CINÉ-TRACTS

A JOURNAL OF FILM AND CULTURAL STUDIES

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FILMS AND FILMMAKERS

Carlos Saura, Wim Wenders, Louis Lumiere, Ousmane Sembene, Mrinal Sen, Michael Snow
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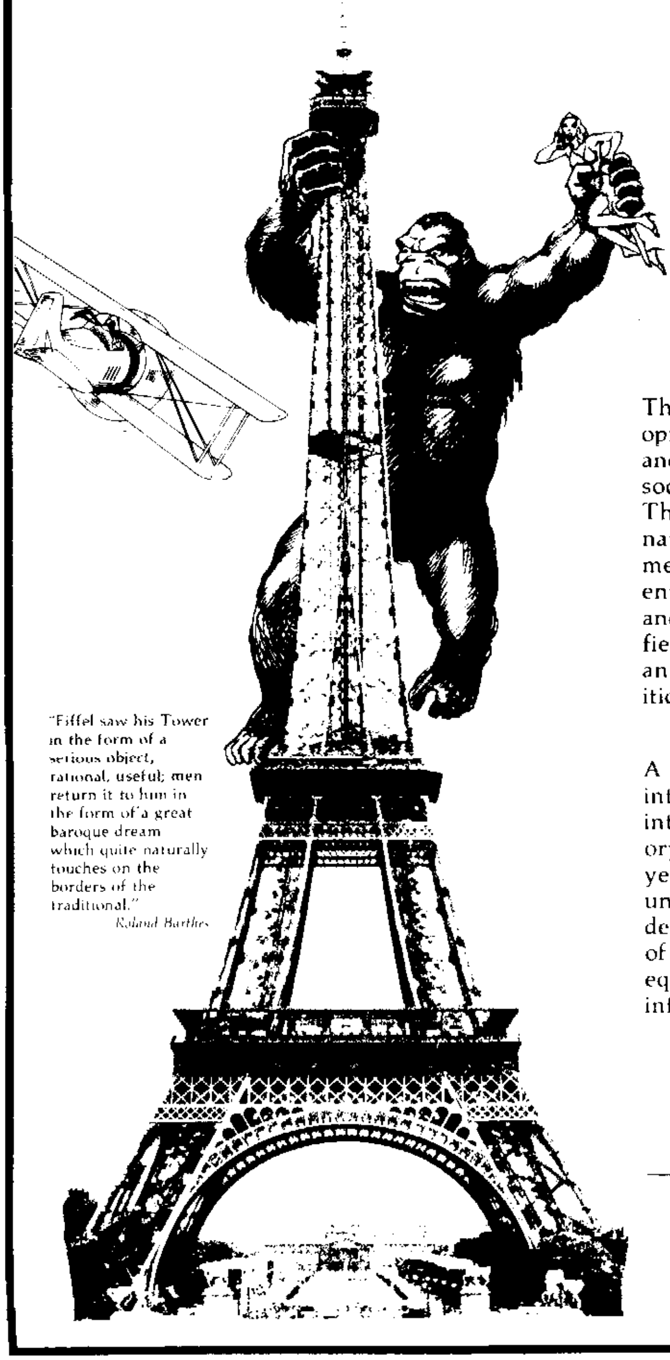

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SIGNS, ICONS AND SUBJECTS IN THE STRUCTURES OF CINEMA ART

by Walter Rewar

Many readers suspect that Lévi-Strauss and Propp, Saussure and Freud have developed principles of explanation which have become permanent additions to the landscape of cinema criticism. The approach which has brought these writers to us has become indelibly associated with the notions of **code** and **message,** and the special bonding of the **signifier** to the signified that creates the sign and mediates the levels of its necessary/conventional manifestations. Those interested in tracing what happens to linguistic and semiotic theories once they are transposed to the area of cinema criticism are likely to point out that the **level** of **abstraction** at which they are used, and the manner in which the distance between their respective philosophical, methodological, and historical contexts are crossed, determines the ultimate significance of the analyses they are asked to perform.

Favorable commentators have praised structuralism's capacity to produce new insights without, in some instances, subjecting its major premises to an extensive critical evaluation. Commentators unconvinced by its claims have questioned the lack of historicity in its premises, the static nature of its models, and its stress on precision, which is thought to go against the grain of a perceived textual variety. In the work of the born-again aestheticians, the linguistic Freud, discovered by Jacques Lacan, has begun to generate certain well-known models of interpretation, in which the symbolizations of houses, chambers, tunnels, blocked horizons, missing appendages, and yellow teeth are meant to tell us something or other about the structure of a motion picture. In the end, the relations **Sa/Sé** are made to dominate those — that Saussure felt to be far more significant — of the dynamic system in which they are inscribed. A series of crucial points get increasingly lost in the debate: we need to stipulate what it means to a theory of cinema that Lévi-Strauss' paradigmatic model of the narrative, in spite of the real progress it has made possible, derives from misleading views concerning variety, information, the structuring of indeterminacy and of communication, all of which inform the organization of an artistic system. Similarly, few critics have questioned the essentialist assumptions underlying the Proppian functions, and how they emerge as so many events in the coded narrative patterns of a verbal expression.

When Vladimir Propp published the **Morphology of the Folktale** in 1928, the study was hailed as a great step forward that allowed the critic to synthesize the syntagmatic analysis of narrative structures. The study involved about one hundred tales, and it isolated countless characters, motifs, events, and relational functions. Propp described the function as an act being performed by a character having some significance to the course of the plot. He also found that in spite of the variety found at the level of content the number of the functions was rigidly limited to thirty-one. Although each tale did not incorporate all of the functions, those that were used, always appeared in the same order. Lévi-Strauss, while developing the so-called paradigmatic model of the narrative, found himself moving away from single level oppositions suggested by phonology. He demonstrated, in his studies of myths and kinship systems, that codes and messages can change from one system to another and from one level to another. Thus, even as Propp was underlining the redundancy of the functions as they unfolded under variable guises along the syntagmatic axis, Lévi-Strauss was suggesting that the redundancy of the functions was not as great as Propp imagined. Each function could carry a great deal of information because tales are stratified into levels, and each level is regulated by its own distribution of codes. To Propp's notion of a coded sequence of functions whose deployment was strictly controlled, Lévi-Strauss was opposing the idea of a distribution of codes some of which are active at some levels and inactive at others. In other words, the Proppian functions (e.g. recognition, departure, defeat, delivery, armed contest, etc.) do not find expression only in the semantic spheres of action of a given hero. They acquire new semantic fields and they manifest themselves with the help of different strings of codes. The latter may emphasize the senses of smell, taste, sight, hearing, and touch. Still others organize the altogether different structures of the social, cosmological, and culinary types.

Propp and Levi-Strauss were in no position to exploit the notions of **redundancy** and **variety** in the contexts of information and communication, and they made no effort to account for the movements of tension and release that are fundamental to the channeling of information and characterize a complex system's behavior at a given level of organization. They explain the symbolic structures themselves by relying on relations that are equal to one another in that they create unaccentuated paradigmatic and syntagmatic combinations. Both writers deny, in so doing, a fundamental insight developed by the theories of information and communication, namely, that structures are composed of moments of concentration and diffuseness, of convergence and fragmentation, of dissolution and emergence, which affect and are affected by the restrictive and channeling effects of the boundary. It follows that a systemic approach to cinema must stress that a narrative structure is not a homogeneous selection of paradigmatic relations evolving in diachrony. It is more like a series of intensifications punctuated by periods of rest, when few events are perceived. The binding effect of the frame defines the type of signs cinema creates. The narrative structure, insofar as it implies a higher level of organization than is typical of its signs, exists as a result of the selective rhythm that a process of transferring information from one part of a system to another imparts to a whole.

The tangled web of conflicting interpretations which has arisen because of a static approach to the dynamic interactions of narrative relations, shows that the time has come to replace arguments drawn from an ontology, by others, dependent on the informational content of a communication. An ontology can tell us which process, chosen from a 'dictionary' of processes creates the cinematic sign. Communication reveals in contrast, that a sign's meaning arises only when other signs are assumed to exist in a range of potentially more or less abstract selections. An ontology can identify a serial list of the codes typifying the empirical level of a motion picture. Communication suggests, that any feature of cinema, whether it belongs to the code or the message, is perceived in narrative terms in the context of a subject's relationship to a system of constraints. Cinema signs are what they are because they are not a number of other things they might have been. But they are also organized. Difference, in this sense, is a constituent element of the sign. Its effects are felt by the structure and the organization of the system as a whole. The boundary sets the stage for the emergence of signs. The narrative sequence is deployed across the spaces of similarities and differences that identify a system's capacity to carry information.

The communicational and informational dimensions of the conventional and the iconic signs, can help us examine in a new light the structures of cinema narrative. By integrating the notion of a goal orientation to the methodologies of Propp and Lévi-Strauss, we obtain a means of determining in what way not only the continuities but also the disruptions allow a given structure to carry information, as it maintains variety in selection. The cinematic sequence depends on both the continuities of the codes and the linking together of differential elements whose value changes as they move from one level of system to another. But the differential elements themselves cannot be reduced to an interplay of forms alone. Saussure has argued that although it is possible to regard any word as a concrete linguistic object,[1] it is necessary to remember that a term such as "nu" may be considered as "a sound, as the expression of an idea, as a term corresponding to the Latin word **nudum,** etc."[2] Each linguistic event depends on an alteration of a code and a projection from metaphor to metonymy. In the semiotic terminology it means that a fact is transformed into a sign at the point of convergence of various differential relationships. These must be framed and bound in some manner before they can fulfill their semiotic functions. The way in which an event calls attention to itself supposes a special relationship of the perceiving subject to language and to the linguistic context. Each event of cinema, whether it belongs to the level of shot organizations as defined by either Eisenstein or Bazin, or whether it refers to symbolic patterns and aesthetic assumptions, must be defined on the basis of its internal properties, and in relationship to a series of constructs which constitutes its frame of reference and provides it with a context. Linguistic, literary, and cinematic tropes, the narrative devices of various types, and the narrative "events" themselves do not have an autonomous existence. In Saussure's theory of the system they must accede to a social significance. They reach an audience's perception when a discontinuity is created. The cinematic effect, likewise, rises to significance as a result of a specific interplay of combinatorial and selective processes. As a first step, sign systems confront us, in the words of Eco, with "a sort of molecular landscape in which what we are accustomed to recognize as everyday forms turn out to be the result of transitory chemical aggregations and so-called 'things' are only the surface appearance assumed by an underlying network of more elementary units."[3] The 'more elementary' units Eco is referring to are precisely the differential elements that constitute both the iconic and the conventional signs. But these can assume their semiotic functions, and they can begin to carry information, only after being subjected to a complex communicational process of binding and intensification, that defines them as to type, before letting them enter a narrative structure which is likely to be activated and exchanged at the social level of human interactions.

The important point about the structure of a sign is not that it is composed of the relationship of the **signifier** to the **signified,** but that it is a bound phenomenon whose outer limit performs specific actions defining its predictability and its ability to carry information. As viewed by Peirce, the conventional and analogical signs can be analyzed in terms of their inherent characteristics and in terms of the multi-leveled features apt to increase their informational content. Peirce observed that there are signs which are fairly arbitrary in their relations to content. These are commonly defined as conventional signs. In a natural language, the ties linking **signifier** to **signified** depend on a cultural agreement. Besides the conventional, there is also a group of iconic signs. They are joined to their object by analogy, similarity, and continuity. They are unique, from the standpoint of communication, because it is commonly assumed that they can have only one form of expression. Icons cannot be readily translated into another language and the uniqueness of their representations derives from the fact that they portray an object according to a single set of rules. Even though they can be substituted for one another, and they are therefore capable of hierarchical movement which guarantees, in Lévi-Strauss' model an increase in variety, they are difficult to combine into a syntagmatic chain. Compared to the iconic, the conventional sign is not easily understood, since it relies on abstractions. It combines more readily, nevertheless, because the structures of the codes upon which it depends are more complex. Thus, it requires, in addition, that the audience be aware of the rules according to which its messages are organized.

The iconic and the conventional signs are interesting from the standpoint of a narrative theory. Each of them has been used to identify the expressive potential of cinema art. Roland Barthes has manifested an overwhelming preference for the conventional sign because it can enter into a large number of combinations. For Barthes, the potential for combination inherent in the conventional sign is suggestive of the semiotic process itself.[5] While analyzing the still photograph, Japanese iconography, fashions, and the modern myth he indicated that systems of signification founded on the icon are poorer than those that rely the conventional signs, because they cannot establish as many meaningful connections as are possible with words. Christian Metz's theory of the cinema favors the analogical aspect of the sign.[6] In its most extreme version, it holds that each image is unique because it reproduces an object of the world directly. There is no need to depend on a code, and no need to invoke the Saussurean concept of **langue:** in cinema, map and territory coincide in the image being projected on the screen. He amended his position when Eco pointed out that a subject's recognition of an analogical representation involves learning. Even unstylized images are coded in some fashion. Accepting Eco's critique, Metz substituted for the icon the concept of the iconic code. He did so without modifying the other levels of his theory, where cinema is described as an art of the concrete, an ensemble of loosely organized analogical representations, a phenomenon in which the rules of system operate in a marginal way.[7] Since the code is always the analog of some field, it became possible for Metz to deny cinema the dimension of **langue,** and of the code redundancies embedded in the organization of its system. From the standpoint of communication, langue is redundant to the extent that its rules are used over and over again. **Parole** is, on the other hand, an individual act, which is relatively unpredictable in each of its manifestations. Being an event in the world, it materializes some of the possibilities afforded by **langue.** The concept of the analogical code, which Metz uses in his theory is a drawback in communication.

The uniqueness assumed by the analog causes a motion picture to lose its intelligibility: in Metz's version of cinema theory, the analogical signs are part of an autonomous structure. They are isolated from the abstract substratum of **langue** that acts as a constraint on expression by channeling the social exchange of information. It becomes difficult to discuss how a motion picture relates to the system of all the other motion pictures, how it can mean anything at all to an audience, how the differential features composing a cinematic sign are created in perception before being integrated in the structures of a narrative, and how meaning emerges as a discrete event (a **parole)** from the field of differences constituting its range of selection.

The cinema aesthetics of Barthes and Metz do not merely spell out a terminology. They articulate and define the functions, the limitations, and the social significance of cinema art. Barthes dismisses perhaps too quickly a legitimate concern with the forms of denotation in cinema, and he insists too much on the arbitrariness of codes and representations. In spite of an acceptance of the structuring potential of a code, Metz assimilates cinema's expressivity to a range of analogies which suggest that each image of cinema is a unique realization **(parole),** which possesses few of the redundant properties of the cinema genre **(langue).** The antinomies between the iconic and the conventional sign are not insoluble once we begin examining them from the point of view of the system, of the necessary interplay between novelty and redundancy that defines information, and of the patterns of communicational exchange in which the two types of signs do not oppose but complement each other. Thus, instead of asking whether the signs of cinema are either iconic or conventional, it seems more fruitful to draw the appropriate conclusions from an apprehension of their essential interdependance.

The conventional signs of language are endowed not only with an historical connection to content, but also with a series of iconic characteristics. The iconicity of language contributes to the informational content of a message: writers who rely on the graphic shape of a word as it appears on a page make use of that complementary information that only an iconic trait can add to a signifier. The translinguistic qualities that abound in the raucous dialogues of Wertmuller's **Love and Anarchy** transcend linguistic denotations in the same way that Gogol's use of the name Akaky Akakievich exceeds the denominative functions of the naming process. In both instances the translinguistic features merge with sound and the visual effects of a narrative, becoming part of the signifier's **mise-en-scène** taken as a whole. Just as the conventional sign (written, oral, representational) has an iconic side to it, each iconic sign possesses conventional characteristics. This is illustrated most strikingly by Poussin who relies, as a painter, not only on the iconicity of his figures, but also on the viewer's ability to decipher their metaphorical meaning, and to follow a specific sequence of figurative composition that will yield a story and the meaning of the painting. Although the distinctions between the iconic and the conventional are blurred, it does not mean that a theory of cinema can dispense with the distinction altogether. The iconic values that theoreticians of art promote are not objective; they are cultural and historical values. The assumption that cinema resorts to conventional signs alone for the elaboration of its meanings is not a statement about cinema, but a fact of the social relations to which a theoretician of art reconciles himself.

Both the iconic and the conventional signs are constituted by an intersection of similarities and differences. Neither similarity nor difference alone can explain how cinema accedes to the flexibility of a sign system which is highly efficacious from the informational point of view, and which is capable, in principle, of expressing anything at all. Lévi-Strauss has demonstrated that the content of a trope can change not only as a result of its relational movement along a syntagmatic chain of functions as in Propp, but also according to the way in which it inscribes itself in a hierarchy of manifestations, which in the theory of communication, may belong to different levels of abstraction. The informational content of cinema is concentrated in the redundancies of the codes that it shares with an audience, and also in the way it integrates elements belonging to different levels of abstraction. A motion picture employs lights, sets, gestures, actors and technologies in a polyfunctional way. It translates its materials so as to subordinate them to artistic, aesthetic, and ultimately political ends. The conventional signs of cinema are used not only as units of sense, but also as signifiers, figures, and images of signs, each of which belong to special levels of abstraction in the cinematic system, and carry different measures of informational content. An obvious complexification of the conventional sign can occur when a director makes a film, as in Truffaut's **Day for Night,** about the making of a film. All signs are translated to another level of abstraction. They can be considered as some kind of signs representing other signs. The iconic sign, contrary to what one might expect, also has the potential of becoming multileveled and complex: clothes are used for providing warmth, and as signs of a character's age, sex, and social standing. Thus, we must conceive of the motion picture as a system of syntagmatic relations, and as a system of structural dominants, whose elements belong to different systems, different levels of system, and different classes of system altogether. Any language implies, besides a communication that includes a sender, a message, and a receiver, an **organization** of signs. A sign may be substituted for something, and it can be combined with others to form a syntagmatic chain. Since it appears, however, that an icon is more difficult to combine than the conventional sign, and since the latter requires a special knowledge of grammar from the audience, the theory of cinema is not advanced very far when we merely note the iconicity of the conventional and the conventionality of the icon. A sequence in cinema is not a mechanically predictable procedure. Each syntagm depends on other signs and other levels of signs. It must also imply the possibility of a choice in the orchestration of elements if it hopes to carry information which depends on selection. It raises special questions concerning the codes that will make it comprehensible to an audience and it requires attention to the measures of variety that allow any system at all to maintain, and in some instances to increase its levels of organization. The motion picture can be considered as a kind of complex message. We must assume, however, that in order to understand it, the audience must be aware of the range of its transformations and variety, and it must know something about the recurrent rules that govern the way in which it is encoded.

The Freudian model of the narrative is highly suggestive in explaining the process of selection which is central to communication, and which depends on both the continuities of the code and the unique manifestations of the analog. The transformations of a dream's imagery into words implies the mechanism of translation that changes the code structure of elements passing from one level of abstraction to another. The transition from the level of the differential and unbound element to the level of the bound representation involves both relational and hierarchical processes, which Freud has described in terms of displacement and condensation. He indicated that a dream thought undergoes a condensation when a feature represents several chains of associations arising at the latent level of the dream, or conversely, when a single element of the latent dream is associated to several elements of the dream thought. Condensation tends to skip and to compress the details of each level as it combines them. It may shorten the original text, distort its spaces, and alter its rhythms. Displacement, in contrast, changes the accent, the intensity, and the punctuation of the latent dream. Displacement transposes the accent from a highly charged image, to another, which is marked in a weaker manner from the emotional point of view, and therefore more acceptable to the representations of the dreaming subject. While condensation redistributes the units of the original process to other levels of the dream, displacement changes the punctuation of the sequences. When essential elements of the latent level are translated to the level of secondary manifestations, they become subject to the redundant aspects of the codes and sub-codes active at that level.[7] Only the resulting sequence of images reaches perception. The work of the dream, in addition to giving us a way to conceptualize the function of the boundaries at their level of abstraction, helps us understand the fact that the passage from a level to another, and the articulation from one syntagm to another can produce new information as a result of translation and selection.

The effect of condensation and displacement channels the signifying units of information into different structures of meaning. Both the relational and the hierarchical transformations of the dream resemble the work of ideology whose primary function resides precisely in shifting contradictions of the system from one level of the socio-cultural reality to another. But before an element can carry any information at all, the free flow of differences, the same differences that Saussure felt capable of creating signs, must be bound by the work of displacement and condensation, neither one of which can be considered predictable in their unique manifestations. Transpositions between levels, and the movement along the syntagmatic axis contribute to the definition of the image. Each of them involves not only the alignment suggested by the redundancy of the codes, but also multiple instances of non-coincidence, which become a source of variety and order that a system needs to maintain itself at a given level of organization.

Interpreted as models of the narrative, condensation and displacement carry information because they are selections from a range. They also generate new information at each stage of the transformations they provoke. Freud's insights help us come to grips not only with the problem of interpreting the condensed and displaced figures of cinema, but also the functions of the cinematic frame, which binds differential elements in the picture field and orients information so that it might fulfill its communicative function. Insofar as the action of the frame is constitutive of the signs, and insofar as its effects can be generalized to structure their organization, that is to say the narrative itself, it obviously does not stem from a series of innocent movements of the camera. Its choices are abstracted from a field of differences before being integrated into the structures of a sign system. The fundamental use to which Propp subjects his functions in a scheme of classification aimed at the fairy tale, the passage from one level of system to another which implies the crossing of boundaries in Lévi-Strauss, are analogous to the functions of the frame in cinema, where space blends itself to cinematic space, and time to cinematic time, as a direct result of the frame's action. The structuration of space and the elaboration of a field of vision occur in the context of a frame and of the points of focus being projected on the screen. In cinema, what happens beyond the limits of the frame is important: the separation of the field from the non-field brings to notice the possibility for a translation which assumes that elements of the non-field accede to the coding system incorporated in the cinema image. Within the frame itself, how objects are either distinguished or related from another defines the role of the boundaries, their capacity to select variety, and ultimately, to carry information. An element's passage across boundaries generates information. When condensation and displacement embrace a series of misaligned codes and remain capable of generating new information, we acquire an insight into how a shot, the frame, the **mise-en-scène,** the **mise-en-cadre,** and the errors of an artistic composition complement each other in their respective contrained channels, and affect the uneven flow of information sustaining the semiotic functions necessary to the existence of a given communicational pattern.

The cinematic narrative is dependent on montage which organizes a series of signs belonging to the analog and the digital types. Freud's scheme suggests, however, that even though each element is affected by a kind of montage process, its significance is not limited by it: condensation and displacement refer to the manner in which the scene of the signifier is represented in analogy according to the rules of continuity, as well as constructed according to the principles of discrete conventions. While analogy maintains some kind of connection to a referent system, the new structures of an emergent text embody messages which have little to do with the codes of the less abstract organization belonging to the latent level of the dream text. Cinema as a semiotic fact hypothesizes fairly loose, non-causal, and mediated relations between an audience and the text, the structures of the text itself, and the relations of the subject to the text. On the one hand, there appears a break between what a subject intends by the elaboration of a structures, and what the structure will mean to others, but on the other, the subject conditions every aspect of an emergent structure, and a functional analysis is impossible without an account of such a relationship. Speaking from outside a Freudian context, Jan Mukarovskij referred to this paradox when he wrote: "The 'I,' the **subject,** which appears in every art and every work in some or other guise (though the guise may differ a great deal), is identified neither with any concrete, psychosomatic individual, nor with the author. The whole artistic structure of the work concentrates on this point and is ordered according to it."[8]

The traditional subject matter of cinema criticism which concerns the story line, the plot, the structure of the main character, the mise-en-scène, and the creative process is being strained by the communicational difficulties arising from the models of Saussure, Propp, and even Lévi-Strauss. In thinking through the work of the dream and in generalizing its effects, Freud has stressed dynamism by pointing to a decentralized, split, non-homogeneous subject whose representation in sign systems are founded in discontinuities. The notion of the split subject, and of its manifestations in a decentralized narrative structure must be distinguished from the issues raised by the homogeneous coding we often associate with the iconic representation, and by extension, with the aesthetics of Bazin. From the point of view of information, cinema cannot subsist on continuities alone. Just like similarity, continuity implies, on the one hand, a redundancy which drown communication in repetition, and on the other, a uniqueness of relation which can block the process of communicational exchange precisely because communication depends on the sharing of codes. To convey information, similarity in art must be related to difference, in the same way that continuity must refer back to a discontinuity. Difference is a function of similarity without which no code can fulfill a communicational function. In relating the dissimilar to the similar, cinema translates one into the other in order to assure variety on the one hand, and comprehensibility on the other, and the transfer of information depends on both of them. The boundaries of the frame, the concentration of similarities and differences in the structures of analog and digital signs, are also the point where narrative structures are juxtaposed by one another, replaced by one another, and create a narrative organization which establishes sequence homogeneously by taking advantage of the continuities assumed in analogy, or proceeds from a basis of discontinuities, and thus relies on the multiplicity of semantic links contained in the conventional sign. In montage between dissimilar elements, as in the montage of collision proposed by Eisenstein, meaning depends on high levels of semioticity. It requires a complex grammar according to which the frames and the shots are assembled and opposed. When montage is of the integrative type, its continuity depends on relating shots that are similar to one another, and is likely to take place among shots where semioticity is kept at a relatively low level. This potential of cinema art, which Bazin saw in Renoir, emphasizes the iconic structures of the sign. It has value not for what it adds to the represented, but for what it can reveal about it.[9]

Bazin is fully justified in stressing an alternative to montage processes based on difference. But sequences emphasizing the icon, in producing a narrative based on continuities, call on dissimilarity. There is no compelling reason why the use of sound in the motion picture should force montage back to a form of reflection typical of naive realism, or why it should make the syntactic structures of the narrative simpler by reducing the conventional expressivity of the image. It can be argued, from the historical perspective, that even though the shots used as montage pieces in the 1920's were shorter than those taken after the birth of sound, one of the main effects of sound has not been to simplify the shot, but on the contrary, to make it more complex by opening up another channel of communication, namely the soundtrack. Montage from the standpoint of opposition, collision, fragmentation, and dissimilarity, and montage as a process of linking, joining, and juxtaposing are part of the overall possibilities of cinema, for the conventional sign does not negate but rather complements the iconic representations. This means, contrary to the theses elaborated by Propp and Lévi-Strauss, that a text is both discrete and continuous, it is a **langue** and a **parole,** it requires both repetition (similarity), and forms of variety (dissimilarity). What differentiates the conventional sign from the icon is not the autonomous relation of the **signifier** to the **signified,** nor indeed the relation of **langue** and **parole** as defined by Saussure. The significant point resides in the fact that they function in a totality capable of translating them into different levels of organization and abstraction on a selective continuous/discontinuous basis.

Cinema transforms the continuities of the narrative functions (and their information) into sequences that are multileveled, complex, founded on discontinuities (and its information). Here especially, the icon may acquire some of the functions of the conventional sign, just as the conventional sign may behave according to rules informing the icon. Contrary to Metz's perception, cinema is a langue in its capacity to create abstractions, and continuities on the basis of redundant codes, apt to assure the comprehensibility of the message. It is a parole when it gives abstractions a unique realization which is bound and focused according to the rules of an individual subcode involving the icon. The historical norms, and the rules materializing in each motion picture lend even the conventional sign a necessary, unique dimension, characteristic of the icon. The difficulty of combining icons requires that cinema rely, nevertheless, on the redundant abstractions of the code, without which the narrative as a whole could not be understood. At another level, instead of considering the two kinds of montage, constitutive of the narrative, as being exclusive of one another because the first emphasizes the continuities of the icon and the other the discontinuities of the conventional sign, we should assume that each is capable of producing a different type of narration. A narrative structure can proceed, in other words, from conditions of conflict and discontinuity, as well as from contexts of continuity, homogeneity, and similarity. In trying to explain the connection of structure to principles of communication, Ju. M. Lotman has suggested that motion pictures which emphasize one set of sign functions over another differ not only in their assumptions about the role of the subject in the narrative structures, but also in what they expect the audiences to do.[10] In the first instance, faced with the self-evident significations of analogical similarities, they are asked to compare the truth values promoted by a motion picture with the truths of their own life experiences. In the second instance, confronted with shots organized according to the principles of the conventional sign, they are asked to interpret and to identify the rules according to which the director's text has been constructed.

The principles of concentration and divergence, of diffuseness and of the framing effect, of continuity and disruption, of coded sequences and transitions among levels relying on multiple coding, are vital to the definition and to the ability of cinema to carry information. A motion picture is not summation of shapes, sounds, and quanta differences of various types. It is an organization of relationships whose structures derive from a dynamic intersection of functions. Ju. Tinjanov has argued that the compositional units of cinema are not homogeneous.[11] Narrative structures are composed of focused and unfocused elements which are superimposed on a shifting pattern of continuities and differences. And although the signs of cinema are not wholly conventional nor completely iconic, Barthes is right in arguing that motion pictures cannot afford to hug the line of middle-class entertainment.[12] Like Metz, Barthes has had a change of heart about the type of signs in cinema. He has also grown distrustful of theories that fail to distinguish between the functions of each type of signs. Several theories of cinema have failed precisely because they have been unable to decide the priority of one type of sign usage over another. The disposition of the boundaries, the frame and the framing effect, the interplay of similarities and differences, and the concentration of differential elements into a narrative structure behave as so many constraints on the flow of information. In attempting to transcend the dictionary of procedures in order to decide on their hierarchy and organization, which alone provide a basis for a theory of cinema, we should keep in mind that no art system is ever fully integrated. The frames, the boundaries, and the montage effects organize the shots of a motion picture into a kind of narrative coherence which produces only a semblance of continuity. The smoothness of the discursive spaces, with their apparent reliance on continuities, are subverted by the subject's overdetermined modes of representation and interaction, and by the cultural norms altering the audience's expectations about what a plot should look like. The continuity in cinema narrative is never mechanical. Because it arises as a result of certain repeated actions of the frame and of the montage effect, it must be conceived as a **secondary** rather than a **primary** feature of cinema art. But the primacy of the conventional sign in cinema narrative must not detract from the significance of the icon. What the fuss is about, insofar as communication is concerned, is that the icon's passage from one level of system to another undermines social exchange by destroying the selective base of information. Its uniqueness represents another danger. The integration of the icon into a narrative structure becomes difficult. As to the analogical codes, they are so novel that the messages cannot be understood. The conventional sign itself, far from being founded in variety as Barthes seems to believe, requires an explicit grammar and a series of explicitly redundant features of code, upon which its comprehensibility depends. This is why cinema criticism must begin to isolate levels in a system — from the differential level to that of constituent narrative blocks — in order to explain under what circumstances information is exchanged along the syntagmatic axis, and between a text's different levels of abstraction. The concept of information is crucial to an interpretation of signs and icons because its measure determines the level of organization in a structure. Cinema theory must also decide which series to institute in the motion picture narrative, and explain what type of sequences can be realized at each level. From the standpoint of reception, each cinematic trope, that is to say, each narrative event rises to perception and it realizes some rules governing different systems and different sets of transtextual structures of which the subject is one of the most significant.

For a motion picture to carry information, and to present it in a form susceptible to exchange, the splicing of images cannot be reduced to a mechanical procedure. The option to do something different than what is being done must always be present. The icon presents a paradox insofar as information is concerned. It supposes, on the one hand a continuity and a similarity which suggest that no alternative to the existing shot exists. It implies at the same time a code overdifferentiation in that each shot is unique. Within this paradox, which can be extended to the conventional sign and to the structures of montage themselves, is contained the ideological content of the mimetic functions of art, and of communication depending on code similarities. In contrast, the conventional sign survives only because it has codes in common with an audience. Its potential for diffuseness creates the need for an explicit grammar. But the redundancies it manifests reduce its communicational content in spite of its syntactic flexibility and of its obvious capacity to combine in complex structures of the extensive type. Its ideology remains questionable for the fundamental reason that it tends to remove from human action the continuities of experience, and it confines the subject at the level of symbolic manipulation alone. The icon provides a way out of this impasse: the uniqueness of the iconic representation does not hinder but serves the purposes of communication. Once the icon is mediated by the grammatical rules of the conventional sign and it is integrated in the decentralized narrative structures of cinema, it assures a dramatic increase in a channel's capacity to carry information by adding to it the variety of uniqueness. Finally, the inter-dependence of the iconic and the conventional signs creates a form of selectivity which can be exchanged in the social system as a new information. The fact of the relationship, which may be either aligned or misaligned, continuous or discrete, does not negate the icon and it does not reduce the significance of conventionality. By considering both types of signs as interrelated but nevertheless distinguishable according to the various contexts of social exchange, we can see that cinema has the capacity to carry information that is complex and highly organized — more complex and organized than the relatively diffuse systems of natural languages to which theoreticians have been turning in the past to explain its structures.

1. Ferdinand de Saussure, **Cours de linguistique générale** (Paris: Payot, 1973), p. 23.
2. Loc. cit.
3. **A Theory of Semiotics** (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 49.
4. **Langage et cinéma** (Paris: Larousse, 1971), p. 89.
5. Roland Barthes. **Système de la Mode** (Paris: Seuil, 1967), p. 241
6. **Essais sur la signification au cinéma I** (Paris: Klincksiek, 1968), pp. 111-46.
7. Sigmund Freud, **The Interpretation of Dreams** (New York: Avon Books, 1965), pp. 311-44.
8. Quoted in Jan M. Broekmann, **Structuralism** (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1974), p. 59.
9. **Semiotika kino i problemi kinoestetiki** (Tallin: Esti raamat, 1977), p. 84.
10. Ju. N. Tinjanov, "Ob osnovax kino," **Poetika, Istorija literatury, Kino** (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), pp. 270-81.
12. **Mythologies** (Paris: Seuil, 1957), p. 28.
13. Ju. M. Lotman, **Struktura xudozestvennogo teksta** (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1970), p. 336.

WIM WENDERS, NICHOLAS RAY AND LIGHTNING OVER WATER

by Ron Burnett

Lightning Over Water ... the narrator is Wim Wenders... he is also the film's central character with Nicholas Ray ... who is moving slowly and painfully towards death ... by cancer. Wenders is faced with the dilemma of showing death on the screen, within the image ... of course, by definition, death cannot be *shown* ... what can be visible is the effect of death ... its presence through the people reacting to it ... death on film balances awkwardly between reality and construction, between artifice and naturalism....

