

FILM/NARRATIVE/THE NOVEL

# *CINÉ-TRACTS*

A JOURNAL OF FILM AND CULTURAL STUDIES

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*Noel Burch*

THAT "ONCE-UPON-A-TIME..." OF CHILDISH  
DREAMS

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DECEIT, DESIRE, AND FILM NARRATIVE

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THE MANAGEMENT OF DESTINY  
IN NARRATIVE FORM

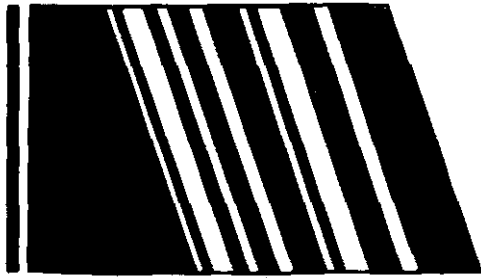
*Paul Sandro*

EXPANDING FILM HISTORICAL DISCOURSE:  
RECEPTION THEORY'S USE VALUE FOR  
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*Eric Rentschler*

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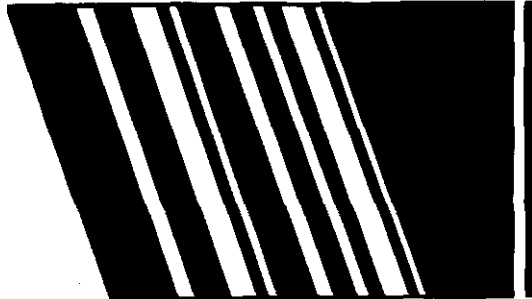
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# INTRODUCTION: FILM/NARRATIVE/THE NOVEL

*Judith Mayne*

The novel "teaches how to look at the world through the eyes of a man walking through a town, with no other horizon than the spectacle, with no other power than that of his own eyes..."

Roland Barthes (1954)

Study of film narrative in relation to the novel could hardly be said to represent a new approach to film analysis. The novel has always been somewhat of a shadow in film history and criticism. When the early cinema became a story-telling medium, film directors turned to novels, both traditional and contemporary, as sources. The ideological contours of these early adaptations are suggested by the fact that they were designed to attract a middle-class clientèle.<sup>1</sup> These ideological contours have taken a different but related form with the trend of film-literary criticism based on the uninspired notion that "the novel was better."

And so a central issue for critics of the film-novel connection has been to analyze the relationship without necessarily affirming a hierarchy. George Bluestone's **Novels Into Film** (1957) is somewhat of a classic in the study of adaptations. Bluestone does indeed call for analysis of film in its own terms, but the context evoked is still one where notions of traditional literary criticism — authorship, aesthetic autonomy — apply. Quite a different approach to the film-novel connection has emerged in the last decade or so. The Focus has been, not on the influence of individual texts, authors, and movements on individual films, filmmakers, and film movements, but rather on the ways in which film narrative shares with the novel a participation in certain realistic conventions which appeal to their readers/viewers in similar ways. Hence the central area of concern becomes the **novelistic**.

In his study of French realist fiction, Harry Levin describes the institutional quality of literature:

Like other institutions, like the church or the law, (literature) cherishes a unique phase of human experience and controls a special body of precedents and devices; it incorporates a self-perpetuating discipline, while responding to the main currents of each succeeding period; it is continually accessible to all the impulsions of life at large, but it must translate them into its own terms and adapt them to its peculiar forms.<sup>2</sup>

To speak of narrative cinema as "novelistic," then, is to assume that the institution of narrative cinema has been shaped and defined by the tradition of the novel. But not all novels are novelistic in the same way. Most fundamentally, the novelistic is the form of prose fiction which emerged from eighteenth-century middle-class society, the originating context for the Western middle-class novel.

The essays in this volume represent a renewed and redefined interest in film's relation to a mode of discourse which throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was best represented by the novel. If the cinema is "novelistic," then, it is because film has, like the novel, acquired the status of classical discourse. Classical discourse: this notion has been explored in a variety of contexts in criticism of the last decade, but one single work stands out as exemplary, both for its position within literary criticism and for the way in which it has reshaped all discussions of the film-novel connection. This is Roland Barthes' **S/Z** (1970). Central to **S/Z** is a reassessment of the classic text, of the 'readerly,' of the "law of the Signified"; and an evaluation of how the contradictions of classical discourse might be opened up in a variety of ways. Central throughout **S/Z** is a focus on the novelistic understood as the interplay of various codes of reading. In a variety of ways, the essays in this volume are informed by the perspectives of **S/Z** on the classical text.

Nöel Burch's recent work on the Institutional Mode of Representation explores how a classic system of film representation began to be set into place.<sup>3</sup> Burch's study of Fritz Lang's **Dr. Mabuse** is part of work in progress on the evolution of cinematic discourse. The connections between the novel and middle-class culture have been demonstrated in Ian Watt's famous study, **The Rise of the Novel**. Margaret Morse examines the relevance of Watt's model and assumptions to the study of film narrative. Other critics of the novel have suggested ideological dimensions to the novelistic which, however different from Watt's, nonetheless confirm his affirmation of the profound links between the novel and Western middle-class culture. Alan Williams explores the cinematic ramifications of René Girard's theory of triangular, or mediated desire. Sandy Flitterman examines the implications for film of Marthe Robert's assertion that the middle-class novel re-enacts the fantasy of the Freudian family romance.

Other critics of the novel have focused on the conditions of reception, or the modes of readership. Paul Sandro examines Frank Kermode's thoughts on narrative as a control of time, and the attendant ramifications for narrative closure in novel and film. Very different perspectives on readership emerge in the recent German tradition of reception theory. Eric Rentschler examines how reception theory might be used to examine the particular contours of film narrative.

Hence, with the exception of Nöel Burch's study of **Dr. Mabuse**, the essays in this issue of **Cine-Tracts** are all directly concerned with the examination of a single critical work and its particular relevance to film study and analysis. The aim of such a collection of essays is assuredly pedagogical. For if, in the wake of Barthes' **S/Z**, increasing attention has been paid to the classic text, it has seemed useful to re-examine the fundamental attributes of the classic text — like desire, middle-class culture, readership, and so on — which determine both the identities and differences between the traditional novel and classical film narrative.

I would like to thank the College of Humanities at the Ohio State University, which provided financial assistance for this volume; and Maureen Casey, who provided valuable editorial assistance.

1. See Russell Merrit, "Nickelodeon Theaters 1905-1914: Building an Audience for the Movies," in Tina Balio, ed., **The American Film Industry** (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 59-79.

2. **The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 21

3. See "Film's Institutional Mode of Representation and the Soviet Response," **October** no. 11 (Winter 1979), 77-96: as well as Burch's film, **Correction Please: Or How We Got Into Pictures** (1979).

# NOTES ON FRITZ LANG'S FIRST MABUSE

*Noel Burch*

"Surely," I said to Hitch, "we'll have to explain **somehow** why she's dumb, or the audience won't stand for it." "They'll stand for anything," said Hitch, "as long as you don't give them time to think."

— Rodney Ackland, **The Celluloid Mistress**

Fritz Lang's first great achievement, **Mabuse der Spieler**,<sup>1</sup> dates from 1922. It is a film which has always seemed to me to occupy a strategic position in film history.

This impression originally stemmed from a very simple observation: in all of silent cinema, this film seemed to be the first — the earliest — to address itself directly to "us" today, insofar as we are all "average spectators." I am referring to a phenomenon which is difficult to analyze in and for itself, but which has been confirmed time and again on the occa-

sion of student screenings in both Europe and America. Whereas other key films of the period, signed Griffith (**Broken Blossoms**), DeMille (**Male and Female**), Murnau (**Nosferatu**), or even Stroheim (**Foolish Wives**) appear to almost anyone today as fundamentally archaic, **Mabuse**, though it may not seem as stylistically modern as L'Herbier's **l'Argent**, for example,<sup>12</sup> does seem amazingly close to our own **cine-dramaturgical space**, owing to the preciseness of its dramatisations, the subtleness of its characterisations and the multi-layered density of its script. It was to take several years, I should say, until this type of **presence** was to become a general phenomenon in Europe and the USA. In fact I am inclined to think that it did not become absolutely commonplace until the coming of synch sound, that every silent film — including, in this sense, the film we are concerned with here — keeps a certain distance with us, a distance inherent in the muteness of their images. However, it is also clear that this film reduces that distance by at least as much as any other silent film.

It might then seem a logical step to assert that this was the first film to conjugate all of the pertinent founding traits of the Cinema Institution cum system of representation — all except for those, of course, which are wholly determined by synch sound. But if, at one point in the past, I did not hesitate to take that step,<sup>3</sup> I have greater scruples today. Yet even if we are not dealing with a "first" — at best a trivial notion, in my view — it appears to me increasingly evident that the undeniable precociousness of this achievement makes it a precious field of investigation for anyone seeking to understand the origins and the nature of **Institutional efficacy**.

This, however, is a considerable task, one which will yield all its implications only within the context of a broader undertaking, which I have been engaged upon for several years now with my friend Jorge Dana. The goal of this project is to lay bare the **genealogy** of film "language" as instanced in classical cinema (I prefer to speak of an "Institutional mode of representation").

The notes that follow, then, constitute only a preliminary attempt to inscribe **Mabuse** as "end-result" — a temporary one, of course, in view of the decisive contribution of synch sound — but end-result all the same, given the relative historical autonomy of the silent cinema.

These are actually a re-writing of notes taken during an umpteenth viewing of the film's first part only. To extend my notetaking to the second part — to which I do refer when necessary — would no doubt have been to add weight to these observations. However, I doubt that it would basically affect the conclusions reached thus far.

Some of these observations and conclusions may also appear to belong rather to the category of codes peculiar to this film, rather than to the system upon which Institutional practice has rested for over fifty years. It seems to me, however, that while Lang's characteristic **clock-work** — for example, the sequence-changes through "question-and-answer" as



described below — may be more visible, more "self-designating" than the equivalent articulations in, say, Hollywood **film noir** (which was to engulf Lang the exile), the distinction is solely quantitative. True, such a statement as this remains to be demonstrated, as does the assertion that "deceptive appearances," as discussed below, are central to the Institution as a whole. In speaking of the classical film in general, is it really legitimate to suggest that the symbolic mechanisms and underlying ideological gestic actually take precedent over the manifest content of the narrative, the surface logic of the plot?

Still, I invite anyone who grasped all the cogs of a plot such as that of Howard Hawks'. **The Big Sleep** at first viewing to please step forward! And I refer to a film which was a box-office success in its time and still delights many an unsophisticated audience in film societies and repertoire houses. True, it is an extreme instance — as was **Mabuse** in its way — but I continue to believe that such instances merely make the general method more visible, they do not contradict it at any time.<sup>4</sup>

It should already be clear from what precedes that I am trying to come to grips with this film at every level — here, in a somewhat random order, owing to my decision to publish these notes. I am attempting to shed light on symptomological traits at the levels of syntax and narrative construction, as well as those of ideology and of "film language" history. The articulation between those levels will, hopefully, belong to a future stage of the work in progress. For the moment, I will leave that task to my readers.

## FOOTNOTES

1. A film that was shot and shown in two parts, entitled **Ein Bild der Zeit (Portrait of an Epoch)** and **Menschen der Zeit (People of an Epoch)**. The action, however, is continuous from one to the next (although the beginning of the second resumes the end of the first, much as in the old cliff-hangers). In the USA, these parts are titled respectively **Mabuse the Gambler** and **The King of Crime**.
2. Or, before World War I, Danish films like Gad's **The Abyss** (1910), German films like **The Student of Prague** by the Danish Rye (1913), or Italian, like Gustavo Serena's admirable **Assunta Spina** (1915).
3. C.f. my article on Fritz Lang, in Richard, Roud, **Cinema: A Critical Dictionary** (London: Secker and Warburg, 1980).
4. Needless to say, I precisely do not regard films like **Man with the Movie Camera**, **Gertrud** or those of Straub for example, as extreme instances but as singular texts indeed, whose textual system opposes in some crucial way that of the Institution.

- 1) The set of photographs that Mabuse spreads out before him at the very beginning of the film has an emblematic density. We see the disguises which this master-gambler — or rather **games-master**, for Mabuse gambles only when he is sure to win — will put on in the course of the film. Mabuse shuffles the photographs and chooses at random, it seems, a disguise for that day's performance. But this is the only instance when the Doctor actually does invoke chance: it is partly for this reason that this moment is **outside the film**. The images that constitute this short prologue descend from techniques which date back prior to 1910: vignettes at the beginning or at the end of a film for the presentation of actors and the characters they portray. Here, in **Mabuse**, there is a reversal and even a subtle parody of this technique. Even if the spectator is unaware of the fact at the moment, the man who looks at the photographs and the man portrayed in them are one and the same, while the other major characters of the film are presented abruptly, "naturally," without any of the "oratorical" precautions of post-primitive cinema. Hence, from the outset, **Mabuse** is located at the most advanced point of classical narration in 1922 by "**perverse allusion**."
  
- 2) The introductory shot of Mabuse merits consideration. Seated, enthroned, he faces the camera in medium shot. Contrary to popular opinion, this type of image was one of the earliest-known to cinema: it was the "close-up" of primitive cinema, and was "invented" by Louis Lumière in le **Déjeuner de bébé** (1896). But there is a difference: before 1905-6, the one or two actors portrayed in such an image usually looked directly at the camera, while Mabuse's look just misses it. (More on this later.) Frontality is nonetheless strongly predominant in this first part of the sequence. Then, when the Doctor turns toward his secretary/factotum Spoerri (located off-screen), he opens up a **space** behind and around him, where there seemed to be nothing more than the neutral background of the primitive equivalent. Thus, in a single shot, Lang "says" where cinema has come from and what it has come to: the shot-reverse-shot that will follow between Spoerri and Mabuse is an admirable conclusion to such a "demonstration."
  
- 3) The exchange of dialogue-titles between Mabuse ("You've taken cocaine again") and Spoerri ("If you dismiss me, I'll blow out my brains") is an extraordinary example of semantic condensation. A master-slave relationship is established, whose homosexual dimensions are suggested also (thus Spoerri, by conventional standards, is a slave three times over, to Mabuse and to his two vices). In addition, as a subsidiary connotation of drugs, especially in that era, we know for certain now that we are inside the world of crime. The force of this emblem — for, like the photographs on the desk, this exchange too is an emblem, if not in exactly the same way — consists in an accumulation of bourgeois taboos (suicide constituting a third) and their condensation in a brief exchange of dialogue. Nowhere do these themes ever reappear explicitly, but this single moment is enough to establish their constant underlying presence.
  
- 4) Until Mabuse takes out his watch, we have seen only the enthronement of the puppet master or, better — of the **dealer**. The **game begins** when Mabuse glances at his watch (although what follows is still in a sense a prologue): an iris, the circular form of which rhymes with the shape of the watch, opens onto a train that rushes by below us (Mabuse looks down at the watch-face and the train): watch in hand, he dominates and governs the world, not unlike the film director who directs shooting and montage with his chronometer. Indeed, until the appearance of von Wenck, Mabuse does rule "the world." Since nothing transpires independent of his desires, this part of the film objectifies the fantasy of Mabuse... and the fantasy that is Mabuse.
  
- 5) The various components of the machinery of the theft are enunciated before the fact (the assassin and his victim alone in the train compartment; the driver next to his car, the line-man at the top of his pole, and Mabuse himself). On another level, this is yet another prologue: the placing of the pawns. But these introductory devices, continuing throughout the first part of the film are **naturalized**, and they lose their mechanicalness, as they are embedded within a narrative. (Tiny irregularities cunningly inserted into the machinery contribute to this naturalization, e.g., the "hesitation" in the montage pace between the cut from the assassin looking at his watch to the driver looking at his, or, on a different plane George's hurting his hand as he leaps from the train after his crime.)

- 6) "Bravo George," Mabuse's congratulations to his assistant, is the fourth title of the film. Each title has possessed great narrative density (the "Banco" with which the man on the pole signals the success of the operation to Mabuse continues, of course, the metaphor of the game, but also signals that the challenge has been made, that another game — the film — begins). Of the four titles seen so far, this "Bravo George" is the most important. First, the title marks a contrast between the effeminate servant and the assassin, George, a strong, virile man. The male characters of the film are clearly divided into the weak and the strong, a thematic opposition at work throughout the film. Second, this is the only instance in the film where Mabuse praises, (in a title) the work of his acolytes. Mabuse never ceases, from this moment on, to criticize his accomplices; and the fact that we have seen him capable of praise foregrounds the image of "chastizing" father, essential to the character. Finally this title seems to mark the end of a utopian past for Mabuse and his gang, when all went well; and it marks the beginning of another era, when things will go from bad to worse. (The end of this era corresponds, as well, to the end of Mabuse and Carozza's love affair.)
- 7) George gets hurt when he jumps out of the train, and is clutching his wrist when he gets up. There is room for human error in the machinery, human error which "demechanizes" and naturalizes. Later in the film, Mabuse smashes a glass out of anger at von Wenck — who thereby draws first blood, as it were — and refuses any help from La Carozza (the incident marks the end of their intimacy). Mabuse **takes no notice** of his injury, like George jumping out of the train. For the powerful (i.e., real men), humanizing traits are synonymous with the traits of masculinity.
- 8) The movement and the gestures of narrative are much more essential than its content. This is amply demonstrated by the manipulation of the stockmarket, from the "x-ray" of the briefcase to show the "commercial contract" to the triumphant expression on Mabuse's face superimposed on the empty stock exchange. The title summarizing the content of the contract is barely comprehensible, Mabuse's orders to his men are enigmatic and in one instance unreadable, and the explanations given about the fall and subsequent rise of the stock market are at best schematic. But none of this makes the slightest difference. What counts is the mythology of power.
- 9) Mabuse uses real bank-notes for writing paper, and counterfeit notes for money. Writing on the bank-notes sets the Doctor outside the social order at least as much as any counterfeiting. The message he writes is undoubtedly in code, and in any case it is illegible... but again, as always, the substance of narrative barely matters: what does matter are the archetypal, symbolic gestures enacted by the movement of narrative.
- 10) The traffic "accident" marks a first climax in the camouflage that is characteristic of the film. Mabuse's car runs into a cab, and Mabuse invites the rider to continue his trip with him. Lo and behold, the rider is Spoerri — although Mabuse has just left him at the house! Spoerri gives Mabuse the stolen briefcase, probably delivered by the driver of the first car. The scene borders on the ludicrous, on the useless — but who would think so at the time? For example: the "accident" is seen from afar (the only close-up shot is quite brief), and Spoerri is unrecognizable until we see him in close-up, next to Mabuse inside the car. Our attention is so quickly focused on the briefcase that the surprising appearance of Spoerri is accepted as a momentary titillation; with no second thoughts of how unrealistic his presence might be. Indeed, the only indiscreet gaze to be mystified in this scene is that of the spectator, dutifully awed by this new demonstration of Mabuse/Lang's powers. For from one end to the other, this scene is a prime example of "useless" complications.
- 11) After the initial exchange with Spoerri, Mabuse threateningly reprimanded his aide, Pesch. Now we witness an even more insistent demonstration of Mabuse's reign of terror over his men. In an attic room, Pesch expresses his discontent to George, who reminds him of the "Commission for Liquidations." Indeed, the script has already begun to pian Pesch's execution (it will take place during the second part of the film), and the theme of the weak versus the strong is further developed. Like Mabuse and von Wenck, George is one of the strong, and he will even be associated with sophisticated "anarchist" culture at the moment of his suicide: he writes the name of the sixteenth-century rebel knight, Götz von

Berlichingen, on his cell wall. (This is the only indication, except for the final firing squad, that the adventures of the Bonnot gang actually did inspire Dr. Mabuse, as has been claimed).

- 12) Essential to the characterization of Mabuse is that he is classless. Mabuse is always in his element, whether as a drunken labourer, a peddler or a union organizer, or as scientist, theatregoer or aristocratic snob. He runs his counterfeit money operation in a tenement basement, acts the role of the millionaire at the stock-exchange, and lives in a petty-bourgeois apartment. Mabuse is the Absolute Evil that transcends class — that is, that transcends History.
- 13) And these blind workers in Mabuse's counterfeiting shop? There are obviously too many of them for the task at hand. And why should they be blind? In a film where the ultimate power resides in Mabuse's look (Mabuse as director), to be deprived of sight is to be totally powerless. In Mabuse's world, slavery again becomes an alternative to "fair" exploitation. Here again, what is meant to pass for "expedient," goes over in fact by the power of its symbolism.
- 14) The use of an iris (for instance: to frame Pesch as he finishes his lament, and after George has reminded him of the price to be paid for desertion; or to isolate Mabuse in the midst of the crowd at the stock-exchange) is one of the many technical survivals in **Mabuse** of the primitive and post-primitive eras (such as one finds in many films up to 1925-6). One thinks, also, of certain long shots in the film that are decentered in the primitive manner (at the 17 + 4 Club as well as the Hotel Excelsior). But at the stock-exchange, there is a clever mixture of the primitive and the Institutional "language" of cinema. First a rapid, "impressionistic" montage creates the atmosphere — or rather, the **presence** — of the stockmarket (the "casino"). Then, beginning with a high angle long shot, the iris closes and singles out Mabuse's disguised face in the crowd. Rather than intercalate the close-up within the total tableau (as frequently occurs elsewhere in the film), the close-up is extracted from the scene. The contrast between these proximate, nameless bodies and that terrifyingly distant Him, like an emissary from the primitive Id unleashed, is remarkable. We encounter what is certainly a particular code of this film; but a code that also marks the historical position of **Mabuse**: the primitive system has by and large been surpassed, but many of its figures remain in the memories of the spectator and in the hands of the technicians, figures that can still serve now and then **without yet appearing dépassé**.
- 15) Superimposed over an image of the empty stock-exchange is a dissolve comparing Mabuse's stock-broker with his "real" face. The shot of the stock-exchange is unusually long (12 seconds until the first appearance of Mabuse's face, 22% more for the slow series of dissolves). The shot stands as an abridged echo of the very first, showing Mabuse in his various disguises. Bracketed by these "face-parades," everything seen thus far has been a prologue: only one character has been introduced and demonstrated his apparently absolute powers; conflict has yet to manifest itself on the screen, let alone plot. Lang and Harbou delay the "beginning" of the plot for more than twenty minutes (although it is true that the film lasts over four hours and that they have time ahead of them!). This long delay at the beginning of the film reveals, I think, something essential about what a beginning means in the archetypal version of the classical narrative, and could shed light on the appetite-whetting role of a more recent phenomenon such as the "credit-sequence."
- 16) The plot proper is engaged at the music hall where La Carozza performs. Hull just happens to come to the performance for an evening's entertainment, and the same terrain is chosen by Mabuse as his "hunting grounds" for the evening. In classical narrative, such coincidences are natural occurrences. The whole affair is self-evident: Mabuse comes to the theatre, finds a victim in the audience and what's more Hull is becoming enamoured of Carozza — Mabuse's official mistress — at precisely the moment that Mabuse spots him. Distinctions between the "planned" and the "fortuitous" dissolve. This is, to be sure, melodrama — the dramatic form so directly engaged with "the popular unconscious." But with its powerful capacity to "naturalize the mechanical," cinema disengages melodramatic forms from their limited, stereotyped associations, to establish a pervasive narrative mode.

- 17) If everything preceding the music hall scene is prologue, then it is remarkably appropriate that the plot should begin as a stage curtain opens. But this is yet one last false beginning, since the curtain opens to reveal nothing but an empty stage — that is, empty of movement: the frozen figures on stage are, the last scene in a tableau-performance. In the cinema, to be motionless is to be non-existent (to "fall back into" photography): movement is life in the cinema, and in this film, life is Cara Carozza. After a bleak encounter between that "empty," dead stage and a row of stone-faced male spectators, she is the one who at last brings life — that is to say, plot, conflict — to the film.
- 18) Displacement is handled with remarkable skill: Hull's attraction to Carozza is displaced onto, magnified in the erotic frenzy of the little old man who can't find enough flowers to throw at the feet of his beloved idol. It is well-known that such displacement is fundamental in classical narrative (the internal externalized through a specific figure: this is the armature, Expressionist in origin, of all psychological cinema, at least until the 1960's).
- 19) What visual irony in the image of Carozza responding to the enthusiastic audience while holding a large doll in her arms — the "child she will never have," not by Mabuse, not by Hull.
- 20) That the first encounter with face-to-face hypnotism (Hull becomes Mabuse's victim in the empty corridors of the theatre) occurs entirely in profile, seems to me crucial. Mabuse never directs his dangerous look at the camera, but leans rather towards the edge of the frame, towards an invisible Hull. Could it be that "we" (the public in 1922) are not ready to accept that look? For central to **Mabuse** is a ritual of initiation to the look. The following scene at the 17 + 4 Club, where Mabuse does indeed "capture us" with his look, might seem excessively long; a clumsy moment, perhaps. But to be effective, initiation rites have to be performed slowly.
- 21) Apropos of the "hypnotism" scenes, we need to recall the history of glances aimed at the camera/spectator. First, there was the "innocent" look of Fred Ott, sneezing at Dickson's Kinetograph; or that of Lumière's conventionites in Lyons; or the crowds of bystanders who would watch films being shot ... from within the frame. And then, the less innocent look of Williamson's camera-swallower (**The Big Swallow**, Britain, 1900) or the comedians and villains accustomed to leering directly into the camera until producers succeeded in putting a stop to this practice. A particularly eloquent moment in this history occurs in 1908, with the comparison evoked by a perspicacious journalist to encourage, precisely, the prohibition of gazes into the camera. When an actor looks at the camera, he said, it was like a hypnotist snapping his fingers to bring a subject out of a trance.

