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A JOURNAL OF FILM AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Mai 68 and The Militant Documentary

Cuban Revolutionary Cinema:
An Interview

A Critical Look at the
Concept of the Subject

Zukor and Paramount: 1929

The Consolidation of the
Film Industry: 1915-1920

Reply to Nichols-Elder Debate

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CONTENTS

Volume 2 Number 3&4 Summer, Fall 1979

Militant Documentary: Mai-68 Par Lui-Même
by Michael Ryan.....1

Towards a Renewal Of Cuban Revolutionary Cinema:
A Discussion of Cuban Cinema Today
by Zuzana M. Pick.....21

The Turn of the Subject
by Stephen Heath.....32

Zukor Buys Protection:
The Paramount Stock Purchase of 1929
by Jonathan Buchsbaum.....49

The Consolidation of the American Film Industry:
1915-1920, Part Two.
by George Mitchell.....63

Elder/Nichols Debate:
A Response
by Peter Mayer.....71

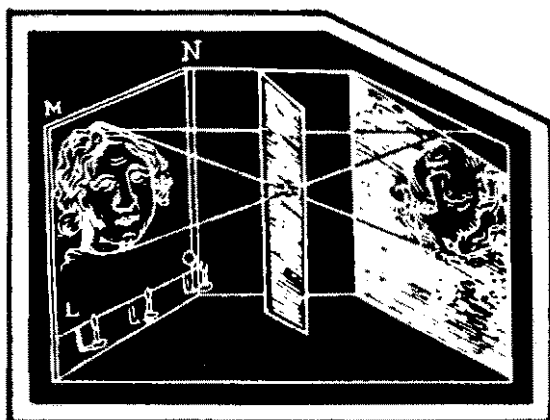
Pesaro: Hollywood in the 1970's
by Teresa de Lauretis76

A Review of **André Bazin**
by Bill Nichols.....78

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camera obscura

A Journal of Feminism and Film Theory / 3-4

Editorial: Feminism, Fiction and the Avant-Garde

Camera Obscura: Chronology by the *Camera Obscura* Collective

Discourse and Difference by Elisabeth Lyon

Re-reading the Work of Claire Johnston by Janet Bergstrom

Enunciation and Sexual Difference: Part I by Janet Bergstrom

Psychosis, Neurosis, Perversion by Raymond Bellour

Alternation, Enunciation, Hypnosis: Interview with Raymond Bellour by Janet Bergstrom

Feminine Discourse in *Christopher Strong* by Jacquelyn Suter

Notes on Distribution by Freude

Camera Obscura Questionnaire on Alternative Distribution

MATRIX

The Camera: Je (Babette Mangolte) by Constance Penley

Camera Obscura Interview with Babette Mangolte

Les Rendez-vous d'Anna (Chantal Akerman) by Meg Morley

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Militant Documentary:

Mai 68 Par Lui-Même

Michael Ryan

Introduction

Militant documentary invites discussion from several angles: the radical, because documentary continues to prove itself a powerful instrument of leftist militancy; the theoretical, because documentary raises and answers several problems in film theory, most notably the question of the referent; the deconstructive, because a discussion of documentary allows a deconstruction of certain metaphysical presuppositions which inform, indeed "haunt" leftist thinking in general.

One such presupposition is the opposition of aesthetics and politics. The metaphysical isolation of aesthetics and politics in a strict institutional as well as theoretical opposition allows politics to continue to be defined as a form of technology which deals with objective facts, social practice and a real world. At the other pole is aesthetics which is concerned with everything politics excludes: representation, imagination, metaphor, unreal fiction, form etc. The effects of this opposition are often pernicious. Usually, it gives rise to feelings of superiority and inferiority, between disciplines. Radical political scientists scoff at radical critics for producing irrelevant studies of novels and films while themselves producing studies which presume a world in which the constructive imagination, representation, and the symbolic unconscious play no part. Critics feel superior to political scientists because the critics feel that they possess the key to the workings of representation in ideology, which is of course the key to politics. Yet they also promote an essentially depoliticized Marxist aesthetics which thrives on new theories but is detached from the concerns of political scientists. Both sides are culpable, and their culpability is due in large measure to the academic institutionalization of the metaphysical opposition between aesthetics and politics.

I shall argue that this opposition can be deconstructed, that is, it can be undone as a stable opposition in which one pole is always superior to the other and which neither pole touches or is part of the other. This deconstruction can be worked out in terms of documentary film, since, within the aesthetics/politics opposition, there lies another: that between history or non-fiction, documentary and the illusionistic film. The process of deconstruction has two moments: reversal and displacement. In the first, the opposition in which the fictional film hierarchically dominates documentary is reversed. Documentary is placed on the upper pole of the hierarchy. In the second moment, this new hierarchy is itself displaced to the extent that no opposition is any longer possible. Documentary and fiction pass into each other. As indeed do aesthetics and politics, as we shall see later.

This exercise in deconstruction is meant to contribute to a growing movement among critics and political scientists alike to overcome the institutionalized boundaries between their disciplines. Critics are realizing that formalist or historical Marxist scholarship is meaningless if it does not participate in a general critique of ideology, that is, if it doesn't relate itself to the question of politics. Political scientists now realize increasingly that "real" political structures are deeply affected by forms of representation, that is, ideology, and that their work must incorporate the lessons given in this regard by aesthetic criticism.

This essay will be divided into four parts. In the first, I shall lay down some rules of thumb for deconstruction and justify my linking of documentary to the deconstructive enterprise. In the second I shall deal with the relationship of representation to deconstruction. In the third section I will deal more specifically with the contradictions of the opposition between fiction and documentary and finally in the fourth section I will give a detailed analysis of **Mai 68 par lui-même**, paying particular attention to the necessary contamination of aesthetic categories by politics in any discussion of the films. I will also consider the specific political stakes of the events of May in France in light of the aesthetic categories of performance and representation.

1 Derrida and Différance

When I say that documentary is the best example of a genre which allows a deconstruction of the categories of art and politics, fiction and history (and, not to be discussed, but nevertheless implied — modernist formalism and socialist realism), we must first ask: **what is an example?** The status of the **example** is the key to deconstruction as a method in as much as deconstruction entails a radical undoing of the assumptions about presence and property (**propriété**: roughly, self-sameness, self identity, auto-affective self-proximity as the exclusion of otherness, oneness) which sustain all idealism, essentialism, ontologism, naturalism, formalism, rationalism — in brief, all metaphysics. That's a mouthfull. Let me explain.

In metaphysics (and by this I mean not only the great texts of Western philosophy, but also the language and the conceptual system which saturates everyday life) the **example** is conceived of as being in opposition to the **category**. The **example** is always defined as being secondary or derivative in relationship to the **genre, the concept or the category** which is defined as being primary or original. The **genre or category** produces the **example** and is shown forth in its essential nature and made present to perception by the **example**. The **category** pre-exists the example and the simple invocation of the example naturalizes the **category** and gives it a self-sufficient fixity. "Documentary" for example, is a genre which exists as an idea or essence or category before it is exemplified in **Mai 68 par lui-même**. The idea "documentary" is conceived as being essentially trans-empirical, and it is only the examples which are seen as specific. It is self-same or self-identical, **proper** to itself. It depends on no "other," especially no empirical other such as an example, in order to be what it is "in itself." It is an essence which need not pass outside of itself in order to be itself. In its self-sufficiency and its uniqueness,

the essentialist concept of "documentary" thus belongs with nature, being, idea, presence, consciousness, etc., as a version of what Jacques Derrida calls **propriété** one of the dominant themes of metaphysics. In this case, the deconstruction of **propriété** would consist of undoing the reassuring opposition between primary essence or genre and secondary example. The general idea or norm — documentary — is constituted by each individual case of documentary film, each deviation from the norm. And each case is necessarily a deviation since it is an empirical, not a general, trans-empirical, essential idea. In order to be properly itself then, the general essence "documentary" must pass outside of itself into the empirical case or example. The derivative example can always be shown to precede the essence which it supposedly exemplifies. In other words, the self-sufficiency and uniqueness — the properness — of the genre, category, or idea is split in its origin by a necessary and constitutive relation to its other — the example. The origin then, is doubled from the very outset, between essential idea and empirical example, neither the one nor the other exclusively or "properly." The opposition essence/example in which essence precedes and controls the supposedly derivative example can thus be reversed and displaced. The example constitutes the essence as much as it is constituted by it. The **propriété** of the absolutely self-same uniqueness of the essence is put in question by its dependence on the example which, by a kind of after-effect, comes to occupy the place of the origin. Within the old metaphysical model if you were to follow the chain of examples back far enough, you would arrive at the generative origin, the trans-empirical essence "documentary" which would be outside the chain of examples while yet giving rise to that chain. But that moment can never be reached without recourse to yet another example. The chain would continue indefinitely because in order to end the chain, the essence would have to be shown forth in the empirical realm, that is, it would require an example. An example would always need to be added onto the chain, but this would also mean that something would always be subtracted from the enclosure which the essence "documentary" supposedly defines. The essence "documentary" is defined as being outside the chain of examples which it dominates. But now the one additional example which would be needed (interminably) to name "documentary" as such assumes the role of that which is perpetually outside. The example comes to occupy the transcendental place of the category or essence, There will always be an additional link needed in the chain of examples.

The chain thus exceeds the general idea or essence and dominates it. The essence and example change places to infinity shuttling back and forth between the high and the low poles of the opposition. Thus the hierarchical opposition becomes unstable. Derrida concludes that each metaphysical opposition can be shown to be constituted (and deconstituted "as such") by such a flipflopping exchange of supposedly opposite poles.

The relationship between consciousness and unconsciousness is exemplary of what Derrida calls **différance** or the irreducible "becoming other" of what is seemingly unique and self-identical. Consciousness is always accompanied by a moment of unconsciousness. Unconsciousness as absence is always inscribed necessarily in the self-presence of consciousness. To try to reduce that absence or "other" absolutely by making it present to consciousness is an interminable task. The moment of making conscious will itself contain a moment of unconsciousness. The presence of consciousness, therefore, is always at least double, a play or economy of presence and absence.

Derrida believes that this economy of **différance**, which would set every seemingly unique pole of an opposition at play with the other that it supposedly excludes thus putting in question all our reassuring notions of presence and property, can be found at work in all philosophy and all thought. Metaphysics sets itself up as a system of binary oppositions in which one term hierarchically precedes and controls the other: presence/absence, nature/culture, essence/example, life/death, inside/outside, meaning/representation, etc. These oppositions reflect the will to

power of the Cogito which would assure its own mastery over a potentially threatening and discontinuous world by establishing hierarchical polarities which make the world easier to know and control. Knowledge in general follows the structure of paranoia. The task of deconstruction is to undermine this mastery by bringing out the undecidability of each opposition. Like essence and example, each binary can be shown to be a problematic economic relationship of exchange rather than a stable hierarchical opposition. All poles are differentially constituted by their relationship to an other; no pole is absolute. Hence, all oppositions are undecidable. No hierarchy, that is, is possible in a differential system. Ultimately one can never decide what consciousness is, that is, how it is opposed to unconsciousness, because consciousness can only be defined as differing from and deferring unconsciousness. Consciousness is "such" only in as much as it is the **différance** (spatially differing from and temporally the deferment of) unconsciousness.

2 Representation and Deconstruction

The logic of the sign, for example, is governed by a set of metaphysical oppositions: semantic/syntax, presence/representation, conscious meaning/metaphor, speech/writing, nature (the naturalness of the speech-thought in the conscious mind)/culture (the technology of the external, mechanical representation), etc. Representation is always thought of as a secondary, derivative supplement to the presence (truth, being, meaning, thing-in-itself, nature, etc.) it re-presents. You can see how this follows the pattern of the essence/example opposition. In terms of the structure of the sign, representation is described by metaphysics as an unnecessary addition to presence, an external, technical apparatus which is inferior to the living, internal presence of truth or meaning. But as a supplement to a supposedly already constituted meaning, representation points out a lack already in the meaning; otherwise representation would not be necessary. Instead, representation (and everything that it implies — syntax, rhetoric, technology, writing, etc.) must be seen as being absolutely necessary for that self-same, self-present truth or meaning to come into being. The **propriété** of meaning, its self-same uniqueness which would exclude any necessary relation to its other (representation) and which would make that other a secondary addition, a mere accident which befalls the self-presence of meaning from without, is thereby put in question. Presence (of truth, of being, of meaning) requires representation from the very outset. Its "other" is "itself." In this way, the hierarchy of internal presence and external representation becomes reversed, and representation can be seen to be as much at the origin of presence as presence supposedly precedes and gives rise to representation. Rhetoric, therefore, is not the secondary, external representation of thought, but rather that which allows thought to function: ". . . (T)hese are no longer, for this way of thinking (metaphysics), derivable forms of figures, tropes or metaphors. Thinking thinks on the basis of (à partir de) them."¹

1. Jacques Derrida
La Vérité en Peinture
 (Paris, 1978) p.407.

Derrida works out the logic of representation as supplementarity in terms of the oppositions speech/writing, semantics/syntax, meaning/metaphor. After first establishing that the "secondary" representation might be as "essential" as the "primary" presence (be that truth, meaning, or being), he argues that one can never move from representation to a presence (of being or ideal truth, thing or meaning) which would be free of representation. The reference from representation to representation, he says, is a dissemination which might never return to the father Logos of meaning or to the mother Nature of the object — both of which supposedly precede and generate representation without really requiring or participating in representation. Just as consciousness can never reduce unconsciousness without leaving a residue or moment of unconsciousness, so also there would always be yet another metaphor or representation in the very naming of meaning or of the object of reference. Reference is interminable in one other respect. Texts are composed of language fragments which play off each other to produce meaning-effects. But the play of the text can never be reduced to any one single meaning determination which would saturate the text and govern all of its effects. Each text generates other texts simply by virtue of the differential

other-relation which cannot be controlled and which undoes anything which appears to be proper and unique "in itself." Every text exceeds its frame, citing other works, and producing new works which emerge in "reading" but which may never have been intended by the author.

Ultimately then, the stable meaning of any text cannot be decided upon. Any meaning-decision would cut off the indefinite dispersion of references. The unique, proper, selfsame work of art is "haunted" by its "other," the "outside" which comes to contaminate the proper (self-same as well as pure) "inside" of the work. Establishing a definitive work would also establish an outside to which the work nevertheless refers and upon which it depends for its being, an outside which, for this reason, belongs to the inside of the definitive work. Focusing on any one text, therefore, gives rise to what Derrida calls "the general textuality of the world."

From what I have said, it should be clear that deconstruction sees all texts as being radically inscribed in history. Every text exceeds its boundaries and refers in an irrecoverable way to other texts, biographical events, the unconscious, etc. Perhaps this is why liberal humanist criticism has reacted so negatively to deconstruction. Dissemination of reference and undecidability of meaning, the two "tenets" of deconstruction, legislate against the elevation of a work out of its "contexts" (contexts are plural for deconstruction, but also there would be no more "context" as such since the supposedly secondary context of a work would be as much part of the work as the "text itself") into a stable, decided thematic meaning or into a neutral, ahistorical realm of eternal value and universal truth. Despite its anti-reactionary-humanist bias, its historicism, and its fundamental dialectical nature, deconstruction puts in question the notion of a stable material ground to representation, as well as the possibility of a pure nature which precedes all technical contamination by rhetorical figuration. Marxists who still cling to this grounding tenet of socialist realism have reacted as negatively to deconstruction as the liberal humanists. Yet no Marxist theory should now be formulated which doesn't either answer or use deconstruction. Deconstruction, despite its disagreements with historical materialism, provides a method for undermining the institutions of language and thought which reproduce and produce ideology.

3 Documentary Film and Fiction

A deconstruction of the opposition between documentary (non-fictional) film and fictional film should proceed by describing how the characteristics of each pole emerges in its opposite. In this way, the decided opposition would become undecided. The opposition documentary/fiction is founded on the oppositions of politics and art, nature and technical representation, real historical event and imaginative creation. I shall argue in terms of **Mai 68 par lui-même** that art, representation, and fiction can be shown to inhabit the "real" history which supposedly opposes documentary to fictional film. At this point, I shall confine myself to pointing out how documentary contaminates all fictional film.

Every film is a documentary. Every fictional film is at the same time non-fictional. This is so because every film is about its own making. The fact of its own making is something no film can hide. We see the war hero Sergeant York capturing an entire battalion of Germans single-handedly, furthering the Allied victory in "real history" and furthering the phallocratic ideology of heroic combat in the present of the film. But at the same time the screen can't help but show us Gary Cooper being paid to wear a WW1 uniform and run around a movie set in Hollywood pretending he's a war hero named Sergeant York. Even as the film asks us to suspend disbelief, it provides the mechanism of disbelief. This is a deconstructive dilemma: the condition of the possibility of the illusion of the film is something which undercuts that illusion. Both must be at work at once. In order for the ideological phallic monument to be raised to the male war hero, it must simultaneously be cut and let fall. Within the film itself, the heroic legend contains its own parody. All one has to do is suspend the suspension of disbelief in order for that parody to

emerge. Sergeant York becomes Gary Cooper and the fun begins.

Fun, but fun which is a critique of ideology. Deconstruction is the instrument of that critique. Derrida would call the unconcealable mechanics of the film illusion (set, lighting, actors, camera position, the very materiality of the film, the spaces between frames, the reversibility of the projector, the screen) a remainder — "ce qui reste" or simply "reste." Mechanics is a remainder because it remains behind, a piece of fallen, inessential materiality, after idealisation has lifted Gary Cooper from a mere actor into a legendary war hero. The legend of the war hero is the ideal essence of the film, the meaning which sublates and transcends the film's mechanics. The legend is ideal because it comes about only through deft mechanics and audience belief. It has no concrete existence. It is precisely the concrete, empirical element of the film which must be suppressed and forgotten if the illusion is to be successful. The documentary aspect of the film, the fact that Gary Cooper and not Sergeant York is the one being filmed, must be effaced. Yet the illusion of being a documentary is what is desired. In order to attain the illusion of documented history, the mechanics of acting and filming must be covered and left behind — a non-idealizable remainder. They could never be incorporated into the legend of the war hero, the ideal meaning, without destroying that legend.

Derrida describes reading in these terms, and the same point can be made for film viewing. When we read, we efface the mechanics and the materiality of language and rhetoric. We see instead meaning, an ideal entity. Language on a page is made up of broken pieces, spaces, fragments. Reading unifies the fragments, orders and spiritualizes them. Derrida points out that something always resists idealization. This can be an aporia or moment of undecidability in a text. Or, it can be the inscription mark of writing on a page which gives it its permanence. After fiction that mark remains. It is the condition of possibility of reading and idealization. It can never be elevated to meaning. Metaphysics has always privileged the ideal realm of meaning and truth over this other fallen aspect of language. Deconstruction focuses on the inscription, the play of rhetoric, and the fragmentariness of language, thus displacing the metaphysical hierarchy. In film, the equivalent of the mark or inscription would be the filmic aspect of the fictional film, what I have called mechanics. By focusing on this, by documenting the illusion instead of believing it, one undoes the ideology of the film.

Documentary, then, might be one of those parts Derrida talks about which turns out to be bigger than the whole to which it belongs. Documentary is only one type of film among many, one which hasn't always been greatly respected. But from its low place on the hierarchy, documentary can be seen to control the fictional film which is supposedly its superior. First because all fictional films are documentaries. Second, because the telos of fictional films, the essence of the filmic illusion is documentary. To seem to be a documentary non-fiction is the goal of fiction in film and the mechanics of ideology.

Documentary history is deconstructive of the transcendence necessary for the successful functioning of ideology. That transcendence is produced as the reduction of time past to a perpetual present and the reduction of spatial difference to a sameness with what is closer to home, that is, with what is more proximate, and therefore less threatening. In a film like **A Man Named Horse**, for example, the American Indian woman might as well be a **Cosmopolitan** model who overdid the rouge. No real difference between whites and Indians in history, of course. When she and the white man speak intimately, the dialogue could be from any upper class singles bar in the country. Time past is time present. Another example of the ideological reduction of temporal and spatial difference in fiction is **Coming Home**, one of the new American radical films which, like **Blue Collar** (which manages to denounce unions while remaining silent about capitalism — a somewhat suspect brand of radicalism), makes a popular leftist cause safe for the Right. Jon Voight plays a paralyzed Vietnam veteran. At one point, he addresses a high school audience and, breaking into tears, tells how horrible it

all was. Even the hard core Marine recruiter, his opponent in the staged debate, looks at him with sorrowful, understanding eyes. Like the rest of the movie, the scene's radical potential is short-circuited by subjectivism and emotionalism. What is wrong with war, especially the Vietnam war, has nothing to do with politics. What matters is what it does to people, especially good American people (in reality mostly black, though Voight plays a white middle class ex-high school sports hero) who suffer because of all the gooks they had to kill. The only "concrete political analysis" in Voight's monologue is that there just wasn't a good enough reason for the war to justify all this heavy suffering. Which implies of course, that there would be wars with sufficient reason.

Socialist militant documentaries, in contrast, should work to keep existing wounds open as well as to open new ones. Sometimes that can be done through fiction, but fiction, as a mode of imagination which by definition detaches itself from empirical history in order to create something new in its place, always runs the risk of falling back within a narcissistic, self-protective, ideological closure.

Controlling Interests, a California Newsreel documentary about the global immorality of multi-national corporations, plays the victimization of American workers off the much more brutal exploitation of the people of Brazil. Its lesson is the persistence of fascism and racism under the guise of American liberalism. Both **Germany in Autumn**, a brilliant mix of documentary and fictionalized segments, and **The Lost Honour of Katarina Blum** deal with terrorism and the authoritarian reaction to it. **Lost Honour** focuses attention on a single human subject rather than examining the broadscale political and historical implications of the reaction. **Germany in Autumn** is a collective effort (Böll, Fassbinder, Kluge, Schloendorff, and others), and the result is a kind of cinematic mural. The putative center of this heterogenous film is the suicides of Baader, Ensslin and Raspe. Despite several lowpoints — Fassbinder's self-indulgent pathos on hearing of the suicides, a bad pick for an opening sequence — the film has many excellent moments. Fassbinder argues at length with a middle-aged woman about law and democracy. He finally gets her to admit her belief that an authoritarian state with a benign dictator would be preferable to democracy, if terrorism is possible under democracy. End first sequence. The pomp of the Schleyer funeral is contrasted with the simple funeral given Baader and the others. The god-fearing, Christian burghers of Stuttgart refused to have anything to do with the funeral, and the police harassed those who dared attend. An interview with the co-founder of the Red Army Faction in prison explains how terrorism came about in Germany after the failure of the 1967 student revolts. The radical students realized there would be no mass uprising, that although the fascist state had been abolished in 1945, the fascist ideology still dominated Germany. Their only recourse was selective acts of violence against capitalists. Historical footage of Nazi acts of terrorism are then contrasted with current rightist condemnations of leftist terrorism in the name of law.

In contrast to the above, ideological film is characterized by a reduction of temporal difference to a perpetual present and of spatial difference to an auto-effective proximity. The mechanism of this reduction is a specular identification with the fictional character in such a way that the fiction becomes autobiographical. Identification overcomes difference. The other is made proximate; threatening distance is reduced. Education, the encounter with an "other" so that the self is altered, made different, is avoided. One way, perhaps, of working against this process of specularity in fiction would be to combine documentary with fiction, so that the margin excluding actual history from the fictional illusion breaks down.

4 Mai 68 par Lui-même

If the forgetting of history is a function of ideology, then militant documentaries can reassert forgotten or repressed history, thus allowing it to function as a deconstructive lever for undermining any pretensions to ahistorical transcendence. This role of documentary is well played for example, in **The Terror and the Time**, a

2. Peter Weiss privileges documentary theater in part for its capacity to subvert pretense to objectivity by means of which power groups mask and excuse their actions: "Documentary theater is partial. Many of its themes can lead to nothing other than condemnation. For such a theater, objectivity is possibly a concept that a power group uses as an excuse for its actions" ("Notizen zum dokumentarischen Theater" in *Rapporte 2* (Frankfurt 1971) p.99.

history of Guiana from the end of colonialism through the election and imperialist inspired overthrow of a leftist government; **The Battle of Chile**, a history of Allende's socialist government and its brutal suppression at the hands of an American backed fascist **golpe**, **Resistir**, a history of the socialist movement in Argentina from the point of view of the Montoneros, and in **Harlan County**, the famous history of a miner's strike. Derrida points out that the easiest way to neutralize something which threatens the homogeneity of a system is to call it an evil which comes from without, an accident which in no way reflects an instability on the inside of the system. The deconstructive militancy of **Harlan County** consists of showing how a miner's strike belongs to a long socialist tradition inside of the U.S. This works against the American program of representing socialism as an evil which comes from without to threaten even the working class.

Militant documentary must assume that discursive acts, verbal or visual, do have effects. Jean Pierre Faye argues in **Langues totalitaires** (Paris, 1972) that discursive acts intervene in history, determining its content and its direction. A falsified message can affect the course of a revolution. The militant documentarist, therefore, must think of the documentary as an act which has effects that must be calibrated to contribute to a deconstruction of ideology. What characterizes the usefulness of documentary for the Left is not "objectivity."² The best militant documentaries are those which sharpen the historical material to a critical edge by selection, juxtaposition, voice-over, and intertiting. CBS's **Inside the Union**, the best American television documentary since the war, made its point by juxtaposing the daily life of workers to the suppression of radical rank and filers by the union fatcats at the union convention, by mixing shots of workers with shots of the immense and monstrous looking steel plant, and by intertiting a poem by Carl Sandburg about how steel is made from raw materials and the blood of men.

Mai 68 par lui-même, a series of eight documentaries about the May uprising in France, is divided between those films which allow the events to carry the camera along without any comment or attempt at arrangement and those which try to develop the images to a critical point. The paradox of the supposedly "objective" **kino pravda** approach is that it believes that history can be recorded faithfully without the interference of strategic editing or voice-over, and that creates what amounts to an "ahistorical" text.

Jean Denis Bonan, a member of one of the collectives which contributed films to the series, suggests that the films are made for those who have already come a long way on the political road. Rather than politically sensitizing an audience, they merely provide familiar information for those already disposed to receive it. And he cautions that, without a minimal historical story-line, the simple recording of disorderly riots might serve rightist ends by provoking and justifying a conservative call for a repressive return to order.³

The question of the role of artistic manipulation or responsible direction in documentary is, then, clearly crucial. The **Mai 68** filmmakers are divided on its importance. One of them justifies an undirected immediacy by suggesting that because of the pull of events, the filmmakers had become "actors" and were no longer merely "cinéastes." Another argues: "At a time when the spoken language had taken on such amplitude, it was necessary to make images, simply images." On the other side stands Guy Hennebelle, who asserts that the films are too dogmatic in their imposition of a "bookish" line on reality, that they demonstrate a too simple ideology of giving the **parole** to the people, and that they display an insufficient reflection on the aesthetic dimension. He is joined by Bonan, who notices a "poverty of discourses" in the documentaries. There is a difference, Bonan argues, between what is important politically and what is of value aesthetically. A parade or a trial may have great political significance, but it might make a poor image on the screen.⁴ In other words some of the filmmakers were not thinking of the effects of their discourse and were as a result content to film the significant events without considering how those images would appear on the screen.

3. *Impact revue du cinéma direct*, No.8 & 9 (Mai 1978) p.53.

4. *Ibid.* pp.22, 51, 54

In spite of the risk of incipient aestheticism, Bonan's critique of the spontaneist ideology of the direct cinema is pertinent. Since a film about a revolution is not necessarily a revolutionary film, the most effective militant documentary would seem to be the one which is both direct and critical (**Germany in Autumn**, for example, **Dare to Fight**, one of the **Mai 68** films discussed below). Pure direct cinema, like all spontaneist notions, is a false ideal. Bonan points out that there will always be a contradiction between the effacement required in the making of the documentary film and the intervention necessary for its editing. And as the realists in literature have learned, holding a mirror up to the world does not guarantee that the world will change.

