

CINÉ - TRACTS

A JOURNAL OF FILM AND CULTURAL STUDIES

9



A SPECIAL SECTION ON CHILEAN
CINEMA, INCLUDING AN INTERVIEW
WITH PATRICIO GUZMAN

PETER WATKINS ON TELEVISION

FILM AND HISTORY

AVANT-GARDE FILM: SNOW & RIMMER

THE CINEMA OF JOHN CASSAVETES



\$2.50/£1.50

cine-tracts

Ciné-Tracts, A Journal of Film and Cultural Studies is published four times a year (on an irregular basis) and is a non-profit publication. Editorial Office: 4227 Esplanade Avenue, Montreal, Québec, Canada. H2W 1T1

Graphic Reproduction, Vanier Press.

Editor: Ron Burnett
Editors: Martha Aspler Burnett, Hart Cohen, Phil Vitone.
Correspondant: Alison Beale.
Associate Editors: Ron Abramson, Peter Harcourt, Teresa de Lauretis, Jacqueline Levitin, Bill Nichols, Zuzana M. Pick, Rick Thompson, Thomas Waugh.
Advisory Editorial Board: David Crowley, John Fekete, Virginia Fish, Peter Ohlin, Donald Theall.

Please note that the articles printed in Ciné-Tracts are copyrighted and their reproduction is not permitted without the consent of the Editors.

The viewpoints expressed in Ciné-Tracts are those of its authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors.

Manuscripts are not returned and must be sent in triplicate, double spaced.
Dépot Légal Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec et Bibliothèque Nationale du Canada.

Indexed in the International index to Film Periodicals (F.I.A.F.), Film and Literature Index (Albany) and The Alternative Press Index.

Single Issue, \$2.50, Subscription, \$8.00 per year. (Foreign, including US. \$10) Institutional Subscriptions are \$12.00 (Foreign inc. U.S. \$14.00)

Exclusive Distribution in the U.K. by The Motion Picture Bookshop, National Film Theatre, South Bank, London, SE1 8XT

SECOND CLASS REGISTRATION NUMBER 4104
ISSN 0704 016X

contents

Volume 3 Number 1 Winter, 1980

Media Repression A Personal Statement by Peter Watkins	1
The Myth of Total Cinema History by Will Straw	8
A Special Section on Chilean Cinema by Zuzana M. Pick	
Chile: The Cinema of Resistance 1973-79.....	18
Filmography 1973-1979.....	21
Documentary and Fiction:	
Witnesses to History	24
Interview with Patricio Guzman.....	29
Letter from Guzman to Chris Marker	35
Reflections Previous to the Filming of The Battle of Chile	38
The Battle of Chile: A Schematic Shooting Script	46
The Cinema of Latin America A Constantly Changing Problematic	50
David Rimmer's Surfacing on the Thames by Blaine Allen	56
On Michael Snow by Bruce Elder	62
The Cinema of John Cassavetes by Marcia Landy and Stanley Shostack	68

Contributors: Peter Watkin's films include, Punishment Park, Culloden, The War Game, Edvard Munch. Will Straw is presently completing research at McGill University. Zuzana M. Pick teaches at Carleton University, Blaine Allen is the editor of Film Reader. Bruce Elder is an experimental filmmaker and teacher in Toronto, Marcia Landy and Stanley Shostack teach at the University of Pittsburgh.

MARXIST UNION

FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE

JUNE 19-22

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

"INTELLECTUAL LABOR AND CLASS STRUGGLE"

WORKSHOPS ON SOCIALIST-FEMINISM, THE ECONOMIC CRISIS, MEDIA ACTIVISM, ACADEMIC UNIONIZING, MARXISM AND SCIENCE, LAW, SOCIALIST PEDAGOGY, THE PUBLIC SPHERE, FILM, THIRD WORLD MARXISM, IDEOLOGY, THE CAPITALIST STATE, INTELLECTUALS AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT, AND OTHER TOPICS.

TENTATIVE PARTICIPANTS INCLUDE S. ARONOWITZ
A. BRIDGES, H. CLEAVER, E.F. & E. GENOVESE,
H. GINTIS, H. HARTMANN, M. HARRINGTON,
N. HARTSOCK, F. JAMESON, T. KAPLAN, D. KELLNER
J. LESAGE, G.C. SPIVAK, A. WATKINS, S. WOODS,
JZIPES.

SPONSORS: DISCOURSE, MARXIST PERSPECTIVES, NEW
GERMAN CRITIQUE, SOCIALIST REVIEW, SOCIAL
TEXT IN THESE TIMES

TO REGISTER: GENE HOLLAND & MIMI KAIRSCHNER
LITERATURE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093

MEDIA REPRESSION A PERSONAL STATEMENT

PETER WATKINS

Recently, I read two articles on the front page of the Danish newspaper 'Politiken' (27 Nov. 1979) — the first confirmed that there are now at least 10,000 attempts at suicide each year in Denmark, the second article dealt with the arrival in Europe of the new American tactical nuclear missiles. Then, this evening, my elder son told me by phone from Paris that the french TV has this day been warning of the possibility of nuclear war, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Danish report on suicide raises a grim irony, which I will mention later. But the other two media items provoke a worrying thought, which will be the basis for this article — that, if our planet is indeed plunged into nuclear catastrophe — countless millions of those who will suffer, will have had little if any knowledge about the nature and implications of the weapons that have caused the suffering, or about the social and economic and military and political forces and doctrines that have led to the war (i.e., World War III). In other words, though we have heard and read in the media about the possibility of nuclear war, most of us — including those in the media who have produced the words — have only a vague comprehension as to what these words mean, in their full context. We sit, and the words slip past, meaningless. But what is happening here? How can we be so passive about so major a potential disaster? Is there a relationship between our inactivity, and the ways in which we receive our "information" on this and other world-subjects? I believe that the answer to this question is unequivocally "yes" — and I would like to offer, through my own personal and professional experience — several connecting points between the current world dilemmas (most specifically, our inability to react to them), and what I see as the present crisis in the mass media, especially TV. We can perhaps understand it, first, as a problem related directly to the withholding of information from the public. Secondly, as related to the yet uncharted effects of the highly structured and repetitive visual language system that TV uses to impart what "information" it does convey.

Let us look at the suppression of information. In 1965 I made **THE WAR GAME** for BBC-TV, depicting the outbreak of World War III. The film dealt with the escalating spread of nuclear weapons, and stated that by 1980 the conditions would be ready for a use of these weapons. **THE WAR GAME** described the possibility that a nuclear war could start by the use of tactical nuclear weapons in the European/NATO area. In November 1965, the BBC banned **THE WAR GAME** from being shown on TV, either in Britain or anywhere else in the world. Further, the BBC have maintained the world-wide embargo on the TV use of the film for 14 years, despite its relevancy to the contemporary world. In 1968, Sudwestfunk (a West German TV company based at Baden-Baden) gave me a signed contract to remake **THE WAR GAME** to show the possible results of a nuclear attack on Hamburg. Ten days before I was due to start work, SWF tore up the contract, and I was told that the film was cancelled — one reason being that it was not "aesthetic" to show nuclear war on TV. In 1975 Danmarks Radio (Danish TV) and Norddeutscher Rundfunk TV (based in Hamburg) agreed to co-produce a film with Bo Melander and myself, to show what could happen if the Indian Point reactor 2 north of New York City went into melt-down. At the last moment, the West Germans collapsed the production, claiming that they had been informed by one of their "technical experts" that such a melt-down was impossible. Early this past year, The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation asked me to make a film for them. I proposed to show what could happen if the newly constructed reactor in the Philippines (partly fuelled by Canadian uranium) went into melt-down. The CBC abruptly withdrew its offer of work, and the letter confirming their rejection of the Philippines film was typed two days before the Harrisburg accident in the United States.

In 1976, with Poul Martinsen and Carsten Clante, I made **EVENING LAND** (Aftonlandet) for the Danish Film Institute. This film shows a strike in a Copenhagen shipyard, prompted by the management's acceptance of a contract to build the hulls for 4 nuclear missile submarines for the French navy. At the conclusion of the film, a meeting of European Defense Ministers (which we staged ourselves) is shown discussing the need for NATO to acquire the Cruise Missile (an American tactical nuclear missile) as a "balance" against the Soviet arms build-up. **EVENING LAND** — probably the first political feature film of its kind ever made in Scandinavia — was heavily attacked by the Danish and Swedish press, and withdrawn from its cinema in Stockholm after a few days. More recently, it has become clear that the Danish Film Institute will not permit **EVENING LAND** to be released to American cinemas or universities, and Danmarks Radio have refused to allow the film to be shown on Danish TV, despite the urgent relevancy of this film, too, to world events (the Danish Parliament is currently debating whether or not to permit the Cruise Missiles onto Danish soil). The Chairman of Danmarks Radio has charged that **EVENING LAND** does not "reach a standard which DR finds necessary." Given that many Danes I have spoken with find the average programme content of DR to be immature, boring and irrelevant to their lives, one wonders exactly what this "standard" is. I recall watching a recent programme on Danish TV, in which most scenes consisted of a crowd of men in grey suits chasing a naked belly dancer down endless corridors. This was an hour long film (I think it was a Hungarian spy drama) and it was shown at peak-hour viewing. To claim that such rubbish has a "standard" and at the same time ban a serious and relevant film such as **EVENING LAND** is an indecent and hypocritical joke.

One realizes, of course, that the arguments of "standard" and "quality" are being used in a special and highly selective manner which is not normally applied to the vast bulk of TV material which reaches the public. This is a completely untenable paradox. So much of contemporary TV — with its emphasis on physical or moral violence — its tasteless "low common denominator" comedies — its extravagant and empty costume dramas — its absurdly fragmented and often superficial current-affairs programmes and news-items — are all a tremendous insult to the integrity and intelligence of the audience. The gap between audience wishes and the transmitted material is now vast — and it is still the TV profession itself which ignores, this gap — claiming, as it does, that the average audience is intellectually lazy, and does not want to be bothered or worried by serious or complex programming. As

a part of the phenomenon, TV has developed to the point of mania the simplified narrative structure, with its synchronized sounds and images — completely antithetical to the complex experience of life. Any attempt to work with film in a more liberating manner, dislocating time and space, is reacted to with enormous resentment within much of the TV profession. A similar reaction is provoked by the use of amateur actors — especially if they work in a free and improvisational manner. It is almost as if TV is deeply afraid of losing what it sees as its control over the audience — a control which could be threatened by the use of freely associative sounds and images, or by people (and not rigidly organized actors) expressing themselves freely and in a complex way. This fear within TV manifests itself in many ways, and not only with ostensibly political subjects.

After the first showing in Norway of **EDVARD MUNCH** (NRK-TV and SR-TV, 1973-1975) a group of Norwegian TV producers reportedly condemned the film for, amongst other things, my use of amateur actors. A senior official with Swedish TV, on the radio, attacked me for "developing the cult of the amateur" and another Swedish TV official stated, also on radio, that I did not know what I was doing when I made films. In many quarters within Scandinavian TV, there was obviously a great deal of resentment for the film **EDVARD MUNCH** — for its amateur actors, for its style and for its complexity. The Norwegian TV (NPK) then censored the sound-track, despite a special Norwegian law which is supposed to protect the integrity of any creative work. The Swedish TV tried to hold back **EDVARD MUNCH** from being shown at the annual Nordisk Film Screenings (they evidently felt that the film was not worth showing to TV delegates from other countries). In the same period, the NRK destroyed all the sound mixing tracks of the film, and all the original quarter inch recordings, just at the time that I needed them to re-mix the cinema version of the film. A few months later, the NRK tried to hold back the film from being shown at the Cannes Film Festival, and did succeed in preventing **EDVARD MUNCH** from representing Norway at the Festival.

It is obvious, in fact, that the "liberal" repression which has been emerging as a phenomenon in TV over the past 15 years, is now fully out in the open, and that what one has to fear — is not only the conservatism and political timidity at the managerial level — but a particular kind of jealousy (of commitment) that cuts in from the ranks of one's own "radical" colleagues. This jealousy links with an increased personal emphasis on ego, ambition, self-fulfillment and job security. One can almost see the fear which now drips down the walls of TV-corridors. And, using the names of "quality" and "professionalism" and "objectivity" and "standard" the middle-echelon of Western TV are now exercising a repression which is even more severe than that of the political bosses who they like to claim are responsible, but in fact whose only guilt — often — is that they (the bosses) provide an excuse, or a front, for the middle-echelon to carry out a wave of censorship (and self-censorship) unparalleled since the inception of public TV broadcasting. The result: that personal, subjective, committed, individual programme — or film making is being openly stamped out, in the name of, and for the sake of, "authoritative" and "objective" programming. In a word, personal propaganda is being eliminated for the sake of corporate propaganda, quite oblivious of the fact that the effect (on the audience) of the highly structured, fragmented and repetitive language-system developed by TV has rendered the concept of "objectivity" both absurd and at the same time, highly dangerous. But, oblivious to this, Western TV is desperately pursuing its goal of safe, non-controversial "quality" wrapped within a facile, narrative structure and quite ruthlessly eliminating everything which threatens this "ideal."

In 1974 I made **THE SEVENTIES PEOPLE** for Danmarks Radio TV. This film dealt with the complex social causes of suicide within Denmark, including a system which places great stress on young people; the role of the media, and various ambient "external" pressures, such as the nuclear arms race, and world instability, **THE SEVENTIES PEOPLE** stated that — contrary to the official Danish statistics — the rate for attempted suicide in Denmark was at least three times higher than previously made known. The film stated that there were (and are) perhaps as many as

7,000-10,000 attempts at suicide each year in Denmark, with the rate being especially high amongst young people. Despite the ironical fact that the recent article in "Politiken" now confirms the basis for **THE SEVENTIES PEOPLE**, the film was viciously attacked by the Danish press when it was shown on TV, and since that time, DR-TV have stated that they will not allow the film to be shown again on Danish television, neither will they permit it to be shown in cinemas or schools outside Denmark. I am sure that the embargo now placed on **THE SEVENTIES PEOPLE** has two root causes. Firstly, because the film is deeply critical of the Danish social welfare system. Secondly, because the complex structure of the film does not conform to the prevailing "standard of quality" within TV.

At this point I should mention that both **THE SEVENTIES PEOPLE** and **THE TRAP** (an anti-nuclear TV play written by Bo Melander, which I directed for the Swedish TV in 1975) have also been refused transmission by the Norwegian TV, on the basis of being, in their opinion, of inferior quality. Danmarks Radio TV has refused to transmit **THE TRAP**, also, on the same grounds. Whilst on the subject of "quality," I should mention that the BBC in 1965 used a similar logic to justify their banning of **THE WAR GAME**. The first paragraph of a mass-produced letter (which the BBC sent out to the public, stating that the film would not be shown on TV) declared that television, by its nature, is an experimental medium (!) but that the "element of experiment" in **THE WAR GAME** was unsuccessful, and a senior officer at the BBC explained to me, in private, that one of the reasons why **THE WAR GAME** was not going to be shown on TV was that the film "was less than a masterpiece." ("Such programme experiments sometimes fail and have to be put on one side at some stage in the production, even though money has been spent on them.")

There is much more that could be said, but space forbids it. The problems attendant on my work stretch far beyond Scandinavia. My films have been very heavily attacked both in Britain and in the United States. The attitude of the British film establishment towards my work, for over ten years, can be summed up in the recent statement about me made by a London magazine: "His entire oeuvre may be characterised as a progression from polemical hysteria towards formal paranoia." In the States, at least three productions of mine, attempting to depict the suppression of the North American Indians in the last century, have been collapsed, and my only American film ('Punishment Park' 1970) has been refused a theatrical release, and any TV screening, for over six years in that country.

In Canada, some six or seven years ago, the head of the National Film Board rejected my request for the board to finance a documentary reconstruction of the Louis Riel uprising, on the grounds that he disapproved of **THE WAR GAME**. It became obvious that this official arranged the only meeting we had, not to discuss the Riel project, but to relieve himself of his pent up feelings about **THE WAR GAME**. "You are a very dangerous man, Mr. Watkins!!," he shouted at me, his voice breaking with fury. His further implication was that, a film on Riel, made by me, would lead to revolution in Quebec and bloodshed on the streets.

Whilst no one could claim that the commercial cinema is an easy arena in which to practice commitment, at least it is honest (relatively speaking) with regard to its limitations and its censorship. But TV, despite — or perhaps because of — its pretense to 'quality,' has, in the past fifteen years, largely corrupted its early promise and degenerated into a brutal, hypocritical and cynical industry, with an ever-increasing contempt, both for its audience, and for those of its members who try to take the medium seriously. As a working profession, and as a means of expression, TV clearly no longer expresses or has any place for the person with commitment, or passion of feeling, nor for anyone who has a deep concern for and with the social process. One may only look at what is happening in the world around us — complex and serious as it is — and then glance at the trite and simplistic rubbish that is the standard fare of TV — one may only question people in the streets of any major city, to ask them what they know about the events of the world (especially the nuclear arms race) — to understand the hideous dis-

parity between the output of TV, and the realities of the human experience, quite apart from understanding the grim toll of with-holding essential information from the public. (One recent and particularly unhappy irony of television was that — before the Harrisburg accident — the TV silence on the subject of nuclear energy and its technology — especially its dangers — was almost as total as the current TV silence on the nuclear arms race, and on the effects of nuclear weapons. One can only hope that the same media "logic"— of waiting until the problem becomes "news" — will not be applied to World War III...)

Most significantly, though, I believe, in relationship to the present world crisis, is that TV has developed its own particular form of language system, which operates within predictable sets of codes, symbols and time structures, with uniform rhythms and repetitive patterns, all of which are highly dangerous (or suspect, to say the least), as they seriously affect the perceptions, feelings, knowledge and political opinions of countless millions of people — as well as, and because of, playing a principle role in distorting any particular piece of information which that language system is attempting to convey. Virtually nowhere within contemporary Western television is this language system — and its effects — being studied. All that TV appears to be concerned about, now, is "style"; money; ratings, and endlessly producing the stuff — totally oblivious of the consequences in human cost.

The phenomenon of TV — in terms of the critical approach adopted towards it — varies greatly, according to what country one is in. Generally speaking, the "New World" countries of America, Canada and Australia appear to be somewhat more critical towards TV — the public tend more to query and even reject the assumed role of TV — than is the case in Europe and Scandinavia, where television appears to have a much more accepted, even "respectable" position, within the social process. One indicator of this, is that one can find dozens — hundreds — of courses in the media, in universities and colleges throughout the U.S., Canada and Australia. It should be said that most of these courses are not critical, and are invariably preparing youngsters to re-perpetuate the same media machinery. But there are some courses, in these countries, which are critical and analytical, and in open discussions on the subject, one can see immediately that the public there has a variety of feelings and reactions to the role of the media (especially towards TV) — ranging from a passive acceptance, to an extremely critical position, even of total rejection. This presents a variety of reaction, that simply does not exist in the same way or degree in Europe, and which, particularly, does not exist in Scandinavia. where the number of university courses critical towards the media can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and the role of TV appears to have an unprecedented authority amongst the public and, most disturbingly, an authority amongst those of university age and those in the younger executive/professional grouping — even, it should be said, amongst those of a more "radical" incline.

Nonetheless, one factor remains constant no matter what country one speaks of, and that is the undeniable impact of TV upon each culture. Further, the scale of the phenomenon — in terms of the numbers of those watching TV sets every night — remains beyond dispute. In the United States, the daily viewing average per child is at least two and a half hours per day, often higher; in Australia, an estimated twenty percent of children are watching between four and six hours of TV each day of the year. I do not have the European and Scandinavian viewing figures, but I imagine that they run into at least two hours per child, per night. Watching. And listening (sometimes). Watching — what? Well, coming across from that flickering rectangle is a highly rhythmic language system, as I have inferred earlier, whose manner of delivering "information"— no matter what the subject — tends to have certain uniform patterns. Uniform patterns within the time allocated to each scene and to each "shot"; uniform patterns to the combinations and groupings of scenes, "shots" and camera movements, etc. We are here looking at the primary building blocks of a secondlanguage system, which we have all been acquiring since we first switched on a TV set, and which more and more is impairing our use of the first language system (words, sentences, paragraphs, etc.) of our native tongue, with which we used to communicate.

If we take, as an example, an average TV evening news-broadcast, running from 7:00 to 7:30pm. we can immediately see what is occurring, if we lay out the structure by cut. It we carefully lay out, like this on paper, the internal building blocks — examining each cut from moving frame to static frame, each cut from visually weighty frame to a relatively empty one, each cut from colour-rich frame to pastel one — if we carefully examine each move of the camera, each zoom, each pan, tracking shot — if we examine the use of sound, and the use (or non-use) of silence — if we analyse the narrative structure of beginning, middle, climax and termination inherent in each news-item — if we examine the repetitive patterns within the groupings of filmed news-items and studio news-items; the average amount of time allocated to each item, and to the number of words spoken by the narrator — we are thus beginning to examine, block by block, the building structure of the TV language, and we realize, as we must, that what we are looking at is not a casual outflow of random sounds and images, but a tautly organized system of conveying what are presumed to be messages.

Further, it should be understood that this language system does appear to have certain "constancies"— no matter whether it is being used for a feature film such as **JAWS** or for the nightly TV news, and that it is applying the same manner of delivery — the same fragmentation — to all subjects. That is to say, there are **direct parallels in structure and rhythm** between the kind of television broadcast in the United States, Sweden, Canada, Denmark, Italy, Australia, France, etc. As well as direct parallels in editorial policies in the "understandings" as to what can or cannot be said on the voice-track, or which subjects are allowed on the screen and which are not, and, above all, parallels in the "understandings" as to what is meant by "objectivity."

In other words, no matter who is using this language system — for no matter what social or political ends — even for the ends of so-called "entertainment"— the results are manipulative. The only difference is in kind. And this mono language-system — via the instant spread of pre-packaged TV satellite programmes — is now reaching into every corner of the globe. Editors are cutting film with the same "understood" rhythms, producers are directing programmes with identical structures, editorial policies, etc. And perhaps the most worrying factor of all, is not only the universal dimension of this phenomenon, but its equal application over almost all subject matter.

In conclusion, then, the problems for me, as a personal filmmaker, range from the corporate circumstances under which I have had to work, to the forms that I use, in conveying my "messages." I have tried to write about both dilemmas in this article, because both are relevant, but I am certainly aware that — because I do describe the barriers against my own work — some within the TV profession will react by saying that I am being too inward-looking, only concerned with my own misfortunes, etc. Certainly, this reaction may occur, precisely because much of the problem within TV now is that the group or the corporate structure has come to mean everything, and the role of the individual has been reduced to that of an anachronism — either as a programme maker, or even as someone uttering an opinion that varies from the group "norm." But I make no excuses that I have dealt here with my own experiences — these personal examples are the best and most valid evidence that I can give, for the repression in the Western media today, and for the variety of forms that it can take — ranging from direct suppression, to a tacitly understood group-censorship. I know, from many conversations with other TV programme-makers, and especially after talking with many young filmmakers, that my own evidence of the suppression within television today, can be duplicated many hundreds of times over. In brief, I find myself now joining the ranks of others, rendered inoperable within television, because of concerns and commitment.

Yet, the need for struggle, today is imperative, given the push on all social fronts towards group conformity, quite apart from the extremely dangerous situation that our world is now facing, on the entire economic-political-military front. And it is my conclusion, after 15 years of trying to work in a serious way within TV, that meaningful struggle is now utterly impossible within this profession. Perhaps, yes, 15 years ago, but not now. Almost everything of any consequence is either reduced to banality (partly by policy, partly by the language system) or is suppressed. Of course, part of the personal dilemma could be seen, in some cases, as being that of the "inevitability" of the artist "suffering" in an alien culture (world) etc. There is a certain historical truth to this, and perhaps under other circumstances I might have continued with my film-work, accepting (more or less) the "inevitable" consequences of working in this way. But, my fear of what we in the mass audio-visual media are doing to manipulate the public — and my fear of the unknown consequences of this manipulation, strike deep. I feel that I must try to discover — or at least research — more about what it is we do — I do — when we use these sounds and images, especially in this repetitive way.

Therefore, at the conclusion of my current project in Stockholm, I intend to withdraw from active filmmaking, and to devote the remainder of my time to researching the effects of film and television on our society, and help stimulate a public awareness of the need for much examination to be done in this meaningful (and often dangerous) sector of the social process. I have studied the structure of TV evening news broadcasts, in several countries, and I hope to begin a series of discussions in various Western TV organizations, in an attempt to help create a dialogue — a process of self-questioning — as to the nature and the effects of our language system, whether used in news broadcasting, narrative film, or "documentary." In this way, I hope that I can help, with others, to create a healthy and much needed challenge to the overly-centralized role of the mass media in our society.

Peter Watkins
4 January, 1980
Stockholm

THE MYTH OF TOTAL CINEMA HISTORY

WILL STRAW

For it is no longer a question of feeble conjecture, heresay and memory, of dead scrabbling through the inept film criticism of yesteryear: the authentic raw material for research awaits the new expert's eye.¹

One recurrent feature of film studies literature, particularly in the last half of the 1970's, has been the expression of malaise over the underdeveloped state of film historiography.² This has been accounted for in history-of-science terms as necessarily following upon an initial phase of collecting and organizing the archival material of historical research prior to its assimilation within a coherent framework.³ This felt necessity for an increased rigour in the writing of film history, however, may be linked in part to the manner in which Film Studies has emerged institutionally as an academic discipline. The development of Film Study Programs, usually out of English or Mass Media departments, (and their academic consolidation) has had, as one of its effects, a reaction against the history-of-cinema books traditionally used as course texts.⁴ The trend towards the centralization or duplication of research material holdings, in (or accessible to) university film departments, making necessary a specialization and localization of historical work, has served to foreground the absence of a methodological-theoretical foundation for the writing of film history.

What I wish to undertake in this article is an examination of the dominant ways in which the historiographical project has recently been conceived in the literature of film studies. I take it as a given that there remains little value in reiterating once again the presuppositional weaknesses of those histories which are the object of critique of this recent work. Rather, I shall attempt an interrogation of the ways in which this dissatisfaction has been posed, the models of history-writing proposed as its resolution, and the implicit conceptualization within such writings of notions such as that of History. This of necessity involves a detour through certain considerations of a wider nature on the historiographical project itself as developed with regard to the writing of general history.⁵ The manner in which recent writing in Britain, associated in part with the work of Hindness, Hirst, Cutler and Hussain, has been dealt with by the historiography under discussion will also be discussed, as well as its more general implications for the practice of writing film histories.