Wim Wenders opens the film by entering Ray's loft in New York ... there is no pretense that this is the present tense of narrativity ... it is openly constructed ... a filmic entry ... a filmic look ... Wenders the narrator, the actor, the director ... Ray, the actor, director, and somehow throughout the entire film both its object and its subject. ... The narration is in the present tense. Wenders lies down on a couch and in the distance we see Ray lying in bed. He coughs and yells in pain. There is nothing so immediate in a film as the ambivalence of that moment, of the desire to identify with the suffering and to be distant from it, to see the pain, but to *know* that the sight can be avoided. Wenders closes his eyes and the camera shows him asleep but only for long enough to reveal that he is sleeping *for* the camera just as Ray was over-doing the sound of his pain. His cries of agony were constructed because we discover that Wenders and Ray are making the film together about each other, are struggling in fact to define for us how they are doing it and why. They are also trying to give Ray back his self-esteem and dignity and are trying not to portray his cancer ridden body as an object for pity.

This film is intensely self-reflexive, intensely aware of its struggle to come into being. To highlight this there is also the presence of a video porta-pack as a character and as a creator of what we see. It circles around the movie camera, around the characters. Wenders intersplices video, transferred to film ... grainy ... colourless ... jumpy ... the angles and the close-ups are somehow wrong ... they are like bracketed comments on the film ... the porta-pack, however, is also about a crisis in the cinema. It records continuously for twenty minutes or half an hour, eliminating the need for a crew and documenting events in a way that foregrounds the process of enunciation. The porta-pack signals the transformation of film into a part of television, but it also points backwards to the possible simplicity of filmic production divorced from the trappings of the industry and *its* requirements. To Wenders Hollywood's rejection of Nicholas Ray is akin to a cancer that is ravaging filmmaking and so the story of Ray's death becomes a metaphor for the decline of the cinema, a cinema that barely recognizes its own limitations and cannot see beyond the boundaries of its own fantasies.

The pain, the profound pain of Nicholas Ray comes out in its fullest at a lecture that he gives. He reminisces to a large audience about filmmaking, about creating and telling stories and as he stands against the podium holding on for balance he is filmed in the light of film noir. The camera turns to Wim Wenders and his crew on a scaffolding constructing the shot that we have just seen. Suddenly the present tense, the apparent present tense of the filming clashes with the obvious fact that a film always comes to us from the past. And the past is further emphasized by the film that Ray has just shown to the audience, *The Lusty Men.* In the scene that Wenders lets us see, Robert Mitchum plays a character coming back to what was obviously his childhood home. It is a profoundly moving scene that summarizes the nostalgia of memory and the desperate need to recover one's roots, to gain an understanding of one's personal history. Ray comments in the following way upon the film: "The closer I get to my ending, the closer I am getting to rewriting my beginning. And certainly by the end, by the last page, the climax has reconditioned the opening and the opening usually changes. However, this film is not a Western. This film is really a film about people who want to own a home of their own. That was the great American search at the time this film was made."

The cinema is fascinated by the past and by death and dying. I once came upon an article in a popular magazine where a doctor criticized the film industry for being unrealistic in its depiction of death. To prove his point he quoted extensively from a Hollywood make-up catalogue which listed a variety of pellets, blood bags, and human looking skins that could be used to portray either a quick or a slow death. The doctor advised filmmakers to check with the medical profession because there were easier ways to represent death. If it can't be done well, he asked, why show it at all? If *Lightning Over Water* makes anything clear it is that death can never be represented in the cinema. In one scene Ray re-enacts his last moments days before his actual death. It is obviously shot in a studio. The lighting is a gentle fluorescent blue. He speaks in poetic terms about a life that has confused him. The camera, it seems, almost wants to avert its *gaze.* This is *not* an act, the image screams. But of course it is, says Ray. The visible, visibleness of his death, becomes a function of how much we want to add or subtract from the picture. Our eyes cease, simply, to be a function of camera position. We roam through our minds and our imaginations and our fantasies for an explanation. The ease of being the voyeur, of being lost in the schizophrenic pleasure of death produced by magic, by carefully placed bags of blood against the plastic skins of well-known actors, that pleasure and the ease with which we experience it, is now disrupted.

Lightning Over Water ends with a celebration. Ray has died. We are now truly in the past and we have helped reconstruct it. His friends and Wim Wenders cluster together to fulfill his final wish, to have his ashes taken out to the ocean on a Chinese Sailboat, which we see moving (through the courtesy of a helicopter shot) past the skyline of New York City. In some senses the final party for Ray seems disrespectful, almost insensitive. In the bowels of the boat people are joking and drinking. The urn bearing his ashes in a beautiful painted box is just above them. Here too, Wenders does not allow cinematic convention its place. The ritual portrayal of death and grief in the cinema with its desire for realism, is thrown aside. One of the final images that we see is a camera bolted to the top of the boat, carefully revolving in a circular fashion. Its movements are controlled by remote control. We look at a distance of six or seven feet into its viewfinder. We see what it sees, what Ray would have perhaps seen, what Wenders desires us to see. We also see the artifice of the camera, of the visible as artifice. The viewfinder of the camera becomes another screen, another frame pointing out the contradictions of believing in the truth of the image. The film ends as it began, caught in the double bind of the image which both tells a story and destroys itself in the telling.

It often seems as if Wenders wants to give up. The contradictions of narrativity seen as opposite to documentation, the documentary, not recognized for what it is, the telling of a story. He cannot face Ray's death, so he must imagine it. But he cannot imagine that which he must face. So, Ray, coughing, almost vomiting sits as the director of his last scene before death, a moment that in real time is death approaching and in film time is death to be preserved, on celluloid, to be repeated and repeated and repeated. All that remains for Wenders is an image, a fragment, a structured memory that is neither fact nor fiction. For filmic memory sits somewhere in a nowhere, lost in nostalgia, unable to grasp itself, precisely at some mid-point between history and the imaginary.

At a crucial point earlier on in the film, Ray tries to write a scenario. It is about an artist whose name is Nick, who has cancer and whose sole aim in life is to recover his reputation. As Ray recounts his story, it is not clear anymore whether the scene has been set-up, imagined by Ray and Wenders, or spontaneously the result of Ray's search for his own imagination, a defiance of his bodily pain. Wenders asks Ray why the story is about an artist and not about Nicholas Ray, the filmmaker. "Why are you making the detour of turning into a painter because he's got your name? Why isn't he you? And why isn't he making films instead of painting? It's you, why take the step away?" But film always steps away, that is precisely what film is as a medium, a step away into representation. And Wender's problem in the film is that he is bound by the play of that illusion. Ray answers the above questions: "I have one action which is to regain my self-image and my image to the rest of the world and for you, you have to cement your own action and try to find that which is closest to you and work actually from a character whose needs are his greatest needs, greatest personal needs." And Wenders answers: "My action is going to be defined by yours. My needs are going to be defined by you facing death." And then Ray says: "Well that would mean that you're stepping on my back, which I don't mind. ..." The conjuncture of narration and narrator, of Wenders as filmmaker, actor and enunciator cannot overcome the contraction of being involved in Nick's pain and using it for the purpose of the film. The spiral of double-binds governing this film reach their peak just after Ray says that he doesn't mind being the "object" of the narration. The crew and everyone else on the set starts to clap and this signals quite clearly that the scene had been rehearsed. The irony is that we the spectators look for the image of a lack of control because that will make the scene appear to happen in the present. It will give it that documentary feel of a transcription. Ironically, that feeling of an absence of control makes the future seem possible, what throws Wenders off is that Ray's death is imminent and therefore that the future is impossible.

> *Nick Ray:* Why'd you come here, Wim?
>
> *Wim Wenders:* I wanted to talk to you, Nick.
>
> *Nick Ray:* About what, dying?
>
> *Wim Wenders:* I didn't come to talk about dying. I didn't come to talk about dying, Nick, but we might have to.
>
> *Nick Ray:* But we might have to.
>
> *Wim Wenders:* I was looking forward to seeing you because I need your advice. You told me over the phone that you wanted to see me, but I was afraid to come. And I'd rather tell you right now, why? I was aware that I had seen you in weakness, and that you might be worried about being seen this way. But I feel it's okay now. There is something else that came to my mind in the plane last night, that I'm actually more afraid of. I thought that I could find myself being attracted to your weakness, your suffering and if I realized I would, I think that I would have to leave now. And I feel like I would be betraying you. That won't happen.

Wenders does try very hard to avoid turning Ray into an object for voyeurism but it is impossible to avoid. No matter how often Wenders tries to talk about his own anxieties, Nicholas Ray is still in the throes of death and we join with Wenders in being spectators to that process. Wenders is faced with the same problem that we have. He can only look at Ray through the viewfinder. The cinema transforms reality but cannot change it.

'It could be Oedipus Rex': Denial and Difference in **The Bandwagon** or, the American Musical as American Gothic.

by Dana B. Polan

Early in the film, *The Bandwagon,* the fallen hero, Tony Hunter (Fred Astaire) disembarks from the train that has brought him to New York and he proceeds to his rendez-vous with scriptwriters, Les and Lily Martin. In a scene shot to emphasize cool browns and greys, Hunter advances along the train platform and sings what amounts to his credo, "I'll go my way by myself, all alone in a crowd," a song he will reprise at the film's end just before a woman attests a devotion to him. As Tony walks from left to right, a magazine rack appears from the right, almost as if propelled into his path. Suddenly, and for a brief moment, the greyness and brownness give way to a riot of hot colors in the bright covers of the magazines. Formally, the moment acts like a burst of vitality in a field of quiet. Tony picks up a book, looks it over, puts it down, and continues on, leaving the magazine rack and its show of color behind.

What does such a moment mean? Or, to ask a more fundamental question, *does it mean?* There is a sense in which the burst of color virtually takes off from the story, from any contribution to narrative flow. It is a kind of demonstration of the musical, of this musical about musicals, as a spectacle, a showing forth of form for the sake of showing off form. As such, this minor scene is only an example in a whole array of examples where style becomes subject, where subject turns into style, where story developments exist only as an alibi to enable new spectacles to come into view. What we have in the force of such spectacle is virtually a realization of the Russian Formalist notion of *device,* or art's use of certain matters not for their meaning, but for their ability to become a good show, a self-evident form.[1] Such a conversion of subject into spectacle, or demonstration of the gap between story and style, runs through *The Bandwagon.* It is there in the scene where people in three different rooms watch director Jeffrey Cordova describe his modern version of Faust to prospective backers. Each room is painted a different lurid color, and an insistent editing which jumps from room to room to room creates a *montage* based on the collision of colors. Again, the distinctiveness of the colors, the emphasis on their differences from one another, has no contribution to make to the narrative as such; we are once more turned into witnesses to the virtuosity of a spectacle which has no narrative sense.

The concern with spectacle culminates most explicitly in the long section of the film devoted to showing scenes from the successfully Tony Hunter production of the play, "The Bandwagon." The proscenium arch and the frame-lines of the film merge as this "backstage musical" film finally delivers its payoff and presents its show to us (only twice — before and after the "Girlhunt" ballet — do we see images of a viewing audience). This is the final "sense" of the film, its *raison d'être;* everything has led to this point where the story stops and pure show takes over. Even though the Martin's early description of their play presented it as a "light, intimate show" about a struggling writer, the song-and-dances we see seem to have little or no connection to such a plot. Instead, what finally unifies these song-and-dances is the simple fact that they are all song-and-dances. The "Bandwagon" show is the final triumph of spectacle and, as such, it serves to unify subject and style since the play that Hunter finally succeeds in putting on is identical to the film that Vincente Minnelli and crew put on for us (this unity is obviously signalled by the fact that the film and the play within the film have the same title). Hunter's accomplishment is MGM's accomplishment, is ultimately the accomplishment of spectacle as sense of the musical world, as the "real" meaning of things.

To understand the political trajectory of such a film, it is necessary, I would suggest, to deal with this nature of style, to investigate the politics of form. Under the influence of methodologies borrowed from literary study (such as narratology), the conjuncture of semiotics and ideological criticism has too often tended to look at the politics of *narrative,* isolating out from a film the values of characters and their story functions. Whereas Stephen Heath suggests that the classic Hollywood film involves a narrativization of space, each new cut, each revealed space caught up in a logic of story and subject,[2] we need to realize that the critic's emphasis on narrative is part of this process of narrativization. For Alan Caspar, for example, in his *Vincente Minnelli and the American Musical,* the moments of spectacle in Minnelli's films must all be interpreted, must all be reduced to expressions of a narrative sense. Thus, for Caspar, the scene with the magazine rack has a sense, is in the film precisely to further the *story* through its revelation of character motivation; "Minnelli captures, suspends, and bores into Tony's melancholia... (Tony) is left alone on the platform... He walks forward on the carpet, his pace dictated by the melody.... At a kiosk, he stops to finger a huge hard-cover novel, the resort of the lonely, but decides against it."[3] That there is something in the scene which exceeds this sense, that something, a surplus, is lost in the hermeneutic conversion of spectacle into meaning, is an idea that Caspar's narrativizing schema, in which novels instantly become symbols (of the resort of the lonely), cannot account for.

In this sense, the emphasis in recent criticism on the Oedipal trajectory as the fundamental mechanism of classic cinema's "family romance" is itself a process of narrativization. The Oedipal story becomes both a component of films and an *a priori* tool by which critics tautologically find that component at work everywhere. Raymond Bellour, for example, declares that, "...film gradually leads to a final solution which allows the more or less conflicting terms posed at the beginning to be resolved, and which in the majority of cases, takes the form of a marriage. I've gradually come to think that this pattern organizes — indeed, constitutes — the classic American cinema as a whole..."[4] At certain moments, Bellour's model loosens — specifically, in moments when he acknowledges the influence of Roland Barthes' sense of the pleasure of the text as a pleasure in excess of the codes of story[5] — but the model quickly represses these moments of aporia, and Bellour's debt to Levi-Strauss' understanding of communication as a social code, which finally involves the exchange and possession of women, takes over.[6] In his analysis of *North-by-Northwest,* for example, Bellour acknowledges Hitchcock's irony, his humor, indeed his *play,* but rather than seeing the use of a comic tone as a possible source of conflict between story and tone, Bellour reads play *within* the functions of the Oedipal trajectory as contributory to the young male's accession to the Law of the Father: "that Hitchcock, here, gives in to seduction, to the ironic prestige of the improbable *(invraisemblable)* in order to tighten all the more the logic of the quotidian, I only see in this a redoubling of the abstraction where there is avowed more deliberately... the rule of the Hitchcockian fable..."[7] Irony becomes rule, the improbable becomes logic.

What Oedipal criticism finally leads to is a banishing of the force of contradiction; the classic Hollywood film — and the idea that there is such a unitary entity is part of the disavowal of contradiction — becomes the site of an eternal return of the same. Play becomes a mere bribe by which texts inscribe viewers into the narrative and so enable a particular process of subject-ion. For Stephen Heath, for example, "the power of such an apparatus (the cinema's encoding of looks to engage point-of-view and identification) is in the play it both proposes and controls: a certain mobility is given but followed out — relayed — as the possibility of a constant hold on the spectator, as the bind of a coherence of vision..."[8] The Oedipal trajectory becomes one of the mechanisms of this binding, a process by which both character and (male) spectator accede to a truth which fictively, imaginarily, closes up the gaps of cinema's essential differences. Play, contradiction, difference, become no more than the "lack" which narrative fills in: "...(T)he substantiation of the absent or lost object is always the first instance of a repetition or insistence, the process whereby the subject is caught up in a signifying concatenation which both excludes and represents it":[9] Jacqueline Rose here acknowledges that the cinema is both exclusion (the decentering of representation) and representation, but, finally, she too understands exclusion within representation, caught up in it, bound, sutured by an Imaginary ("here (in Peter Pan — the film she is analysing) language intervenes as internal speech, taken as the recognition of a culturally established fact, and cancels the dislocation between image and object by ascribing to the former its status as social referent" — p. 30).

The Oedipal trajectory is a domesticating practice, both literally and metaphorically, in which the excessive (for example, the little boy who scandalously desires his mother but who must renounce that desire in order to join the world of culture) becomes the systematic, in which men, for example, are read as mothers' sons and then, finally, as wives' husbands. But if narrative engages in this domesticating, so does its criticism which domesticates Hollywood films and uses the details of textual analysis not only to show the complexities of films but rather to insist precisely on the absence, or on the recuperation, of complexity, on the insistent determination of a structure — the Oedipal narrative — to allow nothing to finally exceed its power. What we finally end up with is only a more refined version of manipulation theory in which the art of the bourgeoisie is seen ultimately to reproduce, without contradiction, the structures of capitalism by providing the necessary inscription of human subjects into those structures. Thus Bellour, for example, ties Oedipalization historically to property relations and the concept of individuality brought by the French Revolution.[10] To follow the path of the Oedipal trajectory is to grow up into an adult of the bourgeoisie, domesticated, married, fictively complete.

And yet, what a number of critics who question this psychoanalytical model have found in their work on the Hollywood film is the contradiction of the trajectory by any number of processes which put to the lie any simple equation of narrative and domestication. For example, recent work on contradictions in the musical and the melodrama have found them to be particularly open areas of investigation. Thus, Robin Wood finds *Meet Me in St. Louis* to be a Gothic musical in which the drive toward family, toward growth into family roles, finds itself countered by another force, an opposing style, which borrows its iconography from the Horror film;[11] where a domesticating criticism might understand *Meet Me in St. Louis* as "celebratory film," in which the girls move beyond obedience to the father in order to become wives with father-figures, Wood suggests that the film "can more convincingly be read as a relentless study of the psychopathology of the Family" (p. 9). Similarly, the melodrama represents a troubling of the Family Romance, a refusal of characters to follow a domestic trajectory. The melodrama is not simply the journey into manhood redone, but a *play* on the very logic of heroism, of growth into maturity. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith suggests that, "in the American movie the active hero becomes protagonist of the Western, the passive or impotent hero or heroine becomes protagonist of what has come to be known as melodrama.... (The melodrama) often features women as protagonists, and where the central figure is a man there is regularly an impairment of his masculinity.... (The melodrama) cannot operate in the simple terms of the fantasy affirmation of the masculine and disavowal of the feminine."[12] While Nowell-Smith's either/or which puts the Western into the position of "simple fantasy" ignores how the Western may also be a site of the return of the repressed, his discussion does pinpoint how one genre adopts an ex-centric position in relation to the model of the Oedipal trajectory. This is not yet to make a claim about any potential subversive power of the musical or the melodrama but merely to suggest that one must search for the force of these genres, whatever that force may be, in a realm other than that of a simple domestication, a simple binding.

The melodrama and the musical exceed the Oedipal model in part through the force of style. What at first seems merely expressionist in the melodrama — for example, the juke-box garishness of the town in *Some Came Running* as a sign of inner turmoil — is finally not so much expression as enactment; content becomes form. Nowell-Smith's comparison of melodrama to Freud's notion of conversion-hysteria suggests this: "The laying out of problems 'realistically' always allows for the generating of an excess which cannot be accommodated.... The undischarged emotion which cannot be accommodated within the action, subordinated as it is to the demands of family / lineage / heritage, is traditionally expressed in the music and, in the case of film, in certain elements of the mise-en-scène. That is to say, music and mise-en-scène do not just heighten the emotionality of an element: to some extent they substitute for it"(p. 117).

In Minnelli musicals, there is a similar conversion of narrative events into spectacle events. Where a plot may begin with a woman's entrance into domesticity — as in *The Pirate* where Manuela is betrothed to the bourgeois mayor of the town — the form takes off and becomes a force running counter to domestication. In *The Pirate,* Serafin's way with spectacle is a repetition of the film's own spectacle in which gliding cameras, radiant techni-colors, the texture of songs, all have the force of an argument for a style and way of life, for life as style and as art. To be sure, *The Pirate* ends with a man and a woman in each other's arms though significantly, not as lovers, but as performers, as clowns. Dressed in costume and looking out at us, their stage the frame of the film, they exhort us to "Be a clown, be a clown," to somehow partake of spectacle. This exhortation is no less ideological than the force of domesticity but it works in another direction to acknowledge the claims of a pleasure principle against a performance principle. The musical substitutes the sociality of *homo ludens* for that of *homo faber.* The musical number, as Jane Feuer argues, is primarily a folk art form, calling for involvement in the aura of spectacle in an age dominated by the utilitarian loss of aura.[13]

Consequently, and I mean this in no way as a negative remark, the musical is an infantile art form, concentrating on and reveling in and enacting the desire to refuse to become adult, for performers to refuse to turn into mommies and daddies, to refuse to punch into the time-clock work of calculation and reason. If the Oedipal trajectory insists on the need to go beyond primary attachments, to cast off incest for the sake of "respectability," the musical is a world which refuses this trajectory (even when its story doesn't). There is something profoundly American about the American musical; its spectacle is the populist assertion of the beauty and strength and vitality of everyday people against the repressive structures of all Father figures. Indeed, the two explicit references in *The Bandwagon* to America signal this. The first occurs in the song, "That's Entertainment," where one line suddenly proclaims, "Hip, hip, hooray, the American way." This is Jeffrey Cordova's America, a place of power lorded over by Father figures. Against this, Tony will herald a different sense of America; rejecting Cordova's call for him to become "Tony Hunter, 1953," Tony says, "I declare my independence — Tony Hunter, 1776." The heroes of American cinema are always declaring their independence, killing all fathers to move into a “free” world where everyone is always young.[14]

At the same time, there is something fundamentally socially perverse about this desire to not grow up, to remain in the world of spectacle. In *Love and Death in the American Novel,* Leslie Fiedler discusses Gothic literature as a perverse literature in terms which apply also to the musical.[15] For Fiedler, Gothic literature ties together suffering artist and suffering hero through their common inability to support, to accede to, the sentimentality, the bourgeois domestic rites, of the romantic novel. Against any possibility of union in marriage, the Gothic hero recoils into positions of suffering (an inward retreat) or lusting (an outward attack), a menacing assertion of power which tries to take what it cannot bear to ask for.

In *The Bandwagon,* Tony Hunter also refuses sentiment and romance. His power, as with the theatricality of the Gothic hero, lies in his ability to show off himself, to convince through the sheer bravura of performance. The structure of *The Bandwagon* may not share the fantasmatics of the Oedipal trajectory which imagines manhood to be a growth into social responsibility. But it is no less fantasmatic in its emphasis on a trajectory of spectacle, on its faith in spectacle as a contagious force which draws everyone into its power. Tony Hunter argues early in the film that he is no more than "Mrs. Hunter's little boy, Tony," and the fantasy of the film is to show how much little boys can accomplish.

Pre-Oedipal or anti-Oedipal, the fantasy of *The Bandwagon* is nonetheless one involved in sexual politics. Its desire is to show the potency of little boys, to suggest that show and play are powerful masculine forces. Part of the historical function of the American musical is to put the lie to certain stereotypes of sexual difference, and suggest that art, more specifically the art of dance, is not the exclusive realm of a female principle. The dancing of Astaire or Kelly is an attempt to suggest that men can devote their time to dance and still be men. In *The Bandwagon,* this conquest of the world of dance receives a specific represenation in the conflict of ballet and soft-shoe: ballet is both the art of refinement — a high art — but also an art stereotypically belonging to women. Tony Hunter finds the ballet form repressive — and the film emphasizes this repressiveness in a shot that shows Hunter awkwardly emoting while balletic dancers sweep past him. The ballet form requires Tony to change. (Encouraging Tony to be in the modern version of Faust, Jeffrey Cordova exhorts Hunter to grow up, to become "better than you ever were.") To realize his fantasy, Tony must reject the balletic world and stay the child he has always been. Gabriel Gerard (Cyd Charisse) is initially the symbol of all that Tony fears; by putting on a show, his show, Tony captures Gerard, tames her difference.

Rosalind Coward provides a succinct definition of the Oedipal trajectory as a narrative of renunciation: "For the boy, the Oedipus complex is a constant and *growing* factor. He is sensually bound up with the mother and his active phallic sexuality leads to fantasies of sexual intercourse or 'marriage' with the mother. Only the threat of castration brought by rivalry against the child's sensual involvement with the mother, coinciding with the child's realization of anatomical difference, forces the child to renounce the mother.... It is castration which is structural of desire."[16] In *The Bandwagon,* Tony renounces renunciation (literally, since much of the film chronicles how he has made a wrong-turn by accepting to act in Jeffrey's play of "stature") to learn the fundamental lesson of the infantile fantasy: that it is best to be what you've always been — a little kid.

Dennis Giles, in an article which sets out to Oedipalize *The Bandwagon,* argues that the film chronicles a boy's successful growth into the responsibilities of adulthood.[17] Tony starts in infantile dread: "He (Tony) fears leaving the comforts of the original unity and, once out of the womb state, seeks to return to the former existence in which he lay immobile.... The Astaire of *The Bandwagon* dreads the Other world of the show and the new identity it promises" (p. 16). As Giles reads the film, Tony, however, gains the help of a maestro — a figure Giles compares to Vladimir Propp's notion of the donor and to Dante's Virgil — in the form of Gabriel Gerard. The maestro is a guide who leads the terrified hero to a place of peacefulness. In Giles' description of the film's narrative, "At this crisis (of child faced with the Otherness of experience), the Astaire character is taken in hand by Cyd Charisse as the ballet star, Gaby" (p. 15). Thus, for Giles, Tony's declaration that he is a little boy is something he learns to renounce, by growing up and beyond it, by learning that the world out there is nothing to be afraid of.

Significantly though, Giles does not quote the whole of Hunter's declaration: "I am Mrs. Hunter's little boy, Tony — song-and-dance man." The addition matters for it links childhood with the job of performer. To be Mrs. Hunter's little boy is to be a song-and-dance man; it is to have the best of two possible worlds. When Tony tries to play a modern-day Faust with the aid of Gabriel, he does emerge into the world of Otherness as Giles suggests, but ultimately, he discovers the self-alienation, the denials, that run through that world, and he rejects this growth, this call to ostensible stature and maturity, as a betrayal of his original identity. He leaves the false show, inappropriate to his needs, and puts on the show the Martins had originally written for him — the show that he initially recognized as perfect for him.

Interestingly, Giles' Oedipal argument contains counter-arguments that make the case for Tony's rejection of any call to adulthood. Giles pictures the security of maternal warmth and of childhood as a stasis which Tony seeks to return to. Earlier in his article, though, Giles describes the show — the very activity he sees as a challenge to childhood as also a stasis. Noting that Gaby's final declaration ("The show's a hit... as far as I'm concerned, it could run forever") presents the notion of a "permanent show" as a solution to all problems, Giles goes on to argue that "the permanent show is indeed a cure for the previous drama — its conflict, its agon(y) since the showing arrests the flow of time... the show bears a resemblance to the state before birth, echoing its timelessness, its ultimate unity of lover and beloved" (p. 14). This indeed is the sense of the film — show as a solution to drama. But the drama is not that of an adolescent growing up but of a middle-aged man becoming young again, becoming his past.

If there is a development in Tony's character, it is a development in reverse. He changes from the aged Tony Hunter, has-been, into the graceful Fred Astaire whose every dance movement belies the passage of time. We watch Tony become not the *artiste* everyone wants him to be, but the song-and-dance man he once was. From the greyness and bleak despair of the opening to the ending in which Tony proves his energy, the film enacts the triumph of spectacle as the art of vitality, of life.

The opening of the film presents Tony in a fallen state, and his quest for stature can only lead him to fall further. In the opening images, Tony is absent from the film, and therefore, he literally has no power, no chance to make a spectacle of himself. The first scene shows an unsuccessful auction of his hat and cane, his show trademarks. The next scene shows Tony hidden as two men lament his fall and contrast his failure to the success of Ava Gardner. At this point, Tony can only appear as an advertising image in a magazine which one of the men is looking at; this is a powerless Tony, reduced to the role of spokesperson in/for someone else's spectacle. When Tony finally does appear, it is only to acknowledge and second the laments of the two men. Coming off the train, he meets Ava Gardner playing Ava Gardner. The meeting confirms Tony's fall, not only because, on a narrative level, the reporters he thought had come to see him have actually come to greet Gardner, but also because it imagistically concretizes the contrast between Gardner and Hunter that the two men in the train established. Gardner stands out here because we are in the presence of the actress herself; we are in the grip of the cameo as privileged moment. Gardner is Gardner, not just a role, while Tony is as of yet an incomplete Fred Astaire. He must do what we expect Fred Astaire to do to redeem himself, to grow into his character: he must dance and sing.[18]

The song that follows — "I'm by myself alone" — is a subdued one and only partially satisfying to our demand for Fred Astaire to perform. Even the magazine rack upstages him. It is not until the next number that Hunter lets go, becomes Fred Astaire, becomes the spectacle that we have gone to the movies to see. This dance occurs at the height of Hunter's immersion in the Otherness of social experience. Friendless and in the midst of Times Square, he looks at the gaudy arcades, hot-dog stands, amusement centers that were once the locations of Broadway in his youth, and he gives evidence of his sense of alienation in this world of quotidian strangeness. His reaction is to aestheticize this world, to take over its spectacle by a conquering spectacle of his own. (Significantly, his reaction is doubled by the music, by the film itself, which moves from the motivated hurdy-gurdy sound of the arcade to the melody that Astaire will sing.) When he trips over the shoe-shiner, Astaire / Hunter's spectacle-power is concretized. Not only does he gain an audience but he meets someone he can impute his own anxieties to, project them onto. He sings about his problems in the second-person, making the solutions to his own dilemma an imperative for his listener ("when *you* feel as low as the bottom of a well and can't get out of the mood, do something to pick *yourself* up and change *your* attitude"). By projecting his fears onto another person, Hunter gains in strength and power. While the shoe-shiner enters into the dance, first as dancing shoe-shiner but then finally as dancing equal, Hunter ultimately asserts his own difference, his special and superior qualities, when his last dance motion — paying the shiner — restores to the spectacle an economic relation of boss and worker. The scene establishes Hunter's power, his capability, which is linked to his identity as song-and-dance man. As Fred Astaire, he is a successful show.

The scene dissolves immediately to a poster which heralds Jeffrey Cordova's production (at every level of control) of "Oedipus." The dissolve signals a central conflict of the film. We move from a spectacle controlled by others. Tony, who had initially not recognized the name Cordova, will come all too quickly to learn who Cordova is. Literally, Cordova is the symbol of the Oedipal trajectory, the force of that which Tony must accede to if he is to mature. Cordova is the powerful Father (he calls Tony and the Martins "kids" even though Tony, no doubt, is his age). He is the Law who demands that Tony renounce rivalry and immaturity, and grow up castrated into a position of respectability. Jeffrey is omnipotence; for the Martins, for example, he is the guy who "can do anything" or who exerts, in Lily's words, a "hypnotic control." He possesses a kind of magic as his assistant, Hal, learns when Jeffrey performs the impossible and signs Gabriel Gerard for the female lead of his play ("Next time," Hal tells a newspaper's drama desk, "If I tell you Mr. Cordova is casting Tallulah as little Eva, believe me"). Jeff's power also involves a claim to the control of spectacle. Where Tony establishes himself in "The Shine on Your Shoes" number as a performer, a doer, an actor literally, Jeff turns him into a spectator or an ineffectual participant in the spectacle of others (for example, he sends Tony to watch Gabriel Gerard perform her ballet, a sight that will fill Tony with dread and doubt).

Most significant in this respect is Jeff's manipulation of Tony in the "That's Entertainment" number. Jeff sits Tony down in an armchair, and performs to him. The song itself reduces contradictions into aesthetic form and serves as a kind of contagion in its sweeping discussion of the plots that are entertaining. This contagion catches up with Tony who joins in with the admission that "it could be Oedipus Rex" — that is, in other words, that the Otherness of Jeffrey's production is ultimately not foreign to the world of entertainment. With this admission, Tony enters into an Oedipal world, a world in which he will be blocked from the realization of his desires by a stronger figure. Jeff becomes the creator of Tony's reality (Jeff announces to his cast that the theatre they are rehearsing in will become "our sun, our moon, our stars") and of Tony's language (Jeff changes Tony's lines, tells Tony how to act).

Jeffrey functions as an all-powerful force who becomes the very source of Tony's world. More than that, Jeffrey becomes the virtual creator of all the characters who now appear in the film and who, as Jeffrey's surrogates, extend his power, his destruction of Tony's aura. For example, Paul Byrd, the choreographer that Jeff hires for the show so that he can get Paul's girlfriend, Gaby, is an echo of Jeffrey, a conspirator in the attempt to contain Tony, to capture him up in the structures of respectability. Paul first seems to be on the side of youth — the world of spectacle as good show; good, clean fun — and when he first hears that Jeffrey plans to do a musical, he is disdainful. But when he learns that the story is to be a modern-day version of Faust, his interest emerges. In the film's symbolic structure, Paul — like Jeffrey — is a sign of high culture, of the denials of both American populism and the American success story of individualism.

The first part of *The Bandwagon* divides, then, into two parts for Tony: a "before meeting Jeffrey Cordova" and an "after meeting Cordova." The poster of "Oedipus" signals the division, and until Tony makes his declaration of independence, everything takes place under Jeffrey's control. Yet not quite everything. Outside of any narrative contribution, certain moments, certain scenes, act as a kind of return of the repressed to show the contradictions of Jeffrey's project. After Jeffrey's initial talk to his cast, the film goes into a long sequence of moments of rehearsal. The sequence, shot according to a montage common for this moment in back-stage musicals, once again shows the triumph of spectacle over story as dance and anecdotal joke imagery (for example, the technician's attempts to produce a cloud of smoke) preempt any sense that what we are seeing is just a rehearsal of a modern "Faust." The montage, frenetic in its cutting, but also representing moments of hustle and bustle in the rehearsals, imparts a vitality to the film that Jeff's project is lacking. One joke in the montage, trivial though it may ultimately be, crystalizes this. Les Martin asks Paul to audition a buxom, sultry blonde who, in response, dances in a virtually burlesque fashion, as Les watches in delight. Paul, ever the high artist, rejects her and picks, in the film's stereotypes, a less showy, more artistic woman. Even in this throwaway scene, the two world-views of the film collide: Paul's, with its devotion to utility and reason (the right woman for the right part) and to "serious" art; and Lester's (like Tony's), with its playfulness, its deferment of reality for the sake of pleasure.

Part of the danger to Tony of Jeffrey's power is that it is virtually unbridled. It creates effects of repression far beyond Jeff's original intentions. Jeffrey's version of *The Bandwagon* is the central figure of this, but it also shows up in the way in which Tony comes to find Jeffrey's threat projected onto other characters *and intensified in the process.* Paul, for example, is a stiffer version of Jeffrey; he may be young but we never see him doing the vaudeville routines that Jeff performs to attract Tony into the Faust production. (This is one reason why the film keeps Jeffrey, after Tony takes over, but gets rid of Paul. Paul is unbendingly conventional, restrictive and restricted; Jeffrey, in contrast, finally shows humility and becomes part of Tony's show.)