Such prohibitions soon became veritable taboos. In 1919, a director as familiar with modern techniques as Maurice Tourneur, had a character who was supposedly addressing the audience directly, aim his look 30° off-camera (**The Bluebird**). By 1922, shot-reverse shot certainly has existed for at least three or four years as a common though not yet universal practice (undoubtedly less common in Germany). Still, however, the component eyelines seldom came anywhere near the camera. Thus the spectator-subject's identification with the camera was not yet complete — or at least this is how it seems to us today. We can only speculate as to whether or not **Mabuse** was the first film to use this face-to-face encounter systematically (and perhaps Lang was ahead of his time merely by virtue of the requirements of his script — somewhat like Griffith in **The Drunkard's Reformation** in which, as early as 1909, shot-reverse shot is used to show an alcoholic learning his lesson from a temperance play).

Mabuse's gaze may be framed and situated in the same way, but it has nothing to do with the comedian Dranem's look into the camera in the Gaumont phono-scènes (talking pictures!) of 1905. The significance of Mabuse's look and the way it interpellates the spectator, are entirely different. In 1922, the taboo was still strong, and gazes grazing the camera were at best rare. But the camera-as-subject had already been assimilated into the Institution of cinema in a variety of ways, and Lang could rest assured of the dissolution of the **spectator-in-the-movie-theatre** into the **subject-in-the-film**. In other words, spectators were

prepared to identify with Mabuse's victims in the same way that they surrendered to the powers of the director, i.e. surrendering but "not for real." This is a remarkable instance of self-reflexivity. If this scene is inordinately long, it may reflect as well the need to firmly codify the camera-directed gaze with which the spectator must engage as unseen voyeur, and not as real spectator, seated comfortably in a movie theatre. S/he must come to recognize that when Mabuse looks at "me," it isn't me he looks at, but an **other**, within or through me... It is the keystone of the institutional structure that is being patiently fitted into place in this scene.

- 22) The stupendous boredom reflected in the lengthy game at the club and the endless post mortem that follows it is the boredom of upper-class men. Gambling is represented (in three early sequences of the film) as a descent down the scale of social class. From Schramm's vulgar bourgeois elegance we move to a sleazy gambling den; and then we proceed upwards from the disguised gambling-room (the woman who emerges from the ceiling in case of a police raid is just like the leather-bound book on the boss's desk which is in reality a cigar box) to the aristocratic drawing-room where Mabuse disdains to gamble but abducts the Woman. If Mabuse transcends class differences, it is to terrify everyone, regardless of class. "We must unite against the bogymen" (or inflation, or the Reds...). But Mabuse does have a class identity, reflected in his own apparent mobility. Mabuse is the petty-bourgeois who dreams of marrying his own Princess Grace. And in the madness of the Weimar years, there must have been more than one shopkeeper who deplored the fall of the Hapsburgs only a few years prior to this film.
- 23) Mabuse is so sure of his plans that he sends Carozza to the Excelsior Hotel to flirt with Hull even before he himself has encountered Hull in the wings of the theatre. But why does Mabuse send Carozza to the Hotel? Unless Mabuse knows that von Wenck is going to turn to Hull (and there is no way he could know), there is no reason to plan Carozza's seduction of Hull. Mabuse "riposts" to von Wenck's investigation, but **before the fact**, before it has even begun (that is, before it has been represented on screen). The narrative of **Mabuse** is not as linear as it appears, but nonetheless **it retains the appearance of linearity**. Each series of gestures has fantasmatic, archetypal value. The elements of the obvious, surface intrigue of the film simply do not hang together. Rather, what "counts," what "matters," if the kind of "magnetization" that is fundamental in classical cinema between a Carozza and a Hull; or the power of the magician Mabuse over all of these paper silhouettes. In short, what "matters" overall is constant and continual reaffirmation of a set of mythological givens. The flow of narrative is like a body of water that is quicksilver on the surface, frozen solid underneath.
- 24) We enter the real Hugo Balling's room and we discover, before Hull does, that Balling had nothing to do with the man who, in his name, won so much money from him the night before. Thus, the text establishes a solid distance between us and Hull. We must not for a moment be allowed either to mistake Hull for a central character, or empathize with him, because **Hull is going to die**. Hull is a weakling, incapable of resisting either Mabuse's powers or Carozza's charms. Hull certainly could not be compared to von Wenck, for instance, who later in the film will successfully resist Mabuse's psychic powers. During the scene in Balling's room, Hull is slow to realize the obvious: that his opponent from the night before gave him a false name and address. Nor was he quick to figure out what in fact happened to him at the club. Hull is a puppet and will soon cease to have any autonomous role to play at all. La Carozza having gotten him under her thumb, and the State attorney having placed him under police protection, Hull becomes a mere pawn between two masters. This is what makes him a killable character, easily disposed of. Moreover, from the moment he sees Carozza in the hotel and picks up the handkerchief that she intentionally drops, he is physically and morally transformed into a cartoon character (a puppet indeed). He becomes a stick figure, scurrying about, rushing down the hotel stairs and knocking over a portly gentleman, or greeting La Carozza at his home with child-like enthusiasm (two scenes in long-shot, an allusion to primitive cinema that accentuates a farcical quality).
- 25) The first scene with von Wenck, the state attorney-hero, takes place in front of a magnificent futurists/art expressionist stained glass window in the living room of the very wealthy

Hull. Modern art is shown for the first time: in Mabuse's house, everything is very dull, very petty-bourgeois. There is one exception: the Oval Room, reserved for Woman (first Carozza who resided there willingly, then the Countess who is taken there by force). The room is decorated in Empire style and the Countess will play the role of Mme. Récamier. The image and the room evoke an era when the relations between ruler and ruled were still those of rapist and victim. Modern art is thus a characteristic of the weak and the rich (synonymous terms in the film): Hull and the Count. Modern art underlines the decadence present in the corridors of wealth (corridors populated in the Germany of 1922 by the Herr Hulls and the Graf Tolds of the real world). Hence it is left to the State — in the person of von Wenck — to confront ... Napoleon? Hitler? In this fiction there is of course no question but that the State will win, even though Doctor Mabuse, "returning from Elba," has his charms. And his petty-bourgeois interior made identification easy for large sections of the audience.

- 26) In the "bestiary" of this film, where men are divided into the weak and the strong, women seem, rather, to be **both** weak and strong. Love strengthens La Carozza, and love kills her: if she is strong, it is in the terms of the female stereotype: strength equals sacrifice (she willingly swallows the poison sent to her). Like her husband, the Countess — who is given to languishing on sofas — has the weakness of a "dying race." But she also possesses the strength of female solidarity (with Carozza in prison, she realizes the nature of a woman's love). And in addition, the countess has a certain virginal purity, that is, the strength to resist the advances of men.
- 27) A cinematic rhyme based on "question and answer" occurs in the film during von Wenck's first conversation with Hull. The two men are discussing "Hugo Balling." "Maybe he's one of them" says the state attorney (he still believes that a gang of card sharks is responsible for what Mabuse, with his disguises, does alone). After this title, we see a white-smocked Mabuse in his laboratory: thus invoked, the Demon appears. This kind of rhyme, intensifying the rhetorical links between sequences, was a characteristic of Lang's work for ten years. German cinema in general (Murnau, Lupu Pick, and Dupont were also attentive to these implications of montage), and Lang's work in particular, made decisive steps forward in the "alternating syntagm" bequeathed by Griffith. Griffith moved from one parallel action to another in such a way that the exact timing of the match was neither decisive nor even significant. Throughout this film, however, Lang attempts to construct highly complex **transmissions of meaning**, of which this scene is a particularly obvious example. This question and answer has the effect of authorial comment. The articulation of title and image "says": "And here is this monster, in the flesh." Aided by George, Mabuse draws venom from a live snake. A more appropriate emblem is hard to imagine. But as the scene continues the first reading is gradually effaced. We become involved in the scene and accept it, quite simply, as Mabuse making the preparations for another evil deed. But ultimately, this scene leads nowhere; it has no ties to either the present or the future of the film (never again will mention be made of the snake or of the venom, and the laboratory will never be seen again as such). Its extension — its "apparent development" — served merely to naturalize the shot, to render its emblematic function less "bold."
- 28) Lang places Hull on his knees, **lower in the frame than Carozza**, as she scolds him for playing into the state attorney's hands. This was typical of the new dramaturgy, in which meaning was totally controlled by reduplication (here, through composition; elsewhere through framing, still elsewhere through lighting, staging, or music). It is not surprising that such an echo-effect should have developed so early and to such an extent in Germany, since this is certainly the most important contribution of expressionist style to the classical system of cinema.
- 29) The presentation of Schramm's combination grill and gambling den is a unique moment in the film. First, this is the only instance in which the narrative principles of chronological time and unified space are abandoned. To begin with, we see a series of shots representing details of the restaurant "as concept": an aquarium for live trout, fowls on a spit, a display of cigars, all shown against a neutral background or through a mask: and then, a woman dancer in men's clothes (suggestive of "bourgeois decadence") and a jazz band. Finally, there is a shot of the entire restaurant. We then move on to a peculiar little biography of the

proprietor Schramm, who went from peddler to convict, and from fence to... owner of a prosperous enterprise. When we return to a long shot of the restaurant, the bread sequence — unlike any other portion of the film — appears to have been a sardonic parenthesis: "Today anyone can get rich, by fair means or foul."

There is only one "partisan" voice in the film and that is Mabuse's. He does not hesitate to give free reign to his right-wing anarchist philosophy. But in this parenthesis, a voice intervenes which the filmmakers designate **as their own**. This voice will never intervene again on the image-track, only in a very occasional title. By virtue of the elliptical, ironic tone of the parenthesis, their voice is firmly situated in the realm of "editorial lucidity." Thus, the petty-bourgeois German viewer, whether social-democrat or liberal, is reassured: the "people behind the camera" see things more clearly than the characters they have created. Such an editorial pose serves here to camouflage the profound identity between Mabuse's fascist ideology, tinted with Bonapartism, and the real-life shopkeeper mentality which indeed looks with jaundiced eye on "all those Jews getting rich on the backs of ordinary working people." Such methods for establishing a tacit editorial complicity with the audience are part and parcel of the Institution.

- 30) Representations of private life (usually relations between the sexes) are an important way of **naturalizing** filmic characters. Films where cops and robbers are perceived only from an administrative view-point are quite rare, even on American television (where, more often than in the past, the criminal remains an "other" without a home, so to speak; while the human center, the "hearth" of the diegesis, is the private life of the policeman or woman). Hence when the state attorney flirts with a beautiful woman in a clandestine gambling den, he emerges with the indelible mark of Humanity. From now on, von Wenck can no longer be defined only in his official capacity, for he is a man sensitive to a woman's charms — and yet this fact will be evoked only once again, with admirable restraint, at the end of Part II.

The private lives of the women are always present on the screen, and often represent the sum total of their existence. Even when a woman is "on duty," she is personalized.

It is indeed remarkable the von Wenck has no family and no home, only a modest office that will soon be destroyed. Mabuse, on the other hand, is often seen at home. Thus an interesting question is raised: **who** is expected to identify with a character who is seen so much at home, and who reigns not only over his servants, but before too long over his kidnapped bride as well?

- 31) Mabuse's values permeate every level of the film. All of the characters killed at his command are weaklings. Hull is undermined by his playboy lifestyle, the Count by the decadence of his race, while Pesch is a pathetic lumpen. As for Carozza, her weakness is to believe in love ("There is no love, there is only the will to power," says Mabuse to the Countess... whose strength is that she does not believe in love). Mabuse does not die, he goes mad — a fate much less definitive, as the **Testament** was to show. Hence, the film is informed by the fundamental principle of the survival of the fittest (a principle common to the majority of mainstream films in Western culture).
- 32) Here is an example of a "premonitory" rhyme: "I prefer watching other people's passion for gambling, without getting too close to them myself," the Countess tells von Wenck, to explain why she is a passive observer in the gambling dens. Her words are followed by a close-up of Mabuse at the gambling table, keeping track of the bank.
- 33) There is a remarkable symmetry between the sequence where von Wenck converses with the Countess in an alcove situated apart from the gaming table and the final scene of Part I, in which the Countess faints and Mabuse carries her away in his arms. In this scene as well, a card-game is in progress, and in the background the countess converses with... a man. But this time the man is Mabuse, and one of the poker players is her husband, whom Mabuse hypnotizes from a distance to make him cheat at cards (in the previous scene, it is Mabuse who cheats by hypnotizing the Russian woman). Both scenes conclude with a fight. Whereas in the first scene the Countess flees her husband under the protection of



the gallant state attorney, later it is Mabuse who flees with the woman in his arms, removing her from von Wenck's protection. Together, these scenes provide a compact résumé of the intricate relations between these four main characters.

- 34) During the alternation between von Wenck's "idyll" with the Countess and the card-game, an ambiguous structure emerges. The state attorney leans toward the Countess and speaks to her. Mabuse, who sits facing the camera, turns to his left with an evil look in his eye. Is he looking at the Countess and von Wenck (up until now he hasn't paid them any attention), or at the Russian woman whose gigolo is taking out his wallet? It would subsequently appear as though Mabuse had been looking at the Russian woman, since he proceeds to swindle her. Considering the narrative structure of the film in its totality, however, it seems that the first impression, a kind of topological reading, is also "correct," that Mabuse is indeed leering at the Countess as well. Just as he covets the Russian woman's pearls, he also covets the Countess' body (not to mention her "race").
- 35) At the end of this sequence, the threads connecting the different characters are tied together in such a way that the unity of the film is confirmed before we move into another alternating montage. Carozza's remark, that "At the gambling table no one looks like a saint," suddenly reminds us of her love for Mabuse. Count Told appears for the first time (though in such a way as to be absolutely unidentifiable, thus underlining the overall transparency of his character). The attorney offers a proof of devotion to the Countess by turning off the lights so that she can leave unnoticed by her husband. La Carozza rushes to watch her leave, and asks: "What does that mean?" Her jealousy of the woman who will replace her in Mabuse's affections is reflected before the fact.

Finally, the directorial machinery of the scene is stamped with Mabuse's inimitable trademark when an employee hands Hull a card. One side of the card reminds Hull of his gambling debts to "Balling" and the other warns him against any co-operation with the police.

- 36) The "Tsi Nan Fuh" sequence is crucial. Here we are reassured as to von Wenck's psychical and moral superiority over Mabuse. Actually, the Doctor's powers are hypnotic in appearance only. Closer inspection indicates, rather, that we are dealing with an occult power. Indeed, while the word "hypnotism" is used quite incidentally to describe the show put on by Mabuse in his role as Sandor Wiseman, it is never used in reference to Mabuse himself. During the Wiseman performance, moreover, the mystical nature of Mabuse's power is definitively confirmed. We see him covertly manipulating the envelopes in which he has enclosed instructions for his subjects, but it is only to give a harmless text, totally different from the one that is to send von Wenck to his death, to the woman who has been serving as his foil. And since von Wenck executes the secret command without any verbal instructions . . . what we witness is, indeed, mystical thought-control.

In this connection, Mabuse's masquerade as a man of science is ambivalent. On the one hand, the attempt is made to discredit science (and psychoanalysis in particular, which proves to be Mabuse's "cover" and which was widely perceived then as a fundamentally threatening domain). This is a familiar procedure for ideologues sensitive to ruling-class pressures when the system breaks down: blame (explicitly or implicitly) social evils on science (or progress), and thus encourage obscurantism and "turning the clock back." Similar phenomena are very much in evidence in our time. On the other hand, giving Mabuse's occult powers a scientific rationale tends to legitimate the "charisma" of Great Men. A Kracauer would not be mistaken if he saw in this aspect of the film a "ludic" manifestation of the pseudo-scientific theories that were part and parcel of Fascist and Nazi ideology.

It follows from this sequence that the Law will prevail indubitably, since von Wenck succeeds in resisting Mabuse's "fluid." In the universe of the film, von Wenck is the only one capable of putting up such resistance. Which allows us to conclude that the science of the Law is as deceptive as Mabuse's criminal science, since in the final analysis it is only by sheer psychic force that von Wenck triumphs over Mabuse.

- 37) Question and answer: von Wenck asks the manager of the Excelsior Hotel, "who is staying in room 231?" We see Mabuse in a long-shot, wearing a different disguise, walking cautiously down the stairway. The implications of this scene are complex. We assume that it is because of his mastery of disguise that Mabuse can freely leave the hotel. But in point of fact, this mastery is not put to the test. At this particular moment, no one is even in pursuit of him. Mabuse gets an unexpected break only because of the state attorney's absolute respect for legal procedure. So that while the scene appears to be just another variation on the theme of Mabuse's power (he tricks his enemies one more time), there is an additional motif: von Wenck is a prisoner of social conventions while Mabuse flies free as a bird.

On close inspection, this detour through the hotel bureaucracy is a bit crude. But of course, it is characteristic of the classical text that one never **does** inspect it closely. Such crude proceedings are naturalized by the "laws" of the links between images, and by the **coherence of the ideological sub-text**. The subtext is held together by a commonly shared assumption: the police are hampered, their hands are tied by petty regulations. Hence, it is normal that a state attorney does improbable things in order to prolong the fantasy, things that are accepted **because they illustrate what "everybody knows."**

- 38) We abandon von Wenck, gassed by one of Mabuse's henchmen, in the back seat of a sealed cab, only to rediscover him immediately, adrift in a rowboat. This abrupt ellipsis poses an enigma of narrative logic (as do so many other moments in the film, but this is the most spectacular). If we suppose this to be the film's original editing scheme (and the use of a double iris, closing and opening in the same part of the screen, authorizes this), certain questions emerge. If Mabuse really wanted von Wenck dead, wouldn't there have been a more effective plan? The boat is drifting close to shore, and the rescue that ensues is practically inevitable. In any case, the rescue happens so quickly that there is no time for any sense of real danger to develop. Von Wenck in his rowboat is much more suggestive of the baby Moses than of impending tragedy. Meanwhile, the men responsible for the operation return to Mabuse. They are embarrassed, and ridiculed by their colleagues. Mabuse curses and strikes them. They were supposed to kill von Wenck, it appears. But even before their return, Mabuse knows that von Wenck is not dead (if not, why the outburst about that "damned bloodhound," when he finds the list of gambling dens in the attorney's wallet?) Yet von Wenck has not yet been rescued, so how does Mabuse know that he has escaped?

Spectators who are unattentive to such contradictions — as are most spectators then as now — might well accept everything in the order presented: von Wenck was in danger, and then rescued; Mabuse assumed him dead, is furious to discover that he is alive. In this reading method, each new bit of information cancels out what has preceded. On the other hand, spectators more attuned to the "mystical" struggle which is going on here, might catch a mental glimpse of another scene. For these petty crooks, the idea of killing this particular man — symbol both of the power of the State and of paternal benevolence (Mabuse is the wicked father; von Wenck, the good) is so intimidating that they are not about to risk a straightforward murder. They choose, rather, an ancient gesture: exposure of an unwanted child to the elements, leaving the onus of the actual death to the gods. Eut not only is this scene not shown, it is barely even suggested (and this is unusual for the film). Partisans of the "internal deconstruction" of the classical text will see in this a moment when the narrative mechanism proclaims its own arbitrariness. They are not mistaken, as long as they take note also of this confused multiplicity which legitimates many possible readings, and of the very real possibility that this is also ("simply") a point at which the machinery — intoxicated with its own efficiency — momentarily runs away with itself.

- 39) The second scene in Hull's apartment (shorter than the first), shows Carozza with a new unfamiliar characteristic: her head in the clouds, she keeps dropping her belongings on the floor. Perhaps this is a pose designed to strengthen Hull's attraction to her (isn't clumsiness supposed to be endearing in a woman?), or perhaps this is simply a way for Carozza to "accidentally" leave a piece of evidence for Hull to discover, dropping it like she drops her gloves or her boa. Actually, however, the discovery of the note — in which Mabuse tells Carozza to take Hull to the opening of a new nightclub — endangers the Doctor's plans.

But neither does Hull's discovery in any way protect him from the ambush being planned for him; but the police have been alerted, and Carozza is sent to prison, where she will eventually die. This the true result of Carozza's strange behaviour, dictated by the film-makers "disguised" as Mabuse, so to speak.

- 40) The descent from the ceiling of the Petit Casino of a woman dancing to conceal the game area with her "performance" in case of a police raid could also be an emblem of the film itself: a game with serious stakes — sexual, mystical and political — is disguised, by an ingenious mechanism, as an "innocent" diversion.
- 41) The seance (introduced with the title: "The Other World," a type of commentary that is rare in the film) occurs as a kind of break in the narrative, a moment whose privileged quality is enhanced by the enormous coincidence of Mabuse's and the Countess's presence. During this scene, a "spiritual betrothal" is consolidated between Mabuse and the Countess, and that "mystical struggle" so implicit throughout the film is finally concretized. The seance is disrupted by an "alien spirit." The Countess takes the blame and leaves the room. Mabuse accompanies her into an adjoining room. At the beginning of their conversation there is an image — unfortunately cut from the version in commercial distribution — of the Countess tracing the spiral design on her dress with her finger. When her finger reaches the center of the spiral, Mabuse's hand enters the frame to rest on her shoulder: she is caught in the web.
- 42) There is a remarkable alternating montage of increasing acceleration, between the action leading to Hull's murder and the arrival of the police at the Petit Casino. Such moments are particularly effective in drawing the spectator into the movement of the film. And then, a prodigious condensation: Carozza is arrested, taken to prison; Mabuse in his apartment, surrounded by his gang, writes her off once and for all.

The murder of Hull, however, does little to actually further Mabuse's plans. (Hull was but a mere instrument in the hands of the police, and their investigation continues unhindered; moreover, he could easily have remained tied to Carozza's apron-strings... were it not for the note that announced his murder!) The only reason for Hull's death is not in the "plot." It is that it provokes Carozza's arrest and thus leaves an empty place for the Countess (Mabuse immediately has the Oval Room prepared). Aren't we starting to perceive that the "serious" center of the film is not the detective story, and only indirectly (by ideological association) is it political allegory. The "serious" center of the film is, rather, of an erotic-metaphysical order, with shades of Spenglerian neo-Ceasarism, that was all the rage amongst German intellectuals of the day.



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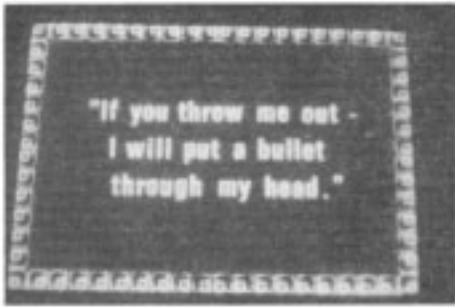
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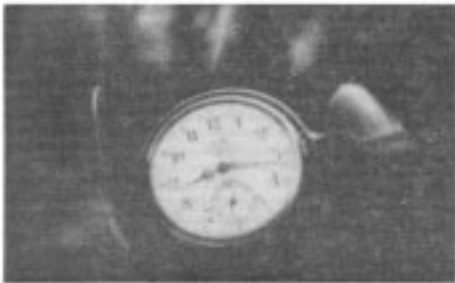
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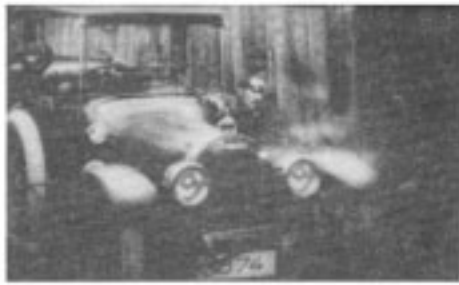
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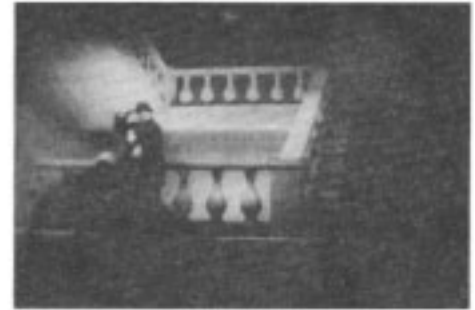
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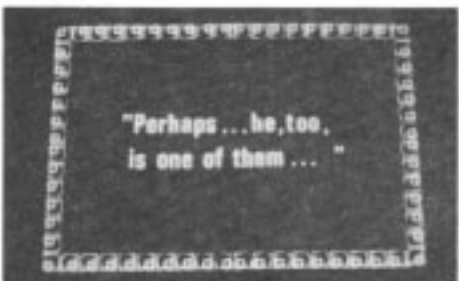
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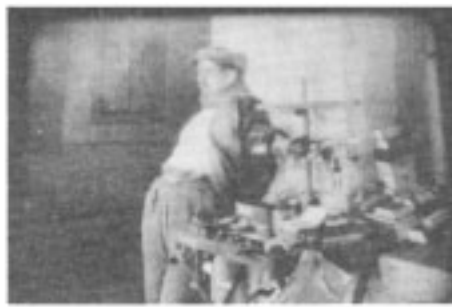
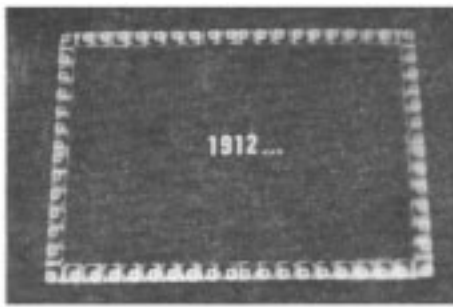


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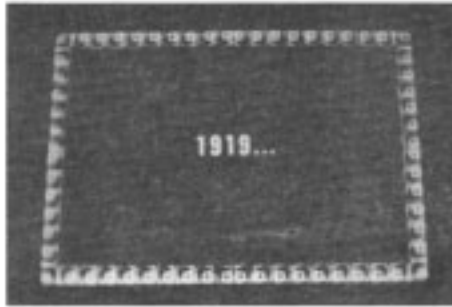




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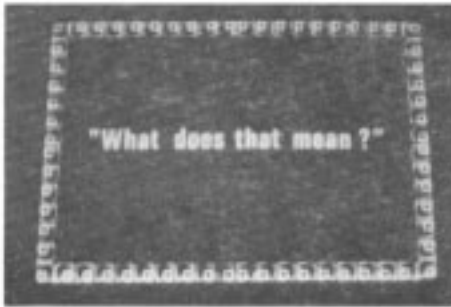
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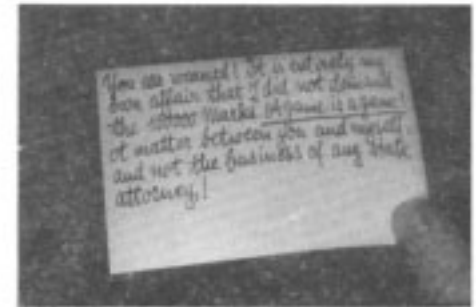
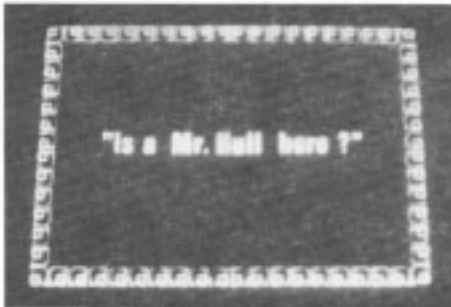
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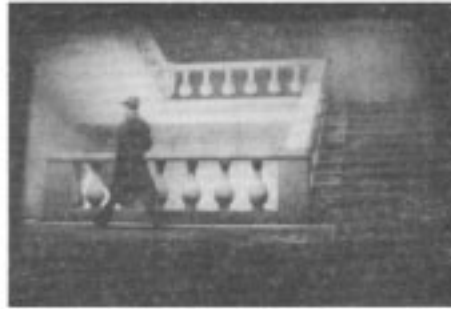
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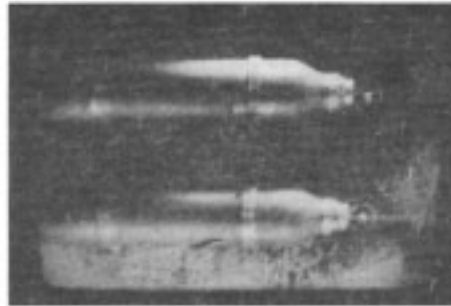
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39—A  
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41—B



# THAT "ONCE-UPON-A-TIME..." OF CHILDISH DREAMS

*Sandy Flitterman*

At a time when Kodak, one of the largest manufacturers of photographic and motion picture equipment in the world, advertises itself as "America's Storyteller," Freud's theory of the "family romance" seems particularly relevant to theoretical discussions of the cinema. And it is more than accidental that Freud's first mention of this concept (in several letters to Wilhelm Fleiss in 1897 and 1898) coincides historically with the construction of both Méliès' Montreuil studios and the first Pathé studios at Vincennes, and the patenting of Raoul Grimoin-Sanson's circular projection "Cinéorama" in France and with the founding of the Vitagraph studios and the beginning of Edison's patents war in the U.S. — these among other important seminal facts in the history of cinematic production.