Different forms of investigation and practices posit entities and produce results which are in no way to be regarded as partial "knowledges" of one great whole which are linked by common principles.⁶

conceptualizations of the historian's practice may provisionally be differentiated as to the principles of validation upon which they base themselves. By this I refer, not only to the criteria by which the historian's raw material is judged to be true or false, pertinent or irrelevant, but, importantly, the manner in which the discourse of history established and orders its objects, as well as the project or imperatives validating such work. To the extent to which auteurism has understood itself as a practice of history-writing, for example, one can see in it the following levels of validation:

- 1 - an initial conception of its project as a necessary rectification of reductionist (i.e., "forest") accounts of Hollywood cinema;⁷
- 2 - a principle of corpus selection based upon an assumed continuity between a group of films bearing the same director's name;
- 3 - an enumeration of such continuities, through analysis, as that which reaffirms the coherence of the corpus; and
- 4 - the wider vision of a larger history which would be an inventory of such continuities, of directorial careers — a mapping across the body of Hollywood cinema of parallel *oeuvres*.⁸

Methods of history-writing may further be differentiated as to the relationship they posit between "event" and document, the former representing the object of history-writing and the latter the discourses through which it is (variably) known. The fact that the "event," as past, is absent from the present of the historian, while documentation survives to confront the historian, is the initial contradiction of historiographies. One, traditional historiographical practice, would take the event as given, usually under the evidence of a proper name or categorical label ("The battle of Waterloo," "The coming of sound") and regard the relationship to such an event of existing documentation as a purely transparent, referential one. Another, while acknowledging that entities-as-unities are necessarily constructed or delimited in the historian's discourse, would see this construction as a necessary provisional step permitting the organization and coherence of archival documentation.⁹

The past thus functions, within historiography, at once as that to which access is presumed given by the archive, and as that which unifies the archive. Principles of archival understanding are thus dependant upon the manner in which the past is conceived: as a series of events of which artifacts are surviving effects; as a field which, presumed unified (in a philosophical conception of time or history), thus guarantees the coherence of disparate documentation. The recognition that the manner in which the past is conceived produces principles of data correlation, and that the inverse is likewise true, makes the reconstruction of the past in the historian's discourse a determinate representation of the past, governed by the imperatives of the present conjuncture, rather than a simple restoration through the access offered by the archive. Edward Buscombe, disputing the implications of this for historiography, writes:

In particular, in what sense is it true **by definition** that all which is past does not exist? Only surely in the narrowest sense that would see the present as a kind of geometric point having position but no length, so that the present is always instantly becoming the past. In which case, how do you analyze the current situation? Isn't it always already the past and so non-existent by the time that analyses have been made? And how can it be argued that the past only exists in its representations without arguing the same of the present? What

can we know of the current situation except through its representations, in which case how does our knowledge escape ideology any more than our knowledge of the past?¹⁰

This is misleading above all to the extent to which it represents the work it is disputing (that of Hindness and Hirst) as posing a distinction between the ideological (that is, representational) knowledge of an absent past and the scientific presence to knowledge of the present. The distinction made by Hindness and Hirst between the past and the "current situation" occurs within an argument to the effect that forms of discourse upon the past draw (and not simply "should draw," in a purely prescriptive argument for political relevance) their principles of validation and pertinence from the conjuncture in which they are produced. They share, with discourses upon the "current situation," the property of existing as a result of imperatives specific to them:

Theories only exist as **discourses** — as concepts in definite orders of succession, producing definite effects — (posing, criticising, solving problems) — as a result of that order. Theoretical discourse, like discourse in general, speaking and writing, is an unlimited process.¹¹

History-writing which understands itself as defined by properties of its object, or by original theoretical axioms, must seek its validation in properties of that object or in derivability from such axioms. Thus, a historiographical practice which works to organize coherently the body of facts existing upon its object will define this work of organization in relationship to the perpetually deferred final assimilation of such data which would constitute a completed history. Practices which begin with a theoretical model thought to correspond to properties of its object will conduct historical work as a process of fleshing out such a model with available data. Regarding this, the primacy of the relationship between "event" and documentation in traditional theorizations of history-writing (including much of the film work referred to more directly below) may enable us to point to a fundamental source of the confusion operative within film historiographies. Film history would in part appear to differ from general history in that, whereas in the latter access to the knowledge of (past and therefore absent) "events" is sought through existing discourses upon them, the object of major strands of film-historical work, the film-text, is perceived as surviving as just such an "event." The distinction between the two problematics history-of-film/history-in-film is in a sense indicative of the manner in which a necessarily inseparable relationship diverges within two approaches to the theorization of history. The latter — "history-in-film," whose pertinence arises either within general history (films as one of a number of documents of a past) or the sociology of cinema (films as representative of aspects of societal situations) is considered, rightly, to pose the "event"— documentation relationship faced by general historiography — the status of referentiality remains problematic. The "history-of-cinema" problem appears to escape this concern by virtue of such documentation, the film-text, being itself the "event" subject to historical explanation; the role of documentation is here shifted to archival, largely written material. The implicit positivism of much writing in film history may be said to stem in part from this assumption that "event" and documentation, film-text and archival material (studio records, trade journals, etc.), by co-existing in the present, remove the otherwise necessary work of reconstructing a past which is by definition absent from the present of historical work. To the extent to which this is the case within film historiography, it remains in a pretheoretical, purely methodological phase which is twice removed from critiques of philosophical conceptions of the past. The film historian's work, in a majority of cases, is thus conceived of as one of tracing the relationship of archival material to the film-text. this relationship posited as being a direct one. The pertinence of archival material lies in its providing the truth of the film-text; the latter, in turn, as historical given, is the pre-condition for the meaningful organization of archival documentation.

Thus, whereas general historiographies attempt to conceive the knowledge process in terms of a relationship between archive and "event," much film historiography distinguishes, within what this general historiography would subsume under "archive," between film-text as object and written documentation as the source of knowledge upon that object. One cannot differentiate general and film history on the grounds that film historians are lucky enough to have **THE JAZZ SINGER** still in existence while "The Battle of Waterloo" is not. Writing within the history of the cinema which moves in a circular and unproblematized path from archive to film-text necessarily conceives all points in this circuit as existing in and accessible to the present, through a notion of films as reducible to products. John Ellis writes:

Contrary to the multiplication of the possible products of cinema, I would venture that the cinema does not really produce anything. This, like most things, is not as extraordinary as it first sounds. To say that the cinema produces films is plainly inadequate: films as strips of celluloid in cans are without great value, certainly not meriting the amounts expended on their production. The formula 'cinema produces films' refuses to ask the question of what a film is.¹²

One of the recurrent recent ways in which this reduction of films to their physical presence is avoided is through a theorization of film as textuality or discursivity. This is a necessary surpassing of the tendency towards hypostatization, but one that is frequently reworked within more traditional varieties of historical explanation. Edward Buscombe remarks that:

Film history, in order to be a science, has to constitute the object which it will study. What the object is can only be determined by a theory of how the film-text produces meaning, since it is that meaning which is the object for which history can account.¹³

While, as suggested, this is a necessary advance upon empiricist or static accounts of the film-text, its status as the "object" of history is, in Buscombe's formulations, contradictory. The film-text functions, for Buscombe, as "object" in the sense that it constitutes a theoretically-conceived entity. It is this which historical investigation must explain. However, it is also the "object" of history in the sense that previously-constituted, generally linear, histories will be brought to bear on this object in a relationship of explanation to explained:

But supposing we can establish the object for which film history will account, what kind of explanations for textual history could history offer? At this point it may be useful to make a distinction between two kinds of film history. The first kind would offer an account of the development of cinematic forms; it would trace, for example, the changing conventions and techniques of film lighting or of editing. To put it another way, it would be a history of style in the cinema.¹⁴

The first kind of history — of cinematic forms — could explain how it is that some of the features of a single textual system (a film) come to have the meaning they do. Only actual textual analysis can tell us what those meanings are, but this kind of history could explain how those meanings originated.¹⁵

Thus the history of cinematic style will, we assume, have a relative autonomy in relation to the industry....¹⁶

Here, the problem of history-writing is not so much solved by the theorizing of its object, but displaced — the question of the manner in which a "history of style" would differ from the histories Buscombe is reacting against (the very terms in which this is proposed suggest it would not, significantly) is left hanging. The "object" of Buscombe's historiography is not the field of the historian's discourse, but, rather, the entity upon which that discourse will be brought to bear. The archive — the existing body of documentation on "film style" — is unproblematically thought to provide a history which will serve to explain the "event," the film-text. While acknowledging the difficulty of the problem with which Buscombe is grappling, I would suggest that he fails to provide an "object" of film study which does not separate a manner of ordering the past as a field of investigation and the object of such an investigation,

To adopt the concept of the past as necessarily a theoretical mode of coherence is to shift the relationship between archive and film-text. The one is not the explanation of the other; both are "the various discourses that the past has thrown up, and that have been accumulated in various forms of archive."¹⁷ What is called the past — the conjunctures and processes which are the conditions of production of such discourses — is necessarily more/other than the sum of the data upon it, or principles of data correlation which enable its cohering within a general framework.

What I shall designate as the "archivist" formulation of historiographical problems, and which I see as dominating much recent film historiography, is a tendency to pose such problems in methodological, almost quantitative terms. This may take the form of questions about the relationship of existing, inevitably non-exhaustive data to the ideal totality of such data which would be the basis of a total history of the cinema; or of the relationship of individual work to the elaboration of such a history. The principles of validation of such work lie in its perceived capacity to establish links and sequential relationships between facts; the relevance of existing documentation or individual work is valorized in a part-to-whole relationship with regard to a complete history to which such work is a contribution. Thus fully-achieved history of the cinema is posited, in varying degrees of explicitness, as the point at which existing data has been assimilated within a framework which provides its coherence. As Robert Allen suggests:

Because material problems afflict film historical work study so severely, there is the temptation to see the collection of data as **the** film-historical problem, jumping with both feet into the empiricist camp of historiography and assuming that the more "facts" we gather around ourselves the closer we come to an ultimate solution to our film-historical dilemma.¹⁸

In this sense, there is an important continuity between the rejected histories of Knight, Mast and Jacobs and a good deal of the recent historiographical writing which I would call "archivistic." What is shared is a recognition of the inevitable limitations of individual work in the face of the mass of data with which one is confronted, and a common perception of this as the central problem. (The apologies traditional in film histories as to the practical impossibility of exhaustivity and the regretted necessity in recent historiographical writing of limited objectives are both meaningful only against the larger project of a History of the Cinema). What is disputed is the extent to which this inevitable process of exclusion can serve to justify a retreat into subjective whim. In neither case is the possibility of a complete cinema history considered in anything beyond what might be called logistic terms.

Gerald Mast's "Film History and Film Histories"¹⁹ is symptomatic of work within the mouvance of these principles of validation which attempts contradictorily to escape them. Mast's discussion of his book **A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MOVIES**

and of film history in general is an attempt to restate the inevitability of individual choice within a division of labour that denies the incompatibility of such choice with making a worthwhile contribution to film history — a modest and valid position on its own terms. However, Mast's comments waver between the popular envisioning of a complete History as the retroactive valorization of such individual work and arguments as to the impossibility of such a total history:

The history of the cinema will never be written; we shall simply have to be satisfied with histories of the cinema. This grand pronouncement contains an assumption not only about the infiniteness of cinema data but about the ability of any single human intelligence to collect it all and set it forth absolutely right. History is not a single entity with a single mind. Different histories will say different things.²⁰

The only way to accomplish the myth of totality — to recapture the totality of cinema history — will be with the total aggregate collection of cinema histories.²¹

Remarks such as "the history of the cinema will never be written" and references to "the myth of totality" take the form of epistemological theses — they at least gesture towards a critique of the notion of written history recapturing "the totality of cinema history" as the truth of the past in its fullness. However, there is a quick elision of the epistemological into the logistic, into what is in many ways simply regret at the brevity of men's lives. The dominant image of the historian's activity in such writing is that of collecting and assimilating data, and the obstacles to a total history (the completion of such processing) rest in the practical limitations of individual capabilities.

Much of the reaction to earlier general histories has taken the form of rejection of all-encompassing historical work in favour of a multiplicity of histories — "Different histories will say different things." While the response of historiographies to the acknowledgement of multiple possible historical accounts may take a variety of forms, characteristic of the film historiography discussed here is a continued effort to recuperate this heterogeneity within the project of a total history.

Mast proposes a number of total histories — "a history of cinema styles," "a history of cinema contributors," "a history of camera technology," of which a total cinema history would be "the aggregate collection."²² The point is not the extent to which Mast himself forcefully subscribes to the likelihood of such a project but that it serves to determine the pertinence of local practices of history-writing. Such formulations encourage specific models of history-writing. A notion of the writing of history as the assimilation of data within one of the "histories" Mast proposes finds as the form of coherence most appropriate to it the linear narrative. Historical explanation is given in the cause-and-effect sequence through which these discourses are ordered.

Charles Altman likewise suggests a similar inventory of multiple histories as a necessary stage in the writing of film history, preparatory to

a synthetic process whereby general historians build these analyses into a coherent whole, thereby discovering the complex web of generalizations — different in every period — which tie each aspect of film history to the next.²³

Governing such writing, I would suggest, is the implicit metaphor of History-as-Edifice, as essentially cumulative, with specialized research supplying the bricks and intermittent moments of theoretical synthesis the mortar with which to construct the perpetually deferred, but teleologically necessary, goal of a Film History. The acknowledged existence of multiple "points-of-view" is regularly reformulated

so as to be reducible to the choice made as to individual emphasis within an intra-disciplinary division of labour. (This is not fully accomplished in Mast, where the **RASHOMON**-like suggestion lingers that true history lies in the sum of such points of view.)

Concurrent with the metaphorization of the historian's project as edifice is the thinking of its object in topological terms. In arguing that the self-understanding of much film historiography is one expressed in methodological principles, I mean that it accepts its domain as given in the cohering of discontinuous data under a label such as "American cinema" and seeks, through the establishing of coherent order, to reaffirm the homogeneity of this domain. This unity is presumed by the project of a total cinema history, and the task of history-writing is one of re-constituting this unity through the linking of localized work to the larger edifice. The topological image of the object is evident in the manner in which it is divided — a mapping of (however relatively) autonomous regions,

The writing discussed here does not offer an explicit philosophy of history in the sense, for example, of a structural grid or model which empirical work would simply fill in. The task of historiography in these examples is one of dividing the surface of its object, American cinema, into particular areas of investigation, but the nature of these areas, of their relation to the whole, is not given in a model of the object. It is a methodological division, based in part on the obviousness of certain categories (style, genre) rather than on principles of a general model (such as Althusser's "instances").

It might further be suggested that such a conceptualization of the writing of film history has brought about in part the increased predominance of corporate-economic histories in recent writing.²⁴ Faced with the inevitable lack of internal coherence or desired closure of generic or stylistic histories, the narrativisation of economic "events" is perhaps the only mode of historical work having the appearance of a certain finitude. Within the strata of parallel genealogies (stylistic, technological, etc.) conceived by the writers discussed above, it alone appears to possess its own internal, researchable, dynamic. If the economic can be narrativised, it is because it is implicitly accepted as the "truth" of film history, within the attendant metaphors of stable base and incoherent effects.²⁵ The undeniable provisional value of such work is in part undermined by its reliance on linear-causal modes of explanation, and by its displacing of other areas of historical research wherein the ultimate unsuitability of such models has shown itself more quickly (though this displacing, of course, is not the "fault" of those engaged as individuals in economic history).

The above is a tentative attempt at deducing from work in recent film historiography what might be called its imaginary — that is, the larger unity from which individual work derives its pertinence. I present it fully anticipating its being characterized as in some way theoretically nihilist. I remain convinced, however, that the "everyday," "innocent" circulation and reception of historical work distinguishes between such work in terms of its pertinence to current modes and situations of reading and theorizing the cinema-institution-machine. A foregrounding of the manner in which archival materials intervene to produce representations of a past would allow for a necessary recasting of the role of historical work, overcoming the current separation between such work and the theoretically-informed reading of films.

END

Footnotes

1. Iris Barry, "Motion Pictures as a Field of Research," **College Art Journal** Vol. IV, No. 4 (May, 1945). p.209.

2. This is attested to by the number of journals publishing special issues on the writing of film history and by a series of programmatic writings recognizing, and attempting to resolve, this perceived gap. See, for example, **Cinema Journal**, No. 14 (Winter 1974-75); Charles Altman, "Towards a Historiography of American Film," **Cinema Journal**, No. 17 (Spring 1977); Gerlad Mast, "Film History and Film Histories", **Quarterly Review of Film Studies**, Vol. 1, No. 3 (August 1976); Edward Buscombe, "A New Approach to Film History," **Film: Historical-Theoretical Perspectives**, The 1977 Film Studies Annual: Part Two; Buscombe, "Introduction: Metahistory of Film," **Film Reader** No. 4; and Robert C. Allen, "Film History: The Narrow Discourse," **Film: Historical-Theoretical Perspectives**, The 1977 Film Studies Annual: Part Two. This article is in general terms a discussion of the above writing.

3. See Buscombe, "A New Approach to Film History"; and Altman, "Towards a Historiography of American Film."

4. Allen mentions Jacobs' **The Rise of the American Film**, Mast's **A Short History of the Movies**, and Knight's **The Liveliest Art**. Mast refers to his own book, Knight and Jacobs, and Alan Casty's **Development of the Film**, Altman discusses several dozen titles on a variety of subjects, less with regard to their general methodological principles than to the variety of information they contribute.

Throughout, I use "general history" to designate the wider, generally nondiscursive history understood as being the province of History as a discipline. This is a provisional use, adopting the terms of self-understanding of this discipline for convenience. I use "historiography" and its derivatives in a similar way.

6. A. Cutler, A. Hussan, P. Hirst and B. Hindess. "An Imaginary Orthodoxy — A Reply to Laurence Harris," **Economy and Society**, Vol. 8, No. 3 (August 1979), p.327.

7. See Andrew Sarris, "Towards a Theory of Film History," **The American Cinema**, (New York: Dutton, 1968).

8. This is clearly, more characteristic of American auteurism than the French **politique des auteurs**. Nevertheless, the divergence between the former as historiographical axiom and the latter as principle of evaluation is reproduced within American auteur studies — in the tension, in later, more microscopic director analyses, between such work as the elevation of hitherto neglected directors (Joseph H. Lewis, etc.) to a level of acknowledged artistry, and an opposing tendency to develop analyses, through such directors, of the everyday working situations of studio contract directors within a complex of determinations. (This is, in a way, homologous to, within mainstream historiography, the movement from traditional "great men" histories to the **vie quotidienne** work of the Fernando Braudel variety — though I stress the looseness of the analogy.)

9. Régine Robin, **Histoire et Linguistique** (Paris: Armand Colin, 1973) offers a survey of various ways in which the relationship of documentation to a past has been conceived, particularly within historiographical procedures drawing upon methods of discourse analysis. See, also, her "Discours politique et conjuncture" in Pierre R. Leon and Henri Mitterand, eds., **L'Analyse du Discours/ Discourse Analysis** (Montréal: CEDEC, 1976). For more general discussion see, in particular: Michel Foucault, **L'Archéologie du Savoir** (Paris: Gallimard, 1969) and two books by Michel de Certeau, **L'Absent de l'Histoire** (Paris: MAME, 1973) and **L'Ecriture de l'Histoire** (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

10. "Introduction: Metahistory of Film," **op cit.**, p.13. Buscombe's remarks are directed against a passage he reproduces from Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst, **Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production** (London: RKP, 1975) , p.309,

Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst, **Mode of Production and Social Formation** (London: MacMillan, 1977), p.7. I suggest that their argument is not purely prescriptive partly as a result of the charges of pragmatism which have met their work, though the political role of theoretical work is clearly important to them. Nevertheless, the non-closure of discourses, their necessary determination within theoretical institutional conjunctures, should be seen as inherent to all theoretical discourses, not only those which work upon this determination to transform its effects.

12. "The Institution of Cinema," **Edinburgh '77 Magazine**, pg. 57.
13. "A New Approach to Film History," **op. cit.**, pg.5.
14. **Ibid.** pg.5.
15. **Ibid**, pg.6.
16. **Ibid**, pg.6.
17. Mark Nash and Steve Neale. "Film: History/Production/Memory," **Screen** Vol. 18. No. 4 (Winter 1977/78), pg.77.
18. "Film History: The Narrow Discourse", **op cit.**, pg.10.
19. See note no.2, above.
20. **Ibid.** pg.298.
21. **Ibid.** pg.313.
22. **Ibid**, pg.313.
23. **Op. cit.**, pg.24.
24. **In part**, because they are linked to increased accessibility to archives, etc. I should make it clear at this point that my intention is not somehow to suggest that such work should not have been done, or that all its practitioners consciously subscribe to the conception of history described here. I wish, rather, to examine the form historical discourses are increasingly taking and the reasons why these rather than other modes of history writing, meet very little historiographical scrutiny. Douglas J. Gomery's work, to me, stands almost alone in actively engaging in debates surrounding the writing of economic history.
24. The notorious example of this economism is, of course, Gerald Leblanc's "Welles, Bazin et la RKO," **Cinétheque** No.6 (though other articles in the same issue are equally representative). I would not accuse any of those writing economic film history in North America of theoretical economism of such excessive and acknowledged proportions. What I am describing suggests more likely a retreat into economic discourses as offering a greater coherence and impression of autonomy.

A SPECIAL SECTION ON CHILEAN CINEMA

ZUZANA M. PICK

The Cinematographic Project

We are living
A revolutionary process
This can be noticed in the streets
In the News
In the people
In the factories
In the mines
In the fields
Something shows us
That we are gently veering
All Chile is moving
Changing its direction
As if it were a great motionless ship
That for the first time moves
The situation
Which reality puts before us
Surpasses any dramatic plan
And events
Have acquired an epic form

A strength
A richness
And complexity beyond reconstruction
Let us
Then approach
This reality as soon as possible
In my opinion
This would be
The most functional cinematographic form
The best
Way of narrating
Our way
Towards socialism

Patricio Guzman 1971-72

CHILE: THE CINEMA OF RESISTANCE 1973-79

The voice that Miguel Littin tried to give to the people in his film **THE PROMISED LAND** was silenced in September of 1973. His hands crushed by Pinochet's torturers. Victor Jara sang for the last time at the National Stadium in Santiago. But the voice of Chile lives on, in exile, and is the voice of resistance.

The Chilean films made by these exiled filmmakers are known as "the cinema of the resistance." "Exile has for us at least, a connotation of permanence. Resistance, although in our case implying exile, includes at the same time an attitude of action: 'to resist' is a verb, 'exile,' a noun. Exile is associated with that which is long and permanent, and we refuse this permanence; the length of our exile will depend on other factors, as well as on ourselves. The fundamental difference is that exile, in itself, means being outside, while resistance implies action and a certain type of togetherness with those who are still there. Transposed to the cinema, this means that we seek for our films to be involved, in an ongoing way, with the resistance struggle. The history of the cinema includes many filmmakers working in exile, but it has not always been possible for them to maintain a combative attitude from within the conditions of commercial production. Our films will continue to be linked to our fundamental task, that of the total liberation of our country. It is in this sense that we understand the term 'cinema of resistance' and prefer it to that of 'cinema in exile.'"¹

This cinema of resistance thus expresses an intention common to all its filmmakers: to unite the largest possible consensus against the Chilean Fascist Junta and isolate it for all time on the international scene.

This willingness has shown itself spontaneously throughout the world. Numerous films have been made on Chile, among them being: **SEPTEMBRE CHILIEN (Chilean September)** by Bruno Muel and Theo Robichet (France), **COMPANERO (Comrade)** by Stanley Forman (Great Britain), **MADE IN USA** by Christine Trautman and Kurt Rosenthal (Peru), **CHILE 11 DE SEPTEMBRE (Chile, September 11th)** by the Film Department of the University of the Andes (Venezuela), **CANTATA DE CHILE (Song for Chile)** by Humberto Solas (Cuba), **LA HORA DE LOS CERDOS (The Hour of the Pigs)** and **EL TIGRE SALTO Y MATO... PERO MORIRA, MORIRA (The Tiger Has Leapt and Killed... But It Will Die, It Will Die)** by Santiago Alvarez (Cuba), **CONTRA LA RAZON Y POR LA FUERZA (Against Reason and By Force)** by Carlos Ortiz Tejeda (Mexico), **VIVE CHILE, MIERDA (Viva Chile, Hell)** by the Experimental Cinema Group (Panama), **LA GUERRA DE LOS MOMIOS (The War of the Momies?)**, **YO FUI, YO SOY Y YO SERE (I was, I am, and I will be)** by Heynowsky and Schumann (East Germany), as well as three other films by the same directors: **EL GOLPE BLANCO (The White Coup)**, **UN MINUTO DE OSCURIDAD NO NOS CEGARA (A Minute of Darkness Will Not Blind Us)**, and **LOS MUERTOS NO CALLAN (The Dead Do Not Keep Silent)**, **SEDZE CORVALANA** by Roman Karmen (USSR), **SANTA MARIA DE IQUIQUE** by Lorenzo Soler (Spain) and **LA SPIRALE** by Armand Mattelart, Jacqueline Meppiel and Valerie Mayoux (France).

SEPTEMBRE CHILIEN was the first documentary dealing with Pinochet's coup to arrive in Europe. Filmed in the heat of events by Muel and Robichet, it presents us with such brutal images as Pinochet's press conference after the coup, the declarations by members of the Junta, and the "good bourgeoisie" parading in front of a destroyed Moneda — but also, more importantly, images of Popular Unity marching under the soldiers' bayonets at the burial of their poet, Pablo Neruda. The people sing the International and proclaim their grief by crying "Companero Pablo Neruda, Presente" and "Companero Salvador

Allende, Presente." When Carlos Ortiz Tejeda and the team from Mexican television arrive in Santiago, the bourgeoisie is more prepared to talk to the Mexicans; in **CONTRA LA RAZON Y POR LA FUERZA**, they witness the first days of a Chile "normalized," "by force against reason." Interviews with the leaders of the Right, with the saucepan bourgeoisie and the young reactionaries of the Catholic University make up one part of this filmed record. The other is made up of images of the people, close friends of the victims, families waiting in front of the National Stadium, of the poverty of the people in the shantytowns and the shepherds along the Mapocho River where the dead bodies were thrown. The burial of the poet and of the anonymous victims closes this document.

