



CINÉ-TRACTS

A JOURNAL OF FILM, COMMUNICATIONS. CULTURE, AND POLITICS

FILM/TECHNOLOGY/IDEOLOGY

JOHN BERGER

STEPHEN HEATH

DUSAN MAKAVEJEV

IDEOLOGY & MEDIA MESSAGES

ETHNO-HERMENEUTICS



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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Editorial | 3 |
| Film / Technology / Ideology <i>Ron Burnett</i> | 6 |
| On Middle of the Earth <i>John Berger</i> | 15 |
| Screen Images— Film Memory <i>Stephen Heath</i> | 27 |
| The Ideological Dimension of Media Messages <i>Marina Heck</i> | 37 |
| Makavejev: in Conversation. | 48 |
| Ethno — Hermeneutics: Ethnography as Anomaly <i>Hart Cohen</i> | 54 |
| Review: "A History of Cinema" by Eric Rhode | 63 |

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WINTER 1976-77 ISSUE

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SPRING ISSUE: HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A.; Roberto Rossellini talks about his new film on Karl Marx

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EDITORIAL

Cine-tracts is a journal that intends to intervene in the current issues of social theory and cultural practice. This intervention is premised on the desire to examine how knowledge is used, who uses it, and to what purpose. The production of knowledge is at least partially predicated on the specific ways in which theory relates to practical action; on the inter-connections between social theory and political practice.

The function of criticism as knowledge must, in some way, be informed by these relations between theory and practice. For this reason we have attempted to both understand and give meaning to the notion of "praxis"— a term whose central tension resides in the dialectics of theory and practice. The elaboration of "praxis" within cultural theory is difficult; ultimately we are attempting to find a notion that would express both the normative and practical means of approaching the understanding and transformation of culture and society.

In what manner can CINE-TRACTS "intervene" in the current debates on cultural theory? Our first principle is that all criticism is ideological — that its present voyeuristic and consumerist positioning masks its ideological character. Our second principle follows naturally from the first. It is the incorporation of the "critique" of ideology within the fabric of our critique of culture. The critique of ideology within cultural criticism is the unmasking of criticism's real terms of response; it is specifying the conditions and circumstance of the response as a practice — and as it is situated within a complex of competing and interacting practices e.g. institutionalized frameworks that characterize the socio-cultural process.

What form would this criticism take? What are its priorities?

We can define our position initially by making explicit the kinds of theoretical work we would reject (critically). We would be most critical of theory that is reduced to dogma; theory that trivializes concepts e.g. economism, operationalism, mechanical determinism. We are also conscious of the need to criticize the tendency towards academism in cultural theory — this is criticism that is most often ahistorical and which makes its claims within a value-free universe thereby abstracting its real terms of response.

These forms of criticism do not need further imitation. Culture as praxis strives to revolutionize; criticism as revolutionary practice intends to generate a rhythm of change; change which is communicated as both crucial and drastic but which preserves within criticism that which is still useful. This form of critical analysis intends to explore methods of posing questions about culture — questions that would include the historical and ideological tensions we spoke of earlier.

The emphasis on tradition, change, and inter-subjective understanding presupposes a rejection of "pure" documentary/descriptive forms of cultural analysis and ideal/empirical forms of explanation. Our cultural analysis must go beyond these forms of interpretation for they do not recognize the collusion that exists between the interpreter and the phenomena under interpretation — that the interpreter *knows* the phenomena he wishes to *understand* and that to a large degree he knows and is of the world in which these phenomena occur. Socio-cultural studies, therefore, have to deal with the consequences of social organization and a critical analysis of culture should formulate criteria by which these consequences can be evaluated. The evaluation of consequences is linked to the realization of social ideals through political activity. The critical moment, then, is the juncture of theory and practice wherein the objects of study are always influenced by and influencing the studies themselves. In bracketing the issues of interpretation, object relations and action, we define the field of cultural criticism as a series of dialectically posed relationships between theory and practice.

One such relationship is the positioning of the subject within the socio-cultural process and within the institutions that make up this process. This crucial dimension of cultural theory (the subject) is wrought with paradox and contradiction. The living process through which the subject constitutes himself is open to objectification and reductionism. The deeply interiorized contradictions that are posed between the self and society are refracted into empirical schemata and the subject ceases to be a dialectically acted upon being who acts and struggles with reality. In speaking of the positioning of the subject and of the constitution of the subject we are not speaking of the atomized individual in bourgeois societies but are rather trying to raise the question of subjectivity within an overall analysis of the socio-economic structure.

Where is the subject in relation to this context and what is his nature? The subject is located within the framework of consumption/production but is not passive. His capacity for self-reflection makes him active and that activity is the basis upon which the subject produces and reproduces himself. The subject's constitution of self is thus predicated on an ambiguous relationship of *struggle* with a pre-existent social whole whose very exteriority masks its presence within the subject. Thus the subject is seen as crossed by contradictions while at the same time producing contradictions.

In linking together the issues of self-reflexivity, subjective positioning, and hegemonic social structure, we are proposing the outline of a possible theory of culture which embraces both the 'critique of ideology' and the problematic of *praxis*. This work is largely incomplete and thus far, poses far more questions than it answers. It is towards these questions that we hope the journal's contributors will address themselves.

THE EDITORS

Working Papers in Cultural Studies 10

ON IDEOLOGY

The first part of the 1977 issue will analyse different concepts of ideology within the marxist tradition. The theorists considered will include Gramsci, Althusser, and Poulantzas. A series of case studies are presented in the second part. These involve the ideological aspects of the crisis in education, a critique of sociological notions of working class 'community', and a commentary on the problems of ideology in marxist aesthetics.

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FILM /TECHNOLOGY / IDEOLOGY

by

RON BURNETT

One of the major problems faced by film teachers, film viewers, and filmmakers is that there are a series of implicit rules that govern the filmmaking process-rules whose *visibility* is distorted by their seemingly *natural* structure. These natural rules make it seem as if the technology of cinematic production is neutral, that is, without ideology. The cinematic production process is elevated to a level of professional scientism and this further depletes the possibilities of understanding the ideological determinants of filmic creation.

"Have you noticed how all the many discourses on the cinema assume the a priori existence of a non-signifying apparatus/producer of images which gives *impartial* service in any situation. . ." ". . . filmmakers would be well advised to think about the ideology produced by the basic apparatus which defines the cinema. The film camera is an ideological instrument in its own right . . . it produces and reproduces a directly inherited code of perspective, built on the scientific model of the Quattrocento. What needs to be shown is the meticulous way in which the construction of the camera is geared to 'rectify' any anomalies in perspective in order to reproduce in all its authority the visual code laid down by renaissance humanism . . ." (Marcelin Pleyne in *Cinéthique*).

The camera does not record what it sees. It constructs a spatial and temporal configuration to conform to the trained eye of an observer who wishes to *generate* the *feeling* that the camera is recording. The industry of film is made up of specialists trained to create the effect of the camera as a transparent device in the generation of cinematic narratives. As an instrument the camera's technological characteristics affect what we see both as we look through it and as we gaze at the screen.

The process through which messages are encoded (i.e., the production process) and the technology which is used to do the *encoding* are dialectically interrelated and interdependent. Film is a consumer product created in a specific economic context (labour and materials being the primary cost) bringing together a certain number of technical staff whose prime function is to successfully construct a sellable item. It is a piece of merchandise having exchange value—sold through tickets and contracts — dependent upon an intricate system of distribution and credit. In order to understand the production process we have to examine the socio-economic structure which, in part, determines film. We have to understand what profit means, what surplus-value means, how credit is arranged, how the large conglomerates package entertainment, how certain filmmakers come to be seen more than others, etc. . . .

"The optical apparatus, *camera obscura*, will serve to elaborate, in pictorial work a new mode of representation, *perspectiva artificialis*. This system, a recentering or at least a displacement of the center (which settles itself in the eye) will assure the setting up of a 'subject' as the active center and origin of meaning. One could doubtless question the privileged position which optical instruments, seem to occupy on the line of intersection of science and ideological products. Does the technical nature of optical instruments, directly attached to scientific practice, serve to conceal not only their use in ideological products but also the ideological effects which they may provoke themselves? Their scientific base assures them a sort of neutrality and avoids their being questioned."*

"But, already a question: if we are to take account of the imperfections of these instruments, their limitations, by what criteria may these be defined? if, for example, one can speak of a restricted depth of field as a limitation, doesn't this term itself depend upon a particular conception of reality for which such a limitation would not exist? Signifying productions are particularly relevant here, to the extent that instrumentation plays a more and more important role in them and that their distribution is more and more extensive. It is strange, (but is it so strange) that emphasis has been placed almost exclusively on their influence, on the effects they have as finished products, their content, the field of what is signified, if you like; the technical bases upon which these effects depend and the specific characteristics of these bases have been ignored, however. They have been protected by the inviolability which science has tried to provide."*

* Jean-Louis Beaudry, *Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus* in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. xxviii, no. 2, Winter 1974-75. p.40 Henceforth to be referred to as *Beaudry*.

* Beaudry. p.40

The camera as a machine, is reflective of a certain way of approaching life; (like Godard says, the camera does not give us a reflection of reality but the reality of that reflection) it reveals a certain way of trying to respond to, and recreate experience. Given the breadth and scope of the technological achievements of the twentieth century, the camera, even in its most sophisticated variations has not changed much since the middle of the nineteenth century. We can say that it fulfills the purpose for which it was designed, that is, to generate motion out of still pictures, to capture in as real (?) a fashion the life patterns around us, but that doesn't clarify why things have remained the same. But, by looking more deeply into the production process, that is, by examining those forces which *maintain* an *established* way of defining experience and a very particular way of presenting those definitions we can perhaps come to a clearer understanding of how dominant ideologies work and how they create the technology to re-enforce and uphold that dominance.

"Dominant ideology is an extremely plastic, diffuse and apparently ahistorical structure. Ideology as Gramsci argued seems to consist of a set of residues or pre-constituted elements which can be arranged and re-arranged bricoleur fashion in a thousand different variations. The dominant ideology of a society thus appears to be redundant: we know it already, we have seen it before, a thousand different messages and signs seem to signify the same ideological meaning. It is the very environment in which we live and experience the world — the necessarily imaginary distortions through which we continually represent to ourselves the imaginary relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from them" (Stuart Hall)*.

*Stuart Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*, Paper for the Council of Europe Colloquy on *Training in the Critical Reading of Television Language* — Center for Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, Sept.. 1973. p.14.

The limitations that define how a camera sees what it sees are the result of a historical process of selection and an ideological process of definition. It is quite clear though, that practitioners of film have always known about the particular limitations of the camera and have designed an industry to overcome those limitations. They have thus made extensive use of the camera's ideological structure *in order* to mask ideological choice.

Due to the sensitivity of the camera as an instrument (the camera, when hand-held will respond to the nervous system of the user and to his/her breathing rhythms) the industry had to invent a tripod which would hold down the camera and contribute to that all important effect of their being no camera-man *present* as an element in the experience of the viewer. "Never set out intentionally to shoot a film without a tripod. You will be constantly hampered and severely limited in what you shoot. The tripod will give you a firm support that will produce steady pictures"*

* Kenneth H. Roberts and Win Sharples Jr., *A Primer For Film-making*, Pegasus, N.Y. (1971), p. 137. Henceforth to be referred to as *Primer*.

The absence of the cameraman is, for the viewer, an essential component of the recording function of the camera. The subject-viewer is fixed into a position where he/she 'sees' without the apparent mediation of the camera. The less the mediation the more it appears to be a record and the more recorded it appears to be the less visible are the stylistic and ideological choices that are being made.

If the cameraman were to shake his camera in the middle of a scene which calls for a still camera it would disrupt the viewer's attention. The disruption would make a certain stylistic restraint visible and produce a disjuncture between the 'real' (which we experience as natural) and the 'conventional' (which we make real by a process of naturalization). As subjects we contribute to a 'making real' of what is so clearly 'unreal' by participating with filmmakers in the *maintenance of the illusion*.

". . . the spectator must be placed in a *possible* position. The creative director who has placed his camera inside of a fireplace to view the action taking place in front of the fire has certainly not selected a possible position. How many people sit inside a fireplace? Who wants a burned backside? As a result, the impossibility of the camera angle signals to the audience the unreality of the action taking place in front of the camera, and the unwelcome knowledge that contrivance is present."*

* *Primer*, p.137.

The camera's position is thus determined by the 'eye' of the viewer and by need on the part of the filmmaker to maintain a logical structure for viewing and for the unfolding of the narrative. But the resultant structure makes it seem as if there is no camera and no contrivance present in the creation of the scene. The absence of what is so clearly present serves to obscure the technical base and to obscure the effects brought about by that base.

"Central in the process of production of the film, the camera — an assembly of optical and mechanical instrumentation — carries out a certain mode of inscription characterized by marking, by the recording of differences of light intensity (and of wavelength for colour) and of differences between the frames. Fabricated on the model of the camera obscura, it permits the construction of an image analogous to the perspective projections developed during the Italian Renaissance. Of course the use of lenses of different focus lengths can alter the perspective of the image. But this much is clear in the history of cinema: it is the perspective construction of the Renaissance which originally served as the model. The dimensions of the image itself, the ratio between height and width, seem clearly taken from an average drawn from Western Easel painting."*

* Beaudry, p.41.

The construction of a narrative film consists of making sure that the Renaissance perspective is maintained. This ensures that the spectator will continue to believe that the action taking place on the screen is real. "Since the filmmaker is working in a two-dimensional medium but attempting to create a three dimensional effect, his compositions should be arranged in depth. His control of perspective is essential for in depth compositions. He can control perspective with his lens selection combined with his positioning of the subjects in relation to the camera, or, in exteriors by utilizing atmospheric conditions."*

* Primer, p.166.

It is quite obvious from the above, that the camera, almost by definition generates discontinuity and disjuncture. Yet we experience film in terms of continuity. The projection process reconstitutes a procedure that fragments and tears up the world into pieces. This reconstruction and reconstitution is something that we are hardly aware of because we are all "ideal" spectators participating through our acceptance of a number of constraints in the maintenance of the continuity. We want to sustain the effects of being in an illusory universe. "The filmmaker must consider the overall action of the scene and how it can be joined to the next scene, allowing the action to flow smoothly. Without continuity a film would be a series of jumbled images lacking meaning and purpose. *As each shot came on the screen, the audience would have to be concerned anew with what the action was, where the action was taking place, what the relationship of each image was to the one preceding, and what the particular image meant to the film as a whole. Continuity answers such questions easily and instantly.*"*

* Primer, p.145.

It is thus undesirable to make the audience aware that they are watching a work that is the product of a set of activities. Since twenty-four frames make up one second of viewing time and since each frame can be filmed in a separate fashion it is essential that the differences between each frame be *minimalized* so as to maintain the illusion that reality is transferable from three into two dimensions. "Thus on the technical level the question becomes one of the adoption of a very small difference between images, such that each image, in consequence of an organic factor (presumably persistence of vision) is rendered incapable of being seen as such. In this sense we could say that film lives on the denial of difference: the difference is necessary for it to live, but it lives on its negation."*

* Beaudry, p.42.

Paradoxically, the camera is a device which it appear as if it does not frame the objects it films. Individual images disappear and we are left with a totality which seems to be a product of the unification of its parts. The presence of an image on the screen is in fact a denial of what is absent. In order for the cinema to be effective (in commercial terms) it must operate at a level which denies those fragmented parts which give it its meaning.

The effectiveness of film though, is not simply a function of the camera and the ideology that it produces. It is also a function of how that series of ideological effects are *edited* and *presented*. The darkened hall of a cinema palace, the hidden projector, the large screen, are all elements of a total environment designed to support and give substance to

* Beaudry, p.45.

the effects generated by the camera. ". . . thus the spectator identifies less with what is represented. the spectacle itself, that with what stages the spectacle, makes it seen, obliging him to see what it sees; this is exactly the function taken over by the camera as a sort of relay."*

Let me re-emphasize that the camera is not perceived as an ideological instrument and that the rules which govern its use are looked upon as natural to the medium. Thus the cinema environment is also looked upon as the only place to screen and view films. Many of the elements that I have been describing are acutely linked to the narrative Hollywood film. It is common practice to teach film using the primer from which I have been quoting. The question that we have to ask ourselves is how a particular style — acutely linked to the creation of the narrative Hollywood film becomes the dominant form and *is taught as if it were the only form*.

Part of the answer can be found in the development of the industry of film. As the cinema grew in the early part of the twentieth century its technical development was almost totally bound up with what was then called the photo-play. Cinema was an industry and the technology of film developed in response to the needs of the industry. New techniques of film were invented to heighten dramatic effect and capture audience interest. Inventors developed shorter focal lengths and Griffith started using close-ups all to service the rapidly expanding and highly profitable business of film.

New camera focal lengths helped improve the clarity and depth of focus giving a strength to the background which hadn't existed in earlier films. (This is all happening in the era of 1910-1920.) Problems of perspective could now be resolved more easily but with that came other hindrances. Sets had to be constructed more carefully and with greater attention to detail. Lighting had to develop a more sophisticated set of techniques to handle both foreground and background. Vast and extremely expensive sets were constructed to make it seem as if what was being filmed was *real* and to give the various narratives a coherently transparent look.

We do not have place here to develop this analysis of the history of film suffice to say that the *Primer* is the product of an *industrial history* intimately linked to the growth and spreading power of corporate and monopoly capitalism. The primer is a catalogue of the dominant ideological concepts which have made film what it is, a consumer product.

Thus by 1919 many books appear on the techniques of creating the photo-play and all the books make it seem as if there is a specific *methodology* available for the generation of a film — *a methodology as distinct from a particular style!*

"The placing of the cinema within US. models even in the formal aspect, in language, leads to the adoption of the ideological forms that gave rise to precisely that language and no other. Even the appropriation of models which appear to be only technical, industrial, scientific, etc. leads to a conceptual dependency situation, due to the fact that the cinema is an industry, but differs from other industries in that it has been created and organized in order to generate certain ideologies. The 35mm camera, 24 frames a second, arc lights, and a commercial place of exhibition for audiences were conceived not to gratuitously transmit any ideology but to satisfy in the first place the cultural and surplus value needs of a specific ideology, of a specific world view: that of U.S. financial capital.

The mechanistic takeover of a cinema conceived as a show to be exhibited in a large theater with a standard duration, hermetic structures that are born and die on the screen, satisfies to be sure, the commercial interests of the production groups, but it also leads to the absorption of forms of the bourgeois world view

which are continuation of nineteenth century art, of bourgeois art: man is accepted only as a passive and consuming object; rather than having his ability to make history recognized he is only permitted to read history, contemplate it, listen to it, and undergo it. The cinema as a spectacle aimed at a digesting object is the highest point that can be reached by bourgeois filmmaking. The world, existence, and the historic process are enclosed within the frame of a painting, the same stage of a theatre, and the movie screen; man is viewed as a consumer of ideology, and not as the creator of ideology.**

* O. Getino and F. Solanos. *Towards a Third Cinema*, in *Afterimage* no. 3, Summer 1971, p.20.

