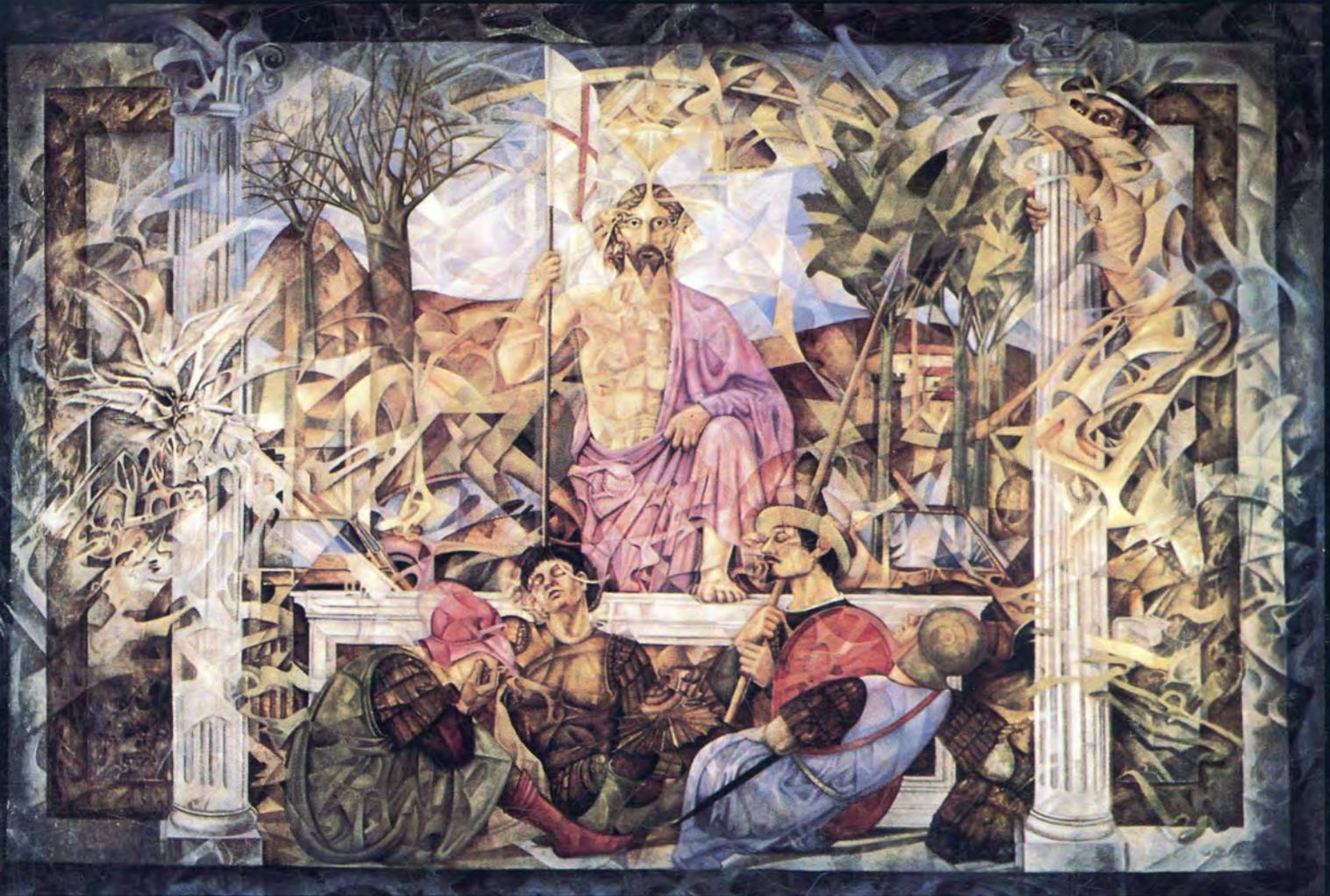


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THE MANY-SPLENDORED ACTOR: AN INTERVIEW WITH JIMMY STEWART

Conducted by Neil P. Hurley, S.J.



INTRODUCTION

On August 17, 1981 Loyola alumna, Melissa Clare, and I were privileged to have a one hour interview with the now legendary Hollywood star, James Stewart, in his Beverly Hills home. Following the taped session which is printed here, the exuberant Melissa turned to me on the steps of the simple Tudor home of the Stewarts and remarked with a mixture of awe and personal gratitude: "Father, I'll never forget this as long as I live. He was great!" Meeting stars can lead to an "off-screen" experience which de-mystifies what one is used to seeing on the screen. In Jimmy Stewart's case, the charisma is there — without the make-up, the flattering play of light and shadow and the 40 foot magnification, all of which contribute to movie magic and star appeal. Despite the absence of that curious chemistry of continuous celluloid frames, what you

meet in the real Jimmy Stewart is what you get enlarged and enhanced in the movie theatre — a disarming, winning, amiable man with an infectious smile, gentle manners and that chief "Stewart-ism" — the halting speech with its suspenseful hesitations incandescent with burning sincerity.

Jimmy Stewart is a natural actor — like Gable, Tracy and Cagney — so irrepressibly convincing in presence and performance that you tend to overlook how supremely good an actor each is and how hard the acting craft is. Let me - for the sake of the reader — roll my many celluloid memories of Stewart roles as if they were a mosaic of moments pieced together in one lengthy movie. For using this fictional stratagem, one sees the complete actor, Jimmy Stewart, a man capable of a range, a depth and a subtle variety for which he has not been given

due credit. In the shadow of the stereotypical Stewart *persona* is another, more hidden, Stewart — a strong rebellious type which does not contradict, but rather complements, that whimsical “man-child” innocent we have come to love and accept as — together with Gary Cooper — the quintessential “common man” embodying all the best traits of goodwill, generosity and gentleness to be found in America.

Stewart began his career on the stage with the University Players (Josh Logan, Henry Fonda, Margaret Sullivan, Arlene Francis and Martin Gabel). He was a contract player in the large stable of M-G-M's stable of actors. Ironically, some of his earliest roles featured Stewart as a villain — a renegade brother of Jeannette MacDonald in the operetta, *Rose Marie* (1936), and a killer in *After the Thin Man* (1936). His image, changed with his role as a midshipman in *Navy, Blue and Gold* (1937), Frank Capra was impressed with the gangling star, seeing great potentialities for selfless roles as a willing “auto-victim” to subvert evil forces threatening community and the democratic system. Stewart admits that his roles in *You Can't Take It with You*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *It's a Wonderful Life* helped his career greatly.

His career was interrupted by World War II; he served for four years as an army pilot, leading men on combat missions in the European Theatre of operations. Following his discharge, he forbade the studio publicity departments to exploit his accomplishments as a patriot and decorated hero for the sake of box office appeal. The celebrated modesty of James Stewart, the actor, is not cosmetic but bone-deep.

The return to Hollywood meant adaptation to new circumstances; gone was the mood of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. The American audience was more sophisticated, having seen films which featured more violence and relaxed sexual standards of conduct than in 1941 when Stewart made the fluffy *Pot of Gold*. Two of his films failed commercially: Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and William Wellman's *Magic Town* (1947). However, Stewart succeeded in accommodating himself to the new genre — the “black-thriller” (known in French as the *film noir*). Stewart presented a new character, a tight-lipped “no-nonsense” reporter out to prove the innocence of a falsely-accused man. As a popular TV rerun, the film holds up well today: Lee J. Cobb, Thelma Ritter and Richard Conte help Stewart to give the film durable “legs.”

Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948) confirmed Stewart's new

screen persona as a serious actor. Adapted from a play based on the notorious Leopold-leob “thrill-murders” of the 1920's, *Rope* starred Stewart as a college professor who influenced the playboy-murderers through his teachings of amoral, Nietzsche-like principles. This unusual movie was shot continuously in sequence as if it were a photoplay. (The accompanying interview casts light on the mechanics of shooting this truly unique and rarely-viewed film.) In *Malaya* (1950), an unscrupulous, rather unlikeable Jimmy Stewart gives no quarter in his scenes with Spencer Tracy, known for “knocking off the screen” rival actors.

In 1950 Stewart began an association with Anthony Mann, a fine director of Westerns. The film, *Winchester 73*, picked up the threads of *Destry Rides Again* (1939), a Western spoof in which Stewart did a broad caricature of a frontiersman opposite Marlene Dietrich who, in her smoky voice, sang: “See what the boys in the backroom will have, and tell 'em that I'll have the same.” A new facet of the Stewart persona emerged with his Western roles: *Broken Arrow* (1950), *Bend of the River* (1952), *Carbine Williams* (1952), *The Naked Spur* (1953), *The Man from Laramie* (1955) and three John Ford vehicles: *Two Rode Together* (1961), *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) and *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964).

It is an assumption — unexamined and purely gratuitous — that Jimmy Stewart invariably plays himself. That he does often as, for example, in his roles in *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Harvey* and Cecil DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth*. A closer study of Stewart's filmology will demonstrate that he is capable of great passion, inner torment and self-doubt. Hitchcock recognized this darker, more troubled side to Stewart's persona and played him against type — the professor-accomplice in *Rope*, the voyeuristic “wheel chair-ridden” photographer in *Rear Window*, the anxiety-lashed father of the kidnapped child in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Add to this the bravura performance of *Vertigo* and, later, Otto Preminger's *Anatomy of a Murder*, and one revises the conventional image we have of Stewart — not false, merely incomplete. Frank Capra saw this other side of Stewart and brought it out in the final scenes of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *It's a Wonderful Life*. These scenes rank with the finest in Stewart's career — yes, even in the annals of Hollywood acting.

Audiences remember Stewart as the quiet, untroubled country boy fighting “big city” political machines and unpatriotic movements or romancing attractive women in a “golly, gee whiz” manner.

These are certainly unforgettable "bits of time," to use the phrase that Jimmy Stewart has coined to describe the arbitrary workings of memory. We do recall in a selective fashion scenes which, though part of a seamless movie plot, become unstitched in our subjective memory-bank and stick there as highlights, pushing into the shadows of oblivion other scenes and bits of celluloid. Among my "bits of time" relating to James Stewart's performances are the typical ones of the playful, ear-pulling, gulling and gagging innocent. But alongside of these

as long as film classics are shown in revival, reruns and retrospectives.

Mr. Stewart, when you first came to Hollywood, you began to work for the large studios, MGM in particular. Could you say a word about your experience there? We would also like to know about your experiences with directors: over your long career you have worked with Lubitsch, DeMille, Capra, Hitchcock, Ford, Wellman, Wilder, and King Vidor.



are other memorable "snatches" of Stewart-on-screen, various instances of that diamond-hard, tousled-haired Stewart who resists and resents injustice and cries out with every fiber of his being against it. There is a "hidden Stewart," a "subliminal Stewart." This interview presents the manifest Stewart, the quintessential American, the charming host, the man who is usher in the Presbyterian Church of Beverly Hills; but the 75 films that Stewart has made (27 before he entered military service) broaden our appreciation of his histrionic talent. What he did for Lubitsch, Capra, Hitchcock, Ford, Anthony Mann and Otto Preminger will live

I came to Hollywood in 1935 as a contract player; MGM probably had the biggest list of such players in town. The contract players did the many small roles in the dozens of pictures that were shot constantly. The directors, the writers, and the producers were also under contract. This is the way the studios operated at that time.

About the contrasting styles of directors at the studios, I wasn't particularly conscious of them. You see, acting is a craft in so many ways. I just felt that the more work I got and the more discipline I had, the better it would be for me in the days ahead. One of the differences as compared to

making pictures today is that one worked a great deal. I can't figure out many who are acting in films nowadays — those who are absolutely dedicated to themselves, feel they owe nothing to anybody, and only want to work on what they approve of. Well, I'm getting off the subject.

That's alright. It helps to understand acting and directing in the earlier days of Hollywood. So the criticism of the big studios in the 1930s overlooks certain advantages.

Well, yes. The big studios had a different theory of operating. I know that people call them "impersonal factories." I completely disagree with that. Frank [Capra] would probably *not* completely disagree with that. He would fight with Harry Cohn, the big boss, as if they were two mad dogs. Nevertheless, he had great respect for the idea of the big studio. You hear talk of these terrible people — L. B. Mayer, the Warner brothers, Harry Cohn, Darryl Zanuck — all of these awful people had this wonderful love for the picture business. It was complete love and devotion. Strangely enough, they had judgment as to the type of material which would be acceptable to audiences, and, strangely enough, they also had good taste. They were disciplined enough to know that what went up there on the screen didn't have to be dirty to be good.

That change came about after World War II, I believe.

Well, yes. I worked up until the war for MGM. I did little parts in big pictures, and big parts in little pictures. I made, I think, 23 pictures for 1935 until I went into the service. A lot of them are hard to remember, and several were not made at MGM — like those I did with Frank [Capra]. They traded us to other studios like ball players — on loan. Sometimes they traded us, not for another actor, but for the use of a back lot. I remember someone told me that I was traded to Universal Studios to do a picture so that MGM could use a street Universal had built on its back lot for shooting certain types of pictures. This type of thing.

You're saying that the studios provided work and that that element of dependable employment is gone today.

Well, yes. Frank [Capra] is a good example of the importance of discipline and experience which can't come from any other thing than work. There's no

other way I know of to build a successful career.

Speaking of Capra, they say he had a "happy set," that his relaxed manner of directing led to an improvisation which reminded one of the stage.

Well, this was the feeling Frank created, and by the way, this was also the feeling on a Hitchcock set. The complete opposite was true of John Ford's set. Everything was completely tense. No one knew what was going to happen on any given day. You didn't know if you were going to be the fall guy of the day, whether Ford was going to have his gun pointed at you. But it was very effective — all of it completely planned by Ford — and, as I said, very effective. It got up there on the screen the way he wanted it and the way the audience liked it. Of course, that's the only thing that matters.

Ford told a story visually and created "believability" through using the screen to tell a visual story. Of course, Hitch did that also. He said that if you're not able to tell a story visually you're not using the motion picture medium correctly. For example, the scriptgirl would come up to Hitch after a scene and say, "Mr. Hitchcock, they're not saying their lines correctly. Mr. Stewart changed that and he didn't say this." Hitch would say, "It looked fine and that's a print." Ford would do that also. Both thought in pictures.

They thought photographically — in images.

That's correct. I'd say of all the directors I worked for, Hitch was the best prepared — to my way of thinking, at least. He worked for months on the script. If you even saw his script, which every once in a while he would look at, on the blank page you'd see the scene. The lamppost or dinner table or the trees in the forest would be sketched there. It would all be visually suggested. Hitch didn't worry about the words; he wanted to forget about the words. He was very good artist, and he put the script into picture language. You know, Hitch never looked through the camera. They say that he was too big to get near the camera, but, of course, that wasn't true. He never looked through the camera because he had very good cameramen. They knew their jobs. He'd call over, say, Bob Burks, who'd stand behind Hitch, and he'd frame the shot by holding up his hands. [Mr. Stewart held up both hands about a foot apart with each index finger and thumb perpendicular to one another.] If he wanted a moving shot, Hitch would say, "I want that," and then he would move his upheld hands to show the

scene which followed the first shot. Then he would go and sit in his director's chair and watch the shooting of the scene when the cameraman got ready.

Actors felt that they were "under-directed" by Hitchcock; not so much veteran actors such as you, for you were a seasoned actor when you first worked on Rope in 1948, but newcomers such as John Dall or Farley Granger who also worked in Rope. Perhaps they may have been made nervous by Hitch's seeming indifference and silence.

Well, *Rope* was an entirely different kettle of fish. Only Hitchcock would try to do a picture that looked like it had no cuts, doing it without stopping.

Yes, using only one-reel takes, ten minutes at a time.

Well, Hitch tried it. Of course, what he was doing was forfeiting one of the most valuable things in the picture business, and that was the cut. I always thought that on the set of *Rope* that if we had had bleachers around that one set and charged admission to the public so they could see how the technicians moved around, then the film probably would have earned more money than it did in the theater. It was fascinating. The camera moved all over the place. Even the walls moved, but they moved on rubber rollers so as not to make noise. But there were so many rubber rollers they made some noise. Hitch would take us through each scene. For instance, I would go in and get a book. The camera would follow me. Then the walls would move on the rubber rollers. I'd then take the book and put it down on a table, but there was no table there — only the camera. There would be a man there hunching below the range of the camera to take the book from my hand. Then I'd move somewhere else. The walls would move and the camera would follow my movements.

A different way of making a movie, isn't it? It was really a photoplay, in a way.

Well, yes. They even had a man who would point to, oh, about thirty circles on the ground which represented where the camera would shoot takes. Well, on cue this man had a pointer and would point to circles so that we, the actors, would be ready when the camera would appear behind a disappearing wall right above the indicated circle. The union didn't know what to call this man. The job

was invented just for this film. As I say, only Hitchcock would have tried it.

Recently, I was talking with a few of Hitch's old crew, and they felt he created problems and challenges as if he wanted to push back the known limits of filmmaking.

Yes, in a sense, that's right; he was convinced all his life of the visual power of the medium, and that was his goal.

Do you know why he chose you to appear in Rope? Capra had seen you in Navy, Blue and Gold and chose you on the basis of your innocent manner and charm. Had Hitch seen you in a particular film?

No, I really don't know why he picked me.

Have you ever thought that Hitchcock cast you in his films contrary to the stereotype of the "man-child" idealist which was the image of you in such Capra films as Mr. Smith Goes to Washington and It's a Wonderful Life? You had a star image which he seemed to change.

I don't think Hitch paid much attention to a "star image." I never heard Hitch discuss a scene with an actor. He never did with me. I heard him say that he hired actors — you know, the "cattle" as he referred to them — because they were supposed to know what they were doing. When he said, "Action," he expected them to do what he had hired them to do. This was pretty much his feeling about it. He never tried to talk to the person and mold him into a certain type of character or try to change him.

They say he was very conscious of directing the audience — through the editing process.

Well, he was so prepared that he knew how a particular scene would join up with the scenes he would shoot later to give the effect he wanted. Yes, in this sense he directed the audience rather than the actors. The way his mind worked and the way he fit things together was unique. Only he knew — and maybe Bob Burks, his cameraman — what the final effect was intended to be. This was a very disciplined and masterful man at work.

Is the transition difficult from the live stage performance to motion pictures where the process is fragmented and merely a sequence of bits of cellu-

loid, or, as you would call it, "pieces of time"?

The big difference — and the big danger — is that you have to change your projection. On the stage you have to reach the persons way up there in the last row of the second balcony as well as those sitting there ten feet away from you. On the stage an actor does more things — you have to project more. In the movies there's more work with the eyes and small movements. Everybody thinks that in making movies you have a microphone over your head so all you have to do is whisper. Well, that's nonsense. That is not the type of cutting down on the projection I mean. No, I didn't find that change very hard. If you talk with Hank Fonda, I think he would agree.

You did Harvey on the stage and then did the movie. Do you feel that the transition was challenging?

No, not really. It was different, but not that different.

The thing I've always felt was that movies were made up of tiny "bits of time." People remember not the film but certain scenes, certain "bits of time." I know that Hitchcock and yes, Ford, too, believed in that principle. Capra never said it, but he understood it and practiced it. I remember how often someone would come up to me — maybe from Philadelphia — and say I remember seeing you in a picture. He doesn't remember the name of the film, who was in it, who was with him when he saw it, where he saw it, but he'll say something like this, "You were in this room [now this is a lot of information I'm getting] and you said something [now he doesn't even remember what I said in the picture], but you turned and the look you gave this other person, I'll never forget that." Now, nine times out of ten, I'll remember the picture, the title, the scene, who the fellow actor was — everything about it. Then I'll say, "Was it this picture?" And the answer will be, "yes, that's the picture I meant."

I can see how true that is of audiences. They remember "pieces of time," not the entire sequence.

Yes, it's strange, but a fact. I knew Hitch and Ford mentioned this explicitly. The motion picture is made up of these little "pieces of time" and influence the audience and create the "believability" for which we in this business are working all the time. The "believability" in motion pictures comes in bits, in small pieces. In the theater, when the curtain goes

down after the first act, you have a feel for the plot and what has happened and the characters who have come at you during that time. In pictures it's different — it happens in little bits of time.

Like building a mosaic floor or putting together a stained glass window. Mr. Stewart, did you feel that your role as the young senator in Capra's Mr. Smith



Goes to Washington extended your range of acting?

Well, it certainly was the most difficult thing I had tackled — probably as difficult a thing as I've ever had, I suppose. I remember that we worked on the filibuster scene for three weeks. I had been talking at the top of my voice trying to sound hoarse. I remember Frank [Capra] coming to me and saying, "I don't have the feeling that you're losing your voice. You're trying to force an imitation and you

don't convince me." Well, that got me. That night I stopped at the office of an ear, nose and throat doctor and asked him, "Could you give me a sore throat?" He smiled and said, "Well, I heard about you Hollywood people and knew you were all crazy, but this takes the cake. I've been working for the last eighteen years to keep poeple from getting sore throats and other illnesses, and you want me to give you a sore throat. I'll give you the sorest throat you've ever had." He dropped some

cheating, if I ever heard of it."

I heard that It's a Wonderful Life was your favorite film and Capra's as well.

Yes, it is. For both Frank and me it's a sentimental and emotional favorite. We were both in the war for four and a half years. Frank had made some pictures, but I did no acting whatsoever. The story



bichloride of mercury down my throat. It made me hoarse. The doctor asked, "When is it? Tomorrow?" I said, "Yeah, the big scene if tomorrow." He said, "I'll be there. What time?" I said, "8:30 in the morning." Well, he came and stayed there the whole day. I don't know what happened to his practice. Every once in a while, I'd come to him and say, "I'm better. Make me hoarse again." He'd drop more bichloride of mercury down my throat. When people found out, they said, "This is acting? It's

was completely original; it didn't come from a book, a biography, or an actual happening. I remember that Frank called me up and said, "I've got this idea. You're in a small town and you're going to commit suicide and an angel named Clarence comes down. You're on the bridge and you're going to jump in. You jump in and Clarence jumps in, but he has no wings. He has to earn his wings and you have to save him." Well, when I heard the story, I said, "Frank, if you want to do a picture

this lens he had. When it came to using the crane, the zoom was attached to it by adhesive tape and rubber bands. The shot turned out fine.

Talking recently with some of Hitchcock's old crew, I discovered that he accepted "input," that he was willing to listen. The image is of a director with his mind all made up who dictated all the terms. Did you find that he listened to actors who had suggestions?

Oh, yes, he was willing to listen. He was not too keen on long discussions between an actor and a director. He felt that not a great deal came out of it. I remember in *Vertigo* when Kim Novak — bless her heart — I thought she was, well, just wonderful in the picture — well, she came up to Hitchcock. I think it was the second or third day of the shooting and said to Hitch, "I didn't feel right in this scene with Mr. Stewart. It's not the right emotion. I should be extending myself more to him." Hitch leaned over and said, "Kim, it's *only* a movie." And she never said another word. She gave a beautiful, wonderful performance.

Is it overpowering for a director to deal with some big stars? In Malaya, for instance, you played with Spencer Tracy and Sidney Greenstreet.

No, that has not been my experience. Cukor had no trouble that way with *The Philadelphia Story*. I do remember that Henry Hathaway got overpowered, but that was because he'd get emotionally wrapped up in the scene. He'd start to breathe heavily and then say, "Cut! There's someone breathing hard." And I'd say, "But Henry, that's you!" Then he'd say smilingly, "Shut up."

Was Ernst Lubitsch the legendary master we have come to believe in?

Oh, yes — the "Lubitsch touch," that was a good way of describing it. There'd be a scene in *The Shop Around the Corner* with people talking and then with his camera all sorts of things happening. You'd see the owner of the shop come in and Lubitsch's camera would follow the little man up a staircase and amid the bustle he'd keep that camera coming back to that little man. It was a wonderful touch — a wonderful "piece of time."

You played in The Greatest Show on Earth. Was Cecil B. DeMille the field general he was reputed to be?

Yes, yes pretty much so, but I — I found him very easy to work for. This "general-like" atmosphere — well, I always welcomed it in a way. I've always believed that there is a type of discipline necessary. Whoever encourages discipline — well, I think that's good. And DeMille did.

There were some directors who did not want actors to see the rushes because it might influence the continuity of the acting. Did you see the rushes and try to learn from them?

Oh, I never went to the rushes. Frank [Capra] had a projection room in the basement of his home. I lived in Brentwood and he wanted me to stop and see the rushes at the end of each day since he lived between Brentwood and the studio. Well, I went with him and in a short time he fell sound asleep. Well, if Frank as director was going to sleep through the dailies, I found a way to excuse myself. That was the last of rushes for me. Oh, I might go the first few days to see how I look, if the chemistry is working. I don't think they do much good. Whether you admit it or not, you only look at yourself. That's no way to see the rushes.

Didn't they do a number of prints from a take so the star could choose?

Oh, yes. Some stars especially insisted on that. Norma Shearer is one example. I forget what director it was — Norma was coming downstairs and turned. It didn't come out right, so they had to keep doing it over and over again. The director gave orders to make five identical prints of the same take. Norma didn't know they were the same. She thought they were different, and she said she liked number two the best of the five. Since then, they don't do many extra takes for the rushes.

Did you get better as you rehearsed or was "one take" sufficient?

It depends. You have to be flexible. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Remember what I said about films made up of "pieces of time"? Well, sometimes you get that moment you want on a first take; sometimes you need several takes. You have to experiment with it. Ford did that. People say that for him the "first take" was it, but that's not absolutely the case. He could go up to "twenty takes," and would, if he needed it.

Since Hitchcock was so well prepared, would you

say that actors got off the set pretty fast with him as compared with other directors?

Well, Hitch believed you were hired to do your job. You were expected to know your lines and carry your part. In Marakesh in Morocco I could see Hitch in the square amid complete confusion with all those extras in 110° heat, and over there was Hitchcock in a blue suit and tie, sitting in a chair, waiting for the cameraman to get ready. Everything quieted down, and people did what they had to do. He then said, "Let's move over here now." You know, I really don't think he cared much for the spoken word. He was interested in getting those "pieces of time" and he just used the words as little as possible. For example, in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, the scene in Albert Hall. You remember that last part with the cymbal. The assassin was going to kill this man while the London Symphony is playing. During all this I'm charging up the stairs trying to tell Doris Day what's happened to our kidnapped child. It was a long speech, and I had done it a couple of times. I had memorized about three pages of dialogue. Well, Hitch came up to me and said, "You're talking so much, I'm unable to enjoy the London Symphony. Why don't you just not say anything? Try to hold Doris and whisper something." Well, the audience was way ahead of the people we were playing in the film anyway. Hitch didn't want words to get in the way. Words

have their place, but you have to know when to use them.

Anything you want to say by way of conclusion and summary.

There was an excitement about it all. As I said, everything was very quiet with Hitch and everything was very tense with Ford — but they got results. They got what they wanted.

I remember the first day I was ever on a set with Ford. I was the sheriff in an old Western town and I'm in front of the bar that I own. Ford said, "Put your feet up on the bar and put your hat down. You're sort of snoozing." And he didn't say anything else. He went back and said, "Are you ready?" And this is all there was. I didn't have anything else to do so I yawned, but I did an immense yawn. My hat almost fell off. Then he said, "Cut!" And I waited for something, and I looked; but he was gone. The cameraman was gone. They went somewhere else to shoot something else. Three days later we were in a different location — I was on a horse or something — Ford came up and said, "I like the yawn," and went away. All I ever heard. □

Neil P. Hurley, S.J. is the author of *The Reel Revolution, Toward a Film Humanism* and *The Hitchcock Signature*.

John R. Reed

AN UNGUIDED TOUR

— a suite on *Dante's Inferno*

The once sundering river
heedless of the dragging miles
finally clutters and backs upon itself
forceless to lunge through its weak banks,
stunned to a swampy oxbow
that fills with the pale
hustling apparitions of life
like a memory rotten as cheese.

Without its bituminous steps
the region's level as a common temperature —
a landscape pearled by a blurring shower.
The shades who wandered here
are gone and their demons too,
only snatches of their talk remain
traceable like charmed particles in collision.
Untutored, we listen, helpless
to alter what they say.

1. "Tant e amara che poco e piu morte" (Canto I)
[Death could scarce be more bitter than that place]

Hold out your hands.
Ice grips them like mittens
as they reach toward others,
your words frosting between
so that everyone can see
your frigid passion.
If you kiss the offered cheek
your lips will stick
like a trumpet player's
to his mouthpiece in the icy air.
The sisters sip you like chilled wine.
You are their aperitif.
But they won't teach you
how snowshoes master the drifts
when flakes like tiny cast-out angels
catch in their hair.
They cannot forget themselves

or you will spill
the salt of your love
and burn their cold wonderland.

2. "Ma io, perche venirvi? o chi 'l concede?" (Canto II)
[But I — how should I dare? By whose permission?]

The marina hoists its masts
like Spartacus' army along the road to Rome
or telegraph poles sending the message 'success'
that ticks out 'failure' on your set,
starting the dull blade of melancholy
slicing uselessly again
while beyond your hearing
the great dark shapes of hope
sing to one another in the deep.

You have to learn by heart
a song whose lyrics change every day
and sing it every night
before the immense curtain
billows down on your revue.

You want to stand in obelisks of light.
You want the leopard sky to clear
and the limping creatures on the slope
to halt and arch up their ears.

3. ". . . di duol senza martiri" (Canto IV)
[untormented sadness]

After the wild geese have flown
their arrow remains in the sky
like your hand's soft thrust on my chest
or on my cheek your kiss pulsing like a moth.

4. "che senza speme vivemo in disio" (Canto IV)
[who without hope live on in desire]

The rake leans upright by the door
like a severed dragon's claw.
You drop your arms to your sides and turn
to watch huge trudging clouds
sickle light from the sky
and hustle on the unready night.

You'll work no more
for the harvest you crave.

It's almost too much
to haul in
each tiny feast of air
that keeps your mirage
shimmering above the waste.

5. "Nessum maggior dolore
che ricordarsi del tempo felice
ne la miseria" (Canto V)
[There is no greater sorrow than to recall happy times in grief]

The air is racing
with nowhere to go,
a great blade
that harms nothing.
Evergreen pollen explodes
ignorant of its obligation,
playful as the Fourth of July.
Lime hillsides wash against
the warm outcroppings.
If you swept away
this spider's web,
she would spin another
without a thought.
But you hold back your hand,
listening for her fragile harp to sing.

6. "Cosi non soglion far li pie d'i morti" (Canto XII)
[That is not how the dead go.]

Snow too has roots.
Mountains relent when glaciers
unclench their hearts
like rootlets that needle
their capillaries
into a stone.

Those alpine valleys tell
of all the icy passion
dying to shape one lovely peak.

Tombstones stand up like mountains
or lie like tablets
shrunk to one commandment:
"Thou shalt not."

The dead must have been astonished
when you came among them,
a bird that roosts to St. Francis' hand.
Sinless, really sinless.

We're told about the blessed
snatched to glory from this slough,
but Stevie, you would have been happy,
and all those around you happy here.
You and I would have stood on the pier
watching the boats go out,
waving to the sailors,
and when you asked me 'Where do they go?'
I would have known how to answer.
Your father who beat his children,
never hit you; whenever you left the house,
your mother's teeth pressed on her lip
as though you wouldn't come back,
the way children watch their pets
taken away. We would have walked for hours
on the hillside and I would have named
every weed and rock and tree for you.
I would have known them when you asked.
Since you left, I've been teaching myself.

They covered their eyes when you came,
unable to believe your smile forgiving
the Buick that grabbed and tore you like a wolf.
All of them grow old, but you are a child still.
You are still smiling.
The eternal snow falls and falls
chilling them all,
but you run on the white streets,
falling into the drifts,
sinking down and down like a feather
in a mountain of feathers,
laughing until the others
can't help themselves
and smile and shake their heads
as if to say "What are we going to do with him?"
their radiant eyes seeking one another,
their stony hearts breaking open again
as though there were blood for them to share.

7. "necessita 'l ci 'nduce, e non diletto" (Canto XII)
[necessity, not desire, leads him]

Imagine a boy
with music paper spread before him,
a radio rationing music into the room.
Each note that he pens in
is a hieroglyph that says
'clean,' or 'sequestered,' or 'rare.'

The notes gather like monks
who anticipate their prayers,
some dark, others dressed in white.
One is round and jolly
and to him the thin ones fuss
with one foot tapping the rhythm.

He can hear their chant.

He has forgotten Joan Kolt
who introduced herself 'bluntly'
today, as he said to his friend.
He has forgotten walking at night
through empty fields past Mona's house,
with its lilting player piano,
or the records he brought
for Carol to hear, lost already
in her own melancholy.

He has forgotten the classroom
where the nuns tell him to be silent
then stop him later with favors to ask.
He has forgotten the hot afternoons
lugging his papersack here and there.

The music paper is his Torah.
He gathers the wandering tribes.
There is going to be a festival
with everyone happy, saying "Shush, shush"
as they cup their hands to their ears.

Elizabeth A. Flynn

WOMEN AS READER-RESPONSE CRITICS

Until recently, the most visible figures in reader-response criticism have been men. David Bleich, Stanley Fish, Norman Holland, and Wolfgang Iser come immediately to mind as critics who have helped shift our attention from the text to the reader of the text. All four have written major books on reader response and are visible in journals which provide a forum for theoretical disputes such as *Critical Inquiry*, *New Literary History*, and *Diacritics*.¹ All are still in the process of defining and refining their positions and are very much at the center of current critical controversy.

Women reader-response critics have been far less visible. The work of a major woman reader-response critic, Louise Rosenblatt, has, until recently, been ignored, for instance. Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration*, first published in 1938, was not recognized as an important contribution to reader-oriented criticism until it was re-published in 1976. Her more ambitious theoretical statement, *The Reader, The Text, The Poem*, did not appear until 1978.² The publication recently of two anthologies devoted to reader-response criticism, both of which are edited by women, suggests, however, that women are beginning to have an impact on reader-oriented theory. Both anthologies, which have been published by prestigious university presses, contain useful introductions to reader-response criticism written by their respective editors as well as valuable bibliographies. Susan Suleiman and Inge Crosman's *The Reader in the Text* is composed of eighteen essays, six of which are by women. Suleiman's useful introductory chapter relates audience-centered criticism to other forms of criticism. Jane Tompkins' *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* contains not only her introduction but also a provocative discussion of the differences between our present interest in

readers' responses and the interest in the audience in criticism of the past.³

The positions of Rosenblatt, Suleiman, and Tompkins are useful to examine because they share some common concerns and common critical assumptions and because their positions have implications for the practice of a politicized form of criticism such as feminist criticism. All three women, if not overtly feminist in their writings, express ideas which have political implications and which are perhaps the result of their shared experience as members of an oppressed group. All three situate the act of reading in a social and historical context and so valorize the responses of real readers and find problematic abstract concepts such as "ideal readers." Rosenblatt, Suleiman, and Tompkins defend a form of reader-response criticism which is democratic rather than elitist and practical rather than abstractly theoretical. Each is primarily interested in communicating a deeply felt position and so each writes with the clarity and commitment characteristic of most feminist writing.

Of the three, Jane Tompkins is the most overtly political. In the concluding essay of her volume, entitled "The Reader in History: The Changing Shape of Literary Response," she argues for the re-politicization of literature and literary criticism. She finds that in contemporary criticism, unlike the criticism of the past, political realities have been divorced from critical comment, a tendency nurtured by the New Criticism but also evident in most contemporary criticism, including reader-response criticism. In the past, especially in the Classical Period, in the Renaissance, and in the Augustan Age, literature was not considered an end in itself but was thought of as a way of influencing behavior. There was a direct connection between literature, criticism, and power. In speaking of the Classical Period she says,

¹See the annotated bibliography in Jane P. Tompkins, ed. *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1980) for a complete listing of the works of these critics.

²Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 3rd ed. (N.Y.: Noble and Noble Publishers, Inc., 1976); *The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (Carbondale, Ill.: So. Ill. Univ. Press, 1978). Subsequent references are to these editions.

³Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, eds., *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980); see Susan R. Suleiman, "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism," pp. 3-45; *Reader-Response Criticism*; see Tompkins, "An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism," pp. ix-xxvi and "The Reader in History: The Changing Shape of Literary Response," pp. 201-232. All subsequent references are to these editions.

The integration of art and politics in Greek thought affected the status accorded to the literary text, a status which, in turn reflects ancient attitudes toward the power and function of language. Texts are quoted and commented upon . . . only to demonstrate by precept and example what the beginning poet should emulate and what he should avoid. The critic faces toward the future and writes in order to help poets produce new work; insofar as he looks back it is only to provide rhetorical models for works yet to be written. The text as an object of study or contemplation has no importance in this critical perspective, for literature is thought of as existing primarily in order to produce results and not as an end in itself. A literary work is not so much an object, therefore, as a unit of force whose power is exerted upon the world in a particular direction (p. 204).

The critic in the modern period, in contrast, is concerned primarily with explicating texts rather than exerting a force upon the world. Language becomes a reflection of reality rather than a creator of reality; poetry ceases to have a "transitive" function. Tompkins traces the modern conception of the function of language to the romanticism of Wordsworth and Shelley. Wordsworth's concept of poetry was not political; Shelley's concept of poetry is determinedly ahistorical. This dissociation of language from politics and history was intensified in the New Criticism so that the function of the critic became that of the "exegete" who focuses attention not on the outside world but on the meaning of the isolated text. She sees that schools of criticism as disparate as psychoanalytic criticism, structuralist criticism, myth criticism, genre criticism, style criticism, and reader-response criticism continue the New Critical practice of focusing attention on the isolated text. Reader-response criticism, far from being a radical departure from the New Criticism, carries on the tradition of privileging interpretation but transfers the locus of meaning from the text to the reader. She observes that readers, like texts, are treated as isolated individuals unaffiliated with political or social groups. According to Tompkins, "whereas in the Renaissance, literature's effects are often conceived in socio-political terms — effects on the dispositions of princes, on the national self-image, on the moral climate of the age — modern reader-critics understand effects as entirely a matter of individual response" (p. 210).

It becomes clear in Tompkins' introductory essay,

"An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism," that she aligns herself with the critical positions of the later Stanley Fish and Walter Michaels, positions she finds compatible with politicized criticism. In his later essays Fish locates meaning in the reader and in the interpretive strategies employed by the reader rather than in an external text.⁴ In so doing, he eliminates the subject/object dualism, according to Tompkins, since the world is not separate and distinct but rather a part of an individual's perception of it. The reader's perceptual categories do not reflect the world but, rather, constitute it. Tompkins sees in this position the possibility of re-politicizing criticism. If selves do not exist apart from the world which they inhabit, if selves create that world, then language is inextricably connected to the world. All discourse is "interested" and so an examination of interpretive strategies becomes an examination of power relationships. Tompkins says, "when discourse is responsible for reality and not merely a reflection of it, then whose discourse prevails makes all the difference" (p. xxv).

Her treatment of the positions of the other contributors to the anthology such as Michael Riffaterre, Wolfgang Iser, Norman Holland, and David Bleich reflects her critical bias. Riffaterre's position, she implies, is weakened by his commitment to the notion of textual objectivity; he believes texts exist apart from readers and can therefore be dealt with objectively (p. xiii). Iser, too, locates meaning within texts and does not grant the reader autonomy or even partial independence from textual constraints (p. xv). For Holland, textual data exist prior to and independent of the reader's interpretive activity (p. xix). Bleich also adheres to the dualistic notion of a self independent of a text. Unlike Fish, who finds that shared perceptual strategies operate through individuals, i.e., that they are not willed by an autonomous self, Bleich assumes that individuals consciously choose interpretive communities and consciously negotiate knowledge within those communities. For Bleich, selves are separate from the world in which they operate. This position, Tompkins argues, is dualistic.

Tompkins' stance privileges the reader rather than the text; readers create meaning. It also implicitly privileges real readers rather than ideal readers since it sees the act of reading as taking place within a

⁴See especially Stanley E. Fish, "Interpreting the *Variorum*," *Critical Inquiry* 2 (Spring 1976), pp. 465-85 and his response to Steven J. Mailloux in *Critical Inquiry* 3 (Autumn, 1976), pp. 183-90.

social matrix and within an historical context. To examine interpretive strategies is to examine social and historical realities.

Susan Suleiman's essay, "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-oriented Criticism," is more descriptive, less obviously polemical than Tompkins'. Her purpose in writing the essay, she tells us, is to "map" the principal tracks in the multiplicity of crisscrossings that make up the landscape of audience-oriented criticism in order to help the reader through her book. She organizes her material around a discussion of six approaches to audience-oriented criticism: rhetorical; semiotic or structuralist; phenomenological; subjective and psychoanalytic; sociological and historical; and hermeneutic.

Suleiman is more appreciative of audience-centered criticism as it presently exists than is Tompkins, calling it a "revolution" in the field of literary theory and criticism. Her treatment of the critics she analyzes, therefore, is more even-handed. Her own critical predisposition becomes clear as the essay progresses, however. She embraces a position which has affinities with both the text-centered work of a critic like Jonathan Culler as well as the reader-centered work of a critic like the later Fish.

In her discussion of hermeneutic critics, Suleiman distinguishes between positive and negative hermeneuticians. The positive theorists of interpretation are critics like Wayne Booth and M.H. Abrams who believe in authorial intentionality and the possibility of distinguishing between valid and invalid interpretations. The negative theorists of interpretation, in contrast, are critics like Derrida and J. Hillis Miller who deny any possible agency for the intention of meaning and deny any notion of a unified text. In the last paragraph of her essay she makes clear her allegiance with the negative theorists. She says,

Concurrently, we might find in today's hermeneutic controversies support for an idea which is gaining ground in both linguistics and literary study and which I discussed earlier — namely, that interpretation is a communal, context-specific act, the result of what Stanley Fish calls shared interpretive strategies and what Jonathan Culler calls reading conventions. By this view, what separates the positive from the negative hermeneuticians is what separates any community of readers from any other — whether the separation be defined in terms of history, culture, ideology, or simply temperament. And by this view, one

common task that each variety of audience-oriented criticism might fruitfully assign itself would be to study, by its own methods and in its own terms, the multiplicity of contexts, the shared horizons of belief, knowledge, and expectation, that make any understanding, however fleeting, of minds or of texts, possible (pp. 44-5).

The passage suggests that Suleiman, like Tompkins, finds attractive the critical position of the later Stanley Fish. She too believes that interpretation involves employing strategies which are shared by communities of readers and which result in specific interpretive acts. Individuals internalize what Culler calls "reading conventions" and so their particular reading acts embody aspects of history, culture, and ideology. She suggests that critics of all persuasions join together in the common task of identifying the relationship between understanding (of minds or of texts) and interpretive communities.

In situating the act of interpretation in a specific context Suleiman, like Tompkins, finds value in examining the responses of real readers and finds problematic the concept of the hypothetical reader. She says, "there must be room in audience-oriented criticism for descriptions of the reading process that go beyond the supposed experience of the generalized reader (whether "he" is defined as a contemporary of the author or as someone who lived centuries later), and that focus on the actual reading experiences and responses of specific individuals to specific works" (p. 27). Generalized readers are "transhistorical" and therefore potentially misleading fictions, perhaps even projections of the social and cultural biases of the critic (usually male) who defines them. In discussing the concept of the "implied reader," for instance, she insists that the concept is itself an interpretive construct and as such is a relative rather than an absolute term. She points out that certain readers may have a difficult time identifying with the "implied reader" of a text and that a critic might usefully explore why such identification might be difficult for an actual reader. With certain problematic works, for instance, the reader may be unable to "agree" with the values of the implied reader and may thus refuse to play the role that the work demands (p. 9).⁵ Suleiman finds

⁵Judith Fetterley's *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 1978), a very good example of practical rather than theoretical feminist reader-response criticism, discusses the dissonances which are created when women read works by writers such as Hemingway and Fitzgerald which imply a male reader.

that the work of recent critics who practice a semiotic variety of audience-centered criticism such as Lotman, Bakhtin, Eco, Fish, Culler, and Barthes places emphasis on the practice of actual readers. It would be useful, she thinks, to explore the codes and conventions to which actual readers refer in trying to make sense of texts and to which actual authors refer in facilitating or complicating or frustrating the reader's sense-making activity (p. 12).

Of the three women, Louise Rosenblatt is the most obviously feminist in orientation. The attitudes toward women expressed in *Literature as Exploration* are surprisingly progressive considering that the book was written in the thirties. Many of the examples she uses concern "women's potential equality with man" (p. 177) or the "emancipated woman" (p. 198). In one chapter, for instance, she discusses the unfortunate Victorian image of the self-effacing female who is linked with economic dependence and intellectual authoritarianism (p. 152). In another example she speaks disparagingly of the image of the "lady" in eighteenth-century novels, as image of "innumerable maidens of fragile physique, too ladylike to engage in even the slightest practical activity" (p. 190). The few references to women's rights in *The Reader, The Text, The Poem* are more positive. She speaks of women "finding their own voices as writers and critics" (p. 142).

The persona that Rosenblatt projects in both books is that of a strong and independent woman who does not have to pay homage to the male critical establishment. And while she does make clear the ways in which her critical stance differs from the objectivism of the New Criticism or the subjectivism of Holland or Bleich, she does not find it necessary to define her own position in relation to the considerable corpus of work which has been written recently on readers' responses. In *The Reader, The Text, The Poem*, for instance, she makes no references to the works of Stanley Fish. She seems to want to convey the idea that her position is very much her own, an extension of the ideas she discussed in the thirties — territory that she has greater claim to than more recent critics. Unfortunately, she has been received not as a major figure in reader-response criticism but as a kind of maverick, an outsider from the discipline of English education who is interesting for her pedagogical rather than her theoretical insights. Neither Tompkins nor Suleiman, for instance, includes an essay by Rosenblatt in her anthology, and both relegate her to a footnote in their overviews of contemporary audience-centered criticism.

Rosenblatt's position is important to consider be-

cause it, too, has implications for a politicized criticism such as feminist criticism. Her view of the relationship between readers and texts moves in the direction of a privileging of the reader, and she, too, places emphasis on the responses of real rather than hypothetical readers.

Rosenblatt's "transactional" view of the nature of the reading process is in direct reaction to the New Critical view that the literary work is a static object which exists apart from a reader's perception of it. For her a "poem" (her term for a literary work which has been experienced by a reader) is not a stable object but an "event," an occurrence in time which involves not only words on a page but some perception of those words by a reader.

For Rosenblatt readers and texts are coequals in the transaction she is describing. She makes clear that her position is unlike a subjectivist position in that it includes texts as well as readers. Early in *The Reader, The Text, The Poem* she makes clear, "the finding of meanings involves both the author's text and what the reader brings to it" (p. 14). And although she emphasizes that reading is an active process and that the reader shares in the creation of the meaning of a text, she implies that the text itself imposes its own constraints. She argues, for instance, that the text is a stimulus for activating the elements of the reader's past experience, that it is a blueprint or guide for selecting, rejecting, and ordering what is being called forth, and that it regulates what shall be held in the forefront of the reader's attention (p. 11). She says elsewhere texts present us with a whole network of codes and that the literary transaction involves interplay between the codes of the text and the codes of the reader (p. 56).

She speaks of the individual "subject" as the center of activity in reading, the mediator among the various structures that present themselves to consciousness (p. 42). Individual consciousness, then, always mediates between symbol and referent (p. 42). Since this is so, readers can possibly create different texts since they bring to bear different backgrounds, different experiences. She says in *The Reader, The Text, The Poem*,

The reading of a text is an event occurring at a particular time in a particular environment at a particular moment in the life history of the reader. The transaction will involve not only the past experience but also the present state and present interests or preoccupations of the reader. This suggests the possibility that printed marks on a page may even become dif-

ferent linguistic symbols by virtue of transactions with different readers (p. 20).

For Rosenblatt, textual meanings are multiple. She says, "The range of potential responses and the gamut of degrees of intensity and articulateness are infinitely vast, since they depend not only on the character of the text but even more on the special character of the individual reader" (p. 49). Elsewhere she says, "multiple and equally valid possibilities are often inherent in the same text in its transactions with different readers under different conditions" (p. 75). The coming together of re

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Rosenblatt's reader, like Tompkins' and Suleiman's, is not simply an individual, but a member of social groups and so brings to bear on a text a whole body of cultural assumptions, practical knowledge, and an awareness of literary conventions (p. 88). In *Literature as Exploration* Rosenblatt speaks of the "communal basis of even the most highly individualized insights and emotions" (p. 117). The shared assumptions Rosenblatt speaks of are apparently "absorbed" automatically rather than willed since the personality of the individual is "molded by the particular cultural group in which he has been reared" (*Literature as Exploration*, p. 149).

Rosenblatt also shares with Tompkins and Suleiman the idea that the individual reading act is historically situated. Reading events take place within a "socio-physical" setting. Since she stresses the uniqueness of each reading event, she, too, is uncomfortable with the concept of a hypothetical or ideal reader. Her denunciation is even harsher than that of Tompkins or Suleiman. For her, the responses of ordinary readers ought to be valued more highly than they now are. She links critical positions which posit the idea of an ideal reader with elitism. She says, "recent critical and literary

theory is replete with references to 'The informed reader,' 'the computer reader,' 'the ideal reader.' All suggest a certain distinction from, if not downright condescension toward, the ordinary reader. This reflects the elitist view of literature and criticism that in recent decades has tended to dominate academic and literary circles" (*The Reader, The Text, The Poem*, p. 138). She finds that there are many similarities between the ways in which critics read literature and the ways in which ordinary readers respond to it. She thinks, in fact, that ordinary readers may respond more authentically to texts since they bring their personal experiences to bear on it more directly than do critics. And more personal, more immediate reactions to texts can enliven professional criticism. She says, "the act of interpretation. . . can avoid the desiccating effect of excessive abstraction by incorporating as much as possible the personal matrix within which the work crystallized" (*The Reader, The Text, The Poem*, p. 136).