The East German filmmakers Walter Heynowsky and Gerhard Schumann began filming in East Germany in 1973, and to date have completed five films on the fascistization of the country. **THE WAR OF THE MOMIES** compares the bourgeoisie before and after the coup: its fears and its self-assurance, its "revolt" and its cruelty; **I WAS, I AM AND I WILL BE** (title borrowed from Rosa Luxembourg, 1919) was made in 1974. It is a violent accusatory documentary on the concentration camp society of Chilean Fascism. Filmed in Chacabuco and Pisagua, in the deserted and desolate northern regions of Chile, filled with abandoned salt-peter mines, the film also includes images filmed secretly at the National Stadium in Santiago. Pisagua, in the north, was already an internment camp during the 1950's, when, under the "defense of democracy" law, more than 500 communist militants were imprisoned. Referred to in the poems of Pablo Neruda, Pisagua is a notorious place. Chacabuco stands today on the ruins of a mine worked for the profit of the British between 1926 and 1938. Brecht's poem on the Nazi concentration camps is to-day given new meaning. The words of the militants and of the victims of fascist brutality make up an important document. **EL GOLPE BLANCO** (The White Coup) completes this first trilogy.

UN MINUTO DE SOMBRA NO NOS CEGARA (A Minute of Darkness Will Not Blind Us), made by these two East German filmmakers, is "a filmed message from the Chilean resistance," "returning its voice to a Chile that will not give in." The official declarations on television, the interviews and statements of the intellectuals in Pinochet's entourage are refuted by workers in the "poblaiones" and by the friends (many with their faces covered) of "disappeared" militants, in an act of accusation against Chilean fascism and the lies spread by the Junta in 1975. In their most recent film, **The Dead do not Keep Silent**, Heynowsky and Schumann criticize the Chilean army and its constitutional loyalty with statements by the widows of two of Salvador Allende's closest collaborators: Isabel Letelier, whose husband Orlando Letelier, was assassinated in Washington on September 21, 1976, and Moy Toha, who tells of the 'suicide' of her husband Jose Toha, on March 15, 1974, in a Santiago hospital.

CHILEAN FILMMAKERS: CITIZENS OF THE WORLD

From a cinematic point of view, international solidarity is also evident in the aid and in the welcome accorded Chilean filmmakers in the different countries where they have been able to continue their work. Gaston Ancelovico and Orlando Lubert work in East Germany, Claudio Sapiain in Spain, Douglas Hubner in West Germany; Raul Ruiz films in France, Miguel Littin in Mexico; Patricio Guzman, Sergio Castilla and Pedro Chaskel work in Cuba; Maria Luisa Mallet, Rodrigo Gonzalez and Jorje Fajardo shoot in Quebec. **The Battle of Chile**, a documentary feature in 3 parts, was put together entirely at the I.C.A.I.C. (Cuba). In Havana, this institution put all its equipment at the disposal of the film's makers, and provided them with financial aid and a working environment highly conducive to the completion of their project. The support given by the Cuban film industry reflects the Cuban Revolution's attitude of proletarian

internationalism. Guzman would not have been able to complete this film in any other country; in the purely economic terms of capitalism and profit it would have been impossible for him to spend six years working on a single film. The advice of Julio Garcia Espinosa was indispensable, especially during the most difficult moments of editing." In addition, the political atmosphere contributed to our training as filmmakers and to the more refined quality of editing. While we reached a kind of maturity between 1970 and 1973, it is here that it has been consolidated," we were told by Pedro Chaskel, the editor of **The Battle of Chile**, during a recent interview in Havana.

The Chilean cinema of the resistance is growing today on the basis of research begun by filmmakers in 1967. This is possible because, as was the case with the films of the first period, the cinema is not conceived in terms of capitalist commercialism, and proposes, as before, political involvement and participation in the class struggle in a Chilean and Latin American context. The interest of foreign mass movements in analysing the Chilean example has not ceased, and has given rise to an unprecedented movement of international solidarity. Fiction and documentary films (short, medium and feature length) have been made, and we are beginning to see the birth of a cinema of animation, practically non-existent in Chile between 1970 and 1973.

The basic themes of the "cinema of the resistance" are the liberation of the Chilean people and bringing charges of repression against the fascist Junta. To these may be added those films on the situation of Chileans outside Chile, showing the social, political and cultural problems which the exile must face. If films analysing the three years of Popular Unity are to continue, says Pedro Chaskel, "this theme must be developed; one can not simply look for mistakes and denounce the brutality of the Junta; this type of examination cannot simply be a looking backwards, but a looking towards the future. The problem which remains to be solved is that of making films which look ahead without renouncing the past."

What is important is that the Chilean cinema exists, and that it lives on at the same dynamic level it had attained in 1973, the year in which an enormous boom appeared imminent. It is in Spain and Havana above all that one can see the vitality of this cinema of resistance, due to the work of its cinematheque. The Chilean Cinematheque of the Resistance, thanks to the aid given it by the Cuban Cinematheque, the F.I.A.F. and the Union of Latin American Cinematheques, today continues the work of Chile's University Cinematheque. Here are gathered all the films made in Chile before the coup, and, more importantly, the films made since 1973. "This cinematheque grew out of the need to protect the films made between 1970 and 1973 and preserve copies of them. Its principle task is to research, record and preserve all the films made on Chile (both by Chileans and by foreign filmmakers): it is thus concerned mainly with documentation work." (Pedro Chaskel)

The overall political picture in Latin America could not be gloomier. Fascism has been installed in most of the countries, and one can foresee no change in the near future. The fall of one Fascist government in Latin America will not suffice to change the wider context, which is enmeshed within the worldwide balance of forces. The years that saw the development of guerilla warfare — based on the Cuban revolution — have been followed by the Chilean democratic alternative and the progressivist regime of Velasco in Peru. With the exception of Cuba, all these experiments have fallen under the blows of imperialism. What can be the objectives of Latin American cinema, and Chilean cinema in particular, within the framework of a political context so overwhelming?

As for the Chilean filmmakers, after the outcry brought about by the coup, the experience of exile and contact with other realities has led them to make different choices. It would require too much space to discuss them one by one, but a short analysis of their films will allow us to isolate the most significant elements.

Translated by Will Straw

Filmography 1973-1979

Year	Title of Film	Director
1973	La Tierra Prometida (La Terre promise). Fiction feature. Filmed in Chile and completed in Cuba.	Miguel Littin
1974	La Historia (L'histoire). Fiction feature, filmed in Chile and completed in Sweden.	Sergio Castilla
1974	Dialogo de Exilados (Dialogue d'exilés). Fiction feature, filmed in France.	Raul Ruiz
1974	La Historia es Nuestra Y la Hacén Los Pueblos (L'histoire est la notre et les peuples la font) Medium length documentary, filmed in Chile, completed in East Germany.	Alvaro Ramirez
1974	La Primera Pagina (La Première Page) Medium length documentary, filmed in the USSR.	Sebastián Alarcón
1974	Quisiera, Quisiera Tener un Hijo (Je voudrais avoir un fils) Animated short. Filmed in Sweden.	Sergio Castilla
1974	Pinochet: Fascista, Asesino, Traidor Agente del Imperialismo (Pinochet: Fasciste, traître, assassin, agent de l'imperialisme) Animated short, filmed in Sweden.	Sergio Castilla
1975	La Batallade Chile (La bataille du Chili) First part: Insurrection de la Bourgeoisie. Feature-length documentary, filmed in Chile, edited in Cuba (I.C.A.I.C.) 1972-1975.	Patricio Guzmán
1975	Los Punos Frente Al Canon (Les poings devant le canon) Filmed in Chile, completed in West Germany.	Gastón Ancelovici and Orlando Lubbert
1975	El Mundo Al Reves Y El Cuerpo Repartido (Le monde a l'envers et le corps partagé) W.Germany.	Raul Ruiz
1975	Il Pleut Sur Santiago (Llueve sobre Santiago). Fiction feature France/Bulgaria co-production.	Helvio Soto
1975	Los Transplantados (Les Transplantés) Fiction feature. Filmed in Chile.	Percy Matas

1975	Il n'y a pas d'oubli (No hay olvidada) Filmed in Canada by the N.F.B. (Montreal) Documentary	Maria L. Mallet Rodrigo González Jorge Fajardo
1975	Nombre de Guerra: Miguel Enriquez (Nom de guerre: Miguel Enriquez) Documentary Produced in Cuba	MIR Collective
1975	Organo de Chile animation short W. German production	Juan Forch
1975	Dulce Patria animation short E. German production.	Beatriz Gonzalez
1975	A Los Pueblos del Mundo (Aux peuples du monde) Documentary.	Coll. MIR (U.S.A.)
1976	La Batalla de Chile — second part. El Golpe de Estado (Le coup d'état) Doc. feature. Filmed in Chile, comp. in Cuba.	Patricio Guzmán
1976	Actas de Marusia Fiction feature Mexican production	Miguel Littin
1976	La Utopia Fiction feature W. Germany.	Raul Ruiz
1976	La Cancion No Muere, Generales (La chanson ne meurt pas, generaux). Documentary. Swedish production.	Claudio Sapiáin
1976	Dentro de Cada Sombra Crece Un Vuelo Doc. Prod. W.Germany	Douglas Hübner
1976	Roja Como Camila. Doc. Sweden	Sergio Castilla
1976	Tres Pablos Doc. USSR.	Sebastien Alarcón
1976	Yo Recuerdo Tambien Doc. Canada	Leuten Rojas
1976	He Venido a Llevarme una Semilla Doc. Romania	Luis Roberto Vera
1976	Hitler-Pinochet Animation short E. Germany	Juan Forch
1976	Estos Ojos— Estas Esperanzas Animation short E.Germany	Juan Forch
1976	Sotelo, France	Raul Ruiz
1977	Noche Sobre Santiago (Nuit sur Santiago) Fiction feature, produced in USSR	Sebastián Alarcón
1977	La Vocation Suspendue (La vocacion suspendida) Fiction feature. France	Raul Ruiz

1977	Lota 73 Fiction short. E.Germany	Alvaro Ramírez
1977	Coloquio de Perros (Colloque de de chiens). Fiction feature.France.	Raul Ruiz
1977	La Piedra Crece Donde Cae La Gota Doc. Cuba.	Patricio Castilla
1977	El Sobre (L'enveloppe) Med.length fiction. Romania.	Luis Roberto Vera
1977	Brigada. Anim.short.E. Germany	Juan Forch
1977	Lautaro Anim.short E. Germany	Juan Forch
1977-78	Chili: Las Camaras Tambien Doc. short France	Federico Elton
1977-78	La Hipotesis del Cuadro Robado France	Raul Ruiz
1978	La Bataille du Chili Third part: Le Pouvoir Populaire Doc.feature filmed in Chile, completed in Cuba.	Patricio Guzmán
1978	Queridos Campaneros Fiction feature, filmed in Chile and comp. in Venezuela	Pablo de la Barra
1978	El Paso. Fiction feature.E.Ger.	Orlando Lübbert
1978	El Extranjero (L'étranger) Med. length fiction.Sweden.	Claudio Sapiáin
1978	El Recurso del Metodo Fiction feature. France, Cuba, Mexico co-prod.	Miguel Littin
1978	La Duena de Casa. France	Valeria Sarmiento
1978	Steelyard Blues.NFB Canada	Jorge Fajardo
1978	The Chileans Canada	Jorge Montesi Mark Dolsoy
1978	Passengers from Outside Canada NFB. Canada.	Jorge Montesi
1978	Alma. Can.Prod.	Jorge Montesi
1978	Las Divisiones de la Naturaleza French Network 2,France.	Raul Ruiz
1978-1979	De Grandes Acontecimientos Y de Gente Comun. France.	Raul Ruiz
1978-1979	El Color de la Sangre No Se Olvida Sweden.	Patricio Castilla

DOCUMENTARY AND FICTION: WITNESSES TO HISTORY

Introduction to a Study of Political Documentary in Latin America

LA SPIRALE (France) and **LA BATALLA DE CHILE: LUCHA DE UN PUEBLO SIN ARMAS**, by the Chilean filmmaker Patricio Guzman, are, from an analytical and documentary point of view, the most notable films on the Chilean political process. While all Chilean and foreign films about Chile contain elements for understanding it, the films mentioned combine elements in a way that fiction films cannot. These two films, made using footage filmed under Popular Unity, are not only historical records of an experience as unique as the Chilean one, but also provide concrete, precise and systematic analysis, allowing for a critical understanding of what constituted the government of Salvador Allende.

LA SPIRALE was made by a collective started by Armand Mattelart, Valérie Mayoux and Jacqueline Meppiel, with written and spoken commentary by Chris Marker. The film is a political analysis of the strategy undertaken by the right for overthrowing the government of Popular Unity. Film footage, photographs and newspapers found throughout the world serve, through lively and succinct editing, as the visual support for the film. The authors refuse any defeatism: American imperialism has been beaten in Viet Nam, the Chilean Marxists have not died in vain. However, Patricio Guzman, the author of **EL PRIMER AÑO** who began filming **THE BATTLE OF CHILE** on February 20, 1973, uses the documentary in a much more dialectical and revolutionary manner.

Refusing to make a purely journalistic eye-witness film, the the Tercer Año Team, made up of five people — Jorge Muller (cameraman), Federico Elton (producer), Bernardo Menz (sound), Jose Pino (assistant director) and Patricio Guzman — filmed, in the streets, in the factories, in Congress and at the Moneda, in the country and in the "industrial belts," the events leading from the parliamentary elections of 1973 to the bombing of La Moneda and the first press conference of Pinochet's Junta. Despite all this, the structure of the film had been well thought out before filming began. Starting with an overview of the class struggle in Chile, the filmmakers determined the key points of the Chilean situation and concentrated on specific areas of conflict. The first part of the film, **THE INSURRECTION OF THE BOURGEOISIE**, deals with the bourgeoisie's strategic change of policy at the moment when the people had reached the peak of their political involvement with Popular Unity. Guzman illustrates the different battle fronts with concrete cases: the hoarding of basic necessities, the systematic interference by the bourgeois parties in Congress and their sabotage of the parliamentary process, the violence and social chaos stirred up by extreme rightist groups, such as Patria y Libertad the offensive by the "gremios" and the 76 days of the copper strike. The class struggle in Chile in 1973 is seen as cutting across the economic struggle, the political struggle, and the ideological struggle. After the people's victory in the miners' conflict, the bourgeoisie prepares itself for a coup d'état: the Regimiento Blindado No. 2 with its armed tanks attacks La Moneda and downtown Santiago. While the Tancazo only lasts a few hours, an Argentinian cameraman, Leonardo Henricksen, finds himself on Agustinas Street and films his own death, along with "the true face of Chilean fascism."

THE COUP D'ETAT takes up the events leading from June 29th to September 20, 1973. The film seeks to present, in a dialectical manner, the contradictions within the Left, and an analysis of the final imperialist offensive against the revolutionary process of Popular Unity. Throughout this section, emphasis is placed on Popular Unity's powerlessness within parliament, the beginning of the political assassinations, the police requisitions within the "industrial belts" and the economic sabotage by the gremios. As in the first section, the film shows the contradictions between a government confined within the legality of bourgeois democracy and a people impatient and ready to struggle on other fronts.

The Battle of Chile is a film that seeks to mobilize on the basis of a Marxist analysis and in-depth reflection. More than a mere historical document, it is also a film about the people, about their potential for struggle and their revolutionary strength, their faith and their political consciousness — but also about their powerlessness to channel all this strength, despite its dynamism, within bourgeois structures. **EL PODER POPULAR** (3rd part) is an illustration of precisely this mass strength and revolutionary aspiration: it consists of a series of discussions and interviews with workers and peasants about the political instance and ways of acting.

"Patricio Guzman has the merit, unique in the history of the cinema, of having filmed, step by step and with a strong premonitory intuition, the agony of a political experience which moved the world, offering itself as an experiment sui generis in the passage to socialism" writes Marta Hanecker in the introduction to, the film's script. But his merit resides also in the level of cinematic experimentation within the documentary form, giving this film a strength which exceeds that of the visual documentation of a political experience. On one level, Guzman uses the long shot, allowing him to enter more directly into the action filmed, and thus avoiding the empty moments or interruptions predominant in montage-based documentary. The very strength of the images allows for a second level of reading, a Marxist and dialectical one, transforming the film into an instructive and open work. **The Battle of Chile** is a "film-weapon" in its revealing of contradictions, and a self-criticism in the way it surmounts the contradictions inherent in the eyewitness documentary film. All the images in the film were shot by the filmmakers, so they had no need to use "secondary" sources. This coherence is such that **The Battle of Chile** becomes a document essential to any study of the Chilean experience, and a model for documenting the liberation struggle of the Chilean and Latin American people.

FICTIONAL FILMS AS COLLECTIVE MEMORY (Miguel Littin)

Miguel Littin settled in Mexico following the coup. Recognized as a director of stature for his **EL CHACAL DE NAHUELTORO** and **LA TIERRA PROMETIDA**, he was able to film, in Mexico, **ACTAS DE MARUSIA**, billed as "the most brutal repression ever filmed." Based on notes compiled by a miner, given by the writer Freddy Taverna to Patricio Mans, the film tells of events which took place in 1907 in Marusia, a mining village in the north of Chile. In **ACTAS DE MARUSIA** Littin exposes the history of Chilean repression and fascism. It is impossible not to think of Pinochet when confronted with the violence brought by Captain Troncoso (played by Claudio Obregon) against the miners and their wives. The scenes of Gregorio (Gian Maria Volonte) being tortured are the grim reminder of a brutality that knows no limits. The violence of the images serves to denounce the Pinochet regime. "It is one of the main tasks of our time to struggle against Pinochet's dictatorship. Because this regime is in the process of crushing the Chilean people, it maintains it in a state of exploitation that humanity has ceased to know, that humanity has forgotten (...) This country is governed by brutes, by wild beasts, by the dregs of humanity arisen from the depths of history. One crushes a people that has learned to sing, that has learned to speak for itself, and one can no longer control it except by force and brutality" Littin told Anne Constanty during an interview in April 1976, in Mexico.

Humberto Solas filmed **CANTATA DE CHILE** in Cuba in 1976. This film uses elements similar to those of **ACTAS DE MARUSIA**. It tells of the events of Santa Maria de Iquique in 1909, using dialectical montage to show the noteworthy events of Chilean history (from the conquest to the Araucan resistance to the suicide of Balmaceda). The strike by the miners and their march to Santa Maria de Iquique ended with a massacre of thousands of men, women and children.

Conceived of as a cantata and fresco, reminiscent of the mural art of the Mexican Diego Rivera, **CANTATA DE CHILE** ends with the armed struggle of the people against the army of modern-day Chile: fascist violence will be stopped only by revolutionary violence. With **CANTATA DE CHILE**, Solas has presented us with a historical reflection on the destiny of the oppressed peoples of Latin America.

In 1978, Miguel Littin completed **EL RECURSO DEL METODO (Recourse to Method)** a Mexico-Cuba-France co-production. This epic fresco is an adaptation of the novel of the same name by the Cuban Alejo Carpentier, and was made with the participation of Regis Debray and Jaime Augusto Shilley, a Mexican poet.

Littin's film is a parody-portrait of the life of a Latin American dictator, played by Nelson Villagra. From the Novel, Littin has retained only the anecdotal, weaving an ambitious mosaic of baroque and lyrical imagery whose overly classical direction fails to capture the complexity of the Cuban author's prose. Carpentier's novel is not merely the portrait of a dictator, but above all else a reflection on Latin American culture. Regarding the title of his work, Carpentier has said: "As for **Recourse to Method**, it is the inverse of Descartes's **Discourse on Method**, for, in my opinion, Latin America is the least Cartesian continent imaginable." For this reason, the language used by Carpentier partakes in the search for a style that could translate reality only by way of the "marvellous-real" The novel is a reflection on neo-colonialism and the assimilation of foreign cultures. If the culture of the Americas is the heritage of successive colonializations and dominations, that culture is inadequate for the apprehension of new realities. That is why Mr. President (Villagra) will have no choice but to lock himself in his Parisian apartment, in the company of his mistress, his daughter and his ex-Ambassador, and await death in an orgy of mythical memories.

Although different from Miguel Littin's previous work, these two films — **ACTAS DE MARUSIA** and **EL RECURSO DEL METODO** — share the same stylistic and expressive experimentation. From the journalistic inquiry of **EL CHACAL DE NAHUELTORO** to the stylistic complexity of **LA TIERRA PROMETIDA**, this filmmaker has set out on a road that will allow him, by way of cinematic fiction, to make a statement about the oppressed peoples of Latin America and their collective history.

THE CINEMA OF FICTION AND HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION (Helvio Soto)

Since documentaries on the coup of September 11, 1973 have been able to acquire only limited distribution, Helvio Soto, a journalist and man of television and the cinema, tackled, with **It Rains on Santiago** (1976), the fiction of historical reconstruction. A film with well-known stars, filmed in Bulgaria, it enabled Soto to make accessible to the average spectator the events which at the time shook the left all over the world. This is cinema of **grand spectacle** serving to inform and to awaken in the spectator feelings and emotions of solidarity.

For Helvio Soto, cinematic fiction is the only way to reach a public accustomed to the commercial films coming out of Hollywood. His four features, **Bloody Saltpeter**, **Vote and Gun**, **Metamorphoses of the Chief of Political Police** and **It Rains on Santiago** are attempts in this direction.

Although his films propose to reflect from within Popular Unity upon it, from the point of view of the bourgeois militant, Soto does not eliminate from the context of his filmmaking the need to make, through the cinema, a statement on the ideological struggle. As a filmmaker in exile, he says: "I feel our ideological problems are much graver than is generally imagined. I feel there is no longer any possibility of dialogue between the Left and the Right. That has ended. (...) That is where the problem lies: that is why there is no interesting Chilean cinema; today the problem must be posed of a cinema that will say something of internat-

ional scope." (interview in March 1976 with Juan Verdejo). Soto is currently filming, in Spain, a political thriller entitled **LA TRIPLE MUERTE DEL TERCER PERSONAJE**.

CINEMA OF THE RESISTANCE AND THE SEARCH FOR A LANGUAGE (Raul Ruiz)

In 1974, Raul Ruiz filmed the first Chilean film to be made outside of Chile. **Dialogue of Exiles** is, as the title indicates, a dialogue, a discussion of the modalities of political involvement and action within a foreign culture. Amidst the Parisian gloom, the exiles evolve, a living extension of Chile. **Dialogue of Exiles** is a very Brechtian film,

Raul Ruiz has always been, within the context of Chilean cinema, a "different" filmmaker: interesting himself specifically in language and communication, he has not hesitated to use the cinema as a ground for experimentation.

"I believe that what united the left at the beginning was the outrage at injustice, but this outrage, transposed to everyday life, cannot be held to (...). That is why one must direct oneself towards a specific type of cinema, like that which Brecht proposed — but which he never realized — a cinema which dissects, which helps in understanding how the machine functions and helps in creating other machines to fight against reaction." (interview with J.V., March 1976)

His work in France since 1975 has taken up this Brechtian stand: it is a cinema of ideas seeking to expose contradictions and misapprehensions: those of the despotic institutions of **LA VOCATION SUSPENDUE** (based on a novel by Klossowski), and of the relationships between seeing and doing in **TABLEAUX VIVANTS**. If, in Chile, Raul Ruiz was concerned mainly with unmasking ideological stereotypes (**EXPROPRIACION, LA PALOMITA BLANCA** and **REALISMO SOCIALISTA**), now, in France, he thinks of the cinema in a much more theoretical manner. He recently told an interviewer: "Each time I made a film, during the three years of Popular Unity, I sought to deal with a problem which the general theory one had at the time had not succeeded in explaining." Today he adds: "I simply reflect without being sure of the effect that may produce." It would be unfair to oppose Ruiz to the other filmmakers of the resistance, because he does not deal with "Chilean" subjects. Nevertheless, he does see European culture as a colonizing culture: in the case of Raul Ruiz, exile weighs heavily, even if he does succeed in working within a foreign cinematic "machine."

It is undeniable that the history of Chilean cinema since 1967 has been linked to the history of Chile. Even if it is possible in so few years to travel the whole road in reverse and reconstruct this history as a continuous thread, one finds the same willingness to project this history, to demythify the "other" history, and finally to lay claim to the past in order to link it to the present and project it into the future, in the search for an identity and with the ultimate idea of making history. Obviously the entry of Popular Unity into the government heightened this interest. Between 1970 and 1973 Helvio Soto made "thesis films" aimed at the decision-making levels of the PU. Littin reconstructed historical reality with a fiction film, and has continued in this vein in exile. Ruiz has directed fictional films for political agitation and developed an experimental cinema inserted within the Chilean political context.

Finally, Patricio Guzman relates political events in the form of documentary. Now, perhaps, he will be able to make a fiction film.

These four filmmakers represent the four tendencies which characterize Chilean cinema — not so much as a movement, but as the same scene filmed simultaneously by several cameras.

The coup of September 11, 1973 put a brutal halt to the process of a peaceful transition towards socialism. The repression unleashed upon Chile was of an unforeseen brutality: individual rights are suppressed, parliament is closed, political parties and unions are made illegal. While the majority of filmmakers have had to take the path of exile, along with almost a million other Chileans, film production has not ceased. As we have seen above, the Chilean cinema of the resistance is growing and continues to play a role in the Latin American political struggle. By the beginning of 1979, the Chilean cinema of the resistance had produced more than 55 films.

The chronology which follows confirms that, while it is true that the cinema under Popular Unity did not attain the level the filmmakers had sought, one must wait for a third period before reaping the harvests of a long and difficult labour. Julio Garcia Espinosa, a Cuban filmmaker and theorist, has written, regarding Patricio Guzman's **The Battle of Chile**: "The battle of Chile has not ended. For the good of Chile and of everyone. The people of Chile continue it. But also because each and everyone of us continues it, within and outside ourselves." The Chilean cinema of the resistance will be the perfect historical document for continuing the work of analyzing the history of the people of Latin America: it also bears witness to the potential for revolutionary struggle of oppressed peoples.

INTERVIEW WITH PATRICIO GUZMAN — ICAIC, Havana, May 1979

LA BATALLA DE CHILE (The Battle of Chile)

Zuzanna Pick: Patricio, you studied film in Spain, and when you returned to Chile the Manifesto of the Filmmakers of Popular Unity had already been published. Instead of making the fiction films you had prepared, you formed a group of young filmmakers and you decided to turn to documentary cinema. Can you tell me what triggered this choice and the decision to make your first documentary feature, **EL PRIMER AÑO**?

Patricio Guzman: I was determined to work on a fiction film. When I arrived, there was a climate of euphoria, something quite unusual, as if the country was awakening and as if what was happening had not taken place for years, for decades. The working class, the students and sectors of the middle class were supporting the Allende government with enthusiasm, people participated in demonstrations, everybody was more communicative and discussions took place everywhere you went. Arriving then with scripts conceived in another country, it would have been ridiculous to insist on making those films and not take advantage of the historical situation. Besides, it would have been very complicated to go ahead with a fiction film while the filmmakers of the left, working now with **CHILE-FILMS**, were trying to organize film production in a very short time. This is why I chose to get together with young filmmakers and start shooting the events right away, without ever taking much time to plan or study the situation. The enthusiasm we had was immense: imagine a city overflowing with people marching in the streets, arriving at factories that are being run by the workers, seeing the fields being occupied by the peasants. This moment marks the culminating point of class struggle: the people take over, huge sectors support Allende and one feels that a new society is being born, that the masses have achieved what used to be the dream of the peoples' vanguard. It was fascinating because we were witnessing a huge spectacle and as we went out to the streets to film, we had only a very rough sketch of what the final product would be like.

