscious, pleasure, difference, and so on.

The second example is not so hopeful, I'm afraid: even those semioticians who are prepared to readjust their theoretical aim and to focus on the uncharted territory of the social unconscious (that area that also includes the imaginary) are impotent so to speak, to confront the social needs expressed by women. To anyone who observes directly the practice of semiotics, particularly in the semiotic acts and social behaviour of the semioticians (as I did last summer at the International Center for Semiotics and Linguistics in Urbino), it is obvious that their inability to deal with feminist critical issues derives from the simple refusal to hear, to see, to take them into consideration. Explanations for this behaviour, were anyone interested, could be found in areas of theoretical discourse that semiotics has certainly considered, for example Freud's notion of disavowal (**Verleugnung**) leading to the creation of the fetish, the penis substitute that ensures the permanence and value of the phallus (the phallus as universal equivalent). But despite the self-critical tools developed by male discourse, and despite the new post-1968 political consciousness, women are still regarded through the optics and within the parameters that Lévi-Strauss finds in the so-called primitive societies: as commodities, as signs produced in a social discourse by and for men, and therefore excluded from the universe of cultural productions and of discourse itself.²³ This is the original infamy of the title of Lea Melandri's book which lifts the unspoken and the unspeakable (infamy, in-fari) taboo on female sexuality, imposed to hide its original expropriation, its reduction to a biological/economic function.

23. See Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women Notes on The Political Economy of Sex," in Rayna R. Reiter, ed., **Toward an Anthropology of Women** (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp.157-210; and Elizabeth Cow "Woman as Sign" *M/F*, 1 (1978), 49-63.

When one takes for granted that there is no specific difference between male and female sexuality, and that female sexuality coincides with the male's desire, the equivalence woman-proletariat is quite easy, too easy. The woman's body as it appears on the social scene, is already other, alienated from itself. It is essentially labour power to produce children, housework, and pleasure for men. Male dominance does not begin with private property and the monogamous family, as Engels says, but is located in the origin of the relationship between the sexes by an **act of expropriation which only today has surfaced to consciousness**. With the dominance of male sexuality, the material and ideological primacy of economic relations over all other social relations is also established. . . . The fusion-confusion between sexuality/maternity, sexuality/procreation has already taken place In order to sing triumphantly of the happy love of proletarian women (as Engels does) one must have no doubt about the identity between pleasure and male sexuality; one must refuse to see that women's sexuality, **the less it is clothed in material, religious, ideological structures, the more it reveals its violently imposed kinship with childbearing, illness and death.**²⁴

24. Lea Melandri, **L'infamia originaria** (Milano Edizioni L'Erba Voglio, 1977). This and all other passages quoted are in my translation; the italics are Melandri's

Although Melandri, author of the passage quoted above, is not a professional semiotician, her analysis of the relation of sexuality to social formations and of the ideological discourses that support and reproduce them is an excellent

25. Jean-Joseph Goux,
**Freud, Marx. Economie
 et symbolique** (Paris:
 Seuil, 1973), p.57.

suggestion as to how semiotics could be used precisely to demystify the dominant semiotic practice. She examines a series of texts, from a worker's letter published in **Il Manifesto** to the first issue of the autonomous revolutionary paper **Rosso** from Freud's analysis of Dora to Joseph Goux's **Freud, Marx**, looking for the codes that may explain the paradoxical facts of our historical reality — "a sexuality obeying norms so ancient as to seem entirely outside the present economic laws, an economy that by repressing sexuality has become itself **factory of the imaginary**" (p.81).

Discussing for example, Goux's proposition that the genesis of the institutions which govern the cultural exchange of values (language, the law, the Father) was already theoretically implicit in the genesis of money²⁵ Melandri points out that oppositions such as body/soul, real/ideal, particular/universal, matter/rationality are not to be traced only as far as the oppositions use-value/exchange-value or commodities/money, i.e. to the conceptual distinction between variables and invariant in the logic of exchange. Idealism opposed body to soul and matter to mind by concealing not only labour as producer of commodities but also in the very beginning, the female body.

Woman enters history having already lost her concreteness and singularity: she is the economic machine that produces the species, and she is the mother, an equivalent more universal than money, the most abstract measure invented by patriarchal ideology. (p.27)

While bourgeois economism, in separating the relations of production from all other types of exchange, proclaimed objective, necessary and historical only the facts of political economy, its critique, Marxism, exposed the social relations of production, the alienated human labour behind production. But historical materialism has stopped its analysis of the material bases of existence short of the sexual order; that is to say, it too, like bourgeois ideology, consistently seeks to reduce the diversity or qualitative jump between two perhaps irreducible material orders, the sexual and the economic. To argue, as Goux does, that the opposition of the sexes was **genetically** the origin of the class struggle but is **structurally** its "mirror" in advanced societies, and thus to subsume the man-woman relationship under the class conflict, does not mean simply affirming sexuality as solely male; it also means denying women any possibility of historical existence, while perpetuating man's alienation from a portion of his material sexual existence (the need for love). The old etymological associations mother-matter-mass, which Melandri hears echoing in Goux's writing, point to a risky semiotic pattern, a binarism that opposes matter and rationality, body and mind (if not soul) — in other words, to the old teleological ghost hovering at the end of a materialistic rainbow.

These are some of the historical signs that, in a hopeful mood, I think may further transform semiotic theory and practice; just as a qualitative shift in the socio-political conception of productive forces after 1968 may be seen at the base of semiotics' concern with sign production and code operations, a theorization of subjectivity and, crucially, sexual difference in their historical forms and in relation to the cultural apparatus of social reproduction will have to become after 1977, central to the semiotic debate. Δ

Lang, Pabst and Sound

Noel Carroll

The coming of sound caused a crisis in film aesthetics. Some theoreticians, notably Arnheim, refused to endorse the shift at all. Sound, for them, was a return to canned theater, a regression to the pre-Griffith era before film had weaned itself from the stage.

More adventurous thinkers, however, embraced the new device, and attempted to incorporate it into the aesthetic system of silent film. Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov, in their famous 1928 statement on sound, and Roman Jakobson, in a rarely discussed 1933 article entitled 'Is the Cinema in Decline?', proposed that sound be understood as a montage element: aural units should be juxtaposed against the visuals, just as shots should be juxtaposed against shots. Jakobson, ironically, answers someone like Arnheim in the same manner that Arnheim would have answered someone like Clive Bell. Jakobson tells the opponent of sound that his opposition is not based on a thoughtful look at the possibilities of the new medium. Jakobson argues that the sound element in a scene can be asynchronous and contrapuntal, thereby diverging from mere reproduction. This possibility enriches cinema, for added to all the conceivable visual juxtapositions of the silent film are inestimably large reservoirs of sound counterpoints.

The Eisenstein-Jakobson reaction to sound was conservative in one sense. It was an attempt to extrapolate the basic concepts of a silent film aesthetic to a new development, recommending montage as the basic paradigm for dealing with sound. By the forties, another kind of recommendation was evolved by Bazin, one diametrically opposed to the general silent film predisposition toward stylization and manipulation.

In Bazin, the recording/reproductive aspect of film, that nemesis of silent film artists and theoreticians alike, became the center of a theory that made recommendations about the types of composition and camera movement that would best enable the film-maker to re-present reality in opposition to the silent film urge to reconstitute it. The formation of Bazin's theory was

closely related to the emergence of sound. In the thirties, a film-maker like Renoir responded to the introduction of sound as an augmentation of film's recording capabilities, and he evolved a realist style that roughly correlated with the notion of film as recording. Bazin described and sought foundations for Renoir's practice, and in so doing defined the predominating ethos of the sound film until the sixties.

The contrast between the reconstitutive response to sound, and the realist's, is much discussed and should not be belabored. But it is important to emphasize that this debate is not merely abstract speculation. Both positions are also artistic dispositions, embodied in the actual practice of important film-makers. The debate is not only so many words, but also many films. Consequently, apart from its dubious theoretical interest, the debate can be historically informative not only about the general directions and transitions in film history, but also about the place of individual films within that evolution.

Two films, Fritz Lang's **M** and G.W. Pabst's **Kameradschaft**, are especially interesting in this regard. There are many coincidental similarities between them: both are German; both are by major Weimar directors; both date from 1931; both were produced under the auspices of Nero Films; and both share the same cameraman, Fritz Arno Wagner. Yet, stylistically they diverge greatly. **M** seems to look to the past, to silent film, for its style while **Kameradschaft** presages the future. Nineteen-thirty was the key year in German's transition to sound. In September of 1929, only three percent of German production was in sound. By September of 1930, the total jumped to 84%. Thus, the 1930-31 period was one of crisis, one where major German film-makers had to reorient themselves to their medium. Lang and Pabst both did, but each in highly distinctive ways, ways which in fact represent in a nutshell the major themes in the dialectic about the appropriate direction of sound film.

M is what might be called a silent sound film. Other examples would include Dreyer's **Vampyr**, Lang's own **Testament of Dr. Mabuse**, Vertov's **Enthusiasm** as well as **Three Songs of Lenin**, parts of Pudovkin's **The Deserter**, Bunuel's **L'Age d'Or**, and Clair's early sound films, especially **A Nous la Liberté**. Calling these silent sound films is not meant disparagingly. Each of these represents a major achievement. Yet that achievement in each case derives from a penchant for asynchronous sound based on a paradigm of montage juxtaposition as a means to manipulate, to interpret, and to reconstitute pro-filmic events.

The importance of montage for **M** can be demonstrated by a brief look at one of its key scenes, the parallel development of the gangster and government strategy sessions concerning the pursuit of the childkiller. This sequence is not only a matter of parallel, temporal editing: it also involves the articulation of a comparative montage that ultimately equates the police and the gangsters. The two meetings correspond to each other along many dimensions. Both record the same type of event -- a search. Both involve similar actions -- characters standing and speaking. At this simple visual level, there is a striking resemblance between the behavior of the two groups. Indeed, there is even a similarity in the positions taken in the separate groups, e.g., there are both official and criminal hardliners. At times, the editing almost elides the two meetings; a criminal could be seen as addressing an official and vice-versa.

Visual details of the two meetings strongly correspond. Smoke is emphasized in both places. Indeed, cigarettes and cigars lit in the criminal meeting are followed by shots of the smoke-filled police session as if the fumes had transmigrated across the cut. Perhaps this is not only montage, but overtone montage. The elision of the two events is also supported by at least one lighting mix; a gesture begun in one shot by the gangster leader is completed by the Minister of the Interior. This multi-dimensional comparative montage, of course, is grounded by a thematic point -- namely, the identification of the two groups. Lang, here, is critical of the police. Like the criminals, their major concern is self-interest -- their 'operation' is also being disrupted by

the child-killer. They want to catch him in order to get the public 'off their backs' and return to 'business as usual'. Stylistically, in the best Soviet tradition, this pejorative equivalence is emphasized through an elaborate set of comparative juxtapositions.

The commitment to montage shapes Lang's attitude to the soundtrack. Elsie's death is a good example of this. She is late. Her mother asks people if they have seen the child. Excited, the mother begins calling out her kitchen window. Her voice carries over several shots, including a plate set for dinner, the apartment stairwell, and a yard, presumably in the neighborhood. These are all places where, given the time of day, we might expect to find Elsie. But we don't see her. The mother's poignant voice, audibly dropping as the camera cuts further and further away, plus these shots, communicate the idea of danger. This is montage of the most basic sort -- a visual idea plus an aural one engender a new concept. Editing is, in short, the model for sound.

The use of montage in both the visual and sound editing in **M** does not appear to be a casual technical decision about the best way to solve this or that local problem about the most efficient means to represent this or that scene. The montage style of **M** seems consistent. More than that, it seems organic, to use a concept of Eisenstein's.

The most sophisticated versions of the montage aesthetic involved a coordination of style and content. For Eisenstein, the dialectical structure of montage corresponded with the revolutionary subject matter of his films; for Vertov, editing mirrored the modes of thinking of the new socialist society that he celebrated; for Bunuel, montage juxtaposition manifested the irrational by literalizing the primary processes. In each case, the relationship between form and content converged into an organic, functional whole. Similarly, Lang's use of montage in **M** seems of a piece with his theme.

To understand the relation of montage to Lang's thematic preoccupations, we should describe the film's subject. **M** is above all a film of investigation. Extended sequences of the film lovingly dote on the process of gathering evidence. We hear Lohman's telephone discussion with the Minister of the Interior as we watch the police collecting and examining finger-prints, candy wrappers, cigarette packages, etc. We hear that they have 1550 clues. Throughout the film, Lang returns to the theme of physical evidence. After the raid on the cabaret, Lohman not only nabs a handful of criminals by careful attention to tell-tale clues, but his assistants pile up a magnificent assemblage of guns, knives, drills, chisels, hammers, etc. More clues for more crimes. And, toward the end of the film, when Lohman reads the report about the gang's entry into the warehouse, Lang dissolves from the written words to the pieces of evidence they enumerate. Lang seems visually obsessed with evidence, showing us much more than the narrative requires.

Of course, this visual concern with evidence is integrally related to the plot. The police's interest in evidence is projected onto the audience. In a limited way, we are simultaneously immersed in these clues along with the police. This is especially important at the beginning of the film, where for almost the first third we, like the police, have not identified the killer. He has been kept off-screen, or with his back to the camera, or in a dark place, or with his hat covering his face. Here, our position is strictly analogous to the authorities'. We have clues, for instance his whistle, but we haven't got our man. The framing of shots and the narrative conspire to make the spectator's relation to the screen that of a sleuth. Like the police, we base our knowledge of the killer on his traces, e.g., his shadow, his voice, his whistle.

The editing throughout **M** can be seen in light of this first section. Lang often edits actions in such a way that first we see or hear a trace, or a part, or an effect of an off-screen character before we see that character. We see the child-killer's reaction to the blind man at the trial before we can identify the blind man. At the very end we see the criminals raise their hands above their heads before we know the police have arrived. In some cases, we never see the off-screen action, as with Elsie's death; here our knowledge is wholly reliant on traces.

Lang's editing seems predicated on provoking the audience to infer unseen, off-screen presences and actions. Even after the audience knows who the child-killer is, it does not leave off its investigatory role, because by consistently presenting scenes where the audience must infer off-screen agents from their traces Lang continues to make the spectator's relation to the events in the film analogous to a detective's relation to his clues. That is, an investigation involves reasoning from traces and effects to their causes -- their agents. Lang's framing and his editing engender the same sort of reasoning -- from trace to agent -- in many scenes, including even scenes that don't involve off-screen criminals. It is as if Lang's preoccupation with the process of investigation were so intense that he used the process as a general model for framing and editing throughout. A similar point might be made about the large number of overhead shots in the film. These shots mime the posture of investigation, that of the detective bending over a city map or a discarded package of cigarettes.

M is an exemplary case of an organic film. The narrative structure, the framing, the use of sound to present off-screen traces, the overhead angulation, and the order of editing, all seem coordinated to induce an investigatory attitude on the part of the audience — thereby simulating, to a limited extent, the fictional experience of the characters in the viewing experience of the spectators. Montage is key here. And in the tradition of Eisenstein, Vertov and Bunuel, it is montage based on imitating modes of thought.

Whereas **M** is a film based on editing, **Kameradschaft** relies far more on camera movement. Since the two films share the same cameraman, Wagner, this difference seems attributable to the divergent conceptions of the sound film held by Pabst and Lang. Pabst and Wagner had begun to use camera movement extensively in the silent period, notably in **The Love of Jeanne Ney**. As the industry changed to sound, Wagner was one of the first Germans to blimp the camera. The mobility this gave him was unleashed effectively in Pabst's **Westfront 1918**, especially in the sequence where the troops crawl along the trenches to mount an attack. **Kameradschaft** marks the highpoint of Pabst's and Wagner's experimentation with camera movement, not only because the camera movement is interesting in and of itself, but because it is integrated into a complex system of composition that presages the development of sound realism culminating with directors like Rossellini, DeSica, and Ray.

The subject of **Kameradschaft** is a French mine disaster circa 1919. Its theme is blatantly socialist; German miners race across the border to rescue their brother workers. The recent war casts a dark shadow on the action, but the heroic self-sacrifice of the Germans, in the name of working-class unity, dispels French distrust and results in a celebration of proletarian cooperation. This theme is not only stated in the film, but is also reinforced by the narrative structure which, in the Soviet tradition, employs a mass hero, thereby democratizing the drama. Instead of a single protagonist or a single set of protagonists knit together by one story, there are several central stories occurring concomitantly.

Kameradschaft is perhaps most interesting in terms of its composition. Like **Battle of Algiers**, but thirty years earlier, **Kameradschaft** builds images that often evoke the illusion of documentary footage. Pabst achieves this by intermittently acting as if his camera were restrained in relation to the disaster as a documentary camera would be. For instance, there is a scene of the German rescue crew being given instructions before it enters the French mine. Pabst shoots this from behind the German team. The camera tracks past their backs, as they listen, until there is a break in the line of men. At that point, the camera turns and moves into this space in the crowd so that the audience can see the French official who is speaking. But the camera doesn't dolly in: it remains about ten yards away. What is the significance of this distance? I submit that it is to identify the camera as an observer. It reminds the viewer of a documentary because the camera stays outside the action. In a period before zooms, to move into the action for a close-shot of the speaker would interfere with and interrupt the rescue. These men don't have time to pose for pictures. The camera has to stay out of their way. Throughout

Kameradschaft, documentary' distances of this sort are evoked, abetting an illusion of a spontaneous recording of the event. This is not to say that every or even most of the shooting respects the 'documentary distance'. Still, as in Rossellini's **Paisan**, it happens often enough to induce a heightened sense of realism.

The camera's relation to the physical environment is especially interesting. It is important to emphasize that the mines are sets, brilliantly executed by Erno Metzner and Karl Vollbrecht. Yet in a way these are curious sets; often they deny the camera a clear view of the action. In one of the opening shots of the French mine, the camera begins following a character who is pushing a heavy coal bin down a tunnel. Then, the camera elevates somewhat and tracks along the ceiling of the tunnel where a diagonal vein has been cut out of the earth and propped up with a veritable forest of short, thick wood pillars. There are miners digging in this narrow space. You can see them hacking away behind and between the wooden props. The camera then swoops down, picking up the character with the coal bin again. He has stopped at a chute that runs up 'to the vein where the miners are working. Coal pours into the empty bin.

One thing to note about this shot is that it exemplifies a realist's concern with making the process by which coal is removed and transported inside a mine visibly intelligible -- i.e., it enables the audience to see how a mine operates. But more importantly, the shot also demonstrates another realist preoccupation, crucial to Pabst's composition throughout. That is, our view of the miners is obscured by those wooden props; the human element in the scene is blocked by the physical structure of the set. The physical details of the environment restrict the human interest we may have in the characters in favor of details of the environment.

Of course, in a documentary, you must deal predominantly with pre-existing environments, which will not always allow you to get clear shots of the action. Pabst and Metzner have built that factor into their sets. Recurrently throughout the film, a tangle of pipes, wires, broken posts and all manner of debris inhabit the foreground of shots, preventing a clear view of the human action. It is as if Pabst imagined what the problems of a documentary cameraman would be in such a situation, and then had Metzner build a set where Wagner could imitate some of those limitations. In turn, this evocation of documentary elements heightens the viewer's sense of verisimilitude.