The pedagogical practices Rosenblatt advocates are compatible with her theoretical position. The ways in which student readers respond to texts are as important if not more important than the ways in which critics respond to texts. She sees the teacher's task as fostering "fruitful interactions — or, more precisely, transactions — between individual readers and individual literary works" (*Literature as Exploration*, p. 26). Such fruitful interactions involve feelings as well as understanding. The student must be encouraged to respond to a work on an experiential level as well as an intellectual level because "when the images and ideas presented by the work have no relevance to the past experiences or emotional needs of the reader, only a vague, feeble, or negative response will occur" (*Literature as Exploration*, p. 59). Teachers need to be knowledgeable not only about literature, but also about their students. They should encourage students to be aware of the ways in which their personal biases may affect the transaction with a text. She says in *Literature as Exploration*,

An undistorted vision of the work of art requires a consciousness of one's own preconceptions and prejudices concerning the situations presented in the work, in contrast to the basic attitudes toward life assumed in the text. Often the reader integrates the work into a context of psychological or moral theories different from those that the author probably possessed. Always, therefore, a full understanding of literature requires both a

consciousness of the reader's own "angle of refraction" and any information that can illuminate the assumptions implicit in the text (p. 115).

She thinks that students will gain an awareness of their own preconceptions and prejudices by studying disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, literary and social history, biography, and philosophy. Such disciplines will help students learn more about themselves and about literature.

Rosenblatt's suggestions for specific classroom practices reflect this recognition that response is rooted in personal reaction to a text. Materials students are asked to read, for instance, should be ones they can respond to on an emotional level rather than classics of the past which they "ought" to read but which may be inaccessible to them. She argues, therefore, that contemporary works are probably more appropriate than works written in the past. She stresses, too, that students ought to be exposed to a variety of materials, including ones which are in conflict with their own values. Literature, she feels, has the potentiality of releasing the student from the provinciality of space and time. Books allow students to define themselves in relation to the world.

The positions of Tompkins, Suleiman, and Rosenblatt have implications for the practice of a politicized form of criticism such as feminist criticism. All three recognize that the reading of literature is social and historical as well as individual; all three provide a foundation, therefore, for criticism which is value-laden, "interested." A feminist reader-response criticism would look at the responses of real readers in real contexts in an attempt to link those responses to the social and political matrices which constitute them. The result would be a better understanding of the relationship between language and power. The kinds of readers who might be studied, the nature of the responses which might be studied, and the context in which they might be studied will vary depending on the questions the investigator wishes to answer. The mode of criticism is rich in possibilities. Jonathan Culler suggests some areas which a study of reading might explore, and his discussion suggests, in turn, possibilities for a feminist study of reading. He says,

The study of reading can proceed in various ways. One's focus can be synchronic or dia-

chronic; one can concentrate on readings of a particular work or readings of numerous works by a particular group of readers; one can draw data from diverse sources to focus on a particular problem or distinction, or one can seek out comparable interpretations for the easier identification of convergences and differences. These are all ways of organizing information that comes from actual readers, be they famous critics, or colleagues and students, or oneself. In comparing and interpreting this information one will, of course, construct models of interpretive processes which, as models, will be idealizations, but notions of an ideal reader or a superreader ought to be avoided. To speak of an ideal reader is to forget that reading has a history. There is no reason to believe that the perfect master of today's favorite interpretive technique is the ideal reader, and it is not clear how the study of reading would benefit from positing a transhistorical ideal. Reading is historical, even though it need not be studied historically.⁶

A feminist reader-response criticism might study the responses of women and men in an attempt to determine the relationship between gender and reading. As Culler suggests, such studies might be synchronic or diachronic, or they might emphasize similarities or differences. It might be instructive, for instance, to contrast the critical writings of Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence in an attempt to identify the interpretive strategies which they employ in formulating their very different visions of literature and life. The possibilities are numerous, and the field is virtually unexplored. The results of a feminist reader-response criticism should yield valuable information about literature, about reading, and about ourselves.⁷ □

⁶Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 51-2.

⁷A version of this essay was originally presented at the Midwest Modern Language Association Convention in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin in November of 1981.

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Jon Griffin

WASPS

Never mind their delicate interplay,
How some rise from a carcass, with no
memory of the host,
or live in a paper globe.
All afternoon they have come,
singly, fatally,
into my room, looking for something.
They rise like balloons to the ceiling,
make a few bouncing circuits, and discern
that what they want is outside.
I know the feeling.
But now the window, like a scrupulous drunk,
holds them here.
Mystified, they trace the panes:
up, down, never far enough.
It's all too clear.
On the third descent I kill them, and arrange
their bodies along the sill —
caveat aviator — I've got
my own paper to work.
Never mind that their wings,
sufficiently enlarged,
are beautiful, and shed light
like a young girl's hair.

John McGowan

DEMOCRATIC VISTAS:
AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN AND THE VERDICT

*I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of
democracy,
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their
counterpart of on the same terms.*

— Whitman¹

The democrat has always staggered under the unacknowledged burden of his contradictory purposes. Democracy triumphs when all men are the same; confident in his status as a "citizen" in a city of equals, Whitman can declare: "It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the tongue of you."² Yet democracy also means the individual can become anything and anyone. The premise of such freedom breeds the need to exercise it. The individual's difference from his fellows becomes the measure of his active use of the rights democracy is meant to insure. Democracy, from this perspective, is understood as the movement of power from society to the individual. Emerson describes the confrontation of the individual with those social powers which might influence him as tests of "manhood" and "strength." "Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. . . . It is only as a man puts off all foreign support and stands alone that I see him to be strong and to prevail. He is weaker by every recruit to his banner. Is not a man better than a town? . . . He who knows that power is inborn, that he is weak because he looked for good out of him and elsewhere, and, so perceiving, throws himself unhesitatingly on his thought, instantly rights himself, stands in the erect position, commands his limbs, works miracles."³ Thoreau's escape to the woods stands as a reproach to every American who has ever felt dissatisfied. It's a free country; you are solely responsible if you do not practice self-reliance.

Yet the need to maintain some contact with our fellows persists. Whitman sings of himself, but protests his song is ours, too. Emerson and Thoreau declare their independence from society, but present their achieved identities to it in their writing. The unspoken predicament is that individualism, while based on the individual's release from social constraints, renders that individual desperate for social recognition. To create oneself in a vacuum proves a peculiarly pointless and joyless undertaking. And a democracy can be surprisingly like a vacuum, with the freedom it grants the individual resembling lack of interest in whom he might become. Not surprisingly, it took an outsider, de Tocqueville, to perceive that "equality makes men lead" a "disturbed and constantly harassed life."⁴ Democracy's commitment to equality poses a threat to the individual, whose response is to insist upon his self-reliance and his distance from the mass. But that independence carries no weight unless the crowd acknowledges it. The "narcissism" Christopher Lasch finds in modern America seems more a child of democracy than a peculiarly modern malaise.⁵

⁴Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 573. Hereafter cited by page number in text.

⁵*The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Warner Books, 1980). For Lasch, "the atrophy of older traditions of self-help has eroded everyday competence, in one area after another, and has made the individual dependent on the state, the corporation, and other bureaucracies. Narcissism represents the psychological dimension of this dependence. Notwithstanding his occasional illusions of omnipotence, the narcissist depends on others to validate his self-esteem. He cannot live without an admiring audience" (p. 10). Certainly, Lasch's alarm at such dependency and the threat it poses to political equality is understandable, but the attempt to make such a condition a recent development seems misplaced. De Tocqueville has shown how the behavior Lasch decries can be more reasonably attributed to the dynamics of social interaction between individuals in a democratic state than to some recent outbreak of rampant narcissism.

¹*The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman*, ed. Gay Wilson Allen and Sculley Bradley (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 52.

²*The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman*, p. 85.

³*The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Joseph Slater (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), Vol. 2, pp. 29 & 50.

Democratic identities are theatrical, with the script of self creation played out before the audience that can grant or withhold substance to the role. De Tocqueville notes how eager Americans are to be liked, and the great emphasis on differences between individuals in a land where few significant differences are apparent. "In democracies, where there is never much difference between one citizen and another and where in the nature of things they are so close that there is always a chance of their all getting merged in a common mass, a multitude of artificial and arbitrary classifications are established to protect each man from the danger of being swept along in spite of himself with the crowd" (p. 581). Yet too conspicuous differences are resented as attempts to violate the ideal of equality. "I know no country in which, speaking generally, there is less independence of mind and true freedom of discussion than America" (p. 235). Democracy "leaves the body alone and goes straight for the soul. The master . . . says, 'You are free not to think as I do; you can keep your life and property and all; but from this day you are a stranger among us. . . . When you approach your fellows, they will shun you as an impure being. . . . Go in peace. I have given you your life, but it is a life worse than death'" (p. 236).

The trick in America, then, has always been to feel that we make our own decisions uninfluenced by social obligations, even though that decision is, finally, the socially acceptable one. Any inkling of social compulsion must be masked at all costs. The potential gap between the individual who sets himself up as different and the democratic backlash which works to stifle any oppositional use of freedom is bridged by the voluntary use of freedom to become like others. Yet a fetishistic attachment to minor differences persists as a way of insuring us that we are like the Joneses only insofar as we want to be, and can point to lots of ways we differ from them. The most typical heroes of American narratives have been fiercely independent in their choice of means for advancement, but safely conformist in defining their ends. The rugged individualist carves out his own path to the same old destination: wealth and success. It is crucial that the American who leaves society for a frontier life (either in the wilderness, or in the realm of private — often shady — enterprise) effects his retreat as part of a larger strategy which will allow his later return (in triumph) to the public world with an identity all will approve. Thoreau's life at Walden is meaningless without his writing his book about it; Gatsby's business ventures only serve to allow his entrance into New York

society wearing a bland mask that hides anything distinctive about him. (Interestingly, English novels from Fielding to Lawrence reveal exactly the opposite pattern: a submission to the public world early in the hero's career enables a later retreat into a cherished and isolated domesticity.)

Two recent films — *An Officer and a Gentleman* (Taylor Hackford, 1982) and *The Verdict* (Sidney Lumet, 1982) — offer interesting variations on these time-worn American themes. Two new conditions influence their narratives about the relation of the individual to social power. The first is the by-now familiar belief that Americans no longer have a frontier which allows escape from society. In present-day America, society is everywhere, and the individual must come to terms with it. Since the American hero always eventually established a relation to society, the loss of the frontier is not (primarily) experienced as the loss of a chance to live entirely outside the public world. (To renounce totally the public world has never been a strong temptation in America because it means renouncing oneself if one accepts that a democratic government is the product of its citizens.) Rather, to lose the frontier means to lose that privileged space where the hero got to gird himself for his contest with society. The space where the rules were less rigid offered the individual a wider scope of action, and thus, the belief ran (and runs) a truer test of his innate abilities. But now even the wilderness and business (which, as a mythic space, is almost exactly analogous to the frontier) have been invaded by a regulating and administering social authority.

The second new condition complements the first. If individual action is increasingly circumscribed, social power is perceived as increasingly well organized. Centralized bureaucratic power seems to insure the increasing incapacity of the citizen to act for or by himself. The balance of power keeps tilting in favor of society. Yet neither movie can see its way to augmenting individual power. Instead, they work to reconcile the individual's need to believe he can still create himself with the fact that he must tailor his identity to the requirements of an increasingly powerful society.

* * * * *

O public road, I say back I am not afraid to
 leave you, yet
 I love you,
 You express me better than I can express
 myself,
 You shall be more to me than my poem.
 — Whitman⁶

In *An Officer and a Gentleman* society's appropriation of domains usually considered private is so complete that even love carries a social force. The hero's (Richard Gere) on-again, off-again affair with the leading lady (Debra Winger) is played as a conflict between his anarchic individualistic desire to remain uncommitted and his need for the affection of others. The price to be paid for retaining that affection is to give up being foot-loose and fancy-free and become "responsible." The price is, at first, distasteful to Gere, but he comes around. He cannot claim the choice is not his own, since the plot has Winger conspicuously refuse to force his hand. His individual freedom is preserved even as he chooses the most acceptable social option: marriage. Maturity, the film suggests, means recognizing that the deepest individual desires are best served by the traditional social outlets. And the very fact that other desires must be sacrificed to gain the heroine's love reinforces the sense of freedom. Gere has been presented with a clear choice, and is perceived as having had the power to choose either available option.

The career plot reveals the same pattern as the romantic one, although burdened with complications which make the film worth discussing at length. We are made to understand that Gere has chosen to become an officer just as he chooses to marry Winger. In fact, the Gere character is portrayed as completely self-made. His mother committed suicide; his father is a drunken, whore-chasing sailor who has left his son on his own for years at a time. Beaten and robbed as a child, Gere has taught himself how to fight since he can't rely on anyone else to protect him. When he decides to go to flight school, Gere's father not only fails to understand how his son could want to be an officer, but predicts he will never survive basic training. Anything Gere has, he has gotten for himself. Once at the Navy base, he plays it his way, bending or breaking the rules as it serves his interests. He will become an officer on his own terms.

That the dismal alternative to marriage is not some imagined bachelor freedom but a desperate loneliness is only faintly suggested in the romantic plot. But the career plot makes it brutally clear that Gere's choices are only barely choices. A life outside society is represented as a descent into nothingness, a loss of identity so complete as to suggest a loss of existence. The drill sergeant (Louis Gossett, Jr.) catches Gere cheating, and embarks on a campaign to drive Gere out of the program when he refuses

to resign voluntarily. When, after subjecting Gere to any number of sadistic humiliations, Gossett thinks he has the candidate ready to quit, Gere screams at him: "Don't you do it! Don't you make me leave. I've got nowhere else to go." Easily the film's most powerful moment, this scene justifies Gere's submission to institutional brutality. The social identity Gere wants to achieve on his own terms is also the only identity available to him. There is no alternative to ultimate conformity, even if we play little games to convince ourselves that we are playing it our way. Gere's anguish, as he is forced to admit he has nowhere else to go, is the death cry of self-reliance.

Meanwhile, in its presentation of minor characters, particularly the drill sergeant and the woman candidate, the film is working hard to take the sting out of this recognition that society's power has reached the point where no alternatives to it exist. The plot is meant to reveal the essential good intentions of the institution and that the individual's best hope for happiness lies in submission to it. In keeping with de Tocqueville's observation that a democracy maintains equality by having men obey not another man but the law, social authority is carefully depersonalized in the film.⁷ The drill sergeant must be recognized as just a man doing his job, not someone who is personally out to get the hero. Gere learns submission to social authority when he accepts that all are equally impotent in the face of the institution. Each individual is given his role to play, and the way to salvation is to play the role well. Gere's error was to believe that actions within the roles reflect individual choices; instead, he discovers the script has been written by others. Individual choice becomes limited to choosing to play the role or not, although, as we have seen, the film finds it impossible to imagine a realizable life for Gere outside the social role he is striving to attain.

The film's "daring" use of a black actor in the potentially unsympathetic role of the drill sergeant actually serves to reinforce the main point. To hate the sergeant for his race would be as irrelevant as to hate him for his height. The role he plays has been written by society without any consideration for such an insignificant individual quality as racial origin. Similarly, the subplot of the woman candidate demonstrates that these social roles are available to everyone (black or white, male or female) provided they accept that the rules and roles are

⁷*Democracy in America*, p. 85. "It is therefore fair to say that [in America] a man never obeys another man, but justice, or the law."

⁶*The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman*, p. 151.

completely inflexible. Democracy triumphs in the anonymity and powerlessness of all.

But *An Officer and a Gentleman*, being American, cannot recommend the complete abandonment of individualism with an easy conscience. Despite the hero's essential conformity — his adoption of the social titles, officer and gentleman, as adequate descriptions of himself — the film must protect his individuality. In its attempt to prove each individual is unique and brings something all his own to his social role, the film provides soap opera family histories for Gere, Winger and Gere's best friend (David Keith) in order to make them individual; yet the final point remains that such personal differences are insignificant. The drill sergeant, about whom we know nothing personal and who always acts "in character," represents the ideal toward which the hero moves. Gere's education — and the audience's — is complete when the sergeant is no longer hated but respected.

The subplot involving David Keith most fully reveals the film's inability to handle the contradictions into which it has stumbled. Taken individually, the events in this subplot are understandable as providing an instructive contrast to Gere's experiences, but the sequence as a whole is incoherent. That Keith's girlfriend tries to trick him into marriage by feigning pregnancy allows us to perceive that Gere's romantic decisions are made freely. Similarly, when we learn that Keith's decision to become an officer resulted from parental pressure and the desire to emulate a brother who was killed in Vietnam, we recognize that Gere's reasons for signing up show greater freedom and integrity. Keith's lack of an individual identity of his own is carried to the point of his being engaged to his dead brother's fiancée. When Gere discovers these facts, he gives Keith an impassioned lecture on the need for him to be his own man. So far, so good. Gere's independence is demonstrated at Keith's expense.

But then the plot goes haywire. Keith follows Gere's advice to take charge of his own life, and his reward is to end up dead in a motel room. Shedding his artificial identity as an officer candidate, he becomes a nobody and is rejected by his local girl when he proposes marriage. The film's nightmarish conviction that the modern American cannot exist outside the prevailing society is allowed to determine Keith's fate. How Keith could have had a social identity while also remaining true to himself remains unclear. But his unhappy end, when contrasted with Gere's happy one, is devised to convince us that Gere, somehow, has managed

that neat trick.

To demonstrate that Gere is no weak-kneed servant of the institution, he is thrown into battle against Gossett in the aftermath of Keith's death. This fight is totally gratuitous since Gere knows Keith quit voluntarily and that Gossett, therefore, bears no responsibility for his death. In fact, Gere's own preaching appears the most immediate cause of Keith's disastrous finish. Be that as it may, the fight seems designed to convince the audience that Gere has retained his independence. He still has the capacity to lash out against the institution because it violates his personal sense of right and wrong. And Gere is so rugged that he hurts the sergeant badly; Gossett only manages to end the battle by fighting dirty.

Astoundingly, the next scene after the fight is graduation, and we watch Gere thank Gossett for making a man of him. To move from a shot showing Gere writhing in pain on the wrestling platform to the scene in which he accepts his commission would seem calculated to evoke a protest from the audience, but moviegoers and reviewers do not appear to have been troubled by the jump. Individualism has been allowed to express itself as rage and even violence against the institution, but the audience accepts (and is relieved to find) that the institution remains impervious to and impassive in the face of such attacks. The hero's social identity is secure because the institution which grants it will survive the more flamboyant antics which prove his individualism. The passing of a century, with its concomitant growth in population, has made the answer to Emerson's rhetorical question — Is not a man better than a town? — different from the one the writer deemed too obvious to support by argument. Gere is allowed his Whitmanesque boast that he could leave the public road if he wished, since he actually abandons his "poem" for that road.

A more perfect primer for life in a country dominated by corporate and government bureaucracies would be hard to imagine. *An Officer and a Gentleman* presents the anarchic individual as the greatest threat to social well-being, and our cherished individualism is only allowed free play as long as its ineffectiveness can be guaranteed. By focusing on whether the hero will be found worthy of being given the social role he needs to exist, the film avoids any consideration of the nature or desirability of the role made available to him. The possibility that one might actually create an identity separate from the one offered from on high is ruled out as either the dream of an immature selfishness

or a sure path to self-destructive isolation. Needless to say, the possibility of alternative social groupings is never considered.

The film's great popularity, its touted ability to make audiences "feel good" suggests that it struck a nerve when it portrayed the hero's horror at the possibility that he would be left without any social identity. The film assures us that society does have roles for us to fill if we make the required sacrifices. The individual in a democratic society is particularly vulnerable to the fear that he will be ostracized, but such fears are especially prevalent in a society grown increasingly anonymous and in an economy grown increasingly volatile. At a time when society has no roles to offer millions of unemployed workers, and when the roles performed by the employed are often played out in a vacuum, the film reassures us that society does want and need us all. To suggest that society exists as a coherent whole with a definite idea of what it requires of the individual relieves the more troubling fear that the existing powers have retreated into unresponsive isolation, leaving us on our own. *The Verdict* goes some way toward considering this disturbing possibility.

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. . . another way of diminishing the influence of authority without depriving society of some of its rights or paralyzing its efforts [is to divide] the use of its powers among several hands. Functions can be multiplied and each man given enough authority to carry out his particular duty. . . . In no country in the world . . . is the right to enforce [the law] divided among so many hands [as in America].

(pp. 64-65)

The Verdict addresses the same complex of issues as *An Officer and a Gentleman*, but demonstrates a fuller awareness of the contradictions between democratic ideology and the organization of power in today's America. De Tocqueville noted that power in a democracy is distributed among numerous "functionaries"; *The Verdict* is uncompromising in its condemnation of those functionaries as corrupt. Everyone in the film who possesses a social title, from the archbishop to the judge, misuses the power he possesses. Even the presumably private world of sexual relations is permeated by the ubiquitous corruption, as the mysterious woman (Charlotte Rampling) who seduces the hero (Paul Newman) does so to obtain

information from him. Contemporary America is portrayed as a totally closed shop in which power's only goal is to maintain itself — and to maintain itself in comfort. To believe that this society would take care of the individual who follows the rules would be the height of naiveté. The film presents the prevailing conditions as an outrage against our democratic ideals; power has become completely divorced from the common man from whom it supposedly derives.

The Verdict's response to this situation is to allow the Newman character a victory over the corrupt functionaries. In the process, the plot's attention gets shifted from the institutional organization of power to the personal misuse of it. All the power in the movie is institutional, a function of social place rather than of personality. The film accepts any and all mistrust of institutional authority as justified. Yet it cannot bring itself to question the institutions themselves. Instead, all abuses become personal. Individuals abuse the power that they possess by virtue of the institution. And at the end of the movie, the institution reasserts itself by taking power away from those who would use it for personal gain and returning it to those who will see that the institution's fundamentally noble aims are achieved. The judicial system does not pervert system; corrupt individuals within that system do. The institution, if allowed to function in the democratic fashion which informed its creation, will prove itself a worthy repository of power.

But *The Verdict* — quite surprisingly, if we assume some legal consultants must have been shown the script — has conspicuous difficulty swallowing the bone of its happy ending. Justice triumphs because the law's ultimate appeal is still to the common man who sits on juries. The jury's use of the power given to it by democracy foils the efforts of the judge and defense lawyer to shield the incompetent doctor and greedy church. But the movie reveals, when it makes the jury's final decision singularly implausible, uncertainty about whether justice is embodied in our institutions or transcends them. We see the crucial testimony stricken from the record by the judge in a ruling on admissible evidence, which surely means no real jury could ever reach a verdict based on that testimony. When the jury in the movie does just that, it has ignored the internal rules of the judicial system in favor of external notions of truth and justice. When lawyers complain (as every one I have talked to has) that the film is inane, they are also expressing their basic faith in legal procedures as necessary to ensure justice. What must be recog-

nized is that the plot's flagrant violation of proper legal procedure points to the layman's conviction that the niceties of legal practice work to prevent justice being done. Yet the movie won't allow itself to go quite that far; it cannot make explicit this condemnation of the institution. The film calls no attention to the fact the jury has acted quite extraordinarily, but uses its verdict to make a very different point, one that affirms the institution. The verdict is presented as perfectly acceptable within the current structure of the law, and is meant to teach us that the common man must regain control of our society's institutions from those corrupt officials entrusted with running them. The hint that the institution acts procedurally to prevent justice — or, more radically, to prevent the common man from exerting any influence — is buried under an expression of democratic faith in our institutions because they give the common man the final say.

The Verdict, then, can be seen as a limited protest against the bureaucratic organization of power. The film's democratic message is not that social power should not write our lives, but that the populace should regain control of institutions that now only serve the interests of the elite. While the movie ends with submission, it is not submission to existing society, but to what are deemed the ideals our society was meant to foster. And in the name of those ideals, the film urges its audience to resist existing power and work to enhance the power that has been wrongfully taken from them by the functionaries.

Along with this democratic faith, however, *The Verdict* also reveals its own version of the old American feeling that the individual necessarily compromises himself once he assumes a role within society. What is especially agonizing today about the conviction that the only purity exists outside society (a conviction most radically expressed by Thoreau in *Walden* and "Of Civil Disobedience") is the realization escape from society is not longer possible. Like Gere in *An Officer and a Gentleman*, Newman in *The Verdict* remains incapable of imagining an alternative to social identity. Newman has taken up the social role of being a lawyer; he begins as an honest one and, as we would expect in a corrupt world, loses everything — his job, his wife, his innocence — when he persists in his honesty. The men he has refused to aid in their dirty dealings succeed in getting him blamed for their crimes, and he just about falls out of the profession. But not quite. He remains a lawyer, even if his current ways of doing business make him as despicable as his former cohorts' false rumors suggest

he is. There is no place to which he can escape and make a new start. The movie takes the position that to be a lawyer is to be corrupt; and Newman is doomed to be a lawyer, as if being a lawyer were a natural, not a social, fact.

The only identity available to him outside society is that of an alcoholic. Newman's drinking in the film represents his dilemma: he must retain an identity he cannot respect. And his refusal throughout the film to clean up his act makes the same point. Lawyers are people who steal mail, make backroom deals and lie to clients and witnesses. Even when such tactics seem justified by the other side's ruthlessness and the essential justice of one's own case, they are hardly praiseworthy. So the audience accepts — and the Newman character himself accepts — the justice of his client's complaint that Newman is merely another functionary in a system that consistently works against the little guy. The nurse from whom Newman tries to cajole information accuses him of being a "whore" like all the rest. *The Verdict* presents Newman the way a traditional Western like *Shane* presents the gun-fighter. He is someone necessary to facilitate the triumph of justice, but his means are disreputable. He is tarred beyond redemption by the brush of his tactics, and will have no place in a quiet society where justice reigns unthreatened. And like *Shane*, the Newman character wants that quiet world even though he knows he cannot live in it; Newman's speech to the jury presents the democratic utopia he would like to see.

Much has been made of the fact that Newman plays an "unsympathetic" character in *The Verdict*, and that his performance must work against his usual likeable on-screen persona. But I think we can recognize that, with a few variations, the character in *The Verdict* is not much different from those portrayed by Newman in *The Hustler*, *Hud* and *Cool Hand Luke*. The most important difference is that *The Verdict*, much more than the earlier films, is weighted toward making accommodation with society the single most important individual virtue. His inability to find a respectable place in society turns Newman into a drunken loser here, instead of making him a romantic rebel as it did in the earlier films. But *The Verdict* also carries that basic ambivalence toward the Newman character which is particularly obvious in *Hud*. The virtue of social accommodation only makes sense in a just society, so that, under present conditions, Newman's drinking, while pathetic, also functions as the mark of his purity. That he despises himself proves he is man enough to refuse to buy into the corruption

all around him. I think that by the end of the film the audience likes and respects Newman more for still drinking than they would if he had totally reformed. The film plays it that way because it is caught between its condemnation of present day America and its vision of a social order that would justify the full subordination of the individual to its goals. But we should recognize that being caught between corrupt America and an envisioned utopia allows *The Verdict* to express both halves of democracy's contradictory goals and endorse them both without recognizing their incompatibility. Newman's individualism is praiseworthy because it distances him from a corrupt society; yet he also proves his willingness to submit to society once it starts acting justly. Newman gets to be radically independent *and* socially responsible.

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[W]hen all the citizens are independent of one another and each is weak, no one can be found exercising very great . . . influence over the masses. . . . Once the trace of the influence of individuals on the nations has been lost, we are often left with the sight of the world moving without anyone moving it. As it becomes extremely difficult to discern and analyze the reasons which, acting separately on the will of each citizen, concur in the end to produce movement in the whole mass, one is tempted to believe that this movement is not voluntary and that societies unconsciously obey some superior dominating force. . . . Thus historians who live in democratic times do not only refuse to admit that some citizens may influence the destiny of a people, but also take away from the peoples themselves the faculty of modifying their own lot and make them depend either on an inflexible providence or a kind of blind fatality. (pp. 462 & 464)

The impulse to see *An Officer and a Gentleman* as "conservative" and *The Verdict* as "liberal" is guided by their respective attitudes toward existing institutions. The conservative accepts and praises our institutions as fully adequate; the liberal criticizes them for failing to protect the political rights and ideals democracy is meant to foster. But to make such a distinction between the two films blinds us to their underlying similarities. Both films adopt an essentially similar position on how social order is secured. In a crowded society, anarchic

individualism appears more of threat than ever before, and accommodation to social mores becomes the behavior expected from "responsible" citizens, just as responsible civic leaders are expected to preach respect for the law during civil disturbances. The threat to democracy in our age, these films suggest, is that individuals will refuse to work for the common good and the system will break down. The films feel so different to the viewer because they single out different types of individuals to condemn for failing to cooperate. *An Officer and a Gentleman* goes after those troublemakers who approach the institution with a "bad attitude" and try to cut corners for their own advantage, while *The Verdict* attacks the people within the institutions. But in both cases the refusal of the individual to accept the guidelines laid down by the institution is the source of evil.

Most significant, if we are to consider the status of democracy in America today, is that these films do not offer individual submission as a moral recommendation but as, quite simply, inevitable. De Tocqueville's discussion of democratic historians suggests the potential for loss of faith in individual action within a democracy. Where individuals are seen as isolated and weak, only large impersonal forces will be deemed effective. These two films have lost all faith in the possibility that the individual can make any impact on the social system. Even while maintaining a nostalgic regard for individualism, the films cannot imagine any individual action beyond pathetic gesture. Gere's taking a licking from the sergeant and Newman's taking another drink remain the only possible individual actions for these men. Only when Gere hands his life over to the navy and Newman places his case in the hands of the jury can these characters escape their ineffectiveness and be part of some notable achievement. The films remain as vague in naming this power larger than the individual as de Tocqueville predicted democratic historians would be. The greatest threat to democracy, if we accept the viewpoint of *An Officer and a Gentleman* and *The Verdict*, comes from the recalcitrant individual, not from transcendent powers that would subject us all.

What happens, then, to our vaunted individualism? The nation protests too much. We insist on our freedom and our individual differences so vehemently because we wish to deny our fundamental similarity in weakness. The dream of a space where truly effective individual action is possible has haunted America, most obviously in images of the frontier. But the Western, from the novels of

Cooper to the movies of Ford, has persistently been elegiac, bemoaning the encroachment of civilization into a space once free. If only we had been here yesterday. Individual action in America is almost always negative, taking the form of a self-defeating refusal to accommodate oneself to society or, more complexly, serving to create a future in which individual action will no longer be possible. Under these circumstances, the most perfect action becomes the one which defines the individuality of the agent beyond a doubt and which is also splendidly ineffective. In such cases, the equality guaranteed by democracy is not threatened, while the individual has exercised his freedom. Thoreau provides a perfect instance here. His motives, even for civil disobedience, can be traced back to his desire "to maintain himself in whatever attitude he find himself through obedience to the laws of his being."⁸

⁸*Walden and On The Duty of Civil Disobedience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 239.

But such integrity makes no claim for others, or to being the basis of effective political action. "It is not a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous wrong; he may still properly have other concerns to engage him; but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it, and, if he gives it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support."⁹ Thoreau's inability to imagine positive individual action within society is a failure endemic to the culture. *An Officer and a Gentleman* and *The Verdict* reveal that a balance between societal and individual power still eludes us. In an era marked by the centralization of social power, this failure seems more ominous than ever before. □

⁹*Walden*, p. 257.

John McGowan is a first time contributor to the New Orleans Review.

Larry S. Rudner

PAPA'S DREAM

For Szmuel Zygelboym, 5-11-43

Manya thinks I am now working hard on my translations. Every hour I hear her steps as she approaches my study door. Out of love — or perhaps her fear that I am passing my time with Papa's dream — she tries to give the impression that she is on an errand to my end of the house. But I know better.

She walks, her old felt slippers flapping on the wooden floor, and quiets her steps as she gets closer to my locked door, the sound of her breathing marks her arrival as she listens. Since I write in longhand, using an ancient fountain pen that cuts its way across paper like a stick through sand, Manya is certain she can analyze my work habits by listening for the scratching sound. Of course, it is all a game; I hear her coming down the hall and, as the felt issues its warning, I begin to write. Manya is satisfied for another hour or so and returns to her own work upstairs. This is a ritual neither of us could do without.

Once again — and this, surely, is what my wife understands — I am behind schedule. Manuscript pages are piled on top of my old desk like so many scraps thrown together, as if the person responsible for this mess looted a stranger's belongings in search of something valuable! Still, I do manage to get a bit of work done despite the hours I spend looking at the stand of woods in back of my house. Watch and write, my own peculiar method of translating life these days.

Sometimes Manya calls my editor Adelstein in New York. She promises him everything will be completed on time, and that my health is holding up though I suffer what she calls "occasional lapses." From the room upstairs her voice, deepened by so many years of smoking and regular baths in Turkish coffee, explains me to Adelstein. "He is working all the time now, Jack," she tells the long-suffering man. "But you know how he fusses over his memory . . . especially now since he tries to recall every detail. He rushes to the library, reads old Polish newspapers, and comes home with his notes." Finally, in whispers, Manya changes the subject. "Sweetening," she calls it.

What a wonderful inventive lie she tells

Adelstein, and how successful a ploy! He believes her, however, and I am set free with a two-week grace period ending with another voice-lowered plea for still more time in which Manya will have me on a "necessary day trip" somewhere, searching, she will tell Adelstein, for a lost fragment by a forgotten poet. Manya invents; my cycle continues — and so, too, my deadlines.

Last month she bought a luxury for herself, an expensive tape recorder that, had I not just been awarded the PEN translation prize for an early volume of the Glatstein poems, she would never have considered purchasing before. During the afternoons when I am committed to work, Manya listens to her amazing machine for at least two hours. Her close friend and doctor, the internist Goldensohn — she trusts only him because he studied in Vienna, long before the war — gave her a collection of concert recordings. "These are much better," he said to her, "than any of your drugs." He has ordered her to spend time every day with music, "to keep the world out," he wrote on the card that accompanied the large, gift-wrapped box, "and to keep Manya in."

Goldensohn told me not to disturb Manya while she is resting. I know how she will be absent from her memories during her time alone and, even if for a short time, stop smoking. Thank God for Goldensohn.

Sounds carry beautifully in this old New England farmhouse, and so I can spend a few moments concentrating on the music along with Manya. Although she is careful to keep the volume at a low level, I hear her voice as she hums along with Bach, her slipper making a whisking noise on the wooden floor directly above my head. As she keeps her own rhythm, my eyes close and my mind attempts to arrange what I will say today.

Yesterday, when Goldensohn arrived with another gift of tapes, he passed by my open study window. After he delivered the package — always careful to place it in the living room, never bothering us with a formal visit during our "work hours" — he returned to my window, troubled. "Are you feeling well, Simon?" he asked. I looked

at my friend before I spoke, my short pause disturbing him. "Of course," I answered, "what should be wrong?" Goldensohn watched me, turned, and began to walk back to his car where he faced me again. "You were speaking aloud in Polish, Simon. In Polish!" "I was just working on a translation," I told him, knowing how he would react to my lie. "It's gone," he said as he opened his car door, "just dust in our mouths."

Manya is sleeping. I can hear only her music: no singing, her chair doesn't move.

I must begin to make sense out of the notes I have prepared for my afternoon lecture. While I don't actually need them — everything becomes so clear to me as I speak — I feel the need to refer to something on paper, to get, as my American colleagues say, "my facts straight." Greshko will be in the audience and he is such a conservative academic . . . pining over the loss of detail and linguistic precision. I can, of course, see the faces I will address during my talk: a mixture of students, professors, even townspeople — each one eager to listen to an old man speak about his lifelong obsession with translating the works of Yiddish and Polish poets into English (a language, I'm afraid to tell them, that admits so little of the original song). But this is what they want to hear, and so I will tell them about Chaim Glatstein, a poet to whom I have devoted a decade's work (I can still see his face, hear the resonant voice booming out verses across a crowded coffee house in Warsaw, laughter breaking away until dawn).

The formal program for today's symposium — Greshko has titled it "A World Passed: Yiddish Life and Literature in Pre-War Poland" — bills me as a "keynote speaker." Greshko says that whatever I say will "set the tone" for what follows. Try as I might to squirm out of these commitments, I eventually give in to Greshko's carefully worded pleas: "You take so long to publish, Simon," he says, the pedant in him aroused, "that you make it impossible for us to wait for the final work. Tell us what you know, what you have done so far . . . before all these young admirers here become as old as we are. And don't forget," he ends with a laugh, "we are fading footnotes. Just talk, Simon, everyone will follow."

I hear my name announced in the harsh guttural tones Greshko brings to moments of high seriousness. The sounds come from his mouth like small explosions, bouncing off the clearer tones of mass

coughing and the rustle of coats being draped around a hundred bodies. In this too-cold auditorium filled with the people I expected would be here, I sit on the stage along with my professor Greshko and half-listen to my life being capsulized, some fragments of truth leaking out between moments of evasion.

As I fumble with my notes, an extraordinarily beautiful woman who sits in the front row watches me, her round face bordered by long, blond hair reminds me of another time . . .

"And he has brought to the art of translation," Greshko says, raising his voice, interrupting my public spying, "those remainders of poetic craft that, had he not been so devoted to their preservation, would have perished along with their creators."

Greshko is about to finish, I hope. My eyes return to the woman.

"Simon Bors . . . his rare ability" (my chest tightens) "to speak about the life and art of Chaim Glatstein."

I rise, hear the applause. Greshko has taken my hand in greeting as well as pleasure, pulling me toward the lectern. "Just talk," he says, as the realization of what I will say comes the second my name is lost in the noise of all those hands as poor Glatstein is being overtaken by the dream.

I begin to speak.

"I am at the edge of the picture surviving," Chaim Glatstein wrote in his last completed poem, "in a place walled off for those whose eyes are dark." I stop.

"Glatstein is dead. We were friends, and he is lost . . . a body turned to matter. Chaim — it means life, you know — titled his last collection of poetry . . ." Again, a pause.

"Please, forgive me . . . but I want to say something to all of you (Greshko looks worried, he frantically tries to push my seated notes onto the lectern). This must be my keynote: it is about one day in a place I remain, fixed as surely in my mind as my legs are to this stage (I lie. My legs are fixed to air). I will not disappoint those of you who hunger for a point . . . a thesis, if you will, for what you read or hear. Will this serve, this bit of conjuring I will present in the form of an old Yiddish proverb: 'If God lived on earth, then surely people would break his windows.'"

From my coat pocket I remove a neatly folded sheaf of papers. Just before I begin to read, Goldensohn moves into a single remaining seat at the rear of the auditorium; he waves to me.

"As I know how my voice must serve memory

— my memory, Glatstein's, too — allow it to engage you as well."

(Poor Greshko)

I look directly at Goldensohn; I speak to him:

"I am sixteen years old . . .

"I am sixteen years old on this one beautiful autumn day in 1931 in Warsaw. As always, I walk to my father's house during the late afternoon from the German *gymnasium* I attend on Mielko street. It is only a short, one kilometer journey, yet it takes me hours to complete. This is the part of the day to become, as Papa tells me so often, 'a part of the city.' He says I should accept the city as I would a friend, 'with the eyes as well as the heart.'

The Schiller Gymnasium is a granite testament to its illustrious name, beauty given form an order I marvel at. Enormous oak trees at both entrance-way and exit to the school run along the length of the street, each tree wrapped at its base by an intricate wrought-iron grill work. The residents who live on Mielko carefully tend to these trees and their collars — polishing, repainting, removing all chips and signs of age. And even when a political poster appears tacked to a tree — a common enough occurrence these days — Mielko's residents, mostly lawyers, teachers, and the more affluent, solid artists, will rush from their flats, brush or tool in hand, to remove the intrusions the world has made.

'Nothing must spoil our street,' I overhear the portraitist Gondalski say today. 'If we lose our street, what is left to keep?' Everyone, it seems, gives approval to the maintenance of our peaceful boulevard.

Papa has lately forbidden me to stop and 'waste time' in any of the small cafes along the street leading to our house. I never obey him since I am drawn to the activities of these places and the people who visit them. When I approach a cafe the aroma of dark Spanish coffee is so strong I am certain a smell can build a wall around those close to it. My friend Aaron, the budding poet, always tells me culture can survive only within the cafe. Aaron is a romantic, however, and likes to believe himself in Paris, in the Latin Quarter he has only read about in Proust, writing lovely, abstract odes to his homeland. Aaron writes in Polish.

A cafe called 'The Master's Place' — set back from Mielko under a large, brown awning, its tables covered by bottles and ashtrays — is Aaron's favorite spot to sit, write and, of course, talk. 'It is where all the somber types come, Simon,' he re-

minds me, careful to make himself the image of the artist in his ill-fitting clothes. 'After all, one can learn so much about life here.'

I do love Aaron!

Those who frequent this cafe are usually from the university or are struggling, younger artists who come to make their daily pleas for recognition to the bourgeois gallery owners who, in turn, ignore them and exchange gossip and prices with one another.

Everyone carries with him the latest editions of the French political newspapers or the cultural journals from Vienna. I always try to blend in with the people here, giving the appearance of belonging while straining to pick up fragments of stray conversations I rarely understand. Aaron accuses me of acting like a voyeur at times, of being inattentive to what he feels is most important — his own poems.

I make my solitary glass of mineral water last throughout Aaron's lengthy poetry recitations, watching his fingers play over worn manuscript pages as he reads. I listen to him but also like to catch glimpses of the elegant women who stop here to drink with friends (or, as I like to imagine, be with lovers). I invent the contents of distant conversations: talk of the theater, debates over the function of 'new fascist art' from Italy.

Today, a striking woman enters the cafe, her face heavily rouged, wearing a tweed suit. She waves to a young man at the table next to ours, and he is so taken in by her arrival that he quickly places his newspaper on the floor; he never stops — I never stop — looking at her.

'Simon, are you listening to me?' (Aaron has caught me again) 'Shall I read the last verse . . . it just doesn't seem to make sense as an image. I don't think I can make it work, and when I read it to Zygler yesterday he said . . . Simon, what . . . what are you doing? Please, what is it now? I don't understand.'

I look at my friend as his eyes glare at what I have written in my notebook. Once again I am split apart by Papa's dream (how can I tell this to Aaron? to anyone?). Even when I think my mind is placed within the world, I am recording what I have heard Rausch say to Papa or Papa's answers. What so disturbs Aaron is that while my pen has run dry I have continued to write, pushing blank indentations onto the heavy notebook paper. I don't know what to say.

Aaron turns away from me, placing my notebook with the blank markings close to my arm and, this done, gathers his own unheard poetry into his worn

leather satchel. I hear his coins drop onto the saucer — there is enough, I notice, for my own drink — and he mumbles something to the waiter who, head down, nods in sympathy. Aaron faces me, takes my hand and says he will visit me after classes tomorrow. He rushes from the cafe.

There is a slight chill in the afternoon air that brings me back to the pleasure of my walk. I move from the cafe to the cart of an old Gypsy woman who is selling fresh sweet rolls. The sugar from her hand rubs off on my palm when I give her a few coins.

I take the wide turning on Mielko that runs past the Ridsz Music Conservatory, a huge, white marble building circled by a stone wall. Tadeusz will be outside today, teaching and, I hope, playing. His music is a wonder. As the youngest teacher at the conservatory — his recent concert was so acclaimed by Warsaw's critics that one called him 'the best adornment of Mielko street' — Tadeusz is pampered and feared.

Walking quietly past the sleeping gate porter, I immediately see my friend at the far side of the courtyard, struggling with a young student, a girl, with the bad luck to be third-rate. Tadeusz stands above her next to a brass score stand, his arms moving wildly, occasionally striking the adjacent elm tree.

'No, Malka. No,' he yells. 'You aren't listening to me or even thinking about the music before you. Mozart isn't to be butchered as if the work existed in small parts you may pick apart as you choose. Approach him with . . . with strength . . . with . . .' Before he finishes speaking, as if he never intended to complete any direction, Tadeusz grabs the girl's expensive violin, takes her bow in hand and smooths the horsehair.

'Listen, for once, and see how the music must grow out of itself, for God's sake!'

As Tadeusz plays, the girl begins to cry. When he is through — more a victim of conscience than he would dare admit to me — he holds his student's hand and whispers into her ear. The girl brushes aside a wet strand of hair and hesitantly, slowly begins to play. Tadeusz hums along with her melody; Mozart is now song. He smiles when he sees me watching this exercise and nods his head. 'So, Simon,' he yells, the courtyard walls echoing his voice. 'So! My friend's way, I have learned, of claiming victory for himself as well as Mozart.'

Several students gather in front of their teacher. He removes his flannel jacket, a signal for all of us that this is the time when he will play for those of us who cannot afford to hear him on the concert

stage. I move closer to the small group, finding a seat for myself on a low stone bench. Just as I turn to Tadeusz, toward his music, his left arm jerks up in a wild movement, as if he were chastising some second-class provincial orchestra. Since I am still too far away to hear what he is saying to himself, I follow his eyes, fixed upward toward the third-story window of the conservatory's main building. There, between plush red velvet curtains, is the stooped figure of Mendelius, director of the conservatory and a man close to the politics of the day. Tadeusz has told me of his distaste for the director, a man in whom my friend sees malevolent feeling . . . whose formal musical criticism only barely manages to soften the guttersnipe comments he injects in his articles about 'the hordes of non-Poles sucking the musical vitality out of the beloved nation.'

The encounter ends as quickly as it had begun. The curtains are drawn tightly together, muffling the laughter Tadeusz and I hear coming from within the director's office. Tadeusz looks down at his violin. He begins to play, an early piece by Mendelssohn, his body taking on the appearance of a praying Jew. Tadeusz moves around the audience his music and presence have attracted, an act cut short by the ripping sounds the newly opened curtains from the director's office make. Tadeusz stopped playing.

'Tadeusz,' I called. 'Please, go on. I'm sorry.' I know what has happened. Mendelius has reappeared.

Without a word to me or any of the students who sat next to him, Tadeusz placed his violin back in its case, gathered his scorebooks, and began to walk away from the school. For a moment I could not move as I watched him cross the courtyard into the street, oblivious to the busy traffic. At the pedestrian island in the middle of Krochmalma street, he boarded a crowded tram that would take him to the suburban district where his parents lived. I ran after him, yelling his name, seeing how, as the tram's door closed, a single sheet of scorebook paper had fallen by the front wheel. But before I could reach the white sheet of paper, it flew onto the rail and was, in the mud's filth, lost.

The traffic continued to pass. People were beginning to rush home, stopping to buy a newspaper or some fruit from the vendors who appeared along the length of the street. The fruit, however, was never good this time of the year.

I was becoming quite cold in my thin jacket.

I walked slowly back across the street to Mielko. The conservatory gates were closed, a large, ancient chain cutting off the curious from the school. My

flat was only a few hundred meters away. Papa would be home, waiting.

'Simon, is it you?' I heard him ask when I finally arrived home. 'Home so late again? Simon!'

I didn't answer, but forced myself to walk along the hallway that separated the flat's entranceway from the parlor. Papa had stacks of newspapers and books from all over Europe lining the hall: he read all the time.

'Simon, come, please,' his voice again called.

'Yes, Papa, I am here. Sorry to be so late, but I did want to enjoy the city this afternoon.' I walked to my father in his parlor.

'Good . . . did you rest along the way?' he asked, his eyes staring at the remaining light coming into the room, causing a golden tint to cover his face.

'Yes, I rested . . . and I saw' He wasn't listening to me.

'Do you hear me at night, Simon? Do I disturb you when I am out here with my notes and papers? You understand how Rausch can talk for hours.'

I sat down beside him, trying to attract his attention. 'Schumann was mysterious today,' I told him. 'In history lecture.'

'How so?' Papa asked while arranging his notebooks on the table in front of him.

He wept, Papa. Right in front of the class. He kept saying something about the lost time of Europe while his arm moved over the map. None of us knew what he meant.' (Papa stopped his arranging and was listening to me.)

'Schumann, like that,' Papa said. He seemed upset but was strangely and immediately sympathetic, as if he understood. 'What time, Simon? What time did he refer to . . . like any of the stories Rausch tells me?'

'I don't know, Papa. But before I left the gymnasium to walk home, I saw Schumann speaking with the rector and then, well, I can't explain it. He just walked back to the room and stared at the map. I watched him.'

'Rausch is coming again tonight,' Papa said, failing to respond to my story. 'He will be here promptly at seven. You are welcome to stay.'

My father wasn't with me any longer. He was lost in his thoughts and plans for the coming evening. Rausch would be here. And I had forgotten to tell Papa about Tadeusz.

My mother was listening to us from the doorway. Although she didn't say anything, I knew she was beginning to worry about an evening that would

be devoted to wild talk, often continuing until early morning. She glanced at the front window, knowing how soon Rausch would come, with his stories, dreams, and garbled phrases without beginning or end. For when Rausch came, his pockets filled with foul-smelling tobacco, my mother knew the familiar would be lost to her.

As I remember all of this now, from the safety of my place so far removed from that day in Warsaw, when Papa spoke about his dream, my senses hurdle through time. Rausch was a mystic, so unlike Papa the lawyer. Papa, I was always taught, had absolute faith in the workings of the law, its logic and coherence. He believed not so much in the God his own father wished him to honor, but in the Gods of reason that came during the recent memory of Europe. Papa's father grew up on Talmud, devotion, questions begging answers begging definition; Papa grew up with Enlightenment and its culture. He always seemed to understand so much, was such a good teacher for me — I, the only child of a late marriage. Papa gave up on God and, unknown to him even when it was happening, inherited what he finally accepted as God's nightmare.

'Leah, please, bring out some food for us now,' I heard him say from the front parlor. 'Rausch is coming. I see him.'