ZMP: **EL PRIMER AÑO** was a journalistic account of the first year of the Allende government, a "temoignage." However, in 1973, when you started filming **THE BATTLE OF CHILE**, you had already decided to make a documentary that would be very different from the first one...

PG: The experience of journalistic account in **EL PRIMER AÑO** was useful in that we realized that if it was interesting and important to record the events it was even more interesting to attempt a film analysis of these events. So that when we started working on **THE BATTLE OF CHILE** and in particular on **THE INSURRECTION OF THE BOURGEOISIE** (part 1), we had already spent a lot of time analyzing this reality from a cinematic point of view. The political analysis had been done already thanks to help we had from political contacts of members of the film crew.

It took us a long time to decide how we could make a documentary about the political situation in Chile in 1973 without simply making a "filmed document," or a literary or political document. How to explain this reality without having a commentator constantly interrupting the narrative. How to use images so that through analysis the spectator could "see" what was happening. We wrote a small manifesto in which the method of work was out-

lined and after three or four months of daily discussion, we started to shoot. This does not mean that we had a script which we just had to follow. What was happening demanded a clear political perspective; once this was achieved, there was more room for improvisation within the events that were visible. We filmed events that were representative and not only those that were eloquent from the cinematic point of view. Things were happening on the streets, in factories and in the countryside that would have looked great on film, but if they were too anecdotal, we refused to shoot them. In **EL PRIMER AÑO**, we had filmed events that were typical, that had a certain local colour, little anecdotes. Here we wanted to get deep into things because the situation was so complicated that we wanted to avoid mere self-evident images. We were not simply interested in filming a street battle but mainly in showing why this happened and what had happened before.

ZMP: Patricio, you had to choose images that would permit an analysis of the conflict and the situation?

PG: Yes, and especially to make clear that whatever happened had been preceded by another event and how they were linked to form a chain. Not knowing in advance what would happen, we took risks in filming a situation never knowing if it would or would not become a politically significant conflict. We selected the kind of possible conflict: Our purpose was to expose the fundamental problems influencing class struggle. Since we chose five, we followed only those five.

ZMP: These five elements are described in **Cine Cubano** no. 91-92 (**translation attached**) as being a schematic shooting script.

PG: That's right, and we decided that these fronts of struggle had to be followed up and examined, and anything happening on another front had to be excluded, even if it was very interesting. Within this outline, there was room for variation and improvisation. This was what we had decided to do: illustrate with images a previously proposed outline, without losing in the filming the freshness and spontaneity of life, without locking them into a set frame.

ZMP: In the first part of **THE BATTLE OF CHILE**, which starts with the election campaign of March 1973, you established the dialectical opposition between bourgeoisie/fascism/imperialism and the power of the Chilean people. This opposition, as you have said on other occasions, is the result of a profound reflection on the role the documentary cinema can play in class struggle. Could you elaborate on your conception of this type of documentary film?

PG: Let me say, first of all, that I find the journalistic account and the "témoignage" very valuable. We chose another approach: to me an analysis that would clarify political reality for the spectator. In order to do this, we probed reality in order to find in it a narrative line. As in life, the political reality has a beginning, a middle and an end. In Chile, the class struggle was so intense that we were able to use this approach successfully. A "camera-eye," a witness to the events would have been interesting but, reality being so rich and overwhelming, we had to find another way of explaining it. A simplistic conception would have turned the film into an impressionistic account of events but would never have reached the level of complexity of the political process. From a revolutionary point of view, this was the first time that power had been achieved through parliamentary procedures. After Allende's victory, the revolutionary process of transformation took place not by the establishment of a socialist regime, but by the tactical utilization of existing institutions, transforming bourgeois legality into proletarian legality. Since these events had never before taken place, the documentarist is called upon to shape them, to explain them.

Political documentaries tend to be rhetorical, celebrative and impressionistic, trying to encourage a series of ideas in the spectator. They often fail. If you can dynamically present to the viewer a series of events following a previously established outline, that provides the film with internal organization, and you can diminish the importance of the narrator. You let the events, by their juxtaposition, speak for themselves, without a voice announcing "This is true," "This is the way you should think," "This is false." The viewer has to draw his own conclusions, and that part of the film remains open.

Even if we had not organized the film, the mere account of events would also have been important. In the context of a revolutionary cinema, it is important to collect historical images. Our own reality pushed us to seek for newer approaches, newer methods. But you cannot systematize this type of documentary because it does not apply to all and every kind of national reality, although we ourselves learned from other documentaries.(1)

ZMP: Since you had studied "fiction," did you have to study again, to relearn?

PG: Without a doubt, and even the editing phase forced me to retrain myself. I was able to apply many elements of *mise-en-scène*. Although I was capable of filming a rally, a meeting, even with a certain amount of improvisation, this purely journalistic approach is limited. I had to apply my political knowledge to the language of the cinema. Many political filmmakers use a very rudimentary language. Some good filmmakers are too involved with aesthetics and self-expression. We tried to harmonize these two aspects. I had a number of political advisors nearby, who taught me many new things gave me books to read to bring myself up to date on what was happening.

ZMP: When you (the **EL TERCER AÑO** film crew) began to shoot **THE BATTLE OF CHILE** had you drawn up a work plan, with job-distribution and preliminary script? In C.C. no. 91-92, the shooting script outline for the film was published, divided into five chapters (**attached**); these were problems you wanted to cover. Did you follow this outline closely after beginning the montage here in Cuba?

PG: The theoretical scheme covers everything we filmed. However, there were changes: the need arose for a whole second scheme, for example, turning the part on the insurrection of the bourgeoisie, so massive and so spectacular in 1973, into a feature-length film on its own. This was not foreseen in the original outline. The film does not correspond to the theoretical outline in a mechanical way: the parliamentary struggle, for example, appears differently in the film. There is a practical adaptation of the images to the theory of the film. The first part ends with a shocking image, that of the death of the cameraman Henrickson, which we came close to witnessing. (Henrickson's director, Sandquist, is a friend of ours, he is a Swedish television correspondent in Latin America who went to Chile during the Popular Unity government.) We ended the film with that eloquent image, trying not to become impressionistic. That image is part of the narrative; it is not there to show the military intervention in a particularly spectacular way. It is the Chilean political process that is spectacular, not the film.

ZMP: For my students, the film was spectacular for two reasons: as a political process and as a film, since they knew nothing at all about the Chilean experience.

PG: That's interesting — we also wanted to make an exhaustive, informative work. Even Allende's television channel was not able to say everything it should have, due to the daily ideological battle it had to wage against a powerful enemy. There were all kinds of confrontations and discussions on television. We used material from television in some cases, and there is

much more that we were not able to use. But television covered momentary problems: we wanted to do a more exhaustive study, investigate the problem of food shortages, for example. Neither the press nor television could do this kind of exhaustive study, we realized, because they were covering pressing, daily affairs; they had to supply the workers with immediate answers. An independent team, linked to the revolutionary forces but autonomous, does not have to give a daily account of events, can keep the material for later editing; this kind of team can produce much more profound reflections on reality. I believe the film, as well as reflecting the political aspect, reflects and emphasizes a people's mood. This is something other films have not succeeded in doing, because they are not concerned with other elements. **LA ESPIRAL** (2) is a very interesting film. a myth among documentaries, something like **LA HORA DE LOS HORNO**S (3) but it uses a method opposed to ours (editing of material available and analysis a-posteriori). These are two different conceptions of film,

ZMP: Once the editing phase had begun here in Cuba, did you keep on using the outline?

PG: The first thing we did was save all the written material: scripts, texts, notebooks, which were numerous. We were able to recover all this material, along with the film itself. First of all we put that outline back together, along one whole wall of the editing room. Then we began to arrange the material by chapter, and we were able to assemble it with great facility. There were numerous possibilities of editing the struggle between opposites without losing the impact of the clash between the working class and the bourgeoisie, by juxtaposing elements, but we preferred to respect the obvious chronological narrative, giving it a chronological order and a basic dialectical order. These things coincided not by chance, but because there was a clarity in the shooting. If you wanted to make an ideal film about Allende's last year, you would put in the parliamentary elections, then the conflict when Allende tries to nationalize the schools, the expropriation of agricultural lands and the copper strike. Simultaneously, the parliamentary crisis, the parliamentary blockade, more bills rejected by the bourgeoisie. Finally, all this ends with a military conspiracy accentuated by precisely those elements: the copper strike among others; the army begins to intervene, and all this culminates with the tanks in the street, the first rehearsal of the coup d'état. If you did this afterwards, from a literary point of view and without having made a film, you would probably be able to express it with that material. But we are doing this at the same time as things were happening. The only problem that arose from the material was that there were two kinds of internal dynamics. One kind appears in the first and second parts, and refers to concrete events, actions: this is very good for documentary film, which can be boring without action. There is another kind of more expressive material, mostly about workers and peasants; this is where the third part originated. This was the most difficult problem to resolve. The first and second parts tell a story chronologically, using dialectics mainly to support the narrative, to carry it along. Then there is material that leads nowhere, an enormous sequence of reflections by the workers of what is happening, that is absent in that collective charge, that clash of the great demonstrations, the street battles, the urban chaos, etc. This other kind of material was the most difficult to organize.

ZMP: Let's talk a bit about a more technical aspect. I would like to discuss with you the use of the sequence-shot (le plan-séquence) in this film. Why did you choose this technique, so unusual in documentary film?

PG: Yes, it is uncommon. In my view the sequence shot is the most eloquent the most effective narrative device, in the fictional film as in the documentary film. The synthesis obtained with the sequence shot cannot be obtained with the breaking up into many shots to film a single situation. So we tried to use the sequence shot whenever we could, when circumstances

favoured it. A sequence shot is irreplaceable: you can see things happening in front of you without breaking up the images, without using inserts. You see everything synthetically. We like this very much, although often we were not able to film in this way. A sequence shot at an inappropriate moment breaks the narrative; the narrative loses tension and impact. But by taking the precaution of having sequence shots of all situations, you can incorporate as many as possible in the final editing. Through the use of sequence shots we were able to shoot using different points of view in order to follow a situation as a whole.

ZMP: I would like to discuss with you the presence of images that signify also at a second level, such as the interview in the bourgeois apartment, the celebrations of the bourgeoisie in their cars while the people walk in their own demonstrations. It seems to me that the horns of the cars replace the voice: they signify a political position and also a different code of behavior.

PG: If you put the people in front of a blank wall, you would be robbing the reality of the eloquence presence. As well as the different codes of behavior that which most differentiated the bourgeoisie from the proletariat, aside from the external signs (some have cars, others do not), is the fact that the worker always tries to base his opinions on fact. "I am for Allende because he offers me such and such advantages and my children have this and that." So that even if that person does not have a superior educational level, he expresses a process of reasoning. The bourgeois, on the other hand, although he has the background to be able to speak better than the worker, is incapable of reasoning. He shouts, he loses control, he expresses puerile concepts and acts in a ridiculous manner. You can see this even when a Popular Unity member of parliament confronts another, an older member of Parliament. Age is irrelevant, but the older man, who has more education, is much slower, much clumsier than the younger one. In the same way, people from the left are fighting for something more concrete, based on facts, with a scale of values, while the bourgeoisie defends its interests in a very primitive way. For its interests are acquired, and obviously they are being lost. This determines the general attitude towards life: one sector defends itself arbitrarily, violently, while the other reasons, with a historical conscience. It was a fascinating situation to observe.

ZMP: Your film functions through the images and not only through a narrative, which is perceived directly and without the intermediary of a voice-over commentary. The sequences which show the parades of "Patria y Libertad" (Fatherland and Freedom — the right-wing paramilitary organization) are frightening while those that involve the crowds of workers and students are exhilarating.

PG: I wanted to show the creative attitude of the people: the Chilean people are more creative and their expression is richer in different kinds of contexts, and this is what we wanted to capture.

ZMP: The night rally by the "Patria y Libertad" group looks like a Nazi demonstration.

PG: Yes. Keep in mind that we never tried to force the contents of the film. That is one of the more disagreeable characteristics of a certain type of political documentary. If you want to express an idea and you are right there is no need to shout. You can say it very softly if you know you are right. The more you base it on facts, the more weight it carries. You reinforce the contents, transforming them into what McLuhan defines as cold and hot mediums — the colder it is, the more persuasive power it has.

ZMP: That also occurs in **EL GOLPE DE ESTADO** (The Coup d'Etat); the images are just as expressive but the editing is not as systematic, although it has the

same characteristics and dialectical approach as the first part. What is the structure of this second part of **THE BATTLE OF CHILE**?

PG: The second part is structured as though it were a single sequence; it is not divided in chapters, it is all interrelated, like when you tip over one domino and all the others fall as well. There is an immediate response to every incident: it is a chain with no missing links. The struggle between fascism/imperialism/bourgeoisie and proletariat produces events during this period which are so interrelated that they are impossible to isolate. In the first part, there is a different kind of tension. In the second part, the events unfold like a chain reaction: tanks in the streets, an armed regiment attacking the population, immediately there are demonstrations in protest, immediately there is a parliamentary session to discuss the state of siege massive taking over of companies, conflicts within the left, immediately there are street demonstrations within the left, the army is preparing itself for the next step of the battle, etc. All in one sequence. This part was very difficult to film and even more difficult to edit. Here in Cuba, during a discussion of the film, it was said that the second part must be seen twice in order to register the amount of information it contains. We were worried about this, because the film was so densely constructed. In **THE INSURRECTION OF THE BOURGEOISIE** there are moments when the camera moves slowly, one has time to catch one's breath. In **THE COUP D'ETAT** there is none of that; that has been all cut out. We were not sure whether we should extend the length or make two films from the second part.

ZMP: **LA ESPIRAL** and **LLUEVE SOBRE SANTIAGO** (4) both end with Neruda's funeral. I was almost expecting **EL GOLPE DE ESTADO** to end with the same images.

PG: Pablo Neruda's funeral is significant in terms of another chapter of Chile's struggle which begins there; that is, in the sense that it provokes the first demonstration by the left after the coup. From then on there is a different scale of values in Chile, the visible events are of a different nature. Although Neruda's funeral is very small, it has a great significance in that other context.

MAY 9, 1979

LA HABANA, CUBA

This interview was translated by Christine Shantz, Ottawa, in September 1979 from the original transcript in Spanish, edited and corrected by Zuzana M. Pick.

NOTES

- (1) The filmmaker stressed the importance of Cuban documentarists such as Julio Garcia Espinosa and Santiago Alvarez. **LE JOLI MAI** (Chris Marker) and **CALCUTTA** (Louis Malle) and a number of Latin American documentaries had an influence on Guzman's theoretical thinking about the documentary. The writings of Dziga Vertov were studied by the filmmakers.
- (2) **LA SPIRALE** (1975-76) is a documentary film by Armand Mattelart, Jacqueline Meppiel and Valerie Mayoux, commentary by Chris Marker. This French film is an analysis of the strategy of U.S. imperialism to overthrow the Allende government.
- (3) **THE HOUR OF THE FURNACES** — Argentina (1965-68) — Documentary by Fernando E. Solanas and Octavio Getino.
- (4) **IL PLEUT SUR SANTIAGO** (1975) — Fiction feature on the Popular Unity period directed by Helvio Soto, a Chilean filmmaker living in France.

THE BATTLE OF CHILE — THE ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT

LETTER FROM PATRICIO GUZMAN TO CHRIS MARKER (Fragments)

M. Chris Marker
Paris, France

Santiago de Chile, November 14, 1972

Dear Chris:

This is not the first time I've not been able to answer your letters right away...

... Our political situation is confusing and the whole country is experiencing a pre-civil war situation, which is a great source of tension for all of us...

... In any case, the present situation will be over with by the parliamentary elections in March. And the problems will by no means be solved. But (if the army doesn't split first) the elections will mark one phase in this situation of pre-confrontation. And we're waiting for them. The whole country is waiting for them.

On the other hand, the recent transportation strike and stoppages in commerce, etc. have caused extraordinary economic losses. One half of the Popular Unity projects (not considered of prime importance) have been frozen. Among those projects is the film we have been working on, **Manuel Rodriguez** ⁽¹⁾, that historical film we have been preparing for six months. Now Chile-Films is on the brink of collapse...

... We have other scripts. Still, any script, any idea, any theme, no matter how current, no matter how useful it may seem, is completely outweighed by our reality. It would seem absurd and insane to us today, in Chile in 1972, to construct dialogues for actors to pronounce, because at every moment there are disturbances, political manoeuvres, rumours; you must be able to drop everything and be alert at any moment.

We believe that the only way of tackling this reality, this moment, is by having a film crew constantly on call, by going out and filming what is happening, just as we did with **EL PRIMER AÑO**, remembering what that experience taught us: to seek out more analysis, more exploration of the facts, less epic characteristics and more political analysis.

However, before we can begin making this documentary film, we need film stock.

Due to the economic blockade of the U.S., it takes up to a year or more to import raw stock.

This is why we have been thinking of obtaining the material in some other way. And we have thought of you, especially...

... It would have to be a feature length film, filmed in the countryside, the cities, mines, factories, homes, ports; showing the working class, the oligarchy, the infamous middle class, the internal tension within Christian Democracy, the tendencies within the Popular Unity; all contained in a kind of mural, a totality, a great dynamic fresco, showing the elections in March, the campaigns, the reasoning, the propaganda, the positions that mark off that final definitive situation, in which the Chilean reality appears as a whole...

... Well, in order to carry out this project, I'm asking for your help.

Answer me as soon as you can.

Following is an outline of the project;

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Today in Chile the class struggle is everywhere. In every factory, on every peasant's land, in every "poblacion," the workers raise their voices and demand worker control of their places of work.

In the mines and in the country there is a growing awareness that imperialism and its Chilean allies will do everything within their power to stop the advance of the workers towards taking power and building socialism.

The bourgeoisie will make use of all their resources.

On one hand, they will use bourgeois legislation. On the other hand, they will use their own institutions (like the professional schools for doctors and technicians, the National Agricultural Society, the factory owners grouped under the Society for Manufacturing Development). At the Same time, they will try to re-inforce their ideology through the mass media, which they control to a large degree in our country.

Whenever possible, the bourgeoisie will also make use of the repressive body granted them by their own Constitution, to repress the people and exercise their own dictatorship.

In this **Second Year** and **Third Year** of the People's Government, the bourgeoisie have used the press, the Tribunals, Parliament — accusing the worker ministers constitutionally — they have mobilized the middle strata, the technicians and professional ranks, the small businessmen, the transporters. They have sent the masses into the street. They instruct and make use of white guards. All of these apparently heterogeneous ingredients have a clear political connotation, denounced by Fidel two days before his departure as "nothing less than fascism."

For their part, the masses, the workers in the city and the countryside understand who the enemy is.

They are demanding a firm advance from their political leaderships. They are organizing everywhere, creating nuclei of popular power all over Chile...

... And the way out of this present situation?...

CINEMATIC FORM

An all-embracing report carried out in factories, plants, fields, mines. An investigative film, whose backdrops are large cities, villages, the coast, the desert, the islands, the mountains, assemblies, demonstrations, supermarkets, ports and the Chilean milieu as a whole.

A mural-type film composed of many chapters, whose protagonists are the people, their political leaders and their organization of the masses, on one hand; and the oligarchy, its leaders, its connections with United States imperialism, on the other.

A film analyzing the **three years** of Government, beginning with the Military Cabinet (2), up to the parliamentary elections in March, and continuing on.

An agitated film, based on daily occurrences, whose final duration is impossible

to foretell. A film of investigation into the "Chilean character," his behaviour, his reactions, the most outstanding fragments of his history.

A film about masses and individuals. Working families, peasant families, urban middle-class families, families of the oligarchy.

A film recording the psychological atmosphere of a possible confrontation, recording the daily oscillations of a possible civil war. What will happen? Is the question on the lips of the worker, the miner, the peasant, the man in the street?

A film that records the atmosphere of political discussion generated in places of employment and public places, where it is evident that, just in the last three years, the degree of consciousness of the working class has evolved to a point which would have taken years, or decades, previously.

A free-form film, using journalistic reporting, photographic stills, the dramatic structure of a narrative cinema, a filmed discourse with startling montage and use of long takes, all coordinated according to circumstance, according to how it is presented by reality itself, without any previous plan.

Please excuse the length of this, and I ask you to reply with absolute frankness. I am fully confident in your judgement.

Affectionately,
Patricio.

NOTES

- (1) Manuel Rodriguez, hero of the Chilean Independence.
- (2) Refers to the Civic-Military Cabinet set up by the People's Government to combat the reactionary work stoppage of October, 1972.
- (3) All of the material requested arrived in Chile in February of 1973.

TELEGRAM FROM CHRIS MARKER IN REPLY
DATE: DECEMBER 1972

Sr. Patricio Guzman
Santa Lucia 344
Santiago de Chile

I WILL DO WHAT I CAN. YOURS. CHRIS. (3)

THE BATTLE OF CHILE — REFLECTIONS PREVIOUS TO THE FILMING OF THE BATTLE OF CHILE

We began filming on February 20th, 1973.

Besides myself, the crew consists of cameraman Jorge Muller, chief of production Federico Elton, soundman Bernardo Menz and director's assistant Jose Pino.

For two weeks we went out to film immediate events without making a thorough analysis of the methodology to be followed. We have only reflected in a very general way on our work in **EL PRIMERO AÑO** (1971) and **LA RESPUESTA DE OCTUBRE** (1972). Now, however, we've called a series of meetings with the intention of systematizing those experiences, and drawing up a tentative working method for the future.

HOW TO PROCEED?

The first impulse was to film "everything that happens," and later find the structure on the moviola itself, without letting any important event slip by, playing the role of a journalistic "observer."

We discovered, however, that it is impossible to film everything that happens, even with several filmmaking teams available and scattered all over the country. "Everything that happens" is not really everything that happens, in the sense that many occurrences are the result of a process that culminates (when it does culminate) in a visible fact; therefore this kind of filmmaking is very incomplete.

Then we began looking for other shooting methods, intending to define the film's structure **before** filming it and not a-posteriori.

We began to draw up a large schematic outline, being the synthesis of the class struggle in Chile, in order to determine the key points of our reality, and to try to find a structure and a working method for the whole film.

CHRONOLOGICAL METHOD

The first thing that occurs to us is to take advantage of the "Dramatic Plan" that reality itself offers us, and to work out a documentary based on the chronological filming of events. Nevertheless, if we don't go into further analysis, we run the risk of having to cope with several extraordinarily complex months. The film might never go beyond a chaotic description of some problems full of implications and derivatives, which would force us to add, later on, a dry introduction and a dry epilogue (with an analysis of the chronological facts).

Besides, the purely chronological approach takes us dangerously close to filming only the obvious facts and ignoring the processes that led up to them, a risk we noted at the very beginning.

On the other hand, when we speak of a "chronicle," we almost always start discussing, automatically, the sensorial impact reality suggests to us, and this reminds us very much of the style of **EL PRIMER AÑO**, a film we would by no means condemn, but one which is insufficient in terms of method for the present time, because it lacks an analytic base and because it is basically an impressionistic film that tries to take on everything.

CHAPTER METHOD

In view of the impossibility of filming **all** of our reality, we decided to theoreti-

cally simplify that reality, first dividing it into chapters or themes.

To sum up, we proposed to interpret our reality (beginning with the great scheme already drawn up) through several specific problems. To analyze, for example, the ten situations the working class must go through in order to take power, and the ten schemes through which imperialism and the bourgeoisie pass in order to try to recover all their power.

Even so, when we finished writing the shooting script, or film guide, for each one of these chapters or parts (e.g., the economic boycott fomented by imperialism and the bourgeoisie; the participation of workers and peasants in food distribution; the Government's creation of the social property area of the economy; the constitutional blockade carried out by Parliament and the Supreme Court; etc.), we encountered the difficulty that the dividing lines between the chapters are non-existent (being only our own codification), and that the interrelations between all the problems make it impossible to conclude one chapter to begin another. There is a relationship of cause and effect in every event analyzed, thus the formal requirements of this structure by chapter becomes ineffective to bring the whole period together, although it does permit us to make progress in our internal discussions.

It is thanks to this fractured analysis of reality, in fact, that we discovered the dialectical relationships between all the events that we are experiencing, and that therefore (even if we discard the chapter method), the formulation of a more or less "closed" film script is unavoidable, in spite of the enormous amount of interrelation between the facts and a constantly changing situation, since otherwise we would completely lose control of the film's theme.

SPECIFIC CASES METHOD

In view of the danger of becoming overly diffuse, we resolved to replace the chapters with concrete situations, thus avoiding the splitting of reality into layers, and trying to focus on specific points of conflict.

We drew up a list of fronts of combat and chose certain very concrete cases representing the workers' struggle to take power, and simultaneously, the sabotage of the revolutionary process by imperialism and the bourgeoisie.

In this case, if the list of conflicts is really representative, we could accumulate a large quantity of cinematic material freed of any kind of previous plan, thus avoiding diffuseness. And this kind of concrete filming, juxtaposed later on, on the editing table, could arrive at an expression of the dialectic of the whole revolutionary process. That is to say, the previously rejected chapters could be handled better a-posteriori, in the editing of the film.

This methodology by specific cases towards a more interesting field: the detection of several "nuclei" from which emerge all the problems of the period.

NUCLEI METHOD

This possibility is developed due to our difficulties with defining a film script proper.

We resolved to stop reflecting and begin filming a specific problem, following the workers' opinion, in an attempt to seek out in practice an answer to the problem of structure.

We show up at "Galaz," a small furniture factory, with a total of 86 workers. The factory is on strike, as well as being occupied by almost all its employees and workers.

This is a small factory whose workers find themselves in the process of being politicized, of becoming conscious. The Industrial Union was created here on December 19th, 1970, just 40 days after President Allende took office as Governor.

Before that date, they were not able to form a union for fear of being fired by the boss, who threatened any worker hinting at union activities or presenting himself as union leader.

The workers know, however, that once the Popular Unity Government is in power the boss does not dare fire them (this is confirmed in practice), and so they succeed in forming the union and affiliating themselves with the Central Organization of Workers (C.U.T.) in early 1971.