Jacques Rancière offers a highly astute reading of the problem of didactic militant art in his essay "Le Compromis culturel historique," the specific object of his critique is the traditional French Left's appropriation in their own films of the "leftist imagination" of 1968. Rancière takes his critique to the heart of French leftist militant art itself and suggests that a power game is already well under way even there. After May 1968, there was a call among militant artists to educate the people, a call whose effects are evident in **Mai 68 par lui-même**. Art, they believed, could serve "a pedagogical function which was once neutral and progressive." Calling this a "didacticism of representation," Rancière suggests that it serves no end other than the "binding together of the class that knows." And the images generally serve the ends of power by making "the intolerable tolerable." What is needed, according to Rancière is an "anti-pedagogy," a political art of images which are full of meanings which cannot be reduced to any single power of representation or representation of power. Only then would the exchange value "in power" of militant art give way to a "new usage (in freedom)."⁵

I don't believe art can ever be fully non-didactic. Even Rancière's "anti-pedagogy" would make a point. An imperative lurks in even the most decadent withdrawal from the world. Deliberately using historical material to make a critical point, however, is not equivalent to being a Leninist vanguardist of the sort Rancière criticizes, who sees himself as the purveyor of truth to the people. In its very nature, documentary puts in question the metaphysical assumptions about knowledge and power which underlie vanguardist pedagogy. In documentary, the role of the artistic subject is limited. The artist can choose what shots to make, where to set up the camera, what images to use in editing. But, much more so than in fiction, what happens is beyond his control. His intervention is usually limited to commentary on and arrangement of a subject matter which is already there. Militant documentaries like **Dare to Fight** are characterized by an economic play of artistic manipulation and unfolding events which are under no single subject's conscious control. Because those events can never be fully mastered, a vanguardist pedagogy can never be fully realized in documentary. There will always be an irreducible opening onto a space of history which exceeds the human subject. This places the subject in a non-originary, secondary position. The would-be educator is structurally in the position of person educated. Nevertheless, this structure is reversible. In **The Song of the Canary**, for example, the filmmakers intervene to do tests on chemical factory workers to determine whether or not they have been made sterile by the pesticides that they work on. The tests prove positive, and a nation-wide uproar ensues. To whatever small degree (and it should be borne in mind that whenever I seem overly optimistic about the power of documentaries, I am always speaking of small degrees), interpretation has given way here to an attempt at change. Not only the presentation of documentary film, but the act of filming itself can serve a pedagogical, interventionist role.

In a slightly less militant vein, Michael Rubbo's documentaries (**Waiting for Fidel, Solzhenitsyn's Children**) effectively use an indirect interventionist approach. In **Solzhenitsyn's Children**, for example, we are shown the two interviewers planning their different roles (straight man, heavy) in their upcoming interview with Bernard Henri-Lévy, Solzhenitsyn's "new philosopher" mongoloid son.

5. Jacques Rancière
Le compromis culturel
historique **Les**
révoltes logiques. No.
Special (Spring, 1978)
p.123.

In **Waiting for Fidel**, the act of filming is itself integrated into the film to the extent that, at one point, Rubbo and the millionaire producer argue in front of the camera about how much the very film that is being used to film their argument costs. Formalistic turns of this sort are usually debunked by hard-nosed, anti-theoretical loyalists of socialist realism. This attitude reflects Lucacs' side in his argument with Brecht. What films like **Germany in Autumn**, **Waiting for Fidel**, and **The Other Francisco** (a Cuban film in which a 19th century pastoral novel about slaves is acted out, then undercut by a narrator who depicts what real slave conditions were like and who goes so far as to conduct a posthumous interview with the author) show is that teaching the truth is also a matter of using rhetoric well. The "truth" of the state of fascism in Germany today, of the differences between capitalist and socialist attitudes toward Cuba, of the differences between pro-capitalist abolitionist view of slavery and a modern depiction of the actual state of affairs, can only be made available through a skillful use of film rhetoric: juxtaposition, contrast, metaphor, irony, symbol, self-reflexivity (the inclusion of the mechanics of filmmaking in the film itself), foreshadowing, etc. Militant documentaries not excluded.

In my discussion of **Mai 68 par lui-même**, I shall concentrate on the rhetorical strategies of political education which the films use.

The series consists of eight films, varying in length from 10 to 100 minutes, divided into three programs — "The Imagination and the Weapons of Power," "Under the Paving Stones — the Strike," and "Minute History."

My discussion will be facilitated by a brief history of the events of May 1968. The revolt begins at Nanterre, a university on the outskirts of Paris, where Daniel Cohn-Bendit leads the 22nd of March Movement, formed on that date to protest the arrest of six leftist students. The movement tries to keep the university closed and to prevent the CRS police from entering the campus. On the 2nd of May, Cohn-Bendit and seven other students are referred to a disciplinary council. Cohn-Bendit's slogan: "We refuse to be the future cadres of capitalist exploitation." On May 3rd, George Marchais of the Communist Party condemns the "false revolutionary" students led by the "German anarchist Cohn-Bendit." A meeting of support in the Sorbonne courtyard, broken up when the university is occupied by police, leads to the first spontaneous demonstrations in the Latin Quarter. On the fourth, the students' and teachers' unions respond to the occupation by calling for a general strike in all universities for May 6, the day of Cohn-Bendit's disciplinary trial. On that day, the Latin Quarter, now in a virtual state of siege, is the scene of violent student demonstrations during which several hundred people are injured. On the following days, peaceful marches take place, the students gain the support of Louis Aragon, of the major trade unions (CGT, CFDT) and of **L'Humanité**, the Communist Party newspaper. Then on the 10th. the first "night of the barricades" takes place. A demonstration, planned for that evening, becomes violent when Cohn-Bendit orders the 22nd of March Movement to lead the students in occupying the Latin Quarter. The Minister of the Interior responds with brutal police repression. The devastation which this night leaves in the Latin Quarter and the indignation it produces further the student cause. The workers' unions call for a general strike on Monday, May 13. The students reoccupy the Sorbonne and declare it an "autonomous popular university". The Paris workers also begin to demonstrate in the streets. By May 17, the strike has spread throughout France, virtually paralyzing the country. By the 19th. the CP and the CGT (General Labour Federation) are ready to make their first call for a government of the Left. But discord has already begun to erupt on the Left between the radical students and the CP/CGT. This rupture becomes increasingly manifest as the revolt reaches its highest point. May 22: Cohn-Bendit is forbidden to return to France from Germany, where he has gone to enlist support. The CP and the CGT refuse to join the students in demanding a lifting of the ban. The violence begins again. On the 23rd and the 24th the second and third "nights of the barricades" take place. In response, de Gaulle announces a referendum for June. The govern-

ment seems about to topple. On the 27th, an agreement is worked out between the government, management and the trade unions, which would allow work to begin anew. It is refused by the workers. On the 28th, Mitterand, head of the socialists, calls for a provisional government until new elections can be held. But the CP has already launched a policy of non-cooperation and non-participation. (In the 1978 legislative elections, the CP under Marchais assured the defeat of the coalition with the socialists with a similar tactic.) May 29: de Gaulle, sensing an imminent crisis, secretly leaves Paris to consult with General Massu, the "hero" of the Algerian war. Assured of the army's support, de Gaulle returns on the 30th. refuses to hold the referendum, and dissolves the National Assembly. The traditional Left and the labour unions accept the gesture and begin preparing for the legislative elections. On the 3rd of June, the CGT calls its people back to work. By this point, the possibility of revolution has been effectively squashed. Gaullist and right-wing demonstrations begin to take precedence over leftist ones. There are hold-outs on the part of the more radical workers at such places as a Renault factory outside Paris, but by the end of June, almost all the workers have taken up work once again. In mid-June, all the leftist organizations are ordered dissolved by the government, and all demonstrations are forbidden until the end of the elections. In the elections, the Right wins. The counter-revolution is complete.

All of the films do not provide such an overview. Most concentrate on one aspect of the events and take this overview for granted. Concreteness is gained, but often the link which would relate specific events to the larger context is lacking.

Program 1 (which I saw last, having gone to 2 and 3 first) is made up of four films: **Freedom of Speech, Mikono, The Railwayman, Back to Work at Wonder.** **Freedom of Speech** provides an historical overview, though by no means a detailed history, of the revolt. It invokes a certain pre-history of the rise of student radicalism from Berkeley in '64 to Berlin in '67 to Paris in '68. The film continues to follow a chronological line, dwelling in the beginning on speeches by student activists to packed auditoriums in the Sorbonne, on long marches being directed by Danny the Red, on the violent confrontations at night between students and the CRS; moving to an account of the general strike, paying particular attention to the occupation of the Renault factories; closing with shots of the police re-conquering the Latin Quarter, of students listening to de Gaulle's speech, and of workers resuming work. The film situates the events within a broad political context which is lacking in most of the other films of the series. It is the one film which provides a sense of the significance on a national scale of the student movement in its role as a catalyst of the workers' strike.

That process of catalyst is the real subject of the film, and the story is told from the perspective of the elitist vanguard. The students are presented as the organizational wing of the revolution. This aspect of it helped me understand somewhat better the criticism Jacques Rancière makes of the "new philosophers" when he says that they repeat the vanguardist militant stance of the 60's when they set themselves up as the legislators of the bourgeois public's political conscience and as the purveyors of truth from above to the "plèb." The students assume a similar messianic role as carriers of socialism to the workers. The narrator of the film: "... the students do not try to make a revolution by themselves, they are revealers, detonators and the liaison between the peoples of the world and the French workers... the students have installed themselves in the vacant cockpit of the revolutionary organization." Scenes of the Renault strike at Flins document the workers themselves saying that they would not have taken the radical step of occupying the factory without the example set by the students at the Sorbonne. There is a long sequence of student delegates standing beneath the wail of an occupied Citroën factory talking to the striking workers perched on top of the factory gate and yelling support to them. "The daily fight of the workers is no longer isolated; with the students, it has become a general fight against capitalism."

The villain of the piece, the character who has left the cockpit of the revolution-

any organization vacant, is the Communist Party with its affiliate trade union, the CGT. The CP is presented as undermining the revolutionary potential of the spontaneous student/worker alliance in favour of an organizational solution with limited, immediate objectives. The CGT first refuses to support the students ("Les gosses, c'est à vous de se débrouiller," "Kids, you'll have to manage for yourselves"). Then it tries to keep the students out of its own bailliwick — the workplace. The narrator comments: "The CGT plus the workers equals a reestablishment of the bourgeois order; the workers and the students equals the possibility of revolution... the CGT prevents the utilization of the strike as a political weapon." This obstructionist role of the CP and of the CGT is one of the major themes of the film series.

It is one of history's obvious ironies that the lesson of the leftist students, who saw through the CP's electoral pretensions and who staked all on the revolutionary potential of the workers only to lose, is now being learned by the Party's intellectuals, who withheld support for the students in '68 and who staked all of the 1978 legislative elections, only to lose. Louis Althusser takes the Party leaders to task — **Ce qui ne peut plus durer dans le parti communiste** (Paris, 1978)—for the same spirit of secretive and jealous self-protectiveness which motivated the Party's alienation of the student leftists in '68. Althusser does not, as did the '68 leftists, put in question the electoralist ambitions and the non-revolutionary pose of the Party, but he does follow their lead when he criticizes the revisionism, the bureaucratism, and the authoritarianism of the Party directorate. Many of the faults of the CP documented in **Freedom of Speech** find analogies in Althusser's polemic. He accuses the directorate of wanting to frame and limit free discussion, especially of the electoral defeat of 1978. They assume Truth to be their property, with which they shall "impregnate" the working class. No one else, including leftists and radical party militants, must be allowed to have the right to exercise this function. Since the leadership, according to Althusser, is guided by a spirit of pragmatism, it has no idea of what a concrete analysis of a situation would be. It applies theory to a set of facts which are accepted as given; it has not the sense to look behind the "stage" of history, as the Marx of the "Eighteenth Brumaire" would put it.

One of the lessons of **Freedom of Speech** is that the CP was so concerned with retaining its own political power that it could not make the imaginative leap necessary for analyzing the situation as a potentially revolutionary one. That would not have gone with the parliamentary approach the Party was taking. Today, Althusser accuses the leaders of being more concerned with beating the Socialists than with pursuing the class war. In 1968, a similar analysis would show the Party to be more **against** the students — who threatened to diminish its power—than **for** the workers. Finally, Althusser, whose problematic relationship to the Party should be underlined, says that the bureaucratic structure of the Party mirrors the bourgeois state: its authoritarian directorate sits in permanence, jealous of its power and distrusting even its own militants. All of this is a weak echo of things said ten years ago, and **Freedom of Speech** documents the accuracy of Althusser's assessment.

If **Freedom of Speech** makes a statement against the CP, it also makes an unwitting critique of the students. The student speeches in the Sorbonne amphitheatre often seem too glib, articulate but severed from the instruments of power which would allow them to articulate their ideas in the world. The students are shown as having no **real** power. In contrast, the workers are almost inarticulate, but often what they say is more effective and moving, because it derives from their own direct experience of alienation. The dichotomy of elite intellectual theory and mass practice motivates the students' vanguardism, but it is also the root of the ultimate failure of the revolt. The students' theories allowed them to see beyond the immediate desires and fears of the workers. But it was the workers after all who possessed the power to close the factories and extend the revolt. When the workers decided to give up the long range aspirations projected by the students in favour of limited economic gains, the movement lost its only real weapon. The Sorbonne speeches may be moving, but they are addressed to a Dowerless constit-

uency. Their rhetoric sometimes resembles de Gaulle's, but they lack one important element: the backing of an armed force, one which sent those same speech-makers scurrying for cover on the streets of the Latin Quarter. It is perhaps no surprise that the year following the uprising, two of the movement's leaders, Geismar and Sauvageot, wrote a book in which they asserted that the only hope for socialism was armed insurrection and civil war.

Mikono, the second film, is a fanciful comic history of a sergeant in the CRS, which begins with still pictures of his childhood, his marriage and his army career in Viet Nam and Algeria, and ends with a sequence in which he, firing tear gas grenades, leads a group of CRS in breaking up a street demonstration to the background accompaniment of classical music. Originally made for German television, it earned Jean-Michel Humeau, its maker, accusations of "demobiliser" and "counter-revolutionary" from its French audience. Given the subject of the film—police repression of a liberation movement—the humour of the film is off-putting. This is not to say that tragedy is the only mode suitable for revolution, although the hopelessness of the students' struggle in '68, confronted by the frightening force of the repressive military machinery of the state and undermined by a conservative Left establishment, takes on tragic proportions. It is to suggest rather that comedy is unsuitable in the context of May 1968 because it works through trivialization, minimization and debunking. Sergeant Mikono, because he is not only a funny-looking man performing a mechanical act which, set to ballet music, produces a comic effect, but also a symbol of repressive state power, should be criticized and attacked on more politically substantial grounds than simple comedy allows. Ultimately, Sergeant Mikono and the CRS are not the least bit funny.

The Railwayman, the third film, tells a story about the relationship between students and workers from a worker's point of view. It provides a lesson in both the small-and-large-scale differences which separate the two worlds.

The first half of the film shows the railwayman at his workplace on strike. He describes his biggest grievances: in order to keep him alert while driving his train, the company has installed a metal bar on the braking mechanism which must be held at the same time as the mechanism and which must be released and raised again every half minute or so. If not released and raised, the bar causes a loud horn to sound in the driver's compartment. Most railwaymen, he says, get in the habit of raising and lowering the bar mechanically every five or ten seconds. They become automatons who are at the mercy of their machines.

The second half of the film records the railwayman's visit to the Sorbonne courtyard. Wearing his old coat buttoned all the way up, he is much older than anyone there. He gazes around at the crowd of young people, the posters of Mao, Che and Gramsci, the tables covered with revolutionary literature. He gets in a conversation with some students, describes the train mechanism to them. One bored-looking young man walks away. Next, the conversation turns to political matters. The railwayman introduces the question of religion. A black man standing beside him argues that once you bring God in you lose all sense of individual endeavour. And so on.

Although the movie does not set out to do so, it does underscore the contrast between the broad philosophical vision of the students and the limited, day-to-day perceptions of the workers. As the visit to the Sorbonne makes clear, no spontaneous communication or dialog will reduce that difference. The railwayman's vision of alienation extends only to the mechanical gesture he must perform which makes him feel like a robot. The failure of May 68 is contingent upon the difference between this vision and the vision of the Marxist students. The student's broad theoretical conception of alienation invites a global solution, whereas the workers' more limited vision could only allow more limited demands and victories.

Back to Work at Wonder, the final film of the first day, documents the moments after the announcement that the majority of workers had voted to end a three week strike. At first, the crowd of workers and students is quiet; then, a woman begins to shout through her tears: "I won't go back in there. Not me. I'll never set foot in that hole again. You can go. Go see what a mess it is..." A union delegate tries to console her by telling her that progress has been made. A student interrupts him. There will be reprisals, he says; she's just complained; imagine what that means. There won't be any reprisals as long as we have a strong union vote, the delegate responds. We already have over two hundred in the union. That's our victory. But you can't have it all at once; you must work by stages. The boss gives a fuck about stages, the student shouts back. The boss has given in; it's a step. The student again: But don't say that it is a victory. Why? because it's a defeat? No, but... Do you work at Wonder? the delegate asks.

Stylistically, the film is a perfect piece of direct cinema, but only because, paradoxically, it catches the kind of dramatic moment which is usually achieved through rehearsal and staging, that is, through fictional cinema. In terms of content, the film dramatizes one of the major themes of the series — the selling out of the radical workers by their own trade unions in opposition to the will of the leftist students who wished to push the strikers towards revolution. The fact that it is a woman who breaks down is both good and bad. It is bad because she seems hysterical in comparison to the stoical males. Already in the other films the revolt of May has begun to seem like an all-male event. Women in the films rarely speak. They generally stand by silently, passive sidekicks to the male revolutionaries. This is a direct product of not only a chauvinist attitude but of an incapacity to come to grips with the problem of male dominance in left-wing organizations. In a negative way this film is an important lesson for what shouldn't be done on the left in relation to women.

The second program of films is the best of the three simply by virtue of **Dare to Fight, Dare to Win Flins 68**. The other film on the program — **The Gentle Month of May** — is more a record of impressions than a coherent piece of work.

Rather than allow itself to be enslaved by the events that it documents **Dare to Fight** makes those events successfully serve critical ends. For this very reason, it is the most militant film of the series. Unlike bourgeois documentaries, it takes a definite political stance in relation to the events that it describes. It tries to make visible and explicit the political forces at work in the constitution of the events.

The film consists of short sequences, each of which describes a different moment in the ongoing history of the strike at the Renault factory at Flins. Each sequence is framed by a few moments of blank space, a quotation from Mao, Lenin or Marx, or a caption providing an analysis of the events. The use of such organizational devices is classically Brechtian and it is both interesting and effective. J-P Thorn the maker of the film, has since come to criticise the use of such quotations. Now he thinks, it is not enough simply to quote Lenin or Mao in order to define a politics or to elaborate a concrete theory. Nevertheless, while quotations may not suffice as concrete analyses of historical situations, they do effectively point out the close rapport between political theory and history. The quotations inform, even if they can never hope to fully explain, everything that happens on the screen.

Captions provide a more successful critical instrument than quotations. If quotations make one read, captions provide one with a reading. In this case, the reading is both accurate and humorous. "First manoeuvre of the bourgeoisie: refusal to negotiate;" "Second manoeuvre of the bourgeoisie: lock-out;" "Third manoeuvre of the bourgeoisie: call in the forces of order. ..." Each caption sets off a different stage of the strike as it makes clear how the empirical situations fit the theoretical scenario of the class struggle. Thorn writes in 1978: "The **form** of the film, its **language**, had to be revolutionary... It seemed necessary to us to place the spectator in front of the contradictions of the events and by a dialectical montage to make him discover their inter-relations so that he could himself

realize the meaning." He also claims that in making the film, he and other participants tried to avoid "a completely prepared commentary which would get in the way of the spectator's own effort of intelligence."

Nevertheless, the method of dialectical montage in this film does have a bias. One of the contradictions that Thorn describes as being deliberately set up is that between "Speeches by union delegates and certain facts." **Dare to Fight** thus makes the strongest statement in the entire series against the CP and the General Labour Federation. At one point, that statement takes the form of a contradiction between what the party newspaper describes and what actually takes place before the camera. A **l'Humanité** headline appears on the screen: Violence at the Flins factory resulting in two deaths, was caused by the student activist provocateurs led by Geismar. The sequence which follows — interrupted several times by a single question flashed on the screen: Who were the provocateurs? — shows beyond doubt that the workers and students were attacked without provocation by the CRS police. The most striking contradiction is presented at the end of the film. Throughout, the CGT has been shown to be on the side of the bosses. Now at the end, **l'Humanité** once again appears as the straw man. This time the headline speaks of a victorious return to work. The CGT-supported motion to end the strike has passed. The faces of the workers, however, stand in grim counterpoint to the insistently optimistic headlines. They are unsmiling, angry, disappointed. Deciphered: victory belongs to the bosses again.

Ten years later, Thorn criticizes this aspect of the film. It is good to show the betrayal of the workers by the CP and the trade unions. But it isn't simply enough to denounce it. One must still explain why "no other revolutionary force . . . was able to propose another alternative and organize it."⁶

The third program consists of two films, a short — **Sochau June 68** — about a strike at an automobile factory, and the longest film of the series — **Long Evenings, Short Mornings** — which lives up to the title of this program, "Minute History."

Long Evenings was made by William Klein, an American. He has been praised for being the only one to catch the spirit of May. Because Klein was more interested in recording the change in the quality of life during May rather than in making a militant statement, his film is more analytical and less tendentious than most of the others. He also had more film at his disposal, since at the moment he was finishing **Mr. Freedom**, and hence was able to catch much more of what was going on.

Klein says that the subject of his film is the "fantastic verbal delirium which broke out at that moment."⁷ One hears Cohn-Bendit, de Gaulle, speeches in the Odeon, people on the street, students in cafes, workers, etc. The only ones who seem never to speak are the CRS police. The emphasis on the verbal has a double edge. It works well when it shows Cohn-Bendit as an attractive and sympathetic orator, addressing journalists at a news conference and cajoling them not to misrepresent too badly what he has just said, or when it shows a worker talking about the daily drudgery of work against a background of CRS buses repeatedly making the same turn, or when it shows the tremendous effectiveness of political slogans chanted by a mass of people — "Le Pouvoir aux travailleurs," "CRS-SS" etc. The emphasis on the verbal in **Long Evenings** works at cross purposes when it underscores the oratorial nature of many of the speeches of the students. The contrast between de Gaulle's Cornelian style and the hustling's style of the students indicates both a difference, and a similarity. Much of what the students say comes across as empty rhetoric, detached from the reality which it is hoping to affect and modify. Consider Cohn-Bendit calling for the setting up of a revolutionary center for all Europe at the Sorbonne. Of course, it never emerged, but this failed dream is not as moving as the failure of the workers, returning to work, shafted after weeks of striking.

6. *Impact*, p.59.

7. *Ibid.*, p.51.

8. Ernest Mandel, *Ecrits politiques 1: De la Commune a Mai 68* (Paris, 1978).

The only organization with the wherewithal to assume power was the CP, whose revisionism and conservatism has been the object of leftist polemics all along and which had done everything it could to prevent a revolutionary alliance between the workers and the students. The Party, according to Ernest Mandel, failed in its revolutionary duty by not coming to the aid of the leftists and the workers. In his essay "The Lessons of May."⁸ Mandel suggests that May 68 demonstrated at least two things: the workers' capacity to arrive at a revolutionary consciousness in the absence of an avant-garde; their potential for exercising power through a general strike which could paralyze the productive machinery of capitalism in an entire country like France. The party claimed that it did not want to reinforce reaction by pushing for a revolution when the conditions were not ripe. This was its justification for limiting the General Strike to demands for immediate economic gains. But as Mandel points out, the party also preached the way of legality. Armed insurrection was deliberately excluded. Immediate material demands were the only real items on the party agenda. The ruling class always agrees to such demands when it is threatened, for it can easily recuperate them after through price adjustments. The left committed its greatest tactical error when it accepted the conditions laid down by its class enemy: hold elections, end the strike, help punish the leftists. According to Mandel, the mass of the workers instinctively wanted more than immediate material gains, but the left never thought of giving them a voice. Mandel concludes that the CP could have taken power if it had been less reformist and more revolutionary in orientation.

9. E.H. Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries* (New York, 1973).

E.J. Hobsbawm⁹ is more pessimistic in his assessment. He believes the CP was correct in considering a violent confrontation with de Gaulle as undesirable. Unlike Mandel, Hobsbawm thinks that May '68 was not a revolutionary situation in the classical sense. The party in power was not divided, only temporarily disoriented, and the forces of revolution were weak but for a temporary initiative. He sees the workers as sharing the political aspirations of the CP; they were motivated not so much by a revolutionary **prise de conscience** as by a desire to find any ready alternative to de Gaulle's one-man rule. (At one point in one film, a worker, after being thrown out of an occupied factory by the CRS, says: "That's the last time I vote for de Gaulle.") Neither did the workers share the students' negativity for the traditional Left. Hobsbawm puts the blame for the failure to overthrow the regime equally on the Communists and on the "character of the mass movement. It had no political aims itself, though it used political phraseology" (P. 24). Its enemy was faceless — the highly depersonalized and alienating social and economic system — and its energy could not be concentrated effectively on any one specific target. Even if the CP had opted for insurrection, Hobsbawm says that it would have been revolutionary only in its coming to power. In any event, the CP seemed at the time to regard the potentially revolutionary situation only as a threat to its own power on the left; the students were distracting the Party from the really important job of keeping its allies in line. Ten years later, Althusser, the party loyalist of 1968, will draw the same conclusion from the legislative elections.

It should be obvious why Mandel, and not Hobsbawm, is forbidden entry into most of the great western capitalist countries. I tend to take his side in the argument. Given the sorry state of revolutionary socialism in the west, I cannot imagine that, by policy, one should wait patiently for a "classical revolutionary situation" to develop, before one could act.

V Dare to Fight and Deconstruction

In his lesson-taking reminiscences, Daniel Cohn-Bendit points out that it was the failure of the students and workers marching through the streets on the night of the 24th, in protest against de Gaulle's call for a parliamentary solution to the troubles, to occupy the state ministries which marked the missed moment of the revolution. The Stock Exchange had already been taken and set on fire, and further occupations would have made it impossible for the establishment Left to capitulate on the next day to de Gaulle's demands. The students and workers, accord-

ing to Cohn-Bendit, were ready to do so, but they allowed themselves to be diverted back in the direction of the Latin Quarter by Officers of the conservative left student union:

We should never have allowed them to divert us, should have occupied the Ministries and public buildings, not to put in a new lot of 'revolutionary' bureaucrats, but to smash the entire state apparatus, to show the people how well they could get on without it, and how the whole of society had to be reconstructed afresh on the basis of workers' control. It is now clear that is, on 25 May, Paris had woken to find the most important Ministries occupied, Gaullism would have caved in at once — the more so as similar actions would have taken place all over the country. It has been said, and rightly so, that for the first time in history a revolution could have been made without recourse to arms.¹⁰

If we read the films according to a negative dialectic, then, we would have to say that what could not be shown on the screen is what should be most exemplary.

I began by saying that the opposition between politics and art, an opposition which would hold the two categories in strict exclusion the one from the other, should be deconstructed. The standard maneuver in such a deconstruction is to forge a concept which, like a pendulum, swings back and forth between the two poles of the opposition, belonging to both and yet to neither exclusively, which makes the poles pass into each other through its medium. In terms of the art-politics opposition, militant documentary of the **Dare to Fight** variety serves as such a pendulum. It is an art form which can only be discussed in political terms. And what it describes is the artistry of politics, in this case, the technique of the political repression of a revolution.

Dare to Fight's use of quotations and intertitles is especially useful in elaborating the deconstructive argument. This aspect of the film has been criticized for making reality fit a bookish political line.¹¹ The criticism stems from an idealist assumption that books, as a form of non-spontaneous, unnatural, external technology, are inferior, derivative, and secondary. As non-natural representations, they pose a threat to the integrity of natural, spontaneous, organic reality, whose value lies in the fact that it is a living presence uncontaminated by representation. Derrida finds a similar prejudice at work in the privileging of living, natural speech over "dead," "bookish" writing. The voice of speech, for example, is always described in metaphysics as being superior to writing because speech signifies life, the presence of consciousness to itself, the generation of meaning by the mind, and organic nature. Writing, in contrast, is conceived as the carrier of death because it does not imply the living presence of a speaker. It is unnatural, inorganic, technical, external, a lifeless representation, rather than the living presence of consciousness. The deconstructive gesture consists of showing how the characteristics of writing — spacing, articulation, re-presentation — everything speech supposedly excludes as a threat to its being, always inhabit speech. A deconstructive line of thought would say that anything that seems to intrude from outside to interrupt an organic plenitude has, in a sense, already taken possession, inhabits the organism from the inside.