I sat at the large oak table in the kitchen, sipping sweet tea our maid Anzia prepared. I looked at Mama. She had a long scar running down the length of her right arm. 'A burn, Simon,' she told me when I asked her about the red mark. 'Just a simple burn . . . I have a fine ointment for it.' She saw how I kept staring at her arm, her eyes moving back and forth between my face and the cheese and cakes she was arranging for the two men. I was not aware when she left the kitchen, nor did I hear her leave the flat after serving the food.

By this time Papa was busy with Rausch. Out of respect, I never intruded on my father during what he now called his 'evening business.' I knew so little about his life now, and he had only recently asked me if I would like to sit in the parlor when he spoke with his 'dear friend,' as he referred to the old man who visited with him every night. But I had no interest in religion — surely, I thought, this was what concerned them — or the Hasidic mysteries they must be discussing. I was too occupied with my own reading.

I heard Papa raise his voice, to such a pitch that an echo sounded despite the heavily furnished and carpeted apartment.

Fragments of their conversation came to me through the walls. 'It is not enough that we sense,'

Rausch said. 'The dream must be understood as a vision, Stefan, a vision, don't you see. Do you think or fear that perhaps . . . ?' I never heard the rest of the question since Rausch lowered his voice until he reached a new point, a new outburst directed at my father. 'Take hold, Stefan. The pain will live, will pass during the day, will live again. Believe me, friend.'

All of this meant nothing to me — the disputes of two men, one of whom was losing his interest in his family, his work; the other an old man, forever lost in the world of the unknown, dreams, speculations and, probably, demons.

I simply could not strain my hearing any longer toward the voices in the other room, and I soon fell asleep. Several hours later I was awakened by my mother's scream. My parents' room was at the other end of the flat and sounds never carried so clearly. I was forbidden to enter their room at night — Mama had told me Papa was a poor sleeper and needed all the rest he could get. Yet, I was drawn to their room as if they had both called me. I stopped at their door and listened. Mama was crying, sobbing.

'But I must go, Leah. How can I stay away from them? Do you expect me to . . . ?'

'Stefan, my God, not again!'

I pushed the door open slightly. I didn't know how to react to what I saw. I was so young. My parents were embracing, wrapped together, both undressed. I turned away since this was too shameful for me to watch. They began to talk, unaware of my presence.

'You make me part of you now as if there can be nothing left for our future,' she said to him. He was pulling at her arm, the one with the scar I had noticed earlier in the evening. Together they fell to the floor, broke apart, Papa's hand on her breast.

Papa was making these choking sounds, pushing words from his throat.

'I see it all so clearly now, Leah. Rausch tells me about warnings in dreams. He tells me to find the answer in the parts I see and yet I can't make any sense of the pieces of fire that burn at the outside of everything. I am not a mute who can contain himself because he has no exit other than his imaginings . . . I have voice, Leah, voice. So I touch you because it seems as if everything might disappear.'

'But you are safe, Stefan, here with me and Simon,' my mother said, her hand stroking his head, pulling the hair from his eyes. 'You are here with us. What more could there be?'

'I tell myself I am safe,' Papa answered. 'I am

known to so many people as a good man, a father, a believer in the laws men have for themselves, and then it begins again.' Papa stopped, threw his head back in a wild motion, and rose above my mother. 'Leah, now, please, you must follow!'

My mother moved closer to him. He pulled her to the wall. My breath was leaving me and my hand forced itself to my mouth as if it could keep the breath within. Papa's hands were reaching for her and then, as if something had taken hold of him, he threw her to the right side of the room causing her to scratch her thigh on the jagged bedpost.

'Stay there,' he shouted. 'Look at me.' My mother could not raise her head from her cupped hands. Blood was trickling down her leg, a lifeless pool formed on the rug beneath her. 'Look at me,' he shouted again, 'as if for the last time. Think, Leah, of what you would say.' Papa ran across the room. 'Put your hand over your mouth and try to shout, as if you were some distance from me and I might not be able to hear you. Shriek, Leah!'

My mother was trying to force out the words Papa wanted to hear. But all I could hear was a continuing, terrified groan.

I never could have imagined my father acting in this way before. In this room, filled with the inherited solidity of ancient bed and furniture marked with the emotions of his parents before him, my father was like a child. It took several minutes for him to quiet his wife. They fell to the floor, their backs against the bed. Papa rested his head against my mother's chest and began to speak into her body.

'You know how it all began, Leah. It wasn't that I was becoming mad in my life at first. It was so gradual,' he said in whispers that moved around her huddled form. 'In the beginning I saw Mama and Uncle Schmuel . . . first they held me to themselves in my dream. Mama kept telling me to hold on, hold on to my creations. I asked her why? Why, Mama? What will happen to me? To Leah and Simon? Just as she was about to answer — I'm sure she wanted to say something to me — I can see her face so clearly as her brother, Schmuel, puts his hand over her mouth. They begin to argue, her muted sounds nothing compared to his threats. And always in this repeated vision I am pushed aside to a corner of this foul smelling room that reeks of unimaginable odors.'

Papa moved his head from my mother. 'And Schmuel says, "Now, now, Sophie. Let the boy find out for himself!" Mama tries to speak to me and then . . . then, they just walk away from me, covered by something heavier than a mist. My last

sight of them is made difficult by this veil. Finally, as if there were an internal timekeeper for this horror, a waiter, in an old-fashioned frock coat, black with a red cravat and a high white collar, walks up to me. He asks me if I want a sweet to suck on when all I can hear is his awful laughter.'

Papa began to cry; my mother drew him to her stomach.

'Shh, Stefan, you mustn't carry on so.' But Papa couldn't be still.

'So I find myself with this image — first once a month, now every night. I am not frightened by the dead people I see, Leah. Not by them. No! I know how dear to me they were in life, but in this . . . in this I see symbols around them that rip at me like a crazed animal. They always leave me, leave me'

Papa is now walking around the room while my mother tries to hold onto him. Again, he pushes her away, this time the force of his arm striking out caused the large, framed photograph of his parents, to fall from the dresser. I jump forward into the partially opened door. My mother's shame at being seen by her only child, Papa's frenzy, and my inability to utter a sound or leave all collide. I fall to the floor by the shards of glass and one piece presses deeply into my leg. I do not feel anything.

Then, as if the next hour of my life was the only hour I have ever known, I see Papa dressing himself, hastily throwing clothing into a black valise. He keeps saying Rausch's name over and over again.

'He say I can understand all of this, Leah, but I must travel with him to Vilna, to tell it to the rabbis there, the wonder workers. In the telling, he says, in the telling comes the resolution and the understanding.'

I see this now: Papa leaving the house, Mama pleading with me to follow him.

'Go, Simon,' she screams. 'My God, have him come back.'

I move through the empty streets, the early morning light outlining the bodies of vagrants sleeping within doorways and courtyards. It would take at least a quarter hour to reach the station. My eyes were stinging, the pain in my leg was searing its way through my whole body. Despite my pain, I am running, arriving at the station just as Papa's train is announced by the loudspeaker. The crowds are too dense to move around with ease and, as I reach the platform, his train moves slowly away, the windows of the wagon-lits reflecting the still-burning gas lamps at platform's edge. There was nothing I could do. My leg forced me to lean against

a pillar.

A hand took hold of my shoulder, turned me from the pillar into a mass of black cloth smelling of garlic and travel sweat. This hand, so tightly placed behind me that I could not move, began to rub against my back — I knew I was being held by Rausch. I tried to bite, to claw my way out from this hold — yet it was a kind of embrace whose pressure was more of sympathy and discipline — but I was caught.

'Simon, be easy,' the old man whispered into my ear, his lips pressed tightly against my head. 'Your papa will be well cared for. He is going to tell others of his dream. He holds a lesson, boy, for all of us, and I have sent him to an interpreter, who will send him to another until your Papa understands. And unlike the rest of us, he will be able to tell stories of God's plan for his people.'

As Rausch finished his simple message, I was released. He took my hand and kissed it. I looked away. I never saw him again.

I had to go back to Mama, to Mielko street, to tell her what Rausch had said. My sadness was beyond my throat now.

I walked to Mielko and, approaching the gate of the music conservatory, saw the porter in front of the main entrance, sweeping the walkway. Just as the man finished, Mendelius appeared. He spoke to the porter. In a glance I will never forget, he looked at me as if I had known him for years. I began to walk toward him to continue my trip home. Mendelius raised his hand as if to shade his eyes, said something to the old man at the gate, and walked into the conservatory courtyard.

When I came near the gate, the porter hastily raised the chain, returned to a small coal brazier at the side of the school and began to hum as he warmed his hands."

Goldensohn was slowly leading me away from the lectern, his arm around my waist. No one spoke, the audience was still in place.

As I left the stage, the beautiful woman whom I had been so attentive to before my story left her seat and followed us as we walked into the hallway. "We'll go outside now," Goldensohn said to me in Polish. "For air. I will take you home. Simon, are you listening?"

We reached the exit. The woman's arm joined Goldensohn's along my waist when I had to stop at the front door, my head pressed against the cool, clear glass. □

Kelly Cherry

WIND CHIMES IN THE DEEP BLUE UPSIDE-DOWN HEAVEN

In this poem, God is a fish
And light floods the cove like high tide.
A rainbow swims in the sea.
I am safe on high ground, holding
The hand of my small daughter.

I am not safe. I have no daughter.
I am my mother's daughter
And I am holding her hand,
But she is drowning.

We have left the poem. I have let go
My mother's hand, and it is my fault that
She is drowning. Now no one can save her
Except God, who is a fish with scales like wind chimes.
In the deep blue upside-down heaven, God glows as if phosphorescent.

On his silvery back, my mother rides
Away from me, grasping his fins in her hands.
All the music I have ever known is becoming fainter and fainter,
Ebbing into silence.

In the poem, the name of the daughter I do not have is Rainbow,
And I am holding her hand because she must never leave me,
But I am drowning because I have no daughter,
And the light that poured out of the sky has drained into darkness
Earlier than anyone expected,

Ebbing into silence.

Bert Cardullo

THE FILM STYLE OF FEDERICO FELLINI:
THE NIGHTS OF CABIRIA AS PARADIGM

for my sister, Lyn



Charles Thomas Samuels once wrote that "[Fellini's] great subject is the reaction to surfaces. Any deeper probing of character is beyond him."¹ Samuels gave *La Strada* (1954) as an example of a film that is ultimately unsatisfying because it attempts both to react to the surface of character and to probe character deeply. Fellini responds to Gelsomina's exterior — that is, he demonstrates her goodness repeatedly, as opposed to analyzing why

she is good; at the same time, he attempts to dramatize the spiritual conversion of Zampanò, who, "too bestial to requite Gelsomina, must lose her in order to understand that she was worth loving" (p. 100). Gelsomina ends up being the protagonist of *La Strada* through the sheer pathos of her condition, whereas she should have been the agent of Zampanò's internal change. The presence of Zampanò in the film calls for conflict between him and Gelsomina and for his gradual change. Instead, Gelsomina goes mad after Zampanò kills the fool, Zampanò abandons her, and learns of her death years later by coincidence. Only then do we see his

¹Charles Thomas Samuels, *Mastering the Film and Other Essays* (Knoxville: The Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1977), pp. 99-100. Hereafter cited by page number in the text.



change, his great regret that he rejected Gelsomina's love. We have seen Zampanò's change, but we have not seen how it has occurred; we want to know what he has been feeling in the years since he left Gelsomina.

Fellini created another memorable female character in *The Nights of Cabiria* (1957), played by the actress who played Gelsomina, Giulietta Masina. But he wisely decided not to attach her to a single male character and thereby arouse our expectations of conflict between them. He chose instead only to "react to the surface" of his female character. The result is, in my opinion, a better film than *La Strada*, one that marries form to content perfectly.

Samuels has described Fellini's style better than anyone else:

In the most impressive phase of his career (from *Variety Lights* [1950] through *8½* [1962], he is, above all, an observer. Insofar as he has a style, it isn't narrowly technical but rather a general method of constructing films through juxtaposition; that is, through setting details of reconstructed reality side by side to point up a common denominator or, more often, to expose the ironic relationship between unlike things . . . Like his neo-realist forbears, Fellini tries to present the world naturally, without arranging things in order to create plots or entertainments . . . Scenes are related in his films not by causality or in order to create a crisis but as illustrations of a state of being . . . Since his subject is [the] incorrigibility [of human hopefulness], repetition is crucial to Fellini's films.

(pp. 85-86, 100)

In *The Nights of Cabiria*, Fellini places Cabiria in successive scenes that illustrate the state of her

being. Her boyfriend Giorgio steals her purse and pushes her into a river at the start of the film. She is rescued, and the film chronicles her attempts to bounce back from disappointed love. Cabiria dances at night on the *Passeggiata Archeologica*, where her fellow prostitutes gather in Rome; but her dance ends in a fight when the aging prostitute Matilda taunts her about rejection by Giorgio. To her astonishment, since she is hardly glamorous, she gets picked up by the film star Alberto Lazzari, but is pushed aside when his girlfriend decides to make up with him in the middle of the night. Cabiria makes a pilgrimage next to the Madonna of Divine Love; she wants to pray for a miracle: for a change in her life for the better, for rebirth. Nothing happens. Cabiria is then hypnotized in a theater into believing that she is eighteen again and in the company of a young man who truly loves her. She awakens from her trance to sad reality: no lover in her life and an audience of men jeering at her. Outside the theater, she meets Oscar D'Onofrio, who was a member of the audience and who miraculously falls in love with her at once. Cabiria is at first reluctant to accompany Oscar to a café, but eventually dates him regularly, falls in love, and accepts his proposal of marriage. She sells her little house, takes all her money out of the bank, and leaves Rome to marry Oscar. They go to an inn in the Alban Mountains, where Oscar plans to push Cabiria off a cliff into a lake and steal her money. At the edge of the cliff Cabiria finally realizes that she has been duped again and, horrified, offers Oscar her savings and asks him to kill her. He runs off shaken, but not before grabbing the money. We last see her wandering dazed along a road, surrounded by young people singing and dancing to the accompaniment of guitars. A girl says, "Buona sera!" to Cabiria, who smiles.

Cabiria is, then, incorrigibly hopeful: this is the



common denominator in her life. She is so incorrigibly hopeful that she seems like a child who has yet to learn from the weight of experience. Indeed, from beginning to end she looks and acts like a child. Richard Gilman remarked in a lecture at Yale that all of Fellini's films, not just the obvious examples like *8½* and *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965), have a dream quality: *The Nights of Cabiria* does in the sense that the childlike Cabiria could be dreaming or having a nightmare that she is wandering through an unaccountably cruel world, a world to which she is a stranger and to which she is unwilling or unable to sacrifice her hopefulness.²

Giulietta Masina is a woman with a girl's appearance in the film: she is slim-hipped, has a pixie haircut, and wears bobby socks and penny loafers. When she puts on her shabby fur coat for her nights as a prostitute, she looks like a child "playing adult." In a scene omitted from the final version of *The Nights of Cabiria*, Cabiria says to the Man with the Sack, "Yes, [I'm all alone,] my mother and father both died when I was still a little girl. I came to Rome . . ." ³ She seems to say that she came to Rome as a little girl and grew up alone; it is as if she has remained the little girl she was when her parents died. Fellini is careful never to show her in bed with any of her customers, even though we know that she has saved money from her work as a prostitute. We see her accept a ride from a truck driver, but it is not clear that she will sleep with him: she is making her pilgrimage to the Madonna of Divine Love and may want nothing more than transportation. We see her actually reject the

advances of a potential customer at one point: the man drives up to the *Passeggiata Archeologica*, says a few words to Cabiria, gets no response, and drives on. Even as Cabiria seems to be "playing adult" when she dresses up to go out, she seems also to be "playing prostitute." That is the effect of not showing her in bed with men and of surrounding her with full-bodied women in high heels and tight-fitting dresses.

Like a child, Cabiria imitates the behavior of adults. When a pimp drops her off at the *Via Veneto*, she tries to imitate the walk and air of the high-class streetwalkers of the area. When the film star takes her to a flashy nightclub, she imitates the behavior of the ladies who surround her. And when she finds herself in the procession to the shrine, she looks around and begins imitating the behavior of the other supplicants. Like a child, Cabiria is unable to consume liquor: at a picnic after the pilgrimage, a character says that she gets drunk after one drink. Cabiria even throws tantrums like a child. Twice she goes into a rage at people who mean well: at the men and boys who save her from drowning, and at her next-door neighbor, Wanda, who tries to comfort her and learn what is wrong when she returns home muddy and wet. Of course we understand the source of Cabiria's anger — not only has she been robbed and pushed into a river, she has also been deserted by the man she loves — yet it seems irrational and inconsiderate. The childlike Cabiria gives her love as freely as she displays her anger: to Giorgio, to Oscar, to one of her chickens, to the film star's puppy. Cabiria becomes excited as easily and completely as a child: while Alberto Lazzari is driving her to the nightclub, she stands up on the front seat and shouts proudly to the prostitutes who line the streets, "Look at me! Look who I'm with!" When they arrive at the club, Alberto must coax her out of the car and through the front

²Richard Gilman, Prefatory Remarks to a Screening of *The Nights of Cabiria*, Yale University, New Haven, Ct., 4 Nov. 1982.

³Gilbert Salachas, ed., *Fellini: An Investigation into His Films and Philosophy*, trans. Rosalie Siegel from 1st French ed. (New York: Crown, 1969), p. 146.

door as one might coax a shy or frightened child.

Two images especially fix Cabiria in my mind as a child-woman, both photographed at Lazzari's garish mansion. The first image is of Cabiria climbing the stairs to Alberto's room — he has gone ahead of her, just as he did at the nightclub. Cabiria looks like a child climbing stairs that are too large for her: Fellini shoots the scene from the bottom of the staircase, so that the already small Cabiria appears smaller the higher she goes and the stairs appear larger. The second image is of Cabiria peeking through the keyhole of Alberto's spacious bathroom, where she is hiding from his girlfriend. It is as if Cabiria, holding Alberto's puppy, is a child peeking through the keyhole at two adults, a father and a mother-figure, who are getting ready to go to bed. Indeed, Alberto seems like a father to Cabiria: he dwarfs her, as does his home. Like a good father, he urges her to eat supper and when his girlfriend arrives he sends her out of the room with her meal and the dog.

Alberto is one of four parental figures Fellini gives Cabiria in the film. Wanda, the prostitute who lives next door to her, is a mother-figure. She seeks to comfort the distressed Cabiria, and offers common sense where Cabiria can plead only her hope and her dreams. When Cabiria says of Giorgio, "Why would he shove me in the river for a mere forty thousand lire? I loved him," Wanda replies, "Love . . . You only knew him a month — you know nothing of him." When Cabiria wants to know, after the pilgrimage, why her life has not yet changed for the better, Wanda stares at her in disbelief, saying, "What do you mean, *change*?" Wanda is the first to suspect that Oscar is deceiving Cabiria and, like a mother, she cries when Cabiria departs from Rome to marry him, complaining that she has not even met the fiancé. The Madonna of Divine Love is Wanda's spiritual counterpart, just as Giovanni, the lay brother, is Alberto's. Like Alberto, Giovanni disappoints Cabiria: he is not at the church when she calls on him, and even had he been there he would not have been able to hear her confession, since he is not an ordained father (when Cabiria hears this, she reacts with characteristic hopefulness: she says she will wait for him anyway).

Fellini gives Cabiria surrogate siblings to complement her surrogate parents. Many children populate this film. Three boys dive into the Tiber and save Cabiria from drowning. Children play outside her door on something resembling the "monkey bars" of American playgrounds; boys have started the fire into which she throws Giorgio's

pictures and clothing. Boys and girls run after Cabiria to say good-bye when she is leaving to marry Oscar; the husband and wife who move into Cabiria's house the moment she vacates it have four or five children. Laughing, frolicking children fill the street as Cabiria and Oscar leave the inn in the Alban Mountains to take their fateful walk. Finally, boys and girls revive Cabiria's spirit at the end of the film with music, song, joy, and kindness.

Fellini said that *The Nights of Cabiria* "is full of tragedy."⁴ It is, in a sense. One childlike quality of Cabiria's — her resilience, her inexhaustible energy — enables her to endure many setbacks; yet, another childlike quality — her impulse to love and to trust — is responsible for those very setbacks. There is apparently no way out for her *except* to endure, to suffer in her humanity. Cabiria achieves no tragic recognition; she does not change but remains hopeful to the end. If anything has changed in the film, it is the attitude of Fellini's camera and, by extension, our attitude as viewers. Like a shy child, the camera has come upon Cabiria and Giorgio from afar in the opening long shots, has decided to stay with Cabiria, has then followed her through her experience unobtrusively yet doggedly, and in the final shot has come up close to embrace her in love and compassion. The camera has been quintessentially childlike in the sense that it has seemed content to observe and record Cabiria's experience rather than analyze and explain it. Fellini's camera may be naive, but it is not sentimental. No one is blamed for Cabiria's condition; we never learn why she is the way she is, or why she cannot change. The greatest tribute to this film may be that we don't resent not knowing. We accept Cabiria as she is presented to us, and we care about her. We have been removed from the temporal world of causality, of psychology, and transported to the eternal world of wonder and play. That is, we have been transformed from adults into children. □

⁴Federico Fellini, *Fellini on Fellini*, trans. Isabel Quigley (London, 1976; rpt. New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, n.d.), p. 66.

Stills courtesy of Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive

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Angela Ball

NOW TAKING PLACE

You are surprised by a postcard:
Y a town of pediments and leaves,
carefully slanted cars, a kiosk
with five sides where you sit
in a show of fireworks, the name
of the town rushing in sparks
to your feet. But the frame
of the room, like an arcade
with footsteps, brings this scene
before your eyes — letting you
in on washed posters, paste-
gray sky, tables of lint, flowers
like screaming birds, a few loaves
of chocolate arranged on old
built-in shelves, the torch-colored
running line of a locomotive
like a pointer, its gold number
thin as a speck — and leaves men
lined up in streets like calm
notions, heads bobbing sideways
into range.

Eugene W. Holland

POSTSTRUCTURALISM IN THE UNITED STATES: THE SUPPLEMENT OF COMPLACENCY

It was recently declared — by one of the foremost proponents of poststructuralism in the United States — that “the passage from the sociology of literary theory as an academic institution to . . . actual theoretical issues is clogged by so many false mediations as to be nearly impassable.”¹ Yet the defensive thrust of this passage — apparently intent on protecting the ‘inside’ issues of theory from ‘outside’ contamination by sociology — belies the ‘sociology’ of literary theory and reading-procedures implied by poststructuralist literary theory itself. For the critique of representation underlying poststructuralism asserts that the text cannot contain a single, unequivocal meaning, and implies that meaning arises instead from an encounter between the text and the reading-procedures of various “communities of readers.”² This notion of ‘reading-communities’ accounts well for the fact that while the temptation to impute meaning to texts is well-nigh irresistible, the plurality of imputed meanings nevertheless indicates that meaning does not inhere in the text itself. Meaning, poststructuralism would have it, entails a relation of “supplementarity” whereby reading-communities complete a text that is constitutively incomplete in itself.³ But upon what basis do such reading-communities exist? We need only add to Fish’s simple pragmatic view (based on shared experience and so forth) the marxian concept of ideology or the genealogical method of Nietzsche to make Fish’s grounding of reading-procedure in

interpretive communities a powerful tool for understanding the political implications of literary theory and criticism.⁴ A poststructuralist genealogy of reading would investigate a literary interpretation or analysis by examining the ground of its “supplement,” discovering what habits of thought or unexpressed interests produced just this kind of analysis or that interpretation.

This, then, is the method I shall use: intrinsic analysis of a recent work of criticism will disclose its unstated assumptions and attitudes, and may help us understand the appeal of a certain poststructuralism in the United States today. I have singled out the work of just one prominent critic so as to ensure a clear passage to the pertinent theoretical issues; though not in any sense “representative,” Paul de Man has contributed as much as anyone to the formation and diffusion of poststructuralism in this country, and it is his work our genealogy of reading will examine.

De Man’s recent *Allegories of Reading* starts with the same gesture of protection that appears in the pronouncement quoted at the outset: the book aims to rescue the ‘inside’ of what he calls “formalist and intrinsic” criticism from prevailing tendencies which talk, he says, “a great deal about reference, about the non-verbal ‘outside’ to which language refers, by which it is conditioned, and upon which it acts.”⁵ Significant is the tripartite relation expressed here between language and its ‘outside’: language refers to it, is conditioned by it, and acts upon it. For on the very page — and thence throughout the book — these three forms are reduced to one: literature’s only ‘out’ will be referential meaning. From the very start, this reduction excludes from consideration two major branches of poststructuralism: that of Gilles Deleuze (and to some extent of Jean-François Lyotard), for whom language is understood in its effects, as action upon an outside; and that of Michel Foucault (and also the Althusserians), for whom language is understood in its contexts, as conditioned by an outside. This gesture of exclusion entails, of course, a corresponding process of

¹Paul de Man, “Hypogram and Inscription: Michael Riffaterre’s Poetics of Reading,” *Diacritics*, 11:4 (Winter 1981), p. 17.

²This notion is central to the work of Stanley Fish; see *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

³The term “supplement” is Derrida’s (see *On Grammatology*, Gayatri Spivak, trans. [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976]); its application in a genealogy of reading is not.

⁴Ideology and genealogy are each in its own way an indispensable critical tool; I adopt a genealogical perspective here only because of the centrality of Nietzsche to the issue of nihilism in de Man’s work. This is the occasion to thank Mark Warren for his valuable insights and comments on an early draft of this paper.

⁵Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 3. Hereafter cited by page number in text.

selection: de Man draws heavily on the power and prestige of Derrida's term "deconstruction" — for whose impact on literary studies in this country de Man is largely responsible. We can only broach tangentially the crucial differences between de Man's brand of "deconstruction" and Derrida's own. But for one thing, whereas Derrida's inclination is to extend the conditions of textuality 'outside' to non-textual and even non-verbal phenomena, de Man's aim is to exclude the outside entirely by declaring even — or rather: especially — the most carefully wrought literary text to be "unreadable."⁶

The main thrust of de Man's reading procedure, then, will be to produce "unreadability" — for, given his initial exclusions, a text whose referential meaning turns out to be "unreadable" is effectively sealed off from the 'outside.' I say to produce unreadability, in the strong sense, partly to counter de Man's smug implication throughout his works that he, of all people, has finally spoken the truth of these texts. This is, of course, a claim many critics make for their procedures (though few have made it under the rubric of "unreadability"); by suggesting alternative reading-procedures in the poststructuralist vein, I want to emphasize the *choice* of basic assumptions de Man's readings represent. For the point of a genealogical approach is not to assess the (supposed) truth-value of this claim, but to examine its conditions of possibility *as* an interpretation: what form of will-to-power, Nietzsche would ask, is this interpretation? What inherited habits of thought make such an interpretation possible? And — perhaps most important — what unexpressed interests does it serve?

De Man's very first example reveals — perhaps all too clearly — some of the operations by which "unreadability" may be produced. The illustration involves a popular situation comedy which gets a laugh when one of the characters mistakes a rhetorical question for a literal one. To everyone except de Man, it is perfectly clear — from the gender-stereotyping characteristic of the show, from the facial expressions and from the tone of voice employed — exactly what the question meant. De Man must (and does) proceed to rule out all these determinations as "extra-textual," until he is left with what he calls a "mini-text" comprising nothing but the question itself, taken completely out of context. The point he wants to make is that "the same

grammatical pattern engenders two meanings that are mutually exclusive" (p. 9); but the illustration shows only that rhetorical questions — like irony in this respect — require some measure of context to be recognizable as such.⁷

The de-contextualizing procedure evident here is all the more important for being virtually undetectable when applied to more conventional texts, which in their empirical form — the book — themselves seem to exclude context. But Michel Foucault has argued rigorously against the empirical self-evidence of the book, asserting that the substitution of notions of 'text' or 'work' does nothing to alter the fundamental subjectivism of this kind of approach.⁸ What de Man presupposes in isolating the text is that "grammatical and other linguistic devices" should suffice by themselves to engender determinate meaning. The text, in other words, represents "an independent act of intelligence and will which makes use of the code of *langue* in order to express meaning." This quotation — slightly modified — is from Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*; de Man's procedure locates him squarely in the saussurian tradition.⁹ He posits a context-independent, self-sufficient text, supposedly able on the basis of grammatical and other linguistic devices alone to generate determinate meaning; when the text fails to do so, de Man calls it "unreadable."

This first example of the TV sitcom is (as de Man admits) fairly trivial — except insofar as it exposes key features of his procedures and presuppositions. His reading of Nietzsche in the 6th chapter of *Allegories of Reading* is clearly not trivial — if only

⁷For an extended discussion of this reading, see Stanley Cavell, "Politics as Opposed to What?" in *Critical Inquiry* 9:1 (Sept. 1982), pp. 157-78, especially pp. 167-72.

⁸The English translation of this essay appears in both *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, D.F. Bouchard, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 113-38 and *Textual Strategies*, Josue Harari, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 141-60.

⁹The *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966) says this:

Speaking . . . is an individual act . . . willful and intelligent . . . by virtue of which the speaker uses the language code for expressing his own thought . . . [Speaking] is always individual, and the individual is always its master.

(pp. 12-13)

⁶For some significant implications of this extension, see Michael Ryan's suggestive *Marxism and Deconstruction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

This metaphysics of the speaking subject is the target of Derrida's critique in the *Grammatology*.

because of Nietzsche's centrality to almost all branches of poststructuralist thought. In this essay, de Man tries to claim Nietzsche for himself, mobilizing his peculiar brand of deconstruction to suggest that language for Nietzsche can be understood neither as knowledge nor as action. However, the same presuppositions we observed in the first example here vitiate de Man's reading of Nietzsche — who was after all among the first to debunk the myths of self- and meaning-centered language.

The section of *The Will to Power* de Man's 6th chapter addresses subverts one of the basic axioms of knowledge.¹⁰ Nietzsche asserts that this principle has no *ontological* status, but merely represents an *inability* of human cognition that therefore appears as an imperative for logical thinking. Nietzsche poses the problem this way: "Are the axioms of logic adequate to reality or are they a means . . . for us to *create* the concept of 'reality' for ourselves?" (#516, p. 280). At the end of the same section, he answers the question directly: "Logic applies only to fictitious truths that we have created. Logic is the attempt to understand the actual world by means of a scheme of being posited by ourselves" (#516, p. 280). Language, according to Nietzsche, does not necessarily reflect or correspond to a logically ordered world; rather language *posits* such a world for the purposes of human understanding.

In order to prevent the contamination of language by an 'outside' upon which it would act by positing 'reality' in this way, de Man must find this section of *The Will to Power* unreadable, and the distinction between language-as-knowledge and language-as-action "undecidable." To this end, de Man claims that Nietzsche's argument "anticipates the differentiation between performative and constative language" (p. 130), and that it, in de Man's sense, "deconstructs" this opposition: "Now that we know that there is no longer such an illusion as that of knowledge but only feigned truths," de Man asks, "can we replace knowledge by performance? . . . Does this mean that . . . all language is a speech act that has to be performed in an imperative mode?" (p. 124).¹¹ De Man's answer, of

course, is no — or rather, that the question is "undecidable": "The deconstruction leading from the one model to the other is irreversible but it always remains suspended" (p. 130). "After Nietzsche (and, indeed, after any 'text')," he concludes, "we can no longer hope ever 'to know' in peace. Neither can we expect 'to do' anything" (p. 126).

Now Nietzsche's disdain for the notion of pure knowledge is widely recognized; but how can de Man prevent what he calls "an irreversible passage from a constative conception of language to a performative one" (p. 126)? To refute de Man's arguments would take us far afield, and ultimately prove nothing.¹² For de Man's very formulation of the question misses Nietzsche's point altogether: Nietzsche does not argue that language should be understood as *an act*, as a speech act. He insists rather that language *as an institution* has determinate effects on our understanding of and action in the 'outside' world. Language, Nietzsche says in section 354 of *The Gay Science*, is "the genius of the species"¹³; and in section 480 of *The Will to Power*, he explains that language functions "in order for a particular species to maintain itself and increase its power. . . . [That species'] conception of reality must comprehend enough of the calculable and constant for it to base a scheme of behavior on it" (#480, p. 266). In brief, Nietzsche never claims that, as de Man puts it, "all language is a speech act that must be performed in an imperative mode"; he does not "anticipate," as de Man says he does, "the differentiation between performative and constative language"; he never implies, as de Man goes on to suggest, that the effectiveness of language depends on a "rigorous mind, fully aware of the misleading power of tropes" (p. 131) — for Nietzsche simply does not take the point of view of the speaking subject at all, as de Man does by

¹⁰Sections of *The Will to Power* will be cited following quotations in the text by section number (#) and page reference to the Walter Kaufmann edition (New York: Random House, 1968); the section in question here is #516, pp. 279-80.

¹¹What de Man means exactly by "performative" and "constative" is not clear, for he never defines these terms (nor "metaphor" and "metonymy," for that matter); he does not use the former pair in accordance with Austin, who coined them. See Stanley Cavell in the work cited.

¹²At this stage in his argument (pp. 126-30), de Man suggests that Nietzsche's critique of "The 'Spirit,' something that thinks . . ." (#477, pp. 263-64) should be understood as a critique of action in general. To the obvious objection that action and thought are not the same, de Man is content to reply simply that "Nietzsche is not concerned with the distinction between speech (or thought) acts and . . . acts that would be non-verbal" (p. 129), and claims that "non-verbal acts are of no concern to [Nietzsche]" (p. 130). But Nietzsche insists (#289, p. 163) that "all perfect acts are unconscious"!

This is a symptomatic misreading: de Man's unwarranted extrapolation from the critique of thinking to action in general simply excludes from consideration any action not governed by a 'spiritual' or thinking subject.

¹³See the Walter Kaufmann edition (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 297-300.

invoking speech-act theory.

These two examples from de Man's book show that the blindness of his reading-procedure stems from the saussurian presuppositions he holds to: unreadability results when the isolated text fails to create referential meaning based on the code of *langue* alone, or when the effects of language do not arise from a fully conscious subject of *parole*. The importance of this saussurian supplement in de Man's reading-procedure corresponds precisely to the initial gesture of exclusion by which Deleuze and Foucault (among others) were excluded from consideration. For one crucial difference within post-structuralism is that, unlike de Man, Deleuze and Foucault base their understanding of texts not on the structuralism of Saussure, but on the work of Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev.¹⁴

While well aware of Saussure's basic contributions to linguistics, Hjelmslev strove to eliminate the difficulties inherent in Saussure's fundamental distinction between *langue* and *parole*. His analysis shows that three very different and incompatible notions of *langue* co-exist in the *Course in General Linguistics*; by replacing the *langue/parole* distinction with the concepts of "schema" and "usage," Hjelmslev eliminates what he considers an untenable distinction between the social nature of *langue* and the strictly individual nature of *parole*. Linguistic execution, which Saussure attributed to *parole*, nonetheless depended on certain habits of mind which Saussure associated with *langue*. But these positive habits of mind were incompatible with the purely differential structure of *langue*, according to Hjelmslev. So he introduced an intermediary term — "usage" — between the purely differential structure of *langue* and fleeting individual acts of *parole*. Hjelmslev defines usage as "the ensemble of linguistic habits adopted in a given society, to be determined by observation of their manifestation in discourse" (p. 80). Hence the individual act of speech is no longer self-sufficient, but understood in reference to the norms of usage; as Hjelmslev asserts, it is not the individual act of speech but "usage alone that constitutes the object of the theory of linguistic execution" (p. 88).

We can now see how the *institution* of language, as Nietzsche understands it, can have active effects on perception and behavior through the force of habit Hjelmslev calls usage, regardless of whether any single rigorous mind were fully aware of these habits or ever consciously "performed" them. Let

¹⁴The crucial essay is "Langue et Parole" in *Essais Linguistiques* (1959; Paris: Minuit, 1971), pp. 77-89. Page references to this work follow quotations in the text.

us note, too, that while Hjelmslev's definition, and the passage from Nietzsche cited above, suggest that usage involves an entire society or the whole species, the norms of usage can also be defined more strictly in relation to a given society *at* a particular time, or in relation to a specific class or group *within* society. (This is in fact the gist of Nietzsche's analysis in the *Genealogy of Morals*.) Michel Foucault is only the best known of a number of French linguists, historians and critics whose work stems from Hjelmslev's "poststructuralist" redefinition of linguistic execution in terms of usage rather than speech.¹⁵

But how would such a redefinition affect de Man's notion of unreadability? To answer this, let us examine one of his readings of Rousseau. In Chapter 11, de Man exposes a basic ambivalence in Rousseau's *Social Contract*: the State is constituted by a double relationship — on one hand, a "metaphorical" relation of peaceful coexistence between citizens within the State, based on harmony and similarity; on the other hand, a "metonymical" relation of unmitigated hostility toward other states, based on sheer contiguity and difference. In order to construe this ambivalence as undecidable, de Man assimilates the dual structure of the State to the dual structure of the legal text, in which — he claims — grammar and reference are "incompatible."

Leaving aside the question of whether grammar and reference really are incompatible, let us suppose, for the purpose of comparison, that a tension between internal peace and external strife, between domestic and foreign policy, is endemic to the modern nation-state in a global system. Such a constitutive ambivalence is suggested, for example, by the tendency for U.S. foreign policy to be the forte of the Republican Party, and domestic affairs the province of the Democrats — as if the aporia de Man locates in Rousseau's influential text had been read — or rather misread consistently — by each party's "community of readers" in its own way.¹⁶ Consider, in another vein, that this same

¹⁵A brief sampling of these others might include Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, (Paris: Minuit) Vol. 1 (1974), *L'Anti-Oedipe*, pp. 285-91 and passim, and Vol. 2 (1979), *Mille Plateaux*, pp. 54-60 and passim; M. Pecheux and C. Fuchs, "Language, Ideology and Discourse Analysis: an Overview," *Praxis* #6, (1982), pp. 3-20; and R. Robin, *Histoire et Linguistique*, (Paris: Colin, 1973).

¹⁶The absolute truth of this illustration is not crucial to my point, but an interesting case has been made for such a reading of American politics by Nicholas Berry in his "Republicans, Democrats, and Public Policy Competence," *Yale Review*, 64:4 (Summer, 1975), pp. 481-95.

aporia appears in Thomas More's reflections on the modern state, embodied in *Utopia*. The value of gold for the Utopians is strictly undecidable — in just the same form statehood is for Rousseau: internally, within the State, gold is disdained and distributed in order to maintain relations of equality and eliminate the potential for envy; externally, in relations with other states, gold is valued and hoarded in order to maintain Utopia's absolute independence from other states and ensure their dependence on it. What these brief remarks are meant to indicate is that a text's relations to its contexts — both its discursive and its non-discursive contexts — may contribute to our understanding of even an "undecidable" text such as Rousseau's. What's more, it may be the rhetorical structure itself of a given text — and not its 'meaning' alone — that most directly relates it to its 'outside' contexts: here, the very undecidability of Rousseau's reflections on the social contract can be understood not only in relation to other political discourses, but also in relation to the domestic and foreign policy problems of the modern state which gave rise to the dilemma in the first place.

Let me admit right away that I am using the word "understand" in a very different sense from de Man's — for this is the next point I want to make. If de Man can declare a text such as Rousseau's "unreadable," it is because of the way he defines "readability" in the first place: as a symmetrical counterpart to the saussurian concept of speech. "To understand," claims de Man, "primarily means to determine the referential mode of a text and . . . we assume that a referential discourse can be understood by whoever is competent to handle the lexicological and grammatical code of a language" (p. 201). A text would be readable, for de Man, if one could distill from it alone, using the linguistic code, a single, unequivocal meaning. This procedure ultimately treats the text not as an *object* of knowledge (which would entail forms of understanding very different from the sole "referential" mode he discusses), but as a *source* of knowledge — even if only to show that, on one level anyway, such knowledge — based on determinate, referential meaning arising from an isolated author/text — is impossible.¹⁷

On another level, however, the privileged

¹⁷On this important distinction between the text as source vs. object of knowledge, see Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); and for a cogent illustration, see James H. Kavanagh, "Marks of Weakness: Ideology, Science and Textual Criticism," *Praxis* #5 (1981), pp. 23-38.

authority of the literary text as a source of Truth is reaffirmed by de Man: this is the role of *allegory* in his work. The literary text is not valued for proposing a determinate solution to, or even for offering a significant formulation of, a problem — but rather for allegorically demonstrating the Impossibility of solution. By openly confronting, even dramatizing our "inability ever 'to know' in peace . . . [or] 'to do' anything," literature attains for de Man the glory of being, among all forms of language, "the most rigorous and, consequently, the most unreliable" (p. 19). In this way, allegory transforms the straw-man of saussurian unreadability into a supremely self-conscious nihilism.

I intend "nihilism" here not as some vague term of disapprobation, but in the strict Nietzschean sense of a paralyzed and often paralyzing reaction to the demise of metaphysics. In a way, anyone engaged in the deconstructive project is a candidate for nihilism, because deconstruction is itself (at least in its original, Derridean form) a critique of metaphysics, particularly the metaphysics of the sign in linguistics and philosophy.¹⁸ "Nihilism appears," Nietzsche explains, "because one has come to mistrust any 'meaning' One interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered *the* interpretation, it now seems as if there were no meaning at all" (#55, p. 35): de Man's insistence on unreadability results, as we have seen, from his vain adherence to a saussurian metaphysics that has effectively collapsed. But this is no mere failure of nerve on de Man's part: he actively affirms unreadability. In this vein, Nietzsche distinguishes two forms of nihilism, one active and one passive: de Man obviously represents the former.¹⁹ Indeed, he most closely resembles a type Nietzsche calls the "aesthetic priest," the supreme example of someone "who would rather will nothingness than will nothing at all."²⁰

We can confirm this characterization of de Man's

¹⁸Whether Derrida himself is susceptible to the charge of nihilism is a question requiring an essay in its own right; there are undeniably Nietzschean elements in his work, yet he has not taken a stand on this issue.

¹⁹*The Will to Power*, #22:

Nihilism. It is ambiguous:

- A. Nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit: as *active* nihilism.
- B. Nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as *passive* nihilism.

²⁰Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Walter Kaufmann, ed. (1967; New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 97, 163; translation modified.

stance by reconsidering the overriding ambition of his work: to resurrect a kind of sequestered formalism. De Man opens *Allegories of Reading* with reference to a "highly respectable moral imperative" that we move " 'beyond formalism' toward the questions that really interest us . . . [and] devote ourselves to the . . . external politics of literature" (p. 3). But his readings work persistently against the thrust of this imperative, so that ultimately it is the tragic gesture renouncing all hope ever to know in peace or do anything that prevails. We are first and foremost responsible as professional critics to the true nature of literature as he proclaims it: the literary text is unreadable, and "therefore puts an insurmountable obstacle in the way of any reading or understanding" (p. 131). If we *accept* this Truth about literature — and the restrictions on "understanding" literary texts that follow — then we have justification for a professional position of "deconstructive" suspension and ivory-tower skepticism, of insensibility and inaction. But if we consider this 'Truth' — like all truths — to be a function of interpretive procedure — what we have indentified as an exclusionary, saussurian, allegorizing procedure — we may arrive at a very different assessment of this apparently resigned stance: it would then appear to be a secretly active enforcement of complacency only masquerading as a tragic resignation forced upon us by the rhetoric of literature.²¹

²¹The secrecy of this active enforcement of complacency in *Allegories of Reading* has more recently given way to a frank acknowledgement on de Man's part of the 'terrorism' entailed in the "theoretical ruthlessness" he advocates. It remains, of course, an exclusively professional or 'academic' — that is, a strictly a-political — form of terrorism. See "The Return to Philology," *Times Literary Supplement*, December 10, 1982, pp. 1355-56.

To complete a genealogy of de Man's reading-procedure, we would want to specify what interests it serves. Under Reagan, the specter of an esoteric literary movement serving politically to sanitize the institutions of higher learning appears perhaps not as ludicrous as it should.²² But the interests a given mode of interpretation may serve need not be located outside its sphere of application, e.g., the academy: there is good reason to believe that power in contemporary society does not flow only from the center in that way, but rather is constituted locally in self-regulating mechanisms.²³ On this view, the university community effectively polices itself with no need for conspiratorial direction from above, promoting mainly 'safe' scholars who have succeeded in (by) 'rising above' the 'outside' world of political realities. In such an institutional context, followers of de Man would be easy to recognize as ambitious career professionals attracted by a sophisticated avant-garde movement whose strict a-politicism would nevertheless exempt them from all trans-academic political engagement and responsibility. Ultimately, a genealogy of North American deconstructive criticism is complete only when we locate the members of this interpretive community and determine what use they make, in a variety of specific journals and institutional settings, of a procedure like de Man's allegorization of unreadability. □

²²Edward Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community," *Critical Inquiry*, 9:1 (September 1982), pp. 1-26.

²³Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan, trans. (London, 1977).

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Fritiof Nilsson Piraten

BIG GAME

Translated by Robert E. Bjork

It was the night between Friday and Saturday in the bar of a yacht club in Cowes during summer regatta week, 1923. We had known each other less than two hours, and we still didn't know each other by name. The staff called him "My Lord" and "Your Lordship."

"I say old chap," he said suddenly, "it would be a pity to part after so many pleasant days together. You must come home with me over the weekend! By the bye: did you make out that Lady Hottington has bowed legs?"

And without waiting for my response he got up and with a yawn turned his back to the waiter who stood there with the check. It wasn't meager, but I paid as if it were the most natural thing in the world, considering it unbecoming to remind a lord of his share in a bill.

His yacht lay at anchor, and the motor boat set us down on dry land where a car was waiting. The sun was already high when we came to Wateregg Hall, the lord's residence in that part of England.

Lord Wateregg's hospitality was magnificent, his table richly laid, and the flow of beverages constant. The visit turned into a couple of raucous days with about fifty guests. I wondered how they'd have time to rest sufficiently for the next weekend. No conventions restricted the pleasantry. On Sunday everyone awoke in his own clothes but no one in his own room. The church lay in the northwest corner of the park, and drowsy people tried to get a few extra winks during the service. I had a rollicking time you can only have among people you don't risk seeing again on this side of the river Jordan. But with all the tips, it got to be more expensive than living in a hotel. Many servants had to be remunerated: the head waiter, the resident pharmacist, cooks, footmen, a half dozen bellboys, chauffeurs; and three gardeners whose only duty seemed to consist of clipping loose aristocrats from hawthorn hedges. In addition I happened to lose a bet.

A tall yew tree grew on the terrace in front of the library. After Sunday lunch Lord Wateregg contended that I couldn't throw a golf ball over the tree; he was prepared to stake a ten pound note on his opinion. I would be allowed three practice throws and have ten minutes to show what I could

do. The tree was very tall, but I was certain I could manage the toss and accepted the challenge, only to find that I had fallen for a very simple ruse: no one had a golf ball; there wasn't a golf ball for several miles around. Everyone guffawed and clapped his hands and was enormously pleased with the excellent entertainment I had provided. I paid the ten pounds, on the surface jovially undisturbed, but with a pang in my heart. I enjoy amusing my fellow men, but I would rather be paid than pay for doing it. Besides I could scarcely afford the entrance fee.

Fourteen days later I had returned to everyday life as a lawyer in Tranås.

On October eighth I received a telegram sent from Esbjerg by Lord Wateregg, who announced that he was on his way to hunt moose. He was coming alone, without servants. Unfortunately — but luckily, I thought — his valet became sick on the journey and was placed in a hospital in Harwich.

Moose was in season from the tenth through the thirteenth of October, and for three thousand crowns a year a few of us leased the hunting area of Gösting's Common, seven thousand acres of good moose territory. We usually shot five or six bull moose every year.

I remembered perfectly well that I had invited Lord Wateregg to go on a moose hunt in the firm belief that he would forget about the whole thing. And *he* surely would have forgotten it. But I had overlooked his resident astrologer who, in a meticulously kept notebook, had predicted the future for him: dinners, hunts, races, card parties, trips, a love tryst — in a word, everything. Well, there were moose as said, and there was no danger with the hunt as such. But I remembered something else, something that made me break into a cold sweat: in youthful vainglory I had given Lord Wateregg to understand clearly that my economic and social position in Sweden, that my life-style in general, didn't appreciably differ from his in England. To receive him in my simple four room apartment would be too big an embarrassment. I recalled too late what had happened to Baron Worms in the 1880's. Had I remembered in time, all this would have been spared both me and the

reader.

Baron Alexis Worms of Nykloster in Småland was an aide to Oscar II, and in that capacity he once accompanied his master to Berlin. During a "Nachspiel" at the Royal Palace, he met Bismarck and in the whirl of the party invited him to a wild boar hunt at Nykloster. The Iron Chancellor thanked him and said he would think it over. The Baron laughed heartily to himself, taking it for granted Bismarck had other things to think over. That he did, but as it turned out, he could think over many things. The next fall, Baron Worms received the disturbing message that Bismarck was to be expected for the hunt. Fortunately the telegram came in plenty of time. The Baron had nearly a month to make a couple of hundred tame pigs wild, but still didn't manage to get them completely believable. The big day came; the cortege with Bismarck and his train drove up to Nykloster in a cloud of dust. Everything was ready. The hunting horns were newly polished, and a number of tenant farmers were dressed in red coats like drivers. The hounds were released, the horns blared. The pigs went wild. You might say they went all too wild, because in seeking sanctuary with the hunters, they ran them down with a squealing that was heard in several parishes. Bismarck didn't even wait for dinner; he had his things packed and left immediately, damned angry. Baron Worms did not get the Black Eagle.