In this case, we were able to detect several themes immediately:

- A. Characteristics of the workers who have become politically conscious more recently than other sectors of workers and their politicization began, to all intents and purposes, two years ago, with the election of President Allende.
- B. The conduct of these workers is different from that of those whose union organizations have been active for years and sometimes several decades.
- C. The Government's problems in forming the Social Area of the Economy. The use of "legal loopholes" to expropriate a factory without the interference of the Constitution.
- D. The political and economic complexities that arise from the formation of the "areas" of the economy, by the Government, in relation to the present situation of class struggle in the country.
- E. The question of the phases or periods of a revolutionary process.
- F. The question of one single political leadership, while maintaining the pluralism of parties and left-wing organizations.
- G. The development of new organizations of the masses, born in the heat of class struggle, as is the case of the Industriales Cordons.
- H. Behaviour and coordination of the fascist groups of the bourgeois parties.
- I. Attitude of the small businessman when faced with the situation of social change, etc.

In spite of the advantages this methodology could theoretically have, especially as to the detection and verification of many interrelated problems, and as to the possibility of filming events as a **chain reaction** (which is an appreciable advantage for the dramatic plan of any documentary); in spite of these advantages, this methodology could lead to a dead end, or confuse us, deceive us with apparent interrelations, since there is the risk of losing the overall perspective on the problems treated. In the case of this nucleus, for example, which allowed us to detect nine themes at once, we have always felt that we tended to turn the "galaz" workers into the protagonists of the sequence, almost by instinct, resolving the descrip-

tion of most of the problems of the revolutionary process through the opinion of these workers, as though the revolution were "Galaz."

In other words, the development of nuclei could distort the development of a film that proposes to show the whole story.

TESTIMONIAL METHOD

Also, the previous methodology leads us almost immediately towards the survey film, towards the documentary based on direct sound interviews, with anyone in front of the camera.

Every time we have tried to design or imagine another "nucleus," we inevitably end up resolving it, in formal terms, based on many interviews, many questions and answers; probably a good way although it neutralizes itself through repetition. And the problem of repetition is decisive in a documentary film, since a monotonous documentary is always more tiring than a monotonous fictional film.

These factors began to undermine the possibility of the nucleus system as a general methodology for the whole film, at the same time bringing to our attention an apparently obvious point: the "documentary" character the film must have. That is, we are trying to begin a film which will be a testimony, principally a "documentary film."

In spite of our analytic intentions, the film cannot and must not become the study of a social-political crosscut and must not be only an essay, but more than this it must be testimony (analytic, dialectical, complex), but a documentary testimony since the reality we are experiencing is in itself a historical period and nothing could be more useful than to set about directly recording this moment of the struggle, with a documentalist criterion above all.

Some of Chris Marker's letters, which we have been receiving throughout these months, have touched on this apparently well-understood problem, in pointing out (these are his exact words) that "nothing is more valuable for a documentary than to meet up with action itself." That is, no matter how deeply a problem is gone into, no matter how much it is analyzed and studied, nothing added later on can replace a plan where the spectator has the opportunity of **seeing** an action, so that he can confirm and experience it himself. That is, the camera and the working team should be situated in the epicentre of the action in order to film it (without omissions that the text in OFF later tries to excuse).

Unfortunately, it often happens that we arrive after the events have already occurred. If a street battle has occurred, for example, just filming the broken windows and the traces of combat will always leave the spectator with the impression that the events were too much for the film crew, no matter how intelligent the remarks made later by the commentator on OFF. The need to be in the middle of conflict and to be able to film it, in order to have images presenting **action**, is fundamental.

We could also use the technique of reconstructing some events, even using the real protagonists: this seems licit to us, but only in an emergency, for this would be to somehow deny the essence of the kind of documentary we are determined to make.

If we have before us a revolutionary process, the growing development of class struggle, the possibility of filming from within a crucial framework of the history of the workers' movement, it would be impossible to find a theoretical framework to explain the important omissions in terms of the future.

In other words, at this point in our reflections, we re-evaluated the need for the report to **show things** at the moment they occur.

This need to reaffirm the testimonial character of our film came upon us just as we were feeling more confident about writing a closed, precise filmscript, or finding one sole methodology. We had been feeling confident that the study and analysis of the revolutionary process would permit us to "enter" or "leave" the film setting without any problems, and that thus the theoretical knowledge of the process would give us the possibility of "illustrating" the film's ideas with any image whatsoever in such a way as to plan a relatively comfortable filming schedule with general calls a week, with as more or less definite schedule and duration. This could be effective for many themes, but under no circumstances for the whole work, because of its testimonial nature.

We agree that it is impossible to film a truly profound documentary if the team **loses its tension** in relation to the setting itself.

We found an answer to these questions in general terms in Julio Garcia Espinosa's article "por un cine imperfecto" (Toward an Imperfect Cinema) which has been one of the few sources we have found to consult in our country at this time. This is the paragraph that impressed us the most:

A cinema at the service of the Revolution... "must above all show the process of problems' development." That is, the opposite of a cinema dedicated basically to celebrating results. The opposite of a self-satisfied and contemplative cinema. The opposite of a cinema that "illustrates beautifully" ideas or concepts we already possess. (The narcissistic attitude has nothing to do with fighters). To show a process is not exactly to analyze it. To analyze, in the traditional sense of the word, always implies a previous closed judgement. To analyze a problem is to show the problem (not its process), impregnated by judgements that analysis itself generates a priori. To analyze is to block beforehand the interlocutor's possibilities analysis. To show the process of a problem's development is to subject it to judgement without passing a verdict. There is a kind of journalism that consists in giving more commentary than news. There is another kind of journalism that consists of communicating news but evaluating them through the montage or the arrangement of the newspaper. Showing the process of a problem's development is like showing the development of the news, is like showing the pluralist development — without evaluating it — of information. The subjective way is when the selection of the problem is conditioned by the interest of the person to whom it is directed, the subject. The objective way would be to show the process, which is the object." (1)

DIALOGUE OF OPPOSITES METHOD

In sum, once again we became aware of the film's testimonial character, although still trying to organize the filming around a schematic film script (where a general **analysis** of the process is made).

Along these lines, balancing the "documentary" aspect and the analytic aspect, it also occurred to us to take advantage of the cause and effect relationships between almost all of the events of this process we are living.

In other words, take advantage of the constant counterpoint between the visible actions of the left and the visible actions of the right.

For example:

- A. The Popular Unity resolves to create the JAPs (Supply and Price Boards) to eliminate hoarding of foodstuffs by speculating businessmen.

- B. The bourgeois parties accuse the JAPs of being illegal organizations and make a national scandal, accusing the Government of creating organizations outside the Constitution.
- C. The Popular Unity succeeds in legalizing the JAPs, using legal allowances contemplated in the Constitution.
- D. Having lost the legal battle, the bourgeois parties throw all their energies into encouraging and developing the black market on all levels.
- E. The Popular Unity presents a bill to Parliament to punish hoarders of foodstuffs (called "Bill against Economic Crimes").
- F. The bourgeois parties reject the bill, however, making use of their majority in both chambers of Congress.

This succession of opposed events proposes the creation of a structure rich in dramatic progression. At the same time, since this is a matter of visible and external events, we can eliminate the possibility of losing the totalizing perspective on the problems.

On the other hand, since they are principally "visible" events, the dialogue between opposites almost always tends to favour the forces of reaction, since the external framework of the battle is the bourgeois state.

On other levels, however, this does not occur. Throughout these last months (in January, February and March), as imperialist intervention in Chilean internal affairs became more obvious, as the potential for fascism and military violence supported by the bourgeois parties has shown itself more and more, as it has become more and more clear who the enemies of the people are, what methods they use and what ends they seek, the masses of workers and peasants and other progressive sectors, along with the Popular Unity parties plus the MIR have raised and multiplied their level of consciousness, their organizational capacity, their political initiative and militancy. And these all-important developments are not always reflected in visible events. The development of base organizations (like the JAPs, the popular stores, production committees, industrial cordons, etc.) does not always appear in the newspapers, nor is it recorded within the context of traditional information media.

Therefore, if we could really succeed in penetrating the surface of events, and filming situations that develop right inside the revolutionary forces and at the same time right inside the enemy, perhaps we could arrive at an authentic dialogue between opposites, since it would mean filming more or less within the epicentre of the class struggle.

Then, the dialogue between opposites would be resolved with many interlocutors. For example: the "Revolutionary Forces" vs. "Imperialism and Bourgeoisie" duality would be resolved with four interlocutors: "Popular Unity and MIR plus workers" vs. "Confederation of Bourgeois Parties plus Guilds."

The separate treatment of each of these great blocks of conflict would bring out into the open all the nuances, the divergent positions and points of agreement, within the revolutionary as well as the counter-revolutionary fronts, which would result in a complex and dialectical expose of class struggle, which is precisely what we are looking for.

CONCLUSIONS

In terms of methodology, it is not so easy, since after analyzing six different systems we are rapidly getting discouraged since all of them offer partial answers to filming the period.

Then we become skeptical about the kind of cinema we are determined to make, in the sense that the cinematic medium probably has a limited and concrete field open to it, and that to try to describe reality in such all-encompassing terms as we propose, is actually to force that medium, and that our project lacks practical implementation.

Then we are assaulted by graver doubts. Why not put this discussion into the film? Why not include the members of the filming team, speaking on these problems? Would this not be an interesting solution? Why not leave behind a record of our problems?

Almost always, however, we discard these tendencies, since the film must be comprehensible to the working class. This premise helps us to get rid of certain facile or incongruous solutions, but we must confess that we often get entangled in exhausting and pointless discussions, wasting a lot of time.

In any case, here are the conclusions:

First, we have resolved to draw up a second theoretical general scheme, to direct all our work, in which the interpretation of reality is subject to three levels of class struggle, as follows:

- A. The Economic Struggle
- B. The Ideological Struggle
- C. The Political Struggle

Our film will be based on these three great boundaries of the situation. The fundamental themes of the film will be the different kinds of class struggle, defined in general terms as follows:

- A. THE ECONOMIC STRUGGLE is the confrontation produced between the opposing classes on the level of economic structure. This confrontation is characterized by the resistance put up by the exploited classes on this level against the exploiting classes.
- B. THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE is the struggle of the exploited class against that of the exploiting. In the capitalist society, this is the struggle between bourgeois ideology in all its forms and proletariat ideology based on the Marxist theory of history.
- C. THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE is the confrontation produced between the classes in their fight for political power, that is, in the fight to make their own the power of the state. (2)

In order to treat each of the specific themes contained in these three levels, we have come up with a third schematic outline, as a substitute for a "closed" film script.

To film this outline we will try to use all of the methods studied, freely mixed, partially or totally developed, according to the particular case, with the object of constructing our cinematic discourse by making use of every possibility available, since none of these on its own seems to resolve the "direction" of the project. Perhaps the dialectical combination of all of them will take us closer to our aspiration of "filming everything that happens."

Having concluded the previous reflections about the orientation of the film script, the next step is to find a concrete answer in images to each method.

EPILOGUE

Rules of work:

1. No member of the crew shall concede interviews or statements to the press or other information media.
2. The crew will maintain liaison with the working collective of the publication "Chile-Hoy," from which it will extract information for some aspects of filming, but for their part every member of the team must contribute information either on their own, or through third parties who have this information at their disposal.
3. There will be a daily call for filming, at 10:00a.m., including Sundays.
4. There will be over-time calls during the night.
5. The production calendar will be programmed once a week.
6. Once every two weeks, past work will be evaluated, during the projection of the rushes.
7. The filming period has no foreseeable concluding date.

Technical material available:

1. One 16mm Eclair camera, with pilot signal, equipped with a 250mm, a 25mm, and an 18mm zoom lens, as well as 3 mounts of 400 feet each.
2. One Nagra-4 taperecorder equipped with a semi-directional microphone.
3. Film: fifteen thousand feet of Plus-X, Ten thousand feet of Four-X, Ten thousand feet of Double-X. Reserve: Four thousand feet of Plus-X and Four thousand feet of Four-X.
4. Tapes: 134 quarter inch tapes.

Translated by Christina Shantz
Ottawa, September 1979

from **Cine Cubano** no. 91-92

NOTES

- (1) "Por un Cine Imperfecto", **Revista de Cine Cubano**, Ediciones ICAIC (available in English in **JumpCut** no. 20)
- (2) "Los Conceptos Elementales del Materialismo Historico," Marta Harnecker Editorial Siglo XXL

The Battle of Chile — A Schematic Shooting Script

1. Control of Production

1. Popular Unity Offensive

- A. Creation of the Social Property Area of the Economy
- B. Creation of the Reformed Area in the Countryside

2. The Legal Battle

- A. Popular Unity Instruments:
 - Laws for expropriation of a factory when it is not producing to capacity.
 - Laws for designation of a state official (inspector) when deficiencies are discovered in the economic and technical planning of a company.
 - Agrarian Reform Law for expropriation of "Latifundios" (large estates).
- B. Counteroffensive by the Reaction:
 - Dismissal of ministers carrying out expropriation or intervention orders, by virtue of the constitutional accusations mechanism, using a Parliamentary majority.
 - Systematic obstruction of Tribunals and Supreme Court functioning
 - Presentation of a Constitutional Reform to eliminate from the constitution those laws which have thus far permitted expropriation of factories.

3. The Ideological Battle

- A. Popular Unity arguments:
 - Salary levelling
 - increase in demand
 - increase in production
 - increase in economic planning
 - industrial growth
- B. Arguments of the Reaction:
 - Nationalization equals robbery or assault on private property.
 - Government intervention equals bad administration
 - Nationalization of the economy equals economic failure

4. Worker Support of the Social Property Area

- A. Development of committee participation
 - Production Committee
 - Planning Committee
 - Raw Materials Supply Committee
- B. Development of Organization participation:
 - Union growth
 - Intensification of agreement between Central organization of Workers and government
 - Development of Industrial Cordons
 - Development of Agrarian Reform Centres
 - Development of Communal Peasant Councils

2. Control of Distribution

1. Imperialist Blockade

- A. Suspension of all credit for purchase of foodstuffs

- B. Rise in food prices on international market
 - C. Suspension of all credit for purchase of raw materials
 - D. Rise of prices of raw materials on international market.
- 2. Offensive by National Bourgeoisie
 - A. Boycott by private sector:
 - Reduced yields from non-expropriated agricultural lands
 - Reduced production in privately owned industries
 - Hoarding of foods and other products by private distributors
 - B. Political use of Problem
 - Scare campaign directed at middle class strata and small business-men
 - Organization of reactionary hoarding systems
 - Implementation of black market
 - Parliamentary boycott of legal solutions proposed by government
- 3. Counteroffensive by Revolutionary Forces
 - A. On the international scene
 - Develops economic relations with socialist countries
 - Seeks favourable re-negotiation of Chile's external debt in Paris Club.
 - Receives credit from capitalist countries partially free of imperialist blockade
 - B. On the Home Front
 - Detection and punishment of hoarding and black market by Industry and Commerce Management Board
 - Strengthening of Supply and Price boards, popular organizations which cooperate with small businessmen in food distribution, also ensuring the observance of official price structures and reporting offenders to government officials.
 - Development of People's stores which are sales centres staffed by neighbourhood inhabitants and directly supplied by the State Distributor
 - Creation of the People's Hamper, consisting of a ration of food for each family which goes directly from the state distributor to the neighbourhoods.
- 3. Transformation of the Relations of Production
 - 1. The Union's Role
 - A. In the Production battle
 - in the private area
 - in the public area of the economy
 - B. In defending workers income
 - Claims based on national economic situation
 - Class consciousness vs. purely economic criteria
 - C. Development of participation
 - strengthening of Government agreement
 - 2. Workers' Participation
 - A. At the grass roots
 - Volunteer work
 - Worker inventors who can construct parts and pieces previously imported from the U.S.
 - Production, Vigilance and Raw Materials Supply Committees,

- B. By Leadership
 - on Administration councils
 - in leadership control
 - in planning control
- 4. The Ideological Fight in Education and Information
 - 1. The Unequal Communications Battle
 - A. Correlation of strength
 - 80 per cent of the press and 70 per cent of the radio stations belong to Imperialism and the Bourgeoisie
 - B. Content of the messages
 - counterrevolution: maintenance and development of the Scare campaign, supported by thousands of dollars daily.
 - the revolutionary forces: multiple efforts to raise the level of consciousness of the worker and peasant masses.
 - 2. Educational Reform Proposed by Government
 - A. The class character of Chilean education, manifest in:
 - those who benefit from it
 - its content
 - B. The United National School Project
 - general democratization of teaching
 - one single educational program for public schools, private colleges and military schools
 - C. Response of the right
 - Scandal raised by parents and reactionary authorities
 - intervention by the Catholic church
 - government warned by the armed forces
 - use of students by the right
 - role of bourgeois press as ideological motivator
- 5. The Battle Plan
 - 1. Imperialism and the Bourgeoisie in Search of their Supporters
 - A. Role of the Christian Democrat Party
 - B. Role of the National Party
 - C. Role of the Confederation of Democracy or alliance of the bourgeois parties.
 - D. Utilization of traditional base organizations:
 - neighbour boards in bourgeois areas
 - student organizations in private schools
 - gremial organizations
 - conquest of some unions
 - E. Creation of new base organizations
 - Proteco, a fascist block organization
 - Feminine power, a female fascist organization
 - paramilitary fascist organizations
 - Fatherland and Freedom ideology
 - 2. General Mobilization of the Revolutionary Forces
 - A. President Allende's role as leader of a revolutionary experience without precedent anywhere in the world.
 - B. Utilization of the executive power in order to partially control the the bourgeois state apparatus.

legal implementation to control the Latifundios, monopolies, and strategic industries.

temporary neutralization of the Armed Forces and the Cavalry.

- C. Strengthening of Revolutionary Parties and Organizations:
role of Popular unity, Communist party, Socialist party, Radical party, Movement of Popular United Action (MAPU), Workers' and Peasants' MAPU Party, Christian Left organization.

Role of Revolutionary left-wing movement (MIR)

- D. The Ideological Fight

Points of agreement within Popular Unity.

Points of disagreement within Popular Unity.

Points of agreement and disagreement between the MIR and Popular Unity.

- F. People's Power Strategy

- G. United action: growth and development of:

supply and price boards

neighbour boards

mother's centres

popular stores

industrial, mining and agricultural unions

direct supply units

communal peasant councils

agrarian reform centres

industrial cordons

communal units.

Translation by Christine
Shantz from Cine-Cubano
no. 91-92.

THE CINEMA OF LATIN AMERICA: A CONSTANTLY CHANGING PROBLEMATIC

"In Latin America there is no place for the spectator, the innocent. Both are accomplices of imperialism." Paraphrasing the words of Frantz Fanon, the makers of **THE HOUR OF THE FURNACES**, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, remind us that the only cinema of value for Latin America is a cinema involved with the process of liberation and revolution. To reach this point, the road has been long and arduous: revolution is a process of rupture, of change and of the development of new paths. To do this, the filmmakers of Latin America have had, from the beginning and above all else, to attack the "main enemy," the cultural colonialism of Hollywood cinema.

In their interviews and writings, Latin American filmmakers insist on the need for a break with Hollywood cinema, a cinema of dependence which favours alienation and the status quo through filmic illusionism, and which reaffirms the moral and cultural values of a national colonized bourgeoisie. This need for a break, expressed in almost all their declarations of intention, has been put clearly into practice in almost every country on the continent, despite the fact that only a few national schools have succeeded in transforming this rupture into a revolutionary practice.

In Cuba, within a liberation process; in Bolivia, with a number of filmmakers around Jorge Sanjines; in Chile, during Popular Unity: the films of these periods, through their conception, their techniques and modes of representation, and through their messages, have broken with any ideology recuperable by the capitalist system. Each Latin American filmmaker working within the dominant cinematic structures has had to face economic and political censorship — as was the case with the Argentinians of "nuevo cinema" (1959-1961) — or the danger of a nationalist policy capable of assimilating films able to reflect a "national reality" — as in the case of the Mexicans.

While it is true that, here in North America, we know very little of Mexican films, it cannot be denied that this cinema is one of the most influential among Spanish-language cinemas. Throughout the comprehensive investigation of Latin American cinema we have been undertaking over the course of several years — and for which this article is an "open" conclusion — we have partially neglected the Mexican film industry. Mexico, with an industry structured after the older, corporatist model, dependent upon the state and on the organizations of professionals within the film industry, is the best example of a cinema of nationalist assimilation. In 1974, when we wrote an article entitled "Découverte d'un autre cinéma mexicain"¹ we naively believed that the new policy of the National Film Bank would permit the development of a young cinema breaking with traditional structures. Questioning the possibility of there existing a "revolutionary cinema," a cinema of struggle, we argued that the films made between 1969 and 1972 by such directors as Luis Alcoriza, Felipe Cazals, Arturo Ripstein Jr., Alberto Isaacs, Gustavo Alatriste and Alfonso Arau, would serve as a critical reflection upon the national cultural reality and as a denunciation of dominant myths. Despite this, one can point, in their later works, to the degree to which official discourse and Hollywoodian models continue to saturate the Mexican cinema. "Folklorizing Surrealism" and gratuitous violence characterize the films of those who once seemed to call for a politics of rupture. With reference to such films as **EL PRINCIPIO** (1972) and **LONGITUD DE GUERRA** (1975) by Gonzalo Martínez and **A QUELLOS AÑOS** (1972) and **CANOA** (1975) by Felipe Cazals, Alberto Ruy-Sánchez describes the positions of Mexican cinema within the context of Latin American filmmaking: "'Popular Memory' is conceived as the 'dominated and persecuted memory' of a people struggling against the repression brought about by those in power, but, in Mexico, the state has managed to perfectly establish its ideology of domination while at the same time, and without imposing any fundamental distortion, exalting the 'memory' of the peasant revolts of the 1910 revolution. The filmmaker thinks he is clarifying historical facts in the light of the popular struggles of the

moment, when he often, in fact, does nothing but present a past which fuels the populist arguments of those wielding despotic power. 'Collective memory' is a notion which has often been associated with a national culture confronting a colonialist culture. This archaic conception of imperialism has proved to be perfectly suited to a group of Mexican filmmakers who have been able to consider themselves specialists in nationalistic memory. They have gone so far as to furnish the images of national reconciliation required by nationalistic despotism. And, to complete their subjection, they have totally subordinated the style of their films to the models imposed on world cinema by the U.S.A."²

What Ruy-Sanchez refers to as the "dilution" of Hollywood within Mexican film production is not simply the result of a state policy expressing itself at the level of content, but, above all, the influence of Hollywood illusionism, which has infiltrated the way in which the cinema is conceived in this country. Do these reflections on the cultural development and cinematic mimeticism of Latin American commercial cinema allow one to say that the fight against Hollywood, and therefore, colonized structures, is impossible in those countries where a film industry has been established?

The case of Brazil would provide an affirmative response to this question: cinema novo did not succeed in changing the cinematic tradition, and its evolution, dependent upon political and economic conditions, did not manage to attract a public large enough to ensure its development. While several filmmakers, such as Glauber Rocha, Carlos Diegues and Ruy Guerra have explored new aesthetic paths which have allowed for an analysis of the conditions existing in Brazil, their films have remained marginal within a commercial film structure. One might speculate as to whether their films have not been "assimilated" within a system which draws upon nationalism as an ideological base with which to subjugate the people and oppose the liberation of Latin America from a neo-colonialism of dependency.

The term "revolutionary cinema" is applicable only within an aesthetic context when discussing the Brazilian cinema novo. Cinema novo had as its objective a break with the Hollywood model, and an investigation of culture based on an authentically Brazilian content and means of expression. The emphasis on myth, on the oral tradition, and on the legends of the Sertao (the northeast of Brazil); the analysis of historical periods using baroque excess and a return to the tropicalist principles of the 1920's — these were the basic aspects of the Brazilian filmmakers' project.

One might question whether the aesthetics of violence, as defined by Glauber Rocha, have made possible a new understanding of the realities of under-development and of a colonized Brazil. In his text, "The Aesthetics of Hunger," Rocha proclaims: "The normal behaviour of the hungry is violence; but the violence of the hungry is not primitivistic; the aesthetics of violence, before being primitive, is revolutionary, it is the moment when the colonized becomes aware of the existence of the colonizer."³

The aggressivity and violence of style of Brazilian films served to unmask the contradictions and ambiguities of social and political reality in a Brazil on the road to "development." The fascination produced by these films did not succeed in hiding the humanism and ambiguity which finally trapped cinema novo within a cul-de-sac. Films like **O DESAFIO** (1966 — Paulo César Saraceni) and **TERRA EM TRANSE** (1966 — Glauber Rocha) are situated at the moment at which the military government grew firm and became less and less tolerant of intellectuals and militants of the left. Political allegory films (**MACUNAIMA** by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade — 1970) became the only means of evading a censorship policy that had become more and more strict. For all practical purposes, cinema novo disappeared in 1971, and, like other movements within the Latin American cinema, it was the victim of the fascistization of nationalistic regimes, even though it had begun in response to the cultural colonialization of the continent. Even if cinema novo did not succeed in becoming a weapon of combat, its influence in the field

of aesthetics is not negligible. The epic aspect of the films of Rocha and Diegues, their overcoming of the neo-realism of Guerra's films through a "marvellous-real," the refusal to glorify the individual hero, and focus upon collective characters in the films of Nelson Pereira dos Santos, are the Brazilian cinema's contributions to the development of a Latin American revolutionary cinema.

The lack of communication with a national audience, cinema novo's greatest problem, no doubt led the filmmakers of other countries to reflect upon more concrete questions relating to cinematic practice. The filmmakers of the Cuban revolutionary cinema, with the vitality and enthusiasm of its early years, had had to deal with the problems posed by the communicative aspects of film and its social role within a concrete social situation such as that of their country. Without neglecting a conception of the cinema as spectacle, filmmaker-theorists such as Julio Garcia Espinosa have been faced with a question as complex as that of "the public taste."