What this means is that when the conceptual base for the analysis of film is predicated on an understanding of the industry and how it developed then we discover that history of film has in fact never been written. (Certainly the work of Cahiers du Cinema and Cine-thique has started the process.) The development of film is presented by bourgeois historians as a series of accidental discoveries — as if inventors and filmmakers suddenly at a given moment, were inspired to create and maintain specific *forms of representation*. The inter-relationship between their *practice* and the socio-economic structure is rarely touched upon. When economics is dealt with it is in the following terms: "Elaborate sets run up into the thousands of dollars. A good restaurant scene may cost from \$2,000 to \$5,000, depending upon its elaborateness and size. A setting calling for intricate electric lighting effects sometimes exceeds the \$5,000 mark . . ." "It is in the outdoor sets, however, that the film artisan finds his biggest field of endeavour. For under the open skies his undertakings are not hindered by space limitations and therefore assume the most gigantic proportions. Here again the question of realism is the first consideration. Perhaps the greatest set that has ever been constructed up until the time of writing was one representing the ancient city of Babylon, used in a gigantic production. One front of this huge setting — the side that faced the motion picture camera — there rose high walls painted to stimulate stone, 100 feet in height and adorned with reliefs of strange winged birds and creatures. For more than six months the carpenters, masons, concrete workers and painters were busied with the set, and the cost of the work is estimated to have been in excess of \$50,000.**

*A.C. Lescaboura, *Behind the Motion Picture Screen*, B. Blum Inc., (1971). N.Y., Reissued in 1919, p.120.

What is the ideological message contained in this quote?

1. Movies are money. We all know that. In fact, the more money that is spent, the greater is the epic. It is a popular pastime (of the media) to quote figures on how much this or that star makes and to see which film is winning the all-time race for the greatest money-maker.
But where does the money come from?
Why invest so much?
What distribution structure is needed to return a profit?
And in a broader sense what economic structure creates and gives credibility to these strange shylocks?
2. Another ideological imperative contained in this quote is that the common person *needs a fairly coherent set of illusory devices in order to experience the reality of the message*. But as we have seen that reality is constructed on, and is determined by, a whole series of specific artifices. Thus the deeper message that we are dealing with is, that it is *actually possible* for reality to be transcribed unto film. This basic and omnipresent mystification of the production process makes it seem as if the camera is spontaneously reacting to a value-free natural environment and that what it *shows* is somehow different from what is *said*. The

message generated by the camera, that is, the way in which it transforms the real, has to be suppressed in order for the real to be experienced. *What the camera sees is dependent in the first instance on why it is being used and in the second instance on how it is being used.* This brings us back once again to the problem of understanding the ideological intent of media messages.

The next question that we have ask ourselves is, can we understand the connotative level of the visual message through an understanding of the production process? In part, as Stuart Hass says, there are a series of dominant or preferred meanings which act as a *connotative map* for the cultural and social order. These dominant meanings are not mechanically deterministic but do form the basis for our common sense constructs of the world around us. "The domains of preferred mappings have the whole social order embedded in them as a set of meanings, practices and beliefs, the everyday knowledge of social structures, of how things work for all practical purposes in this culture, the rank order of power and interest, and a structure of legitimations and sanctions. Thus, to clarify a misunderstanding at the denotative level, we need primarily to refer to the immanent world of the sign and its codes. But to clarify and resolve misunderstandings at the level of connotation, we must refer *through* the codes, to the rules of social life, of history and life-situation, of economic and political power, and, ultimately, of ideology. Further, since these connotational mappings are 'structured in dominance' but not closed, the communicative process consists, not in the unproblematic assignment of every visual item to its position within a set of pre-arranged codes, but of *performative rules* — rules of competence and use, of logics in use — which seek to *enforce* or *prefer* one sematic domain over another, and rule items in and out of their appropriate meaning sets."*

* Stuart Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*, p.14.

Certainly, if we are to begin to de-code film we have to begin with the praxis that created it. This does not mean breaking a film down into its technical components (pans, close-ups, long shots) and then attaching some meaning to the use of a particular technique. It means understanding the *context* in which the praxis exists and upon which it is dependent. It means that the visual code at its connotative level has been mapped and outlined by a process of selection and exclusion and that the dominant or hegemonic code has to be duplicated in order for a film to survive the various levels of economic and political pressure which accompany its creation. The production process is a mediator between a deeper organization or semantic rules and a seemingly value-free denotative level. But all of these, the semantic rules, the production process, the denotative and connotative codes, have certain conditions and *practices* as their basis. It seems, because of the hermetic nature of the film product, that all of these factors exist outside of what is being seen-experienced. *This is, in fact one of the prime ideological functions of present day commercial cinema.*

A primary question that we are still left with is how the historical process generates certain dominant codes. This is not a question that we can answer in depth here, but we can make the following tentative assertions.

1. Hegemony deeply saturates the consciousness of a society: it sets limits and exerts pressures but it is not valuable to talk about hegemonic control in mechanical terms since the concept itself implies something that is all embracing but is not in absolute control. ". . . if our social and political and cultural ideas and assumptions and habits were merely the result of a specific manipulation, of a kind of overt training which might be simply ended or withdrawn, then the society would be very much easier to move and to change than in practice it has ever been or is."* As with all other cultural institutions in existence right now film is a product of a hegemony. It reproduces

*Raymond Williams. *Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory*, New Left Review, no. 82, Nov.-Dec., 1973. p.8.

the ideas of that hegemony and its specific contribution is to make the relationship between dominant ideas and their products a mystified one, that is, to disconnect and create disjunctures between the production of ideas and the institutions which produce them. (Film historians have called this magic.) So, the history of film can be seen as a process of solidification of this disjuncture, through the maintenance and elaboration of many of the codes which this paper has examined.

2. ". . . we can only understand an effective and dominant culture if we understand the real social process upon which it depends. I mean the process of *incorporation*."* The first part of this paper went into great detail about education as an instrument of a dominant culture. It also examined all the subjective crises which come about when trying to deal with the effects of that dominance. My central conclusion was that education functions to alienate the student from searching for the root causes of any situation. Once the student is *incorporated* into this *mode* of thinking (and I think William's use of the word incorporation is important to emphasize here because he is trying to get away from a mechanical model of manipulation.) Common-sense ways of seeing reality become attached to the dominant culture. This is not as Williams says simply a case of an *imposed* ideology, but is the consequence of the effect of hegemony upon consciousness.

* Ibid. p.9.

3. "It is not only the depths to which this process reaches, selecting and organizing and interpreting our experience. It is also that it is continually active and adjusting; it isn't just the past, the dry husks of ideology which we can more easily discard."*

* Ibid. p.9.

A key characteristic of the dominant culture is the way it adjusts and co-opts and in fact incorporates possible changes in its structure. The Primer on Film-making is a highly developed 350 page book. It is an inventory of dominant codes. It seems to present all the possibilities for cinematic creation. It is important to note that it, and books like it, are in use in schools throughout North America. Since the book supports accepted ways of seeing and experiencing film it helps to maintain the way students go about viewing films in theaters.

4. "Dominant definitions connect events, implicitly or explicitly, to grand totalizations, to the great syntagmatic views of the world: they take large views of issues: they relate events to the 'national interest' or to the level of geo-politics . . ."* "The definition of a hegemonic viewpoint is (a) that it defines within its terms the mental horizon, the universe of possible meanings of a whole society or culture; and (b) that it carries with it the stamp of legitimacy — it appears coterminous with what is 'natural', 'inevitable', 'taken for granted', about the social order."* The ability to decode a series of dominant codes implies that the codes have been learned and that they are necessary

*Stuart Hall, p.17.

* Ibid. p.17.

for understanding and participation in the life of the society. *Ideological representations are reproduced through the actual process of decoding.*

So it is in the opposition between encoding/decoding that we can begin to postulate a model that will provide some understanding of how the historical process generates and then maintains dominant cultural codes.

If the relationship between a film and an audience were a direct and unmediated one (unmediated that is, by the theatre environment, the screen texture, the type of audience, the class position of the viewer, etc.) then its effects would be clearly visible and film would be a behaviourist's utopia — a place where the meaning of the objects on the screen would be immediately understood — transferred as it were directly onto consciousness. But the viewers of a film see many ideological intent and framework of the film has to be understood.

Between the space created by what is *said* and what is *understood* lie the possibilities for the transformation of how we approach our comprehension of film. For it becomes clear, then, that film is not a pure form of communication but is really a sort of mythic noisemaker.

If there is any myth about film that needs to be unmasked it is that the sound and images emanating from the screen *affect people in a total way*. This undialectical but central notion imputes a power to the medium that it cannot have unless those watching it are not using what is *presented* to *help* construct an experience. It is precisely this type of objectification that sustains the idea and status of film as an experience different and more special than any other. By making it appear as if the audience is not aiding in the construction of what it is seeing (in a dialectical fashion) the perceptual and cognitive activity of each viewer is obscured and what we are left with is (according to bourgeois critics) magic. But that notion of magic is a carefully constructed myth which viewers bring to the theater. It allows them to deny to themselves to work that they are doing to make the experience happen.

In the act of viewing the viewer brings their 'être de classe' into dialectical conflict with the 'object de classe' that is being presented. Hollywood films are powerful precisely because, they make it seem as if that conflict is peripheral. The existence of that *disjuncture* though, is a grammatical necessity — without it, the basically repetitive pattern of experience that Hollywood films offer would lose their attractiveness.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The following are two unpublished letters written by John Berger to the principal actors (Olympia Carlisi and Philippe Léotard) of the Swiss film "Le Milieu du Monde", which was co-scripted by Berger and directed by Alain Tanner.

The letters explore the nature of passion and, by contextualizing the male and female roles in the film, the author enters male and female consciousness and sexuality. The letters are not documents to be looked at solely in terms of the film to which they refer, they are, rather, a clarification of creative intent; they reveal the preparatory complexities of role-building and the intricate relationships both internal and external to film. A sense of "process" is written into the letters, in terms of what constitutes the creation ("realization") of a film, and the depth intrinsic to social, political and historical analysis. The value of these letters lies in the fact that they are both subjective and critical. Via the letters, the author seeks to clarify his own epistemology for the actors as well as his own understanding of script-relations. The actors' interpretations of their own particular roles reveals the degree to which they have understood and integrated their understanding of the scenario into their work in the film.

The two letters are paradigmatic. On the one hand they are an inventory of dialectical elements (from author-actor, script-screen to active-passive, mind-body, male-female, sex-passion, peasant-proletariat, Swiss-Italian). On the other hand, the "totality" of the film experience and the envelopping nature of the spectator-screen relationship is closely aligned with the author's analysis of passion (that is, to construct a metaphor, what is referred to in the letters as "Lovers' totality," "subjectively the lovers incorporate the world in their totality" and "...and this is the promise passion makes to the imagination...")

The major reason for Ciné-Tracts' printing of these two letters is that, in addition to their great sensitivity, they deal with the relationship of the production process to final product, and this is a basic concern for the journal.

The work of John Berger, author, critic and film-maker will be discussed at length in a future issue of Ciné-Tracts.

JOHN BERGER, ON "MIDDLE OF THE EARTH"

Geneva, 1973.

Dear Philippe:

The last thing I want to do is to tell *you* how / think François should be played. I don't even know how he should be played. But what I would like to do is to explain what I see in his story — especially the story of his passion for M. I think this is worth doing because, although there have been tens of thousands of films about love stories, remarkably few have shown any understanding of the nature of sexual passion. For the most part they rely on stereotypes of "Love" and (more recently) on appeals to the spectator's eroticism (voyeurism). What we are concerned with is François' whole world — the world of which he is the centre — and its transformation by his passion for the Italian waitress.

François, as I see him, is a man who cannot *contain* his passion. This has at least two consequences. He cannot contain his passion in the sense that he cannot disguise or suppress it: in his pursuit of M. he is heedless: with scarcely a second thought (as soon as he recognizes his passion for what it is) he risks his marriage and his political career. His friends say that he has gone mad and, at the beginning, they try to rescue him from "the power" that is driving him mad: the power, as they see it, of the unscrupulous Italian waitress. There is, however, a second sense in which he cannot *contain* his passion: he cannot meet its demands, he cannot live, despite his heedlessness, according to its dictates; and so his passion leads to his disintegration. He does not "go to pieces". He is not in the least like the schoolmaster in the Blue Angel. He does not abandon his own moral categories. He remains, as he understands it, the master of his own life and actions. There is nothing *obviously* self-destructive in his behaviour. But this "mastery" of his own life prevents his passion from developing, it prevents him being transformed by his passion. And so his passion ceases to be his own: in other words, it ceases to be a passion and becomes a force outside him, an obsession. It might be tempting to call this incapacity *impotence*. (Although clearly F. is not impotent in the immediate sexual sense.) Yet to assess F.'s incapacity in terms of a personal power (or potency) is already to use the terms of the incapacity itself. The clues lie in the nature of sexual passion at its most essential. What does passion do? What does its advent mean?

At a certain moment, which we witness in the film, F. becomes aware of being in love with M. Yet that is already wrongly formulated. For the state of being in love *is* the state of being aware of it. The state cannot precede the awareness. The most that can precede it is an interest or an attraction. There is a crucial moment at which F. falls in love with M. At this moment she responds to him in a certain way: her response carries with it a limited promise: (Perhaps she just appears to be more apparently ready to listen to him than anybody else. Perhaps it is the way she caresses him in bed the first time.) His imagination seizes upon this promise and totalises it, transforming it into the promise of all that he is not (or has not) and therefore all that he desires. Such an imaginative act of totalisation is "the fall" into love.

M., as any woman would be, is aware of what has happened. She registers his passion as an invitation and as a warning. Meanwhile it offers her opportunities. (We shall study the course of her reactions later). She has not fallen in love with him.

To return to F., and the nature of passion.

Passion begins with the self. It is necessary to emphasize this because the contrary may quickly appear to be true: the lover may appear to leave himself and to be entirely directed towards the beloved. He (or she) may well put the well-being of the other before his (or her) own; genuine self-sacrifice (that is to say sacrifice made without thought of moral virtue) is not uncommon in passion. But this is because the loved one represents the lover's completion. The beloved is the self's potential; The self's own potential for action is to be loved by the beloved again and again. Thus love creates the space for love. The love of the beloved "completes"— as though we were talking of a single action instead of two — the love of the lover. This is the scene in which passion begins and ends with the self. Only Christianity has pretended otherwise. Passion seeks the completion of the self. It does *not* seek a fellow-self: it seeks the opposite of the self.

Think of the Caravaggio painting of Narcissus. The boy gazes with longing at his own reflection in the water. According to the legend he has fallen in love with himself. But this painting transforms the legend. In purely visual terms, we are confronted by the boy desiring the exact opposite of himself. And this is the more striking because of Caravaggio's unique ability to paint the facial and gestural expressions of sexual desire. (There is a loosening of the mouth which gives such an expression — a look of dismay or even disgust — but which is belied by the eyes and their inexhaustible impatience.) Paradoxically but diagrammatically, the painting demonstrates the *the loved one is all one is not*.

Sexuality is the physical proof of this. Feminine and masculine. Sexuality simultaneously differentiates and joins. It creates the opposition and offers the means of temporarily transcending it. Each time the reawakening of desire is the reconstituting of the opposite.

With all those with whom we are not in love we have too much in common to be in love. Passion is only for the opposite. There is no companionship in passion. But passion can confer the same freedom on both lovers. And their shared experience of this freedom — which is astral and cold — and gives rise to an incomparable tenderness.

François' incapacity can be located here. He refuses this freedom. We shall see why in a moment.

It may be argued that lovers often appear to be complementary, sharing many common interests and attitudes. And this is often the case — given the social hierarchies and categories which exist, and given the confusions created by the institution of marriage. But, in fact, the existence of apparently common interests, if passion is involved, becomes irrelevant. What is relevant is that the loved one is *thought of* and desired by the lover as his or her unique opposite. The fact that so many legendary love stories are concerned, like Romeo and Juliet, with love between "enemies" is usually quoted to prove the power of love over all obstacles and prejudices. I would suggest that such stories reveal, in situational terms, the nature of all passion. Passion is always for the opposite.

In the case of François and M. the opposition is fairly obvious: it concerns nation, traditional religion, class (M. is proletarian in origin as opposed to F. who is peasant), climate, experience, etc.

The actual modalities of the opposition are not, however, easily calculable from the outside by a third person. What is more they are continually undergoing processes of transformation within the lovers' shared and subjective relationship. Each new experience, each fresh aspect revealed of the other's character, makes it necessary to re-define the lines of opposition. This is a continual imaginative process. When it ceases, there is no more passion. Another kind of love may remain.

I will give an example. A crude one to reveal the process crudely. They both like honey. The Same kind of honey? Yes, even. Eaten the same way? Even that. With the same childhood memories? Sooner or later they will be able to discover or assume an opposition that seems all the more fundamental because of the similarities already noted. Finally the honey was tasted on a child's tongue about which there was nothing so important as the fact that it was not yours. For it is the tongue yours now seeks.

As François shows M. the countryside, St. Croix, the village where he was born, the Lac de Joux, etc., their dialogue expresses this — to F.'s evident delight. The more different she proves herself to be, the more amorous he becomes. She has only to speak of something different in her experience and he starts embracing and kissing her so that she cannot continue. He does not actually want to hear her when once she has established her difference. All he wants to do is to tell about himself and (physically) love her. It is almost as though he cannot understand the language she speaks. As though she were a kind of Woman Friday.

To conceive of the loved one as *all that the self is not* means that together you form a totality. Together you can be anything and everything. This is the promise which passion makes to the imagination. And because of this promise the imagination works tirelessly drawing and re-drawing the lines of opposition.

What is the relation between the lover's totality and everything which, for a third person, would seem to be outside it? Between it and the world? Subjectively the lovers incorporate the world into their totality. All the classic images of love poetry bear this out. The poet's love is "demonstrated" by the river, the forest, the sky, the minerals in the earth, the silk worm, the stars, the frog, the owl, the moon.

". those mountains
Hilled with snow, whence milky fountains
(Sugared sweets, as syrup's berries)
Must one day run, through pipes of cherries:
O how much those breasts do move me"
(Carew)

(François copies out a poem he learned at school and sends it to her by post, a poem by Hugo?)

The aspiration towards such "correspondence" is expressed by poetry, but it is created by passion. Passion aspires to include the world in the act of love. To want to make love in the sea, flying through the sky, in this city, in that field, on sand, with leaves, with salt, with oil, with fruit, in the snow, etc., is not to seek new stimuli, but to express a truth which is inseparable from passion. Perhaps the material basis for this correspondence between the natural world and passion is to be found in the nature of sexual energy itself. Wilhelm Reich tried to establish this connection, and if his findings were unscientific, the intuition was surely correct.