He had had a month to make pigs wild. I had less than twenty-four hours to disguise my circumstances and come up with, at the very least, a manor, a number of cars, a staff of servants, and an air of great wealth and property. At first I despaired sitting there with Lord Wateregg's letter in hand. But then I poured myself a strong whiskey, lit a cigar, and began to speculate. Nothing stimulates inventiveness like a desperate situation and a lack of time. And finally I found a way out. I called "Tranås Hydro-therapy Resort," commonly called "The Kneipp"* or "The Bath Hotel," and reserved a double room for Lord Wateregg and a single for myself. I reasoned thus: with its three story white facade facing the square, the Bath Hotel ought to be an acceptable country house on a manor hemmed in by a growing industrial town; the smaller buildings on the three other sides of the square were to represent tenant housing with shops where the tenants were cheated by the coupon system; the park along the river fit well into the

scheme; the town's main street with shops, three banks and at least one department store became a credible, semi-private street for my use; I was chairman of the police commission and the police saluted me on the street — that was an asset. If I kept the lord moderately muddled during his visit, the bluff had certain prospects of succeeding. I knew that he knew only one Swedish word; that was *skål*. Nor at that time was the English vocabulary at the Kneipp anything to worry about.

Followed by a doorman from the Kneipp, I met Lord Wateregg at the train, and scarcely had we greeted each other before he looked sharply at the doorman.

"What's that on your man's cap?" he asked.

It said, of course, "Tranås Hydro-therapy Resort" on the gold braid.

"Oh, that," I said, faltering before the cursed question and with a foretaste of coming difficulties. "That's our family name. It's the custom with us — an old-fashioned livery practice. The name on the cap instead of the weapon on the pommels, you see."

"Strange indeed!"

He spelled out the barbaric words on the braid.

"How do you pronounce it?" he wondered.

"Travattanks!" I answered nimbly. I knew that for him the surest criterion for a name's antiquity was that it be spelled Nebuchadnezzar and pronounced Saint Paul.

"Travattanks, Travattanks," he repeated to himself and seemed fully satisfied.

The doorman stayed at the station to arrange for the baggage, and I drove to the Bath Hotel with my guest. I heaved a sigh of relief after the first round. But he kept his eyes open and was truly inquisitive. His gaze went directly to the wall over the hotel entrance. Again, the family name! With great letters on the plaster facade. I started to sweat.

"Do you have your name on the buildings too?" asked the lord surprised.

"Yes, as you see. Rather curious, isn't it?" I parried. "But it's a long story and it would only exhaust you to hear it now after the trip. I see you're much too tired as it is. Another time!"

But he persisted in knowing how it had come about and said he wasn't at all tired. I gained time by fumbling with a cigar, lighting it, puffing smoke, and coughing a while. Then I went to it.

"I had a forefather in the sixteenth century, who took part in Stockholm's Bloodbath, by the way, by getting his head cut off in it. Throat cutting at that time, of course, was reckoned among natural causes of death among the aristocracy. It was he who established the custom, and oddly enough he

*After Sebastian Kneipp (d. 1897), a German priest, who developed various forms of hydrotherapy for treatment of disease.

did it before the Bloodbath; it seems doubtful, of course, that a person with his head intact can come up with such an idea. The old man had so much property spread all throughout the land that he had his name painted outside the palaces so as to recognize them more easily when he travelled about in the dark, expansive forests of the period. After him, it became a tradition among the relatives. It's more eccentric than decorative, but we've chosen not to give up an ancient practice."

"No, of course not," he said. "Most interesting."

It was, however, no long story, and he very much wanted to hear more about the old gentleman from the sixteenth century. As a diversion I started to talk about my cars instead. The taxi station was there outside the hotel. Three empty cars stood in a row and, fortunately for me, they didn't have meters.

"I'm in the habit of having a couple of my cars manned out here in front. For convenience's sake. So if you want to go out for a ride some time, just hop in the first one that comes along. But there's one thing you must be aware of: we have the strange practice here of tipping the driver for every single ride. Exactly, the drivers. We don't give the other servants tips until we leave, just as in your country. After you've taken a spin, you hand the driver a little money. One bill usually does it. If they don't think it's enough, they're so cheeky they insist on more. Then you have to give them another bill."

He thanked me and said it was always good to know such things from the beginning.

A couple of drivers were standing and talking with each other by the first car. The lord looked at them and remarked, "Your drivers don't have your name on their caps!"

For the third time, the family name. In my mind I cursed my own invention. But with the courage of despair I replied, "No, and they don't need to either. I recognize them anyway. It so happens" — here I lowered my voice to a whisper — "they're my natural sons."

"I see," he said and whistled a knowing whistle.

"And somehow or other, you do have to take care of them."

"One should absolutely not leave them adrift," agreed the lord with moral conviction. "Always was and always will be: one's income takes care of itself; all one has to do is keep expenditures down. I understand you. It's quite odd anyway, if I may say so. But — do you dare ride with them yourself?"

"Of course. As much as I want to. They have no right of inheritance, you see."

"Ah! Yes, naturally. I didn't think about that."

At last I got Lord Wateregg past the doors and was determined, as far as possible, to anticipate

embarrassing questions.

"You know the difficulty guests often have finding their rooms," I said. "That's why I've had the guestrooms numbered. Now, when people wake up, they can quietly and discreetly make their way to their own rooms and avoid having to ring and ask where they live."

He found that very practical and said he would introduce the same system on his own estates.

"The only disagreeable thing is that it makes it seem like a hotel," I added.

"My homes are hotels," he said gloomily.

I explained to him that high costs had forced me to refrain from the bath-in-every-room system. Instead I had a central bath where everyone could go in a bathrobe when he pleased. I showed him the baths: sauna and Roman bath, swimming pool, and sixteen booths with bathtubs. He was clearly impressed and immediately took the opportunity to wash away the dust of the journey.

When we met again after an hour, he wondered if it still wasn't more expensive with three bath attendants than with as many bathrooms as you please.

"It would seem so," I answered. "But strictly between us: they are three tenants who happened to be behind in their rent ten years ago. I agreed with them then that they could be bath attendants for their clothes and food until they could pay me. It's likely to take a while, because I don't give them a penny in cash. As to their clothing account, a towel a lifetime doesn't add up to much."

Lord Wateregg couldn't keep from laughing. I saw that my economic cunning appealed to him in the highest degree.

"You have quite a few guests," he pointed out when we came into the dining hall for lunch.

"Just eighty at present," I said modestly. "I asked the head waiter this morning. And as usual, you recognize fewer than five percent of your guests. But you should see it during the holidays, especially Christmas and Easter. Then the house is full."

"Don't even mention it!" he sighed. "I'm all too familiar with the confounded holidays."

In the so-called diet nook of the community smorgasbord stood a great silver dish of oatmeal. Lord Wateregg eyed the dish mistrustfully and asked what it was. "Taste it," I said. And I took a large portion of porridge on a plate for myself, peppered and salted it generously, and then drenched it with vinegar. He followed my example. He took another helping and said he'd never tasted such good stewed calf brain. I hinted parenthetically that only the lower class in Sweden took less than four drinks at the smorgasbord. He said that he'd

be damned if he cared which class he was assigned to, but that, as far as akvavit was concerned, he'd abide by the custom of the land. It was a promising beginning.

There was bony roast veal for dinner, and I suspected that my guest wouldn't go into raptures over that horrible Swedish concoction. Usually something *à la carte* could be hastily arranged, but on that day it was impossible for some reason. I avoided the roast veal by having a bowl of steaming rum toddy served as soup. The lord ate seven bowls and slept immediately. Waving a red handkerchief as a fire-danger flag, I led the procession when his lordship was carried with due honor to his room. And there was evening, the first day.

The hunt began the next day. It was the tenth and a Wednesday. Lord Wateregg had the best positions, but he didn't get to fire a shot; on the whole the day's three battues provided no quarry. The beaters swore there were two moose in the first drive but that they broke away. The lord, however, was in the best humor; he enjoyed life in the forest and field, and keenly appreciated our simple lunch sacks. "Englishmen are a tea drinking breed," he said, "but if they knew how real coffee tastes, they'd give up that dishwater." There was spiked coffee in the thermos bottles.

On Friday, the lord shot a nine-tined moose and a horse. The accident meant nothing, because he had insurance with Lloyd's which covered both domestic cattle and gamekeepers. It was the first horse on his lifelong trophy list, however, and he seriously considered a suggestion to have the head mounted.

He aroused attention and esteem wherever he went. The nobly hooked, prematurely discolored nose; the bridge of the nose constructed as if for holding a monocle; the ostensibly nonchalant and, at the same time, correct posture; the untroubled self-possession in all situations; a heartiness in drinking; the habit of thoughtlessly allowing others to pay for him — everything bore witness to noble ancestry and an exalted social position. Like the late Queen Victoria, he had the habit of sitting down without turning his head to make sure he had a chair behind him. There was always a chair where the Queen sat down; there usually was one where he did. Usually but not always. He once sat down on the dining room floor with a terrible crash, pulling table cloth and a number of hors d'oeuvre plates with him. Lord Wateregg might lose his balance, but not his monocle and lofty calm. He rose, not unlike a stand-up dinner, and continued the meal as if nothing had happened. It was a sight to see him wholly undisturbed by a lobster's claw

on one shoulder and the Italian salad strewn here and there on his tweed suit.

He had only me, of course, to associate with, and along with all the hunting, eating, and drinking I also had to be at my law office. Then I usually sent him on an outing in a car. It wasn't long before the town's taxi drivers competed for his favor. One day, however, I couldn't keep him from following me to the office. He read the sign on the door and observed that the name greatly resembled mine.

"It is mine," I said truthfully, "and this is a law office. My younger brother's office. We have an old custom of bringing up a younger son as a lawyer and having him administer the family property. He must be provided for, after all."

"Isn't it risky to let him have control of the money?" he wondered. "At home in England we make them priests and in that way don't risk anything."

I think the lord came to think about his immortal soul for a moment, for he added musingly, "the devil if I know which is best."

Lord Wateregg flattered my hospitality by staying on a week after the hunt (which came to an end on Saturday, the thirteenth). It was at Sunday breakfast that he saw Miss Rosenfjoll for the first time. She made her entrance into the dining room in the company of a nurse.

She was a noble spinster with perennially red cheeks, ample bust, and corseted waist: middle-aged, marriage crazy, and an imaginary invalid (migraine). It was known she had a small income as a canoness and a similar pension from the House of Nobles. Otherwise she got along by petty, dubious means, wandering round boarding-houses and cheap health resorts and descending upon relatives. She was a regular customer at the Kneipp.

It was evidently one of her interesting days. We saw the nurse serve her medicine, a tablespoonful from a large brown bottle, and another spoonful from a clear bottle, just as big. From across the hall, I greeted Miss Rosenfjoll, who responded with a vapid smile.

"Who is that?" the lord asked.

"Sssh!" I whispered. "That's my wealthy old aunt. Aunt Sophie."

"Is she sick?"

"Unfortunately not," I said. "A little pickled, more likely."

Lord Wateregg seemed a bit shocked. "So early in the day!"

"Not a minute too early for Aunt Sophie. You see the bottle on her table? There's whiskey in the dark one and gin in the other. It attracts less attention when it's called medicine and taken with

a spoon. I don't set limits on her thirst. On the contrary. I'm the one who pays for the nurse, and she takes her instructions from me. So don't worry about the old girl not getting her regular doses. But is she strong! Sometimes I get so scared she'll outlive me that I exist on diet food and skim milk for several days at a time."

"I see," said the lord with a grin. "Your aunt's rich, I take it."

"Well, it depends. There are those who even think she's extremely rich. I'd say myself that she can be considered well-to-do. Twelve million crowns. Not less anyway."

"What's that in pounds?"

"Seven hundred thousand. Or thereabouts."

"Seven hundred thousand," he repeated. "No fortune, I admit, but still a pretty penny when one gets it in hand all at one go. And if I may say so, not bad for enhancing one's position. Travattanks forever!"

He raised his akvavit glass and we drank. He didn't drop the subject, however. He asked immediately if we had a high inheritance tax in Sweden.

"Appalling!" I explained. "I figure I'll have to shell out two million when Aunt Sophie dies. When she's 'called home' — as she soon will be. And as it's so delicately termed in Christian parlance."

"That's a sixth," he said. "Then we have it worse in our country."

"As a good patriot, you wouldn't say anything about taxes — if only they went for reasonable projects like maintenance of historical manors and support for thoroughbred horse breeding. But where does the money go? To the poor —"

"Exactly!" the lord ardently interjected. "To the poor, who don't have any entertainment responsibilities or even any expenses, to all intents and purposes. It's the same in our country."

"If a divided burden is half the burden, then poverty must be easy to bear; ninety percent of all humanity is poor. Now, they have no idea what to do with all the money they get from the community except, it seems, put it in the bank. And since they're not used to business and are mistrustful by nature, they take their money out a couple times a year, just to make certain it's still there, and immediately put it back in again. It causes the banks so much trouble and expense that they've actually had to decrease interest on low deposits. Then we have those colossal government expenditures in unemployment compensation. Just think of that. Unemployment subsidy! When have I seen any subsidy? Or you?"

He agreed wholeheartedly but in the same breath

began to talk about his many burdensome responsibilities, which included being honorary chairman of a gambling club in London. I got a little sidetracked by one of Oscar Wilde's remarks which just ran through my head: "Work is a heavy burden for the drinking classes." I didn't quote it, however.

Miss Rosenfjoll and the nurse left the dining room, but we remained a while longer and discussed social issues. In the end, Lord Wateregg asked to shake my hand. He admired my courage, he said. It was so seldom nowadays that anyone dared openly express what all reasonable and conservative citizens thought and felt in their heart of hearts.

Thereafter we saw Miss Rosenfjoll quite often in the dining room and in the salons. Lord Wateregg thought she looked weak and wondered if she wasn't sick after all.

"It's possible she does have a bad headache occasionally, but it's nothing serious, no real migraine. All the doctors say so. And when you know about the medicine she takes, then — well, you understand."

On another occasion he asked how long her visit lasted. "Two and a half years," escaped my lips.

I noticed I was becoming more and more reckless in my statements and decided to be more careful. Now what was said was said. The lord was astounded and dropped his monocle. I was compelled to find an explanation quickly.

"It's an amusing story, Aunt Sophie's long visit. About two and a half years ago, she needed to borrow ten thousand crowns from me temporarily — seven hundred pounds," I threw in at random. "Jokingly, I then told her: 'Now I'll hold you here as ransom, Aunt Sophie, until I get my money back.' She laughed and answered just as jokingly that she would take me at my word. And since then, I've had the old crone on my back! She doesn't pay back the ten thousand crowns and doesn't leave. Now and then we joke about it, but you see well enough that I have to play along with her. I don't dare breathe a serious word either about the money or her leaving. It all goes to show what you knew in advance: it's only the well-to-do who shamelessly line their pockets at the expense of others."

"Seven hundred pounds," he mumbled to himself.

After lunch on Wednesday, we sat smoking and drinking on the large veranda facing the park. Beyond the branches and yellowing leaves we could see the glass roof of the exercise hall. The lord felt compassion for Miss Rosenfjoll and still wasn't convinced that her migraine was totally imaginary. He asked if I thought she would appreciate a bouquet of flowers even though he hadn't been introduced to her. (That I had avoided, putting the blame on

their inability to communicate with one another.)

"Flowers are a favorite of hers," I assured him. "And a bouquet from you would tickle the old voluptuary."

He made a gesture towards the glass roof down in the park and said he'd walk over to the greenhouse himself and choose flowers.

But the lord had to be kept away from the exercise hall at all costs. Even an English lord must draw the line somewhere, and it could arouse a dangerous wonder in him if he saw that I allowed about fifty half-naked guests to be treated with health- and physiotherapy.

"Under no — I mean, by all means!" I stammered. "Most assuredly. But whatever you do, don't go near the greenhouse. It's best I tell you, and I count on you not to carry it any further. Just between us: the assistant gardener and a boy died of cholera the day before yesterday, so the atmosphere in the greenhouse is extremely unhealthy for the time being. Naturally I keep the thing strictly secret, otherwise it would be an expensive setback for flower and vegetable sales. But — it would be another thing, of course, if you could lure Aunt Sophie there with you. You could do me a real service —"

"For God's sake!" the lord interrupted aroused. "You surely don't want to make me an accessory to murder!"

"No hard words. He who helps nature helps himself," I said philosophically.

"Well, I'm bloody well not the one who'll be her heir!" he retorted roughly.

He was about to send an order to a flower shop when, to dampen his irritation, I made a suggestion which saved him expense and which he therefore accepted with pleasure.

"Go into the large salon; there are a lot of azaleas in pots there. Pick as many as you wish and make a beautiful bouquet for Aunt Sophie. That way, it'll be something very personal."

He went directly to the salon where he was surprised in the midst of his flower picking by the Kneipp's house mother. She let loose a shriek and raised her hands in horror towards the sky; she pointed at his bouquet of white azaleas and shook her head energetically. He threw the white azaleas on the floor and started to pick red ones instead. I don't know how or when the flowers were given to Miss Rosenfjoll.

Often during the next few days I didn't see the lord for hours on end. Sometimes he was indisposed

and had to retire to his rooms. More often than not I was glad to be rid of him, for the truth is that I had begun to tire of my existence as an eminent aristocrat and great landowner.

He planned to leave on Monday, October 22, and on the Saturday before he asked my advice about gratuities. A hasty computation told me that five hundred crowns would be more than sufficient for both his and my board and lodging. But I had the ignominious bet at Wateregg Hall clearly in mind, so I advised him to give the head waiter fifty pounds to divide among the staff.

"Is that really enough?" he wondered. "For the whole staff?"

"It's actually on the low side," I said. "But you must bear in mind that I always have a few poor friends and relatives here whom I have to pay tips for myself. And servants do make their comparisons, you know."

He understood and approved of my view of the matter.

He departed the night between Sunday and Monday without saying good-bye, left me a letter of several hasty lines and a check made out to me for seven hundred pounds. A telegram had unexpectedly called him away; he apologized for his precipitate departure. The seven hundred pounds were left for Lady Rosenfjoll's account; without her knowledge, he took the liberty of paying my little claim on her. Besides, the payment was part of a little prank he planned to play on me; he knew I was the first one to appreciate a good joke and hoped it wouldn't cause any bitterness between us in the future. For otherwise he would be "very sorry indeed. Yours truly," etc. I was mystified. That he hadn't been sober when he wrote out the check — that I took for granted. And there was a danger he would change his mind. So as soon as the bank opened, I hurried over and got my hands on the money. On the way back, I met the porter from the Kneipp, who said that Miss Rosenfjoll had disappeared from the hotel and Tranås the same time as the lord. And one beautiful day, I read in the *Daily Mail* of the marriage in London between James Edward Ainslie, seventh Earl of Wateregg, and Lady Rosenfjoll of Sweden.

The years have passed. Occasionally I think about Lord Wateregg computing how much a six hundred crown pension from the House of Nobles is in pounds, shillings, and pence. I never hear from him. □

Zoe Filipkowski

LEADING THE MARE

Cold light spreads out around the barn, until it too, a gray structure fragilely held by hillside, disappears, leaving gray against sky, an abrupt hollow.

The mind rests on light, though finds its urgency untrammelled by mounds of chips and matted grass stretching out, everywhere encircling, lifting scent of burnt edges and cedared boxes, offering their weight for the walk.

Only the hand, balancing rope, wet and stiff, understands the tension of leading, waiting to feel resistance, grasp and go forward into space, through and into circle.

J.P. Telotte

VISCONTI'S OSSESSIONE AND THE OPEN WORLD OF NEOREALISM

Modern critical opinion holds that Italian neo-realist films, especially the earliest ones, are essentially naturalistic in tenor, that they developed from the realistic narrative and camera style of Jean Renoir in the 1930's and fused this approach to the deterministic views of earlier Italian literature, particularly as found in the work of Giovanni Verga.¹ This perspective accounts for what many see as neorealism's greatest contribution to film technique, its freeing of the camera from the studio's confines to venture out in the streets among the people; and at the same time, it helps to explain what many see as a bleak atmosphere infusing these films, especially that pervasive sense of an ominous and inevitable tragic end awaiting the characters depicted. According to Roy Armes, this naturalistic grounding logically led to the socialist realism of later Italian films, since socialism was thought to "offer a way out" of this deterministic bind.² In fact, though, few of those involved in the neorealist movement made that transition into a political, much less a Marxist cinema, certainly not Rossellini, probably the key figure in the movement, nor Fellini or Antonioni, easily the two most important disciples of the first neorealist filmmakers. The reason for this divergence from expectations may be that the neorealist vision of reality was never quite as restrictive or hermetic as received wisdom would have it.

The amalgam of cinematic realism and literary naturalism involves a paradox which has yet to be fully explored, but one which is important to a proper understanding of neorealism. Armes and Ted Perry both stress the determining natural world which neorealist characters seem to inhabit, a world which apparently calls for remediation, but which

also precipitously denies the viability of any action.³ Most viewers, consequently, see in these films a closed-off world, demanding change yet ready to frustrate any attempts at it. The realist aesthetic emerging from Renoir's films, however, implied an altogether different vision. As André Bazin, dean of realist critics, notes, the consequences of the focus-in-depth, long-take technique were, on the one hand, to reintroduce "ambiguity into the structure of the image" through the very wealth of detail upon which the viewer could focus, and on the other, to create a sense of continuity between that photographed world and external reality, since both clearly drew on the same substance.⁴ The neo-realist visual aesthetic, then, contributed to a subtle conflict with the almost naturalistic ideology which may have sparked the stories. Try as one might to impart a deterministic shape to the narrative, the openness resulting from the film's visual style will suggest a different story, one of consistent ambiguities and multiple possibilities. If no ideological solutions seemed immediately forthcoming in films like *Shoeshine* or *Bicycle Thief*, it was less because that perceived world permitted no remedies, than because few clear and remediable causes could be traced out, no blame could be easily placed — at least not as easily as the socialists would have liked. Life simply showed itself naturally to involve contradictions and frequently the frustrations of human desires.

³In his essay "The Road to Neorealism" (*Film Comment*, 14 [Nov.-Dec. 1978], p. 13) Perry points out that "Neorealism did not suddenly appear *sui generis*. There was already a rich tradition of naturalism, developed around the beginning of World War I in the Neapolitan cinema." It was this tradition, he suggests, which "made possible the coming of Neorealism."

⁴*What is Cinema?*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967), I, p. 36. While Bazin admits that the cinema "cannot make reality entirely its own because reality must inevitably elude it at some point," he feels that a primary development of the film aesthetic was its ability to "narrow the holes of the net," to make film reality more closely approximate its natural subject matter. Renoir was especially influential in this respect, he suggests, because he "restored to cinematographic illusion a fundamental quality of reality — its continuity" (*What is Cinema?*, II, pp. 28-29).

¹Detailed discussion of the literary and cinematic influences which came together in the neorealist movement can be found in Roy Armes' *Patterns of Realism* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1971), Ted Perry's "Roots of Neorealism," *Film Criticism*, 3 (Winter 1979), pp. 3-7, and Ben Lawton's "Italian Neorealism: A Mirror Construction of Reality," *Film Criticism*, 3 (Winter 1979), pp. 8-23.

²*Patterns of Realism*, p. 18.

If every neorealist film told a tale of struggle, then, it was not simply because this was the prevailing condition of life in war-torn Italy, that one indeed had to struggle to survive. Rather, it was the various impulses behind neorealist narrative which contributed to that tension between an ambiguous, open-ended, truly modern vision and that deterministic, closed-off interpretation of the human condition which had its roots in an earlier era. Luchino Visconti perhaps best demonstrates this inherent conflict, for he made what is usually termed the first neorealist film, *Ossessione*, a work which seems to call forth that naturalistic interpretation. Also, he studied under Renoir, whom he considered his "master," and later professed a sympathy for communism.⁵ However, even in this first film, undertaken during those early stirrings of neorealist thinking, we see that inherent tension working itself out, revealing the complexities which characterized subsequent neorealist narratives.

Ossessione, unavailable in the United States for many years, is generally known less at first hand than through citations of its more sensationalistic plot elements.⁶ And while it is often employed as a touchstone by those wishing to emphasize the more sordid elements of neorealist films, it has seldom been studied in detail. A close examination reveals that *Ossessione* is not, as both its title and reputation might imply, simply an attempt to dramatize the blind forces which seem to control man's life. While the film clearly owes a debt to the naturalistic tradition, its major impact derives from a more complex vision than determinism allows for. In this film Visconti confronts the viewers with man's perspective on and reaction to the common impulses and limitations which often seem to rule his life and determine his destiny, much as he later would in films like *The Damned* and *Death in Venice*. Gino, *Ossessione's* protagonist, is not simply "destroyed" by his actions as either the film's literary source, James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, or the later film versions would have it. Rather than underscore an impending doom, Visconti depicts an open-ended situation, as he brings Gino face to face with his

⁵For a discussion of the various formative influences on Visconti, see Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's *Luchino Visconti* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1968), and Monica Stirling's *A Screen of Time: A Study of Luchino Visconti* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979).

⁶Arthur Knight in *The Liveliest Art* (New York: New American Library, 1957), p. 223, provides a brief discussion of the copyright problems which for many years blocked *Ossessione's* distribution in this country.

personal and social predicament, perhaps ultimately to succumb — as many men do — or perhaps to learn from this encounter and thus, at least for a moment, transcend his human limitations.

As in such later and more famous neorealist films like *Open City*, *Paisan*, and *Bicycle Thief*, *Ossessione* presents not a completely closed off future; one man reaches the end of a line of action, but precisely what is to follow remains ambiguous. A tying together of the loose ends, of course, might well have created a closer link to the deterministic literary tradition. In this case, though, a potential, even if only that of self-knowledge, remains. In fact, this minimal yet tangible sense of potential, lodged in a narrative openness, may be the source of those political resonances — especially Marxist — which



many critics saw as the most important element of neorealism. The open structures of these films imply a basic human capacity for growth and change, even as they acknowledge a common human situation — man's periodic and often disastrous confrontations with limitation. Despite such inevitable conflicts, these films assert, life with its hope of change will persist.

Seen in this light, *Ossessione* is more than a story of "the destructive power of sexual passion."⁷ While the film focuses on human compulsions, particularly the drifter Gino's desire for the former prostitute Giovanna, it plays this force off against an innate ability to impel one's own motions, to channel man's natural longing for freedom and to direct his life accordingly. What Visconti creates in

⁷Luchino Visconti, p. 19.

Gino is a realistically complex image: an image of our natural and often wayward drives confronted by a consciousness and desire for understanding that will not be stilled. In this commingling of obsession and reflection, of determinism and free agency — of the symbolic character and indeterminate human image — *Osessione* points up the full complexity of neorealist filmmaking.

This reflective element derives in part from the Cain novel which Visconti drew upon — illegally — for the broad outline of his film. In its mix of determinism and moralizing, that sensationalistic novel may seem far removed from neorealism, more in the mainstream of the naturalistic tradition of American fiction. *The Postman Always Rings Twice* underscores the animalistic relationship of its



two lovers, Frank Chambers and Cora Papadakis. Soon after they meet, Frank notes that he can “smell her,” that Cora’s odor lingers in his nostrils, reminding him of his desire for her; and in their first embrace he literally devours her, biting her lips “so deep I could feel the blood spurt into my mouth.”⁸ Such sensory details, though, filter through Frank’s consciousness, as he recalls the events leading up to his current predicament. The resulting combination of sensuality and introspection sets a pattern for the rest of the novel — a story by turns revelling in the delights of an illicit love affair and sorrowing at its consequences. Before his execution for murder, Frank recognizes in these events a kind of poetic justice and draws a moral for the readers.

⁸James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 11, 9.

This resolution, however, throws into stark relief the inconsistent if not dishonest attitude underlying both the novel and the more faithful 1946 American film version. In both cases the narrative engages our attention with its attractive images and events, only to make our interest in them ultimately seem voyeuristic and wrong-headed. The confession with which both end effectively undercuts their narrative power and ill serves its apparent purpose — to reassert a moral order in the face of a dangerous release of violent human emotions. We are left with a specious and unconvincing accession to standard morality, even if it is a regression mainly dictated by the mores of the period or, in the film’s case, the MPAA code requirements.

In making his film Visconti labored under no such



restrictions, despite the fact that in wartime Italy the central government had the final say on every project, and the Catholic Church served as an unofficial censor, watching over the country’s morals.⁹ With his adaptation, Visconti fashioned what might seem an even more unsettling view of human mores, for he discarded the framing first-person narration which, while allowing for a sense of involvement in the lurid actions depicted, also provided the intellectual distance necessary for the novel’s moralizing and rationalizing element. *Osessione*’s protagonist neither relates his story, as *Postman*’s

⁹While Visconti managed to avoid outright censorship of his film, he did meet with considerable resistance after its release. An indication of the reaction it stirred is found in Stirling’s account of the film’s showing in Salsomaggiore, where a bishop was requested to bless the local cinema after it had been “sullied” by the playing of *Osessione* (*A Screen of Time*, p. 58).

does, nor attempts to explain or justify his actions. One result of eliminating this framing and narrating device is that we are distanced from the protagonist's point of view, that which dominates the other versions of this story, and thus we are deprived of this conventional kind of "psychological" insight. Visconti thereby achieved a more natural view of character and action — hallmarks of later neorealist style — although he also conjured up, despite our distance, a more disturbing vision, as the film refuses us the security of a temporal remove and reflection or the false comfort of an externally imposed moral opinion.

Osessione's immanent world is neither amoral nor purely deterministic, however; it simply operates according to its own, sometimes paradoxical nature. We see a world characterized by movement and life. Roads and motion along them provide the frame for this narrative and its key images. Of course, the impulse for movement and freedom carries its own limitations, consistent with the complementary human desire for order and stability. A long opening shot unites these themes of motion and stability into a kind of thesis statement for the ensuing narrative. The film begins with a subjective tracking shot through the windshield of a truck as it hurtles down a highway. Implicitly, *we* are in motion during this shot; however, since the subjective shot focuses only on the road surface in front of the truck, we cannot see what lies ahead. The truck cab's framework also intrudes into the picture, emphasizing our limited perspective, the inability to see beyond the confines of our immediate environment or, narratively, to see beyond the present moment as we are carried along by the story. The opening thus suggests both impelling energy and human restriction, movement and the inevitable limitations which accompany it. The narrative investigates the constant interaction between a desire for motion, for unhindered pursuit of the multiple attractive images around us, and the barriers which always seem to impede free and easy movement.

From this truck Gino is figuratively born into the world, and his character demonstrates the same sort of conflict it models. When the truck stops at Bragana's tavern, Gino is discovered in back and thrown off by the driver who permits no "free rides." The impulse for motion thus meets its first obstacle — a restriction against unsanctioned movement. Deprived of his mechanical propulsion, Gino walks to the tavern, the only human structure around; and as he does, the camera tracks away from him and booms up over the truck to frame

Gino against the building's facade. The film's initial pattern thereby doubles itself; the camera at first moves away, but stops for another view of Gino, while he moves out under his own power, but only to enter the building in the background, the sole image of stasis and confinement in the vast, open landscape.

This pattern of camera and character motion informs much of the film, the camera continually following Gino as its central focus, just as he pursues Bragana's wife, Giovanna. Propelling Gino are a few fundamental attractions, sensory appeals which compel his attention and motion. The possibility of food and drink and the sounds of Giovanna's singing lure him into the tavern, and as he follows the aroma of food and sound of her voice, the camera tracks with him, focusing first on his legs, then on a dog he passes. This sequence emphasizes Gino's almost compulsive, need-oriented motion and links it to an animal activity, hinting at his lack of reflection at this point. When Gino reaches the kitchen door, he stops, arrested by the image of Giovanna's legs, dangling from the table on which she sits. Fittingly, the camera too halts to render a composition in depth, framing Gino in the doorway against the view of Giovanna's legs. In this case, the depth of field underscores the physical attraction which will impel their future actions and also cloud their understanding of the direction in which these actions might lead.

The visual fluctuation between shots of Gino and Giovanna and such detailed compositions in depth is mirrored in Gino's subsequent pattern of action. Alternating motions, implying shifting attitudes, mark Gino's early relationship with Giovanna, as he seems by turns completely enmeshed in her world, yet eager to break away and resume his uncommitted life. When Gino enters the kitchen — Giovanna's world — to eat the meal she offers, their sexual attraction is played up by the suggestive eating of the food. When Bragana learns he is penniless and throws him out in a repetition of the first expulsion from the truck, however, Gino goes complacently, moving down the highway which brought him there. Without money or a particular goal, he simply follows the road which stretches into the open background. When Bragana, at his wife's urging, offers him lodging in exchange for work, Gino just as offhandedly reverses his direction. This noncommittal attitude, though, lasts only until Giovanna resumes her syren-like singing, at which point he puts aside his work, walks into the tavern, and bolts the door, as if locking himself in her world. With this action, the camera too loses

its freedom, temporal and spatial ellipses occurring to omit the sexual encounter which follows. By giving free reign to his passion, Visconti suggests, Gino has effectively — and paradoxically — compromised his own freedom.

Adding a further paradoxical note to the relationship between Gino and Giovanna is the fact that both seem nearly obsessed with the notion of freedom. She married Bragana, she says, because "I thought I could save myself with him, but it turned out worse than before." Consequently, Giovanna desires to break free of her husband's possessiveness, although she fails to consider the lesson of her previous attempt at freedom: that freedom is not something waiting outside of oneself to be seized. When in her company, Gino similarly talks about being free, especially of his attraction to the open sea and his desire to take a job as a sailor. After making love, both put their ears to a seashell to listen to the sound of the sea, an action symbolic of the freedom they long for and have begun to associate with their newfound love. As they try to run away for the coast, however, Giovanna recognizes how formidable this freedom may be. She finds walking the open road painfully difficult in her high heels, an image of the material desire she is unable to put aside; and the security afforded by Bragana and his tavern looms more attractively when she is faced with the uncertainties which accompany her new "free" life. Unable to abide these conditions, she turns back, while Gino and the camera remain on the highway, pulled by both her attractive image and the beckoning open road.

When Gino hops a train with no regard for its destination, Visconti demonstrates his protagonist's innate desire for a free life, while also introducing an alternate attitude towards the common human desire for security. He introduces a character with no counterpart in Cain's novel, *Lo Spagnuolo* — the Spaniard — who intercedes to save Gino from being thrown off the train, and thus from repeating the previous two expulsions. While he has little more than Gino, the Spaniard pays for his ticket and dismisses the gesture, noting that "money has legs and must walk." His attitude, in sharp contrast to Giovanna's linking of money with freedom, suggests an alternate attitude towards life.¹⁰ In the

¹⁰Stirling suggests that the Spaniard "offers Gino an alternative to the morass into which passion is driving him" (p. 57), while Nowell-Smith sees him as embodying "a more fluid existence" which stands in contrast to those stifling "forces of the past and of society" (p. 27). The very existence, in fact frequent appearance of this alternative, of course, greatly undercuts the primarily naturalistic interpretation which both offer in their extended treatments of the film.

Spaniard's eyes, life itself must be valued, and money should only aid man in following his inclinations, not become an ultimate goal or a distraction from the dictates of life itself.

It is with Spagnuolo, appropriately, that Gino reaches the coast, the port city of Ancona where the sea, emblem of freedom, seems ever visible on the horizon. In fact, Gino's first action is to go to the waterfront and stare out at the sea. However, he never ships out as he plans, for he is unable to put aside Giovanna's influence; as he admits to the Spaniard, "I only know I want her at any cost, and if I go back I won't be able to resist her." He instead takes a job with a carnival, a position which emphasizes the conflicting impulses in his life, as his task is to pass among the crowds, bearing on his shoulders a large, cumbersome advertisement, which denotes in its use of language the abstract notion of restraint with which he has replaced Giovanna's alluring image. When she and Bragana come to the carnival, they enter from the foreground, outside of his world and away from the single image of freedom, the sea, which dominates the background. Giovanna helps him remove his burdensome sign, that emblematic restraint, but only to take him with her, away from the promise of the sea.

In thus trailing after Giovanna, Gino apparently loses sight of the possible ramifications of this commitment to impulse. With the couple he goes to the Cafe of Friends, a place whose very name ironically comments on both his relationship to these people and his abandonment of the Spaniard with whom he has been living. The cafe suggests a world of complete freedom, one where drinking, dancing, and singing are the natural state of affairs. This freedom is qualified again, however, by the camera's movement. As they enter, the camera moves away, tracking among the drunken patrons who are so crowded together that movement is hard and direction almost impossible. Trapped amid the welter of celebrants, the camera itself seems to be pushed about and to wander aimlessly, suggesting the dangers of such a chaotic world. When it finally picks Gino out of the crowd, he is seated with Giovanna, while Bragana, on stage in the background, engages in a singing contest. Again depth of field comments on their relationship, for the two lovers are framed in the foreground, arguing over their future, while in the background Bragana sings about the tribulations of love. Gino's eyes remain focused on the attractive image before him and oblivious to the barrier to happiness, the husband, behind, so that the focus in depth underscores

Gino's heedlessness of any restriction on the free and easy gratification of his desires.

This motif contrasts with Cain's characterization, for his Frank Chambers is also caught up in his passions, but they lead him to concoct an elaborate scheme for murdering the husband who stands in his way. Only the accidental intercession of a cat thwarts his initial plot, and Frank quickly devises another in which the husband is encouraged to get drunk and drive a deserted and dangerous stretch of highway, there to be hit on the head and pushed into a ravine. These complex schemings, rehearsed for the readers before they are carried out, underscore the controlling rationality at work in the service of passion and ironically comment on our usual rational pretensions.

In *Ossessione*, however, Visconti emphasizes the impulsive rather than reasoned nature of the accident/murder by which Bragana is eliminated. After Gino, Giovanna, and the drunken Bragana leave the cafe, narrative continuity again lapses. We next see the two lovers at a roadside, following an "accident" in which the husband has been killed. Since we neither witness the event nor hear any plotting, we are unsure precisely what has happened, if there was a similar premeditation. Like Gino, we simply find ourselves caught up in a flow of action. In fact, Gino is later shocked to think that Bragana's death might have been part of an elaborate plan by Giovanna to collect her husband's insurance, a plan requiring him as an unwitting accomplice. If that was the case, then her feelings may not have been genuine, her love for him more feigned than real. Of course, such ambiguities and open-ended situations are commonplace in human relationships, but they nearly incapacitate Gino. We might see in this suggested psychological complexity a natural correlative for the visual depth of field employed throughout the narrative, as well as an assertion of the sense of indeterminacy which seems a fundamental component of Visconti's style.

In keeping with this complexity, the death of Bragana does not open onto a world of freedom as the lovers expected, but one of ambiguous motivations and actions. Giovanna reopens her husband's tavern to support herself and Gino, assuring him it will furnish the wealth and security they really "wanted." Gino, however, feels trapped and frustrated by Giovanna's burgeoning acquisitiveness, as she seeks to *purchase* happiness. As the ensuing tavern scenes build up a hermetic atmosphere — Gino staying confined to his small room, drunk and unshaven — his love for Giovanna gradually comes to seem his limitation. Even

Giovanna comes to seem trapped by her new-won freedom, for she is constantly seen running about, trying to serve the crowds which have flocked to the tavern because of the notoriety created by her husband's death and her affair with Gino. This success both exhausts her and separates her from Gino, who refuses to have any part in the tavern's prosperity. In a telling scene, the camera follows her to the kitchen where she hopes to eat a late supper before cleaning the dirty dishes accumulated during the busy day; however, she is so tired that, after eating only a mouthful of soup, she falls asleep on the table, framed in a low-angle shot against a seeming mountain of dirty dishes, a mark of both her success and her domination by that attainment. By repeatedly juxtaposing such dark, internal shots with brightly lit scenes of the happy crowds around the tavern, Visconti adds to the sense of the paradoxical situation into which the lovers' efforts at freedom have plunged them.

The film does point a way out of this predicament, as the Spaniard appears in the road outside the tavern — that on which Gino has come and gone several times already — and invites Gino to leave that world of stasis for one of motion and life. From the window of his imprisoning upstairs room, Gino seems far removed from the open world in the background where Spagnuolo beckons. While the open road lures him, Gino appears effectively "barred" from it, literally by the window frame intruding into the composition and metaphorically by his own limited frame of reference and his burgeoning fear of what that open world — the characteristic in-depth composition — might hold in store. Underscoring his general lack of reflection, Gino can only tell his friend, "I don't want to travel anymore." In his subsequent punching of the insistent Spagnuolo, we might see less a conscious choice on his part than an act of frustration born out of the conflict between the two drives he is unable to mediate: one for the freedom of the open road, the other for the commitment he still feels to Giovanna.

This conflict resurfaces when Gino meets Anita in Ferrara, as Giovanna inquires about her husband's insurance. He encounters Anita in a park, a natural world seemingly free from the restrictions which now ever seem to impinge. After arguing with Giovanna over her concern with her inheritance, Gino tries to leave her for the uncomplicated world he now associates with Anita, only to be followed by both Giovanna and the police who are investigating Bragana's death. Paralleling Giovanna and the police in this way only

emphasizes the sort of reversal her character has undergone here — or more precisely, the complexity revealed in it — as she begins to represent confinement rather than freedom. Even as he tries to break away from her influence, then, Gino finds himself bound more tightly to Giovanna's world, with ever less hope for real freedom. After making love to Anita, Gino is seen through the netting over her bed, which suggests this ongoing entrapment. In fact, her small upstairs room recalls his cell-like room at the tavern and evokes his last encounter with Spagnuolo. Now when he looks out the window, however, he sees not a sign of hope but the police. Appropriately, therefore, the window frame again serves compositionally to suggest Gino's imprisonment, indicating how his impulses have drawn him deeper into a trap, even as he reached for what he thought he needed most.

While this paradox is temporarily relieved by Gino's escape from Anita's apartment and the police, a more obviously ironic situation quickly evolves. Gino's vehicle of escape is also the vehicle of his return to Giovanna; and he comes back to her just as he had first arrived, by stealing a ride on a truck. At first glance the agent of his freedom, the truck simply brings him full circle to her sphere of influence — and eventually to a realization of his own limitations.

Clearly, the truck has become a key image in the film. It suggests, most obviously, a vehicle of motion capable of delivering the promise of freedom held out by the open road which usually leads into the background of the frame. At the same time, it marks the inevitable limits on freedom. Thus the truck variously becomes a conveyance, a mode of escape, and a force of entrapment. At first Gino seems the master of this mechanism, for not only does it carry him into this world, but he professes to be a mechanic, and it is by promising to fix Bragana's truck that he is first able to get Giovanna alone and make love to her. While the truck is apparently employed in arranging Bragana's death and thus bringing the couple a large inheritance, it is also their undoing, for another truck, passing on the road at the time of the "accident," yields a witness who denounces the pair. Finally, when they flee the tavern to start a new life, they are run off the road by another truck. In this very real accident Giovanna is killed, and her assertion that "fate cannot abandon two people who are about to have a child" is violently mocked. Like fate, the truck brings aid and disaster, unpredictably, but also in a way that thrusts home man's own lack of direction, of "steering" for his life.

Following this fatal accident, Visconti tracks in for a medium shot of Gino to reveal both his bewilderment at the quick flow of events and his dawning recognition of his predicament. For the first time he seems aware of the complexity of the world through which he has carelessly drifted, for he looks first at Giovanna's body and then directly into the camera. In this "look of outward regard," he achieves an unexpected eye contact with the audience, drawing them into his situation. He is thereby released from the intellectual detachment which our previously distanced perspective — that brought by the supposedly "objective camera" of neorealism — seemed to elicit; that is, no longer do we view Gino simply as a trope for man's blind urges or the victim of a malevolent nature. Rather, we are drawn into a most *human* situation, engaged in a contact which affirms the continuity between his world and our own.

With Gino in this scene again framed against a road leading into an open background, we complete a cycle begun with the film's opening tracking shot. While that initial motion has ceased, a potential for movement — and development — remains. Visconti has, after all, sought to effect an evolution in our perspective during his narrative. Our initial identification with motion and with Gino was quickly replaced by a visual detachment, not unlike that which naturalistic literature typically seeks. Thus we often find our view of Gino barred or obstructed by some object in the frame, or a depth of field employed to suggest enclosure rather than openness. Despite that distance, however, we become caught up in his situation, as that final eye contact thrusts home. *Ossessione* thereby demonstrates a basic power of film which neorealism successfully tapped: the capacity not just to observe and lay bare the mechanism of life, but also to compel a sympathy with the human situation upon which it focuses. Visconti created a character moved alternately by his own inner drives and external compelling forces, one which reminds us how common these powerful yet often contrary forces are and what care we must take — what life affirming commitment we must make — to channel these influences properly.

If later neorealist films were to make this basic dialectic more obvious, they also opened the way for a degree of misinterpretation by seemingly implying that their primary purpose lay in documenting such struggles. In more famous films like *Open City* and *Paisan*, Rossellini chose material which emphasized a very literal conflict between the forces of freedom and oppression, embodied in the

Italian partisans and the occupying German army. *Open City* thus begins on a long shot of a gate barring the road which leads into Rome, which is just barely glimpsed in the background, and it closes with a near-matching shot, but with the road open, the city clearly visible as a group of children march resolutely toward it. Repression and the fight against it will go on, we understand, but already a victory of sorts has been won, a victory lodged in the human spirit and made visible by the image of youthful potential. At the same time, our perspective on this continuing struggle has undergone an evolution. Where we were distanced, detached from these people and events, we have been invited to identify with them, to see our situation in theirs, to travel that now open road. Rossellini, and Visconti no less, sought to accomplish just this: through the experience their art of reality promised, to extend our human world and engage us in its potential, to be shaped or neglected as we will.

In describing the neorealist aesthetic, Bazin suggested that "realism . . . be defined not in terms of ends but of means, and neorealism by a specific kind of relationship of means to ends."¹¹ This emphasis on means may have encouraged an abiding myth of neorealism, that such films eliminated the filmmaker's intervention in actuality and thus afforded a purer view of reality. To the extent that this aim could ever be realized, though, it would undercut a truly naturalistic vision, for the filmed world to which we are granted this intimate access shows more clearly as our own, sharing in its complex, ambiguous, and ultimately human nature. The sense of a closed, deterministic system thus dissipates in the very visual wealth upon which the film's sense of reality so fundamentally depends.

Bazin also cautioned that the impression of

¹¹*What is Cinema?*, II, p. 87.

realism could ultimately "only be achieved in one way — through artifice."¹² The filmmaker, he argued, eventually must acknowledge that his stories are not merely *found* in reality, but are constructed and arranged by writers and directors. Neorealist films consequently involve a subtle tension between those compelling and intriguing images of reality and that shaping intellect responsible for their organization into a narrative, and it is a tension which itself demands expression, whose story must be told. In *Ossessione*, as I have shown, we find mirrored precisely this aesthetic tension, for the film tells essentially of the need for some balance between these impulses and reminds us of the consequences of failing to achieve it. Like those works which followed its path, *Ossessione* forces us, often uncomfortably, to recognize this complex texture of reality. Initially it draws us along, almost blindly, down the road of life which its protagonist seems to follow so haphazardly. Given the disturbing vision of what results, we are then challenged at the film's close to continue along that path extending just beyond Gino's image, but bearing with us his shock of recognition. That perspective is a demanding rather than a despairing one, for it requires that we exert our own shaping influence over that impelling and restrictive world which we have no choice but to inhabit. While images of closure abound here, it is the image and spirit of man which dominate and remind us that, although not a free world, it is manifestly an open one, admitting, as the full flowering of the neorealist movement attested, of human possibility. □

¹²*What is Cinema?*, II, p. 26.

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EZRA POUND AND THE CALCULATIONS OF INTEREST

A conventional summary of Ezra Pound's career links the single-minded poet's decline to his increasing interest in economics, fascism, and racist politics. These topics coincide with the end of the "sane" phase of Pound's career and would seem to mark the beginnings of a neglect of "poetry" and a devotion to polemics. From the early twenties Pound concentrates on the increasingly arcane and only occasionally lyric *Cantos* while producing reams of what appears now to be ephemeral and misguided prose.¹ Such a summary relies on that critical topos, the aberration, the unaccountable swerve from the making of art to the production of obscurity, journalism, and, in Pound's case, a loathsome politics. I would argue, however, that it is in double-minded writing that these aberrations have their origins.

His dismay at the rupture of the poetic sign in the practice of the early twentieth century poetry instigated Pound's poetic and critical career. He recognizes the decadence of Anglo-American poetic discourse is the result of a problem in its language, not in its personalities or souls, and sets forth a tradition of great continental literature. The characteristic Poundian intervention is to insist on a set of standards for achievement collected from this reading to restrain the sliding of poetic discourse from its only determinate and authenticating referent: the world of perceived objects, situations, and events. The essential quality of these standards in the troubadours, Dante, and French prose is the closure of the sign, the aligning of signifiers and signifieds in a language of precision. Thus while discovering his own tradition of poetry whose language is motivated by perception, and not mere language, Pound nevertheless imitates, adapts, and translates the authoritative language of others. Pound's celebrated call for the end of poetic and vague diction in his famous essay, "A Retrospect" could have had no more deserving auditor and, paradoxically, no other source, than the author of

A Lume Spento (1908), *A Quinzaine for this Yule* (1909), and even the *Pisan Cantos* (1948).² But precision, as he warns in the same year, 1913, should not lead to needless obscurity, "Good writing is writing that is perfectly controlled, the writer says just what he means. He says it with complete clarity and simplicity. He uses the smallest possible number of words. I do not mean that he skimps paper, or that he screws about like Tacitus to get his thought crowded into the least possible space" (p. 50). Yet it is precisely this skimping that best characterizes *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920) and the *Rock-Drill* and *Thrones Cantos* (1955, 1959). The ruptured sign thus promotes an accomplished and confident theory but a culpable and elusive practice. These double columns of Pound's canon appear to mount in a placid ignorance of each other's resistance, but in actuality their production is mastered by recognitions of duplicity that will direct his social views in the name of poetic arguments written but never vocalized in his *Cantos*.