Deconstruction would see the organic flow of documented events in **Dare to Fight** as already contaminated by the technology of quotation which only seems to exist apart from and outside that flow. If one examines the events, one finds that the bookish art and the political line, which the idealist would banish from the lived and living experience of history, already at work constituting history. Contamination by technical exteriority has always already taken place. There would be no "history," no student revolt and no workers' movement, without such contamination. A famous passage from Lenin's **What is to be Done?** is "cited" in the film: "Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers **only from without**, that is, only outside of the economic struggle, outside of the sphere of

10. Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit **Obsolete Communism: The Left Wing Alternative** (New York, 1968) pp.70-71.

11. For a version of this critique, see Rancière's "Le Compromis": "The inability to put the worker's struggle **into the image** is manifested also in the inverse figure: that where the image is devoured by the text which explains the class war." (p.113).

relations between workers and employers" (**Essential Works of Lenin**, New York, 1966, p. 112). This passage, coming as it does at the head of a film sequence, does indeed fit the events recorded by the spontaneous documentary camera into a definite political line, even a "bookish" line. But the distinction between "lived" event and "dead" quotation becomes irrelevant when one reads the events. The lived events are already informed by Lenin's text; the students would not be there if they had not read it, nor the workers if they did not prove it. What one sees is a strike, launched in support of the students (who were, as Althusser points out, supporting the workers), threatened by repressive force, divided between a conservative trade union which wants the workers to return to work and leftist students who urge the workers to pursue the strike beyond the immediate economic ends which the union espouses. Economic gains are not enough; the workers should link their struggle for wages to the larger class struggle. In other words, the quotation from Lenin does not just stand as a bookish corollary to the lived events. It exists in two places — one outside the lived events, a dead adjunct, the other inside, a constitutive, though unwritten, assumption of the events.

Art (in this case, the technology of a bookish political line) inhabits history and politics. It is not only determined and constituted by history, but it is itself constitutive and determining. By focusing on a moment such as the citation from Lenin in **Dare to Fight**, this opposition can be deconstructed. But just as we should not cling to the opposition that would relegate the theoretical "bookish political line" to a marginal position in relation to the "real," spontaneous historical centre, neither should we rush headlong into the vanguardist assumption that "class political consciousness can be brought to the workers **only from without**." This inside/outside opposition, too, needs to be undone. Lenin would not have been able to conceive of a class consciousness capable of being brought to the workers from "without" if the Peterloo workers, for example, long before he wrote, had not risen up out of hunger against a ruling class. And those workers would not have been able to imagine the possibility of insurrection if people like Montesquieu, Rousseau, Godwin and Paine had not written bookish political tracts the century before. And so on, from theory to practice, outside to inside, art to politics, and vice versa, back through history.

If **Dare to Fight** allows a deconstruction of the opposition art/politics, it also puts in question the strict opposition between fiction and non-fiction in film. As each fictional film can be converted into a documentary of its own making, so also each documentary contains the structural possibility, because it consists of filmic images whose "real" "objective" referent is not immediately present, that it might be fiction. Simply by virtue of the inevitable fact that it detaches an image of history from the ongoing process of history and re-presents it, documentary is unavoidably tainted by fiction. The documentary image is distinguished from the fictional image in that the revelation of the mechanics of filming furthers the documentary effect, while it destroys the fictional. But, more importantly, the object of the fictional film's camera eye is contrived, whereas that of documentary is supposedly innocent in this regard. What we need to interrogate is the nature and constitution of that object, in this case, the events of May 1968 in France. Usually, such events are considered to be the "nature" which justifies the claim that documentary is a non-fictionalized, objective recording of reality. What a documentary like **Mai 68 par lui-même** shows, nonetheless, is that political, social, and, in the sense of the human-made world, physical reality is a construction. That is, the physical and social world presented in the film is one constructed by human imagination, institutionalized concepts, mythic representations and symbolic unconscious. The world which documentary records is not "natural," What **Mai 68** demonstrates is that even "natural" life is highly technological, conventional and institutional. Its content and form is determined by the technology of language and symbolic representation. The so-called natural world of **Mai 68** is as much a construct as any fictional object.

For example, the various actions of the different groups involved in the events — students, workers, police, union hacks, etc., — all fall back upon what can be called a "scenario," that is, a highly over-determined set of conscious and unconscious prescriptions, inscribed in language, modes of behaviour, forms of thought, role models, clothing, moral codes, etc., which give rise to and mark out the limits of what happened and what would have happened in May 1968. There was an unwritten rule that the students would not use arms. Likewise, the workers could not storm the National Assembly. Otherwise, the rule forbidding the police from mowing them all down would have been legitimately forgotten. The homes of the bourgeoisie were not to be broken into. The battle was to be limited to the streets and the factories, the prescribed scenes of revolution. The city was not to be set on fire. That would have been going too far. One of the most telling sequences in this respect shows a Paris businessman sitting in his quinziesme apartment, comfortably reading his evening paper, high above the boulevard where police and students are fighting it out.

Limits on action are determined by, among other things, role-giving concepts. The concept (in conjunction with the reality) "police" determines the behaviour of the men hired to carry out that epithet. No matter what class they belong to and no matter where their allegiance should rationally lie, they will, according to the behaviour prescribed by the concept "police," maintain order by beating up leftists and workers. A certain world of discourse opened up to students through books and teachers allows them to act under different concepts. The intertwining of both the ideal that is represented by "socialist revolution" and the concept of it accounts for part of their behaviour.

The role of "fictional" constructs in determining "real" history is most clear in terms of institutions and of language. The symbolic power invested in the institution of the President of the Republic allowed DeGaulle's words calling for a national election to have the counter-revolutionary effect they had. And it was the power invested in two, in historical terms, recently constructed institutions — the collaborationist Union and the reformist Party — which secured the counter-revolution by virtue of the "unnatural" but nevertheless effective and real power that they hold over workers.

The events of **Mai 68** then, even if they can, **à la limite**, be called a real referent, are themselves constituted as a play of representations. They are real, but not "natural" and uncontrived. History, but a history which is constructed. At the limit of non-fiction is another form of fiction, just as the goal or limit of fiction (in film) is a seemingly non-fictionalized event.

(This extrapolation from deconstruction to the constructed nature of the real world should remind one of Marx in **The German Ideology** when he describes nature as the product of previous human labour. Derrida, like Marx, writes in the Hegelian tradition, and although he would be distrustful of the anthropologism of the early Marx, his skeptical dialectics are more in line of Marxian philosophy than certain anti-Marxist deconstructionists would care to admit.)

My point, then, is that the presence of real history and objective fact which documentary supposedly renders is itself comprised of and constituted by representations. Fictional representation in film can be shown to be historical. This would be the gesture of reducing the fictional film to documentary. It is the Marxist, ideology-critical moment of the analysis. The deconstructive equivalent of this moment is to show that the supposedly natural referent of non-fictional film can be itself described as a kind of fiction, a complex set of representations — political, social, institutional, conceptual, physical, linguistic — whose reference one to the other in history is open-ended. Once the documentary camera freezes a moment of time/space on celluloid, it has already given up the right to claim the ability to "objectively represent reality". The dissemination of references generated by any one moment of history exceeds the frame of the film. The woman in **Back To**

Work at Wonder is not an objective fact, but a representative of a certain concept of woman dominant at that time. The real woman is inseparable from the cultural and social representations that she lives by. Her spontaneous reaction represents a whole history of social conditioning which produces her highly conventionalized behaviour. Her actions are real enough but they cannot be described as a nature free from contrivance or representation. Nothing of that network of mediating representations which determine the immediately given reality can be shown on the screen. The "truth" of that moment would be indefinitely deferred. One can imagine trying to track down and document the truth of, for example, the moment when the woman breaks down into tears and begins to swear at the union official. It would entail tracing her entire life, including all the conscious and unconscious influences on her mind, her genetic history, a history of the institutions which determine her dress, her hair style, her mode of speech, a history of the factory and of women in the workplace, a minute history of the habits of speech and behaviour in the society at large which reinforce her role-model, and so on to infinity. The "truth" of that moment is plural and interminable. The "truth" always lies elsewhere; which is to say as well: it is always (t)here. This is what Derrida means when he says that any individual text (**Back to Work**, for example) merges with the general textuality of the world. The documentary text merges in such a way with this general textuality that it cannot be privileged as an objective depiction of reality in its "truth."

That, because of the indefinite dissemination of reference from representation to representation, the concept of truth — as coherence, correspondance, adequation, revelation, or whatever, — no longer applies either to history or to art, does not mean that there are no truths. There are, but they are always limited, approximate, fragmentary, never total. A plenitude of truth which would saturate all representations and close off reference is impossible. The truth that the woman in **Back to Work** acts according to a model imposed on her by a male dominated world can be stated, but compared to a more detailed, more accurate, more truthful account of the micro-physics of that domination, it is a limited "truth" indeed.

Because the immediately given reality which the documentary camera records is comparable to the universe seen from earth, if militant documentary is to "truthfully" depict, and thereby criticize, reality, it must have recourse to the tools of the speculative imagination — strategic arrangement and critical commentary. It must construct narratives, the hallmark of fiction. **Dare to Fight**, for example, calls the CRS police "the forces of order" and the "servants of the bourgeoisie," and it fits them into a predictable pattern of class repression, a narrative of history. If the illusion of being a documentary is the goal of fiction, fiction can be said to be the only recourse of militant documentary if it is to be a "truthful" and "critical" depiction of the social world.



Towards a Renewal of Cuban Revolutionary Cinema:

A Discussion of Cuban Cinema Today

Zuzana M. Pick

On March 24, 1959, a few months after the triumph of the Revolution, Fidel Castro signed a bill creating the I.C.A.I.C. With funds provided by the Rebel Army and the Institute of Agrarian Reform, the first features and documentaries were financed. Influenced by Italian neo-realism, filmmakers were then searching for a new style which could appropriately express the enthusiasm of the revolution and the realities of this "new" country. It was mainly through the documentary unit of the I.C.A.I.C. that cinema in those early years participated in the progression towards socialism. As Alfredo **GUEVARA**, first director of the I.C.A.I.C., wrote 10 years later: "The Cuban Revolution, with its independent film industry, free of market requirements, has made it possible for the first time in Latin America, to promote the education of a public liberated from ideological imperialism and neo-colonialism (...)."*

In 1968, with Tomas **GUTIERREZ ALEA's MEMORIAS DEL SUBDESAROLLO**, Cuban filmmakers finally overcame a first period of uncertainty. Santiago **ALVAREZ**, the documentarist, Julio **GARCIA ESPINOSA**, Manuel Octavio **GOMEZ** and Humberto **SOLAS**, director of **LUCIA** (1969), among others, are the most active participants in the creation of this national cinema not only through their films, but also their writings published in **CINE CUBANO**. The theoretical concerns of the Cuban and in general of Latin American filmmakers have been essential in developing a political and revolutionary cinema. Parts of the following discussion reflect this concern.

* Alfredo Guevara "El cine cubano tiene 10 anos," **Hablemos de cine**, Lima (Perou), no, 54, May-June 1970.

In Ottawa in January of 1978, I interviewed the members of the Cuban delegation who visited four Canadian cities for the première of Cuban films brought to this country by Linda Beath, of New Cinema Enterprises, Jorge **FRAGA** is presently director of the production office at the I.C.A.I.C. (Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry). He has worked as a documentary filmmaker since 1969. His last film, before he became a "bureaucrat," as he says, is a long feature documentary **La ESCUELA EN EL CAMPO** (1972). Tomas **GUTIERREZ ALEA** is ben known in North America for his 1968 film **MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT**. He was a law student who went to Rome in the late forties to study film at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia where he worked with Zavattini and Lattuada. He co-directed **EL MEGANO** (1956), the first "revolutionary" Cuban film. He participated in the founding of the I.C.A.I.C. in 1959 and co-directed with Julio GARCIA ESPINOSA the first post-revolutionary film **ESTA TERRA ES NUESTRA** (1960). His long feature fiction films are **LAS DOCE SILLAS** (1962), **CUMBITE** (1964), **MUERTE DE UN BUROCRATA** (1966), **UNA PELEA CUBANA CONTRA LOS DEMONIOS** (1971), **LA ULTIMA CENA** (The Last Supper) (1977) and **LOS SOBRE-VIVIENTES** (1978), his most recent feature, which was shown in Havana in January 1978. Alina **SANCHEZ** is an actress and singer. Samuel **CLAXTON** is an actor in **LA ULTIMA CENA** and in Sergi Giral's **RANCHEADOR** (1977).

PICK:

Could we start this discussion by trying to define the position of Cuban cinema in the context of the political and revolutionary cinema of Latin America and the rest of the Third World?

ALEA:

To begin with, Cuban cinema came into being with the revolution, and is a cinema consistent with the revolution, fundamentally seeking to express our reality and its deepest significance. As to whether it has achieved this or not, I believe that it has succeeded in taking some steps in that direction. It's a cinema that has rapidly attracted the attention of other Third World countries including Latin America.

PICK:

It appears obvious to me that in the middle of the 60's a political cinema began to develop in Latin America, Cuban films were then "visible" in the rest of the continent. It thus seems to me that an important relationship exists, which goes beyond a pure stylistic influence, between the "birth" of a Latin American cinema and the development of film within a revolutionary political process in Cuba. Filmmakers in Latin American countries realized that there was a possibility to produce a different kind of cinema, one that was closer to the reality of underdevelopment and political struggle.

ALEA:

I don't know how far-reaching that influence has been; I think, however, that it has been quite important — I am aware of the reception some of our films have had and the interest they have roused in other film directors.

PICK:

Humberto Solas has made a film about Chile (**CANTATA DE CHILE**) and several films have been made in Cuba about Angola and Viet Nam. Is there a particular interest in Cuba in making films that do not necessarily deal with a national thematic?

ALEA:

That is an organic and consistent function in the much-emphasized internationalist spirit of the revolution. From the beginning we have made films related to subjects from other Latin American countries. I, myself, made one; it is one of my least-known films, but it had a truly interesting theme, that developed in Haiti in the 40's. It was based on a novel by Jules Romain, a Haitian writer; the novel is **Los Gobernadores del Rocío**, and the film is entitled **CUMBITE**. But since then there have been many films about Puerto Rico, documentaries have been made on Angola, Ethiopia, Panama, Peru and Chile. We have been interested in focusing on the problem of other countries in a pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation.

FRAGA:

I would like to remind you in relation to the previous problem of Cuban cinema and its links with the movement of the new Latin American cinema. Clearly, Cuban cinema has had an influence, but that is not the most interesting aspect of the process. You will remember that the documentary school of Santa Fé emerged in the middle 50's, headed by Fernando **Birri**. And parallel to this, in Cuba, during the same years and without knowing of that experience, Alfredo GUEVARA, Tomas GUTIERREZ ALEA and Julio GARCIA ESPINOSA began their cinematic activities, and without knowledge of each other, produced similar films. In other words, when we come to talk about the emergence of a new Latin American cinema, it must be seen not so much as centred around the influence of Cuban cinema, but rather as a process of cultural revolution initiated in the early 50's, in which Cuban cinema is a factor, a prominent factor because of the revolution. But the roots of the phenomenon are continental. This aspect has not yet been fully studied; it is linked to the political processes of the era. Neo-realism played an extraordinary part as a catalyst, not only for the Cubans, but also for **BIRRI**.

ALEA:

In fact, BIRRI studied with us in Rome.

FRAGA:

And for me, the documentary **TIRE DIE** (1), which is prior to **MEGANO** (2), is a classic in the emergence of the new Latin American cinema, in which even some of the aesthetic premises have been outlined.

PICK:

Yes, of a first type of documentary, for later the documentary changes and from being neo-realist, from being a documentary of description, becomes a documentary of analysis and a documentary of accusation.

ALEA:

But **TIRE DIE**, in its use of montage as an expressive element, is no longer neo-realist, is already elaborating an aesthetic that tends more towards generalization, that is not simply descriptive.

PICK:

Jorge Fraga, since we are now talking about documentary cinema, could you tell me about the present situation of this cinema in Cuba? During the first few years of the revolution the documentary was a very important instrument in the areas of political, technical and scientific education; and in the field of cultural renovation. Is it as important as it was in the first years? What position does the documentary presently occupy in Cuba? Has there been a change in the conception of the documentary since 1968 and the First National Congress of Culture? (3)

FRAGA:

Actually, there has been no substantial change. The documentary continues to play a very prominent part in our production, continues to be the formative school for directors. What can be observed in the last few years is a certain settling process, a certain stabilization of the procedure. These aspects concern us, because they imply repetition and standardization. Throughout 1978 we have carried on an internal discussion in order to become aware of this phenomenon and to look for new means, new themes, new procedures; still retaining, however, a sense of continuity, of the importance of the genre, from a political as well as an expressive point of view.

ALEA:

To say the same thing in another way — as Jorge Fraga says. we have stabilized methods, stabilized techniques, we have matured technically, there is a fluidity of expression in our film language, but that same stabilization implies a certain standardization of the product, which concerns us deeply, and this is the problem we are faced with. There are some extraordinary documentaries, but the great majority of them are simply ordinary, not to say mediocre.

PICK:

Is the repetition only on a thematic level or is it also on a stylistic level?

FRAGA:

I think it is most noticeable on the stylistic level: the use of the interview, the use of montage, although there is also a thematic constant. If we see these two things as linked, I think that what we need is this — First: to renovate the means of approaching certain themes that are never exhausted — that is, certain themes particularly susceptible to being explored. Second: we must also increase our thematic repertory.

PICK:

On the subject of themes- I realized that in four of the films shown throughout Canada, the action takes place in 1961, the year of literacy, the year of the invasion: **EL BRIGADISTA, GIRON, RIO NEGRO** and **EL HOMBRE DE MAISINICU** (4). All these films have come out in the last three years. To what can the interest in dealing with this particular period be attributed? Does it correspond to a present need to examine that particular period once more, more or less in the way that you, Tomas Alea, dealt with it in **MEMORIAS DEL SUB-DESARROLLO**? Or does it only serve to support the action?

ALEA:

That period is obviously a very rich one in the history of our country during the years following the triumph of the revolution, because it is the most critical period — during this period we even had an armed invasion; also the revolution took on an explicitly socialist nature and irreversible steps were taken in this direction. It is not surprising, then, that the period should draw the attention of directors, as there is a quantity of material there which has not yet been fully exploited, in the proper sense of the word, I mean which has not been expressed, which has not been sufficiently **realized**. It is not surprising that this should happen. Now then, the fact that four films about that theme have been brought together for such a small showing seems to me out of proportion, considering our production as a whole. That sample, therefore, does not give an idea of the full scope of our production, which, although it deals with the historical and with post-revolutionary problems, also has a great interest in, and emphasizes, pre-revolutionary history, the origins of our national culture. This pre-revolutionary period is very important because it is one of the periods which have been distorted the most by bourgeois historiography, and it is necessary that we understand it as a means of support in order to reaffirm our identity. I think, however, that the most interesting things are to be found in the films about contemporary problems, and I believe there were none of these in this series.

PICK:

Could you give me titles of films?

ALEA:

DE CIERTA MANERA, by Sara GOMEZ, a woman who died at the age of 32, immediately after having finished the film. It deals with the "poblacion," a group of people in La Habana, in a district which had been a slum before the revolution. After the revolution, they built new houses for themselves, since they had been living in cardboard houses like the "favelas." They made it a very pleasant district, and everyone participates in the work. In other words, after the revolution there are no more slums in the strict sense of the word, because everyone has access and the possibility to work. So everything would make one suppose that this had completely changed the mentality of those people, the "pobladores." Fifteen years after the change, however, the film shows that the transformation on the level of awareness has not taken place at the same rate as that of the economic base of the group and a corresponding level has not been reached. In other words they continue to live with many of the old slum values. The film analyzes this phenomenon in every penetrating and effective manner; it was a polemical film and provoked many discussions among the public; it was very successful, and also in terms of style, although it is a first film, and has a certain, let's say, untidy style, it is so genuine that it wins you over in spite of its formal defects. At the same time it plays on the documentary, with fiction, with actors and with characters, not actors, who play out their own roles in stories that they themselves make up. It was very interesting for us. I believe that it has also been very well received by other audiences and has had some success in the States. In Spain it faced a language problem: the language spoken, as it is the language of a marginal, or ex-marginal group, is a language which is incomprehensible in Spain, to Spanish critics. In Spain it should be shown with subtitles. It can't be dubbed because then it loses all its authenticity; it is necessary that it be understood, even with its idiomatic expressions. Other films have recently been made including, **UN HOMBRE, UNA MUJER, UNA CIUDAD**, and **USTEDES TIENEN LA PALABRA**, both by Manuel Octavio GOMEZ (6). At present a comedy on the new rural communities is being completed, and also another on women's problems; this one is absolutely contemporary in that the plot develops as it is being filmed. The latter film is by Pastor Vega. The working title is **RETRATO DE TERESA**. This series is only a first sampling of our production, I think, and I hope that Canadians can appreciate the full range of our film production.

PICK:

Which films are most effective, do you think, both politically and commercially if shown in the Canadian context? Without any doubt, the series shown now reflects a personal selection.

FRAGA:

This series (shown in Ottawa) has the drawback of being a "series," but as far as showing what the Revolution was, with respect to its informative value, I think that it is very good.

ALEA:

The four films you mentioned, by showing that most critical moment, are very revealing of what the Revolution in Cuba is all about.

PICK:

In respect to fictional films, that deal at present with contemporary problems, from a more general point of view (1). In 1968, for example, when **MEMORIAS DEL SUBDESARROLLO** came out, European and Latin American critics wrote that Cuban fictional cinema had reached a moment of maturity. What can we say about them now? (1) Could it be said that fictional cinema has now found a better direction?

ALEA:

I think that 1968 was an exceptional year; between '67 and '69 several films were produced- **JUAN QUIN QUIN, LUCIA, MEMORIAS DEL SUBDESARROLLO, LA PRIMERA CARGA DEL MACHETE**, an extraordinary film as an approach to our history; even **GIRON**, although it came out a few years later, recaptures all the spirit of that time. It was a time at which a series of ways, of filmmaking styles, a "Cuban" way of seeing film, were revealed, consolidated. Since 1968 it has had its ups and downs, but a number of films have been made. I think that now, from 1968 until now, what we learned in '68 has undergone a process of reaffirmation and purification, and I believe that our present films are more mature. However, it is also true that there has not been at any given moment, a concentration of certain significant films — this process now has been much slower.

PICK:

The integration of documentary and fiction is one of the characteristics of the films you have just mentioned. Tomas Alea, would you like to elaborate on this approach used by Cuban filmmakers?

ALEA:

The use of the documentary style within fiction is a characteristic feature of some of these films — **GIRON, LA PRIMERA CARGA DEL MACHETE**, which plays with this approach, in **MEMORIAS DEL SUBDESARROLLO** this has continued. In a way it now reaches a much more complex level, and the reason is that we find in the integration of the two styles a way of approaching reality. It has therefore become a very natural and organic fact of Cuban revolutionary cinema. One can play with various levels of approach to reality within the Same film, And the confrontation between those levels, the relationships between them, is very productive, and throws much light on the analysis one wishes to do. We think that this cannot be treated as a formula, nor as a style, but simply as an attitude. It is not a question of a realistic style based on formula, but of a realistic attitude towards film.

PICK:

In fact, this is one of the most important characteristics of Latin American and Cuban cinema; precisely this question of attitude: the attitude and the intention of the director are at times more important than the stylistic formulas, the thematic organization, and so on. Fidel's words can then be applied: "the filmmaker makes revolutionary films, if he himself is revolutionary."(7)

Let's go back to the question of the fusion of the documentary — could it be classified then as a characteristic, as a natural style and as a revolutionary style?

ALEA:

I would not call it a style, but rather a characteristic feature, a feature that is present because of an unprejudiced attitude towards the polarization of the two genres. For, definitively, not even documentary cinema is a reproduction of reality, except in a figurative sense, since you manipulate elements of reality and the work takes shape according to the conception you have of reality, the conception you obtain through the work. It is the same process as in fiction, except that the moment of the manipulation of the documentary is present in the filming, let's say, and in fictional cinema a little beforehand, from the time you conceive of the screenplay; but in both cases you are seizing upon various aspects of reality and combining them, playing with them...

FRAGA:

This is very important; I think the most accurate word for this is **procedure**. It is possible that from now on the fusion of fiction and documentary may disappear, because it has a transitory nature, but that doesn't mean anything, it has no particular significance. But we should look into the reasons for that fusion. As a historical fact, its evolution corresponds

to a specific moment. What is a question of principle, however, is that we have not made a rigid hierarchical organization from an axiological point of view, with respect to saying that fiction is superior to the documentary, or vice versa, that traditional under-estimation; we do not believe in that traditional opposition, but we believe rather that it is a very relative thing, that it is a historical thing and that it is a procedure available to the filmmaker in order to express a certain reality.

PICK:

—which logically depends on a particular conception of cinema. If, traditionally, documentary cinema is conceived as a cinema which is seen only occasionally, as an "educational," "informative" cinema, in Cuba it is shown commercially. The documentary as a derogatory term for a type of film that is never seen, no longer exists in Cuba.

FRAGA:

That perhaps has something to do with a Cuban tradition. In Cuba, journalism — and the greatest example is José MARTÍ — journalism, which could be considered as the literary equivalent of the documentary, has a past very closely linked with literature as art. Ninety-five percent of MARTÍ'S work is journalistic, is very much attached to circumstance and to the direct observation of reality, and nevertheless it has a highly artistic elaboration.

PICK:

So in Cuban art there has traditionally been a fusion of genres, in cinema as well as in literature.

FRAGA:

The wars of independence against Spain generated what is now called "campaign literature," which is the testimonial literature of the time, much of which has great aesthetic value, even that of writers who were not professionals, but just revolutionaries.

PICK:

The integration of history into the thematic pattern is one of the fundamental characteristics of Latin American cinema. In other words, in the first place, the film does not exist independently of its historical context; but rather, through cinema, there is a constant reexamination of history. Therefore, history does not exist as a static, stable past, as a notion of something that does not move, but rather of something that is constantly changing.

ALEA:

That I think is an important characteristic and I think of course that it is a consequence of the Marxist education of the Cuban and Latin American revolutionary.

SANCHEZ:

That tradition also exists in literary criticism. In Sergio GIRAL's film **EL OTRO FRANCISCO** (8), for example, a novel is analysed within its historical context, with a very rigorous critical approach. It is literary criticism from the point of view of the author and of a particular historical moment.

ALEA:

That film is very interesting as a phenomenon. It's tremendously interesting.

FRAGA:

The theme of the film is a novel, a novel on slavery published in 1941. A romantic novel.

The film does both versions, one the reflection in the novel of the era, and the other, how slavery really was. Actually, the film is cinematic literary criticism. It is fiction and also documentary.

SANCHEZ:

And the amount of social information contained in the film is extraordinary, in spite of the pretext of being a film about literature.

PICK:

Since we are talking about history, about historical representation — a more general question, a bit more theoretical. Jorge Fraga, perhaps you could answer, since it involves the function of political cinema and specifically of revolutionary cinema: first of all, in a revolutionary situation, as in Cuba, or in a pre-revolutionary situation, as in the case of Latin American countries: obviously cinema in these two situations is completely different, but in Latin America, as in Cuba, the history of political struggles has been part of the film's thematic. Do you think there is a difference in terms of the conception of history, and in terms of the function of that kind of film? In a situation like that of Cuba, the historical theme serves to examine past history, in order to correct the errors involved in the bourgeois conception of history, while in a pre-revolutionary situation the films dealing with history often do exactly the same thing, but as the revolutionary situation does not yet exist, they press towards the possibility that the situation could occur. I think that at this point I have answered my own question...