What is even more striking is the fact that by the time Freud's article was published in 1909 (as part of Otto Rank's book **The Myth of the Birth of the Hero**) nearly 95% of all American films were narrative films, a drastic limitation of the former cinematic diversity which had

included news films, travelogues, historical re-enactments, trick films, sporting events, biographies, literary adaptations, comic vignettes and dramatic films.<sup>1</sup> What can we say of the conjunction of this early narrative hegemony in film with Freud's theory of children's fantasies of origins? Since the latter is a question of parentage, it might be useful to look at the cinema's avowed parent form, the novel. Especially pertinent to this quest is Marthe Robert's **Roman des origines et origines du roman**,<sup>2</sup> a book which deals with the theory of the novel from the point of view of Freud's notion of the family romance.

Freud coined the term "family romance" to designate a primitive form of imaginative activity in children, involving the fantasmatic invention of ideal parents to replace the actual ones which are considered by the child to be inferior. The child imagines a narrative (thus, tells a story to her/himself) in which s/he — the main protagonist — is either the offspring of noble parents or the bastard child of a noble father. According to the story, fortune has made it so that the child, either Foundling or Bastard, must live with these lesser parental beings of daily life. The production of this tale is thus motivated by a longing for an initial state of perfection: "Indeed the whole effort at replacing the real father by a superior one is only an expression of the child's longing for the happy, vanished days when his father seemed to him the noblest and strongest of men and his mother the dearest and loveliest of women."<sup>3</sup>

Freud uses terms like "works of fiction" and "imaginative romances" when discussing these productions. Accordingly, the fabrication of the family romance is a type of imaginative activity along the lines of day-dreaming; its dual function as wish-fulfillment and correction of actual life reveals two principle underlying aims, one erotic and one ambitious (with an erotic aim beneath this second one as well). The day-dream is a narrated scene, an organized visual representation which the subject, invariably present, recounts to himself in a waking state. It represents a compromise between a repressed wish and the demands of censorship and can thus be used by secondary revision in the dream-work. When it appears in a dream, the day-dream used in this editorial way may be directly connected to the unconscious fantasy which makes up the "nucleus of the dream."

In any case, the structure of fantasy is the same whether conscious or unconscious: imaginary formations and psychopathological structures (from the conscious fantasies of perverts to the unconscious fantasies of hysterics) can have identical form and content. In speaking of such fictionalizing activity as the production of imaginary worlds in an attempt to correct reality, Freud emphasizes the association of fantasy with pleasure:

"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 **phantasy-making**, which begins already in the games of children, and later, continued as day-dreaming, abandons its dependence on real objects."<sup>4</sup>

Initially believed by Freud to be a pathological symptom of paranoia, the family romance was later found to be a normal, and in fact universal phenomenon of infantile life. The fictional narratives consciously fabricated in childhood are seldom remembered in adult life, but since they participate in the unconscious fantasy schemata of the subject, are capable of being revealed in analysis. The family romance only becomes pathological when the adult continues to believe in its truth and acts accordingly.

Freud continually emphasizes the widespread and universal nature of the family romance, pointing out that these fantasies (along with sexual fantasies of the primal scene, seduction, and castration, among others) "are especially prominent, and are distinguished by their very general occurrence and by being to a great extent independent of individual experience."<sup>5</sup> The universality of a fantasy structure like that of the family romance is related to that **a priori** quality of generalization Freud finds in the Oedipal complex and as a consequence, in the unconscious. Freud refers to the "constant sameness which as a rule characterizes the phantasies that are constructed around the period of childhood, irrespective of how greatly or how little real experiences have contributed towards them."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it should be emphasized that the family romance has little to do with a child's actual feelings of love or hatred for the parents; rather, it must be understood as one of the patterns structuring the imaginative life of the subject.

Freud identifies two stages in the production of the family romance, one asexual and relatively narcissistic, the other originating from an awareness of sexual difference in procreation and thus from the pressure of the Oedipal complex. In the first type of family romance, the story of the Foundling, the child replaces its parents with others of higher social standing and imagines circumstances which have placed it in a foster home. Here the motives of revenge and retaliation on the parents for not being perfect are mingled with fantasies of self-aggrandisement and the desire for infantile omnipotence. These motives are no less present in the second type of story, that of the Bastard, but they are rendered more complex by motives stemming from the awareness of sexual difference. In the Bastard's family romance, the child exalts the father but, realizing that maternity must be certain, imagines the mother in secret infidelities. Sexual curiosity, revenge on the parents for the punishment of sexual naughtiness, and the avoidance of sibling incest can all be satisfied by the production of these stories. Since at this stage the mother has become an object of sexual curiosity, the family romance of the Bastard enables the child to "picture to himself" (Freud's words) erotic situations in which the mother has secret love affairs. In fact, the child might picture as many illicit unions as there are siblings (competitors), thereby avoiding guilt arising from desire for a sibling ("If your sister is not your mother's child you are relieved of guilt").

\* \* \* \*

In her exciting and provocative study of the novel, Marthe Robert attributes these two tendencies of the family romance to two novelistic modes. Robert is the author of several books on contemporary literature and psychoanalysis,<sup>8</sup> a subject on which she may well be "without doubt the most qualified commentator of our time" (**Le Monde**). In **Roman des origines et origines du roman** she combines a lucid comprehension of psychoanalytic thought with penetrating insights into the process of literary production to discuss the phenomenon of the novelistic across the works of Defoe, Cervantes, Balzac, and Flaubert, among others. "Strictly speaking, there are only two ways to write a novel: that of the realist Bastard, who seconds the world by meeting it head on; and that of the Foundling, who, for lack of awareness and means of action, avoids confrontation by escaping in flight" (74). Her analysis deals not only with what produces the novelistic as a literary form, but with what produces belief in the novelistic as a rendering of experience.

Citing that most primitive form of storytelling, the family romance, as the "immemorial myth from which (the novel) derived until now its only true authority" (364). Robert traces the development (and demise) of the novel in terms of this psychoanalytic production of imaginary narratives. When speaking of the novel's protean freedom — its ability to assume a variety of forms — she refers to the "many-sidedness" and "great range of applicability" of the family romance which, Freud emphasizes in his paper, "enable it to meet every sort of requirement."<sup>9</sup> In this way Robert can link the family romance's resolution of psychical

conflicts with the novel's tradition of storytelling, asserting that it is this connection which has enabled the novel to express "the struggles of interests, desires, and feelings that have made it ... the most powerful means of communication between the dream of a single person and the profound reality of all." (363)

For Robert the psychical conflicts involved are precisely those Oedipal relations which Freud designated as "the nuclear complex of the neuroses." She notes that the legend of Oedipus remarkably combines the motif of the Foundling (and its concomitant pre-sexual innocence) with the themes of parricide and incest in which Freud found confirmation of his analyses of unconscious psychic facts. In the family romance, infantile megalomania is combined with the desire to avoid the double crime of parricide and incest; within the familial triangle the subject thus organizes affective space, directing a scenario in which he is able to suggest what he must inevitably renounce. Thus the family romance "brings to that conflict typical of childhood, that crisis ... which is the distinctive sign of the human, certainly not a solution, but the simplest, most ingenious and most clever of expedients." (54)

Robert goes on to associate the family romance's elasticity with the novel's celebrated formal diversity. Where other genres (such as classical tragedy, for example) have numerous conventions regulating their artistic form, the novel has absolute freedom as to the number and style of its formal variations; "its only law is the familial scenario by means of which it spins out unconscious desires." (63)

"The Oedipal complex being a universal human fact, there is no fiction, no representation, no imagistic art which is not in some way a veiled illustration of it. In this sense the novel is simply one 'Oedipal' genre among others, with one exception — and for literature this is certainly not a negligible difference — instead of reproducing a raw fantasm according to rules established by a definite artistic code, it imitates a **fantasm which is novelized** [romance] **from the start**, a story-sketch which is not only the inexhaustible reservoir of future stories, but the only convention which restricts it." (63)

Thus for Robert, while the novel as a genre is marked by an absence of formal constraints, the psychic content of the novel's motifs is absolutely determined by the family romance; this "obligation to the fantasm whose program it accomplishes" (63) is what distinguishes the novel from all other codified artforms.

"Therefore the familial myth of childhood defines the novel in precisely that which renders it undefinable: its absence of generic characteristics, from which proceed those contradictory properties so often noted by [novelistic] theory, and above all, the desire for verisimilitude that it seems curiously to take as a sign of truth." (64)

In tracing the elementary features of novelistic production common to the family romance of childhood, Robert determines two novelistic attitudes, two orientations of the novel which correspond to the two "ages" of the family romance. However, it must be noted that Robert does not provide us with a comforting binarism; **both** the Foundling's and the Bastard's stories are fictionalizing processes and as such are situated neither in fixed categories (not "more" or "less" real) nor in specific dates.

"It is the orientation which is decisive here, not the amount of dreamlike ingredients treated in the material; and certainly there are two types of literature, two writers' temperaments, and, to use the expression in its most immediate sense, two sharply contrasting 'visions' of the world; but the difference is not at all in an acknowledged opposition, useful as that



might be for historians; it refers beyond all esthetic and ideological intentions back to the two ages of the 'family romance' and to two techniques of apprehending the world between which novelistic literature always makes a necessary choice." (107)

Thus every novelist's work will resolve psychical conflicts in a mode corresponding either to the Bastard (if s/he engages with the world) or to the Foundling (if s/he seeks to create an internal world to the measure of her/his fantasies), but elements of each will be found interweaving in both. "Sometimes the naturalist will mix into the 'slice of life' a portion of irreality or stylistic ingredients which bespeak the visionary; [...] sometimes, on the contrary, the visionary categorized as such will go beyond the dream to express something essential about life [...] the contradiction is never really resolved." (76) The two novelistic attitudes can alternate, complement, struggle with, and nuance each other within a single work, or across the range of texts by a single author; the Western novel in fact derives much of its richness from this dialectical play of tendencies.

The Foundling is associated with what Robert terms novels of the "Other Side" (**L'Autre Côté**); the narcissistic introversion and belief in the magical powers of one's own concentration characteristic of the Foundling's story are found in the deliberate creation of "another" world seen as a defense against the disappointments of reality. Folk tales and myths of popular culture, Romanticism, fantastic tales (c.f. E.T.A. Hoffman) are all part of this "Other Side." The Foundling's self-perception is that of an undifferentiated whole in which neither parents nor external world are considered separate from the self. The absence of conflict or of division (which characterizes Freud's notion of primary narcissism) produces fictions distinguished by a narcissistic euphoria before the 'trenchant sword of experience' has forced the differentiation between self and other, self-love and love for the world.

Robert is always careful to emphasize the sexual modalities of each type of fictionalizing. The Foundling's creation of immaterial phantoms and imaginary worlds has the same sexual coefficient as the Romantic's magical idealism, glorification of childhood, belief in the myth of the primordial androgyne, and in a world of infinite possibility. "The romantic Eden therefore is unaware of sexuality, just as are the Paradise of the Foundling and that of the theologian, such that the mystery of the engenderment of all things is revealed precisely there where sexual difference is denied." (113)

Later in the section of her book appropriately entitled "The Other Side," Robert examines **Don Quixote** and **Robinson Crusoe**, whose characters' adventures at the inception of the genre initiated a tradition of novelistic storytelling generally corresponding to the Foundling's tale. Here procreation takes the form of fictional engenderment — for Don Quixote it is the constant proliferation of illusory exploits; for Robinson Crusoe it is the plethora of narrative detail which populates his island. Don Quixote, in fact, descends to the psychic level of the child, remaking reality to the shape of his aspirations; in this he reveals the omnipotence of desire (and the desire for omnipotence) which is the specific property of infantile thought most effectively borne out in the Foundling's story. So, too, Robinson Crusoe's desert island represents this passion for fictive engenderment in the imaginative creation of another world; in fact, Robinson becomes 'the ancient patriarchal monarch' of his island's fictive space.

Throughout her discussion Robert emphasizes that Don Quixote and Robinson Crusoe are spiritual brothers who, for all the apparent differences between Quixote's **anachronistic** space and Robinson Crusoe's utopian space, nonetheless strive for the same psychic reality of isolation and evasion. Yet each demonstrates, to some degree, what was needed in order for the novel to depart from the enclosed world of the folk tale or Romantic myth. Thus when the Foundling becomes of necessity more aware of the Oedipal Bastard's more realist struggles, either Robinson Crusoe's desert island with its exigencies of life, or Don Quixote's incorrigible wanderer in search of dreams in the real world, is the result. In other words, Robert associates the emergence of the family romance in modern literature with

the inception of the novel, connecting the rise of the bourgeoisie and its concomitant ethos of free enterprise with the exigencies of sociality represented by Oedipal conflicts.

Robert finds that the 19th century novel generally corresponds to the family romance productions of the Bastard, and indeed the section of her book entitled "Slices of Life" examines the work of Balzac and Flaubert from the perspective of the Oedipal Bastard. But here too she emphasizes the necessary mediation between the two types of family romances, entitling the chapters "The Search for the Absolute" and "Out of Hatred for the Novel." Robert asserts that the 19th century novel is a sort of formal compromise between these two infantile tendencies, representing a power struggle between two equally captivating myths of omnipotence — one which operates by imitating every imaginable conquest, the other by obstinately retreating to the lost paradise of utopian ideals. "The novelistic literature of the 19th century reflects at every stage of its production this latent struggle between two different psychic ages from which the works receive their scope, their significance, and their style. . ." (232)

The infantile Bastard, plunged into a world of sexual difference and thus knowing the division of love and hatred, embraces the ambiguity in a tale whereby the beloved mother is debased and the abhorred father idealized. Finding that he must love the denigrated object while emulating the hated one, the "hero of the Bastard's fable 'makes' a novel in the sense of the **arriviste** of expression: he 'succeeds' by means of women, or more exactly through the one woman in whom he concentrates the seduction of all the others. . ." (57). From the fictionalizing Bastard of the family romance whose ideal of maturity and action provides a means of confronting a world of difference and conflict, Robert thus extrapolates the **arriviste** of the 19th century novel of social ascension, and its creator as well.

"Doubtless the Bastard is the same everywhere, he is the 'novel-maker' ['faiseur de roman'] who, having decided to use women in order to succeed, is capable of artfully tying together the intrigues of love and the shady calculations of ambition." (229)

"A man of time and of quantity, always obliged to invent new means to satisfy his enormous appetites, the Bastard is less concerned to create 'enduring' models than to incorporate the maximum amount of current ideas in order to augment the illusion of his resemblance with reality." (228)

Sexuality is present even in the different names of the infantile tales: Where the Foundling's birth is **mysterious**, that of the Bastard is both shameful and glorious (the "Foundling" evoking an idea of spontaneous generation where its Oedipal counterpart, the "Bastard," contains innuendos of illicit sexual union). . . . Oedipus represents the transition between the Foundling and the Bastard of the 'family romance': the awareness of sexuality sharpens the mind of the subject; on the other hand it throws him into the abyss of his own psyche, where he must wander blindly." (91) Once the knowledge of sexual difference intervenes, the child/subject of the family romance produces fictions of infinite variety and detail. Thus against the psychic insularity of the Foundling, Robert poses the incomparably vaster zone of influence of the Bastard. Where all of the transgressions of the Bastard (which speak of the subject's **desire**) have been relegated to the margins of the text in the Foundling's epic tale, now the Bastard novelist (and his infantile counterpart) attempts to appropriate the greatest number of objects, freely producing extensive, abundant works which are alive with detail and action.

This multiple, differentiated engenderment produces those novels characteristic of 19th century Realism in their maximum of illusionistic detail because the "Bastard, being by nature implicated in all of life's matters — it's the 'as if' which founds his mission — . . . can tell stories in a myriad of ways, no matter what means, provided that they are realistic or 'life-like.'" (228) An abundance of human characters (as opposed to **literary** types) in the Realist novel leads Robert to speculate on the nature of Balzac's **Comédie Humaine**: she makes an

equivalence between Balzac the "novel-maker" and the **arrivistes** in his novels, locating Balzac's desire to realize the family romance **of his life** in his activity of writing. (252) The social machinations of Balzac's Machiavellian heroes actually overlay a more ancient and fundamental psychic combat. But for all his verisimilitude and **arrivisme**, Balzac is no less "Robinsonesque" in his project, particularly when he subscribes to the myth of omnipotence: the Foundling ("Balzac's Angel") appears in his work wherever the postulation of an ideal, the mystical visionary, the belief in the supernatural or the desire for an absolute surges forth in his texts.

In her treatment of Flaubert, Robert asks a fundamental question: How can Flaubert both be seen as the apogee of a detailed realism (with his utter obsession for exactness and verisimilitude), and at the same time represent the prime example of an escape from the realities of life into art (art for art's sake, the ideal of the "book about nothing")? The answer lies in "the two contradictory ideals" which Flaubert intensely felt within himself and which Robert aptly connects to the dialectical struggle between the two psychic ages of the family romance. In discussing Flaubert's adolescent **Mémoires d'un fou**, Robert quotes his impassioned avowal ("To write, oh to write means to take possession of the world!"), nothing that

". . . the story lays bare the two irreconcilable tendencies between which Flaubert must of necessity divide his work, without attempting to reconcile them in a more or less unified ideology, but in placing the intangible truth of art above, and beyond, the 'actual' (practical) verities of life." (322)

To come to this conclusion, Robert analyzes two of Flaubert's dreams from the perspective of the primal scene (that traumatic vision of the child onto the scene of parental intercourse), noting that this crucial moment will constitute the obstacle to Flaubert's own "sentimental education," guaranteeing his "failure in the apprenticeship of life." Both the Foundling and the Bastard come together in horror at the parental "crime" of copulation; the family romance gives expression to both this desire and this hatred, love for the mother and the impossibility of achieving it.

Robert points out that everything in the Bastard's version of the family romance proceeds from two conventionally opposed images of woman. (318) In the Bastard's version of the family romance, degradation of the mother is the result of the compromising position the idealized maternal figure is believed to have taken at the moment of the Oedipal crisis. She ceases to be ideal when the child believes she has betrayed him by making love to another. Robert finds these contradictory tendencies at the core of Flaubert's art, providing a powerful illustration of the intersection of the family romance with the novelistic:

**"Mémoires d'un fou** is probably the most extraordinary document that literature had yet to produce on the reality of the 'family romance' — a condensed romance of the impossible desires which push man, young and old, to shake, with all the powers of his imagination, the order and meaning (sense) of the established world." (322)

\* \* \* \*

But what of the important conjunction between storytelling and film which was briefly mentioned at the start of this discussion? Marthe Robert's analysis of the novel in terms of Freud's theory of the family romance provides some productive insights into the very particular regime of belief at the source of the cinematic apparatus. For Robert, not only is the family romance the psychic origin of the novel, bringing to it the "force of its desires and its irrepressible freedom," "it is the genre itself. . . giving to every man something of his first passion and his first truth." (62) In speaking of the family romance's contribution to the novel's "desire to be truthful" (**le désir de faire vrai**) she asserts that

"the novel is never satisfied simply to **represent**, rather it intends to give 'a complete and veracious account' of all things as if it issued not from literature, but — by virtue of one

knows not what privilege or what magic — directly from reality. Thus it spontaneously offers its characters for real people, its words for real time, and its images for the very substance of facts. . ." (64)

In other words, the novel appears authentic precisely to reinforce the **illusion** that it is real. This novelistic illusion functions successfully because at its source it participates in the particular form of faith accorded to the family romance. Like their counterparts in the infantile tales, characters in the novel participate in a confusion of illusion and reality, imagined and actual: "the specific nature of belief that every person accords to his family romance is the only acceptable explanation of the novelistic illusion." (65)

This "faith" in the illusion hinges on a perpetual oscillation between knowledge and belief, a movement which is **crucial** to the film spectator's participation in the pseudo-reality of the cinema. The novel strives for credibility in the same way as its infantile predecessor. The family romance is paradoxically constituted in a dialectical play of fictive and real; the child is moved to make up stories because reality has been disappointing, but in order for these fictions to be effective they must balance both the imaginary with the real. In other words, enough indices of reality must be present in the imaginary production. In a sense the subject/child is forced to make a compromise between reality and dreams, to "submit his fantasy to calculation, his utopia to time, his dream to observation" — equivalences whose aim is to render the fable more **credible**, rather than more **real**. This tension between two opposing tendencies provides the structure of belief in both the child's family romance and the adult's novel: "this dialectic between the 'fictive' and the 'true' is the heritage of the novel long before it is ever couched in writing." (66)

Indeed, as Robert puts it quite succinctly, "the contemporary novel is totally taken up in this dialectic of 'yes' to the world and 'no' to reality which is for every outstanding work, not only the source of a host of new ideas, but like the very tension of creation." (233) Robert's characterization of this process bears some striking resemblances to Christian Metz's discussion of the cinematic viewing situation. Deriving his discussion in part from several postulations of Octave Mannoni,<sup>10</sup> Metz asserts that belief in the cinema involves a fundamental process of disavowal which controls multiple operations of the cinematographic process.

"It is understood that the audience is not duped by the diegetic illusion, it 'knows' that the screen presents no more than a fiction. And yet, it is of vital importance for the correct unfolding of the spectacle that this make-believe be scrupulously respected (or else the fiction film is declared 'poorly-made'), that everything is set to work to make the deception effective and to give it an air of truth (that is the problem of verisimilitude)."<sup>11</sup>

In other words, behind every incredulous spectator (who **knows** the events taking place on the screen are fictional) lies a credulous one (who nevertheless **believes** these events to be true), disavowing what s/he knows in order to maintain the cinematic illusion. In some respects then, the whole fiction-effect of the film viewing situation turns on this dialectical interplay of knowledge and belief, this "yes' to the world and 'no' to reality."