In several of the love-scenes we see this. But it is on M.'s initiative, It is she who puts segments of oranges on her breasts, rubs snow into his hair, puts an apple between her legs, etc.

The lover's totality extends, in a different manner, to include the social world. Social action, when it is voluntary, is undertaken for the sake of the beloved; not because the results of that action directly affect the beloved; but because that action, that choice, is inevitably an expression of the lover's love; anything that the lover changes in the world pertains to the beloved. The Freudian theory of sublimation interprets this truth in a particular way. The medieval code of chivalry was a complex systemization of the same truth.

Oppressive social reality, enforced action or restraint, relates to the beloved in another way. The beloved redeems the suffering of it. I do not use the word *redeem* in a religious sense. Within the context, within the totality of passion, the beloved — because the beloved is all that the lover is not — represents what is beyond the oppression. Thus passion, when it occurs, breaks out of the totalitarianism of oppression. Nazim Hikmet wrote to his wife from a Turkish prison:

"I read a book:
 you are in it
Hear a song:
 you are in it
I've sat down to eat my bread
 you're facing me
I work:
 you're facing me
Although you are present everywhere
 you cannot talk to me
We can't hear each other's voices —
you, my eight-year old widow."

The lover's totality overlays (or undermines) the world. Lovers love one another *with* the world. (As one might say *with* their hearts or *with* caresses.) The world is the *form* of their passion and all the events which they experience or imagine are the imagery of their passion.

There is no simple analogy to make the relation between the lover's totality and the world clear. Perhaps the nearest is the relation between an ideal language and the universe. The state of being in love *signifies* the universe: the universe is its "signified". The lover, like the madman (how often has this been noticed in proverbs, stories and speech?) is at one remove from the thereness of most things or the contingency of most events. Both lover and madman operate within a total system for finding meaning in the world, and that system, unlike formal systems of religion, refers directly to their own history, to what they believe has happened to them. Passion emanates from the heart. It constitutes its own centre. And that centre becomes the centre of the world.

We see this in F.'s comportment even when he is by himself. He is "lighter", more confident than his colleagues. Or more serious. At one moment he shocks his colleagues by talking frankly about death. Afterwards, when he is gone, they say that the waitress is driving him out of his mind.

Many attitudes are incompatible with passion. But this is not a question of temperament. A cautious man, a mean man, a dishonest woman, a lethargic woman, a cantankerous couple may all be capable of passion. What makes a person refuse passion — or be incapable of pursuing a passion which has already been born, thus transforming it into a mere obsession — is his or her refusal of its totality. (I take obsession to mean a persistent idea or emotion provoked by something outside the self and against the self's will: whereas passion encompasses the will and arises from within the self.)

Why refuse its totality? Let me simply restate the process we have observed. The loved one is seen as all that the lover is not. Thus lover and loved one propose to one another a totality. But within that totality — as within any — there is the unknown: the unknown which is also conjured up by death, chaos, extremity. If a person has been conditioned or has conditioned himself to treat the unknown as something exterior to himself, against which he must continually take measures and be on his guard, that person is likely to refuse passion. It is not a question of fearing the unknown. Everyone fears it, it is a question of where it is located. In our culture today most things encourage us to locate it outside ourselves. Even disease is thought of as coming from the outside: which is a necessary, pragmatic truth, but an incomplete one. To locate the unknown as being *out there* is incompatible with passion. Passion demands that the unknown be recognized as being within.

This is why in the end F. cannot "contain" his passion, cannot allow it to develop. It has nothing to do with the intensity of his immediate feelings or attraction towards M. It is to do with his own view of his own life. And this is true, despite the fact, as we see, that he is ready to sacrifice aspects of that life for his passion for M. He is ready to abandon his political career, his marriage, his reputation in the canton where he was born and brought up; what he cannot abandon is his control, his "executive" function. The more obstacles he encounters, the deeper his "disgrace" in the town, the more he insists that he can see a solution, a way through, picturing himself as the master, the agent, of his own fate. Yet the more he can manage his passion, the more his passion escapes him.

Retrospectively, this is perhaps evident from the first moment that he falls in love with M. He sees her as all that he is not. But he tends to define her "opposition" negatively — i.e., that she is not what he is. She is no Calvinist: she is not bourgeois: she is not inhibited about eating: she is not secretive, etc. (All the things that he is conscious of himself being: all the things that he would like to change in himself.) What she positively is — all that is truly *unknown to him* about her — her Catholic upbringing in Italy, her marriage to a trade union militant, her experiences as a waitress, her time in hospital when she was burnt — all this he avoids, or immediately translates into his known terms. For instance, he will say, I know how men treat waitresses and I don't want you to be treated like that.

As his relationship with her develops, we see more and more clearly that he fluctuates between two attitudes, two ways of behaviour towards her. These should be highly contrasted, and he can change from one to the other in a moment. But the contrast must not be comic: rather, it is absurd.

When he is entirely concentrating upon and astounded by, her physical existence, he loses himself completely in the immediate, and the delight he finds in it. This delight — and his ways of expressing it — are childlike. (That is not to say innocent: but spontaneous and single-minded.) For example, naked in the bedroom, he takes two teaspoons and using them like castanets, pretends that their convex surfaces banging together are like her buttocks. For example: he invents a game whereby they play with the musical box he has given her: every time it stops she must "freeze" in that position, and likewise him, when she is controlling it. Whilst she is frozen, he begins to kiss her. She responds. No, he says, not until the music starts. It is only within this artificial childishness that he can acknowledge what is uncontrollable, mysterious daemonic in his passion. According to his other way of behaviour, his other mood, he is the *man in charge*. It is not that he is then particularly authoritarian towards her. It is simply that, for both their sakes, he must assume that he has everything under control. He makes much of using his gadgets: radio, camera, car, map-holder, etc., etc. He plans — excessively — how they will spend the following hours they have together. He talks a lot about techniques. He makes elaborate proposals about their future. He proposes going to the states. He wants to learn to fly. She will do it with him, he says. In this mode, he is like a man planning an expedition and training his team. Almost in mid-sentence he can change again to become the child overwhelmed with delight. When they make love, the two expressions alternate. Neither way of behaviour corresponds to how he is with other people. So in fact there are three François:

- 1) François the politician of the small town: frank, popular, shrewd, likeable, warm, local;
- 2) François the dreamer-planner of his passion: extravagant, obsessional, cosmopolitan;
- 3) François the child: funny, inventive, affectionate, entirely lost in the moment.

The drama, at the first degree, is between the public face of the man and the private one. But the underlying drama, at the second and third degrees, is that the self behind the private face is split, divided against itself, in defence against its own passion.

François' tragedy is that, unable to face the unknown, he splits himself to refuse his passion — or, to be more exact, to refuse the possibility of tragedy.

Yours,

John



MIDDLE OF THE EARTH

27th February 1973

Dear Olympia,

I write this letter as much to explain to myself as to explain to you why M. is the kind of character she is *at the moment*: Naturally she can and will change as you give her form and self-consciousness. This letter is no more than a way of releasing her from generality, of allowing her to begin to become particular — both in terms of herself and of the film.

Since the story of the film concerns passion, it is essential that M. is as specific, as particular as possible. The reason why so many love stories fail to convince in the cinema is that the protagonists are stereotypes (or idealisations) and so can never be imagined as provoking the first demand of passion: I want him (or her) because he (or she) is as distinct from everybody else as I am.

M. comes from Vicenza. Her mother came from Bari. As a child she sometimes went to the south for the summer. Her father was a worker from Bologna. During the latter part of the war he was a Partisan. Then a communist. Her mother was not interested in politics but was loyal to her husband. In this, M. is not unlike her mother. She is *not* a political being, but she has a consciousness of class and a familiarity with certain Marxist categories. Her husband was a communist and trade union militant. She is a little over thirty. She has no children. Her husband was killed in an industrial accident six years ago. A year later, she herself was burnt in a fire in the block of flats in which she was living. Since the death of her husband she has lived and worked in Vicenza and, for a time, near Sion, where she learnt French. This is her second trip across the Alps.

François falls passionately in love with her. (See Letter to Philippe). The film — to a large degree — is about François' passion. A passion which intrigues M. and which, finally, she does not return. This means that in terms of the drama portrayed, M. is more passive than François. Yet in the film as a whole (the whole which includes more than the drama) she is crucially active. The function of her action is to demonstrate and to reveal to the spectator the limitations of François and his world. It is her presence and her decisions which constitute a critique of this world. A strong but extremely subtle critique. She never directly formulates this critique in words, and, for most of the time, she is both gentle and tender to François. It is her *being* which mounts this critique, and in mounting it, forces the spectator to see François' world — which is probably not unlike his own — as if from a distance. The form of the film, commentaries, etc. will help to achieve this aim. But no devices in themselves would be adequate. M.'s critical role must be founded in her character, and we need to understand how and why — both in general and specific terms.

The general first:—

1. Geographical.

She comes from a different climate. This implies a different attitude to many everyday things: foods, clothes, nature, sun, architecture, streets, time, etc. As a result of this, she walks slightly differently, sleeps slightly differently, handles things slightly differently. Perhaps worth bearing in mind here that in their movements, the Italian worker or peasant resembles more than any other European — the Indian. And this is somewhat more true of women than men. Should not be exaggerated. But sometimes there is a striking affinity. Watch a woman peeling an orange. Her hands and fingers. The incline of her head. (Normally time is longer for an Italian than for a Swiss and this allows for a greater variation of rhythm in speech, gesture, mood, etc.).

2. Social-historical

Given a woman of M.'s background, the social-historical difference between her and the Swiss she now finds herself amongst, is the result of what "the developed" call "under-development". This means that she lives — in terms of at least part of her experience — at a different historical stage. In some respects she belongs to the 19th century rather than to the 20th American century. She is still, to a degree, outside the controls of the managerial consumer society. When she crosses the Alps, she crosses several other thresholds. It's not worth going into the multiple causes for this: role of the family, in Italian life, Italian catholicism, Italian regionalism, etc. etc. What we need to know is how this distinguishes her from the people of Lausanne, Zurich, etc. (and, by implication, from those of Cologne, Brussels, London, Frankfurt and so on.) The fact that she is a woman preserves this historical difference a little more clearly. If she were a man, it would be less marked. However crudely let me try to list some of these differences. They begin with her attitude to herself and they extend to her attitude to others.

a) She *believes* in the story of her own life. She does not need somebody else to tell it to her. She has a sense, however much she is exploited, of possessing her own life. And nothing can challenge her pride of ownership about this. She is not secretive about her attitude to herself. It has never

occurred to her that to remain unnoticed is the safest way. She can well be competitive. But her soul is not involved in the competition.

- b) The roles of men and women are more clearly defined for her as an Italian. In many ways her freedom as a woman is less. But, at the same time, the confirmation of tradition, makes her actual relations with men simpler. This is absolutely not the same thing as naive. It means that she accepts sexual differences more easily. This in turn means that she is more easily oppressed. But it also means that she is surer of herself. For example: her modesty (physical) has nothing to do with a lack of confidence. (And she has no need of deliberate immodesty.) The first few times she and François make love at night, she insists upon it being in the dark. But what follows in the dark in no way suggests that she is inhibited.
- c) Her thinking is less security-oriented. Or, to put it another way, pleasure occupies a different place in it. Her sense of life is more immediate. Her fear of the future is less pronounced. The future does not threaten her identity — and so she is not forced to continually insure against it. Her sense of the past is stronger. All this is expressed in, for example, her attitude to money. She is not careless with money. But she never spends it *for* the future. She spends it for pleasure now. Or she spends it to re-create something she has once enjoyed. Likewise in her talk. She talks of the present and the past. François talks all the time of the future.
- d) Her allegiance is always to individuals, never to organizations. She accepts the social contracts — employment, marriage, law etc. — because she can see no way round them. But they have no moral weight or interest for her. (To this extent she is Machiavellian.)
- e) All these things are most visually manifest in her physical presence: in how she inhabits her body. And perhaps here we need to make a distinction. She is perfectly capable of *theatre*: of dressing-up, showing-off, playing a role, creating drama. (Although all these on a very modest scale: she has neither the temperament nor the means to be a prima donna.) But *prior* to "the theatre", she has a relation to her own body which is different and which is:

coarser
less anxious
fuller
more modest
more spontaneous
and yet:
more traditional.

She is *not* conventionally beautiful, she is not consciously seductive, she dresses carelessly. Physically, her bearing is like that of a woman walking along a country road, past houses or groups of people whom she believes know nothing about her.

So much for the general factors which differentiate M. from her new surroundings. (This differentiation is profound but subtle: after a number of years abroad it will become less obvious.) Now for the personal, biographical factors.

M. is an unusual woman. Yet she represents many thousands of Italian women of her age and class. She is *not* unusual in any way which provokes immediate idealisation. She is not unusually beautiful. She is not unusually comic. (Though she has a gift for miming, which she uses when recounting her story.) She is not unusually sexy-looking. Her unusualness lies in her independence. And it is through this independence that, through her, we see François and his world as from a distance.

How did she gain this independence? It is implicit in all her biography after the death of her husband. Why did she not settle down? Remarry? Live with a friend? Take a steady job? Improve herself?

Her independence came from something which is not so usual amongst young Italian women, or young women anywhere — a profound and accepted experience

of solitude. In fact two such experiences — the first following the death of her husband. (Her parents were by then dead.) The second when she was burnt and was in hospital for several months. (During this period her eyes were bandaged.) But perhaps more important than the darkness, was her realisation then that she might be gravely disfigured. (As things turned out: the disfiguring was not bad. A little on her face and back.) She then had to come to terms with the space between how she would always appear to most people and how she *was* for herself. Or, to put this another way, her responsibility for her own life became *interiorised*; it no longer depended upon visible roles. This does not mean that she is shy or withdrawn. She can be exuberant even. But what she does or how she looks, no longer constitutes an appeal. This might alter perhaps if she fell in love, but during this film we do not see her in love. (Once she talks about it as something that might happen in the future.) It is this independence of M.'s which makes her potentially a *tragic* character. (Though not in this film.) She is capable of tragedy. François is not.

How does she re-act to François?

At first she is flattered and intrigued by his attentions. She has never met a man like him before.

His discretion strikes her as gentleness.

She accepts the opportunities he offers her. (Opportunities of going out, knowing him better, good meals, etc.)

She finds him attractive.

He becomes a focus of attention for her in her otherwise rather eventless life.

The fact that the old woman in the cafe knows him and speaks well of him also influences her.

I. ALL THE ABOVE IS FOR THE FIRST 4 or 5 DAYS OF THEIR ACQUAINTANCESHIP.

Their relationship then changes. It is the first time they spend a whole day together. (Her day off work).

She becomes aware of how passionately he feels for her. Not because he wants to make love to her. Not because of what he says. But because of how he presents her to a friend of his whom they meet. She realises then how heedless his passion has made him. That afternoon they make love for the first time.

II. WHAT FOLLOWS IS A PERIOD (OF ABOUT 5 DAYS) DURING WHICH SHE ACCEPTS HIM AS HER LOVER AND DOES NOT YET KNOW FOR HERSELF THE OUTCOME.

One might describe this period of five days as the idyllic period of their relationship. But nevertheless it is no; an idyll: or, if it is, it is a very incomplete one. She is tender towards him. (At other times we have seen her capable of considerable gruffness and impatience.) She is tender towards him because she is tender towards her own destiny, and during these few days she believes that he may become her destiny. She is not in love with him. On the other hand, she is not testing him. She wants to know him because he interests her. She can only know him by accepting his passion. He represents what circumscribes her world. She would like to enlarge this world of hers. It is possible that through this process he might become the centre of her world. *But she knows all the while that this has not yet happened.*

This so-called idyll is a strange one — and needs to be very clearly seen.

In a sense because she is endeavouring to go beyond the world that she knows and because she is not frightened of him, she is like a child. The more intimate their situation, the more simple she becomes.

At the same time, his incapacity to be whole, his sudden changes of role (see Letter To Philippe) render him far more childish than her. *It is she who is forced to maintain the continuity.*

Sometimes she does this by repeating the same thing — the same words. His reactions to these same words, at different moments, in suddenly different moods (roles), become more and more contradictory.

She makes him appear mad. But not mad with passion.

He is continually inventing different solutions for their two lives. She is trying to see what he is as a whole.

It is *not* that she is calm and he is nervous. He is always more or less in control. It is more that he can never answer her questions. She becomes slower and slower: he becomes faster and faster.

She is seeking her passion and never finds it.

He has found his and cannot accept it.

The question of time actually becomes an issue between them. She is always wanting everything to continue longer than it does: yet he usually interrupts it to talk in some way about the future.

It should be made clear that during this five day "idyll" their physical attractiveness for each other, their caresses, their mutual sexuality, is strong. Through this she is trying to discover him: if she discovers him, she may love him. He is trying to incorporate into his life what he is certain he has discovered in her: what he has not discovered does not exist for him.

He is the teacher. She is the learner. But what he teaches is not what she wants to learn. Sexually she is freer than him. But she is also less experienced. And *his* experience refuses the unknown.

III. AFTER THE IDYLL SHE REALISES THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE. HE SENSES THIS AND BECOMES MORE AND MORE POSSESSIVE IN THE SENSE THAT HE TRIES TO TAKE HER OVER, TO IGNORE ALL THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW ABOUT HER.

For example: he buys her clothes exactly as he might for a woman of his own milieu. He actually insists that she dresses up like this and comes out to dinner with him. Then he has a photograph taken of her. When he makes love, he says he wants her to be the mother of children.

She begins to emphasise the difference of her background. She does this consciously, even comically. She exaggerates her "simplicity", "origins", etc. Not cruelly. She turns their "destiny" into comedy. Occasionally they laugh at the same thing together. When this happens, she is affectionate. When it does not happen, she become coarser and coarser. She begins to behave almost like a prostitute. Their scenes now are comic. But he is usually unaware of the comedy.

When the old woman dies, she seizes the opportunity to leave. Death returns her to everyday life. The funeral is the last time they see each other.

When she retells the story of her love affair with François she tells it, without bitterness and without rancour. She tells it like a traveller's tale. They said he sacrificed his career for me, she says, but he only wanted to make another one with me! He loved me without a new hope.

Dear Olympia — there's almost nothing of the story in this. But is there not the silhouette of a profile?

Yours,

John

SCREEN IMAGES, FILM MEMORY

by

STEPHEN HEATH

* J. Lacan in *Le Séminaire*, vol. XI, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1973, p. 154.

* *ibid.*, p. 160.

* *ibid.*, p. 156.