FRAGA:

It's exactly as you say. The difference between a revolutionary film and one from a pre-revolutionary period, and another where the revolution has already taken power, is one of degree. The role of the historical thought in one or the other is always fundamental. In fact one of the things we have tried to keep in mind is that in Cuba we live in two time periods, simultaneously: because we cannot see Cuba apart from the continent. There is a scale of historical time by which many of the things which for us are historical, are part of contemporary life for the rest of the continent. For us, Cuba is the liberated province of Latin America: we do not conceive of our country as separate from Latin America, from the rest of the continent. We have the same history, the same language, the same traditions, the same struggle; there is a cultural identity and an historical identity. The role of historical thought is the same, and I think this has to do with the fact of colonization and neo-colonization. The struggle against colonialism is inseparable from the struggle to recover history.

SANCHEZ:

In our cinema, one important thing is the generational information that emerges at times. Because for the new generations, regardless of whether or not they have access to history by other means, it is very important for cinema to fulfill an educational function, so that they always keep in mind our history, especially more recent history, the difficult years, the most difficult years of the revolutionary reality — they should always be fresh in our memory. As reality changes, the perspective those generations have on an earlier reality changes in a concrete way. Cinema also has a didactic role, an ideological role.

PICK:

Cuban revolutionary cinema is now twenty years old. In general terms, I would say that the most important characteristics of this cinema are: the search for the thematic, formal experimentation, and the creative thrust, constantly manifest in renovation and continuity. It could be said that those characteristics are closely linked to revolution.

FRAGA:

Yes, those are the necessary characteristics of a true revolutionary cinema, a revolutionary cinema without those characteristics is not consistent with revolution.

ALEA:

What should not be done — we are fairly well convinced of this — is to make films in order to express on the screen what the revolution does: cinema must be revolutionary in itself.

I think of this condition as an attitude, the result of which is a gamut of possibilities, the widest possible, for it is not a question of following along behind the revolution, repeating what the revolution has done, but rather of going along beside it, organically, as one more fact of the revolution. I think that this is clearly what we have done in these twenty years.

PICK:

What concerns me in general is that film, as a means of expression, usually falls a little behind the historical moment: considering that in Cuba cinema goes along with the revolution, would there ever be a possibility that it be in the vanguard of the revolution; that it foresee if you like, not what is going to happen, for that is not possible, but that it anticipates the historical moment? Do you think that is theoretically and practically possible?

ALEA:

I think that if one begins with that attitude, that way of seeing things, this must happen at the most successful moments. It cannot help but happen. What concerns me is that sufficient development be reached in order to express it, because that depends upon individuals. Now, the conditions for that to happen are present.

PICK:

It seems to me that a film like **CANTATA DE CHILE** is very different from many other recent Cuban films; the whole idea of the cantata, of the musical structure of the film, is in complete harmony with the visual form. This is not particularly new, but the use of music in this film permits the development of a symbolic and allegorical level, especially at the end of the film, where following the repression comes the battle and the final victory. This film is in the vanguard of cinema, I think, and is not content with just seeing the moment, expressing that moment, or analyzing that moment, instead it goes beyond history.

ALEA:

Yes, this is what happens in that film concretely, fundamentally, on the formal level, but on the other hand it is a film which reveals nothing new about the revolutionary struggle in Chile. In that sense it is historical: it doesn't add anything new. Now, I also believe that on another level — a film must be revealing and expressing the uncertainties and the ambiguities of political struggle. It must contribute to the understanding of a political process: this is the goal of revolutionary films. But this is not achieved just by aiming for it. I think **CANTATA DE CHILE** is successful in its formal aspect because of the mastery of Humberto SOLAS, who is really an exceptional filmmaker.

PICK:

Jorge Fraga and Tomas Alea, you both showed a great interest in film theory when you talked to my students. In what sense do you think the knowledge of theoretical work now being done here in North America and in Europe, especially in the fields of structuralism, semiotics and psychoanalysis, and the study of the relations between the filmic product and the spectator, can help you in the context of Cuban cinema? Is it purely intellectual interest, or is it a direct application aimed at renovation, at a change in revolutionary cinema?

ALEA:

Let me begin. For me, the point of departure of that concern or interest is the fact that Cuban film emerged, as we know, after the revolution, in a spontaneous fashion. The whole first phase — and we have had twenty years of revolution — all of the past years the development has for the most part been based on that spontaneity, and therefore on an empirical base. Of course as reality conditioned us, made us see things in a different way, made us see

reality in a different way, and therefore express ourselves in another way, it turned out to be interesting cinema, because in fact it was revealing a process. Many of our directors were educated in a purely accidental way, because there was a need to emphasize certain aspects of the revolution and there was nobody else who could do it. Some of them developed a strong conception of cinema very well; others not; which is also normal. But now our reality is not that convulsed reality of the first years of the revolution where everything that happens in the street is proof of what is going on — what is happening is deep within the reality. Now, in order to reach that depth, a greater capacity for analysis is necessary, a wider theoretical base, in order to penetrate it. It is no longer easy. Now we have reached the phase where emphasizing theoretical studies becomes important. It seems that this is a necessary step, linked to a historical necessity.

FRAGA:

All this theoretical research in structuralism and semiotics, as was said previously, is carried out within a theoretical framework that never seems to go beyond the limits of bourgeois thinking. I have the feeling that this phenomenon is not circumstantial, it is not an historical accident. Hegel's line of thought did not go beyond the limits of bourgeois thought either; nevertheless it was later to contribute to the development of revolutionary thought. I don't mean by this that Hegel is just an example. For without a doubt, in the field of art, revolutionary thought, at least the most visible and obviously revolutionary thought, still has not elaborated a system of concepts sufficiently structured, differentiated and subtle to restore the link between form and social and historical reality. What has been called vulgar sociology still survives, which is an excuse for talking about something else while one talks about a work of art. Semiotics seems to have the great disadvantage of appearing to kill mosquitoes with cannons. But, on the other hand, the analysis of the form of procedures, of what is tangible there, is an inevitable moment, is an indispensable moment for the analysis of art or culture. What we are trying to see in semiotics, in the existing tendencies, which are not all interesting — some are too abstract and have lost contact with reality — semiotics has put a concept into circulation, which, no matter what later development that concept may undergo, already makes up part of the concepts of art needed to analyze revolutionary film. It's the concept of "communication." Revolutionary artistic thought has tried to study the relationship between the work of art and reality, but has made a total abstraction of the relationship between the work of art and the spectator. Revolutionary film without an ideal of efficacy is inconceivable, we do not make a work of art for its own sake, nor for posterity, but for the people we have in front of us now, for those human beings who are there now. And this cultural, social, political, ideological, aesthetic link with the addressee gives rise to a whole theoretical problematic that needs to be clarified.

This is the moment to search out a more diversified theoretical base. To illustrate an idea, though perhaps it is too simple. Romanticism saw art in relation to the artist, classicism in relation to its rules of composition, realism in relation to social and historical reality; semiotics at least in part, wants to see art in relation to its addressee. A revolutionary conception would have to synthesize all of this in order to see the work of art as a process of conditioning, of the incitement of change, of stimulus, and as an agent of awareness development. This synthesis has still to be done. Now, this is a very general definition — the principal fact for me is that mentioned by Tomas Alea. We — not only Tomas and I but also other filmmakers — are feeling the need for an arsenal of better developed concepts, to be able to undertake the analysis of what we are doing, as a means of restoring the link between thought and action. What has happened in the field of political and economic thought — there is actually no formula for carrying out a revolution. You read Lenin's **State and Revolution** and you'll find four or five ideas that will help guide you in practice, in action. This is how theoretical thought about art works as well. So this role as a guide for action, guide for work, not only as a means of interpreting reality, must be developed in film theory as well. To take an existing experience, study it, and take from it what is of use to us, of interest for us. My personal impression is that there are things of great value and great interest. And the present evolution in bourgeois cinematographic thought is by no means accidental, by no means fortuitous, but rather a necessity which we can take advantage of.

NOTES

(1) **TIRE DIE** was made in 1959 by Fernando BIRRI, then director of the Film School of the Universidad del Litoral in Santa Fé (Argentina). Fernando SOLANAS and Octavio GETINO acknowledge the influence of BIRRI as the forerunner of political documentary in Latin America by using a short clip of **TIRE DIE** in **THE HOUR OF THE FURNACES** (1968).

(2) **EL MEGANO**, is the first "revolutionary" film made in Cuba in 1956, during the struggle for liberation. It is a short documentary on the conditions of coal miners. Made in clandestinity by Julio GARCIA ESPINOSA, Tomas GUTIERREZ ALEA, Alfredo GUEVARA and José MASSIP, this film has since then become an important landmark of Cuban cinema.

(3) Julio GARCIA ESPINOSA, Estrella PANTIN, Jorge FRAGA. "Towards a Definition of the Didactic Documentary: Paper presented to the First National Congress of Education and Culture." (pp.199-207) in Zuzana M. Pick (ed.) **Latin American Film Makers and the Third Cinema**. Carleton University, Ottawa, 1978.

(4) Directed by Octavio CORTAZAR (1977). Manuel HERRERA (1973), Manuel PEREZ (1977) and 1972, respectively.

(5) **DE CIERTA MANERA** (One Way or Another), 1974. Carlos GALIANO **"ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. The Revolution in action."** p. 33 JUMPCUT no. 19 (December 1978).

(6) **A MAN, A CITY, A WOMAN** (1978). **USTEDES TIENEN LA PALABRA** (1974).

(7) I was referring here to the opening sentence of Julio GARCIA ESPINOSA's text "In Search of the Lost Cinema." "The duty of a revolutionary cinema is to make the revolution within the cinema." p. 194 **Latin American Film Makers and the Third Cinema**. op.cit.

(8) **THE OTHER FRANCISCO** (1974) directed by Sergi GIL RAL.

Translated by Christine Shantz and Leandro Urbina
Ottawa, January 1979

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The Turn of the Subject

Stephen Heath

The notion of the **subject** has been important in much recent work on cinema and film, work that draws on and places itself within current debates in cultural and political theory — questions of the nature and role of ideological struggle, of the development of alternative practices of representation, and so on. It may be helpful, therefore, to try to provide something of a summary account of the implications of that notion today; and this all the more so in that there is a certain sliding in the terms of much discussion, a certain difficulty (sliding and difficulty are part of the necessity of the discussion, of the problems it engages). What follows is thus a series of clarifications (in intention at least), so many notations of the turn of the subject, the various issues at stake. These notations are given in a more or less straightforwardly didactic mode of exposition which reflects the original circumstances of their elaboration.¹

Evidently, the summary account is at the same time the argument of a critical position, coming from and going back across and perhaps moving beyond the writings which I and others near me have published over the last five or six years. In this connection, it should be stressed that the notations, set out as numbered 'theses,' have an assertive form of the kind 'x is or is not equivalent to y' that is shorthand for the idea of such a critical position and its argument, for, in full, in relation to current theoretical work and understanding, we need to clarify the discussion in the following way, this way being proposed in the interests of the attempt to produce an understanding of the concept of the subject useful in — possible as a point of practical extension in — historical materialism.

1 The **subject** is not equivalent to the **individual**.

The main source for the common assertion of the equivalence of subject and individual is Althusser's essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses'.² Though apparently working with a distinction between subject and individual, Althusser there effectively, constantly, makes subject and individual correspond in his description of ideology and its functioning, the subject as the unitary identity of the individual. In fact, the distinction initially retained — referred to as 'convenient' by Althusser — is so precisely for the benefit of the final correspondance Ideology interpellates concrete individuals as subjects, constitutes subjects on individuals who are the given supports of this process; at the same time, individuals always already are subjects, the individual in the individual/subject distinction is 'abstract,' a convenience in the description of the mechanism of ideology; the terms of the constitution of the subject in ideology — and ideology is this constitution of the subject — are those of the specular and the imaginary ('the structure of all ideology. . . is specular,' the individual as subject is called to an image of her or himself in that of an 'Absolute Subject' according to a structure of recognition/miscognition, ideology as the operation of this subject-imaginary); the subject is thus the individual always held in the identity — the identification — of interpellation: subject and individual correspond as that imaginary relation, the individual nowhere but in — only 'abstract' to — the recognition of ideology, entirely subject in its terms.

Against which, work exists that has been crucially concerned to develop a grasp of the subject, and of the individual as subject, in displacement of versions of the unity of subject with individual, of the individual-subject (whether that unity be referred to God or reason or. . . ideology): work on language, signification and the relations of individuals in their constitution in meaning as human beings, as 'individuals'. Althusser acknowledges Lacanian psychoanalysis, a major factor in this work, but retains only the mirror-phase and the specularity of the imaginary — the imaginary of the individual — subject in ideology, the subject as the category of that ideological imaginary. When Lacan stresses, however, that 'the subject is not the individual',³ his conception is not that of the subject as a term of the imaginary, supported by an abstract individual; the subject is here the insistence of a complex articulation of instances and, first and foremost, a symbolic production, never a unity, a simple imaginary, a simple effect of ideology. Althusser's individual/subject distinction-for-correspondance cannot be made to agree with the whole weight of Lacan's emphasis on the primacy of the signifier in the constitution of the subject such that there is no individual as a given to be converted into a subject in ideology ('all ideology has as its defining function the "constitution" of concrete individuals as subjects') but that rather, on the contrary, subjectivity is a fact of the 'concrete individual' (to keep Althusser's phrase) in its reality as being in language, which subjectivity in its constitutive division and process cannot be contained or subsumed in any unity (the imaginary is the fiction of such unity). This problematic of the subject is **radically** different to Althusser's, with, potentially, quite other political effects.

The gap between Althusser and Lacan over the notion of the subject and the confusion of the equation of the former with the latter can be quickly illustrated. Lacan's Other, the locus of the symbolic cause and division of the subject, of the decentering of the individual to itself in subjectivity, finds as its response in Althusser's argument the 'Other Subject', the centering of the unity of the individual as subject. Consider the following:

'Through the effect of speech, the subject realises itself more and more in the Other but is already now only pursuing there a half of itself. It will find its desire only ever more divided, pulverised, in the circumscribable metonymy of speech. The effect of language is always mixed up with this, which is the basis of analytic experience: that the subject is subject only from being subjection to the field of the Other, the subject proceeds from its synchronic subjection in the field of the Other.' (Lacan)⁴

The individual is interpellated as (free) subject in order that it freely submit to the commandments of the Subject, in order that it (freely) accept its subjection.' (Althusser)⁵

If one adds, first, that this subject with a capital S — absolute and universal subject — is precisely what Lacan designates as the Other with a capital O and, second, that, still according to Lacan, "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other," one can see how **unconscious, repression and ideological subjection**, while not the same, are materially linked in what may be called **the process of the signifier**.' (Michel Pêcheux)⁶

The Althusser passage bears a certain resemblance to the Lacan from which it is then quite distinct. Despite Pêcheux, who is commenting on this same Althusser passage, the Subject posed as a necessary term in the description of the realisation of individuals as subjects in ideology (the Other Subject is a pole in the specular relation in which the subject is produced in recognition; the subject is mirrored in the Subject) is precisely **not** the Other of Lacanian theory (which, far from being a pole in a relation of recognition, far from being a Subject, is the site of lack and desire and the whole circulation of the division of the subject: the material fact of the lack that is the place and the experience of the subject in language; with the unconscious as the 'discourse of the Other,' the structuring of desire from this constitutive division of the subject in the field of the Other, in the process of the signifier). Any consequent account of subjectivity and ideology will have as one of its first steps to refuse the individual-subject-imaginary-Subject reduction and confusion. Pêcheux's wanly symptomatic 'while not the same' the return of the difficulty of such a reduction, is a little indication of this.

Three sets of remarks at this point as a kind of appendix to this initial proposition, the subject is not equivalent to the individual; remarks which take up one or two issues arising from its discussion and that will be important again later.

First, the unitary identity of the individual as subject with the definition of the latter as purely and simply an ideological construction is the basis for the total sexual indifference of Althusser's account. The individual is a given, 'abstract' in the theory, 'concrete' in the world, and the individual-subject is a universal function without history or body, constituted by interpellation in ideology, an imaginary relation, exhausted in that. Althusser's stated purpose overall in the 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' essay is to 'go beyond' the 'descriptive' and 'metaphorical' base/superstructure model by developing a theory of the state and the means of its reproduction of the relations of production and of the labour-force in those relations; hence the description of 'state apparatuses', 'repressive' (the apparatus formed by government, army, police, etc.) and 'ideological' (the apparatuses of school, religion, family, etc.), the emphasis on the reality of ideology, embodied in apparatuses, having real effects and so on. At the same time, however, the account of ideology and subject can only serve to confirm the most static, and politically quietist version, of the base/superstructure model. In ideology the subject is in an imaginary relation; individuals are subjects through and only through, ideology, the imaginary. In total subjection to the Subject, in total subjection to a more or less infallible State power (the 'immense majority' of individuals come out as good subjects, 'go all by themselves' in the imaginary freedom provided for them, happy in their illusion; the majority of school teachers, for example, all but the 'rare' few, have not the slightest 'suspicion' of what they are really being made to do. . .). Outside of ideology (were this possible), the individual is as nothing, a given, a cog in the economic real. The real/imaginary couple, with the subject in the latter, tightens back the base/superstructure model in a totality that leaves no place for contradiction, action, transformation, no way of conceiving the actual fact of different struggles and actions today. Thus, exactly, Althusser's silence on questions of male/female difference and their political implications for a materialist account of subject and ideology. Thus, again, the impossibility, truly unthinkable, of a concept such as

patriarchy with its critical force of so many questions to the simple terms of a fixed base/superstructure, economic-real/ideology-imaginary description, the force of the development in a movement within which subjectivity and sexual difference were and are important, and terms of real and effective action and transformation.

it is true that patriarchy is not too well thought of these days, that it is regarded by some as theoretically quite hopeless, if not empty, as dangerously infected with transhistorical diseases. But then it is a peculiar criticism that, overtaken by a kind of 'theoretical purism' (and if anything is 'theoretical' it is 'theoretical purism'), on the basis of formal objections, is blind to the fact of a theoretical concept that is political, that it is political action that here commands in a directly theoretically reflected fashion, that what is at stake is **precisely** to produce **contradictions**, to transform, to advance critically, on the basis of a specific struggle and its specific and irreducible questions, historical materialism and its political theory, Marxism. To adapt Juliet Mitchell's well-known 'we should ask the feminist Questions, but try to come up with some Marxist answers,'⁷ the Marxist answers are not the covering up of the questions with the reiteration of an assured position (Marxism is not a dogma or a theoretical purity) but the development of a politically materialist assumption and articulation of those new transforming questions. Patriarchy is one such question today. And the concept of the subject, it might be added, is perhaps one again, related moreover to ways of considering patriarchy, sexual difference, and so on; these notes, indeed, are finally about the possibility of that concept as such another question.

Second, anticipating here in the light of previous discussion points to be taken up under the heading of the next proposition, it must be stressed that the constitution of the subject is not equivalent to that of the ego (equals the identifications of the subject). Althusser, holding the subject as a simple category of ideology and imaginary, considers specularly, interpellation, place, identity as constitutive of the subject, with the individual supporting this subjectivity. Hence his reduction of psychoanalysis to a reference source for an idea of the imaginary, leaving aside the actual concern of psychoanalysis with the history of the individual as 'individual' and the relations of subjectivity produced in and as that history. All distinction between subject and representation as 'subject' is elided: Althusser's subject is its representation, no more nor less, is entirely defined in that representation. Representation in this sense, however, is the term of an identification which does not comprise the constitution of the individual as subject, but a specification of the ego, a representing of the subject. A model for this distinction — and thus for the constitutive non-homogeneity, non-unity — of the individual as subject — is the interminably sliding division in the practice of language of the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enounced; the latter the representation of the subject in discourse that the insistence of the former as the mark of the signifying process of its production ruins, sets in movement again, in the very moment of the fixity posed, that representation.

Third, if we say that the subject is not equivalent to the individual, what is at stake in 'the individual'? Do we need — and if so in what sense — to retain an idea of the individual? Althusser needs the individual as support for ideological identification as subject, a kind of raw material on which ideology can work, but the appearance of 'the concrete individual' has a general inevitability beyond the particular form of his argument. It is as though in thinking of men and women as animal and human beings, 'natural' and 'cultural,' and so on, a term was required to name and refer to the singular, delimitable body and existence, the fact of beings. The problems are then many and almost overwhelmingly complex: from the recognition that the reality of the seemingly obvious term 'individual' is a fully historical and ideologically full version of human nature with a definite political value (hence Marx's critique of social arguments from the individual, the stress that what individuals are is dependent on the material conditions of their production) to awareness of the difficulty of the very notion of an individual being (evolved physical organs, genetic inheritance, environ-

mental relations of growth and development, etc.). More substantially too, there can be no question anyway of 'dividing off' an animal from a human reality: there is no unity of either and no separation out into two 'sides'. What one confronts is 'a precise **constituted materiality**'⁸ and there is no single opposition of the type individual/subject adequate to that constitution which then demands every time, a multiple analysis of instances, articulations, determinations that intersect, cut different ways, open into contradictions one with another. To say that the subject is not equivalent to the individual is one moment of a stress on such a multiplicity, of a necessary attempt to pull away from the reductionism of Althusser's essay so as to refine something of the difficulty of his given — 'abstract,' 'concrete' — individual. Lacanian theory is of crucial and critical help here, but is only that, is not the end of a materialist conception of subjectivity. What it offers is another account of individual and subject (the subject as implication in the process of the signifier) that is important in its posing of questions of the determinations of subjectivity in relations of language and meaning and of the construction of sexuality and difference there, while simultaneously limiting those questions in, exactly, the idea of 'the subject' it then proposes ('the law of the Other' as a purely absolute symbolic function, an eternal history of the subject is an essential phallic order⁹); with the individual left on the one side as pre-subject organism;¹⁰ on the other as an entity also existing in a society, about which social existence there is little or nothing to say.¹¹

It is as though it is necessary always to maintain the use of an individual/subject distinction in the interests of the development of a materialist description (demonstrating the specific productions of the terms of subjectivity, refusing the idealism of the subject-individual unity) and at the same time necessary always to displace and transform that distinction in its different versions in order to arrive at a properly historical materialism which takes human being in the very fact of its complex relations of existence, the real of its precise constituted materiality,

2 The I is not equivalent to the ego.

'I' is an instance of the subject in language: that is, at once of its division in the symbolic ('I' marks 'me' in the activity of language, in the process of the signifier, which 'I' can never fix, never stop as **mine**; 'I' itself is an element in that interminable movement, is a constant moment of exchange and circulation and non-identity: 'I' always joins 'me' to language anew, in difference) and then of its strategies of identification, a point of the insertion of identity (precisely 'I' serves to mark 'me', my(self-) possession). The ego is the function of the subject as identity, the reality of its identifications, the subject as **object**: 'the ego is an object — an object which fulfills a certain function that we call the imaginary function.'¹² The subject and the 'I' as moment of the division of the subject in language are excentric to the ego as function of the imaginary, 'absolutely impossible to distinguish from the imaginary captations which constitute it from top to toe, in its genesis as in its status.'¹³ This excentricity indeed is the very site of psychoanalytic intervention. Freud's 'Wo Es war, soll Ich werden,' translated in English as 'Where Id was, there shall ego be' and in French as *Le Moi doit déloger le ça*, 'The Ego must dislodge the id', is rendered by Lacan as 'There where it was, must I come': psychoanalysis is to be involved not in strengthening the ego (Lacan's conception of the ego is not that of an agency assuring adaptation to reality, which was one practically influential — notably American — extraction from Freud) but in making come the 'I' the subject in the reality of its division and desire, in the assumption of its history.

The non-equivalence of 'I' and ego can be focused again from the distinction briefly mentioned earlier between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enounced in the practice of language. I — individual, speaking being — pose myself as 'I' the subject of a proposition, a statement, some meaning, and find myself as 'I' in the division of 'I' in language, its production of the possibility of the place 'I' its excess to that product, the stated, fixed 'I.' 'I'

is split, never complete, a simple identity: 'I' am subject of statement **and of language**. Freud indeed, already, pointed to instances of language of the kind 'when I think what a healthy child I was' as examples to help understand the slipping of identity in dreams, the dispersion of the ego in the 'I' of the dream, an 'I' that is a process against any unity of the subject, a point of its constant division.

There exists in the practice of language a class of utterance that can be cited in turn as providing something of a linguistic scenario of the imaginary — confusion of 'I' and ego, the closing of the split between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enounced: namely **performatives** (the term introduced by the Oxford philosopher J.L. Austin¹⁴). When I say 'I promise', I pose myself as the subject of an action that is really mine in language: I accomplish the action (to say 'I promise' **is** to promise) and, exactly, that accomplishment is the achievement of a stable, unified 'I', full of the action that is mine — only I can promise — and the holding of language entirely to that of action of mine — the utterance is the action. Subject of enunciation and subject of enounced come together: 'I' has the identity of my action that this utterance is. Thus the supreme performative, though never to the best of my knowledge discussed in the classic literature, is 'I object' (in a debate, for instance). To say 'I object' is to object; I may or may not go on to give reasons for my objection but, no matter, I have objected. Precisely. I have indeed **objected**, brought myself to-gether as an identity, erect, **an 'I' object**. But then, this objectification or 'objection' — is cast in the imaginary, a fiction of the ego ('the ego is an object'); 'I' is always the mark of a subject in language, its cause there, and the split, the division, never closes, the act is also an act of **language**, the imaginary is a production **in relation to** the symbolic which always returns the process of the signifier and the implication of the subject there. Performatives are an example of an imaginary of the 'I' but this is to say that that 'I' is an object constructed, overrun by the process it offers to stop. It should be noted, moreover, that performative utterances are significantly supported by controlled social rituals and institutions (what Austin would disingenuously refer to as 'the appropriate circumstances'), often with the possibility of reference to quite specific contractual relations between legal 'subjects' (promising and 'breach of promise', for example). Ego and imaginary are not and cannot be produced and sustained in the sole realm of language.

Here, we can come back a little to Althusser's essay and a problem it raises. Althusser effectively conflates subject and ego: the subject is the identifications given in ideology, realised through the agency of the ideological state apparatuses and functioning through the mechanism of interpellation ('ideology interpellates individuals as subjects'). In illustration of interpellation, Althusser proposes one or two linguistic examples: 'Hey you!', shouted in the street and followed by the automatic turn in recognition that it is me thus addressed; a knock on the door, 'Who's there?' / 'It's me' (strictly speaking, this latter example is presented before the main discussion of interpellation begins; it is introduced nevertheless as an example of that 'ideological recognition' which is exactly the effect of interpellation). Interpellation, however, cannot constitute individuals as subjects in this way; indeed, the mechanism of interpellation presupposes subjects¹⁵, human beings in determinate and constitutive subject relations in the symbolic, in language (not just raw material — 'abstract', 'concrete' — 'individuals'). The linguistic examples are then striking illustrations not so much of interpellation as of the confusion engendered in these terms by Althusser's account of what is at stake in interpellation. Interpellation on the basis of those examples, that is, is not the constitution of the subject (no interpellation constitutes the subject) but an extreme confirmation of the ego or a fantasy of 'the subject'. 'Hey, you!', the voice 'in the back', and I turn, become the object of that address, place myself out there, held in the sudden 'presence' of myself (Freud insisted on the link between what is heard and the production of fantasies); 'Who's there?' / 'It's me,' me, ego, an object again, as though I were an evident identity in language, as though lang-

uage were mine, another scenario of the imaginary. And, moreover, as though to underline the subject/ego confusion and the reality of the examples proposed, the reply, 'It's me' is generally considered to be more or less 'silly': people do not answer 'me,' they are not so stupid, are not simply the illusion of themselves in the mirror of 'the Subject'; and if they do, it is, except in what are often joked about as moments of 'forgetfulness' or 'confusion' (in which, yes, one touches a real crystallisation of the imaginary), in specific circumstances (involving intimacy, friendship, expectation, and so on) that engage them with another as subjects in a complex play of relations within which certain imaginary effects are sustained and enacted as positions of me but which are not reducible to those effects, which effects in turn are not constitutive of subjectivity.

Interpellation is in no way the key either to subjectivity or to ideology, neither of which is to be taken as a simple instance of the imaginary: the ideological always involves relations of symbolic and imaginary and works with individuals as subjects in these terms; it does not, that is, constitute 'subjects,' convert individuals into unities of illusion that run along all by themselves, but is an activity engaging the process of subjectivity in determinations of meaning — a certain performance of the subject, certain representations — which nevertheless cannot exhaust that process, its material complexity, its contradictions.