Physical elements of the set literally obstruct our view of the drama. When the grandfather drags his grandson into an underground stable, he sets the boy down in an empty stall. This is a charged scene, dominated by the grandfather's emotion. But we cannot see the grandfather's face. A wide board, part of the side of the stall, is in front of the old man, denying a clear view of him at this dramatically important moment.

The significance of this shot should be understood in terms of realism, specifically in terms of the archaeological temperament of many realists. Whether a Stroheim or a Zola, the realist packs his work with details in an effort to reproduce the particular environment of the event depicted. Pabst does this when he introduces and elucidates the German miners' surprising overhead 'locker' system. But Pabst differs from a realist like Stroheim in that he not only packs the background with details but also the foreground. This is an extension of the means at the disposal of the realist. The archaeological realist seeks to increase the weight of environmental detail relative to the dominant human action of the story. This does not mean that the archaeological realist overwhelms the main story, or even that detail has equal weight with the story, but only that the role of detail, as a focus of audience attention, be appreciably greater than one finds in the sparse decors of typical narrative films of the period. Stroheim weighed the background of **Greed** with details, and then used the deep focus long take to prompt the audience to explore the environment. Pabst does this as well, amplifying Stroheim's practice by often filling the foreground with details, thereby compositionally displacing characters from their privileged position as the first object of audience attention.

Pabst also uses the beginnings or the ends of shots to emphasize physical detail. A shot can open on an object and be held for a second before a character enters. Or, a shot may be held on a detail after a character exits.

Related to Pabst's concern with physical detail is his handling of actors. People often walk in front of the camera. Also, important characters, involved in major actions in the story, are sometimes in the background of the shot behind groups of extras. When the grandfather sneaks into the mine, the camera tracks with him, but between the old man and the lens stands the French rescue crew as well as several imposing steel columns. For brief intervals, the old man disappears from view. What is involved here is a complex compositional acknowledgement of the situation being represented. Standard narrative composition designs its environment and blocks actors so that important characters are at the center of visual attention. The realist deviates from this practice, giving the details of the event and the place portrayed more prominence. The realist acknowledges more complexity in the world, but the realist does not recreate the world. Realism, like standard narrative composition, is a style of representation, not reproduction, of actual reality. But as a style it acknowledges the complexity of situations by giving detail more compositional attention than does the solely drama-centered narrative.

The realists Bazin endorsed were involved in what could be thought of as a kind of cinematic land reclamation. They repossessed areas of cinematic space, unused in standard narrative composition. Specifically, they resettled the back of the shot, and the sides of the shot. They were concerned with depth of field, and what Bazin calls 'lateral depth of field'. Both these preoccupations are central to **Kameradschaft**.

The saga of depth of field is well known. Standard narrative composition according to Bazin pays scant attention to background. It either obliterates it by close shots or masks it by soft focus. The background may also be downplayed via abstraction. The background of the standard narrative shot is not so abstract as to call attention to itself, but there is so little visual detail that there is not reason for the eye to dwell there. A table, a chair, a telephone and a picture are enough. And don't have mother enter the background to answer the phone while dad and junior are having a crucial dramatic conversation in the foreground, because that will divert attention.

Renoir, Wyler, Welles and the neo-realists revolted against this. The background became an arena of activity; in **Rules of the Game**, sometimes as many as three separate stories are contesting the action in the foreground. **Kameradschaft** similarly upholds this principle of overall composition. Of course, **Kameradschaft** differs from **Rules of the Game**. Primarily, Renoir places interrelated dramatic actions on different compositional planes -- Schumacher searches for his wife in the foreground, while the poacher sneaks off with her in the background. Pabst, instead, implodes the frame with the physical and social facts of the situation. Whereas Renoir concentrates on the personal, psychological economy of the drama, Pabst is an anthropologist and an archaeologist. Both rely on depth of field, but they are realists with different types of interest. Pabst is concerned with enriching the environment, whereas Renoir primarily enriches the drama.

Disaster lurks throughout **Kameradschaft**. Explosions, cave-ins, floods and fires mercilessly erupt. The depth of field technique is especially powerful in these scenes. A man will run down a tunnel that is collapsing behind him. Metzner's engineering ingenuity with these catastrophes is overwhelming. Tons of stones are falling within a few feet of the actors playing the trapped miners. Everything is captured in one shot, engendering an awesome feeling of authenticity. Bazin claimed a heightened sense of verisimilitude for depth of field shots involving danger. Pabst exploits that effect more than a decade before Bazin conceptualizes it as a central factor in realism.

Of all the ways in which **Kameradschaft** corresponds to Bazin's characterization of film realism, camera movement is the most significant. To elucidate this, I should start with a fast review of Bazin's interest in camera movement. He applauds Renoir's tendency toward incessant lateral panning and tracking.

Renoir follows his characters, rather than pre-blocking the scene in such a way that the camera remains stationary throughout. Bazin appreciates this use of camera movement for two reasons. First, it imbues the scene with a sense of spontaneity. And second, it treats the relation between on-screen space and off-screen space cinematically.

This second reason is somewhat obscure and requires comment. Bazin believes that the stationary, pre-blocked scene treats the film frame like the border of a stage or a painting. This is, the picture and the play are presented as boxes that are spatially discontinuous with their surroundings. The pre-blocked, stationary scene treats on-screen space on the box model. In distinction, repeated lateral panning and tracking subvert one's sense of the frame as a self-contained box and affirm the continuity of on-screen space and off-screen space. The frame is not analogous to the proscenium arch which lifts the action out of a spatial continuum with the wings of the theater, setting it in some virtual realm. Rather the film frame is only the viewfinder of the camera as it moves over a spatially continuous world; lateral panning and tracking acknowledge the presence of that real world and make the on-screen image's continuity with it a matter of the audience's felt attention.

It is this aspect of realism Bazin dubs 'lateral depth of field.' Like ordinary depth of field, this style is realistic relative to a more standard type of composition. That is, standard practice treats the frame as a theatrical box; the realist repudiates this, thereby acknowledging spatial continuity by subverting the artifice imposed on the image by standard practice.

Pabst constantly emphasizes lateral depth of field in **Kameradschaft**. As in Renoir, there are many slight axial pans in the film. When the crowds run to the exploding French mines, Pabst includes several shots that begin with a group of people running in one direction across the frame. Then the camera pans slightly to the point where two streets intersect. At that corner, the first group of people turn and join an even larger group which is running away from the camera. Through the use of these slight axial pans, Pabst emphasizes the spatial contiguity of all of the people who are converging on the mine. Throughout the film, this type of panning recurs in order to articulate the spatial contiguity of converging action. Pabst often uses panning to represent a character's point of view. Here, the synthetic space of editing is repudiated, resulting in the felt sense of a spatially continuous environment.

Of course, the large camera movements of the film enhance the sense of a spatial continuum as well. Where possible, Pabst knits the different areas of action together with long, snaking tracking shots. I am not denying that there is a great deal of editing in the film. However, there is also a great deal of camera movement, especially for the period. Moreover, much of this camera movement is used in situations where the normal practice of the period would be to fall back on the analytic editing procedures of silent film. Again, to understand what is realist about **Kameradschaft**, it is necessary to consider it as a deviation from standard practice. Much of the film corresponds to the editing bias of the period. But there are also other tendencies, found in the camera movement which, given the film-historical context, can be interpreted as an acknowledgement of spatial continuity that affirms the role of film as the recorder of a spatially continuous world.

The theme of off-screen space is also inherent in many of Pabst's stationary compositions. When the French rescue crew receives its instructions, the body of one of the miners is cut off by the side of the frame. This recalls a strategy found in 19th century realist paintings like Manet's **At the Cafe**. The point is to emphasize the continuity of the depicted environment beyond the border of the frame. The innumerable pipes, wires and tunnels in **Kameradschaft** serve an analogous function; they are the kinds of objects that by their very nature remind the audience that they are part of a larger off-screen spatial network.

Since off-screen space is also important in **M**, it is instructive to consider the different ways Pabst and Lang use it. Lang keeps very specific things off-screen. Examples include: the child-killer, the murder, the gangsters as they break down the attic door, and the police as they raid the kangaroo court.

I have already argued that the reason Lang does this is to mobilize an investigatory attitude that corresponds to the theme of detection. But another point can also be made. The agents and events kept off-screen are generally associated with danger. This is especially true of the off-screen agents. They constitute threats to what is on screen. In my examples, for instance, the gangsters threaten the child-killer, and later the police threaten the gangsters. This is a formal articulation of Lang's theme of paranoia. The off-screen threats are a pictorial means of expressing the paranoid obsession with unseen and invisible enemies. Lang's **films noirs**, like **The Big Heat**, will employ similar strategies. His **1000 Eyes of Dr. Mabuse** takes the theme of invisible danger as its major subject. For Lang, in other words, off-screen space has a symbolic function within his paranoid vision. It has dire connotations as an invisible, menacing empire. In Pabst, off-screen space is just off-screen space, emphasized for its own sake. Of course, in Lang off-screen space is literally contiguous with on-screen space. But that is not its aesthetic point. Lang is interested in developing a subjective world-view, while Pabst is striving for an objective view of the world.

For Bazin, camera movement was also associated with spontaneity. The connection here, I think, must be understood historically. That is, it must be understood in the context of a dominant style based on pre-blocked stationary compositions that suggested theatrical artifice. The pre-blocked stationary composition gives the impression that the action is pre-ordained and circumscribed. Thus, a style that allows the character to lurch off-screen, forcing the camera to follow him, may have the connotations of freedom and spontaneity. Such camera movement is realist in contrast to a pre-existing style that is artificial. It is spontaneous in contrast to a style that gives the action the impression of being controlled.

For Pabst, this sense of spontaneity is central to his attempt to promote the illusion that the film is a documentary recording. In some scenes, like the German visit to the French bar, almost three-quarters of the shots contain camera movement. The feeling engendered is that the cameraman is pursuing an unstaged action, shifting his point of view as the event develops. This sensation is induced especially when the German and French rescue teams meet underground. The leaders of the two groups shake hands; the camera dollies in. First, it heads for the Frenchman. But then it turns and moves into a close-up shot of the handshake. This slight change in camera direction is significant. It is as if, mid-movement, the cameraman changed his mind about what was the important element in the scene. I am not denying that all the shots in **Kameradschaft** are pre-planned. Yet they often feel unplanned. The shot of the handshake has the look of involving a spontaneous decision on the part of the cameraman. Throughout the film, camera movement has the look of following the action rather than delimiting it. The camera seems to be an observer with the result that the film projects the illusion of a spontaneous recording of an event.

Surprisingly, Bazin does not appreciate **Kameradschaft**. He compares it with *Grand Illusion* since both films employ more than one language. But, he remarks, Renoir gets more thematic mileage out of his polyglot format. Why doesn't Bazin notice the camera movement aesthetic implicit in **Kameradschaft**? One reason might be that there are still vestiges of the silent sound film in Pabst. For instance, there is a fantasy sequence where the sound of a hammer tapping a pipe metaphorically becomes the rattle of a machinegun. Nevertheless, the dominant tendency of the film is toward the sound film style Bazin advocates. Indeed, Pabst not only claims the background and the sides of the frame for realism; he takes over the foreground as well.

The transition from silent film to sound did not only involve a question about how sound would be used. It also prompted a re-evaluation of the nature of the medium. For Pabst, sound was associated with the recording capacity of film. This led him to a reassessment of the image. He sought and found compositional strategies, including camera movement, which amplified the idea of film as a recording. A whole style evolved in the process of coordinating composition with the commitment to recording. The stylistic system Pabst developed was not the only one available. **M** presents another alternative. But

that alternative is based on a very different response to the significance of sound. Steeped in the methods of the silent film, Lang attempts to turn sound into a montage element. The underlying presupposition of Lang's system is that the nature of film is to reconstitute reality, not to record it. In Lang, sound is modeled on pre-existing technique whereas in Pabst technique must be remodeled to accommodate sound, specifically to accommodate sound conceived of as entailing a commitment to recording.

Sound caused a major theoretical crisis in the film world. By using the term 'theoretical', I do not mean simply that it was a crisis for theoreticians. More importantly, it was a crisis for artists. A framework was needed to understand the aesthetic significance of this new element. Two major ones presented themselves. Sound could function as an element of manipulation as it does in *M*. This is to interpret sound in terms of a silent film paradigm. Or a new paradigm could be embraced, one that responded to sound as increasing film's commitment to recording. In *Kameradschaft*, Pabst accepts this option. It prompts him to develop a highly original camera style, one that presages Renoir. As such, *Kameradschaft* is one of the watershed films in cinema history. I do not mean to use *Kameradschaft* to disparage *M*. *M* is surely one of the greatest films ever made. My point is that *Kameradschaft*, a generally neglected film, is *M*'s peer insofar as it proposes a fully consistent stylistic alternative. In the dialectic between manipulation and recording, both films speak eloquently at a time of crisis and uncertainty. Δ

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Saul Landau

The Truth Lies on the Cutting Room Floor

○ Conclusion

Chapter 12

During the early editing of QUE HACER, Haskell Wexler and I flew to Chile to film an interview with President Allende. While we were in Chile, more than 70 Brazilian political prisoners arrived, newly exchanged for the kidnapped Swiss ambassador. Haskell read the story in the newspapers and we set out to find the prisoners. After searching through Santiago for a couple of hours, we found the Brazilians. They told us, for the camera, of the excruciating tortures they had suffered at the hands of the Brazilian military dictatorship. Then they acted the tortures out for the camera, playing both the roles of torturers and victims: To watch people act out tortures they themselves have so recently endured produces a profound impact. At least it did on Haskell and me.

The Brazilians had spent the previous week in confusion. Handcuffed together, they had been pushed from prison cells and shoved onto an airplane, destination unknown, without clothing or passports. Armed soldiers accompanied them and physically abused them until the Varig plane landed at Santiago airport. Only then were the handcuffs unlocked. Several of them told us that because they had been randomly handcuffed men and women had to go to the toilet together, much to the guards delight.

Once in Chile, the situation for the prisoners changed. Allende, hearing of the abuse on the plane, refused to allow the Brazilian guards to disembark and he found makeshift quarters in a park to house the seventy confused prisoners.

Haskell and I met the Brazilians in the park. They were still feeling disoriented and were trying to plan activities that would revive them and make them politically useful. Even though we explained who we were, they thought we represented NBC. They discussed us among themselves and decided that the American people should know what had happened to them in Brazil. In broken Spanish, or what they called 'Portunol', they began to describe their experiences. Haskell spoke neither Spanish nor Portuguese. So I did the interviewing in Spanish; they answered in Portuguese or a combination of Spanish and Portuguese. Two of them spoke English and so we used them in the film.

From the beginning, Haskell and I knew that the film would carry a heavy message; the question was whether we could get it shown anywhere. These Brazilians had undergone the worst conceivable tortures and yet they had survived and maintained their political identity. A 23 year old woman law student explained how she resisted electric shocks and then forced herself to hold out under sodium pentathol, rather than reveal meeting places or the names of her comrades. Another woman had been gang raped, her face beaten out of shape, electric shocks had been applied to her face and genitals, and she had been forced to witness the murder of a comrade. She laughed when she spoke of her torture. Most of the Brazilians spoke in a detached, almost casual way as they described electric shocks to their genitals, water tortures and other monstrosities. They might have been describing what they had eaten for lunch. But when they described the tortures inflicted on friends and comrades, their voices choked with emotion and tears filled their eyes.

These interviews took place in January 1971. Santiago's summer temperature rose into the 90s and the smog thickened, making Los Angeles seem clear by comparison. Each day, Haskell and I tried to learn when the interview with Allende would take place and, failing to ascertain the date, we would drive down to the Brazilians' quarters and spend the day filming with them. In between, we took two days to travel to Temuco and Puerto Saavedra with David Beitleman, then Vice Minister of Agriculture in charge of expropriations. On the road David explained to us the agricultural history of Chile over the last hundred years. He seemed to know exactly what crops were planted on each acre, and what crops ought to be cultivated if Chile were to prosper.

Some 400 miles south of Santiago lived the Mapuche, or Araucanian Indians, where they still held land in reservations. Beitleman, on this particular excursion, was on a peace making mission. Inspired by Allende's victory, the Indians had begun to make demands for the return of their tribal lands. Portions of land had been sold by their grandfathers and was now occupied by small farmers, some of whom had married Indian women. Beitleman relished the claims against absentee landlords. With legal papers in hand, he knocked on the rich landlord's door and presented him with the eviction notice and the name of the people to whom the land rightfully belonged. Eviction notices, however were only a small part of the problem. The situation was more complicated for small farmers with titles going **back** as far as 70 years and holdings of at least 20 acres. Here the law became unclear and justice not so simple.

In the fishing village of Puerto Saavedra, Beitleman met with the Mapuches in a church built by Scandinavian seamen. First to speak were several local communist and Unidad Popular organizers. Haskell photographed the stone-like, impassive faces in the crowd. The Indians were sitting, standing, leaning against pillars, wrapped in ponchos and silence. Then Beitleman began to speak.

'The Chilean people have enemies and some of those enemies you know first hand. The big landlords and bankers who have cheated the poor and the Indians. They are being dealt with now that the people have elected their own representative to be president. But some of Chile's enemies are far away. And some of our brothers and sisters are fighting our battle in a country called Vietnam.' Beitleman went on to explain how foreign capital had penetrated Chile and taken away the peoples' ability to manage their own resources, how the Vietnamese were fighting to restore their independence, and how Chile had taken its first step in that direction by electing Allende; but no one should forget that the battlefield was thousands of miles away. As he spoke,

the men, women, and children in the audience seemed scarcely to breathe or blink. In Haskell's photos, the people could be mistaken for statues. As Beitleman concluded his speech, however, the crowd applauded and then lined up to talk turkey with him.

At that point, had Haskell and I been set up to film, we would have recorded the most extraordinary conversations. These people had never seen a moving picture and would not have known what the large lensed camera meant. One Indian man complained to David that his wife would not steep with him because her father, a hunica (the Indian term for whites), was being threatened by the tribe with expropriation. She had told her husband that unless he intervened to save her father's land she would no longer afford him the privileges of the marriage bed.

David listened carefully to this and other complaints, none of which seemed to bear the remotest connection with the lecture he had just delivered on Vietnam and Chile's needs. He had stressed to the Indians that their needs were not Allende's first priority; that control of Chile's resources, especially her copper, was first on the list. He had told the Indians that, like their Vietnamese brothers, they would have to fight for their rights. The Allende government would aid them in their struggle, but it would not do it for them, nor could it afford to put large financial resources at their disposal simply because foreign powers had for hundreds of years drained the wealth of the country. And the Mapuches told David about their individual problems, the immediate and very real struggles of their daily lives, none of which had simple solutions and all related to the peoples' victory.

Social change produces individual agony, not just among those who are expropriated, but by almost everyone. The sexual problem tied to land theft that occurred seventy five years previously was only one example of the grievances that Beitleman heard. And possessing a confidence based on his knowledge of Marxism, the support he derived from the electoral victory and probably remnants of Talmudic wisdom, he explained to each complainant the limitations of the government to deal with their problems. He emphasized involvement, discussion, struggle. He urged the Mapuches to become integrated in the Chilean peoples' struggle to throw off the chains of colonialism and build a new society.