Pound's move to imagist practice was perhaps motivated by a recognition that his previous work had bound itself to literary pretexts, other languages, and other assumed links between the signifier and the signified. Pound's earlier reliance on standards assumed the closure of the sign had been effected by Dante or Gautier but merely produced a mannerism or style authenticated solely by its link to Dante or Gautier. An attempt to escape the mimesis of styles and to motivate the sign unequivocally and immediately, imagism as doctrine held the pre-eminence of the sensible thing or situation, and consequently reduced the function of language to that of achieving equivalences: "Use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation" (p. 3). Pound supposed that imagist practice could eliminate inessential and distracting language; the image was the remedy to the confusion of language by itself. But the imagist moment passes quickly as Pound recognizes the limitations of such a practice, especially for an epic poem, and the ease with which it simply becomes another style. Besides, imagism was still confined to an alphabetic, linear logic; the image was only an intellectual construct relying upon a constitution by signs.

¹I allude to all the non-poetic and non-literary writing collected in *Selected Prose, Guide to Kulchur, Jefferson and/or Mussolini, Impact*, etc.

²*Literary Essays* (New York: New Directions, 1954), pp. 3-14.

One may guess that Pound's next enthusiasm, for ideogrammatic theory and practice, sprang from a recognition of and dissatisfaction with the arbitrary nature of all alphabetic signs since what Pound imagined in the ideogram was the ultimate coincidence of sign and image, intellect and world, along with the reduction of arbitrary or conventional symbolization. Fenollosa claims, "Chinese notation is something much more than arbitrary symbols. It is based upon a valid shorthand picture of the operations of nature. In the algebraic figure and in the spoken word there is no natural connection between thing and sign: all depends upon sheer convention. But the Chinese method follows natural suggestion."³ Thus Fenollosa's legacy became Pound's substitute for a Romantic theory of natural language, for a theory of the imagination that finds its authorization in nature.

Such a supplement for the Romanticism which he apparently disavowed seems inevitable in a modern poet who does not wish to play out the consequences of an unmotivated sign, as Joyce did in *Finnegans Wake*. Where Hegel saw the alphabetic sign as superior to the ideogrammatic because it had passed through nature and mind, Pound privileged the ideogram because mind had not radically conventionalized it; its "roots" were still in the natural, visible world. Pound's contempt for abstractions and transcendentals, such as he attributed to the Taoist and Buddhist traditions and Romanticism, never touches the transcendentalism of Romantic thinkers like Fenollosa's teacher Emerson (or Leo Frobenius) who saw particulars as expanding universals and detected a hieroglyphic writing in nature.⁴ Pound's faith in the natural sign endorsed by Fenollosa's research forces upon him ambitions whose unlikely fulfillment will inaugurate a career outside poetry that will try to compensate for the failure of this natural sign to govern his *Cantos*.

As Pound sets out on that project during the War these ambitions and resistances crystallize as the mastering contradiction of the *Cantos*. His poem is a contested discourse: and Odyssean path of errancy, accumulation, and fortunate but under-signed homecoming, versus a Confucian drive for directness, reduction, and unwavering purpose. This contradiction can be renamed a number of ways:

Odysseus	Confucius
open work	closed work
alphabetic	ideogrammatic

but in each instance the classic opposition, *dulce*

and *utile*, has been dissolved and reorganized in terms of the repercussive aspects of the two components of the sign: a discursive signifier that allegorizes writing as the Odyssean journey, and an established signified that achieves the closure, perfection, and stability of the Confucian doctrine of the mean. The project of the *Cantos* can be seen as the elaboration in epic terms of creating a motivated sign.

Pound may have recognized the domination of Odyssean discursiveness when he threw out the first three Cantos and began with Canto I as we know it now. The Homeric descent there is a compromise between Confucian directness and Odyssean errancy. Pound's letters about the *Cantos* are evidence for this split in intention and apparent confounding of Odyssean and Confucian values. In 1922 he writes to Felix Schelling that the poem will have to be "clearer" and that its opening palette has been presented "too enigmatically and abbreviatedly." He concludes that he hopes "to bring them into some sort of design and architecture later."⁵ Five years later he writes to his father that "the whole damn poem is rather obscure, especially in fragments" (*Selected Letters*, p. 210). "Obscure" is a strong word for a builder of light to use; it suggests that the poem may be a "selva oscura" that one can escape only through divine intervention or a perpetually deferred re-ordering. In 1937 he disavows the possibility of a Dantesque scheme and recognizes that "part of the job is finally to get all necessary notes into the text itself" (*Selected Letters*, p. 293). This promised reorganization never occurs, of course, and by the early '60's the poem is abandoned as a "botch" by Pound who concludes that "it is difficult to write a paradiso when all the superficial indications are that you ought to write an apocalypse . . . I might have done better to put Agassiz on top instead of Confucius."⁶ Pound's wavering adherence to the call of closure and Dante mark this fundamental conflict throughout the writing of the poem. What does not waver is his conviction that his poem must have a mastering text or poet, either Dante, Confucius, or Agassiz. Like his first lyrics, his *Cantos* are bound to a text; some

³Ernest Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1964), p. 8.

⁴See Emerson's "The Poet" and Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*, #459.

⁵*Selected Letters* (New York: New Directions, 1971), p. 180.

⁶Donald Hall, *Remembering Poets* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 241.

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70 NEW ORLEANS REVIEW

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other must lead the way.

Assuming that Pound's entire canon responds to this fundamental split in intention, I will briefly review his positions on economics, politics, and race as consequences of his commitment to the natural sign.

Pound's evaluation of economics follows essentially the same pattern that his evaluation of poetic diction does. The analogy between currency and language is suggested in his *ABC of Reading* (1934), a sequel to his *ABC of Economics* (1933): "Any general statement is like a cheque drawn on a bank. Its value depends on what is there to meet it. If Mr. Rockefeller draws a cheque for a million dollars it is good. If I draw one for a million it is a joke, a hoax, it has no value. If it is taken seriously, the writing of it becomes a criminal act."⁷ That Pound may well be writing about his "Draft" of *Cantos* here is clear if one recognizes the parallels between writing an epic and a cheque for a million; that he had eventually to forsake his epic and take to a radio microphone to be "taken seriously" and tried for his words suggests the stakes involved in organizing an authorizing poetic sign. But Pound's explicit interest here is in a social problem in which the signifier (currency) has become severed from the signified (value): "Money is a form of agreement; it implies an agreed order. It implies an honesty and an ability Credit rests in ultimate on the abundance of nature, on the growing grass that can nourish the living sheep."⁸ Shiftless people make money, just as poets make poetry from poetry until both poetry and money have become entirely auto-referential. Poet and usurer live on mere interest, never really improving the "principle." The demise of a culture, then, is the breaking of this hinge that connects signifier and signified, money and its precise referent as a determinate value: "All trade hinges on money. All industry hinges on money. Money is the pivot. It is the middle term If you live on clichés and lose your respect for words, you will lose your 'ben dell' intelletto" (*Impact*, p. 107). The Confucian pivot mediates this description of money, just as Pound's refusal to confine his *Cantos* to English mediates another aspect of the issue: "A single commodity (even gold) base for money is not satisfactory" (*Impact*, p. 94). But Pound as a poet could hardly exculpate himself of an analogous kind of rank profit-making out of nothing — for this is the Odyssean element of his poem, whose directions, openness to new topics,

and calculated waywardness were designed to accommodate Pound's interests. In other words, Pound may have seen in the *Cantos* a double of the economic exploitation of the signifier-currency since like any alphabetic language it multiplies without really accomplishing any work of representation or achieving any non-arbitrary relationship to a set of signifieds. As Pound calculates the effects of interest in the economic register he recognizes his own culpability in the discursive register. Choosing to name the violation *usura* (with its Dantesque association with sodomy and sterility), Pound is able to indict himself, to write *Ezra*.⁹ This linkage may seem tendentious or improbable, but it explains the passion in Pound's "unpoetic" *bête noire*, the bestial object of his Old Testament ire: it is himself, the absurd anti-semitic named semantically "Ezra." In this light the famous *Usura* Canto begins to sound like a confession of the impotence of his poetic practice, a call to direct political intervention in an attempt to be taken seriously:

With EZRA

with Ezra hath no man a house of good stone
each block cut smooth and well fitting
that design might cover their face . . .
with Ezra, sin against nature,
is thy bread ever more of stale rags . . .¹⁰

If an unmotivated or a vagrant signifier is the inevitable figure of modernist poetic discourse, Pound's disregard for the *copula* (following Fenollosa; *Character*, p. 15), conventional syntax, and narrative sequence may be seen as an attempt to fabricate a massive, complex ideogram to replace an alphabetic discourse that has no necessary ties to nature. If *usura* prevents the precise erection of a house of stone, then an unmotivated sign cannot organize a unified poem; Pound's only course apparently was an expiration that could only further the split inherent in the alphabetic elaboration of a non-alphabetic principle of ordering, deepening the ideogrammatic obscurity of his *Cantos*.

If Pound's analysis of economics may be seen in the context of a problematic of writing, the same can be said for his attraction to fascism. Mussolini's appeal to Pound derived from the dictator's ability to dictate, to make thoughts into words that meant actions. He was an artist: "Treat him as *artifex* and all the details fall into place. Take him as anything

⁷*ABC of Reading* (New York: New Directions, 1960), p. 25.

⁸*Impact* (Chicago: Regnery, 1960), p. 147.

⁹*Selected Prose* (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 61.

¹⁰*The Cantos* of Ezra Pound (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 229.

save the artist and you will get muddled with contradictions."¹¹ Mussolini's attractiveness was such that Pound never suspected that a muddle *was* involved in Italian fascism. What required the artifice thesis was Pound's demand for an ideal, not for the purported clarity that the thesis produced. The ideal poet who could put his ideas into action, Mussolini was also for Pound a living idealization of order and beauty, "I assert again my own firm belief that the Duce will stand not with the despots and the lovers of power but with the lovers of ORDER/ to kalon" (*Jefferson and/or Mussolini*, p. 128). More significantly, Mussolini was also the apotheosis of the sign, a closed, motivated sign that could leave intention uncontaminated by representation:

Mussolini a great man, demonstrably in his effects on event, unadvertisedly so in the swiftness of mind, in the speed with which his real emotion is shown in his face, so that only a crooked man could misinterpret his meaning and his basic intention.¹²

Mussolini's perfection as the poet is thus his mastery of the problem of the sign. It is this mastery that renders his mind and insures his critics, at least those who are not crooked, of his "basic intention."

Pound's fascination with him was clearly a kind of transference, but it also enabled him to graft his project to the fascist movement, to its site and calendar, providing him with the ideological context and ground that could serve the purpose that Christian orthodoxy in the Middle Ages had for Dante. But Pound's new orthodoxy did not threaten overtly his *Cantos*; Mussolini asked Pound, as noted in *Guide to Kulchur* and commemorated in Canto 87, "why do you want to set your ideas in order?" (*Kulchur*, p. 182) and the poet apparently saw the comment as a defense of his project, even though it contradicts the Confucian doctrine at its heart:

If a man have not order within him
He can not spread order about him
(XIII, 59)

But Mussolini's arbitrariness here is exactly what Pound's predicament required; speaking from Pound's idealized perspective, Mussolini could tell him all that he needed to proceed with his troubling *Cantos*, even in the midst of an ideology of rigid

practicality and social cohesion. Mussolini's credentials also included his essential insight into the crisis of society: "The genius of Mussolini was to see and repeatedly to affirm that there was a crisis not IN but OF the system" (*Kulchur*, p. 186). Such a doubling of fascism with Pound's structural analysis of decadent poetry and economics confirms Pound's views and furthers his identity with a dictator whose absolute centrality could permit the "eccentricity" of his question about order, just as he imagined that his own eccentric *Cantos* would be centered by a larger context. Mussolini's solution to the crisis of structure was himself, the incarnate Sign; Pound's was simply another leader.

Pound's attraction to fascism, like his dedication to a closed monetary sign, signifies a covert revulsion for his poetic practices. For if Mussolini and fascism tried to institute a legend of national origins and form a national destiny to contextualize a hierarchical system that worked down from an apex which was the dictator's swift mind and natural signs, Pound's *Cantos* were from their opening caught in duplicity and weakness. The questioning of pretexts led Pound to a writing that denied itself the mastering contexts of a single language, point of view, syntax, or chronology in favor of an ideogrammatic, immigrant democracy in which the tyranny of grammar is replaced by the powerful but unmanageable recognitions provoked by juxtaposed fragments. Where the fascist state is a kind of perfect formalist poem dictated by the artifice, the *Cantos* may have seemed to Pound a mere pile of fragments, a decadent anthology of dead languages deprived of origin and conclusion, source and destiny. In this sense, the *Cantos* appear to be an adequate representation of bourgeois vagaries, the democratic, decadent state, an extended disquisition on styles: the poem awaited its Mussolini. Walter Benjamin claimed that fascism estheticized politics. Pound's politics manifest an esthetic ideal derived from Confucian directness and Dantesque closure that his *Cantos* violated in their Odyssean openness and indeterminacy. The promise of a final re-ordering is the expiation, the messianic moment, the re-canting that Pound ultimately had not energy or desire to fulfill.

If writing led Pound to espouse currency reform and argue the rightness of fascism for Italy, it also led him to anti-semitism. Like his other interests, it is an anachronistic aspect of the political anachronism of fascism; it suggests Pound's nostalgia for an enclosure like the Medieval Church that could bind history, language, politics, art to a cohesive ideology. Thus fascism used the divisive

¹¹*Jefferson and/or Mussolini* (New York: Liveright, 1970), p. 34.

¹²*Guide to Kulchur* (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 105.

issue of race as a principle of closure; it could only proclaim the racial purity and unity of the Italian and German peoples through the promotion of a palpable Other whose purpose in fascist discourse was to define the purity it supposedly defiled. Such a procedure mirrors the diagnosis of language Pound made before the War: purity or precision is obtainable only through a rigorous search of language's "papers" to determine whether it has a purpose or place in the poem. Such too is the evaluation of currency that begins to seem a hunt for what or who is simply "passing" and not authorized; what simply passes is a *toxin* ("The Toxicology of Money" in *Impact*, p. 111), the *tocsin* that stimulates Pound's pursuit of the "other." So Pound's anti-semitism is not an imitation of fascist policy or an abbreviation or return to a nineteenth-century prejudice common to Pound's background. It is an elaboration of the poetics he had begun to apply to social issues. If the signifier, money, and democracy were vagrant, meaningless, and goalless features of a world alienated from natural signs, then the Jew was the necessary figure of the culpable subject, a sign of all that was unmotivated and homeless — and yet the Jew is a "natural" sign, a living emblem in a society itself bereft of definition. The Jew must oppose in this fantasy a Mussolini whose definition is equally natural and visible, and thus must become the homeless exile *par excellence*, the unfixed principle of usury whose homelessness forces him to follow an endless path across Asia, Africa, Europe, and America. If Pound knew, as Joyce did, Bérard's thesis that the *Odyssey* was semitic in origin, then his choice of a hero for the *Cantos* also suggests a link between the Jew and the "heimatlos" American poet in exile.¹³ The link is ambivalent, of course, since Pound recognized Joyce's explicit use of the thesis in *Ulysses* and saw the novel as a competition for his own project. Nevertheless he proceeded with his own Odyssean project in an attempt, perhaps, to restore the original, aristocratic hero in the face of Joyce's irony. Pound's increasingly virulent anti-semitism in the thirties accompanies his epic's perverse shift to recounting Chinese and American history; while Joyce's mastery is recognized with *Ulysses*, Pound begins to resemble the one who lost his way, a truly lost Odysseus, or wondering Jew. A mythic image of his homeless hero, his siteless poem, its rootless and hybrid poetic situated at the juncture of the Orient and the Occident, the Jew is the toxic image of the *Cantos'* exiled author.

¹³Victor Bérard, *Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssee* (1902).

The Jew then may be a figure for the vagrant signifier that *fascism's* lock-stepping sign would confine and annihilate. Pound equates the non-semitic, accordingly, with clarity (his desire) and thus fabricates a convenient criterion for linking writing to the social-racial context. But the Jew is the motivated sign at the back of *fascism's* motivated sign; the verso of a text that makes the recto possible, that must always be put down. His essay on Mencius provides an example: "All this is perfectly clear and utterly non-semitic in the original text" (*Selected Prose*, p. 86). His analysis of Hebrew scripture notes no "spiritual elevation" (*Selected Prose*, p. 68) and refers to them as "the annals of a servile and nomadic tribe" (*Selected Prose*, p. 91). Such features of Jewish representation are the result of a tenuous hold on reality: "Under stress of emotion, the Jew seems to lose his sense of reality" (*Selected Prose*, p. 86). All this may be Pound's severest self-criticism: no spiritual elevation, servile, nomadic, emotional, stressful; but nothing is more telling than the charge of nomadic by the author of the wandering *Cantos* awaiting the promised land of a final re-organization. In this way the Jew assumes the figural opposition to Confucius in these essays from the '30's and seems to efface the Odyssean element in the poem as a final mortification of Pound's own premise and presence in the poem. In the *Pisan Cantos*, Odysseus becomes *ou tis*, no one:

OU TIS, OU TIS? Odysseus
The name of my family
(LXXIV, 425)

and in *Rock-Drill* the last tableau is his wreck/landing at Phaecia:

And he was drawn down under wave,
The wind tossing,
Notus, Boreas,
as it were thistle-down.
The Leucothea had pity . . .
(95, 657)

so that Odysseus disappears within the whorling currents of his *Cantos*. The principle of errancy with its possibility for unforeseen discovery becomes the poison that Pound had always seen in the normative use of alphabetic, discursive writing: "In these essays Eliot falls into too many *non sequiturs*. Until he succeeds in detaching the Jewish from the European elements of his peculiar variety of Christianity he will never find the right formula. Not a jot or

title of the hebraic alphabet can pass into the text without danger of contaminating it" (*Selected Prose*, p. 320). Note the attribution of the *non sequitur* to the Hebraic influence when the *non sequitur* is the very logic of the ideogrammatic method, and the final transference of the contamination of any alphabetic writing and the toxicology of money to the Hebrew alphabet. Like the Medieval Jew of Christian legend, Pound's Jew as sign pollutes the well of language. This final attribution of contamination to Hebrew culture is inevitable, given Pound's premises, since that culture forbade graven images and thus effaced whatever pictographic elements its alphabet retained. Without this corroboration of signifier and signified, the Hebrew alphabet becomes the figure for all alphabets that eschew the image and the natural sign. The Jew, the vagrant, the signifier, detached from a resolving and authorizing homeland, home, signified must live on interest, as Pound did.

Pound claimed a connection between the rate of usury of a culture and its art: "The greater the component of tolerance for usury the more blobby and messy the work of art" (*Selected Prose*, p. 76).

Caught in the writing of what he may well have secretly thought of as a "messy and blobby" work of art, Pound chastised the signs of his work by choosing capitalist economy, the apparent orderlessness of his writing by fascism, and himself by his grotesque anti-semitism. These supposed detours from the poet's task in fact provide the shortest route to the anxieties of writing as Pound practiced it. That his initial figure of the *Cantos* as a "rag-bag" was discarded during the War only to be cited by Pound in 1966 as part of "the best introduction to the *Cantos*" suggests that the five decades of writing in between was an extended and complex effort to deny its initial trajectories and its split in intention.¹⁴ That writing could be called the calculations of Pound's interest in a wealth of subjects, or the idle calculation of interest on a "draft" that Pound never felt confident enough to sign. □

¹⁴*Selected Cantos* (New York: New Directions, 1970) p. 1.

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Christopher Middleton

A YOUNG HORSE

Where can it now have gone
The warm night ruffled
With screech owl feathers
Where can it have gone
When the horse came to a call

The warm night with branches
Haunt of moss web of intelligence
The breath of a young horse
Cooling between fingers
The night vast with bunched stars

Simply blown away it was
The night murderous and milky
The night of old hymns and hot bullets
Blown away by a breath
Curling between fingers

It flew between my ribs
It set a hollow throbbing
Between the ribs and fingers
A sort of pulse had shuttled
Felt as it wove and melting

Melting the shell this mortal
Man nocturnally hides in
His temple void of presence
With a wicket gate of muscle
To shield from shock his hungers

Kajii Motojirō

A MUSICAL DERANGEMENT

Translated by Stephen Wechselblatt

One autumn, a young French pianist performed a great many traditional French pieces in a series of concerts extending into the winter. There were some classical German melodies as well, but most of the works he performed were French compositions that few people had been able to hear, and were known only by reputation. I heard a series of six concerts, which occurred in a hotel auditorium with a small seating capacity, so I was able to listen with a peacefully luxurious feeling. I became more accustomed to the hall, to the faces and profiles of people in the audience with each passing concert, and felt an intimacy like that of a seminar. I thought it was pleasant to conduct a concert series this way.

The concert series was coming to an end. That night, I entered the hall aware of an unusual serenity and clarity. I listened intently to the long sonata in the first half of the program so as not to miss anything. When it was over I felt I had been able to lose myself in the sonata. I had a premonition that I would be unable to sleep that night, and due to this I would experience a pain twice as deep as my present happiness, but the deep happiness I experienced at the moment had no trace of pain.

When there was an intermission, I nodded to a friend of mine sitting a short distance away, and we squeezed our way out through the crowd. We met silently, without discussing the music at all, and smoked our cigarettes. We both felt our customary solitude was especially fitting that night. As we relaxed together silently and somberly, I perceived a strong emotion carrying with it a kind of insensibility. I took out a cigarette, stuck it in my mouth and puffed away as though everything was fine. — The light reflected red in the night air and blue sparks shot up But I watched my feeling turn to deep dislike when I began to hear the sonata's main theme softly whistled in the distance.

I realized I was calming down when I returned to my seat and glanced at the faces of the women who'd remained in their seats. I didn't notice when the bell sounded and people returned to the same seats as before. I felt strangely uneasy when the next piece was about to begin, as though my mind were numb. Now the pianist began to play some short, modern French works.

Sometimes his long white fingers moved like huge rolling waves, sometimes they struck the keyboard hard like prancing cattle. At other times, they seemed to move in isolation from the pianist or the sonorously rolling music, as if they had a will of their own. Suddenly I no longer heard the music and I began to observe the audience listening breathlessly. It happens so often I didn't think about it at first; but as the concert began to draw to a close, it began to strike me as strange. Was I tired? No, that wasn't it: I was incredibly tense. I tend to remain quiet when a piece of music ends and other people applaud, but that night I felt compelled to stay still. It struck me that one long piece of music was taking place in the room as the audience applauded loudly and softly settled down again.

Remember the game you played as a child of covering and uncovering your ears with your hands when adults made noise? People's faces seem to lose their meaning in the echoes that start and stop constantly. No one knows about your game or realizes they're part of it. — It is like the solitude that seized me with a sudden violence just as the piano player touched a high-pitched chord lightly. The audience hardly dared to breathe in the midst of a sound so delicate. I was amazed at its smothered stillness.

"What a strange petrification has taken place in the audience! If those white hands performed a murder on stage, no one would be able to utter a sound."

I remembered the noisy applause of a few minutes ago like a dream. It remained in my eyes and ears distinctly. I thought it was amazingly strange that people who could be so vociferous could now be so silent. They were following the music single-mindedly, without realizing how strange it was. My heart was filled with an inexplicable sense of transience. I remembered my infinite loneliness in the concert hall, in the large city surrounding the concert hall, and in the world The short piece died away like a wintery blast. Afterwards, the music continued to echo in the same silence. By now it was all meaningless to me. The audience kept applauding loudly and softly settling down again. It was like an incomprehensible dream.

With the final applause at the end of the concert, people began standing up and putting on their coats and hats. I began to file towards the door with everyone else, but with a desolate feeling as virulent as a disease. Near the exit, a broad-shouldered man with a fat neck stood up in front of me. I recognized him at once as a well-known aristocrat who loved music. When the expensive scent of his clothes touched my desolation, for some reason the dignified figure tragically withered and fell to the floor. I hurried to my friend waiting for me at the door, still feeling guilty, and more people withered and collapsed. I went home alone that night instead of walking to the Ginza with my friend as we always did after a concert. Needless to say, I suffered from insomnia for many nights afterwards. □

Manuel Silva

THE RAT

Translated by Sandra Reyes

That night when I heard the gnawing of the Rat, I knew something bad was going to happen to us, what's happening now. That's why I didn't want to wake you, why I didn't say anything the next day.

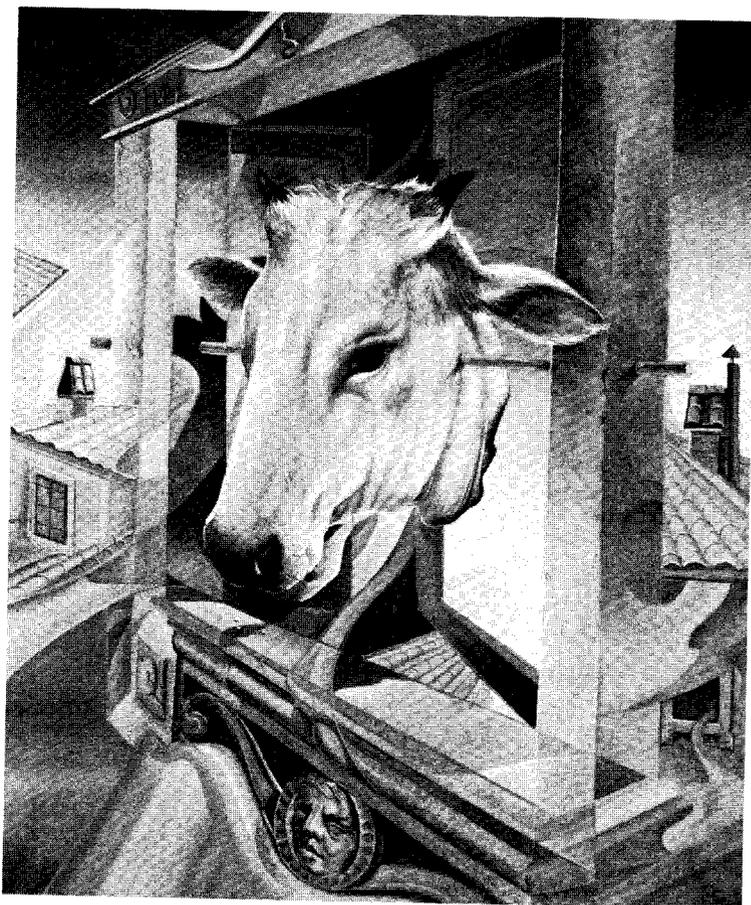
That night, when you heard the gnawing of the Rat, you knew something bad was going to happen to us, what's happening now. That's why you pretended to be asleep, and why you didn't say anything the next day.

That night, when the Rat intruded into the den and started gnawing, it knew something bad was going to happen to us, what's happening now. That's why it kept on gnawing and disappeared the next day.

Now that what is happening to us is happening to us, I blame the Rat; instead of leaving, it boarded our sinking ship. I blame those nasty pigeons, evil omens; they kept flying around the neighbors' roofs, harbingers of a contemptible peace.

I blame the mean day, when your scream filled me with terror in the shower, and I ran out naked to help you, like a monkey out of its cave, armed with nothing except my slippery hands. I still blame the Rat you pointed to, cowering behind the chair. I blame the trembling of my hands when I grabbed that miserable broom to jab at it. I blame the blind surrender to fate that made me hurl the first blow knowing it would miss. I blame my fury, shoving around all the furniture, slinging the useless broom. I blame myself for letting it find its way to our room, where all would be lost. I blame myself for making it hide among our clothes, among these clothes. I lay all the blame on myself for letting you be a part of that grotesque hunt, you also armed with an old broom.

But most of all I stand accused of missing the killing blow, the one you finally struck the pregnant Rat, because what's happening to us would begin then, when I discovered myself naked, covered with goose pimples, a stick in my hand as if it were a spear, and holding the dead Rat by the tail looking at you, feeling myself looked at by your eyes, glassy like the Rat's, out of whose snout trickled a string of blood.



"Vacca"
Oil on Canvas, 27" x 35"

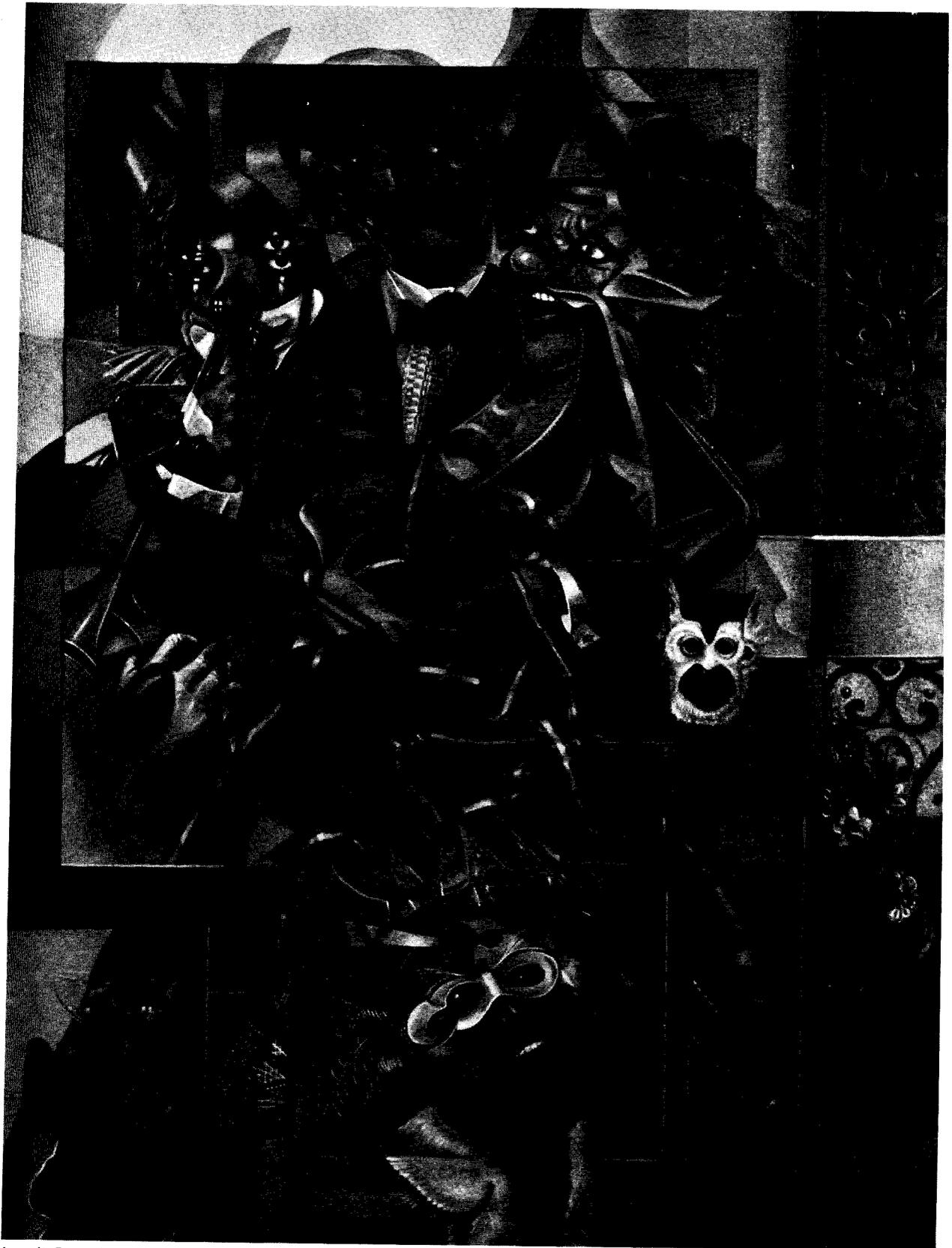
Franco Alessandrini
PORTFOLIO



"Trombone and Tromba"
Oil on Canvas, 24" x 60"



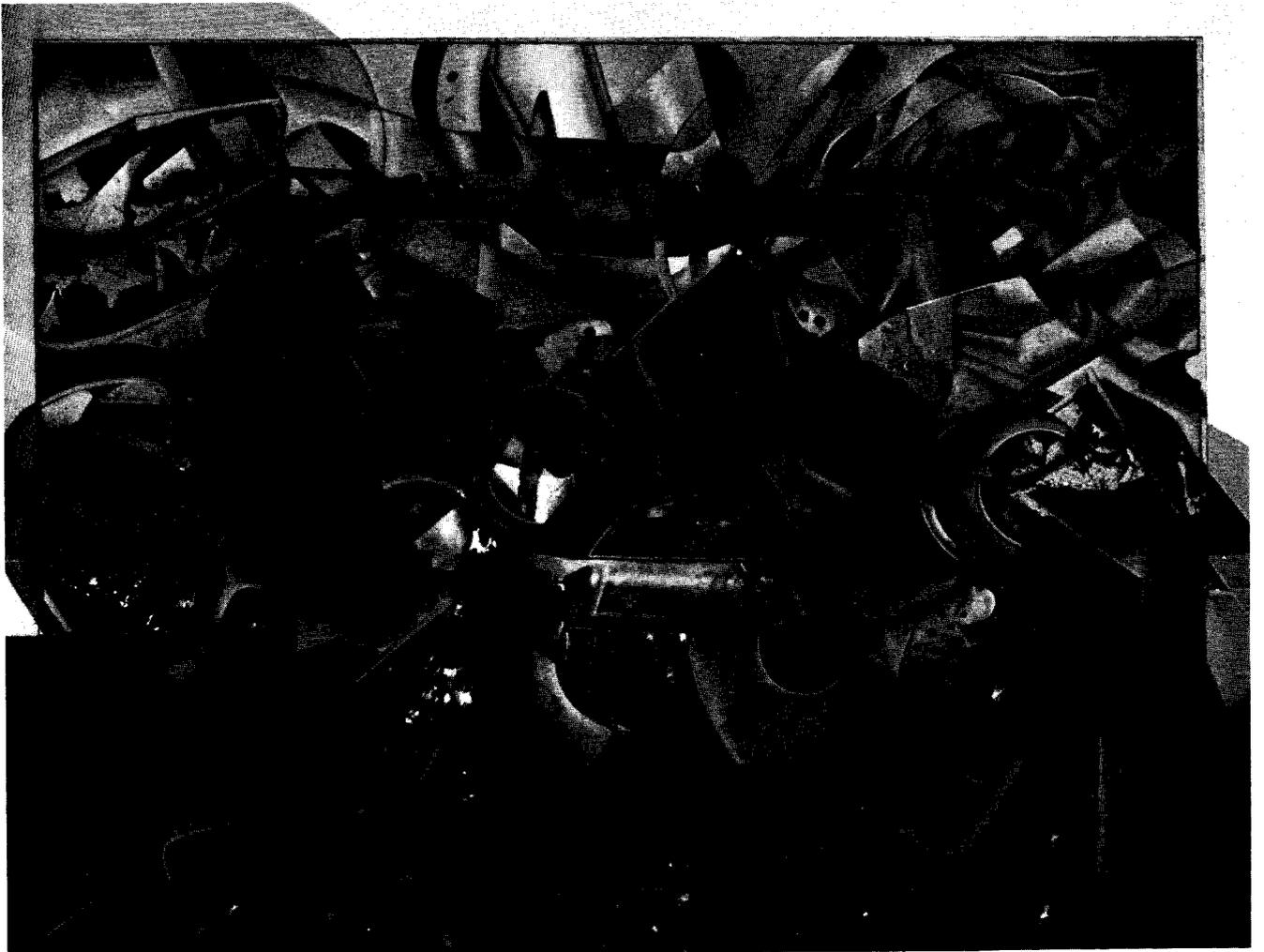
"Sonatore di Tromba Studio"
Oil on Canvas, 36" x 30"



"Martedi Grasso"
Oil on Canvas, 36" x 48"



"Implosion"
Oil on Canvas, 36" x 48"



"Ferrcus"
Oil on Canvas, 36" x 48"



Ultima Cena
Oil on Canvas, 12' x 6'





"Croce fissione"
Oil on Canvas, 8' x 4'

Leigh Hauter

MALARIA

When I came on duty he had a blanket over his head. The spec five who was ward master said that his name was Parsons and he had come in that afternoon. He said he was some sort of shock victim but he didn't know that much; only that a lieutenant had driven him in and had screamed at everyone including the guy with the blanket. He said that there wasn't anything else new and leaving me the keys to the medicine cabinet, left. Reilly came by right then and started talking about this list he said the orderly room was going to post the next day. He said there were half a dozen requests for replacements and they were going to ship a number of people out to field units tomorrow.

It was over half an hour before Reilly finished talking about what he knew, which wasn't much, and left. I had forgotten about the new patient by then and sat down at the desk and started going over the charts. When I got to his name, I remembered him and looked up.

He was about halfway down the ward on the left. There was one of those coarse green army blankets over his head. I swiveled the chair around and got up.

There were about ten patients on the ward. It was just a medical company. There wasn't really that much sense in us even having a ward. If anybody was really sick, they were flown down to the hospital in Saigon. I guess our unit was just a holdover from some war in the past. They just had us here because they had all of this equipment and hadn't figured out that they didn't need us yet. The only kind of patients we ever got were the ones that weren't sick or the ones that no one else would take.

Right next to the guy with the blanket was a lieutenant. We never got officers on the ward. The lieutenant was different. He didn't want to be sick. He had malaria and he didn't want to. Everybody else in the country prayed for malaria so they could go home. Not the lieutenant. Every night he would cry about having malaria and in the morning when the doctor came around, he would insist he didn't have it.

He denied having it and the doctor, who was still in his twenties, figured if an officer didn't think he had malaria then he might be right. Anyway, it was hard to prove someone had malaria if they denied

having it. He had been on the ward for three weeks now, shivering and running a temperature.

I walked to the other end of the ward and back. I wasn't going to just sit down next to the guy with the blanket and stare at him. Instead I was thinking that I'd check the situation out first. He might, I figured, be doing something under there that he didn't want anybody to know about and I wasn't going to bother him.

I finally sat down on the foot of his bed. I decided he wasn't doing anything in particular except sitting there.

"You doing anything?" I asked. He was sitting up, obviously, but he didn't move. He didn't answer my question either.

"I'm the only one working here all evening, so if you want anything just holler. There's not too much to do around here. Some of the guys usually come by later and we play some cards." He didn't move or answer so I didn't say anything more. I just sat there for a few moments thinking. Finally I asked him about the blanket.

"It must be hot under there?" I asked. He didn't answer. The lieutenant in the next bunk was reading some sort of field manual. He gave me an annoyed look and then went back to his book. I never paid him any attention anyway, and tried again with the new patient.

"If you're worried about the flies and mosquitoes, I can get you some mosquito netting. You can hang it up over your bed."

He still didn't answer and I got up. I asked the lieutenant if he was having any chills from his malaria and he told me that he didn't have any chills and he didn't have malaria. I smiled and went back to the desk.

I don't mind not having anything to do. I mean, if I had to choose between not doing anything and doing something I didn't want to do, the not doing anything would win out every time. This job wasn't that bad. I only had to work eight hours a day if I didn't get caught for extra details and I could come back to the same bed every night if I wanted to. That is important — knowing that you have a place to sleep at night. It could be worse. I could get assigned to a line unit and have to sleep in a different hole every night. I've never really gotten off

on sleeping outside. I don't know what's wrong with me.

I looked down the ward one more time to make sure everything was O.K. and seeing that the lieutenant was reading and nobody else was doing anything in particular, I reached down in the drawer below the I.V. bottles and got my book out. I was reading this science fiction. It was about a world, maybe two thousand years in the future, where people had to follow these long rituals about everything or they would get into a whole lot of trouble. Everyday they would get up and dress in complex uniforms and then climb down into these intricate transportation things like cars that would haul them hundreds of miles away to some central location where they would all get out and file into really tall buildings. After they all got into the buildings, they would have to stand in the same room all day until it was time to ride back out to wherever they lived. The story was about some who didn't want to do it anymore.

About eight Reilly came by to play some cards. Reilly was a sharp. I'd watched him at night up in our hootch. He had this partner, a black guy, and they would set up these card games. I'd watch them. Reilly was playing the game of emotional distress. He had already gotten to go home once to see his wife for thirty days. That time she had gotten all sorts of doctors' notes and letters from Congressmen. This time he was working on going home permanently. He'd gotten off the line already. He was pretending he had a drinking problem. That's what he'd do when he was playing cards too. He would have several bottles around and put on this big game about drinking. I don't drink so I could tell, though, that he wasn't drunk. Everybody would get drunk and him and the black dude that he knew from the line would take everybody's money. He had all of these friends from the infantry unit he'd been with that he was always planning shady things with. Anyway, I'd watch them sending signals back and forth to each other.

Reilly brought out a deck of cards and a couple of patients came up and sat down. The others were down at the other end of the ward watching television. Star Trek was being broadcast out of Saigon.

"Did you hear anything new about the list?" Reilly asked. I only had a nine of diamonds and folded.

Reilly had the habit of asking you questions about things that he had already told you. I guess he wanted to keep you on your toes or something.

"Only what you told me earlier," I answered.

"You want to know anymore?"

I didn't answer at first, but took a look down the ward. It was getting dark outside and the lieutenant was reading. He'd turned on the light by his bed. In the shadows I could see the guy with the blanket. He hadn't moved much from earlier. He hadn't eaten dinner. I'd asked him if he wanted to walk up to the mess hall with everyone else and get something to eat, but he hadn't answered. I wrote it down in his chart that he didn't eat.

"Do you want to know more or don't you?" Reilly asked. He was getting sort of pissed off. Reilly always got pissed off if you didn't pick up on his bait. That was the one thing I had learned to get him mad. I didn't answer him right away and he got upset.

"Well, if you don't want anymore, I won't tell you. I don't have to. You'll find out soon enough on your own. I was just going to do you a favor."

I could tell he was really getting sore so I told him that I wanted to hear what he had to say. I had to beg him. That's what he had wanted anyway. He just wanted you to pry information out of him and half of the time, he'd never have anything to say. The only patient still with cards laid them down and Reilly picked up all of the money on the table.

"I really only know some odds and ends but it's sure that the list will be out tomorrow. Gary, in the orderly room, isn't saying too much about it. He wouldn't tell me for sure whether your name is on the list or not, but if I was you, I'd be packing up my bags tonight and getting my business in order."

I put the cards in the desk drawer right next to the stethoscope and thumbtacks. I got up and walked down the aisle. Reilly was always saying stuff like that and it really wasn't funny. He kept on talking about how bad it was out on the line and how lucky we had it here and all of that. He was really a pain.

"Hey, come on," Reilly yelled from behind me. "He didn't say your name was on the list. So don't worry about it. They only send people out to the field that cause trouble anyway. You aren't causing trouble, are you?"

They were watching Star Trek on television. It was the one where Spock shows emotions. I could hear Reilly walking down the ward but I didn't turn around. I could hear his footsteps and they stopped about halfway down the ward. I waited for him to come all the way down, but he'd stopped. I turned around to see what he was up to.

"Is my name on the list or not?" I asked.

He acted like he wasn't paying any attention now. Instead he walked up to the guy's bed with the blanket and stared at him.

"What's he doing?"

"What about the list, Reilly?"

He was pretending he didn't hear me. Instead, he sat down on the bed. The guy didn't move. Reilly looked at him for a moment and then spoke. "Are you OK?" He reached out and touched the blanket and then started pulling on it. "Do you hear me?"

I was really getting pissed off at Reilly. I was getting mad at the whole thing. Two months in country and I didn't feel I had to put up with all of these things Reilly would try to lay on me. He started pulling on the blanket. I could tell the guy underneath it was getting pissed, too. He sat up straighter and then all of a sudden he spoke.

"Leave me alone would you?"

I looked at both him and Reilly.

"Just leave me alone."

This got Reilly's attention real good. He gave the blanket another tug. You don't really get Reilly to do something by the direct approach. "But I don't want to leave you alone," Reilly replied. "I want to know about the blanket. You can't just put a blanket over your head without people asking you questions."

I was going to tell Reilly to leave the guy alone. He was always messing with people. He couldn't turn down the chance to mess with the crazy patients. Only the day before he had been picking on the officer who said he didn't have malaria. I walked up in between the beds.

"What about the list? You can't just say things without telling all you know. It isn't fair."

"Why does he have a blanket over his head?" He looked at me and then back at the guy with the blanket. "He could smother under there." He reached out again and grabbing the blanket, gave it another yank.

"Reilly!"

He gave it another yank. "Help me get this thing off him. He can't do this."

The guy under the blanket started pulling back. The blanket didn't come off his head, but Reilly got him to fall down on the other side of the bed. I stepped back because I wasn't going to have anything to do with this. I told Reilly one more time to leave the guy alone, but he didn't listen. He started pulling harder on the blanket. When the guy hit the floor he screamed out and all the people watching television got up. I stepped back further. I figured that someone over in the orderly room would hear what was going on and start running.

Then I would really be in trouble. I yelled at Reilly to stop it.

The next morning I went down to the orderly room as soon as I got up. The list was there on the bulletin board. My name had been penciled in at the bottom. It just listed the names and told us to report to the orderly room. I went in and asked about the list and the clerk had me sit down. I had to wait there looking at him type for about half an hour before he told me I could get up and go into the captain's office. The captain wasn't there but a first sergeant was and he told me that I would be shipping out that afternoon. He said that I was being shipped out to an advisory team and that they'd send someone by to pick me up in the afternoon. I walked out and went looking for Reilly.

He worked days on the ward so I cut across the opening where the helicopters came in. The back door to the ward was there behind a wall of sandbags and I came in right next to the television. Reilly wasn't on the ward.

I went up to the desk and asked the spec five about him. He was reading some charts and didn't look up. He must have thought I was interested in what he was doing because he started talking about the charts. He said that the lieutenant who said he didn't have malaria had been shipped back to his unit.

I stood there for a moment looking at him. He didn't even act like I was there. I thought about whether I should tell him I was being shipped out or not. I figured that if I told him he would have time to get someone else to cover my shift this evening. If I didn't tell him, he would have to cover it himself.

I didn't tell him and went back out the door looking for Reilly. He was out by the field ambulances. He had the back doors of one of the ambulances open and was inside spread out on one of the litters. There was a patient dressed up in pajamas on the other stretcher. The patient was rolling a joint. I asked them what was happening.

"You hear about my name being on the list?" I asked Reilly. "It wasn't typed on like the other names, but someone had written it in using ink."

Reilly didn't look up but continued lying there on the stretcher with his arms folded behind his head. He told me that I probably got put on the list for the way I acted last night.

"I've always told you that people bring that sort of stuff on themselves. If you stay out of trouble, you stay out of trouble."

He stopped talking and looked over at the patient. The guy was rolling another joint. He had

three of them laying on the stretcher beside him.

"You ever meet my buddy Parsons here? We both came into country together. I got sent out with an infantry unit and he got sent out as a medic with an advisory team."

I looked over at the guy. He didn't look up, but nodded his head. As I watched him, he finished rolling the fourth joint and then he put his dope up and took the joints and put them in the back of his cigarette pack. After he was finished with that, he looked up.

"Yeah, I heard about you. That's a real bummer, you having to go out to an advisory team and all. But don't worry about it. Except for the lieutenant you'll have, it's OK."

Reilly interrupted him. He got up from the stretcher and put his hand on my shoulder and said something about it being nice working with me and

all of that crap. While he was speaking the guy Parsons got up too. I was starting to feel that something real fishy was going on, but I wasn't real sure what it was yet. While I was worrying about it, Parsons got up and shook my hand and then Reilly said that he had to get back to work.

As I watched them both walk back across the opening over to the ward I got this image in my head for some reason of Reilly and his partner hustling those people in the barracks at cards. I had a feeling that there were probably a lot of hustlings going on out there and I'd better learn about it real quick or I was going to be in a lot of trouble. I watched Reilly and Parsons disappear back into the building before I went to go up to my hootch and get my stuff ready to leave. I wondered how Parsons knew about the lieutenant. □

Leonard J. Leff

THE SEARCH FOR HATTIE McDANIEL



As Civil War history, David Selznick's *Gone With the Wind* (1939) succeeds in some respects but fails significantly in others. Its treatment of race relations, for example, suggests virtually none of the pain and humiliation that slaves experienced in the ante-bellum South. Except for a few unruly freedmen at the film's periphery, it depicts blacks as kind, loyal, and pliant. Performers like Butterfly McQueen (Prissy) and Oscar Polk (Pork) amusingly, even artfully, fleshed out the stereotype and thereby reinforced audiences' racial attitudes. But one black actress did not.

Invigorating her character, Hattie McDaniel carried Mammy beyond the limits of Margaret Mitchell's Southern sensibility. Under Georgian production advisor Susan Myrick's coaching, McDaniel learned a Southern slave's drawl and delivered it in her naturally orotund voice with rich

comic effect. Her serious moments in the film — her responses to Ashley's homecoming and to Rhett's grieving for Bonnie — brought out Mammy's compassionate understanding of human nature. She had Melanie's altruism, Scarlett's determination, and Ellen O'Hara's maternal instincts. This high-spirited performance, a subtle instance of social activism, transformed Mammy from stereotype into human being and earned McDaniel the laudatory praise of both black and white critics as well as the 1940 Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress. The performance, the publicity, the award, the racial support, and McDaniel's industry-wide reputation as an accommodating professional were potentially the building blocks of a durable Hollywood career. After *Gone With the Wind*, however, she became a black actress without portfolio, the recipient of few good

roles and relatively little renown in motion pictures.