Central to this projection of Jeffrey's power is the figure of Gabriel Gerard. She is virtually called into being by Jeffrey's needs, out of an enumeration that has the force of genesis. "We need somebody with fire, charm, grace, beauty, and Gabriel Gerard," is the way Jeffrey puts it; Gabriel is not woman for herself, but woman as thing-for-others, alienated through the language of the Father, literally defined by that language.

While film theory's analysis of the male look in film has tended to understand that look as a source of male control, a fetishistic fixing of the woman in place, Tony's look at Gabriel is one that fixes him, a look that calls his strength into question. In a shot/reaction shot sequence which alternates Tony looking with Gabriel performing, Tony first deciares that "she's fabulous, sensation — the loveliest thing I've ever seen" and then wonders "she's a little tall, isn't she?" This first minor doubt grows into a major anxiety even though the Martins do their best to allay Tony's fears. For Tony, Gabriel is threat in all its purity, all its estranging intensity. She is estranging in that she is Jeffrey's creation and Paul's possession; she is outside Tony's influence, attracted to his spectacle only when she is distant from it (she admits that she's seen his films but at museum retrospectives). That Tony has no hold over Gaby shows forth in her second appearance in the film which has a privileged status since Tony is not present in the scene. We learn that Tony cannot — that Gaby is ruled by Paul, that she is part of a nexus of possession (Paul, as he says, knows "this girl," knows how to make her operate — early in the scene Paul ends an argument by telling Gaby "your nose is shiny," an observation which sends her off to the powder room. Paul knows Gaby well enough to control her through her stereotypical female vanity.) Tony will learn the way of the world all too quickly; Gabriel's references to his real age cut him, emasculate him.

Gabriel represents for Tony what Sartre calls the *practico-inert,* the resistance of the social world to our projects, a resistance which shows up as the blunt there-ness, the invincible object-hood of things.[19] A metonymic expansion of Jeffrey's original and originary power, Gabriel is a threat (in the film's terms) as the pure Other, the different, the not-for-Tony. But she is also the threat of "woman," of sexuality (she is not an innocent but has a boyfriend), of adulthood.[20]

In the American Gothic, as Fiedler suggests, the solution for the male is retreat, a recoil from the woman, from women, into an a-social relationship that is a scandal to social respectability:

"the typical male protagonist of our fiction has been a man on the run, harried into the forest and out to sea, down the river or into combat — anywhere to avoid 'civilization,' which is to say, the confrontation of a man and a woman which leads to the fall to sex, marriage, and responsibility" (p. 26). But the flip-side of recoil is attack, the covering up of fear through self-deceiving swagger (it seems not accidental that some of the last pages of *Love and Death in the American Novel* deal with tough-guy writers like Hammett, Chandler and Spillane as a new wave of the Gothic). In much *Film Noir,* for example, the woman's danger is intensified by film style (the shadow-filled mise-en-scène; the twists of a plot made chaotic by the machinations of a woman's treachery) all the better to justify the hero's (and the film's) disposal of her. Again this is part of the infantile perversity of a genre opposing the impositions of "respectable" adult sexuality. Against accession to the law of the Father, the films engage in a phantasmatic restructuring of options open to the male.

Tony's option, the film's option, is precisely that of swagger, of swagger as spectacle, of dance as demonstration. Tony rebels, walks off stage, and the film rebels, shifting from the stage world that had dominated the previous minutes of the film to now show us spaces other than the enclosed reality that Jeffrey had built for his cast. We are now in the presence of a new structuring of reality. Following Jean Laplanche's and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis' definition of the Freudian phantasm as an "imaginary scenario in which the subject is present and which figures, in a fashion more or less deformed by defensive processes, the accomplishments of a desire and, ultimately, an unconscious desire,"[21] I would argue that *The Bandwagon* is here explicitly a phantasm. The film functions precisely as a figuration of desire. It shows a fantasmatic understanding of social reality as something that you can simply walk out on; of work — after all, Tony is undoubtedly an employee — as something that you can just leave when its demands become too great. More than that, it ultimately figures reality as something that one can remake, that finally *needs* a strong hero to remold it (i.e. the film finally casts the phantasm's subject, Tony, into the role of saviour who restores order to a chaotic world). *The Bandwagon* shows the reality that had scared Tony, the reality that Jeff had promised to control, falling apart, breaking at the seams. The Oedipal drive becomes a farce; it is built on contradictions it cannot wish away. It must give way. The power of a Father like Jeffrey is ultimately self-defeating because it is ultimately self-creating, self-delegating in its power; as omnipotence, it has no higher reality it can derive its energy, its legitimation, from. An *ex nihilo* power, the force of Oedipus, as Freud himself admitted in *Moses and Monotheism,* is an arbitrary force: "...in the case of the victory of patriarchy, we cannot point to the authority which lays down the standard which is to be regarded as higher. It cannot in this case be the father since he is only elevated into being the authority by the advance itself."

The Bandwagon shows Jeff's world literally cracking apart around him. The center does not hold. While early scenes had emphasized Jeff's prowess as a director (the guy who can do anything), we don't witness his complete failure and significantly, we witness this failure after Tony's outburst. All the early rehearsal scenes had shown Jeff in directorial control; now he shows himself to be incompetent in his every action as if in reaction to Tony's assertion of power. With the overdetermination that Freud found centrai to the mise-en-scène of the phantasm, *The Bandwagon* shows Jeff's production to be a failure not just because it is a modern-day production of Faust, which would have been a sufficient charge against it, but also because it is a bad modern-day production of Faust. Not merely are its sets overblown; they fall apart, break down. Nothing earlier in the film had suggested that Jeff could fail to produce his play, but just simply that he shouldn't produce it. But now, a fantasmatic structure necessitates that Jeffrey fail in every possible way, that everything conspire to call Tony into play.

If Gaby is a metonymy for all that is wrong in the world of the Other, then she must become the stake, the pivot, in the restructuring of reality by the film phantasm. When Tony storms off the stage and thereby begins the humbling of the Father, Gaby comes to Tony's apartment to apologize. While she is doing so at Paul's command, her action goes beyond what Paul requires of her, and she is suddenly free from the repressive structure that had held her to Paul's and Jeffrey's world. She changes camps in one of those conversion scenes so important in the Hollywood spectacle — a conversion without reason, without motivation, a conversion that is abrupt but intense. What might seem the limitation of the Hollywood film in its elision of the forces that drive people to act; what might seem the aesthetic deficiency of an art devoted at all costs to having boy get girl, no matter by what contrivance even when the girl can't stand the boy — all this is actually the talent of a certain kind of cinema: its power not to represent "reality" but to engage in a phantasmatic and ideological redefinition of "reality" which is coherent and insistently optimistic about its transformative powers.

In Tony's apartment, Gaby is, in one moment, the secure woman of high art and poise, noticing Tony's paintings and knowing immediately that one is an early Degas, and then, in the next moment, she is all insecurity, crying her heart out, confessing that all along she has been nervous and afraid. As with the shoe-shiner, Gaby here allows Tony to lose his anxiety by seeing it in, projecting it onto, others. As her crying becomes more and more hysterical, Tony becomes more and more controlling, tossing off one-liners at Gaby's expense ("I would say that you're more plain than ugly"). For no reason, but the phantasmatic needs of Tony and of the film, Gaby has retreated from her strong position as woman of power to a position of stereotypical weakness: woman as cryer, woman as emotional, woman in need of a man to help her out (looking for something to wipe her eyes, Gaby fumbles with a scarf tied to her bag but Tony gallantly sweeps out a hankerchief). Against Dennis Giles' argument that Gaby is the maestro leading Tony on to a new identity, it is Tony who becomes the maestro pulling Gaby away from the inferior world of classical ballet to a world Tony has always known, the world that is ultimately right for Gaby too (and for Cyd Charisse whose best dancing occurs when she breaks from the classical ballet mode). Her first number in Tony's "bandwagon" production heralds the changes in Gaby and in the world of spectacle that Tony has made her join. Against Jeff's declaration that the theatre of his rehearsals would be the cast's "sun," Gaby's song heralds "a new sun in a new sky." Popular spectacle is re-birth, an infusion of new life (the costuming amplifies this as Gaby's radiant gold outfit virtually explodes onto the screen and suggests her new energy).

Film scholars have long noted the centrality of artist-figures in Minnelli's *oeuvre.*[22] The true artist, as the Minnelli film often pictures him, is a figure of bursting talent, sheer virtuosity, who simply has to look inside himself to discover artistic power. As a phantasm, this notion of the artist takes on the qualities of magic. Against those figures which the film associates with a brute and vulgar reality, the artist creates his own reality, finds that reality is pliant when one approaches it fantasmatically. Where much of the film details the arduousness of Jeff's rehearsals, all Tony has to do is announce his desire to put on the real "Bandwagon" play and, after one quick shot of a train rushing to a town on the play's tour, the show is suddenly on. All sense of work is banished; the play simply bursts into being. The camera sweeps in and we are inside spectacle. Quotidian necessity has vanished.

If there's a populism in *The Bandwagon* — in its sense of people discovering a community in the world of spectacle against the world of stature and pomp — this image of the artist as re maker of the world also establishes the film as the triumph of individualism (significantly, when Tony comes into power, he refers to his cast as "kids," just as Jeffrey had done). "Dancing in the Dark," the dance number where Tony and Gaby truly dance together for the first time concretizes this individualism, this sense of the artist as virtuoso, and signals its elitism. (This is a central contradiction in art working under the sign of the American dream: it affirms the powers of the people, the need to be just one of the boys, but also calls for Horatio Algers who become celebrities by standing above the world. It is not for nothing that in *Rio Bravo* John Chance (John Wayne) doesn't join in the communal sing-song.) Tony initiates the process of individualism with a speech to Gaby which celebrates the need to throw off the bonds of authority, to realize that power lies in "you and I": "No one consulted us. We're the only ones that matter in this whole thing, not those geniuses out there telling us what to do." The possibility of their own spectacle thus called up, Gaby and Tony head off for the park in a carriage and their journey becomes a discovery of a world that Jeff's art had closed off to them. They notice the stars, nature, the passers-by ("Do you know what those are on those benches? People... happy people"). The mythology here is that of a passage from the artificiality of culture to the innocent reality of Nature. (Significantly, though, the scenes in the park are all shot in the studio. As in *An American in Paris* which pretends to show a real Paris but ends with the title, "The End. Completely filmed in Hollywood, USA," what *The Bandwagon* celebrates is not the conversion of culture and nature alike by Hollywood spectacle, a reality of unreality, a form which claims to be beyond the merely cultural or the merely natural.)

Disembarking from the carriage, Gaby and Tony stroll through the park and come upon dancers on a dance floor. All the conventions of narrative lead us to expect that Gaby and Tony will join the dance and make their spectacle there. But, significantly, they pass through the crowd of dancers and it is not until they are alone that they begin to dance. The world of performance and spectacle rejects the elitist pretensions of high art but it also rejects the coming of the masses, the threat of the crowd as grey anonymity. (Performances in Minnelli films tend to avoid large cast numbers. Eschewing the multiplicity of bodies in the dances of a Busby

Berkeley, the Minnelli number emphasizes the way talent stands out, as figure from ground.)

In terms of this triumph of individualist artistry, it seems to me not accidental that the supreme spectacle of the film, its big finale, is a tough-guy detective story. The fictional detective is precisely a kind of artist, specifically a story-teller who comes upon an incomprehensible reality and imprints a plot upon it, the narrative, in Robert Champigny's terms, of "what will have happened."[23] For example, in Hammett, the Continental Op is literally a maker of fictions as he arbitrarily tries out a way of framing the world and then steps back to observe his social canvas. *The Bandwagon's* "Girl Hunt" sequence borrows from the detective tradition and shows Astaire/Hunter as Rod Riley, a man who, like all detectives, converts ignorance into knowledge and power through the force of an explanatory model. Riley is an ultimate shaper of reality, putting everything into its categorical place: the guilty and the innocent, the dead and the alive, the blonde and the brunette. With its opening declaration, "the city's a lonely place at night" echoing the anomie of the city that Tony Hunter had felt in the beginning of the film, the "Girl Hunt" sequence shows a Hunter who is safe in the city because this is a city of his own creation, a city within a play within a film.

The "Girl Hunt" sequence shows film technique asserting its virtuosity (to such an extent that we see angles and camera movements that make no sense for what is supposedly a stage production). This aestheticization of reality is the project of spectacle, and Tony's power is a doubling of the power of the film itself. Tony, by becoming director of a play, and of a woman, gets the chance to prove himself by the conversion of resistant matter into aesthetic form. If Tony develops in the film, his development is only a realization of a quality he had all along. A throwaway line in the beginning of the film suggests Tony's initial power and stands as a marker to indicate how far his power will grow. One of the two men on the train refers to the early force of Tony's spectacle by describing Tony's captivating influence on the man's wife ("He nearly broke up our home"). Tony's influence is a virile one, but initially a virility of distance, the virility of a star who exerts power over audiences by remote control. When Gaby comes into the film with her choreographer/boyfriend, Tony can realize his home-breaking talents at close range. It is important that Paul be a choreographer; for Tony, to take over direction of a play is also to take over direction of a woman. Where Tony and the Martins had joked in an early scene about his prowess, acknowledging it but seeing it only as a game, an act (when Lily says, "Hey, mister, can I have your autograph?" Tony gallantly but playfully sweeps her up in his arms), Tony's interaction with Gaby — the way she fantasmatically converts to his cause — allows him an intervention, a directness of power, that early scenes had only hinted at.

But direct and powerful though this intervention may be, it is no less aesthetic, an interposing of roles of theatricality between self and the world. Revealingly, this film, in a genre often dismissed as mushy sentimentality, about two people — a man and a woman — coming together, never shows a scene of strong love between these two characters. (Gaby and Tony do kiss at the very end, but the kiss is sandwiched between two moments of aestheticization — Gaby's final speech and the end-number.) Instead of romance, we get a mediation of romantic interaction through a constant posing and playing in which characters seem to be implying something but never getting around to explicitly saying it. For better or for worse, the effective representation of heterosexual relationships seems to pose a difficulty for Hollywood art as American art. We are endlessly in the world of domestic melodrama where sexuality is symbolically stunted or in the world of the musical where people don't talk to each other, but where they and the films couch their interactions in the form of song-and-dance — distanced forms in which any reality of the self is submerged by a kind of presentation, a show, of the *surfaces* of the self. The seemingly great romances of Hollywood cinema actually show romance displaced — into sham, into game (for example, the double-entendres of *To Have and Have Not* where the characters talk about sex in terms of a horse race and never get down to business); into the guise of toughness or cleverness or cool (what's attractive about Slim in *To Have and Have Not* is precisely the allure of her banter, her ability to toss off one-liners ("Maybe just whistle") as well as Steve); a displacement into role-playing (the lead characters of *To Have and Have Not* are always Steve and Slim to each other even though these are not their real names).

This is the Gothic sense of American art — life pictured finally as an agony in which the self can interact with the world but only through an alienation, what Goffman calls a "frame." Tony Hunter does get a privileged scene in which he tells Les how much he's in love with this girl (and the phrasing "this girl," identical to the way Paul refers to Gaby, suggests the distance, the reification, in the heart of love). But the scene's power is that of a confessionnal, a private moment whose force does not extend into the public sphere. When Gaby and Tony are together, they do not love, they aestheticize. "Dancing in the Park" shows them coming together in agreement for the first time, but it is an agreement to be a spectacle, to wordlessly show off the talent of the body in performance.

Two scenes, which are intercut with the spectacle of Tony's "Bandwagon" production, show Tony and Gaby together, but again, love can only remain unspoken, the banished subtext that characters try to pronounce but finally remain silent about. The first scene shows Tony addressing Gabriel on the train as they return to New York for the premiere of "The Bandwagon." This scene, just before Tony tells Lester about his love, shows Tony displacing the admission of love into a game. With obvious theatricality, he turns the interaction into a little skit: "Say, who's the pretty girl? This couldn't be the mousy little Miss Gerard. Why, you've been with the firm for years... Say, you're beautiful!" When he knocks over Gaby's writing pad and realizes that she's writing to Paul, a reality stronger than Tony's little game seems to assert itself, and Tony recoils by sending Gaby off. "You must be tired," Tony tells her and, like Paul's "Your nose is shiny," an observation takes on the force of a command. Gaby absents herself.

When Gaby and Tony next meet, their encounter takes place in the doorway to the theatre as they prepare for the opening night of "The Bandwagon." The scene is an intimate one — only the third time that Gaby and Tony have been alone in the film — but the intimacy is a forced one in which love is undeclared, a structuring absence, the one thing that cannot be mentioned.

> Tony: I just want to say that no matter what happens tonight, it's been... *(His voice trails off)*
>
> Gaby: I know, Tony. It's been that for me, too.
>
> Tony: I've been wanting to ask you something... what I wanted to ask... Perhaps I better not.
>
> Gaby: I wish you wouldn't.

Gaby's end-of-film declaration is a culmination, a symbolic condensation, in which sexuality is displaced by spectacle. Tony emerges from his dressing room to find the whole cast assembled to throw a party for him. Gaby steps forward and concretizes their relationship in a speech that turns love into a "permanent show." As she speaks, the camera cuts closer and closer to her face, giving her speech all the power of a final consecration:

> The show's a hit but no matter what happened, we feel it was wonderful knowing you, working with you. Maybe some of us didn't see eye to eye with you at the beginning. Maybe we thought we wouldn't work out together but we have *(cut to a closer shot).* Yes, there were obstacles between us but we've kissed them goodbye. We've come to love you, Tony. We belong together. The show's going to run a long time; as far as I'm concerned, it's going to run forever.

Life turned into long-running show, reality turned into aesthetic production, love turned into spectacle — this is the final phantasm of *The Bandwagon.* Tony and Gaby do kiss for a moment but then, "May we say something?" ask Jeffrey and the Martins and we are launched into a finale of "That's Entertainment." Oedipus has been left behind with a world of responsibility, a world where people face the social Other. As Dennis Giles notes, "the show not only abolishes distance but time" (p. 14). The permanent show is the show of spectacle as Imaginary form, recoiling from the world to endlessly insist on the transcendental qualities of art as infantile fixation, as the final controller of sexuality and human relationship.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Victor Shkovsky, "Art as Technique," *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays,* trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 3-24.
2. Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," *Screen,* 17, No. 3 (Autumn 1976), pp. 68-112.
3. Alan Caspar, *Vincente Minnelli and the Film Musical* (Cranbury, N.J.: A.S. Barnes and Co., Inc., 1977), 133-4.
4. "Alternation, Segmentation, Hypnosis: an Interview with Raymond Bellour by Janet Bergstrom," *Camera Obscura,* No. 3-4 (1979), 88.
5. For a moment of hesitation in Bellour, see ibid., p. 75: "... does the use of binary oppositions bring about an unjustified reduction of the reality of the object in favor of its structure and its meaning, at the expense of its multiple phenomenality...?"
6. On Bellour's debt to Barthes and Lévi-Strauss, see ibid., pp. 72-4.
7. Raymond Bellour, "Le blocage symbolique," *Communications,* 23 (1975), 235 (my translation).
8. Stephen Heath, "The Question Oshima," *Ophuls,* ed. Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 1978),76.
9. Jacquelinne Rose, "Writing as Auto-Visualisation: Notes on a Scenario and Film of *Peter Pan,"* *Screen,* 16, No. 3 (Autumn 1975), 31.
10. Raymond Bellour, "Un jour, la castration," *L'Arc,* No. 71 (1978), pp. 9.23.
11. Robin Wood, "The American Family Comedy: From *Meet Me in St. Louis* to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre," Wide Angle,* 3, No. 2 (1979), pp. 5-11.
12. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "Minnelli and Melodrama," *Screen,* 18, No. 2 (Summer 1977), 115-6.
13. Jane Feuer, "Hollywood Musicals: Mass Art as Folk Art," *Jump Cut,* No. 23 (Oct. 1980), pp. 23-5.
14. For the classic study of myths of independence, re-birth and youth in American culture, see R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).
15. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel,* rev. ed. (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1966).
16. Rosalind Coward, "On the Universality of the Oedipus Complex: debates on sexual divisions on psychoanalysis and anthropology," *Critique of Anthropology,* 15, No. 4 (Spring 1980), 11.
17. Dennis Giles, "Show-Making," *Movie,* No. 24 (Spring 1977), pp. 14-25.
18. A general discussion of the relations between character and performer in Minnelli films can be found in Ed Lowry, *Art and Artifice in Six Musicals Directed by Vincente Minnelli,* unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1977.
19. Jean-Paul, Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, 1: Theory of Practical Ensembles,* trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: New Left Books, 1976).
20. Self-critically, I must admit that it is only within a reading that focuses on the narrative as *Tony's narrative* that we can read Gaby simply as a stake and not as a character in herself. If we are to talk of desire as a structuring of enunciation, we must also deal with woman's desire. Bellour notes this in his interview when he wonders if it isn't a critic's maleness and not just patterns in the film that lead to the critic's concentration on *male* trajectories in film: "If I've wanted to go to the furthest possible point in understanding the power and subtlety of this textual pressure, it's quite simply because I myself am caught in it. It was as the subject whose desire is the prisoner of this machinery that I tried to demonstrate its functioning. In this sense the desire to analyze cannot help but manifest a certain ambiguity, since the analysis repeats the movement of the film in order to understand it..." (p. 95). This is finally to admit that the critic's reading can produce, can indeed create, a sexuality of the text; it is therefore important to be aware of the effects of one's own reading, of its own partiality. For a discussion of female enunciation, see Tania Modleski, "'Never to be thirty-six years old': female enunciation in *Rebecca," Wide Angle,* forthcoming.
21. See the entry on "Fantasme" in their *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967).
22. See, for example, the studies by Lowry and Caspar, op. cit.
23. Robert Champigny, *What Will Have Happened: A Philosophical and Technical Essay on Mystery Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977).

AN INTERVIEW WITH MRINAL SEN

by Sumita S. Chakravarty

Introduction to the film director

Mrinal Sen, the most well-known and respected of India's film directors after Satyajit Ray, is a godfather of the parallel cinema that has gained momentum in India since the last fifteen years. Born and brought up in East Bengal (now Bangladesh), Sen, 58, came to Calcutta in his late teens to study science. In his student days he was actively involved with the left-wing theatre movement in Bengal, and has since then maintained a strongly political consciousness. He made his first film in 1956, and numerous other films and documentaries have followed, most of them dealing with the contemporary problems of his country. With *Bhuvan Shome* (1969), Sen's career, as well as that of Indian cinema, took a marked turn in the direction of the low-budget "art" film produced through government subsidies. The critical and box-office success of *Bhuvan Shome* took Sen on to the most radical period of his filmmaking, at a time when Calcutta was torn with widespread urban unrest, the Naxalite movement and the war that established Bangladesh. *The Interview* (1971), *Calcutta '71* (1972), *Padatik* (The Guerilla Fighter, 1973), *Chorus* (1974) all have marked political ramifications. Sen's most recent film, *Aakaler Sandhaney* (In Search of Famine) won the Silver Bear at Berlin this year, and is his most reflexive work. In recent years, Sen has received many international awards and honors, and his work has been shown in many festivals. A retrospective of his films was screened at the National Film Theatre in London last year.

Q: At what point of your career do you feel you are now? You mentioned last night (at a symposium on the new Indian cinema arranged by the Asia Society, New York) that you are constantly examining and evaluating yourself in relation to your work. Do you feel that you have achieved through cinema what you set out to achieve?

A: Well, you know, it happens to everybody — all the filmmakers, for that matter, all the performing arts workers — must engage in self-examination, and we want to communicate. For instance, when I make a film, I feel I have been able to hit the bull's eye, I have been able to communicate to my people. Because the point is to do so, and to see how my reaction to the society, to the world around me, is accepted by the people. It's not necessary for me to see that they agree with my point of view. The point is to provoke a debate; that, to my mind, is a very important social engagement. And this is what I have been doing all my life.

My entry into films has been quite accidental. As a student I wasn't even a habitual film goer, not to speak of trying to make films. But that was the time when I started trying to understand the political scene around me. I made my first film in 1953. It was terrible, and I could immediately convince myself that filmmaking was not my cup of tea. I took to selling medicines without knowing anything about medicines. Then after five years I again made a film. Looking back, I find it to have been rather sentimental, but I do stand by the political thesis that I expressed in that film. I tried to say that the colonial people's struggle with national liberation is inseparably linked with the liberal or democratic world's fight against fascism. I made the film in 1958 or '59, but the story dates back to the 1930s, when on the one hand, the national liberation movement in India was very strong, and internationally the democratic forces were fighting the fascist powers. That film was a success with the people, by which I mean that they could understand me. That was the beginning of a new look into cinema. Since then I have been making films which have always, in one way or another, projected and depicted the political scene in India.

I have been changing myself according to the changing times. I am chased by my own times — it sits on my neck and makes me work. This is what I have been doing for several years. Some people now feel that I am retreating from the political scene. I say, "No...."

Q: Why do they feel that?

A: Because the question is whether it is necessary to take up a political situation in order to make a political film. I say, "No." I feel that you can make a film about the relationship between a man and a woman in the Indian situation, and make it politically very valid. It all depends on how you keep your perspective. The point is to keep a socio-political, a socio-economic perspective.

Now at the moment I am passing through a phase of self-criticism, which to my mind is also the position of the political scene as it is evident in West Bengal. You know, in West Bengal, we have a Marxist government. On the one hand, the valiant fight of the government against social maladjustment gives me a lot of ideas as a filmmaker. On the other hand, an incorrigible sense of self-complacency inside the party disturbs me deeply. This is not the case with the Indian Communist party alone. It manifests itself all over the world. The moment a left wing party is in power, it develops a self-complacency in terms of its achievements. That is where I feel ill at ease. That is where I feel I have to look into myself, do a little bit of soul-searching. For I have also indulged in self-complacency as far as my work is concerned. I have also felt satisfied with my own thing. The best way to combat this reality is to question yourself and to doubt your own integrity. That is why, two years ago, I made a film, *Ek Din Prati Din* (And Quiet Rolls the Dawn). It is a film against male chauvinism, but it is not just a feminist film. It has other connotations — political, social, economic. It deals with the many constraints which surface in the Indian social scene. My wife played the mother in that film. I'll tell you an anecdote. Last year, it was shown at the Cannes Film Festival, and afterwards an interviewer asked my wife, "Now that you have made a film with your husband, how do you feel about working with him?" And she said, "Well, my husband and I go out together, we do the shootings, and my husband always tries to impress upon me that he works harder than me, and I accept that. Then, after a hard day's work we come home, and he relaxes on the bed because he is very tired, and he asks me to make a cup of tea, so I go into the kitchen." I was immediately caught. On the one hand I had been making a film about male chauvinism, but in private life I was doing the same thing.

In my next film, *Aakaler Sandhaney* (In Search of Famine), I questioned myself as a reality seeker. I questioned the integrity of my own community of film workers, the reality seekers. To what extent, I asked myself, are we able to capture reality? I feel, after all these years, that there is a gap between our understanding of a situation and our projection of it on the screen. The filmmaker, like the writer and painter, tries to fill this gap. In *Aakaler Sandhaney* you find the same thing. The filmmaker had a strong sense of historicity, and with his knowledge of history and of the cinematic medium, he could perhaps recreate the physicality of the famine which killed five million people. But the past walked into the contemporary reality. On the one hand, you can see the continuity of the cruel legacy of famine — the factors which contributed to the famine in 1943 are also present today. But the moment the present-day reality confronted the filmmaker, he got scared and had to run away. At the end of the film, when we give some information about the woman in 1980, it might be considered redundant by some. Eut it is very important for me to make that comment. The woman who has lost her child and whose husband has run away stands there as though she is asking the reality seekers, "Where have you gone, you city folk? Don't you come to make a film about famine? Where have you gone?" This to my mind is also a projection of my own time.

I made another film about how, without our knowing it, we change our life styles, our attitudes to the milieu that has shaped us. The film was shown in many festivals this year. In it I try to explore the idea of change through non-events. I have done it very undramatically. We always seek drama in films, but life is full of non-events. There are few dramatic situations in the course of an ordinary life. So why not make a film about that, and show how you are imperceptibly changing — decaying or growing from day to day. And the fact of being a renegade, how the process of corrosion takes place without one's knowledge. Some of my militant friends think I am not as angry as I used to be. But anger or violence shouldn't necessarily be very physical. It works on many levels. The point is to capture the growth or decay through the complexities, the mulitiplicities of an individual. Only through that can one come closer to reality.

Q: Perhaps you have answered this question already, but I will repeat it: you have often been described as a political filmmaker. How would you define a "political" cinema?

A: As Godard said once, you can make political films or you can make films politically. I believe that you don't have to take up political scenes in order to make a political film. You don't have to have a political activist as a protagonist to make a political film. You can't escape politics; it is all around you. That is why it cannot easily be defined. It all depends on your sensibility as a viewer and my sensibility as a filmmaker.

Q: To what extent is your development as a filmmaker related to the social and cultural milieu of the city that you are so deeply involved with — namely, Calcutta?

A: I'm in love with Calcutta. Even though I was born in East Bengal and partially educated there, I consider myself a Calcuttan. Unlike my colleague, Ritwik Ghatak, who had his sensibilities deeply rooted in East Bengal, I have no nostalgia for East Bengal. Calcutta happens to be my El Dorado. I'm a much travelled man; quite often I go abroad — about five or six times a year — but I never stay outside Calcutta for more than seven to ten days. In spite of all the problems and inconveniences that the city faces, Calcutta gives me an emotional stimulus, an emotional kick. This is not the statement of a parochial. Calcutta provokes me, it gives me a lot of food, it keeps me young. But when I talk of Calcutta, when I make a film about it, perhaps I build a case not only for Calcutta, but for the whole of India, and in a larger context, for the whole of the Third World scene. I would even go a step further, and say that I try to build a case for the whole world. We live in a bastard culture; we are fast heading toward a common culture. With the growth of science and technology, we have arrived at such a stage that there isn't much difference between a New Yorker and a Calcuttan in terms of the ethical issues he faces. I even go to the extent of debating the concept of national cinema. Film is national to the extent that it captures national scenery, the national physiognomy, the national landscape, outfit, speech and food habits, and national film is made with national currency, that's all. But the moment you are in a position to capture all these, which are very physical, there is very little difference between you and me. For instance, *Ek Din Prati Din* tells the story of a young woman, the sole breadwinner in a family of seven, who didn't come home one night. That created a lot of tension in the family. I wanted to do a surgical incision into the social fabric presented in the film. When the film was shown in European festivals, it was enthusiastically received, particularly by women. At a gathering later on, many women asked me questions about the film. I picked out a few of them who were from one of the Scandinavian countries and said, "As far as my knowledge goes, yours is a very permissive society. Staying out for one night is no problem for you. What is it that you responded to in my film?" They at once said that the film is about male chauvinism, and that is a global phenomenon. And so I try to reach an international audience through my films. If I am able to capture a national milieu, my films become communicable to people outside the country. This always happens. I remember Roman Polanski's *Knife in the Water,* the finest film I've seen on male chauvinism and the commodity fetish. I saw a little bit of myself in that film. Thus I debate the concept of a national cinema. In cinema we have a universal language because it is to a large extent technological and it doesn't belong to any particular country.

Q: To what extent have other art forms influenced your work? I am thinking primarily of theatre and the novel, and its influence on your film technique.

A: These influences are always there. We have unnecessarily been creating barriers between one medium and another. This is the age of cross-fertilization. As a film man, I feel closely attached to the theatre, and try to borrow the technique of theatre in my films. I also take a lot of inspiration from poetry. When I used to write on the aesthetics of cinema, I expressed the links between film and poetry because of their use of images. The novel too inspires one, and much fruitful dialogue is possible between these two art forms. Feuchtwanger[1] thought of writing a novel based on the structure of *Battleship Potemkin.* In the same way, Eisenstein had a long discussion with James Joyce about using the monologue form in a film that he planned to do in Hollywood but eventually could not. So I feel that one art has a lot to give to another. I don't go by what the purists say. I feel that film, to a large extent, is a highly cross-fertilized art because it is the latest — and the most technical — of all the art forms.

Q: What about the foreign influences on your films? Satyajit Ray mentions Italian neo-realism, Girish Karnad spoke of Akira Kurosawa; who or what do you see as having affected your work?

A: Italian neo-realism has given me a lot of intellectual food, and I have been greatly influenced by it. I love Zavattini who said that it is important to have respect for the circumstances in which your characters grow. He also said that we are not unaware of reality, but are deadly scared of looking at it. Some of these things I have tried to incorporate in my films. But my greatest influence has been my own time.

Q: What audiences in India are you trying to reach through your films? Do you address primarily the educated and urban sections of the population, or do you hope to reach the rural people too?

A: Nobody would be happier than me to hear that I have reached the wider masses. When I see that I have failed to do so, I feel like collapsing. But I have to be objective, and I must say that I've failed to reach a mass audience.

Q: Why?

A: Because the subjects and the techniques perhaps do not interest the wider people. Here I have to make one statement. I question the validity of film being a popular medium. To my mind, this involves a great danger. Just as a serious reader must learn how to interpret a text, a viewer must also learn how to see a film. If this is true of reading, of listening to music, of seeing a painting, why shouldn't it be true of watching a film? My business as a filmmaker is to communicate more effectively to the larger masses, but it is also important to see how he can reach me. I see the popular movie industry as having a disastrous influence on the sensibilities of the audience, and I am engaged in a continuous battle against it.

Still, I can see that what used to be the case with my films earlier is no longer the case today. There has been an enormous change in the quality of the spectator, as much as in the quality of my films. Previously, when I made a film, I would think that perhaps it was my last. But now I see that I have become somewhat of a marketable commodity, in the sense that I find some people asking me to make films. This has never happened to me before. And it is because I have been able to find a wider audience, not only in my own country but also abroad. This is a great thing for me, and for any communicator like me.

Q: Has it been happening in the last five years or so?

A: In the last five to seven years. It's been happening very slowly and steadily. But then I wouldn't give you a very rosy picture. Things are not moving as beautifully or as easily as some people would like to believe. They will mention one or two films that did well commercially. For instance, Shyam Benegal mentioned *Chakra* (The Vicious Circle). I can see when someone tries to strike a balance between what he wants to do and the popular demand. But in *Chakra* I found many things to be quite unnecessary. These were done very deliberately to draw people at the box office. This makes me feel ill-at-ease. It poses a greater danger to people like us.

Q: And you are not willing to compromise?