The grievance session over, we drove back to Temuco, waited while David met with a Mapuche communist organizer and then in a tiny plane, we flew back to Santiago. David pointed to land erosion from the air and expressed confidence that Allende could carry out his program in six years, through legal means, and thus prepare Chile to enter the stage of socialism. He criticized the MIR (the ultra-left) for their land seizures, but said that he worried most about certain 'petit bourgeois elements' of the Socialist Party. 'At least MIR has discipline and functions in an organized manner, even though we disagree on many subjects. But elements of the SP carry out anarchistic policies, feel responsible to no one and cause trouble. Why seize land illegally when with a little extra effort you can do it legally?' David, however, did not think a coup would come when he spoke with us at the end of January 1971. He had waited, like many other communists and socialists, for this electoral victory to put into practice the policies that would lead to the peaceful road to socialism. Also, David had helped collect the enormous amount of data under UN and other auspices which now could be used to expropriate landlords. The laws had not yet changed; but Allende planned to enforce those that existed. One of them prohibited absentee landlordism. Shooting battles soon began. The landlords said the land belonged to them. Allende's people asked: 'Who gave it to you?'

The landlords replied: 'God'. So much for the ideology. The peasants needed the land and they began to receive it or seize it. On the country side, the counterrevolution had also begun.

When we returned to Santiago, we tried to fix a date for the filming of the interview with President Allende. After waiting for seven weeks in Cuba, I felt prepared to sit around Santiago with much less anxiety than Haskell. We decided, after advice from several people close to the President, to go to his house on the day before we were scheduled to leave the country. We arrived at his home at Tomas Moro, discussed our plans with a policeman and a bodyguard and then waited. Haskell decided to check out the camera, opened the camera box and discovered that he had forgotten the camera. So one of our Chilean assistants raced back to the hotel in a taxi. Finally, word was sent that Allende wanted to speak with me. As I went inside, I encountered a small group of people who were also waiting. One was Regis Debray who was interviewing Allende in depth, also for film and tape. Debray and I chatted about his experience in the Bolivian prison and he asked me about the depth of the cultural revolution in the US. We each kept our eyes on Allende's door and finally I was summoned.

Allende greeted me like a physician greets a patient, with a 'what can I do for you?' manner. We discussed the nature of the interview, agreeing that we would assume that it was for a U.S. TV audience. He asked me what themes I wanted him to deal with, nodded in agreement, and said he would give us forty five minutes. I summoned Haskell and the crew. We set up our equipment in the patio behind his house and began the interview.

Chapter 13

The filming of an interview looks simple, if the camera operator knows what he is doing. And Haskell knew. Of the three 11 minute magazines he shot, almost every foot was steady and focused. He knew instinctively when to zoom in to a close up and when to pull back to a medium shot. Gustavo Moris filmed cutaways to fill in the spaces when the magazines were being changed. Exposure was perfect and in forty five minutes, we had concluded the task which had brought us to Chile.

We packed, said goodbye to our new friends and flew back to the U.S. feeling confident in Allende's ability to hold together the people of Chile as they advanced in their legal socialist experiment and in Allende's ability to maintain sufficient unity inside the left to mobilize and organize the masses for power. Men like Beitleman and Allende's cabinet ministers all impressed us with their steadfastness of purpose, their maturity and political wisdom. Against military attack, however, these qualities meant little.

Not working for NET or any other TV network, Haskell and I proceeded to try to sell our scoop interview with Chile's Marxist president. The reasons given by the commercial networks for rejections ranged from 'It's not in English' to 'We only use our own products, unless it's something like a Kennedy assassination'. KQED, the San Francisco public TV station, offered us \$50, and World Press, an NET production made in San Francisco, offered us \$50 more. I bitched to one of the KQED executives about the low

payment and he called a meeting with other executives. They refused to pay more. I told them that their meeting time alone cost more than \$50 if they added up what each executive made an hour. We took the \$50.

We faced the same problem with the Brazil torture film: no market. Channel 13, WNET, in New York played about 40 minutes of the film, but others had little interest in torture in Brazil. Most preferred carnival. The film did show at the Los Angeles Film Festival, at campuses and in other non-theatrical TV settings. Some viewers felt the film had great impact. One man fainted during a screening, saying later that he identified with the victims. But others raised an interesting question. They said they felt bored. Torture boring? Or, torture interesting?

Films about torture are different from torture itself. Seeing people tortured is different from seeing films of people being tortured. We filmed one sequence in which the testicles of the victim are tied by rope to a bar on the ceiling. The victim must prop up his body by extending his hands below him. If he lets go with his hands and allows his body to fall flat on the table under him, his testicles are pulled off. The idea behind torture is obvious: just before the victim's strength gives out he will beg in panic to be released and will provide the torturer with information. I know that we filmed the sequence because I later watched myself in the frame asking questions as one Brazilian simulated pressure on the testicles of another. But if I had not seen myself in the frame, I would have denied that we filmed such a sequence. I did not remember it.

On several occasions, flashes of light appear on the film. Haskell confessed that they resulted from him taking his eye away from the eye piece, allowing light to flash the frames, because his eyes had filled with tears. Yet, for the most part, the film appears straightforward. The filmmakers ask the Brazilians to describe and then re-enact what happened to them and to explain why they had been able to endure torture and why armed struggle was the only way to bring about social change in Brazil. Jean Marc, a student leader, explained that military dictatorship offers no legal ways of opposing or disagreeing. In the meantime, he exhorted, think of the violence done by the system. Think of how many kids die from hunger and poverty.

We cut the film in Hollywood, at Haskell's studio. In one cutting room we saw and heard Brazilian revolutionaries describing why they chose armed struggle as the only means possible to combat the military dictatorship, and therefore why they also accepted torture as the consequence of getting caught. In the adjoining cutting room, a bouncy jingle floated through the corridors: 'Things go better with Coca Cola.....'. Haskell moves from one cutting room to another, as do the various editors and assistants who work on the commercials that Haskell and his partner make. The commercials allowed him to put up the money to film the story of Brazilian torture and the conversation with Allende. The commercials clash with the substance of the torture film in a cruel, aesthetic irony.

Haskell revealed the conflict: How to make commercials in one room and a film about politics in another? In the Coke commercial the slick cut, the precision timing, the titillation and tantalization of the viewer might persuade him to buy a product he neither needs nor wants, one which erodes his teeth and eats away at his digestive tracts. To convince him to buy these products great photographers like Haskell Wexler are paid enormous sums of money. Slick

(technically slick) editors are hired and super sound cutters work for weeks to make a thirty second commercial. The cost of any of these would come to ten times what the Brazil torture film cost. A 60-minute film costs about \$30,000; the 30-second commercial about \$150,000. Easy to understand Haskell's conflict.

To film a Schlitz commercial, Haskell and his partner travel to Australia or Europe. The actors there don't collect residuals and they charge less than American actors, so Schlitz likes the arrangement. If Haskell did not make these commercial products or film police movies, he would not have had the money to film the torture film. A curious contradiction, and one that I was willing to live with.

While working on the editing of QUE HACER in San Francisco, I spent two days a week in Hollywood viewing the Brazil film and suggesting editing possibilities. The Hollywood ambiance, established by the film industry, contrasts with any other in the country. Nathaniel West tried, in **The Day of the Locust**, to capture the madness of human character in the midst of gentle breezes and swaying palms. The balmy, smog ridden air also conveys illusion and carries the seeds of contradiction, the very essence of the film industry.

The film industry is like any other industry. From raw materials to factories to warehouses to stores to studios, to cameras to labs to editing machines to sound studios to title houses to screening rooms to sales conferences to market specialists; the film path. Like other industries, Hollywood's movie complex contains workers at all levels of technical and artistic skills. Developing along with the horseless carriage, whose marketers developed the illusion among the population that their product, and only their product, would meet their transportation needs, so also the movie industry packaged and sold illusions. The Perils of Pauline hooked the needy Americans like opium hooked the Chinese. No matter if they behaved like spoiled adolescents in real life, the 'stars' on the screen fashioned characters for millions of Americans to imitate. The movie model became the lover, fighter, moralist, priest, gangster. A few women like Garbo and Harlow developed female characters with strength and independence.

The workers in the industry felt the same exploitation as workers in any other industry; only their product differed. The grips and gaffers and all the gophers and lackeys could rub elbows with the stars whom their children swooned over. But the grips and gaffers could also tell their kids about the actors as real people. Now, millions of Americans watch the movie stars make fools of themselves on late night talk shows on TV. In pre-television days movie magazines recounted the conspicuous consumption and playing habits of stars.

The industry still produces the celluloid illusion that allows American moviegoers to suspend their critical faculties and escape into the world that Hollywood has created over the last 70 odd years. Industry connotes factories and indeed Hollywood for many years mass-produced its movies as though off an assembly line. The 'labs, sound studios, cutting rooms, sets and equipment rooms comprised the factory apparatus. And as with all products, engineers and designers played the crucial role in the manipulation of images to achieve social and often directly political results.

Hollywood plays an important part in America's cultural apparatus. At the very period when commodity production had become more fetishized than ever before, in the period when assembly line production was born and nurtured, the time that consumption as a way of life took hold, the movies emerged as not only the new product, but the product that provided the consuming public with images and symbols, taught them what and how to consume, provided them with larger than life heroes and heroines to whom consumption came naturally -- on and off the screen.

The movies taught them that all became resolved in the end, that goodness was rewarded and evil punished, that police were good and criminals bad. It gave coherence to the values that had created consumer capitalism, racism and imperialism. It transformed history into myth. The good guy in the movie might err in small ways, but his virtue was ultimately rewarded. The images slid past the viewers' eyes, the piano player and then the movie score providing audio grease, while the editor selected shots so as not to jar the viewer from his viewing pattern, not to let him notice that he sat in a movie theatre and that the characters on the screen said memorized lines that might have come out right only after twenty takes. No ohs and ahs, no awkwardness, unless directed -- that was the substance of the viewers' message. Perfection in celluloid, created by an industry, for profit and manipulation. Movie perfection. Technical Perfection of the means of manipulation. Movies offer the viewer the appearance of great imagination. Most of this appearance, however, comes from tried and tested formulas, slight variations, with high precision special effects, on worn out themes.

Like the massiveness of the productions themselves, showing a waste that even the most affluent in real life cannot reach, the production process combines the qualities found in the celluloid products with the exploitation common to all industries. The lower down on the skill scale, the lower the pay; the stunt man and the special effects expert each receive high pay for their respective skills. But the vast majority of those who work on the production have become unnecessary to the work process.

The decline of Hollywood and the buying up of the big production companies by oil corporations (Gulf Western bought Paramount for example) has resulted in a consolidation of the capitalist enterprise and a reaffirmation of status-quo politics.

Chapter 14

In the midst of industrial and declining Hollywood, and next door to the cutting room where 'things go better with Coke', we edited the Brazil torture film. Haskell and I struggled over political aesthetic problems -- they interconnect -- and felt that we had a product we could both accept. He paid for the finishing costs and we both tried to interest TV people in both films, without much success. The campus showings happened and a distributor bought rights. But few Americans had any interest in torture in Brazil, or in the ideas and character of Dr. Salvador Allende. (After the coup in Chile the Allende film's distribution picked up).

QUE HACER was finished at the end of 1971 and other than European interest, we had few bites. We entered and won some festivals in Europe, made some theatrical and TV sales, but in the U.S. we had little luck in peddling our 35mm product. A Hollywood lawyer asked me to describe the film. I did so in detail and he shook his

head. 'No, no. Is it a Western, a murder mystery, spy story, love story, musical?' After thinking, and recovering somewhat from the shock, I replied, 'I guess we'd have to call it a South American'.

Advice was easy to get. Practically everyone knew someone else who would give us crucial advice. The major distributors had no interest in the work. The medium sized distributors generally felt that the film was too serious and unusual for them to risk the capital outlay required to push a film. From \$250 to \$500 thousand dollars would have been needed if Cinema V (an independent distributor) would have taken it. So we continued trying to peddle our product. Eventually, QUE HACER opened briefly in Washington and New York theatres, achieved critical praise in the **New York Times**, and then went on the campus circuit.

The directors, crew and cast saw the film together in a screening room. We watched our creation unroll before our eyes, not in the tiny images of the editing machine, nor the 16mm projector in a small living room, but in 35mm living color by DeLuxe. Every mistake was magnified, and we cringed. All the beautiful and good things we had accomplished, by design or luck, were also reflected back through the magic screen. The film looked much more complicated than we could have designed, and what we had considered good acting often appeared stiff on the screen; the parts we had worried about looked natural. What a relief to see it finished! What a disappointment to see it finished! More than a year and a half had passed from shooting to projection, and now the product moved along through the projector at so many frames per second that the eye could not see the line between each frame. Chilean reality revealed via cinema; cinematic reality laid bare via Chile.

Our first feature film had somehow found its way, frame by frame, to completion. We had spent about \$130,000 from beginning to end and were about \$20,000 in debt to labs and airlines. Most of the actors and crew, including ourselves, had not been paid. And so we began the search for a distributor who would advance us a substantial sum. Another frustrating year passed and we finally settled for a distributor who would absorb the cost of making the 16mm negative.

Chapter 15

Paul Jacobs and I were hired by the Great American Dream Machine program to do 'journalism' for TV. Investigative reporting, they called it. Paul and I outlined to the producers a series of subjects we wanted to research and film; they agreed on the subjects and salary and we went to work. Both of us needed the money, and we thought we could shake up some people in the process.

The first story we filmed concerned the FBI. Or, more accurately, the FBI's attempt to frame various Movement organizations and individuals by creating violence and then blaming it on leftist extremists. Paul and I put together a crew of people we knew, including Stanley Kronquest -- now recovered from his Cuba experience -- and Dave Meyers, a cameraman with much experience and ability. Paul had received some tips that two FBI agent provocateurs had suffered attacks of conscience and wanted to tell all. So we flew to Seattle and filmed interviews with the agents -- the FBI's official term for them was 'informants' -- and with their victims.

Thus we began to work in film journalism, investigative reporting through camera and tape recorder. The difference between film journalism and newspaper journalism derives from the nature of the camera itself and from cinematic rules or grammar. For example: we interviewed David Sannis, an FBI 'informant': who alleged that an FBI special agent ordered him to blow up a bridge. A newspaper journalist writes down what Sannis says while perhaps an accompanying photographer takes some pictures of him. In film journalism, there are additional requirements: proper background, sufficient light, cutaway shots, and establishing shots. The film journalist must be sure that the cameraman has taken care of all these essentials. A 'cutaway' refers to a change in picture. For example, someone is speaking and gestures to indicate something. The next shot might show two people working. The picture then returns to the person speaking. For the viewer, all of this appears to be somehow one action. What is involved, however, may be three or more different pictures. The first consists of someone talking; the second of people working, which may or may not be at the same location or shot at the same time; the third may be the original speaker from a different angle. Three different pictures allow the editor to eliminate uhs and ahs, or irrelevancies and redundancies. Multiple and different shots also make a fast moving movie story. The viewer, however, accepts the illusion for reality and believes that it is all happening as it appears on the TV screen.

And so we ventured into film journalism for the first time -- and got into trouble on our first story. Instead of the FBI having to account for its illegal activities, Jacobs and I were censored and ultimately lost our jobs. But that is getting ahead of the story and brings us again into the complexities of public television.

On location, we filmed two FBI agents provocateurs. One was an ex-right winger who had tried to involve leftists in blowing up a bridge on orders from a named FBI Special Agent. The second fink was an ex-junkie who learned about explosives while working for a chemical company. The FBI Special Agent in Seattle fished him out of the clutches of Seattle police and with their consent, agreed to drop drug charges if he would act as an 'informant'. So a right wing fanatic and a junkie explosives expert, on orders from FBI agents, set out to seduce leftist groups in the area into violent activities. The 'informants' would provide the explosives and the technical know-how. The two finks reported all of this for our cameras. The bridge bombing caper never came off, but the junkie had succeeded in setting up a bombing of the Seattle central Post Office, to which he had alerted the police ahead of time. The ambush resulted in the gunning down by police of one young activist as he stepped out of a car carrying a bomb made by the 'informant' from materials supplied by police agencies.

We filmed these interviews with synchronized sound -- the running speed of the tape recorder and the camera are synchronized by means of an electronic impulse from camera to recorder. Synchronized sound requires some communication between the cameraman, sound operator and director. This is not unnoticed by the actors, in this case the 'informants', and can affect or distract them at times. So the filmed testimony of 'informants' recanting still remains a cinematic version of the real interview.

We did not doubt the veracity of the main details of their story: a Special Agent of the FBI, with badge and licence, ordered illegal, violent acts to be carried out in order to smear leftists. We talked with the mother of one of the 'informants' and she verified that her son had spoken with an FBI agent on two occasions. We learned that the Seattle attorney had known the ex-junkie was working with the FBI. However, we could get neither of them on film.

Back in San Francisco, we filmed a third 'informant' who had agreed to work for the FBI in return for the police dropping drug charges against him and his wife. His work consisted of burning down a dormitory at the University of Alabama 'on orders from an FBI Special Agent'. We filmed this informant in Golden Gate Park. Dave Meyers took cutaway shots, rear angle shots, profiles and reaction shots of Paul Jacobs who did the interviewing.

Having completed the basic material -- three finks recanting -- Paul and I wrote the reporters' script. After about fifteen takes, Paul said his part into the camera in a way that satisfied all of us. We wrote a script outline and gave the material to an editor to cut. We added footage of demonstrations and still photos of the burned down dormitories. We had also photographed some of the FBI documents, stolen from Media, Pennsylvania FBI offices by unknown parties. The documents contained admissions from J. Edgar Hoover that, on occasion, FBI 'informants' had committed illegal acts in their efforts to gain acceptance by new left groups.

Finally we had what we felt was a solid ten minute section for the Great American Dream Machine. We sent it off to the executive director, who casually acknowledged receipt and told us he had set it for the fifth show. To him, the FBI expose amounted to just another story, not substantively different from a 'pollution in the Hudson' story. He suggested minor changes in the use of some of our cutaways. One, he suggested, looked like a jump cut. A jump cut looks like a cut. For example, if someone is speaking and the editor wants to speed the delivery, he 'cuts' two sentences out. The person speaking is still shown in the same position, but the viewer can tell that there has been a cut in the continuous action.

In order to create the illusion that nothing has been cut, the normal procedure is to cut to a reverse angle or a reaction shot in which the speaker's mouth is not visible. This allows sentences to be omitted while the viewer sees another picture; the illusion is that nothing has been cut from continuous action.

Jacobs and I began to work on another story for the Dream Machine. It was to be about the Defense Department's support of cancer research in order to be able to test the effects of whole body radiation on human beings. In the meantime, however, a more alert executive at NET had seen the FBI segment and said, 'Wow, what a story!'. 'Oh yeah,' said the executive director, 'I was saving it for the middle shows just in case we had to revive our rating.' The FBI segment was re-scheduled for the first show and Jacobs and I were called to New York to make changes and to re-record the reporter's rap. The fun had just begun.

NET told us: 'This is hot. We have to be meticulous.' So we cut out all the shots of demonstrations and anything that could not be 'proven' to their satisfaction. Paul recorded new narration after NET eliminated everything that might remotely be considered 'opinion'.

Everything was transferred to video tape and the new recordings were done on tape in New York studios. Nervousness prevailed. Everything had to be perfect. We could not go up against the FBI in the manner that the FBI went up against the radicals: by making broad accusations without a shred of evidence.

But, we objected, we had gathered the evidence. Why must this show be treated so specially? Hands were wrung. Expressions became grave. Vows and threats were made. Several NET executives pledged that they would resign if this show did not go on the air.