To specify drive (*Trieb, pulsion*), Psychoanalysis finds the same term that for cinema renders the process of filmic construction — *montage*: "if there is something that drive resembles, that something is a montage". The montage of drive, however, has no *finality*: its force is a set of partial drives regulating tensions (drives with multiple vicissitudes and objects) and that force is constant, without end (except death, confronted by Freud in connection with drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*). Thus "drive is precisely that montage by which sexuality participates in psychical life" and "what characterizes *Drang*, the pressure of drive, is constancy maintained".

So described, drive is seen in a dynamic system that defines a flow on a constant energy surface, a process of conservation where the conservation is exactly the constancy of a certain functioning of positions and moments throughout the system's motion. Such a system has its "openness" according to that mode of articulation which is the absolute specificity of psychoanalysis in its aim to be the science of the construction of the individual: flow and constancy are bound in the history of that construction to ideational representatives which are the location of objects and modes of satisfaction for pressures of drive. As Freud stresses in the 1915 metapsychological paper on "The Unconscious", drive is never known but through representation (drive is a limit-concept between the psychical and the somatic, the representative is the "turn" of drive from the one to the other and it is on this that repression bears) and this representing also joins individual and subject, psychic and social in a complex and concrete history. It is round that history, its determinations and effects, that psychoanalysis becomes important in an understanding of cinema and film.

* * *

A film has a very definite finality: it exists to end. There are, of course, challenges to this ending of film — the work of Rivette, for example — but they remain *challenges*: in our common experience films move to the end that is their very closure as "films", achieved commercial units. At the same time, however, it has also to be seen that a film must never end, that it must exist — and even before it begins, before we enter the cinema — in a kind of englobingly extensive prolongation. The commerce of film depends on this too, recognized in a whole host of epiphenomena from trailers to remakes, from weekly reviews to star magazines, from publicity stills to mementoes (rubber sharks, tee-shirts). More crucially, since the individual film counts for little in its particularity as opposed to the general circulation which guarantees the survival of the industry and in which it is an element, a unit, film is a constant doing over again, the film as an endless variation of the same (genres are one term in this play of repetition).

* * *

A film, then, holds the (apparent) paradox of the termination of the interminable, the endless brought to an end (to be begun once more), and this paradox is the very movement of the individual film, the point of its developed finality. Film turns on a dual metonymy: a film as the shifting flow of discretely contiguous images and shots, a film as the ordering of that flow of images and shots in a coherent relation. Classically (commercially), the articulation, the determination of the overlay, is narrative — basis for montage and editing, guardian of the possibility of images (figured out in scenario and shooting-script). In short, narrative is film's secondary revision, the passage of intelligibility; always remembering that, as in dreams, such secondary revision is there from the first, contemporaneous with every moment of a film.

* * *

As a mode of communication, film can be said to have no particular sector of meaning no particular portion of the matter of content in Hjelmslevian terms. Yet narrative is there immediately in film, in cinema, to map out the images, to support the frame against its excesses, to suggest laws for holding flow to ensure continuity, to be "cinematic form" ("the total rejection of a story and the accompanying denial of syntax or arrangement, can only lead to the breakdown of cinematic form").* Developed and exploited as a form of narrative, film is implicated dominantly in a constraining logic: *Suspicion* — the father's interdiction — the father here as character, name (General *MacLaidlaw*) and image (the inescapable gaze of the portrait) — hangs over an action in which a woman marries the baby she wants and suffers the guilt of transgression as doubt; *Letter from an Unknown Woman* — a woman without a father conceives the son of the man before whom she has been as an adoring daughter (the day he enters her life as a young girl is counted as her real birthday) and to whom she becomes a mother (the son replaces the lost lover-father), a man pursues the plenitude of the original woman, mythically encapsulated in his fetish reference to the Greek bust and unknowably glimpsed in the image of Lisa at the opera now known through the letter to be impossibly gone, a knowledge that sends him out to

*J.H. Lawson in Film *The Creative Process*. Hill and Wang, New York, 1964. p. 289.

his death. The graffito ("Pappy x") on the stairway after the bloodbath in *Taxi Driver* is not simply by chance or by way of a simple ironic reference; it is the crease of an oedipal fold that defines the "hang" of the whole of the film's action (consider the repeating movement in loops round the images for Bickle-Robert de Niro of the two women, Betsy Cybil Shepherd and Iris-Jodie Foster).

This oedipal logic does not exhaust all of the narrative effects in a film but it is as it were, the set of a film's narrative mapping, the matrix of its movement of exchange, the constant point of symbolic blockage (demonstrated by Bellour in his study of *North by Northwest*).

* * *

"Let's go and see.../ No, I've already seen it." The problem of "already"— in this sense of "once", "one time" — is the problem of films insofar as narrative (outside the terms of commercial production and consciously against narrative, independent cinema will achieve films that it is impossible "to have seen once"). Narrative contains a film's multiple articulations as a single articulation, its images as a single image (the "narrative image", which is exactly a film's *currency*, how it can be talked about, what it can be sold and bought on, itself represented as — in the production stills displayed outside a cinema, for instance), its sounds as a single register of the image (thus a fundamental political question will be the relation of images and sounds: *how do you hear a film?* the question of all Straub's work). In order to see a film again, you need to forget it so as to have once more — so as once more directly to be — the memory it constructs you. The time of (narrative) film is that of Identity, centre, perspective, oneness, of the vision of the unified and unifying subject. The oedipal logic of its narrative is the expression — form and content — of that vision.

* * *

If the traditional opposition be maintained, then the work of narrative in film lies in the juncture of form and content; narrative here is a series of operations which finally run across such an opposition, producing chains, bindings, Implications. The place of the series, its *for-figure*, is the subject as the held coherence of the relation of film and spectator: following the film, the spectator makes the relations the film relates in a reciprocal process of intelligibility (the clarity of sense), within which process he or she is entertained as subject — countenanced and occupied, kept going, held in (the etymology of "entertainment"). Narrative film, in other words, invites the individual to come as subject; coming in the film, the individual finds, ceaselessly, his or her (?) Image, the projected position, the vision of the subject.

* * *

The terms of this narrative relation of vision are those of a *memory*, the constant movement of the retention of the individual as subject, framed and narrated.

To say this is not, in the first instance at least, to insist on the degree to which memory has been so crucial a topic for film — think of *Secret Beyond the Door* or *Marnie* (it is to be noted that the examples that come most strikingly to mind are films themselves explicitly coloured by psychoanalysis), of *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, organized as a memory, or *Suspicion*, where the problem is the absence of any memory of Johnnie-Cary Grant and the accumulation for Lina-Joan Fontaine of memory fragments that can never be resolved but in suspicion, the psychological category that fixes the film for the spectator., supports the fiction (hence a factor in avant-garde activity is a breaking with this kind of past in film, the dismantling of a unity of memory and of memory in film into the contradictions of its construction — *Penthesilea**). Nor is it to insist on the apparatus of cinema itself as specific memory system, cinema as a certain regime of absence with everything recorded, a series of "direct mnemonic traces" (necessarily *Penthesilea* explores this, referring to Freud's paper on the "magic writing-pad", using video to go over — work through — the film). Rather, it is a matter of stressing the memory force of the narrative in its operation of the film. In classic cinema, there is a kind of potentially free play within the frame — the set — of the narrative. Like a protective rail, the narrative edges the ramifying flow of images and sounds in a single direction, constructs a legality (what is to be seen and heard, what is to be related, a contest of rightness), regulates a point of view.

*By Peter Wollen and Laura Mulvey

Noise, intensities, traces are brought into narrative line so as to reach the image of the end (strength of the convention of having "The End" over the final image is not without its significance); narrative operates — once and for all (the mode of consumption of narrative film) — a continuous memory, the spectator as though "remembered" in position, in subject unity, throughout the film (which is why, within this process, images of dismemberment provide such a powerful — and lucrative — theme, as witness *Jaws*).

* * *

From the very start of its history, human figures enter film, as though of right, spilling out of the train at La Ciotat, leaving the Lyons factory or the photographic congress (is the fascination with people arriving and departing simply coincidental?); human figures that can only be evacuated with great difficulty, as in certain (duly classified) "experimental" films.

With regard to the human figure and the body in film, we can recall a celebrated anthology piece:

"Mr. Griffith turned to a young actor... 'Let's see some distrust on your face '

The actor obliged.

'That's good!', Griffith exclaimed. 'Everyone will understand it.'

Billy Bitzer objected, as he was often to do when Griffith attempted something new: 'But he's too far away from the camera. His expression won't show up on the film.'

'Let's get closer to him, then, Let's move the camera.'

'Mr. Griffith, that's impossible! Believe me, you can't move the camera. You'll cut off his feet — and the background will be out of focus.'

'Get it, Billy', Griffith ordered...

After the rushes were viewed, Griffith was summoned to the front office. Henry Marvin was furious. 'We pay for the whole actor, Mr. Griffith. We want to see *all* of him.'*

* Lillian Gish in *The Movies Mr. Griffith and Me*, Englewood Cliff, New York, 1970, p. 59-60

What matters in the anecdote is not its historical veracity but its symbolic truth: cinema can and does fragment the body (the hands over the piano in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, the movement up over the body of Lina-Joan Fontaine, from feet to face, at the beginning of *Suspicion*) but the human figure, the total image of the body seen, is always the pay-off (as the examples indicate: the hands express the pianist; the movement up is the appraising sweep of the male gaze fixing the woman for the film) Within limits, those of narrative again, film plays on the passage between fragmented body and the image possession of the body whole, making identifications, remarking identity.

* * *

"The audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera"*, "the spectator can do no other than identify with the camera"*. Convention holds that the actor should never look at the camera, that is, at the spectator.

*Walter Benjamin in *Illuminations*, Jonathan Cape, London. 1970, p. 230

* Christian Metz in 'The Imaginary Signifier', *Screen*, Summer, 1975, p. 52.

That convention says something about the particular nature of cinema's voyeurism (a spectacle that lets itself be seen without any immediate marks of the complicity of presenting itself to be seen) and in so doing it raises the question of address. Conventionally, in other words, film addresses no one, unfolds itself on the screen under the gaze of the spectator, running the symbolic, the order of address, into the imaginary, the sufficiency of the specularized image.

Such a relation is the contrary of a distance; the image is near, the spectator is bound to it, which is precisely that work of narrative as it contains the symbolic in its terms of cohesion. Instituted (developed and exploited) thus, cinema gives the experience of film as a kind of dream screen, the satisfying projection of a basic oneness — the "no-oneness" of the non-contradictory patterning of identity in identification — carried over and ramified in the specific movements of this or that film, its actions, its human figures, its Images

* * *

* *Le Cinéma Scholaire et Educateur* Paris, 1926, p. 50.

"Framing, that is to say, bringing the image to the place it must occupy". Against the divisions of address, the frame holds the spectator as subject in view of the image, converting signifier into signified, seen into scene. In this, frame and narrative go together, the latter the major determination of the former's positioning (the historical links between narrative constraint and conventions of framing have often been stressed); narrative is the perspective of the images, that vision of the subject.

According to a report by Nijny, Eisenstein had it that metaphor was the key to solution of difficult problems in framing, in what he called globally *mise en cadre*. In fact, the metaphor of the frame is the fiction of the subject, perspective univocally maintained and centered. Or, to put it another way, the frame is itself the metaphor, the transfer of image and subject as the constant point of suspension of the signifying chain, the metonymic flow — "point of suspension where the screen-memory is immobilized, where the fascinating image of the fetish is set up".

* * *

* Jacques Lacan in *Ecrits*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1966, p. 518.

The screen is at once ground, the surface that supports the projected images, and background, its surface caught up in the cone of light to give the frame of the image, contour and base (in the absence of light from the projector, there is no *idea* of the frame; Malcolm Le Grice's *Spot the Microdot* is one exploration of this). Probably, the screen is one of the most stable elements in cinema's history: once its position has been determined, between 22 March and 28 December 1895, then commercial cinema begins. It is also noteworthy in this respect that the very term itself is fixed from the start, with neither challenge nor fluctuation; the first official cinematographic usage of the word *écran* occurs in the Lumière programme-prospectus for the Grand Café shows ("the apparatus permits the subsequent reproduction of the movements by projecting their images, life size, on a screen in front of a whole audience").

The 180° rule serves to match screen space and diegetic space (the space represented in the articulation of the images), ground and background; with its help, "one will always find the same characters in the same parts of the screen". The 180° line that the camera is forbidden to cross answers exactly to the 180° line of the screen behind which the spectator cannot and must not go, in front of which he or she is placed, fixed in the apex of a triangle of representation, the space of the image, that is repeated in the very terms of the fiction of the imaged space.

* 'Apprendre le Cinéma', special issue of *Image et Son*, May 1966, p. 142.

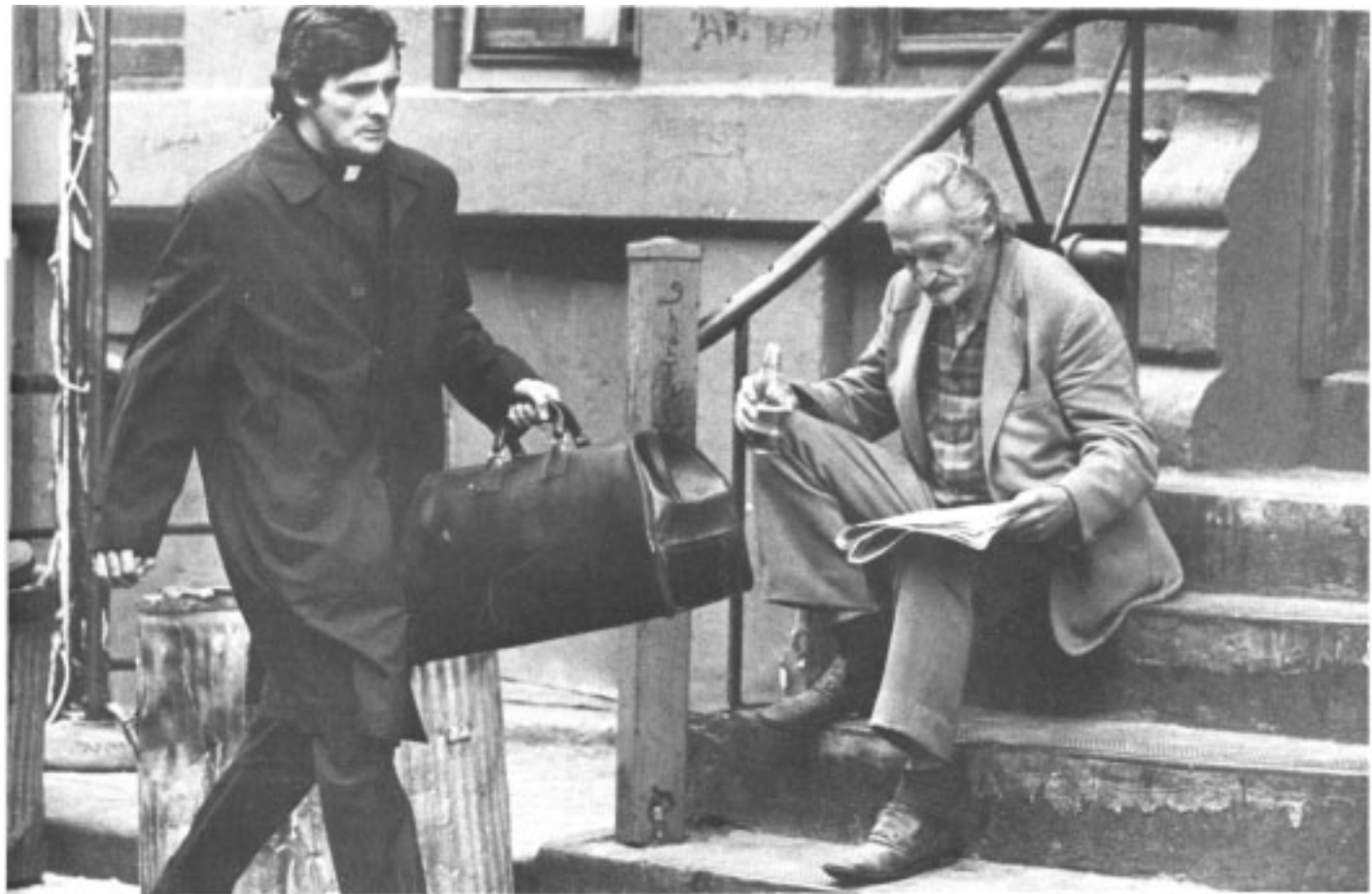
Psychoanalysis insists on the division of the subject in the symbolic, which division is indeed the veritable *theatre* of the subject, the scene of its production: "a signifier represents a subject for another signifier": "To accord this priority to the signifier over the subject is to take account of the experience opened up for us by Freud, the experience that the signifier plays and wins before the subject realizes: so much so that in the play of the *Witz*, the joke, for example, it surprises the subject. What it illuminates by its flash is the division of the subject with itself. But that it reveals that division to the subject must not hide from us that the division stems from nothing other than the same play, the play of the signifiers...". Bound to the signifier, the subject, as it were, *takes place* in the movement of repeated difference, the concatenations of signifiers, the discursive chains, and that place taking is simultaneously a perpetual division, the subject expelled and propelled in the endless movement. The imaginary here is then this join of the subject, the suture of the relation of the subject in the chain of discourse, is so far as it is held as an image against the division it includes; the dialectic of the subject, in and out of place, place of that process, turn between symbolic and imaginary, collapsed into a specularity (the sacrifice of desire to an object as opposed to the radical heterogeneity of a desire that exceeds the subject and object it structures).

* Jacques Lacan in *Ecrits*, op. cit., p. 840.