For Metz, the merging of the cinema and of narrativity, a "great fact" in the history of cultural discourses,<sup>12</sup> is posited precisely in terms of the fiction-effect specific to cinema viewing. The film spectator enters a regime of belief in which s/he is positioned as the producer of the cinematic fiction, dreaming the images and situations (the "ideational representatives" of the Freudian dream-work) which appear on the screen. In this way, cinematic discourse takes its place among other fantasy structures in the psychoanalytic field. As was previously noted, the subject in all fantasmatic productions is invariably present, even in those primal scene fantasies where the subject may be only a perceiving eye, an illicit ob-

server, a hidden voyeur. The centrality of the subject in fantasy and fiction is neatly summarized by Freud: "His Majesty the Ego, the hero of all day-dreams and all novels."<sup>13</sup>

But while all fantasies **originate** from the subject who produces them, a film is a more complicated process involving the technological base, the textual operations of the film, and the unconscious desire, which is mobilized in cinema, of both filmmaker and spectator alike. Thus, what distinguishes the cinematic viewing situation is precisely the production of the viewer's position as an empty space, "a pure capacity for seeing," in order to facilitate that slippage which makes the viewer the producer of the cinematic discourse:

"If the traditional film tends to suppress all the marks of the subject of enunciation, this is in order that the viewer may have the impression of being that subject himself... The important thing is that the spectacle which is 'taken by surprise' should also be surprising, that it should (like any hallucinatory gratification) bear the mark of external reality."<sup>14</sup>

In other words, in order for the cinematic fiction to produce and maintain its fascinating hold on the spectator it must appear as if the screen images are the expressions of the spectator's own desire. Or rather, as aptly described by Bertrand Augst, "The subject-producer must disappear so that the subject-spectator can take his place in the production of the filmic discourse."<sup>15</sup>

This "as if" brings us back to the notion of storytelling, that productive matrix of both the novel and film. It is through storytelling that the "little make-believer" (le petit fabulateur) of the family romance rejoins the cinema spectator. The former is the omnipotent child who, through fictive elaboration of a story of origins, remakes the world to the measure of desire. The latter is that pseudo-subject, the subject of enunciation created specifically by the cinematic apparatus, who "dreams" the story on the screen — whose images appear in a metonymic circulation of desire, from representation to representation. Both participate in the wish-fulfillment and correction of reality that Freud designated as the province of fantasy ("...every separate phantasy contains the fulfillment of a wish and improves on unsatisfactory reality"<sup>16</sup>).

But the cine-subject is a particular kind of dreamer because the filmic state is a unique regime of consciousness, unprecedented in other forms of imaginative activity. In order for the spectator to assume the position of filmic enunciation, it must appear that the story on the screen emerges from nowhere. It must, in effect, efface the traces of its discursive structure.

"The 'story' as system makes it possible to reconcile all that, since history, in Emile Benveniste's terms, is always (by definition) a story told from nowhere, told by nobody, but received by someone (without which it would not exist). It is therefore, in a sense, the receiver (or rather the receptacle) who tells it. . ."<sup>17</sup>

Thus when montage emerged in cinema as the primary mechanism of narrativity ("Going from one image to two images is to go from image to language"<sup>18</sup>), a simultaneous need arose to disguise or conceal its operations. Where the existence of montage pointed to an organizing principle, a primary subjectivity behind the discursive text which selected and organized the shots, the effacement of its traces facilitated the film's appearance as "a story told from nowhere." In a dialectical movement which evokes the oscillation of knowledge and belief, the effective functioning of the cinematic apparatus is only possible on the basis of this concealment of its operations. In this way a pseudo-subject is created which every spectator can appropriate as one's own:

"More blatantly than in other forms of discourses, cinema exploits the links between desire and power precisely in order to secure and maintain its ultimate control over the subject-spectator. . . Reversing the situation of enunciation, cinema seduces the spectator, making him claim as his what he cannot acknowledge consciously. . . With cinema, power has achieved the ultimate control of desire."<sup>19</sup>

In discussing the current status of the novel, Marthe Robert finds Flaubert in some sense at the end of a tradition. Having refined the technique of the word to its ultimate — the invisible omnipotence of the artist-creator — Flaubert is both narcissistic Foundling ("thanks to his pen he is the allpowerful master of figures issuing from his desires"(350) and Oedipal Bastard (subordinating "the content of his dreams to the perfection of writing, for the stories he contrives are not innocent" (353). It seems to Robert that the days of the **arriviste** Bastard's grand adventures are numbered, while "the great authors of the avant-garde tend to let the Foundling undo the novel's plot in order to speak his revolt in a wittingly disorganized form." (362) While the Oedipal novel is still capable of considerable allure, as in Joyce's **Ulysses** or Proust's **A la recherche du temps perdu**, "the Bastard loses a large part of his preponderance, having to be content with furnishing the raw material which the Foundling treats at will, to the point of rendering it unrecognizable or of dissolving it entirely in the very material of language." (362)

Thus the novel's stories no longer depict a "slice of life" immersed in the temporal and spacial specificities of experience; the vocation of realism linked to the fundamental impulses of the family romance no longer belongs to the novel.

"For the first time since **Don Quixote** and **Robinson Crusoe** launched it on its adventurous way, the novel is free to be written entirely on the margin of the struggles of interests, desires and feelings which have made it, throughout time, the most powerful means of communication between the dream of a single person and the profound reality of all. It is free to be nothing but a succession of phrases with neither History nor stories [**sans Histoire ni histoires**], free to say nothing but the narcissistic vertigo of its own writing, and even to decree that it must find there the only respectable part of its vocation." (363)

If not the novel, then, where? Flaubert's invisible, all-powerful artist, "like the God of creation," seems to re-emerge in the subject-effect of the cinematic apparatus. The advent of the fiction film represents much more than the cinematic dramatization of the novel; it heralds a new form of social discourse with a specific system of signification. Controlling the representations, yet invisible and absent, the subject of enunciation of the cinematic discourse occupies the position of the 19th century Realist novelist. "All that remains is the raw fact of seeing, . . . seeing without marks or place, directing us into vicarious experience like the narrator-as-God or the viewer-as-God; it is the 'story' which exhibits itself, the story which reigns."<sup>20</sup>

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Marthe Robert has written extensively (in French) on literature and psychoanalysis. She has translated the works of Kafka, Kleist, Goethe, and Nietzsche, among others, into French. She has written biographies of Heinrich von Kleist and Franz Kafka. Some of her French books include:

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\* \* \* \*

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\* \* \* \*

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## FOOTNOTES

1. This is an assertion made by film historian Robert C. Allen (in **AFI Education Newsletter** 3:3, January-February 1980) based on paper print records.
2. Marthe Robert, **Roman des origines et origines du roman** (Paris: Gallimard, 1972). All page references to this book will be made in the body of the text; all translations are my own.
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19. Augst, **op. cit.**, p. 54.
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# PARADOXES OF REALISM: THE RISE OF FILM IN THE TRAIN OF THE NOVEL

*Margaret Morse*

The commonplace assumption that the cinema is a 19th century form, a continuation of narrative modes and melodramatic contents pioneered and naturalized in the novel, will find some support in Ian Watt's **The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957). The novel may have risen, then, but film as a great narrative fiction machine and socializing agent would simply have stepped into the traces of its predecessor, the novel, a social and cultural construction of the 18th century. Both cultural forms can indeed be subsumed under a generalized interest in depicting reality, the authentic record of everyday human experience in narrative fiction. However, a serious application of Watt's methodology to film makes possible some refreshing ways of differentiating novel/film, and raises other questions that a strictly semiotic, psychoanalytic or Marxist approach would not.

### The Rise of the Novel: Reception and Methodology

After its American publication in 1957, simultaneously with its appearance in London, **The Rise of the Novel** garnered a position as the college text of the 1960's on the subject matter, a combination literary history and critical evaluation of the influential novels of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding. While the scholarship may have been superseded by subsequent research and new data, and perhaps other texts may now be preferred (judging by the moderate slump in sales in the 1970's), Watt's work remains unique as an approach, an audacious union of the sociological and the philosophical, of the empirical and the theoretical, presented in a both scholarly and personal mode. While one can point to many parallels in film theory and criticism, there is no one approach which makes the link between a history of changing social relations and cultural institutions, the mode of production and reception of film texts and the analysis of the texts themselves in their historical context.

That Watt's now classic book has not ceased to be of interest to literary scholars and theoreticians either in the United States or in Europe is indicated by the plenary address and panel discussion by and with Ian Watt in 1978 on the book at the Southeastern American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies, and by the recent translations into German and Polish in 1974 and Italian in 1976.<sup>1</sup> What interests me and perhaps other scholars of the 1980's about Watt's approach is its scale of relevance, for what is at stake are not any particular novels or even the novel as a discrete genre with specific properties, but what a Watt translator has termed "the conditions of production of cultural models."<sup>2</sup> My own previous research has also taken courage from **The Rise of the Novel** in an attempt of similar scale to show the failure or growing irrelevance of particular cultural models in turn-of-the-century Vienna.<sup>3</sup>

The variety of approaches needed to work at Watt's scale of relevance is somewhat intimidating and the epistemological problems are truly hair-raising. The exact mix of methodological traditions in **Rise of the Novel** can probably not be duplicated since they are a largely intuitive product of the cross-currents in Watt's own intellectual history, a unique and perhaps inimitable personal expression. Nor should that mix of empirical, sociological, phenomenological approaches be replicated exactly, because in the meantime we have obtained some of the tools needed to work analytically where Watt was working on intuition. (More on this later.) What allows Watt to negotiate the shaky epistemological grounds inherent in his project with some grace is his lack of interest in either the novel as a discrete theoretical construct or in devising a narrative of its history, rising or waning. He does insist on analysis of concrete novels and draws on demographic data with aplomb, but these are not the crux of the matter either. What matters is the link between these realia and the conditions which made them possible, as theoretically reconstructed. Such linkage is hardly empirical; it is admittedly hypothetical and its virtue lies in its explanatory power.

How does Watt proceed with this montage of what Christian Metz, for example, distinguishes in regard to the cinema as two different kinds of history, external and internal, i.e.

the history of the cinema as a social, cultural and economic institution and the history of film in its own autonomous development as a meaningful form? How does Watt keep separate, yet show correspondences between social norms and particular linguistic performances? between material and ideological pre-conditions for the novel and novels? His solution is to work the link in two directions, from a general premise about social and cultural norms and patterns of life to its illustration in particular novels (i.e. individualism in Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe**), and from constellations of relationships in the novel to their social, cultural and material pre-conditions (i.e. from the sado-masochistic relationship between Lovelace and Clarissa to the division of labor and sex-roles in 18th century English society).

Anyone familiar with the Kuleshov effect will recognize that these links are ultimately made in our mind, but Watt's correspondences are quite convincing to me and underline the value of heterogeneous approaches. However, I would recast the project in other terms, for what he is doing in the critical currency of today is reconstructing positions of enunciation and what made them possible. The concept of language as enunciation emphasizes speaking (and other linguistic acts) as a performance by a subject to an addressee in a particular space and time. One useful distinction which the idea of enunciation makes possible is that between an act of enunciation and an utterance: the "I" who speaks is different than the "I" who is the subject of a sentence. The position of enunciation implies a place in the social order as well as a temporal and spatial position. Not all possibilities to function as subject of an enunciative act are available to every member of society, but tend rather to be distributed unevenly according to material conditions and ideological factors (and I would include gender, race, class, age, sexual preference, etc. under the category of ideology). It is possible to reconstruct the position of enunciation from the utterance because every utterance is marked to some degree or other by the attitudes and value of the position from which it was enunciated.

As I interpret Watt's project, he posits pre-conditions for enunciating and receiving particular kinds of utterances (novels) and locates positions of enunciation and reception in English society (authorship, readership, marketplace, etc.). He then sets these positions, from which a certain kind of literary performance is possible (middle class, relations to print-medium, literacy, privacy), into relation with the positions from which particular utterances in specific novels appear to be made, primarily in terms of the relation of the author to the utterance. In the process Watt conflates the actual author (Defoe, Richardson, Fielding) and the subject of enunciation, but I am not sure it harms his conclusions. The "position of the subject" so often encountered in film theory is actually that of five different subjects: actual author in a social context/subject of the enunciation/subject of the utterance/subject of address, which can also be reconstructed from the utterance/and, the actual viewer. These "five subjects" are worth keeping in mind, because they may diverge. Psychoanalysis also reminds us that the subject is split into conscious/unconscious as well.

After establishing the dominance or at least the importance of women in the 18th century reading public (with leisure, literacy, privacy and upwardly mobile aspirations by means of personal relationships) and having already established the relation between the novel and the private sphere where women have been relegated, Watt goes on to make some interesting assertions about the relation between Defoe and Richardson and their female characters. Defoe's Moll Flanders speaks with a "male voice," a voice which is in fact identical to Defoe's. Moll's astonishingly unselfconscious egotism and the gulf between her moral beliefs and self-serving operant values are not irony on Defoe's part but his own inner contradictions and those of a society undergoing secularisation. Richardson, on the other hand, has a strong identification with women of his circle and his female readership, allowing his Pamela a "female voice," ultimately transformed, however, into a very authoritative "male voice." These assertions about the amount of identification between author and character and the sex of his voice are intuitive conclusions on Watt's part. It is possible to be sensitive to modulations of the text and to sense the gender and social location from which an utterance could possibly come — and I prefer that way of looking at it to the idea of a "female voice" in the text. But at this point in discourse on literature it is possible and productive to use a more precise semiotic tool and to demonstrate (through the use of shifters, relatives, performatives, tenses and evaluative and emotive terms) the "imprint of the process of enunciation in the utterance."<sup>4</sup>

There is another issue involved in the linkage of pre-conditions for enunciations and the actual reconstruction of positions of enunciation from the (novelistic or filmic) utterance: What kind of link is it? The relation established is not necessarily homologous; nor does this two-way vector of linkage imply that social and historical conditions determine the text or vice versa. The relation between socio-historical context and imaginative literature which I have extrapolated from Watt's analysis is one where imagination supplies an identity founded on continuous spatial and temporal experience, the possibilities for which were increasingly lacking in 18th century middle-class society.

Here I have alluded to another critical vocabulary lacking in Watt's book — not Freudian psychoanalysis, for that is in evidence, especially in his interpretation of Richardson, but a Lacanian approach. Watt manages to describe the fiction-effect, identification and the split-subject without any recourse to Lacan. Watt's thinking precedes and parallels that of Christian Metz in "The Imaginary Signifier,"<sup>5</sup> which does depend on the Lacanian notions of the mirror-stage and the imaginary. The ahistorical and anti-contextual bias of Lacan is, of course, not assimilable to Watt's approach, concerned as it is with socio-historical context and with an instance of cultural change which seems to presume the changing psyche as well. And where one wishes to compare cultural models for their commonalities and differences, Watt's approach is the more productive one, vis-à-vis Lacan.

One possibility of linkage between our two kinds of histories seemingly unaccounted for is that of non-correspondence. What if a cultural model were autonomous, without social function, or atavistic and residual, having outlived its relation to changing society? The possibility exists, especially if we consider film a product of the 19th-century in a late 20th-century world. A specific case of non-correspondence, it would seem, is between the possibilities for enunciation by women in today's society and the dearth of utterances which could be made from female positions in film. To what do we owe this puzzling lack in film of female subjects? There is another possibility besides anachronism, one to which Watt's analysis of the sadistic relationship in Clarissa is a precursor — that of cultural model as an ideological weapon, a tool to maximize or minimize the possibilities located in positions marked by gender, class, age, and so on. If the novel is a female-sympathetic model, as Watt implicitly claims, it may be possible to show how and why the film is a male-sympathetic model in terms of the interests of positions of enunciation in the social context. The linkage then becomes available to more than a sociological or psychoanalytic approach — it becomes part of a conflict theory of cultural models, ideologically and positionally marked.<sup>6</sup>

#### Major Premises: The Paradoxes of Realism

A major feature of the novel, according to Watt, is its valuation both of the detailed presentation of everyday life in all its particularity with "optical accuracy," and of concern with the individual life in all its singularity against that background. Hence characters in novels have proper names. This preoccupation with realism, defined thusly marks a change in values and patterns of awareness in English society, distinguished first by a diminishment in scale from broad public concerns to private life and personal relations, and then by valuation of the autonomous individual as opposed to the social order and its hierarchy. Watt mentions the social changes of urbanization and development of a market economy which makes such things as specialization, money and bookkeeping, print and the literacy needed to circulate it, postal and highway systems, possible and necessary. Paradoxically, besides massing human beings, these social changes also isolated them from each other. Privacy and leisure are creations of the period as well, not yet commodities but by-products to which middle-class women, servants and apprentices had greater access than other groups. (Current social histories may revise Watt's conclusions about the leisurely life of women of the period.)

Another paradox implicit in Watt's analysis is that the very factors which split experience into partial events — the division of labor and the separation of private life from social and economic activity — are supported by an ideology of individualism and identity founded on memory, temporality experienced as a causal succession of events in continuous space unified in a single consciousness. Identity founded on narrativity seems to be something

new; Watt cites medieval definitions of realism and the abstract relation between scenes in Shakespeare (among other things) as evidence for a prior sense of reality and identity.

What had changed in the meantime? In Adam Smith's pin factory in **The Wealth of Nations**, each worker rather than making a whole pin undertook a part of the process, the head for example. Smith imagined that the workers would cooperatively put the pins together, part of a larger co-operation between entrepreneurs, landowners and workers. However, it became clear in Marx's analysis of alienation that workers may lose contact with the final product and with the meaning of the work process. One of the attractions of Robinson Crusoe, in Watt's analysis, is that he overcomes the specialization of his age and becomes the dream of the absolute individual, an island entire unto himself, able to supply every need, replete with stock, bookkeeping and an utterly selfish relation to other human beings. And this selfishness was also a part of Adam Smith's co-operative model, for each worker, entrepreneur and landowner in pursuit of his own benefit would ultimately serve the social welfare, regulated only by the Invisible Hand, the only site where the whole came together. Robinson Crusoe has an exceptional whole command of everyday life in his hands; he knows where his bread comes from, from wheat to table. And Crusoe is not only a whole individual in ideology, but in a continuous narrative available in one possessable item at a reasonable cost.

In Richardson's novels, the female experience of isolation and lack of control over her own fate is given direction. Richardson has written a manual for seduction as well as manuals for letter-writing and burial in **Pamela** and **Clarissa**, and he prepared women for the two possible outcomes of the only strategy available to those given no place of their own to speak from, marriage or death. These options achieve recognition and fix identity in a male-oriented society, where women were increasingly dependent on marriage at the same time that marriage grew increasingly difficult to achieve. Unfortunately the Invisible Hand had not provided English society with a co-operative sexual division of labor and the sexual codes of male and female could be diametrically opposed in their aims and interests. The massive epistolary exchange in the many volumes of Richardson's novels gives an overview of what was going on in the consciousness of correspondents on both sides of the closet.

It is interesting that the novels of Defoe and Richardson both mimic not life directly, but the literature of unified experience, the autobiographical memoir and correspondence by letter. Both novelists base their claim to a depiction of reality on the authenticity of these personal records of experience. Of course these would have been unique and singular objects, written in everyday language by hand in a situation of privacy and leisure.

The novel, however, it may be written is produced under quite other conditions: printed replication en masse for a market in the public sphere. Consumption is again private, in the closet or a room of one's own, which makes possible the performance of novels as silent reading, with consequent lowering of censorship and increasing ability to identify with the fictional world. The realism of the novel, the sense of unmediated access to unified space and time, is achieved by making both the prose and the print as transparent as possible. Prose is the poetic language most analogous to the language of everyday life, hence invisible and universally accessible to the literate. The enunciative stance of the witness in a court of law giving circumstantial evidence is the one adopted by an author, who like the court seeks to keep his/her own subjectivity invisible. The uniformity of the print medium makes literacy as automatic reading possible; its very impersonality authenticates the reality of the personal expression of experience. The visibility of print in a tangible object, a book, makes the inner and outer life of an individual equally real. What these formal means ultimately make possible is the illusion of reality, the vicarious enjoyment of the experience of others as a continuous whole, and the adoption by the reader of the position of a voyeur with an impossible point of view, invisible oneself yet able to see even into the consciousness of others. Anyone who thought that the camera was the first to institute this psychic regime of voyeuristic identification with pure seeing will be reminded that the novel is also a mechanically-reproduced visual medium and a recording art; this fact plays an important part in its fiction-effect on the reader. The ultimate result of what Watt terms "formal

realism" is that the novel is "capable of a more thorough subversion of psychological and social reality than any previous (literary genre)."<sup>7</sup>

Watt goes on, however, to distinguish a second kind of realism, different than the formal or presentational realism already described (and hence not restricted to novels). This is a "realism of assessment." In Fielding's works, the author's presence and values are felt in explicit commentary and in "words and phrases (which) intentionally invoke not only the actual narrative event, but the whole literary, historical, and philosophical perspective in which character or action should be placed by the reader."<sup>8</sup> This variation of the novel is characterized by obtrusive patterning of plot and by figurative language which draws attention to itself. In the process the novel itself and the attitude of its narrator to it comes into view to become "real." The aim of realism of assessment is to bring the novel "into contact with the whole tradition of civilized values," and the ordering of social groups rather than the sovereign individual is its main emphasis. At the cost of the pleasures of identification with the illusion of reality, this kind of realism, the novel as discourse, brings with it detachment and the possibility of conscious assessment by the reader.

Another paradox of realism is that the social orientation of the novel of assessment is expressed at the price of its popularity, and its self-conscious form, less accessible and comprehensible than transparent prose, is ultimately more elitist. This configuration has been a recurring dilemma in the cultural models of theater and film, for each has a similar "formal realism" and a "realism of assessment." The politically-progressive filmmaker, for example, has a choice of producing a Hollywood-type of film in hopes of reaching a larger audience — at the cost of hypnotizing it rather than changing its conscious conviction; or, of producing a film which is also real as discourse and therefore of sacrificing the larger audience unprepared to understand the film or take pleasure from it.

Watt's analysis has the merit of setting these two realisms in their social and historical context. The solution to the dilemma, then, would seem to lie in the matrix of relations which are the pre-conditions for the dilemma rather than in the valorization of either pole. As long as sovereign individuality is the mythic foundation of the social order, such a dilemma seems inevitable. The remarkable achievement of the novel as a cultural model is to have harnessed the forces of psychic regression to an ideology of individualism. Dionysian communion, founded upon dropping the barriers between self and other, had had a socializing function of furthering identification and cooperation with the social order: the novel socializes into individualism, the "selfishness" which was the motivating force of Adam Smith's co-operative social and economic order. At the same time, the novel made possible the reassessment and change of personal identity on the basis of narrative reflection; that is, it offered the possibility of changing one's position of enunciation from that assigned by the social order, a change of identity not as conversion but as moral choice.

It is possible to recast Watt's two contrasting realisms in terms of modes of enunciation. Emile Benveniste has made a distinction which would be useful in a Wattian-type project. This is the differentiation between utterances which are openly the product of a particular enunciative situation located in time and space between a speaker and an addressee (discourse), and those utterances which efface or mask the enunciative process (history or story). Both film and novel belong to the second type (story), as shown in the application of the distinction to literature by Gérard Genette<sup>10</sup> and to film by Christian Metz.<sup>11</sup>

However, is the distinction story/discourse a matter of degree or of differences in kind? Subsequent thinking on genre theory by Genette and others maintains that a genre such as the novel is a matter of consensus and convention, an arbitrary and historical concatenation of elements. A mode of enunciation (inclusion or exclusion of interlocutors and enunciative situation, i.e. discourse/story) can be distributed differently within a text and among the texts assigned to a genre. Evaluating presence in a novel is clearly a matter of degree; in the end the reader surmises even without explicit guidance the position of author-enunciator through points of view which reflect the enunciator as well as mirror "reality as the novelist saw it."<sup>12</sup> The difference between open discourse and masked discourse or story



is an important one, especially in ascertaining the relation of a text to its reader as well as to its writer, a difference which must be ascertained case by case rather than globally. The recasting of Watt's two realisms in terms of enunciation allows them to be set into relation to other cultural models such as film.

#### Novel/Film: The Great Hollywood Commutation Test

Thus far the numerous commonalities between novel and film have been underlined by reviewing Watt's analysis. His book seems a harbinger, his conclusions antecede those of film theory of the next two decades. But what if we were to substitute film for novel in Watt's approach, rather than merely appropriating his conclusions on the novel to film? Do any differences come to the fore when the Invisible Hand is replaced with the likewise invisible and Omniscient Eye? Are realism, individualism, literacy and privacy the keywords of film?

If the fragmentation of experience was a prime factor in the need to create an identity from narrative, the changes in economic and social life of the 19th and early 20th century augmented and extended that fragmentation until it pervaded every aspect of life. The division of labor was extended so that labor was divided into head work and hand work, and control was exercised over the hands and the order of completion of tasks by dividing the tasks into tiny bits and by regulating the execution and rhythm of work. These changes are known globally as "Taylorism" and they improved efficiency of factory production by taking what was essentially a whole worker with a partial task in Adam Smith's conception and dividing the worker into convenient pieces (mind, hand, leg, etc.). The assembly line is the embodiment of this organization of work with an additional feature — a car can be made in many different places and at different times and assembled in a convenient rather than logical order of parts.

Now all of these features which hold true of labor itself are also true of film. Film reassembles fragments into an identity in place and time which is imaginary in its wholeness and continuity. Furthermore, the assembled whole may never have existed referentially or in pro-filmic reality. It was a true revelation to Kuleshov's workshop to discover, for example, that one could make a place which never existed by putting together bits of landscape into "creative geography." His workshop also made a "woman" out of bits and pieces of film of different women. (How revealing it is that these two bodies-in-pieces assembled into objects of desire were a landscape and a woman — and not a man.)

The pair *découpage/montage* (cutting up the story, selecting out the pro-filmic reality and cutting it out with the frame into bits/creating a succession which evokes a whole) is the order of the assembly line itself — but it is the spectator who assembles the final product, the imaginary space or identity. The cultural model film evokes a factory world: it is collectively made, capital-intensive, consumed publicly in specially designated places, and like a laborer's time, it is a commodity which is nothing tangible, nothing more than the right to rent a seat for a specified time. The Hollywood factory system with its hierarchical and minute division of labor is just the most obvious and consequent embodiment of intrinsic properties of the film as cultural model.

Post-revolutionary Soviet filmmakers like Dziga Vertov recognized that the division of labor in film production and reception is a very important and regressive aspect of its form; Vertov has been accused of "implicit Taylorism"<sup>13</sup> but that accusation is readily applied to film as a whole — Vertov had the insight to make it explicit. Like the worker, film marches the spectator along at a pace determined by the machine.<sup>14</sup> Vertov's critic suggests a "slow-down" as the answer to the "speed-up" of the machine of narrative. But evidently something more fundamental would have to be changed in the division of labor in film to overcome the features of the model itself.