We had written to Mr. Hoover asking him to respond to the charges made against three of his Special Agents, by three of his 'informants'. He did not reply to our letter. The program went through various stages of survey, but no castration occurred. As each level of executives watched the film, new changes and new wrinkles had to be added or subtracted. But the key charges remained: the FBI engaged in burning and bombing.

A few nights before air date a letter was hand delivered by a deputy director of the FBI, and addressed to the executives at NET. The letter charged Jacobs and me with libel, slander and subversion. J. Edgar Hoover had signed it. He said he was turning the material (in our program) over to the Attorney General for possible prosecution.

The NET executives no longer communicated directly with us; the air filled with rumors. The PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) and the CPB (Corporation for Public Broadcasting) entered the picture. In the meantime, Paul was called once again to New York for further film alterations, this time including Hoover's letter in the program itself. Broadcast time neared and still the official word remained: the show would go on. The reviewers saw the one hour Dream Machine, including our ten minute FBI section, and wrote their reviews for the next day when the show would air. Then the word came down from the PBS chairman, Hartford Gunn: cancel the FBI segment.

The NET executives, lawyers and producers who had threatened resignation if such censorship occurred forgot their threats. After all, most had expensive habits to maintain. Official explanations were offered: the film did not provide conclusive proof of the charges and besides, this kind of show would jeopardize NET and PBS chances of doing controversial programs in the future. Moreover, Congress might frown on this kind of show when the budget for public television came up before the House. In addition to that, the executives did not have to inform the producers as to why decisions were made.

The reviews appeared that morning in the **Times** and **Variety**, both describing the FBI segment that viewers would not see. The reviews also raised the question of censorship, because we had informed the reviewers of the situation. The best we could hope for at that point was a scandal that would embarrass the NET-PBS elite.

Someone once said, or should have, that liberalism has more lives than the proverbial cat. How could they pull themselves out of a case of censorship and still smell 'like believers in freedom of the press? Jack Willis, a friend of mine and Paul's, provided the answer. He arranged, through Channel 13 in New York, the NET affiliate, to sandwich our FBI segment in a show called 'behind the Lines'. The

segment deleted from the American Dream Machine would appear in between ten middle aged men in suits and ties and Paul in a turtle-neck discussing whether the issue was censorship or judgment. The two hour show included both an early version of the FBI segment and the last, or deleted, version. A short history of events, TV style, was included, using interview techniques to try to establish the facts.

The TV free-for-all was under way and Paul was overwhelmed by the competing ego drama. Our 10 minute segment was seen by some viewers, but the issue on 'Behind the Lines' was not whether the FBI bombed and burned, but whether censorship really existed. And the show answered the question by presenting the previously censored segment. So how could anyone claim censorship if the program was now being run? The context however had changed drastically.

The show indeed aired, but Paul and I both knew that our work had been toyed with and that we had ended up as liberal tools. The simple journalism that we had done about the FBI had not begun to get reported. It was lost in liberal TV politics, and when our work was shown, we had lost all control of the viewing circumstances. So the success of TV journalism, or investigative reporting, depended on the banality of the story. Pollution in the Hudson, indeed, was the model subject.

One of the problems of the investigative reporter is dealing with the people whom you must interview. The newspaper reporter must develop a rapport in order to seduce facts and information from witnesses or activists. The filmmaker-reporter must also establish a director-actor rapport. To do this with the FBI 'informants' was distasteful to both Jacobs and myself. We, in effect, had to trick people into thinking that we liked them and were going to immortalize them in celluloid in order to induce them to say what we wanted in a manner that would convince a viewing audience. Since the bomb-making ex-junkie, the right wing fanatic and the smiling pothead who burned down the Alabama dormitory comprised our cast for the FBI show, we had to treat them like actors. These people were repulsive to Paul and me. But in the making of the show, we assumed roles that allowed us to get from them what we wanted. Paul was the concerned nice guy and I played the hard line film director. He stroked them and I made them want to please me. Paul Jacobs has since vowed to return to the written word.

Chapter 16

The independent filmmaker not connected with commercial TV or any other institution must hustle to make a living. Surgery on scripts, quick production jobs and such dried up as the depression struck the film and TV industries. By chance, Paul stumbled on a story. He met an ex-FBI agent at the Buffalo airport and within a few days we had raised enough money to make a thirty minute black and white film, called **Robert Wall: Ex-FBI Agent**.

The cinematic problems inherent in a film which is shot in two days and involves almost all monologue became clear as we began to work. It was not simply one man looking into the camera or at some off screen filmmaker and relating a story or an account of events. Working again with Bill Yahraus, along with Paul, Michael Anderson and Stanley, I began to feel that a team of filmmakers might be able to deal with the non-institutional base that hampered us. We shot Robert Wall in two days, one in Buffalo with his wife and family where he described why he quit the FBI, and where his wife, a strong

moral force, described the life of an FBI wife. We went to the street and shot Wall with his kids, playing in the snow. The basic problem we knew we would face was how to do more than film someone talking into the camera. But with no script and only a bare feeling for the man, his character, and life drives, we burned the black and white film.

The next day, we flew with Wall to Washington, D.C., where he had spied on people and institutions. Stokely Carmichael had been one of Wall's victims. The ex agent described in cold, professional language how he surveilled Carmichael, wrote letters to Peace march directors threatening racial violence unless money was paid (to which he forged the names of black leaders), how he tried to infiltrate the Institute' for Policy Studies and finally, how he had studied Hebrew so that he could bug the phones at the, Israeli Embassy. We drove around Washington, recording him, filming scenes at the Institute for Policy Studies where Marcus Raskin, Dick Barnett and Arthur Waskow questioned Wall about how he spied on them.

We returned to San Francisco and in a few weeks edited the film. The old problem -- what to do with it -- arose. But Jack Willis, a friend from NET, offered us the possibility of a screening at Channel 13 in New York. Willis, program director for the NET local, tried to enliven, and did enliven, public TV fare. The film, 25 minutes long, played one night on New York's public station. Then, like the rest of the films we had produced, it slipped off to the grey world of campus distribution. Like most 'controversial' films, this one won praise in the **New York Times**. 'The kind of TV fare we need,' said the printed validator of the electronic apparatus. Thus praised by the **Times**, the film was a success in the eyes of the producers above Willis. They seemed to be acknowledging, deep down in the recesses of their brains, that their media needed validation from an older and more respected source. No amount of fan mail from the public could accomplish in their minds what a favorable **Times** review achieved. But, after all, we continued to tell ourselves, one reviewer might or might not, represent a viewing public's opinion. The reviewer may have felt in the mood for a particular show one night, and not on another. In any case, one man's opinion, written in the prestigious **Times**, could still make or break any program -- after it aired.

We split with Wall the small fees we collected. The Institute for Policy Studies put up the main source of funds for completing the film. We began to realize that if we wanted to make more films, we would have to find leftist or left-liberal activists. After **Robert Wall**, we raised money to film a brief interview with Louis Tackwood a Los Angeles police spy. Haskell Wexler and his partner, Cal Bernstein, brought their equipment and did the camera work on one of the slimiest people we had ever met face to face.

Since Robert Wall had gone over well with the TV people, we thought we could sell them another scoop. For a couple of hours, Tackwood, a 26 year old black, described how he had participated in frame-ups that led several people to their deaths and others to prison' or severe misfortune. He thought of himself as a professional, and each job as a challenge. He had played a role in the Marin Courthouse raid where Jonathon Jackson was killed, had been a party to the 'frame-up' of Angela Davis and, according to his own account, he had delivered money from the Los Angeles police department for the killing of Carter and Huggins, two Panther organizers, to Ron Karenga's U. S. group.

Jacobs skillfully brought out the details of Tackwood's background -- that he grew up in the black lower middle class, that his father engaged in gambling and other illegal activities, how he developed an attitude of selfishness, disrespect for women, and became the model of a street hustler. The portrait emerged over two hours, while I felt increasing irritation. Haskell grew bored; so did I. The vibes in the room became thicker with hostility, fear, insecurity. A handsome, well-built, intelligent black man and his oppressed eighteen year old wife, were the focus of much white attention. That attention came because the man had worked as a police stoolie, an informer, the one vocation that all religions and ethics had declared unredeemable.

Tackwood bragged about what a good informer he had become, how he had fooled everyone and hustled the police for extra money. He saw the job as a challenge and the only reason he quit, according to his testimony, was that the job had become routine and no longer interesting or exciting. Guilt? Remorse? He searched his mind and came up with an analogy: The butcher didn't think of the poor cow. Tackwood didn't think of the poor people. As he spoke, a chill seemed to permeate the room. We had finished. We paid him \$200 and he looked triumphant, although a little confused. And then we couldn't sell the film. So it remained in the can.

Chapter 17

The Movie Business and the making of movies have something in common. Both engage in the production of a similar commodity by using similar tools and both attempt to show their product to large numbers of people. The business of movies, however, operates in the same way that any other business must: for profit. The movie makers sometimes work in the business; others still maintain an older ethic, one that artists and craftsmen in the 19th Century used in making their products. This ethic derives from the sense of craft and skill, from the process of making something for a lasting world of things, from a tradition of work, a discipline inherent in art and a morality derived from communitarian history. One makes things for use. Movies educate, excite intellects and feelings, enrich souls and characters, provide material for discussion, reflection and fantasy. In the Movie Business the film becomes a product for sale, so that investments can be recouped, profits made, and the general ends of commerce served. The filmmaker or filmers in the industry become workers, of higher or lower skill and pay. The ethical nature of art becomes lost except insofar as commerce serves the social good.

The non-industry connected filmmaker, however, must still find a means to distribute and exhibit his product, and the only means available bring him inevitably into the world of business and commerce. Not the Movie Business, but the world of small commodity production and distribution, the world of the last of the artisans.

So as the Hollywood industry and TV business became inaccessible to us because of conflicting ethics and ethical conflicts. because our politics did not match the needs of the industries as the Nixon years advanced, we found ourselves in the grey world somewhere between the artisan and the small merchant. We produced products by hustling small investments from people who otherwise would have lost it at the racetrack, and then trying to get the products shown. To exhibit films, however, it becomes necessary to deal in commerce with distributors and exhibitors. The world of business.

'A motion picture', said M.J.E. McCarthy, who began his industry career with Pathe in 1923, 'is the only commodity that does not carry an established price tag.' So EASY RIDER cost less than \$400,000 to produce, but brought profits of many millions. Other spectacles which cost many millions to produce bring back little. How then can the value of a film be determined?

Compared to a painting, film represents the mechanical age. A painter's product, his/her painting, came about through individual effort, alone, his/her expression through the medium of paint as applied to a canvas by a brush or other instrument. No mechanical reproduction could replicate his/her work, no matter how skillful the reproducer. The painter then related to his/her audience, small or large, through his/her unique product. When mechanical reproduction began, many people could see imperfect copies of the work, but only one work, one original work, existed. The individual artist, with his/her own paints and brushes, made a product, a lasting object for the world of things. Think then of a moving picture, or a negative of a still photo. The original cannot convey any meaning in its negative form and requires reproduction for the work itself to be realized. So movies appear in the age of mechanical reproduction, the age when the individual artist's relation to his/her product and audience has changed. Mass society, mass public, mass art become possible and then become realized. Cinema helps that process and in so doing also confuses what had up until then been fundamental aesthetic principles. Cinema, because of its form and the need for space and darkness, confused the older principles of art with a new idea. Reality as captured by photographic equipment became the forte of the new art. Cinema began to claim that it could reproduce life in picture form. Whereas before, no matter how perfect the painter's eye and brush skill, no one could confuse the object seen on a canvas with a real, living person, the cinema could confuse people; recognizable characters appeared and, after a technological breakthrough, they could be heard as well as seen.

Art in the hands of businessmen, art as an industry, emerged from the technological developments under capitalism.

Chapter 18

In the 1971 local elections, San Francisco elected a liberal Sheriff, Richard Hongisto, on a coalition of minority vote plus three law and order creeps splitting the rest of the vote. Dick Hongisto knew Paul and me from KQED, admired our work, and when Paul and I suggested to him that we make a film about the County Jail he gave us permission to go inside the jails to film and record. So, after a layoff of several months and no work offers, we again made our own work. The question again arose: where or how to get the money? Perhaps a better question could have arisen; how to make a film about a jail? But we acted cocky. Michael Anderson and Bill Hahraus, Paul and I decided we would go into the jail and record and film -- and somehow our magic touches would put it all together and produce a movie. And arrogance allowed us to think only of money.

The arrangements were made, a small sum was raised to buy the film and black and white negative, a stock fast enough to allow us to shoot without lights, and we borrowed a tape recorder and microphone. With Michael's camera on Michael's shoulder -- we entered the jail -- to make a film about the jail. But what does that

mean? We didn't ask ourselves. A film about jail describes almost nothing. The minute the filmmakers walk unescorted into the cell block and the door closes behind and the key locks it shut, all the material picked up by the camera and recorder contains raw information about jail. How to film it, camera verite, without showing the camera or using the interview technique? We did both. We decided to make a film about jail, not to seduce people into vicarious identification with inmates or guards. We would watch, film, ask questions, flirt with queens, show respect for guards and prisoners alike. There would be no Fred Wiseman technique -- showing how tricky and clever we were by not showing the filming process. We thought we could perform a useful service to inmates and future inmates by showing people what jail is really like -- by showing its likeness on film.

We received our initiation in the holding jail. We were four middle class whites with thousands of dollars worth of equipment entering a jail whose inmates were predominantly black. And we were to film them in their temporary habitat. Obviously, the film would reflect the relationship between filmmakers and subjects. The prisoners wondered, well, what the hell are they in it for? We assured them it wasn't money we were getting. Why else, they wondered, would we want to come here to the jail to show it like it is and use them as actors and not pay them. So they demanded to be paid. Consciousness had come a long way since we filmed **Losing Just the Same**. Until we had established some trust with the inmates through our behavior, until they believed our intentions about filming, they demanded payment as actors. When we behaved in ways that did not earn their trust, inmates and guards did not cooperate -- as actors trying to present themselves in their roles. We promised as little as we could.

We all felt frightened as we began. The sound of the gate closing combined with the cacophany of inmates' voices shouting, demanding, mocking, tempting; the sound of the television sets blaring their electronic din into the corridor. Arms were thrust from the cells between bars, reaching out to touch us. Some waved a 'come closer', then hung limp. Cups were banged against the bars. I tried to direct the camera action to pick up the madness, and urged Michael to film as he walked with someone following behind holding a lamp. I allowed the microphone to pick up the racket. As we moved along faces smiled at us, scowled at us, wondered at us.

Our first day at the county jail (a time serving jail as opposed to the holding jail) established the structure of the film, although we did not know it at the time. We interviewed the Chief Deputy, an Irish-American civil servant policeman about to retire. He talked with mouth and hands, raving about the new things going on, affirming his belief in America and telling us that 'this democracy of ours', which he attributed to Harry Truman, 'will live for a thousand years'. He also described the homosexuals in jail, or the 'queens' as jail people called them. 'They're very clean,' he told us, and 'we put them with drunks, cripples and old people so that no problems occur'.

That interview seemed to put the Sheriff's staff off guard because we began by talking with the Chief Deputy instead of running in and filming sympathetic prisoners. Afterwards, we made our way to the top floor of the jail, the queen's block.

For the first time in a filming situation, I found myself unenthusiastic about the work. As I took sound readings in all the early sequences, I began to resent the work I had chosen for myself. I had to fight against myself. Each day I wanted to quit early and go home. I struggled with the belief that a film made by us about jail could not show the real jail, that all documentary films played tricks on viewers, and that we had become involved in the perpetration of a media fraud.

However, we had begun and so I continued. I felt myself becoming interested in the people, in their ability to act before the camera, trying to play their roles as jail birds, guards or innocent victims. I recalled **White Heat** and other prison movies as we walked by the barred cages of drunks and queens. The din remained a constant irritant throughout the day. It seemed as though the jail had been constructed by a sadist who designed the building as an echo chamber. Whenever a cell opened or closed, the sounds reverberated and oscillated through six tiers of concrete and metal. The prisoners were either locked into their cells, or locked outside them and forced to 'stand in their cell-block corridor. We filmed them standing around, playing cards, chess, dominoes and ping pong. They sat on the concrete watching TV, and beating Santana rhythms on empty coffee cans. We filmed the queens enacting a spontaneous, Genet-like drama for the cameras and a group, mostly black, of prisoners playing the dozens. They had grown used to our faces and equipment.

We filmed candid scenes and frank interviews, put-ons and bad bullshit. The political statements all sounded forced. There was not a Soledad brother in every cell. Worse, many of the politically conscious prisoners we interviewed could not articulate well or spoke with heavy accents from the rural south or urban ghettos. In other words, acting ability and advanced ideas did not always coincide in the same person. All the inmates, however, revealed something about imprisonment. The essence of jailhouse pathos comes from the forlorn faces of those locked in cages. The feeling and texture of the jail was transferred to film with slow pans of empty corridors, the sounds of cell doors clanging and toilets flushing, inmates mopping floors, reading their own poems, singing songs called 'Mother'.

We filmed and recorded whatever action we thought would look good on the screen. We interviewed people with faces we thought would look interesting -- guards, prisoners, the jail chef, an ex-marine cook on civil service security. We asked him why the food tasted so bad. 'Well,' he said, 'we're cooking for 800 people here and you can't please everyone. It sure ain't like you get it at home'. He smiled. He knew he looked comical -- short, chubby, bespectacled, wearing a large white chef's hat and his jailhouse uniform.

We encountered both Nazis and liberals among the guards, sensitive men who found ways to endure the cruelty, and men who had become hardened to human suffering and looked upon their work as just a job.

Among the film crew, our reactions to the filming differed. Paul quickly grew bored on any shoot. With no specific task to perform, he would get in shots and want to leave before we had finished. He did not enjoy the shooting and saw no reason why he should come along. We all agreed. Bill would become nervous as soon as we entered the building, remembering a two day stretch recently served

(one of them with me). He would sometimes need Valiums before he could endure the cell block door being locked behind him. Michael seemed more energetic, enthusiastic and integrated in his feelings for the people and for the work he was doing. I continued to feel detached and uncertain.

In the midst of filming, we ran out of money and had to hustle this and that foundation. We took an advance from WNET, used Jack Willis' thirteen year old film stock (luckily, black and white negative keeps), and transferred our sound on to used magnetic tape. (The transfer is the process of dubbing the sound from quarter inch tape onto 16mm tape, the same size as the film.) This transfer allows the film and tape to move together through the synchronizer. Most filmmakers use only new tape stock, but we had to save money. In order to save the cost of studio time, we had to do the transfer at midnight in the TV station. Low budget filmmaking resulted from having no money. We saved labor costs by cutting corners and by not paying ourselves. O

This is the last installment of Saul Landau's manuscript.

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'YOUNG MR. LINCOLN' RECONSIDERED:
an essay
on the theory and practice of film criticism

PART ONE



Ronald Abramson

Richard Thompson

The collective text on **Young Mr. Lincoln** by the editors of **Cahiers du Cinema** (no. 223, 1970; translated in **Screen**, vol.13, no.3, Autumn 1972) marked the beginning of a new period in film theory and criticism. Its influence among serious film critics hardly needs citation: the text has drawn commentaries from Ben Brewster, Brian Henderson, Bill Nichols, and Peter Wollen. It announces itself as a radically different kind of criticism from that which has gone before.