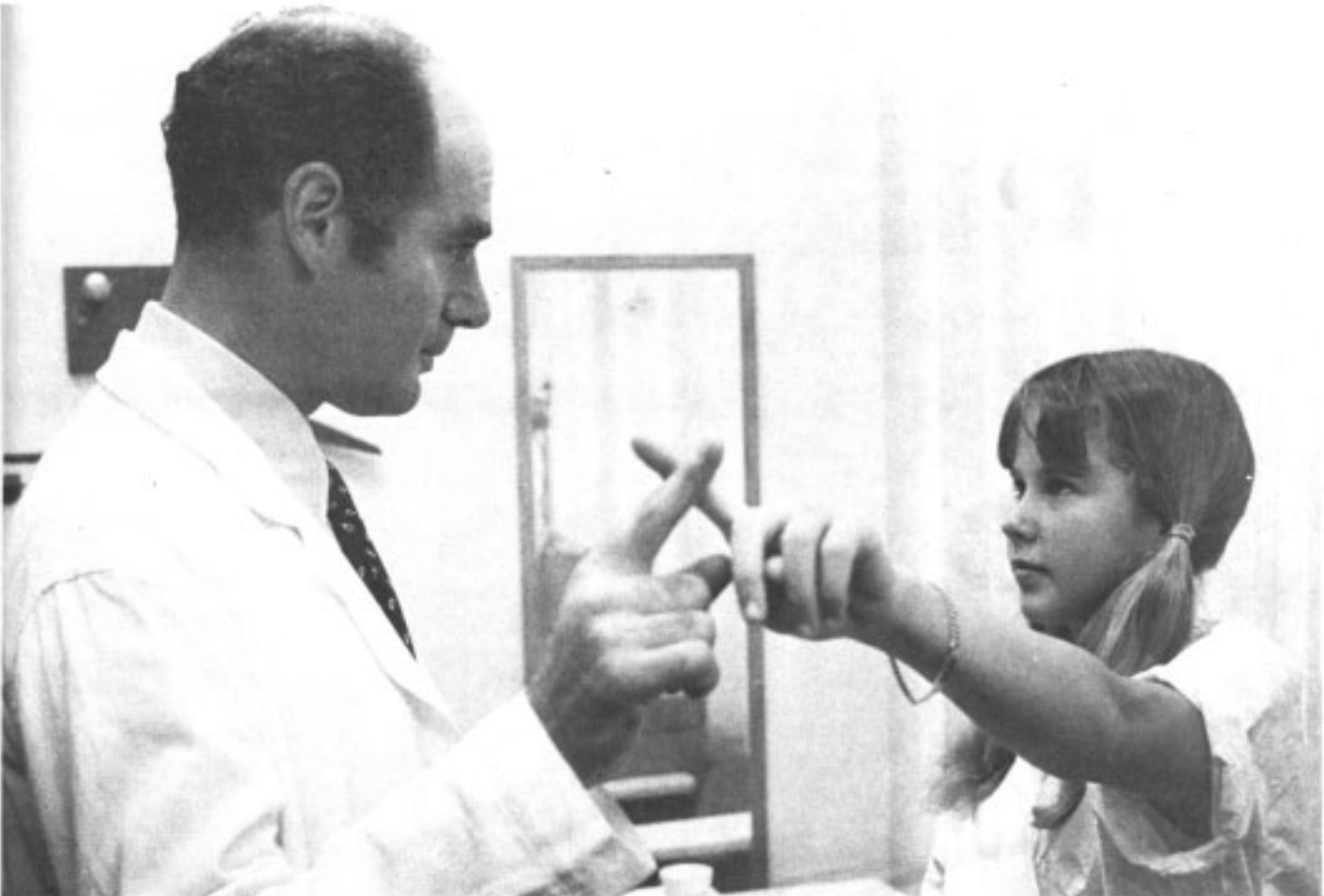
Cinema and film can be posed with reference to their own elaboration of a suturing effect: the apparatus of cinema functions — is perfected to function — on the basis of the reconstitution of continuity from a succession of differences; film with narrative's control lays out the images as an uninterrupted direction of sense, the narrative image. The latter returns us to the organization of space. In its narrative layout, film moves against heterogeneity; the elsewhere of every image, every shot, must be recaptured for the film as the



JAWS



THE EXORCIST



unbroken alignment of desire and subject. The screen immobilizes Images, grounds them; the rules of filmic construction for the screen (180° rule, matching on action, eyeline matching, field/reverse-field etc.) background the Image flow into a unified subject-space, immediately and fully continuous (there is something of a reflection on this in Jacob's *Tom, Tom The Piper's Son* with its refilming procedures, its attention to the hidden surface of a film on screen in movement).

* * *

Shots at once replace and, according to the rules, continue one another; the succession destroys and conserves. The critical point of this *Aufhebung* is that of the articulation — the cut, the joint, the moment of the montage. A constant phasing out and in, film is the production not just of a negation, the continuous replacement of Images, but more crucially again of a negativity, the excessive foundation of the process itself, of the very movement of the subject in the film, which movement is then stopped in the succession, the negation, the phasing. Such a negativity is the *disphasure* of the subject position the subject-fading as "flickering of eclipses", and "time between that the film seeks to eradicate, to render "invisible" as guarantee of the vision of the subject, the fullness of its memory, but that can never be so eradicated, film's *possibility* depending on it.

Something of the structural effect — the montage — of this complexity can be understood by thinking of the two theories of fiction to be found in Freud's writings the juncture of the two being the idea of play. In the first, play is stressed as the production of new, different worlds, as a pleasingly free rearrangement, an opposition to or correction of reality; this productive imaginative activity being constant for Freud in fantasy, day dreaming, art and neurosis (one constituent of which is precisely a luxurious elaboration of fantasy). The fantasy of play, the play of fantasy, stands in opposition to the reality principle as a kind of remnant of the original force of the pleasure principle ("With the introduction of the reality principle one mode of thought-activity was split off: it was kept free from reality-testing and remained subordinated to the pleasure principle alone. This is the act of fantasy-making, which begins already in the games of children, and later, continued as day-dreaming abandons its dependence on real objects."), as a fulfilment of wishes in its liberties vis à vis actual life. All these terms emerge, for example, in Freud's account of family romances the fantasies in which the subject is staged in modified and corrected relations with its parents; the fictioning production serves to regulate and unify, to hold tight in the Imaginary. The second of the theories of fiction is that which is implied in the discussion of the *fort/da* game in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in so far as the fiction of that game, the *fort/da* itself, displaces the aim of a simply coherent mastery; the *fort/da* functions not only to master absence but also to repeat it (hence Freud's doubt, the impact of the observation of the game as starting point for the new account of drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*). Fiction, play is seen more radically, not just in its constructions but in the process of those constructions; not just in the joy of mastery, the illimiting correction of reality, the fantasy supremacy of "His Majesty the Ego", but in the returning loss, a slipping that ceaselessly refinds the movement of absence across the subject that the illimitation seeks to negate. A year before *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud had located this unsuring of the subject as the effect of "the uncanny", produced "by effacing the limits between imagination and reality, such as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginably appears before us as reality, or when a symbol takes over the functions and significance of the symbolized, and so on", this effacing of limits is not a correction, the cohesion of a position-image, but a disturbance, a perpetual slide of signified into signifier and, in that process, of the subject's representations. What *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* then does is to pose the process directly in its negativity and thus pleasure itself — as in play, fiction — as an alternating, contradictory force, a *time* that contains its own beyond (for Freud, "the pleasure principle seems in fact to be in the service of the death drives" which are nevertheless the very breakdown of the pleasure principle).

It is this difficult "time" that is important in relation to film. Straub often quotes Cocteau as having described cinema as "la mort au travail" ("death at work"): the space articulated in film is punctuated at every moment by the heterogeneity of its process (over framing, camera movement, sound/image lays, shot joins...), of its montage (in the widest sense of the term; the sense in which Godard-Gorin could talk of montage as "the principal political notion", in which Vertov working for heterogeneity as against the

unity of subject representation, could talk of a Kino-Eye film as being constantly "in montage"). Negation on negativity. phasing on disphasure, cinema as fiction-machine knows in its films something of the bipolarising tension grasped by Freud in the movement of the *fort/da* game: film runs across the subject that runs through the film, as the game loses its experience of a central presence in a radical excentering. It is this run that narrative is used to hold, to suspend in image and representation.

* * *

What narrative? what hold? what image? what representation? If the "privilege of the subject" is established from a "reflexive relation" which has it that "the moment I perceive, my representations belong to me"* then what is the content of the "me"? Why "cinema"? Why "film"?

* Jacques Lacan in *Le Séminaire*.
vol. XI, p. 76.

There is no subject outside of a social formation, outside of social processes which include and define positions of meaning, which specify ideological places. Yet this inclusion, definition and specification does not exhaust the subject: at once because it says nothing concerning practice and also because it says nothing about the concrete history of the construction of the individual for such inclusion, definition and specification. It is this latter area that psychoanalysis effectively identified and opened up (the new "continent"), that it takes as its province. Yet, to turn back round again, the history with which psychoanalysis thus deals is still directly and immediately social, not "before" or "elsewhere" to social processes, ideological places. There is a concrete history of the construction of the individual as subject and that history is also the social construction of the subject; it is not, in other words, that there is first of all the construction of a subject for social/ideological formations and then the placing of that constructed subject-support in those formations, it is that the two processes are one, in a kind of necessary simultaneity — like the recto and verso of a piece of paper; psychoanalysis itself has found it difficult to respond to the implications of this. A corollary of the simultaneity, moreover, is that the construction is never finished, is interminable on both sides (psychoanalysis is not just to do with the first three or four years in the life of an individual); entry into language, for example, crucial in psychoanalysis's account of the construction of the individual as subject, is not "once and for all", though it has particular and describable "historical" stages: the individual is always entering, emerging, as subject in language (the lapsus is an explosive demonstration); the process of representation is permanently remade in language at the point of individual/social articulation (the process *together* in which "a sign represents something for someone" and "a signifier represents a subject for another signifier").

The individual is always a subject in society, the point of social and ideological formations, but is always more than simply the figure of that representation, the excessive turn of such formations. An important — determining — part of ideological systems is then the achievement of a number of machines (institutions) that can *move* the individual as subject, shifting and placing desire, realigning negativity and contradiction, in a perpetual retotalisation of the imaginary in which the individual-subject is grasped as identity. It is in terms of this "double bind" — the statement of social meanings and the holding of the individual to those meanings, the suturing of the enounced and the enunciation, what above was called "the vision of the subject" — that the institution of cinema, film as machine, can be understood.

"When the bourgeoisie had to find something else besides painting and the novel to disguise the real to the masses, to invent, that is the ideology of the new mass communications, its name was the photograph".* Godard's remark serves to emphasize this at least: that film is developed and exploited like the novel, which it relays, as a production-reproduction of the "novelistic". In a real sense, the sense of this development and exploitation, novels and films have one single title (the title of the novelistic) — *Family Romance* (or, as recently, *Family Plot*). Narrative maps a memory in film from the novelistic as the reimagining of the individual as subject, the very representation of identity as the coherence of a past reappropriated — the past "in" the film (once again, the thematic returns: memory itself; childhood, *Citizen Kane*: nostalgia, *Meet me in St. Louis*; and, constantly, the oedipus — a film about possession by the devil? *The Exorcist* cannot but fold in the question as to the possessed girl's missing father) and "of" the film (the join of the images, the holding of the spectator as the unifying position of their relation).

* J.L. Godard in 'Premiers Sons
Anglais' in *Cinéthique*, No. 5,
1969.

Godard puts this clearly in *Numero Deux* with its family story as home movie (test: the projection of *Numero Deux* side by side with *Adam's Rib*), its contradictions of image-frame-screen ("Un film écran"), its problems of memory (beginning with the position of women: "la mémoire sort du trou?" ("Does memory come out of the hole?")), questions the little girl in the bath; certainly film has blocked the hole with its memory-images of women, *Letter from an Unknown Woman* is explicit enough).

* * *

It is to Freud that we owe the expression "family romance" (*Familienroman*) and this, of course, is in no way fortuitous: effectively, psychoanalysis is the novelistic from the other side, the production *in it* of a critical knowledge of its terms, its instances, its movements, its reasons. Indeed, what are the Dora, Rat Man or Wolf Man case histories as Freud writes them but the novel overturned (where "overturned" indicates a work in and against)?

To say this is simply to point to the implications with respect to psychoanalysis itself of the argument concerning the individual/social subject and to stress — a stress that is crucial for any *political* understanding — that psychoanalysis specifies an area for historical materialism that has an absolute importance but that the forms under which it has encountered, specified and described the area are articulated socially and ideologically, are thus susceptible to variation, change and transformation.

* * *

The novelistic is the category of the realization of narrative in novel and film (and photograph and television...), the terms of its memory. One part of the particularity of film in such a realization can be seen to lie in an extreme pull towards coalescence, an economic tightness of totalisation; the film is caught up in rimes in which elements are included, shifted, and turned back, as in a mirror — take *Taxi Driver*, shut in to the return at last of its initial images, contained in the two loops of exchange which pose the one woman and the other and set the structural equivalences that give the movement of the film, enclosed in a vision — with its "dramatic references": rear-view mirror, cab windscreen — as the knot of "significance", the loops' "meaning". In short, film is determined as *memory-spectacle*.

* * *

It will have become evident in the course of these notes that "film" has often been used as an abbreviation for "film in its dominant historical development and exploitation". The question is open, in other words, as to alternative practices, other cinemas.

With regard to that open question, three brief remarks. Firstly, from the perspective of what has been said here, narrative remains a necessary and directly avant-garde concern: to transform narrative and its narration of film is to render problematic the relation established between spectator as subject and work in the images of the novelistic, the memory-spectacle. Secondly, this is not, cannot be, some simple "destruction" of narrative, some "emptying" of meaning or whatever; rather, it is an insistence of the production in film of contradictions, including the contradictions of that production, on balancing the complexity described by Freud in the two theories of fiction differently, productively. Thirdly, to attempt such a production, such a radical balance, is to pose film exactly as montage in its multiple possibility of engaging drive, its *critical* potential for pleasure.

Freud is given to commenting (for example, in "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through") that, descriptively speaking, the aim of psychoanalysis "is to fill in gaps in memory". The memory thus constructed, however, is not the retrieval of a unity of the subject but the demonstration of difference and structuration and division and heterogeneity, of the dynamic eccentricity of the subject in process, out of true, out of image. Perhaps film should take up from here for its other memories.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Concept of a Working Paper: A "working paper" is an inquiry that openly declares itself as a process. It invites critiques, not at the level of absolute judgements, but rather as they can extend and elaborate the commitments of the paper itself. A working paper is therefore able to speculate about issues in a way that does not bind it to the preferred styles and modes of a "finished" paper — the structure of which generates a sense of finality with respect to the issues even if the content pronounces its conclusions as 'open'. A working paper is therefore a particular response to the pedagogical problems that arise in the communication of ideas within and outside the academic context. It de-emphasizes the intellectual as the producer of a kind of knowledge that must be adequately refined and packaged solely for academic consumption. Instead it emphasizes the intellectual as he/she is situated within his/her community and makes crucial the capacity of that community to develop as its priority the inter-relationships between its members. A working paper, then, may best be understood as a pedagogical tool that ties the process of knowledge production to the process of inter-subjective critique. It provides a specific moment in which the problems of this relationship can be surfaced. Finally, the concept of a working paper makes primary the ethos of collective work and criticism over individualistic models of academic interaction and therefore is tied to possible ideological responses to the problems of communication and critique within the academic discourse.

"Working Papers In Cultural Studies" is the journal of the Center of Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham. It is a self-conscious attempt to make the working paper model a locus for understanding the relations of theory and practice within cultural criticism. The work carried on by student collectives is highly committed material argued in speculative terms but within a highly directed set of ideas.

Marina Heck's article was produced in the context of WPICS and is published here with their permission. It is within the above understanding of a working paper that we support both the range and style of this work. In attempting to clarify the relations of semiology to ideology, Heck's article addresses itself to issues that are central and problematic to ongoing work in communications and cultural theory.

The Ideological Dimension of Media Messages

Marina Camargo Heck

I want to start by posing some questions about the concept of ideology as such, in order, to get a clearer sense, and perhaps common agreement, on what I understand by *the ideological instance of the message*. On the other hand, I have neither the intention nor pretension to solve any of the substantive problems of this delicate field of sociology, and I certainly cannot offer a theory of ideology. I'll pick up here and there the bits and pieces which I have found useful when dealing with ideological content of the media.

To try and link the phenomena of mass communication with the sociological problematic of ideologies is a very delicate and difficult enterprise. However I am convinced that, when we establish the relation between both fields and clear up some of the problems implicit in trying to establish this relation, we will have achieved a very positive step towards a reconceptualisation of the sociology of communication. The introduction of a relatively complex model of ideology will give firmer theoretical basis to the investigations on mass communication. On the other hand, the profound technological transformations of the structures of communication in urban-industrial societies seem to require a revision of the classical sociological methodology for the study of ideological processes. As usual in these cases, the difficulties begin when we have to decide what exactly we understand by 'ideology' and 'ideological'.

What classical sociology of knowledge called 'ideology' is not in fact what this term denotes in more recent work in, say, the sociology of 'public opinion' or political science. A change has occurred in the problematic, so that the definition of the concepts which determine the two fields are not the same. For example, the attempt to identify the concept of 'ideology' with that of 'opinion' dilutes the notion of *dominance* which was always there in the more classical approach. In current political science, the sociologist who examines ideological material works with opinions, usually those given in interview, which are responses to very precise questions, such as: what party do you vote for? why? etc. These opinion researchers have moved from the comprehensive concept of ideology to a far more limited concept of 'opinion' — i.e. from the study of the philosophy of ideas and culture to the opinions of the man in the street. This appears as more 'operational', and it can certainly be more easily quantified: but it tends to take the whole framework of ideas within which individuals express 'opinions' as given, and neutral, and therefore unproblematic: all that requires pin-pointing is where individuals position themselves inside this framework, or how their position has changed as a result of exposure to certain 'stimuli'. Thus, the shift in the theoretical perspective has also been followed by a methodological change, leading to the introduction of new techniques of research and modern ways of measuring effects and attitudes. In a way, these new techniques support a completely new perspective in the analysis of cultural phenomena from that indicated by the concept, 'ideology'. This change can itself be seen as 'ideological', since, by taking the ideological framework in which opinions are ranked as 'neutral', it proceeded to analyse the field as if 'ideological communication' in the more classical sense could not exist at all. That is — it produced, as its result, a new state of things, already operating inside its problematic: the 'ideology of the 'end-of-ideologies',

This process could lead us to discuss the related sociological mythology of 'mass society', this peculiar social system where ideologies seem to have become invisible, but where, in fact, far from having disappeared, ideologies now impregnate all the fields of social communication, and its self-reflection in communication research.

In marxist analysis and in other recent developments in the sociology of knowledge, what is called the 'ideological forms' covers a very extensive area; in works of the young Marx, it tends practically to coincide with the concept of superstructure as such, i.e. it comprehends the basic aspects which usually classify the cultural contents of a society or social formation. This idea no doubt brings many problems with it: but what we mean here is that, according to Marx, the theory of ideology (which he unfortunately never finished) should include all of what we would call today the 'sociology of culture'. This comprehensive intention has been very much reduced in later developments in positivistic sociology, and the area has split into various specialized disciplines, such as the sociology of art, the sociology of literature, of religion, etc. where the notion of ideology, linked to a global model of culture and the productive system is no longer in evidence. Nowadays, the concept of 'ideology' is limited to the field of political science, though the marxist model didn't imply that the notion of ideology was more significant in the area of political ideas than in other areas of culture.