A: No. Till now I have tried to serve my conscience to the best of my ability. I have collapsed many times because I couldn't reach a lot of people, and I've had many popular failures and accidental successes, but I must say that it is important to stick to your guns, not to budge an inch. You are growing at the same time, but it is important not to grow any fetish. Quite often it happens to people like us that the moment one gets known for being different in a film festival, immediately he/she is bought by the Establishment. I feel that if Hollywood lays its hand on some very promising director because he made a name in a big festival, he is finished. This has happened to many people. I wouldn't like to mention any names because some of them are very good friends of mine.

Q: Can you mention some of the problems with film censorship that you have faced?

A: So far I haven't faced many problems because I know some of the restrictions and constraints within which we have to work. At the same time, since I am somewhat known in my country and outside, the censor board in India is perhaps a little cautious when it comes to examining my films. Also, I find that the government, in the course of years, has become a little more lenient, a little more liberal and intelligent than it was before. Earlier, it used to be very stupid, but that has changed somewhat in recent years as far as film is concerned. I have to keep my fingers crossed, however. I don't know what will happen in the future.

Q: Was your film *Aakaler Sandhaney* (In Search of Famine) at all inspired by Ray's *Ashani Sanket* (Distant Thunder), since both films are concerned with the Bengal famine of 1943?

A: Not at all. I lived through the Bengal famine, and it has been in my mind for a long time. In fact, in 1960, I made a film called *Baishey Sravan* (The Wedding Day) in which I explored the decaying relationship between a man and woman during the famine which killed five million people. I was not interested at that time in the numericals of the tragedy — how many people died. I was interested in showing how a social calamity like that made the relationship between a man and a woman so gruesome, so cruel. They were torn asunder, they lost all traces of human decency. For that I don't make them responsible, but the circumstances, the ruthlessness of the times of the famine. The film was shown in Venice in 1960, the first of my films to be shown abroad.

So this film of mine, *Aakaler Sandhaney,* had nothing to do with *Ashani Sanket.* In a way, if you read between the lines, perhaps you find a little bit of criticism of Ray's film. I consider Ray a great filmmaker, a pioneer, the man who set the ball rolling in Indian cinema, but I wasn't very impressed with *Ashani Sanket.* I found it to be too beautiful.

Q: Is India going to be the new cinema? You know, in the 50s it was the French, in the 60s the East Europeans, in the 70s the Germans. Will it be Indian cinema in the 1980s?

A: I don't really know, but I feel that the way the new Indian cinema is growing, perhaps it may be in a position to give a lead in the future. I am getting increasingly dissatisfied with the kinds of films that are being made in the affluent countries.

Q: What about the cinema of other Third World countries? What is your impression about the efforts of Latin American or African filmmakers?

A: I have been quite impressed with many of them. The way these films have portrayed social injustices using a different idiom becomes, to my mind, very effective. There are very many levels at which filmmaking is being attempted in the Third World countries, and I'm all praise for them. But I must express some reservations. I am often asked to make a film of the plight of Indians abroad, and my answer is that I'm not interested in that subject. I want to project the conditions of Indians in their own country. I find some African filmmakers making films on the plight of Africans in Paris or London. I would rather see them portray Africans facing problems in their own countries.

Q: Is the new Indian cinema capable of bringing about some radical changes in Indian society?

A: Some changes are coming about, but film is not a gun. Film creates a climate, that's all. The gun does its own job. Literature cannot build a revolution; neither can film. Quite often some of my militant friends ask me to make a revolutionary film. They will watch a revolution on the screen and the job is done. The militant's revolutionary task is finished. In his private life he will do everything that has very little to do with the revolutionary path of action.

1. Lion Feuchtwanger (1884-1958) was a left-wing German author and dramatist who is perhaps best known for his historical novels, which often dealt with political subjects. Born in Munich, Germany, he studied philology and the history of literature at the Universities of Munich and Berlin, and founded a literary newspaper in 1918 in which he was concerned with the revolutionary artistic tendencies in contemporary literature. During the first world war, many of his plays were suppressed in Germany. In 1933 his house and fortune were confiscated, and he fled Germany to take up residence in the United States. In Moscow, where he was in 1936 and 1947, he began his novel, *Exile.* His best known work is *The Oppermans* (1934).

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NOTES ON COMMUNICATION AND REPRESENTATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION

by Phil Vitone

Since the end of World War II research into educational uses of television has constantly increased. It has become the single most studied area of educational inquiry. Hailed as a major advance of the technological age, television appeared to present a wide number of suitable applications to a range of pedagogical and organizational problems facing educational policy-makers.[1] Researchers were, from the beginning, well financed, and they responded quickly with methods and programs for use.[2] The effort was also fueled by the electronics and communications industries, particularly in the United States, creating an atmosphere of optimism that ensured the long term presence of the technology in educational establishments.[3]

Social attitudes towards television, on the other hand, have never been entirely positive, nor have they reflected secure, comprehensive understandings of the medium. Similarly, literature and research existed in the Educational Television field, as well as in other areas of educational study, which took a critical and cautionary position towards the application of television and other technologies, suggesting that there was a general over-optimism and prematurity of approach.[4]

Furthermore, many research studies provided undeniable evidence that there was "no significant difference" between television teaching and "live" teaching. These reports forced even some of the most vigorous early proponents of television education to review claims and methods. From the late fifties to the present, revisions have been initiated attempting to maintain original conceptions and goals through the introduction of more sophisticated productions and variations on hardware use. A wide and plentiful variety of literature, from the most eclectic and intuitive handbook to the most serious academic study, has saturated the field with new and improved methods. On the other hand, certain positions and methods, such as the simple recorded lecture, have been generally discredited or viewed as limited. New impetus for research and development has come from those positions within the Education Television community which have sought to incorporate theoretical aspects of learning and communication into production and programming. *Sesame Street* is an obvious and striking example of this latter direction of the field.

The development of Education Television reflects, in large part, a rather functionalist perspective on the medium.[5] The technological ability to produce for large or small audiences corresponded very well with two general categories of television use. What became known from the late sixties onward as Educational Television or "ETV," referred to a "soft" use of the medium to "enrich" or "supplement" a viewer's knowledge, often intended for large, disparate audiences of the type reached through broadcasting. The second category of Instructional Television or "ITV" referred to the "hard" use of the medium in order to teach some subject matter "directly."[6] This latter use was most suitable to a situation where a certain control, monitoring, and regulating of results could be obtained; that is, within a small space or grouping, such as those found in a closed-circuit or tape-playback context.

Differences between ETV and ITV in programming, production methods, approaches to subject matter and definition of audiences should not be considered fundamental, but as representing different degrees of emphasis in the delineation of an instructional strategy. Operational distinctions, however, could not respond to the increasingly apparent complexity of television communication: division between ETV and ITV was based implicitly on the realization that home and school offered two different sets of conditions for the reception of messages. This is to say that, home ETV had to compete with other types of television available: school ITV or ETV did not offer the same choice. The popularization and "soft-sell" approach of broadcast ETV was a clear, competitive reaction to commercial television that did not include any real attempt to theoretically analyze the nature of the effect and desirability of the latter type of programming upon the audience.

The entire question of television mediation of communication, though taken up as a central issue in other fields of research, remained marginal through the mid-sixties in ETV research. Only by the end of that decade were theoretical questions regarding potentialities and limitations of television communication raised centrally for educational purposes. Significantly, such questions arose, as formal and central concerns in a separate area of educational study, which has been called "media studies."[7] The desire to provide students with basic "criteria for evaluating"[8] media messages has, within the past decade, promoted the development of critically oriented courses on media analysis and production in the curriculum of educational institutions in various countries.[9] Communication theory, aspects of semiology, psychology, political theory, and aesthetics have provided the basis for insight, investigation, and instruction. Television and its messages, for the purposes of a media studies curriculum has been understood from a humanist, hermeneutical perspective, in opposition to the predominantly functionalist-behaviorist approach of the major part of ETV research. Educational technologies have only within the last ten years considered factors such as media bias, personal interpretation, social and cultural mediation of television messages as being of any value and significance to the ETV field. Though the work of communication theorists such as McLuhan and Innis, as well as the semiotic work of Barthes, has existed since the fifties, it has only been since the early seventies that any attempt has been made to relate any such relevant ideas to ETV theory and practice.[10]

The increasing, but late appeal cognitive and communcational models of perception had for program design necessitated information *on* the audience. Attempts to obtain the guarantee that a program's concepts and content would be received by the audience meant that its members had to be known and any intervening factors accounted for.

The position of the ETV field in relation to present media and communication research has yet to be fully articulated. It is the purpose of this paper to fill some of the terms of this relationship, as well as illustrate reasons for its having been neglected in the past. In so doing, with particular reference to the "media studies" project, it becomes possible to evaluate models of ETV practice in terms of communicative practice, thereby illuminating the relationships established between intentions, practices, and actual effect. This last aspect is of significant interest to the ETV field, as it would provide information concerning the terms of methodological success, still an area of contentious debate.

In an effort to expand upon points made above, as well as initially describe the framework for investigating the relationship between communication and ETV, it is worth presenting the following comparison: whereas, the initial interest held by media studies has been the degree of student success in deciphering the validity and acceptability of information transmitted along the various technological communications channels, ETV has reflected, for the most part, a preoccupation with the successful transmission of particular messages revealed through transformations in behaviour. The former is concerned with evaluation and contextualization (decoding) or received information; while the latter arranges information and constructs messages (encodes) for its audience, upon a particular subject matter. Though these do not reflect necessarily opposite positions, a definite series of problems have been seen to arise when criteria for evaluating media programs are brought into perspective with major historical forms of ETV. Media-studies refer the student, for one thing, to the many possibilities for "hidden agendas" being located in transmitted messages.[11] This point refers to a deeper level of information existing covertly in the television program's codings and outside the intended announced message. Such "coded" information may reflect social, national, cultural knowledge, and other biases.

The vehicle for such "hidden agendas" particularly in the case of television is, arguably, to be found primarily in, and dependent upon, audio-visual representation understood as verisimilitude. In an image, the term refers to an understanding of the image as truthfully duplicating and rendering the critical elements of an object or exposition, without the representation imposing or involving a significant mediation and modification of the subject matter.[12]

Media studies and communication studies, in general, as well as recent trends in semiology, film theory, literary criticism and learning theory, would advise a cautious, discriminating attitude in regards to either viewing or producing from such an approach. However, representation, standing here for the reproduction of the "real," has been, and continues to be, the underlying principle upon which the overwhelming majority of ETV programs are based. It is upon questions surrounding this fundamental issue, that is, the status and function of audio-visual representation, that the interest the ETV research community has in communications media should be evaluated.

ETV Development

The roles that television has played as an educational technology are heterogeneous, reflecting the mulitiplicity of pedagogical methodologies which have tried to incorporate the medium into their operations.

Educational Television (ETV), and the more specialized variant of Instructional Television (ITV), have had rather unstable histories, demonstrated in inconclusive research findings, indefinite production methods, a variety of failures and relatively few successes given the aspirations of its community.[13] Many researchers have indicated that the medium was and remains poorly understood, thus corroborating views held by others in the fields of sociology, communications, and Mass-Media Studies.[14] It has been argued that the ETV-ITV project was, in great part, inaccurately conceived and inappropriately operationalized.[15] Yet it remains a field where there is a continuing interest in technical applications, in part the result of a continuing belief in the medium's potential, and the demands for accelerated education in modern technological society.[16] This has been a cause for dismay among a number of ETV researchers who can only view such developments in Educational Television as lacking direction, furthering the unproductivity of the past.[17]

By and large, subsequent, on-going research has progressed along these two general lines: one endeavors to expand television use through the development of production methods which are rigorously evaluated in order to ensure significant instructional impact. The second line of research seeks to understand instructional practice through a further examination of existing and potential forms of television production within a communication theory orientation.

The first case involves the development of television techniques which would reproduce the conditions for learning established by psychological and behavioral research. This does not simply demand the adaptation of television to pre-existent pedagogical practices, but also to the evolution of those instructional means, specific to the medium, which would achieve particular educational aims. There has been great interest in research into a possible grammar and symbolic form of television communication, as a means of coding information "natural" to the medium would enable more consistent reception of the instructional message.[18] The desire for immediate and spontaneous interaction with video material has led researchers to, among other things, examine the psychological basis for image communication, "visual literacy," and a consideration of popular television programming and the techniques employed to generate interest and attention.

The second research direction is concerned not so much with operationalizing the medium towards set and known goals, but with the possibility that the unknown ramifications of increased television use will necessitate new pedagogical goals. Such a perspective suggests that a re-orientation of social attitudes towards knowledge has occurred as a result of the development of electronic communications technology. Mass communications research which investigates and determines the social and cultural effects of television is of obvious interest to this second approach. Commercial television techniques are not merely appropriated, but critically examined for the information they, in themselves, produce. Mass-media is understood as being a second, alternative information source which enters into subject matter areas that schools have both traditionally explicated and ignored. This suggests that society's educational network is larger than the school, its practices and approaches. Television is not simply a technical aid, but also an object for study and exploration.

The two positions of viewing television, either as a technical aid, or as an object for study and expression, reflect different understandings of the communicational functions of the medium. These approaches are based upon certain key assumptions concerning communication and representation in general.

ETV and the study of representation

A central concern in critical film study has involved ways of conceptualizing representation. Structurally, representation is viewed as a subjective and abstract derivative of the actual subject matter which the former stands for; it is an ideology-laden depiction. A problem, however, is that such incomplete reconstructions are so often perceived as complete duplications. Correcting this misapprehension would depend on a "decoding" of the (audio and visual) image, uncovering its partisan aspects. This view of the nature and function of representation (simplified here for sake of argument) is antithetical to a position holding that certain types of representation, audio-visual reproductions generated by mechanical and electric technology most centrally, can produce verisimilitude. In other words, these media do actually reproduce and restore the objective essence of whatever subject is under their scrutiny. There is no question of selectivity by the producer of crucial details, properties, contextual, historic and other aspects of the subject which forms the image, nor of the presumed ontological status placed upon these features. Theories have been advanced which attempt to provide explanations for why the reduction of reality reified in a representation can be perceived as totalizing duplications. Certain reductions either as caricatures or idealizations have such an omnipresent acceptance in culture as to suggest that people are driven (compulsed) to affirm them. Evidence for what seem to be unconscious motivations appears to be suggested in the overwhelming popular indulgence in cinematic narrative representational structures. The critical review of compulsion is to occur as a result of decoding, as was said; or through altered representational structurings that force or engender a self-reflexive posture, or at least obstruct simple unconscious acquiescence to dubious pleasures arising in the aftermath of repression.

It is in regard to the above and other theoretical views of how meaning is mediated and formed in representation that the problematic of Educational Television becomes interesting. Most crucially, it facilitates an opposite approach to the problem of representation by involving interpretive resistance to meaning. Unconscious motivation and the structures which correspond to it notwithstanding, representation in ETV has existed not strictly as an abstract construction providing the receiver or consumer with a desirable concreteness, but also precisely as an artificial totality needing to be cosmeticized and "effectively" communicated. This is done in the simple hope that the message will be positively received. Simply stated, the ETV project involves the viewer not in being awakened from a dream-like stupor, but coaxed into dropping a certain alertness. Historically with ETV, many empirically-based studies and observations have found viewer satisfaction and understanding minimal in relation to the product. ETV producers haven't viewed their programs as ideologically involved, yet they have faced audiences which have rejected programs as if there were this type of conflict.[19] Some ETV developers have felt the need to obtain from their audience specific information concerning those audio-visual representations which meet the latter's approval in order to adapt favorable images to a program's purpose. An outstanding example of a promoter and developer of this interactive approach to ETV program creation is the Children's Television Workshop, creators of *Sesame Street, 3-2-1-Contact* and other trend-setting series.

What is suggested by the above, that is, suggested by the history of ETV, is that there is a yet unspecified interactive component to the establishment of meaning in "one-way" audio-visual communication or representation. There is a need to investigate the rudimentary meaning structures and the necessary conditions for their mediation in the building and communicating of representation. Correlatively, the relative ability of any producer to communicate meanings with audio-visual means to a usually anonymous spectator, must be ascertained. These problems are to be examined, via a view to the history of the ETV problematic in a more extended article in the following issue.

NOTES

1. George N. Gordon, "Instructional Television, Media, and Contemporary Education," *American Education in the Electronic Age,* ed. P.L. Klinge (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Educational Technology Publications, 1974) pp. 138-157.

T.R. Ide, "The Potential and Limitations of Television as an Educational Medium," *Media and Symbols: The Forms of Expression, Communication, and Education,* the 73rd Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I, ed. David R. Olson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) pp. 330-356.

Paul Saettler, *A History of Instructional Technology* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1968) pp. 227-28,249.

2. Robert R.J. Blakely, *To Serve the Public Interest: Educational Broadcasting in the United States* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979) pp. 138-142.

Ide, "Potentials and Limitations," op. cit., p. 331.

Saettler, *History,* op. cit., pp. 227-230.

3. Armand Mattelard, *Multinational Corporations and the Control of Culture* (Sussex/New Jersey: Harvester Press/ Humanities Press, 1979) pp. 128-192.

4. See for example: Gilbert Seldes, "Television's Place in Art and Culture," *Educational Television, The Next Ten Years* (Stanford: Institute for Communication Research, Stanford University, 1962) pp. 103-115.

5. The term *functionalist* here refers to the instrumental use of a technology for the achievement of set goals. The technology here is an adjunct or aid to a process usually considered in behavioristic terms. This view is opposed to one which sees television technology as producing Its own undetermined effects on any behavior and content. Whereas in the first case video would be investigated as far as certain desired properties or effects were located, the latter makes no such investment; both positively and negatively understood aspects of technology are viewed as relevant and the technology becomes a central, as opposed to subsidiary, interest.

6. ETV and ITV are the standard abbreviations used by the field of education as a whole for Educational Television and Instructional Television, respectively.

7. For a brief historical sketch, see John Maddison, "Introduction," *Media Studies in Education,* Reports and Papers on Mass Communication, No. 80 (Paris: UNESCO, 1977) pp. 7-11.

8. Sirkka Minkkinen, *A General Curricular Model for Mass Media Education* (Altamira: J.M. Llorca for UNESCO, 1978).

9. *Media Studies in Education,* op. cit. The report gives a brief outline of a number of media studies programs in various countries.

10. See for example: Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris, editions du Seuil, 1957).

Harold Innis, *The Bias of Communications* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951).

Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* (N.Y.: Vanguard Press, 1951).

11. Minkkinen, op. cit., pp. 25-31.

12. The term is used in much film theory in this regard. For an example, see Kristin Thomson, "The Concept of Cinematic Excess," *Ciné-Tracts,* No. 2 (Summer 1977) Montreal, pp. 54.63. "The spectator who takes films to be simple copies of reality will probably tend to subsume the physicality of the image under a general category of versimilitude; that shape on the screen looks as it does because 'those things really look like that.'" (pp. 57-58) Verisimilitude can be understood as a formal term for the commonsense notion that "photographs never lie." Minkkinen, op. cit., p. 73:

> Paintings and drawings are always the artists' personal interpretations of reality or of ideas. The idea and the actual Image itself are formed gradually. The case is not the same with photography although it, too, calls for selection and the development of the ideas interpreted through the images selected. The camera operator on films, television productions and still photography selects an object and decides on such factors as lighting, angles, visual framing, timing, the disposition of the object before the camera and the location, and the technical equipment required. From then on, it is the camera that determines the outcome. The external world is recorded in the sequence: object/objective/film, and the resuiting photographic record is to be taken to be a proof of what has been recorded: hence the saying photographs never lie. But a visual message is always and interpretation of what the producer has selected. His interpretation can enlargeour understanding of an object or distort how it is seen.

Whether it is one image, or an entire sequence, it is often assumed that the single message, the reality of the "photographic record," will be communicated. But if the "visual message" is always an interpretation on the part of the producer, constructed by a mechanical device, there is reason to doubt that intended crucial aspects of this "record" and "message" will be communicated, as the viewer may be in conflict with the interpretation or even the conventions and products of the photographic device itself. The projection of verisimilitude does not refer simply to the quality of the representation, but is also expected to provide the necessary base for the establishment of an effective communication. Audio-visual communication, as will be seen, has confronted communicational difficulties in the holding of such a simple view of duplication and representation.

13. Most ETV investigators regard the early phase of development of television for education as not very meritous. A still significant number have been critical and doubtful of the value of many aspects of more contemporary ETV practice, with some even going so far as to negate any worth to the entire project up until the time of their writing. See for example: George N. Gordon, "Instructional Television: Yesterday's Magic," and David Berkman, "The Medium Whose Future has Passed," *Instructional Television,* ed. Jerold Ackerman, Lawrence Lipsitz (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Educational Technology Publications, 1977) pp. 147-152, and pp. 95-108. See also David Olson, *Introduction to Media and Symbols,* op. cit., pp. 1-24; Ide, op. cit., pp. 331-32.

14. Television communication remains an area where on-going research continues to unravel complexity. As there appears to be a historical, as well as social and organizational factors involved in viewer-television interaction, any understanding of such must be open to new, previously unrealized conditions. See James Carey, "The Ambiguity of Policy Research," *Journal of Communications,* Vol. 28, No. 2 (Spring 1978), pp. 114-119, and *Broadcaster/Researcher Co-operation in Mass-Communications Research,* ed. James D. Halloran, and Michael Gurevitch (Leeds: J.A. Kavenaugh & Sons, 1971). Furthermore, as is pointed out in UNESCO documentation on mass communications, knowledge of the effects of television is not very broadly based, both in terms of producers and consumers. There has been a need for on-going media education which would inform viewers on the effects of television communication in a variety of forms. See: Minkkinen, *Model for Mass Media Education,* op. cit., and *Media Studies in Education,* op. cit.

15. Ide, "Potentials and Limitations," op. cit., p. 356; George N. Gordon, "ITV, Media and Contemporary Education," op. cit., pp. 138-42.

16. ETV has been the most researched area of educational technological development, and it remains a highly demanded and financed educational medium. This is evidenced by the high degree of investment in software and hardware development by large mulitnational electronics and information processing corporations, the development of Public Television Stations in the United States, TV Ontario, Access Alberta, and Radio Québec in Canada. A wide variety of trade, professional and scholarly journals as *Audio-Visual Instruction, Media and Methods, and Audio-visual Communications Review* frequently feature articles on television applications in schools.

17. Gordon, "ITV: Yesterday's Magic," op. Cit. pp. 147-52; pp. 8-10.

18. For examples see: Media and Symbols, op. cit. for a wide variety of psychologically based media methods. See also, E.U. Heidt, *Instructional Media and the Individual Learner: A Classification and Systems Appraisal* (N.Y.: Nichols Publishing Co., 1978) for an in-depth, cognitive psychology-based classification of media and media use; and Leslie J. Briggs, Peggy L. Campeau, Rogert M. Gagné Mark A. May, *Instructional Media: A Procedure for the Design of Multi-Media Instruction, a Critical Review of Research, and Suggestions for Further Research.* Report prepared by the Center for Research and Evaluation in Applications of Technology in Education (CREATE) (Pittsburgh: American Institute for Research, 1967). The latter is a widely used handbook of production methods based on behaviorist-Skinnerian notions concerning learning.

19. The child reacting with boredom to a taped lecture and favoring an adventure or variety show may be arguably reacting to the practice and ideology of a paternalistic pedagogy.

VENICE STRIKES AGAIN: THE 1980 FILM FESTIVAL

by Dedi Baroncelli

Golden Lion Awards to Gloria *(Cassavetes) and* Atlantic City, USA *(Malle) for best industry film; to* O Megalèxandros *(Anghelopoulos) for best film "belonging to an emerging cinematography or outstanding for the novelty of its language"; to* Ajandék ez a nap *(Gothár, Hungary) for best first film.*

Venice, 8 September 1980

Cinema is losing its color. The alarm sounded by Martin Scorsese for the cause of technicolor films conservation echoes perhaps too loud in this fading and dying city, some say; shouldn't we be more concerned with the fading colors of Venice? And with this Festival, quip others, their faces displaying a full gamut of grey tones from disappointment to insomnia. After 12 days of screenings and 120 films, they look like the cast of a future-video-programmed Antonioni entry. Those who favored the return to an award-giving Festival now seem crushed by the realization that the Golden Lion hides a soul of base commercial metal, is tarnished by the deals procured by Gaumont et al., and armed with "big" Jack Valenti's claws. Those who just went to have a good time, the "indiscriminate" spectator who saw every movie, "booing and applauding at random" (as the official critics deplore), now pack up their sleeping bags with visible relief, dreaming of a week-long black-out in their regular beds. Those who shunned the whole award controversy (whether awards should be given or not, whether Venice should be a commercial event or not) are unhappy with the overall low level of the exhibition. For my part, though I cannot say to have enjoyed myself enormously, nor am I inclined to easy moralizing after the fact, I'd venture the opinion that the level of this festival is no worse than that of comparable international events. Especially considering that it is the last of the season. So it would be pointless, except for those afflicted by a most severe case of necrocinephilia, to go on rehearsing the "muggings" inflicted by the competition on Carlo Lizzani, Festival organizer — Tarkovsky's *Stalker,* premiered on the Croisette, Iosseliani's *Pastorale,* envoyed to Hyères on the rebound, Kubrick's *The Shining,* shown at San Sebastian, Altman's *Health* at Montreal, Bergman's latest at Oxford. From the leftovers, all things considered, the Venice jury didn't do so bad.

One has, of course, reservations: for example, the two-headed or rather schizophrenic Lion awarded to Cassavetes and Malle, on the one hand, and Anghelopoulos on the other. But the confusion, the ambiguities of the Festival all but reflect the present state of cinema, admittedly depressed if not comatose. Aside from a handful of invigorating tales, enriched with rock music and videogame SFX *(The Empire Strikes Back, Gloria* itself, or the unpresuming *Melvin and Howard),* and with the exception of the few private obsessions that succeed in becoming cinema, that is, resolutely demonstrate Death at Work (Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz, Lightning Over Water* by Wenders and the late Nicholas Ray, Welles's *Filming Othello, Guns* by Robert Kramer), we have watched the generalized explosion of marginal subjects, the plotting of political fears with private desperation, love and horror for both the country and the city. Women, children, dropouts, the aged have swept away the last wan heroes of the screen, but their bland stories leave behind the sweet aftertaste of social vindication as a debt absolved. An explosion, in short, both diffuse and confused, an explosion — to stay with the color motif — in grey, since Marginality (which is the figure of death at work in these films) labors in vain to become centrality under the mortgage of Fashion.

Metaphorically or not, illness was the real protagonist. The 120 minutes of *Pilgrim, Farewell,* where Michael Roemer repeats the theme of his earlier documentary *Dying,* and tells the fictional story of a woman with terminal cancer, are not worth a single minute of the filmed agony of Nick Ray. Roemer's film does not convey the slightest hint of that "immense frivolité des mourants" (thus Proust, on his deathbed) that pervades instead *Lightning Over Water* and which is shown at every moment in the unfinished spectacle of this film at (and of) work. Similarly, the sly tragi-comical references to "grey power" made by the three retired folks of Brest's *Going in Style* pale before that History of Cinema as Great Incident which the old, not yet retired, Welles writes in front of a moviola in *Filming Othello,* a work that shows how marginality will pay provided it be exhibited strictly for what it is — the very condition of making film. Films such as these, such as Fassbinder's and Wender's and Welles's, leave us with real depression. The others, with their good intentions, their *décor,* their protagonists (especially the "negative" ones: macho men, adults) of the Great Social Vindication, are frankly boring. And nothing is more boring than a sadness without depression. Which is what one gets from the grey metropolitan ghettoes of Turin in Squitieri's *Razza selvaggia* (Savage Breed) and Serra's *La ragazza di via Millelire* (The Girl of Millelire Street), from the destitute Milan efficiencies of Orsini's *Uomini e no* (Men and Not Men) and the deteriorated Atlantic City efficiencies of Malle's film; not to mention the enviable typology of unheeded despots — the husbands, once masters now defeated: wife-beaters in *Lena Rais* by the German Rischert, slow-witted ex-sixtyeighters in Comencini's *Vòltati Eugenio* (Turn Around Eugenio), addicts and pushers in *Atlantic City* or Pirri's *Eroina* (Heroin), blind patriarchs in *Petrijin Venac* (Petria's Grown) by Yugoslavia's Karanovíc criminals in *Gloria,* deceivers of rare banality in Harvey's unbearable *Richard's Things* (Great Britain). The victims of men so intolerable, of tyrants so worn out, can only seek refuge, indeed dissolve, in the improbable emancipation of a slow motion freeze, a fixed frame in grey (again) or a solitary long shot with triumphant crescendo of violins. Nothing else triumphs, however, besides boredom.

The Winners

In these dark times of recession, some dreams of glory still come true, it seems. At least Cassavetes's do. We must have looked angrily at the box office record of *Saint Jack,* which after all is but a polished remake of his earlier *Killing of a Chinese Bookie* (distributed only recently in Europe and practically disfigured by the cuts, 40 minutes of projection time), and he must have said to himself: let Columbia Pictures recognize, once and for all, the centrality of marginality, and let it invest accordingly in my new film, with an appropriate, world-wide promotional campaign. Shrewdly engineered on paper, Operation *Gloria* works on the screen, too. Weaving its way through the New York skyline (as in Siegel's *Dirty Harry),* the camera dips under the Brooklyn Bridge in the deep cobalt of the metropolitan night, then plunges into the lurid alleys of the South Bronx. This solemn, apocalyptic ouverture opens the films which Cassavetes had to make, which his put-off admirers were waiting for, and which critics will take seriously because the larger public too, now, has a share in a "cinema of emotions," in perfect balance between irony, social satire and narrative hold. *Gloria* is the harsh remake of *Kramer vs. Kramer,* baton of the painful but inexorable recomposition of the American family. The former doll of a mafia boss, Gloria makes it immediately clear that she doesn't like children and never will. A little Puerto Rican boy practically falls on her out of the blue when her ex-friends, the mobsters, massacre his family (his father has betrayed the syndicate). Stuck with a six-year-old kid, colorless as Kramer junior was rosy-cheeked, and relentlessly chased by the hit-men unleashed in his pursuit, Gloria jumps into the action. Through the streets of New York, the middle aged woman and the man too young to be a man make trouble for those who consider them weak, useless, undesirable and unproductive subjects. Gloria is handy with the gun; the sequence of the shoot-out with a car chockfull of killers (the boy holding on to her skirt, Gloria in high heels, the automobile rearing up and capsizing) sends the audience into a frenzy of applause. Cassavetes plays with the genre and reshuffles the cards, leaving its structure untouched. A woman and a child, hunted down by the law of the stronger, may have no longer any identity, be neither mother nor son, even forget their racial origin, one a Yankee, the other a Puerto Rican. In the last sequence the screen loses its color, like Venice and Scorsese's threatened creatures, as the black and white cools down the images of a happy ending, perhaps only dreamt of; but to enjoy this rare triumph of a pair of marginal people, one must forget — against the Pittsburgh Carson Memorial in the background, eloquent in its own way — that Cassavetes is actually celebrating their death and burial.

In recent years Louis Malle has been working in North America *(Pretty Baby).* This time, with screenwriter John Guare, he has found the pivot of a story in the hub of the roulette wheel which, in the congenial setting of *Atlantic City,* joins the theretofore mediocre destinies of an aspiring blackjack dealer and an old weather-beaten gangster. The dangers of *déjà vu* were many, both in the gambling theme and — as we've seen — in the marginal pair motif. But watch out. In his formula the "European" elements are not to be underestimated. First of all, Malle's Atlantic City is an ultramodern one, in which the old neogothic mansions are being torn down to make room for plastic-fantastic, neon-lit casinos: it is not Vegas, but a gambling city cut to the measure of man, more "poetic" (there is the ocean, for example, punctuating the pathetic memories of old Burt Lancaster: "If you saw how beautiful it was, twenty years ago"); in a word, more "European." One is reminded of Giorgio Strehler, who reinvented it for his staging of Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth* at Milan's Piccolo Teatro; and of Rafelson, and "anti-American" filmmaker, who used it as the decaying set of *The King of Marvin Gardens.* Now Malle, with his pure Dada sensibility, digs into the gallery of cinema's *objets d'art* (the American film *noir)* for a finely honed detail, the anonymous small-time gangster, and places him center screen, smack in the middle of the frame, embarrassing like Oldenburg's huge toothpaste. To be sure, it's the same old plot of emargination and vindication. But the operation is performed with elegance, with melancholic humor and a stylish wink meant for the sophisticated in the audience: in order to make and to watch a movie — Malle is suggesting — one must be something of a rebellious dealer. One must be quick with the pace of the game, to make money, and sometimes even prepared to get fired. Like Sally, who will follow her dream to Montecarlo, Malle has landed in Venice. He has won, and probably will make money as well.

Much more difficult to keep up with the great Theodoros Anghelopoulos. Intransigent *auteur,* he relentlessly portrays the rhythms and gestures of daily life, and the *temps morts* usually edited out of a film, merging real time and ritual time in endlessly slow historical-ideological *tableaux.* Here in Venice there is disagreement: one viewer invokes the muse of poetry, another the muse of boredom (do they exist?). One speaks of *O Megalèxandros* as "a hymn to boredom," hailing a bill of law that would ban any use of the long take for the next 25 years: not a bad idea, actually, if it could guarantee to keep us from the objective discomfort of a four-hour long *grande bouffe;* but it can't — as Dreyer has shown — since the problem of the relation between filmic time (and rhythm) and perception is much more complex than a joke, however clever. Megalèxandros is a bandit, not entirely fictional, who lives in Epirus at the turn of the century, a rebel mountaineer donning the golden helmet and the charismatic nickname of Alexander the Great. Imprisoned by the System, he escapes taking along as hostages a group of British aristocrats, and nearly causes a European war, holding in check both politicians and the military. But eventually, isolated and embittered, caught in a net of intrigue, ignorance and megalomania, he ends up torn to pieces by his own men and at last made into a legend. With the obstinacy characteristic of his hero, Anghelopoulos dragged a troupe of 200 people through the Macedonian mountains to a forsaken village — no roads, no telephone — under living conditions halfway between the commune and the Gulag, in order to shoot 13 hours of film (then edited to 4 hours); a film in which, just below the surface of the historical fresco, one plainly reads the ideological theorem on Stalinism, divided between dream and science, glory and blood. The interminably long takes and circular pans, the shifts in tone from Sophocles to Grand Guignol that accompany the film's reflection on the divisions within the left, make Anghelopoulos the best and most interesting epigone, not of Jancsò in the sixties but of himself. Whether this film is greater or lesser than his renowned *O Thiasos* (The Performance), it is a mannerist work bearing the unmistakeable seal of high quality.