Two brief sets of remarks, further to points arising from the above discussion.

First, the distinction of subject and ego in the definition of psychoanalytic practice, Lacan's 'must I come,' is effectively and importantly a radical position, the refusal of a role of social repair-work. This radical position, however, which has a well-rehearsed fluency (the merest reminder of American practice or the International Psychoanalytic Association will do the trick) is, finally, itself no less questionable. It has to be asked, that is, whether Lacanian analysis and theory, refusing the reinforcement of the ego, have not then in their turn contributed to a formidable reinforcement of 'the subject,' to the maintenance of a conception of subjectivity fixed in an idea of 'the subject' beginning and end of theory and practice, last instance. 'The assumption by the subject of its history' — but what are the terms of this subject and this history? the dangers that in the end psychoanalysis is the containment of subjectivity and history in the fabrication of a 'history' of 'the subject', its constant assumption of that?

Second, if today, in the mesh of symbolic and imaginary that is any instance of 'I,' 'I' pulls towards the confusion of an equivalence with the ego, towards the particular imaginary of the full subject, unity to itself in consciousness, that pull is not some linguistic universal but a directly historical construction. In this connection, it can be noted at once, for example, that the standardisation of the term 'subject' in the analysis of language and the classification of what we now call the 'personal pronouns' as such coincide. 'Subject' is a term of logic and philosophy that appears in grammars of English in the seventeenth century and is decisively accepted in the latter half of the eighteenth; the personal pronoun classification ('I,' 'thou,' 'he,' 'she') is again present in some seventeenth century grammars and then practically standard in its current form from about 1740. The stabilisation of the analysis of language in this way accompanies the move for a reform of language — the development of a regular English prose, insistence on English 'refined to a certain standard', given a permanent and rational form, as the medium of educated converse — in the terms and the interests of the bourgeoisie with its economic wealth, rising political power and increasing investment in science as technological advance. The Royal Society, founded in 1662, includes necessarily a committee 'for improving the English tongue.' Taken up in its conception as instrument of communication (Locke: 'the chief end of language... to communicate thoughts'), language is to be set-

tled (regularised, refined... Swift talks of 'fixing') for the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, which exchange is supported by, is between, uniform and equal subjects, the subject of the universalising bourgeois ideology (transformation of the class values of its social-economic exploitation into universal values and attributes of the natural being of 'man' now given rational expression in an achieved social organization); the subject instituted equally in political economy and legal theory (economy and law supposedly based on the rights of individual subjects freely to possess property, enter into contracts, buy and sell, and so on). Philosophy then has the task of accommodating this universal subject, clarifying the terms of its agency of knowledge (the subject as 'the knower wherever there is knowledge'), founding the 'I am' of self-possession in immediate consciousness ('the groundless ground of all other certainty'). In this respect, the Romanticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be recognized as an important but limited contradiction within the setting in place of this version of subjectivity: forcing the universal subject towards questions of the history of the individual, of the **individual history**, it returns a heterogeneous, non-given subjectivity, with progressive and radical political effects; reproducing the subject in the relation of the individual ('individual' as uniqueness, particularity), it constitutes a new unity, the subject-person-personality, which easily supports the universal subject of bourgeois order, which the latter demands indeed as the complement to its generality — the complement expressed in the received oppositions that are now so 'natural' to our thinking: 'objective'/'subjective', 'public'/'private', and so on.

3 No individual is one subject

The individual, precise constituted materiality, is not **one** but heterogeneous, a process, the term of a multiple and complex construction that is historical, unfinished, not given. To say this is to cut back across the proposition that 'the subject is not equivalent to the individual' in order to stress the difficulty of any notion of **the** subject. And it is to touch, moreover, on the difficulty of the very notion 'subject,' the function of which (as immediately preceding remarks will have suggested) has in the past been massively to found a site of unity. 'The subject' has been, that is, a basic component of idealist systems and the problem today is to exploit the material kernel of current theory and debate, to work towards an account of subjectivity that does not rest on any instance of 'the subject.'

In current theory and debate, it is psychoanalysis that offers the decisive emphasis on this heterogeneity of subject construction. The subject is the term not of a unity but of a division, the effects of which return against every fiction of the one-subject possessed of itself in consciousness (effects which psychoanalysis recognises in the concept of the unconscious: 'the unconscious is a concept forged on the trace of what operates to constitute a subject'¹⁶). The history of individual subjectivity is never over, never concluded (were this so, there would be no scope for psychoanalytic practice) but is interminably actual, ceaselessly going on in the present. I do not become a subject, 'I' am the term of a structuring production in process which defines 'my' instance of subject. Thus, the subject is neither the beginning nor the end of language: language produces the possibility of subjectivity in which 'I' come again and again in a movement and slipping and difference of identity; I am never finished with language which is always where 'I' 'am' and elsewhere at once to 'me.'

Critically, Lacanian theory thus says the impossibility of 'the subject' (every schema drawn, every reference to this or that topological figure, every knot tied and untied is an immense effort to represent that impossibility — the process, the division, the articulation of instances); finally, 'the subject' is there nonetheless as the unity that psychoanalysis gives itself as its closed area of operation and conception, its truth.

4 The subject is produced in language.

Once again, this is an emphasis crucially developed by Lacan (perhaps the major emphasis of his theory, certainly so far as a materialist account of subjectivity is concerned). Language is the 'cause' of the subject: 'Its cause is the signifier, without which there would be no subject in the real. This subject is what the signifier represents, and it could only represent something for another signifier:

to which the subject who listens is then reduced' — in short, the subject is an 'effect of language'.¹⁷

Lacan himself qualifies this emphasis as materialist: 'Only my theory of language as structure of the unconscious can be said to be implied by Marxism...'¹⁸ What is indeed materialist is the attention, against any given of the subject or any notion of the subject simply realised on the individual as the imaginary of ideology, to the effective construction of subject in language. The subject is not before or beyond but part of the process of signification, is in the slide of signifiers and their representation ('this subject is what the signifier represents'). Caused in language, the subject is thus not the cause of itself but, precisely, a term of division and non-identity, with the unconscious the fact of that constitution-division.

Yet what exactly is 'language' in these formulations concerning language as cause of the subject? Language has no such abstract existence. Lacan, in fact, has a further term, **the symbolic**, which functions in response to this problem of abstraction (and which Saves the psychoanalytic subject, the unity psychoanalysis ensures as its field of explanation and operation): language is the reality of the symbolic but the latter is, as it were, the term of the psychoanalytic description of the subject, of the order of the constitution of the subject in language, which order is the realisation of the universal of the subject (the phallus as 'the privileged signifier,' the final and eternal meaning of symbolic exchange). Nor does language have any existence in unity. The 'unity' of a language is a powerful political and ideological operation, the most striking example of which is the institution of 'French' in the conjunction of the development of a centralised State following the Revolution (again, the necessity is to render uniform 'the language of a great nation' in the interest of free communication, in the interest, that is, of the maintenance of the national hegemony of a particular clan). There is, in fact, something of this same unity in Lacan's language-symbolic and it is not without significance in this respect that, in extreme moments, its universality seems to be a nationalism of the French language — French-speakers have the symbolic (a good working unconscious, etc.), the English are precarious, very dubious, and the Japanese are beyond the pale (Miller: 'You have already excluded the Japanese from analysis?' Lacan: 'I have already excluded the Japanese, of course ...'¹⁹ Of course.).

The process of the subject in language is exactly that: a **process**, not a structure of **the** subject. If language is the site of the symbolic constitution of the subject in the movement of the signifier, then that constitution is always historical, multiple, heterogeneous, always specific and specifying subject effects. There is no existence of language other than in this radical complexity.

Something of what is at stake can be demonstrated with an example. Take, for instance, the sentence: **He who died on the cross to save us all never existed.**²⁰

Analysis concerned with an effectively materialist account of subjectivity would have to consider at least the following:

i) I cannot understand the sentence, 'what is being said,' unless I know English: the sentence is involved and involves me in the fact of the English language. But my relation to English is not a unified and uniform 'knowledge': I do not know 'the English language', there is no 'fact of the English language' in this sense, it is not some simply given coherence, a unity.²¹ My relation is a definite history of and in language: through family and school and work to the various distributors of language available to me — to **me**, not equally and similarly available to everyone, every one person, class, sex, race, and so on — in my society (libraries, press, radio, television, cinema, advertising, etc.); a relation that has indeed a crystallization in a specific institution of English, which institution is what I know and live, including in its support and production of class division and conflict.

ii) Repeating language, the sentence is inevitably implicated in particular discursive formations: language has no existence other than in acts of language that engage determinate forms of meaning, pose what I want to say, and the very terms of the 'I want to say', in and from those forms (no one has ever spoken 'language' or 'a language'). This emphasis must be clearly guarded against idealist misinterpretation: it maintains not that language determines, is the instance of determination, but that language exists and only exists as an area of determinations, as always condition-and-effect of social practice (a dialectical conception close to that of Marx and Engels in their stress on the simultaneity of linguistic and social activity. on language as 'practical consciousness'). The influential error of structuralism and post-structuralism, as of Lacanian psychoanalysis, is an ultimate **belief** in 'language', which becomes exactly the instance of determination, either as the system underlying all individual uses (but meaning was always more or less problematic in this account, left for the social taken as these individual uses and grasped as a contract for communication) or as the symbolic (with the constant meaning of the phallus, the phallus 'destined' for this role).

To recognise the existence of language as an area of determination is to recognise a complex historical reality in every linguistic act, and that complexity is multiple, diverse in its times and levels of operation. Thus, quite simply, the example-sentence is bound up in the ready-made — the preconstruction — of 'He who died on the cross to save us all', the history of that. Thus, more difficultly, it is bound up with its movement with and from that preconstruction in a way that is contradictory, open in its process to different effects. The sentence moves me — speaker or listener, writer or reader — to a position, the assertion of the non-existence of 'He who died...'; even if I wish to deny the assertion, I must take up its — that — position. At the same time, the act of the assertion itself is involved in a recognition of 'He who died...'. an acknowledgement of an effective existence; and this is correct, since 'He who died...' does have a discursive existence here which gathers up a whole history of Western religion, its forms today, a certain context of current argument, and so on. 'He who died...', that is, may or may not be judged to have existed but that judgement either way is the recognition of the existence of 'He who died...' as a discursive reality, which discursive reality is a historical mesh of past and present social practice and practices in which I am here placed and in relation to which 'I am' in the sentence (and that historical mesh is not then 'extra-discursive'; its reality includes the effectivity of discursive formations, language as condition-and-effect of social practice.

iii) The 'I' that I am in the sentence is difficult again. The coming together and apart of the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enounced is condensed in the 'us' of 'He who died on the cross to save us all.' 'Us' is an element of the enounced, of the topic with which the statement of the sentence is concerned, the universal saviour; simultaneously, 'us' involves me in the utterance of the sentence, the fact of its enunciation, points the address of the sentence from me, speaker, to you, or from someone to me, listener. The 'us' is a knot of join and division; there is no simple position for a 'me': my relation is an implication in the production of the enunciation as well as in the product of the enounced. This relation, furthermore, is always for me, through and through, a historical and social relation that engages the terms of my subjectivity in the actual conjuncture of this utterance in the manner that is not the simply determined closure of a position. I am in play in any position I have in the sentence: for example, as between its anti-Christian position and its statement of that position in an assertion of non-existence which leaves aside the question of the historical existence and significance of Jesus of Nazareth by its adoption of the 'He who died...' formula which, in turn, traps me in the address of an 'us' that, even as in the movement of the sentence I perhaps elude its religious embrace, catches me in the position of an ideology of a common humanity, the 'us' of 'my fellow men', that is strong in the specific institution of English I know... And this is to ignore the fact of the enunciation of the sentence **here**, that it is given as an example in a particular mode of argumentation with particular conventions of exposition, particular strategies of subjectivity, that it is derived from a particular kind of Althusserian account of ideology and subject-construction in which the reference to the Christian religion is

powerful and powerfully symptomatic (of the eternalisation of ideology in a necessary and invariable subject-form, 'the formal structure of all ideology being always the same'), that it is quoted in an argument working in most respects against that account and in a particular journal of 'film, communications, culture and politics'...

iv) 'The subject' is then this play: not one, but the subjectivity engaged in this movement, the multiple and contradictory possibilities of meaning. I am subject in the realisation of language in meaning, the turn of that process; which realisation is my existence, precise constituted materiality, in the historical mesh of effects and determinations, including their instance in language.

5 A signifying practice involves relations of subjectivity.

This proposition has a number of difficulties, points where it is important, as it were, at once, **for a start**, to avoid misunderstanding. The delimitation of 'a signifying practice' is one such difficulty inasmuch as it tends towards confirmation of a series of given and assumed unities of practice — literature, cinema, and so on. To treat cinema for example, as signifying practice must not be its assumption as 'cinema,' as some simply specific practice, unified in that specificity. Cinema in practice is beyond the definition of 'cinema' at any given moment (the definition supported and maintained by its social institution), existing in films that are always the fact of a precise social relation (which relation includes the effects of the particular social institution of cinema).

To stress that the given and assumed unity of a signifying practice does not exhaust — and in this sense, at least, is false to — the reality of its practice, which brings into play each time a definite historical and social engagement of meaning and subjectivity, is to stress a certain co-extensiveness of signifying practice with sociality, with social being. Social relations are always, simultaneously with their other determinations, a practice of signification; the social is a permanent implication in meaning (attempts to identify and situate areas of experience outside this implication merely serve to endorse its strength, the very problematic of meaning; as again, in opposite and complementary fashion, does the institution of recognised and powerfully controlled areas in which the production of meanings is allowed and regularised in its potential as for example, literature with its accompanying and defining criticism, variously instituted in school and journal, newspaper and university).

Semiology — the semiology programmed in Barthes' **Elements of Semiology** — took something of its stand here: social and signification are in equivalence; everything signifies, from kinship to furniture, semiology, the science of signs, studying the systems of the different practices (kinship, furniture etc.), is the necessary sociology, a socio-logics: 'the universal semanticisation of uses is fundamental: it reflects the fact that the real is always intelligible and should lead finally to the merging of sociology and socio-logics.'²² The problem then was exactly the notion of intelligibility. The conception of language that semiology adopted as model from Saussure was that of a system of communication between purely given subjects (Saussure's '**sujet parlant**'); thus Lévi-Strauss defines the aim as 'the interpretation of society as a whole in function of a theory of communication.'²³ In this perspective, ideology is simply hidden communication, an exchange of signs concealed by a process of naturalisation (analysed in terms of connotation), and the critical role of semiology, stressed above all by Barthes, is the demonstration of intelligibility, the bringing to light of signs and their systems. All of which is to leave aside the difficulties of the very idea of communication. To declare its function to be communication is to catch up language in a teleology that essentializes it in the terms of a particular ideological conception, supporting precisely a social and political representation of free subjects in relations of free and equal exchange, with a basis in mutual understanding, a common and unproblematic intelligibility of the real.

The difficulties of communication were felt within semiology as the question of the status of language, again above all in the work of Barthes. Where Saussure had seen

language as a model for semiology. one important system amongst other systems, Barthes saw semiology as everywhere brought up against the presence of language, language as inextricable foundation of the meanings of other systems. The consequences of this then go beyond those of a mere reversal of emphasis. If signifying practices are penetrated by and founded in language (and, with regard to cinema, no one makes or sees a film before or outside language, but always in relation to and with language), there are strictly speaking no signifying practices in the sense of semiology's distinct systems of signification. What one is dealing with as a 'signifying practice' or an 'institution' (remembering that meaning is not instituted from some one place) is in every instance a complex of relations, a heterogeneity (by which a signifying practice is crossed but which it may well be the point of its institution to attempt to contain). The locus of this heterogeneity, its pressure almost, is the subject, the subject not one but the realisation of the process engaged, the subjectivity in play.

It should be added, recalling earlier discussion, that if language is everywhere, it is not as simple system but. exactly, as practice. One encounters not 'language' or 'a language' but practices of language; language exists only as signifying practice — 'discursive formations' are signifying practices of language — and itself offers no unity to which subject and signification can be returned.

The starting proposition, 'a signifying practice involves relations of subjectivity,' might be rewritten, and the argument advanced, as follows: signifying practices are subject productions. What is then at stake is the need to maintain the dialectical ambiguity of 'subject productions' (ambiguity may not be, as Benjamin suggested, the visible image of dialectics, but it can help at certain points of theoretical and conceptual difficulty to keep two necessary emphases in movement together): productions of the subject, productions by the subject; or better, avoiding 'the subject', subject production as a give-and-take of relations between, say, spectator and film, between precise constituted materiality and particular work of signification ('the subject', the subjectivity in question, being these relations in meanings).

The impasse of the failure to maintain this give-and-take of relations is striking and politically serious in its consequences: either the subject determined or produced, the one subject given, in passive subjection, of the subject freely creating and according meanings, pulling this way or that at active will; in the first case, no hope, it all works perfectly, in the second, lots of hope but not much to be done, since it goes the way you want already (all determinations are elsewhere, in the economic 'real').

In both cases, variants of subject-individual correspondance are operative. The second recovers and reconstitutes 'the subject' onto the individual who then confronts signifying practice from the distance of this unity, as 'given subject.' The first knows no existence of the individual other than as the unity of 'the subject' produced in ideology. Thus Althusser is led, as the very assumption of the terms of his argument in the 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' essay, to the notion that individuals-as-subjects '**marchent tout seuls,**' go all by themselves, like so many automata, 'in the immense majority of cases', with the exception of a few difficult subjects, a few '**mauvais sujets**', duly brought back into line by the repressive powers of the State; hence indeed the necessity of 'a scientific discourse (**without subject**) on ideology'. Individual-subjects are by definition — that of ideology as characterised by Althusser-subjected, locked in illusion; the immense majority' — the popular masses — have had it, pinned 'in the back' like so many immobilised butterflies, with only theory, subject-less scientific discourse, and the political directives of the Party able to save them, put them right (they will have at long last the vision of the 'process without Subject(s) or End(s) of history...').

Thinking quickly of cinema and film in this context of subject production, it is not a question of 'a' or 'the' subject 'in' or 'outside' a film; it is not a question of conceiving film on the model of interpellation, which, at the same time, is not to say that a film will not adopt and construct strong forms of interpellation; it is a question of insisting

on the the experience of a film, its signifying practice, as so many relations of subjectivity, relations which are not the simple 'property' of the film nor that of the individual-spectator but which are those of a subject production in which film and individual have their specific historical and social reality as such.

6 The ideological is a political function of representation.

If we are to understand what is at stake in the conception of the ideological and of the possibility and necessity of ideological struggle, we need to pose not an eternally defining instance of 'the subject' but the question, each time, of the representation of meanings (which representation of meanings may well include, at specific times, and this is indeed part of our present history, definitions of 'the subject,' a stable identity of exchange).

Recent critical work on ideology has been concerned to reject the concept of representation and hence what is characterised as 'the classic Marxist problem of ideology'?²⁴ Representation, it is argued, is inevitably implicated in an idea of correspondance, the link between representation and represented where the latter is the determination of the former which does or does not correspond (the representation represents or misrepresents the represented). To hold to the concept of representation is thus to hold at some stage to a reality given outside of its production in representation and so available to be known truly or falsely by consciousness ('the classic Marxist problem of ideology'). The moment any determining action by the means of representation in constituting what is represented is allowed (for instance, the stress in many of the preceding remarks here on the constitutive engagement of subjectivity in language, in relations of meaning, against any notion of a simple grasp of consciousness to the world, against any phenomenology of 'the real'). then the forms of correspondence/non-correspondence are shattered and with them the very concept of representation — 'the products of signifying practices do not "represent" anything outside them.'

Such a critique, however, is inadequate in its account of representation, failing — and this despite the suggestion that these are its grounds — to bring into that account the terms of subject production in signifying practice. Representation is not a correspondance (except for philosophical argument) but, in practice, a certain return of the subject: divided-constituted in language, the individual in subjectivity crosses and is in place in meanings, is a movement of relations of meaning, with representation first and foremost this process. The question of representation, that is, is not initially that of the represented (which is indeed a specific action of representation and hence **not** a term from which the question should be posed) but that of the subjective effect produced, the point of the action of representation, of its represented. Misrepresentation, and struggle against ideologies on that basis, need not be simply abandoned (quite the contrary). With regard to sexual difference, for example, misrepresentation is defined in the analysis of existing relations of subjectivity in meaning and of their effects from a political perspective of the demonstration of oppression; misrepresentation then being not the position of an essence but the opposition of a different practice, based on the need to transform existing relations (not to recover some precedent). Or again, cinema can and should be examined in its institution of relations and effects, its reply to the subject production of meanings, its representing of available terms — of grounds — of subjectivity.

These formulations are themselves inadequate if not filled out with a number of clarifications of their emphasis.

A signifier represents a subject for another signifier; a sign represents something for someone (these definitions are made by Lacan²⁵). Signification, the relations of meanings, is the process together of these two 'sides' and it is this complex production that is at stake in representation, that is that certain return of the subject mentioned above. Representation, in other words, names the process of the engagement of subjectivity in meaning, the poles of which are the signifier and the subject but which is

always a complex, specifically historical and social production than can know those poles only as theoretical abstraction or/and ideological construction (thus the problem of psychoanalysis with its assumption and confirmation of 'signifier' and 'subject'). The ideological is not in or equivalent to representation — which, precisely, is this complex process of subjectivity — but is the constant political institution of the productive terms of representation in a generalised system of positions of exchange. The stresses of 'constant political institution' can be underlined: institution — language, meaning, signifying practice, representation outrun in their production any closure of an ideological position which is thus not a kind of automatic result but an intervention, an appropriation, in meanings which is the reality of the given (financed, legislated, etc.) 'ideological apparatuses' (it being understood that these apparatuses cannot simply subject, engaging as they do a process of subjectivity which is not simply 'their' construction, and that the intervention and appropriation in meaning is not a conspiracy or the translation of a will but the effect of the actual and multiple determinations of social practice in a particular social formation); constant — there is no end to the process of the engagement of subjectivity in meaning, never a one position, the subject achieved once and for all, and subjectivity is indeed the liberty of that process which must thus be ceaselessly caught up, entertained (hence the ideological importance of representing machines — cinema, television and so on — and the more or less difficult problems of control they pose in our societies); political — the ideological is not representation but its political function, the modes of institution do not arise spontaneously from representation but from the political reality of the social practice (which is not to say that the ideological is the 'expression' of a subject — class but is to say that it may and will in specific social formations contain determinate effects of the realisation of class struggle).

Adapting Lenin, it seems right to say, as these notes run out, that the reality with which they deal is always richer in content, more varied, more multiform, more lively and ingenious than is imagined by even the best theories.²⁶ It seems right not because the point is then to lay down the arms of the development of analysis and theory (Lenin's own example is sufficient indication of that) but because the need is constantly to push and rework analysis and theory into the richness and variety of experience, in order to understand and use and extend its transforming possibilities. These notes have been an attempt at something of a pushing and reworking of the notion of 'the subject', its critique in the interests of a materialist account of subjectivity. Of course, this attempt does not go very far; but the distance within which it stays, its difficulties and contradictions are part of the current theoretical and political stakes of subjectivity as a significant, indeed fundamental site of struggle.

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As coda, a brief return to cinema, present here and there in preceding remarks. It is apparent now that the major error of the production of the question of cinema and representation in conjuncture with its appeal to the explanatory powers of psychoanalysis has been the location of a complete subject of cinema, via the description of the latter exclusively as single apparatus, instance, or whatever. Primary identification, voyeurism, and so on have entered as static and absolute determinants, without history; in every case, there is primary identification, the all-perceiving subject, the phallic look... The point is not to deny these descriptions but to insist on their historicisation (and thus, in fact, on the historicisation of the concept of 'subject' in the context of the terms of the engagement of subjectivity as stressed in these notes). We have to learn to understand and analyse the redistribution in specific conjunctures of the operation of the cinema, the redeployment of limits — for example, the recasting of the 'all-perceiving subject' from the reality of a film practice in its material complexity, its possibility of contradictions. Redeployment **and definition** of limits, since to grasp the former is to understand also that cinema is not a set of essences more or less actualised in its history (and generally more, always there). but a practice, signifying practice, only in the historical and social relations and institution of which are such 'essences' **produced**, and cinema held to them, to a 'the subject'. ◇ ◇ ◇

FOOTNOTES

1. The material for this article was prepared as a contribution to a seminar taught with Teresa de Lauretis and Annette Kuhn for the Center for Twentieth Century Studies of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee,
2. Louis Althusser, 'Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'Etat,' **La Pensée** no.151 (June 1970); reprinted in *Positions* (Editions Sociales: Paris, 1976); translation in **Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays** (New Left Books: London, 1971).
3. Jacques Lacan, **Le Séminaire livre II** (Seuil: Paris, 1978), pp.11,17.
4. Jacques Lacan, **Le Séminaire livre XI** (Seuil: Paris, 1973), p.172; translation **The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis** (Hogarth: London, 1977), p.188 (note that, as often elsewhere, the translation is badly in error in its rendering of this passage).
5. L. Althusser, art. cit., **Positions**, p.121; **Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays**, p.169.
6. Michel Pêcheux, **Les Vérités de La Palice** (Maspero: Paris, 1975), p.123.
7. Juliet Mitchell, **Women's Estate** (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1971), p.99.
8. Raymond Williams, 'Problems of materialism', **New Left Review** no.109 (May-June 1978), p.7. William's **Keywords** (Fontana: London, 1976) contains useful details as to the histories of the words 'individual' and 'subject' (pp.133-6, 259-64).
9. The phallus has 'the privilege of being universally the index of the lack' produced from the subject's relation to the signifier: Serge Leclaire, **Psychanalyser** (Seuil: Paris, 1968), p.181. Sociologically (so to speak), and 'with no paternalism towards women', it then only remains to acknowledge that 'all community is phallic', by definition, irredeemably; Jacques-Alain Miller, 'Pseudo-Barthes', in **Prétexte: Roland Barthes** (union Générale d'Éditions: Paris, 1978), p.208.
10. 'Once caught in the net of language, the relation of the organism to its environment is transfigured into that of the subject which speaks to what is called its being. . .' Moustapha Safouan, **Études sur l'Oedipe** (Seuil: Paris, 1974), p.117. The entry into language submits the needs of the organism to the formulation of demands which in the fact of their formulation, their fixing of the process of the signifier, leave over the effect of that process in the subject, the desire instituted from the lack in the field of the Other.
11. As witness the fiasco of Lacan's encounter with the Vincennes students in 1969: no way of understanding Marx until the discourse of the hysteric and the advent of psychoanalysis, society is dominated by the practice of language, revolutionary aspiration ends in the discourse of the master, psychoanalysis at least is progressive in that it will tell you what you are really rebelling against; 'L'impromptu de Vincennes', **Magazine littéraire** no.121 (February 1977), pp.21-24. The issue is not that Lacan was not locally acute at several points in the encounter but that there is no possible movement beyond the assumed positions of the theory in its psychoanalytic closure, the site alone of knowledge and explanation. Or witness again the almost total absence of any historical reference or consideration of the historical in Lacan's massive work; history is simply interior to the elaboration of the theory of the subject (Miller, in his article previously cited, gives a striking illustration of this when he suddenly declares something to be 'perfectly visible in history, see the **Nicomachean Ethics**' — history is a reference to Aristotle, a bibliography to psychoanalysis).