The model of film is also the product of the "male" side of the division of labor. It presumes (no matter what sex actually occupies a "male" position) a primacy of the public sphere and a private sphere as a support system charged with reproducing the social order. That films appear to address women as spectators obliquely through a male-charged point of

view corresponds to the larger social context where women also accept and translate address from the male position to their own. To occupy male positions in cinematic production or to produce better "images" of women (the very idea of which shows how naturalized the image of woman as commodity has become) does not in and of itself make women subjects of enunciation. In the larger social context, as long as the basic division of labor (work presuming a supportive private sphere) remains the same, every gain made for women in occupying positions in the social order is a loss for men and an additional burden to women (the double load). Considering the interests within the social order, it would be remarkable if a cultural model produced and consumed in a male-oriented sector did not serve the ideological interests of that sphere. (In Richardson's day, the aspirations of women coincided with the interests of the rising middle-class).

With this in mind, it is possible to interpret the resourcefulness of Griffith's **Lonedale Operator** (1911), that virtue in women which used to be known as "pluck," as a mistake similar to the mismatching eyelines and mixed-up screen direction in the same film. The telegraph operator besieged by thieves telegraphs for her own rescue and then faints. She proceeds to hold her attackers at bay with a wrench which looks like a gun. In the remake of the film in 1912, Griffith has the heroine shoot through a keyhole at her attacker with a gun, repeating a motif of **The Lonely Villa**, where the evil housemaid shoots wildly through a hole in the wall. The woman is without an overview, unable to handle the tools of a male world.

Other forms of fragmentation experience in the 19th century can contribute to our understanding of film as a cultural model. The railroad, feature of the first wave of industrialization, united distant places along a track sequentially — but at the cost of making space discontinuous. What is in between stations loses its meaning as real space and becomes visually-appreciated landscape. It was the railroad which also brought to consciousness the separate nature of light and sound; at the speed of train travel, the image of the train is separate from the sound of the whistle. (And the discovery of the Doppler effect is attributed to observation of the changing pitch of a train whistle.) The automobile has an effect similar to a train on space, except that one has more points of departure and destination in its traces. The telegraph and telephone also separate the interlocutors of discourse from the limits of spatial continuity — except that of a wire. The electric light freed human activity from its temporal regulation by daylight; energy freed the sphere of labor from private life even further. The phonograph frees sound from its place, time and subjectivity of origin; the camera abolishes time by fixing the image, and abolishes spatial continuity by bringing life-like images of distant places to the viewer. Eyes and ears of 19th century spectators were displaced along wires, tracks, roads and filaments at diverging places and times.

The task of creating a sense of unified experience and an identity in the 19th and early 20th century — considering also that spectators themselves were from a far more heterogeneous group in terms of class, national and cultural traditions — was a far more prodigious one than that faced by the cultural model of the novel. The developing primacy of the image over the printed and spoken word in public life is a feature of the period. The image is a socializing force in a different way than the word, more conducive to the task at hand. The desire for continuity which would make sense of the fragmented and discontinuous experiences of everyday life is understandable. The now-so-disparaged continuity editing was a formal and ideological achievement which we can dispense with now that it is fully naturalized. Besides developing its own logical formal relations (eye-line matches, direction matches, 30° and 180° rules, etc.), early films often employed an array of other machines to motivate relationships between shots which were discontinuous in the visual field of the diegesis (the world evoked by the narrative). Distant spaces in simultaneous time are evoked and connected by railroad and telegraph as well as by formal alternations between them in **The Lonedale Operator**; by automobile and telephone in **The Lonely Villa**; and by a relay of automobile, train, telephone and hand-delivered note to the final destination of the rope in the last modern sequence of **Intolerance**. It is true that the gathering of the clans in **Birth of a Nation** lacks such mechanistic motivating links, but it is more than compensated for by the impressive visual scene of lines of men on horseback who are at once relays and rescuers. The look is a powerful tool of linkage, but it is limited to the visually or subjectively

accessible. Some exceptions prove the rule: consider the impossible look of Marie de Medici and son on a cut to an event which happened earlier and elsewhere, a Huguenot uprising in **Intolerance**. Or the look between Dracula and Elizabeth, in Transylvania and Bremen respectively — such hypnotic telepathy has become one of the unremarkable powers of every film viewer. The habits of the present day viewer have become so different, that it is a startling device to follow the link between two alternating spaces, be it the pneumatic tube system of Paris, the telephone system of London, a Belgian train or Roman highway system, all of which have been featured in commercial (formal realist) and avant-garde (realist films of assessment) in recent years.

But to return to an earlier period when a new organization of space and time had yet to lose its strangeness, the major theme of comedy was precisely the machine — train, automobile, factory and the cinema. The very assumptions and devices of linkage upon which the cultural model of film is based were put into question: cars wove wildly unrestricted to any path, pies were substituted for looks, and impossible matches aided improbable rescues. The double-take of the Buster Keaton character in The General at the missing box-car uncouples the link between seeing, knowing and controlling reality.

But it is well to remember that the look Buster Keaton gives the missing box-car is actually directed out at us, the subject of the camera-spectator position. It is we who put the fragments together, who assemble the machine into a whole which never existed. And we do it retrospectively. The whole we assemble is accessible to very little conscious but much unconscious revision; unlike the novel, the film disappears to anyone who doesn't have access to a machine. When we do have access to a film, we can retrieve it only along a line or filament, whereas the book and the library are a remarkable tree-like ordering system. The book exists in real space, the film exists only in memory, except for those few who have depreciated capital stock, actual film, in their possession. Our means of reassessment are drastically curtailed in comparison to the novel. Furthermore, the film gives us access to the perceptual consciousness of the subject, but the conceptual and introspective consciousness of the novel is virtually lacking. It is time to ask whether or not the substitution of images for the printed word in the narrative does not make possible an utterly different means of constituting a subject. And furthermore, would it not be productive to see whether or not the process of substitution and the legitimation of the image can be followed formally and thematically in film history?

Rather than assuming that the cultural model of the film filled a need (which began with Plato or with the Renaissance or with industrialization) for increasing realism, the question is whether there wasn't something uncanny about these life-like moving images and sounds which was only gradually deconstructed. Suppose that the increasing realism of film (sound, color, wide-screen) was only slowly made possible by the suppression of the power of images to invoke reality. The relation of images to effigy magic is widely known; the invocatory power of images to create rather than represent a world still plays an important part in our enjoyment of them. Our modern visual culture, including not only film but advertising, television, design, etc. would seem to have been made possible by the mass suggestion that images do not have the power to invoke reality.

A legitimating function of titles and allusions to books can be easily recognized in the early films of D.W. Griffith & others. The image track is like an overgrown book illustration securely anchored by the printed word. It strikes me as quaint when in the German film Uncanny Stories (1919) three portrait paintings on a wall come to life at the stroke of midnight, leap through all the books and find the stories in which they then play the main parts.

Anxiety over loss of conscious control of events and over the seductive power of the filmic and the female image are an overriding theme in Expressionist film. In a late contribution to the discourse on cinematic seduction, Fritz Lang's **M** (1931), there is the visual premise that two parallel societies exist, a lower criminal world based on the visual and the aural with a hermeneutics of total observation, and a society of the law based on the hermeneutic principles of the letter, archives and the trace. If the printed word has social primacy,

the formal relationships in the film equate the two societies of image and sound/word as interdependent, equivalent and equally subject to the Law. The irrationality ascribed to the visual-aural is displaced onto an outsider-madman and onto every man.

Early Soviet cinema displayed an implicitly ambiguous attitude toward the cultural model of film. Lenin's promotion of Soviet film can be seen as an attempt to capture a dangerous power for the Party rather than as a positive or appreciative aesthetic attitude. In Eisenstein's October, the progressive revolution is in the hands of those who use the printed word and the map for the rational control of the crowd; the provisional government is motivated by effigies and images. In Vertov's Man with the Movie Camera, the aggression of the camera, the sedentary spectators, the ad juxtaposed with the consumption of beer, the speed-up of the assembly worker and many other moments display a relation to film ranging from ambiguous to critical. This uneasiness with film seems impossible to recapture in a world of the fully naturalized image.

Have realism and an identity founded on narrative become something with which we can afford to dispense? The proper name of the character in the novel has been replaced by the star with a role. The "image" has largely replaced the concept of identity as correspondence between reality and consciousness. Those who sell only their labor power as time need no image; wherever some element of personality (presence, charisma, sexual attractiveness, executive ability) is a commodity, the image is indispensable. The demand for authenticity in the image of the politician is still there, but it is validated by shaping private life to the image and publicizing it. What can be ascertained in popular culture is a growing demand for the simulated rather than for the realistic, for the sign of an experience rather than the experience (as if it were real). The 1919 promise, threat or command: "Du mußt Caligari werden!" seems so outdated, because on the one hand, as we have produced and naturalized the cultural model of film we have become Caligari; on the other hand, in greater numbers we'd rather "love to hate" a low-down, two-timing, ranch-stealing scoundrel on television.

Fiction is suspended disbelief in the world evoked by the narrative, but now the accent has shifted. Our imaginary bodies are dispersed in networks over space and in time; our living bodies are often immobilized at a desk, a console or in the dead-space in between. The average American family daily spends almost the equivalent of another working day watching television. In such a social context, the claim of realism to imitate the experience of everyday life faithfully may lose its power to charm.

## FOOTNOTES

1. I would like to express my thanks to Ian Watt for his generosity in making background information available, including his own article, "Serious Reflections on **The Rise of the Novel**," **Novel**, 1 (1968), 205-216, reprinted in **Towards a Poetics of Fiction**, ed. Mark Spilka (Bloomington and London: 1977) which provided many of the insights into his work in evidence here. This does not suggest that he would support my premises or conclusions, for, of course, the overall interpretation of his work and any further additions, applications, speculations and mistakes are my own.
2. Grosso Destreri in his introductory essay to **Le Origini del Romanzo Borghese**, Italian translation of **The Rise of the Novel**, brought to my attention by Watt.
3. **The Works of Arthur Schnitzler as an Index of Cultural Change: Relations between the Sexes in Social Reality, Ideology and the Imagination**, Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1977.
4. "Enunciation," **Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Sciences of Language** by Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1979), 324.
5. In: **Screen** 16, 2 (Summer 1975) 14-76, a translation of "Le signifiant imaginaire," **Communications** 23 (1975) 3-55. Metz's approach is more worked out and precise, however, than Watt's; Metz does not necessarily share Lacan's biases, just some of his conceptual apparatus. Metz's work has been implicitly assimilated to Watt's in the application of a Wattian approach to film because Metz has done most to define what the cultural model of film is.
6. For an example of such an approach c.f. 3 above.
7. **The Rise of the Novel**, 206.
8. "Serious Reflections," 99.
9. "Serious Reflections," 98 and **Rise**, 288.
10. "Frontières du récit," **Communications** 8, 152-163.
11. "Histoire/Discours," **Langue, Discours, Société-Pour Emile Benveniste**, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975) 301-306.
12. **Rise**, 118.
13. Stanley Aronowitz, "Film — The Art Form of Late Capitalism," **Social Text** 1 (Winter 1979) 110-129.
14. C.f. Thierry Kuntzel, "Le Défilement," **Revue d'Esthétique** 1973, 97-110.

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## DECEIT, DESIRE, AND FILM NARRATIVE

*Alan Williams*

Reread only twenty years after its original publication in French, **Deceit, Desire, and the Novel**<sup>1</sup> is in some ways a genuinely shocking book. In an era of critical formalism, René Girard argues that works by "novelists of genius" (no death of the author here!) are distinguished by a specific, consistent **content**. Great novels, to put the thesis bluntly, depict life in society correctly; they tell **the truth**. These works Girard calls **romanesque** ("novelistic" in the translation). Other, lesser novels lie, albeit in a particular and consistent manner. These he terms **romantique** ("romantic"). The opposition is given from the outset in the original title of the book, **Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque** (literally: "Romantic Lying and Novelistic Truth"). Thus there are two basic components in Girard's account of the novel: a thesis about life in society and a set of interconnected explications of the works of five novelists who correctly represent this in their works. To these, Girard appends periodic explanations of various aspects of the romantic, both as attitude towards life and towards the novel. (The romantic in fact, will emerge as a particular type of motivated misreading of the novelistic.)

Girard is certainly not the only twentieth-century critic of the novel to foreground content/"truth" (the signified, the referent) in his work. In this as in other ways **Deceit, Desire, and the Novel** recalls the critical positions of Georg Lukàcs. And Girard's theory of life in society, as well, does not lack theoretical parallels; as will soon become apparent, his theory of desire has noteworthy similarities to the analyses of Freud and Lacan. In addition, the book raises, in its work on particular texts, such currently fashionable issues as irony, motivated misreading, and the intimate connection between revealing a "truth" and providing camouflage for it.

Nonetheless, despite all of these tempting intellectual parallels the book remains a relatively isolated instance, a one-of-a-kind landmark in the literature on the novel. Various reasons may be advanced to account for this. Such will be, to some extent, the fate of all genuinely original works of criticism (as opposed to more strictly theoretical endeavors). Furthermore, it is undeniable that the Girardian system seems, viewed from the perspective of further development, a simple, reasonable idea subject to permutations of great interest. A faithful Girardian reading of a film or novel would discover, perhaps, a new version of the novelistic/romantic opposition, but it is doubtful that it would find a new theoretical consequence of the premise. Girard's very inclusiveness may in this sense work against him; it is hard to discover anything "new" about his system that he hasn't already said or at least implied (since the system is so restricted and manageable).

This sort of potential limitation has not, however, stood in the way of academic endeavors in the past, and in any case "revitalizations" of Girard's theories are in fact conceivable. More critical is the position that **Deceit, Desire, and the Novel** occupies in the history of contemporary scholarship viewed as a political process. Girard's book has doubtless seemed to some students of literature the very epitome of "old guard" criticism, and hence useless in their fight against it. (Girard would doubtless be able to analyze this situation in terms of his own theories of desire and rivalry...) In any event, the recent (and only comparative) neglect of **Deceit, Desire, and the Novel** in literary theory has probably lessened its impact on work in film and the novel. Nonetheless, I will argue in this essay that the book raises issues of substantial importance for the study of narrative cinema. If Girard's work does not necessarily provide convenient recipes for film analysis (though in a few cases I think it does do this), it can suggest reading practices worthy of emulation, and also provide a highly suggestive model for the historical placement of film narrative.

## I. MEDIATED DESIRE

At the heart of Girard's analysis is a theory of desire, in the largest sense of the word ("will" and "power" are correlate concepts). The basic thesis of the book is that desire, in everyday life and in works by "novelists of genius," is invariably triangular. It is never the case that a subject simply and fully desires an object — though this is the ("romantic") manner



in which desire is habitually read. In reality, the subject desires an object because the subject believes the object to be desired by someone else. Thus, "at the origin of a desire there is always the spectacle of another real or imaginary desire" (p. 105). This original desire may be real or illusory precisely because it is a **spectacle**, a representation for (and, in the case of illusion, of) the desiring subject. Reduced to a **moraliste's** aphorism: one only desires when one is jealous.

Although sexual desire is in most respects the prototype for Girard, he stresses that all forms of wishing have, ultimately, triangular form. And, in fact, his first example involves not sex but, quite typically, money and social status:

In the first pages of **The Red and the Black** we take a walk through Verrières with the mayor of the village and his wife. Majestic but tormented, M. de Rênal strolls along his retaining walls. He wants to make Julien Sorel the tutor of his two sons, but not for their sake nor from love of knowledge. His desire is not spontaneous. The conversation between husband and wife soon reveals the mechanism: "Valenod has no tutor for his children — he might very well steal this one from us."

Valenod is the richest and most influential man in Verrières, next to M. de Rênal himself. The mayor of Verrières always has the image of his rival before his eyes during his negotiations. . . . The ever-increasing price that [the mayor] is willing to pay is determined by the imaginary desire which he attributes to his rival. ( . . . ) The Triangle is present each time that Stendhal speaks of vanity, whether it is a question of ambition, business, or love. It is surprising that the Marxist critics, for whom economic structures provide the archetype of all human relations, have not as yet pointed out the analogy between the crafty bargaining of old man Sorel and the amorous maneuvers of his son. (pp. 6-7)

Desire, for both Girard and Stendhal, is intimately linked with rivalry and jealousy. Monsieur de Rênal's obsession with Valenod's possible intervention in his affairs is just that — an obsession with the rival. Girard repeatedly stresses that the rival, or in his more general terms, the mediator, is the fundamental prerequisite for desire. To produce two terms (subject and object), a third term is necessary (the mediator). The triangle M. de Rênal Julien/Valenod is an example of a specific type of desire that Girard labels "internal" mediation. Another example occurs later in **The Red and the Black** when Julien wins back the love of Mathilde de la Mole by paying ostentatious court to another woman, the Maréchale de Fervaques.

This type of mediation is "internal" in a social (and inter-subjective) sense — Valenod and M. de Rênal, Mathilde and the Maréchale are relatively "close" in social standing and in psychological motivation. External mediation, on the other hand, occurs when the distance — social, spiritual, or physical — between subject and mediator is relatively large. Girard's two principal examples of this type of desire are Don Quixote/Amadis of Gaul and Emma Bovary/Parisian fashion and morals:

Don Quixote has surrendered to Amadis the individual's fundamental prerogative: he no longer chooses the objects of his own desire — Amadis must choose for him. The disciple pursues objects which are determined for him, or at least seem to be determined for him, by the model of all chivalry. . . . Chivalric existence is the imitation of Amadis in the same sense that the Christian's existence is the imitation of Christ. . . .

There can be no contact whatsoever between Don Quixote and his legendary Amadis. Emma Bovary is already closer to her Parisian mediator. Travelers' tales, books, and the press bring the latest fashions of the capital even to Yonville. Emma comes still closer to her mediator when she goes to the ball at the Vaubyessards'; she penetrates the holy of holies and gazes at the idol face to face. But this proximity is fleeting. Emma will never be able to desire that which the incarnations of her "ideal" desire; she will never be able to be their rival; she will never leave for Paris. (pp. 1-2, 8)

For reasons that will soon become apparent, Girard devotes much more attention to internal than to external mediation. But external mediation reveals the truth of internal mediation in at least one crucial respect: choosing a mediator is a means of defining the self. What Quixote and Emma Bovary do explicitly the characters of Stendhal, Proust, and Dostoyevsky do implicitly. They choose/create models of behavior. To find a mediator is to answer the questions: How should I act? and, How should I think and feel? Thus desire is a solution to problems of ontological insecurity, and Girard frequently refers to all forms of mediation as "ontological sickness."

Though desire is assumed to be the most private of facts, it is really the most public. It is social through and through. Hence its persistent association with status and social mobility, particularly in Stendhal and Proust:

Proustian snobbism could be defined as a caricature of Stendhalian vanity; it could also be defined as an exaggeration of Flaubertian bovarysm.... Just to call a desire snobbish is to underscore its imitative character. The mediator is no longer hidden; the object is relegated to the background for the very reason that snobbism, unlike jealousy, for example, is not limited to a particular category of desires. One can be a snob in aesthetic pleasure, in intellectual life, in clothes, food, etc. To be a snob in love is to doom oneself to jealousy. Proustian love therefore is synonymous with snobbism and we have only to give a slightly broader meaning to the term than is normally done in order to discern in it the unity of Proustian desire. The mimetic nature of desire in **Remembrance of Things Past** is such that the characters can be called jealous or snobbish depending on whether their mediator is a lover or a member of high society.... Proust continually asserts that the two "vices" are identical. "Society," he writes, "is only a reflection of what happens in love." (pp. 24-25)

A triangle has three sides. But in triangular desire as conceived by Girard, one side, one line of force is privileged: that which connects subject and mediator. Proustian snobbism is an exaggeration of Flaubertian bovarysm because the distance between subject and mediator has been reduced. Similarly, the apparently qualitative distinction between external and internal mediation is the result of a quantitative shift — a somewhat larger (and historically prior; this will be discussed below) reduction of the distance between subject and mediator. And in its extreme cases ontological sickness can indeed produce a form of binary relation — though this is not subject/object but subject/mediator. For there are degrees of internal mediation. Bring subject and mediator sufficiently "close," morally and psychologically, and this type of collapse may occur. Girard terms the result double or reciprocal mediation. Each partner in such a dyad is mediator for the other, and in extreme cases objects of desire may become unstable or disappear entirely.

In **The Red and the Black**, for example, the Valenod/de Rênal relationship gradually becomes reciprocal mediation, when Valenod imitates the desire attributed to him and asks Julien to be tutor for his children, and later when the two men exchange political positions (while preserving their rivalry). In the end, this relationship becomes the instrument if not the actual cause of Julien's death. In Proust's fiction, Baron Charlus stands out as the character most consistently governed by this structure of desire, though most of the other characters may be seen to be victims of less debilitating versions of it. However, double mediation<sup>2</sup> is most characteristic of the work of Dostoyevsky (and Girard frequently calls such characters "underground" figures):

Except for a few characters who entirely escape imitated desire, in Dostoyevsky there is no longer any love without jealousy, any friendship without envy, any attraction without repulsion. The characters insult each other, spit in each other's faces, and minutes later they fall at the enemy's feet, they abjectly beg mercy. This fascination coupled with hatred is no different in principle from Proustian snobbism and Stendhalian vanity. The inevitable consequences of desire copied from another desire are "envy, jealousy, and impotent hatred..."

**A Raw Youth** gives a very good illustration of the characteristics peculiar to Dostoyevskian desire. The relations between Dolgorouki and Versilov can be interpreted only in terms of mediation. Son and father love the same woman. Dolgorouki's passion for Akhmakova, the general's wife, is copied from that of his father. This mediation of father for son is not the **external** mediation of Proustian childhood... but an **internal** mediation which turns the mediator into a loathed rival. The unfortunate bastard is both the equal of a father who does not fulfill his obligations and the fascinated victim of this being who has rejected him for some unknown reason. To understand Dolgorouki one should not therefore compare him with the children and parents of previous novels, but rather with the Proustian snob obsessed by the person who refuses to accept him. Nevertheless this comparison is not entirely exact, for the distance between father and son is less than the distance between the two snobs. Dolgorouki's ordeal therefore is even more painful than that of the Proustian snob or lover. (pp. 41,44)

## II. THE NATURAL HISTORY OF DESIRE

This is as far as one can go in summarizing Girard's argument without introducing the problem of history. **Deceit, Desire, and the Novel** is a rarity among theoretical accounts of the novel in the weight it accords properly historical theses. More conventional approaches — even Ian Watt's, which in other respects obviously surpasses Girard in attention to historical issues — place the novel in a socio-historical context and then conceptualize its development in the formalist/art historical framework of the rise and fall of a relatively coherent body of conventions. These formalist arguments produce a synchronic notion of "the novel" novel" as genre with relatively stable characteristics, in relation to which diachronic "developments" are then read as significant but theoretically contingent phenomena. Conventions are seen to "exhaust themselves" and are replaced by other, functionally equivalent ones; "styles" succeed one another: and so on. But by placing the novel (or, at least, the novelistic) directly in contact with a broad theory of social existence, Girard avoids this type of segregation of art and history. His apparently naive gesture of holding novelists responsible for telling "the truth" becomes, to my way of thinking at least, the principal strength of his book, because his theory of desire is an historical theory. (It is, in fact, a neo-Hegelian theory worthy of Adorno and Horkheimer — which helps to explain the resemblances between Girard and Lukàcs.)<sup>3</sup>

Girard has chosen to study the work of five novelists: Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, Proust, and Dostoyevsky. These represent (in both senses of the word) five stages of what can be termed, with only some irony, the "natural history" of desire. Girard would agree with Proust that society is only a reflection of what happens in love — but he would add that, equally, love is only a reflection of what happens in society. Both are dictated by the structure of mediation. The five authors studied are taken as providing models for late feudal society (Cervantes), three successive stages of post-revolutionary "democracy" (Stendhal, Flaubert, Proust), and finally, totalitarianism and the "modern" sensibility. Strict chronology is not as important as logical progression; Dostoyevsky is made to "follow" Proust, and in some respects (see pp. 149-50), Flaubert's *Emma Bovary* represents an "earlier" stage of desire than most of Stendhal's characters.

Stated crudely (though much of this crudeness is built into Girard's schema), the progression is as follows. Before the revolution, and surviving for some time thereafter (e.g., in the provinces: *Emma Bovary*), external mediation is the typical structure of desire. Quixote imitates Amadis, Sancho Panza imitates Quixote. Outbreaks of ontological sickness occur but are containable.<sup>4</sup> (In Cervantes, the condition is nonetheless contagious, as witness Quixote's friends who try to cure him by imitating his affliction — p. 97). External mediation is characterized by a clear and socially defined distance/distinction between subject and mediator. It depends, finally, upon a rigidly hierarchical social structure. After Cervantes, however, the distance gradually lessens between classes and, as a result, between individuals who may define their relationship in a new manner. The nobility, crucially, becomes conscious of its own privilege as something **others might want**, and rivalry between nobility and bourgeoisie slowly shifts from external to internal mediation. Confirming and fixing this tendency, the decisive event in the natural history of desire is the revolution:

The courtier's external mediation is replaced by a system of internal mediation in which the pseudo-king himself [the Restoration monarchs] takes part. The revolutionaries thought they would be destroying vanity when they destroyed the privileges of the noble. But vanity is like a virulent cancer that spreads in a more serious form throughout the body just when one thinks it has been removed. Who is there left to imitate after the "tyrant"? Henceforth men shall copy each other; idolatry of one person is replaced by hatred of a hundred thousand rivals. . . .