The important point is that, in marxist analysis, though the account of the system of dominant ideas, as developed say in the German Ideology is highly abstract, it is also very far reaching and comprehends the whole general interpretation of social reality and aspects of culture in history available in a particular society. Currently, the contents which seem to interest the sociologist are much reduced: they no longer form an inclusive totality or 'mental horizon'. They are limited to very specific and limited aspects of social reality. The great bulk of current research in, for example, political sociology and opinion formation, measures merely the degree of acceptance or refusal of the ideological content of particular messages, with respect to quite specific beliefs or issues. In short, the link between 'ideology' and 'communication' has already been made in current mainstream positivistic research, but it has been incorrectly formulated — formulated in such a way as to disguise the problem or conceal its real dimensions.

The fundamental difference between this kind of research and a marxist analysis is that the latter, when studying ideological systems, sets out to uncover the conditions and rules of organization of the 'representations' of individuals. Two things are involved here: (1) the idea that social processes, conflicts, the social relations of production etc. are only appropriated by social individuals via the forms in which they are 'represented' (2) The fact that, though these 'representations' freely and openly circulate, the 'conditions and rules' which allow them to be generated never appear on the level of consciousness.

Ideological representations are produced by social processes. We can say that they are the 'manifest forms' of these processes. These 'manifest forms' — what Marx called the "phenomenal forms of the appearance" of social processes — determine the "spontaneous perceptions" which individuals have of these processes. These perceptions are 'spontaneous' in the sense that they seem to be the 'natural' ways in which processes are to be understood. They constitute our 'common sense awareness' or 'consciousness' of social processes. However, since some part of the content of these processes are, at the same time, hidden or concealed in our spontaneous perceptions of them, they serve *both* to *show*, and to *obscure* what is going on, and our relation to it. Spontaneous perceptions constitute our everyday consciousness of social processes. When these spontaneous perceptions are socially objectivated, and extended into the form of a discourse, then we may say that we have arrived at the 'ideological instance'.

Althusser defines ideology as "a 'representation' of the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence." (*Ideology and the State*, p. 153, NLB) Of course, the imaginary character of this relation determines and explains the distorting character of ideology. According to Poulantzas:

"This social-imaginary relation, which performs a real practical-social function, cannot be reduced to the problematic of alienation and false consciousness.

It follows that through its constitution ideology is involved in the functioning of this social-imaginary relation, and is therefore *necessarily* false; its social function is not to give agents a *true knowledge* of the social structure but simply to insert them as it were into their practical activities supporting this structure. Precisely because it is determined by its structure, at the level of experience the social whole remains *opaque* to the agents."
(Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, p. 207)

Marx shows that the fundamental basis of the capitalist economic structure (i.e. surplus value) 'hides itself completely from the consciousness of the agents of production (i.e. capitalists and workers). From this it is assumed that the agents of production necessarily have a false and distorted perception of the economic process. We must insist that this distortion (ideological) cannot be explained by way of a type of 'bad conscience' or 'wish to cheat' of the dominant classes, but is due to the

necessary obscuring of the social realities. In short, our 'spontaneous perceptions', which take off from the distorted level (where 'surplus value' is hidden), must, themselves be distorted. There is, therefore, a level of 'deep structure', which is 'invisible' and 'unconscious', which continually structures our immediate conscious perceptions in this distorted way. This is why, in ideological analysis, we must go to the structuring level of messages, not just to their surface forms — that is, to the level where the distortions are *coded*. It is also why we need a scientific analysis — which Marx said must penetrate from the 'phenomenal forms' to the 'real relations' below, in order to disclose what has been 'hidden', or expressed only in a distorted form.

In *For Marx*, Althusser agrees:

"It is customary to suggest that ideology belongs to the region of 'consciousness'. We must not be misled by this appellation which is still contaminated by the idealist problematic that preceded Marx. In truth, ideology has very little to do with 'consciousness', even supposing this term to have an unambiguous meaning. It is profoundly *unconscious*, even when it presents itself in a reflected form (as in pre-Marxist 'philosophy'). Ideology is indeed a system of representations, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with 'consciousness': they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as *structures* that they impose on the vast majority of men, not via their 'consciousness'."

"So ideology is a matter of the *lived* relation between men and their world. This relation, that only appears as '*conscious*' on condition that it is *unconscious*, in the same way only seems to be simple on condition that it is complex, that it is not a simple relation but a relation between relations, a second degree relation. In ideology men do indeed express, not the relation between them and their conditions of existence, but *the way* they live the relations between them and their conditions of existence: this presupposes both a real relation and an '*imaginary*', '*lived*' relation. Ideology, then, is the expression of the relation between men and their 'world', that is the (overdetermined) unity of the real relation and the imaginary relation between them and their real conditions of existence."

(Althusser, *For Marx*. p. 72).

We will take up this question of the 'unconscious' level of ideology and its relation to 'code' and 'structure' in a moment. First there is another aspect of the Marxist notion of ideology which needs further clarification. This is the question of ideology as 'dominant' — and of the role of ideology in maintaining the dominance or hegemony of particular social classes.

In recent marxist analysis we find that the role of integrating and unifying, the function of the cohesion of social forms, is precisely attributed to the ideological instance. In such cases, ideology is the level which has the function of preserving the unity of the whole social system (i.e. the status quo). This position sees the ideological level as the over-determining instance in the process of social formations. In this case, ideology is, by definition, 'dominant' — a distortion: hence the important distinction is not between dominant and dominated ideologies, but between *ideology*, as such and *theory*, or *science*. Much of Althusser's references to ideology in *For Marx* make use of this ideology / science distinction.

In other places, and especially in later formulations, Althusser seems to have reformulated his position. There can be a theory of ideology 'in general', which tells us about the "mechanism" of ideology, and which is thus "abstract with respect to every real ideological formation". In this sense, ideology is, like Freud's unconscious, "eternal" and "without a history", since its structure and function is similar whenever and wherever it appears. This usage is not very clear, and Althusser himself is tentative about it (p. 152): in so far as we understand it, it refers to the functions which ideology (singular) always serves, whatever its historical location. There can be, second, a theory of particular ideologies (plural). These are always specific, always "express class positions" (p. 152), always "depend in the last resort on the history of social formations, and thus of the modes of production combined in the social formations and of the mass struggle which develop in them." What there *cannot* be is a *theory* of ideologies (plural) in general. For this would be to assume that there was a common content, or common characteristics to the different, historically-determined ideologies: and this would be to falsely abstract some 'universal core' to all ideologies, and rob them of their historicity. It is clear, especially from the postscript to Ideology and The State, which he added to clarify matters after Poulantzas's criticism, that Althusser does not conceive of a dominant ideology ruling throughout without contradiction. (See *Ideologie et l'Appareil d'Etat, la Pensée* Juin, 1970).

Barthes, in *Le Plaisir Du Texte*, says,

"... (It is) (Commonly said: "dominant ideology". This expression is incongruous. For what is ideology? It is precisely the idea *insofar as it dominates*: ideology can only be dominant. Correct as it is to speak of an "ideology of the dominant class", because there is certainly a dominated class, it is quite inconsistent to speak of a "dominant ideology", because there is no dominated ideology: where the "dominated" are concerned there is nothing, no ideology, unless it is precisely — and this is the last degree of alienation — the ideology they are forced (in order to make symbols, hence in order to live) to borrow from the class that dominates them. The social struggle cannot be reduced to the struggle between two rival ideologies: it is the subversion of all ideology which is in question). (Barthes: *Pleasure of the Text*, p. 32)

But in the same passage, Barthes himself is quite ambiguous about the non-existence of other ideological significations apart from those emitted by the "dominant ideology"; but this is to want a text without productivity, a sterile text. The text needs its shadow: this shadow is a bit of ideology, a *bit* of representation, a *bit* of subject: subversion must produce its own chiaroscuro. (Barthes: *Pleasure of the Text*, p. 32).

Well, I would ask, doesn't this *chiaroscuro* in fact point to some sort of oppositional ideology? Elisio Veron, commenting on the above quotation of Althusser's ("Ideology is indeed a system of representations . . . they are usually images and occasionally concepts but it is above all as *structures* that they impose on the vast majority of men,") says: . . .

"... if Ideologies are structures in the sense structuralism uses this expression then, they are not 'images' nor 'concepts' (we can say, they are not contents) but are sets of rules which determine an organization and the functioning of images and concepts." (E. Veron, *Semanticization of Violence*).

We can here already see the first foundations for the introduction of the notion of code.

"Ideology is a system of coding reality and not a determined set of coded messages (. . .) Ideology becomes autonomous in relation to the *consciousness* or *intention* of its agents: these may be conscious of their points of view about social forms, but not of the semantic conditions (rules and categories of codification) which make possible those points of view." (my translation) ("Semanticization of Violence")

In another text Veron illustrates his point with an analogy: he imagines that there was a computer prepared to receive as *input* a certain type of message and to emit as *output* a classification of each message as consistent or not with a certain ideology. He concludes: ". . . we shall call the ideological system, not the input or the output of the machine, but the programme according to which the computer emits and/or recognizes ideological systems. From this point of view, then, and at this level of analysis as 'ideology' may be defined as a *system of semantic rules* to generate messages." (*Ideologia y Comunicacion De Masas* — my translation.) In many ways this perspective coincides with Eco's, when he writes about ideological meanings. Eco understands ideology to be the 'universe of knowledge of the receiver and of the group to which he belongs'. He thus makes ideology more or less coterminous with his 'culture in the anthropological sense'. Before this universe of knowledge is communicated semiological analysis will not be able to detect it; it will therefore be necessary for it first to be "reduced to a system of communicate conventions." "However, to achieve this, it is necessary that the *system of knowledge* becomes a *system of signs*: the ideology is recognisable when, once socialized, it becomes a code." (Umberto Eco, *La Structure Absente*)

From this observation Veron develops his argument:

"Ideology is not a particular type of message, or a class of social discourses, but it is one of the many levels of organization of the messages, from the point of view of its semantic properties. Ideology is therefore a *level of signification* which can be present in any type of message, even in the scientific discourse. Any material of social communication is susceptible to an *ideological reading*." (Veron, *Ideologia y Comunicacion de Masas*)

For Veron, this ideological reading "consists in the discovery of the implicit or non-manifest organization of the message." For the analysis of this latent organization it would be necessary to study the mechanisms of that organization — that is, of selection and combination. "From this perspective we can define ideology (. . .) as a system of semantic rules which express a certain level of organization of messages." It would be only *through* the disentangling of these semantic rules that we can get to the core of a message. However, in the analysis of the ideological meanings, the 'core' does not refer only to the content of the message or its 'non-manifest organization'.

When a message is emitted, it isn't only what is *said* that has a signification but also the *way* it is said, and what is *not said and could be said*.

The significations in a message are established by means of a code and it is this code which permits the message to be organized, i.e. permits the selections and combination of the signs which actually constitute the message. The coding and decoding of a message implies the usage of the same code; that *is*, in cases where a message is organized and emitted in one code to a group which receives it and decodes it using a different code, the meaning of the message will differ completely. This is what Eco calls 'aberrant decoding'. These assertions refer to the denotative meanings which are the ones that are defined by the code in general, while the connotative meanings are given by subcodes or lexicons, common to certain groups and not to others.

Barthes in *Elements of Semiology*, referring to Hjelmslev, observes that significations consists of a plane of expression also called signifier and a plane of content or signified, and that the signification is the relation of the two planes. This first system of signification is the plane of denotation. For example when in the system the work / pig / signifier has the content of the notion, "a useful animal that produces meat, bacon, etc." (signified), the relation between the signifier /pig / and the signified "very useful animal that produces meat", gives us the signification "animal, pig". In Saussure, it is not the morpheme/ pig /, nor the actual animal in the farmyard, but the relating of the two together — signifier / signified — which gives us this sign.

| | | |
|------------|---|----|
| pig | s | s' |
| animal pig | | |

At a second level, the above relation between signifier and signified, i.e. the whole system of denoted meaning, becomes the plane of expression or the signifier of a second system. For instance, in the context of North American black movement the word pig does not mean the relation between the material object (animal) and what it signifies, but becomes the signifier of a new sign: *policeman*. This level is that of connotation.

| | |
|------------|---------------------|
| pig | |
| animal pig | concept: pigness |
| 'pig' | |

As we said above the connotative meanings are defined by lexicons or subcodes used in certain contexts within certain groups. We have seen that though a message might be emitted and received in a common code, the connotations in this message would be decoded according to the lexicons of the receivers. This means that a connotation can be decoded originating different significations. For example, the same denotative system *pig* is the signifier of a second system where again the signified is the concept of *pigness* which originated the signification of our previous example: pig-policeman: now, read in the context of women's movement, this same animal — quality of pigness connotes male-chauvinist quality in men.

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| pig | |
| animal pig | concept: pigness |
| (male chauvinist) 'pig' | |

Another level of signification is called *metalanguage*. We may say that this level is parallel to that of connotation because, again, we have the whole first system (denotation) performing the role of just one element of the total meaning. But this time the whole denotative meaning fills in the box of the signified — rather than the signifier — of the second system.

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| | s | s' |
| S | s | S' |
| S' | | |

This second system, derived as above, is called metalanguage. Metalanguage is a discourse *about* other systems which provide its content: it is communication *about* communication. Semiology is a metalanguage, since it 'talks' about what it signifies.

Another type of second-order system is what Barthes calls *myth*. We suggest that myth should be thought of as a special type of connotation. This is because, according to Barthes, the mythical system is generated in the same way as connotation. The real soldier saluting the flag (signified) — the photograph of him saluting (signifier) gives us the denotation — negro saluting flag (sign). At the second level, this sign (negro saluting flag) — the concept of French imperialism gives us the second order connotation which is 'France is a great empire, and all her sons without colour discrimination faithfully serve under her flag.' Barthes does not make it clear why this second order meaning, which he calls myth, is different from, rather than a special case, of connotation. We would like to suggest that the difference between myth and connotation depends on the amplitude of the lexicons from which the concepts are drawn. The connoted meaning in 'pig-policeman' and in 'pig-male-chauvinist' are clearly linked to the lexicons of identifiable sub-groups. By contrast, *myth* seems identifiable with the lexicons of very ample groups, if not of the society as a whole. Myth therefore differs from connotation at the moment at which it attempts to universalize to the whole society meanings which are special to particular groups. In the process of universalizing its meaning, these meanings, which in the last instance are particular to a certain group, assume the amplitude of reality itself and are therefore naturalized. Thus, we might say, myths are *connotations which have become dominant-hegemonic*.

I think that, in part, the problem is to define what exactly is understood by *level of signification*. In relation to hegemony, Veron observes: "... ideology is a level of signification which *operates* by connotation and not by denotation." (my emphasis). The fact that we, following Veron, asserted that ideology operates by connotation inside the message, was probably one of the reasons why T. Lovell assumed that we though there was a *pre-ideological*, neutral, state of the message, which she identified with denotation. To this argument, Stuart Hall replied that to retain the denotation / connotation distinction is not the same thing as thinking the denotative levels was 'pre-ideological'. The denotative process cannot be identified with a 'neutral state'; there can be no 'neutral' state because denotation, also, must be produced by the operation of a code. Thus we cannot be accused of searching for, or subscribing to, Barthes' idea of an 'empty text'. The distinction denotation / connotation is, however, not only useful but indispensable, since the second can only exist through the first. This doesn't mean that there is no ideology at all in the process of denotation. I do not subscribe to the idea of a 'zero degree writing' nor to a text absolutely free of any ideological meaning; but I can see that there is a moment, like our first encounter with the message, where we have the impression of the absence of ideological meanings even though to decipher this message we are using a code, which is already ideological. If we can imagine such a moment where there are only denotative meanings, that in fact would be the moment where connotation is present at its minimum, tending to zero. This minimum, however, is present through the fact that ideology is a code, i.e. not a code in the sense of the immanent universe of the message, but a codified system of social reality. In this sense ideology is beyond and involves the whole universe of the sign as such — denotative or connotative. It is *inside* the coded sign that a distinction can be maintained, between denotation and connotation. And at *this* level of the analysis of the message, "the connotative/denotative distinction (. . .) remains pivotal". In Stuart Hall's reply to Lovell, this point is made more clearly: "I believe the method requires a distinction between the level of organization of the sign, at which, by means of a certain signifying codes, the sign can be produced at *all* (and a minimum level of perceptual recognition guaranteed — (. . .)); and the ideological level of organization, where the sign is given a privileged reading within the larger ideological syntagms of meaning." (This passage refers to a debate that took place between T Lovell of screen and working papers in cultural studies specifically Marina Heck and Stuart Hall.)

Barthes, himself, in *S/Z* elaborates his concept of denotation from the definitions he offered in *Elements of Semiology*: "Denotation is not the first sense, but it pretends to be. Under this illusion in the end it is nothing but the last of connotation (where the reading is at the same time grounded and enclosed) the superior myth thanks to which the text pretends to return to the nature of language (...) we must keep denotation, old vigilant deity, crafty, theatrical, appointed to *represent* the collective innocence of language." (Barthes. *S/Z*, p. 816)

The semiologists contest the hierarchy of the denotation and connotation, saying that any language, with its dictionary and syntax is a system just like all others and therefore there is no reason for reserving denotation as a privileged first level neutral in itself, which originates all the others. Barthes however justifies his adoption of the distinction in an argument based primarily on Hjelmslev, a fact which demonstrates his loyalty to linguistics, at least as far as the *Elements* period was concerned: "... nous sommes encore soumis au prestige de la linguistique..."

The destruction of the connotation /denotation distinction is made through the identification of denotation with connotation and the fact that ideological meanings are present in both processes. Baudrillard, in *Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, also does this; though he distinguishes the different *degree* of ideological interference in each instance, he refuses the general distinction as it is usually used. "Denotation is totally supported by the myth of 'objectivity' (either concerning the linguistic sign, the analogous photographique, iconic sign, etc.) the direct adequacy of a signifier and a precise reality" (see p. 190). And further on: "... denotation is distinct from other significations (connoted) by its singular function of effacing the traces of the ideological process in restoring it to the universal and the 'objective' innocence. Far from being the objective term to which connotation is opposed as the ideological term, denotation is thus, because it naturalizes this ideological process, the more ideological term" ... (my translation).

Though using arguments which appear to defend Semiology, I think Lovell's criticisms about our lack of scientific rigour, 'pace Barthes', is very close to the linguist's type of attack on Barthesian researchers, though mounted from a much more traditional sociological position. What I mean is that she doesn't argue based on the traditional linguistic distinction between semiology of communication and semiology of signification (distinction which I have never been fully able to understand) and she definitely does not accept the distinction denotation / connotation. But on the other hand she suggests that semiology should limit itself to the study of the structural organization of language, "how it is coded" (semiology of communication???) and leave sociology to sort out "the very *meaning* of Ideological artefacts" (semiology of signification???) In one way or the other, Lovell's attack, which is made in terms of our 'non-scientificity', is really mounted in the name of the 'non-ideological science' of sociology a position which I am very sceptical about.