The break with neo-colonialism should include an investigation of culture taking into account an audience alienated by the Hollywood-style imperialism which ideological structures, through their domination of the means of communication and of cinematic language, have imposed. In Montreal, during the *Rencontres Internationales Pour Un Nouveau Cinéma* in 1974, Garcia Espinosa pointed out to the Latin American filmmakers in attendance that revolution and the taking of power were not sufficient for establishing a cinema of liberation. Clearly, though the Chilean experience has demonstrated that, without a total seizure of the means of communication and production and distribution structures, the task of the revolutionary filmmaker is all the more complicated.⁴

It is because of this that Julio Garcia Espinosa has insisted upon the need for working "with and for the people." He has argued, for these reasons, that militant activity is indispensable for a new Latin American — not merely Cuban — cinema, and stated: "Certainly, as we have often repeated, what defines our cinema in concrete terms is anti-imperialism. Nevertheless, for us, anti-imperialism cannot be reduced to the level of thematic. It should be the *raison d'être* of our films, and we should respond to the challenge offered us by the presence, on our screens, of an imperialist cinema."⁵ This challenge of which Julio Garcia Espinosa speaks should lead into an investigation at the level of language, at the level of cinematic genres, and at the level of the social function of the cinema. If the film public, even in Cuba, enjoys going to see films for amusement, it is not because these spectators are reactionaries. Cuban filmmakers have not neglected the concrete fact of cinematic spectacle (that "jouissance" of which Metz speaks) and, later in his statement, Julio Garcia Espinosa, referring to Hollywood cinema, says:

It is said, for example, that the American cinema, the North American cinema, is an escapist cinema. It is, certainly, an escapist cinema as regards the solutions it provides to problems, but it is not escapist if one takes into account the problems and needs which arise in reality (...) All these things are the products of real needs on the part of the spectator, as the relationship cinema/public is not an aesthetic relationship, but one which responds to the need to satisfy the specific needs which arise in reality.⁶

This demonstrates the necessity for analyzing, in a highly rigorous manner, the aesthetic bases of Hollywood cinema, before being able to establish the presuppositions guiding a cinema of cultural liberation.

A denunciation of the alienation produced by the American cinema should include the study of communication mechanisms and of the role of the spectator. Thus, the Cubans have incorporated documentary within fiction, have refused the easy and dry didacticism of demonstration films and insisted upon a popular

cinema, one drawing its form and content from a close relationship between filmmaker and spectator. It is not simply a question of drawing the people into the making of a film, of refusing to use professional actors, but of integrating them within the entire process of production and distribution. The films of the **U KAMAU** group and of Jorge Sanjines grew out of the experiences of the filmmakers in making and showing their films in relation to the work and participation of the actors/characters and spectators. The Bolivian people are less interested in seeing their reflection on the screen than in understanding mechanisms of oppression and strategies for liberation. It will no doubt be said that Sanjines works under very favourable conditions — with popular masses untouched by the American cinema. Nevertheless, the Bolivian group's experiences have helped to define a term which has multiple meanings: popular cinema.

A popular cinema, in the Latin American context, does not mean a cinema for the masses; a popular cinema does not imply populism. A popular cinema is a Latin American cinema serving to awaken, reflecting the life and traditions of a people's struggles; it is a cinema in which the filmmaker effaces himself as an artist before the vitality, strength and generosity of his people. A popular cinema in Latin America takes different forms and faces: it is "imperfect," it is epic, it is didactic — but a popular cinema should be above all an instrument of revolution, a weapon for oppressed peoples and a participation in the revolutionary process.

The diversity and historicity of Latin American cinema are essential to understanding the problematic of the film movement which has emerged from the Rio Grande to the northern regions of the continent, in spite of national and political differences. In Merida (Venezuela), in 1977, an assembly of filmmakers founded a "Committee of Latin American Filmmakers" and passed a declaration in which they set out the aims of their films and their solidarity in the face of such new conditions as political repression and exile. Since 1973, the Chilean, Bolivian and Argentinian filmmakers have affirmed the need to adapt cinematic practice to this new reality on the continent. Exile and resistance will therefore dictate the modalities of production: the response may be a clandestine or parallel cinema. The answer to the fundamental question — what is the future of Latin American cinema? — should therefore be based on new principles.

The recent work of Chilean filmmakers in exile, the films of Jorge Sanjines, and works by Carlos Alvarez, have all been possible only because of international solidarity. It is thanks to such solidarity that cultural resistance and the preservation of a national identity is possible, even in exile. The optimism of certain directors in exile is always tinged with a degree of bitterness.

Let us allow an exiled filmmaker to speak: "How does one revive the 'spirit' of one's region, of one's people, when one lives elsewhere? Whatever the hospitality of the host country, the filmmaker-exile remains, in his liberty, a prisoner. (...) That is why one must ask oneself whether the era of Latin American cinema in exile is viable or not. Everyone must weigh his own possibilities and avoid any illusions as to a cinema in exile which would be rich and splendid. Let us reflect on the films we are able to make."⁷ Carlos Alvarez, the Colombian filmmaker, looks for new strategies. One must find new tactical objectives while still retaining the general principles of the past: the cinema should remain a weapon for denouncing the repression and fascism of the Latin American regimes. Today, as before, Carlos Alvarez proposes that one attack this brutality and that one denounce the poverty of the people: one must, using the cinema, appeal to international solidarity. He concludes by saying: "One day, the Latin American cinema, which is suffocating in exile, will re-awaken. After a long period of forced hibernation, it will once again blossom with an even greater expressive force."⁸

The Latin American cinema of resistance and exile, the Cuban cinema and the films of those who continue to struggle for the final and complete liberation of the Latin American continent, cannot be considered without reflecting upon the

progress of the last eighteen years. An attentive study of the theoretical and practical principles which allow one to speak of a new cinema in Latin America will enable us to understand the extraordinary accomplishments of the Chilean films made in Europe and North America since 1973, and the new strategies of Jorge Sanjines, who continue to film despite enormous material and economic difficulties.

The purpose of the dossier we are presenting here in **CINE-TRACTS** is one of an open conclusion to a new problematic for militant cinematic practice. So many films by Latin American filmmakers have become known since the eruption, in 1963, onto the screens at Cannes, of the Brazilian cinema novo; amidst the polemics over the definition of political cinema as a militant praxis, the theoretical reflections of the Latin American filmmakers have been neglected.⁹

We hope that in re-opening the debate on Latin America, in particular with regard to the Cuban films, and those of Patricio Guzman, one will take into account the past and present strategies without launching into a purely laudative approval, going beyond more general contributions to the theoretical study of the cinema. Theoretical work has been one of the essential elements of a militant filmmaking praxis in Latin America: can it serve as the point of departure for a practice undertaken within the context of the "building of a national cinema"?

Translated by Will Straw

This article is part of a study on Chilean Cinema to be published shortly in *Les Cinémas d'Amérique latine*, edited by Guy Hennebelle and Alfonso Gumuncio Dagron, Paris.

The Filmography was established by Juan Verdejo, Madrid, 1979

The author would like to thank Patricio Guzman, Pedro Chaskal, Juan Verdejo for making parts of this material available to us. Also, to Christine Shantz and Will Straw for translation, and to Peter Harcourt and Ron Burnett for their help.

FOOTNOTES

1. **Positif** (Paris), No. 157, March 1974, pp.56-63. The remarks which follow are in response to the article by Jesus Salvador Trevino, "The New Mexican Cinema," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Spring 1979), pp. 26-37.
2. Alberto Ruy-Sanchez, "La 'dilution' de Hollywood dans un cinéma populiste américanisé." (Condensed and organized by Guy Hennebelle, from a translation by Maria Eugenia Garcia and Dominique Dufétel) Dossier: "Amérique Latine: théories pour des cinémas de libération." **Revue du Cinéma — Image et Son** (Paris) no. 340, June 1979, pp.99.
3. Glauber Rocha. "The aesthetics of hunger" (also entitled "The aesthetics of violence"). **Cine Cubano** (Havana) no. 42-43-44, p. 58
4. See in this context the interview with Armand Mattelart, "Appareils idéologiques d'état et luttes de classe. Chile 1970-1973." **Cahiers du Cinéma** (Paris) no. 254-55, pp. 6-31.
5. Julio Garcia Espinosa. "Le cinéma et la prise du pouvoir." (Translated by Andrée Dandurand) Cahier no. 3 **RENCONTRES internationales pour un nouveau cinéma**, Montreal, 1974, p.27.
6. Ibid. p.27.
7. Carlos Alvarez. "Le dur métier de l'exil." (Berlin 1976). Dossier: "L'Amérique Latine: théories pour des cinémas de libération". Collected by Guy Hennebelle. **Revue du Cinéma — Image et Son** (Paris), no.340, June 1979, p. 105.
8. Ibid. p. 105.
9. Texts in English have been published in **JumpCut** no. 19 and 20, as well as in Bill Nichols, ed., **Movies and Methods** and **Latin American Filmmakers and the Third Cinema**, published by the author at Carleton University.

David Rimmer's *Surfacing* on the Thames

BLAINE ALLEN

"I think that it would be profitable to speak about the special nature of any film, of the fact of images unwinding off a machine. Until that's understood (I have some theories about it myself), we can't begin to create, on a methodical basis, an aesthetic for that film. We don't understand the psychological meaning of images — any images — coming off a machine. There are basic problems, it seems to me, that could be discussed here. I've probably added no end to the confusion, but that's what I have to say at the moment. (Applause)"

Arthur Miller
"Poetry and Film: A Symposium"
Film Culture 29, Summer, 1963

A study of a film such as David Rimmer's **Surfacing on the Thames** demands an initial definition of context. Rimmer's film is so compact and yet addresses so many broad questions that the field of examination must be made clear and a matrix of study established. The film can be slotted into several categories, each of which narrows the field of study and sets up **a priori** standards and criteria for examination. It is a film which can be categorized generally in the independent or experimental tradition and, at a finer level, it falls into P. Adams Sitney's classification of a "structural film." As such it would be useful to use the following definition by Sitney: "The structural film insists on its shape, and what content it has is minimal and subsidiary to the outline."¹ Rimmer's film, however, is an interesting corollary to Sitney's rule in that **Surfacing** appears to raise particular questions of the balance between form and content. In turn, the film must be examined in the context of a tension between the realist and illusionist tendencies of all film.

When we speak of realism and Rimmer, we are not discussing realism in the sense of a 'realistic' image, and an image which might be characterized as faithfully reproducing the pro-filmic event a realism in the Bazinian sense. Instead, the concern is even more basic: the film material itself. Rimmer explores the qualities and components of the raw material with which he works and, in his consciousness of, and articulation of, those qualities, he speaks firmly on the level of the finished product and indeed, of any film.

Even though this is a highly controlled form and structure, **Surfacing on the Thames** appears to an extent to validate the use of the term 'experimental' in reference to film. Sitney eschews the use of the word on the grounds that "experimental cinema... implies a tentative and secondary relationship to a more stable cinema."² Peter Wollen, on the other hand, takes an opposing view, echoing recommendations formulated by Paul Sharits: "Sharits develops the idea that the most fruitful research procedure lies in making films which are indeed, in the strict sense of the word, experimental. Such films, made by 'researchers,' would produce information about their own linguistic ('cinematic') structure. Thus the self-referential film is a tool of inquiry into the problems of film language and film being, united at the level of the minimal unit."³

In this difference of opinion concerning terminology and purpose, we can see the fundamental difference in the respective approaches to film of Sitney and Wollen. Sitney, caught up in a concern for aesthetic and artistic unity, sees 'experimental' as 'incomplete.' Wollen, on the other hand, views the experimental film as necessarily tentative and actively working toward a definition of film and its components. As practising filmmakers, Sharits and Rimmer fulfill both functions, examining and researching the components of the medium and creating a film as an organic whole.

Surfacing poses the use of the word, 'experimental' in a more internally contained world. The film, both the creation and the experience of it, explores a truth about the nature of cinema and the qualities of perception. In this latter concern, it is related to the works of many other independent filmmakers from Brakhage to Breer. Whereas the non-structural filmmakers seem

to work to illustrate a preconceived personal aesthetic or theory through their work, Rimmer's film seems more tentative than that. **Surfacing** seems more an exploration of the possibilities of the medium through a set manipulation of a fixed piece of material.

Surfacing on the Thames is the product of a length of archival footage which will be referred to as the 'parent footage.' This 'parent footage' raises other questions crucial to an understanding of the film. The footage is at once arbitrary, in that it was not conceived of or shot by Rimmer himself, and yet calculated in that it was chosen for its specific and peculiar qualities. Rimmer examines the nature and components of the material with which he is working and tries to instill in the viewer a conception of what the 'parent footage' and **Surfacing on the Thames** is all about. By extension and as a result of his research he examines the nature of film as a whole. Through the process of rephotography of film, Rimmer's camera is to the 'parent footage' what the first cinematographer's camera was to the original shot, a barge floating on the river Thames. The original realism of the shot is transformed into a commentary upon realism itself. As well, concern is lifted from the event which was originally recorded on film — the ship on the river — to another event, the film as an object of enquiry. In the modernist film: "...light is no longer seen as the means by which the pro-filmic event is registered on film, but as the pro-filmic event itself, and at the same time part of the material process of the film itself, as transmitted through the lens and indeed the strip of celluloid in the projector — so that the strip can be seen as the medium for the transmission (and absorption) of light, the basic raw material."⁴ This is especially evident in consideration of the realism evoked in the film material: the image or illusion grows out of the components of the image which are themselves real.

To make **Surfacing on the Thames**, Rimmer expanded five feet of film into just under two hundred feet of finished product — each of two hundred frames is repeated for two hundred frames and each extended frame or 'shot' is joined to the next by a ninety-six frame dissolve. The ninety-six frame dissolve is thus the basic device of linkage. The mathematical precision of the film — the exact duration of each 'shot' and the regularity of the transitional dissolves — creates in the experience of the film a pendular rhythm. Here dependent upon the fixed rate of projection, the temporal device of rhythm is generated by the quantitative series of images and the determined number of frames per 'shot' and per dissolve.

Peter Wollen points to the relationship of screen time to story time and in so doing compares traditional Hollywood cinema to experimental film: "In most films, Hollywood films particularly, story time is longer than screen time and hence the basic operational figures are those of compression and ellipsis. In contrast, independent and experimental films have tended more to suppress imaginary time entirely and to work with screen time alone, often with great complexity, or else they have chosen to move towards isochronicity (Warhol) or, through repetition, for instance, to have story time shorter than screen time (Conner).... In general terms, too, we can say that Hollywood cinema has tended to suppress consciousness of screen time, to transport the spectator into the realm of the imaginary."⁵ **Surfacing On The Thames** is clearly an example of what Wollen calls 'elongation,' of story time shorter than screen time. If one can say that the suppression of screen time works to spark the realm of the imaginary in the spectator, then at least for **Surfacing** the converse would seem to be true. Each frame of the 'parent footage' is perceivable for just over eight seconds in the 'offspring.' We are called upon to examine each frame of the parent film in detail. Although the film is without a narrative as such, it has a simple dramatic structure; this is common to a number of Rimmer's films, and makes them more readily accessible. This is probably most evident in the loop-based **The Dance**, which begins with an image of curtains opening and a shot of an audience within the film, and ends with the end of the dance, the curtains closing (reverse action of the opening), and the audience again. In **Surfacing on the Thames**, the structure is similar to that of **The Dance** in that the film starts with the exposure flare at the head of the roll of film and zooms out from an unresolvable (in representational terms) view of a severely restricted area of the field of the frame of the 'parent footage.' At the end, Rimmer zooms in on the field of the last frozen frame, again to an unresolvable image and there is flare from the end of the roll. In so structuring the film, Rimmer creates an interior world to the film, but one which is put at a distance. The flare and the zoom are indicators of the film as film as much as any of the elements which are included in the centre section of the film. The zoom outs and in also create the illusion of a three-dimensional space in a film which, in concept, would seem to be militantly two-dimensional, given that it is a cinematic examination of a piece of cinefilm; a two-dimensional medium doubled over as it were.

If one considers the quality of the image itself, there are several aspects which stand out. On the level of chemically generated phenomena, there is the highlighted grain and the coloration. The grain has been brought out largely through the process of rephotography. The grain which is notable is not only that of the older 'parent footage' but also the coloured grain of Rimmer's 'offspring' film. Although the respective aesthetics behind the visual effects are different, one

might relate the use of highlighted grain in **Surfacing on the Thames** to that of **The Machine of Eden** by Stan Brakhage. Brakhage's effect was gained by baking the film in an oven: Rimmer's by less-than-Hollywood quality optical printing.

The softness of the image, the highlighted grain, and the golden colour of this film work to evoke a painterly tradition. The resemblance to the work of Turner has been noted several times. Kristina Nordstrom has put the prime element behind this association as the film's "golden coloration."⁶ The quality of the image also invokes the work of the Pointillists. To this movement or style, one can relate the emphasis on the grain of the film as a compositional element (one of the parts of which the whole film is the sum) and the creation and manipulation of the film on a scale as minute as the dots which make up a Pointillist painting.

With the antique quality of the colour, Rimmer seems to be speaking with great respect and affection to the age of the 'parent film.' The film has no concrete unity in history: the nineteenth century of Turner has nothing to do with the World War Two origins of the 'parent' footage. A combination of the traditions evoked, the setting represented (readily recognizable, even without the title of the film, as London), and the historicity of the 'parent' film all comes together to create an impression of an image out of the past, an 'Old World' quality of the image itself. The conscious evocation of such a cumulative quality is certainly part of a bias on Rimmer's part to counterbalance the analytic nature of the film.

One component of the image which is dealt with clearly are the frame lines. The film starts in the standard 1.33:1 aspect ratio of the sixteen millimeter format. The zoom out which opens the film, however, also reduces the image to 1.85:1, masking the top and bottom of the screen in black. In so doing, Rimmer clearly complements the horizontality of the image, and also actively calls the frame lines to the attention of the spectator and puts the question of the relationship of the frame lines to the image as a whole. In fact, the black bands at top and bottom of the screen become integral parts of the whole image, especially notable when the space defined by them is invaded by the shifting of the top and bottom frame lines. This displacement of the whole frame was an accident according to the conception of the film — the registration was not supposed to change — but becomes an essential element of the realization.

Surfacing on the Thames gains half its title from the representational image and the other from the concentration on the extra-cinematic phenomena, which in any other case might be named impurities or imperfection. Both Regina Cornwell and Peter Wollen point to the structural potential behind these impurities. With reference to Paul Sharit's **S:TREAM:S:S:ECTION:S:SECTION:S:S:ECTIONED**, Cornwell notes: "Sharit's purposely uses the scratch and a system of scratches which eat into the otherwise representational images below, and create their own illusions out of the film emulsion itself."⁷ Like the frame lines or the grain of the image, which are traditionally elided in the experience of a film, but are here brought to the forefront, so are the scratches, hairs, dust and all the other markings which are, in conventional films, normally regarded as distractions if indeed they are perceived and cognitively registered at all. Here, these phenomena originating in the 'parent footage' are frozen in **Surfacing** and must be grounded as an element of each shot and of the film as an organic whole. The individual marks are random in their occurrence in the parent footage, but through their duration, they take on a sort of order. They appear and disappear in regular rhythm. The order which they create becomes especially evident when a mark which stretched over several frames in the 'parent footage' is reproduced by Rimmer. For instance, there is one point in **Surfacing** at which a line which crossed four frames in the 'parent footage' is transformed into four separate lines in four separate shots. The lines, in successive shots and through the dissolves which connect them appear to shift laterally from left to right until, after the fourth, it is not replaced by a line indifferent orientation with respect to the frame lines and is thus lost.⁸

Through the technical expertise available to him Rimmer creates the impression of a series of physical levels in the film. There are the levels of the emulsion and grain and the representational image of the ship and barge and the London skyline of which it is composed; there is the level of the extra-cinematic phenomena: the scratches, dust, and the like. As well, although only at the start of the film, there is the extra layer of the **SURFACING ON THE THAMES** title. As the image becomes more readily resolvable, especially determined by the relative clarity of focus of the respective levels, one is perceived as farther in the foreground. The image of the ship and barge has little (although some) depth in itself. The whole image is quite soft and the forms rather nebulous. Some sense of depth is generated by the darkness of the lower area of the frame, the area containing the river and the ship and the barge and the relative lightness of the skyline, putting it perceptually in the background, and the even lighter nondefinite sky behind and above that. The image is not primarily notable for its pictorial recreation of a sense of depth, however, instead it is quite flat. This quality combined with the imposed frame lines at top and bottom lend a uniplanarity to the image. Rather than being a tunnel or window effect, it is consciously an image. Over the level of the image, perhaps on the same level as the

mat formed by the black bands at top and bottom, are the scratches and dust and such. These are in sharper focus than the image itself. At one level the idea of putting impurities such as dust and scratches into sharper focus than that of the representational image is an indication of Rimmer's sense of irony and wit, fundamental to his work as a whole. On the perceptual level, however, the device acts to add a level to the film in illusory three-dimensionality. The superimposed title card becomes yet one more level — especially considering that the title remains stationary during the zoom which opens the film. Here, the title card is clearly related to the titles used in other structural films, notably **1933**, **Solidarity**, and **Reason Over Passion** all by Joyce Wieland. Simply by putting a static title over a moving image, Wieland too creates the impression of the planar levels of film.

If Rimmer presents something of the paradoxicality of the simultaneous presence of two- and three-dimensionality, then another paradox which he explores is surely that of movement. One can say that because at the outset of the film the ship is at point A and at the conclusion it is at point B, that it must have moved, but to attempt to point specifically to that motion directly involves the paradox at hand. Movement, in **Surfacing**, becomes not movement, but displacement with regard, especially to the frame lines which are set up as reference points. Through the use of dissolves and the ability to see simultaneously prior and following positions of the image in question Rimmer works to demonstrate something of the perceptual apparatus at work. The movement is not so much 'between' frames, as it has been concisely explained away in the past, but rather a product of the interaction of the serial presentation of the frames and our perception of those frames. At points in the film, our perception is confounded, for if we follow the rule of "displacement leads to a realization of movement," then at points the ship moves backwards. In point of fact, the entire frame has shifted out of registration to the right. Again, the inclusion of this technological error becomes a demonstration of Rimmer's ironic sense of play with the images as well as demanding a re-evaluation of the phenomenon by the perceiver. This type of error, like the scratches on the 'parent footage', but unlike the projection scratches on random prints of **Surfacing**, works for the experience of the film as a whole. While the re-produced scratches demonstrate the apparent three-dimensionality of the image, so the shifting of the frame (along with the opening and closing zooms) works to intensify an experience of three dimensionality as it relates to the historically veritable space between Rimmer's camera and the projected image which it is recording.⁹

The dissolve, especially considering that it is a relatively long dissolve at ninety-six frames is an integral part of the schema of the film. The length, or as experienced, the duration of the dissolves puts the unifying effect in structural harmony with the film, as an example of elongation, as a whole. In fact, the greatest part of the whole film is dissolves in process. The image is in virtually constant transition. The dissolve allows one to see simultaneously two frames of the 'parent footage.' The device calls into question not only the placement of movement in the film, but also the very existence of movement. The film as a whole deals directly with what might be called 'cinematic fact,' in the order of the material of the film, and concerns itself directly and more obviously with the illusions of the film experience. What we see are the individual images which created the illusion of movement in the 'parent footage.' By connecting frames of expanded duration with a dissolve, we are afforded a privileged view of preceding and following images at the same time and in transition. On the representational level, we see where the ship on the river has been and where it is going simultaneously and, in putting this process on a time scale, an extended time scale, the purpose of extending the dissolve over ninety-six frames or in durative terms, four seconds — the conception of movement arises.

The dissolve then becomes an optical effect, in that its precise end is to elide the "cuts" between frames of the original footage. Rather than presenting images serially in order to generate apparent motion (the theoretical and practical aim of all cinematic hardware), with the dissolve Rimmer attempts to create continual movement, or at least an equivalent. But of course paradoxically, the former, the desired end, is impossible A) because Rimmer's source is not actual movement, but individual images (the pro-filmic event is not the action of the ship or of the landscape, but another film); B) because Rimmer's chosen medium is another generation of film, by nature a serial presentation of fixed, individual images.

With the technology available to him, Rimmer is incapable of filling in the spaces. The ship does not appear at the points at which the motion picture camera was originally unable to capture its image. But Rimmer elides this specific space by means of an expansion of time. Although the ship cannot be where it never was in the film, it can appear and disappear gradually and virtually constantly.¹⁰ With continual appearance and disappearance of successive images, there is in the film an equally continual change. The movement, almost imperceptible, but undeniably present in **Surfacing** is opposed to apparent motion. Apparent motion is dependent upon seriality, images replacing images in succession and within tolerance bounds of time and space. (If A follows B, A cannot be too different in form or nature from B, nor can A be too

distant from B, nor can the space of time between appearances of A and B be too great.) The continuous change in **Surfacing** becomes effectively equivalent to continuous movement. And continuity is characteristic of real movement. In effect, then, the result is a type of movement which is more like real movement than conventional apparent motion.

For the sake of comparison, we might note Rimmer's later **Watching for the Queen** in which the transitional device between frames reproduced for an extended duration is a cut. The chosen footage is an image of a field of faces which covers the screen entirely to the limits of the frame. We see the first frame of a forty-eight frame shot for one minute. Cut to the next shot, the second frame. The impression, less than the movement of the faces, is of cutouts of faces in a collage, having been moved between shots. The lack of apparent depth, especially in the first frames of the 'parent footage' (the camera tilts up during the shot so that the faces at the top of the field become more blurred thus re-creating a sense of depth in the image) aids in this impression of a photographic, two-dimensional collage. **Watching for the Queen** is a prime example of Rimmer's work with movement, testing its limits, as opposed to subverting and replacing it as in **Surfacing on the Thames**. It is not until later in the film (although before the film reaches 'speed,' re-printing the 'parent footage' with fidelity to the frame-by-frame-succession) that we realize movement as opposed to spatial shifting. It is only after the image changes with readily accessible regularity or more rapidly, at least, than at the start of the film, that the figures appear to move. At the outset, when the cuts between successive images are so far apart, the cuts appear as changes rather than as movement. The image is fixed for so long a time that the change is almost imperceptible and yet, again, it undeniably does take place.¹¹

The device of the dissolve used in such a way need not be analytic in intent. Chris Marker's **La Jetée** offers a clear cut example of the expressive use of a dissolve between similar still images to approximate filmic motion. In Marker's film, the camera setups are the same and the only difference between the two images is an altered orientation of a sleeping woman's head. Indicatively, for a more strikingly emotional effect, Marker utilizes a dissolve of shorter length than Rimmer's. Marker's short dissolve, in fact, comes close to bridging the actual time of such a turning of the head as is perceived. Thus screen time and story time are maintained as equal although there is a technical ellipsis.

While distancing the spectator from the actualization of apparent motion, the dissolve serves to break down the structure which generated the appearance of motion in the 'parent footage' and transform it into a different form of movement. The reproduction of the action of the profilmic event of the 'parent footage' — the movement of the shin — is extended. The spectator is deprived of the device necessary for the generating of movement and perception of apparent motion, that is the serial and instantaneous presentation of successive images. Instead, those single images are reproduced in cinema form two hundred fold and are presented and withdrawn gradually rather than instantaneously. The spectator is prohibited from perceiving apparent motion in the sense which is endemic to motion pictures. But in a function which relies on a relationship between time and space, Rimmer manipulates one with respect to the other and provides valuable data on that relationship and a type of movement which is asymptotic to real movement and which is based on temporal continuity rather than seriality.