12. J.Lacan, **Le Séminaire livre II**, p.60.
13. J. Lacan, **Ecrits** (Seuil:Paris,1966),p.374.
14. J.L. Austin, **How to Do Things with Words** (O.U.P.: Oxford, 1962; second revised edition, 1975).
15. The difficulties of this have been demonstrated at length by Paul Q. Hirst, 'Althusser and the Theory of Ideology', in **Economy and Society** vol.5, no.4 (1976); reprinted in P.Hirst, **On Law and Ideology** (Macmillan: London, 1979).
16. Lacan, **Ecrits**, p.830.
17. Ibid., p.835.
18. J. Lacan, 'Sur l'objet de la psychanalyse', in **Cahiers pour l'analyse** no.3 (May-June 1966), p.10.
19. Discussion in **Ornicar? Analytica** no.4 (1977), p.17.
20. This sentence is not taken 'at random' (later remarks will pick up this point); it is an English version of a sentence considered by M.Pêcheux in the course of his attempt to suggest the bases for a theory of discourse within the perspective of Althusser's 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' essay (Pêcheux, op.cit., pp.88-89). I adopt elements from Pêcheux's discussion after my own fashion in an analysis that is intended to grasp a real complexity beyond the subject-imaginary-ideology limitation. (For a general situating of Pêcheux's work, see 'Notes on suture,' **Screen** vol.18 no. 4 (Winter 1977/78), pp.69-74).
21. The purpose and conception of the most influential linguistic theory of recent times have been defined in terms that apparently go quite contrary to such an emphasis: Chomskyan linguistics is devoted, that is, precisely to the description of **competence** as 'the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language'. Without being able here to enter into substantive discussion, one or two points can be noted. The linguistics developed by Chomsky is indeed a problem of knowledge; it seeks to characterise the system of linguistic knowledge that has been attained and is internally represented by a person knowing some language (a further question is that of accounting for the growth and attainment of that knowledge). The procedure of this linguistics is thus the characterisation of 'potential systems of knowledge', while its end is an innate linguistic theory, 'universal grammar,' 'what we may suppose to be biologically given, a genetically determined property of the species', this innate schema defining 'the "essence" of human language' (Noam Chomsky, **Language and Mind** (Harcourt, Brace & World: New York, 1968), P. 76). Between universal grammar and **performance**, 'the actual use of language in concrete situations', competence is projected as the knowledge internalised by the speaker of a language, a realisation of the 'essence' as a particular language. Chomsky himself, however, is scathing on such notions as 'a Language': 'So what is a language? There is a standard joke that a language is a dialect with an army and a navy. These are not linguistic concepts.' (N. Chomsky, **Language and Responsibility** (Harvester: Hassocks, 1979). P. 190). No serious study can have 'language' and 'a language', as object inasmuch as these notions have no principled reality; serious study can only be based on 'the idealization to systems in idealized homogeneous communities' (ibid., P. 191). The critique of 'language' and 'a language', that is, serves to support the idealization of competence: on the one hand, individuals and a variability of the system or systems 'in the heads' of these individual speakers in a 'language community' (itself to be analysed as a 'question of power' alone); on the other, a competence that poses and presupposes a general subject-form. 'Real speakers' are 'individuals' who can go in all sorts of ways but they are joined at the same time in an ideal knowledge (a grammar)

which is available in the linguistic intuitions of individuals and which is the only serious linguistic reality of 'language'. This subjectivity of the individual in language is derived from a universal subject-form — the knowledge of universal grammar — that is its very condition.

22. Roland Barthes, 'Eléments de sémiologie,' in **Communications** no.4 (1964) and translation, **Elements of Semiology** (Cape: London, 1967), II.1.4; c.f. Roland Barthes, 'A propos de deux ouvrages récents de Cl. Lévi-Strauss: Sociologie et socio-logique,' in **Informations sur les Sciences Sociales** vol. 1 no. 4 (1962) pp. 114-22.

23. Cl. Lévi-Strauss, **Anthropologie structurale** (Plon: Paris, 1968). P. 95.

24. See especially Hirst, op.cit., section E "'Representation"; **On Law and Ideology**, pp. 68-73.

25. See e.g. **Le Séminaire livre XI**, p. 188; **The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis**, p.207.

26. Cf. 'History as a whole, and the history of revolutions in particular, is always richer in content, more varied, more multiform, more lively and ingenious than is imagined by even the best parties, the most conscious vanguards of the most advanced classes.' V.I. Lenin, "'Left-Wing" Communism, An Infantile Disorder', **Selected Works** vol.3 (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1967), P. 401.



Zukor Buys Protection:

The Paramount Stock Purchase of 1929.

Jonathan Buchsbaum

INTRODUCTION

Now that film study, and in particular film history, has entered academia, increasing numbers of writers are rejecting the traditional anecdotal histories and are attempting to investigate previously unused primary sources. D. Gomery argues that court records offer an untapped source of data that supply far more accurate material than the notoriously imaginative contemporary press figures. Barry Salt exposed the dearth of evidence used normally in claims about codes in his empirical work with samples running into the hundreds of films. In addition, writers like Comolli and Burch have challenged teleological readings of the history of technology by introducing political questions about power interests served by the specific options chosen in the commercial exploitation of the technology. One topic that has received scant attention in the histories has been the relationship of film and television in the early years of television. This paper attempts to specify some of the determinations operating between the two at a crucial point in the history of film.

Certainly the diffusion of television in the 50's was a major factor in the decline of the studio system. Yet film history has little to say about how the studio heads saw the spectre of television before the fact, what options they foresaw, their fears and hopes. Television might have developed differently had the studios been more aggressive in supporting television and acquiring controlling patents. We know that as the studios grew into the efficient film factories through the 20's, control began to filter from cottage industry furriers to New York financial capital. Theatre building and land acquisition contributed to this ceding of power, but the massive investment required by the conversion to sound certainly outstripped the funds available from receipts. In those very years, television loomed on the horizon as a potential challenge to the monopoly of film as the mass visual medium.

In addition, the industry had to confront the corporate behemoths of AT&T and the growing RCA which held the controlling sound patents. The process of sound involved converting a sound signal into a light signal, a technique analogous to radio broadcasting and more pertinently television. Just as the myriad visions of

film in its first ten to fifteen years reflect the indeterminacy of its future institutionalization and suggests the role of economic factors in subsequently shaping the industry and the product, so also the independence of broadcasting and film determined the exclusion of the film industry from the initial development of television.

Television required large research and development costs borne primarily by the burgeoning radio industry and AT&T. Film technology developed out of the disparate researches of mechanical tinkerers. It was natural that the broadcast industry would model television marketing on the huge growth history of radio in the 20's. But there was discussion or at least the alternative possibility of broadcasting films in theatres which would cut distribution costs drastically and make entry even more difficult for independent producers. The film industry's inability/failure to invest in this path ensured marketing for the home. While home marketing may have been inevitable in terms of profit opportunities, the chronology was probably accelerated by the tunnel vision of the studios.

However, in sketching the historical moment of the late 20's/early 30's, when serious discussion of television as a practicable and marketable product first began, and AT&T and RCA were competing in the transition to sound, the film industry probably had little chance of asserting itself in the development of television because of its relative capital drought and its historical indifference to technological innovation. That is, electronics industries were powerful and growing at the time, and the film industry may have been unable to affect the course of television, given its reliance on essentially 19th century technology.

Only Zukor probably perceived the real long range dangers of broadcasting, and tried to build a bridge between the two industries. But rather than attributing to shortsightedness the failure of the other studio heads to take a similar interest, the material presented here suggests that economic and technological factors precluded their entry, although it is probably also true that their roots in consolidating a vertical monopoly hindered their adaptation in a new horizontal media environment.

In June 1929, Paramount-Publix purchased a half interest in the Columbia Broadcasting System. At the time, Paramount was rapidly expanding its theatre acquisitions and CBS was struggling to compete with its powerful rival, the National Broadcasting Company, which was owned by the Radio Corporation of America. Broadcasting was also booming in the late 20's, and speculation was rife that television was 'around the corner.' In retrospect, it might appear that Paramount anticipated the potential threat from a new visual competitor and acted to protect itself when the 'corner' was turned and television became a commercial reality. However, television was not to emerge from the laboratory for a full ten years, and by then Paramount's financial interest in CBS had long since expired. Was the investment, then, merely a gross miscalculation of television's germination period? And why didn't any of the other studios enter into similar agreements with broadcasting interests? Commentators offer different explanations for the agreement. Although neither Zukor nor Paley have provided publicly any retrospective discussions of the deal, the rationale behind it might clarify the nature of the motion picture industry's response to radio and television in the first wave of excitement attending television's imminent arrival. As well, the motion picture industry served as a battleground for renewed hostilities between the two principal combatants in the communication industry, AT&T and RCA. The Paramount connection with CBS might turn out to be one feint in the elaborate jockeying between those corporate giants to extend their respective spheres of activity.

The arrangement between Paramount and CBS was announced at a Paramount stockholders' meeting in St. Louis. Paley spoke at the gathering, saying only that Paramount had acquired a half interest in CBS. The specific terms of the deal

were not revealed at the time, but Paramount actually traded 58,823 of its shares at 55, then worth \$3.8 million, for 50,000 shares, half the total, of CBS. Furthermore, as was Paramount's common practice in its theatre buying campaign, it guaranteed CBS to repurchase its shares at 85 by March 1, 1932, provided that CBS showed a profit of \$2 million by that date. The stock transfer enabled Paramount to move into the broadcasting industry without raising any cash, and CBS now had collateral with which to attract credit. As CBS made \$3 million by the specified date, Paley exercised his option to require Paramount's repurchase. However, by 1932, Paramount's stock had dropped to 9. Since Paley wanted his CBS stock back, he offered to buy the CBS stock (which Paramount held) for \$5.2 million and thereby supply Paramount with the requisite \$4 million to buy back its own stock. That is, Paley effectively paid Paramount \$1.2 million to buy back its own stock.¹

In Paley's speech to the stockholders, he emphasized the mutual benefit to accrue to both companies following the transaction. Since both organizations were in the entertainment field, it was logical that they should pool their respective talents.

Spread like a monster blanket over the country in a great assembly of motion picture houses, exhibiting Paramount products and those distributed by them. Over the same area a penetrating network of powerful radio stations has been engaging the attention of that same public and catering to its amusement needs in the home. There were great Possibilities inherent if not actual that these two dominating forces in entertainment might find themselves in competition if not in conflict. But now they have been welded to-gether and in a master combination of direction, facilities, talent and resources and to the ultimate end that the public is to be better served and new peaks scaled in the arts of entertainment.²

Paley had ample cause for such ebullience. CBS had lost \$172,000 in 1928 and their advertising revenues as of May, 1929 were \$569. Paley went on to speak of television, asserting that 'it is sure to come', but declining to predict when. Also, he admitted that he did not know what form television would take, whether in the home solely, or in theatres as well.

Such political equivocation probably concealed a perhaps not fully conscious awareness that television in the home ultimately would compete with films in theatres. Both Paley and Sarnoff marshalled two identical arguments for why movies had nothing to fear from television. First, just as 'nature strikes a balance,' so new technology does not necessarily devalue old technology, but in fact makes the old technology more useful. Didn't radio invigorate the phonograph industry? Sarnoff, evidently impressed with the analogy, cited the large sales of candles as evidence that the incandescent bulb had not extinguished the demand for candles. Even setting aside the intuitive accuracy of the analogy, one can imagine the persuasiveness of this argument for the motion picture producers who had just witnessed the instant immolation of their expensive inventory of silent film effected by the benign new technology of sound. Second, Paley and Sarnoff note that man is a gregarious creature who needs the sustenance of human contact in public. For Sarnoff, this instinct can overcome the thrall of 'twenty-six million potential theatres in the home.'³ Paley invokes the authority of psychology:

The explanation is psychological. Man being a social creature, he likes to rub elbows with his fellow men. Emotional response in an audience is infectious. Laughs engender laughs, thrills sweep like electric currents through multitudes. Scenes of dramatic poignancy, on stage or screen or platform, affect a group mind that exists for the moment as one.⁴

Possibly they believed some of these ideas, but it is unlikely that their target audience in Hollywood did. One writer, who must have been amused by such pontification, sardonically preferred his own psychological 'law'.

Just as deep-rooted as the gregarious instinct in human nature is the fondness for easy convenience, the desire to get something for nothing... (when viewers are faced with the choice of watching Harold Lloyd at home or in the theatre) they will stay at home, and the chances are that 'some of the money they have saved thereby will be spent for supplies of Krispy-Kinx Breakfast Food...^{5a}

Paley may well have shared this more probable view, but assuredly the Paramount stockholders would not have relished such a vision.

It seems that Zukor did not comment publicly on the deal at the time, for all the news accounts quoted only Paley's speech, or even reprinted excerpts from it under Paley's name, but none includes a statement from Zukor. In Paramount's Annual Report, issued at the end of the year, Zukor does mention the arrangement but he makes no reference to television, confining his brief remarks to the value of the weekly Saturday night Paramount hour:

The appearance of Paramount and Publix stars, orchestras, and other talent on this hour and on other broadcasts of the Columbia Broadcasting System has been of considerable help in popularizing our plays and pictures.

In his 1953 autobiography, Zukor devotes a scant half paragraph to CBS, basically reiterating the gist of this report to the stockholders when he defends his business acumen for anticipating trends:

When radio grew strong in the middle 20's many believed that it would ruin the film business. I thought it would help by creating new talent. We brought radio people to the screen and put screen people on the air. To help boost radio, we secured a half interest in the Columbia Broadcasting System.^{5b}

Reports on the deal in the newspapers at the time varied in the importance they attached to television as a motivation. The **New York Times** implied that television lay behind it:

The development of the talking pictures and the consequent paralleling interests of the two companies is reported to be directly responsible for the arrangement. Scientific development added the voice to the motion picture screen and there is every prospect that similar developments will soon introduce vision into radio.⁶

However, one would not assume necessarily that the **Times** was particularly well informed about Paramount, and the articles did not receive prominent treatment on the page. **Variety** suggested the more reasonable explanation that Paramount accepted the 'now general belief in radio as one of the greatest advertising mediums of the world.'⁷ The article does not even list television as a consideration.

The only major broadcasting journal to comment on the deal, **Radio Broadcast**, virtually scoffed at the discussion of television as a factor:

The statement issued at the time of the merger set forth that it was brought about by Paramount's desire to associate itself with radio on account of the coming of practical television. It is our guess that this was simply publicity strategy because television has yet to reach a stage of development of interest of the general public and does not promise to do so in the immediate future. Paramount has been linked with the effort to start chain broadcasting for several years and this merely represents the consummation of their work in this direction.⁸

This diversity of opinion would seem to indicate that no one really knew what the status of television was at the time. Paley clearly wanted to at least enhance

the value of CBS in the eyes of the Paramount stockholders, which might account for his encouraging remarks on television, but did he actually perceive that television was 'around the corner'? This elusive phrase enjoyed wide currency in the late 20's, but more or less disappeared after 1930. The reason lies in the technological history of television. Knowledgeable observers at the time knew that television was not imminent, yet anticipation in the popular press persisted unabated through the end of the decade.

Although the principles behind television had been worked out as early as the 1880's, the first demonstration did not take place until the mid-20s when the technology of broadcasting had established itself. These early experiments were conducted by AT&T, General Electric and several independent scientists. Essentially, television relies on a similar principle as radio, except that visual, rather than auditory, impulses are converted to electrical impulses which then modulate a carrier wave. Reception reverses the process. However, the conversion of visual impulses is more difficult than the conversion of sound vibrations in radio. First of all, while a given sound will vibrate at a certain rate per second, a visual image is composed of an array of light values. Thus, the image must be broken down into some discrete number of visual impulses which can then be converted into electrical impulses. Scanning performs this function. In the early mechanical scanning systems, the impulses were generated by a rotating disc with holes forming a type of French curve from the centre to the circumference. Each hole sweeps across the image in parallel lines either from top to bottom or side to side. Because of persistence of vision, scanning in this manner will yield a whole image as long as the entire image is less than one tenth of a second. The scanning causes light to pass over a grid of photoelectric cells. These cells produce an electrical discharge when struck by light. These are the impulses that modulate the carrier wave. These same impulses can then be picked off the carrier wave at reception and reconverted from electrical impulses to light on a grid isomorphic to the transmission grid.

The two major technical problems in this system were raising the sensitivity of the photoelectric cells to assure adequate illumination of the image and synchronizing the transmitting disk and the receiving disk. But these problems did not present insuperable obstacles by the late 20's. However, there was one further fundamental problem inherent in mechanical scanning: the quality of the image. The quality of the image is a function of the amount of discrete bits into which it is broken down. A high quality photograph contains something on the order of two million bits of visual information, the individual grains of silver halide. A newspaper half tone photograph, constituted by tiny dots, has about 50,000 bits. Mechanical scanning managed only about 5,000 bits per image in a thirty to sixty line frame. The modern television uses about 200,000 bits per 525 line frame. Improvement of the quality of the image sufficiently to be able to identify detail and follow movement exceeded the capability of mechanical scanning. Thus, all the talk of television being 'around the corner', which was predicted on mechanical scanning, was simply incorrect. Probably, such talk originated primarily with uninformed observers who assumed that technology merely needed come final touches before going commercial.

One of the informed, but reckless, prognosticators was C.F. Jenkins, an independent inventor who published an impressive book in 1929 detailing the principles of his system with schematic diagrams for amateur construction. The same year he formed his own company for commercial production, which not surprisingly failed within a year. Certainly he was fully conversant with the technical limitations of television, but he must have lost perspective on the inadequacy of the image.

Even as late as 1929, that is, four years after the first demonstration of television in this country, Jenkins planned for the content of television to be silhouettes, but maintained that contrary to expectations of the average viewer, 'it was soon discovered... that radio stories in silhouette were just as entertaining as movie cartoons in the theatre.'⁹ If Jenkins was banking his commercial hopes on pub-

lic satisfaction with such modest fare, he was only displaying his own myopia about the state of the art at the time.

But he did recognize that live action broadcasts were not commercially viable at that point. Live action broadcasts posed a problem at the time because of the difficulty of capturing enough light to trigger the photoelectric cells. For this reason, Jenkins and others believed that movies would solve this problem in the early days of television, for a light source would be aimed through the celluloid directly to the cells, using incident rather than reflected light. This solution touched off speculation that television in fact would as much as triple the current demand for film, hence Jenkins' distinction between Radiovision (live action) and Radiomovies. However, the sacrifice of image quality would not be ameliorated by this consideration. In addition, the contracts with the film studios covering the use of sound reproduction equipment specifically precluded its use in television, thus confusing the issue of who would benefit from the projected inflated demand.

Once mechanical scanning is acknowledged as impracticable, an additional problem arises. New scanning procedures like Zworykin's iconoscope, successfully demonstrated in the laboratory in 1929, appeared to solve the problem of the liability of limited bits of information, for scanning could now be done electronically using a beam of electrons. But once the single image reaches the acceptable level of 200,000 bits per image, to transmit that number at 30 times a second calls for about 6 million impulses per second. At such high frequencies, radio waves will not bounce off the ionosphere as with radio broadcast waves. This fact restricts the range of transmission to 25 to 50 miles, depending on the height of the transmitter, for these high frequency waves will travel no farther than the horizon. In addition, while radio networks use ordinary telephone wires for their intercity hook-ups, those same wires cannot carry these high frequency waves. Thus, the possibility of a television network becomes problematic, consequently retarding the growth of television until likelihood of network transmission can attract financial backing to support television experimentation. By the early 30's, mechanical scanning was effectively a fossil, and not even students of television could say whether network television would travel by radio waves or by wire. The radio wave plan would require covering the country with an expensive series of radio relay stations. Wire transmission would involve expensive development and laying of a new type of coaxial cable, eventually perfected by AT&T, to cost about \$5,000 to \$10,000 per mile.

Finally, the size of the frequency band for television threatened to gobble up large parts of the spectrum. The entire radio broadcast spectrum occupied only about 1,000 kilocycles. A single television channel needed 6,000 kilocycles, a space six times as large as the radio spectrum. Faced with these difficulties with electronic television, only the foolhardy or the ignorant could retain the mirage of television 'around the corner.'

For example, technical journals like **Scientific American** and **Radio Broadcast** grasped the impracticability of mechanical scanning as early as 1927 and 1928. The prolific radio correspondent of the **New York Times**, Orrin E. Dunlap, foresaw that mechanical scanning could not generate the necessary number of picture units,¹⁰ and a **Radio Broadcast** writer, in a how-to article on mechanical scanning, called it an 'insurmountable problem'.¹¹

And yet, other writers refused to accept defeat. Because the principles of radio and television were similar, they were deluded by the rapid perfection of radio into applying the same model prospectively to mechanical scanning:

Television over distances of small range is quite an accomplished fact and it only remains to perfect the details of the scenes transmitted. Since, moreover, television works on the same principle as radio telegraphy and radio telephony, there is no reason why seeing events that are happening in America cannot be

just as easy an accomplishment as oceanic talking to America. The same theoretical and mathematical considerations are applicable. Hence the aim at the present time is to extend the range of transmission.¹²

Given the virtually unanimous opinion of film historians that Zukor was guided by a brilliant business instinct, it would seem extremely unlikely that a misguided (for the time) fear of television led him to seek protection with CBS. But other factors beside the desire to ally Paramount with a related growing entertainment industry may have dictated his action. Since the beginning of 1929, **Variety** had reported assorted rumours that Paramount was negotiating with RCA for some sort of consolidation of interests. Zukor probably sensed that the motion picture industry was endangered by the vigorous competition between RCA and AT&T over the marketing of sound equipment for sound motion pictures.

This competition was an extension of the earlier struggle between AT&T and RCA in radio. AT&T perfected a sound on disc system for sound motion pictures in 1925, and entrusted its commercial exploitation to John E. Otterson. Otterson managed to find a promoter who succeeded in persuading Warner Brothers to take out an exclusive license on the system in 1926, the year of AT&T's cross-licensing agreement with RCA: Warner Brothers, however, failed to sign up any other studios as sublicensees, with the sole exception of William Fox. The other studios were understandably reluctant to pay royalties to a competitor, whereupon Otterson abrogated the contract with Warner Brothers and relegated them to non-exclusive licensee status. Then he sought to sign up the other studios. However, they preferred to proceed cautiously, and entered into a 'stand still agreement' in February, 1927, a mutual compact (among Paramount, MGM, Universal, United Artists and First National) to withhold final decision on which sound system to adopt until the expiration of one year's waiting period. With the success of **The Jazz Singer** in October of 1927, the studios were eager to decide by the time the waiting period had elapsed. For various commercial reasons (not technical, as both the AT&T system and the RCA system had been highly recommended)^{13a} they ended up choosing AT&T's system 'over the rival RCA system, but four of the Big Five studios all signed five year contracts with the AT&T non-communications subsidiary, Electrical Research Products, Inc., in May of 1928, Universal signing two months later.

Naturally, RCA was concerned about their exclusion from this lucrative field. RCA had developed their own sound on film system and objected strenuously to the ERPI contracts for their apparent violations of free trade in the motion picture industry, for their 1926 agreement with AT&T stipulated that all sound film patents were to be shared equally by the two companies. Unable to force Otterson to respect the terms of the 1926 agreement, RCA, in an effort to secure a market for their equipment, purchased interest in several large theatre chains, and finally formed their own production company as well in October of 1928, Radio-Keith-Orpheum. They also signed up a number of smaller studios to lease their equipment.

But AT&T had managed to gain a virtual monopoly in the field. By the end of 1928, AT&T equipment, a Western Electric product, had been installed in 1,046 theatres. RCA had garnered only 95 theatres. While AT&T could not compel theatres and studios to use their equipment instead of RCA's, the terms of the contracts assured that result. One clause, called the non-interchangeability clause, stipulated that no licensee could use equipment that was inferior to the Western Electric product or films that had been recorded on non-Western equipment. RCA demanded comparative testing to disprove the implied inferiority of their equipment.

AT&T defended itself on the grounds that they wanted to insure the highest standards of sound reproduction. An Otterson memo, however, demolishes that defense and exposes ERPI's real strategy:

In the talking motion picture field, they (RCA) are competing very actively with us at present, as you know, to develop an affiliation with the large motion picture producers and competition between us will doubtless ultimately result in a situation highly favourable to the motion picture interests and opposed to our own. This is an extensive and highly profitable field and it is quite worth our while to go a long way toward making it practically an exclusive field.^{13b}

AT&T delayed submitting to a test during this important time of conversion to sound, so that exhibitors continued to use Western Electric equipment almost exclusively. When this test finally took place, in spite of Otterson's transatlantic orders to delay, or at least trump up grounds for inferiority, the RCA system was judged not, inferior. The theatre situation changed abruptly. By the end of 1929, Western Electric equipment was in 3,267 theatres, and RCA equipment was in 4,926 theatres.

The so-called double royalty clause specified that any licensee distributing or exhibiting films made with non-Western Electric equipment would still be required to pay royalties to Western. RCA deemed this an unfair trade practice, and threatened court action against AT&T unless they removed this provision. Eventually, Western complied.

There remained yet another clause that Western imposed on its licensees, regarding repair and replacement. Western equipment could be serviced only by Western technicians, for which licensees paid a weekly service charge. This last condition elicited another threatened suit from RCA, which sent a draft of the suit to Western for its perusal prior to submitting it in court. Western chose to retreat, and shortly thereafter withdrew from motion pictures, selling out to private business, but RCA succeeded in forcing AT&T out of the competition only after a seven year fight, during which time ERPI's revenues totalled more than \$152 million.

AT&T's aggressive campaign to exclude RCA from the sound film market was directed by the above mentioned John Otterson, a prepossessing figure according to various accounts, one of which characterizes him as a 'lantern-jawed ex-Navy man.'¹⁴ Otterson, famous since the massive three year one and a half million dollar investigation of the Telephone Company by the Federal Communications Commission in 1935-38, adumbrated a strategy for corporate warfare based on an arsenal of patents in the 'Four Square Memo' of 1927:

The AT&T Company is surrounded by potentially competitive interests which may in some manner or degree intrude upon the telephone field. The problem is to prevent this intrusion...

Each of these interests (G.E.; RCA; IT&T; and Western Union) is engaged in development and research that is productive of results which have an application outside of their direct and exclusive field. Indicative of these activities we have between the AT&T Co. and the Radio Corporation such things as the Vitaphone, phonograph, broadcasting by wire, point to point wireless, wireless communication with moving objects...

In the case of each of these activities the engineering in the major field extends beyond that field and overlaps upon the engineering of another major field and sets up a competitive condition in the 'no man's land' lying between them...

It seems obvious that the best defense is to continue activities in 'no man's land' and to maintain such strong engineering, patent and commercial situation in connection with these competitive activities as to always have something to trade against the accomplishment of their parties.

If the AT&T Company abandons its activity in the commercial competitive field and other potentially competitive interests continue their activities, it means that they will carry their offensive right up to the wall of our defense and our trading must be in our major field against activities

in their outlying commercial fields. The nearer trading can be carried to the major field of our competitors the more advantageous trading position we are in...

On the whole, it seems to be essential to the accomplishment of the AT&T Company's primary purpose of the defensive protection of its dominating in the domestic telephone field that it shall maintain an active offensive in the 'no man's land' lying between it and potentially competitive interests.¹⁵

Although AT&T claimed later to have repudiated this stance, Otterson nonetheless did control AT&T's activities in the 'no man's land' of the motion picture industry, in which he tried to implement his memo. Several times Otterson informed his superiors that AT&T commanded such a strong position in the field that it should consider actually buying out RCA and achieve a monopoly in the exploitation of sound equipment.¹⁶

The unfortunate saga of the rise and fall of William Fox is instructive of Otterson's manoeuvring. It took Upton Sinclair a full book to trace the narrative only up to 1935, thus missing the climax of the tale when the Supreme Court reversed its own decision in ruling against Fox, so the events can only be grossly sketched here. Following the death of Marcus Loew, his widow wanted to sell her share of Loew's stock. Zukor and Warner's were interested, but Fox offered to pay \$50 million at 125 a share for the stock, then selling at 75. For various reasons connected to Fox's friendly relations with ERPI, Otterson arranged a one year loan of \$15 million to Fox partially to ward off the threat of another studio picking up the shares. This loan amounted to only part of the \$50 million needed to transform Fox into the dominant force in the industry, but Otterson helped Fox raise the remaining financing. In addition, Fox personally held crucial patents to the Tri-Ergon flywheel that proved to be a controlling patent in sound equipment. AT&T and RCA could not secure controlling patents in sound film without it (although Fox did not know this when he purchased the rights in 1926).

Fox, therefore, outbid Warners and Paramount for the Loew's stock, completing the deal in February of 1929 after six months negotiation. With AT&T using Fox as a wedge toward possible hegemony in the industry, and RCA battling to meet that competition, Zukor no doubt was apprehensive that Paramount would be relegated to a secondary role whatever the outcome of the battle. He must have known how valuable the backing of AT&T was, for it could raise funds almost at will, or could arrange for loans easily through its extensive ties with financial and securities banks.