The Golden Lion award for the first film went to *Ajandék ez a nap* (A Special Day). The Hungarian Péter Gothár, 33, who has worked mostly in television, has brought to Venice yet another "woman's film." Or rather, the twin portrait in lap dissolve of a grade school teacher beset with a married lover and housing problems, and of a country which, like her, works hard, has a married lover (the Soviet Union) it would like to break up with, and longs for a more tranquil and independent "home." The metaphor is gutsy in its overtness, but not unusual in the new — and not so new — Hungarian cinema; nor is the obsession with stylistic perfection, which here constructs a formally flawless film, perhaps too much so. Amidst carnal and psychological violence, alcoholics creeping along the walls, gangster hunts and phoney marriages, in a Budapest lurid with poverty, the teacher's rise toward emancipation appears to be somehow irresistible. She is luckier than her colleague Diane Keaton in *Looking For Mr. Goodbar:* though the money problem remains, at least she gets rid of all the males and finally finds an "authentic" love relationship in, as it happens, her lover's wife. It must be said that Gothár's mise-en-scène has earned a prize to a less than interesting, if fashionable, script. This is what the typists, semiologists and iron critics of the jury must have thought; plus the fact that the other entries were no better. Right.

The "events"

The most impatiently awaited "event" of the Festival was Antonioni's *Il mistero di Oberwald* (The Mystery of Oberwald), work of an *auteur* in tangle with the new electronic technologies. Looking back, the most memorable event was the 15-hour-long television serial adapted by Fassbinder from Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz.*

Antonioni. On the screen the head titles explode forward, as in the "Space Invaders" videogame. But, no: they are gothic characters in an apocalyptic sky, and its color is changing "unnaturally" under our very eyes. A bolt of light shoots on the Visconti-like castle of Oberwald — the atmosphere is that of a gothic mystery tale — and on with the drama, Cocteau's *The Two-Headed Eagle.* The eagle has two heads, and the characters two hearts in this court drama of ambivalence and duplicity; but Antonioni immediately releases it from the ecstasies of the original and any further association with Cocteau. A queen who could be Elisabeth of Austria evokes the ghost of her husband, killed by a terrorist on their wedding day; as she looks at the king's life-size portrait at the other end of a table set for two, a young assassin who resembles the king irrupts into the room. The two will then discuss power and the countering of power, elaborating on the theme of terrorism with a human face. But soon the director leaves their stage and aims the camera at the flowers on the table. And then begin the chromatic transformations as per his video experiments, the ludic ingenuity of a newly found technique (or rather, semi-new, if one considers the twenty or so past years of video art). The villainous Count of Föhn is flooded with greens and violets; the face of Monica Vitti — who acts as if she were in one of her usual roles as petty bourgeoise in a *commedia all'italiana,* complete with Romanesque slang inflections — goes from suntan to cadaverous grey, registering the effects of unfathomable feelings (or of the electronic keyboard). The screen has no depth, the images vibrate and ghost as on a tv screen when the reception is poor. In the finale, it is the clouds which announce the tragedy (since that, we almost forgot, is what the film is about), turning decidedly yellow. During the press conference, Antonioni preempts the question stating candidly: "Don't ask me why the clouds are yellow in the final scene: I did it on impulse, an expressive need." Was it to humanize technology, to mould it to the thing called poetry? Perhaps. Actually, if color is a trick *(trucage)* of cinema, in this film it is utilized in the manner of Méliès: something of a "never before seen," which nevertheless yields only a weak scenographic result, a surface effect, compared with the depth of that other trick, cinema. Some fans, impatient and perverse, already suggest touching up the film with black & white video. Those of us who are more patient and less perverse just wait for the video version of Oberwald. And we especially wait for the Empire, about to strike again.

Berlin. Seven days of standing in line and carry-out sandwiches to see it. And crowds of interviewers and photographers out to capture him, Rainer Fassbinder, the only true pin-up of the Lido, in his hat, t-shirt and welder's goggles on a face swollen and pale like that of his hero, Franz Biberkopf. Why all this commotion, this unprecedented rating, higher than any (splendid) Mizoguchi or scoops like, say, Schroeter's extraordinary *La répétition générale* — he, too, new German cinema, he, too, present but quietly ignored by the masses and their media — ? The first answer that comes to mind is: from the superb array of characters — all main — and interweaving stories of the Weimar era, Fassbinder has drawn a cinematic *summa,* a full state of the art; on the one hand, the coming of age of the ex-new German cinema, its achieved historical maturity since Schroeter's *The Kingdom of Naples,* Schleondorff's *The Tin Drum,* Syberberg's *Hitler* and Fassbinder's own *The Marriage of Maria Braun;* on the other, from within the Fassbinder filmography, the achieved maturity of the lower class thematics in his early films *(The Merchant of Four Seasons,* etc.), of his penchant for the sophisticated, slightly rétro, melodrama *(The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant, Effi Briest, Bollwieser),* or the motifs of erotic ambiguity *(Petra von Kant* again, *Fox and His Friends, In a Year of 73 Moons).* As all these films return here, in Berlin Alexanderplatz, in the same way in which the women in Biberkopf's life surround the protagonist in his dream, it is the film itself that has the answer. A European answer, in its thematic breadth and in the maturity of its mise-en-scène, to the American neo-kolossalism. Perhaps, after *Berlin,* the Empires will not rule alone the cinema of the 80s.

Worthy of Note.

Something else must be mentioned. First, another "event": the 32 films by Kenji Mizoguchi, a unique exhibition and the only one in the world, insufficiently highlighted by a panel of critics hastily put together, though well provided with an excellent catalogue. Since, unfortunately, no one has bought it, where will it be seen again? Then, the labor of love which restored Visconti's *Ludwig,* the homage to Peter Sellers *(Lolita* restored to its original 153 minutes), Zanussi's

Kontrakt, Resnais's *Mon Oncle d'Amérique,* lmamura's *Fukushu Suru wa Wareni Ari* (Vengence is Mine), and last but not least, three Hitchcock jewels, *Rear Window, Vertigo* and *The Trouble with Harry,* borrowed from the Cinémathèque Française and otherwise unavailable to the public.

A conclusion of sorts.

The real winners in Venice were not the Lions, but those 4-legged creatures, minuscule in the studio and gigantic on the screen, defeated by Luke Skywalker. *Empire,* synthesis of all kinds of "special" effects, marks the triumph of the imaginary set: reality, were it only a landscape, cannot but disappear even when it's there; it must "look" artificial. To directly produce the reproduction of reality, to print films and photographs without having had to film, to "take" bodies and things: will that be the task of cinema in the future, the construction of a hyporeality? We shall see. Meanwhile, at the Festival's close, we have seen *The Trouble With Harry,* a game of purely mental illusions around a mysterious corpse; a very "tricky" film, but with no "special" effects.

translated by Teresa de Lauretis

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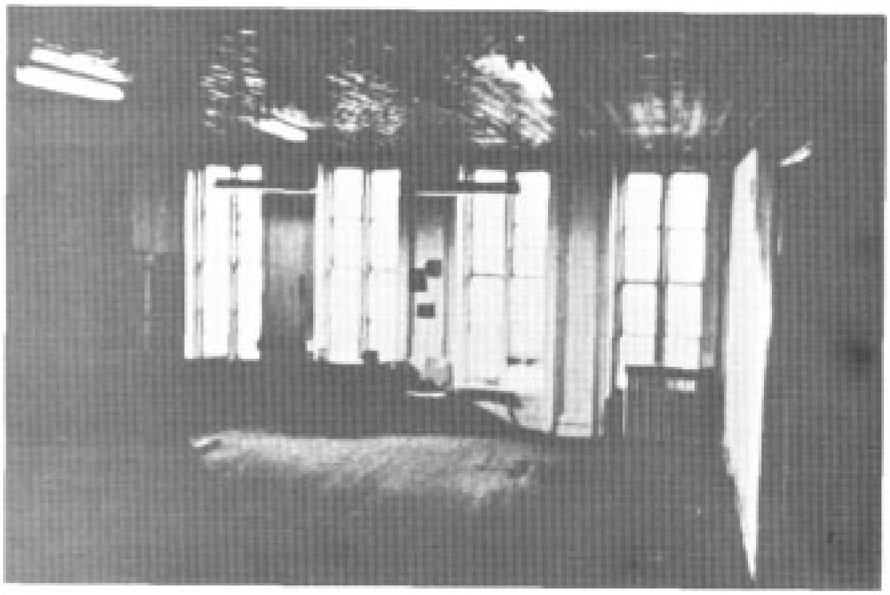

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LOSS AND RECUPERATION IN THE GARDEN OF DELIGHTS

by Katherine S. Kovacs

The thirteen feature films which Spanish director Carlos Saura has made over the past two decades bear witness to the experiences of his generation, those who were born in the 1930's and who came of age after the Spanish Civil War, in the 1940's and 1950's, when Spaniards lived isolated from the rest of Europe, still attempting to come to terms with the aftermath of that war both in economic and in psychic terms.[1] Saura's debut and development as a filmmaker coincide with another period of radical economic and social change in Spain, the 1960's and 1970's, when tourism, foreign investments and a drive towards industrialization dramatically transformed Spain from an underdeveloped rural country to an industrialized urbanized nation. Saura's films testify to the impact of both of these upheavals on his countrymen and point to some of the unresolved conflicts which they have generated. As he noted, "What interests me most in the Spanish middle class are the contradictions which can be observed. We are dealing with a country which is being quickly transformed, where technocracy has become important but where attitudes are still very close to what they were in the Middle Ages. The conception of religion, of family life, of the way in which a mother should bring up her children, the idea that the man is the head of the family ... none of these assumptions have been questioned."[2]

For many years under Franco it was not possible to confront these issues directly. All of the arts and especially the cinema were subject to close scrutiny. Film scripts had to be submitted before shooting was authorized and the final movie had to be approved by the censor before release. In the early years of the Franco regime and especially during the 1950's, the few movies made which dealt with the past tended to glorify Spanish history; those with contemporary settings resolutely avoided any political or social commentary. In the 1960's the government began to encourage young filmmakers through the granting of subsidies and the much heralded "New Spanish Cinema" Movement was born. This movement reflected the Spanish government's search for a new image abroad; it did not really open up Spanish cinema. Saura and the other young filmmakers who debuted during this period were still severely restricted as to the subjects which they could present in their movies. Although themes of current or political interest such as the Opus Dei, the Civil War, or the Spanish Republic could be mentioned *en passant,* this was more for foreign rather than domestic consumption. While the films were shown in their entirety at film festivals, they were usually highly censored or not even released at home.[3]

This situation started to change in the early 1970's, during the five years preceding Franco's death when a so-called *dictablanda* (soft dictatorship) replaced the *dictadura* and a number of outstanding films were made which dealt in an indirect often allegorical way with some of the attitudes, obsessions, problems, and life styles of Spaniards. These would include Victor Erice's *Spirit of the Beehive,* which describes a child's perceptions of real and imaginary worlds; José Luis Borau's *The Poachers,* a parable of sexual and political repression; and Jaime de Arminan's *My Dearest Señorita,* a black comedy on sex roles. During those five years, Saura himself directed four films: *The Garden of Delights* (1970), *Ana and the Wolves* (1972), *Cousin Angelica* (1973), and *Cria* (1975).[4]

In these films Saura presented protagonists who were in some way representative of the Spanish middle class, protagonists whose present situations attested to the impact of the past upon their lives — both their private past experiences and the collective past of Spain. Two themes recur with insistency in these works: childhood and the Spanish Civil War. For Saura the War is the central issue for all Spaniards: "It ... had a decisive influence not only on those like us who lived through it ... but also on later generations, on people born afterwards and who, while not experiencing it directly, suffered its consequences in the form of an entire political system, a repressive system of education, personal conflicts, and family losses (and those who were executed, died in battle or went into exile.)"[5]

Like Saura himself, a number of his protagonists were children during the 1930's. Their memories of the war are crucial to the way in which, as adults, they view themselves and respond to the world around them. In order to come to terms with their present conflicts and problems, some of them embark upon a search which is at once personal and collective, a search to resurrect their authentic past memories, to recapture what has been obliterated or falsified by the official interpretations which the victors have given to the events of the past. The first of Saura's searching protagonists is Antonio Cano in *The Garden of Delights.* This man who is virtually without memory, must recuperate it in his own way. He embarks upon a search which begins with the Civil War (referred to directly here for the first time in Spanish film)[6] and eventually leads him to confront the conditions of life in modern Spain.

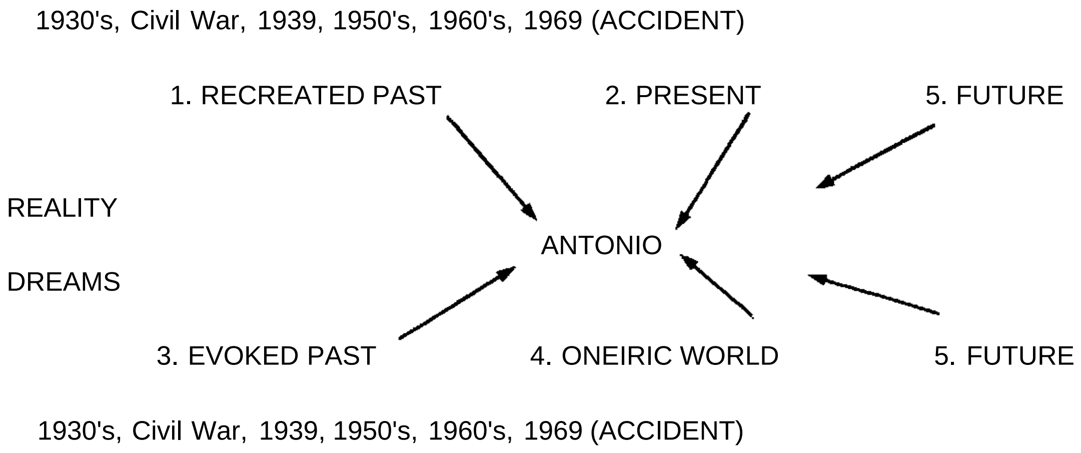
Antonio's biography summarizes the history of Spain over the past forty years. Formerly a wealthy industrialist, "an intelligent man without scruples,"[7] Antonio is a member of the class of technocrats responsible for Spain's industrial transformation. In 1969, at the age of 45, he has a serious car accident which leaves him brain damaged and partially paralyzed. The film begins after the accident, during the period of convalescence, when he is no longer "normal." Except for an occasional flashback to the period before the accident, throughout most of the film our attention remains resolutely fixed upon the new Antonio, a man without memory, without the ability to speak or to act.[8] Antonio floats between objectivity and subjectivity, incapable of distinguishing between reality and dreams, past and present. He does not remember the past or understand the present, but merely watches as life unfolds before his eyes. Throughout the movie, the viewer watches Antonio watching. His role as spectator is stressed from the film's opening scene.[9]

The movie opens with a long traveling shot through a menacingly empty factory. From there we cut to a woman who is gazing into a mirror as she applies makeup. She compares her face to that of another woman whose photograph is placed next to her. An elderly gentleman by her side oversees the operation. In the manner of a stage or even of a film director, he instructs the woman on what to do, gives orders to the servants who are arranging the furniture and selects the music to be played on the victrola. The record which he chooses is a well-known song from the 1930's entitled, appropriately enough, "Recordar" ("Remembrance"). When a pig is inexplicably introduced into the room (shades of Buñuel), the preparations for the still-unrevealed ceremony are complete. Then we cut to a shot of Antonio who is noiselessly moving towards the camera. Saura focuses upon his eyes so that his role as spectator is established and then pulls the camera back so that we see him in a wheelchair. Then the action begins. What follows is a psychodramatic recreation of a traumatic incident from the childhood of Antonio. As if they were onstage (we have a long shot of the characters framed by the screen), the elderly gentleman who is his father shouts and gesticulates at the woman (an actress playing the part of his mother) who is dissolved in tears. They have decided to punish the five-year-old Antonio for some unnamed action by locking him up with a pig. As they push Antonio towards the room where the pig awaits, we see a look of utter terror on his face. It is nevertheless clear that he does not understand what is happening, that he is confused and frightened by a scene with which he cannot identify, because without memory he does not recognize his own reflection in the mirror which the family holds up. When he is finally released from the room, he has fainted. Antonio's father has succeeded in frightening him without jarring his memory.

The purpose of the scene is to give Antonio back a memory, to impose it from the outside, in the hopes of eliciting a corresponding recollection which would transform him from spectator to participant in his own biography. Thus for the family the scene is an invocation, a magical rite in which, as in Buñuel's *Exterminating Angel,* everyone must return to his original place for the spell to be broken. For this reason, the father has gone to such lengths to recreate the period, the exact setting, the gestures, all enacted in an histrionic acting style reminiscent of the films of the 1930's as well. This is the first of three recreations of scenes from the childhood of Antonio. Later we see his first communion, interrupted by Republican supporters who break down the church door; still later, there is newsreel footage of Franco's troops entering Madrid, followed by a scene in which Antonio's mother (the same actress) dies. Each of these scenes is planned and performed by members of Antonio's family. By duplicating the experiences of Antonio the child, they hope to resurrect Antonio the adult who was destroyed by the car crash.

In all of these reenactments, Antonio's family and friends represent themselves as they were at different moments in time. They reveal their cruelty, indifference, and brutality both in the past, where we see the extent to which Antonio's upbringing was based upon guilt and fear, and in the present, for the experiences which they force him to relive are all negative ones which induce terror and pain. (Indeed his father chose the episode with the pig precisely because it was one which Antonio relived in his childhood nightmares). Ironically, the reenactments do not result in Antonio remembering himself. He is now an objective spectator, severed from his personal connections with his own biography, struck by the coercion and manipulation routinely practiced by these people onstage or off. He therefore resists accepting these visions of himself and of his life.

Thus the film opens with a recreated scene from the past. This is only one of five planes of action on which the movie unfolds. These five planes are described by Saura in his shooting script.[10] In the first category of "recreated past," he includes not only the decor, objects, and past scenes which Antonio's family recreates, but also newsreel footage, videotapes, photographs, newspapers and other sources which they use to document the facts of Antonio's life. The film is constructed in such a way that sequences taking place on these five different narrative levels are juxtaposed and combined in ever new and startling combinations. The following diagram shows Antonio in relation to these different narrative levels:


1930's, Civil War, 1939, 1950's, 1960's, 1969 (ACCIDENT)
1. RECREATED PAST
2. PRESENT
5. FUTURE
REALITY
ANTONIO
DREAMS
3. EVOKED PAST
4. ONEIRIC WORLD
5. FUTURE
1930's, Civil War, 1939, 1950's, 1960's, 1969 (ACCIDENT)

Throughout the film, we move without transition from one realm of action to another, from reality to dreams and back again. Following the opening sequence, we switch to the second plane of action, set in the present. In present sequences, Saura realistically conveys the extent of Antonio's illness, his physical and mental limitations, and shows us the impact of his state upon his family in financial as well as in psychological terms.[11] The tone of the present sequences ranges from humor to real pathos as we see the comic and tragic contrasts between the present Antonio and the rather unpleasant but eminently capable man he once was. All of the present sequences depend for their impact upon the implicit contrast between the two Antonios. The characters in the movie have two distinct ways of responding to Antonio. They alternate between the two, sometimes within the same scene. Either they attempt to treat him as he used to be, a grotesquely inappropriate course of action which provides an ironic reversal (since the capable Antonio is no longer the real one) or they act as if he were a child.[12]

By reversing the roles and having someone treat an adult as if her were a child, Saura is offering a critique of the cruel restrictive method of childrearing which we have already seen Antonio's father use on Antonio and which Antonio had in turn imposed upon his own son. This theme will receive extensive development in a number of Saura's subsequent films. As he once remarked: "I think that childhood is not the paradise which one always talks about, at least to the extent that my own childhood was not that way at all. ... in childhood the individual experiences nightly terrors and solitude because of the child's insecurity and lack of knowledge about what's going to happen. ... There is also the conditioning in the system of education which claims to make the child a domesticated creature through a series of repressions. As a result, children feel weak and insecure."[13] Throughout *The Garden of Delights,* Antonio is reduced to the level of a defenseless child subject to society's efforts to educate, direct, control, and repress him.

This view of Antonio receives its richest elaboration in the film's second sequence when we watch the nurses prepare Antonio for bed, place a rubber sheet over the mattress, and tuck him in. As they turn out the lights and the camera focuses upon his face, one cannot help but think of Proust's Marcel, the invalid who lies in bed at night and returns "without effort to an earlier stage of my life, now forever outgrown."[14]

In the following sequence, Antonio also returns to an earlier stage of his life. It is morning and as he lies in an outrageous 1930's seashell bed, a beautiful woman enters the room to awaken him. This is Antonio's aunt. As they begin to converse, the viewer has the impression that he is watching a beautiful film within a film. This might be a stylized rendering of one of Antonio's authentic childhood memories or the transposition of a scene from a movie which he remembers having seen as a child. In any event, this dream-memory belongs to the third category of narration, which Saura calls that of the "evoked past": isolated memories which Antonio still possesses of his former life. This memory seems to have been triggered by the song "Recordar," Antonio's "petite madeleine," played by his father in the first sequence and repeated here. In both scenes, we hear the voice of the famous Imperio Argentina, who had introduced "Recordar" in a movie made in 1931 entitled, *Su noche de bodas (Her Wedding Night).* The art deco setting of this sequence is therefore on one level a concrete parody of the Paramount Pictures style of that film and of other 1930's movies, an evocation (albeit in exaggerated form) of an atmosphere which prevailed in Spain during the 1930's and which is associated with the advent of the Spanish Republic.[15]

On another level the self-conscious nature of this parody leads the viewer to believe that these might also be memories which Carlos Saura himself has of the films which he saw or heard about as a child, films which provided an escape hatch from his real existence. Indeed, the movie is filled with allusions to other movies including *Alexander Nevsky, An American Tragedy,* and others which Saura associates with incidents from his own childhood.[16] In The Garden of Delights certain scenes have special personal resonances for the director as well as for his protagonist.

In the case of Antonio, often his memories pivot upon the same period as those of his family's but interpret events in wholly different ways. Here for example Antonio resurrects the same era of the 1930's which his father had recreated in the films opening but he offers a correction, or rather, a reversal of the earlier situation. Instead of being punished for some transgression, Antonio is now reliving a pleasurable erotic experience — his awakening and his sexual awakening by an aunt for whom he felt a vaguely incestuous attraction. The erotic nature of this feeling is underscored throughout the scene by the music, the decor, the curtains fluttering in the breeze, and by the fact that Saura presents Antonio as an adult who is being caressed by a beautiful woman. The latent content of this scene is manifested by a substitution. Both in the scene with his son and here with his aunt, Antonio the adult is placed in the position of a child. Here however, as in all of Antonio's own memories, he is actively participating by playing the part of himself as a child. He uses his voice, facial expressions, and gestures to convey the difference in age. This novel technique in film is analogous to the perceptions of a patient in psychoanalysis who, in reliving a past moment, identifies totally with his former childhood self. He therefore does not see himself realistically in the form of a child but in the body of an adult as he appears at the moment when he is remembering.

This is the first scene in the movie when we see an event from Antonio's point of view. (Later this scene will be replayed and parodied when his former mistress Nicole wakes him up and stirs his memory of the accident while the spectator watches Antonio's family watching them on closed circuit TV). In the sequence with his aunt, we have entered Antonio's mind for the first time and watch him perform in a scene of his own creation. But it is only as the scene progresses that we realize that we are participating in a memory evoked by Antonio himself. In retrospect we realize that the doors and windows symbolize an opening into Antonio's mind and that the sounds of tennis balls which intrude as he embraces his aunt belong to the next scene.[17] In general Saura conveys the fact that a scene is not real through certain details of decor and acting style rather than by means of dissolves, cuts, or soft focus shots which are usually used in movies to indicate the passage from reality to memory, from present to past.

The same holds true for sequences which belong to the fourth category of narration, what Saura calls Antonio's "oneiric world."[18] Throughout the film Antonio has hallucinations, sees visions or images which do not have any apparent relation to his past or present life. Although they occasionally merge with visions from his evoked past, they tend to be more fleeting in nature. They appear without warning and are usually highly charged, emotive and violent. They might correspond to obsessions or fears which Antonio is unable to articulate. In this category one finds the recurring motif of knights on horseback and combats with shields. Sometimes in some undefinable way these images seem to suggest that Antonio is attempting to come to terms with what has happened to him. The frequent shots of doors opening and closing and of long corridors which all seem to lead to a factory or attic filled with broken-down machinery might represent a mental landscape, the debris of Antonio's own brain through which he is painfully making his way. At other times these visions suggest that he is working through certain vaguely remembered experiences. At one point Antonio sees a child on a sled. This child immediately becomes Antonio himself moving rapidly towards the pool in his wheelchair. His bloodied hands attest to his efforts to stop himself, but to no avail. He plunges headlong into the pool. As we learn more about his accident later in the film, it become clear that the sensation of rolling uncontrollably is somehow associated with that event. In any case, like Antonio's evoked memories, these images which we might call his daymares, are presented in a concrete and palpable manner. Our only hint that Antonio is about to "see" something is when the camera focuses upon his face as he gazes off into space.

Throughout the film there is a fluid passage from this world of daymares to reality and back again. This fluidity is suggested when we hear sounds in one scene which correspond to the image found in the next one. An example of the way in which dreams penetrate reality may be found in the sequence in the church, the recreation of Antonio's first communion. When he suddenly remembers the Civil War, he and we hear the sound of airplanes passing overhead. In terror he calls out for his aunt who appears and saunters towards Antonio, making her way slowly through the crowd of real "extras" whom Antonio's father had assembled for the reenactment. A second time Antonio calls out for his aunt and again she makes her way through the crowd. This imaginary figure, invoked by Antonio to protect him, stands among the real actors as palpable as any of the other performers. Her presence is a graphic manifestation of the strength of the authentic imaginary when juxtaposed with the false real.

It is interesting to note that many of Antonio's visions tempt him in the garden. It is there that he spends most of his days, engaged in the painful often frustrating task of learning to write his name, a task from which he is easily distracted, by the sound of the wind in the trees, by the birds, and by the fantastic figures which act out scenes on his private stage. In spite of the fact that these hallucinations and phantoms often frighten him, he nevertheless finds comfort gazing at what Saura calls "the serene, friendly and beautiful expanse of *his* garden."[19]

In this context the title which Saura gave to his film is significant. It is a clear reference to the triptych by Hieronymous Bosch which now hangs in the Prado. This alterpiece which is also known as *The Earthly Paradise,* has been in Spain since the time of Felipe II who placed it in the Escorial, admiring it as "a painted satire on the sins and ravings of man."[20] The title comes from the central panel situated between Eden on the left and hell on the right. Its meaning is still a subject of some debate. There are those for whom the garden of delights represents the childhood of the world, the golden age before the flood when men and beasts dwelt together satisfying all of their sensual appetites freely and without guilt. For Carlos Fuentes who describes the painting in a chapter of *Terra Nostra,* Bosch was depicting the rites of the Adamite Christian sect who saw in carnal delights the road to paradise.[21] For other observers, however, Bosch's painting continues a long Medieval tradition which designates the garden as a false paradise which dazzles the eyes with an appearance of pleasure, promises instantaneous and complete gratification only to lead to ruin and the damnation of the soul.

Whatever interpretation one might choose to give to Bosch's giant strawberries, monstrous fish, and dismembered bodies, as Saura himself notes, "The title (of the painting) corresponds with what is narrated in the film. It is coherent with the painting ... the painting suggests something of the movie."[22] The painting suggests something of the movie because following his accident Antonio Cano finds himself in his private garden of delights, situated halfway between the innocent world of childhood and the purgatory of adult life. The style of Bosch's painting, a style developed for the scrupulous depiction of the here and now probably also appealed to Saura, who in his own *Garden of Delights* also presents the figures of dreams in an utterly realistic manner. Indeed throughout the film one finds a curious reversal: while the dream figures possess a palpability and reality of their own, the purportedly realistic ones often seem stylized and false. This is in keeping with Saura's avowed intention to make of his film "a kind of grotesque altarpiece."[23] As he writes in the notes for his screenplay, this was to be "to a certain extent, a view of the last few years of Spain, a very special chronicle."[24]

The idea of the garden or forest as a place of revelation is one which is found in a number of recent Spanish films. In José Luis Borau's *The Poachers,* in Manuel Guttierrez Aragon's *In the Heart of the Forest* and in others, these areas are presented as the domain of fairy tales and legends, the place where mysterious magical rites are enacted. In speaking of the evocative power of the garden or woods Borau recently noted in a lecture: "The Spain of today is largely a dry and arid country worn out by centuries of erosion and war. But in ancient times, a Roman historian described Spain as a land with so many trees that a squirrel could travel from one end to the other merely by jumping from tree to tree." The garden or forest is a privileged place, a mythological space where the individual or the Spanish nation can find refuge from time and history. This is true for Antonio. Throughout the film the garden is shown in opposition to the house.[25] It is in the house that the father orchestrates the grotesque reenactments of Antonio's life and in the house that social rituals are performed. It is perhaps not by chance that Antonio's family is in the construction business, a point brought home by the photographs which his father assembles of the factories and buildings which they have constructed over the years. It is in terms of this dichotomy between the house and the garden that we should interpret the scene near the end of the film when Antonio meets the members of the board of his company. When they decide that he can no longer participate in the family business and cast him aside like a broken-down piece of machinery, his connection with the house is in some way severed. He returns to the garden for the film's final scenes, where in his own way, he will manifest the progress which he has made. There he rejects the fearful appropriation of his life by the people of the house, an appropriation not just of his past but of his future as well.

The fifth level of narration which Saura mentions is that of the protagonist's future. Throughout the film there is a movement from distant past, to recent past, to the moment of Antonio's accident, all juxtaposed with scenes from the present. When we arrive at the end of the film, we can anticipate what his future will be like. Although his family seems about to give up on him, we know that he has begun to recuperate, completely on his own and in spite of their elaborate efforts. He is no longer in a wheelchair, is able to articulate some disjointed syllables, and has more memories of the past. Although he does not totally recover his past (he never does remember the number of the Swiss bank account), he is now in a position to resist the imposition of a future upon him.

This act of resistance takes place as he and his wife Luchy walk through the garden of Aranjuez. She reminds him of all of the suffering which he had caused her before the accident but promises to care for him, to devote herself completely to him, so that he may replace the children who no longer need her. At first Antonio does not seem to respond, but points to a boat on the lake. Once they are seated in the boat, in an awkward, violent and humorous way, Antonio articulates the words, *An American Tragedy,* the title of a well-known film adaptation of a novel by Theodore Dreiser made in the 1930's, in which a young man who wishes to marry a rich girl pushes his pregnant fiancee out of a boat and drowns her. As Antonio recalls this film which he might have seen, he makes frantic but futile attempts to push Luchy out of the boat. With this act, he manifests his desire to create his own story, to counter Luchy's version of the past and to keep her version of the future from becoming his reality. His inability to do so is brought painfully home by Luchy's laughter.

Nevertheless this violent reaction paves the way for the film's final sequence where, back in his own garden, Antonio has two visions. The first is a clear and vivid memory of his car accident, where he sees his own bloody body amidst the wreckage of battered autos on the lawn. He utters the words "Do what you want with my body but don't touch my head," words which are repeated by the other Antonio in the car. In this scene where there are two Antonios the fact that the invalid one perceives the other is a sign that he has established a link with his past, recapturing his own memory and bringing his biography up to date.

In the next scene which closes the movie, he sees all of the family members on the lawn moving silently around in wheelchairs, while he himself is at first walking through the woods and then seated among them. This is an ironic statement of what Saura has been showing us throughout the film: the man who has lost his memory is the healthy one.[26] Through fantasy and dream he has found his own individual truth and liberated himself from the social and political forces which have crippled his family and which had crippled him long before the accident. This scene offers a graphic illustration of a view expressed by Spanish novelist Juan Goytisolo shortly after the death of Franco: "A people who have lived nearly forty years in a state of irresponsibility are a people necessarily ill, whose convalescence will be prolonged in direct proportion to the duration of the illness.[27]

Implicit in the structure and themes of *The Garden of Delights* is the notion of the family's illness as representative of the malady afflicting Spain after 30 years of Franco. They will not recuperate until like Antonio they begin to reconstruct an authentic past, not on the basis of what they are told or shown, not on the basis of newsreel footage, public ceremonies or photographs, but by means of the workings of the inner psyche, through those hallucinations, dreams and memories which create an authentic reality, thereby releasing them from the hold of ideology, discourse, and representation.

Saura's interest in the recuperative powers of dreams, phantasms, and illusions, his joining of social forms and ceremonies with startling often violent images, remind us of techniques which we have come to associate with another great Spanish director, Luis Buñuel. But while on one level these images are surrealistic, they also reflect certain characteristics of Spanish art and literature through the ages. Saura himself is very conscious of the ways in which his views "correspond more generally to our Spanish culture which one finds for example in the 16th and 17th centuries, in authors such as Gracián, Quevedo, Calderon, and of course, Cervantes. ... This way of transfiguring reality through the imagination and (the tendency towards) dramatic representation are without doubt also due to the weight of the Inquisition upon the intellectual life of the period and the danger that existed in saying certain things, which necessitated indirect means of expression through stories, fables, symbolism and the presentation of the imaginary."[28] Faced with a similar impossibility of saying certain things, Saura rediscovered the solution of his predecessors. *The Garden of Delights* signifies a return not only to the past of the Spanish Civil War but also the reinstatement of a certain tradition of what we might call Spanish realism. On this point the filmmaker is explicit: "We Spaniards have been cut off in great part from our roots. The Civil War was a catastrophe, the post-war period even worse. It completely halted the process of implanting Spanish culture in its past. And that past is not the glorious, idealized history which we were taught, but a fantastic, critical and realistic past that goes far beyond the narrow accepted meaning of the term realism. I think that there is a critical way of seeing reality, of showing the defects of a society, of a certain way of life and thought that is very Spanish."[29]

The realistic tradition with which Saura identifies is one in which dreams are intermeshed with reality, be it in the nightmares of a Goya or the more gentle dreams of a Don Quijote. Both of these figures, in different ways, reflect a long-standing Hispanic preoccupation with the falseness of reality and the truth of dreams, a preoccupation which Saura translates to the screen. Like Segismundo in *Life is a Dream* who exclaims, "Yet I dreamed just now. I was in a more lofty and flattering station," Antonio Cano wakes up one morning and finds that what he took for reality was "but a dream and dreams are only dreams." But in *The Garden of Delights* Saura goes one step further and suggests that the healthy mind dreaming certain dreams may use them in a constructive way: to help himself and his countrymen towards a more total perception of reality and of the problems of the day.