The transition from external to internal mediation constitutes the supreme phase in the decline of the nobility. Revolution and emigration completed what reflection had begun; the nobleman, physically separated from his privileges, is henceforth forced to see them for what they really are — **arbitrary**. Stendhal clearly understood that the revolution could not destroy the nobility by taking away its privileges. But the nobility could destroy itself by desiring that of which it had been deprived by the bourgeoisie, and by devoting itself to the ignoble sentiments of internal mediation. (pp. 119, 121)

From Stendhal and Flaubert, who depict this stage of history, to Proust and (decisively) Dostoyevsky, internal mediation becomes more and more pronounced:

Beginning with Proust, the mediator may be literally **anyone at all**, he may pop up **anywhere**. Mystical revelation presents a constant danger. A chance encounter along the promenade at Balbec decides Marcel's fate. One glance at "the little band" is enough to cast a spell on him. . . .

Proust's "no matter which" [i.e., no matter which person desired or despised] becomes so automatic in Dostoyevsky that it provokes a farcical horror. In this case as in others Dostoyevsky presents us with the truth of the Proustian experience in an exaggerated form. The underground man, like Marcel, succumbs to the Other's prestige. . . (pp. 92-3)

Stendhal, Flaubert, Tocqueville describe as "republican" or "democratic" an evolution which we today would call **totalitarian**. As the mediator comes nearer and the concrete differences between men grow smaller, abstract opposition plays an ever larger part in individual and collective existence. All the forces of being are gradually organized into twin structures whose opposition grows ever more exact. Thus every human force is braced in a struggle that is as relentless as it is senseless, since no concrete difference or positive value is involved. Totalitarianism is precisely this. The social and political aspects of this phenomenon cannot be distinguished from its personal and private aspects. Totalitarianism exists when all desires have been organized one by one into a general and permanent mobilization of being in the service of nothingness. (pp. 137-8)

In giving this brief summary of Girard's version of modern history, I have abstracted it from its context, two chapters entitled "**The Red and the Black**" and "Technical Problems in Stendhal, Cervantes, and Flaubert." The subject of **Deceit, Desire, and the Novel** is not, after all, the natural history of desire, but the complex problems that great novelists have faced at different points in this history when they attempt to reveal the truth of mediation. Hence the rubric, "technical problems." In more typical studies of the novel, chapters with this sort of title would treat style, point of view, and so on, as relatively independent, "formal" entities. Not so with Girard. Stendhal, Cervantes, and Flaubert (and, later in a similarly titled chapter, Proust and Dostoyevsky) face different "technical" difficulties because the situation of each vis à vis metaphysical desire poses differing problems of analysis and revelation. Both the characters they put into play and the readers they address are at "so many stages along the same road" in the history of mediation.

But it is important to bear in mind that as the characters become more and more prone to ontological sickness, so do these author's readers — and their critics. The largest "technical problem" of all, which can never be fully overcome, is misreading. If there are "romantic" (as opposed to "novelistic") novels, there is also romantic Criticism, which insists on reintroducing the absolute distinction between Self and Other (between subject and mediator) that the great novelists call into question. That such misreading is possible and, in fact, typical in criticism, is dictated by an essential aspect of the novelistic. For Girard, novelistic works are invariably ironic, though all in different ways, since what they attempt to reveal is a dialectic of appearance (autonomy, separation of Self and Other) and reality (mediation)<sup>5</sup> at various stages of the history of this relationship.

The prototype of romantic misreading is the nineteenth-century critics' view of Don Quixote as "model individual." In Girard's view, Cervantes treats Quixote as model victim of ontological sickness. This difference of perspective is crucial: the romantic critic makes Quixote an **exception** to social norms, while Girard makes of him the symptomatic manifestation of the true meaning of the norms. Whereas the romantic critic thus will consider Cervantes' hero in isolation, Girard's reading insists on his essential place in a social fabric.<sup>6</sup> But this soft of motivated misreading does not expire with romanticism, for in this sense we are still living in a Romantic era:

Subjectivisms and objectivisms, romanticisms and realisms, idealisms and positivisms appear to be in opposition but are secretly in agreement to conceal the presence of the

mediator. All these dogmas are the aesthetic or philosophic translation of world views peculiar to internal mediation. They all depend directly or indirectly on the lie of spontaneous desire. They all defend the same illusion of autonomy to which modern man is passionately devoted.

It is this same illusion which the great novel does not succeed in shattering although it never ceases to denounce it. Unlike the romantics and neoromantics, a Cervantes, a Flaubert, and a Stendhal reveal the truth of desire in their great novels, but this truth remains hidden even at the heart of its own revelation. The reader, who is usually convinced of his own spontaneity, applies to the work the meanings he already applies to the world. (p. 16)

Girard, then, finds far more similarities than contrasts between nineteenth-century thought and social structure and those of the present day. The illness has spread so widely and become so advanced that it is simply harder to detect. Though he doesn't say so, it seems clear that from the underground figure of Dostoyevsky to the compulsive shopper in a discount store there is only a slight shift of social context and technological means. And here, precisely, is a problem that any reading of **Deceit, Desire, and the Novel** in terms of cinema must confront: Girard's version of history ends with Dostoyevsky — with totalitarianism as psychic if not yet political reality. (In his brief historical comments, Girard states only that Russia went directly from feudalism to totalitarianism, bypassing the apparently optional stage of "democracy." How this occurred is not stated.) This history ends, in other words, before film begins. The problem is this: does the cinema in fact "inherit" the underground psyche, or must this be, in a sense, **rebuilt** representationally in terms of a new medium of expression? Critical formalism would probably suggest that any new medium necessarily entails the building up of a new set of conventions, and hence a "new" history, even in terms of content (the latter dictated at least in part by "formal" parameters).

There are numerous indications in his book that Girard would indeed view film as doomed to an "underground" position in history. His one mention of the cinema (p. 161) places it alongside "modern eroticism" and the **nouveau roman** as examples of the voyeurism symptomatic of extreme internal mediation. But Girard is not and does not pretend to be a cinema historian, and if one can agree with this assessment in terms of "classical narrative cinema,"<sup>7</sup> it is far from certain that this may be asserted in any easy way for so-called "primitive" cinema. The audience of early film remains a problem, and if Girard's theses are of no direct assistance in evaluating the beginnings of the medium, it is primarily because the working class and working-class culture have no place in his scheme. Today, when K-Mart-Kulture has presumably made Western workers as "underground" as the most alienated of bourgeois intellectuals, it is easy enough to draw the parallel I made above between the discount shopper and the Dostoyevsky character. But there obviously was some sort of distinct working-class culture as late as the early twentieth century, and it obviously had something to do with primitive film. (This is a tricky area, and this vague formulation will have to indicate the difficulties of differing national exhibition patterns, locations of theatres, etc.) But we do not know nearly enough about working-class culture of the period to make any sort of comparisons with nineteenth-century bourgeois values.<sup>8</sup> And since there is currently little agreement about how much "primitive" cinema (and its sources, such as vaudeville) survives in various guises and in different areas (e.g., comedy), assessment of the extent and type of internal mediation in film remains for the present a project dependent on developments in historical research in the areas of film history and cultural studies. Books like Girard's, however, can give us a glimpse of the larger issues ultimately involved in such work.

### III. TEXTUAL STUDY: FILM AND THE ROMANTIC, FILM AND THE NOVELISTIC

In addition to providing this sort of help in conceptualizing problems of the historical placement of cinema (in the broad, philosophical sense of this endeavor), Girard's book may also be enlisted in another sort of project: the reading of specific film texts. There are a number of revealing difficulties raised here, of which the most important is undoubtedly the difficulty of finding films that may be considered "novelistic" in the precise sense that Girard gives this term.<sup>9</sup> The vast majority of narrative films produced to date clearly fall into his category of the romantic. The "lie" of individual autonomy, of clear separation of Self from Other is (notoriously) the necessary presupposition of American film production, at least since Griffith, and equally of the vast majority of all other commercial cinemas.

In this, the cinema clearly carries on the function of prose fiction, in which, as Girard takes pains to point out, the romantic attitude dominates almost completely: "these illusions **find their best expression** in literature." The novelistic is thus first and foremost a demystification of ordinary novels: "to reveal the novelist's truth is to uncover the falsity of our own literature, and vice versa" (both quotes p. 269, my emphasis). Thus, to apply Girard's theses to the bulk of commercial cinema would mean to perform, as a distinct critical operation, the work of demystification that he attributes to novelists of genius. This would be, properly speaking, "novelistic" criticism. Girard's analyses of his five novelists' work can provide models. From Stendhal (/Girard), we may learn to look for seemingly bizarre parallels between amatory, entrepreneurial, and political behavior — for example, mother and daughter in **Mildred Pierce** (1945) as a classic example of double mediation at the parallel levels of family relations and "free enterprise." From Dostoyevsky, we may learn to recognize imitative behavior between bitter enemies — viz., the notorious resemblances between heroes and villains in classic melodrama, this perhaps receiving properly "novelistic" treatment in some of the early work of Fritz Lang, most clearly in **Spies** and **M**. The example of Proust may sensitize us to the interrelations of social standing and romance. Girard's analysis here is extraordinary and, alas, beyond the scope of this review. His reading of Proust is in the view of many the most brilliant criticism in the book, and I would suggest it as required reading for all those interested in romantic drama in general and the Woman's Picture in particular.

In fact, Girard's various scenarios of internal mediation might well be of interest to genre theory, the clearest parallel here being Dostoyevskian double mediation with classical melodrama (e.g., the Western), with family melodrama perhaps exhibiting a mixture of the Proustian and Stendhalian scenarios. Novelistic interpretation of this sort could not, evidently, take Girard's work as a critical cookbook, but clearly his example would help to indicate and preserve useful distinctions (between various scenarios of mediation). This possibility of discrimination is, in my view, the principal advantage that Girard's work has over recent Lacanian models used in film study.<sup>10</sup> with which it obviously shares many central concerns — most notably the "arithmetic" that three must exist to make two.

But what of the novelistic in film itself, as opposed to readings of "romantic" works performed by "novelistic" critics? Many passages in **Deceit, Desire, and the Novel** suggest that the literary novelistic is to be found, albeit in different forms, either in works of extreme seriousness or of extreme frivolity: "the triangle of desire has interested hardly anyone but vaudevillists and novelists of genius" (p. 111); "all novelistic works have a tendency to the comic" (p. 125). There seem to be two lines of reasoning implicit in this shun-the-middle-ground prescription. First, novelistic insight takes the form of a demystification of received ideas: vaudeville and "high art" are both, in different ways, critical discourses. Second, demystification implies a demystifying agent, and novelistic insight invariably assumes the form of an authorial demonstration:

The novelist lets his characters act and speak; then, in the twinkling of an eye, he reveals to us the mediator. He re-establishes covertly the true hierarchy of desire while pretending to believe in the weak reasoning advanced by his character in support of the contrary hierarchy. This is one of the perpetual methods of Stendhal's irony. (p. 15)

In terms of film, the major consequence of this assertion is that the novelistic-filmic is not compatible with styles of relative transparency. As this and other passages make clear, novelistic discourses are double-voiced, with the fictional universe and authorial commentary alternating and overlapping. (In the broadest sense, this is simply a definition of **irony**, and of related discourses such as satire.)<sup>11</sup> Comedy and heavily-narrated "serious" works share this dependence on an authorial presence. Jokes are not made without implying a joker; characters' desires are not called into question without a textual agent seeming to do so. It is nonetheless clear that, despite Girard's indication of an essential link between "vaudeville" and novelistic genius, film comedy in general, and romantic comedy in particular (the principal Hollywood sub-genre since the advent of sound) is at its most typical a mixed form. Film comedy's periodically obvious and critical narrator can retreat strategically, leaving the stage/screen free to the young couple and True Love — minus the troubling (and univocally comic) mediator(s).<sup>12</sup> It seems likely that moments of novelistic revelation in film comedy, where they may occur, form only one stream of discourse within a relatively contradictory whole.

The consistently novelistic work, in film as in prose fiction, is the occasional troubling exception to the romantic paradigm, and its discovery and explication is subject to two important qualifications. First, because the novelistic implies a narrator, it is difficult to conceptualize outside some sort of auteurist framework. And because novelistic insight implies a double, ironic stance **vis à vis** the fictional universe, the implied author will almost inevitably be (for the terms of the analysis) the director. Second, in film as in prose fiction, most criticism is itself romantic through and through, and novelistic works will be vulnerable to misreading as romantic works. Sometimes these two problems can interact, producing critical denunciation of a particular director — a viable strategy in itself for defusing novelistic comparison/irony — as one who attempts to make romantic drama and **fails**, or succeeds only "superficially." The example that I will propose for brief consideration here has suffered this fate, and I will conclude with the following Girardian reading of Max Ophuls' **Lola Montès** (1955).

**Lola Montès** provoked a small riot on its initial release, and its first audiences were uniformly hostile, despite critical acclaim in some of the specialized cinema press. In retrospect, it is clear that spectators, drawn by publicity and by star and genre expectations, were correct in taking the film as an attack on their sensibilities. Officially a Tradition of Quality biopic starring the sex symbol **par excellence** of its day, **Lola Montès** suffered, unlike others of the director's films which are more discrete in doing precisely the same thing, from the very obviousness of its theses about desire. What must have outraged audiences ready to see Martine Carol charm an endless string of attractive and powerful men was the way the film shows its heroine as basically unimportant except as a means of producing rivalry (mediation).

Briefly put, the thesis of the film as I read it is that Lola's celebrity and successful ascent to the very top of the social hierarchy of her day (only to fall precipitously at the end) is a direct result of a sori of floating reciprocal mediation which she knows how to manipulate. The very end of the film shows how this bargain (for it is an exchange) works for the circus spectators: by paying one dollar to kiss the hand kissed by princes and kings, the spectacle patrons may take the place of these figures, if only for an instant. This is the paradigm for the desire Lola activates: the desire to be the Other, to displace the Other. Lola is the **place** where the Other has been, but is no longer (since the Subject is "there"). In this, the circus scenes give the "truth" of the flashbacks, where the point is also made directly on occasion by minor characters. ("As soon as a man has been with this **Lola Montès** for five minutes," says one of the king's counsellors, he brags about it [**il s'en vante** — mistranslated in the English subtitles],... even if nothing has happened.")

I have given a more detailed reading of **Lola Montès** in this perspective elsewhere;<sup>13</sup> two important aspects of Ophuls' work that can only be indicated rather than demonstrated here are worth mention as examples of typical problems of the novelistic in film. First, although the "truth" of Lola's function as Object in mediation is clearer in this film than in other, structurally similar works' by the director (e.g., **Le Plaisir**), it is most typically indicated not by



overt statement delegated to a character but by a relentless accumulation of implicit comparisons. These imply but do not impose a reading of desire as **situational** rather than "personal." The dominant comparison in the film is between circus spectacle and "real life," and this not only makes the film a meditation on celebrity and implicitly about the cinema itself, but also underlines the connections that may be drawn in this film and elsewhere between desire and representation. Lola's desirability is a result of a process of figuration; even as "real person" she is playing a role: the Object desired or desireably by the Other.<sup>14</sup> In this, she is the last of a series of performer-characters in Ophuls' late films whose love life and profession (pianist, dancer, artist, model, even prostitute "playing the part of the young **ingénue**") are different aspects of the same life script.

Second, critical misreading of the film has taken a particular turn that may tell us something about misreading in general. Dismissal of Ophuls' work has consistently operated by a separation of subject and style; Ophuls is said to be a director who treats romantic subjects in an "ornate" and "baroque" fashion (that is to say, his film style is far from "transparent"), which is said to interfere with the subjects' essential "simplicity." This is in my view a back-handed statement of what Ophuls is really doing: taking romantic stories and subjecting them to novelistic criticism. But interpretation that separates out "style" and "content" as separate and distinct entities is comfortably insulated from such a reading of the director's work, and it can continue to view him as someone who tries to tell "love stories" and **fails**.

#### A FEW WORDS IN CONCLUSION

I have deliberately read Girard, to the extent that this is possible, from the standpoint of critical studies in cinema in 1981. Inevitably, in making his book address the interests of students of film, I have to some degree naturalized his insights. The full range and quirky ingenuity of Girard's thought can only be appreciated when one reads **Deceit, Desire, and the Novel**. If at all possible, I would suggest first reading or re-reading **The Red and the Black** and **Swann's Way**. Aside from the potential scholarly benefits indicated in this essay, Girard's book provides the incomparable pleasure and interest of great criticism — of which there is never an adequate paraphrase.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins, 1965. All quotations are followed by page numbers from this edition.
2. The reader should note that for the purposes of this exposition I have somewhat simplified Girard's reading of Dostoyevsky. Not all extreme internal mediation is reciprocal, and/or will not appear as such if a story is told from the point of view of one member of a mediation dyad. In "one-way" extreme internal mediation the rival becomes a kind of God or devil, his/her motivations a sacred mystery.
3. See, for example, Adorno and Horkheimer's **Dialectic of Enlightenment** (English translation New York: Seabury, 1972); the similarities between Girard and Lukács have been noted by Lucien Goldmann in the opening pages of **Pour une sociologie du roman** (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).
4. However, Cervantes is for Girard a prophet of sorts, and in one quasi-Dostoyevskian section of **Don Quixote** ("The Curious Impertinent") he gives an uncannily prescient description of reciprocal mediation à la Proust or Dostoyevsky. Girard often refers to this section of Quixote as evidence of the "unity of the novelistic vision."
5. On the role of appearance and reality in ironic discourse, see D.C. Muecke, **Irony** (London: Methuen, 1970), pp. 30-35.
6. These are both self-fulfilling reading strategies. Girard will see ironic comparisons where the romantic critic will see contrasts favorable to the "model individual" of his or her choice (these can be varied, of course, and this is a favorite game — critic's double mediation — within romantic criticism).
7. Voyeurism is certainly a key concept in much contemporary film theory, and Girard's analysis of internal mediation in general can be seen as having many points of contact with Lacanian theory as applied to film in **Screen** magazine and elsewhere.
8. Theodore Zeldin's **France 1848-1945** (Oxford, 1974 and 1977) gives fascinating information that significantly supplements Girard's historical theses in many areas.\* The first section of volume one, "Ambition," is of use in contrasting bourgeois and working class culture in the period. (These correspond to the first and forth volumes respectively of the American paperback reissue.)
9. Taking other critics/theorists, it is easy enough to designate a sector of world cinema as novel-like, if not novelistic. A favorite teaching example of mine for some time has been Satyajit Ray's **Pather Panchali** as exemplifying most aspects of the novel posited by E.M. Forster. But in Girard's terms, that film and the entire Apu trilogy is more probably in the category of the romantic.
10. As, for example, Stephen Neale's **Genre** (London: BFI, 1980).
11. Mary Ann Doane has provided one model for an approach to filmic irony in **The Dialogical Text: Filmic Irony and the Spectator** (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1979).
12. This point has been made by **Catherine Johnson in Contradiction in 1950s Comedy and Ideology** (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1980).
13. **Max Ophuls and the Cinema of Desire** (New York: Arno, 1980).
14. Men may then prove their superiority to social inferiors by outbidding them in the ongoing auction of Lola's favors for position and power. Hence, her social mobility. When she finally reaches the "top" of society (the king), she loses the implicit function of social definition that accompanies this movement — actually, she redefines society as rigidly hierarchical, a historical throwback — and she is felled by (what else?) a revolution. Following this, she becomes a consumer item.

\* See in particular, the second section of volume two, "Taste."

# THE MANAGEMENT OF DESTINY IN NARRATIVE FORM

*Paul Sandro*

**The Sense of an Ending** (1966) was published by Oxford at a time when scholars in France were analyzing narrative differentiae in great detail with methods derived from the science of linguistics. While the work of Greimas, Bremond, Genette, Todorov, Barthes and others attempted to bracket, indeed displace, many of the assumptions of humanism, Frank Kermode's work affirms them from the outset. His main thesis is that fictions, as models of time, fulfill a basic human need to make sense out of time. From primitive histories to modern novels, fictional paradigms humanize time by giving it form: "Right down at the root, they must correspond to a basic human need, they must make sense, give comfort."<sup>1</sup>

In Kermode's discussion of eschatology and naive apocalypse, he sees fictions of the end as providing something like a large-scale model of destiny for the open-ended lives of individuals:

Men, like poets, rush "into the midst," in medias res, when they are born; they also die in mediis rebus, and to make sense of their span they need fictive concords with origins and ends, such as give meaning to lives and to poems. The End they imagine will reflect their irreducibly intermediary preoccupations. They fear it, and as far as we can see have always done so; the End is a figure for their own deaths. (p. 7).

In this view of apocalypse, the death of individuals and the end of the world are linked by a formal homology; a vast world-historical fiction thus frames present existence. Kermode's discussion then shifts from fictions of the End to end-determined fictions. With emphasis on the notion of teleology, he traces the evolution of literary form from medieval apocalypse through Renaissance tragedy and on to modern fictions of dissonance which aim to disrupt teleology for epistemological reasons.

Kermode observes that, with accumulated disconfirmation of eschatological predictions and increased sophistication of fictive structures, the terrors of apocalypse were absorbed by tragedy. In Renaissance tragedy he sees the concern for vast temporal ends changed into a new end-feeling, that of personal crisis: "perpetually recurring crises of the person, and the death of that person, took over from the myths which purport to relate one's experience to grand beginnings and ends" (p. 35). The end becomes immanent instead of imminent, and the model of destiny is scaled upon the life of the tragic hero. Fictions of crisis incorporate end-feeling in the turning points of narrative structure. Similarly, Roland Barthes wrote in his summary essay on the work of the French narratologists, that these moments of choice, however small, are risk-laden because the end is at stake.<sup>2</sup>

Kermode stresses two major differences between naive apocalypse and the fiction which has crisis for its end-feeling. First, the end of the fiction no longer posits the literal end of the world. Instead, the fiction becomes its own world — a "bibliocosm" or "man-centered model of world time." Second, the myth of naive apocalypse, which had a rigid set of expectations implicit in its concordant structure, no longer progresses toward its end without obstacles or **perepetia**. On one hand, the function of plot in fictions of crisis is to "redeem time," to capture its fullness by providing a concordant structure between beginning and end. Here Kermode's views mesh with those of Poulet and other French writers of an earlier generation concerned with problems of time and consciousness.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, plot must also reconcile the desire for teleology with the demands of verisimilitude. **Peripetia** serve to misdirect expectations and defer narrative closure "so that the end comes as expected, but not in the manner expected" (p. 53). What Kermode calls the "falsification of expectation" is disconfirmation followed by a consonance; the interest of having our expectations falsified is obviously related to our wish to reach the discovery or recognition by an unexpected and instructive route" (p. 18). **Perepetia** complicate the middle: they threaten narrative resolution temporarily only to yield to the triumph of form.

But when Kermode analyzes the time constructs of modern literature, he goes beyond this notion of narrative as an elaborate, and somewhat magical, structure of concordance.

Modernism manifested in Sartre, Beckett, Robbe-Grillet, and others exploits the gap between the contingencies of life and the desire for concordant fictive structures. Dissonance becomes a discovery device in the modern novel. In his analysis of Sartre's **La Nausée** Kermode explores the "crisis in the relation between fiction and reality, the tension or dissonance between paradigmatic form and contingent reality" (p. 133). This crisis involves on one hand Sartre the existentialist who refuses all prefabricated patterns, whose world has no beginning and no end, and, on the other, Sartre the novelist who needs a literary form to embody pure contingency. The ultimate problem is "the relation between fictions as we use them in our existential crises, and fictions as we construct them in books" (p. 135). Sartre the existentialist rejects as "bad faith" any deterministic notions about the nature of things. They "cover reality over with eidetic images — illusions persisting from past acts of perception" (p. 134). These ideas of the essence of things specifically deny human freedom of choice. Those who seek alibis in psychological determinism and those who place human existence in a teleological framework of world order are seeking fraudulent refuge from the responsibility of making choices in the present. Kermode quotes Sartre's well-known statement that in life "all ways are barred and nevertheless we must act. So we try to change the world: that is to live **as if** the relations between things and their potentialities were governed not by deterministic process by magic" (p. 135). Sartre's statement in **What is Literature?** that "to speak is to act" posits writing as an expression of human freedom. Yet Kermode asks,

How far is it inevitable that a novel give a novel-shaped account of the world? How can one control, and how make profitable, the dissonances between that account and the account given by the mind working independent of the novel? (pp. 143-44)

In a contemporary context, **The Sense of an Ending** remains instructive, not only in its main argument, but also in its assumptions, emphases, and omissions. A full-scale critique of the book is beyond the scope of this essay, but some remarks are necessary to situate the work in relation to more recent critical theory.

First, Kermode claims that fiction responds to a human **need** for a sense of continuity with origins and ends, and he emphasizes the primacy of this need with allusions to biology. Yet the term **desire**, used interchangeably at times, is more appropriate to a discussion of fictions which are cultural objects. Desire goes beyond biological need, indeed to the point of threatening biological survival; hence the cultural necessity for ritual which regulates the expression of individual desire in order to insure the survival of the social body. In psychoanalytic theory, desire has been linked to the process of the individual's emergence as a social being, a subject able to exchange meanings with other subjects in the symbolic register of mental life. One school of theory traces the aggressiveness of human desire for sense-making to the premature emergence of the subject, a premature division of the symbolic from the imaginary.<sup>4</sup> Human desire for continuity would thus be seen to derive from a fundamental discontinuity which the ego works constantly to overcome. Here psychoanalytic criticism can make a prior claim on Kermode's territory: while Kermode emphasizes the desire for continuity with an uncertain end, psychoanalytic criticism traces that desire to a more basic desire for continuity with a lost and inadequate origin.