Perhaps this difference is best brought out when Henderson compares the **Cahiers** text with Wollen's afterword:

Wollen's reading (is not even) an interpretation, a translation of what is supposed to be already in the film, into a critical or meta-language. There are as many readings of a text as there are systems of interpretations; what is important here is that the reading be rigorous, that it employ only one critical system and proceed towards comprehensive translation of the film into its meta-language. Wollen's afterword contains bits and pieces of such translations, but none of these is sustained or developed towards its logical conclusions . . . What is most important in the **Cahiers** piece is its method of reading, its means of producing results. Wollen mystifies his own reading by simply adducing a list of findings without presentation and questioning of the method which generated them.¹

1. Brian Henderson, preliminary draft, **Young Mr. Lincoln** study, UCLA, 1974.

This is what seems important to us about the **Cahiers** piece: it is rigorous — that is, it presents us with its method and sustains that method throughout the reading; it sets explicit limits on the kinds of critical systems it employs; and it comprehensively translates the elements of the film into its meta-language.

The tendency in film criticism which this piece helps to establish is this: from now on a piece of film criticism may be interrogated at two levels. The specific reading of the film may be questioned in the terms of the meta-language the critical system employs; and the critical system itself may be questioned. The strength of the new criticism is that it refuses facile or convenient judgements and/or interpretations. In short, it is anti-eclectic. Within clear, self-imposed limits this criticism tries to be rigorous and comprehensive, testing its critical system against every element in the film. It attempts to present knowledge-in-the-process-of-formation, a systematic working-through of a text which demonstrates how a knowledge product (an understanding) is produced. This is quite different from the simple presentation of the end products of this work-process — if indeed there has been any systematic work done at all.

The **Cahiers** piece in some ways fails to live up to its own ideal: it does not concretely specify through allusions to the *mise-en-scène* how and why certain abstract categories of the meta-language are to be invoked. The categories (Man, Woman, Law, Nature) are simply imposed on the film. Furthermore, the relations between categories are assumed to be pre-determined — by reference to certain Marxist notions of how 'bourgeois ideology' functions. These relationships are never adequately tested against the structure of the film. (This second point is crucial in our own discussion since we accept most of the categories of **Cahiers'** meta-language but we do

2. Actually, a piece of film criticism in this form may be interrogated at four levels. 1) The specific reading of the film may be questioned in the terms of the meta-language the critical system employs. 2) The critical system itself may be questioned. 3) The critic's understanding of the critical system may be questioned. In the case at hand, this would mean questioning **Cahiers'** understanding of Althusser and Lacan. 4) A specific reading of the film may be presented in terms **other** than those proposed by the initial reading (this would most likely imply the use of another critical system). The first part of our essay works primarily at the first of these levels and the second part will work on the second of these levels.

3. Editorial, **Screen**, Vol. 13, no. 3 (Autumn 1972), p.2.

4. Ibid., p.2.

5. From "John Ford's **Young Mr. Lincoln**," **Cahiers** collectif **Screen**, op.cit.: "It is worth recalling that the external and mechanistic application of possibly even rigorously constructed concepts has always tried to pass for the exercise of a theoretical practice: and - though this has been long established - that an artistic product cannot be linked to its socio-historical context according to a linear, expressive, direct causality (unless one falls into a reductionist historical determinism), but that it has a complex, mediated and **decentered** relationship with this context, which has to be rigorously specified (which is why it is simplistic to discard 'classic' Hollywood cinema on the pretext that since it is part of the capitalist system it can only reflect it." While it is true that **Cahiers** does not dismiss the **entire** film, it is nonetheless true that **Cahiers'** assumption of the **ideological project** of the film is "external and mechanistic."

not accept the asserted relationships between categories. We leave open the question of the functioning of 'bourgeois ideology,' studying the film in every detail in order to **learn** how textual meanings are produced.)

Our effort, as metacriticism, questions the **Cahiers** presentation at two distinct levels: first, as it re-interrogates the film-text in the terms of the meta-language of **Cahiers'** critical systems — Marxism (Althusser) and Freudianism (Lacan); second as it interrogates those critical systems themselves.² Furthermore, we will demonstrate that **Cahiers'** "mis" reading of the film is inextricably linked to the critical system which determines their reading. Our effort is not meta-criticism as a simple commentary on the **Cahiers** article; we will take up the challenge implicit in the **Cahiers** presentation that faces any critic who addresses the whole of that presentation rather than any particular aspect of it. That is, we will re-read the film as rigorously and comprehensively as **Cahiers**, and our differences (and the reasons for those differences) will be made clear through direct references to the text.

1

The **Screen** introduction to the **Cahiers** article noted that the **Cahiers** critique of **Young Mr. Lincoln** was rooted in earlier theoretical work that had been published prior to that article.

In the **Cahiers** editorial "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism" (**Screen**, vol.12,no.1) Ford films were placed . . . in a category of "films which seem at first sight to belong firmly within the ideology and to be completely under its sway, but which turn out to be so only in an ambiguous manner."

The **Cahiers** text on **Young Mr. Lincoln** . . . is a concrete extended analysis of a film within this category. The **Cahiers** writers describe a disjuncture in the film between its formal signifiers . . . and the ideology which these are intended to project. . . ³

In this section we are not concerned with the contradiction between the ideological project and its formal presentation but rather with the definition of the ideological project itself.

The ideology of Ford's film which **Cahiers** writers describe variously as "the Apology of the Word" (natural law and the truth of nature inscribed in Blackstone's **Commentaries** and **The Farmer's Almanac**), the valorisation of the complex Law/Nature/Woman. . . ⁴

For **Cahiers**, this ideological project is assumed to be the naturalization of bourgeois law. What we will show in the following analysis is that the relation of the film to such an ideological project is highly problematical; that the triadic equivalency used to validate **Cahiers'** propositions on the ideological stance of the film cannot be substantiated by a close reading — active or not — of the film. Furthermore we will show that this (mis)reading is not a mistake but is rather bound up with their own ideological stance which suppresses certain meanings while valorizing others. Their theories and the method used to validate them are circular; i.e., **Cahiers'** assumptions about 'bourgeois ideology' in this film are never tested against the film's system of signification. The ideological project of the film is simply assumed by **Cahiers** to be a function of 'bourgeois ideology' in general.⁵

The cornerstones of **Cahiers'** reading of **Young Mr. Lincoln** are: the establishment of a triadic equivalency — Nature/Law/Woman; and then the misreading of this equivalency as the naturalization of bourgeois law, or property rights, and the supreme rule of capital.

The third sequence of the film is the one used by **Cahiers** to assert the triadic equivalency.

Centered on Lincoln, the scene presents the relationship Law-Woman-Nature which will be articulated according to a system of complementarity and of substitution-replacement. It is in nature that Lincoln communes with Law: it is at the moment of this communion that he meets Woman: the relationship Lincoln-Woman replaces the relationship Lincoln-Law since Woman simultaneously interrupts Lincoln's reading of the book by her arrival and marks her appreciation of Lincoln's knowledge and encourages him in his vocation as man of knowledge and Law.⁶

6. Cahiers collectif, **Screen**, op. cit.

Interruption of Lincoln's communion with Law



If we read this passage closely we see immediately that there is a problem: while it is true that "It is in nature that Lincoln communes with Law," it is also true that Woman interrupts this communion. Any convenient triadic equivalency is thus thrown into question. Furthermore, it is possible to read Ann's encouragement of Lincoln to pursue the Law as a sign of her immaturity, her flirtation with Power, as it will be with Mary Todd later on — Mary becomes a sign of the power struggle between Lincoln and Douglas (Neither Mary nor Ann exist under the sign of Motherhood.) It is important to remember that Lincoln does not try to engage Ann in any discussion of the Law; he quickly closes the lawbook and puts it aside. The **interruption** of the

communion of Law and Nature — a communion physically mediated by Lincoln, as he brings the book into the woods and uses it there — is the most significant moment of the scene: Ann Rutledge's offscreen voice surprises and interrupts us, the viewers, as well as Lincoln. It is clear from Lincoln's actions that he regards Ann as someone not to be involved with or identified with the Law. (The scene has overtones of a **marriage ceremony**: the framing of Lincoln and Ann under the archway created by the branches of the trees and a low angle shot — the only one of its kind in the scene of Lincoln saying "I do" with music in the background emphasizing the solemnity of the occasion.) There is certainly no equivalency of Woman with Law. What there is, is **difference**.

Lincoln saying "I do" to Ann by the river



In the very next scene with Lincoln at Ann's grave this difference is elaborated into a fullblown **opposition**, thus placing the figure of Lincoln in opposition to Woman and Nature. This opposition is precisely what must be overcome, and it can only be overcome by placing both elements of the opposition under the sign of a higher order: Motherhood, The Family. The discourse of Lincoln throughout much of the film will be of the either/or type (right/wrong), while throughout the film the Mother's (Mrs. Clay's) discourse will be of the both/and type, and so placed in opposition to his. Let us designate her discourse as The Law of the Social Order and the State. **Cahiers** presents the movement of the film as a simple **elaboration** of a **static** triadic equivalency in which the Law of Nature and the Law of Society are never in contradiction. We on the other hand see the film as a **dialectical process** which includes the overcoming of opposition; the transcendence of either/or thinking (binarism) as a limiting attitude; and the education of Lincoln to the fact that this Law must serve a higher Law, namely the Law of the Family. Only then is the Law and the violence of the inscription of the Law justified. And only then will Lincoln be able to assume his place as the Unifier of the Nation (the greater family).

7. We see this as the same problematic as the relationship of American populist ideology to U.S. monopoly capitalism.

8. Furthermore, **Cahiers'** assertion that morality in the film is an idealist mask for politics conveniently forgets that politics is an idealist mask for economics; and it should also be remembered that the usual discussion about the **morality (Higher Law) of slavery** — which is the way **Cahiers** discusses it — is presented in the film as a discussion of the **economics** of slavery. Who's being idealist here anyway?

The movement of the film is the gradual subordination of the Law to the Law of the Family. Since the Rule of Law is the Rule of Capital (property rights equals **rights**; and violations of those rights equals **wrongs**), and since this Rule of Law is shown to be subordinate in the film, then the relationship of the ideological project of the film to 'bourgeois ideology' becomes complex and mediated rather than direct and casual.⁷ One can see here, if one chooses, the simple justification of the Rule of Law/Capital under the sign of a Higher Law and the Law of the Family. However, a less simplistic reading will also see the breaks and gaps in which contradictions may reside. After all, capitalism, especially in its advanced stages, is destructive of family relationships; therefore, appeals to a Higher Law can be an encumbrance to the prerogatives of monopoly capital (as in much of the resistance to the Vietnam war, or environmentalist opposition to oil exploration); and what **Cahiers** sees as a **repression of politics** could just as easily be understood as a **critique** of politics.⁸

9. The **Cahiers** critics may suggest here that it is not they who reduce and repress opposition to the Law of Capital, but the system itself which does it (it is certainly not the "system" of the film which reduces the Law of the Family to an epiphenomenon of the Law of Capital). But their interpretations are then no more than "reflections"; a vicious circularity ensues in which every text turns out to be exactly what **Cahiers** believes "bourgeois ideology" to be. All is "known" in advance. The marxist ideologues simply reveal to us the workings out of this "bourgeois ideology" in the text. The concept of an "active reading" has become a means for suppressing all other possible readings. This dogmatism is covered over by appeals to the "real" to "material reality," and to a procedure under the sign of "science" — justified as a theoretical production corresponding to an "objective reality."

The system **Cahiers** seeks to interpret winds up interpreting them. The dialectic is frozen; the categories are universalized; the system is reinforced.

It is not tautological that the concept of history is historical, that the concept of production is itself produced (that is, it is to be judged by a kind of self-analysis). Rather, this simply indicates the explosive, mortal present form of critical concepts. As soon as they are constituted as universal they cease to be analytical and the religion of meaning begins. They become canonical and enter the general system's mode of theoretical representation. Not accidentally, at this moment they also take on their scientific cast (as in the scientific canonization of concepts from Engels to Althusser). They set themselves up as expressing an "objective reality." They become signs: signifiers of a "real" signified. And although at the best of times these concepts have been practiced as concepts without taking themselves for reality, they have nonetheless subsequently fallen into the **imaginary of the sign**, or the **sphere of truth**. They are no longer in the sphere of interpretation but enter that of repressive simulation.

— Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, p.48; translated by Mark Poster. St. Louis, The Telos Press, 1975.

The Law is subordinated in the film to the Law of the Family. One can go two ways in establishing the specific dynamics of such a relationship. The Law can be justified by the Law of the Family, or it can be critiqued (and perhaps trivialized) by the Law of the Family. **Cahiers** reads the film in the light of the former and sees the relationship of the Law and the Law of the Family in the film as one of substitution-replacement. Here the **Cahiers** ideological project is revealed: to reduce everything and every relationship to the Law of Capital, to reduce any opposition to the **Law of Capital** to the "idealist mask" of "spirituality" which conceals the true "materialist" relations of Capital; and, where that opposition to the Law of Capital resists such a reductive reading — as in **Young Mr. Lincoln**, where it is obvious from the courtroom scene that the Law is being criticized and trivialized — then the opposition is being repressed in the analysis.⁹

This universalization of Marxist critical concepts under the signs of "science" and "materialism" and within a code of (bourgeois?) political economy is such a critical moment of the **Cahiers** critical stance that it will be necessary to deconstruct it again and again. For the moment, we will be content to show how this discourse misreads the film, represses certain elements of the film, and flattens out critical contradictions within the film.

A close reading of the film presents certain anomalies in the **Cahiers** interpretation, not only in the scene by the river which they use to establish the triadic equivalency, Nature/Law/Woman, but in other scenes as well. For instance in the next scene, in which Lincoln visits Ann Rutledge's grave and has to decide whether to stay in the country settlement or go to Springfield to pursue a law career, **Cahiers** interprets Lincoln's words, "Well, Ann, you win. It's the Law" to mean that "Lincoln's definite acceptance of the Law is thus, once again, made under Woman's direct influence." What **Cahiers** fails to remember in its analysis is that Ann Rutledge is dead! That is to say, Lincoln's choice of Law is occasioned under the sign of Ann's death. The fact that in the next scene we see Lincoln riding into Springfield in the all-black, funereal outfit only serves to underscore the relationship between Death and the Law in the film and to undermine **Cahiers'** interpretation of these events as establishing a Nature/Law/Woman equivalence.

What the **Cahiers** reading does is blur over crucial differences and flatten out contradictions — the difference between Ann alive and Ann dead finds no place in the **Cahiers** analysis. In fact, their whole analysis is a repression of the fact of death in the film. In Lincoln's meetings with the Clay family he continually asserts that Mrs. Clay is like his (dead) mother, that Sarah reminds him of his (dead) sister of the same name, and that Carrie Sue is like (dead) Ann Rutledge. This is part of Lincoln's effort to "come alive," to enter into the Family as husband/son and to subordinate his death-like Law to a life-like Law (the Law of the Family).

The notion of Lincoln wishing to "come alive," to go back to the time before Ann's death when he was emotionally alive and close to his roots both in nature and in the community, suggests that Lincoln seeks to avert death at two levels: first, he seeks to avert his emotional death which commences with Ann's death but includes his being "uprooted" like the dead branch that falls toward the Law and the City (Springfield). Further, he seeks to avert the inevitability of his physical death, for he knows that to continue toward his destiny is to be assassinated by John Wilkes Booth. (This is highlighted in a scene cut from the release version which shows Lincoln entering Springfield and passing a theater with a sign announcing Booth in **Hamlet**.)



Lincoln's introduction
Lincoln Reclining

But who is Lincoln who seeks to avoid his destiny? Who is the Lincoln who "knows"? The line of reasoning points to the fact that there are actually two Lincolns in the film. There is the Lincoln who **is** the historical figure/myth, and there is the Lincoln who **acts** this historical Lincoln. (This fact of the text is partially hidden by the fact that Henry Fonda plays "both" roles.) When we are first introduced to Lincoln he is like an actor preparing to play a part.* All his movements suggest an actor preparing to go onstage — in this case the stage of American history. Call this first Lincoln, Lincoln-R, i.e. Lincoln Reclining; call the second Lincoln, the historical figure/myth in the film, Lincoln-S, i.e. Lincoln Standing (it is clear that in this very splitting, the film seeks to "re-write" the Lincoln myth).

*We are indebted to Janey Place in her study of **Young Mr. Lincoln** which appears in the current issue of *Wide Angle*.

The point is that Lincoln-R is a reluctant Lincoln. (This is the true critique of "politics" that one finds in the film, the Populist distrust of politics so deeply embedded in American ideology.) Lincoln playing a role, or Lincoln-S, is associated with Politics, Law, Death, and, interestingly enough, with the Theater or at least with theatricality (perhaps an important indication of artificiality).



Lincoln at the jail door
as law enforcer and
politician
Lincoln Standing

Lincoln-R is associated with Nature, Woman, organic community life ("You all know who I am," the words with which Lincoln opens his first speech in the film) and rural America. When Lincoln-R is forced to become Lincoln-S he is ill at ease, violent and emotionally detached. At the party given by Mary Todd, people don't know who Lincoln is (Mr. Lincoln, are you by any chance one of the Lincolns of . . . "). Lincoln is out of place — or is simply not placed by those around him.

When he steps out onto the balcony with Mary Todd, Lincoln immediately detaches himself from Mary. She moves to the background, Lincoln in the foreground gazes out at the river, and the Ann Rutledge music theme comes up. Lincoln-R has stepped out of the role of Lincoln-S. Lincoln-R yearns to be alive, to put an end to his "uprootedness" and to avoid the inevitable fate which includes assassination in the theater.

Lincoln's attempts to come alive largely take the form of inserting himself into the Clay family, of substituting the Clay family for his lost/dead family.

It is, thus, not insignificant that the balcony scene is immediately followed by Lincoln's ride to the Clay farm. Significantly, Mrs. Clay, in the scene at her farmhouse, refuses Lincoln entry into her family, precisely because he doesn't understand the Law of the Family; he insists on asking Mrs. Clay to tell him which one of her sons killed Scrub White. She refuses, of course. And she refuses Lincoln with exactly the same words — "I can't, I just can't" — with which she refuses Felder, the prosecutor, during his vicious examination of her during the trial. While it is true that Lincoln is opposed to Felder in the adversary proceedings of the court trial, it is also true that they are united under the sign of the Law and this Law is opposed to the figure of Mrs. Clay, who represents the Law of the Family.

The entire movement of the film is toward Lincoln's education in the Law of the Family and his entry into the Family. At first, Lincoln seeks to divide the Family by his insistence on an either/or Law ("Which of your sons killed Scrub White, either Matt or Adam?") but learns that the Law of the Family is the Law of the both/and, the Law of unification.¹⁰ This dawning realization is most apparent when Lincoln intervenes in Felder's third degree examination of Mrs. Clay by telling Felder and the court that "I may not know much of the Law but I know what's right and wrong" (compare this to his earlier statement about rights and wrongs of property in the scene by the river to see how much ground Lincoln has already traversed in his education into the Higher Law): then, turning to Mrs. Clay, he says, "I'd rather, Mrs. Clay, see you lose both your boys than to see you break your heart trying to save one at the expense of the other. So don't tell them." Lincoln's education is almost complete; all that remains is for him to read the almanac — a manual for country living, the workaday bible of rural yeomanry, the inscription of analogical processes of Nature.

Cahiers seem to understand at some level, that their cornerstone, Nature/Law/Woman, provides a shaky foundation at best. They try and bolster that foundation with this piece of specious reasoning:

Just as culturally determined and codified as the relationship Nature-Woman, the equivalence Nature-Law is here underlined precisely by the fact that the Law Book is Blackstone, for whom all forms of Law (the Laws of gravitation as well as those which regulate society) grow from a natural Law which is none other than God's law.