In this context, the rumours of Zukor's attempts to establish a relationship with RCA make perfect sense. For all the reasons that continue to make the motion picture industry a speculative investment, its unpredictable revenues and lack of tangible product, such as a radio receiver or telephone receiver, Wall Street financiers had avoided extensive financing of the studios. But with the introduction of the solid product of sound equipment and the simultaneous rush of the studios to strengthen their asset base and guarantee retail outlets through theatre acquisition, Wall Street began to look favourably on the industry. Articles appeared in the business magazines approving of investment in film. Since Zukor had dealt with these financiers since 1919, he understood the importance of tangible assets in finding financial backing. RCA, then, promised to be a probable valuable partner in Paramount's quest for financing. Zukor's inability or disinclination to persevere in the Loew's bidding with Fox reflects the importance of these corporate ties. Apparently Sarnoff demanded a higher price than Zukor was willing to meet. RCA already had contractual affiliation with RKO and was soon to receive Rockefeller support, so Zukor could hardly impose the terms on Sarnoff. Zukor then turned to CBS, then barely escaping bankruptcy. Paley was more accommodating than Sarnoff under the circumstances, and Zukor concluded the deal with CBS, finally gaining his safety against the looming encroachments of RCA and AT&T.

The difficulties Paramount encountered in competing with the AT&T backed Fox and in reaching an agreement with RCA probably illuminate the failure of their studios to pursue a similar vision. By 1929, profits were soaring in the motion picture industry as sound films turned out to be extremely successful. But the initial investment in conversion to sound swelled expenses at the same time revenues were rising. As well, the sound boom touched off another furious wave of theatre buying. The amount of this spending could no longer be met out of revenues, so that the studios had to relinquish some control to the financiers who were orchestrating the funding. When the delayed effects of the Depression began to cause a decline in attendance, many studios found themselves over-extended. Paramount showed a profit of \$6 million in 1931, but lost \$21 million in 1932. Paramount, Fox and RKO all fell into receivership during these years. This series of failures reflects the relative cash weakness of these businesses, so dependent upon property values for their asset profiles, and indicates that despite the high profits of 1929, the studios were in no position to go shopping for diversification throughout the industry. Zukor, perhaps alone among the moguls, saw the actual need for diversification and eventually acted on that need in the CBS deal. But recall that the deal was a stock transfer, and involved no passage of liquid capital.

If Zukor did fear the Fox-AT&T alliance in 1929, later events justified such a premonition. Most historians think that Otterson was backing Fox to insure larger outlets for Western equipment rather than using him as an advance guard in the opening offensive toward eventual take-over of the industry. Unfortunately, resolution of this question depends on a great deal of ex post facto reasoning and rapidly degenerates into choosing among presuppositions. It is true that Otterson was instrumental in the removal of Fox as head of Fox Films, and Otterson was one of the trustees during Fox's receivership and reorganization. So long as Fox's interests and Otterson's coincided, Otterson had been willing to support Fox. But Fox balked at turning over to Otterson the valuable Tri-Ergon patents, valued at \$200 million in 1935, to which Fox held clear title. Otterson had declined Fox's offer of 1926 to split the purchase of the American rights for \$60,000 each, so their consequent three thousand fold appreciation must have angered Otterson, who unfortunately had only himself to blame. In any event, when Fox was unable to repay his loan to ERPI in 1930, Otterson, in league with Fox's former Wall Street backers, seized control of Fox's company. When Loew's and Paramount also failed, Otterson acquired influence in the direction of those companies. At this point, he notified his superiors that AT&T, with no further investment of capital, could now control the entire industry:

It is true to-day, as it has been for three or four years, that the Telephone Company can control the motion picture industry through ERPI without investing any more money than it now has invested. I am not recommending that this be done even though I know that the salvation of the motion picture industry lies in this direction. The industry is in crying need of the kind of strength and character that could be obtained through the influence of the Telephone Company.¹⁷

His superiors declined to encourage that course of action. As a public monopoly, AT&T's corporate executives were wary of inviting Government interference in their operations. Also, the Federal Trade Commission had sued Paramount and other studios in 1928 for antitrust violations, had disallowed Fox's purchase of the Loew's shares in November of 1929, and had instituted court action against RCA in 1930 for antitrust violations. Thus AT&T had good reason to steer clear of that danger.

Although Otterson's more global design may have been checked by the disinterest or prudence of his superiors, he nevertheless did actually enter motion picture production. Through ERPI, Otterson set up in 1932 a revolving fund for independent producers in an effort to drive out the numerous small pro-

ducers who used the RCA system, known as 'bootleggers.' All told, Western advanced over \$3.5 million, and Otterson could declare victory in 1933:

Through our financing of pictures we have gotten a steadily increasing proportion of the business and have left RCA with little or no income from royalties except in connection with studios owned and operated by themselves.¹⁸

These activities were discontinued in 1935, on the eve of the FCC Investigation.

Aside from more well-known events that made 1929 an interesting year, the particular dovetailing of several historical moments make it an especially important date in motion picture and broadcasting history. The hostilities between AT&T and RCA, so recently quelled in the Agreement of 1926, erupted again in the motion picture industry, with an AT&T official recommending at one point that AT&T flex its corporate muscle and simply end the struggle once and for all by buying out its rival. Such a move would prepare AT&T to enforce its will on the motion picture industry through its monopoly on sound reproduction and recording equipment. Furthermore, television was an unknown factor at the time, and the industry did not know whether to view it as a threat or not. Finally, conversion to sound necessitated the motion picture industry's ceding some degree of control to their new found friends in the Wall Street financial world. While one can reasonably eliminate the danger of television as a consideration of Zukor's, the CBS connection, following as it did Zukor's failure to join forces with RCA, represented Zukor's drive to protect Paramount's independence through diversification in the shifting constellation of the entertainment industry at the time.



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The Consolidation of the American Film Industry:

1915-20

George Mitchell

PART TWO

The economic rationalization of the movie business quickly made itself felt on the studio floor, transforming not only the methods by which films were put together, but their content as well. By the middle of the decade the days were numbered for the kind of loose collaborative filmmaking described above (see issue No. 6 — Editor). The Triangle film company, for example, founded in 1915 was planned from the bottom up with the idea of producing films on a rational, efficient, assembly-line basis. In order to give management (many new executives had come to the motion pictures not through filmmaking but from exhibition as well as a variety of other business enterprises) an authoritative voice in the filmmaking process, the new Triangle Company hired three leading masters of the filmmaking craft, Griffith, Ince and Sennet, whose jobs were not only to direct films but supervise the work of other directors. The leaders of the industry, following the example of other mass producers, introduced "scientific management" into the production process. The basic principle of scientific management was that the worker should be confined to the physical execution of the tasks of production, while management designed and regulated each stage of production. This school of management theory instructed employers on how to re-arrange the work process so as to achieve greater productivity and profit.

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Thomas Ince, more than any other individual at this time, exemplifies the efforts to apply modern management theory to the production of movies. Ince was acutely aware that the work of the modern film manager was to reduce the risks inherent in mass entertainment production. As he put it, "the guess work starts with the selection of the script and the first payment made to the author." (21) Ince, who, like DeMille and Griffith, began in legitimate theater, commenced his motion picture career in 1910 at "Imp" pictures. Hired by Triangle in 1915, he set to work out a system of greatly increased managerial control over the chaos of production. Kenneth MacGowan described Ince's attack on the director's craft: "He wouldn't

let a director shoot off the cuff, which meant developing scenes and sequences from a sketch outline. Ince worked closely with his writers . . . until he could approve a shooting script, He gave his director this complete blueprint of a picture and insisted that he follow it in every detail. Years later, men like Irving Thalberg, Darryl Zanuck, and David O. Selznick adopted the Ince policy when they managed big studios." (22) Ince also devised a system of cost accounting which enabled management to keep detailed tabs on production on a per-foot basis. The new, enormously costly Hollywood style made this kind of record-keeping a necessity. The old, off-the-cuff style disappeared even from the older studios that had ventured into feature production. An actor, after visiting the Edison Company Studios in 1915 wrote in his diary, "the entire atmosphere breathes organization." (23)

Around this time producers also tried to reduce the risks of production through "scientific" techniques of determining audience responses. Through trial screenings, audience card surveys, and box office returns they sought to isolate those elements in film content which yielded a profit, from those which did not. In 1918, writing in **System, The Magazine of Business**, a film executive characterized the pre-war years as the "old days" when "nearly every film was a leap in the dark for we had no reasonably scientific means of discovering what the public would like." (24)

The application of modern management techniques to film production spelled the demise of the director as an "artist" or mastercraftsmen guided by the demiurge. The breakdown of the filmmaking process extended to all aspects of production, including the writing of films. Edmund Wilson captured the industrial nature of the 'thinking' side of film production in a thirties essay: "the writers, shut up by day in small cells in large buildings, which like mills, have armed guards at the doors, compelled to collaborate in twos just as a pair of weavers is given so many looms and reporting like schoolchildren to supervisors who commend or suppress or censor, display, even outside the studios, a psychology of mill-hands or children." (25) Joseph Mankiewicz, the producer and director, described the matured process as "constructed, distorted, into a system as closely allied to the producing of wash-basins or trunks as it could have been." (26)

A more detailed review of the transition period shows how the social portraiture of the motion pictures was also transformed by being integrated into the overall strategy of the movie business.

As late as 1913 no one in the U.S. film business could say exactly what a commercial film was, and was not. There was, for example, a lively debate over the question of how long an individual film should play. Many other unknowns bedeviled producers and exhibitors: should the business encourage or discourage the prominence of the movie actor; should large amounts of money be invested in an individual film? Some Italian and U.S. firms were producing lavish epics with huge casts although the films, expensive and risky, were not in regular production. And then there was the thorniest question of all: what was the proper relation between the movie social portraiture and existing cultural norms? How much sex and violence should be in the films? What perspective should be taken on the state, on capitalist development, and other features of modern society? How did one deal with minority groups, with social problems and other controversial areas?

On the question of movie values the business had nothing against tradition as long as tradition turned a profit. Certainly most leaders in the business personally prized and supported bourgeois values; yet there were disturbing indications that old values were a drag on profits. Obviously the great mass of people, as well as bourgeois opinion, actively supported these values but advocacy of them in movies did not generate sufficiently rapid movement towards the theaters. The notion of stimulating demand through a more sensational and provocative social portraiture was gaining ground.

The screen's conservative approach to **cultural and moral values** was rapidly invalidated by the discovery that movie profits were usually not enhanced by support of

the **status quo** but rather by the advocacy of cultural drift. The confusion within the industry on this question is evident in the pre-war correspondance of the prominent producer-distributor George Kleine. In 1915 an associate wrote to Kleine, "recently I have been hearing the criticism from exhibitors who watch the motion-picture audience very closely that most of the pictures that are being offered are too colourless and lack dramatic excitement." (27) Kleine answered, "we are sitting up nights, trying to be up-to-date in analyzing the public preference in the matter of films." (28)

One approach which appeared more and more promising at the box office was to have the plot deal with some form of 'sex' problem. In 1912 Universal released **Traffic in Souls**, promoted as "the sensational motion picture dramatization of the destruction of the Vice Trust by District Attorney Whitman." (29) A spate of similar films followed, all claiming to be based on real-life happenings and dedicated to the cause of sexual purity. Many middle class critics felt that profit was the aim of these films, not enlightenment. A reviewer wrote of one such production, "such a film represents the commercialization of the subject and the exploitation of it for private gain in the worst degree." (30) Unconvinced, the studios pushed forward. In 1915 the lavish **Daughter of the Gods**, with prurient appeal, was a big box office success, and so were the films of Fox's Theda Bara, the sensational sex "vampire".

The industry soon became a leading propagandist for revisions in the moral code. Theda Bara, in a magazine article "How I became a Film Vampire" revealed that the "good little girl is just as bad as the bad little girl is good." (32) Carl Laemmle, a studio head, wrote that "instead of discovering that 95 percent favoured clean pictures, I discovered that at least half, maybe 60 percent want the pictures to be risqué." In 1917 one of George Kleine's correspondants quoted an article on a Chaplin film in the **Washington Star** which claimed that "an extraordinary development of the motion picture enterprise is the evolution of a capacity on the part of a large proportion of the public to enjoy vulgarity." (33) Klein's reply stands as an epitaph for the old perspective. "It is seriously to be questioned" he wrote back, "whether any description that indicates **clean living or decency is fitting in trade advertisements.**" (34)

The result was that traditional norms were no longer actively supported in the film perspective as large corporations aiming to refine the profit potential of movies came to dominate the industry. By the mid-teens, more and more films deliberately veered away from a perspective which supported the virtues of family, hard work, saving, piety and the modest life. This change is apparent in everything connected with the films, but especially in the new perspective on sex, class and consumption. The new approach offered a highly ambiguous and often positive view towards (among other things) adultery and conspicuous consumption. These shifts were justified in the name of corporate expediency (in trade journals) and economic and cultural progress (in popular magazines). Movie makers, hooking up with wider trends, became champions of moral relativism. As DeMille put it later, "what's moral in Africa is unmoral in Asia." The movies did not simply reflect the wider changes taking place at the time, they took active part in transforming attitudes about work, social relations, and patterns of consumption and leisure.

Let us examine some of the ways in which the new social portraiture served corporate needs. As noted, during the mid-teens eroticism was factored out of the overall human condition and made a key element in the new movie formulas. It is true that eroticism had long been part of the appeal of films; nor was there anything new in using eroticism to give depth and vibrancy to a popular artform. But eroticism in the story film prior to WW1 was locked into a strong negative perspective, an approach which severely limited the exploitation of sex. Pre-war films like **Traffic in Souls**, **Civilization**, **The Cheat** and **Intolerance** have prurient moments (bare breasts, adulterous relations, rape scenes) but these elements were contained by the old traditional perspective; the sex in these films is supposedly there for an object lesson.

While early producers undoubtedly recognized the potential profit of more erotic

films they faced serious risks in exploiting sex. In the era of small firms, the individual producer did not have sufficient political or economic clout to stand up against the well organized partisans of the status quo who were already breathing down his neck for the sex and violence in the films, the cheap 5 cent theatre etc. The new corporations, larger and much more powerful, found they did have the financial, legal and political wherewithall to proceed in this area. Once this was clear, the old traditional moral code was jettisoned, one part after another. Always in pieces, it should be noted, never with a consistency that could clearly be construed as political or social deviancy. Just as the rise of mass production and distribution in other areas of the national economy led to manipulation of the yearly model, so now the mass production of movies subjected the view of society to a similar fiddling. The filmmakers learned that it was not only in their interest to exploit social and cultural phenomena in this fashion, but that **only** by going against the grain of established values, by offering for public consumption what was officially taboo (or on the borderline of taboo) could their movies generate profits at a sufficient rate. Cultural norms became a kind of natural resource to be steadily mined by the industry.

As the movie industry threw itself against established norms with increasing intrepidity it generated a massive amount of resistance that mushroomed into wide support for stringent public controls. The industry in turn found it necessary to pour money into efforts to maintain autonomy. This effort was always couched in the language of artistic and political freedom but in practice the industry had little use for these freedoms. The industry was motivated to protect its control over film content because its leaders knew that profits, monopolization and the relative freedom to manipulate the social portraiture were all intertwined. To take one example, anyone comparing the early story film with films made in the twenties cannot help noticing how important a role the wealthy play in the later films and how scarce are realistic stories about working-class life. The popular anti-capitalism of the pre-war film (the idea of wealth as an evil force, anti-urbanism, anti-consumption, the attack on monopoly) virtually disappears after the war and does not appear again until the crisis of the '30's. This was largely a result of the economic consolidation of the industry. The rationalization of the movie business, in combination with wider social, economic and political changes generated by other sector rationalizations, necessitated a new perspective on wealth, poverty and class relations. A subtle but pervasive ban was laid down against stories that were critical of the existing economic and political structures. Only rarely, in the twenties, does one see films about economic exploitation, degrading working conditions, or the tactics of powerful businessmen. Even in the thirties, a time of considerable political and economic strife, the critical element is tepid and diffuse. This closure was the result of a conscious position the movie business had assumed vis-à-vis economic, political and cultural questions.

That this shift is something more than another reflection of the post WW1 move to the right is evident in the way the movie-makers rushed to cooperate with strong government policy statements against criticism of the social and economic system while at the same time fighting tooth and nail against the much more popular, broad based movements to resist the model of U.S. life propagated by Hollywood. When its real interests, profits, were threatened the industry waved the banner of free speech, and where freedom of expression was of dubious profit (as in 'political' films) it policed content as effectively as any government censorship body. The state-subsidized films of Germany and Russia in the twenties show the reactionary nature of the Hollywood approach — on aesthetic and political levels.

The new view of sex, wealth and consumption served corporate aims in a number of intersecting ways. What did movie sex have to do with movie consumption, and how did the promotion of both of these further the interests of the movie business? We noted that movie-makers learned that certain forms of abrasive content brought people to the theatres and kept them coming back. But if the movie-makers were going to present a more liberal view of sex, what would be the social context for this liberalization and what would be its nature? Clearly the working class neighborhood would be unsuitable at this moment for sex high-jinks and wild debauched sprees. A more liberal screen attitude about sex among the working class would, from the viewpoint of the

late-teens and early twenties, probably seem as risky as promoting worker-radicalism. Indeed, radicalism and free love were continuously linked in the anti-left propaganda of the time. Here is where a more positive view of the upper class was crucial. A positive view of the wealthy neighborhood allowed producers to move ahead faster with profit-making erotic content, because upper-class sex, cleansed by money and opulence, and linked to a viewpoint supportive of the status quo in economic and political matters, was the only kind of sex that would pass.

The revised social portraiture served corporate purposes in a variety of other ways. The wealthy neighborhood glorified on the screen, helped upgrade the status of the film business by association, conferring bourgeois respectability on an industry still plagued by its reputation as a poor people's theatre. This upgrading also had important implications for industry autonomy. Hence the industry endlessly advertised that the classy trappings of its films were proof of the superior character of its films. Vice-versa, industry leaders warned that realistic, austere films about working class life and poverty were sordid, low-quality entertainment. The capital investment manifest in sets, gowns, hardware and manpower were promoted as the "high cost of quality films." In actuality, of course, the classy surfaces had little to do with "quality" and much to do with strategies of consolidation. Finally, this mystification of wealth and consumption was right up the alley of the bourgeois media and its backers in the rapidly expanding consumer goods sector. In the movie business, as in other sectors of commodity production, schemes to insure a stable market were of critical importance; more and more attention and investment had to go to insure demand. This was yet another force pressuring filmmakers to adopt a bourgeois perspective.

To stimulate demand then, movie-makers tied the social perspective of films up with the mainstream of American economic life after WW1, linking with the rapidly expanding consumer goods industries. A symbiotic relationship evolved between journalism and the film, for example. Great amounts of money were poured into newspapers and magazines for the promotion of films; newspapers, especially big metropolitan dailies and important chains, tended as a result to take a favourable attitude towards the film establishment. Another example of cooperation was the publicity tie-in: plot and content of films were manipulated so as to involve retailers of consumer goods and film exhibitors in schemes of mutual promotion. Speaking of a 1918 high-life extravaganza, a trade magazine advised distributors that "the star wears some very attractive gowns in some of the scenes so that gown shops... will be anxious to show her picture in their windows or on their counters inside of the stores." (35) A suggested promotion line for **The Grand Duchess and the Waiter** was to "play up Menjou and Miss Vidor, Photos of Miss Vidor used in tie-ups with jewelry stores, beauty parlors, style shops, showing her with brilliant jewels, her new boyish bob and her Parisian gowns." (36) **Fifth Avenue**, a 1926 Paramount release was described by promotional literature as a picture which "fairly glows with ornate settings and fine backgrounds." The "exploitation angle" recommended playing up the title, stressing "contrast between Society and Bohemian atmosphere" and "boost style show." (37) The exploitation angle suggested by Paramount for **Speeding Three** (1926) ("comedy drama of rivalry between auto manufacturers with the daughter of one defeating the other with the help of a college boy who wins her love") was "many possibilities for a tie-up with automobile manufacturers." (38) This kind of promotion became very common as the movie idea of contemporary life was shaped around consumer goods. Pictures routinely had their quota of gowns, autos, jewels and lavish interiors. By the mid-twenties Hollywood's role in disciplining consumers was well appreciated in political, industrial and commercial circles.

This outlook on materialism was in sharp contrast to the earlier screen perspective on wealth which argued that material goods and money counted for little or nothing. As a company ad for Biograph's **Gold is not All** (1910) put it: "there was never a truer maxim framed... what a moral those four words teach." Beauty was identified with simple tastes, corruption with extravagance. In the post war period the screen version of the human predicament increasingly depended on commodities for interest and appeal.

These transformations on the social portraiture can be traced in the ongoing internal debates over the content and format of the film. In the earlier, more competitive era, as noted, business wisdom held that production costs in any single film should be kept as low as possible. Longer films, high actor fees, big outlays on sets were resisted by many producers because of the risk involved. After seeing **Birth of a Nation**, in February, 1915, William DeMille wrote to Samuel Goldfish in New York: "remember how sore Biograph was with Griffith when he made **Judith of Bethulia** and how much money that lost though it was only a four reeler. So I suppose you're right when you say that there is no advantage in leading if the cost of leadership makes commercial success impossible." (39) But the stunning financial success of **Birth of a Nation**, evident in the coming months, demonstrated the advantage of high investments in an individual film. In 1915 we find the Kalem Corporation promoting one of its productions on the basis of a hotel set that cost \$15,000 to build. And the **Moving Picture World** anticipated the ideological shifts that would be necessitated by the new business wisdom when it announced in 1915 that "half the world is more interested in how the other half **dresses** than how it **lives** (my emphasis)." (40)

The idea that lavish production values were motivated by a quest for excellence in films was readily swallowed by the media (and by many film historians). A **New York Times** reviewer stated in 1917 that "a motion picture stands or falls by the measure of its interior scenes... too often they are palpably things of paint and canvas, tasteless and tawdry, with no illusion of solidity." (41) After 1920 it was endlessly repeated in industry propaganda that outlays on sets and actor's fees was the measure of a picture's worth. The high-cost film, at first resisted by producers, became the iron-law of film-making. The script that could not be shaped to these ends was unlikely to be produced. A film which somehow attacked these values (except in comic form, spoofs on Hollywood such as Ella Cinders and King Vidor's **Show People**) was considered subversive,

The connection between excess and the profit sheets is clearly outlined in an anecdote related by Lillian Gish. Gish, playing in a film version of **La Bohème** complained to the producers: "These are poor Bohemians... they can't live in a big beautiful house." According to Gish, the front office responded: "How are we to get exhibitors to pay big prices for your pictures if they don't see the production values?" "The executives finally agreed to let Mimi live in a big attic," Gish wrote. "I couldn't accustom myself to their strange set of values." (42) Neither could D.W. Griffith who never adjusted to the new screen perspective that his early epics gave rise to. In 1923 he took to the pages of **Arts and Decoration** with a curious attack on the view of wealth in the film, the exaggerations of which he saw as a kind of cheap "Latin" parvenu influence. "Motion pictures have received and merited much criticism about the style of rooms they photograph to represent the homes of the rich," Griffith wrote. "Men and women in evening attire depart to the opera or arrive from it. Persons of wealth, family and education flash their jewels in the atmosphere of a furniture shop, or an auctioneer's showroom. The rooms are crowded with objects that stridently quarrel. I concede the bad taste of such interiors." (43)

The keystone of the new corporate edifice was the flagship theatre which, in conjunction with control and exhibition, the star system, lavish production values and promotional efforts, provided the means for a relatively small number of producers to dominate the global market for films. To cite the twenties Seabury study again, "the effect upon the public was and is that the producer who also controls the theatres upon a substantial scale can exhibit to the public anything he wishes to exhibit. The spur of competition for the business of these theatres is gone. The man who makes the picture owns the theatre and his picture is exhibited not because it is artistic or has other merits, but because he owns or controls the theatre." (44) The importance of these factors for the social portraiture cannot be over-stressed, for it was the metropolitan audience (and in particular the metropolitan press) which was the gateway to national distribution and promotion of films. Lewis Mumford's remarks on the media in this period suggest the effect of the new social portraiture being transmitted through this system: "All... work to a common end: to give the stamp of authenticity and value to the style of life that emanates from the metropolis: this makes every departure from the metropolitan pattern seem deplorably provincial, uncouth, and what is even more heinous, out-of-date." (43)

At the start the film was a commodity, but it was a commodity that, for better or worse, still absorbed values and ideas rooted in tradition, and in the community. As the movie business learned that the social portraiture was a key element in growth and monopolization, this popular and traditional influence waned. Now popular culture was processed into the social portraiture only to the extent that it was economically sensible to do so. Important aspects of traditional bourgeois and popular culture (anti-capitalism, nativism, the work ethic), were not adequately represented because they were inconsistent with corporate goals. All discussion of social imagery in the post WW1 film must bear in mind that the crucial mediating factor was not "public opinion" but the needs of the movie business.



◆ FOOTNOTES

21. **San Francisco Call Chronicle**, February 1, 1920, MOMA Clipping File
22. MacGowan, p. 173
23. Diary of Rogers Lytton, February 15, 1915, NYPLMC
24. **System**, March. 1918
25. Edmund Wilson. **The American Earthquake** (New York, 1958). p. 399
26. Joseph Mankiewicz. interview, Oral History Papers, Popular Arts Project, Series I, Vol. 6, part 2, p. 3, Columbia University Manuscript Collection, hereafter cited as PAP.
27. Letter of Denis O'Brien to George Kleine, June 21, 1915, George Kleine Papers, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as the Kleine Papers).
28. Letter of George Kleine to Denis O'Brien, August 12, 1915, Kleine Papers.
29. See also Jacobs, p. 148
30. **OUTLOOK**, February 14, 1914
31. Ibid.
32. Quoted in Donald Ramsay Young, **Motion Pictures: A study in Social Legislation** (Philadelphia. 1922). p. 10
33. Quoted in the letter of L.W. McChesney to George Kleine, July 23, 1917, Kleine Papers
34. Letter of George Kleine to L.W. McChesney, July 24, 1917, Kleine Papers
35. **Exhibitors Trade Review**, March 16, 1918
36. **Motion Picture News**, September 11, 1926
37. **Motion Picture News**, February 6, 1926
38. Ibid.
39. Letter of William DeMille to Samuel Goldfish, February 10, 1915. CUMC
40. **The Moving Picture World**, July 3, 1915
41. **The New York Times**, February 25, 1917
42. Gish, p. 279
43. David Wark Griffith, "Are Motion Pictures Destructive of Good Taste? " **Arts and Decoration**, September, 1923 ◆

Elder/Nichols Debate: A Response

Editor's note; The fourth issue of Ciné-Tracts had an exchange between Bruce Elder and Bill Nichols on among other things, film criticism and structuralism.

The debate between Bruce Elder and Bill Nichols in a recent edition of **CINE-TRACTS** illustrates the difficulties inherent in any scientific approach to film criticism. Although the debate does raise such vital matters as the nature of critical explanation and the relationship between criticism and science, questions which tend to receive insufficient attention in film journals, both combatants show by their arguments that neither of them fully appreciates the complexity of the issues which are at stake. This is evident from an analysis of some of their statements. For example, Elder claims that cine-structuralism, which to him represents the paradigm of the "scientific method," has had "a very truncating effect on the critical enterprise. In part this is due to certain fundamental **disanalogies** between the nature of scientific and aesthetic inquiry." (P. 98) However, Elder's pronouncements are quite dogmatic because we are not given any clear account of what to him constitutes the "nature" of both "scientific and aesthetic inquiry." He informs us that "aesthetic inquiry... involves a subjective moment" yet he argues for the necessity of "meta-criticism" which, as he sees it, "has two tasks: in the first place, it must develop a methodology which, while it enables one to unfold the foundational presuppositions that underlie one's critical practice, itself remains free from such presuppositions since it is only a methodology for such an explication. Secondly, it must attempt to determine the aesthetic validity of these presuppositions by testing them against actual work." (P. 99)

Elder's arguments are self-contradictory. If "aesthetic inquiry" invariably involves the "subjective moment," then metacriticism is no longer a possible "task." Indeed how can metacriticism provide a reliable yard-stick for evaluating specific critical models if the "subjective moment" always intrudes in "aesthetic inquiry." In his argument regarding the "disanalogies" between scientific and aesthetic practice, Elder presupposes that models of explanation in criticism function very differently to models employed in scientific inquiry. This unproven assumption rests upon a more fundamental assumption which is also unargued: the rigid dichotomy between the activities of what Elder calls **homo scientus** and **homo creator** (P. 105). It could very well be the case that there exists a considerable overlap between "scientific and aesthetic inquiry," that the total divorce between the two pursuits is merely a figment of Elder's imagination.