Linguistics has always refused to be ideologically compromised and claims to be the only possibility to scientifically study language processes. As a "social science, linguistics should study, prior to anything else, the status of language itself in society; its role in the class struggle, its ideological determinations, etc. However, it contents itself to study (language as a) closed system, as one studies a mechanism, once again because the phonological model weighs heavily on it. The current impasse of linguistics with respect to semantics is proof that this model (of language as a closed system) is inadequate. But at the same time linguistics appears to be an enterprise which ideologically bleaches the language: treated simply as a communication instrument, linguistics will regard language as a neutral 'instrument', excluded from the field of social and political relations, the field of class conflict." (mytranslation. *R. Barthes*, Louis-Jean Calvet).

Once agreed that the ideological instance refers to the connotative meanings of the message, our problem is how to detect it. In Barthes this preoccupation with the connotative-ideological instance is constant, and this is one of the reasons we find him extremely useful (in spite of his 'fortuitous genius'). According to Calvet: "... this hunt for false evidence is what constitutes the continuity of Barthes' thought, this wish to unveil (...) the historical commitment (i.e. political) of all discourse ..." Barthes' project of unmasking false appearances (which he says is the function of the mythologist of today) implies a description of the situation tomorrow and therefore implies a political position. "The unveiling which it carries out is therefore a political fact: founded on a responsible idea of language, mythology thereby postulates the freedom of the latter." ("Myth Today" in Barthes, *Mythologies*, p.156).

For Barthes, ideology and rhetoric are closely associated. Both of these concepts lead us to readings at the level of connotation. It is through the analysis of the rhetoric that we reach the ideological level. "This common domain of the signifieds of connotation is that of *ideology*, which can only be unique for a given society and history, whatever may be the signifiers of connotation on which it draws. There are signifiers of connotation which correspond to general ideology and which are specified according to the substance chosen. We shall call these signifiers *connoters*, and the set of these connoters a *rhetoric*: the rhetoric thus appears as the signifying aspect of ideology," (Barthes, *Rhetoric of the Image* Communications No.4)

In Eco the couplet, rhetoric/ideology, is also basic to the process of 'poetic decoding'. For him, ideology is hidden under the rhetorical apparatus of the author of the message. Usually a code corresponds to an ideology; and, in many cases, a rhetoric is formally incorporated in a certain type of ideological information. The example he gives is the phrase: 'workers should remain in their posts'. This *could*, technically, be 'read' from two different lexicons; but in practice it would be rather unusual to find it in a revolutionary newspaper and quite commonplace to find it in a conservative newspaper. The fact that a rhetorical phrase fits one lexicon better happens because "a certain way of using the language is identified with a certain way of 'thinking' society. Ideology has generated a rhetorical premise which has assumed a styled and recognisable form." (Eco, *La Structure Absente*)

Veron emphasizes that the key to understand the ideological dimension of the message lies in the organization of the semantic rules of these messages and not in their explicit content. This non-manifest character of the message does not result from the intentional hiding of a certain content. When these contents are communicated directly, or when the organization of the message is manifest, Veron prefers to talk about *propaganda*, and not ideology. The manifest function of the messages should not be confounded with their ideological function.

This non-manifest, hidden or veiled content and organization of the message refers to what we have been calling the *ideological level of signification*.

In this paper, we have been working, broadly, within a semiological framework. The paper is not intended as a defence of semiology as such, about which we have many criticisms. Apart from more detailed criticisms, semiology is often presented simply as a 'technical' kind of linguistic analysis: and, very often, it treats language and communication too 'linguistically' — as closed, formal systems, requiring an immanent analysis. It tends to abolish the historical dimension. The detailed defence or critique of semiological methods is not what is really at issue. There is, however, something basic and central, which semiology as a method does clearly bring into view, and this question *is* worth arguing about. Ideology is often understood essentially as the free floating, and biased ideas which float about in society, and which skew things in favour of the ruling class. This suggests that it is this free-floating 'thing' which we really need to analyse: and that it is only occasionally, and incidentally, that these ideas take root in language and communication. From the perspective of this paper, ideology is only present in so far as it can be shown to exist in and through the way language and communication is structured and produced. Ideology *is* not hiding inside language — ideology is the name we give to the structuring which language and communication undergoes. It is a dimension of, or better, an *instance* of all social communication. We can only grasp it, analyse and unmask it, because we can pin-point its 'mechanisms' in the production of meaning through language — that is, fundamentally, at the level at which language requires the operation of social codes to be produced. Whatever are the shortcomings of semiology, or semiologies, as a method, this outlook is basic to it, and distinguishes it from most other types of ideological analysis. It is in this sense, above all, that the paper is semiological in its basic perspective.

INTRODUCING MAKAVEJEV

The Yugoslav film-maker, Dusan Makavejev's work — from "Man is not a Bird" to "Sweet Movie"— has been sympathetically received amongst the New Left and alternate-society oriented groups. His appeal is, at least, partially, explained by the fact that Makavejev, like much of the New Left, has severely criticized Stalinism and the consequent disappearance of the 'individual' in an objectivist problematic of politics and history. His films, therefore, as he has often said, are an effort towards the 'repossession' of 'individual' and "de-alienation of politics". Ciné-Tracts feels that Makavejev's effort at the "repossession", by and large, degenerates into a bourgeois individualism and an existentialist notion of politics and freedom.

Last Fall, Makavejev was in Montreal and Ciné-Tracts talked to him; what follows, is excerpted from that conversation.

You must understand my cultural/political background and that the New Left is not well regarded in Yugoslavia today. I can talk about the tradition of Polish and Hungarian films in the late 1950's and how in Yugoslavia there evolved a good short feature film industry concerned with social criticism. We were fighting hard to "get reality", so to speak, onto film. I was therefore very interested in close-ups of people working, which I wanted done in such a way as to be able to feel grains of sand under the teeth of a worker. These kinds of sensuous images are very important to me.

The state of documentary film in my country was quite bad, and if you got support from anywhere to do good documentaries, part of that support came from the Grierson tradition, because N.F.B. films were about real people; they were the only films about old people, poor people, people who didn't speak good English, etc.

Grierson inspired documentary films in England, the first real documentaries films about the working class — fishermen, coal miners, postmen. Of course, these films are terribly artificial, almost unreal, especially, when people speak. At the same time these films were really quite carefully constructed, quite honest about the working process. The coal miners' faces, for example, had a tactile quality, a reality. I think that the use of train rhythm in *Night-Mail* was an ingenious way of communicating how the postmen were really LIVING on the trails, working to its rhythm. You begin to understand the role that the sound plays in this film — it can be poetic and terrible at the same time. You realize that the postmen are spending their working lives in these shaking, moving boxes which make their way through such beautiful landscapes. They really work hard. I think that these films did something very important — it is as if they are the opening chapters of a book, explaining to film-makers all over the world *how* people live, how people work, and that the nature of the working process deserves full attention ...

CINE-TRACTS . . .

I think it is a cultural thing because when I look at a film made by the N.F.B. in 1956 on old people, what it tells me is this: these old people are so fucked up, so miserable, so without thought creativity, energy or meaning — these poor and oppressed people — and the film never says, why or how come they are like that ... It is fundamental false factuality. You show someone who is suffering, but not why the suffering is there in the first place. The model that Grierson constructed made it seem as if film were a window, a window on the world. It re-inforced, for a long time (because his documentaries are also the basis for the development of newsreels and TV news) a concept, a model, that said: "I, in using my camera, can provide a window on the working lives of people; I do not interpret what there is, I only mirror life as it is". And so, Grierson provides the basis for the ultimate mystification of the screen by making it seem as if reality can be 'redeemed', re-created, rerecorded and imprinted. Since Grierson the mystification has intensified. He began by constructing a logic that obliterated editing for the viewer and this has been perpetuated at the N.F.B. The film-makers themselves came to interpret their own activities as the transference of actuality onto celluloid; they failed and didn't see that 'reality' is as much artifice as in film.

My own reference point is that Grierson, historically, left a very questionable, a very difficult model for the portrayal of the working class on film. There is a kind of romanticization of working class people, of people like the Indians, that transforms real people and real situations into aesthetic objects. This, I think, is a very important problem which must be dealt with, especially in considering what are called 'political' films.

The Czech films of the 1960's were quite different from anything else, and these socialist films, had a special meaning for people in the west. We started recognising each other, East and West. The question: what's the identity/role of the radical intellectual? was raised both in the west and in the socialist countries, though not quite in the same way. The films I made (as well as films made by people in similar cultural situations in the 50's and 60's) were the first justification of socialism after many years of sterile, Stalinist production — pure desert. People were quite deprived of anything meaningful, unless, of course, you were heavily romantic, and liked films full of glassy-eyed people looking into the future. The critical films (mostly from Eastern Europe) which came out of the 50's and 60's represented complicated inter-relationships between people and society, between power and society and between the different levels of power and the kinds of myths which had been guiding people's lives. . .

I have destroyed as many fences as possible, fences
between private and public, neurotic, psychotic and
normal . . .

My conscious activity has been a repossession of politics, a de-alienation of politics... You don't have to leave politics to politicians; politics belongs to everybody. Politics should be integrated into everyday processes, making people judge everything. I think that my films are political in content — fragments of political life, ideology — I am using politics as material. I was happy when I forced political subjects into movies in my country. I have made a short on the First of May parade; and as a critic I fought for movies about reality, movies that discuss political issues. I believe I was legitimizing the subject of politics as content for films, without actually saying anything about politics.

I was one of the rare examples of those who managed to fight Internal censorship. I was a rare example of creative freedom in my own country. I felt much more restricted when I made my films in the west. Here I was up against private interests, facing people who were investing their *own* money. Not only that, but, people who were investing money and then trying to steal from their own films. That was incredible; it really surprised me! I thought that once these people had decided to spend money on a film, they should use this money to get the best quality possible, because they wanted to make the film marketable. But these investors were ready to squeeze money from the production and to deprive me of money that had already been agreed upon. They were not concerned with the product itself, they were concerned about the amounts of money invested... So you have this incredible schizophrenia. Investors do not understand the nature of the product they are financing. If you are a capitalist, you are thinking about the product in terms of breaking ingredients into it that are going to make it more marketable; you are not thinking positively, not thinking about making the product an expression of creativity.

Hollywood films are not about capitalism, there's no
capitalism in them. They rarely speak about money or
property, they rarely show the 'psychosis' of private
property . . .

Now, if we want to speak about real socialism, we must be open enough to recognize the socialist ingredients in whatever is being done... Look, the whole of the production process in the world is capitalistic — but that does not mean, for example, that capitalist publishing houses are not capable of printing good books sometimes. Whatever is concerned with real truth, whatever is concerned with real human situations, whatever tells us about the real human condition, contributes, one way or another, more or less, to what I consider to be socialism. People generally, see it more militantly vis à vis the system etc.; my concept of socialism is much broader.

Within so-called capitalist film production, whatever is creative, belongs to the socialist tradition whatever, has been well-produced in the last 80 years, Socialism is going to take





that is *its* heritage. But the question about film being used as a tool, as an agent of change... Is there a film which ever really affected social change? I remember some films that were quite melodramatic, which effected people. But how far can films go? Can films ever meaningfully participate in solving socio-economic problems? I think that the nature of movies is images that are more concerned with our desires than any other part of reality. The nature of movies is to connect with our unreal selves. Freud said that every unexplained dream is a letter from the unconscious which is not opened. Dreams can put us in touch with deep realities, and films are very good nightmares.

People of property cannot live without fences, fences
are their flesh, a part of their body . . .

The REAL cinema is the jump from one style to another so that people know that they are watching the work of a particular film-maker. In this sense, films — fiction films — may be closer to reality than the documentary. I believe that films deal with ways of seeing, not ways of living...

ETHNO — HERMENEUTICS: ETHNOGRAPHY AS ANOMALY

by

HART COHEN

* Anomaly generates crisis in which the discovery process is converged upon by invention. This crisis demands recourse to philosophy and debate over fundamentals that have previously been assumed under normal science The existence of anomalies create the sense that the existing paradigm is inadequate to meet the problems posed by the environment and the paradigm itself. Kuhn characterizes the switch to a new paradigm as a revolutionary change. See Kuhn T., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edition, Chicago, 1970.

The attempt to create a theory of *critical ethnography* and the process of understanding the constitution of such a notion can here be termed *ethno-hermeneutics*.

As *critique*, ethnography would retain the function of *anomaly* as articulated by Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* i.e. altering the axis of the tradition / innovation continuum.*

* Murphy, *The Dialectics of Social Life*, Basic Books, N.Y. 1971.

Ethnography is an activity that fixes human action in the form of texts. As such, the ethnography of human activity may be said to be hermeneutical in that 1) the object of interpretation is situated in a text or a medium that displays textual features i.e. a category of signs fixed by language; and 2) that the method of interpretation reflects and continually surfaces a subject-object dichotomy e.g. the objectivity of the scientist versus the subjectivity of the writer. The language of ethnography is always contextualized and thus constitutes the totality of relations at the level of signification and relationship on the one hand, and meaning and identity on the other. This totality is a synthesis that proceeds from the negation of a negation:

1) The subject / object split stems from the subject's inability to understand the locus of reality that lies in the mind (first negation) but

* Goldmann, L., *Immanuel Kant*, NLB, 1971, p. 155.

2) The mind is not free unless it recognizes and exists within the truth of a rational, social order." (second negation).*

The appropriation of reality within and by ethnography proceeds via its self-reflexive understanding in the context of a perceived reality in transformation.

Traditionally, in anthropology, direct observation tends to corroborate the power of norms based on data collected in the field. The scientists' (subject) objectivity arises in his mind through *designation* of the object. This position posits a phenomenology of mind and of the world external to it. Mind is teleological to society whose end is the maintenance of social structures. Language, when used in this context (as a device for objectification) produces reification — the illusion of natural, (eternal), and formal human relationships.

Critical ethnography is skeptical of 'received' truth such as the 'established facts' of positive scientific discourse. Through reason and argument it seeks knowledge, both by paying tribute to the autonomy of human identity and by defining an area where it can speak with special authority e.g. the relationship of an ethnographic account to its social context. Reason, then, is completed by knowledge whose interest is emancipatory and whose language, as it evaluates human practices, is itself worked upon by practice. Because the relationship between the "namer" and the "named" is a changing one, the fixating act of language can be seen as a modifying and temporary activity. While the boundaries of knowledge and language do not contain the criteria of truth which is both material and universal, the reconciliation of explanation and values may be expressed as a relation between identity and the object: *The transformation of the object by human action*.

In freeing the a priori from reification, in relating it to the real human community, we know that this community can only be based upon human activity, upon the common action of man. Now all action involves the transformation of the external world. It must relate to a common object. The function of theoretical knowledge is precisely to transform the unformed immediate given, which differs from individual to another, into a common object.

* Hawthorn, J., *Identity and Relationship*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1973, London, p. 148.

The logic of empirical science is here implicitly criticized through the distinction of an *experienced* world from that of a phenomenal world; through the understanding of both as the mutual interpenetration of the realm of thought and the realm of action.

As critique that intends to rework the relations of subject and object, ethno-hermeneutics integrates two paths of criticism in its process. The first path in moving 'away' from the object is concerned with its linguistic and signification dimension — the *relationship* aspects of the object. The second path moves 'inwards' to the object. It is concerned with the object's identity and meaning. The relation between the two critical paths is a dialectical one i.e. one cannot be reduced to the other but interact to surface different forms of subject-object contradiction.

Critical ethnography recognizes the embeddedness of the objective in subjective understanding and the corollary subjective reworking of the external world. In doing so, it seeks to replace the structural and functional paradigms of positivist thought with a *normative* one that intends, through understanding and explanation to generate change.

One of the most important ideas in dialectical philosophy is that thought is always an attempt to discover a meaning in life under certain concrete conditions and to establish a praxis which will tend to change reality in the direction of the hopes of human groups.*

* *ibid.* p. 101.

The problem can now be posed for the ethnographer on two levels: At the level of consciousness his model explanation of a social practice may be constructed without any recourse to the persons involved i.e. they have no awareness of a systematic totality from which can be derived their particular actions. At the level of reality, the ethnographer may have to take into account models constructed by the society i.e. the praxis of the society. In Marxian thought this is the intrusion of independent consciousness into historical materialism but qualified by the interest of revolutionary change through praxis.

* Lefevbre, H., *The Sociology of Marx*, Random House, 1969, N.Y., p. 86-87.

The mind is an active factor in Marxism despite the primacy of praxis, for it transforms social action into object, image, and ideology.

In refuting the notion of a passive mind that simply reflected society, Marxian epistemology emphasized the subjective re-working of the external world. It juxtaposes idea and action, culture and society, in the interests of surfacing ideology; the illusions and inversions of reality as they are thought through and misapprehended by man.

It is on the basis of conscious revolutionary praxis that thought and action are articulated dialectically, and that knowledge "reflects" praxis i.e. is constituted as reflection on praxis. Until then knowledge was characterized precisely by its failure to "reflect" reality namely praxis; it could only transpose it, distort it, confuse it with illusions — in short knowledge was ideological.

* Knight, E., *A Theory of the Classical Novel*, London, 1970, p. 44.

The critical ethnographer, on the basis of this dialectic of thought and action, performs a counter-transformation. It is the process of moving from a *reflected ideology* to a *reflecting praxis*. His critique stands midway between the world-view of the people themselves and the action as observed by him / her self. When ethnography becomes practical i.e. a reflecting praxis, it functions as anomaly (Kuhn) constituting a radical challenge to certain conventional relationships in the social sciences. Through the insertion of both praxis and world-view, the ethnographer is led to a structuring of its object; a structuring that is derived not from a fixed, immutable human nature (read Levi-Strauss), but from a history of the existing relations of the object. As anomaly, ethnography discovers in its object relations its own structuring of the object. In this sense a higher unity of subject and object is reconstituted through the ethnographer's re-thinking his own thought and relating it to how the situation of the object conditions its perception of itself. At this point, one is necessarily bound up with the problems of domination, and, thus, to give a literary reading of this problem is insufficient. There is however a further dimension to critical ethnography that I wish to pursue. There is a curious co-relation between the distance that separates the ethnographer and his object, and the way in which he fragments the relationship between culture and society.

...the (ethnographer), by placing himself at a distance... creates the identity he sets out to portray. Not being a participant in the reality which interests him, he is obliged to introduce from

elsewhere some principle of intelligibility. If things and people are to be taken in isolation from the other, then they must be supposed to possess a 'built-in', self-contained identity...

The importance of the relation between things and people is the way in which things are transformed through culture to connect the person to social life. In traditional ethnography, things express the identity of an individual or a society and thus signify the continuity of culture. In stressing the relationship aspect of identity and things, traditional ethnography had lost the negative tension within its notion of culture i.e. viewing *things* as a system of constraints pre-existent in a social context within which identity struggles to express itself.