There is no evidence **in the film** that Blackstone's Law has anything to do with Natural or Divine Law. This may in fact be true but it cannot be

10. The signifiers, respectively, of those two kinds of law are Blackstone's **Commentaries (either right or wrong)** and the almanac (Law of Nature through cyclical rhythms such as — significantly for this film's plot — the phases of the moon). The first IS given to him by the family with the father present. the latter given by the family with the father absent — another difference that **Cahiers** neglects.

substantiated by reference to the film. We consider this kind of reasoning to be illegitimate at this point in the discussion of the film. (Clearly what is happening here is that **Cahiers** wants to force the film into a preconceived mold around their ideas of capitalist theology, the Law of Capital and Natural and Divine Law and Ford's assigned place in that configuration. This causes them to miss a vital contradiction in the film, arguably the one which structures the entire text: the opposition between the Law of Capital and the Law of the Family.

Furthermore, while it is true that Blackstone's Law is related to God's Law (in Lincoln's speech to prevent the lynching and in Felder's initial presentation to the jury) it is never related — in the film — to Natural Law, i.e. to Woman or the Law of the Family. It is Felder and Lincoln who invoke God's Law, not Mrs. Clay. Remember that Mrs. Clay needs help from Lincoln in order to swear on the Bible preceding her testimony at the trial. And remember that it is Felder again who invokes God's Law during his cross examination of Mrs. Clay when he tries (unsuccessfully) to make her reveal which of her sons killed Scrub White. At this point, God's Law/Blackstone's Law is clearly in opposition to the Law represented by Mrs. Clay. Lincoln is finally forced to intervene in order to save Mrs. Clay, and the discourse of his intervention is absolutely crucial. He does not intervene on behalf of Blackstone's Law i.e. he does not break in to make a point of law rather he intervenes by saying, "I may not know much of the law but I know what's right and wrong." And he is not talking here about the rights and wrongs of property, but of trying to force a mother to break up her family.

The points made above show the anomalies between **Cahiers'** interpretation and a close reading of the film. With these discrepancies in mind we are forced to consider a new reading of the film, one which is better able to take account of the gaps, differences, oppositions, and contradictions between **Cahiers'** reading and the film that our close reading has revealed. Let us propose then a different conceptual arrangement with which to inform our further readings of the film. As with any conceptual arrangement, this one must be tested against the film with the same rigor with which we tested the **Cahiers** interpretation. Our conceptual arrangement, if more valid than **Cahiers'**, will provide a higher degree of coherence as well as a higher level of complexity of organization.

The conceptual arrangement we propose has two sets of triadic equivalencies whose relationship to one another is that of opposition. The first set is Nature/Woman/Life and is opposed to another set, Man-without-woman/Death/Law. The figure of Lincoln constitutes a dynamic tension between these two opposing sets and, at the same time, is a movement from the former to the latter and then the transcendence of their opposition under the sign of a higher unity.

We will now retrace our initial reading of the film under the signs of this conceptual arrangement, which is the product of our theoretical activity.



Lincoln, immediately
after Ann's death



2

The adumbration of the *mise-en-scène* is too critical — and too long — to be simply a series of parenthetical statements of our concern with thematic Significance. We do not make a facile distinction between style and theme (see Abramson, "Structure and Meaning in the Cinema" in Nichols, ed., **Movies and Methods**) nor do we reduce one to another.

We don't seek an empirical reading of the elements of *mise-en-scène* uninformed by any theoretical practice but, at the same time, we don't seek an elaboration of theme on the basis of a narrative analysis.

We avoid the error of empiricism: i.e. of assuming that knowledge is produced by sense impressions received from the film (in film criticism, this error takes the form of a formal elaboration of the elements of *mise-en-scène* coupled with some intuitive grasp of their significance). We also avoid the error of structuralist-rationalism: i.e. of assuming that knowledge is produced by a theoretical practice apart from any empirical work on the film (in film criticism, this error takes the form of either the elaboration of a set of structural antimonies, or the elaboration of a set of preconstituted ((*a priori*)) conceptual arrangements which is considered sufficient for a scientific understanding). Empiricist criticism tends to reify the text while structuralist-rationalist criticism tends to obliterate it.

The difference between **Cahiers'** position and our own is between an interpretation which claims a scientific status for its procedures but, in fact, has no procedure for verifying or validating its interpretative schemes, and an interpretation which understands itself as a hermeneutic, which is constantly clarifying its conceptual categories and testing their adequacy against the text. The former believes its categories exhaust the meaning of the text (which is why it is necessary to suppress so many aspects of the text), while the latter understands itself as a dialogue with the text as well as with other interpretations. This distinction is meant to emphasize that our procedure involves a rigorous testing of our theoretical production against the text. **Cahiers'** procedure tends to eliminate from consideration any elements of mise-en-scène that contradict its theoretical practice, while our procedure involves a thorough and systematic testing of our theoretical production against the text. Our procedure is empirical without being empiricist.

But let us be clear about the place of mise-en-scène analysis in our overall project. We do not believe that a "close analysis" of a film no matter how rigorous, ever "proves" the validity of a particular interpretation. However, we do believe that a "close analysis" of a film can provide evidence that disproves or at least brings into question the validity of a particular interpretation. In this sense, a "close analysis" can provide evidence which will necessitate a more comprehensive interpretive scheme as well as provide material for resolving a conflict of interpretations. The evidence for our disagreement with the **Cahiers** interpretation is to be found in the following analysis of the mise-en-scène.

1. **Iconic Costume.** The first of these, and the most easily recognized, is Lincoln's costume. In the film, Lincoln is introduced wearing jackboots, homespun pants, suspenders, and a light homespun shirt — all tones of gray; this costume is in marked contrast to the formal dark suit of Stuart, the professional politician. Lincoln continues to wear this costume in the summer scene by the river with Ann Rutledge. It isn't until Lincoln visits Ann's snowcovered grave that we see him in another costume: thick winter muffler, and coonskin cap. This costume is the transition between the loose, airy, casual dress of the first scenes and the formal, funereal black outfit he wears through the rest of the film. As Lincoln enters Springfield to join Stuart's law firm, this outfit becomes a symbol for the consequences of Ann's death upon Lincoln's future vocation.

This iconic shift segments the film in a significant way. In the scenes before this shift, Lincoln is presented as the prototype of the agrarian myth: his politics are simple and direct, his attitude is modest and charitable. His economic relationships with others are the prototype of symbolic exchange — non-equivalence and reciprocity. This can be contrasted to Lincoln's first acts as a lawyer in the Plaintiffs scene, in which he settles a civil dispute marked by greed, vindictiveness, deceit, and physical violence; the overdetermined symbols of these new relationships which Lincoln now experiences are the Law and money. It is in the scenes with Ann Rutledge before this iconic shift that we are presented with Lincoln's emotional life as a present reality; this human dimension of Lincoln is emphasized in his interior monologue. After the shift, he discusses his emotional life as if it were buried in the past. It is as if Lincoln were now dead, unable to enjoy life in the present, only able to experience the present impulses of his anima by re-routing them through past associations.

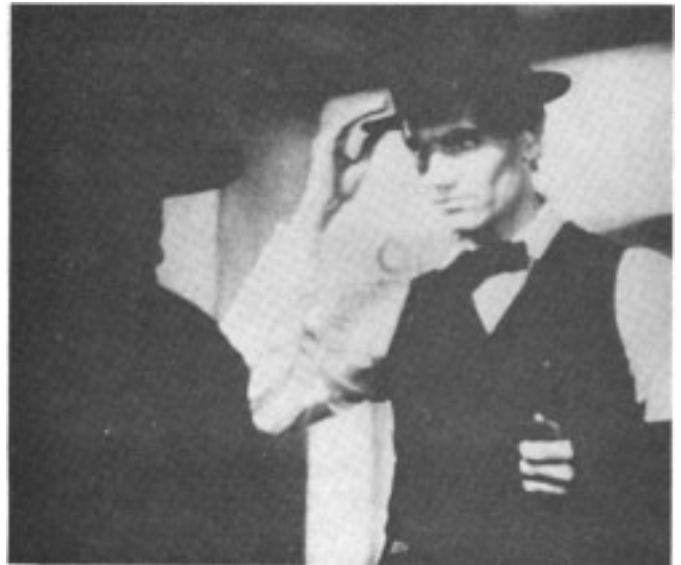
The costume is significant by its absence in the scene at the Clay farm. Lincoln's black outfit, already established as a symbol of death and the Law, is shed (more accurately, altered to resemble his country costume) in deference to Mrs. Clay and what she represents.

2. **Eyes.** **Cahiers** has made a great deal of Lincoln's harsh and intimidating gaze (calling it "castrating") and specified its instances in the film. For example, in the Plaintiffs scene, when one of the plaintiffs tries to pass off a counterfeit coin as payment for Lincoln's legal services, Lincoln's intimidating gaze is given to us in full frontal shot, further emphasized by its privileged position as the last shot in the scene. The gaze is presented in this way again throughout the trial scenes, particularly during the second testimony of J. Palmer Cass. What is interesting here is that by the time of Cass's interrogation, the gaze has become so deeply inscribed in the viewer's consciousness that the gaze itself need not be shown, but rather replaced in the shot sequence by the image of its effect, i.e. Palmer Cass — what we can see of him past Lincoln's black back — squirming in the witness stand.

This same strategy is employed in the final scene, when Carrie Sue kisses Lincoln, then starts and draws back from Lincoln's forbidding presence. His gaze is never shown to the viewer, but Carrie Sue's reactions are the sign of that unseen presence which is the denial of sexual pleasure.

3. **Triangles.** Outside of one-shot close-ups, two types of shots recur. The first type shows three people, usually in medium close-up, sometimes in medium long shot, inserted in the decoupage as reaction shots. The most prominent of these are of Mrs. Clay with Carrie Sue and Sarah, or of Mrs. Clay with Matt and Adam (see examples in the Fourth of July celebration scenes, the murder and lynching sequence, and the trial scenes). These reaction shots strengthen the imagery of three which is more actively presented in shots built around Lincoln.

In the second type of shot, Lincoln is at the center of the frame, in the middle ground, slightly high of center, dominating and facing us. In the lower right and left foreground, sometimes silhouetted, lower in the frame (cut by the bottom frame line) are two similar items: pieces of pie, heads, figures. The triangle becomes a visual metaphor for the **problematic** (in the Althusserian sense: the theoretical or ideological framework within which a word or concept is used) of the entire film: the choices presented to Lincoln and how he chooses to make them. The pie-judging closeup is analogous to the trial scene shots of Lincoln framed by Adam and Matt's backs in the courtroom (this is part of the film's strategy of repeating the conceptual paradigm at different levels). The first part of the narrative presents us with a set of either/or choices (choose for or against the Law; stay in New Salem or leave), which can only be resolved by the choice of one or the other; whereas the use of triangular/three-part imagery raises the most basic visual



The Castrating Glance



Reverse, Lincoln looking up at Mrs. Clay



Reverse, Mrs. Clay looking down on Lincoln

challenge to the binary law of twos, particularly in the Plaintiffs and pie-judging scenes, where Lincoln's resolution is both/and.

4. Visual Perspectives on Lincoln. Most shots in the film are eye-level or, sometimes, adjusted to look up at Lincoln. Key exceptions involve Mrs. Clay. At the end of the lynching scene, as Lincoln says goodbye to Mrs. Clay, Sarah, and Carrie Sue at their wagon, we have five high angle shots of Lincoln, who is seen behind a mule's back, his face halved by the reins. These shots are a critical set of signifiers, stressing by their repetition the contrast between Lincoln as the representative of the Law and Mrs. Clay as the representative of the Family. This visual perspective is the correlation of the superiority of the Law of the Family to the rule of Law. This higher scheme must be contrasted with their **existential** position at this point in the narrative: Mrs. Clay's family is in danger of being broken up; in a strange environment, she is unable to deal with Blackstone's Law; Lincoln is in the position of defender and helper of the family, having just broken up the lynch mob. Therefore, one would expect to find a shot strategy which emphasized Lincoln's dominance over Mrs. Clay, perhaps from Lincoln's POV, and the reverse, perhaps from Mrs. Clay's POV. However, this is not the case: that expected visual relationship has been inverted — and subverted.



Lincoln reading Adam's letter to the Clay family

The relationship of Mrs. Clay to Lincoln is continued in the scene at the Clay farm where Lincoln receives the gift of the almanac, which turns out to be the answer to the question, "Which of your sons killed Scrub White?" Mrs. Clay's dominance over Lincoln is carried through in the mise-en-scène here as well. Lincoln sits on the steps of the porch, below and at the feet of Mrs. Clay. When Lincoln asks Mrs. Clay which of her sons killed White, we are given the most unbalanced shot in the film. At this point, Lincoln sees this as the key question, thinks Mrs. Clay knows the answer, and assumes that she will tell him in his role as lawyer and protector. Mrs. Clay's refusal of Lincoln's question is also a refusal of Lincoln's stressed overtures in this scene for entry into the Clay family. The asking of the forbidden question threatens the unity of the family and the order of the film's visual universe. This threat of the question is visualized as a threat to the stability of the frame. Upon hearing the question, Mrs. Clay leaves the intimate space that she and Lincoln have shared; she stands, photographed in a low angle shot, at the left side of the now-unbalanced frame. Then Lincoln stands into the shot as well, at the right side, but is unable to balance the composition — he and Mrs. Clay are now the two prominent, disordered diagonal elements of the frame. It is, of course, a binary composition. When he retracts his question and



The gift of the Almanac

takes an alternative tack, he and Mrs. Clay remain in the same plane (this plane-sharing is quite unusual for Lincoln) in a balanced, harmonious shot — he puts his arm around her shoulder.



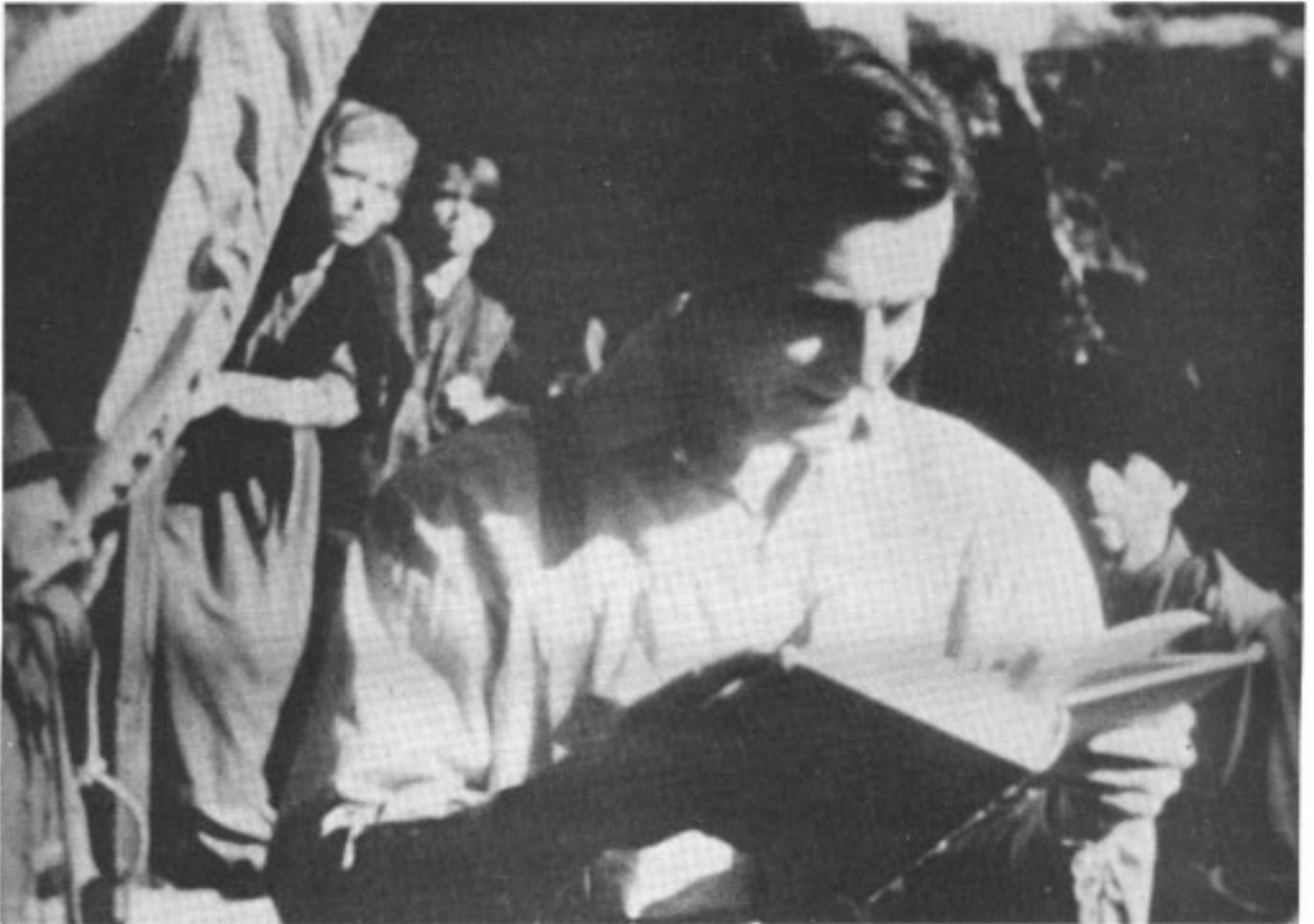
Mrs. Clay refuses Lincoln's question - I



Mrs. Clay refuses Lincoln's question - II : the answer (the almanac) is in his hand.



Lincoln receiving the Law book



Shift in placement of the Father

3

Using a model which emphasizes Lincoln's character in the process of change and development — as opposed to **Cahiers**, which sees the Lincoln character as a static figure whose sole function from beginning to end is the inscription of the Law in the name of the Father — our reading establishes a double set of triadic equivalencies in opposition to one another. Therefore, our model can account for the **development** of Lincoln's character in the film by seeing it as the embodiment of a dynamic tension and dialectical movement between the two opposing sets of triadic equivalencies: Woman/Nature/Life; and Man -without-woman/Law/Death.

Our reading of the film regards the Lincoln character in a process of change and development, a movement from innocence to the sophistication of the Law, the establishment of a binary opposition between them (innocence and city/Law), and the overcoming of this opposition under the sign of the Family. In this reading, we see seven scenes as critical loci of signification.

1. The electoral speech (establishment of Lincoln's innocence).
2. Wagon scene no.1 (Lincoln receives the lawbook from the Family; initiates Lincoln's role as the inscriber of the Law).
3. Ann Rutledge's death (Death marks the break with the innocent past; completes Lincoln's initiation into the Law).

4. Wagon no. 2 (mise-en-scène establishes Mrs. Clay's dominance over Lincoln and the Law).

5. The farm (beginning of **Lincoln's** — as opposed to our recognition of the power of The Law of the Family as opposed to the power of the Law.)

6. Lincoln's **active** intervention to protect Mrs. Clay in the courtroom (this action signals that Lincoln now, himself, subordinates the Law to the Law of the Family).

7. Wagon scene no.3 (farewell scene, with debt and gratitude — the exchange of money. Ostensibly, Lincoln now is part of the Family as well as its protector).