Bill Nichol's argument relies upon a rather simplistic division of interests. This can be seen from the following quotation from his rejoinder to Elder's article: "Most scholars who are even remotely involved in current research, recognize that structural and semiotic methods ask how messages are constructed, what rules or codes organize them. They ask how meaning is communicated **not** how **well** it is communicated or even, necessarily, what meaning is communicated." (P. 106)

Nichols quite rightly distinguishes between "theories" and "models" and between "developing models" and "the testing and formulation of hypotheses" but he himself does not "develop" these vital distinctions any further. Moreover, Nichols does not offer us the distinguishing characteristics which separate "models" from "theories," nor does he consider the possibility of a sophisticated model with wide applicability achieving the status of a "theory."

This article will argue that many problems in criticism generally and difficulties encountered in characterizing the nature of the relationship between scientific activity and critical inquiry originate from the fact that we assume that the terms such as "science" and "criticism" are simple and unequivocal. For example, Elder sees the problem of definition simply in terms of inter-changeability: to define the "scientific method" we just substitute "cine-structuralism." The latter terms also assumes for Elder certain emotive connotations: cine-structuralism represents everything that is regressive and wrong-headed in contemporary film criticism.

The multiplicity of meanings of the term "criticism" becomes apparent from an examination of this term. Film criticism like science may possess a uniform purpose (e.g. the elucidation of filmic works) but its **activity** is by no means homogeneous. Criticism can mean appreciation, but it can also mean censure and denigration; it can mean the assessment of works from various perspectives: ideological, philosophical, ethical, aesthetic. Criticism can also refer to the problems of historical research associated with the understanding of a work. The term can embrace the spontaneous judgement of a film or the lengthy and considered evaluation of its intricate workings. Indeed the terms "judgement," "evaluation," "criticism," are "family concepts," in the Wittgensteinian sense: their meanings overlap at various points but at others they diverge considerably. Thus the film theoretician must be certain about the type of criticism he is performing and the constraints that are inherent in his particular approach.

Elder's uncertain grasp of his own terminology is illustrated by the following comments: "Thus we have the spectacle on the contemporary critical scene of a number of **competing methodological tools**, each of which celebrates a certain kind of structural and relational complexity without giving us any reason to believe that such complexity has any **aesthetic relevance**. In many cases it does not." (P.99)

On the same page he continues his argument: "That methodological aridity is a danger to which any structuralist and semiological analyses have succumbed is nowhere in greater evidence than in the rigorously **positivistic and empiricistic** character of their quest to uncover cinematic codes. The pursuit could be described essentially as one that attempts to demonstrate that one can observe certain common patterns, of, say, shots exist in certain groups of films. No attempt is made, however, to show that such patterns have any **aesthetic validity**." (italics mine)

Elder offers the reader little amplification of his pivotal notions of "aesthetic relevance" and "aesthetic validity" and the terms "positivistic" and "empiricistic" appear to him to be roughly synonymous. The term "positivism" was first coined by Auguste Comte and "stands for a certain attitude to human knowledge." It attempts to inform us as to "what kind of contents in our statements about the world deserve the name of knowledge and supplies us with norms that make it possible to distinguish between that which may not reasonably be asked."¹ Hence one could argue that positivism is really a **normative** attitude which tries to dictate how we should use such terms as "knowledge," "science," **and** "criticism." Empiricism on the other hand, is the doctrine that all knowledge is ultimately derived from sensory experience and this philosophy was first propounded by philosophers such as John Locke and David Hume.

A useful distinction in the philosophy of science, not considered by either Elder or Nichols, is that between the **process** of science and its **product**. The former refers to what scientists actually do: observing, collating data, experimenting, reasoning; the latter term has to do with such questions as the relationship between statements which make up theories, the form such statements take, the nature of reason-giving in scientific inquiry. The process-product distinction can also be expressed in terms of difference between the context of discovery (it is difficult to find "sound" scientific hypotheses) and the context of validation (how do we formulate: criteria for determining whether or not a hypothesis or model is "sound").

The relevance of the foregoing distinctions becomes apparent if we scrutinize some of Elder's statements. He is entitled to challenge the utility of various "competing methodological tools" in the analysis of particular films and to query their "aesthetic relevance." Questions such as these fall within the domain of the "product" of any inquiry; it is a matter of validation, of questioning the results obtained by various schools of critical thought. However, he is **not** entitled to rule out the efficacy of cinestructuralism or any other "methodology" altogether because such questions fall within the ambit of the **process** of scientific inquiry, its context of discovery. Furthermore, it is evident that Elder's conceptual confusions cause him to make **ex cathedra** pronouncements about the inappropriateness of "the scientific method" to film study.

1. L. Kolakowski, **Positivist Philosophy** (Penguin Bks, 1972) pp.10-11.

What must also be appreciated is that when someone argues for a "science of criticism" or a "scientific method," it is not always clear what exactly is at stake. If such an argument merely implies that criticism should be conducted in a more methodical and systematic fashion than has been done in the past, then most critics, no matter what their persuasion, would concur. Indeed, most critics would argue that critical judgement is not simply an autobiographical revelation, a question of taste which is beyond rational discussion. Even for a critic such as Elder, who insists upon the importance of a "normative base" and "the subjective moment" in "aesthetic inquiry," would concede the above as is evidenced by his interest in "metacriticism." The critic hopes that his judgements about a work possess inter-subjective significance and any programme which promises to make his judgements valid for a greater number of sensitive students of film would be welcome.

But the claim that criticism is or should be a science usually implies more than the advocacy of greater systematization. The argument essentially takes two forms: either that the critic should proceed in his investigations the way a scientist does or, in the case of film, that the critic should enlist non-filmic techniques and bodies of knowledge in order to obtain new insights into his area of specialization. By adapting such "scientific" disciplines as psychology, sociology, linguistics and semiotics to the practice of criticism, it is hoped that criticism will achieve greater organization and reliability. Moreover, the advisability of applying non-filmic techniques and disciplines to film criticism is ultimately dependent upon the way we conceive the relationship between the practice of criticism and scientific inquiry.

The argument that criticism is **not** a science may represent several divergent claims that should be examined separately. On the one hand, it could mean that the scientific **techniques** employed by, say, an empirically-minded critic as he sets about delineating various responses to a given film are very different to the techniques of a physicist when he studies, say, the expansion of gases. However, the claim that criticism is not a science can be based upon a more serious objection than that the critic and scientist employ incompatible **techniques**. It may mean that there exists a great difference between the **methodology** of scientific inquiry and criticism. In other words, the two disciplines are different in their rationales, they use different logics of justification, they abide by different standards of precision and validation. What is at issue here is the pervasiveness of the scientific method itself. Do such disciplines as aesthetics, ethics, and criticism fall within the ambit of the scientific method? Both Elder and Nichols in their arguments do not separate clearly enough questions relating to **technique** from those pertaining to **methodology**.

It should be mentioned that there is an implied contrast between the methodologies of science and criticism in **some** of the attempts to apply scientific disciplines to critical practice. Scientific procedure is conceived as **linear**: we progress from a body of known facts that can be accurately recorded and then proceed on the basis of these facts to such new areas of investigation as criticism. By contrast, traditional criticism is seen as wedded to a will-o-wisp methodology, as following a crooked and devious path. The unsteady hand of the critic is to be stabilized by the sure and confident clasp of the psychologist or semiotician.

Many endeavors to "shore up" critical practice with "scientific" disciplines are based upon certain assumptions about the nature of science and criticism. It is often assumed that the philosophy of science is somehow less problematic than the philosophy of criticism. It is not appreciated that there are such crucial questions as the place and function of models in scientific explanation, the status of the principle of induction, the relationship between theoretical language and observation language, how best to characterize the principle of verification, about which philosophers of science find it difficult to agree.² Thus the scientifically-minded critic must beware of making any rash assertions about the capacity of science vis-à-vis the practice of criticism. As mentioned earlier, exponents of a science of criticism and critics such as Elder who are sceptical about the "scientific method" tend to adhere to a **linear** notion of science.

2. Baruch A. Brody (ed) **Readings in the Philosophy of Science** (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1979) pp.252-293; Stephen Toulmin. **The Philosophy of Science**. London: Hutchison. 1967) pp. 34-42; pp.112-115; K.R. Popper. **The Logic of Scientific Discovery**, (London: Hutchinson, revised 1968 edition) pp. 32-48.

The difficulties encountered by anyone who attempts to characterize the relationship between the "scientific method" and disciplines which are often deemed to fail outside the sphere of the "hard" sciences can be seen from Louis Althusser's discussion of Freudian psychoanalysis and its adoption by Lacan. Althusser offers us a "materialist" analysis of scientific procedure: we commence with a practice ("analytic cure") and a technique ("the method of the cure") that give rise to an abstract exposition with the appearance of **a theory**.³ However, the reverse, not considered by Althusser, could also be quite true: that we start with a "theory" and then set about finding an appropriate "practice" and "technique" for that theory. Althusser's treatment of the "scientific method" as it applies to psychoanalysis borders on positivism. In order to qualify as a new science, psychoanalysis must be based on a new "object," the "unconscious."⁴ It will be recalled that positivism tries to give us clear guidelines as to **what** constitutes "knowledge" and true "science." Nevertheless, Althusser's characterization of the scientific method is very problematic itself. He begs the question as to whether or not one can speak of **a new** "science," in the strict sense of the term, and his notion of "object" receives little explication.⁵ Moreover, Althusser claims that due to the "newness" of Freud's concepts, Freud had to borrow concepts from thermodynamics in order to explain his new "theories." Althusser assures us that modern psychoanalysis as presented by Lacan no longer has to rely upon such primitive **imported** concepts in view of "the light that structural linguistics throws on its object, making possible an intelligible approach to that science."⁶

Althusser does not consider the possibility that "structural linguistics" itself may be problematic and he takes it for granted that the insights of structural linguistics are automatically applicable to psychoanalysis. Indeed, it may very well be that, in the future, linguistics may represent the same sort of "theoretical" liability to psychoanalysis as the thermodynamic "models," employed by Freud, represent to orthodox psychoanalytic theory. It is also questionable that a discipline, which is so dependent upon models from other disciplines, can be regarded as a truly autonomous "science" with its own "object." This latter consideration is vital for current film theory with its heavy reliance upon "imported" concepts.

However, if we adopt the Peircean concept of science which is essentially "circular" then the gap between critical and scientific practice may be considerably narrowed and the question of applying scientific methods to criticism may be seen in a different light. For C.S. Peirce, scientific enquiry in any field involves the constant reappraisal of past facts in the light of present and future information. The signal characteristic of "a scientific" intelligence is its ability "to learn by experience."⁷ What we have here is not inductive (or linear) but **hypothetic** inference: in the former we conclude that facts, similar to observed facts, are true in cases not examined, whereas in the latter we conclude the existence of a fact quite different from anything observed; the former classifies, and the latter explains. We do not simply generalize from observed facts that Napoleon lived; the historical fact that Napoleon lived in the 19th century is a hypothesis which we believe because of certain effects resulting from this fact — "tradition, the histories, monuments."⁸

If scientific inquiry is conceived in the Peircean way, then the gulf between scientific and critical enquiry tends to diminish because we no longer need to dwell upon the observational stage when we characterize the scientific method, nor do we need to concentrate upon the interpretive stage when we describe critical procedure. Indeed, any methodology, be it critical or scientific, that is governed by discernible rules, a methodology which admits the right or wrong procedures, would continually rely upon both observation and interpretation. Moreover, the critic, too "learns by experience" what theories and methods work for him. He must be flexible in his approach to his subject. When he encounters a new work for the first time, he must be willing to re-think his procedures, and, if necessary, he may have to revise some of his previous judgements. Both the scientist and the critic work on certain basic assumptions. The scientist assumes that if all attempts to falsify his hypothesis have failed then his fellow scientists will accept his hypothesis. The critic conducts his craft on the assumption that fellow practitioners agree on such basic questions as what is original and what

3. Louis Althusser, **Lenin and Philosophy**, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971) p. 197

4. Althusser, p. 198.

5. Althusser sees scientific progress in terms of "breaks" and "ruptures" in the theoretical base of a science; he does not adhere to the more common notion of scientific progress as a cumulative, self-correcting process

6. Althusser. p.207.

7. C.S. Peirce. **Collected Papers** (Cambridge University Press, 1932) vol. 2, p. 134.

8. W.B. Gallie. **Peirce and Pragmatism** (Penguin, 1952), p. 95.

is clichéd, the function of art, the relationship between art and human nature. For instance, if a film critic has conclusively shown that a film only uses stock characters and situations, employs hackneyed themes and tired camera techniques and his interlocutor still does not concede that this makes for a "clichéd" film, then the dispute is no longer about the film but about the meaning of the notion "clichéd." Similarly, if a physician has used over a long period of time a new vaccine for a previously incurable disease and in every case the patient staged a complete recovery, then the physician would be entitled to argue that he has found a cure for the disease. This is especially the case if the physician can offer a theoretical explanation for the success of his vaccine and other physicians can replicate his treatment. Anyone who refuses to acknowledge that the vaccine does work, is not really calling the efficacy of the vaccine into question but what constitutes correct medical procedure.

Another vital consideration which received scant attention in the Elder/Nichols debate is how the critic actually goes about "reading" a particular film, or as Barthes puts it, "the infinite dialogue between criticism and the work".⁹ When a critic views a new film, he strives for a coherent interpretation of the material before him. He formulates a "hypothesis" as to the film's meaning and tries to articulate as clearly as possible the significance the work has **for him**. His "reading" of the film must be informed by what could be called "interested" objectivity. However, in making out the meaning of a work, the critic relies not only upon his own emotions but also upon the "evidence" which is to be found within the work. For instance, after viewing a film, the critic will form a hypothesis as to its meaning. Subsequent viewings will either confirm his initial reading or may cause him to alter it. In some instances previously unnoticed details within the film may come to light which induces him to discard completely his earlier reading. Thus criticism does involve the unceasing tug-of-war between original "readings" and subsequent exposures which may cause the critic to change his earlier assessment, a flexible system of checks and balances which enable the critic to reduce the margin of error in the appropriateness of his reading. This aspect of critical activity could be described as "scientific" insofar as the critic is employing inductive procedures; he is learning from his experience of various works which sort of interpretation will "wear" and which ones will not.

It is appropriate to conclude this discussion with a brief examination of the philosophy of criticism as espoused by Roland Barthes, who is one of the most astute and perceptive writers on the subject. He is fully aware of the complexity of the critical task and, unlike writers such as Elder or Nichols, does not indulge in simplifications and easy solutions. Barthes urges us to regard a work as an "anthropological fact," which is open-textured and the repository of many "meanings."¹⁰ He also argues that there are several points of entry to a work and no one entry should be declared as the principal one.¹¹ What is more, Barthes appreciates the problem of enlisting appropriate models to the practice of criticism. For instance, criticism should not try to emulate the physical sciences with their statistical norms and their preoccupation with general properties.¹² Furthermore, the nature of "objectivity" in criticism must not be conceived in positivistic terms. For Barthes the problem of "objectivity" should not be boiled down to such questions as "What is the quality of the work that exists outside of us"¹³ but instead, objectivity in criticism should be seen in terms of the rigour and consistency with which we apply a particular code or model to a work.¹⁴ What is required is a "**hypothetical** model of description" which helps us to explain how the infinite variations of a "language" are engendered.¹⁵ Barthes maintains that criticism can be divided in two "parallel" methods: **academic** which is "positivist" or "objective" and **interpretive** which is "attached, more or less explicitly but in any case consciously, to one of the major ideologies of the moment, existentialism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, phenomenology."¹⁶ However, Barthes argues quite rightly that "positivism is an ideology like the rest" and consequently, there exists no real division between the two methods.¹⁷ Barthes also states that "all criticism must include in its own discourse. . . an implicit reflection on itself; every criticism is a criticism of the work **and** a criticism on itself."¹⁸ The Elder/Nichols debate is not sufficiently reflective "on itself" and, unlike Barthes, both participants are not fully aware of the complexity of critical activity and the difficulties inherent in any endeavour to relate criticism to "science."

9. Roland Barthes **Critical Essays** (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972) p. xii.

10. Roland Barthes **Critique et Vérité**, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966) p. 50

11. Roland Barthes **S/Z** (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970) p. 12

12. Barthes, **Critique et Vérité**, p.66

13. Ibid, p.17

14. Ibid. p. 20

15. Ibid. p. 57

16. Barthes, **Critical Essays**, p. 249.

17. Ibid. p. 250.

18. Ibid. p. 257.

PESARO: HOLLYWOOD 1970's

The fifteenth Mostra Internazionale del Nuovo Cinema, held in Pesaro, Italy, 14-22 June 1979, was devoted to the Hollywood cinema of the 70's. sometimes also referred to as the new American cinema. For a festival such as this, founded (1965) and acclaimed on a commitment to the exhibition of little known or available films, often of lesser known national cinemas, the choice requires justification. Why Hollywood. Because there is no more "new cinema," claims the Mostra organizing committee (Lino Micciche, Adriano Apra, Mino Argentieri, Ernesto G. Laura, Bruno Torri, Sandro Zambetti), if by that one means political or movement cinema; even Straub/Huillet, once significantly absent from official festivals, are now showing at Cannes, as are the Taviani brothers and Olmi. More and more, in the last decade, cinema and Hollywood have again become coextensive with one another. Faced with the latter's efficient imperialism, and its strategies aimed at occupying all the spaces of cinema from expressive redundancy to the ethics of poverty, Cinecitta and other national cinemas have reached an impasse. Their historically defined areas of esthetic and ideological productivity have been taken over by a cinematic technology whose primary concerns are not communication, information and the production of meaning, but rather the production of imagery and the mise en scene of information (e.g. **The Deer Hunter, Star Wars, Apocalypse Now**). Even "independent" cinema, where it still exists, is neither really independent nor alternative to the industry's dominance — today's new waves are contemplated in the budget as P.R. expenses when they are not directly planned in the multinational study centres. Thus, the program description states, "after the utopias of the 60's. it is perhaps more useful to look closely at cinema's 'dependence' from Hollywood before dreaming of other 'independencies'."

As in two previous festivals set up to reexamine neorealism and Italian cinema under Fascism, the 1979 Pesaro project was to approach Hollywood "scientifically," without holy reverence but at the same time without the need for ideological exorcism: "gone are the days when some could argue that the worst Soviet film was better than the best U.S. film." The overall intent, then, was to provide otherwise unavailable materials toward a critical reevaluation of Hollywood cinema and its relationship to Italian film culture. Screenings included a section of 30 films never or not yet distributed in Italy (**Sounder, Roseland, The Paper Chase, Heroes, Blue Collar, The Warriors**, etc), a section of some 30 commercially exhibited films, edited and dubbed, which were apparently considered worthy of special attention as vintage auteurial works (Altman, Cassavetes, Forman, Scorsese, Milius, Mazursky, Malick, Cimino, Allen, etc.); and a third section of 20 or so videotaped original versions of previously distributed films. A small opportunity for critical debate and public discussion was provided at the end of a four-day conference in which participated major Italian critics plus a handful of Americans (Robert Sklar, Thomas Guback, Stephen Harvey of the New York Museum of Modern Art, and Tom Luddy of the Berkeley Pacific Film Archive), and after the screenings of Stanton Kaye's **He Wants Her Back** (1978) and Karen Arthur's **The Mafu Cage** (1978) in the presence of the respective filmmakers. No one appeared surprised that, out of the eighty recent films selected — not a few of which were independently produced — only one was directed by a woman. And indeed there were sounds of relief in the audience when Karen Arthur, in answer to the first question from the floor, said that she had nothing against men, in fact she loved them.

The papers delivered at the conference ranged from general overviews of U.S. society in the 70's, a survey of film studies at the university level, and sociological descriptions of the new audiences, the young directors, the new comedians, and so forth, to analyses of the economics of the film industry, thematic criticism, and theoretical genre definitions. A central concern surfacing in nearly all contributions and debates was the "Hollywood myth" — a sure sign that ideology is not so easily exorcised. Guido Oldrini of **Cinema Nuovo**, for one, took issue

with the excessive and indiscriminate admiration for American cinema as absolute cinema, or as cinema **tout court**, on the part of several Communist Party film critics; the other side of the argument being Alberto Abruzzese's view that the contemporary social imagination was shaped and expanded for all classes, and thus collectivized, by this dream machine capable of integrating "high" (esthetic, artistic) and "low" (vulgar, entertainment) practices — cinema's capacity for mythmaking. According to Enrico Ghezzi of **Fiction**, it was the ability to re-visit and ritually repeat its past, the power to re-present itself as myth, that characterized Hollywood in the 70's, its real production of the myth of **cinema**, of cinema as myth. Another position, representative of certain sectors of the Italian counterculture and its radical affirmation of pleasure as social-personal, political instance, saw American cinema as the only one still capable of producing fiction. Given that no ideological or expressive independence is possible in the current situation of complete economic control of the media by a multinational culture industry, concluded Emanuela Martini of **Cineforum**, "the path of theoretical inquiry in cinema inevitably intersects the path of pleasure (which I refuse to consider synonymous with regression)... Today only one road is open to us (a road regrettably superstructural) if we are to repossess cinema, as spectators; letting the film possess us, yielding to the primary need it responds to, we can engage with it not in a relationship of binary communication (now unthinkable with any mass medium) but in a more honest dialectic; we can take from cinema what it can give (what we always sought in it), a plunge in the imaginary the representation of our double which is not (even in the so-called realist films) faithful reproduction of reality, but visualization of the sphere of fantasy and desire. This has been, and still is, the lesson of American cinema."

What the Pesaro-Hollywood confrontation showed, at its best, was Pesaro's Hollywood, that is to say, its particular construction of the myth of cinema in Italian terms — historical modes of productivity, critique and fascination that are cinema's conditions of presence in Italy in the 70's.

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July, 1979



André Bazin, Dudley Andrew. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978
\$11.95 cloth

A book that takes its subject seriously, explores the subject with intelligence, sympathy and clarity and manages to communicate not only the Sense of this being a subject which matters but also **why** this subject matters, at least to the author, is a welcome book indeed. Dudley Andrew's **André Bazin** is such a book. Despite flaws, it is based upon diligent research and rigorous intent so that new knowledge is virtually guaranteed all but the best informed readers. At the same time, by constructing a singular, if not entirely consistent argument, Andrew's book allows issue to be taken in a rigorous fashion rather than inviting lamentations of slipshod research and half-baked opinions that leave behind bookshelf rubble rather than useful foundational stones.

Andrew's greatest contribution lies in his sketches of biographical and intellectual history. The efforts lend a more palpable sense of time and place to Bazin's writings and, less intentionally, help us describe aspects of the milieu against which most of the New Wave critic-filmmakers turned (as well as their even more politically-oriented successors at **Cahiers du Cinema**). At times Andrew asks us to take a great deal on faith; for example, that the plethora of positive adjectives ("Bazin eagerly read Malraux's one and only treatise on the cinema" p.68) have some form of verification behind them, but on the whole this aspect of the book reminds us of the admirable personal qualities Bazin possessed and of how he devoted them to his love for the cinema. Andrew also reminds us of Bazin's broadly political concerns, his activity within the arena of the cine-club, factory and union-hall screenings, his efforts to educate and inspire in an open but challenging manner. The academic and cultural institutions now surrounding the cinema were well toward the horizon of Bazin's activities. In that context he served an admirable function of combining a serious intellectual engagement with film, a provocative popularization of the cinema as an art, and an organizational effort to create viable institutions of criticism and exhibition for the cinema. This multi-faceted ability and its successful combination deserves acknowledgement on its own, perhaps even more so than Bazin's writings in isolation; Andrew's book provides us with a sound introduction to precisely this aspect of Bazin's career.

The greatest deficiency with the book is its tendency toward hagiography. The lack of a critical perspective toward Bazin leads to some seriously limited assumptions and implications: first, that what Bazin became engaged in was what was most important in French culture. Andrew supports Bazin's withdrawal from a program of rehabilitation for French prisoners-of-war by explaining that the post-war era "was the great epoch of 'cultural animation' in which idealistic members of the Resistance banded together to use the momentum of the Liberation as a starting point for a much more thoroughgoing liberation, that of culture itself" (p. 85). The implicit narrowness of scope attributed to the Liberation here easily leads to speculation whether these were "idealistic" or simply "idealist" members of the Resistance. If points like this were debated openly at the time, there is little Sense of it in Andrew's account.

Second, that because Bazin was a great human being he was also a great critic. (I could easily say "great man": there is little sense that women played anything but quite traditional roles in the lives of Bazin and his colleagues.) Qualities that made Bazin loved as a person, which Andrew summarizes from Jean Renoir's homage as "the love of the natural, the subtle perception of an order which seems to emanate from the accidental arrangement of things; the appreciation of the minor or bizarre; the importance of an environment at once personal and mysterious which can be inhabited and studied at the same time" (p. 218) are qualities also found in his writings. Therefore, his writings are also to be loved and cherished; they offer us a path back to an appreciation and openness before life which is truly admirable. The syllogism is obviously faulty.

Third, that because Bazin is a great critic his basic assumptions, even if they treat topics like ambiguity, are consistent and of enduring value. The work of producing this consistency no doubt leaves the most gaps in Andrew's text. The difficulties, if not outright errors and contradictions in essays like "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" are iced over to present us with a wholesome, harmonious, radiant recapitulation of Bazin's original argument.* Andrew's re-presentation of Bazin's criticism rides an asymptote of its own — effacing itself as a "mechanical duplication" of its referent while holding itself from a collapse into identity by a hagiographic style directed more toward Bazin than the real world that was Bazin's own target. The work of producing enduring value depends largely upon this explanatory "ironing board" effect and *ad hominem* appeals to Bazin's personal character: how could a great human being produce anything less than great criticism? Regrettably, Andrew does not even indirectly address the large body of criticism directed against Bazin's aesthetic leaving the reader with the feeling that despite the historical placement of Bazin's career on one level, he did indeed operate in a timeless realm of essential truth or, alternatively, that the criticism against Bazin are unanswerable; his endurance necessarily depends upon an act of disavowal.

Bazin remains for me one of the important figures in film theory and criticism because he did attempt to take account of the cinema's indexical relationship to its referent. Subsequent developments in criticism have located this relationship within an arena of bourgeois ideology and have sometimes pointed out Bazin's own complicity with that ideology, but they have seldom succeeded in addressing the phenomenon of our captivation with the cinematic image itself as a starting point for a more rigorous relation to film, and films. Once identified as ideological the question for many has become how to escape the tyranny of captivation; hence support for avant-garde practices and a theory of the "difficult" text, be it written or cinematic. These developments have led to a form of political "interrogation/intervention" with the cinema localized within academic and cultural elites where concern for reaching a larger constituency receives relatively low priority. If Bazin counselled reverence more than suspicion he at least directed his attention to those forms of cinema which were broadcast in their appeal, and his remarks to a large, heterogeneous audience. Andrew helps remind us of the political significance of this choice and even if he does not carry questions of politics and film any further than Bazin, he at least returns us to the central arena of popular film not in relation to but as part of the relations of production in post-war western society.

Bill Nichols



* In addition to the other, well-known criticism of Bazin's writings and this essay in particular, I recommend the discussion in Gaston Roberge's **Films for an Ecology of Mind: Essays on Realism in the Cinema** (Calcutta: Firma KLM Ltd., 1978).

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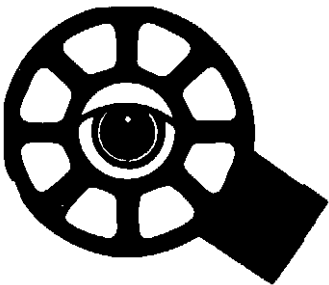
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