To return to the writing of the person who coined the term 'structural film.' P. Adams Sitney has written, in comparing the consciousness of perception in the work of Stan Brakhage to that of the structural filmmakers: "In Brakhage, perception is a special condition of vision, most often represented as an interruption of the retinal continuity (e.g., the white flashes of the early lyric films, the conclusion of **Dog Star Man**). In the structural cinema, however, apperceptive strategies come to the fore. It is the cinema of the mind rather than the eye."¹² To an extent Sitney is correct, although it would be dangerous to extend the idea too fully to **Surfacing on the Thames**. Regina Cornwell quotes Alain Robbe-Grillet on the new novel: "It does not express. It explores, and what it explores is itself."¹³ Rimmer puts his exploratory energy to work on five feet of thirty odd year old film footage and, in **Surfacing on the Thames**, presents the results of the examination. In so doing, he compounds the observations of both Sitney and Robbe-Grillet. He is not simply exploring how we see nor solely what we see, but the space between the two and the interaction and processes of what we see and how we see it. The spectator is called upon to share in the experiences of exploration and, while a filmmaker such as Brakhage demonstrates the way he himself sees, Rimmer shows us the multiplicity of ways of seeing in general.

1. Sitney, **Structural Film**, pp.407-408.
2. Sitney. op cit. p. 8.
3. Wollen, **Screen**, pp.15-16.
4. Wollen, **Film Reader**,p.12.
5. Wollen, **Screen**,p.14.
6. Nordstrom, **Film Library Quarterly**, no pagination available.
7. Cornwell, **Kansas Quarterly**, p.66.
8. An interesting phenomenon in watching this film repeatedly is the "real" projection scratch. After having viewed the same print, in virtually immaculate condition, several times, I saw another print which was marred with a small mark near the centre of the frame which, as the film was projected, vibrated and oscillated. Because this mark worked in a temporal scale different from the marks reproduced by the parent footage — obviously, it continued to be present throughout the film, not disappearing or appearing from shot to shot — it did become a distraction rather than a unifying element. And yet, because of the foregrounding of the marks on the parent footage, this projection scratch took even more precedence as an invader than a similar mark might have done in a conventional narrative or even a non-narrative film of a different form.
9. One might in reference to the conclusion of Rimmer's **Canadian Pacific**, in which the image of the camera and filmmaker is reflected from the window glass through which the film has been shot.
10. Rimmer originally conceived of the film as continual dissolves, the shots constantly fading in and out, never leaving one image without another superimposed. Laboratory processes for optical effects made it necessary to separate effects by at least four frames i.e., four frame of black before the end of the fade out of shot A and the start of the fade in of the following shot B. As a result, corresponding to those four frames of black on one print role, on the other print roll the image is fully exposed, without superimposition. This ideal testifies to Rimmer's intent to create continuity. In execution the effect of the four frames is not evident nor appreciable, especially considering the basic elongation process, that it is a question of four frames out of a total of two hundred frames per "shot" or, at twenty four frames per second, one-sixth of the second out of eight and one-third seconds,
11. In **Watching for the Queen**, the image is fixed by elongation (instead of having one twenty-fourth of a second to register and image, each frame is extended, at its greatest length, one minute. Each 'shot,' in the time needed for one frame to be replaced by another in the projection gate, is replaced by an image of a similar form in slightly different orientation. Effectively, this is similar to the classic experiments used to demonstrate the phi-phenomenon: a form A is presented, followed by a similar form B in a different position in the field of vision. A seems to move in the position at which B appears. In experimental conditions these forms are often lights.
12. Sitney, op. cit.,pg.408.
13. Cornwell. op. cit., p.69.

All Things in Their Time:

On Michael Snow's '↔'

Bruce Elder


In a manner now familiar, for it is characteristic of the filmmaker in question, the implications of his choice are multiple. The use of a visual sign, "↔" rather than a verbal was, one is tempted to conjecture, calculated to elude that singularity, that lack of ambiguity typical of a verbal construct — or at least any verbal construct which is referential rather than poetic in nature. The strategy for eluding such a specificity is to use a diagramme of the film's shape for the title. Despite its referentiality, that diagramme, especially when considered in relation to the film suggests many things; movement, activity, energy, rhythmic oscillation, the flatness of the picture plane, a non-narrative, non-teleological structure (since the arrow points in both directions rather than simply ahead) and the correlative idea of an accretionary modular construction, as well as the idea, which shall be the central concern of this paper, that of the balancing of opposites.

But what, we must demand, are the opposites which are brought into balance? The most obvious answer is "the direction of movement." But almost as obvious are the answers, "between an extended and contracted space, or more precisely, between the illusion of a haptic space and a materially-grounded optical space," "between a vertical image and a real construct," "between a cinematic reproduction (i.e. an image in which the transformational capacities of the cinema are deliberately minimized) and a cinematic construct (i.e. an image in which the transformational capacities of the camera, in this case specifically the moving camera are maximized or at least made evident)," "between representation and presentation," "between description and construction," "between illusion and object," as well as "between the opposites of image content and image production."¹

To anyone familiar with the art-theoretical notions which dominated the fields of critical and artistic practice at the time of Snow's formative years as a painter and sculptor, the late fifties and early sixties, these oppositions are well-known. They were at the centre of critical discourse from the time Snow began work in painting in the early fifties: for evidence, one need only consider that Clement Greenberg's article, "The Crises of the Easel Picture" appeared in 1948, his article "Modernist Sculpture" in 1952, and "The Role Of Nature in Modernist Painting" in 1949.² The transition from the first to the second item in each of these pairs was seen by the critical orthodoxy of the time as representing both the course of development of painting, as well as a description, **modus differens**, of the artwork's genuine ontology. Painting, at least in recent times was said to develop from representation to abstraction, from the use of a haptic space to the use of an optical space. In the course of this development, it was alleged, painting approached the discovering of its own essence. Thus, recent painting was said to be involved with the attempt to construct a genuine ontology for its medium.

The process of discovering the essential character of any medium was a dialectical one. In order to discover the features specific to any medium (that which made a painting, for example, a painting and not an image of some other sort), one proposed a series of binary oppositions and repudiated one item from each of the opposing pairs. Painting was said to be not sculpture, hence its space should not be tactile but haptic; similarly painting was said to be not drawing, hence, outline or hard edge was eliminated.

It is within this context that the radical nature of Snow's work most clearly comes into view. In common with other artists formulating that art which is now commonly referred to as post-modern, Snow's work involves a repudiation of the modernist ideas of "purity" and "essentiality" and the aspiration to construct an ontology of the medium. In essence, Snow's strategies were based on the fundamental principle of non-exclusion. He demanded to use both representational and abstract imagery: his work employs both illusionistic devices and devices which emphasize the objecthood of a work of art. Thus, while modernist art was clearly based on principles whose effect was to exclude certain characteristics from painting, sculpture, etc., Snow has worked systematically to re-instate those features into each of these media as he proceeded to revise them, using them to balance the features which modernist art has included. But,

in a sense he has worked them to devise a kind of art work which could also include the ideals of a modernist — other than its principles of exclusion. In a sense  as the double-arrow title indicates, he has wanted to have it both ways — "modernist" and other.

Nor is this the only sense in which Snow demanded to have things more than one way. Snow's career has been characterized by a relentless movement from medium to medium and back again. He began his career as a painter in the early fifties; in the later fifties he turned to sculpture, then in the middle sixties to photography and filmmaking. And at the same time that he has been pursuing this career in the visual arts he has also worked in music, first playing jazz trumpet and piano, later with groups involved in "the music of gradual process" (he worked for a while with Steve Reich in the sixties) and most recently with a group involved with collective improvisation.

To anyone committed to the modernist ideal of artwork, this circulation between a number of fields of endeavour would appear as somewhat promiscuous if not downright perverse. For modernists had advanced the notion that the endeavour to explore the specificities of any given medium — an endeavour they claimed as central to artistic practice — could be realized by a protracted process which, inasmuch as it involved the identification of a very delimited range of problems and a thorough working out of those problems, resembled research as much as anything.

It is evident that the importance of the polyvalent nature of Snow's enterprise demands to be understood within a different framework. The locus in which Snow's work developed to full maturity was that of New York in the sixties, and, at that time, artists working there were strongly committed to the systematic exploration of the interrelations between various artistic practices. Ken Jacobs' **Shadow Works**, for example, constituted an inquiry into the various possible modalities of interpenetration between film, theatre and painting, while Yvonne Rainer's dance works constituted an inquiry into the various modalities of interpenetration between sculpture and performance.

The effect of the inter-media approach in which these artists engaged was directed towards the displacement of the ideas of purity, discreteness, essentiality and of the irreducibility of any medium to another from the centre of the forum of critical discourse. At its deepest level, one could understand this displacement as representing the repudiation of the American quest for purity.³ The artists in question all turned to a more synthetic tradition with its roots in Europe as a source for those tactics which could be deployed to disrupt the closed system of American modernism. It was from constructivist cinema, Bauhaus photography and machine art and dadaist events that these artists drew the strategies to oppose and to balance the ideals they had assimilated from the history of modernism.

In Snow's own multi-faceted work, plurality is deployed in an effort to accommodate and to reconcile diversity. Snow's **oeuvre** is committed to the location of possible points of convergence between apparently divergent activities: it is almost as though, as Annette Michelson points out, "Snow's obsessively systematic investigation excludes the notion of disparity."⁴

Almost, but not exactly. It is certainly true enough that Snow's imagery and materials have circulated from medium to medium and it was Ms. Michelson who pointed this out in an earlier article on Snow.⁵

Nonetheless, whenever the materials of one work in one medium become "the content" of a work in another medium, they are reformed according to properties specific to the medium which comes to contain them.⁶ Thus the **longeurs** of the presentation of the still photographs in **One Second in Montreal** make one aware of the specifically cinematic phenomenon of duration. Indeed, the characteristically witty tale of the piece points to the essential tension between the temporal characteristics of the two media upon which the piece is so cleverly built. There are thirty still photographs in this film. A common exposure time in photography is one-thirtieth of a second. The sum of the exposure times of all the photographs in the film, then, is the one second referred to in the title of the film. The difference between that time and the actual duration of the film (twenty-six minutes at 16 frames per second; its recommended running speed) represents the contradiction between the two media.

This contradiction also points towards the difference between the time with which a representation is made and the time it takes to be viewed. Snow has, in fact, reworked this opposition with an almost obsessive regularity; **Plus Tard** is just one example of a later work in which this contradiction is the subject of primary concern.

The recirculation of materials from medium to medium suggests once again that Snow wishes to have many things many ways, not just one. The same material can be used, as **Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film** indicates to constitute a painting, a slide show and a film. It represents, then, at base, a tactic for breaking out of the confinement of the modernist orthodoxy into the space of post-modernism.⁷

Indeed, Snow's work can best be understood as standing just at the breaking point of modernism. Modernism, developing out of the work of Cézanne, the Cubists and the Futurists had been intent initially in breaking down and later displacing "subject-matter" from the work and on analyzing the image. With the work of Abstract Expressionists and most Post-Painterly Abstractionists, representational aspects were forcibly eliminated and the object, colour and shape were foregrounded as painting (in both its ontological and historical dimensions) became itself the subject of painting. In minimalism, the objecthood of the work was pushed to its extreme limit. This was, in part, attributable to its revision of the nature of the idea of unity; for the period preceding modernism the commonly prized form of unity was that of organic unity;⁸ this form of unity was understood as a complex, undefinable and mysterious interrelation between every aspect of all the diverse parts and the synthetic whole. The idea of unity in modernist art, on the other hand, is based on simple and readily perceived gestalts.

In an important way, minimalism carried the programme of modernism to its end. Minimalist works, by the simplicity of their shapes, by their elimination of referentiality, by their repudiation of symbol and metaphor and by their use of industrially manufactured materials — manufactured to specification, so as to remove any suggestion of subjective handwriting — radicalized that insistence upon self-containment which had characterized modernist art throughout its history. Indeed, it carried that insistence to its limits, for with the elimination of symbol and metaphor, subjective association and referentiality and with the development of unitary structures, the furthest reaches of the ideals behind the modernist movement had been reached.

Thus, minimalism represents the closing of one era and the opening of another. When Robert Morris began to use devices which suggested the incompleteness of his work, and Sol DeWitt⁹ began to present in his shows objects which represented various stages in the conception and realization of works of art, the idea of process and of the centrality of concept rather than material came to be articulated. With such statements, then, the modernist ideals of self-containment and "mediumistic" virtues were repudiated.

Correlative tactics can be found in most of Snow's pieces. Indeed, the devices by which he makes reference to the frame — devices which uncontestedly occupy a central place in his work — can best be understood within this context. The modernist idea of the frame, a rather geometric understanding of its nature that would undoubtedly have been passed along to the young Mr. Snow, was that the frame was a boundary form whose nature, by determining the nature of the space which an art work was to fill, effected the nature of all relations constructed within it. Against this singular concept of its function, Snow, like Duchamp before him, insisted on painting and the multiple functions of the framing gesture. The frame, Snow suggested, acts to define "a channel" of attention and a point of view (**Scope**), to establish a tension between a defined bounded field and a point of view (**Side Seating Painting Slide Sound Film**), to isolate one field of view from amongst a number of possible fields, to create an opposition between what is contained within a frame and what lies outside it, as a generator of forms and finally, as an aesthetically productive even if arbitrary device. Indeed, Snow points out time after time throughout his **oeuvre**, that rather than simply isolating the art-object as the modernist had claimed, thereby insuring the discreteness and enhancing the purity of the art work — the frame acts both as kind of container and as a bridge between the area within the frame and the area outside its bounds. Thus, on this matter again, Snow insists on having things more than one way.

The transformation in the formal characteristics of art work which we have just described are so profound and far-reaching that they suggest that a change occurred in the programme which artistic endeavour was understood to be carrying out. This, I would argue, is true; in fact, I would argue the change was so profound that it reached down into and radically altered the theoretical context which subtended the practice of making art.

What are the specific modalities of experience with which Snow deals and what is the relation between his analysis of perception (for his work is decidedly analytic in character) and the forms which his art work assumes. Let us begin our response by noting the evident fact that most of his films, and much of his art in general, possess very simple predetermined shape. While such simple shapes are undeniably correlated to the simple **gestalts** which characterized minimalist art, they have, in film, a specific function. This uniqueness of the function in film depends upon the fact that film alone of all the visual arts is also an art of time. For this reason, the simple shape of a film can, and in Snow's work usually does, act as a diagramme of its temporal form.¹⁰

It serves, then, to convert a temporal into a spatial form, giving to that temporal form the same precision and definiteness of a form existing in space. One is tempted to say, with only the slightest degree of hyperbole, that such simple shapes by containing fluid temporal forms within diagrammatic spatial forms, act to arrest the flow of time, making time an enduring thing.¹¹

In sum, a diagrammatic shape acts to hypostatize the experience of time. The radicalness of such an enterprise can best be understood in relation to the temporal features of innovational cinema at the time when Snow came to make film. The temporal rhetoric of that cinema had largely been developed by Brakhage; the speed of his cutting, the intensity of his camera movement, the continual displacement of one sort of imagery by imagery of entirely another sort (for example, flat imagery by deep, hand drawn or scratch — created by photographic etc.) and of perceptual modality with another acted to deny the sense of a temporal continuum and to provoke a gaze that is so intense and fascinated that it can properly be called ecstatic. Thus, one feels, when watching a film by Brakhage, that past and future have been eliminated (one neither engages in recollection of past events nor in anticipation of future events); the primary temporal impression afforded by these works is that of a continuous present.¹²

The modality of temporal experience elicited by Snow's film is of a very different character. Far from being caught up in the flow of time, one is, by the hypostatization of the experience of time the diagrammatic shape of his work proposes, as well as by the **longeurs** which characterize them, encouraged to stand back from the experience of time and to inquire into the manner in which it is constituted. His films, then, elicit an analytic rather than an ecstatic response.


The analytic act, obviously, is one that depends upon identifying and splitting apart differentiated units. For this reason, it is essential for Snow's work to create a temporal form which includes a variety of characteristics (pastness, presentness and futurity) rather than singularity of the continuous present found in the work of Brakhage. Moreover, the analytic act involves by its very nature the division of object into "static" parts. Thus, the mode of experience elicited by Snow's work has as its object a static object of reflection constituted by an intellectual act.

I am, however, being a little too casual about the description of the experience of watching a film by Michael Snow — or at least too one-sided, inasmuch as I am failing to indicate the double-sided nature of that experience. For, in a sense, Snow also re-instates the sense of the continuum of time, of the flow from past to present to future, into film. Thus, in addition to hypostatized and static object of reflection, there is a second object, the object of perception which is in its temporal character uniform and identical in all its parts, and which unfolds in a field of time. The opposition between these live objects suggests the difference between an object existing in a spatial form and an event which unfolds in a temporal form. The duality between these two suggests the duality between object "film" (a strip of celluloid) and the event "film" which plays out on a projector.¹³

As we also noted, correlated with each of these two objects is a specific mode of experiencing the object.¹⁴ This duality is important for several reasons. In part, its importance lies in the way the distinction points out a fundamental tension that exists in the aesthetic experience. For aesthetic experience itself involves both an engrossed, even empathetic viewing and a detached and distanced and critical response. To further explore the importance of each of these modes of response, some further clarity about their nature must be attained.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

FOOTNOTES

1. Snow himself, writing about **Standard Time** (which can by his own testimony be taken as a kind of sketch for "  , " wrote, "I'm interested in a kind of balance that has some similarity to the way Cézanne equalized physical facts in painting. In film, the transformation is into light and line and the balance is between illusions (spatial and otherwise) and the facts of light on a surface.
2. The original publication of **Art and Culture** in 1961, in fact, exactly coincides with the moment when Snow embarked on his first major piece, The Walking Women series. And in a sense, both works mark the end of an era, in criticism and in practice. For until 1960 Snow's painting was involved with the attempt to construct formal equilibria by deploying strategies based on abstraction. In 1960, the course of his work made a bold turn; he suddenly abandoned this enterprise and instead became involved with developing tactics to represent variations on temporal themes and the process of recollection.

In retrospect, the fact that Snow found himself making films would appear on this basis, to have been predictable. To have said this in 1960 would, however, have sounded a little preposterous.
3. A somewhat polemical statement of the relations between the modernist aspiration and American ideals is to be found in Clement Greenberg's article, "American-Type Painting.."
4. Annette Michelson, "About Snow," October, No. 8, p. 123.
5. "If, for Snow, everything is usable, it is also reusable — at least once. Thus, **Untitled** (the paradox of titling a work with the title Untitled represents another form of circularity in Snow's work. One recognizes the affinity of this strategy with certain Dadaist strategies, a case in point being advertising a ballet under the title **En Relâche** meaning no performance today, B.E.) shown recently at the Bykert Gallery is a sumptuous "slide show" which alludes largely to the making of **Wavelength**, using stills from the film, the filters, the plastic sheets employed in its making, emphasizing in a very painterly manner, the ambiguity of spatial relations created by superimpositions, juxtapositions, of filters, alterations of angles of vision." Annette Michelson "Toward Snow" in P. Adams Sitney, ed., **The Avant-Garde Film, A Reader of Theory and Criticism**, New York. New York University Press, 1978, p. 181.
6. Snow has made a rather humorous statement about the way in which his working in a number of media brought into a balance the ideas of purity and diversity. In a statement submitted to Regina's Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery in 1967, he wrote: "I'm not a professional. My paintings are done by a filmmaker, sculpture by a musician, films by a painter, music by a filmmaker, paintings by a sculptor, sculpture by a filmmaker, films by a musician. music by a sculptor... Also, many of my paintings have been done by a painter, sculpture by a sculptor, films by a filmmaker, music by a musician. There is a tendency towards purity in all these media as separate endeavours. Paint as fixity, the static image. Sculpture as objectness. Film as light and time." Quote included in Pierre Théberge, "Michale Snow, Summary of his Life and Work," in catalogue **Michael Snow** (Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1979), p. 9
7. I would be amiss if I were to fail to point out that the re-use of material from previous artwork also serves as an autobiographical function, This dimension of Snow's work is admirably analyzed in Regina Cornwall, "Post Snow: About the Work of the last 12 (sic) Years" in the catalogue **Michael Snow** (Kunstmuseum, Luzern, 1979).
8. Constructivism, to which modernism has real similarities, is an important exception to this rule.
9. Analogous devices were developed by Sharits for the cinema. Sharits' installation pieces often include his notes and "scores" for his films as well as projections of his completed pieces; installation pieces, moreover, by their very nature make apparent both of the projection mechanism and the physical strip of film in addition to the projected image. Thus his pieces can reflect on the process of production and frequently suggest the dialectical relation that exists between concept and product.
10. This is most evidently true of **Wavelength**; the well-known conic shape of that film can be understood as a dialogue for our experience of the "flow" of time. The camera movement in that film like the movement of experience of time, is entirely forward directed.

11. In his discussion with Pierre Théberge, Snow makes a comment which probably goes some distance in revealing the impulse behind the act. He told M. Théberge, "I think I'm stuck with certain contradiction about not being 'at home' in the movement of time because the future and the past are contents of the mind and you can't say the word 'present' fast enough for it to fit into the present. One of the interesting things about a still photograph, in the same way a certain painting is the aspect of fixing a moment in time which, of course, is also an illusion since like everything else it is slowly changing. Experiencing this stopping of time seems to be a refreshment that is demanded occasionally and I suppose it's in the infinite, In that sense, it's slightly religious." Pierre Théberge, "Conversation with Michael Snow," in **Michael Snow** (Kunstmuseum, Luzern, 1979), p. 20.
12. This reduction of time to the present is paralleled by the reduction of space to a two-dimensional surface in most of Brakhage's work. Hence Snow when he restored the sense of past and future to film also restored deep space to the image.
13. In pointing out the plural character of the filmic object, Snow's work has obvious affinities with that of Paul Sharits.
14. In the same conversation with Pierre Théberge cited above, Snow remarked, "I am interested in trying to direct the spectator to an experience of an image as a 'replaying'; as you put it of a past event but also with the present sense of critically seeing this representation, that is involved with an image." Snow has thus acutely pointed out how his work moves back and forth between two perceptual modalities.

The Cinema of John Cassavetes

MARCIA LANDY

STANLEY SHOSTACK

This essay attempts to block out the parameters of a film form we will call American realism. We will do this through an examination of the films of director John Cassavetes. Our objective is to identify the film's ideological or critical point of view. Our method is based on a taxonomy we have created to distinguish ideological from critical practices in the style and content of filmic discourse.

Marxist theory suggests that a political analysis of film would entail deciphering the presence of certain qualities in the films: class consciousness, class struggle and revolutionary solutions to that struggle. We have generated eight categories of film by asking a series of three questions each dealing with one of these qualities.

Is the film self-consciously class conscious? If the film engenders identification with characters, actors or plot, rather than with class and if the film is predominantly "entertaining," sentimental, purely affective, rhetorical or moral, then we place it in the **ideological** category. If the film provides sufficient distancing, uses various devices to dissociate the audience from the characters and action, invites "reading" the film in terms of class issues, and promotes criticism of the film and of the conflicts within the film, we identify the film as **critical**

Is the primary conflict in the film a class conflict? Ideological films which portray class conflict only to negate it are called **legitimizing** since they support dominant bourgeois structures. Films which are not class conscious and do not portray class conflict are placed in our **affective** category. They tend to posit conflict in moral or rhetorical terms independent of the class basis of the conflict portrayed. Among the critical films, we distinguish between **analytic** films which do not involve class conflict, preferring a psychological analysis of class issues, and **dialectical** films where the conflicts are those of class, based on social and psychological treatment.

Is the main conflict (of whatever sort) solved? Under the legitimizing category, we locate **comic** modes which provide resolution to the film's conflict consonant with the dominant values, and **containment** modes, which fail to resolve the film's conflict, posing no alternative but affirmation of the dominant values by default. These films are melodramatic and basically portray an irrational society whose forces are too overpowering to be resisted. Under the affective category, we distinguish between **prescriptive** films, which because of their limited articulation of a problem can articulate a limited solution by means of a hero or surrogate, and **descriptive** films whose problems, mostly of a sociological nature, are thoroughly portrayed, but the relationship between cause and effect, the solutions for them is not provided. On the critical side, we divide analytic films into **transcendental** and **nihilist** films. The former posits a resolution through ironic acceptance of the inevitability of change; the latter films fail to resolve personal conflict and portray a tragic and pessimistic view of change. Dialectical films are divided between **pre-revolutionary** films which do not posit revolution, and **revolutionary** films which resolve the conflicts shown by advocating revolutionary struggle. These films examine every aspect of life in the sense of total revolution and are frequently didactic, though not polemical.

The contention of this paper is that Cassavetes' films are predominantly ideological rather than critical, that they are affective rather than analytic or dialectical, and that they fall into the prescriptive and descriptive categories. A note of caution should be made about such a mode of classification. The objective of classifying is not primarily for descriptive or normative purposes but to assist the film viewer and critic in developing an apparatus to counteract passive, uncritical, automatic pre-suppositions about cultural artifacts. Such a critical method should enable the viewer to develop a more dialectical and aggressive relationship to cinematic discourse, especially where the films themselves fail to encourage such a practice.

In **THE KILLING OF A CHINESE BOOKIE** (1975), John Cassavetes allows the audience direct contact with his film language and style. He accomplishes this through his central character who gives one of the more articulate soliloquies heard in a Cassavetes film. Cosmo Vitelli, played by Ben Gazzara, tells an assembled audience, the surrogate for the film audience, that people expect one to play a role and living up to this role can be a full-time job. Cassavetes provides his film audience with no analysis of this state of affairs that is responsible for the tragedy confronting the central character. Nor is the audience expected to respond critically. Indeed, the audience

is required to accept this extraordinary assessment as a plausible construction, a basis from which to explore behaviour within filmic boundaries. Cassavetes, then, is asking his audience to look into the hero's version of reality in order to join in the melodrama affectively, a cynical version of crowd-pleasing.

In our analysis of film form and content, we start from the assumption that all films are political even when not overtly political, as in the instance of Cassavetes. By default or by intent, through presence or absence of conscious political treatment, commercial feature films portray human beings who are part of a larger social reality. Even when most overtly psychological or broadly sociological rather than dialectical and materialist, the films are never totally detached, nor is the filmmaker, from a determining social construct. Yet, a critic must establish the nature of the film politics by addressing form and content as well as implicit or explicit context, and must also differentiate the film's point of view along the spectrum of possible ideological or critical treatments of political reality.