The explanation for this eclipse begins with David Selznick, perhaps the most intelligent of Hollywood's great moguls. McDaniel was one of only four actresses under personal contract to Selznick, and he genuinely wished that she prosper. His admiration for her may partially have motivated his attempt to mute — as far as he was capable, given the period and his ability to recognize racism — all offensive racial material in *Gone With the Wind*. Publicly and privately, he praised her talent and urged her colleagues' full recognition of it. But though he knew that black performers had been placed under a special burden and felt that responsible white executives should attempt to ease it, he fell victim to social forces of which he had little understanding and over which he had little control. Selznick's handling of Hattie McDaniel during the premiere and aftermath of *Gone With the Wind* demonstrates just how Hollywood allowed the world outside the studio gates to adversely influence its treatment of the American black, as character and as performer. Filled with a large cast (from CBS's William Paley to the South's Jim Crow), this exploration of the prototypical working relationship of a major producer and a talented black actress whose color and whose era militated against her achieving success in motion pictures has paradoxically little incident but telling significance in the history of blacks and American film of the 1940s.

Born in Wichita, Kansas, in 1895, the daughter of a Baptist minister, Hattie McDaniel began her professional career by singing in a tent show with her older brother Otis. She later headlined on the Pantages and Orpheum vaudeville circuits and starred for two years at Sam Pick's Suburban Club in Milwaukee. In Hollywood in the early 1930s, she appeared on radio and in films. She was heard on radio's *The Optimistic Donuts Show* as "Hi-Hat Hattie" and on *Showboat* as "Mammy." But in the movies, where her corpulence came into play, her humor and benign bullying were even more delightful. In *Alice Adams* (1935), she was the sassy hired help for a family of white social climbers; in *Saratoga* (1937), Jean Harlow's sympathetic maid;

¹Biographical details here and elsewhere are drawn from entries on Hattie McDaniel by Thomas Cripps, *DAB*, Supp. 5, 1951-55 (1977), and by Joseph T. Skerrett, *Notable American Women: The Modern Period. A Biographical Dictionary* (1980); see also Lisa Mitchell, "'Mammy' McDaniel as the Definitive Matriarch," "Calendar," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 November 1976, p. 30; Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), pp. 86-89.

in *The Mad Miss Manton* (1938), Barbara Stanwyck's cantankerous yet nurturing mother surrogate.¹ By the end of the decade she had been typed as the humane but brassy maid, secure of her "place" in white society. But unlike any role that she had previously competed for, Mammy in *Gone With the Wind* promised featured billing and possible stardom.

"Mammy was black," Margaret Mitchell wrote in *Gone With the Wind* (1936), "but her code of conduct and her sense of pride were as high as or higher than those of her owners." Although the use of "but" constitutes only one of many racial slurs implicit in the novel, Mitchell's Southern viewpoint in no way prevented her from depicting the character's sympathetic qualities. Mammy had wit and integrity; furthermore, because of her strength she was a woman, really a maternal figure, whom Scarlett could emulate. Next to Scarlett herself, she would be the film's most captivating female character. Selznick undertook no nation-wide search for Mammy, yet offers to play the role came from all parts of the country. "I wish to God you could have seen the white woman who turned up last week with a can of blacking in her pocketbook and the determination of playing Mammy," Margaret Mitchell wrote to Kay Brown, Selznick's New York representative, in March 1937. "I sat on the blacking so she couldn't put it on her face, and for forty minutes watched her play Mammy up and down the rug."²

North of Atlanta, in Washington, D.C., Eleanor Roosevelt wrote to Kay Brown a month later to request an audition for her maid, Elizabeth McDuffie. "She is extremely capable and has a great deal of histrionic ability," Mrs. Roosevelt noted, and "she was brought up where the scene is laid." Selznick wanted a professional actress for Mammy, however, so he tested only established black performers. No one — including apparently the liberal-minded Mrs. Roosevelt or her maid, whom Margaret Mitchell had met and described as "a woman of great dignity and intelligence" — found the character too demeaning for a black woman to portray. Selznick readily narrowed his choice to two finalists. According to Hollywoodana, Louise Beavers first interviewed for Mammy wearing smart clothes and elegant furs. But McDaniel, after prevailing on her friends in a studio wardrobe

²*Gone With the Wind* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 23. *Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind Letters, 1936-1949*, ed. Richard Harwell (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 131-32.

department, sallied in authentically dressed as a Mammy of the Old South. Her masquerade perhaps let Selznick envision her in the part; however it happened, he cast her as Mammy.³

During the filming of *Gone With the Wind*, blacks on the set variously exhibited pride, frustration, and — in Hattie McDaniel's case — apparent accommodation. The extras strutted about in "Central Avenue overcoats" and applauded their brothers' and sisters' performances. Butterfly McQueen complained about conditions on the sound stage and the white artists' mistreatment of her. Among others, she may have been one who criticized Selznick International Pictures for its reportedly segregated toilets, which were desegregated in response to blacks' objections. "I complained so much," she told a journalist in 1981, "that Hattie McDaniel . . . warned me that Mr. Selznick would never give me another job." Unlike Butterfly McQueen, Hattie McDaniel concentrated almost solely on her acting. "When I'm working I mind my own business and do what I'm told to do," she once said.⁴ Such a cooperative spirit undoubtedly earned her Selznick's respect, for in a collaborative effort like filmmaking, balanced temperaments contribute to balanced production budgets. Word of her professionalism may even have influenced the politics of her later earning the Academy Award. At any rate, when *Gone With the Wind* was complete, Selznick wrote in a memorandum to an associate that McDaniel's was "one of the great supporting performances of all times." The difficulty in capitalizing on it became immediately apparent.

Selznick and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the distributor of Selznick's film, mutually decided to

premiere *Gone With the Wind* in Atlanta, Margaret Mitchell's home town. Though she abhorred public appearances, Mitchell consented not only to attend but to speak. David and Irene Selznick as well as a host of Selznick International and MGM executives would play courtiers to the Hollywood royalty who travelled eastward. Swallowing his antipathy toward Selznick, a reluctant Clark Gable agreed to fly to Atlanta; Vivian Leigh, on the other hand, accommodatingly told Selznick that she would "do everything except visit hospitals."⁵ Selznick wanted to include some black actors in his party but hesitated. Someone in the studio's Culver City home had conjectured that "Southerners would not care to have the Negro members of the cast" present. Legare Davis, MGM's Atlanta representative, must have apprised Selznick International of Atlanta's Jim Crow laws, which rather than abate had actually expanded during the 1930s. In the city, amateur baseball games of different races had to be played at least two city blocks apart. With one exception — that portion of Grant Park that contained the zoo — Atlanta's parks were also segregated; as C. Vann Woodward has observed, "only in the presence of the lower anthropoids could law-abiding Atlantans of different races consort together."⁶ Still, Selznick hoped that Hattie McDaniel and other blacks might at least "make a brief appearance on the stage at the opening."

Selznick's resolve to include the black principals was perhaps strengthened when he received a letter from Robert Willis, an influential student attending the city's black Atlanta University. While Willis assured Selznick that "your Negro Public, in Atlanta, is going to make your stay in Atlanta comfortable, just as your White Public," he sought a denial of the "wholesale talk of forcing us to the back, during the parade so that we may not hinder other people who want to see their favorite Movie People." This 21 November 1939 letter, in one sense, must have reassured Selznick. Two years earlier, Pittsburgh's chapter of the Negro Youth Congress had excoriated Selznick and threatened boycotts and pickets if he "dare release this foul incitement to ignorance, hatred and mob-violence."⁷ Sensitive to such criticism, Selznick had worked assiduously throughout the filming of *Gone With the Wind* to earn the support or at least the

³A copy of Mrs. Roosevelt's letter (22 April 1937) may be found in "The Negro Problem" files, *Gone With the Wind* papers, David Selznick Collection, Hoblitzelle Theatre Arts Library, Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin. The Selznick Collection provided the contracts, letters, and memoranda on which this essay was principally based; unless otherwise indicated, citations from unpublished sources originate with the Collection. The author wishes to thank Dean George Wead, Charlotte Carl-Mitchell, and their associates for guidance in locating materials. Margaret Mitchell's comment about Elizabeth McDuffie comes from her *Letters* (p. 163); the anecdote about McDaniel, from Mitchell (n. 1).

⁴See McDaniel biographical materials (n. 1) and Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 361-62; Roland Flamini, *Scarlett, Rhett, and a Cast of Thousands: The Filming of Gone With the Wind* (New York: Collier Books, 1975), p. 216; David Ragan, "Gone With the Wind star [Butterfly McQueen] sings the blues," *Los Angeles Globe*, 24 March 1981, n.p., in the *Gone With the Wind* clippings file, Theatre Arts Library, University of California at Los Angeles.

⁵David Selznick, Memorandum to Howard Dietz, 5 December 1939, *Gone With the Wind* production file, "Story," 6182B, Legal Department, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Culver City, California.

⁶Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3rd rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 116-17.

tolerance of the NAACP and the black press. Willis' letter seemed to suggest that Selznick had been moderately successful: rather than outrage, news of the opening of *Gone With the Wind* had aroused genuine enthusiasm among one group of intelligent black people.

Since the black press had run numerous illustrated stories about her in *Gone With the Wind*, Hattie McDaniel must have figured prominently among the "Movie People" in whom Willis and his peers were interested. Meanwhile, though, MGM had designated the Loew's Grand Theatre as site of the 15 December 1939 Atlanta opening and, fait accompli, determined which performers would and would not be welcome at the premiere. The racial policy of the Loew's had resulted from a phenomenon produced in large measure by segregation and well understood by blacks like Robert Willis. Throughout the South in the 1930s, many theaters screened films to bi-racial audiences. Whites and blacks had separate entrances and seating; the whites sat downstairs, the blacks in the Jim Crow balcony, called the "buzzard roost" or "nigger heaven." Increasingly, the heat, the cramped quarters, and especially the ostracism drove the black moviegoer to the all-Negro theaters. So successful were they that by 1937, for example, Richmond, Virginia, had five of them. As a result, other white theaters in town ceased making provision for black people.⁸ By 1939, this pattern could be seen in Atlanta, where the Loew's Grand served only a white audience. The selection of this theater thus affected Selznick's plan to include Hattie McDaniel in the festivities. As a spectator, she would have had no place to sit.

Robert Willis' letter forced Selznick to confront his dual obligation to American blacks (specifically, Hattie McDaniel) and to Southern racial etiquette. In a 30 November 1939 letter to Willis, Selznick stressed a point that in more private correspondence he had frequently iterated: "The feelings of myself and our company toward the Negro race are the friendliest possible." Both the black and the Jewish press of the late 1930s emphasized the linkage between the Nazis' persecution of the Jews and

America's mistreatment of blacks, and though Selznick was not closely associated with Jewish causes, he recognized that the black community's alienation "might have repercussions not simply on the picture, and not simply upon the company and upon me personally, but on the Jews of America as a whole among the Negro race." Writing to Kay Brown, his New York representative, who was to deal with Willis' inviting the Hollywood entourage to visit Atlanta University, Selznick clearly articulated his dilemma. Anticipating "an enormous Negro audience for 'Wind,'" Selznick asked Brown "to handle the Negroes" in a "friendly manner" but also to honor "the very delicate Southern attitude toward them." Brown carried Willis' invitation to Howard Dietz, MGM's publicity director. Though he found the Willis-Selznick correspondence "most interesting," he claimed that the schedule had already been set and was, he implied, resistant to change.

Invoking the mind of the South and recognizing the Grand Theatre's racial policy, Selznick's Atlanta representative Legare Davis sounded an even stronger storm warning. He recommended that the producer leave behind the black performers, Hattie McDaniel included, because the premiere's dual nature, quasi social and quasi business, would create problems for both races. In *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South* (1937), Bertram Doyle writes that interaction between blacks and whites was "less strained when the expected and accepted forms, common to contact and association of the races, are very precise and clearly drawn; and that, on the other hand, racial antagonism and conflict ensue when, even within the limits of what is deemed right and proper, individuals do not know precisely how to act" (p. 149). Black performers who by profession knew how to act ventured gingerly through the South. Stepin Fetchit, for example, advertised himself as an entertainer who had appeared in "southern towns that wouldn't allow other members of his race to enter the town," but in all likelihood, he clowned his way both into and out of such cities.⁹ Among many whites in the region, the most popular black stage or screen persona remained the "Auntie" or "Tom." White Atlantans who looked forward to seeing Clark Gable as the embodiment of Rhett Butler might thus reasonably have yearned — even expected — to see Hattie McDaniel in the guise of a Southern mammy. Legare Davis may have feared that dressed as a movie star, "Hi-Hat Hattie" might exceed "the limits

⁷Lloyd Brown, Secretary of Pittsburgh's Negro Youth Congress, Letter to David Selznick, 21 January 1937, *Gone With the Wind* papers, Motion Picture Association of America, New York City.

⁸Bertram Wilbur Doyle, *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South: A Study in Social Control* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1937), p. 147; Charles S. Johnson, *Patterns of Negro Segregation* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), pp. 74-75.

⁹Advertisement, as quoted in Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black*, p. 238.

of what is deemed right and proper."

Selznick was enraged, then exasperated by the apparent brittleness of regional sensibilities. In desperation, he turned to unofficial advisors in Culver City. Some studio employees from the South assured him that "the Southern affection for Negroes in what they regard as their proper place is . . . much greater than the North." Upon reflection, Selznick must have realized that despite the comforting intent of this counsel, it finally reinforced Davis' recommendation. Though Selznick might have hoped that on the Loew's stage McDaniel would have been accorded the respect that she was due as a black performer, he must also have known that under all but the most extraordinary (and strained) circumstances, Georgians would not have dined with her, invited her to the Junior League formal dance planned as part of the premiere, or even sat at ease with her in the same theater. Recognizing that he could not divorce the business from the social in Atlanta, Selznick reluctantly decided to leave McDaniel behind.

If Hattie McDaniel could not appear in person, her likeness would at least be represented in the film's program.¹⁰ The printer's proof of this souvenir booklet contained several illustrations of scenes from *Gone With the Wind* as well as credits and a brief production history. Its front cover featured a pastel-like drawing of Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara; its back cover, cameos of the principal actors, including Hattie McDaniel. The program's expensive twenty-five-cent cover price, one-third the cost of a matinee seat and half the cost of a paperbound movie edition of the novel, meant that only the wealthy could comfortably afford it, so the inclusion of a black face for the black patron did not concern Selznick. As he wrote to MGM's Howard Dietz, Hattie McDaniel deserved her portrait in the program solely because she "gives a performance that, if merit alone ruled, would entitle her practically to costarring." Shortly before the program went to press, Legare Davis, who had no objection to depicting the black performers in character, cautioned Selznick against including a studio portrait of McDaniel. He feared that highlighting McDaniel (as opposed to Mammy) "might cause comment and might be a handle that someone could seize and use as a club." Though he had

no reason to anticipate a problem, he did not want to provide "an opportunity for anyone else to make trouble."

Davis' conservativeness, partially the result of an overly imaginative doomsday scenario, was not uncommon to Hollywood field agents; premieres (no less than movies) were intended to offer offense to no one and to create a climate that would contribute to a film's favorable reception. With characteristic hyperbole, MGM had billed the *Gone With the Wind* opening as "the Greatest World Premiere in History!" However exaggerated the statement, Selznick International personnel believed it, and in Atlanta and Hollywood, nerves were fraying. In an 8 December 1939 letter to her boss, Kay Brown remarked on everyone's being "so touchy." Only days before, Selznick had had a "brutal" telephone conversation with Brown, after which she wrote and then destroyed her resignation letter. Anxiously preparing to unreel a four million dollar investment at the premiere, Selznick naturally wished to insure that nothing compromise the South's pleasure in the event or the film. His resistance down, he contracted Legare Davis' edginess. Despite his admiration for McDaniel and his certainty that Davis was "nuts concerning use of Negroes" in the program, Selznick decided to "play it safe." Except in scene illustrations, McDaniel's likeness would not appear in the program for the premiere.

With less than a week before the opening, Selznick decided to have two editions of the program, striking McDaniel from only the Southern one. "Certainly for Hollywood [I] would infinitely prefer having no portraits to omitting Mammy as I think there will be bitter resentment of this and would not be surprised if same were true in New York." Notwithstanding his reference to McDaniel as "Mammy," Selznick exercised a broad-minded firmness. As he saw the country's evolving race relations, an "increasingly liberal" wind, perhaps stirred by circumstances abroad, was blowing across America. He did not want to be "personally on the spot" by appearing insensitive to McDaniel's performance. To moviegoers outside the South, then, McDaniel's photograph was in part to demonstrate Selznick's commitment to racial harmony, but his handling of her following the *Gone With the Wind* premiere demonstrates the constraints placed upon him.

For several reasons, Selznick had tied Hattie McDaniel to a personal contract. Obviously, he felt that she was talented. Yet since Selznick International films were produced individually rather

¹⁰For some information about the program, I am indebted to Herb Bridges, some of whose extensive *Gone With the Wind* memorabilia illustrates *Scarlett Fever: The Ultimate Pictorial Treasury of Gone With the Wind* (New York: Collier Books, 1977); this book demonstrates the occasionally unique value that illustrations may have to the scholar.

than on an assembly line, Selznick himself would have comparatively little work for her. He predicted that after *Gone With the Wind*, however, other producers would recognize her special gifts and wish to use her; at a profit to the studio, he could loan her out. With a personal contract, he could control the manner in which others cast McDaniel, previewing and if necessary vetoing all proffered roles that replicated and thus threatened to diminish the freshness of Mammy in *Gone With the Wind*. For economic if not social reasons, then, Selznick was prepared to support McDaniel's slipping out of her Southern drawl and slave's kerchief into more varied parts. Selznick's support and her own abundant talent seemed sufficient impetus to advance her career.

As her first appearance following the opening of *Gone With the Wind*, McDaniel was signed to act and sing on *Goodnews of 1940*, a radio show scheduled for 11 January 1940. By this time, black radio voices had been broadcast throughout both the North and the South and in both dramatic and musical programs to bi-racial audiences. But generally toward the end of the decade, when the taste of all audiences shifted, black voices became fewer. Musical programs of the early 1930s, which frequently spotlighted Negro singers and orchestras, ceded their popularity during the later 1930s to dramatic programs, in which blacks played less prominent roles. Once they stopped singing and opened their mouths to speak, black performers were expected to know their place. Even playing servants, they had to conform to what were often presumed to be Southern prejudices. "Wonderful" Smith, featured on Red Skelton's radio show, claimed that he "had difficulty sounding as Negroid as they expected." For actor Frank Silvera, the stereotypes were "'a link in a heavy chain' shackling the Negro to the past."¹¹

Goodnews of 1940 would showcase Hattie McDaniel's talent as both actress and singer but apparently would not emphasize the mammy persona. Selznick wished only to whet an audience's appetite for *Gone With the Wind*, not satisfy it.

¹¹Erik Barnouw, *The Golden Web: A History of Broadcasting in the United States*, II, 1933-53 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 110-11, 120-21; Cripps, "The Myth of the Southern Box Office: A Factor in Racial Stereotyping in American Movies, 1920-1940," in *The Black Experience in America: Selected Essays*, eds. James C. Curtis and Lewis L. Gould (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), p. 137. J. Fred MacDonald courteously provided me with a tape-recorded transcription of the *Goodnews of 1940* broadcast. MacDonald is the author of *Don't Touch That Dial! Radio Programming in American Life, 1920-1960* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979).

Eager for McDaniel's success, Selznick urged CBS president William Paley to listen to the program and perhaps find a spot for her on the network. Selznick's motivation was clear. Broadcast week after week, a McDaniel radio series would provide free promotion for the film and generate added revenue for the studio, which owned the actress' services. Like Selznick, though, Paley was subject to the opinions of his field agents, in this case the managers of CBS' affiliated stations. Paley's Southern antennae sometimes reacted with great wariness to any material that did not conform to the region's perceived Jim Crow sensibility; Paley could thus be expected to tune one ear to McDaniel and the other to the South's possible reaction to her.

Hosted by Edward Arnold, *Goodnews of 1940* featured William Gargan and Loreen Tuttle in a dramatic sketch, Fanny Brice as Baby Snooks, singer Connie Boswell, and Meredith Willson's orchestra. Though the musical pieces were well received by the studio audience, Arnold's attempted badinage fell uniformly flat; the gulf between the microphone and the audience did not help. The show's first guest was Hattie McDaniel. "Playin' the Mammy of Miss Leigh was just about the biggest thrill I've ever had," McDaniel enthusiastically told her host early in the program. "And that Mr. Clark Gable as Rhett Butler," she added, almost coyly; "you know of all the people in Hollywood, he is just about my favorite actor."

Bracketed by an energetic spiritual, McDaniel then appeared in what Arnold termed "a revival scene" with an "all-star Negro cast." In the skit McDaniel exhorts her fellow congregants to call to mind their deacon's ministry and on the occasion of his wedding to contribute to a gift purse for him. McDaniel turns out at the punchline to be both his agent and his fiancé. She sings in solo fewer than eight bars, and in the sketch sounds no more "black" than Gary Coleman, whose timbre and speech rhythm she adumbrates. A pallid show in toto, *Goodnews of 1940* at best only adequately showcased her talent. In a 19 January 1940 letter to Selznick, Paley said that although he had not heard McDaniel on *Goodnews*, his programming executives had reported to him that her acting ability outshone her singing voice, "which got some unfavorable reaction." With parts for black actors scarce, Paley suggested that Selznick continue to pursue guest spots for her. "There is a feeling," he more candidly concluded, "that it would be difficult to sell her for a series of her own, largely because of the reticence on the part of advertisers to make a colored character too dominating in a show. This

has to do with Southern prejudice and so forth."

Less than two months later, wrapped in ermine and wearing gardenias in her hair, Hattie McDaniel swept past some black pickets to enter a banquet room filled with industry notables and Academy Award statuettes. She may have been, as *Variety* reported, the first of her race ever to attend such a ceremony; she indeed was the first ever to win an Oscar. In her acceptance speech, she expressed her happiness and humility and pledged to "always be a credit to my race and to the motion picture industry." With a choked "thank you" and a flutter of her tear-stained handkerchief, she hastily rushed from the podium. At least one black intellectual found the *Gone With the Wind* phenomenon yet one more sign of the South's having lost the battle and won the war — in "history books, novels, and now the motion picture"; for L.D. Reddick, McDaniel's award lent further credibility to a "Southern" view of the past.¹² Generally, though, the black press, including *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* (respectively, the NAACP's and the Urban League's official journals), no less than the white press saluted the actress. But "where does this Negro artist go from here," gossip columnist Jimmy Fidler glumly asked. McDaniel was admittedly a character actress, encumbered or endowed with (as one chose to read it) a certain persona. As it would for Fay Bainter, the previous year's winner of an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress, the award should have provided opportunities for McDaniel to explore further the nuances and depth of the black matriarch whom she portrayed so well in *Gone With the Wind*. But no such parts came Hattie McDaniel's way.

In *Maryland*, released in summer 1940, McDaniel played "Hattie," a mammy. She portrayed the loyal servant in two spring 1941 releases, *The Great Lie* and *Affectionately Yours*; in the latter, she and Butterfly McQueen reprised their characters from *Gone With the Wind*. Donald Bogle maintains that Southern audiences objected to her familiarity with whites in Selznick's film and gave Hollywood reason to soften her character in subsequent works (*Toms*, p. 92). As the lessor of her services, Selznick had a monetary interest in maintaining whatever popularity she had earned by the end of 1939. His approval of her appearance in *Affectionately Yours* thus seems to indicate a new-found reluctance to experiment with the McDaniel persona or to feature the actress in less traditional roles. Even in seeking

major parts for her, he became unadventurous. For example, in October 1940, Selznick International's story editor Val Lewton sent a first-draft script to Columbia Pictures, suggesting that the studio star McDaniel in the lead. The setting, an army training camp, was intended "to take advantage of the present interest in the army . . . and show the human and comic aspects of these places." With McDaniel as the title character, Lewton concluded, "these vignettes of present-day Army life would have tremendous audience appeal." The screenplay was called *Sargent Mammy*.

In the 1940s, producers recruited Hattie McDaniel a number of times. Though she eventually bought out her contract from Selznick, she made one of her best films — *Since You Went Away* (1944) — for him. Selznick's press release to black newspapers proclaimed that "not enough attention had been paid to the colored Americans who fight and die for their country and work and live in it"; *Since You Went Away* would right the balance.¹³ But as Fidelia, the family cook, McDaniel revived her familiar screen image. Where this Negro artist went from here diminished both her and Hollywood. Taking what she was offered, she played roles whose names evoked their characters' stereotypical flavor: "April," in *Janie* (1944), "Cozy," in *Never Say Goodbye* (1946), "Aunt Tempy" in the black-picketed *Song of the South* (1946), and "Bertha" the family cook in *Mickey* (1948). In the late 1940s, she enjoyed renewed popularity on radio's *Beulah*. But although she survived three marriages (two of which ended in divorce), she could not outlast the cancer that took her life. In October 1952, with her success in *Gone With the Wind* never matched, Hattie McDaniel died.

The stunted careers of numerous black actors paralleled that of Hattie McDaniel, but the reasons that explain such failures pertain little to the performers' talent; rather, they bear on the geography and politics of the film industry. First, Hollywood not only loved old wine in new bottles, it gathered rubber grapes from counterfeit vineyards on its own back lots. Despite its faithful, detailed recreation of events and places far beyond studio gates, the movies' creative community generally had little contact with life east of Palm Springs. Producers, always more comfortable with the past than the future, thus recycled the screen images of all minorities from previously successful motion pictures. The world outside Hollywood was

¹²Reddick, "Educational Programs for the Improvement of Race Relations: Motion Pictures, Radio, the Press, and Libraries," *Journal of Negro Education*, 13 (1944), p. 376.

¹³Selznick, as quoted in Daniel Leab, *From Sambo to Superspade: The Black Experience in Motion Pictures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), p. 119.

changing. In the military and government during the second world war, for example, blacks and whites worked together in similar remunerative jobs, a point made by the film industry's own *Negro Soldier* (1944). But the studio bootblack and the Bel Air domestic, who may paradoxically have imitated the behavior of their race's screen personae, remained white Hollywood's principal contact with blacks, thus an accessible model. Selznick's experience with the *Gone With the Wind* premiere may have reinforced a nagging fear that his fellow producers were right: a black character out of livery was an aberrant.

Rather than solve a problem, Hollywood preferred to bury it. Two events — the 1942 visits of the NAACP's Walter White to Los Angeles as well as the second world war and its aftermath — did sensitize the film colony, particularly Jewish producers, to the nature and horrific consequences of racial intolerance. Some black actors feared, though, that the elimination of stereotypes would diminish the amount of work available to them. Their apprehension was merited. When producers sensed that the black audience would no longer tolerate a conventional black screen image but that a portion of the white audience, particularly in the South, might resist a better rounded one, black characters began playing less prominent and even fewer roles. Towards the late 1940s, ironically as the liberal consciousness of which Selznick had spoken began to mature, older actors like McDaniel, with good references as domestics, found that the movies had left them behind. In a letter to California State Senator Jack Tenney, McDaniel wrote: "I have spent my life in entertainment . . . entertained the soldiers and contributed to the raising millions of dollars in U.S. War Bonds, won the Academy Award . . . and here I am without a job. Would you please speak to someone?"¹⁴

Selznick was sympathetic. Like him, several producers, directors, and writers wanted to recognize publicly — through motion pictures — the equality of black actors and black characters. In isolated films, Hollywood did move away from excesses toward a more centrist position — but cautiously. In *Casablanca* (1942), for example, Rick's good friend is Sam, a black pianist. No "niggerisms" pass his lips, and he neither rolls his eyes nor sleeps on the job. Yet like Mammy's, his role is to serve. He has no home, no friends, and no lover; he is defined solely by his willingness to attend Rick. Ironically, at the last fade out, Rick deserts him for the debonair, cynical, and white prefect of police. In mainstream American movies

of the 1940s, blacks got neither the girl nor the boy, for Hollywood feared that the South would object. And perhaps therein lies the principal reason that Hattie McDaniel and other black performers failed to build major careers during the 1940s.

Quite simply, the studios' assumptions about Southern race relations militated against a policy of expanded roles for blacks. For its part, the South may have been ready for an upgraded black image. During the 1920s and 1930s, Southerners of both races attended plays, musicals, and vaudeville shows with black content; on radio, they also listened to the black Southernaires' program and to Marian Anderson's concerts. In films, they had lost interest in the grosser stereotypes. Hoping for the best from *Gone With the Wind*, Margaret Mitchell wrote to Susan Myrick, one of the movie's Southern advisors, that "everyone here was sick to nausea at seeing the combined Tuskegee and Fisk Jubilee Choirs bounce out at the most inopportune times and in the most inopportune places and sing loud enough to split the eardrums. And even more wearying than the choral effects are the inevitable wavings in the air of several hundred pairs of hands with Rouben Mamoulian shadows leaping on walls. This was fine and fitting in 'Porgy' but pretty awful in other shows where it had no place."¹⁵

Yet fed by field agents like Legare Davis, the "New York office," and Hollywood's own isolation, a "myth of the Southern box office" flourished. It was, as Thomas Cripps has written, "a distortion of American values that permitted the major film companies, their executives in marketing and production, and their performers to believe that the tastes and prejudices of the American South were at the core of their own decision-making processes."¹⁶ Though Southerners' interest in stage and film entertainment with significant black themes belied the myth, Selznick's experience with *Gone With the Wind* demonstrates how incidents of ostensibly little importance nurtured it; Hattie McDaniel's and other black performers' limited success in motion pictures shows furthermore its malignant influence. During the period of the second world war, McDaniel's peers could only wish that like the land of cavaliers and cotton fields, of Knights and Ladies Fair, and of Master and Slave, the chains that bound the black actor to an inferred Southern sensibility would one day be gone with the wind. □

¹⁵Cripps, "Myth," pp. 117 and 137; Mitchell, *Letters*, p. 272.

¹⁶Cripps, "Myth," p. 144.

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¹⁴McDaniel, as quoted by Mitchell (n. 1).

Charles Black

CONVERSATION WITH A SHEPHERD

You keep talking sheep
And I keep thinking about gold numbers

On splendid hotel doors, uncommitted
To you and me as we are.

If you would give up your sheep
I could draw from my numbers

A splendor of hotel rooms
As far as the next connecting door.

But I know you, so talk
Sheep. I make out grandly

Thick odd numbers, gold-leaf
Injunction against disturbance of splendor.

Ralph Flores

DECONSTRUCTING AUTHORS: DON QUIXOTE

"I asked him what he was laughing at, and he responded that it was something written in the margin."

Don Quixote, I. 9.

The recent movement of deconstruction, even while radically questioning the concept of history, has gained a point of apparent historical vantage by locating an approximate moment of "rupture" in connection with such names, according to Jacques Derrida, as Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger, or on the side of literature, Novalis, Mallarmé and a handful of avant-garde French writers — Artaud, Sollers, Bataille — whose texts "effect in their very movement the manifestation and practical deconstruction of a commonly accepted representation of literature."¹ While going on to concede that some texts "well before" these could have resisted models, Derrida offers no instances.² Many texts, however, might have been cited as disrupting the "representation" of literature — for instance those of Ovid, Montaigne, Rabelais or Cervantes. The rupture of — and as — "literature" may be located possibly in late antiquity or the Renaissance, and the notion of "an epoch" of (if not before) the rupture turns out to be problematic indeed.³ Our argument here will have implications, indeed, both for literary history and for readings of a familiar text: Cervantes' *Don Quixote* suggests that the fissuring of semiotics and the critique of authorship cannot be localized in post-Nietzschean texts, and this text's intertextual relations, which have been described — never quite incisively — as parodic or perspectivist, can also and tellingly be described as deconstructionist.

Take an arbitrary, if typical, point of departure. In an inconclusive discussion — one of many — over the merits of the chivalric romances, someone recounts the performance of an exemplary knight

who attacked an army of over a million armed soldiers, and "routed them all as if they had been flocks of sheep" (1.32).⁴ The hyperbolic simile is conventional enough, and is made in passing, but a reader will readily recall that one of Don Quixote's first knightly endeavors is to attack what he sees as armed soldiers which then turn out to be flocks of sheep (1.18). The transformation of one version of the story into its inversion is less chivalrically significant, it seems, than the association of one version with the other; this being so, which of them is the more "heroic" or "knightly" or "original" is indeterminate, and the work of apparently damaging figures — enchanters or "authors" — unavoidably partakes of knightly affairs.

No mastery, least of all by authors, seems possible over such endless mimetic proliferation. Recall how the prologue author appears as "himself" in a posture of suspense, "the paper in front of me, my pen in my ear" (1. pro.). Productively askew — pen in ear — he is self-inseminating; is this belied or not by his just having extensively written? He has nothing "to cite in the margins" and his non-margined writing, he worries, is not a book: he follows no *auctores* and so (he says) cannot add their names to — or next to — his text. A mere glance at *Don Quixote*, however, would promptly inform a reader of all sorts of textual and authorial names (Amadís de Gaula, Antonio de Lofraso, Don Alonso de Ercilla, etc.) (1.6). Presumably none of these are worthwhile, and indeed the prologue author's "purpose" — his *mira* — is "to undo" (*deshacer* — dismantle, unmake, de-construct) "their authority and influence" (1. pro.).

Since his own (non-)book, however, can have no citable support from *auctores* (such as, he says, Plato, Aristotle or the Scriptures), its very struggle must be, he suggests, marginal. His whole project,

¹Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éds. du Seuil, 1967), pp. 409-428; *Positions* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), Eng. trans. in *Diacritics*, 3, 1 (1973), p. 37.

²*Positions*, p. 37.

³*Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivak (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 19, 23.

⁴References are by part and chapter in the J.M. Cohen translation (Baltimore: Penguin, 1950); Spanish citations are from the edition of Martín de Riquer (Barcelona: Juventud, 1965).

indeed, is overdetermined: (1) the prologue author is "too spiritless and lazy to go about looking for authors" yet nonetheless needs them and does at any rate refer to Homer, Ovid, Scriptures (1.32, 49, 2.22), (2) he can easily make up deceptive references yet writes the kind of book that requires none, though such notions (and the statement of *mira*) are offered not by him but by his "friend," (3) the *mira*, as in *mirar*, is the way something looks, as in mirror, miracle, mirage.⁵ Such features are quixotic, re-marking — in Derrida's term, *hors livre* — the undecidability of *mimesis* as a possibly "productive" doubling in "representation" and a possibly non- or pseudo-productive doubling in deceptive similitudes, sorcery, masks or personae.⁶

i.

Genealogically productive doubling is from the prologue's outset doubted even as it is affirmed: "I have not been able to contravene the order or nature by which each thing engenders its similar [*semejante*]. So what could my sterile and ill-cultivated genius engender [*engendrar . . . el ingenio mío*] except the story of a son who is dry, shrivelled, capricious . . . ?" (1. prol.). The supposedly "natural" father-son connection is displaced by an author-work connection and even there, playfully, by a lesser one: "I, though apparently Don Quixote's father, am his stepfather," and as such will not implore the reader's indulgence toward "this, my [now metaphoric?] son" (1. prol.). If the (step-) father-son, author-product relation is of naming, the author in his concern for referential truth will not decide among names — Quejada, Quesada, etc. — especially since (he adds) none of them matter for "the truth of the story" (1.1). This is in a way repeated: the author's *semejante* "invents" in his madness names which are nonetheless always quasi-referential (del Toboso, Rocin-ante).

Suspicion may be thereby cast, however, on the self-styled beginning author who performs his role by determining "correct" references and by providing assurances (to the beginning reader) that Don Quixote misperceives ("That was in fact the road our knight actually took"; ". . . that was the

truth"; "The case . . . is this") (1.2, 28, 21). Any simple allocation of "truth" to the author and "error" to the protagonist becomes, in this story, increasingly untenable, since (as we learn) there seems to be no first or final dominating author, and even if there were one (Cervantes has been given the title), he for all his *ingenio* would possess no virgin signifieds to become signifiers, no subject not already engendered. And if any viewpoint — any story, emotion, project, *mira* — may be invisible from another, less committed (or more mocking) viewpoint, the second is not more or less valuable than the first, nor can their relation be described in such terms as subordination, incorporation, validity or truth.

There can be, then, no mimetic — and incidentally, de-selving — proliferation from which any author may be protected, however far "outside" (or "inside") the text he may seem to situate himself; thus the naively confident discriminations of the beginning author are strikingly changed when "his" manuscript is ruptured:

The author of this history left the battle in suspense at this critical point, with the excuse that he could find nothing else written . . . The second author of this work did not want to believe that so curious a history could be consigned to the laws of forgetfulness [*olvido*].

(1.8)

We are confronted again with the aporia of authorship. Did our author somehow become a "second author," or had we been reading the second author all along? As second, moreover, how is he an "author" rather than an editor or copier? Indeed, with his dependence on always prior manuscripts, why is he "second" rather than third, fourth or *x*th? On the other hand, if he "did not want to believe" in the text's *olvido* amidst evidence of the ruptured activities of prior authors, might he in some respects have made himself an inventor (author?) of Don Quixote's further adventures? Having assumed, after all, a disdainful attitude toward the knight's madness, he suddenly reverses himself and praises "the light and mirror, . . . our gallant Don Quixote," etc., as if worried at the manuscript's fragility (1.9). Apparently compensating for his earlier stance, the second author (if "he" is "the same") both questions that stance and makes himself its satiric object. His deferral as "second" author to another, however, is comparably unclear: he announces the Arab historian as the "first" author

⁵All these are derived, according to the OED, from the Latin *mirari*, to wonder, look at. "Mira" in Spanish is what might provide a target for seeing ("sirve para dirigir la vista"); it is also, interestingly, the "estrella variable . . . de la constelación de la Ballena" (Real Academia Española, *Diccionario* [Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1970]).

⁶*La dissémination*, p. 210. See also Cesáreo Bandera, *Mimesis conflictiva* (Madrid: Gredos, 1975).

only to designate him a liar and to exercise power over him by an application of norms: "When he could and should have extended the *pluma* [feather or pen] in praise of so fine a knight, he seems painstakingly to have passed them by in silence; a thing poorly done [*hecho*] and worse thought out, since historians are obliged to be precise, truthful and objective . . ." (1.9). "Truth," then, is located in what might seem (or had seemed shortly before) to be erroneous or hyperbolic, while deception is located in a report of merely historical facts.

Here as elsewhere in *Don Quixote*, apparently rhetorical writing is deemed "truer" than apparently non-rhetorical writing which for the same reason becomes troped. Any "truth of the story" (to use a recurrent phrase) is itself a story, any norm by which "rhetoric" or "authorship" might be assessed is itself rhetorical or authorial. If the stepfather-author can never quite be aligned with his hero or text (or the prologue author with traditional *auctores*), the text's own authors, too, are always fissured by supplementarity: each author — "first" or "second" — becomes secondary to the other. Recall for instance: "They say that the proper original [*el propio original*] of this history reads that when Cide Hamete came to write this chapter his interpreter did not translate it as written" (2.44). The author who could have written and known this distances the text's production without thereby substituting "his" production as a new present. The "*propio original*" is necessarily both more and less authoritative than that of Cide Hamete and the translator: it is self-perpetuating, legendary, fictional — the impossible basis (since it includes their deviations) for what Cide Hamete and the translator write. It suspiciously resembles the "present" history, thus locating itself further rather than closer to the "original." Authors like those of *Don Quixote*, who defend or protest their plight, question the text as they produce it: Cide Hamete, though he cherishes the Montesinos episode, notes in the margin that he cannot quite believe it, and so merely inscribes it apart from truth or falsity (2.24). "Truth" then is marginal, if that, yet only in the margins (which the prologue author was reluctant to mark with *auctores*) can an authorial *ingenio* be momentarily disclosed in "original" exclamations about the possible irrelevance of truth.

The marginality is undecidedly mimetic: authorial writing is marginal to the "central" story even though that story, diagetically, is marginal to its inscriptions. Distinctions such as author/character or story/text continually reverse themselves or coalesce.⁷ How far, then, can quixotic "error" be

separated from the erroneous writing about it, or when, if ever, is the error/truth binary telling? The text which endlessly rehearses such questions can only concur with the quixotic attitude that referential truth is more a "rhetorical" than an "epistemological" necessity, although it is both. Recall the quixotic attitude: cognitive errors are rarely of concern, for even when Don Quixote recognizes them, they often confirm his knighthood (in the work of envious enemies) or are not "his" as a knight. He thus is angry when Sancho, who laughs at the fulling-mills mistake, fails to perceive the irrelevance of error: "Am I by chance obliged, being as I am a knight, to recognize and distinguish sounds, and know whether they are fulling-hammers or not?" (1.20). And of course the "enchanters" who (Don Quixote claims) transform appearances, are repeatedly held responsible for errors.

If on the one hand, however, Don Quixote disparages certain errors, he is extremely punctilious, on the other hand, about "correct" referentiality in narratives and about the "correct" enunciation of words (e.g., 1.12). Thus even as he admits that, owing to enchantment, he cannot always venture correct perceptual judgments, he also insists that a certain kind of language — chivalric language — is necessarily referential. He thus judges that what seems a barber's basin must be a helmet, though he defers judgement on the packsaddle/harness question, which is not in his area of authority (1.45). The very quality of knightly discourse "must," he claims, validate certain of his judgements and actions, and even if they should go askew, that by no means detracts from the discourse which defines them. This notion, so seemingly foolproof, will nonetheless be put into question. For the quixotic mission proposes to revise a temporal process: the signs of chivalric language, if they are out of conformity with the "present" world, might by certain actions and discourse, Don Quixote believes, be forced into closer conformity.⁸ The effort to reconnect discontinuities, however, eventually

⁷This is to dissent from Leo Spitzer's reading, which privileges the unified "personality of the author": see *Linguistics and Literary History* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1948), pp. 72-73. See also Marthe Robert, *The Old and the New*, trans. C. Cosman (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1977), p. 167: *Don Quixote* gives "proof that literature can only endlessly repeat its dreams, and if the writer is wrong to mistake this repetition for immortality, at least he has the unique privilege of catching himself openly in his own error." But the writer's "error-catching" (which may not occur "openly") is often already inscribed in the repeated dream and — so regarded — "he" becomes far less privileged.

proves futile and the quixotic sign is at the same time deconstructed.

This can perhaps be noted in the situations which Don Quixote seems anxious to overcome. Recall his beginning experiments — echoing the prologue author's — to legitimize himself. He needs to be dubbed and to have a squire, and he soon fulfills both requirements. There remain, even so, requirements which he cannot so easily accomplish but which he hopes might nonetheless be fulfilled. He needs an author (though not immediately) and he needs (though, he says, only perhaps) a genealogy. His problem is that having erased one self so as to invent another, he bypasses the generative — if not the authorial — process, and his referential marks (Quixote, *la Mancha*) are vague beyond genealogical usefulness. The ancestral armor which might have heraldically signalled his lineage is "eaten with rust and mouldy," and in any case the prospective knight cleans it into plainness, later overlaying upon it his "*triste figura*" (1.1,19), as if inscribing an engendering out of signs or history only as ancestors.⁹

Such an effort becomes an obstacle in his paradigmatic narrative according to which a knight, to marry a princess, must offer proof of royal blood (1.21). On this point Don Quixote has difficulty, and can only wish that "the sage who comes to write my history will establish my parentage and descent" (1.21). Any so-called genealogy, however, might not be established, and Don Quixote tries to evade requirements: his heroic deeds will outweigh his lineage or perhaps the princess will love him so much that, despite her father, she will "take me for her lord and husband, even though she clearly knows I am the son of a water-carrier," and should there still be obstacles, he will simply carry her off (1.21).

ii.

Caught up as he is in this particular story, Don Quixote seems to forget that he has already dealt with the problem, so to speak, in the figure of Dulcinea as his lady and princess. The possible

⁹Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Pantheon, 1970), ch. 3.

⁹In his reading of Nietzsche, Foucault distinguishes between metaphysical "history" as a postulation of origins or ends and "genealogy" as a noticing, through minute labors, that at the beginning of things is "not the inviolable identity of their origin, [but] the dissension of other things, . . . disparity" (*Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, ed. D. Bouchard [Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1977], p. 142).

advantage here is the referential "del Toboso" which Don Quixote attaches to her name, as if expecting that the more completely he becomes a knight, the more completely can she become a princess. Such a possibility, indeed, he seems keen to put to the test.

The quixotic project so conceived parallels René Descartes' efforts in the *Meditations* to prove God's existence, for in the knight's system, we shall venture, "Dulcinea" performs much the same rhetorical function. The issue is complicated, however, in that traditional Petrarchan metaphoric transferences (as Don Quixote suggests to Sancho) are not merely reiterated, but used:

Do you think that the Amaryllises, the Phyllises, Sylvias, Dianas, Galateas, Phylidas, and all the rest . . . were really flesh-and-blood ladies and the mistresses of the writers who wrote about them? Not a bit of it . . . I am quite satisfied, therefore, to imagine and believe that the good Aldonza Lorenzo is lovely and virtuous; her family does not matter a bit, [and] . . . I think of her as the greatest princess in the world.

(1.25)

So he says — at this point. Yet Don Quixote not only invokes Dulcinea's power for the performance of each exploit, but he demands, with each "triumph," that the victims *visit* her. Although such requests meet with confused resistance or with merely promised compliance, Don Quixote no doubt comes under the impression, even so, that as the triumphs, requests and visits add up, "Dulcinea" must somehow become more fully referential. Thus when Sancho returns from a commissioned visit to her, Don Quixote is solicitously attentive to the most minute details: adapting himself to Sancho's way of thinking, he on the one hand allegorizes the lady's qualities out of Sancho's earthy remarks but on the other seems to "believe" more strongly than ever in her empirical actuality (1.31).

What Sancho delivers as the "communication" of an unwriting Dulcinea requires, Don Quixote learns, the more direct communication of a visit. Although he is willing to oblige, Don Quixote has scruples: Sancho's trip was suspiciously fast, and so some enchanter (like a sophist, or a narrator of fictions) must have shortened temporal-spatial dimensions: "You [Sancho] have only taken three days traveling to El Toboso and back, and it is a good ninety miles. I conclude that the sage necromancer, who is my friend, and looks after my af-

fairs — for I certainly have one . . . — must have assisted you on your journey without your knowing it" (1.31). Don Quixote links referential problems to a sage necromancer: one calls up the other. But he may protest a bit too much that the enchanter is helpful, friendly and part of the knight's self, since almost everywhere else enchanters are hostile, envious and unreliable.

Enchanters are like Descartes' *mal ingénie* in the *Meditations*: deceive Don Quixote how they may, they cannot subvert his chivalric courage.¹⁰ This situation is far less assured, however, than that of the Cartesian narrator, for with Sancho's problematic "enchantment" of Dulcinea, the evil demons insinuate themselves into the Quixotic Cogito itself, beclouding its natural light. Don Quixote, searching for Dulcinea's abode, must rely (much more than he usually does) upon the guidance of Sancho, who had "seen" the lady. Yet as Sancho worries quietly about where in El Toboso to go, Don Quixote harbors doubts ("Do not deceive me, Sancho . . .") (2.10).

In and despite such doubts, Dulcinea's force for Don Quixote is (slightly earlier in the narrative) one of light:

so long as I see her it is all the same to me whether it is over walls or through windows, or chinks or garden grilles. For any ray reaching my eyes from the sun of her beauty will illuminate my understanding and fortify my heart.

(2.8)

Like the Cartesian narrator for whom God's existence will be proven indubitably in the natural light, Don Quixote apparently expects that he will soon be overwhelmed and persuaded, by her light, of Dulcinea, and that since the enchanters in this instance cannot affect his perceptions, he will need make no subsequent corrections. What happens instead (in a scene singled out for comment by Erich Auerbach) is that Sancho introduces — in chivalric phrases — one of three passing peasant girls as the Lady Dulcinea while Don Quixote, "his eyes starting out of his head and a puzzled look on his

¹⁰Cartesian and Cervantine resemblances have been widely noticed: Spitzer points to *Don Quixote* as a precursor of the *Discourse on Method* (p. 69); Américo Castro speculates of Cervantes that "el futuro gran artista se adentre en sí mismo, con heroicidad no menor que la de un Montaigne o un Descartes" (*Hacia Cervantes* [Madrid: Taurus, 1957], pp. 262-3); E.C. Riley writes of Cervantes' scruples "as those of the Baconian and Cartesian thinkers of the seventeenth century" (*Cervantes's Theory of the Novel* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1962], p. 162; also p. 223).

face," can see only peasant girls (2.10).¹¹ Suddenly put into radical doubt, Dulcinea must be enchanted. *Dulcinea enchanted*: this is as though Descartes' God had somehow turned into the *mal ingenie* and the Cogito itself been abandoned to darkness.

Ever *ingenioso*, however, Don Quixote soon seizes upon the discrepancy between what Sancho "sees" and he does not, between *what Sancho thus can say* and he cannot. He infers that the enchanters in their envy beclouded his eyes but not Sancho's, that they in other words re-troped into a *mala figura* the already well-troped lady, and that what Sancho "correctly" saw, *if not said* — Don Quixote urges — were "eyes like emeralds," not like pearls, etc. (linguistic rectification will, perhaps, be of help) (2.11).