Much has changed in the decade since the release of *The Garden of Delights.* Following the death of Franco and the holding of free elections, film censorship was abolished and a number of documentary and feature films appeared which dealt with all aspects of the Civil War. At the same time, a host of foreign films which had formerly been prohibited flooded Spanish theatres, seriously cutting into the market for local films. Both of these trends have led to a change in direction for Spanish films of the past five years. Because of the new freedom of expression and the stiff competition of foreign movies, many Spanish filmmakers have abandoned the difficult symbolism and complex narrative structures which had characterized the films of the previous period. This is certainly true of Saura. Having exorcised the monsters from the garden of delights, he has moved towards simpler filmic forms, towards movies which are more autobiographical and less preoccupied with the past. Such films as *The Garden of Delights* correspond to a particular moment in Spanish life. They stand as documents in the history of consciousness of Spain, documents of a period which has been laid to rest. Now Saura, like his countrymen, is turning towards a future whose contours are only just beginning to emerge.

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NOTES

1. Saura shot his first feature, *Los Golfos,* in 1959. At this writing he has just finished shooting his fourteenth, a film about juvenile delinquency in Spain entitled, *¡De Prisa! ¡De Prisa!*

2. Bernard Cohn, "Entretien avec Carlos Saura," *Positif,* No. 159 (mai, 1974), 30. This an all subsequent translations from articles in French or in Spanish are my own.

3. On this period see Vicente Molina-Foix, *New Cinema in Spain* (London: British Film Institute, 1977), pp. 16-20.

4. The first three of these films form a sort of trilogy on the consequences of the Spanish Civil War. Since Saura has developed the method of working with the same producer, actors, and creative team, he tends to elaborate his ideas from one film to the next. One often has the impression that each film is a consequence of the one that went before. Sometimes scenes, images or situations from one film will recur in a later one. For example as Saura himself has noted, the idea of a grotesque altarpiece which was first utilized in *The Garden of Delights* was his point of departure for *Ana and the Wolves,* where three brothers represent the three great powers in Spain, the church, the army, and the family. (See Enrique Brasó, "Post-scriptum sur *Ana y los lobos," Positif,* No. 159, (mai, 1974), 33).

5. Enrique Brasó, "Nouvel entretien avec Carlos Saura," *Positif,* no. 162 (octobre, 1974), 33.

6. Saura had a number of political problems with the film for this reason. It was not allowed to be shown in Spain for about seven months and was withdrawn as Spain's entry into a number of film festivals. An unauthorized copy was finally sent to the New York Film Festival where it received good reviews. As a result the Spanish censor allowed it to be released in Spain with a number of cuts.

7. This notation and the biographical information on Antonio Cano found in this paragraph are taken from the unpublished shooting script of *The Garden of Delights.* It is found on the first page under the title "Essential Chronology of Antonio Martínez (sic)." All subsequent references to the script will be from this copy, which was Saura's shooting script (not the original screenplay). it contains a number of interesting drawings and handwritten notations by Saura. I am grateful to Professor Ramón Araluce for showing it to me.

8. The only real flashback in the film occurs near the end when Antonio remembers the day he went to his father's factory and told him he wanted to take over.

9. Like Saint Anthony, Antonio must endure the temptations which assail him.

10. This would be page 3 of Saura's shooting script.

11. But as Saura tells us, we also see the progress which Antonio makes. *(Ibid.,* p. 3).

12. This is illustrated in two juxtaposed scenes when Antonio wanders into his wife's room and then into that of his son. His wife tries to get Antonio act as he used to and then gives up in despair. His son, on the other hand, reverses the roles, playing the part of his father and repeating the angry words which Antonio had once used to humiliate him. Antonio flees from the room in terror.

13. Augusto M. Torres and Vicente Molina-Foix, "Entretien avec Carlos Saura," *Ecran,* No. 49 (15 juillet 1976), 55.

14. Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way,* C.K. Scott Moncrieff, trans., (New York: Random House, 1956), p. 5.

15. The aunt herself makes this association with the movies when she promises to take Antonio to see the movies which his mother won't allow him to see.

16. In speaking of the cinematographic references found in *The Garden of Delights* Saura noted: "When I was a child, I always used to play with shields and balls of wool. I used to fight with my friends. The children in the film imitate adults by imitating the knights from (*Alexander*) *Nevsky.* As for the sequence in the boat, taken from *A Place in the Sun* (the title of the 1950's remake of *An American Tragedy),* I shot it because of the sound of the bird: 'Ou, ou, ou.' In fact, I had a good time directing this film...." In "Entretien avec Carlos Saura," *Positif,* No. 159, (mai 1974), 31.

17. When the scene shifts, Antonio is seated in the park next to the tennis court where his daughter is playing tennis with some friends. He is therefore not awakening in the morning from a dream (in which case he would be in his room) but from a vision which has been prolonged during the time when he dressed (or was dressed), ate, and was wheeled out into the park.

18. In his shooting script Saura includes as part of Antonio's "oneiric world": "—Images evoked without apparent connection. — Fantastic or exaggerated images. — Dreamed images in the present or the past. — Mixture of recreated past-reality of Antonio, reality of the family, through fantasy (Antonio as a chiid — Antonio adolescent — Antonio adult — Antonio ill)." *The Garden of Delights,* page 3.

19. *Ibid.,* p. 46. (Written by hand.)

20. Walter S. Gibson, *Bosch* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), p. 156. The author goes on to note that "it was chiefly in Spain that Bosch's paintings were regarded with some of the same spirit which had conceived them. Not only did the largest proportion of his works find their way into Spain, but it was also here that the Medieval attitudes lingered long after they had disappeared in the rest of the Europe. In the Escorial the cells of the monks were filled with his pictures."

21. Fuentes, *Terra Nostra,* M. Peden, trans. (New York: Farrar, 1976), pp. 580-588.

22. Enrique Brasó, *Carlos Saura* (Madrid: Taller de Ediciones Josefina Betancor: 1974), p. 288.

23. *Ibid.,* p. 288.

24. Carlos Saura, *The Garden of Delights,* p. 55 (handwritten on a sheet labeled B).

25. As Marcia Kinder has noted, the house is "a common dream environment for expressing one's life space." Marcia Kinder, "Bergman's Red Room," *Dreamworks,* Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring, 1980), 63.

26. This scene is not found in Saura's shooting script. Indeed he seems to have had another ending in mind in which dogs were to eat up the people seated in the wheelchairs. See Brasó, *Carlos Saura,* pp. 284-288.

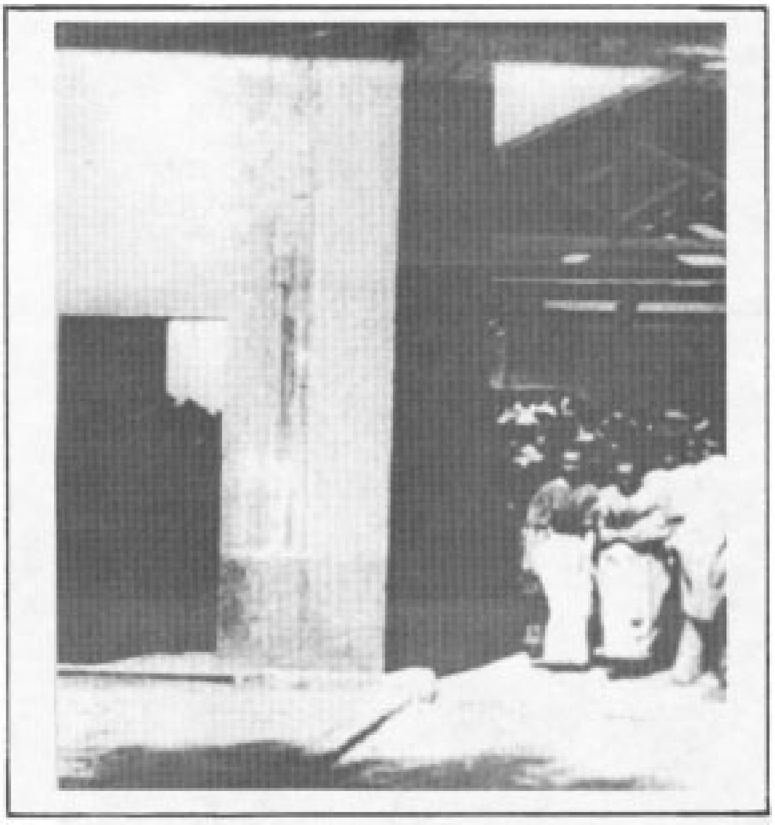
27. Quoted by Roger Mortimore, "Reporting from Madrid," *Sight and Sound,* Vol. 49, No. 3 (Summer, 1980),188.

28. Guy Braucourt, "Entretien avec Carlos Saura," *Ecran* 73, No. 18 (Sept.-Oct., 1973), 61-62.

29. Enrique Brasó, "Post-scriptum sur *Ana y los lobos." Positif* No. 159 (mai, 1974), 25.

FROM LUMIERE TO PATHE:
THE BREAK-UP OF PERSPECTIVAL SPACE

by Richard de Cordova



SORTIE D'USINE

The workers appear, exiting from the Lumière Factory at Lyon — some from a small door screen left, which masks in shadows the space behind it, the majority from a gate expanding fully across the right side of the screen. A depth is visible here, a depth through which the workers move into view and divide, exiting to either side of the *place* marked by the absence of the camera. At one point a man trots out of the crowd calling a dog behind him. When the dog appears, however, we see it at the side of another man, who is pushing a bicycle. The first man disappears "into" the foreground, screen right, while the bicycle skids to a halt in the center of the frame. Suddenly, an unidentifiable person, perhaps a child, dashes across the screen from left to right, in the foreground. Then the bicyclist resumes his movement, followed by the dog, both disappearing "into" the foreground screen left. Three more bicyclists appear, each approximating a movement "towards" the spectator, the first disappearing left, the second right and the third left.

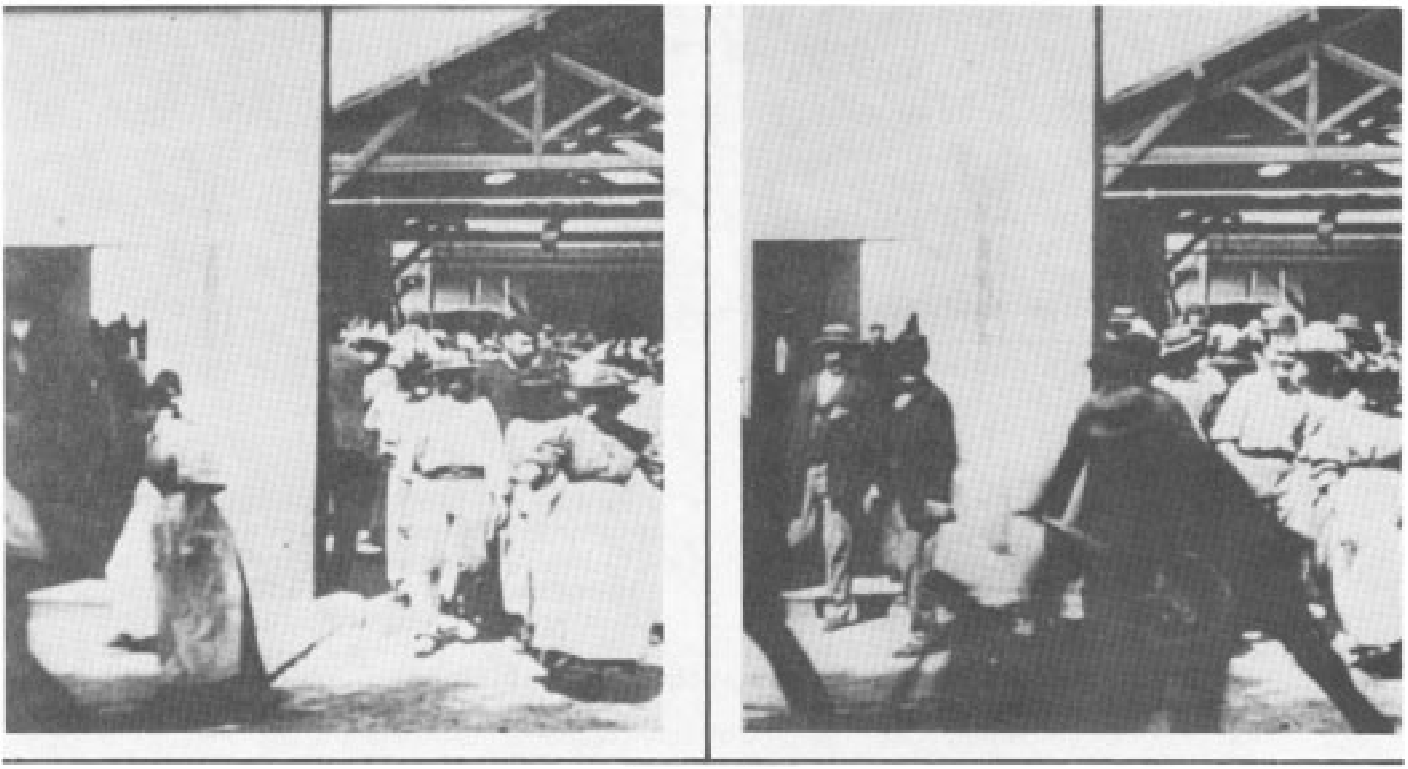
As the film ends the dog re-enters the foreground from the left, and a man runs into view from the right to help another man who has just closed the left half of the gate. Understandably, our attention has been drawn from the door on the left side of the screen. The people who exited also exited from our view in the most direct way possible. But after their exit, in the final seconds of the film, we can see two figures in the shadow of the doorway staring out as if they too were witness to some new sort of spectacle.

But what are they looking at? — the camera, the projector, the spectator, or the workers who have already exited our view? One can already see the play of absences that put this machine, the cinématographe, in place, and which in turn implicated the spectator in its play. Two figures look at the camera, which is absent. The spectator's view is that of this absence, but is not identical to it — split between the real time of filming and that of projection. The projector reconstructs the camera's view, but only by projecting it elsewhere, absenting itself from the lure of vision. Despite this, there were still perhaps those spectators who, easily distracted, followed these figures' gazes to the flickering presence, the Lumière Cinematographe.

Another possibility remains — the figures are looking at a 'real' off-screen event. In terms of what Souriau has called the "pro-filmic event" this can be argued.[1] However, this is not to say that "reality" entered into the representational system of the Lumière film as a possibility of meaning — that is, as off-screen space. It entered precisely as an absence, a consequence of the material aspect of the apparatus itself — the presence of the frame. Off-frame, not off-screen:[2] To assign a realistic space to this absence, at its origin, is to argue that this space was guaranteed by the scientific nature of the apparatus alone. Rather, it was the result of a particular work, a work to be examined here, in the films of Lumière and Pathé.

Another absence has been in movement all along, one which had constituted the most radical aspect of the cinematographic machine. Precisely, *in movement:* the spectator put to this movement, *machinated.* Thierry Kuntzel has called the effect of this machination, the defilement.

> Défilement ... means, in the vocabulary of cinema 'progression, the sliding of the film-strip through the gate of the projector' and, in military art, the use of the terrain's accidents or of artificial constructions to conceal one's movements from the enemy. In the unrolling of the film, the photograms which concern us 'pass through,' hidden from sight what the spectator retains is only the movement within which they insert themselves...[3]



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The spectator effected by this défilement — produced as its effect — was inarguable different from the spectator before the invention of the camera. This was no doubt the novelty of the cinématographe (although this novelty was soon displaced onto its scientific capacity to reproduce the real). The play of vision in painting and later photography, had been fully contingent upon a materially unrestricted time of contemplation. The Lumière films, however, appear and disappear, and, at the base of this movement, each 'photogram' appears and disappears, imperceptibly. Left out in this movement, the spectator is at the same time taken up by it, subjected to its force.

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This force is imbricated with what Barthes calls the "proairatic."[4] This would seem to make perfect sense in a work destined to equate the camera with the scientific representation of the real. The workers "défilent." The truth of *their* movement is to be the truth of the machine. But not yet — a term is in excess. The workers leave the factory and then our view, disappearing off-frame. These two actions hardly have the same status although the temptation in retrospect is to collapse their difference onto the spatio-temporal verisimilitude of the *worker's* défilement. This, however, is to ignore the historical specificity of the machine and the problems of representation it instituted.

The workers don't just move: they move *in perspective.* This must be seen as a violent discomposition of the perspectival system that had been dominant since the sixteenth century in painting (the system upon which photography itself had been modeled). Before, this system had placed the elements of the representation in a stable (but certainly not static) set of relationships.[5] The Lumière films fall solidly within the rules of perspectival representation, but the elements are in constant flux — in a mechanical movement.

The bicyclists, for example, having been masked by the crowd, appear. Such an appearance had been impossible in both painting and photography. Masking was the predominant means of the representation of depth in pre-renaissance painting and an element the system of renaissance perspective engaged. However, an object masked was, *at the same time,* an object represented. The movement of the cinématographe posed problems for the elements of perspectival representation in that these elements were submitted to the exigencies of representing a radically different syntagm.

The bicycles appear near the center of the frame and move "towards" the (absent) camera, exiting to its left or right side. It is evident that masking was only one of the elements of perspective *dis*composed in the movement of the machine. The centered vision of renaissance perspective regularized, into a mathematical system, the physical proportion of similar objects relative to their placement on different planes of the composition — from foreground to background. It also necessitated a certain distortion of objects away from this center towards the edge of the composition. Thus, the bicyclists become larger and larger as they advance. For a moment, they reach the place where they are, to the greatest extent, recognizable (the first bicyclist, in fact, stops 'here'). But then, as they continue, they become more and more distorted, and at the point of their greatest abstraction, they disappear.

Here, we return to the problem of off-frame, the "place" of this disappearance. It is only through the problems of representing movement in perspective that the frame itself becomes an active problem of representation. The figuration of this larger problematic was, in fact, effected through a work upon the existence of the frame itself. This is not surprising since the frame marks the very possibility of both renaissance perspective and movement within it.

Stephen Heath traces the historical development of the frame in the Renaissance.

> Before the fifteenth century frames hardly exist, other than as the specific architectural setting that is to be decorated (wall, altarpiece of whatever); it is during that century that frames begin to have an independant reality, this concommitant with the notion itself of a 'painting'. ... The new frame is symmetrical (the centered rectangle, clearly 'composable') and inevitable (the Quattrocento system cannot be realised without it, it becomes a reflex of 'natural' composition).[6]

In the same article Heath quotes Merleau Ponty's description of the relation between fixity and movement in film: "The spectator is not just responsive to what is moving but also to what stays in place, and the perception of movement supposes fixed frames."[7]

Thus, the frame is a "reflex" of the centered, composed space of renaissance perspective. The filmic representation of movement worked both within this centered space (necessitated by the photographic base of the apparatus) and against it, discomposing the fixed composition of objects within the fixity of the frame.

This was the structural contradiction the cinématographe introduced — an aspect of its historical specificity as a representational form. This contradiction above all presented itself as a problem of representation. In the Lumière films this problem was approached in two distinct ways.

In the first, the effect of movement was minimized and a centered space maintained. This is certainly the case in *Querelle Enfantine.* Although movement is present it is held firmly within the conventions of nineteenth century portrait photography. This solution is also employed in *Barque Sortant d'un Porte.* There is movement in perspective but the boat's slow movement out into the infinite distance doesn't disrupt the more heavily stressed aspects of the composition, which is present from the very first image of the film. The specificity of these films is thus the following: Moving objects remain centered within the frame.

The position these films take in relation to the aforementioned contradiction is obvious. They work at masking this contradiction by containing movement within the centered space specific to earlier forms of perspectival representation.

In the second solution movement is foregrounded as a movement of discomposition. As we have seen, the frame is the nexus of the contradiction through which this discomposition proceeds, permitting both a centered space and the possibility of movement 'against' that space. This contradiction is to be worked out very largely through another contraction in these films however, one which it in many ways implies. The problems of composition and discomposition are shifted onto the problem of the frame as both possibility *and* limit of representation.

It is in this way that the syntagmatic "unrolling" of the film is subsumed into a play of appearance and disappearance, a play doubling the appearance and disappearance of the film on the screen. The cinématographe entered much more into the discourse of magic and illusionism than into some ready-made institution of "the cinema." The films of Méliès demonstrate this with the clearest insistence. The Lumière films cannot be excluded from this discourse by favoring any notion of their referential transparency.

One only has to examine this play of appearance and disappearance in the films to see the extent to which this purely *discursive* aspect was foregrounded. In *Partie D'Ecarte* three men are sitting at a table in the center of the frame playing cards. A waiter suddenly enters screen right. One of the men motions to him, and he exits screen right. Seconds later he comes back in with drinks, and, after setting them on the table, he watches the men's game, hysterically pointing to their cards and laughing as if in a fit. How does one account for the waiter's seemingly unmotivated hysteria? Were it not for the excess of his movement the composition of the shot would focus the spectator's attention onto the game of cards itself. It is precisely his movement that disrupts this composition, and it is his movement, from presence to absence and back, that is the subject of the film.

However, the waiter is watching the game of cards in the center of the composition, a game which, as we have seen, is of only a secondary interest to the spectator. It is this split between the spectator's "interest" and the waiter's that disallows the possibility of seeing the waiter simply as a spectator-in-the-text. The mechanism at work here is more complex. There is definitely a complicity established between the spectator and the waiter. Diegetically his hysteria is completely unmotivated through any aspect of the card game itself, but it is through this hysteria that the spectator is addressed. The complicity between the spectator and the waiter stems from the identification of the spectator with the enunciation. The waiter is to a large extent the symbolic bearer of the enunciation, and the play of appearance and disappearance is, accordingly, figured through him. However, the enunciation of the film is not to be assigned solely to him but to the relationship between his movement and the centered space within which the card game takes place. The waiter is perhaps hysterical, because he "finds himself" in a contradictory position in relation to the centered space of the perspectival system. It can be argued that the spectator in 1895 was in exactly the same position.

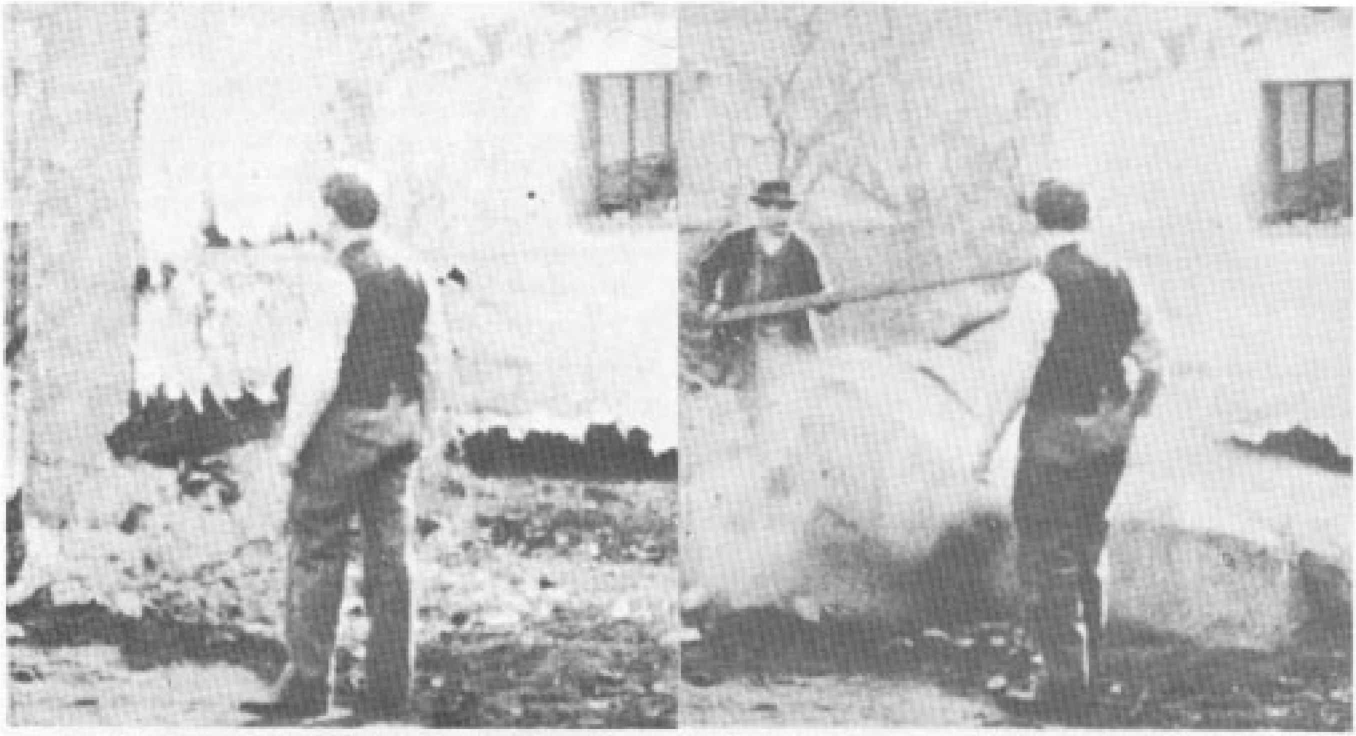
In *Partie D'Ecarte* the terms of a centered space are at least co-present. In *Arroseur Arrosé* they virtually disappear. It is perhaps not suprising that the function of the frame is so overdetermined in the film. As the film opens we see a man positioned on the left side of the screen facing the left frame (already the rules of "good" composition have been completely abandoned). He is holding a water hose and pointing it off-frame in such a way that only a small segment of the stream of water is visible. The rest disappears off-frame. A prankster appears from the right side of the frame and steps on the hose, making the flow of water "disappear."

The man holds the hose up to his face. The prankster then takes his foot off of the hose and the water squirts the man in the face.

The gag is much more complicated than it may appear to be. The entrance of the prankster represents on one level the possibility of a composed space (the man could turn around and recognize the other, thus producing a balanced space), but at the same time, his action complicates the play — already present — around the man's discomposition. The water has already disappeared from the hose, off-frame. The prankster, by stepping on the hose, doubles this disappearance, assuring its diegetic motivation. He controls the appearance and disappearance of the water and makes the man the victim of its play. Here, it is important to note yet another instance in which a character is figured as enunciator in these films.

A chase ensues after the man recognizes the "reason" for the disappearance and reappearance of the water. Both characters disappear off-frame, left. Then, a few seconds later, the man reappears, pulling the prankster by the ear to the center of the frame. The man spanks him and then quickly returns to his watering as the prankster disappears off-frame right. Thus the film ends as it began — thoroughly discomposed. This is its symmetry, and it is one that directly addresses the problem of the frame as limit of representation.

Demolition d'un Mur is perhaps the most exemplary in this respect. Three figures are standing in front of two perpendicular walls that were perhaps, at one time, walls of a house. One of the walls extends from the foreground left into the background. The other wall connects with it in the background and extends from there well into the right side of the screen. A foreman sends the two other men off-frame, one to the left and one to the right. He remains in the center of the frame while the others disappear. Soon, one of the men reappears in the small space between the wall and the left edge of the frame. Then, seconds later, the left wall collapses and the two men rush to the pile of rocks remaining near the center of the frame. As the dust begins to settle we can begin to see, in perspective, the space the wall had masked.



DEMOLITION D'UN MUR

Once again the figuration of an enunciative presence is evident, one that in turn articulates the play of appearance and disappearance in the film. The foreman is the 'central' figure that sends the other two men off-frame to demolish the wall. Two points should be stressed concerning this demolition. First, it is a spectacle entirely dependent upon the effects movement had on the system of renaissance perspective. This is, in fact, its subject. Secondly, the two walls are "composed" in such a way that they create a cubic space within the frame, typical of that of renaissance perspective. In this respect, one can see the left wall as a double of the frame itself. The man who reappears, from off-frame, just behind the wall is himself the similarity *between* these two aspects (frame and wall) in that both subject him to the same play of appearance and disappearance. It is in fact along this play that masking and the frame will be linked, and the frame will become an everpresent mask over a coherent space.

Of course, in *Démolition d'un Mur,* it is the mask itself that disappears, revealing the depth hidden "naturally" behind it. In this film, we can already see a work tentative to a coherent logic of referential contiguity connecting spaces of appearance and disappearance.[8] The production of an off-screen space depends upon this logic, and thus the movement of shots within the classical sequence.

The films of Charles Pathé are still very far removed from what will be considered the classical model. However, the possibility of a movement from shot to shot is very much a part of their system. By examining one of these film, *Policeman's Little Run,* I will attempt to demonstrate that the movement from shot to shot in these films was figured precisely upon the same problematic posited in the Lumière films: the discomposition of perspective and the syntagmatic play of appearance and disappearance.

First, it should be noted that *Policeman's Little Run* must be situated well within the conventions of the chase film — a genre both well established and extremely popular in 1907. That is, it is in no way formally or technically advanced for its time. The film's interest lies in its systematic and conventional aspects, the terms which rendered its coherence possible.

The film opens with a shot of the front of a butcher shop. A dog appears from the left side of the frame. It jumps up onto the butcher's counter (centered in the composition), steals a bone, and then disappears off-frame right. Two policemen then enter left. They jump around hysterically for a moment and then 'follow' the dogs disappearance to the right.

This bone is the ostensible lack that motivates the narrative. However, it is much more an element of a centered space that the dog has "stolen." The chase is one of a discomposition, and its resolution will be a return to a composed space.

A short description of the next shots will facilitate the analysis that follows.

2. A policeman is standing on a corner screen left. The dog appears around the corner and exits right, slightly towards the camera. The other policemen appear from around the corner. The lone policeman joins these, and after some hysteria, they follow the dog off-frame right.
3. The dog appears around a corner in the background, followed by the police. The chase proceeds from the background directly into the foreground, stressing the perspectival depth through which the actants move. The dog exits off-frame right from the immediate foreground. The police follow.
4. A shot of a stairway up an embankment. The dog appears from the left at the top of the embankment. It begins running down the stairs. The police appear and follow. The dog reaches the bottom of the stairs (the level of the camera) and exits off-frame right. The policemen run about indecisively before exiting in the same direction.

The repetitive structure that will dominate the film is already evident. Two variations of this structure can be distinguished:

(A) The shot appears
    Figure A appears
    Figure B appears
    Figure A disappears
    Figure B disappears
  The shot disappears

(B) The shot appears
    Figure A appears
    Figure A disappears
    Figure B appears
    Figure B disappears
  The shot disappears

In each, it is obvious that the appearance and disappearance of the characters doubles the appearance and disappearance of the shot on the screen. The diegetic logic of this doubling is simple. The shot becomes supportable only as a narrative unity — after the entrance and the exit of the characters it must disappear. However, the syntagmatic unity of the shot and the "unity" of the narrative action are not co-extensive in this film. Although they double each other in a play of appearance and disappearance, they do not *exactly* overlap. It is in the difference between the two that another logic is inscribed.

This logic is that of the enunciation, and, as in the Lumière films, it concerns itself with the effect movement had upon Renaissance perspective. The appearance of each shot is the appearance of a composed space, well within the strictures of pictoral perspectival representation. The character's movement from appearance to disappearance, discomposes this space. Their disappearance marks the return to the composed space originally posited.

The frame is thus the limit of the narrative representation in the film. However, outside of this limit, on either side of the character's entries and exits, the frame is an index of the very possibility of a composed space. It is only from composed space to composed space that the movement from shot to shot can progress in *Policeman's Little Run.* Each shot contains the terms of its discomposition *within* it. The disappearance of a shot and its replacement by another renews and repeats the spectator in a predictable structure of expectation: the discomposition and the return to, a centered, stable space.

The only shot devoid of significant movement is the last, a close-up of the dog, with the bone in its mouth, wearing a police hat. This shot, which relies (like *Querelle Enfantine)* on the conventions of portrait photography, arrests the movements the film had engaged in and resolves the conflict of movement, returning the spectator, finally, to a composed space. It is not incidental that this is the only close-up in the film. This was a conventional means of ending the Pathé films *(The Diabolical Itching* and *The Yawner,* for example). The point to be made here is that the close-up is not merely a means of narrative emphasis in these films; it functions much more crucially across the contradiction which movement introduced into the perspectival system.

In *Policeman's Little Run* the movement from shot to shot is founded upon a play on this same contradiction. There is no active production of off-screen space, and thus no logic of referential contiguity from shot to shot. There is a cut, for example, from the chase proceeding through a bedroom to its appearance on a street. One could argue that time had passed between the two shots, but this is an assumption in retrospect.

Contiguity in the classical model will be both spatial and temporal; it will depend upon a linearity represented along the linearity of the discursive chain. The reversal of the chase (the dog begins to chase the policeman) introduces an element of linearity, but it is effected through a mere reversal of the structure of repetition already in movement (rather than A appears B appears, etc., B appears and then A appears).

This repetition signals a difficulty in coming to terms with linearity and its metonymical figuration through referential contiguity. One series of shots in *Policeman's Little Run* ruptures this strict structure of repetition and does indeed proceed from shot to shot through a "coherent" space.

9. The exterior of a building. The dog appears and begins to run *up* the wall of a building, defying all laws of gravity. The dog Is still in the top part of the frame when there is a cut.
10. The dog is running further up the side of the building. It disappears at the top of the frame.
11. A repeat of 9 (the exterior of the building). The police appear and begin climbing up the building after the dog. They are still in-frame when there is a cut.
12. A repeat of 10 with with the policemen climbing.
13. The policemen arrive at the roof. One falls down and disappears at the bottom of the frame while, at the same time, the rest of the police disappear at the top of the roof on its other side. As they disappear the dog appears from the top of the roof and runs down. The Policemen follow.
14. A continuous tracking shot of the policemen as they descend. They are about to leave the frame when there is a cut to the next shot.

A number of points are important concerning these shots. First, throughout the rest of the film, the narrative proceeds at the level of the shot (through the repeated action in each shot). Here, it is operative at the level of the sequence. It is only the production of a referential contiguity that permits this expansion: the building is posited as a coherent space. The tracking shot is averitable confirmation of this space, although its formal novelty cannot be denied.

It is equally important that the representation of a temporal contiguity links the shots. In shots 9-12 the dog and the policemen are kept completely separate, but the "time" of the chase is maintained through the repetition of 9 and 11, and 10 and 12. In the rest of the film the elements of the chase must appear and disappear in the same shot. This sequence marks the possibility of segmenting the elements of the narrative, all the while retaining their spatio-temporal relationship.