Second, what amounts to Kermode's theory of identification is based exclusively on a dynamic of self-affirmation through mastery. Fictions fulfill a desire to belong to a beginning and an end by "redeeming" time in concordant structures that can be captured by human subjects. In contrast to this dynamic of mastery, fictions may be conceived as structures that solicit and facilitate limited loss, self-expenditure. Bataille's analysis of death and sensuality in various forms of ritual explores this notion without extensive reference to psychoanalysis, while much post-structuralist theory (e.g. Kristeva, Barthes, recent Metz) develops Freud's notion of the death instinct in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle."<sup>5</sup>

Finally, Kermode asks in a general way how fictions manage their teleology. This is a productive question to ask in the textual analysis of films. Some films appear to be relatively straightforward in their trajectory; others complicate it to make the end more interesting; still others problematize it partially or radically. Panofsky wrote in 1934 that the "early melodramas had a highly gratifying and soothing quality in that events took shape, without complication of individual psychology, according to a pure Aristotelian logic so badly missed in real life."<sup>6</sup> This is essentially Kermode's thesis about the consoling capacity of form, and it is helpful as far as it goes. Yet because Kermode assumes the primacy of a unified subject, he does not explore the work of textualization that covers over the moments of loss (gaps, ruptures, contradictions) that are implicit in even the most straightforward narratives. He emphasizes instead how plot complications delay and disguise the narrative's movement toward closure and thereby produce the effect of temporal fullness. By contrast, recent textual analyses of films look for ideological assumptions in such textual effects.<sup>7</sup> Nor is Kermode's approach directly productive in understanding post-modern texts that question radically the unity of the subject in the instance of its passage, its articulation, through a text. For example, what have come to be called structuralist/materialist films tend to block those processes that support the coherence of a viewing subject. These processes include regulated repetition which re-positions the subject with respect to previous moments through an operation of narrative memory, and causal linkages which project the subject toward an end. On the other hand, **The Sense of an Ending** can serve as an articulate background statement against which such texts can be defined. The book can also help account for some of the fascination of less radical texts that manage their teleology by displaying it through parody or disrupting it in large-scale enigmatic structures.

René Clair's **Entr'acte** (1924) parodies teleology in a playful struggle between poetry and narrative. The ironic stance inherent in parody allows **Entr'acte** to manage its own formal destiny by displacing it, by focusing attention on an imitation of teleology.<sup>8</sup> In the first half of **Entr'acte** there is little narrative development. Like the ballerina and the paper boat in the parody of the poetic voyage, a circular voyage, the film has been turning on its axis, balanced, so to speak, in a poetic space of all-possibility. Up to this point there have been two metaphors for the artist: artist as chess player, and artist as hunter. In the first instance, the chess game is displaced by the poetic voyage. In the second, the hunter with some difficulty breaks the dancing egg and hatches the dove. It takes a third metaphor — the artist as undertaker — to finally get the story going. At the request of the scriptwriter, Francis Picabia, his and Eric Satie's initials were painted on the hearse in the funeral procession. This reference to Picabia and Satie's roles as undertakers "behind the scenes" in the story mirrors their roles as artists, for they are behind the scenes of the story as well, in charge of the cinematic "ceremony"; one is in charge of the program, the other in charge of the music. And, of course, even the cinematic ceremony is set ironically in the context of a larger, theatrical ceremony, the ballet **Relâche**. As artists, Picabia and Satie are, **in absentia**, the proprietors of this (narrative) vehicle, and it is their **business** to dispose of their characters in that vehicle. This is indeed the business of narrative, for authors fix the destinies of their characters, and they "embalm" their characters in the diegetic time of the story. The funeral cortege is the very model of teleology: it is an end-determined structure, the procession existing for the final purpose of putting the body away. But given that structure, something must activate it.

We know from theories of narrative that every story needs a premise, an initiatory "violence" of some kind to produce a state of imbalance which can motivate action.<sup>9</sup> In this story, the artist-as-undertaker produces the need for action; he not only puts cadavers away, but produces them as well. It is Picabia who breaks the lyrical state of self-sufficiency when he shoots the hunter. The hunter is the romantic artist, enchanted by the dove he has just liberated from the dancing egg. The flash-forward in this sequence suggests the subjective intention of the artist; we see the hearse again, this time with a star inscribed on its side; the star's destiny is already fixed. There is also an ironic image of the narrative demand for inertia in the causal chain, in the placement of this initiatory violence on the top of a building. The hunter falls from the building, becoming functionally a dangling cause, an effect of an action in this sequence which will become the cause of effects in later sequences. The rest of the story will also be downhill. The runaway hearse follows a downhill

trajectory, and, as if to comment again on the need to maintain inertia, the way is even slicked; the Cadum baby in the billboard ad for soap smiles at us (perhaps knowingly?) along the way.<sup>10</sup>

The chase after the runaway hearse seems at first to lead somewhere, to be a goal-directed action, but it ends up as a circular trip. The action of putting away the body doubles back upon itself when the coffin falls out and the revived corpse, now a magician, makes the onlookers and himself disappear. What began as a release from the repetitions of the first part of the film ends on a larger scale as another repetition.

The most obvious play on narrative time occurs at the end of the film when the story's diegetic time appears to contest the temporal limit of the text. Like the corpse in the story who refuses to be put away, the narrative **corpus** also refuses to be put away. After the revived corpse makes all the characters including himself disappear, he bursts out through the title "FIN" and gestures that the film is not over yet. It takes the director of the Swedish ballet, Rolphe de Maré, to kick him back through the end title. In the full version of the film, the previous action is then printed in reverse; the tear heals, and the film is over.

Parody is a form of imitation. To parody narrative you must produce narrative; a runaway narrative is still a narrative. That the hearse in **Entr'acte** goes out of control only engages a more highly end-determined structure, a kind of narrative to the second power. The hearse out of control, cut loose from destiny, has as its correlation recovery of control, the inevitability of destiny. This hypermotivated narrative displays destiny as the principle of its movement, risks it, and reinstates it at the same time. This is why I do not consider **Entr'acte** to be a subversive film, one that breaks entirely with classical cinematic discourse, but rather one that preserves it and reanimates it in the parodic regulation of its own formal destiny.

A number of Luis Buñuel's films manage the problem of teleology by disrupting the context for narrative closure through enigmatic and destabilizing structures. Although ten years separate **The Exterminating Angel** (1962) and **The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie** (1972), their plots complement each other with symmetrical precision. While **The Discreet Charm** concerns a group of friends whose attempts to have dinner together are repeatedly frustrated, **The Exterminating Angel** concerns a group of people who come to dinner but are unable to leave. Starting from what would be considered an ordinary event, each film disrupts in its own way the conditions which make it possible to conceive of events in diegetic time. At some point in both films chronology is disrupted and the film's narrative stance is destabilized.

From the beginning of **The Exterminating Angel** there are indications that something has gone wrong inside the mansion on Providence Street. The entrance of the guests twice over and the repetition of a toast made by Nobile at the dinner table serve as textual emblems for larger scale repetitions in the film. After dinner the guests retire to the drawing room where one of the women plays a sonata on the piano. But having progressed this far in the evening's events, the guests find themselves stuck within the spatial boundaries of this after-dinner performance, unable to conclude the **soirée**. A spell has been cast over their will to act, condemning them to participate in a series of acts that can occur only within the confines of the drawing room. This chain of acts leads nowhere within the narrative; it must come full circle before the guests are finally released from the house. We see them next in church where they had promised to celebrate a mass of thanksgiving if they were ever to escape. But after the mass is over, the celebrants find they are unable to leave the church. The film ends there, but the beginning of a new cycle of actions projects the end of the story beyond the end of the film in a pattern of ever-widening cycles of entrapment.

The characters in **The Discreet Charm** have difficulty getting together for their dinner party in the first place. There are numerous misunderstandings and unexpected interruptions. But it isn't until halfway through the film that the film's narrative stance is upset. At a critical moment a sequence ends suddenly with a shot of one of the characters awakening from

a dream, at which time the narrative continues in his present moment and in what would appear to be his reality. But that reality is undermined too when, at a critical moment, it is shown to be the dream activity of still another character. Each time that an event is shown to have been constituted in the unconscious mental activity of a character, it is pushed back into an infinite regression of unconscious events.

At several points in the film there are sequences which show the principal characters walking silently along a country road. Nothing indicates where they are or where they are going. At the end of the film, the walk is the only event whose referential capacity has not been displaced in the infinite regression of narrative perspectives. All other events — the dinner parties, the nightmares, the nightmares of nightmares, the awakening from nightmares — are discredited by the obsessive reframing of the narrative stance. Yet even the status of the walk as the only anchored event is tenuous. Like the missed events in which the characters figure, the event is not concluded: the characters are left **in mediis rebus**. If any extension of the story's semantic substance must derive from the processes of structuration within the text, then the final event is subject to the same displacement as the others. At best, it stands as a minimal narrative, the residue of blocked narrative operations. The characters, disgorged from the main story by the obsessive reframings, find their place finally as rejects in an open-ended event which presents the condition of narrative desire, the desire for a sense of an ending. By contrast, the destiny of the characters in **The Exterminating Angel** is that of being ingested by their fictional universe.

It should be noted that while both films satirize bourgeois consumption thematically (the consumers consumed, the consumers disgorged), they also play on their own status as objects of narrative consumption. Both films resist consumption and digestion as classical narratives by disrupting the context for closure; **The Exterminating Angel** ends in a series of ever-widening openings, **The Discreet Charm** in a series of premature closures. Yet, as this limited analysis makes evident, resistance to narrative closure may lead to the recovery of meaning at a hermeneutic level, in this case as a reflection on destiny.

Like the modernist works of Beckett and Robbe-Grillet that Kermode discusses, modernist films tend to problematize narrative teleology. In the films of directors such as Resnais, Fellini, Bergman, and Antonioni, characters often lack clearly defined goals, events appear arbitrarily linked, and endings are ambiguous or enigmatic. Yet, while modernist films may resist narrative development and closure, they also create a desire for them. And like the schismatic works and movements that Kermode discusses in terms of productive dissonance, these films depend on the persistence of that desire to serve as a background for their effects.



## FOOTNOTES

1. Frank Kermode, **The Sense Of an Ending**, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966). All subsequent page references given internally.
2. Barthes, "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative," trans. Lionel Duisit, **New Literary History**, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1975), esp. pp. 266-71. See also **The Pleasure of the Text** (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975); and sections on the proairetic code in **S/Z** (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974).
3. Georges Poulet, **Studies in Human Time**, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956).
4. Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror-Phase as Formative of the Function of the I," trans. Jean Rousset, **New Left Review**, No. 51 (1966), pp. 71-77.
5. Georges Bataille, **L'Erotisme** (Paris: 10/18, 1957).
6. Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures," reprinted in Gerald Mast, ed. **Film Theory and Criticism**, (New York: Oxford, 1971), p. 254.
7. See for example, Mary Ann Doane, "Desire in **Sunrise**," **Film Reader II**, (Northwestern University, 1977); Thierry Kuntzel, "The Treatment of Ideology in the Textual Analysis of Film," **Screen**, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1973); Stephen Heath, "Film and System, Terms of Analysis," **Screen**, Vol. 16, Nos. 1 and 2 (Spring and Summer 1975); Robert Burgoyne, "The Imaginary and the Neo-real," **Enclitic**, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1979).
8. An expanded version of my analysis appears in "Parodic Narration in **Entr'acte**," **Film Criticism**, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Fall, 1979).
9. See, for example, the initial functions in Vladimir Propp, **Morphology of the Folktale**, (Bloomington: Indiana Research Center in Anthropology, 1958); and Tzvetan Todorov, **Poetics of Prose** (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), Trans. Richard Howard).
10. See frame enlargement and notes in Standish Lawder, **The Cubist Cinema**, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975), pp. 257-8.

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# EXPANDING FILM HISTORICAL DISCOURSE: RECEPTION THEORY'S USE VALUE FOR CINEMA STUDIES

*Eric Rentschler*

I

"We have film historians, but something less than film history."

— Edward Buscombe, "A New Approach to Film History"

"Literary history has in our time increasingly — and not without reason — fallen into dispute."<sup>1</sup> So begins Hans Robert Jauss's 1967 polemic analysis of a discipline's decline and its deplorable present state. A crisis atmosphere governs his essay "Literary History as a Provocation to Literary Studies,"<sup>2</sup> an all-pervading sense that modern would-be literary histories neither come to terms with literature or history, preferring as they do (1) mere chronologies of individual works within generic or epochal contexts or (2) unilinear accounts of central figures in a "life and work" setting. Both approaches refuse to make qualitative or critical judgments, and in this way they reflect the conservative legacy of German classicism and nineteenth-century historicism. In so doing, one isolates the concrete work outside of mundane temporality and projects oneself into the historical past while ignoring the interpreter's present. The hindsight of history, previous judgments, and an exegete's self-reflection: all of these factors remain peripheral and ultimately superfluous concerns for literary study defined in these traditional terms.

As Anglo-American film scholars have drawn back from their markedly theoretical emphasis, they have started to articulate a similar predicament.<sup>3</sup> The impasse outlined by Jauss over a decade ago now faces film historians. Numerous expressions of an intense discontent with previous scholarship in this field have resounded in recent years. Invariably, those involved in the discussion describe the problem in terms of **different kinds** of film history, which although not mutually exclusive have in the past rarely combined in a felicitous and productive way. The work at hand reflects a piecemeal rather than a synthetic proclivity. Commentators repeatedly speak of contrasting pairs, squaring off histories of style with socio-economic studies of the film industry<sup>4</sup> or juxtaposing theoretical and down-to-earth approaches, "emic" and "etic" perspectives.<sup>5</sup> (Clearly these antinomies in various ways and on different axes only restate Metz's distinction between "filmic" and "cinematic" study, i.e. the scrutiny of the activities and institutions surrounding films and filmmaking as opposed to investigations of the cinematic text itself, its signs and codes.) Certain film historians come under attack for their exclusive concern with artistic matters and their neglect of socio-political conditioning factors.<sup>6</sup> It is conversely argued that sociological accounts have overstressed film's "relevance quotient" and, in so doing, have dealt with concrete films in less than medium-specific terms.<sup>7</sup> Thus far, no one has found a bridge between these clearly related, yet somehow discrete activities; we lack "a workable means of correlating politics and art, reality and realism,"<sup>8</sup> a way of mediating the formal integrity and complexity of individual films and the concrete historical station they issue from and act upon.

Even though no one has demanded that film historians start from ground zero, many have recognized the need for more workable paradigms. "It is not," claims Edward Buscombe, "that film history lacks theory or methodology, though much of it does. Rather, it lacks any agreement either about the usefulness of these theories, or about how they might fit together."<sup>9</sup> Seeking a more totalized and sophisticated film historiography, David Bordwell acknowledges the need to consider "film style, the film industry, and the social matrix in one complex whole." Such sweeping and encompassing analysis promises much more satisfying results than the impressionistic grab-bags of data, directors, and short descriptions so endemic to many so-called "standard works" of film history.<sup>10</sup> But how to achieve this? "Nothing less," maintains Bordwell, "than a theory of art in culture is required."<sup>11</sup>

## II

"An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us."

— Martin Heidegger

Jauss's attempt to maneuver between the Scylla and Charybdis of aestheticism and historicism does not totally resolve the methodological stalemate outlined above. His stress, though, on the communicative aspect of the aesthetic experience within its historical dimensions does offer a crucial point of departure thus far only in part acknowledged and for the most undeveloped by film scholars. Rather than reconstructing the past, Jauss seeks an **integration** of past and present, of reader and text, thus allowing a hermeneutically-reflected approach to the historicity of literature as well as of its audiences. Reception theory concerns itself "with the historical conditions of the aesthetic effect of works of art."<sup>12</sup> Anything but a uniform discipline that is solely applicable to literary study, reception theory is a dialogical science. As Jauss stated in a recent interview, it "does not exclude the standpoint and the activity of the subject, but rather includes him as the condition of knowledge, and this concept is to that extent specific to all sciences which would understand meaning, which proceed from the assumption that meaning is a yielded truth — and not a given one..."<sup>13</sup> For Jauss the subject is every bit as time-bound as any given text; an encounter between these two elements gives rise to a dialogue, an exchange Jauss describes as a relation between history and (literary) effect. He, as Hans-Georg Gadamer before him, elevates the historicity of understanding to the status of a hermeneutical principle, and, in so doing, presents compelling arguments against the limits of both aestheticism's and historicism's penchant for sealing their objects off from the present or from the course of intervening time. Each approach would separate the work or art and the perceiving subject as closed monads isolated from one another. Central to Jauss's notion of effective history stands the desire "to make the focus of interest the communicative and thereby socially formative function of literature, over and above its representational dimension."<sup>14</sup>

Up to this point film scholars have done little work in reception aesthetics, limiting their few inquiries in this direction to empirical studies of audience sociology on the one hand<sup>15</sup> and theoretical discussions of spectator/viewer psychology on the other.<sup>16</sup> Conventional film history, while stressing the artistic merits of selected films, isolates its object, the "films themselves," in a vacuum: it attends only vaguely to the production background, social context, audience appeal, and critical reception of a film and instead prefers to believe "that however the work got to be what it is, it is what it is." Such practitioners assume "that a film can exist for us concretely on a screen today exactly as it might have existed then or twenty or sixty years ago."<sup>17</sup> More recent discussants have seen the error of such ways, calling for "a truly reflexive film studies" which might lead to "a systematic appreciation of the subjective nature of any historical writing."<sup>18</sup> While designing the film history of the future, one does well to consider past attempts. As Robert C. Allen indicates, the inescapable insight remains "that film historians' concepts of the nature and function of film determines, in some measure at least, the kinds of materials they choose for analysis, the kinds of events they see as significant, and, perhaps, most importantly, what patterns of cause and effect they infer from their data."<sup>19</sup> If we can agree at least nominally that the major task of film history is to depict how and under what conditions films produce meaning, then we must clearly heed Gadamer's caveat that history does not belong to us, but we to it.<sup>20</sup> We do not stand beyond tradition, but within it. And the history of which we are a part is indeed one we think of in narrative terms. This sense of belonging derives from a tradition developed in the novel; the institution of cinema likewise replicates a model of a text/reader relationship which evolved out of the novelistic. With these beginnings in mind, I would like to outline Jauss's programmatic description of reception history, point out its advantages and shortcomings, before elaborating on its potential worth for narrative study and future film histories.

### III

"The problem of application — put another way, the insufficiency of a mere reconstruction of the past 'as it really was,' of an interpretation or description of a text 'for its own sake,' and the effort to mediate past literature in the experiential horizon of our own present — was a suppressed demand, and it is the real content of that turn toward the aesthetics of reception which occurred in the mid-sixties and which, evidently, was successful."

— Hans Robert Jauss in an interview (1979)

Reception theory in its numerous guises had enjoyed only a marginal existence in German literary discourse prior to Jauss. Clearly, previous generations had produced volumes such as Fritz Strich's **Goethe und die Weltliteratur** (1946) or Wolfgang Leppmann's **The German Image of Goethe** (1961) as well as sundry studies of author reputation, mainly marked by a positivistic or a hagiographical impetus. Nonetheless, various factors had historically prevented any rigorous pursuit of reception studies in Germany. First of all, up to the mid-1960s, the classical notion of the autonomy of the artwork prevailed. This held — albeit for different reasons — for textimmanent adherents, New Critics, and even T.W. Adorno.<sup>21</sup> The primacy of the text made reception at best a secondary, indeed undignified activity that drew attention away from the sanctity of the aesthetic representation.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, a concomitant belief in the integrity of discrete historical epochs (which literary historians were to scrutinize on their own terms as phenomena valid unto themselves) likewise fostered a scholarly curatorship of the past, a protective and hermetic attitude toward tradition.<sup>23</sup> And finally, the legacy of Dilthey and **Geistesgeschichte** continued to prompt the exegete to commune with his/her subject via an act of empathy toward the creative mind; the interpreter's task involved nullifying the temporal gap separating him/her from the artist by reexperiencing (**nacherleben**) a work's origin as it evolved in its shaper's mind. This preoccupation with the temporal gap was perceived until recently as an "affective fallacy," offering nothing new, at best a subjective interpretation that in no way affects the ineluctable presence of the text and the authority of the writer.<sup>24</sup>

These assumptions underwent radical criticism during the late 1960s in West German universities. Jauss's program very much issues from a period of intense dissatisfaction with previous socio-cultural models, a discontent articulated mainly by the student left which called — among other things — this conservative intellectual heritage into question, laying bare its failure to mediate past experience and contemporary praxis.<sup>25</sup> Syncretic in its design, Jauss's program poses a liberal alternative to the rarefied ivory tower ways of the past and the more radical impetus of present-day leftist critiques.<sup>25a</sup> He seeks a Hegelian sublation of numerous impulses (Gadamer, Kosik, Russian formalism of the 1910s and 1920s, Mannheim, Popper, Goldmann, among others), a unique blend that endeavors to renew current discourse by recognizing the seminal role of tradition while insisting we confront this past only in the present. The point remains to make this encounter a productive (and not reproductive) one, a merging of horizons.

Jauss most explicitly appropriates the insights of Gadamer's **Wahrheit und Methode (Truth and Method)**, in particular three ideas:<sup>26</sup> the productive role of prejudice, the shaping function of horizon, and question-and-answer as a central factor in all interpretation. Drawing on Heidegger's notion of **Vorverständnis** (pre-understanding), Gadamer argued that all understanding involves a certain set of predispositions we bring with us into the text, a collection of assumptions which the act of reading causes us to examine.<sup>27</sup> The fact that we exist within a certain horizon — i.e. "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point"<sup>28</sup> — need not be considered a liability, but in fact an ad-

vantage, one which enables us to fuse past and present experience. Rather than obscure this dialectic, Gadamer made it the basis of any historical understanding:

In fact the horizon of the present is being continually formed, in that we have continually to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing is the encounter with the past and the understanding of the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves.<sup>29</sup>

The exegete carries on a dialogue with tradition, a question-and-answer activity which tests his/her assumptions. Temporal distance is helpful because it serves as a filtering process: "It not only lets those prejudices that are of a particular and limited nature die away, but causes those that bring about genuine understanding to emerge clearly as such."<sup>30</sup>

Jauss intends to go beyond previous literary-historical ventures of materialist critics (whom he equates with a vulgar Marxist theory of realism) and the formalist school by focusing on the historicity of both text and reader. In a series of seven theses, he outlines "how literary history might be methodologically justified and rewritten" (p. 171). Rather than go through these points one by one, I will limit my discussion to the elements potentially useful for our purposes.

The central concept informing Jauss's project is **Erwartungshorizont** (expectation horizon), a notion borrowed from Karl Mannheim.<sup>31</sup> All texts, as all interpretations, issue from a distinct temporal vantage point. Literature, fundamentally dialogic in nature, stands within, questions, and often seeks to revise the shared assumptions and accepted traditions of a given point in time. The novel exemplifies perhaps most dramatically how a specific mode of discourse forms an institution, one which reflects and influences human praxis. The literary historian's — and Jauss speaks here with this audience in mind and not a wider readership<sup>32</sup> — task involves not only recreating the **Erwartungshorizont** of author and contemporary audience, but also opening these up to a conversation with present and past interpreters. The advantages to be gained are many: reconstructing the expectation horizon enables one to discern the questions for which a text provided an answer; it allows one to establish how previous readers understood the work as well as to apply it to the present reader's situation. This procedure makes it clear that there exists — contrary to the Platonizing dogma of philological metaphysicians — no single definitive reading of any given work (p. 183). Reception history above all means placing a text within the context of its multiple possible meanings and interpretations.<sup>33</sup>

Sensitivity to the historicity of literature involves for Jauss three things. First, a work dare not only be seen in terms of its effective history; reception theory must account for its significance and place within the historical constellations — Jauss limits these, however, to the literary context (p. 189) — framing it. Secondly, one must place literature at the cutting stone between the diachronic and the synchronic:

It must be possible to analyze the literary horizon of a certain historical moment as that synchronic system in which simultaneously appearing works can be received diachronically in relation, and in which the work can appear as of current interest or not, as fashionable, out-dated or of lasting value, or before its time and after it (pp. 196-97).

Finally, the task of reception history involves going beyond literature and clarifying its function in relation to the whole of human history, i.e. "as **special history** in its own unique relationship to **general history**" (p. 199). This step means a concrete application to the

reader's present situation, and thus constitutes a move past the hermeticism of previous literary histories. At this juncture, Jauss speaks of literature's crucial power in becoming a part of a reader's experience horizon, shaping daily praxis and influencing social action (p. 199). Herein literature takes on "that truly socially formative function which belongs to literature as it competes with other arts and social forces in the emancipation of man from his natural, religious, and social ties" (p. 207).

#### IV

"For it is not a question of presenting literary works in the context of their time, but rather of describing the time which recognizes them, i.e. our own time, by evolving the time that gave rise to them."

— Walter Benjamin, "Literary History and Literary Study"

Challenges to Jauss's program come from both conservative and progressive quarters. The main objections of the traditional critics can, I think, more readily be cast aside than the serious misgivings voiced especially by Marxist commentators. Advocates of text-oriented approaches basically uttered an often-heard reproach: reception aesthetics, in its stress on reader response, fosters subjectivism and psychologism. It furthers no authentic interpretation, but rather a sort of relativism in which every reader provides a different — and equally valid — reading. Jauss could successfully counter this charge by pointing to the more apparent subjectivism of **textimmanent** advocates who attempt to put their object and their activity beyond history while pursuing a meaning **an sich**. Reception history takes into account previous readings of a text; it wants to unify "different interpretations in which the meaning of works of art — yielded to us and always only partially concretizable — especially manifests itself."<sup>34</sup> To critics who maintained that reception theory was nothing new, at best a "swing of the pendulum" (Manfred Naumann) rather than a shift in paradigms, Jauss replied that the basic constellations of reception theory (author, work, public) have always obtained and in part been recognized. But nineteenth-century objectivism in its various guises militated against any thorough-going attention to "the historical conditions of the aesthetic effect of works of art."<sup>35</sup> Only recently has a more inclusive concept of reception been used in literary studies, one which grants application — and not isolation — a seminal role.