Plotting to "restore her to her first being [*ser primero*]" (2.11), Don Quixote is not sure, even so, of what he — as a knight — can do. His thoughts take him "out of himself," *fuera de sí* — the movement by which he gained identity as a knight but now by which that identity might be threatened (2.7). As Don Quixote is mimed or played with (by readers of Part One, by actors, by "sane" figures), authoring is laid bare as inevitably figurative or non-self-referential, a mirroring with an "outside" only "inside" the mirroring. As against Don Quixote's traditional notions that drama "hold[s] the mirror to us at every step" (2.12), mimetic doubling becomes alarmingly uncontrollable: the knight of the mirrors mirrors a knightly role complete with a detailed claim to have defeated in combat all knights of la Mancha, including a certain Don Quixote (2.14). The mirroring is so thorough (with its vaunting of one lady over another) that Don Quixote, instead of saying that the other knight lies, can only explain that the enchanters must have

¹¹*Mimesis*, pp. 334-358. Auerbach notices how urgent the Dulcinea problem is to the story's economy. Like many commentators, however, he is read by the text he reads: "In our study we are looking for representatives of everyday life in which that life is treated seriously, in terms of its human and social problems or even of its tragic complications" (p.342). Now *Don Quixote* (as Auerbach stresses) offers no such "serious" material, even though it is very "realistic" (pp. 342, 354). This poses difficulties, especially when Auerbach attempts to describe its "totality" (p. 355). Yet rather than questioning his notions of "reality" (and this text, if any, would suggest that he might do so), he argues that the protagonist in his madness has "no point of contact with reality" (p. 344); Auerbach thus inverts quixotic binaries. (For more on his method, see David Carroll, "Mimesis Reconsidered," *Diacritics*, 5, 2 [1975], pp. 5-12.) A recent analysis of the Dulcinea problem can be found in Ramón Saldívar, "Don Quijote's Metaphors and the Grammar of Proper Language," *MLN*, 1980 (95), pp. 252-278, which argues that "Dulcinea" is the metaphor of a metaphor (pp. 272-273).

doubled him:

This Don Quixote you speak of . . . is the best friend I have in the world, so much, indeed, that I regard him as I do myself [*que le tengo en lugar de mi misma persona*] and that, on the basis of the exact and precise description you have given, I cannot but think that he is the same [*que sea el mismo*] that you conquered.

(2.14)

The last phrase, made in chary regard for the "other" knight and the enchanters, is a deferential mistake or catechresis — "the same" is not "the same," and the argument Don Quixote goes on to advance (as he might elsewhere promptly notice) (1.48) is inconclusive: "[What] I see with my eyes and touch with my hands cannot possibly be the same being [*no ser posible ser el mismo*], were it not that he had many enemy enchanters, . . . and one could have taken his shape [*figura*] to allow himself to be conquered" (2.14). The repeated "same" — *mismo, mesmo* — almost affiliates Don Quixote with the enchanters he opposes and denies the difference he asserts.

The "I" he employs — and we might again be reminded of Descartes' — functions as a speaker-advocate for "Don Quixote," the latter named and even presented as if someone else: the enchanters "who transformed the figure and person of Dulcinea . . . similarly transformed Don Quixote . . . [But] here is Don Quixote" (2.14). He insists that another chivalric battle will prove that Don Quixote "is" Don Quixote. Yet just how would another battle (whatever its outcome) be known *not* to be enchanted as well? Don Quixote would like quickly to settle the issue by removing a mirror-obstacle — the knight's visor — and (as in the Biblical trope) seeing and being seen "face to face" (2.14). When the mirror knight refuses, Don Quixote proposes that just this is what a formal battle will force from him ("I shall see your face, and you shall see that I am not the vanquished Don Quixote you imagine") (2.14).

Don Quixote triumphs in the ensuing fight, partly because the other knight assumes a naively calculable mirroring ("he went around the field, believing that Don Quixote had done the same") (2.13). Victorious, Don Quixote sees the knight's face, but only to deny what he sees or to see what "must," by evil enchantment, be yet another doubling: "He saw, our history says, the same face, the same figure, the same aspect, the same

physiognomy, the same effigy, the same picture [*pespetiva*] as that of the Bachelor Sanson Carrasco" (2.14). The mirror knight's squire, who turns out to be Sancho's old friend and neighbor, offers to expose (as would Sancho) the "tricks and plots" involved. But Don Quixote is so anxious to limit, if he can, one particular sort of doubling that he ignores all others: his first request is not that the fallen knight clarify his identity but that he praise and visit Dulcinea. Only after extracting that specific promise does he then demand that the other, defeated Don Quixote must have been a mere resemblance, a resemblance which can perhaps be regulated in a face-saving exchange: in return for the knight's belief, Don Quixote will believe that the defeated knight could not be Sanson Carrasco but only his "figura" (2.14)

The narrative will unfold the inadequacy of such attempts to control mimetic proliferation. Take the Montesinos episode, surrounded with doubts and frequently alluded to in later episodes. The frame story, with projects of bookish genealogies and metamorphic changes, may incite Quixotic desires but with all desires' distortions, as in Ovid's — or the scholar's — "allegories, metaphors and transformations" (2.22). Boundaries of dreaming and living are unclear: Don Quixote describes a "life," "vision" and "dream" ("*sueño profundísimo*," "*vida y vista*") against which the "*contentos d'esta vida*" (which?) pass "like a shadow and dream" (2.22, 23). In the cave Don Quixote pinches himself to decide whether "I myself was there or some empty and counterfeit phantom" and concludes, less than Cartesianly, that "I was there then as I am here now" (2.23). Even so (or on that account) the Montesinos *vista* is marked by oneiric displacement and condensation: Durandarte has died yet lives, historically noble ladies "enchanted into different *figuras*" are nonetheless recognizable, including the lady Dulcinea who as a peasant girl is there both in good company and referentially accounted for. And if the *vista* seems suspect because of its temporality (Don Quixote's three days juxtaposed to Sancho's hour or so) (2.23), temporality differed will presumably also decide or "bring to light" matters of truth or falsity ("the time will come" when Sancho will believe Don Quixote's truth) (2.23).

The passing of time vindicates, however, neither Don Quixote nor Sancho (Dulcinea's ostensible enchanter may always himself be enchanted) (2.33). Cide Hamete Benengeli, who simultaneously — and marginally — denies, affirms and is neutral, cannot settle the Montesinos issue even with his certainty

about Don Quixote that "at the time of his end and death they say that he retracted [the Montesinos adventure] and he said he had invented it" (2.24). For who is "he"? As the story will show, the "time of end," however authorially useful, is only one among others and the dying man is not himself — or only himself and not Don Quixote.

iii.

Such fissures of self may have precedent, we might notice, in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, which the scholar would domesticate in his Spanish Ovid (2.22, 24). Ovidian metamorphoses occur as, yet beyond, willing, in terrifying loosening into hierarchically inferior (supposedly dominated, non-human) forms of (non-) self. The *Metamorphoses* moves as free play, interrogating a number of Western norms — of rulership or fatherhood (Phaeton, Daedalus), of "auto-affection" (Narcissus and Echo), of mimetic and "unified" narrative (fantastic myths framed by a nominal historical scheme but in a sequence which is fluctuating or de-centered).¹² Selves radically altered force the question, How are our bodies — and our genealogies or names — ours? No answer is given by "philosophy" (recall Pythagoras, book XV), but Ovid's poetry shows anatomically impeded voice: a newly changed Io tried to complain, but "sheer bellowing came out of her mouth, and frightened by her own voice [*propria voce*], . . . she fled from herself" (1.635 ff.).¹³

The concept of self, here as elsewhere, is questioned. In the Narcissus-Echo story (with analogues in the Cervantine ass-brayers), Tiresias — whose very appearance recalls Oedipus — predicts that Narcissus will live to a ripe old age "if he does not know himself" (III.348). Since Narcissus dies young and Tiresias is then widely acclaimed, self-knowledge is presumably achieved even as the very concept may come under critical scrutiny (Narcissus loves a reflection). Narcissus spellbound is a marble statue (*signum*), but the auto-affective

¹²On Ovid's non-Augustan attitudes, see Brooks Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 4-22; Karl Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975), pp. 145, 185-265. See also Charles Altieri, "Ovid and the New Mythologists," *Novel*, 7, 1 (1973), pp. 31-40, and John Brenkman, "Narcissus in the Text," *Georgia Review*, 30 (1976), pp. 293-327. Altieri emphasizes more than Brenkman how Ovidian freeplay is at once a challenge to conventional poetics and a sign of authorial mastery.

¹³*Metamorphoseon*, ed. D.E. Bosselaar (Leiden: Brill, 1959), my trans.

illusion is dispersed when the water ripples and when his "same" voice, with Echo's supplementation, can only be different — it is neither his nor hers (III.419). Narcissus concedes that lover-like he may be in error, that he knows who he is and that what he loves is his image (III.463-467). But this makes him more concerned than ever with his mirrored-fractured reflection: his self-knowledge is necessarily and only *like him*.

Although Ovid thereby clarifies or subsumes the "*vox auguris*" of Tiresias (which was "*vana*" before the story's unfolding), he also playfully tests — demystifies but also reconfirms — his own stance as poetic *auctor*. Mythic happenings occasion a doubt which is surprise. Deucalion and Pyrrha, perplexed at an oracle's dark words, are forced into mythic readings which are immediately vindicated in the poem's "now," which must be (amusingly) a venerable not now (I.400). Daedalus, again made a complexly confusing maze in which he was almost caught, then "set his mind to unknown arts, changing nature" (VIII.188). The words hark back to Ovid's opening lines of the *perpetuum carmen*, but not quite; Daedalus builds wings to fly, as if making rather than telling a metamorphosis, and he cannot guide his deviating Icarus, who cries "Father!" just when the word no longer can apply.

If Ovidian metamorphoses are contained by assumptions of cosmic continuity or poetic power, Cervantine enchantments seem unlimited in their effects on any "author."¹⁴ Notice the unknowability of the enemy enchanters' capacities, against which the don's most frequent belief is that the enchanters can change appearances only: enchantments, he tells Sancho, "change all things from their natural state [*ser natural*], [but] I do not mean that they really change one thing [*ser*] into another, but that they appear to, as we were shown in Dulcinea's enchantment" (2.29). The story's "closure," however, involves the incomplete subversion or deconstruction of the essence/appearance binary, or of "Dulcinea" and then "Don Quixote" as signs. Recall the vacillation between Don Quixote as his own light and Don Quixote as dependent on the Dulcinean light which somehow, impossibly, is darkened (2.32, 36). When the duke and duchess ask for a description of Dulcinea, Don Quixote responds wistfully that his idea of her has been erased (*borrado*) by her recent misfortune and that the enchanters will deprive him "of the eyes with

¹⁴An Orphic poetics — song in persuasive power over the world — can never quite die, or so Ovid asserts (poetically, of himself as poet) in the opening and concluding lines of the *Metamorphoses*.

which he looks [*con que mira*] and of the sun which gives him light," persecuting him into the "deep abyss of oblivion" (2.32). The question, indeed, throughout Part Two is whether Dulcinea had been metamorphosed merely in appearance (as signifier) while remaining untouched in essence (as signified) or — though this is not quite equivalent — whether her "enchantment" can be reversed, that is, whether she can be re-constructed.

Don Quixote and Sancho, having "seen" Dulcinea (though differently in form) can vouch for her existence, and Don Quixote can yearn for her in her *ser original*, a possibility unlikely to have arisen had she not been enchanted out of it. It is now no longer enough (though Don Quixote says otherwise) for her to be "imprinted in my heart and in my innermost entrails" (2.48). For if Dulcinea is out of order, Don Quixote may be out of order as well.

A balancing or supplementation defers his problems; just when Don Quixote begins to believe that (without Dulcinea) he is vulnerable as a knight, his narrative paradigm seems to be nearing fulfillment. Earlier he had described the pattern:

A knight, . . . if he goes to the court of some great monarch, will already be known by his deeds. Then as soon as the boys see him ride through the city gates, they will all follow him and surround him and shout: 'Here is the Knight of the Sun!' — or of the Serpent, [etc.] (1.21)

Now as Don Quixote himself enters the ducal palace:

In an instant all the galleries of the court were crowded with the Duke and Duchess' men and women servants, crying loudly: 'Welcome to the flower and cream of knights errant.' . . . And this was the first time that he was positively certain of being a true and not imaginary knight errant, since he found himself treated just as he had read these knights were treated in past ages. (2.31)

The burdens and doubts of proving himself a knight may seem to be overcome. Yet during his visit, on the contrary, he worries about decorum and is incessantly joked with. The dukes devise a method which might restore "Dulcinea," but as Don Quixote may be half-aware, the assumption that he will be restored if Dulcinea is restored is ominously close to (or poorly disguises) the negative converse

that because he had been less than a knight, she is less than his lady. Such reversibilities seem uncontrollable, and the enchanters less situable than ever.

The widening hiatus, we are saying, between (or "in") Don Quixote and his knighthood occurs as a dismantling of chivalric signs. When Don Quixote on a roadway challengingly proclaims Dulcinea's greatness, he is trampled by a herd of hogs, and (worse) the only relation between the two actions is mere juxtaposition, not causality (2.58). Don Quixote himself makes rhetorical use of the contrast: "Printed in histories, famous in arms, . . . (yet) trampled, kicked and pounded by the feet of unclean and filthy animals" (2.58). In and despite the contrast, there may be no difference, and this is one among other instances, indecisive in themselves but cumulative in effect, in which dismantling takes place: (1) disputes about Montesinos leading to Don Quixote's whispered suggestion of a cognitive exchange ("if you want me to believe what you saw, . . . I wish you to believe what I saw") (2.41), (2) battles transpiring in silence, non-heroically, often non-publicly, "without any sound of trumpet or warlike instrument" (2.64, 48), (3) Don Quixote and Sancho, defeated, being surrounded by silent and silencing captors who fail to address them except with abusive, monstrous epithets (2.68), (4) Don Quixote naming the rhetorical figures he uses ("so that you may believe in this exaggeration of mine, know that I am Don Quixote . . .") (2.58, also 73).

Other instances, too, merit some scrutiny. Don Quixote claims as a Christian to reject omens; those who believe them, he says, act as if nature were obliged to give signs of approaching disasters by unimportant things (2.43, cf. 2.22). Yet when after Sancho's whipping, Don Quixote fails to see a disenchanted Dulcinea, he catches at the words of some nearby boys playing, and cries out "*malum signum!*" (2.73). Sancho, rejecting omens, shows the words to be entirely irrelevant to Don Quixote's plight: he breaks apart the sign he had just seemed, by his whipping, almost to reconstitute; not only does Dulcinea fail to appear, but *there are not even signs of her non-appearance*. We need not be tempted to thematize the Dulcinea dismantling, however, by linking it to narrative movements from Don Quixote to Alonso Quijano, from madness to sanity and death or still less from "false" (chivalric) to "true" (Cervantine) writing. The author-enchanters in their increasing absence-silence may work as powerfully as ever and, in a dizzying production/non-production aporia, can never be simply designated as falsifiers, forgers, madmen

or even poor writers. Characters offer stories about themselves, but the stories are often disguised or incomplete and the text suggests repeatedly that there can be no secure authorial signature (1.22). If a story is likely to require some — but not too many — referentially “correct” details, when and for whom do those details become irrelevant (or deleterious) to the much-mentioned “truth of the story”? Traditional “truth” — bounded, single, steady — is displaced by a far less decidable “truth.” Thus in and despite endless evaluation of “authorial” doings, the doings can never be normatively systematized; parodic oppositions are repetitions and parallels which the story’s progress fails to synthesize.¹⁵ This is apparent both in relations between Don Quixote and Sancho, and in relations between Cide Hamete, “Cervantes” and Avellaneda.

The oscillating Don Quixote-Sancho relation, to begin with, cannot be fixed as dominance, opposition, equality or subversion. Sancho makes efforts to demystify Don Quixote’s notions, but such efforts provide Don Quixote with occasions for counter-demystifications and “authoritative” explanations (“Sancho, you know very little of this subject of adventures . . .”) (1.8, 18). When Sancho notifies an encaged Don Quixote that his captors are the local barber and priest, Don Quixote warns him that the enchanters “assumed the likeness of our friends . . . to put you into a maze of conjectures” (1.48). When Sancho nonetheless persists that his master cannot be enchanted, Don Quixote responds magisterially that enchanters may be deceptive even in their tactics of enchantment, that every appearance against enchantment may merely be an indication of it. Although Sancho later thinks (in presenting the peasant girls) that he can make use of such ambiguities, his effort — which sets in motion Dulcinea’s deconstruction — is itself an ambiguity in its doubtful “success.” Again, if his master raises Sancho to governorship, Sancho, though able sagely to rule, soon rejects the governorship. Does he reject it, however, as a hierarchy or a pseudo-hierarchy? “Let me rise from this present death” could have been uttered at more or less this point by either Don Quixote or Sancho, who distance themselves from one another *and* become more alike (2.53).

Similarly with authorial issues: Avellaneda had written an alternative second part for *Don Quixote*, but to what extent can the Cervantine author claim

¹⁵On parody as paradox, see Dorothy van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form and Function* (New York: Rhinehart, 1953), pp. 9-19.

that his text, of all texts, is more “genuine” or “original” or “true”? Any such claim would be quixotic; indeed where the author (enchanter) allows Avellaneda the potency to engender “another” Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, it is mostly Don Quixote who criticizes the “other” author’s bad writing and who makes Don Álvaro swear that only the “present” Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are real (2.72). To what extent, we might wonder, then, is the parody against Avellaneda’s (or Cide Hamete’s) offspring *not* also against that of “Cervantes”? Often, to be sure, a parodic gap is obvious, as in the hyperbolic (and inconsistent — or unknowably authored) praise of Cide Hamete, who “leaves nothing, however minute it may be, which he does not bring to light” (2.40). But such gaps prepare for others more equivocal; the quixotic sign’s undoing partially overlaps with (and is disguised by) logocentric nostalgias of “end.”

In many ways *Don Quixote* is endless; “victories” alternate with “defeats” which can in turn be perpetually “explained.”¹⁶ It is the fictional author, we might notice, who gives signals of closure: “Human life speeds to its end faster than the wind, without hope of renewal, except that in other life.” So says Cide Hamete, the Mohammedan philosopher; . . . [who] alludes only to the swiftness with which Sancho’s government ended” (2.53). Here topoi of closure are immediately deflated — they are conventional, mawkish, possibly insincere. And the elegy preceding Don Quixote’s death, although not explicitly cited as Cide Hamete’s, is suspect by resemblance: “Since human things are not eternal, moving in decline from their beginnings [*principios*] until they reach their final end, especially the lives of men, . . . Don Quixote’s end came when he least expected it” (2.74). Steady “decline” endows the movement with a predictability also being denied, as if two topoi, since they are both conventional (death is inevitable, death is surprising), must both be employed: the writer is drawing on his stock and performing as best he can, after all, his authorial duty.

Similar topoi (presumably comforting in their familiarity) are similarly banal: a restored Alonso Quixano rejects his earlier self, commenting that “there are no birds this year in last year’s nest”; the bulls who trample Don Quixote take no more notice of his threats “than of yesteryear’s clouds” and, by the same expression, omens are irrelevant to his plight (2.74, 58, 73). These topoi of time as cul-

¹⁶See Robert M. Adams, *Strains of Discord* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1958), p. 81.

mination — and domesticated futility — occur at moments (we noted earlier) of deconstruction, and their suggestions of narrative integration are disguises or deferrals of the differences which make them possible. With no Ovidian presumptions to contain metamorphoses, the Cervantine author ends by guardedly citing the author-*persona* who not only believes that he will put a stop, with Don Quixote's death, to further "falsifiers" like

Avellaneda, but who believes that he has realized the project's *mira*: he "enjoys entirely the fruit of his writing . . ." (2.74). For an "other" author — call him Cervantes — any such *mira* must look like some glittering mirror, a mirage. □

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Debra Daspit

UNTITLED

How soon
hit is winter again.
these days
that try to fool us with their heat
cannot last long,
cannot convince us
of any other season but this:
rosebuds, puckered like sweetest mouths,
the chinese talla,
letting go its autumn hearts.

November 20, 1977

John Mosier

THE BUNKER AND THE PALACE

The most controversial and memorable part of the 36th International Film Festival at Cannes proved to be neither the films nor their critical reception, but the new building constructed on the site of the old municipal casino. Everyone knew that the festival needed larger and better quarters. Chief among the many annoyances directly attributable to the small size of the old palais was the fact that the five major sections of the festival were spread among four buildings, and that two of those buildings were both distant from the palais and inadequate as screening rooms.¹ The festival therefore involved all of the major hotels and theatres in a town of over 75,000 people. Since each individual site was small, and located so far away from any other site, much time was spent travelling from building to building and then waiting for the screening to begin, or for the theatre to be cleared. As any given festival wore on, the crowds outside of each theatre would increase until simply getting into the building would become difficult. At the other major festivals one needed only to be able to read the printed schedule and to cope with the exhaustion of sitting through endless days and nights of films. But at Cannes one first had to find out what the schedule was, where the film was being shown, and, finally, to be able to plow through the crowds in order to get to the entrance, which was usually well concealed. If this last sounds an exaggeration, consider that for many years the special entrance for critics and others to the Directors Fortnight was through the emergency exit which opened directly on a back street adjacent to an automobile dealership. A small handwritten cardboard sign was taped to the door. If one knew that this was in fact where one was supposed to be, the sign was reassuring, but I doubt that anyone ever found the entrance as a result of the sign.

So everyone expected that the new building

would involve the centralization of the screenings at the festival, since the new palais would have, in addition to the main auditorium, called Lumiere, another sizeable auditorium (called Debussy), as well as two reasonably sized screening rooms. In addition the press were promised that they would have an enormous area reserved strictly for their use. The entire ground floor would be devoted to the various exhibitors, who would have vastly more space, better technical support, and more effective security. Additionally, the exhibitors, a diverse lot ranging from the British Film Institute to the purveyors of the latest in erotic video from Hong Kong, would be so centrally located that people would virtually be forced to pass through the exhibition area on their way to other parts of the festival. These were important considerations. Film festivals are businesses that stand or fall on their abilities to maintain everything necessary for films to be bought and sold.

A building big enough to centralize the festival (and handle all of the other convention business that the city does) would obviously be one big building. It was, and its size, coupled with the appearance of its exterior facade, led it to acquire the nickname of the "bunker," which will probably stay on as its semiofficial monicker. But the bunker presided over a beautifully landscaped waterfront area, spectacularly befountained and beflowered. Although it could be said that the building was unattractive and out of place amidst the other buildings of Cannes, such objections historically have mattered little to a nation which has cheerfully erected oil rigs in the middle of its capital. Also, Cannes is neither a new town as European towns go nor one with many structures of particular age. The buildings date mostly from the 19th century, and the natives have spent their spare time erecting new ones, none of which are particularly matched to the older structures. None of the great hotels or apartment buildings along the oceanfront boulevard, called the *croisette*, are of architectural significance, and the old palais, which dated from the immediate postwar period, looks remarkably like a large midwestern court house of the 1930s. And the new palais had replaced what really was the most unattractive area of the oceanfront, where the *croisette* disappears

¹These divisions are: competition, *Un certain regard*, Directors Fortnight, Critics Week, and the Market. Technically only the first two are the "festival." The other three are simply coordinate events. For a number of reasons, the festival is the sum of all of these events. This may seem a minor point, but most of the North American critical coverage of Cannes concentrates on the first section alone, and, in ignoring the others, gives a false impression of the festival.

into, among other things, the municipal parking lot and the municipal interurban bus turnaround. Other charming features of the area which were now replaced or eclipsed were the casino (surely a candidate for someone's list of the ten stupidest looking European casinos), and a singularly unattractive structure called the *gare maritime*, which always reminded me of the restrooms in the Rio soccer stadium. The former was knocked down and the its functions incorporated into the new palais, while the latter was mercifully hidden from most points of view. As a final fillip, deep in the bowels of the new palais would be an enormous subterranean parking area.

But the chief objections to the building turned out not to be aesthetic but technical. The worst was the wretchedness of the auditoria for showing films. Originally all of the films in competition were to receive special screenings in the Debussy. These screenings would be reserved strictly for the critics and the press. After a few days, however, the Debussy was abandoned for these screenings, which were then moved to the Lumiere. Not, however, until after some formidable disasters during which the opening sequences of films were projected onto the curtain covering the screen, the house lights remained obstinately on, and strange noises appeared in the sound system during those few happy moments when there was sound.² Even assuming that such problems could be corrected, there remained more permanent ones: seats that were both uncomfortable and too close together, poor sight lines, and screens that were too small and too far away.

What emerged then, was that the festival management had suffered the same fate that all too frequently encounters film exhibitors everywhere, and that is: architects who are completely ignorant of the requirements for theatres and completely unwilling to acknowledge their ignorance. Essentially this is the same problem that has bedevilled building projects in the United States. It is why, for example,

²The problems I am referring to started with the screening of the Goretta film on May 8th. There was coverage both of the technical problems and, later, of the "bunker assault," in which strikers attacked the building but were repelled by riot police firing tear gas. See *Variety*, 11 May 1983, p. 5, for the two stories on the early technical problems, and the 18 May 1983 issue for the story on the rioting outside the bunker (p. 5). See also Thomas Quinn Curtiss in "Happy Cannes, Mr. Oshima," *Herald Tribune*, 14-15 May 1983, p. 6. Frank Segers summed the situation up in *Variety*, and is, I believe, the first person to equate the festival with the building: "The single thing that summed up this year's Croisette experience was — a bulding." See "New Palais Proves Cornerstone of Cannes Attendees' Attitudes," *Variety*, 25 May 1983, p. 5.



Inscrutable East meets Inscrutable West. *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*.



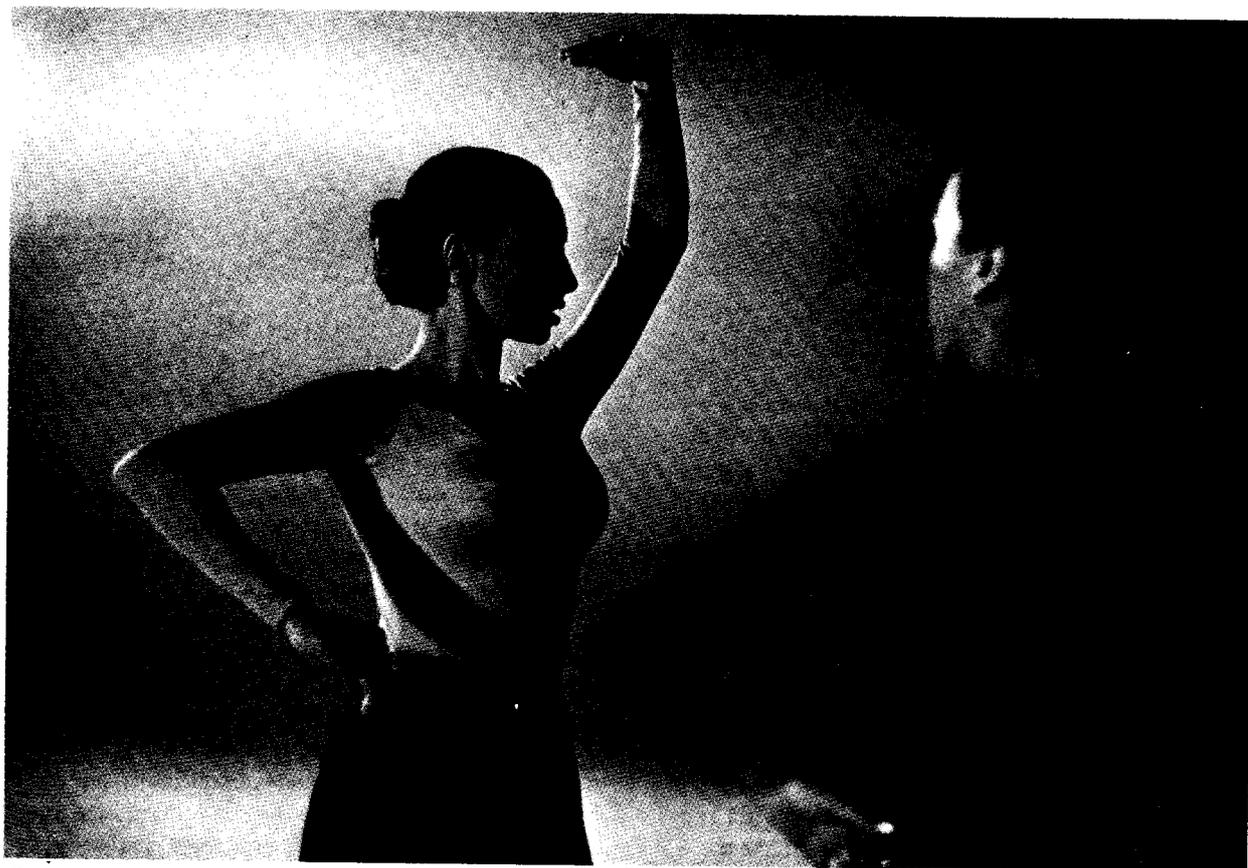
A very minor film about a very minor writer: Marjorie Rawlings in *Cross Creek*.



And now for a special grand prize to . . . (seriously)

North American universities have spent vast sums of money in building auditoria and multi-purpose facilities only to discover that they are totally unsuitable for showing films. The real reason why university audiences have so little exposure to film in this country is that serious screening facilities are simply absent. What is worse, buildings are built with what in retrospect seems a perverse innovative flair that precludes films being projected.³ That being the case, the French have become American-

off the escalator one faced the escalator that would take one from the second floor to the first floor. The escalator that would take one from the first floor to the second floor was somewhere else. Those elevators not hidden entirely (or disguised as closets) were located so that if one left some public area on one floor by elevator one would step out in a building maintenance area on some other floor. For the press, located high up in the building, the only net gain in the move was a surprisingly plush bar



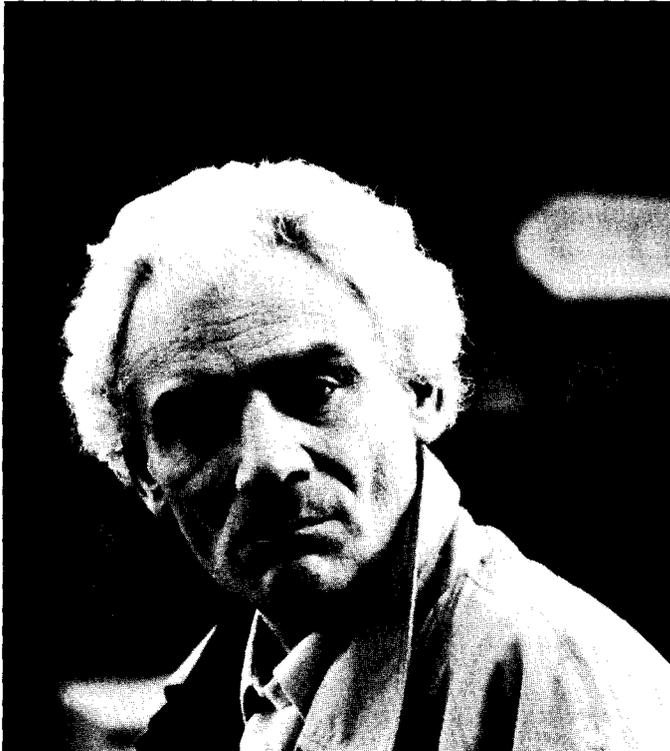
Carmen.

ized with a vengeance, suffering the ultimate in audiovisual cultural imperialism, the multipurpose facility.

Adding to the irritation of wretched projections was the incredibly badly designed system of egress and ingress, some of which assumed comic proportions. For example if one took an escalator from the ground floor to the first floor, when one stepped

³These remarks reflect not qualitative judgments, but quantitative ones: films cannot be projected because of certain prior conditions regarding ventilation, electricity, ceiling height, and so forth, have not been met. These specifications, although easily accessible to architects, are seldom used or understood. Although what is needed is actually simple it is hard to add it after a building has been built (how do you raise the ceiling of a room on the third floor of a five story building?).

high up on the oceanfront side, a striking view, and better restrooms. All of the other ancient problems of inadequate typing and telex facilities, insufficient storage, and meaningless crowding around the mailboxes were all the same in the bunker as in the old palais — or worse. A worse problem was that the bunker was simply not designed to enable people to move from screening to screening, and this was the case whether one was trying to move from theatre to theatre within the building or trying to get into it (or out of it). Before the smaller auditorium was taken out of circulation for the press screenings, there was a particularly nasty scene — anywhere else it would have qualified as a riot — during the screening of *Equateur* largely



Gian Maria Volonte. Best Actor. *Death of Mario Ricci*



One of the few happy characters in *Nostalghia*.

occasioned by this problem. The entire process of getting in and out of the main screenings became so awful that many people simply gave up.⁴

The frustrations facing the critics, however, were insignificant when compared to what the exhibitors were facing down in the basement or subfloor where their booths were set up. All of the screening rooms were up one or more stories. Of course such rooms have little use for a beautiful ocean view. The trade exhibits, however, were literally in the basement. No windows. It was never exactly clear just how one was supposed to get down there, or once there,

⁴The first incident that I witnessed involved the Goretta film at the 830 am press screening of May 8th. The film was initially projected on the curtain, and one middle aged woman sitting in the front got up, said, very loudly, "That's it, I'm going home," and walked out. The screening of *Equateur* was the next day (5 pm on the 9th in the Debussy). Many people were ejected when the room was filled to overflowing. There were fistfights between ushers and reporters at the entrances, and supposedly at least one person was hurt when a glass door was broken. The screening itself was delayed considerably, and as the delays continued some people left. These screenings were all reserved for the press. During the screening of *Return to Danang* some of the French critics left because the French subtitles were not projected on the screen, only the English ones. (The subtitles were on the print, but the film was not framed properly.) It was essentially the *Equateur* fiasco that forced the cancellation of the use of Debussy for the press. They were moved to the screenings in the Lumiere. Presumably all of the people who were slotted to go in those seats were simply turned away.

out. In fact, one could make a good case for the fact that the architects either built the building upside down, or, more probably, used plans that were intended for some other site. And once in the basement, the simple task of finding anything or anyone assumed monstrous proportions. As a result, many of the exhibitors simply abandoned their booths and took to their hotels, which of course made contacts even more frustrating. So the task of seeing films became even more difficult as a result of the move. Everyone who had kept his older screening arrangements was now even further away from the new palais, the presumed center of the action, since the new palais was literally at the opposite end of the *croisette* from the old. To make matters still worse the three key sidebar events all shifted locales.

The chief beneficiary of all this commotion was the Directors Fortnight program, which for years had operated out of the small commercial threeplex on rue d'Antibes called the Star. The major screening room, Star 1, was invariably jammed for the evening screenings, and over the years the charming custom mentioned earlier had developed of letting the press come in through the fire exit.⁵ However the management secured the use of the old palais, installed a bookstore and a bar on the mezzanine, and started showing their films in there. This meant a marked improvement in the opera-

tions of the Directors Fortnight. As the bunker rapidly became one continuous exercise in crowd noncontrol, the old palais began to emerge as some sort of cinematic oasis. The organization, calm, and the excellence of the screenings, coupled with the disasters elsewhere, will, if they continue, signal a dramatic shift in the relative prestige of the various events of Cannes. At the very least, the situation should draw more attention to the *Societe des realisateurs*, which is the group responsible for the Fortnight, and to the films they screen.

Chief loser (audiences and the exhibitors imprisoned in the basement excepted) in the move was the Critics Week. In the old palais the Critics Week had its screenings in the smaller theater, called the Cocteau. The less said about the Cocteau the better, although an ingenious way of stepping the seats to allow sufficient rake had the hilarious side effect of making it impossible to walk down the aisles when the lights were off. During every screening at least one hapless film critic crashed down the length of the aisle, usually when he or she was trying to leave early or arrive late — in both instances times when conspicuousness was no real plus. Apparently on the theory that things couldn't get worse, the Critics Week packed up and moved to the new palais, only to discover that the screening room reserved for them (called Bazin) had three formidable problems. First, it seated perhaps a third as many people as the Cocteau, thus meaning more screenings. Second, through some architectural triumph the ceiling was too low to allow a picture of the correct size to be seen on the screen. Although the Debussy had this problem too, the screen situation in the Bazin was incredible. The picture was too small by about half.⁶ And the third? Well, in an effort to achieve the right rake, the seats had been raised up from the aisle in some peculiar fashion. Now, instead of tripping down the aisle and falling on their faces, critics were able to dive laterally out into the aisle from their seats. In effect the Critics Week continued its somewhat comic tradition of being not

only a place where new talents were screened, but where the international film critics fell flat on their face.

The slate of disasters associated with the festival resulted in both consternation and glee. Consternation on the part of everyone who had anything to do with the festival (except of course for members of the *societe des realisateurs*) and glee on the part of all those critics who have always professed to loathe Cannes and everything it stood for. There have always been a great many of these about, and essentially one can sort them out by using simple non-cinematic criteria, since they divide themselves neatly into those who like France and those who do not, into those who are experienced travelers and those who are not. One might be tempted to think of the world of film as being a glamorous and sophisticated one, but the sophistication is all internally generated as far as the United States goes, where the industry is located in Los Angeles, and consists largely of people who have been very few places else. For this and other reasons, from the point at which film criticism became a "serious" vocation for North American intellectuals it has been the fashion to denigrate Cannes for its location on the Riviera and the consequent attendant expensiveness, snootiness, and "glamour." Most of this has, frankly, been unjustified. When the dollar was at its low in the late 1970s it was possible to eat a good meal and find reasonably priced lodgings. Certain things were quite expensive, such as the notorious taxi ride from the Nice airport, but the same was true of equivalent taxi rides elsewhere in the world. Much of the complaining about prices had as its source that same North American provincialism that marks the majority of North American tourists everywhere. This whole matter may seem trivial, but it is not. How perceptive is the criticism of a writer about the success with which a film analyses a cultural milieu if the critic is completely unaware of what constitutes that milieu? Moreover, on a less theoretical but still relevant level, how objective is film criticism when it is written by critics who are smarting under thousands of alleged indignities and financial assaults?

However important a factor the place itself is, and the ability of the people who got here to cope with it, the alleged commercialism of the festival deserves comment. It seems somewhat exaggerated. There is a great circus that accompanies the appearances of stars, the publicity efforts of the major film companies, and the whole idea of a film festival. No one knows how to evaluate the degree

⁶By the time I started attending Cannes (in 1978) many (perhaps most) people seemed to know about this entrance. However, there were embarrassing exceptions: the director and stars of *Girlfriends* waited patiently in the crowd at the front entrance to the auditorium, only to be told that there were no more seats inside. The film being shown was, of course, the premiere screening of *Girlfriends*.

⁶Again this is a measurable specification: the last row of seats should not be further than either six times the width or eight times the height of the projected image from that image. At the first screening of the Critics Week (11 am on May 8th) there was an opening formal apology for the screen size, as well as for the inadequacy of the sound system.

to which something like a film festival is serious. Several points do however suggest standards, chief among them the films that the festival gives its awards to. The complication here is that there is no easy way of keeping track of the awards given to films since WWII. Nor is it an easy manner to decide how to measure or rank films themselves. The whole thing is by definition woefully imprecise, but one gets an idea by looking at the lists of prizes.

By this measure, Cannes may be seen in a somewhat different light. In the 1950s the juries awarded prizes to *The Third Man*, *Miracle in Milan*, *The Wages of Fear*, *Marty*, *The World of Silence*, *Friendly Persuasion*, *When the Cranes Are Flying*, and *Black Orpheus*.⁷ Special prizes of various sorts were awarded for various reasons to film artists such as Ingmar Bergman, Andrzej Wajda, Giulietta Masina, Orson Welles, and Ingrid Thulin. In other words, Cannes had a reasonable track record for its awards. It may be true that it did not have the same reverence for film as art that characterized the Venice Film Festival, although a prize by prize comparison would be interesting. But even a cursory glance at the list suggests that the juries awarded prizes to films that are today routinely used in film history courses, and recognized artists whose work is universally regarded as important. In other words the prize lists are not lists of films that have long since been forgotten, made by people no one has ever heard of. There is an element of circularity here, since a film's reputation may very well in part rest on its reception at Cannes, the fact that it was shown there, and the fact that it won an award. But it is easy to see that films such as *Miracle in Milan* and directors such as Bergman have their own intrinsic importance, and their reputation is not simply a result of luck or successful merchandising.

It is fair to ask the extent to which Cannes awarded people prizes and recognition before the beginning of their fame, and here, it seems to me, is where the criticisms made in the late 1960s had some merit. Compared to Venice, Cannes may have been short in its recognition of new and important talent through the late 1950s and well into the 1960s. But the annus mirabilis 1968 changed, perhaps forever, the world of film festivals. Cannes itself was

⁷The source for this discussion of prizes is the booklet Maurice Bessy's *Cannes: 35 ans*, (Paris: Jaguar Press, 1982). While scarcely an unbiased account (it was published by the festival to commemorate its 35th anniversary), the lists of prizes awarded are presumably accurate. There is little if any informed comparative discussion about film festivals. The best single one is contained in Volman and Ford's excellent introduction to film, *Cinema pour vous* (Paris: Juillard, 1974), pp. 120-158.

closed down, but it managed to reopen in 1969, and after that there were some fairly rapid re-organizations which changed the festival dramatically. Its chief "competitors," however, virtually did close down. This was literally the case with Venice, and intellectually the case with the Karlovy Vary Film Festival in Czechoslovakia. Cannes, by its own somewhat ingenuous and self-serving admission, rose out of the ashes, phoenix-like. Its real competition, Venice, essentially folded as a result of these same crises, which is in a curious way what happened to the only two other festivals that were able to mount a serious challenge in the long run, Moscow and Karlovy Vary. These festivals should have been the real competition. Why? Because, for better or for worse, a vast percentage of the film producing community is either actively or passively receptive to Marxist analysis. Equivalently, an enormous percentage of the world's intellectuals are either actively or passively Marxist, something that the English speaking minority traditionally overlooks. Moscow and Karlovy Vary should have, over the years, become the real intellectual and artistic centers of the festival circuit.⁸ They had every factor going for them: the traditional excellence of the constituent countries in the cinema and the great public interest in it, the willingness of the state to subsidize artistic and cultural events without regard to costs, and the high prestige intellectuals, academics, and artists enjoy there.

Neither Germany nor Italy was likely to be able to sustain festivals that would, in the long run challenge France. Italy is poorer, and, like its wealthier neighbor to the north, deeply sectionalist, whereas Germany has the great disadvantage of not having a film industry with anything like the reputation of France or Italy since the War. These factors of wealth, a prestigious industry, and a united nationalism, are important ones. Just how important all three of these factors are may be seen by the fact that the United States, which certainly has two of them, is unable to mount a serious film festival in these terms, probably because film has little prestige here. North American universities, for example, do not really take the study of film seriously.⁹ Using these three criteria it is also in retrospect easy to see why Italy would ultimately

⁸A monograph (with no bibliographical information in it to allow a reference) distributed during the 1970s by the management of the Karlovy Vary film festival has an impressive listing of its awards and achievements, one of the more noteworthy being its "discovery" of the Brazilian cinema novo. But all of this was before 1968.



Juli's mother, Juli. *Forbidden Relations*.



Juli, a friendly policeman, Gyorgy. *Forbidden Relations*.

fall behind in the festival competition, since France's wealth has been increasing at a greater rate than Italy's. To these three perhaps one should add a fourth key factor, which is the fact that the management of Cannes and its various associated events has remained comparatively stable. In other words the same people have been doing the same thing for a very long time. This has simply not been true of the other festivals.¹⁰

All of these factors came into play at Moscow and Karlovy Vary in the 1970s, exacerbated by the ossification and closing down of key elements of Eastern European society after 1968, particularly in the case of Czechoslovakia. Although the English language critics had always complained about the relatively few members of the staff at Cannes who spoke English, the key people invariably spoke it. But in the east such people were being replaced by people who did not, and for fairly obvious reasons. As far as finances go, it is worth remarking that during the 1970s the standards of living in key eastern block countries started to go down (most notably in Czechoslovakia), a significant factor, since film festivals take money, as we shall see below. Finally, there was the increasingly worrisome business of the prizes. The idea at these festivals seems to be that the Russians have to get a piece of whatever major prize there is, and the

⁹The remarks of an orthodox commercial director about the study of film are revealing: "Everybody wants it except the universities themselves. The film department . . . is always part of something . . . has always taken a back seat. You know what Lenin said about the importance of films . . . It's a fact everywhere you go in this world except in this country." Edward Dmytryk in an address to the University Film Association in 1980, which appeared first in the *NOR*, 8.2 (1981), pp. 139-148; reprinted in the *JUFA Bulletin*, 34.2 (1983), pp. 9-18. Perhaps a better example is contained in William Zinsser's *On Writing Well* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976). His advice to young writers: "If you think movies are dumb, don't write about them. . . . A film critic who reviews a new Fellini picture without having seen most of Fellini's earlier films is not much help" (pp. 123-125). It is difficult to think of any other area of intellectual endeavor where the basic rules are quite that basic. But the fact that Zinsser feels he needs to bring these things up is a telling indictment of just how wretched the state of affairs really is.

¹⁰The Berlin Film Festival has had three directors since 1975. The situation is more or less the same elsewhere, and the turnover at lower (but extremely important) levels amongst the festival staffs is frequently worse: Karlovy Vary has had three press attachés since 1978, while at Cannes the current press attaché has held the job since 1969. The tenure of people somewhat outside the organization but nonetheless of absolutely key importance is phenomenal: the office of president of the French Film Critics Association (de jure head of the Critics Week, since the Association runs it), was held by the same person for the first twenty years of the Critics Week's existence.

socialist country of the hour has to get a prize in whatever area it enters a film.¹¹

In June of 1968 none of this was particularly obvious, and the future of Cannes looked somewhat grim. However, it managed to stage a festival in 1969, and in the following years prizes were awarded to *Blow-Up*, *If, M.A.S.H.*, *Death in Venice*, and *The Go-Between*. In other words, one might discern a slight drift towards rewarding the new and the untried. I am not trying to imply that Cannes has or had a monopoly on showing artistic successes, and there are many just criticisms that can be levelled at it. However, one often gets the impression that most of what is exhibited there is the commercial junk of the various film producing countries, and this is simply not true. One could continue this listing titles up to the present day, citing the awards given to such difficult and demanding films as *The Tree of the Wooden Clogs* and *Kagemusha* as proofs of the seriousness of the official competition section of the festival. But prizes in and of themselves do not mean that a festival is a more serious forum for the cinema, although presumably artists who exhibit their films there do feel that they have some shot at a prize irrespective of their country of origin and their politics, something that is clearly not the case elsewhere in all too many cases.

But what happened after 1968 changed the festival situation dramatically. Up until then Cannes was essentially one main event showcasing several dozen films, all of which were entered in the competition. But as a result of all of the criticisms of commercialism and so forth in the late 1960s the major sidebars were inaugurated, and it is hard to find anything like them in the world. This is where Cannes now has absolutely no competition at all, nor is it likely to: the end effect of its three competitive, fiercely independent, but ultimately overlapping exhibitions means that every aspect of film gets covered. Almost all of the adverse criticisms one reads about "Cannes" is written by people who are considering only the main com-

¹¹Brashly commercial though Cannes may be, it is hard to credit the fact that the Russian film *Black Bim with One White Ear* is more of a serious film than *Tree of the Wooden Clogs*, or that the awarding of a prize to a Bulgarian-East German co-production eulogizing the life of Bulgarian communist Georgi Dimitrov does not have political overtones. Yet these are actual prizewinners in 1978 and in 1982 at Karlovy Vary. In 1978 the Canadian directors who entered films in competition there said that the prizes were rigged so obviously that they would refuse to come back. Whether this was or was not idle gossip or sour grapes, the fact is that there have been no Canadian entries since then.

petition section and imply that it consists entirely of the competition section and the trash of the "market." The other sections, which by definition are the more intellectual, artistic, or sophisticated, are simply ignored.¹² But if one considers Cannes as the sum of all of its separate components, the festival, far from being some sort of commercial operation, could be criticized as being the exact opposite: the sidebars have come to constitute a global vacuum cleaner ensuring that almost any level of cinematic enterprize will get a showing at Cannes, the more obscure the better.

The point of this historical detour is that in the 1960s there were a number of film festivals that might lay reasonable claim to being the best or most important, but that after the disasters of 1968 Cannes emerged through the 1970s as being in a class all by itself, with no serious competition. The Bunker crisis of 1983, although at first glance of a considerably more trivial nature than the closure of the festival in 1968, is probably a more serious one, although in some ways the situations are parallel. It is more serious because it affects the willingness both of the people involved in the market and the critics and filmmakers, which was not the case in 1968. Although many critics and film artists joined in the closing down of the festival, there is no evidence I am aware of that the people who transacted the actual business were sympathetic to the closure. For many of them, possibly for almost all of them, it would be simply business as usual the next year. But the Bunker problem directly affects the people in the market. The Bunker crisis is also more serious because it is a problem strictly related to Cannes, while the 1968 closure, no matter how traumatic an event it may have been, was, one hopes, reduced to its proper perspective by the other more serious events of that year, such as the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The situations are parallel only in that each disaster demands some substantial response, some real change. In 1968 the response was to open up the festival to include all sorts of alternative cinemas. In retrospect this was the correct decision. In 1983 the problems are probably equally simple: redesign the building. This will take an even more forceful decision on the

part of someone, and it will take a great deal of money, possibly as much as four million dollars. My guess is that this is, strangely enough, just what will be done.¹³ If it is, all that will happen is that Cannes will remain where it is, precariously (although far from accidentally) perched at the top. It has no real competition, and it will remain the major event for some time to come. Irritating as it may be for some, Cannes is likely to be around for some time.