However, this sequence must be seen as a true rupture in the system within which the film otherwise remains. It is not incidental that the sequence, which is the most advanced in terms of the evolution of film, presents itself as a radical experiment in space. The fact that the dog and policeman run up the side of a building is only one aspect of this experiment — the editing and camera represent each other. One could say that the sequence verges upon nonsense, but it is more accurate to see it as a definite work upon sense, one which will produce the conditions to render possible the conventional use of off-screen space.

The production however, is continually that of a spectator constituted in a movement of sense. One could very well point to the theoretical problematic of the suture in this respect.[9] This paper has attempted to demonstrate some of the historical problems of "suturing" the spectator into early filmic discourse. Specifically, this involved placing the spectator in a radically different position in relation to earlier perspectival representation. Movement, of course, was the major term of the difference — movement within the frame and movement off-frame. The play of appearance and disappearance that resulted, in these films, was an imaginary play, one locatable only in the discursive possibilities instituted by the cinématographe itself. The work we can see in them was one destined to represent a symbolic coherence upon this imaginary play.

NOTES

1. Etienne Souriau, "La Structure de l'univers Filmique et le Vocabulaire de la Filmologie," *L'Univers Filmique,* Flammarion, 1940.
2. See Pascal Bonitzer, "Hors-Champ: Un Espace en Défaut," *Cahiers du Cinéma,* no. 234-235. Bonitzer makes the distinction between off-frame and off-screen. The former is material and the latter is imaginary, fictional.
3. Thierry Kuntzel, "The Défilement: A View in Close-Up," trans. by Bertrand Augst, *Camera Obscura* No. 2, Fall 1977, p. 56.
4. The code of narrative action. See Roland Barthes, *S/Z,* Editions de Seuil, 1970.
5. I.e., the spatial relationships between objects is fixed. Within this fixity, however, there is an infinite play, one limited only by the spectator's time of contemplation. Foucault shows this remarkably in his analysis, "Les Suivants" in *Les Mots et les Choses* (Gallimard, 1966). It should be noted that the play of the two figures "vision" described earlier would not be radically different except for the fact that its reflexivity invokes the existence of a completely different representational machine, one which effectively subjects this vision (more precisely, subjects the spectator's vision) to a défilement.
6. Stephen Heath, “Narrative Space," *Screen* vol. 17, no. 3, Autumn 1976, p. 81.
7. Ibid, p. 74
8. For Metz, metonymy. He provides the following chart.

	similarité	contiguité
Dans le discours	paradigme	syntagme
Dans le référent	métaphore	métonymie

In *Le Signifiant Imaginaire,* 10118. 1977.

9. See *Screen,* Winter 77/78 for articles by Miller, Oudart, and Heath on the suture.

LATIN AMERICAN CINEMA: A VIEW TOWARD THE FUTURE OF DOCUMENTARY FILM PRACTICE

The Second International Festival of New Latin American Cinema

by Zuzana M. Pick

Havana (Cuba), November 19, 1980: Closing night of the Second International Festival of New Latin American Cinema. (9 p.m.) Screening of the Cuban documentary *This is Our Cinema* by Rigoberto López.

The two-hundred-and-fifty filmmakers and critics who had assembled in Havana since November 11th, received this film with enthusiasm. Not only an homage to the films of the "new" Latin American cinema. *This is Our Cinema* also pays tribute to its most prominent figures present in Havana the preceding year. Those of us who did not make it to the First Festival, held in December 1979, had the possibility of participating, through this screening, in an atmosphere of euphoria which greeted the birth of a film festival dedicated to Latin American cinema. In the late 60's, filmmakers from different countries started meeting more or less regularly to screen their films and discuss their work. Vina del Mar (Chile) in 1967 inaugurated a series of encounters of which the most historic were Mérida (Venezuela) in 1969 and Montréal in 1974. The Havana Film Festival is a return to this tradition. Aware of their "historical" role, the I.C.A.I.C. filmmakers hosted this meeting under the directorship of Pastor Vega *(Retrato de Teresa).* The International Festival of New Latin American Cinema was dedicated last year to Raymundo Gleyzer and those filmmakers who have died or "disappeared" in countries where fascist repression is running wild. As the emergence of a "new" cinema — that of Nicaragua — was proclaimed in 1979, this year a new breed of filmmakers from El Salvador was welcomed into the community of Latin American political filmmaking.

Latin American cinema is in "crisis": today most of its filmmakers live in exile, cut off from the struggles that are going on in their countries. A few months ago, in July 1980, Bolivia fell under the heels of right-wing generals. Jorge Sanjines' name now has to be added to the long list of those who have fled their countries and who have to work under the most adverse of conditions. In spite of this seemingly despairing situation, a cinema of struggle is being born in Central America. The films made in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala recall the early vocation of Latin American cinema. These films represent the ideas and politics which marked the birth of a "new cinema" two decades ago.

Patricio Guzmán, during one of the seminar discussions which were part of this year's festival, reminded the audience of the need to place those assumptions about Latin American cinema prevalent in and outside of the continent into proper perspective. He launched a strong attack on critics who, Cassandra-like, proclaim the death of the cinema. He said: "It is logical that if Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and now Bolivia are under the domination of fascism, as Brazil was until recently, our cinema has to go through a grave crisis. The uncertainty of the Colombian and Equatorian situations, the relative opening in Brazil, the recently established bourgeois liberal democracy in Peru and the war of liberation being waged in El Salvador and in Guatemala, all of these place the Latin American filmmakers against the sword and into the open battleground. We are facing a crisis. Our cinema is nothing other than the expression of the mass movement activities in each of our countries. And the reflex which we are witnessing is now clearly seen in our films. However, some critics, and especially some European critics, talk of our crisis as a "crisis in the air." They say that we have lost our inspiration, that our cinema is dead, without backing up their assertions."[1] This statement by Latin America's foremost documentary filmmaker summarizes some of the debates and discussions which took place in Havana among critics and film directors. A profound concern for the future of documentary and fiction filmmaking dominated all of the discussions.

Few fiction films were shown in Havana this year since the Festival covered only last year's production. Brazil dominated in this category with two films: *Gaijin: The Road to Liberty* by Tizuka Yamasaki and *Bye, Bye Brazil* by veteran "cinema nôvo" director Carlos Diegues. *Gaijin,* the first feature-length film of Ms. Yamasaki — assistant to Joaquim Pedro de Andrade and other Brazilian filmmakers — retraces the arduous route toward freedom and self-definition of a young Japanese woman (the director's grandmother) who arrived in Brazil in the early years of this century, with other Japanese immigrants and her newly-wed husband. Tizuka Yamasaki captures the cultural differences between Japan and Brazil, the historical exploitation of farmer-immigrants, and the personal perception of her heroine placed in a foreign environment. Her double alienation, as a woman and as a foreigner, is broken by the death of her husband and her departure to the city. In contrast, *Bye, Bye Brazil* seemed almost out of place in this Festival. Diegues, who has now received the acclaim of foreign audiences for this film, is an established filmmaker, whose films can be placed within the context of Brazil's "commercial" cinema and have lost the quality of experimentation which characterized the "cinema nôvo" period (1962-1970). The fiction films from Mexico, Puerto Rico and Venezuela screened during the Festival, seemed "minor" works of directors trying to work under the "commercial" conditions prevalent in those countries and caught up in formulae and worn-out conventions.

The international notoriety of the new Latin American cinemas was undoubtedly the result of the presence of its fiction films in European film festivals throughout the 60's. When referring to Latin American cinema, the works of directors such as Tomas Gutierrez Alea, Miguel Littin, Glauber Rocha, Raul Ruiz, Jorge Sanjines and Fernando Solanas, come to mind. Now that the production of fiction films is in a state of recession, it is easy to declare the demise of Latin American cinema. However, economic and political factors have to be taken into account when this slowdown is discussed. In countries such as Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela, funding is easily obtainable for commercially-oriented features. The "nationalist" cultural policies of the 70's Brazilian governments, through EMBRAFILM,[2] have permitted the rise to power of producer tycoons like Luiz Carlos Barreto *(Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands* (1976) and *Bye, Bye Brazil* (1980)). The "boom" of Brazilian film has brought financial benefits to commercial producers, while independent filmmakers are systematically denied access to the sources of finance and the circuits of distribution. In 1972 to 1974, it was possible for new filmmakers to become part of the Mexican production hierarchy: the present context in that country does not, however, permit a similar development. The old guard and the established directors have the monopoly of feature film production. As a consequence, independent filmmakers are turning to lower-budget and politically oriented productions. Filmmakers in exile, working in foreign countries, have not always had access to funds for fiction films. Their situation as political exiles has dictated a strong commitment to a directly political film practice within the documentary mode. There is a clear return to the use of the documentary film as a political tool.

Filmmakers are also trying to combat any dangers of recuperation by the prevailing systems of production and distribution. The documentary films are conceived as weapons of denunciation against the fascist repression of Latin American governments.

The move away from fiction features was demonstrated by the high proportion of documentary films presented during the Havana Film Festival. Over one-hundred and seventy documentaries were shown to a highly receptive and enthusiastic audience. Not only did these films come from all countries, but they confirmed the wide-ranging aesthetic and political possibilities of the documentary film. Their subject matter bears witness to the filmmakers' commitment to political issues. Their films recall the tragedies of men, women, and children who have refused to bear in silence the daily violence brought about by underdevelopment. The moving and passionate testimonies of the young fighters of Nicaragua and El Salvador gave rise, during the screenings, to manifestations of solidarity with the Central American struggle. The ongoing vocation of Latin American documentary — the denunciation of exploitation and oppression — was continuously asserted by images of misery and repression in films from Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Brazil. The strength of the Cuban production in the documentary field was demonstrated in films dealing with the multiple aspects of that country's history, its artistic and cultural manifestations and its support for Third World struggles. In Cuba, documentary short and long features have become appealing and entertaining tools of political expression. In comparison to other Latin American countries, Cuba's documentary has managed to rid itself from excessive voice-over narration and on-camera interviews by giving more attention to montage and narrative structure. This gave rise to a series of public and private discussions directed toward the re-evaluation of documentary practice in Latin America.

A historical overview of this practice still remains to be done. To summarize it here would not do justice to the innovative experimentation and energy which has characterized this practice for two decades. The fact that few films are available for distribution in Canada, and that some of the seminal works have rarely been shown outside of Latin America, makes this task quite difficult. However, and in order to understand the Latin American contribution to the documentary movement, it is useful here to recall their conceptual framework.

Documentary filmmaking in Latin America is at the forefront of a radical political practice. As opposed to the empiricist practice which characterizes so much of Canada's National Film Board production, the Latin American filmmakers see documentary as a political tool. From the pioneer work of Fernando Birri (Argentina), to the early films of Santiago Alvarez and the I.C.A.I.C. *Newsreels* (Cuba), to Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's *The Hour of the Furnaces* — a film which marked the first decade of Lantin America's "new cinema" — to the younger generation of filmmakers such as Patricio Guzmán and his monumental *The Battle of Chile,* the documentary movement has refused to fall into the trap of a falsely neutral political position. Documentarists have openly declared themselves to be political individuals rather than "artists of film."

The discussions which took place in Havana helped clarify the position of documentary within the "new" Latin American cinema. Jesús Diaz, a Cuban documentary filmmaker and director of *En La Tierra de* Sandino, while addressing one of the seminars on film and literature, reminded the audience of the need to reconsider the role of documentary. Diaz asked in a very passionate manner, that "discrimination" against this mode of production stop. "When speaking about the relationship of film and literature, what is almost always thought about is in reality the relationship between fiction films and fiction literatures. The underlying assumptions of those who think in this way, refer to all possible films and to all possible literatures. It is like when the Americans speak about 'America.' They forget the existence of a Central and a South America, and even that Canada and Mexico are part of North America. So the 'fictionalizers' forget of the existence of documentary film, of testimonial literature and of essay writing. On a continent where this literature is of singular stylistic and historical importance, this is a grave omission. On our continent, a great deal of film production, for obvious budgetary reasons, is documentary. Here, the struggle of the filmmakers is directed against the imperialist monopolies who colonize the screens and the minds of our people, and sometimes legislation regarding the exhibition of national documentaries in cinema houses is seen as a victory ... This neglect of documentary cinema is at least justified by a double crisis of omission which it faces: that of the critics and that of the audience. While fiction film, as an experienced, though slightly out-of-breath boxer is recuperating from the beating it got from television — seeking refuge in spatial fantasies, disasters and pornography — it still relies on audiences, reviewers and academics. Documentary has become such a poor relative that movie houses show it as a 'filler.' And the critics almost never invite it to come to dinner. Academics quote Vertov and Flaherty with the same bitter-sweet nostalgia of something as lost as 'art nouveau' or the music of New Orleans cafés. Only a small group has contributed as passionately as its detractors to create a situation in which documentary finds itself: its filmmakers."[3] These provocative thoughts challenged assumptions about documentary as a "minor" form of expression, and they came precisely from one filmmaker who has made documentary film his career in a country where his films are not shown as "fillers" but as features in every movie house program.

In the 1960's, documentaries were produced by filmmakers working out of universities — Grupo Cine Experimental in Chile — or film societies and experimental cooperatives. Today in Latin American countries (except in Cuba), the conditions of production have only changed in regard to technology. The younger generation, trained on more modern equipment, shoots with colour stock instead of the black-and-white film used by the earlier filmmakers. This new generation is therefore faced with different aesthetic and political options. The challenge faced by directors such as Jorge Sanjines, Carlos Alvarez, Mario Handler and Santiago Alvarez in the mid-60's and later by Chilean documentarists, consisted in being able to make films in spite of the poverty of their technical and financial means. Montage of found footage, still photographs, silent shooting, editing of songs and political commentary on the film material had to be created with originality and innovation. The younger generation, better trained and sometimes having contact with commercial filmmaking, brings into their film practice this experience, and still tries to comply with the goals of the "new" Latin American committed documentary. In order to do this, and keeping in mind the present situation in the countries of the continent, a renewal of stylistic and narrative strategies is necessary. Hence, Jesús Diaz' request to revise the history of documentary cinema by going back to its sources — Flaherty, Vertov, Romm and others — and its specific non-literary characteristics, as established by the contemporary filmmakers — Santiago Alvarez, Patricio Guzmán, Barbara Kopple and others. Emphasis should be turned toward enunciation, since the filmmaker is not simply a "manipulator" of images, but the voice which informs them. Therefore, the insistence by Diaz upon a rhetoric dictated by a language of politics is coupled with the need to demystify the assumptions about the neutrality of the cinematic image, as well as the false "scientific" conception of political analysis associated with television documentaries and traditional newsreels.

As challenging as his "Provocations on Film and Literature," is Jesús Diaz' *En La Tierra de Sandino* (1980), which demonstrates the distinctive vitality of Cuban documentary today. Clearly indebted to Patricio Guzmán's *The Battle of Chile* (1973-1979), Diaz' work can be seen as a step toward the new aesthetic strategies of Latin American documentary. Both these films share the same concerns at the level of expressive experimentation and the sense of urgency for the analysis of a revolutionary process. The narrative tissue of the three parts of Guzmán's epic *The Battle of Chile* link these two functions of Latin America's documentary practice.

From the investigation of the strategies of the national right-wing bourgeoisie *(Insurrection of the Bourgeoisie,* Part I of the film), to the preparation of the overthrow of the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende *(Coup d'Etat,* Part II), to the reflexion of political action by peasants, workers and students *(Popular Power,* Part III) *The Battle of Chile* takes the spectator step by step through this unique revolutionary experience. The worth of the film also resides in the refusal to systematically use the most traditional documentary devices to expose the political and social conflicts which are the subject matter of the film. The production of *The Battle of Chile* started with a preliminary study of the levels of ideological, political and economic struggle at work in this "battle of an unarmed people."[4] In each sequence of the film, elements pertaining to these conflictual levels are introduced, thus permitting the analysis of class struggle within the specific historical context: the last months of the Allende government. The preliminary definition of these three levels allows for a construction of a cinematic/political discourse in which the historical reality determines not only the shooting, but also provides the spectator with a theoretical framework for political analysis. The foregrounding of those elements which are an integral part of the class struggle in Chile permits not only the discovery of the most visible manifestations of conflict but also its least apparent ones. In order to achieve this goal, Guzmán's narrative strategy is determined by a basic dialectical opposition between the bourgeoisie and the power of the Chilean people. By establishing clearly the visual codes of this dialectic, the filmmaker can enrich these basic codes as the film's narrative moves on, to the point where his verbal intervention through a commentary almost becomes redundant.

En La Tierra de Sandino, Jesús Diaz follows the way opened by Patricio Guzmán, who edited and finished *The Battle of Chile* at I.C.A.I.C. in Havana. The three "short stories" of *En La Tierra de Sandino* compose this portrait of Nicaragua after the victory of the F.S.L.N. (Sandinista Front for National Liberation), each one visualizes the march of the people toward a new socialist future. The opening image of the film, an impressive high angle shot of one of the hundreds of volcanoes that spread along the Central American mountain range, serves as a reminder of the energy and force erupting in Nicaragua at the arrival of the young liberation army into its capital city, the last stronghold of the brutal Somoza regime. The joy of the victory celebrations gives way, in the first short story, to the painful memory of repression in a moving sequence of the funeral of young victims of the National Guard's last stand. The tone of the film is thus set by a subtle change of emphasis from the collective to the individual. This shift is best seen in the second short story when Diaz takes his crew to a "hacienda" and records the confrontation between the landworkers and the absentee landlords. Here, as in *The Battle of Chile,* the political reality is treated as a fictional continuity, each narrative element participating in the description and analysis of the conflict. Each of the coffee plantation workers becomes a spokesperson for a socio-economic group, the individuals' self-assumptions are overshadowed by collective expectations. And this is not simply stated by the dialogue between the groups of workers and the landowner's couple, but through the expressive concerns of the image itself. The sequence-shot and the direct-address technique permit the filmmakers to eliminate the unique, dogmatic voice explaining point by point the details of the conflict. The background shacks, those miserable habitations of peasants in Nicaragua, serve to remind the spectator of the living conditions of this plantation and make the peasants' demands increasingly urgent.

The extensive use of sequence-shots in today's Latin American documentary corresponds to the theoretical concerns of filmmakers who have defined documentary as an autonomous narrative form. The sequence-shot, montage, commentary, music and titles are all elements which, when used with imagination and political purpose, are taking the documentary away from the worn-out clichés of "cinéma-vérité" and the soporific talking heads of television pubic affairs. This new style, this new way of seeing owes a great deal to the persistent work of Santiago Alvarez, the Cuban filmmaker of *Now!,* who has systematically refused the dictatorship of the "spoken word" in documentary. He has even avoided the restraints of the "one-take technique" of the "candid-eye" and the continuity of sound-image editing, privileging instead the expressive montage technique of overlapping sounds, disruptions and the mixing of different visual mediums.[5] What happens in front of the camera and how to record these events is what Jesus Diaz is interested in — as Alvarez, Guzmán and others have asserted in the past — while telling the third short story in *En La Tierra de Sandino.* It portrays the experience of a young Cuban woman who joined the Nicaraguan "literacy" campaign. Her confrontation with a foreign rural environment gives her as many chances for learning as those she is giving to the children who come to her huge table under a tree. Diaz "observes" her at her daily tasks and her exchanges with the family who has invited her to stay. As the time of departure approaches, the filmmaker and the crew manage to capture with warmth and sympathy the emotional goodbye to her school and her people. Her individual experience is similar to that of many other young people who have joined the struggle for literacy in Nicaragua.

The Battle of Chile and *En La Tierra de Sandino* are not the only documentaries which have demonstrated the renewal of this narrative mode in Latin American cinema. *Terra dos Indios* (Land of the Indians) by producer-director Zelito Viana (Brazil), strongly denounces the genocidal policies of the Brazilian "model of development" and brings to the foreground the history of native struggles in his country. Viana provides at the same time a rigorous analysis of the modalities of the struggle, of the strategies used by the governments at the national and regional levels, and of the demands of Brazilian Indians. Their rights to land ownership and to equal participation as citizens is brought into perspective with a historical study of the "indigenist" policies of Brazil's modern governments.

The Latin American film community, gathered in Havana in November 1980, celebrated the arrival on the scene of two new cinematographies born of Central American struggles. If films such as *The Battle of Chile, En La Tierra de Sandino* and *Terra dos Indios* confirm the accomplishments of a Latin American documentary tradition which has developed in Chile, Cuba and Brazil since the 60's, those from Nicaragua and El Salvador indicate the constant renewal of Latin America's cinema in the last two decades. The cinematographic developments which have occurred in Nicaragua and El Salvador since 1979 both share the same origins and the same experiences. Their cinematographic productions were limited to commercials for television and movie houses (El Salvador), and to propaganda and army-training films (in Somoza's Nicaragua), and to some sporadic individual efforts in the experimental field. The exhibition and distribution of films, limited to their capital, and to some larger cities, was completely dominated by American monopolies.

Groups of filmmakers from Latin America and Europe travelled to Nicaragua in the summer of 1978 when the activities of the F.S.L.N. intensified. As part of an international effort of solidarity with the popular struggle, these filmmakers reported on the atrocities committed by Somoza's National Guard. *Patria Libre o Morir* (Free Homeland or Death), produced by the Costa Rican collective Istmo Films and *Nicaragua '78* by Frank Diamond and Derde Cinema from Holland, were made for the purpose of mobilizing public opinion in the defence of human rights. Nicaraguan fighters participated in the production of *Patria Libre o Morir.* Subsequently, the F.S.L.N. set up an information infrastructure designed to provide photographic and film material for the international leftist press reporting on the Nicaraguan insurrection. This prepared the ground for a national film production. Those who were part of the "Brigada Leonel Ruguma" — Ramira Lacayo, Alvaro Ramirez and others — became the guerrilla-filmmakers of the young Nicaraguan cinema. They shot approximately 65,000 feet of colour stock on the daily life of the Sandinista fighters and their battles. After the overthrow of the Somoza government, the Sandinistas created the Instituto Sandinista del Cine Nicaraguense (Sandinista Institute of Nicaraguan Cinema), also known as Incine, in August 1979. The film production at Incine is limited now, due to modest technical and financial resources, to documentaries, shorts and newsreels. (Co-productions for feature films were being set up in recent months). The Incine newsreels are conceived in a similar way to the Noticieros Latinoamericanos which I.G.A.I.C. produced in Cuba. Structured around one subject, they are closer to documentary than to the traditional newsreel. This production of newsreels serves two purposes. On one hand, it permits the development of technical skills among the young people who have joined the Institute. On the other hand, these films complement news and television coverage by in-depth analysis. The first newsreel — Noticiario No. 1 — made in November 1979 by Ramiro Lacayo and Frank Pineda, is the testimony of an old fighter who joined Cesar Augusto Sandino's struggle in the 1930's. Images of the present are integrated into this historic account of a man who, after three decades, has seen the dream of the revolution fulfilled. The Noticiario No. 11, directed by Maria José Alvarez in 1980 and shown in Havana, is centered around the particular social and economic problems of the Atlantic Coast region. Through a short examination of the region's history, the tasks of national reconstruction are outlined.

Victoria de un Pueblo en Armas (Victory of an Armed People), a long feature documentary made by a collective of Nicaraguan, Costa Rican, Mexican and other Latin American filmmakers, under the coordination of Berta Navarro (Mexico) in 1980, presents itself as a celebration of the Sandinista victory. Here death and destruction are seen in terms of liberation. The future of the Nicaraguan revolution depends on the participation of its people in the task of reconstruction. *Mujeres en Armas* (Women in Arms), directed by Victoria Schulz, is an homage to the women who participated in the national war. Victoria Schulz, a European filmmaker who had worked in Nicaragua before 1979, interviewed women of all ages who, as fighters, broke away from the traditional roles assigned to them by society. Children are also an important subject of the Nicaraguan documentary: they fought alongside adults and were victims, directly or indirectly, of the brutal repression of the Somoza government. Their testimony sheds light on their political awareness and on the role they will play in the future of the country. Documentary in Nicaragua, as seen through the films shown in Havana, is primarily conceived as a testimony to the vitality and to the changes taking place in this country. As a didactic tool, the documentary affirms through its practice and themes, the political vocation of its filmmakers. It is a cinema born in struggle which confirms the continuity of the "new" Latin American cinema.

The screening in Havana of films from El Salvador sparked manifestations of Latin American solidarity with this country's struggle. *El Salvador: El Peublo Vencera* (El Salvador: The People Will Win), a production of the Revolutionary Film Institute of El Salvador, was coordinated by Puerto Rican filmmaker Diego de la Tejera, and presented by the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation. This, like the other Salvadorean works shown, is a testimony of the war, and open denunciation of the genocidal violence sweeping the country and a call for solidarity. As in Nicaragua two years ago, film in El Salvador is born out of a political context. The repressive climate of the country forces the filmmakers to work collectively and in clandestinity. Films like *Morazan, Violento Desalojo* and *Zona Intertidal* are all produced by the collective Cero a la Izquierda (Zero to the Left), formerly a theater group. The first describes the life in a military camp in the liberated zone of Morazan where women and children are trained alongside men, and where small bombs and mortars are manufactured. The other two films deal with repression against school teachers and peasants in the rural areas of the country. The long feature *Las Historias Prohibidas de Pulgarcito* (The Banned Stories of Tom Thumb), coordinated by Mexican director Paul Leduc, is inspired by a fragment of the poet Roque Dalton's work of the same name. It analyzes the history of the conflict and its first part is a strong indictment of bourgeois complicity with the ruling junta. Images of guerrilla fighters and of clandestine meetings and press conferences are intercut with those of fascist leaders reporting on the repressive operations of the army. A militia fighter calling the people from a church's belltower becomes the symbol for the growing struggle of the people of El Salvador. As Yderin Toval, a Salvadorean filmmaker, declared in an interview conducted in Havana: "Our cinema is a chronicle of a revolution, the history of the country and of a new era. Our style is not that of the 'auteur' cinema. Our reality imposes its own dialectic on the film's style. Filmmakers in El Salvador are coordinators, craftspersons and catalyzers of our country's struggle. We try to translate reality without modifying it by individualist judgement. The protagonists of these films are the popular masses; their struggles for just revendications, class struggle and permanent confrontation between army and revolutionary army are the subjects. Repression and social injustice are the themes of our films and through them we witness the progressive development of our Revolution."[6]

Nicaragua and El Salvador have produced a new generation of Latin American filmmakers, whose cinematic practice is an integral part of a political and military combat. "The cinema as a gun" loses here its metaphorical meaning: armed with weapons and cameras, these young filmmakers, working in clandestinity and with lightweight equipment — as the pioneers of the 60's — are documenting for the future, the continuous struggle of the Latin American people. Their work today confirms that the strategy of the Latin American cinema has not changed. In spite of setbacks, there is always somebody who will pick up the weapons of those who have fallen.

NOTES

1. Guzmán, Patricio. "Exile, Crisis and Future." Text of a seminar read in Havana (Cuba), November 1980. We wish to thank Rubén Medina at I.C.A.I.C. who gave us permission to use material from the printed texts of all seminars given during the Festival, and which were distributed to those attending the sessions. All the translations are by Z. M. Pick.
2. Some of the other means imposed by the government regarding cinema, relates to exhibition. Each movie house has to program Brazilian films for a specific number of days per year. This quota has gone from 56 days per year in 1963 to 133 days per year in 1978. See *Jump Cut* no. 22, special section on Brazil, for further information about Brazilian cinema in the 70's.
3. Diaz, Jesus. "Provocations on Film and Literature." Seminar read in Havana, 1980.
4. "Battle of an Unarmed People" is the subtitle of Guzmán's film *The Battle of Chile.*
5. Chanan, Michael. Santiago Alvarez. London. BFI Dossier no. 2, 1980.
6. Special Bulletin on El Salvador. Havana Film Festival 1980.

OUSMANE SEMBENE: QUESTIONS OF CHANGE

by Roy Armes

Ousmane Sembène,[1] born in Senegal in 1923; has long ranked as Black Africa's leading filmmaker, a role which he occupies with wit, assurance and a clear awareness of the responsibilities it carries with it. As a recent seminar at the National Film Theatre in London showed, Sembène acquits himself with a seriousness that does not in any way exclude humour and with an insight into the problems to be encountered in establishing cinema in Africa which has not left a legacy of bitterness or cynicism. In short, the man is in the image of his films and, as his latest feature, *Ceddo,* shows, the past fifteen years have seen a deepening and enriching of his work, so that he is now truly a filmmaker of world stature. Together with the aural and visual beauty and originality of the films and the ever more assured command of rhythm which they convey, it is the questioning stance towards developments in Africa (which is adopted in all his output, in the novels as much as the films) which constitutes perhaps the most vital aspect of Sembène's work, as relevant to a Western audience as to an African one.[2]

The outstanding position occupied by Senegal among the states of West Africa in both novel and film is no doubt in part attributable to the impact of the political and cultural policies adopted by the French in the years preceding independence in 1960. For it was here, in Senegal, that the policy of "assimilation" was put into practice more thoroughly than elsewhere in Africa, allowing selected Black Africans the full rights of French citizenship on condition that they underwent a totally French educational training (in which, for example, colonialists like Lyautey were the heroes of history and their African opponents no more than misguided rebels). The aim of this policy was to create an *élite* which would receive its university training in France and then return to the colonies to take over the reins of administration there in ways which would demonstrate the indissolubility of the links with France. But the impact on those whose life it shaped was both profound and contradictory. As Gerald Moore puts it in his excellent study of *Twelve African Writers:*

> The intention and effect of the system was to distance the child step-by-step from his own culture and values, exposing him at the same time to the very real seductive power of French civilization, ranging from the tangible delights of red wine (a specially favoured import), good bread and *charcuterie* to the more rarefied ones of Voltaire's prose or Rousseau's libertarian sentiments. This alienation from oneself, coupled with the prolonged exile in France then necessary to any higher education, called forth the counter-assertion of negritude, but it was a counter-assertion made very much in the intellectual terms, as well as in the language of the conqueror. The ambivalence of Francophone African policies is one which lies also at the heart of negritude itself.[3]

One of the leading practitioners of the negritude movement and in a sense the supreme product of this system is the scholar, French-language poet and first President of an independent Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor. But though the system operated fully only in Senegal, the attitudes underlying it were expressed elsewhere in Black Africa and their impact can be felt in a whole range of French-speaking African intellectuals and writers. This impact is particularly noticeable in the case of filmmakers who generally receive their training in their chosen means of expression also in the West, at the IDHEC in Paris or the Centro sperimentale in Rome.

Ousmane Sembène's career differentiates itself strongly from this all too prevalent pattern of development, and the unique coherence and force his creative work over twenty-five years derive from the undissolved links between his upbringing, his social beliefs and the chosen subject matter of his novels and films. Unlike Senghor (seventeen years his senior), the young Sembène was no scholar and went to work while still in his teens, first as a garage mechanic and then as a bricklayer. A keen if unruly filmgoer, he received his key revelation of the power of the cinema from — ironically enough — a fascist-inspired documentary. The memory of Jesse Owen's exploits at the Berlin Olympics as depicted in Leni Riefenstahl's monumental *Olympiad* remained with him and helped shape his future career. As Sembène later told an interviewer, "For the first time a Black honoured us by beating the Whites... I remember that at the time it became *the* film for the young people of my generation."[4] At nineteen Sembène joined the French army (not as a conscript but as the only way of escaping from hunger) and served in the ranks in both Africa and Europe. Released after four years, he returned to Dakar in time to participate in the great railway strike of 1947, which forms the subject of his finest novel, *God's Bits of Wood.* Back in France Sembène worked first at the Citroën factory in Paris and then — for some ten years — as a docker in Marseilles. A Communist Party member from 1950, Sembène played an active part in trade union organization and activities, until a back injury forced him to give up manual work.

But already by this time — the late 1950s — his artistic talents were beginning to bear fruit. After dabbling with painting, he turned to writing, publishing his first novel, *Le Docker Noir,* in 1956. This first work, though still immature and autobiographical, already contains the theme which Gerald Moore sees as central to all his novels: the need for change. It also expresses clearly the crucial dilemma of the Black African novelist (which was ultimately to lead Sembène to abandon the novel in favour of the film), the difficulty of reaching the audience which he seeks. As Moore points out, the desire of the hero of *Le Docker Noir* to write:

> brings him up against the perpetual dilemma of the artist: the need for isolation and withdrawal in order to create seems at times a betrayal of that very comradeship in suffering which he seeks to celebrate. The generality of dockers do not read novels and cannot hence feel liberated by them.[5]

A similar personal theme, in this case the problems caused by a return to Africa of a young man who wishes to change the society into which he was born, is the subject of Sembène's second novel, *O Pays, Mon Beau Peuple!* (1957). But with his two major novels of the early 1960s — *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu / God's Bits of Wood* (1960) and *L'Harmattan* (1964) — Sembène gets beyond the limitations of the personal perspective. A key element in this progression — which is echoed later in the films — is the discovery of the female protagonist and of the key role of woman in changing society.