Jauss, while steering clear of objectivistic dead-ends, still maneuvers himself into a precarious position when he tries to navigate territory traditionally claimed by Marxist criticism. In fact, he can be faulted for his decidedly monolithic reproduction of Marxist aesthetics, one that reduces a rather complex, far-ranging, and historically diverse array of possibilities down to a stick-figure representation, a unilinear reflection theory (**Wider-spiegelungstheorie**) which at best reflects Lukàcs in the 1930s.<sup>36</sup> Jauss asserts that one must do more than just account for the interaction between literary and social praxis; literary history needs to transcend what he perceives as Marxism's failure to deal with the relation of literary works to each other in their own diachronic and synchronic dimensions as determined by production and reception (p. 163). More than one critic has taken issue with Jauss's loose and vague use of the words "history" and "society."<sup>37</sup> Although Jauss maintains that reception studies ultimately view literature as part of human history and a potentially powerful social phenomenon, he does not consider the role of literature in everyday existence, its material (extra-artistic) production and consumption mechanisms and the historical factors which determine these (c.f. pp. 199-207). Nor does his rarefied notion of **Erwartungshorizont** allude to anything apart from literature-oriented activity. Henry Schmidt has aptly expressed the idealistic limitations of Jauss:

The mechanisms of cultural transmission that he [Jauss] describes . . . remain essentially intrinsic phenomena, whose emancipatory function is centered in aesthetic experience . . . His preoccupation with aesthetic experience horizons obscures the social basis of literary communication processes and the material conditions of distribution.<sup>38</sup>



Beyond this, Jauss manifests a reverence toward tradition; in focusing on the power of effective historical **understanding**, he neglects to consider the potential role of **critique**. He, like Gadamer, does not allow for the possibility that "reflection can grasp the genesis of its own standpoint (immersed in history as it is) and thereby alter its relation to this context."<sup>39</sup> This mediating function of reflection stands as the ultimate guarantee for **effective** historical understanding and **expanding** expectation horizons.

Bearing these exceptions in mind, I would like to show how Jauss's reception aesthetics applies in two specific contexts.<sup>40</sup> Although its potential use value for literary and film history is wide-ranging, I will limit by discussion to recent prose and cinematic output from West Germany.

V

"When the author removes the formerly guaranteed message from the novel and compels the reader first and foremost to construct the meaning of the content, then the author-reader relationship and the relationship between the narrator's role and the 'reader's role in the text become problematical."

— Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "Introduction to Reception Aesthetics"

In quite crucial ways it surprises one that Jauss, when asked about the possible parallels between reception theory and contemporary writing in West Germany, maintained that "there was no correspondence in literary praxis to the formation of theory in German literary studies in the sixties such as was the case in the twenties between Russian formalism and Russian futurism."<sup>41</sup> In fact, West German narrative literature of the last two decades<sup>42</sup> manifests a markedly communicative aspect; its prominent traits (disorientation, fragmentation, radical suspicion of traditional sources of reason and at times reason itself, narrative indeterminacy, open-endedness) seem almost custom-made for the practitioner of reception aesthetics.

A three-fold intertwined logic informs the larger course of recent West German literature: a desire to come to terms with a fascist legacy, a need to find viable forms to live within the contemporary everyday, and the endeavor to understand human language, its past abuses, its present usages, its untapped possibilities. Reception theory is not so much one methodology among many with which one might scrutinize postwar German prose. Given a radical awareness of previous effective history, the tendency to question its own **Erwartungshorizont** as a product of a shattered tradition, and its inherently dialogic character, the majority of West German prose makes little sense unless one bears in mind the insights of reception theory. Narrators in works by such representative writers as Hans Erich Nossack, Heinrich Böll, Uwe Johnson, Peter Handke, and Ilse Aichinger, keep a very modest profile; they seem to have lost their bearings. They know many things, but above all, they remain painfully aware of just how little they know. Hans Mayer aptly describes the dilemma facing any contemporary West German novelist:

To want to write about a reality which one is less and less confident of perceiving. To want to write in a language which one secretly no longer trusts. To hit upon a set of circumstances without distorting them. To write down stories according to the rules of a craft which no longer apply.<sup>43</sup>

Since the mid-sixties, several interrelated impulses have dominated narrative output from the FRG: (1) **documentations** (Günter Wallraff's under-cover investigations of various public and private institutions, Alexander Kluge's account of the bombing of his home town during the last days of World War II [**Neue Geschichten. Hefte 1-18**]), (2) **biographies** (Peter Handke's description of his mother's path to suicide (**Wunschloses Unglück**), Dieter Kühn's attempt to wade through the hype and distortion of previous Josephine Baker biographies

[Josephine]), and (3) self-explorations (Handke's Paris journal entries [**Das Gewicht der Welt**], Bernhard Vesper's journey through the torments of his past [**Die Reise**], Karin Struck's diary from three months in 1972 [**Klassenliebe**]). The three tendencies involve a similar activity: one sifts through bits and pieces of the past within the context of a narrative present, looking over these moments in time and pondering their possible meanings, then and now. Ultimately, the reader is left to share the interpretive conundrum — and not supplied with the assurance that the indeterminant and unsettling might be resolved within "the context of a generality of human affairs and their understanding," as was the case, for instance, in the prose of an earlier century.<sup>44</sup>

The reader poses a constituting factor in the meaning of such a text. This interplay between author and reader stands as a central structural shift that separates modern German narrative from that of previous epochs. This shift indeed is one of the catalysts for the formulation of reception aesthetics.<sup>45</sup> Clearly, though, this shift in the producer's relation to the audience reflects more than just changing literary structures. To be sure, my outline here betrays all of the liabilities found in Jauss, for it fails to transcend the rarefied confines of literary experience, even if it marginally broaches questions of historical portent and social praxis. It remains to be seen how reception theory might be put to use so that it combines **both social and aesthetic structures within their specific historical dimensions**. My subsequent discussion will suggest a number of areas in which a future film history of West German cinema since 1962 might begin to achieve such a synthesis.

## VI

"The critic-historian, no less than the filmmaker, is a storyteller, reworking material from the near and further past (choosing, indeed, which past shall be of service), projecting the home society's unacknowledged conflicts, exposing, rejecting, denouncing for, and on behalf of, readership and audience."

—Sylvia Lawson, "Towards Decolonization: Some Problems and Issues for Film History in Australia"

Some tasks (among many) for history of West German film since 1962:

(1) **Outlining the expectation horizon behind the 1962 Oberhausen Manifesto**. Hardly deferent to the past abuse of the cinematic medium in Germany, the Oberhausen signatories framed their statement as a critique of existing film practice and promised to create alternative forms. This prolegomenon to the Young German Film (whose mature extension would be called New German Cinema) was an act of reception; it pronounced the death of a moribund tradition and the birth of a "new German feature film." Historical hindsight provides numerous insights into the constellations surrounding this moment. First, one must regard the shattered nature of German film tradition, a tradition broken by twelve years of Nazi control. Further, one needs to consider Germany's abiding and "deep-rooted distrust of sights and sounds which tell its own history" (Wim Wenders).<sup>46</sup> The country's most able image-makers have almost without exception left Germany, either in search of more favorable working conditions or out of dire necessity.<sup>47</sup> Another historical prejudice that influenced Young German filmmakers' attitudes was the haunting awareness of the potential manipulative powers of their medium, how it had served and promoted fascist ideology under Goebbels' tutelage, and the insidious manner in which it had legitimized the conservative **status quo** during the Adenauer era. Finally, one must mention a factor markedly underestimated at least initially by the **Jungfilmer**, i.e. the international stranglehold exercised by the American film industry over distribution and exhibition mechanisms. Young German filmmakers could celebrate their first triumphs in enlisting state support of their projects (the founding of the **Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film** was followed by the Film Subsidies Bill of 1967); they thus had funds to make their films, but no real means of distributing them and no viable home market. In a country without an alternative film culture (no film clubs, national cinémathèque, sympathetic media organs or film journals, as in France), the young directors remained in search of an audience in a country ill-disposed to conscientious and incisive shapers of images.

(2) **Viewing Young German Film within effective historical continuities beyond simply film-based considerations.** At various junctures in German intellectual history, youth movements have risen out of stultifying contexts, reacting to a stagnant Zeitgeist and formulating radical alternatives, both formal and substantive. The battle cry "Opas Kino ist tot" (Gramps's cinema is dead) marks a generational rebellion which must be seen in the wider terms of the German past, as a successor to the Sturm und Drang effusions of the Werther-era, the progressive endeavors of Young Germany in the pre-1848 epoch, the Expressionist and Activist pamphleteering of the 1910s and 1920s. Young German Cinema developed at the same time students were manning barricades in Schwabing (1962). Its ties with the organized student left are more than just coincidental. The massive discontent with the false representations of the Springer press (**Bild-Zeitung**, the FRG's largest daily newspaper) in 1967 formed a rallying point that led to the earliest major street battles. A similar critique of manipulative depictions moved the young directors, whose first films abound with documentary footage and counter-information.<sup>48</sup> This bent toward **Gegeninformation**, toward providing alternative views of the FRG and German tradition beyond the representations of the media and cultural legitimators, stands as one of the distinguishing traits of New German Cinema, which over the years has continued to maintain its youthful status, even as some of its figures approach their 40s and, in some cases, 50s.<sup>49</sup>

(3) **Discussing West German directors' relation to tradition in their attempt to fashion a viable national cinema.** Although various filmmakers and critics have maintained that Young German Film started from zero,<sup>50</sup> such individuals seriously neglect the fact that parts of an otherwise bankrupt film tradition were salvaged. These include Werner Herzog's consistent appropriation of the fatalistic and fantastic aspects of Weimar production,<sup>51</sup> the renewal of the **Arbeiterfilm** (worker's film) from the late 1920s under the auspices of WDR,<sup>52</sup> as well as the modern reshaping of the **Kammerspielfilm** (chamber-room film).<sup>53</sup> The major problem in the development of a counter-cinema, though, remained coming to terms with the Hollywood model to which directors enjoyed a love-hate relationship. On the one hand, as Timothy Corrigan points out, American films offered "an image of redemption and unparalleled technical proficiency;" on the other hand, Hollywood was perceived as "the propagator of an ideological and economic imperialism."<sup>54</sup> This identity problem has in fact even more far-reaching dimensions. The American film tradition these young directors felt so ambivalent about had in great part been constituted by emigrant **German** directors whose Hollywood work bears no small trace of a film language originally articulated in Germany. A larger compelling task for future surveyors of German cinema remains plotting the dialectics of this interaction between two inextricably-bound national cinemas.<sup>55</sup> Young German Film's initial grapplings with film noir (pre-1971 Fassbinder, **Detektive, 48 Stunden bis nach Acapulco, Deadlock**) and more recently melodrama (post-Sirkian Fassbinder and a host of epigones), for instance, demonstrate the hardly simple dynamics behind this exchange, one informed by a simultaneous urge to decolonize film practice as well as an inability to disregard completely this dominant — and in many ways oppressive and ideologically suspect — cinema. Clearly, this question has ramifications that apply for a number of emerging national cinemas.<sup>56</sup>

(4) **Describing the precarious situation faced for the most by the NGC in West Germany and showing how socio-economics have conditioned filmmaking.** Attending to the reception of post-Oberhausen productions means studying the adversary relations between young filmmakers and a host of instances: the established film branch (cinema owners, commercial distributors, producers), film critics (for the most autodidacts writing for the bourgeois press with no high opinion of film<sup>57</sup>), government funding agencies (both federal and local) and public broadcasting networks (in both cases, German directors, to make the films they want must make arrangements with these institutions, ones subject to a large amount of political pressure<sup>58</sup>), and rating boards. These tensions obviously have had both economic as well as aesthetic consequences. (For instance, the so-called "amphibian film" evolved as a result of filmmakers whose main source of support was TV. Certain topics do not find ready support from these institutions, e.g. terrorism.) The relative lack of box-office success enjoyed by West German films until recently comes as a result of these conflicts, not — contrary to some domestic viewers — as a simple consequence of German filmmakers' utopian and esoteric proclivities. Given Germany's traditional disdain for its most critical talents, a brash and economically powerless independent cinema bent on remolding

accepted images and casting new ones was bound to suffer its fair share of growing pains as well as have a hard time of it at home. New German Cinema had to go into quasi-exile before gaining recognition from its domestic audience.

(5) Explaining **the key role of international critical reception in fashioning public images of New German Cinema, as well as the consequences thereof.** The image NGC enjoys internationally evolved over time as directors like the triumvirate Fassbinder/ Herzog/ Wenders — and to some degree Straub/Huillet, Schlöndorff, Kluge, and Syberberg — travelled with their films to festivals outside of Germany. The counter public sphere lacking at home was found in Great Britain, North America, and France. Appreciations, homages, retrospectives, and eventually art-house screenings of works by these directors indicated the extent of foreign admiration, very much in contrast to the luke-warm, if not hostile, reception accorded the NGC inland. This approval, bounded in foreign experience of a cultural output viewed from the distance, has furthered a codified notion of the NGC. Certain directors have been canonized, only a small portion of the German production ever reaches exhibition, most commentators know relatively little about the specifics of the FRG, and hence quite a circumscribed notion of a national cinema has arisen, one that knows little of the many films made for TV, documentary productions, feminist initiatives, works by recent arrivals (**Nachwuchsfilmer**), or the extremely active avant-garde. One will have to account for the divergent expectation horizons within and outside of West Germany which led to such differing opinions, much less the specifics of critical traditions and reception mechanisms. One would do well in tracing the mass media perception of the NGC and how it has both fostered certain impulses while simultaneously obscuring many others. Present images very much do influence the making of future films.<sup>59</sup> Future film historians need to attend to the larger body of work at hand if they would account for the major contours of their subject. This will require, of course, extensive archives work and viewing of films at institutions abroad.<sup>60</sup>

I can only touch upon a host of other tasks which will be confronted by a reception aesthetics concerned with the dynamics of single texts in their socio-historical context. One consideration is the role of the viewer as addressee in NGC texts (e.g. Kluge, Fassbinder, Straub/Huillet, Reitz), how the spectator constitutes meaning for such texts both in and outside cinemas. Another point of study would be the subversion of certain genres and cinematic conventions by the NGC in search of its own voice (the second-hand **films noirs** of the late 1960s, the anti-**Heimatfilme** from the early seventies) or directorial appropriations of foreign impulses beyond the influence-oriented discussions abounding today (Fassbinder-Sirk, Wenders-Hitchcock, Herzog-Murnau, etc.), ones which have done little to grasp the cross-cultural and historical problematics behind such borrowings.

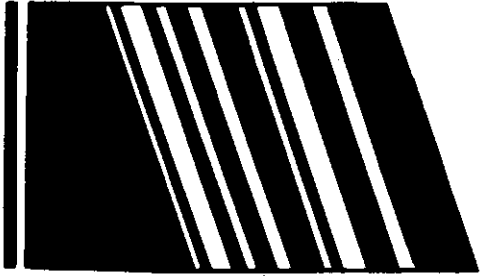
A future history of West German will above all demand a self-reflexive element, one that calls attention to its assumptions, workings, sources, and findings as the function of a specific expectation horizon. Reception theory stresses the historical dialogue between a number of partners, between text and producer, producer and context, context and text, text and reader — not as separate functions, but as part of a single ongoing process. "If film history is to pursue this path of seeking to relate the production of cinema to a social structure," submits Buscombe, "then it needs some more sophisticated models from which to work."<sup>61</sup> A future film history that is to measure up to this imposing demand would do well to take note of reception theory's possibilities.

Eric Rentschler's current project bears the title **West German Film in the Course of Time.** He recently edited a special issue of **The Quarterly Review of Film Studies** devoted to "West German Film in the 1970s."

## FOOTNOTES

1. **Literaturgeschichte als Provokatin** (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 144. Subsequent references will be quoted in the text according to page number.
2. The original published version of the essay appeared in 1967 under the title "Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft," which underwent some revision prior to the 1970 publication. Parts V-XII were translated by Elizabeth Benzinger in the English rendering "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," **New Literary History**, 2, No. 1 (1970), 7-37.
3. Some recent indications of a renewed interest in film history include contributions on the subject in **Cinema Journal** 14 (Winter 1974-75), the 1977 **Purdue Film Studies Annual: Part Two** ("Film: Historical-Theoretical Speculations"), and **Film Reader** 4 from 1979 ("Metahistory of Film"), The Ohio University Film Conference devoted its 1981 gathering to "Film History: Industry, Style, Ideology."
4. See Edward Buscombe, "A New Approach to Film History," **1977 Film Studies Annual: Part Two** (Redgrave: Pleasantville, N.Y., 1977), p. 2.
5. Myron Loundsbury, "The Gathered Light: History, Criticism and **The Rise of the American Film**," **The Quarterly Review of Film Studies (QRFS)**, 5, No. 1 (1980), 53.
6. C.f. Gerald Mast's discussion, "Film History and Film Histories," **QRFS**, 1, No. 3 (1976), 305ff.
7. Bill Nichols. "Critical Approaches to Film Then and Now," **Cinéaste**, 5, No. 2 (Spring 1972), 8.
8. *Ibid.*, 10.
9. Buscombe, p. 2.
10. A representative example among many others is Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel's **The German Cinema** (New York/Washington: Praeger, 1971), which still is the only single-volume study of the entire span of German film history — in German or English.
11. "Our Dream Cinema: Western Historiography and the Japanese Film," **Film Reader** 4 (1979), p. 58.
12. Rien T. Segers, "An Interview with Hans Robert Jauss," **New Literary History**, 11, No. 1 (1979), 83.
13. *Ibid.*, 86.
14. *Ibid.*, 89.
15. Douglas Gomery's work has been very important in this area. See, for instance. "The Picture Palace: Economic Sense or Hollywood Nonsense?" **QFRS** 3, No. 1 (1978), 23-36.
16. Clearly, the investigations of Metz and Lacan have set the tone for most discussions along these lines. Recent feminist theory, likewise, has centered its attentions on this subject. See "Women and Film: a Discussion of Feminist Aesthetics," **New German Critique**, No. 13 (Winter 1978), pp. 82-107; also, Gertrud Koch. "Female Sensuality and Its Love-Hatred of Cinema: Some Speculations on Past Joys and Future Hopes," as yet unpublished.
17. Mast, 299.
18. Loundsbury, 54.
19. "Film History: The Narrow Discourse," **1977 Film Studies Annual: Part Two**, p. 11.
20. Buscombe, in his introduction to **Film Reader** 4, quotes E.H. Carr's similar insight from **What Is History?:** "... 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" (12).
21. "The study of impact neither touches art as a social phenomenon nor should it be allowed to dictate norms to art, a position it has usurped in the spirit of positivism," claims Adorno in his **Aesthetische Theorie, Gesammelte Schriften**, Vol. 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 339. See Peter Uwe Hohendahl's discussion of Adorno's attitude to reception studies in "introduction to Reception Aesthetics," **New German Critique**, No. 10 (Winter 1977), pp. 31 -33.
22. See Karl Robert Mandelkow, "Probleme der Wirkungsgeschichte," in **Sozialgeschichte und Wirkungsethik**, ed. Peter Uwe Hohendahl (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum Fisher, 1974), pp. 83-85.
23. Jauss discusses this in section II of his essay, esp. pp. 153-54.
24. See Hohendahl, "Introduction to Reception Aesthetics," pp. 33-35.
25. Some indications of the methodological state of siege came to expression in **Ansichten einer künftigen Germanistik**, ed. Jürgen Kolbe (Munich: Hanser, 1969) and a sequel **Neue Ansichten einer künftigen Germanistik** (1973). For a survey of the impact made by the student movement on West German intellectual life, see **Nach dem Protest: Literatur im Umbruch**, ed. W. Martin Lüdke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979).
- 25a. Henry J. Schmidt, "'Text-Adequate Concretizations' and Real Readers: Reception Theory and its Applications," **New German Critique**, No. 17 (Spring 1979), p. 158.
26. Gadamer will be quoted according to the translation of the second edition of **Wahrheit und Methode** edited by Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury, 1975).
27. Gadamer, pp. 235ff.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
31. See **Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction** (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1940).
32. The failure of numerous reception scholars to take real readers into account is discussed at some length by Schmidt (see footnote No. 25a).

33. C.f. Mandelkow, p. 88.
34. "An Interview with Hans Robert Jauss," 85.
35. Ibid., 83.
36. He presents Marxist literary theory in a much less slanted way in the 1979 interview, being sure to distinguish between Marxist orthodoxy of the Stalinist era and more progressive recent theoretical work from the GDR (88-89).
37. See Berndt Jürgen Warneken, "Zu Hans Robert Jauss' Programm einer Rezeptionsästhetik, in **Sozialgeschichte und Wirkungsästhetik**, p. 290.
38. Schmidt, p. 158.
39. Jack Mendelson. "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate," **New German Critique**, No. 18 (Fall 1979), p. 59. The rather involved and transhistorical consequences of such a leap are developed by Mendelson in subsequent pages of his essay.
40. See Jauss's more recent **Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik 1** (Munich: Fink, 1977) for the author's attempts to apply his own theory.
41. "Interview with Hans Robert Jauss," 87.
42. Within theater, post-Brechtian impulses have fostered this communicative aspect in drama as well, especially since the early sixties.
43. "Günter Grass and Thomas Mann: Aspects of the Novel," in **Steppenwolf and Everyman: Outsiders and Conformists in Contemporary Literature**, trans. Jack D. Zipes (New York: Crowell, 1971), p. 196.
44. Martin Swales, **The German Novelle** (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1977), p. 56.
45. Hohendahl, p. 37: "The discovery by Weinrich, Iser, Harth, Poulet and others of the role of the reader was apparently generated, even forced by structural changes in the modern novel."
46. "That's Entertainment: Hitler: Eine Polemik gegen Joachim C. Fests Film **Hitler-eine Karriere**," **Die Zeit**, 5 August 1977. An example of Wenders's point would be the fact, for instance, that the anti-Nazi Hollywood films of Fritz Lang still do not have a commercial distributor in West Germany.
47. Even the two most significant histories of German film were written by German exiles abroad, Siegfried Kracauer's **From Caligari to Hitler** in New York, Lotte Eisner's **The Haunted Screen in Paris**.
48. Subsequent West German films dealing with the student movement include Günter Hormann's **Aktiver Streik an der Frankfurter Universität** (1969), Cristina Perincioli's **Besetzung und Selbstverwaltung eines Studentenwohnheims** (1969), Wim Wenders's short **Polizeifilm** (1970), and Helma Sanders's **Unter dem Pflaster ist der Strand** (1974).
49. C.f. Hans Helmut Prinzler. "Gegeninformationen: Notizen zu neuen Dokumentarfilmen aus der Bundesrepublik und zu **Deutschland im Herbst**," **Jahrbuch Film 78/79**, ed. Hans Günther Pflaum (Munich: Hanser, 1978), pp. 48-61
50. In an interview with Jonathan Cott, Werner Herzog said: "Filmmakerû like myself started from zero — we didn't have the cultural continuity of France or the United States." See "Signs of Life," **Rolling Stone**, 18 Nov. 1976, p. 53.
51. Clearly this tradition has its roots in 19th-century Romanticism. Both Herzog and Syberberg have appropriated this legacy in a decidedly undialectical manner.
52. See Richard Collins and Vincent Porter, "Westdeutscher Rundfunk and the Arbeiterfilm (1967-1977)," **QRFS**, 5, No. 2 (1980), 233-51.
53. For a discussion of this genre during the Weimar era, see Lotte H. Eisner, **The Haunted Screen**, trans. Roger Greaves (Berkeley/Los Angeles: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1969), pp. 177ff.
54. "The Realist Gesture in the Films of Wim Wenders: Hollywood and the New German Cinema," **QRFS**, 5, No. 2 (1980), 206.
55. Hans C. Blumenberg, one of Germany's leading film critics, recently stated: "Without the Germans in Hollywood, American cinema would be unthinkable." See "Von Caligari bis Coppola: Junge deutsche Filmemacher in Hollywood auf den Spuren von Lubitsch, Murnau und Lang," **Die Zeit**, 22 Feb. 1960.
56. Sylvia Lawson points out how this problem obtains for filmmakers from countries like Australia, China, Cuba, as well as younger directors from India, Japan, Switzerland, and the Third World. "All insist," claims Lawson, "in various ways that the decolonization of filmic practices, which is to say of the filmmakers' own consciousness, must precede that of the audience." See "Towards Decolonization: Some Problems and Issues for Film History in Australia," **Film Reader** 4 (1979), pp. 70-71.
57. Notable exceptions are Blumenberg, Wolf Donner, Wolfram Schiitte, Karsten Witte, Gertrud Koch, and Peter Buchka.
58. I have shown how this had disastrous consequences for the NGC during 1976-1977 in my piece, "Deutschland im Vorherbst: Literature Adaptation in West German Film," **Kino: German Film**, No. 3 (Summer 1980), pp. 11-19.
59. I deal with this problem at some length in "American Friends and the New German Cinema: Patterns of Reception," to appear in **New German Critique**, No. 24 (Fall 1981).
60. See Friedrich P. Kahlenberg, "Toward a Vital Film Culture: Film Archives in West Germany," **QRFS**, 5, No. 2 (1980), 253-61.
61. "Introduction." **Film Reader** 4 (1979), p. 12.



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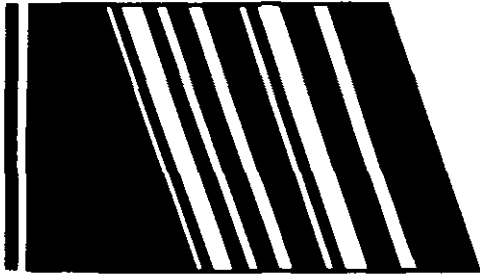
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