1. The Electoral Speech. Initial State. Lincoln's Innocence.

Lincoln is first presented in contrast to Stuart the lawyer-politician through costume, physical position and movement, rhetoric and style of delivery — as well as camera placement, editing and lighting. The contrast emphasizes Lincoln's qualities of simplicity, clarity, modesty and down-homeness. The cutaway at the end of his speech to the frolicking boy and girl suggest Lincoln's innocent virtue as well as the virtues of innocence. This striking shot — striking because this nondiegetic cut has no counterpart anywhere else in the film, or in most of Ford's work — has no place in the Cahiers treatment — because it emphasizes Lincoln's innocence, whereas Cahiers does not regard Lincoln as innocent at any point in the film.

2. Wagon Scene No.1.

Lincoln crosses the square to the Clay family wagon, where he is told by Mr. Clay that the family has no money and is need of supplies. Mrs. Clay is uneasy about accepting credit from Lincoln, and offers him a barrel of books in exchange. Lincoln selects one of the books: Blackstone's **Commentaries**.

The mise-en-scène establishes a pattern of relationships that will be followed throughout much of the film. As Lincoln moves around the magazine, Mr. Clay — the father — nearly disappears, severed by the frameline. Lincoln is in the foreground, lower and fully lit; Mrs. Clay and the two boys are framed in the proscenium of the wagon-hoop, also fully lit. The composition effectively cuts out the father and joins — without equating — Lincoln as one unit, and Mrs. Clay and sons as the other unit, so that visually Lincoln receives the Law from a patriarchal family and at the same time he replaces the father of the family.

Lincoln's role as inscriber of the Law thus parallels his attempt to be the protector of the family. While it is clear from the visual relationship between Mrs. Clay and Lincoln that the role of the family is privileged — framed, set on its own plane behind and above Lincoln, effectively idealized through the conventions of late eighteenth and nineteenth century American popular portraiture — it is also true that the narrative establishes that the family is illiterate and has no knowledge of the Law, and the visuals contain the sense that the family and the Law are quite different, if not yet opposed. So we

can say here that while the Family is not the Law, it is the carrier and the source of the Law, and is given to Lincoln as a sacred trust, part of a system of symbolic exchange that will be elaborated throughout the film (this is not a system of "barter," nor a "circuit of debt and repayment" as **Cahiers** would have it).

3. Ann Rutledge's Death

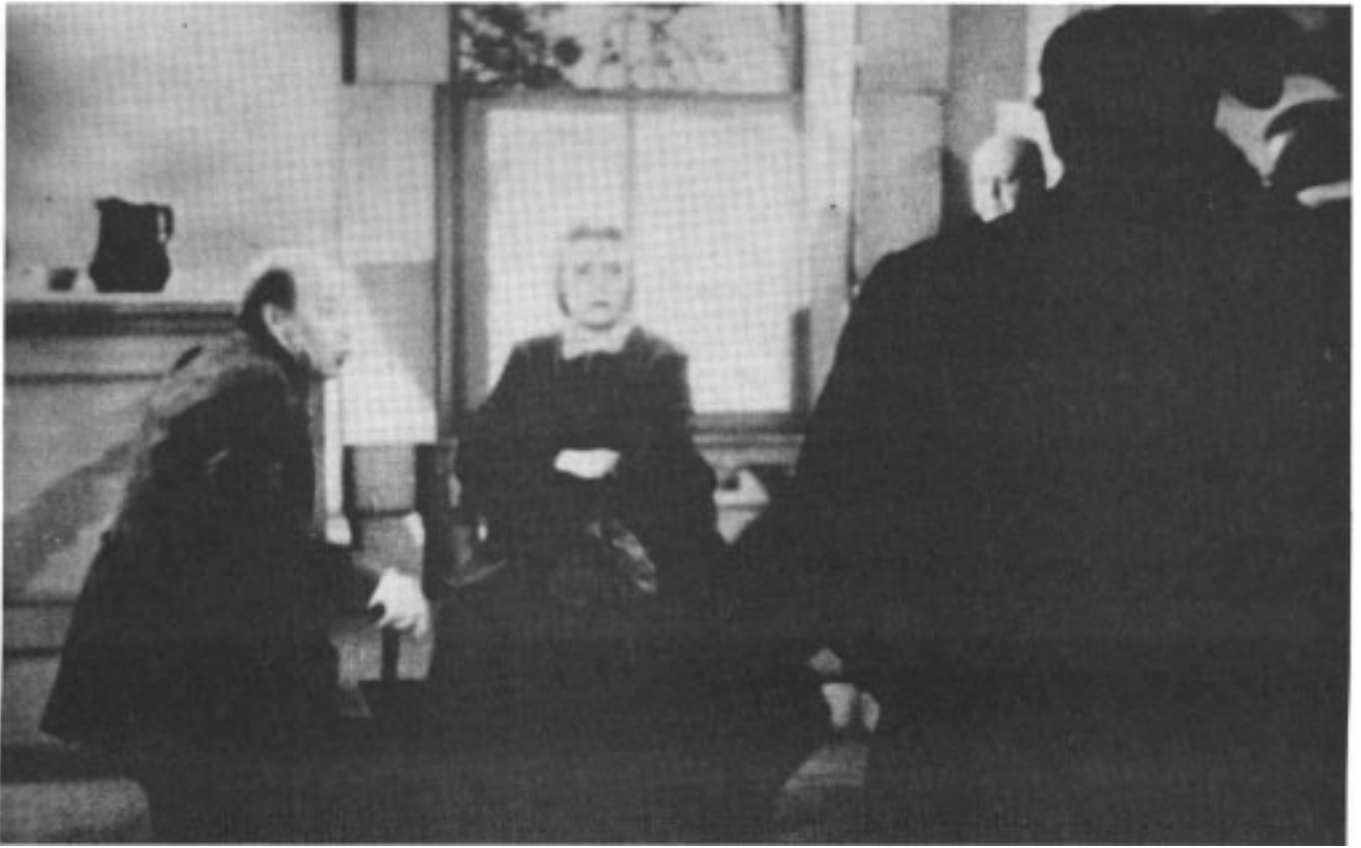
The two scenes just discussed and the two riverside scenes with (live/dead) Ann Rutledge comprise the film's presentation of Lincoln's innocence (i.e., that he has not yet been introduced to the city, not yet become a lawyer, and not yet become entangled/fascinated with power — the Plaintiffs scene, etc.) and the death which marks the complete break with that innocence. We have already discussed the major iconic shifts which accompany the death. What must be emphasized here is the equation of Death with the Law.

The wintry scene is critical to the entire project of the film because the meaning of the signifiers, ambivalent in the summer scene by the river, here is crystallized. In the previous scene, Ann represented womanhood as potentiality, in contradistinction to womanhood proper, i.e. motherhood. For this reason, the immature Ann could be associated with both Nature and the Law (although more clearly identified with the former than with the latter). Ann as signifier — Ann alive but unmarried — was a kind of "floating signifier"; upon her death, the meaning of this signifier becomes fixed. Now, as the dead Ann, she becomes clearly associated with winter (the freezing of emotions), with Death, and with the Law. This analysis makes clear the determining function of Death in the film with regard to other signifiers — iconic and otherwise.

Now Lincoln, as Man-without-woman, becomes part of a new matrix of signification, namely Man-without-woman/Death/law, which opposes him to Woman/Nature/Life, which will be represented by the Clay family women.

The scene presents us with a tension between the verbal discourse and the visual imagery: while Lincoln tells us it is Spring, the visuals tell us it is Winter. The visuals are a sign of Lincoln's emotional state: it will always be Winter for Lincoln. Lincoln as historical/mythical figure (Lincoln-S) desires to be dead, to complement his emotional death with a physical death. But a part of Lincoln (Lincoln-R) resists; he desires to go back to a previous state, before Ann Rutledge's death. But if this desire were realized, the film would end. This desire conflicts with the desire of the narrative (desire **of** the text) to go on. Therefore, only the verbal discourse informs us that it is Spring; it conveys the desire **of** the text for Lincoln to go to Springfield and practice Law. The visuals, on the other hand, convey Lincoln's desire to remain in Ann's presence (there is no question here, **Cahiers** notwithstanding, of Lincoln's resurrection; what is resurrected is the narrative).

Therefore, there are conflicting desires in the text: Lincoln's desire to remain with Ann, presented to us primarily through gesture and visual style; and Lincoln's desire to go to Springfield and practice Law, given to us primarily in the verbal discourse. There is also the desire of the viewer to have the film continue, for which Lincoln-to-leave Ann is obviously necessary, as well as the desire of the text itself for Lincoln to assume his role as President and Unifier of the nation. It is clear that the desire **of** the text will prevail, but it is important to note the gap between the the desire **of** the text, presented as Lincoln's desire to go to Springfield and practice Law, and the visual inscription of desire **in** the text, presented as Lincoln's desire to be relieved of the death-role he must play. The film's unsettling effect on the viewer is born here, in the insistence of the film to have it both ways: to be alive and to be dead, both inscribed in the text under the sign of Desire — a struggle between Eros and Thanatos. This struggle is mediated through the Clay family wherein Lincoln attempts to transform the relationships of a dead past into a living present.



Lincoln intervenes at the trial

4. Wagon Scene No. 2.

Lincoln has just rescued Matt and Adam from the lynch mob. He goes to the wagon to reassure Mrs. Clay, Sarah, and Carrie Sue as they prepare to leave for their farm; Lincoln has here assumed the role of protector.

We want to stress that at this point in the film Lincoln is fully identified with the Law (prohibition of violence and pleasure, as in the lynching scene), and with Death. The *mise-en-scène* establishes that Mrs. Clay's law, the Law of the Family, is on a different level from Lincoln's Law. What is interesting here is that their respective perspectives, on the relationship of these two levels, are not in common — not conveyed by the *mise-en-scène* as the same. We have already discussed the powerful and repeated high angle shot on Lincoln from Mrs. Clay's POV. What signals the contrast in consciousness is the fact that the high angle shot on Lincoln from her perspective is not complemented by a low angle shot on Mrs. Clay from Lincoln's perspective — i.e. a shot which shares the axis around which the camera organizes the visual perspectives. The master shot establishes the axis of their mutual glance. However, the axis around which the camera organizes the visual perspectives for the reverse one-shots — usually the same as the axis established by the master shot — is here used only for the high angle shots down on Lincoln from Mrs. Clay's POV, which establish her superiority over Lincoln. The reverse one-shot on Mrs. Clay from Lincoln's perspective is on an altogether different axis, not the low angle that we would expect, but an angle almost that of eye-level. This indicates: first, that Lincoln and Mrs. Clay do not share the same worldview; second that Lincoln's view is the lesser one; and third, that Lincoln does not yet recognize the Law of the Family. This strategy is striking because the film has few one-on-one cutting sequences, and because among those few, the prominence of the two figures is either equal or slightly tipped in Lincoln's favor.

5. The Farm.

Lincoln's education in the Law continues during his visit to the Clay farm. There Lincoln attempts to make himself part of the Clay family by drawing direct analogies between his lost family and the family he desires to join (his mother, Nancy Hanks, with Mrs. Clay; his sister Sarah with Sarah Clay; Ann Rutledge with Carrie Sue). Lincoln's attempts to become part of the Clay family do not succeed because Lincoln at this point still insists on the rule of Law as the supreme authority. Mrs. Clay's rejection of Lincoln's question is also a rejection of himself: under the Law of the Family, a member of the family would never make the demand Lincoln has made, because the demand (to answer the question) embodies and **is** the desire to divide the family. Lincoln is not yet ready for his role in the Family, just as he is not yet ready for his role in the Nation.

However, Mrs. Clay's rejection of Lincoln is not absolute (nor does Lincoln take it as absolute: the moment of her rejection is by far the most disharmonious moment of the *mise-en-scène*; but it is immediately followed by an extremely harmonious image, Lincoln and Mrs. Clay in the same plane, perpendicular to the camera, shot from slightly below their eye levels with a neutral, squared background behind him; and Lincoln puts his arm around her shoulder, the only time — along with his carrying Ann Rutledge's flower basket — that Lincoln initiates physical contact with anyone in the film); the Clay family presents Lincoln with a gift, unconsciously, to be sure, and whose significance is not at all understood by Lincoln (these last two points contrast sharply with the gift of Blackstone's **Commentaries** at the beginning of the film).

6. Lincoln's Intervention to Protect Mrs. Clay at the Trial.

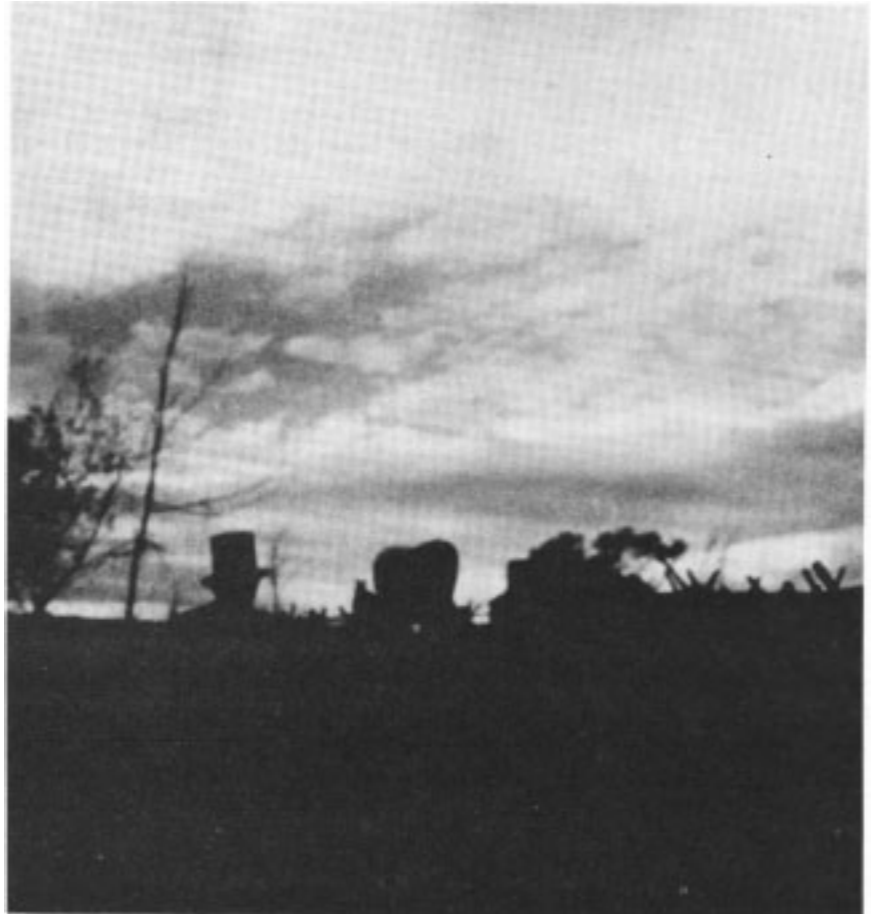
Felder the prosecutor calls Mrs. Clay to the stand as a hostile witness. By invoking both God and the Law he attempts to coerce her into telling him which of her sons killed Scrub White. The cross-examination of Mrs. Clay by the prosecutor is relentless — unbroken by any of Ford's deflating humour — and merciless. Lincoln allows the examination to escalate until it becomes necessary for Mrs. Clay to cast desperate glances in Lincoln's direction (he is offscreen). No reaction shots of Lincoln are given, making his absent presence all the more powerful. Lincoln allows the cross-examination to continue; he, too, is prosecutor: the words which Mrs. Clay used to answer Lincoln's question at the farm are exactly the words she uses to answer (refuse) Felder's question in the courtroom. Lincoln and Felder at this point both stand under the sign of the Law; this makes Lincoln's intervention that much more dramatic (along with its presentation: Lincoln's interrupting voice comes from offscreen, startling us, as Ann Rutledge's did in the first riverbank scene) and impressive in its gravity, authority, power; his voice stills the courtroom so that his words stand alone; Felder looks over, breaking off his obsessive oration. It is for Lincoln a leap of Faith — from the Law of the Social Order to the Law of the Family. He hasn't yet read the almanac; the truth is there, but for the truth to be revealed, an act of Faith is required ("Seek and ye shall find"). Lincoln's leap — not an act based on knowledge, because he has not yet read the almanac — activates the truth which is the answer, contained in the almanac (so far only latent or potentially there).

After reading the almanac (which we feel he has done the night before, in the scene at his office when the Judge comes to advise Lincoln to seek help from a more experienced legal hand) Lincoln is now fully the agent of truth. It only remains for him to coerce — through the Law — the truth from J. Palmer Cass. The almanac here serves two intertwined purposes: 1) as an analog signifier of Nature, it provides Lincoln with the means for his victory in the courtroom; 2) as the inscription of the both/and, it prepares Lincoln for his role as President. The former secures the unity of the family while the latter secures the unity of the nation. The final scene links these two processes or tasks together.

7. Wagon Scene No. 3.

The final scene with the Clay wagon is overdetermined, which we expect, and apparently arbitrary, which we don't expect. Lincoln bids his farewell to the now-united family after receiving a few coins from Mrs. Clay. The circuit of symbolic debt and exchange is now closed — or so it seems. The wagon in front of which the scene has been played moves out of frame revealing Carrie Sue and Matt facing Lincoln (and the camera). We are not prepared by the film's style for this space-transforming event (the film's method has been to lay out very clearly at the beginning of sequences and shots, and not to change space significantly during shots).

Given the mother's privileged position in the film, we would expect that the resolution of Lincoln's relationship with the Clay family would finish with his dialogue with Mrs. Clay. That this is not the case surprises the viewer, and it does so through the *mise-en-scène*. In narrative terms, we expect all family members to be in the wagon as it leaves for the farm; instead, Carrie Sue and Matt are left behind as the home/wagon exits. Ostensibly, Lincoln's desire to be both protector of the family and a member of the family has been fulfilled.



Lincoln follows the wagon

His emotional needs as regards family seem settled (Nancy Hanks-Mrs. Clay; Sarah-Sarah). But his emotional/sexual needs regarding Ann Rutledge are still unsettled. Carrie Sue's feelings toward Lincoln are more or less explicitly sexual throughout the film, and her remark, "I reckon I'd just about die if I didn't kiss you, Mr. Lincoln," confirms this. Up to this point, we have argued that the general movement of the film is from life to death to rebirth; but Lincoln's castrating figure (we don't even see the castrating glance Lincoln gives Carrie Sue here, but we suffer its effect through the look on Carrie Sue's face) leaves us with this final impression: that the process of rebirth has not been able to overcome the inevitable.

In the end we experience a contradiction between: the ideological project of the film, whose purpose is to fulfill the conflicting desires of the textual system — Lincoln's desire to become part of the family, to be emotionally reborn (largely inscribed in the *mise-en-scène*) and the necessity of a Historical Fate (here inscribed as the desire of the text for Lincoln to play his

historical role and meet his Fate). The desire of the text, of course, prevails, but the textual inscription of the Lincoln character in the film — his separateness from everything around him — is the mark of a deep contradiction, one which suggests the text's ambivalence toward History and Politics.

Lincoln desires to follow the wagon, to be part of the Clay family. He cannot. The wagon disappears and with it Lincoln's last hope of life. Lincoln turns to stone; he has become myth.