American realism is a form of ideological film. It has neither class consciousness nor portrays class conflict. American realism is not critical in that it does not treat the psychological or social problems it poses either analytically or dialectically. In spite of their independent stance, Cassavetes' films reflect the ideological concerns and characteristics of the dominant American culture. In general, the mode of these films is affective. The conflicts are posited in moral terms independent of a class base. Cassavetes' films alternate between a prescription film mode and a description film mode: in the prescription mode the solution is often articulated by the hero or heroine or by a choric commentator, as in the case of Fritz Lang's **FURY**, Kurosawa's **RASHOMON**, Kramer's **GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER**, or Cassavetes' **A CHILD IS WAITING**. Descriptive films tend to veer toward a realist aesthetic; the problem is described, but the relationship between cause and effect is left open. Most of Cassavetes' films belong to this affective descriptive mode of film-making.

Cassavetes occupies an ambiguous position between the American independent filmmaker and the American commercial filmmaker. His films, like his public persona and the *dramatis persona* in the films reflect an individualized yet conformist orientation. From **SHADOWS** (1960) to **CHINESE BOOKIE**. Cassavetes' work is problematic, yet representative of American film.

The highly personal director-dominated reality is something with which the audience must contend. Cassavetes views himself as an aging left-over of the pre-Beatles sixties, doomed to bar-rooms and hotels for his diversions and assignations. The musical accompaniment, when not specifically related to the action, is frequently soft jazz (not rock) and even Cosmo's bar in what is called the post-reproductive period (with the exception of **MINNIE AND MOSCOWITZ**) and are generally "over-ripe," if not "on the way down." If Cassavetes' films had any foundation in critical insight, they might be considered transcendental films concerned with the acceptance of aging and inevitable change, but Cassavetes' commitment is basically to a descriptive mode. He details the conflicts, describes them, but does not understand them, or if he does, he does not share this understanding with the audience.

Cassavetes belongs in the company of realist and neo-realist filmmakers insofar as the realist aesthetic often tends toward description rather than criticism or analysis. In the analytic mode, a filmmaker generally attempts to explore, without sentiment though not without empathy, the problems of family, generational conflict, friendship and time. Though these films may not pose solutions, they are self-conscious in their treatments of the problems they pose. Cassavetes' films represent a hodgepodge of Americana; its violence and self-deception are its charms.

On first viewing his films, one might see Cassavetes as a class-conscious filmmaker, showing the men in **HUSBANDS** as truly bourgeois and Nick et al in **A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE** as genuine representatives of the working class. Cassavetes, however, thoroughly blurs class lines and distinctions and the class-bound clichés he employs reverberate with his cynicism. For example, in **A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE**, the black worker sings an operatic aria to the surprise of the assembled workers and Mabel. She, herself, listens to opera and dances to ballet music heard on her little transistor radio. The juxtapositions are grotesque: rough-hewn black man with refined voice; hair-brained housewife enjoying fine music. The joke which Cassavetes is telling is neither amusing nor class conscious. He essentially invites the audience to share in racist or sexist jokes. Likewise, the detailed scenes of men in bars, usually tormenting women in one way or another, are also not evidence of a serious concern with class consciousness intending to provide the audience with an insight into their social milieu. Indeed, these scenes function to obscure the differentiation between oppressor and oppressed, and between different forms of social and personal oppression. Instead, Cassavetes attempts to show that we are all victimized by the same psychological and biological frustrations. In **HUSBANDS**, the bourgeois males return to the *déclassé* environment of the bar to reassert their long-dead self-

esteem. They indulge in song bouts and games to deepen their awareness of self-loathing. Cassavetes' statement that only working class and adolescent play has sensual depth is a cynical distortion of genuine class differences. Cassavetes' films frequently use blacks and immigrants, but they never portray the overwhelming roles of racism, ethnicity or class oppression in shaping American attitudes. Even in **SHADOWS** which hinges on an instance of bigotry, the individuals are totally accepting of each other, as opposed to what one typically encounters. In **A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE**, racism is again alluded to parenthetically as is the case in the choice of a victim in **THE KILLING OF A CHINESE BOOKIE**. But the role of racism (like the role of women) in American life is hardly scratched by a Cassavetes film.

Sexism in American society is also touched by Cassavetes, but not probed. Sexism is manifest in the close-up photography of women as well as in the roles in which women are cast. One finds the recurrent portrait of the high-born, sensitive, struggling and exotic female, played most consistently by Cassavetes' wife, Gena Rowlands. Sexism is also manifested by the violence especially visited on women: the attack on the countess in **TOO LATE BLUES** and the attempted suicides of young women in several films. In **FACES**, there is another suicide attempt on the part of the wife: in **A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE**, the audience views the psychic and physical brutality inflicted on, and self-inflicted by, Mabel. **CHINESE BOOKIE**, too, bristles with hostility, aggression and violence. Cassavetes seems to be obsessed with the ubiquity of aggression as it is expressed in the ethos of male-bonding or in relationships between men and women as we see particularly in **HUSBANDS** and **A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE**.

Cassavetes' allusions to struggles over race and ethnic identity would seem mainly to be devices to heighten the viewer's sense of realism while avoiding any confrontation with the issues. In his uses of realism, Cassavetes could certainly feel self-satisfied that unlike most Hollywood filmmakers, he can lay claim to greater seriousness of purpose. Yet compared to some European filmmakers, to independents, to the filmmakers of **SALT OF THE EARTH** and **HARLAN COUNTY**, Cassavetes' films occupy a place which reveals how far a quasi-independent liberal filmmaker can go within the parameters of dominant American commercial film production. Since Cassavetes' films are intended for large audiences and not coterie groups, they are determined, liberal though their concerns, by certain conventions and politics. Certainly these conventions include soft-pedaling racial issues while portraying them, exploring the internal conflicts of working class life without analyzing them, examining domestic conflicts as long as the examination stays within the boundaries of description.

The violence in Cassavetes' films can be related to both his lack of class consciousness and to apparent unresolved attitudes towards his women characters. American film realism seems to be built on the foundation of thwarted personal desires, oppressive, and repressive sexual relations, male competitiveness, race hatred, fears of impotence, and especially male and female role conflicts. These issues are handled for the most part in a psychological and descriptive mode, only rarely in the context of work, political struggle, class struggle, or even self-conscious struggle over the inadequacy of dominant economic and social institutions and roles. The focus on violence in many films facilitates personal, immediate, and affective connections with the filmic presentation. Most significantly, violence, couched in psychological language, masks the social and economic determinants of that violence.

In Cassavetes' films, not only are women often the targets of physical abuse, they are also the instigators of anarchy, repression, and even insanity. They are occasionally capable of inflicting pain. Cassavetes' women are not patterned after glossy media images. The women are young and old, tired, sick and often at the end of their ropes. They experience conflicts over identity, and sexuality, commitments to lovers, and relations to spouses and children (**A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE**). Cassavetes struggles to represent women realistically, but in focusing on violence, pain and catharsis, he does not help his audience understand the sources of the violence perpetrated against women in society or in his films; thus, perhaps unwittingly, his films continue to perpetuate fantasies and images involving women's degradation, rather than exploring the roots of that degradation. The descriptive aspects of the realist approach may also serve to frustrate alternative and more analytic ways of viewing women's reality.

Cassavetes' treatment of marginal people in his films is also worth mentioning, since it further reveals problematic aspects of his point of view. He shows us prostitutes, down-and-outers, call girls, show girls, all representatives of the bar sub-culture. These people appear in a kind of cinema verité treatment, Cassavetes goes no farther than we do to open their lives, except perhaps to play briefly with them. We are given ambivalent, if not condescending and mocking attitudes toward them which mirror our own ambivalence and condescension. The angles at which he shoots them, the harsh close-ups he subjects them to, and the games his characters play with them reinforce our uneasiness. His "realism" serves to reinforce the familiar — at the expense of the people presented.

In **A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE**, Cassavetes seems to get closer to a class consciousness than in his other films, but even here he does not succeed. We are led to believe that the workers acquire their greatest sense of satisfaction from and have their greater commitment to their work. Thai is where their lives solidify and where they can be themselves. This is hardly a portrait of alienated labour. On the other hand, the bourgeois lies of the husbands in **HUSBANDS** are alienated, although the film provides their means for dealing with that alienation. From **SHADOWS** to **THE KILLING OF A CHINESE BOOKIE** we see people working out their particular circumstance of oppression, but never is that oppression attributed to life under capitalism.

The absence of class consciousness points to a different set of concerns in Cassavetes' films — his psychological and broadly sociological predilections. His ultra-realist style provides a clue to his point of view. His emphasis on "faces," on the exposure of interpersonal alienation or, its reverse, intimacy, on comradeship or its absence, on struggle and involvement are revealed through Cassavetes' emphasis on spontaneity, especially "spontaneous" conversation. The films give the illusion of an unconstructed "situation" in bars, hotel rooms, or family gatherings. The sound of voices may be harsh and the dialogue, in general, indicative of Cassavetes' affective and descriptive filmmaking mode. The choice of actors, their physiognomies and total physical appearance, attempts to give the allusion of "spontaneous" reality. His characters appear weary, struggling to survive, struggling hard for pleasure and companionship. The men are prominently divided between decadent and middle-class intellectuals (Minnie's lunch date is one such case) and the admirable male characters, independent of actual class, resembling working class ethnic males. They are bound together by a nostalgia for the past, the quest for pleasure, their virility and scrappiness, even aggressiveness and buoyancy. But they do not communicate. Indeed, when Nick brings his work crew to Mabel's homecoming party, it comes as a total surprise to his family.

Economic hardship is never a problem in a Cassavetes film. The conditions which produce pain are less tangible though nonetheless realistic to many a member of the film's audience. Characters, particularly men like Harry, Archie and Gus, suffer from a sense of loss, the loss of friends, of vitality and resiliency. Life is a struggle against loneliness which includes the loss of ways of testing and validating reality. In this battle, no one is more privileged or more oppressed than any other. All must suffer, but some handle their pain with more élan than others — Harry in **HUSBANDS**, Cosmo in **THE KILLING OF A CHINESE BOOKIE** and Nick in **A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE**, who does better than Mabel in keeping up with reality. He may be the source of the craziness but he is also the one to assert the reality principle in the face of Mabel's "antics." Thus, it is not competition, inequities in wealth and status, exploitation of one class by another which animates Cassavetes' films — but the tacit acceptance of these phenomena and the concern with and emphasis on how characters react to adversity and struggle to survive in an environment which is taken for granted.

Since none of the economic conditions are analyzed by the filmmaker but taken for granted, his ultra-real film style acts to legitimize the world these individuals inhabit. In image and dialogue, Cassavetes makes us feel the rightness of the description, makes us feel that the description is the reality, that what we see and experience through the film can be matched with discrete elements in our own reality. Cassavetes gives us problems with which we can identify and characters who appear believable. The way in which improvisation and gesture work to dull the edge of criticism, reinforces our own stereotypic sense of character and reality.

In Cassavetes' presentation of conflicts, each film poses its own "problem" which is described with sociological care. Some of the films may even offer a "prescription" for resolving the dilemma. Kindness and care for mentally retarded children, overcoming psychological inhibition through vented feelings, and confronting one's inauthenticity are some of the antidotes proposed to personal and social malaise. The texture of the world in a Cassavetes' film thus reflects the discontents of the sixties when alienation, psychic dislocation, and a generalized malaise was said to characterize filmic and social reality. Though Cassavetes anticipated racial and class concerns which surface in the late sixties and early seventies, his treatment is basically cynical.

Cassavetes' most conspicuous contribution to filmic style, along with his improvisational mode, is his use of the close-up as a device for portraying ambivalence or confusion. Indeed, Cassavetes draws attention to the importance of close-up in his work by his very choice of the title **FACES** for his seminal film. Although he indulges in a magnified beauty shown occasionally and especially with the face of Gena Rowlands, the faces shown are generally not serenely composed. They

are shown with raised eyebrows, expanded eyes, furrowed foreheads, in short, expressions of questioning and uncertainty. They are not the faces of an Ingmar Bergman character, reflecting struggle with inner depth, but faces showing inner turmoil and despair, requesting information or, what is more important, validation.

The use of close-up might seem contradictory in a film style which strives towards realist representation, which uses improvisation and unadorned settings to reproduce the texture of modern alienated and disjunctive existence, but the sum total of Cassavetes' style leads away from not towards, conventional realism. His mode of realism is not social but psychological. The predominance of close-up indicates Cassavetes' preferences for exploring the subjective and inter-subjective conditions of behaviour. His dominant interests involve problems of self-definition and inter-personal barriers to self-realization. He is not finally a socially motivated director. The level of his social analysis does not extend beyond his struggle to combat conventional and institutionalized values and attitudes. His use of the improvisational mode seems to suggest that he wishes to reject the rhetorical, formal, intellectual and highly articulate uses of language, since those forms of discourse reflect a social structure which produces and reinforces conformity and dishonesty and inhibits authentic self-expression. The appearance of spontaneous discourse thus reflects, with its clichés, inaudible comments, swallowed words, unfinished sentences and more authentic discourse a desire to look for and explain the potential for authentic behaviour. Moreover, gesture and physical movement (e.g., Mabel in **A Woman Under The Influence**) often undercut the verbal discourse and provide another means through which the audience can begin to perceive conflict and ambivalence.

Both improvisation and close-up act as distancing devices in a Cassavetes' film. The audience is sometimes positioned as voyeur, and other times encouraged to empathize with character and situation. The audience can thus confront, with some discomfort, a reflection of its own private and personal forms of self-destructiveness and self-sabotage, so often concealed and neglected in **mise-en-scène** or documentary forms of realism. But the ultimate effect of close-up and improvisation is the enhancement of the realism for psychological purposes. Cassavetes' form of psychological realism, because of its **verfremdungs** potential produces an uneasy relationship between filmmaker and audience, which is never clarified or directed. He reproduces the unreflective aspects of actual interpersonal relations, yet gives the audience little to work with in understanding or ameliorating the confusions and uncertainties that it reflects.

By pushing his films to the limits of realism, Cassavetes expresses the problems of the realist aesthetic, its passivity, its sentiment, and its lack of interest in analysis. By making the audience voyeurs, intruders in a private world, he reveals the inherent limitations of a descriptive mode. The realism begins to cross over into stylization and stereotype. Moreover since Cassavetes poses no alternatives, the audience is left uncomfortably to contemplate its own personal inadequacies. Cassavetes does finally implicate the audience affectively but only so that he can push them away from, rather than towards insights about the social and economic determinants of reality.

A closer examination of **HUSBANDS** reveals Cassavetes' failure to develop class consciousness and his predominant concern with the psychological dimensions of behaviour clothed in the accoutrements of male bonding or domestic conflict, and of nostalgia for adolescent enthusiasm and vitality.

HUSBANDS (1970) is a good example of Cassavetes' elevation of secondary conflict, the conflict between men and women, to a primary concern in his films. The film follows its three central characters, all men, Gus (Cassavetes), Harry (Ben Gazzara), and Archie (Peter Falk) as they struggle to define themselves in relation to each other, to their wives and other women, and mourn their lost comrade, whose death begins the film. The three conduct a wake in a bar where they are joined by rather bizarre drinking cronies in a serio-comic saturnalia involving a song competition. The men cry; they kiss each other, push each other, insult each other playfully, and verbally rebel against the restrictiveness of their domestic lives, their wives, children and their sexual limitations. Friendship with other males seems to be the antidote to their boredom and rage. As with many Cassavetes' male characters, these men fuse idealized attitudes about working class men with bourgeois cynicism. Unlike a Buñuel film, where the problems of exploitation by the bourgeoisie of the working class get careful dissection, in **HUSBANDS**, problems are generalized, portrayed as oppositions between the individual and repressive institutions, between conformity and non-conformity, between spontaneity and ritualization or routine: rather than the result of predictable social forces.

Cassavetes conveys these oppositions most especially in **HUSBANDS** through his develop

References

See Jack C. Ellis. *A History of Film* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1979), p.386.

Stanley Kauffman, "Making Faces," *New Republic* (Dec.14,1968).

Mollie Haskell, *Show* (Feb.,1970), p.67.

Andre S. Labarthe, *A Way of Life: An Interview with John Cassavetes*, Evergreen, (March,1969), p.45.

Bosley Crowther, "Actors Improvise New Experimental Film," *The New York Times*, (March 21, 1961).

Rick Setlowe, "Husbands Proves Actors Commune: Even Extends to Ballyhoo On Playoff," *Variety*, (March 30,1970).

Vincent Canby, "Film by Cassavetes Takes Friendly Jabs," (Dec., 23,1971), and "Film: Very Middle-Class Friendship," *The New York Times*, (Dec. 9, 1970), p.63.

8. "Minnie and Moskowitz," *Variety* (Dec. 22, 1971).

Andrew Sarris, "Films in Focus" *The Village Voice*, (Dec. 10, 1970).

Vincent Canby, "Film: Very Middle-Class Friendship," *op. cit.*

Jacob Brackman, "Husbands," *Esquire*, (Feb., 1971).

Rick Setlowe, *op. cit.*

ment of secondary conflict between men and women. We see the aggressive attitudes of the three men towards the women in the bar during their song contest, their physical abuse of the women in the hotel rooms, but especially in the scene in Harry's home where he beats and humiliates his wife. Ben Gazzara is an appropriate instrument for working out Cassavetes' fantasies. Gazzara portrays an artist, compromised by the requirements of making a bourgeois living. He works in the 'ad-biz' where we see him furtively rubbing what appears to be a drawing. He describes himself as a working slob. Clearly we are to infer that his dissatisfaction with his work, his frustration with a career corrupted by commerce are based on the requirements he feels he has to supply his children and wife with: privilege and bourgeois splendor. The sheer decadence of Harry's life-style is unmistakable. The wife-beating is the culmination of Harry's rage, but it is every bit as misdirected as it is unsuccessful at solving Harry's problems. The incident is preceded by an encounter between Harry and his mother-in-law; his wife is hiding. Harry leaves the house half dressed, to rejoin his waiting comrades, but suddenly returns to the house to find his wife, coffee cup in hand emerged from her hiding place. He forces his kisses upon her; she knees him in the groin. He slaps her violently; she attacks him with a knife. He orders her mother to take away the knife and is bitten and slapped by his wife, instead of stabbed. He forces his wife to her knees and twisting her arms demands that she say she loves him; she complies painfully. Finally his attack attracts the friends outside who come to the rescue.

The male-female relations portrayed by Cassavetes are one expression of the violence and alienation characteristic of modern life, especially in bourgeois dominated capitalist societies. The three friends spontaneously go off to England and pick up three women and further their exploration of hedonism. Their encounters, however, only reveal the bankruptcy of their experience and their arrested development. None of their encounters are between mature adults. The following day Gus and Archie decide to return home leaving Harry behind, with an older woman and friends. Cassavetes thus reminds the audience of Harry's earlier rapport with his mother-in-law as opposed to his wife. The male group has dwindled once again, now to two, and these return to their wives (whom we never see) asking each other "What will Harry do without us?"

Nostalgia is the key to decoding much of Cassavetes' action, nostalgia for a prelapsarian past of boundless energy and unbridled potential. The 'fall' for Cassavetes' male character comes with sexuality and women. Harry tells us that if it were not for sex, he'd rather be with his male friends. **HUSBANDS** balances a chumsy frolic with the guys against the isolation of marriage. But, the overriding theme of the film is the irretrievability of loss. "Those wedding bells" that first broke up the old gang peel a death knell over the male group. Death and loss bracket the film — the death of the fourth musketeer at the beginning and the defection of Harry at the end.

HUSBANDS offers no alternative to the inevitability of loss, nor could it, given its assumptions. it confronts the audience with those waning males who have only experienced vitality during those basketball games with the guys, the drinking orgies, the romps with buddies which provided the momentary forgetfulness of death. The discontent in the film, as in other Cassavetes' films, does not specifically define the repetitive structures of bourgeois existence. The problems seem to be traced to the failure of personal and social relations in a bizarre and alienated world.

The ultra-realist style of the film cannot deliver a realistic solution. The film has no antidote, no prescription and ultimately its description of the oppression of marriage is completely non-contextual, neutral, ahistorical. Analysis of seminal aspects of Cassavetes' style further reveals the highly individualistic orientation of the filmmaker and his relationship to his real or surrogate audience. As with so many directors we find in Cassavetes' films a surrogate figure for the artist and for his problems in communicating. In **SHADOWS** we are shown an artistic community struggling with commercialism and racism, but especially with Philistinism as portrayed through the sycophantic dialogue of the establishment oriented figures. Authenticity is the key (or lack of authenticity) to the dilemma and the preoccupation with authentic discourse an abiding signature of the filmmaker.

Thus Cassavetes' realism does not eliminate or enlarge its audience's reality. His films provide yet another instance of the limitations of reproducing segments of reality without introducing ways of understanding and analyzing the situations presented. By neglecting the potential of critical films, namely, by not providing a dialectical basis for confronting and examining primary and secondary conflict, by not increasing the audience's self-consciousness about cause and effect, and by not counteracting the passive as well as affective dimensions of the descriptive mode, Cassavetes' realism reinforces prevailing ideological practices. The most prevalent ideological aspect of the films is their tendency to reinforce the attitude that there are no alternatives to the problems presented, or what is worse, that such a struggle would be futile. At best, the audience is reinforced in the belief that prevailing conditions are tolerable, because the audience can see its own personal conflicts mirrored and thus validated. Clearly, Cassavetes' filmic style is not conducive to the creation of a critical assessment of filmic or social reality.

find a new position

Framework

film journal

The other film journal consistently committed to radical film practice and theory, and the analysis of oppositional as well as dominant film forms. Framework has become the only concrete alternative in Britain for serious developments in film culture.

Recent issues featured: Latin American cinema dossier, African cinema, TV debates, Joris Ivens, Lyotard, Rouch on Vertov, Rossellini, Feminism and film, British cinema, Eisenstein, Godard, Syberberg, Comolli, Japanese independents.

Subscription for 3 issues: £3.00. Overseas: £4.00 / \$10.00. Back issues (1 & 4 out of print): £1.30, overseas: £1.75 / \$4.00. Institutions subscription: £6.00 / \$16.00. Special offer for institutions when ordered with new subscription - complete back run 1-11 (inc. 1 & 4): £15.00 / \$40.00. Postage included in all prices. New address: Film Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ.

cineaste

AMERICA'S LEADING MAGAZINE ON
THE ART AND POLITICS OF THE CINEMA

Published quarterly, each issue features articles, reviews and interviews on everything from the latest Hollywood films and the American independent scene to the newest European releases and the emerging cinemas of the Third World.

Past issues have featured interviews with Costa-Gavras, R.W. Fassbinder, Bernardo Bertolucci, John Howard Lawson, Andrew Sarris, Paul Schrader, Sidney Poitier, Bruce Gilbert, Jean Rouch, Jorge Semprun, Lina Wertmüller, Gillo Pontecorvo, and many others.

Past articles have included Hollywood and Vietnam, The Left and Porno, Marxist Film Criticism, The Costa-Gavras Syndrome, The Communist Party in Hollywood, The Death of Cine-Semology, Frank Capra and the Popular Front, Mideastern Cinema, The Politics of Spy Films, Hollywood's Politics of Compromise, The Adventures of Political Cinema, and The Working Class Goes to Hollywood.

Sample Copy \$1
\$6 for one year (\$10 foreign)
419 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

JUMP CUT

a review of contemporary cinema

No. 21 **New Brazilian Cinema.** In Brazil national cinema is flourishing. This Special Section provides a survey and in-depth analysis. **BLACKS BRITANNICA:** How public tv censored a left documentary on racism in England. **Alternate Cinema Conference:** a detailed report on the gathering of 400 film and video activists. **The Politics of Star Biographies:** what is a feminist approach to Shirley McLaine's life and career? Plus **BATTLE OF CHILE**, **HEAVEN CAN WAIT**, **VIOLETTE**, Films on African Liberation and lots more.

PO Box 865 Berkeley CA 94701

6 issue sub \$6; Canada and Abroad \$8; Institutions \$9 (Abroad \$11). Single copies of current issue \$1.25 (\$1.50 Abroad). Bulk orders over 10 with cash 30% discount.



CINÉ - TRACTS

A JOURNAL OF FILM AND CULTURAL STUDIES

CINE-TRACTS 1 *

FILM/TECHNOLOGY/IDEOLOGY
JOHN BERGER
STEPHEN HEATH
DUSAN MAKAVEJEV
IDEOLOGY AND MEDIA MESSAGES
ETHNO-HERMENEUTICS

* UNAVAILABLE

CINE-TRACTS 2 *

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN CINEMA
FILM AND PERFORMANCE
THE FUNDAMENTAL REPROACH BRECHT
SOME PROBLEMS OF TECHNOLOGY,
PERCEPTION AND REPRESENTATION IN
CAMERA MOVEMENT
REFLEXIVITY IN FILM AND BROADCAST
DOCUMENTARY
KINO-TRUTH AND KINO-PRAXIS
VERTOV'S MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA
THE CONCEPT OF CINEMATIC EXCESS

CINE-TRACTS 3 **

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE CINEMA
SAUL LANDAU: THE TRUTH LIES ON
THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR
RAYMOND WILLIAMS ON REALISM
JOHN BERGER ON JONAH
ARTICLES ON WALTER BENJAMIN AND
JACQUES RIVETTE

CINE-TRACTS 4 **

QUESTIONS OF PROPERTY FILM AND
NATIONHOOD
A DOSSIER ON JOHAN VANDERKEUKEN
THE TRUTH LIES ON THE CUTTING ROOM
FLOOR
ON THE PRACTICE OF POLITICAL FILM
AN INTERVIEW WITH J.L. COMOLLI
SPECIAL CANADIAN SECTION INCLUDING
FILMS OF THE FRENCH UNIT OF THE
N.F.B. (1958-1964) PERRAULT
DECONSTRUCTION IN LITTIN'S THE
PROMISED LAND

Cine-Tracts 5

Semiotics, Theory and Social Practice:
A Critical History of Italian Semiotics

Lang, Pabst and Sound
The Truth Lies on The Cutting Room
Floor

Young Mr. Lincoln Reconsidered
An Essay on the Theory and Practice
of Film Criticism

Woman, Desire and The Look:
Feminism and the Enunciative
Apparatus in Cinema

Cine-Tracts 6

Culture and Identity: The Canadian
Question, Why
The Consolidation of the American
Film Industry
The Rhetoric and Economic Roots
of the American Broadcasting Industry
Modes of Representation in the Cinema
Mapping Anthropology on Film,

Cine-Tracts 7-8

Militant Documentary: Mai-68 Par Lui-
Meme
Towards a Renewal of Cuban Revolutionary
Cinema
The Turn of the Subject
Zukor Buys Protection: The Paramount
Stock Purchase of 1929
The Consolidation of the American
Film Industry
Elder/Nichols Debate: A Response