The following passage from James' *Portrait of a Lady* expresses the duality:

...When you've lived as long as I you'll see that every human being has his shell and that you must take the shell into account. By the shell I mean the whole envelope of circumstances. There's no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made up of some cluster of appertenances. What shall we call our self? Where does it begin? Where does it end?

It overflows into everything that belongs to us-and then it flows back again. I know a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for *things*. One's self — for other people — is one's expressions of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps — these things are all so expressive...

... I don't agree with you. I think just the other way. I don't know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know nothing else expresses me. Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; everything's on the contrary a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one...*

* James, H., *Portrait of a Lady*, Edel, London, 1968, p. 230.

In assuming a positive relation between things and identity, ethnography asserted a social reality based upon what was thought to be the common sense relationship of the part to the whole. This position may explain traditional ethnography's difficulty in the areas of social change, for it is the notion of constraints that is a pre-condition for understanding the need and desire for change.

Edmund Leach's ethnography "Political Systems of Highland Burma" represents a different view of the relation between things and identity that makes it an anomaly within the tradition of ethnography. Leach argues that instead of viewing the world as composed of separate and discrete objects (a condition he attributes to language) that become related to each other, reality itself may be continuous event that becomes "torn apart".

... He goes on to demonstrate that the Kachin look upon what we call 'social relationships' as social distinctions. Brothers are distinguished from each other as "brothers". Their unity, it would seem, is assumed, and it is their separateness that must be glossed. The Kachin are "theorists" in that they "start off with formal models and work down to the facts of the case . . .

* Murphy, op. cit., p. 56.

By inverting the traditional anthropological world-view, Leach represents anomaly, but *not* a paradigmatic change in the Kuhnian sense. Leach's social anthropology is characterized by an eclecticism that modifies and re-thinks old material (data). Leach has emulated Hegel's cunning of reason but at the expense of Marx's 'cunning of history'. In his analysis of the Kachin, the dialectics are situated in both the ethnography itself (the ethnoscience of the Kachin) and in the method of the ethnographer. They are, however, dialectics that do not proceed beyond their initial formulation. Every *thesis is* its antithesis rather than every thesis *having* an antithesis. Thus Leach has blunted a crucial effect of dialectical reasoning: Its ability to destroy the common sense reality of naturalistic social science to assert time. This can now be extended to stand as a critique of structuralist epistemology to which Leach subscribes (albeit critically).

In structuralist epistemology, a 'conceptual scheme of structures' derived from the brain structures *praxis* — here reduced to raw action, a unity of form and matter. While Levi-Strauss asserts that praxis can transform the use of thought and reason, the primacy of "the objective structure of the psyche and the brain" makes praxis an *outcome of logical* (Formal) and not historical priorities.

In both Leach and Levi-Strauss, ethnographic theory has come to be increasingly estranged from either intrinsic or identity elements within cultures. This is less so in Leach's case who has maintained links with the empiricist tradition. The situating of 'idea' within an objective entity that has, to this point, only a metaphysical identity, dissolves the tension between subjective and objective sensibilities. The objectivity of the scientist has subsumed the subjectivity of the writer; an objectivity that rivals the rigorous objectivity of the positive anthropology.

"The idea of "objective" in metaphysical materialism would appear to mean an objectivity which exists even apart from man; but when one affirms that a reality would exist even if man did not, one is either speaking metaphorically or one is falling into a form of mysticism. We know reality only in relation to man, and since man is historical becoming, knowledge and reality are also a becoming and so is objectivity."

* Hawthorn, J., Op. Cit., p.

The 'metaphysical objectivity' of structuralism collapses a crucial tension between subject and object for a basic distinction of the social sciences is that it studies a refractory object that thinks about him /herself and as well, about the scientist. In positing an eternal 'human nature', structuralism does away, not only with the individual as a synthesis of subject-object relations, but the history of those relations themselves. Gramsci expresses the conviction that not only can human nature change, but that it can be changed in a particular way through man's conscious efforts — this in turn altering and profoundly reconstructing the subjective and objective universe. In thus re-constituting subject and object in the process of transforming both praxis and world-view, a scientific advance at the level of a paradigmatic revolution may be said to have taken place.

"The basic innovation introduced by the philosophy of praxis into the science of politics and of history is the demonstration that there is no abstract "human nature" fixed and immutable (a concept which certainly derives from religious and transcendent thought), but that human nature is the totality of historically determined social relations, hence a historical fact which can, within certain limits, be ascertained with the methods of philology and criticism.*"

* Gramsci, A., *Prison Notebooks*, N.Y.: progress books, n.d. p. 133.

The basic error, then of structuralist epistemology as emphasized by its critics is the abstraction of knowledge from its historical and social context. This aspect of the critique of structuralism is intimately tied to the status of anthropology within structuralist practice and as a social science which makes of man an object of practical knowledge. The refusal of this kind of social scientific practice to recognize itself as

part of the social world produces knowledge that bypasses man himself — specifically the human condition of man acting upon himself through his works. Structuralist explanation is scientific explanation that posits a world before consciousness, outside which the ethnographer stands. The critique of structuralism makes problematic the empirical study of man by positing that the study of man is simultaneously man's act upon himself as subject *and* object. If man's understanding of himself is defective, then the development of a fruitful anthropology can only proceed through a complementary praxis of *reflection* and *critique*. This praxis is both necessary and appropriate to the production of 'objective' and 'scientific' anthropological knowledge because the procedural problems within ethnographic experience and ethnographic practice turns on the problems of communications; the process of encounter, exchange, and understanding constitutive of ethnographic practice possesses intentions and reasons — both which explicate the capacity to understand the 'other' as a social and human phenomenon. Reflection and critique as it subjects anthropological thought itself to ethnographic description and ethnological understanding would proceed and inform ethnographic practice. Critical ethnography is ethnography that examines itself, and therefore remains open. Through testing and resistance it seeks its own boundaries for its pertinence in the object. Thus directed, ethnographic practice can be said to be based on human inter-subjectivity rather than on techniques of data collection.

...the relationships we form with the subjects of our work — for whatever reasons we settle upon those relationships — control the kind of knowledge that the material we gain will yield and also control how we exercise whatever responsibility we may feel to our subjects and to ourselves as persons.*

* Jay R.. "Personal and extra-personal Vision in Anthropology", in *Reinventing Anthropology*, ed. Dell Hymes New York: Vintage, 1974, p. 372.

Because ethnographic practice embraced the personal sensibilities of both the field worker and his subjects, the methods of description and analysis have tended to become strategies towards uncovering the native's artistry at disguise in order to evaluate the credibility of his or her information. It was at this very juncture that a theory of culture subsumed a theory of persons (a distinction used by Geertz) in the attempt to surpass the alienation within which the fieldworker exists. The value of 'instrumental knowledge' submerges the human element within anthropology, and in the process alienates field worker and informant alike. The critique of 'instrumental anthropology' points a way out of alienation by founding anthropology on "man himself, not as an object of practical knowledge, but as a practical organism producing knowledge as a moment of its praxis." (Sartre: 1963: 179)

The convergence of the problems of intersubjectivity and language within ethnography identifies ethnography as a particular problem within communications.

...Communication presupposes that each person transform his own immediate given, his own matter, in such a way that the other understands what is communicated to him and can relate it to his own given, to the matter of his own immediate apprehension; but it also implies that each should be able to understand the matter of his acquaintance as a special case of knowledge held in common and his own knowledge as dependent upon that of other men. Experience is the name given to the result of this transformation of matter which, it must be stressed, leads at least to the possibility of communication.*

* Goldmann. L., Op. Cit., p. 149.

Ethnographic practice, then, is a process in which people from differing cultures try and communicate with one another. This process is mediated by the social circumstances in which these people find themselves and is the means that cultural praxis can at all be connected to human thought. It is therefore "...Because intersubjective knowledge is concretely situated and existentially constituted in

ethnographic praxis... that...it entails and requires both self-awareness and an understanding of social mediation." (Sholte: 1974:440)

If communication is an epistemological pre-condition to any anthropological knowledge, then ethnographic practice is a special case within the problems of discourse in communications theory. Ethnography must absorb both the instrumental and representational interests of scientific description and observation *and* the constitutive and articulatory interests of literary discourse. (Sholte:)

The identification of the problems of ethnography with the problems of communications takes place from two points of view. In terms of the above (See quote), ethnographic practice is characterized by the interaction of a subject and object presupposing a "dialectical and constitutive relation of exchange and communication." (Sholte: 1974: 440). The structuralist position, on the other hand, utilises a communicational framework to link the problems of exchange and signification ultimately unifying systemic (information and systems theory) and structural (semi-logical) modes of analysis.

The logic of *La Langue* is the same as that of the unconscious and it is similarly grammatical (as opposed to substantive): regulatory principles as such, the necessity of exchange, and the synthetic integration of transferred values. The laws of *La Langue* are identical to the principles of signification, exchange, and symbolisation... (making) structural anthropology one of the semiological sciences... a logical syntax commensurate with the concept of language as "unreflecting totalization"..."*

* Sholte, B., Structural Anthropology as an Ethno-Logic, in *The Unconscious in Culture*, ed. Ino Rossi (New York: Dutton, 1974), p. 433.

The greater importance of symbols over the phenomena they symbolize in Levi-Straussian structuralism can be attributed to the semiological character of "things" in the world. The condition of non-symbolization is commensurate with non-communicability in semiology thus establishing the world of "things" as semiological. In that the mind is considered as an objective "thing" in semiology, it is said to function *absolutely* at the symbolic level. As Simonis puts it:

A thing is the object of science to the extent that my mind communicates with it, rather than solely with itself. If the mind communicates with things, it is, in the final analysis, because things, contrary to ordinary conception, have, like the mind, physical and semiotic properties.*

* Simonis, Y., "Group Dynamics and Levi-Strauss' Structuralism", in *The Unconscious in Culture*, ed. Ino Rossi (New York: Dutton, 1974), p. 379.

In applying linguistic models to social and cultural phenomena, Levi-Strauss seeks to eliminate the conventional questioner-questioned (subject-object) paradigm, which in effect, constitutes the negation of all ethnography hitherto produced. In its place structuralism posits a study of the symbols produced by a universal function of exchange to assess the unconscious structures by which social life generates its own significations.

A critique of the structuralist enterprise may be founded on the particular way in which the analysis of language has come to function as both theory and method within its paradigm. In the attempt to "operationalize" the linguistic model for cultural theory, the reflexive and ultimately emancipatory interests of the speaking subject is lost. The structuralists either ignore and forget that:

The linguist is a linguist thanks to the fact that there is (and he is) a speaking subject, and not despite this fact.*

* Pos, H.J., quoted in Sholte, Op. Cit., p. 431

A *critical* ethnography asserts the sociological treatment of language as it would contribute towards a theory of the speaking subject. In so doing it seeks to retain a referential and constitutive system for subject-object relations within ethnography

elevates the *negative* to a paradigmatic role within its theory. The use of the *negative* surfaces discontinuity between the subject and object in terms of the socially mediated context of their relations. Critical ethnography interposes itself between past ethnographic practice and future ethnographic theory thus introducing into the theory of ethnography the variability of time. In this respect it stands as a critique of structuralism: It is the attempt to open the analytic process to structuralism: It is the attempt to open the analytic process to the value of history through which a self-consciousness then becomes possible.

All history is contemporary history: not in the ordinary sense of the word, where contemporary history means the history of comparatively recent past, but in the strict sense: the consciousness of one's own activity as one actually performs it. History is thus self-knowledge of the living mind. For even when the events which the historian studies are events that happened in the distant past, the condition of their being historically known is that they should vibrate in the historian's mind.*

* Griemas, A.J., *Du Sens*, Paris, Seuil, 1970, p. 13.

In order to reconcile the synchronic analysis of structuralism with the self-consciousness of a critical hermeneutics, history (as defined above) must be considered as a meaningful element of the interpretive process. The extreme structuralist position turns away from attributing such historical meaning to interpretation and instead posits an object-language whose transformations are constitutive of both signification *and* meaning:

Signification is thus nothing but such transposition from one level of language to another, from one language to a different language, and meaning is nothing but the possibility of such transcoding.

The attempt by structuralism to uncover its form of self-consciousness takes place in the works of Roland Barthes, a renowned ethnographer of myth and popular culture. Barthes' form of critique points towards a self-conscious understanding of the subject-object dilemma within the structuralist position. Barthes' work as ethnography is the documentation of that dilemma; an ethnography of the language of the subject examining itself:

The use of a metalanguage is precisely the form that self-consciousness takes in the realm of language: it is language speaking of itself, a set of signs whose signified is itself a sign system.*

* Jameson, F., *The Prison House of Language*, Princeton U. Press, 1972, p.207.

Barthes points out that by identifying truth with language, structuralism will necessarily have recourse to a never-ending series of formal languaging systems, one which would ultimately absorb structuralism itself.

The semiologist is he who expresses his future death in the very terms in which he has named and understood the world.*

* Barthes, R., *Système de la Mode*, Paris, Seuil, 1967, p. 293.

The self-consciousness of structuralism, then, cannot point to any referent other than its own demise. In this respect it is a kind of false self-consciousness that fails to surface the mutual dependence and conflict of the subject-object:"... to reckon the place of the observer into the ex-

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* Jameson, F., Op. Cit., p. 208.

the place of the observer into the experiment, to put an end to the infinite regression."*

The ethno-hermeneutic, as defined at the outset, is characterized by certain interpretative functions based on contextual information and mediated texts i.e. accounts from which are derived ethnographic descriptions and ethnological analyses. The function of metalanguage within the ethno-hermeneutic is to disclose the presence of pre-existent codes and models and to re-emphasize the place of the analyst himself within the construction of the various paradigms. If so constructed the ethno-hermeneutic could then re-open the text and analytic process alike to fulfill its other functions: To extend the comparative understanding of the subject-object achieved through reflection and self-awareness to emancipatory and normative interests. The restoration of these interests back to comparative understanding (through praxis) completes the hermeneutic circle.

If there is... any point at all... in embarking upon an attempt to establish communication and co-understanding with cultures, religions, etc. not one's own, the following pre-conditions must obtain: one is in a position, despite one's history-boundedness to philosophize from a platform that is not wholly bound to one's historical (cultural) situation. If one accepts the bringing about of inter-subjective co-understanding and content as the super-imposed (i.e. emancipatory and normative) research-guiding interest of the human sciences: i.e. if one places the human sciences in the service of the historical (and cultural) dialogue which humanity has been conducting with the aim of ever increasing emancipation, then the problematic of historicism is transcended.*

* Radnitsky, G., quoted in Sholte, B., "Toward a Self-Reflexive and Critical Anthropology", in *Reinventing Anthropology*, ed. Dell Hymes (New York: Vintage, 1974), p. 448.

BOOK REVIEW

A History of the Cinema From its Origins to 1970, by Eric Rhode, Allen Lane Press, 674 pp., 1976.

What is a historical fact? Though this question is basic film historians rarely ask it. Most film histories are *inventories* of directors and stars and most equate the growth of film with changes in its technology. The difficult task of constructing a methodology for investigating film and its past — for coming to grips with the social, political, and economic forces which are the motor for its history — this task has been laid aside and the end result are a series of books that catalogue almost all the same things. Most film historians rarely if ever ask questions about their own epistemology. The givens of film history are transmuted into "fact" by repetition.

". . . the facts of history never come to us 'pure' since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form: they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder. It follows that when we take up a work of history, our first concern should be not with the facts which it contains but with the historian who wrote it." (E.H. Carr)

Most film historians accept the very arbitrary division that has been created by film practitioners between "fictional narratives" and "real documentaries". Consequently, most film histories are about the development of the narrative cinema and about changes in style; about shifts in the use of certain conventions and most of all about "expression" — ". . . expressions of an era, expressions of a culture, expressions of individuals etc. . . ." (Sam Rhodie).

Eric Rhode's book begins as if it is going to break out of the categories used in most film histories. He makes no effort to explain his methodology and raises no questions about why he has *chosen* one fact (?) over another but he tries in the early part of the book to inter-relate the socio-economic conditions of a given period to the films and events he examines. He analyzes the role of nickelodeons in the period from 1905-1914 and traces with clarity the way in which monopoly capital destroyed this phenomenon. But he doesn't go into the functioning and structure of monopoly capital per se and the picture we get is incomplete because the *causes* which enframe the rise and growth of capitalism in the early twentieth century are not talked about. It is this radical separation between 'history' and the history of an art (?) that makes Rhode's emphasis on Griffith so problematic. In the history of film Griffith is a deity. He seems to have invented the epic narrative and the technology that goes with it. What are the criteria for making his into the major figure of the early twentieth century in film? Rhode mentions his 'visual sensitivity' and 'taste for melodrama'. He made close to 450 films. He used close-ups and tracking shots. Are these adequate as criteria? Rhode spends three pages discussing Griffith's racism in *Birth of a Nation*. Griffith is so above criticism that his racism, though central to the film's meaning, is ultimately made to appear peripheral (much as Leni Riefenstahl somehow ceases to be a Nazi in film histories). Rhode make it appear as if Griffith was enacting a subjective scenario over which he had no control. "It is probable that Griffith's blindness to the way others would react to his racism reflects not so much his Southern obtuseness as a failure to recognize how internalized his feelings about the negro were." Yet, there is a 'history' to racism and to exploitation, and Griffith cannot be exonerated from responsibility for contributing to more racism. If anything *Birth of a Nation* documents the sensibility of the white property owner and surfaces the attitudes that made slavery an *essential* cog in the development of capital in the United States.

Rhode's book never really recovers after the first section. Early questions about the social origins of cinema and the psychological needs that films fulfill are subsumed under a gathering symphony of descriptions of narratives from around the world. The book just takes on too much trying to cover the Soviet Union, France, Weimar, Scandinavia and Hollywood all in one section of 180 pages.

What influences a film's creation? What role does the production process play in the development of a particular aesthetic? In fact how do films come into being and what gives them such broad appeal? How do we deal with the ideology of the Hollywood film? What methods are available for doing that kind of theoretical investigation? *Can one speak of the history of a medium without referring to history in general?* What are some of the premises that guide the investigation of history?

These are a few of the questions that film historiography has to address itself to. In the final analysis this short review cannot do justice to many of the more positive qualities of Rhode's book. Though he makes use of traditional 'aesthetic' criticism and though his critical model is never surfaced or revealed the book still asks many important questions about the effect of cinema upon society. Ultimately, Rhode's project is limited by his unquestioning acceptance of the narrative as 'representative' of cinema in general and by his unself-reflexive approach to history.

R.B.

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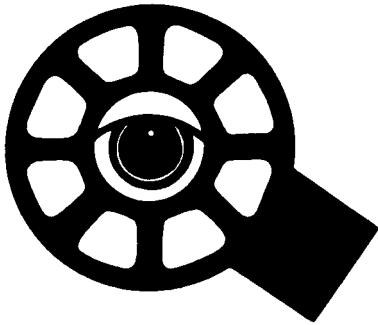
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