Lincoln as Old Testament enforcer of the Law at the attempted lynching

CONCLUSION

Our analysis of the film shows that contradictions which reside in the overall textual system are rooted in an ideological deep distrust of History and Politics, "Civilization" and Law, hence of the rule of Capital. This is decidedly different from **Cahiers** which understands Lincoln **solely** as the figure of that Law and the instrument of its inscription. **Cahiers** understands the contradiction to be between the Law and its overly violent and repressive inscription.

Our interpretation posits a contradiction at a much deeper level — that of the Law itself. While **Cahiers** sees only one Law operating in the film, we see two conflicting Laws (actually three if we consider God's Law, but this Old Testament Law is invoked by Felder,* and by Lincoln when he defends the Law to the lynch mob. And thereby God's Law is always associated with the Law of the State) and their conflict is the motive force of the film's development.

Cahiers' analysis suppresses crucial elements of the text, most notably Lincoln's conflict with Mrs. Clay and his identification, because of that conflict — i.e. his understanding that Mrs. Clay represents a Higher Law than Felder, that the Law of the Family in the Name of the Mother is higher than the Law of the State in the Name of the Father — is also the resolution of the question "Which one of your sons killed. . . ." The answer hinges on the almanac, the "gift" of the Clay family, but Lincoln's reading of the almanac, i.e. his **understanding** of the "gift" in turn hinges on his coming-to-understand that Mrs. Clay represents a Higher Law ("I may not know much about the Law, but I know what's right and wrong"). We suggest that the contradiction between these Laws that structure the entire text is so profound that to simply read the film and the resolution of this contradiction as the naturalization of bourgeois law is to misunderstand the ideological meanings of the entire text.

The ideological structures of the film, as revealed by a rigorous analysis, are highly complex and demand a highly complex and coherent critical comprehension that **Cahiers'** Marxist (Althusserian) - Freudian (Lacanian) reading cannot provide. It is our feeling that our interpretation, which accounts for the contradictions in the inscription of the Lincoln character in the film as well as the contradictions between the Law of the Family and the Law of the State, can provide that level of coherence and complexity. ●

* Felder is a Jewish stereotype and his name suggests a shortened Felderstein, all of which emphasize associations with Old Testament law. (We are indebted to Ed Doell, a student at UC Santa Cruz, for making this point explicit for us.)

The authors are grateful to Alan Curl, whose discussion of the trial scenes sparked much of the visual analysis herein; and to Dudley Andrew, Greg Lukow, and Steve Seidman for their valuable suggestions; and to the students in Ronald Abramson's Film History 179 Seminar at University of California at Santa Cruz. We are also indebted to Hali Paul for her help in doing the frame enlargements. And for typing and proofreading the final manuscript we are indebted to Nita Esterline, Betsy Queen and Valerie Cardoza.

WOMAN, DESIRE, AND THE LOOK:

Feminism and the Enunciative Apparatus in Cinema

Sandy Flitterman

Recent feminist analyses of film have sought to examine the signifying mechanisms in films understood as texts, that is as specific signifying practices. As Christian Metz has said, semiotics tries to give an account of filmic facts by examining their objective conditions of production rather than their projected own image. The utilization of a semiotic methodology informed by psychoanalysis (as elaborated in contemporary French interpretations of Freud) can provide useful insights into how films are understood and how the figure of the woman-image functions in a particular way within the space of representation and the time of narration to create a specific effect in the viewing subject. The image of woman is here figured as an empty sign, which speaks the desire of men: within the filmic text as it is structured, is there even a possibility for the formulation of her own desire? In analyzing the productive mechanisms of meaning in film, a psychoanalytically oriented semiotics can be brought to bear on the signifying function of woman as an object of male fantasy and on the problematic figuration of female sexuality (the unspoken, that which cannot be figured, the ruptures in the coherence of male patriarchal discourse) in the film-text — a text generated by an apparatus which is designed to produce a specific kind of pleasure. In this light the classical narrative cinema can be seen as a repository for male fantasy in which the visual and narrative exploitation of the woman is the pivotal figure which allows the machine to operate. Psychoanalysis is instrumental in facilitating understanding of spectator/film viewer/viewed relationships, emphasizing as it does notions of fantasy, and other concepts aligned with cinematic structure as it speaks the subject (both the producer of the text and the viewer whose viewing is also a fantasmatic production).

The look is both a metaphor in films and an integral part of filmic structure. The cinematic apparatus is designed to produce the look and to create in the spectator the sensation that it is she/he who is producing the look, dreaming these images which appear on the screen. Each filmmaker appropriates and then designates the look in a specific way — that is what characterizes a particular director's system of enunciation, the way the look is organized to create the filmic discourse. The central narrative function of cinema is based on the look (the filmed image is always the result of a look on something). One of the primary ways the filmic text is organized then, is through the disposition of views: a complex intersecting web is created by a series of looks inscribed in the cinema, catching the spectator in a net of multiple identifications which are all mediated through the eye. A series of three look-relays can be established: 1) from the camera to the pro-filmic event; 2) from the viewer to the film projected on the screen; 3) among the characters within the diegesis. Across the visual trajectories the spectator is both producer of the looks and traversed by these looks. Hence the importance of such concepts as the eyeline match and point-of-view shots when seen in the light of Freudian notions of voyeurism, exhibitionism, and scopophilia, for illuminating the positioning and re-positioning of the spectator engaged in the activity of film-viewing, and for the analysis of visual pleasure which is offered by the traditional narrative cinema.

Film viewing is structured on a system of voyeuristic pleasure, the viewer's erotic contemplation of the spectacle working in complementarity with the pleasure of the filmmaker as it is figured in the film. The textual articulation of the desire of the filmmaker across the visual field dictates a specific position and function for the woman — as image and as lost object (distance from the object is intrinsic to scopophilic satisfaction). If the film is understood as a fantasmatic production, in which desire is the motor of both the psychic and cinematic apparatus, the lost object is the condition of desire, its irreparable absence generating the metonymic movement of desire from one representation to another. The cinematic apparatus designates the position of the spectator as desiring subject and producer of the discourse in a position similar to that of the dreamer as enunciator of the dream. In the cinema, the enunciative apparatus, as articulated through the look, structures a specific relation of the spectator to the screen. It is possible to consider the cinematic apparatus as defining an institutional site in which the male appropriation of the scopic drive defines the woman irrefutably as object-image of the look.

In this enunciative apparatus, the film presents itself as history (in which the source of enunciation is suppressed, the verb tense is the preterite of already completed events, and the actants are "he", "she", and "it") rather than as discourse (in which the enunciative source is present, its reference point is the present tense, and the pronouns "I" and "you" are engaged), according to Emile Benveniste's system. It does this precisely because the marks of the subject of enunciation have been effaced, but it can only succeed to the extent that it disguises itself as history. The whole purpose of the apparatus is precisely to make it possible for the real subject of the enunciation—the viewer to enter the discourse, to inscribe her/his own enunciation. To make this possible, the discourse must appear as lacking enunciation and thus must manifest itself as history, so that the viewer may have the impression of being the subject itself — an "absent subject", a "pure capacity for seeing". Since by definition the story is told by nobody, from nowhere, it is the receiver who tells it. The film must present itself as history in order for the subject-effect to operate (everything is determined for the spectator's mis-apprehension of control of the images), and it is this effect which characterizes the filmic enunciation. Like all other aspects of the apparatus, it conceals its operation in order to exist as an apparatus.

The problem, then, is to examine the specific modes of operation of enunciation as it constitutes the subject. A major articulation of this in film is through the system of point-of-view. Logically, a deconstruction cinema will attempt to restore the marks of the subject of enunciation, or at least undermine the concealing operation which is produced and required by the apparatus. Thus by calling attention to the operating of the absent subject, a counter-cinema would reinsert this subject in the process of production. Therefore, as Laura Mulvey has pointed out, feminist film practice must endeavor to generate new spectator-text relationships by rendering problematic the voyeuristic pleasures of cinema which have historically been embodied in the image of woman. Yet, the enunciative apparatus itself is so overdetermined, that the opportunity for a true counter-cinema to develop is very difficult — and it is to this level of complexity that the effort must address itself.

In her article on visual pleasure Laura Mulvey discusses scopophilia and woman's image-creation in terms of the objectification of women: the woman is the passive, still, inactive recipient of the male gaze. Raymond Bellour (in his analysis of Hitchcock's **Marnie**) extends the notion of voyeurism to the apparatus itself, saying that the image of woman is actually constituted by a look. In the dominant patriarchal system of representation the active/looking, passive/looked-at split is delineated in terms of sexual difference; men are the active bearers of the look, women are the receivers. Through the look (always aggressive) and the articulation of point-of-view, woman is implicated in a position of passivity.

Mulvey also speaks of the fetishized image of the woman freezing the look, stopping the flow of the action into moments of erotic contemplation. The strong visual erotic impact of the highly coded image of woman connotes to-be-looked-at-ness. Within the diegesis, the male character bears the look of the spectator; as protagonist he controls the events, as the spectator's surrogate he controls the erotic power of the look. Thus as erotic object both within the diegesis and for the spectator, the woman-image serves as a locus for the gaze of male characters and of viewers.

Hitchcock provides a complex example of the combination of fetishistic scopophilia (in which the erotic instinct is focussed on the look alone) and voyeuristic sadism (which coincides with the requirements of narrative, demanding as it does that changes occurs and that action progresses). More particularly, in **Marnie** the look is central to the plot, oscillating between voyeurism and fetishistic fascination, and the confluence of these looks on the woman-image is the central mechanism of the filmic operation. Mulvey calls for a cinematic intervention which will disrupt the gaze, free the look of the camera and destroy the fascination built into the voyeuristic activity of cinematic viewing. However, as we shall see, since the erotic power of the look is built into the apparatus of cinematic enunciation itself, this is not so readily achieved.

In his article on Alfred Hitchcock's **Marnie**, entitled "Hitchcock, The Enunciator", Raymond Bellour analyzes the enunciative function of the look. Through detailed analysis of one specific signifying mechanism (from among the many other operations which combine to generate the film-work), Bellour attempts to elaborate a theory of the enunciative apparatus in cinema. In the article he illustrates how the director uses his privileged position to represent his own desire, concentrating on the crucial function of the look in that process. For Bellour, the "camera's look" implies virtual control, possession of the screen object. From the outset, Bellour makes the equation, body of the woman, film body; the film-work is posited as a dialectic of pursuit and possession — an aggression on the body of the woman. The camera, as the center of signification, is carrier of the look and through scopophilic possession of the object, assures the viewing subject of the integrity of

the object. Bellour alludes to Hitchcock's power to make the image, to give Marnie concrete existence through the look. The vision of the male is seen here to be embedded in the apparatus; it is through the enunciative function of the look that the fantasy of the director, Hitchcock's film-wish, unfolds before the viewing subject. Fantasy here is understood in the sense of one of the modes of hallucinatory satisfaction of desire.

Bellour discusses how the "camera's look" is inscribed in the film via the male's vision: from Hitchcock (the enunciator) to Mark Rutland, Strutt and Garrod, his fictional delegates. In the analysis of the first segment of the film, Bellour shows how Hitchcock inscribes the male characters onto the "trajectory of virtual possession of the object" via the chain of the look. At this point the object is the woman-image. On the assumption that this film, as a production of desire across the scopic field, enacts the process whereby cinema "exploiting the mechanism of the lure, and through the work of enunciation in the text, becomes the condition of orgasmic pleasure": the director's, and through the subject-effect (since the cine-subject is artificial and in effect created by the apparatus), the spectator's, Bellour attempts to analyse how this process takes place. The image of the woman, simultaneously offered and snatched away, sets up "the irreducible gap of the scopic drive". The absence of the object is the condition of desire; here the structure of fantasy crystallizes around desire for the woman-image. Desire is here understood not as a relation to the real object independent of a subject, but as a relation to a representation.

Bellour maintains that Hitchcock defines his place as enunciator by monitoring the modalities of the scopic relationship to the object. In illustrating this, he designates three ways in which the "camera's look" is inscribed in the film, specifically through camera movement, character movement, and in the variation in the distances between the two (camera and character). This modulation of these three "complementary codic systems" is condensed in the single initial shot of Marnie, as the camera stops following her, detaches itself and remains stationary while she continues to recede into the distance. In this action, the spectator's double identification with the camera and with the object is foregrounded: by the same movement of separation the "two processes of identification which transfix the spectator" — identification with the camera (in which Marnie is designated as object of our gaze) and identification with the object (in which the image of Marnie is constituted as a whole body) — coalesce. Here the woman as representation embodies the two contradictory aspects of pleasurable structures of looking, the scopophilic instinct (pleasurable looking at an erotic object) and ego libido (as engaged by narcissistic identification). The condensation of the processes of object choice, "possessing" the object via the look, and identification, which operate on the subject in the cinematic viewing situation is here rendered cinematically in the breach effected between the camera's look and the spectator's gaze on the image of the woman.

Hitchcock appears at that point in the chain of events where the "film-wish is condensed," that point of crystallization in the film which is like the Freudian pun. He becomes a sort of double of Mark and Strutt who contribute to the "location" of the image of Marnie, but who are also "caught in" the image of themselves caught by the look of the camera. An ironic doubling, since Mark and Strutt are at the outset Hitchcock's doubles. Bellour makes the point that here Hitchcock clearly intervenes as enunciator by inscribing himself in the chain of the fantasy. He literally inserts himself into the film, becoming one point in the relay of (male) looks (from the spectator through the fictional delegates) which constitute Marnie. From the floating image of Strutt's lustful description of her, to Mark's

comment on her "looks" (that image constituted through the looks given her by men) to her image-constitution effected by the camera, as if it had materialized Mark's thoughtful look in the shot which preceded this, we can see the gradual constitution of the image of the woman,

As Hitchcock appears in the hallway of the hotel, he looks first after Marnie and then turns to the spectator, addressing the camera and in so doing, underlining his power as image-maker. By this intervention Hitchcock makes explicit the fact that the film, as discourse, is proceeding from somewhere, that it is he who is organizing the fiction and that he has delegated the look to his fictive surrogates. In terms of the history/discourse distinction discussed earlier, in the classical model, this position of enunciation is occulted, so that it appears as if the story proceeds from nowhere. Here Hitchcock disrupts this flow momentarily in order to reassert his total control of the images. He thus calls attention to his position of enunciator, as producer of the discourse, and permits a momentary eruption of discourse into the smooth fabric of the history. This is what Bellour refers to as Hitchcock's "signature system" — the means by which, through obligatory concrete appearances in each of his films, Hitchcock punctuates the "logical unfolding of the fantasy originating in the conditions of enunciation," and materializes his controlling position. Insofar as the film is the perpetually displaced means of Hitchcock's satisfaction of his own desire, the assertion of his presence as producer of the look underscores his autocratic possession of the images. In terms of the spectator's position in the film-work, this provides a radical, if fleeting, subversion of the subject-effect that the apparatus is designed to produce, and to conceal.

There are many chains of meaning to follow out in Bellour's provocative and complicated essay. Perhaps the point in the essay most crucial to an understanding of the function and position of the woman-object in the *mise-en-scène* of desire, as it is articulated in film through the operation of the look, is Bellour's discussion of the shot in which Marnie, having just rinsed away a previous identity with her hair colour, looks jubilantly into the mirror. Bellour has maintained that Marnie's answer to the sexual aggression wrought on her through image-objectification is theft and shifting identities: "All she can offer is the surface of an image and this is precisely what is attractive in her." She constitutes **herself** as an image of desire, desired because she is an image, and offers this to the viewer.

The dramatic effect of this moment is heightened by virtue of its being the first revelation of Marnie's face — up until this shot, she has been an enigma described, remembered, and seen from behind. Now, Marnie "looks" at her own image in the imagined mirror before her, and we, as spectators, are positioned to receive her gaze and therefore, in a sense, to offer her back her own reflected image. However, Bellour makes the point that the camera look and Marnie's look do not coincide; the angle of the shot and the position of the camera makes it impossible for Marnie to directly address the spectator. Yet this precise thing occurs, for two frames — creating the subliminal effect of a momentary condensation, uniting in one gaze Marnie's image, the camera and the spectator. What Marnie sees in the "mirror" is the spectator's gaze, herself as image, a construction of that gaze. This minute fragment of an instance passes by the conscious attention of the spectator, permitting us to see her staring at herself without her seeing us stare at her. This exemplifies the particular kind of voyeurism of the cinematic viewing situation, in which the position of the voyeur is invisible, allowing for the kind of gratification derived from the situation in which the object being looked at does not know it is being looked at.

Bellour suggests that Marnie imagines herself in terms of her image reflected in the mirror, just as Mark, stimulated by Strutt's description and his own memories, imagines her when he glances off-screen in the initial segment of the film. Marnie's absorption in her desire for her own image here makes her an object of desire for the (male) spectator, for the source of the camera-wish-Hitchcock, and for the male characters. For the woman spectator, it can only stimulate the identificatory desire to **be** the image, but never to possess it. For Bellour, this shot clatures the establishment of the enunciative apparatus of the film and defines the climactic moment around which the film is structured. This shot, in its complete self-referentiality, condenses the look, production of the look, and its image-product, creating a single moment in which we gain access to the mechanism of enunciation, a mechanism which is elusive by definition. This moment crystallizes the operation by which Hitchcock's film maintains a perfect economy of pleasure, organizing it through the look, and implicating the woman-object crucially in that structure.

These have been some provisional remarks about the cinematic apparatus of enunciation and the place of woman's image within that. With reference to Raymond Bellour's article on **Marnie** I have attempted to illustrate how in this film the apparatus constructs a particular viewing subject, and how the woman-image functions in the production of Hitchcock's pleasure. Bellour's analysis is applicable to the specifically Hitchcockian system of enunciation, a structure which "crystallizes around the desire for the woman," and it should be emphasized that Bellour describes the way in which Hitchcock repeatedly organizes his fictions; he does not propose a grid which can simply be applied to all films on the classical narrative model. But the **type** of analysis Bellour proposes delineates a field of investigation in which the film-work can be understood as a fantasmatic production, as a machine of representation which produces a kind of pleasure and a specific function for the woman image. In his attempt to analyze the fascination of the image value generated by the film text, he charts the movement in film by which there is always an element of pleasure which is displaced. And it is for this reason that this type of theoretical elaboration is profoundly significant for feminist analyses of film.

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I would like to thank Bertrand Augst whose discussions with me helped me formulate the basis of this article.

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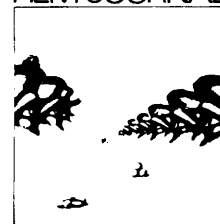
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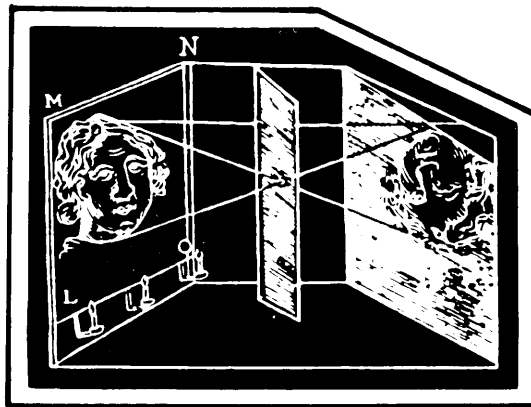
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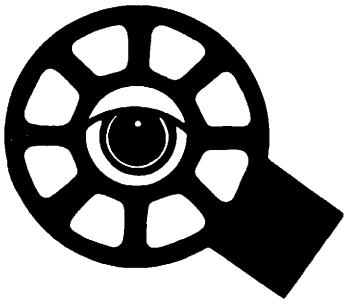
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