Sembène's other and later published works — the collection of stories, *Voltaïque / Tribal Scars* (1962), and the short novels, *Le Mandat / The Money Order* (1965), *Vehi Ciosane ou Blanche-Genèse / White Genesis* (1965) and *Xala* (1974) — all relate closely to his work in the cinema, being drafts of novelisations of themes and stories expressed in his films. But though he has in this way abandoned the novel, Sembène's status as a pioneer should not be underestimated. His originality can be seen if his work is set against the overall pattern of African fictional writing prior to independence. As Claude Wauthier points out in his useful book on *The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa:*

> The meeting of two civilisations, the European and the African, the shock it caused both to the individual and to the society, narrated in the form of a semi-biography or a village chronicle, had been the favourite subject of African novelists before independence. They had begun by creating in their own image characters who set out, like Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, in search of knowledge.[6]

By contrast, in a work like *God's Bits of Wood,* which Moore characterises as "the first epic novel to emerge in Africa," Sembène has moved on to work of a wider significance. To quote Moore again:

> His cardinal importance as an artist is that his work was the first in Africa to move beyond "protest" (whether satirical or indignant), to show people in the process of changing themselves, under the stress of oppression, into a force which can overthrow it.[7]

But despite this undoubted artistic success, it was perhaps inevitable that Sembène would eventually turn away from the novel. His lucidity as to the limitations of a book culture are clearly shown in *God's Bits of Wood* in the character of N'Deye, who has been to teacher training school:

> She lived in a kind of separate world; the reading she did, the films she saw, made her part of a universe in which her own people had no place, and by the same token she no longer had a place in theirs... N'Deye herself knew far more about Europe than she did about Africa; she had won the prize in geography several times in the years when she was going to school. But she had never read a book by an African author — she was quite sure that they could teach her nothing.[8]

Writing remains crucially important to Sembène but by the early 1960s he had become increasingly frustrated by the failure of his work — written in French and published in Paris — to reach the mass of the people in his home land. In Dakar and elsewhere in Africa the French language is that of the coloniser or bureaucrat and his only potential readers there were precisely those members of the new Black African educational *élite* whose status he — like Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* — most queried.[9] A scholarship from the USSR in 1961-62 — when he was approaching the age of forty — took him to the Gorki Studios in Moscow where he was able to study filmmaking for two years under such distinguished teachers as Mark Donskoi and Sergei Gerasimov. On his return to Africa in 1963 filmmaking began to take predominance over writing and, as his confidence grew he tackled subjects at greater length and moved away from reliance on the French language, making his films in such local dialects as Wolof and Diola instead. But in moving away from literature, Sembène was turning to a medium that was still, in the early 1960s, virtually non-existent in Africa, south of the Sahara. Figures quoted by Vieyra[10] for the early 1970s show that out of the 251,000 cinemas in the world, the whole of Africa possessed only 2,500 and of these 500 were in South Africa, 450 in Egypt and 350 in Algeria. Moreover the programming of all cinemas in French-speaking Africa was controlled by just two French-based companies, COMMACCIO and SECMA, who divided the market amicably between them and pursued a policy of providing the cheapest and least demanding films. Of the 350 or so features which they handled each year, 50-55% were from Hollywood, 30-35% were French and 10-15% Hindu, Egyptian or Italian.[11] Senegal itself had only seventy cinemas for its three and a half million inhabitants[12] and there was no organizational structure that would allow collaboration between the various West African states. As Sembène was later to tell an interviewer, "It's easier for me to get my film shown in Paris than in Bamako."[13]

There was therefore no commercially viable base for production in Black Africa, and Senegal at that time possessed neither laboratories for processing films nor facilities for editing. Even in the field of short film production Sembène had few predecessors. The only pioneer of note prior to 1963 is the Senegalese film historian and documentarist Paulin Soumanou Vieyra (b. 1925) who was to become his friend and production manager. In 1955, Vieyra, who studied at IDHEC, produced with three friends what is generally considered the first Black African film, *Afrique sur Seine,* a twenty-minute study of Africans in Paris. Subsequently, after his return to Senegal, Vieyra completed several other short films but prior to 1963 he had not attempted a fictional subject. Much of Sembène's energy in the 1960s and 1970s has of necessity been devoted to the task of building up the basic structures of African cinema and his productions are only the more visible aspects of a twenty year struggle.

Ousmane Sembène's first film project, commissioned by the government of Mali, was a documentary on the Songhai empire. Though this film shot in 1963, was never released, its subject forms the basis of his latest feature film project. Also in 1963 Sembène completed *Borom Sarret,* a highly successful twenty-minute fictional film which tells of the misfortunes of a cart driver in Dakar who is cheated by a client and then has his cart confiscated by the police. Based on an original idea the film owes much to its well-observed detail and neat characterisation. Turning to a story he had written earlier and which was published, as *Vehi Ciosane ou Blanche-Genèse,* in 1965, Sembène next tried to bring his writing and filming careers into unison. But this first attempt at an adaptation seems not to have been a success and the resulting thirty-five minute film, *Niaye* (1964), was never released commercially.

Sembène was undeterred, however, and with *La Noire de... / Black Girl* (1966) he completed Black Africa's first feature length film. *La Noire de...,* which was shot in black and white and runs to about sixty-five minutes, deals with the relationship between Africans and Europeans. It focusses on a young African girl, Diouana, who becomes maid to a French family and is at first very happy. Then the family moves back to Antibes, taking Diouana with them. Far from being the land of her dreams, France turns out to be a place of utter solitude and exploitation, where she is denied real human contact and loses her personal identity. In despair she kills herself. Sembène had found the subject in a report in 'Nice-Matin' and used it as a basis of one of the stories in the collection *Voltaïque.* Adapting this text for the cinema, Sembène retained the French language of the original and dealt with the girl's sufferings by means of internal monologues. This separation of image and sound, perhaps inspired by the lack of synchronous sound recording equipment and emphasised by the use of another actress's voice for the monologues, gave the film a superficial modernity (in the lineage of the Melville of *Le Silence de la Mer* and the Bresson of *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne).* Bressonian restraint is not, however, Sembène's forte, though the film does present its case forcefully and with some nicely observed detail (such as the Whites at a dinner party agreeing that "While Senghor's there, we've nothing to worry about..."). The clearest indication of the richness of Sembène's later work is the use made of the African mask which figures in the opening and closing images of the film. Purchased from a small boy by Diouana and given as a present to her employers, it becomes in Antibes her sole link with her homeland and symbol of her degradation. Restored to the small boy at the end, it becomes a symbol of Africa to haunt the previously insensitive husband.

Mandabi / The Money Order (1968) shows a new confidence in the handling of the problems of adaptation, colour and full feature length. The film was financed partly thanks to an advance from the Centre Nationale de la Cinématographie Française, which necessitated the production of two separate language versions, one in French in addition to the Wolof version preferred by Sembène. The specific problems of the Wolof version point to the difficulty of making specifically African films which use the language of the people. Sembène was working from a literary text written in French and published, as *Le Mandat,* with *Vehi Ciosane* in 1965. He was anxious to keep closely to his preplanned dramatic structure and pattern of dialogue, so the Wolof version could not simply be improvised. Yet at this time Wolof was not a written language, so that there was no way of scripting the film except in French. In the end Sembène had to rewrite his French dialogue using nonstandard French constructions which would allow its verbal translation by the actors to be accomplished with the least possible difficulty.[14] The film as a whole is basically a slightly uncomfortable comedy recounting the misfortunes and humiliations of Ibrahima Dieng when he tries to cash a cheque sent him by his nephew in Paris.

The style of *Mandabi* is basically realistic — it was shot on location with a largely non-professional cast — and offers some sharp insights into the contradictions of Dakar society: the pompous and conservative Dieng, manipulated by his two wives, set against the greedy arrogance of the officials whose use of French indicates their distance from the people. Though *Mandabi* ends with a muted plea for change, it is a richly coloured social study rather than a work of political intent.

In 1970 Sembène shot a short film, *Taw,* for the National Council of the Church of Christ. A study of a day in the life of an unemployed youth in Dakar, the film shows Sembène's technical command but is not one of his more significant works. As he himself admits, he is concerned with neither documentary nor *cinéma-vérité* techniques and the basic chronichling of reality holds little interest for him. In any case he was already preparing a much more ambitious feature film in which the action would take on a wider significance. *Emitai* (1972) is set during World War II among the Diola people of the Casamance region, where Sembène had spent his childhood and worked as a fisherman while still a boy. It is basically a story of resistance by the peasant people to the French authorities who have sent troops to requisition their vital harvest of rice and to enlist (by force if necessary) their young men. In handling this subject Sembène avoids both false heroics and the psychologising which would be a typical Western approach (he does not, for example, deal with the — presumed — inner tensions of the young sergeant sent back as an oppressor to his home village). His attitude to the fetishistic beliefs of the villagers is also significant. Though himself a Marxist and atheist, he treats these beliefs with respect, but without either romanticising them (after the manner of negritude) or reducing them simply to picturesque examples of primitive folklore. Instead Sembène traces the double pattern of reaction within the village: the chief and the old men consulting the tribal gods, prevaricating and then capitulating, while the women lead the resistance, hide the rice and confront the French. When the men are forced to surrender the rice, this attitude drives them to attempt some stand against their oppressors, but in the film's final images they are ruthlessly shot down. Once again Sembène filmed on location, in dialect, with a largely non-professional cast, but this time he was working from an original script. The result is a work that lacks the tight dramatic unity and flow of *Mandabi,* but gets beyond the stance of a simple recording of African life to achieve a sharper critical insight both into traditional African culture and French colonialist practice.

In *Xala* (1974), which also appeared in novel form the same year, Sembène's attention is turned to the neo-colonialist era. Though this bitter satire is set in an unnamed African state its relevance to Senegal is very clear and the film suffered eleven separate cuts before its release in Dakar was permitted. Here Sembène moves away from surface realism and the film opens with the symbolic take-over of power by the new African bourgeoisie. The central figure of the film, El Hadj Abou Kader, forms part of this ruling group and is about to celebrate his affluence by marrying a third wife (younger than his daughter) as the action opens. But on his wedding night he is afflicted by the 'xala' — temporary sexual impotence — preoccupation which brings with it financial ruin, the break-up of the marriage and his expulsion from the ruling élite. Sembène's picture of the Black bourgeoisie is harsh and he castigates its airs and pretensions, its corruption and its misuse of privilege: Kader washes his limousine with imported mineral water and pays for his witch doctor's services by cheque, and his replacement on the council is a common pickpocket risen to affluence. As in *Mandabi* the use of language — Wolof or French — is a measure of a character's complicity in the neo-colonialist system. Against this gallery of corrupt officials, Sembène sets not an urban working population but a group of beggars. The latter, harassed by El Hadj when he is in power, take a fearful revenge in the film's ferocious Buñuelesque climax when the hapless merchant is forced to strip and submit to the jeers and spitting of the beggars as a prize for the lifting of the xala. Sembène does not offer easy answers but his film is one that can clearly not leave the African mass audience towards which it is directed indifferent.

Ceddo (1977) marks a new departure in Sembène's work — a look at the historical past of Africa, not in one particular time and place but in an unspecified area of Black Africa (though Wolof is spoken) and at a time which can be dated no more precisely than the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The film, structured as an allegory and deeply rooted in traditional culture and practice, deals with African response to alien intrusion. Though the characters include a Catholic priest and a slave trader, the main emphasis is on the impact of Islam in the form of the Imam who eventually kills and supplants the king and imposes a religious conversion on the people. As always Sembène is anxious to avoid placing the blame other than on Africans themselves. As he told an interviewer at the time of the film's showing at Cannes in 1977:

> Of course the West is responsible for much, but there is another kind of responsibility on the part of the Blacks themselves, their involvement in the slave trade, cooperation with the colonialists on the part of tribal leaders.[15]

So, in the exemplary narrative of the film, focus is placed on the "ceddo" — the outsider who refuses to accept conversion and subordination and who triggers off the film's action by kid. napping the king's daughter. Though he is eventually slain, the ceddo's spirit of revolt lives on in the Princess who on her return kills the Imam. This subject could hardly fail to be controversial in Senegal, where seventy per cent of the people are Moslem, and almost inevitably the response of the government which had supplied a substantial credit to the production, was to ban the film. The role of the Princess — for Sembène "the incarnation of modern Africa" — was also bound to provoke hostility, but is in line with the director's reiterated belief, constant since his days as a novelist, that "there can be no development in Africa if women are left out of account." *Ceddo* is arguably Sembène's major film to date. In its stylization of action (as in the theatricalization of the confrontations of king or Imam and people) and creation of a synthesis of several centuries of struggle, the film has certain similarities with Pasolini's work at the time of *Oedipus Rex.* But *Ceddo* is in no way derivative, and certainly it is the freest of Sembène's films from literary forms and influences and the film most clearly patterned as an interplay of image and music (the sound tract by Manu Dibango is remarkable). The rhythm Is slow but perfectly judged, and the film does full justice to its subject and to the traditional practices it depicts, though there is of course, never a hint that a return to tribal culture would be either possible or desirable.

Ousmane Sembène's progress as a filmmaker from *Borrom Sarret* to *Ceddo* is exemplary in its consistency and rigour. Though he never repeats himself, in terms of theme or style, the films are unmistakeably the work of a single creative personality confronting the full complexities of modern African life. Stylistically he found his beginnings during the 1960s in a form of realist observation that is akin to the practices of the Italian neo-realists. Like the work of De Sica, for example, *Mandabi* is essentially a social statement which does not go beyond the stage of exposing the uncaring face of officialdom or the limitations of traditionalists (like Dieng) to conceive of social change. But in the 1970s Sembène's work has become steadily more fluent and inventive while at the same time increasingly abrasive (as the difficulties he has experienced with the authorities show). Though the cinema has scarcely advanced at all in industrial terms over the past twenty years in Black Africa, it has in Ousmane Sembène produced the ideal progressive filmmaker who acknowledges the enormity of the problems to be faced but refuses to be anything but determinedly optimistic about the future and who constantly seeks new formal means of expressing his concerns.

NOTES

1. There is some confusion over the name since all the films are listed as directed by "Ousmane Sembène," while the novels were issued under the name "Sembène Ousmane." Perhaps the best solution is to follow the example of Paulin Soumanou Vieyra in his valuable study of the director (Paris: Editions Présence Africaine, 1972) which bears the title *Sembène Ousmane Cinéaste* on the cover and *Ousmane Sembène Cinéaste* on the title page! I have followed Vieyra's internal usage here, Sembène being the patronymic.

2. Key sources for an understanding of cinema in Black Africa are Paulin Soumanou Vieyra's *Le Cinéma Africain des Origines a 1973* (Paris: Editions Presence Africain en 1972 (Paris: Société Africaine d'Edition, 1972) and *Cinéastes d'Afrique Noire* (Paris: CinémAction 3, 1978).

3. Gerald Moore, *Twelve African Writers* (London: Hutchison, 1980), p. 21.

4. Ousmane Sembène, interview with Noël Ebony, quoted in Hennebelle, *Cinéastes d'Afrique Noire,* p. 115.

5. Moore, op. cit., p. 70.

6. Claude Wauthier, *The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa* (2nd English Edition: London, Heinemann, 1978). First edition in French (as *L'Afrique des Africains)* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964).

7. Moore, op. cit. p. 83.

8. Sembène Ousmane, *God's Bits of Wood,* trans. Francis Price (London: Heinemann, 1970), pp. 57-58.

9. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967). See the chapter "On National Culture."

10. Vieyra, *Le Cinéma Africain,* p. 12.

11. Pierre Pommier, *Cinéma et Développement en Afrique Noire Francophone* (Paris: Editions A Pedone, 1974), p. 16.

12. Vieyra, *Le Cinéma Africain,* p. 410.

13. Ousmane Sembène, interview in Hennebelle, *Cinéastes d'Afrique Noire,* p. 125.

14. Vieyra, *Ousmane Sembène Cinéaste,* p. 96.

15. Ousmane Sembène, interview with Ulrich Gregor, *Framework* No. 7-8, pp. 35-7. Subsequent quotes concerning *Ceddo* are from the same source.

OUSMANE SEMBENE

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L'Harmattan (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1964).

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Xala (Paris: Présence Africain, 1974). Published in English as *Xala,* (London: Heinemann, 1976).

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Short Films

Songhays (1963, unreleased)
Borom Sarret (1963, b&w, 35 mm, 22 mins)
Niaye (1964, b&w, 35 mm, 35 mins)
Taw (1970, Ektachome, 16 mm, 24 mins)

Feature Films

La Noire de.../Black Girl (1966, b&w, 35 mm, 65 mins)
Mandabi/ The Money Order (1968, Eastmancolor, 35 mm, 90 mins)
Emitai (1972, colour, 35 mm, 95 mins)
Xala (1974, colour, 35 mm, 123 mins)
Ceddo (1977, colour, 35 mm, 120 mins)

PROPHECY, MEMORY AND THE ZOOM: MICHAEL SNOW'S WAVELENGTH RE-VIEWED

by William C. Wees

T.S. Eliot:	In my beginning is my end.
Michael Snow:	From the beginning the end is a factor. In the context of the film the end is not 'arbitrary'; it is fated.
T.S. Eliot:	What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.
Michael Snow:	And past the end it should have ripples.[1]

Probably no avant-garde film has attracted more critical attention than Michael Snow's *Wavelength.* Yet, its most famous cinematic device, the zoom, seems never to have been fully understood — or even correctly described. Consider, for example, the following statements by some of Snow's most insightful critics. Bruce Elder: "The inexorable forward movement of the zoom ... continually brings the more distant nearer." Annette Michelson: "The camera continues to move steadily forward." Gene Youngblood: "The camera edges closer." Regina Cornwell: "The zoom very slowly edges forward," and things "are removed from view by the zoom's movement."[2] These observers know perfectly well that the camera is mounted on a stationary tripod and does not move at all. So, their talk of "movement" might be excused as simply a manner-of-speaking, were it not that the zoom's perceptual effect is crucial to the significance of the film.

What, then, *is* the visual event created by the zoom in *Wavelength?* How does it come about? How is it perceived? What, in a word, *happens* during a viewing of that forty-five minute zoom? And what does it mean?

In trying to answer those questions, I will have to leave out of consideration other significant visual phenomena of the film: the fluctuating exposures, positive-negative inversions, "flicker" effects, and the many other variations in light, color and texture which are like visual improvisations played against the implacable progress of the zoom. These elements (which one would be tempted to call "painterly," were they not more characteristic of Snow's "camera-related works," as he calls them,[3] than his actual painting) deserve a detailed analysis in their own right.[4] But since it is the zoom that gives the film its "shape" or "structure" (to use Sitney's Well-known terms), not to mention its fame (even among people who have never seen the film), it will be Snow's use of the zoom that will occupy us here.

Wavelength's zoom, like any zoom-in, does three different things simultaneously. It narrows the camera's "angle of vision"; it "flattens" the space perceived on the screen; and it keeps whatever is in the center of the frame at the beginning of the zoom, exactly in the center for the full duration of the zoom.[5] The third of these characteristics is the least noted in the discussions of the zoom, but it seems to me to be absolutely basic to the effect and meaning of *Wavelength.* To see why this is so, let us consider all three characteristics in somewhat more detail.

The first thing to remember is that, unlike a tracking shot, a zoom shot is not based on "forward movement." In fact, it is a commonplace of technical manuals, as well as more general texts on film techniques, to point out that a zoom shot, which creates its effects through the optics of the zoom lens, should not be confused with a tracking shot, which depends for its effects on actual movement of the camera forward (or backward) in space[6]

WAVELENGTH

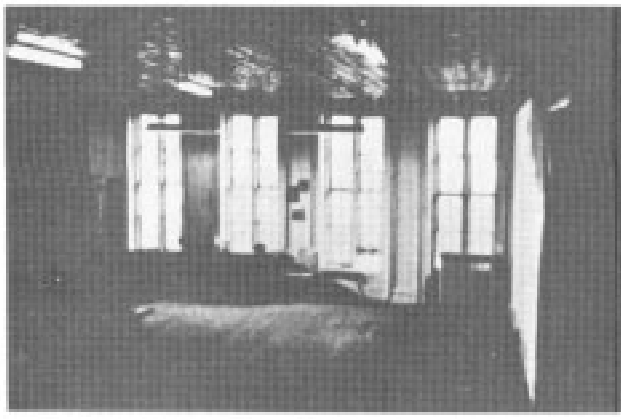

Figure 1

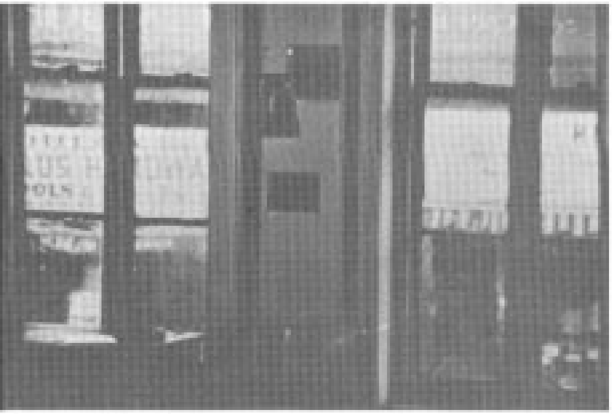

Figure 2

A zoom is a purely optical phenomenon. The only thing moved is the housing containing the elements of the zoom lens. The housing is revolved to change the relationship of the lens elements, which in turn change the angle at which light is refracted as it passes through the lens on its way to the film plane. It then leaves a chemical trace that will eventually become the image projected on a movie screen. During a zoom-in, the angle progressively decreases, so that less and less of the space in front of the camera is visible in the film image. Whatever remains visible gets larger and larger to "fill the space" within the frame. As the zoom approaches its extreme telephoto "end," a "compressing" of space becomes easily observable, so that images in the foreground and the background seem almost to be squeezed together on a single plane.

These effects can be quite striking and have been put to good use in a number of films.[7] However, the third characteristic of the zoom — the peculiar relationship of the center to the borders of the frame — has seldom been exploited, and only in *Wavelength* has its significance been fully explored. Snow placed his camera so that the rectangular photograph of waves pinned on the far wall of the room is exactly in the center of the rectangular film image we see on the screen, and throughout the zoom, the photograph stays in that central position. As if it were displacing everything around it, the photograph grows larger and larger, while everything else in the room gradually disappears. Finally, its borders spread beyond the borders of the screen image: the effect is of a "container" that has been filled to overflowing by that which it "contained."

There has been *no* "forward movement." If one can speak of movement at all, it would have to be in reference to a shrinking of the visible space of the room. By minute increments, the angle of vision has narrowed our view of the room, until the photograph has filled all the available space "in" the room and "on" the screen. Thus, the underlying principle of *Wavelength* is not movement toward the photograph, but expansion of the photograph — and reciprocal contraction of the space around it — as the zoom goes from a very wide and inclusive angle of vision to a very narrow and exclusive one.

The fact that so many people refer to "movement' in describing their perception of *Wavelength* suggests that, despite what I have just been saying, the zoom does provide visual cues for movement. If I actually walk toward a photograph pinned on a wall, I find that the photograph does, indeed, get larger in my visual field, and that things around it slip out of view at the peripheries of my vision. The zoom produces equivalent effects, hence the tendency to describe it as "moving forward." But I am really imitating a tracking shot, not a zoom. I cannot make my eyes pull in the sides of their visual field. Therefore, I cannot narrow my angle of vision, nor does the space before my eyes "flatten" as I get closer to the wall. Furthermore, my vision does not have a precise frame within which I can measure the expanding borders of the photograph. I cannot "hold" the photograph in the geometric center of what I see. For that matter, I cannot even determine with any certainty where that center is.

I think it is safe to say that no perceptual experience in the every-day world can prepare us for the kind of vision produced by the zoom. Yet, our film viewing habits lead us to assume that what we see on the screen has an equivalency with something we could ordinarily see. In this situation our perception is likely to fall back on what perceptual psychologists sometimes call the "best bet" principle: presented with unfamiliar, incongruous or conflicting data, the perceptual system will usually opt for the explanation that seems most likely (though not necessarily most "logical"), given its previous experience with similar data and/or its innate tendencies to "interpret" stimuli in particular and constant ways.[8]

Confronted with the zoom in *Wavelength,* the perceptual system responds to the most familiar visual cues — the increased size of things ahead and the disappearance of things to the side — and "sees" movement toward the wall (as the comments of the critics indicate). That is a "better bet" than seeing the wall move toward the camera, or seeing a room and the things in it grow bigger and bigger until a small photograph becomes larger than the whole end of the room had been previously. As far as our ordinary seeing is concerned, the odds are against these alternative possibilities, but in the perceptual realm of the zoom, they are, in fact, better bets, because they conform more closely to the actual optical effects of the zoom lens.

By imposing its narrowing angle of vision on the space of the room, the zoom *does* make the wall "move forward," and it *does* make things get bigger. The wall "moves forward" exactly as the fronts of the buildings, which we can see through the windows of the room, "advance" until they look like flat images pressed on the window panes (see Figure 2). This is the inevitable result of the "flattening" effect of the zoom-in. The optical effect responsible for "flattening" the space and drawing the distant wall into the foreground, simultaneously makes things "grow bigger." Things expand to fill the space vacated by whatever has been eliminated from view as the visual angle narrows. Since the expansion always goes from the center outwards, the central image gets bigger as the space gets flatter. What becomes biggest and flattest of all will be whatever was at the exact center of the projected image when the shot began — in this case, of course, the photograph of waves. Presumably this is why Snow says that from the beginning of the film, the end is "fated." The end is visibly present in the beginning: a grey spot precisely in the center of the projected image (see Figure 1). There is no "choice" but for the end to increasingly manifest itself through the photograph's increasing size (see Figures 2 and 3). When the photograph is the only thing left to be seen on the screen (see Figure 4), the beginning can be said to be visibly present in the end, since what was there in miniature at the beginning (in time: at the start; in space: at the center) is still there, grown large, at the end.

Thus it is that *Wavelength's* zoom permits us to perceive, cinematically, that interpenetration of beginning and end, to which the quotations in the epigraph to this essay refer. It is also in this way that the interpenetration of time and space is made visible.

As the zoom is the "cause," so the photograph is the "effect." It is the visible evidence of a telescoping of center and peripheries, time and space, beginning and end. Hence the peculiar significance in the fact that the film is centered on the photograph throughout. The photograph is literally the center of the film's projected image from beginning to end, and at every moment it embodies, in Snow's phrase, "prophecy and memory";[9] or, to modify a line from Yeats, it tells us what is past and passing and to come.

WAVELENGTH

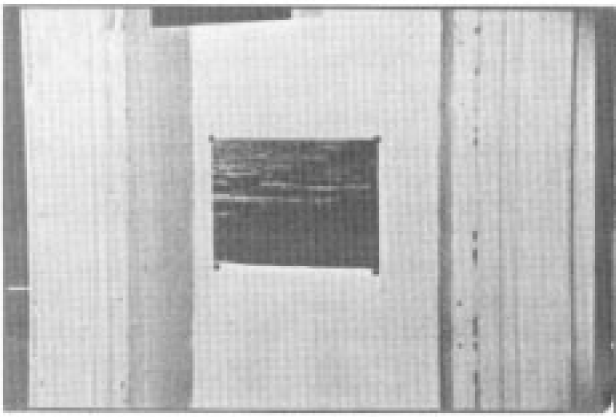

Figure 3

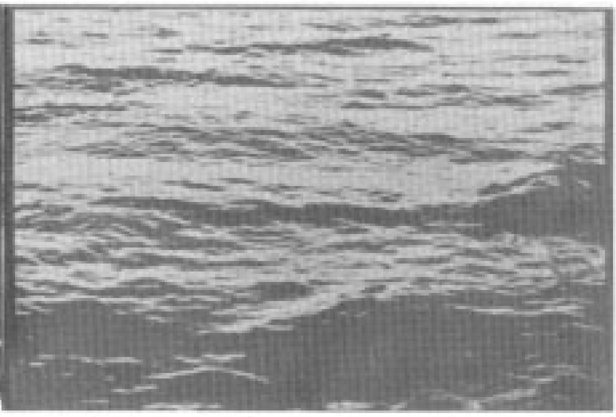

Figure 4

As soon as the borders of the photograph disappear beyond the borders of the projected image, the perfectly flat and rather dense and uninteresting photograph suddenly "opens" to reveal what manufacturers of lenses like to call "infinity." As Peter Gidal puts it, "At the end, we have reached the photograph of waves on the wall and seep into their re-presented infinity."[10] Up to this crucial point, however, the film seems to be leading toward exactly the opposite perception. The deep space of the room has been steadily becoming shallower, until the flatness of the photograph and the flatness of the screen seem to be one and the same. Then, the flatness evaporates, and the viewer perceives depth again. But the depth in the photograph is not like the depth in the room. As a one-dimensional object, the photograph does not have dimensions that can be worked upon by the optics of the zoom lens. This explains why the zoom finally gives up. It briefly shifts to a slightly wider angle, as if gesturing toward its beginning, and then the whole image goes out of focus and washes out into white: the clean slate of a new beginning.

Although there is nothing more that the zoom lens can show us, the film does not end on a dead center of exhausted perception. The spatial flattening produced by the zoom does not, finally, affirm the flatness of the photograph/screen, but, instead, releases a qualitatively different sense of depth than that we had experienced as long as the wall provided a "ground" for the photograph and prevented our experiencing the photograph's "infinity." By the same token, the film does not simply reduce itself to the materiality of the screen and the flat image projected on it.[11] It ends by suggesting that its materiality is not "the end" at all. At least, that is what I take to be the implications of the "flattening" effect leading to, and being superceded by, the perception of "infinite" depth, and the increasingly blown-up image of the photograph being erased by a final vision of pure, unobstructed light. Where the film ends, the imagination is encouraged to carry on, free of material constraints.[12]

Before concluding, I think it is worth asking what would have happened if *Wavelength had been* based on the forward movement of the camera, instead of the narrowing angle of a zoom-in. As if in answer to that question, Snow's short film, *Breakfast (Table Top Dolly),* appeared in 1976. That film comically demonstrates the results of a camera's forward movement, when it is literally and doggedly pursued.

The camera slowly dollys toward a small, cloth-covered table on which we see an untidy "still life" of eggs, an egg carton, a plate of breakfast rolls, two other plates of food, an opened carton of orange juice, a paper cup and several plastic cups and glasses, a bowl of fruit, and other breakfast items. The camera's physical encroachment becomes fully apparent when the tablecloth begins to bunch up, and objects on the table start to slide, teeter, tip, fall back against each other, and tumble off the sides of the table. Juice spills, eggs are crushed. Everything is pushed by the camera (actually an invisible plexiglass sheet mounted on the front of the camera) toward the wall against which the table rests.

In *Wavelength* objects in space remain untouched; it is space itself that is "flattened." In *Breakfast (Table Top Dolly)* objects are flattened, but our perception of the space they occupy remains unchanged, because the camera's changing position in space does not, like the zoom, change our angle of vision or perception of depth. In *Wavelength* the "flattened" space unites with the screen and the flat photograph projected on it, until our perception of "flatness" suddenly opens to "infinity." In *Breakfast (Table Top Dolly)* the wall never merges with the screen. It is a barrier as impenetrable to our perception as it is to the objects pressed against it by the camera's forward movement. Objects may be dislodged, spilled, broken, but they cannot lose their intractable materiality, because the way they have been filmed depends on the physical movement of the camera, not optical effects of a zoom lens.[13]

Stopped by the wall, the camera draws back ... then surges forward again, with the same predictable results. Because its approach is mechanical not optical, physical not perceptual, it is trapped in a three-dimensional world of temporally ordered cause-and-effect events. It can continue to repeat itself or it can stop, but it cannot unite beginning and end, nor break through to a new perception of space. It cannot produce "ripples" past the end.[14]

NOTES

1. Quotations are from T.S. Eliot, "Four Quartets," *Complete Poems and Plays,* 1909-1950 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952), pp. 123, 144; and from an interview with Michael Snow in *Cinim* No. 3 (Spring 1969), reprinted in *Structural Film Anthology,* ed., Peter Gidal (London: British Film Institute, 1976), p. 37.

2. Bruce Elder, "Michael Snow's *Wavelength," Canadian Film Reader,* eds. S. Feldman and J. Nelson (Toronto: PMA Books, 1977), p. 319; Annette Michaelson, "Toward Snow," *Artforum,* IX (June 1971), 31; Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1970), p. 125; Regin Cornwell, *Snow Seen* (Toronto: PMA Books, 1980), p. 73. In other passages these commentators are more accurate in describing the zoom, and in regard to many other aspects of the film they have extremely useful and interesting things to say. To this group I must add P. Adams Sitney who also refers to the zoom's "forward movement" in *Visionary Film,* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 379.

3. Pierre Théberge, "Conversation with Michael Snow," *Michael Snow,* exhibition catalogue (Kunstmuseum Lucerne, 1979), p. 17.

4. Stephen Dwoskin attempts an impressionistic sketch of these elements in *Film Is* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1975), pp. 111-14. The sound track also plays an important role in the film, but that aspect, too, will be left out of the present discussion.

5. A defect in almost all zoom lenses (including, presumably, the Angénieux lens Snow borrowed from Ken Jacobs) causes the image of an object in the center of the frame to gradually slip off center during a zoom-in. However, this so-called "sidedrift" could be corrected in Snow's case, because the film was shot over several days and the camera removed after each day's shooting. For the next filming session it was set up anew, which permitted Snow to re-align the position of the photograph so that it remained in the center of the frame.

6. However, even the experts can sow confusion. After clearly illustrating the difference between a zoom and a tracking shot, James Monoco says in a photo caption, "Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967) treats the tracking shot (sic) as a structural law...," and then proceeds in the next sentence to refer to the film's forty-five-minute zoom." *(How to Read a Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 178.)

7. For examples and more general discussion of the use of the zoom in T.V., documentary and conventional cinema, see Paul Joannides, "The Aesthetics of the Zoom Lens," *Sight and Sound,* XL, i (Winter 1970-71), 40-42; Stuart M. Kaminsky, "The Use and Abuse of the Zoom Lens," *Filmmaker's Newsletter,* V, xii (October 1972), 20-23; John Belton, "The Bionic Eye: Zoom Esthetics," *Cinéaste,* XI, i (Winter 1980-81), 20-27. (Belton's essay, jazzed up by "Lyle Tector," also appeared in *Film Comment,* XVI, v (September-October 1980), 11-17), With the exception of Belton, who devotes one paragraph to *Wavelength* in the *Cinéaste* version of his essay, Snow's use of the zoom is totally ignored in these essays. Joannides draws some useful analogies between the flat, "abstract" patterns produced by an extreme telephoto shot and the emphasis on the flat surface of the canvas in modern painting since Cézanne, but he does not apply these analogies to *Wavelength.*

8. See, for example, R.L. Gregory's discussion of Ames' famous "Distorted Room" in *Eye and Brain,* 2nd ed. (New York and Toronto: McGraw-Hill Co., 1973), pp. 179-81.

9. *Film Culture,* No. 46 (Autumn 1967), 1 (appeared Autumn 1968).

10. "Back and Forth," *Structural Film Anthology* (see footnote 1). p. 48.

11. Malcolm Le Grice faults the film precisely for this reason: that it fails to "advance" the "material concept of cinema." *(Abstract Film and Beyond* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1977), p. 120). Snow's own comments suggest that the materiality of the medium occupied only half of his considerations. See his analogies with Cézanne's balancing of "colored goo" — the oil paints — and "the forms that you see in their illusory space." *(Film Culture* (see footnote 9), 3.)

12. Here I take exception to Bruce Elder's recent comment that Snow's films "elicit an analytic rather than ecstatic response." ("All Things in Their Time: On Michael Snow's '———'," *Ciné-Tracts,* No. 9 (Winter 1980), 65.) I prefer his earlier claims to a "spiritual dimension" in Snow's work, and his assertion that *Wavelength* "explores the possibility of transcendence." ("Michael Snow's *Wavelength,"* (see footnote 2), p. 309.)

13. Physical movement of the camera can, of course, transform our perception of materiality, as Snow proves in the most rapidly oscillating passages of '———' ("Back and Forth").

14. In Snow's newest film, *Presents,* the camera does, literally, break through the rear wall of a stage set (after it has pushed and pummeled the furniture in front of the wall), but it produces no change in our perception of space. It simply gains the (hand-held) freedom to roam through many other three-dimensional spaces.

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