Those who differ about the reputation of the festival do agree on one thing — there is certainly a good deal of unexciting cinema shown there, as elsewhere, although, interestingly enough, critical opinion is rarely unanimous about what it is. To one North American writer it may be Eastern European films with subtitles, to another Antonioni, and, to a third, anything made by a major studio. There is a reason for this. Within the last twenty years a series of large alternative audiences have emerged throughout the western world. In addition to the vast audiences for such works as *Jaws* and *Star Wars* (not, incidentally, ever formally screened at Cannes), there are respectable audiences for films of a slightly more intellectual nature as well, all of those people who, in the words of that amiable travelling dentist, Alexander Theroux, form film societies and have annual screenings of *L'Avventura*.¹⁴ There are a quite a few of these people around, and they appear to break themselves down into smaller audiences on national or even regional levels. That explains why there is an audience of sorts for movies about aging hippies and divorced wives of film teachers who become lesbians, as well as, on a more serious level, documentary footage compiled out of amateur movies taken inside the communities of Polish Jewry

¹³As this article went to press it was announced that the festival management had told the city authorities that the building would have to undergo considerable renovation before the 1984 festival: the outside of the building, which "helped to earn the palais the nickname of 'the bunker,' is being redecorated . . . and the stairs . . . are being completely rebuilt . . . These . . . will include a new cinema screen for the Debussy — the site of major projection problems during the festival — and work on installation of new projection equipment and on acoustics." The figure mentioned is two million dollars: "Cannes Palais gets \$2-Million Summer Re-Do," *Variety*, 20 July 1983, p. 1 & 39.

¹⁴"This film might have been shown at one of these university film societies that have an annual screening of *L'Avventura*, *Pather Pachali*, and tedious East European cartoons." Paul Theroux, *The Great Railway Bazaar* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), p. 272. Note the fact that the title of Ray's film is spelled wrong, an incidental although telling commentary on the importance of film to North American intellectuals.

¹²Much of this stems from the simple fact that at the old palais all of the films shown in competition had simultaneous English language translations, while in the other sections films were shown only with French subtitles. This restricts many North American critics. Contrarily, many of the films shown in the market do have English subtitles, which explains why some critics would tout the market as though it were the only other section of the festival.

in the 1930s.

In some way the critic is supposed to keep track of all of these categories, reserving a set of judgments appropriate to each, and singling out the good from the bad, keeping in mind, of course, that film is sometimes an art form that behaves like other art forms, i.e., artistic styles change drastically. As Somerset Maugham pointed out, when these changes in style occur all of the people who were making art the old way don't simply dry up and disappear.¹⁵ They keep right on, sometimes with a fair degree of success, sometimes without.

Consideration of the films themselves this year was made considerably more difficult by the fact that the traditional festival stand-by, *Le Programme*, went out of business.¹⁶ One of its great charms was the cumulative rankings of the films on the basis of their ratings by the major Parisian critics, and there is no real substitute. The logistical problems of the festival made this closure all the more unfortunate, since my guess is that critics missed more screenings this year than ever before (for the reasons discussed earlier), and so consensus was much more difficult to achieve. That consensus is useful, whether one agrees with it or not, and communications this year were so tenuous that it was much more difficult to assess. However, it is fair to say that the films in the main competition section were, on the whole, disappointing, although the three major films there were probably the three consensus films: Bresson's *Money*, and Tarkovsky's *Nostalgia* being the two critical favorites. Inamura's *Ballad of Narayama* received the palm, while Bresson and Tarkovsky split the "Grand Prize of Creation," which was awarded instead of a prize for best director. Of the remainder, there was a fine film of Goretta's, *The Death of Mario Ricci*, an intriguing one by Oshima, *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*, and an extremely underrated Hungarian entry, *Forbidden Relations*. There was also the usual collection of curiosities: another ballet remake by Saura (this time of *Carmen*) which won him a

¹⁵*The Moon and Sixpence* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1919), pp. 17-18. Maugham's example is George Crabbe, whose "moral stories in rhymed couplets" continued to be written right on through the age of Keats and Wordsworth: "I think he must have read the verse of these young men . . . and I fancy he found it poor stuff. Of course much of it was. But the odes of Keats and of Wordsworth, a poem or two by Coleridge, a few more by Shelley, discovered vast realms of spirit that none had explored before. Mr. Crabbe was as dead as mutton, but Mr. Crabbe continued to write moral stories in rhymed couplets."

¹⁶*Le Programme* was the source for the ratings that appeared in previous articles covering the festival. See the discussion in NOR, 9.2 (1982) pp. 17-19.

special prize for best artistic contribution, an adaptation of a Garcia Marquez story, *Erendira*, directed by Rui Guerra with script by Garcia Marquez, a peculiar Russian entry by Riazanov, *Station for Two*, Weir's *The Year of Living Dangerously*, and Mrnal Sen's *Kharij*, which won the special jury prize. Then there were some films which must be mentioned for a variety of reasons. For example, *The Meaning of Life* also received a special prize. This year there were so many prizes and novelties that by the time one finishes discussing them one has discussed virtually every film shown in competition. Among the very few neglected works: a truly wretched film by Ferreri, called *Story of Piera*, three very weak American entries (*Cross Creek*, *Tender Mercies*, *Angelo My Love*).

Outside of the competition, by far the most important film was the film shown as a "surprise," called *Boat People: Return to Danang*, by the talented filmmaker from Hong Kong, Anna Hui. In 1982 Hui's film *The Return of Wu Viet* had been screened in the Fortnight, and gotten a good deal of favorable response. In 1983 the Fortnight had a virtual monopoly on good films: Schepisi's *Barabarosa*, the Argentine film *Last Days of the Victim*, the Spanish work *Demons in the Garden*, and the Hungarian *Daniel takes the Train*, as well as another intriguing entry from Israel's Yoky Yosha, called *Dead End Street*. Even the lesser films were intriguing, and included *Local Hero* and a fiction film by the talented documentarist Patricio Guzman (called *The Rose of the Winds*). The Critics Week continued its rapid decline, and just as the presence of the Fortnight in the main auditorium old palais could be taken as an omen of its gradual ascent, so could the amateurish efforts of the authors chosen by the Critics Week stand as a good visual equivalent of the utterly inadequate screening room in the new palais which the Week used. Since John Sayles' *Lianna* was shown in this section, some explanations are probably in order. Last, there was the usual spread of films in the market and its various allied information sections. Five entries should be singled out. For Hungary, two radically different works, *Cha cha cha* and *Jacob's Revenge*. For Brazil, *Hurrah Brazil* and *Bar Esperanca*. Bringing up the rear — in more ways than one — was the British film *The Draughtman's Contract*.¹⁷

One of the curiosities about Cannes is the extent to which mediocre or lesser ranked films that are shown in competition there move across the At-

¹⁷All of the films mentioned above will be discussed in the second part of this article, which will appear in the Winter issue.

lantic and become rapidly enshrined as major endeavors, an anomaly caused either by the higher standards of the Cannes critics or the lower ones of the New Yorkers. That being the case, it is well to mention some of these lesser works which will (or in some cases already have) cause a grand stir. Cannes opened with Scorsese's *King of Comedy*, which was variously shown in or out of competition, depending on when one received the information. The idea of the film constitutes a rather cruel set of jokes. The protagonist is a wretched little man whose great desire is to be a comedian



The real daughter of the real minister of culture acting. *Money*.

on the order of Johnny Carson. Instead of the real Johnny Carson however, we have Jerry Lewis, whose measured performance seems to set the film entirely on end: Scorsese probably should have tried to come up with someone who could be passed off as an obvious film version of Carson. Pupkin kidnaps Lewis so that he can get a stint on the show. The whole thing is taken very seriously, and he gets on. He does a standup routine which is one of the other cruel jokes, because it is quite good. He goes to jail (briefly), and emerges as a celebrity. It is a very minor fable about the importance of the media (read: television) which has been done once on a far better scale by Hal Ashby in the film adaptation of the Kosinski novel, *Being There*. Once was probably too much. There is a great gulf between the realization that television is important and the idea — which one sees discussed quite earnestly on television — that television has any real influence on human beings.

An analogous sort of misjudgement characterized the closing film, Badham's *Wargames*, in which the

fascination of a teenage computer whiz for computers parallels Pupkin's for television comedians. The adolescent taps onto the wrong system and, in order to play yet more games, nearly starts a nuclear war, the consequences of which are only slightly less disastrous for mankind than the fact that Pupkin has kidnapped Johnny Carson and won't release him. Both films rely on amateurish characterizations to advance similarly preposterous plots, and both plots are of the same sort: that someone could do something like this is not preposterous, but the treatment of the subject by the



The first prison camp musical. *Station For Two*.

filmmaker is in both cases.

American shallowness was balanced neatly by another trio of impoverished French films, this group even worse than last year's. Great things were expected of Beinex's *The Moon in the Gutter*, largely on the basis of *Diva*. The absolutely disastrous reception of the second film might make people re-evaluate the first, although one doubts it. Equally disappointing was Chereau's *The Wounded Man*, although the real disaster of the three was Becker's *Deadly Summer*. What all three of these films had in common was a certain kind of vulgarity, which, although it may sound old-fashioned, seems quite demeaning of women, or, in the case of the Chereau film, of men.

Given these three disasters, one would imagine that the French audiences would greet the Bresson film with enthusiasm. It was short (less than ninety minutes), clinically precise, and based on a story by Tolstoy in which a chain of reactions to a counterfeit note passed off as a prank by a couple of schoolboys creates a master criminal and a

bloody murderer. Bresson's economy of exposition has become so laconic that his earlier films seem overly verbose by comparison. Some of the French critics were equally enthusiastic, but, curiously enough, the film drew enormous hoots in its initial screening, hoots which were completely misplaced, and really out of order. Part of the booping was the result of one of those curious Gallicisms: the minister of culture's daughter appeared in the film, and for some, this fact seemed rather closely linked to the fact that the film was funded.¹⁸ These reactions — and problems — aside, the film is a minor masterpiece, entirely the opposite in every way to its chief rival, Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia*.

From his first works Tarkovsky has established himself as a director with a tremendous reputation among the film intellectuals of the world. His last two films, however, have a certain sameness about them. In both *Stalker* and *Nostalghia* there is the same fondness for absurdly long slow shots, amplified natural sounds, and footage in muted colors much on the order of sepia. The plot of *Nostalghia* revolves around a Russian in Italy who is attracted to an apparently insane Italian who shares with the Russian (and the director) a fondness for the importance of the mystical in life. Since Bresson's film seems a film in which the director refused to allow any acting to take place at all, and allegedly willed his characters into virtual immobility, the emphasis in *Nostalghia* on inner human development as revealed by the actors made the two films opposites.

Both Tarkovsky and Bresson are major artists. The problem is that they are eccentric ones whose views about the cinema seem entirely opposite. Bresson's liking for short films as opposed to Tarkovsky's love of very long ones is simply one example of what could be a very long list. Bresson's refusal to let the actors in his films act is legendary. This befuddling of great talent with eccentricity could almost be taken as the slogan of this year's festival: very few films escaped it. Take, for example, Peter Weir's *The Year of Living Dangerously*, which is worth seeing for the performance of Linda Hunt as the dwarfish and very male Eurasian photographer Billy Kwann. Casting a woman in the role was an eccentricity. That is not to say that it is not a successful choice. The problem is that one eccentricity leads to another, and finally the film starts to collapse under their weight. What, for instance, is one to make of the way that Sigourney Weaver is photographed in the

first scene we see her in, at the swimming pool with Guy Hamilton, Billy Kwann, and her older British friend? Why are there so many shots from what seems like a camera mounted under the table? Why are the legs and thighs of the heroine made to look like advertisements from the before scene from a sort of weightwatchers add? This is supposed to be, among other things, a deeply romantic movie, and much of it is done in a way that is romantic. Is the director a thigh fetishist? The eccentricities, in other words, are disruptive, and they proliferate. Having the story told in Billy's voice over narration seems at first glance to be conventional. But how does it square with the fact that he is killed during the film? Certainly a defensible strategy, but also an eccentric one.

On a similar level, one could say that the Python film *The Meaning of Life* is also a work of eccentricity. As with all of the other films mentioned, some of it is successfully harnessed. The opening sequence, in which a group of middle-aged office workers turn their decrepit skyscraper into a pirate ship and sail off, is, no matter how silly, a real work of cinematic imagination. But after the opening, what we end up with is yet another series of vaudeville skits, chiefly notable for the somewhat peculiar desires of the various members of the Monty Python group to appear as middle-aged women. What started off as a piece of cinema shifts into the usual (for Python) vaudeville skits whose theme is not the meaning of life but the ability of men to act like women. And not very well, either, which is the problem.¹⁹ Weir can do all sorts of interesting things, but what he cannot do is direct a movie that adheres to some sort of necessary expository logic. The Python group can come up with all sorts of brilliancies, but as female impersonators, they are singularly wretched. Perversely, however, that is chiefly what we get — large doses of what the artists are most deficient at. This same sort of disease infected the other potentially interesting films, most notably the works by Oshima and Riazanov.

Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence is a film about the relationships between two British officers and two Japanese (one an officer the other a noncom) who run a prisoner of war camp during WWII. One British officer is admirably played by David Bowie, and the main characters are all beautifully acted.

¹⁸The boos were mentioned in *Variety*, 25 May 1983, p. 5, "Crowd Boos Bresson At Cannes . . ." where it was reported that "Bresson was visibly miffed by the audience affront."

¹⁹The opening sequence of the film is so cinematically rich that it certainly deserved some sort of award (which it got). However, the fact is that the Python group haven't really progressed as film makers since their early *And Now for Something Completely Different*.

The problem is that, Bowie excepted, the acting gives us cartoons: Bowie's colleague, played by Tom Conti, is nothing other than the British officer played by Peter Sellers in *Doctor Strangelove*. Oshima's intentions are clear: the repression of homosexuality is a major force in regulating the samurai code, and homosexual bonding, no matter how sanitized, is an important part of what happens to men in groups. The film has gorgeous photography and a beautiful score, and the actors did their best, but Oshima doesn't seem to see the difference between illuminating a thing and giving us a parody of it. This is probably why the best scene in the film (and the one that produces the title) is one in which the Japanese noncom is drunk, and bubbling over with infectious good will. That one scene notwithstanding, the two sides have little in common, and it is ironic that in Oshima's film the Japanese are no more comprehensible than they would be in the old North American war films of the 1940s. The savagery is never really explained, nor does the attraction really come across with sufficient force. What we have is a kind of redemption through eccentricity here: Bowie's performance, like Linda Hunt's, redeems an otherwise incoherent film which in the final analysis is propped up on stereotypes.

Riazanov's work is equally peculiar. Unlike all of the other Soviet films openly screened abroad, it serves up some choice examples of local corruption. The provincial railroad station at which the hero is stranded is depicted with a fair amount of truthfulness as a place where the employees are too busy stealing goods to engage in services, and where a constant stream of background announcements remind one that nothing in the Soviet Union really works. Trains fail to arrive, or leave, meetings are cancelled, the best housing is reserved for people working in the blackmarket, and so forth and so on. Why the Russians let the film be shown at Cannes is intriguing.²⁰ Unfortunately the film as social criticism is more intriguing than the film itself, because, the revelations of corruption in soviet life aside, *Station for Two* is representative of the worst sort of Russian film making. It is too long by a third, over acted, under directed, pointlessly photographed, and ludicrously sentimental. On second thought, the answer to the question is simple. The Russians entered it in competition because it is exactly the same sort of shlock with which they win

²⁰It is vaguely possible that the release of the film has something to do with Andropov, since he has launched a formidable attack on corruption, so that the topic is presumably "safer" than it might have once been. There is some discussion of this in the source quoted in note 23.

an award every year (either at Moscow or at Karlovy Vary), made just a little daring by the references to corruption. The film is not all of those things owing to a failure on the part of the director in the usual senses of the word. The length, the sentimentality, are deliberate. If the social criticism makes the film a rarity in the east, the peculiar directing makes it an eccentric one in the west.

Even more peculiar is a work of an entirely different sort, Rui Guerra's film *Erendira*, based on a story by Gabriel Garcia Marquez which he himself has turned into a script. "One evening, a very long time ago, when I was living it up in a lost village in the Caribbean, I met a little girl of eleven whom an old woman, perhaps her grandmother, had forced into prostitution. Following the itinerary of the religious feasts, from village to village they trailed their own travelling bordello with their own tent, their own group of musicians and their own flow of drink. Their stay in the village lasted only three days, but the memory has remained forever in my mind. I was unable to feel it, however, as a novel. I saw it rather as a drama in images; it was film rather than literature. For this reason, I wrote it in the form of a screenplay. It was only much later that I decided to adapt it as a novel."²¹ Garcia Marquez' story of *Erendira* was published in 1972, although the image of the young girl he relates above happened when he was sixteen. How much of the script of the film derives from the "original" screenplay, and how much was written by Garcia Marquez during the production of the film is an intriguing question.

Erendira has the weaknesses of all the other Latin American co-productions. Most members of the cast are European. Irene Papas plays the devilish old grandmother. Although the film was made entirely in Mexico and entered at the festival as a Mexican film, Mexicans have only token roles. Claudia Ohana, a young Brazilian actress, plays *Erendira*, but the other two important roles in the film are played by the European actors Michel Lonsdale and Rufus. Irene Papas is ill at ease as a Colombian grandmother, and at times seems to be acting in another film entirely. She and Michel Lonsdale drift into pantomime as well as simple overacting, while Claudia Ohana understates her role to the point that it appears she is simply toughing it out amidst a troop of hams.

Guerra is of course the archetypal "third world" director, which for the French virtually guarantees

²¹These quotations are taken from the press booklet on the film. The comments on this film will appear in slightly different form in *Americas* (November 1983).

that his work will be chock full of eccentric happenings, but his main accomplishment here is to bring the scriptwriter's images to the screen in such a way that they appear fantastic and imaginative without being silly. The forceful wind which blows through her grandmother's house, the golden oranges of Ulysee's father, and the vast facade of the senator's election campaign, are all impressive. They serve to represent Garcia Marquez' talents in ways that Miguel Littin was quite unable to do in *Montiel's Widow*. Guerra does equally well at capturing that peculiar oscillation between a magical world of symbol and a very real rural peasant reality. Lastly, he manages to give us the humor of irony and exaggeration that pervades his scriptwriter's other fiction. The problem with the film is not Guerra's directing, but the script and the actors. The acting is at times wretched. There is the script, which is just what its author said it was: a drama of images. The images are good, and Guerra brings them to life, but they do not give us the sense of structured drama. What is missing from the script is a conventional sense of dramatic structure (which is not the same thing as a conventional dramatic structure). Nor does Guerra provide any help. It is a surprising problem given the two artists, whose other works, at their best, have precisely that quality. In short, *Erendira* looks like an old script filmed with a commendable but actually misplaced adherence; perhaps not surprising, given Garcia Marquez' reputation, but nonetheless unfortunate.

Two other equally highly regarded films are in much the same category of intriguing failures. Saura's *Carmen* continues the director's conceit that by transposing famous ballets to film he can improve on them by tinkering with their basic ideas. What *Carmen* actually is, is an extremely low budget film visualized pretty much the way a student taking filmmaking I would see it. The director of the ballet is searching for the perfect Carmen. He finds her, and falls in love with her. Gradually his passions turn him from the director of the tragedy to a participant. All is however so artfully done that one is never sure what is ballet and what is life. By now Saura's rewriting of the classics of Spain has become a regular feature of Cannes, and, judging from the cheers at the end, an important and breathlessly awaited part to boot. The problem is not that his films are bad. Part of the problem lies in the fact that the works are so predictable, and part of it lies in the fact that Spain has a score of talented film makers whose works should be seen in competition, while Saura's works should be shuttled over to the *Un certain regard* section.

Towards the conclusion of the festival the rumors were that the prizes would be awarded either to Bresson or Tarkovsky, and several critics left the Tarkovsky screening asserting triumphantly that "this was the film." In a mildly surprising double switch, the jury awarded the prize to Inamura's *The Ballad of Narayama*, a relatively conventional film about a Japanese village where the custom is for families to take their old people up to the top of a mountain and abandon them when they reach seventy. The son must take his mother up to the mountain. Despite the sedateness of the idea, the film is an animated one. Of all the films shown in competition it was clearly the most conventional piece of cinema, with an equal emphasis on acting, photography, and a reasonably plotted script. That being said, unfortunately there isn't too much else one can say about it, except that it has a good bit of sex and violence livening up what may seem after my description a pretty dull story, but in a festival overburdened with examples of eccentricity and self indulgence, this may have been the reason why it got the top award. Or possibly it won because Akira Kurosawa designed the poster for Cannes this year.

Finally, there were three essentially simple straightforward films entered in competition which I fear ended up being ignored as a result of their unpretentiousness. The first of these was Goretta's *The Death of Mario Ricci*, which undoubtedly suffered from being screened at the beginning of the festival in the infamous Debussy, although the jury (who saw the film elsewhere) went on to award Volonte the prize for best actor. This prize was richly deserved, although all of Goretta's actors in this film were excellent. The plot is simple — which is why the acting was so important. A famous television newsman named Fontana and his sidekick go to a small Swiss town to do an interview with a world famous authority on global famine. But the professor is undergoing a midlife crisis of sorts. At key moments he locks himself in the bathroom, and even his attractive "secretary," played by Mimsy Farmer, is unable to do anything for him. As they while the time away, the two newsmen become aware of a minor tragedy: an Italian workman, Mario Ricci, was killed in an "accident," and this accident, which looks more and more like murder, triggers the always present divisions in Swiss society between the genuine Swiss and their guestworkers. Although Goretta's treatment of this division is less comic than the one given us earlier in *The Swiss-makers*, and less violent than some of the French treatments, notably Boisset's *Dupont Lajoie*, it is

at least as persuasive, and it is to the hero's credit that he spends more time unravelling the murder than he does fussing with the professor. *The Death of Mario Ricci* is an optimistic and serene film, with multiple happy endings: the professor recovers, his secretary's faith in him is restored, the murder mystery is solved, and several other minor problems are ironed out. But the serenity and beneficence are won, not gratuitously awarded. This is a subtle film, and to my way of thinking Goretta's best to date. One detail may illustrate how subtle Goretta is: Fontana is a cripple.

Mrinal Sen's *Kharij* is a more alien work: a young couple live happily in what appears to be middle-class India. The husband promises the wife he will buy her anything she wants, and what she wants is a servant. This servant is a little boy who is handed over to them by his father. He lives in squalor, and one cold night he goes into the kitchen to sleep and asphyxiates himself. There is a tremendous scandal, and the young couple gradually come to realize their thoughtlessness and carelessness. Sen, who is really the only other Indian filmmaker of any prominence internationally, seems to me to be getting better and better in his work. There is no particular point or moral to this film, although the film's subtitle, "a class affair," implies one. It seems instead a reasonably objective analysis of a serious social problem for which there is no easy answer. But Sen's camera, which simply follows the young husband around as he tries to find the boy's father, consults with his own father, and makes trips to the police station and morgue, gives us an idea of the dimensions of the problem that makes any sort of comment necessary. Ultimately a film like this comes across better with seasoned actors, something that viewing *Kharij* and the Goretta film side by side makes painfully obvious. Only the young man's father has the presence that the film really needs. But it is scarcely Sen's fault that he must labor under these handicaps. The point is that he makes better films with them than many of his more famous colleagues make with all the actors and funds in the world.

Also lost in the Bunker was Zsolt Kezdi-Kovacs' *Forbidden Relations*. Lili Monori, by now far, and away Hungary's most famous actress, plays a village girl whose husband hangs himself. Then Juli meets a stranger who returns to the village. There is between them an extreme sort of animal passion from the very first. Later, in a finely delineated scene, she learns that Gyorgy is actually her brother from her mother's first marriage. It makes no difference to her. Their affair continues. Her

mother, who reports the two of them to the authorities, goes insane. In places the story is reminiscent of Geza Csath's ironic reworking of Chateaubriand's great romantic fable, "Paul and Virginia," in which (in Csath) the two cousin-lovers are redeemed by Virginia's mother, who confesses that Virginia is really her child by another man, that is to say, she is an adulteress. And Virginia? "She sobbed, but accepted. I believe (and there's no reason I should be angry for it) Virginia would have let her mother go to torture had her own happiness depended on it."²² But the film continues. The couple are tried. In the socialist state incest is also a crime, and a serious one (remember that Marxism-Leninism is scientific). Gyorgy is sent to a prison for a year, and Juli is given a six months suspended sentence. She stays at home to raise their child. It is her joy at his impending release that sends the mother insane. The two sibling lovers desire to live together peacefully as a couple, to have children. It is utterly impossible for society to change this desire. Juli becomes pregnant again, the two are again tried, and both sent to prison. Gyorgy is released first, and occupies himself by rebuilding the ruined house that the two of them are trying to make their home. He has become, but this time, a model husband, father, brother, citizen. Juli has the second child in prison, and is given leave to come home temporarily. Even though the prison awaits her, and probably both of them if they do not renounce their incestuous relationship, there is no possibility that they will change.

There is then, the film seems to say, some basic elemental level of humanity which sticks, which cannot be eradicated, sympathized with, nor even understood. But Lili Monori manages to persuade one of the believability of the situation. Her hysteria, her sullenness, which in her films with Marta Meszaros came to be eccentricities, here are put to good use: Kezdi-Kovacs appears to realize that Monori's greatest asset is the fact that if you see her standing in a crowd of people, or walking down a street, her presence jumps out at you. When her talents are being used well, as they are here, she can virtually carry an entire film, and in a film like this, whose very premises are so alien to us, she has to carry it. All in all, an excellent film which, unlike many other Eastern European works, is not essentially a work of political analysis, nor one that requires a sophisticated understanding of contemporary Eastern European society or history.²³ All

²²Taken from *The Magician's Garden and Other Stories*, tr. Jascha Kessler and Charlotte Rogers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 42.

of those factors are there as subtexts, but the film does not rely on them to establish itself. Most of the films this year shown in competition either portrayed shallow characters in arresting situations, or deeply portrayed characters trapped in a situation of no real worth. Such mismatches can be hidden in a number of ways — outlandish situations, exotic settings, brilliant photography. But

²³This is not to say that there are not (obvious) political overtones to the film. See the reporting on the press conference by E.J. Dionne, Jr., "Politics Also Makes the Film Scene at Cannes," *Herald Tribune*, 17 May 1983, p. 5.

finally the lack of depth comes to dominate, and the films are packed away into that great cinematic limbo. That may also happen to this film, but it scarcely deserves it, and for once it was a pleasure to see the sort of film being shown in competition that should be seen there: unconventional, questioning, and brilliantly done. □

This is the first of a two part article on the 1983 Cannes Film Festival. The second part will appear in the Winter issue.

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Heinz Risse

THE ORDEAL

Translated by Renate Latimer

In the vicinity of F., a small mountain village in Calabria, on a June morning in the year 1412, the corpse of a man was found who had apparently been robbed and murdered during the night. Since the dead man no longer had anything on him from which one could have deduced his identity, he was brought into town and displayed at the morgue. Several people who saw him there declared at once with certainty to have met the man on the evening before his murder. At the inn, they said, he had told them that he was a merchant traveling on behalf of his business. The innkeeper, whom the judge had fetched hereupon, confirmed their words and added that the stranger had not left the inn until very late in the evening, after a plentiful meal, saying that he now intended to continue his travels. Two young people had departed with him. They had sat at his table during the meal and had entertained him, and moreover the stranger had paid their bill. The judge asked whether the two young men lived in F. The innkeeper assured him that they did and gave their names; one was called Urbini, the other Vigilio.

The judge had both brought forward. Although they explained that they had already separated from the merchant at the gate of the inn and although an immediately undertaken search of their houses did not yield anything incriminating, the judge ordered that they be retained in custody. On the following days he interrogated them repeatedly, but no matter how cleverly he phrased his questions, he did not succeed in discovering even a hint of guilty evidence. Finally he too was convinced that neither Vigilio nor Urbini was the murderer of the merchant. Nonetheless he could not decide to rescind their imposed arrest. Then one night amidst the discord of his deliberations he came upon the idea to leave the decision up to God. On the following day he ordered Urbini to be fetched: he asked him whether he had had any dreams during any of the nights of his stay in prison. Urbini looked at the judge in amazement: yes, he replied, a very singular dream indeed. In this dream he had seen himself lying in a road, motionless and also incapable of moving. It had been dark and the fear of being accidentally run over by a carriage had tormented him greatly, especially since he had been able to hear the rumbling of carriages in the distance; but in fact none had come near him. Upon awakening, he had been bathed in the sweat of fear which he had experienced in the dream.

The judge reflected for a moment and then ordered Urbini at dawn of the following day to be placed, with chained hands and feet, outside the town in the road traveled by farmers who were bringing their wares from the environs to market. There he was supposed to lie for two hours; the farmers were to incur punishment if they did not direct their vehicles as if the road were empty. Should Urbini survive the ordeal, his freedom was to be restored.

The judge himself appeared on the next day at the spot where Urbini was laid down. Together with the constables he waited for the time, which he had designated for a decision, to elapse. To his astonishment the time passed without a single carriage driving by. At last after he himself had removed the chains from the arrested man, he commanded two of his people to walk down the road and inquire in the villages at the foot of the mountain why the farmers would have kept away from the town market on this day. The messengers soon returned: they announced that, not far below the spot where Urbini had been laid down, a rock slide had taken place during the night and stones and earth were blocking the road.

The judge, who saw in this occurrence the proof that someone had indeed relieved him of the burden of a decision, had Vigilio fetched at once and also asked him whether he had had any dreams during the time of his arrest. The prisoner smiled. "I dreamt," he replied, "that I placed my hand into the jaw of the stone lion at the portal of the town hall."

He too is innocent, the judge thought.

"The lion bit me," Vigilio continued.

"The stone lion?" the judge asked in amazement and shook his head.

"It was merely a dream," the prisoner replied.

"All right then," the judge said, "let us go to the town hall and you will place your hand into the lion's jaw. If he does not bite you, I will order to have you also set free."

Together with the prisoner and two guards he walked through the streets to the town hall. A crowd of people followed them because news of Urbini's deliverance had spread rapidly; this miracle roused the desire in many to be present at Vigilio's ordeal. However, laughter arose when the masses learned from the constables of Vigilio's task to prove his innocence. The prisoner too smiled while climbing the steps to the portal of the town hall and observing the amused faces of the people in the market square. In obvious anticipation of his own deliverance he placed, still smiling, his right hand into the open jaw of the stone lion, but with a scream of pain he immediately withdrew it again. Those standing close to him saw that Vigilio's violent movement had flung a scorpion unto the steps of the town hall: evidently the animal had found refuge in the dark cave of the lion's jaw and with its sting had defended itself against the intruding hand.

The judge decreed that the prisoner be returned to prison at once. He also ordered that no one be permitted to administer medical aid to his injury: so deeply was he now convinced of Vigilio's guilt. Several hours later amidst great suffering Vigilio died.

Nonetheless the judge's conviction concerning the merchant's murderer was wrong; in fact, neither Urbini nor Vigilio had murdered the salesman, but a man who twenty years later admitted to his heinous deed on his deathbed in Naples. No one in F., however, learned of this confession, not even the judge. Even if it had come to his attention, he ought not to have doubted the justice of the decision he had handed down. For who may say whether the punishment was not to relate to a deed of which the judge was unaware? Connections that one can see are usually illusory and can cover the true connections. Man can only ask his question — as the judge did. He seldom learns whether he was able to solve the mystery imposed by the answer. □

Ben Stoltzfus

L'EDEN ET APRÈS: ROBBE-GRILLET'S TWELVE THEMES

"L'Eden is one of the first films engendered by series."

— Alain Robbe-Grillet

ROY ARMES believes that *L'Eden et après* (1970) is one of the most original works of modern cinema.¹ The film uses a complex series of generative themes which Robbe-Grillet himself has compared to Schoenberg's "atonal" system.

Eden was constructed, not with a binary structure, reality/imagination as mentioned by some critics, but on the basis of twelve themes, each one reproduced in ten series (five large series and five small ones within the large) somewhat like the twelve tone scale [i.e., system] of dodecaphonic music.²

In his book, *Style and Idea*, Schoenberg also emphasizes a possible comparison between sound and image by relating tones to objects:

Just as our mind always recognizes, for instance, a knife, a bottle or a watch, regardless of its position, and can reproduce it in the

imagination in every possible position, even so a musical creator's mind can operate sub-consciously with a row of tones, regardless of their direction, regardless of the way in which a mirror might show the mutual relations, which remain a given quality.³

In music, a tone has pitch, quality, and duration. In film, an object has size, color, and duration. While it is prudent not to push synesthesia too far, the high pitch of a tone may be compared to the small size of a cherry, just as the cherry's red color may be compared to the timbre of a musical instrument. Finally, a filmed object, like sound, may be of long or short duration.

If tones are comparable to objects, then themes must be something else, since ideas in music and film are constructed from syntagmas of sounds, words, and images. In music, as in film, by convention, the word "theme" is most frequently used to designate a work's central idea or thesis. While Robbe-Grillet uses objects and images as thematic generators, their number is not limited to twelve. It may also be confusing to have Robbe-Grillet refer to objects as "themes." Even more disconcerting than this semantic difficulty is the actual enumeration of twelve themes which contains signifiers (such as the stolen picture — a thing), motifs (such as the labyrinth), and concepts (such as death).

The difficulty then, with Robbe-Grillet's twelve themes, as he lists them, is that he mixes themes with motifs with objects. Objects generate themes and ideas generate objects. Sensing this problem he has said that it is perhaps impossible for a viewer to reconstruct the film's twelve generative themes. However, if we keep Schoenberg's original comparison in mind, it may be possible to structure analogies between *L'Eden* and a musical system based not on objects but on categories. The sheer number of people, images, and places precludes a meaningful comparison between them and the twelve tones of dodecaphonic music. But if we start at the other end, i.e., with the more abstract con-

¹"Robbe-Grillet in Africa," *London Magazine*, 13 (1973), p. 109. A parenthetical reference to this article will appear within the text. See also André Gardies, *Alain Robbe-Grillet* (Paris: Seghers, Cinéma d'aujourd'hui, 1972), pp. 84-93. Gardies' study is structural and formalist. He makes no attempt to "explain" the cultural context or the mythic units Robbe-Grillet uses for his generative themes, i.e., nothing is "recuperated." Gardies sticks to Robbe-Grillet's original twelve themes and does not differentiate between idea generators (such as death) and object generators (such as doors).

²*Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui*, Vol. 1, ed. Jean Ricardou and Françoise van Rossum-Guyon, Colloque Cerisy-la-Salle (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), p. 205. All translations from French into English are my own. *L'Eden et après*: Eastmancolor, 100 min., 35mm., Robbe-Grillet's fourth film, excluding *Last Year at Marienbad* (directed by Alain Resnais, scenario by Robbe-Grillet). Robbe-Grillet wrote and directed *L'Immortelle*, *L'Homme qui ment*, *Trans-Europ-Express*, *L'Eden et après*, *Glissements progressifs du plaisir*, and *Le Jeu avec le feu*. Parenthetical references will appear within the text as NRHA, 1.

³*Style and Idea: Selected Writings*, ed. Leonard Stein (New York: St. Martins Press, 1975), p. 223. Parenthetical references will appear within the text.

cepts signified by groupings of objects, images, and places, we can reconstruct a twelve theme system. In the table that follows, my list on the right corresponds generally to Robbe-Grillet's. The essential difference between the two is that mine does not mix apples (themes) with oranges (objects).

is stated with water: Violette drinks a glass as an antidote to the "fear powder" and recovers.

The chosen "row" of themes, like Schoenberg's twelve tones, thus forms the basis for the cinematic narrative (which is melody in music), its space (which in music is rhythm), and its metonymy

Robbe-Grillet's list of generative themes: ⁴	My list:
1. Picture (object)	1. Art (theme)
2. Labyrinth (motif)	2. Alienation (theme)
3. Imagination (theme)	3. Freedom (theme)
4. The danse (motif)	4. Play (theme)
5. Sperm (viscous material)	5. Eroticism (theme)
6. Doors (objects)	6. Exoticism (theme)
7. Male sex (theme)	7. Superman (theme)
8. Prison (place)	8. Captive woman (theme)
9. Blood (liquid)	9. Violence (theme)
10. Death (theme)	10. Death (theme)
11. The double (theme)	11. Fear (theme)
12. Water (liquid)	12. Purification (theme)

A shot of a painting on the wall of Violette's room, entitled *Composition #234*, a semi-abstract rendition in white and blue of Houmt Souk, gives us the *art theme* (1). The *theme of alienation* (2) is rendered as the students' estrangement from their studies. Their boredom and indifference is shot as a large mathematics lecture hall in which Violette sees flowers on the blackboard instead of equations. The prestidigitations of the handsome stranger connote the *theme of freedom* (3). The student games in the Eden café connote the *play theme* (4). The *theme of eroticism* (5) is shot as a girl eating a raw egg. A travel poster of Tunisia on the wall of the Eden café connotes *exoticism* (6). Duchemin, the tall, blond, blue-eyed, handsome stranger connotes the *superman theme* (7). The *captive woman theme* (8) is rendered by shots of Violette in the Eden café which looks like a labyrinth-prison. The "shooting" of a student and the "rape" of another signifies *violence* (9). A ritual death ceremony with candles is *death* (10), while the *fear theme* (11) is stated literally with "fear powder" which Violette licks off Duchemin's hand. Her paranoid reactions, like musical tones, engender a rapid succession of images and sounds. The *theme of purification* (12)

(which is harmony). As with Schoenberg's system, the mutual relation of tonal signifiers is shot separately as successive slow scenes, or as fast, disparate, contiguous images — a relationship which regulates the succession of intervals as well as their association into "harmonies." In *L'Eden*, as in a serial composition, the order of the images and tones is sometimes transposed, inverted, or read backward. No "theme" or tone returns unless separated by the other intermediate eleven, thus insuring an equal distribution of emphasis on all twelve. The chosen "row" of twelve forms the basis of the film's diegesis and the music's melody.

While musical harmony may have its visual counterpart in metonymy, the students' mood at the Eden café is anything but harmonious. Disenchantment with reality pervades the café, the university lecture halls, a room where the students smoke pot, and in which Violette makes love. This feeling of ennui, this sense of alienation which communicates itself to the spectators, is in fact the students' reality and constitutes one of the themes of the film. Thus, the theme of alienation (no. 2) has its signs: students dramatizing ritual games of rape, murder, and death in a café which is a labyrinth.

L'Eden et après opens with a voice saying "subjective, objective, injective, superjective, bijective," beginning with actual words and ending with absurd, nonexistent ones. This comical de-

⁴*Obliques*, Nos. 16-17 (Paris: Editions Borderie, 1978), p. 197. Bruce Morrisette, in his study of *L'Eden*, views "themes" as "materials" to be structured, as the "reservoir" from which the author takes his subjects. See "Post-Modern Generative Fiction: Novel and Film," *Critical Inquiry*, 2 (1975), p. 258.

valuation of reality is followed by images of the neon sign of the Eden café, followed by other "signs" (i.e., object-images) such as eyes and pipes which are accompanied on the sound track by piano music. These effects evolve into disparate, dissonant, non-musical sounds. We hear next a voice saying "objects, images, imagination, fantasies, fancies, deforming mirrors, reality, my life." We see a girl being "raped" on a table in the Eden café. A voice says "the image of a sum is the sum of the images." We see shots of the Tunisian landscape. Violette's voice says: "In our useless and studious life nothing really ever happens."

The rapid succession of frames in this "overture," and the series of objects contained within them, adumbrate the twelve themes of the film. To reflect on these themes at all is to discern a pattern of death, violence, eroticism, and alienation. Other themes, like exoticism, the superman stereotype, the captive woman stereotype, and freedom correspond to additional exaggerated social codes. Still other themes, like art, play, and purification are figures of intentionality, an assertion of authorial identity.

Robbe-Grillet assembles the images of contemporary myths, exaggerating and deforming an iconography drawn either from high culture (Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*) or from low culture (the funnies, junk yards, sex magazines). In short, the themes with which Robbe-Grillet builds his system are fragments of our collective psyche:

As you know, sadistic imagery, with an ever increasing insistence, is appearing in certain popular areas: the jackets of novels sold in stations, cartoons, film publicity, etc. The difference is that in [my film] the sadistic imagery is emphasized without any moralizing alibi Our society has images of rape, torture, woman-as-thing, or of spilled blood already in its head; what I am doing is to expose them to the light of day, showing them as platitudinous images now in vogue.⁵

Roy Armes believes that the exploration of such a world in which cultural stereotypes become dream and in which advertising images acquire a future dimension is ideally suited to the cinema in general and Robbe-Grillet's work in particular ("R-G in Africa," p. 108).

Violette, the heroine of the film, plays games of

chance, rape, murder, and death — games that mime the cultural stereotypes they dramatize. Each exaggeration, like a giant Campbell soup can in a series of pop art posters, or as in a Rauschenberg "combine," is a sign, connoting one or more of the twelve themes. The twelve themes, like the twelve tones of Schoenberg's system, appear as rapid, discontinuous images that will be repeated "thematically" in the café, in the factory, and in North-Africa — the three places (Robbe-Grillet has organized them into five) where the ten series help to construct the twelve themes.

Most if not all of these themes overlap, since it may not be possible to produce art without freedom, or to think of death without love. Things in the film, like a stolen painting, or events, like the student games in the Eden café, or relationships, like the one between Violette and the stranger, Duchemin, depending on the particular "blend" of associations, will signify one or more themes. For illustrative purposes suppose we use theme eleven, fear, symbolized by Violette licking "fear powder" off the back of the stranger's hand (Duchemin). Violette's instant panic evokes a succession of images: chains, hooks, scorpion, cages, fire, blood, broken glass, spikes, the rack, the stranger dead, a bloodied photograph — things and scenes which, through synecdochic contiguity, construct or shape the concept "fear."

Robbe-Grillet has fragmented this idea of fear into objects and images which are then juxtaposed in order to construct the picture of the whole. He has selected images whose discourse illustrates the twelve themes.⁶ Anecdotal meaning, says Robbe-Grillet, may emerge from a juxtaposition of two or more images:

If you bring together the theme [i.e., image] fire and the theme death you produce a narrative fragment: the mortal fire. I have organized an adventure, not in the traditional narrative sense as the critics define it, but have, on the contrary produced anecdotal sense through the serial juxtaposition of twelve more or less arbitrary themes [i.e., ideas] chosen in advance (*NRHA*, 1, p. 205).

For instance, there is a Tunisian sequence of a nude descending a staircase, perhaps Robbe-Grillet's nod to Duchamp's famous painting in the Philadelphia museum. In addition to signifying the art

⁵Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Le Sadisme contre la peur," interview, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, No. 310 (19 Oct. 1970), p. 48. Parenthetical references will appear within the text as *SCP*.

⁶Maria Bystrzycka, "Eisenstein as Precursor of Semantics in Film Art," *Sign, Language, Culture*, ed. A.J. Greimas et al. (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1970), p. 473.

theme, the frame contains allusions to at least six other themes. The scene depicts a nude woman descending a spiral staircase whose metal banister resembles prison bars. When the woman reaches the bottom of the circular staircase, she is seen standing in profile, back arched, left arm over her eyes, her abdomen opposite the tip of a giant, old-fashioned plow that is pointing directly at her. The themes of art, love, death, superman, captive woman, and fear, due to metonymy, synecdoche, overlapping, and "contamination" of signifiers are contained in that brief sequence. This synchronic activity of images can thus, effectively, be compared to chords in music.

Allusion to a famous painting connotes "art," while the naked woman, iron banister, and plow connote "captive woman subject to male, aggressive love." Robbe-Grillet's hieroglyph, like the dream-work of Freud's analyses, contains the pictogram whose objects, i.e., signifiers, express the content of the total image. But the audience viewing the scene of the nude descending the staircase generally laughs at the playful elements it contains — perhaps the incongruity of the oversized plow (though why this should be perceived as funny would require a separate, lengthy analysis).

Sado-erotic signifiers (no. 5 and no. 9) merge with the death theme (no. 10) and with art (no. 1). Dutchman's (a comic variant no doubt of Duchamp's name) nude model is seen lying "dead" in a bathtub in blood-stained water. Mock violence is in fact everywhere and the film contains a variety of deaths by attack, poisoning, and drowning. In a Djerba prison, a woman's body is seen several times on a rack, or next to giant spikes, like those of an inverted harrow. Do harrow and plow in a sado-erotic context "read" as perverse variants of an earth-goddess fertility motif? Robbe-Grillet himself suggests this possibility when he states that "woman, as a mythical object, maintains a secret rapport with Nature (lunar cycles, pregnancy, maternal instinct)."⁷ We could also say that Violette has undergone a "harrowing" experience, that she has been "racked" with fear and distress. Since film, as Christian Metz points out, is language without *langue*, i.e., a unit of *parole* that transcends English, French, German, or Russian, its universal puns are translatable into English regardless of the fact that the film was conceived in French. Film language short-circuits *langue* going directly from frame, objects, and images (the artist's *parole*) to theme.

⁷Alain Robbe-Grillet, "L'Eden et après: début pour un ciné-roman," *Obliques*, Nos. 16-17, p. 192.

Puns, therefore, as disguised signifiers, invite translation from a pre-conscious imagery into conscious, i.e., rational categories. Without such translation, the twelve themes would be arbitrary and meaningless.

The captive woman theme (no. 8) is developed not only on the narrative level, with Violette's imprisonment and torture, but also on the affective level, with images of nude women in cages, as though these women were rare birds to be admired or wild animals to be tamed or merchandise ready for shipment to the brothels of the world. The caging of an erotic object, like a naked woman, with its white-slave-traffic overtones, anticipates sado-erotic scenes of torture and murder, the end-product of another cultural stereotype — male aggression and the theme of violence. The superman theme (no. 7) is thus linked to violence (no. 9) as much as the captive woman theme (no. 8) is linked to fear (no. 11). If the freedom of the male contrasts with the bondage of the female (none of the males is imprisoned or tortured), then fear seems to be the corollary of woman's subservience. Fear is, in fact, the film's most consistent theme and obvious signifiers, like the fear powder — things (shall we say tones?) that point directly to fear or are associated with it — are frequent. A partial listing would include *pistol, abduction, prison, nude, poison, scorpion, knife, fear powder, factory, corpses, darkness, blindfold*.

If, with fear signifiers (or tones), we list erotic signifiers (no. 5) such as *pistol, abduction, prison, nudes in cages, sperm (glue, paint), key, plow, eggs, chains, spikes, the rack, pipes, a handbag, etc.*, we see that signs like *pistol, abduction, prison, and nude* belong to both themes and are present in both categories. We can say, therefore, that due to a pairing of objects, signifiers may connote simultaneous themes — themes which may triple or quadruple depending on how the spectator is "reading" the film.

In film, as in music, certain narrative solutions or thematic resolutions probably occur as a result of cultural conventions and historical expectations. Forms that a conservative public might find shocking may be commonplace to the avant-garde. In fact, all too frequently, what seems acceptable or unacceptable depends on social patterns, background, education, and experience — types of exposure conditioned by a natural, historical, or social milieu. Accordingly, for those unfamiliar with serialism in art, a Schoenberg composition, or a film like *L'Eden* will appear dissonant and disorderly. A tonal system, for example, corresponds to prob-

abilities which the auditor knows will occur and he probably derives pleasure from that knowledge and the fulfillment of his expectations. The apparent disorder of a dodecaphonic system disrupts this auditor's pleasure, unless, of course, he knows that "atonal" music is nothing more than another different system of probabilities. Like a composer, the *auteur* of a serial film chooses and orders a constellation of images that lend themselves to multiple relations that are synchronic and diachronic and that can be assembled forward and backward on a vertical as well as on a horizontal axis. Serial art, says Umberto Eco, has destroyed one sequence of probabilities in order to introduce new meaning and a new type of discourse. The higher level of apparent disorder is accompanied by higher levels of information. What characterizes a poetics of this kind is that the possibilities for message proliferation multiply, thus engendering contradictory meanings.⁸

Contradiction leads to defamiliarization which, in *L'Eden*, corresponds in some ways to the ennui in Kafka's works. Violette, like K. in *The Trial*, is "arrested" for unknown crimes. She is held captive for her alleged complicity in the theft of her own painting. Finally, through guile, after many episodes, she frees herself from her tormentors, escapes to the roof of the prison, steps over dead menaces like the shark (what is a shark doing on a prison roof?), and walks alone along the sandy beach. She soon tires, her steps falter, and she falls, crawling in the sand on her hands and knees.

The theme of alienation (no. 2) manifests itself as a schizoid double — an almost identical Violette — young, blond, short-haired, slim, dressed in a black-and-white print mini-dress and knee-high boots, who lifts Violette number one up from the sand, takes her back into town, gives her water, fresh clothes identical to hers, restores her calm, brings her back to herself, and then once more vanishes into the sea. But contrary to what we might expect, the splitting of the self acts as a healing experience: it is the theme of purification (no. 12). It is as though Violette's sojourn in Djerba and her "vision" of the double, had endowed her with magical powers enabling her to rival those of the enchanted stranger. It is as though Violette's newly-found freedom had, in the end, endowed her with strength. Subsequently she finds the painting

for which so many had "died." She is now a liberated woman, equal to the "superman."

Paronomasia (no. 4) helps us decode the film's incongruities. As in a dream, mystery (the infrastructure) has its own internal logic. Thus Duchemin, seen dead in a European canal, is no more "dead" than Dutchman at the foot of a jetty stairs in Tunisia. Violette, who finds Duchemin "dead," goes for help and returns. But Duchemin has vanished and in his place she finds her handbag. Why the handbag? Why is Duchemin gone? Such anachronisms devalue the logic of conventional film narrative, but they also connote dreamlike incoherence on its most elemental level, because most of the things, places, and events in this film are substitute signs, i.e., hieroglyphs. The "fact" that Violette finds the stolen painting after her "liberation," which comes after her "trip" to North-Africa, which ensues from the events triggered by the stolen "key," etc., invites speculative and "re-cuperative" interpretations. The imagery of Violette's waking dream resembles the linguistic puns, compression, and distortion of experience Freud describes in "The Interpretations of Dreams."⁹

Erich Fromm maintains that dreams are a language, while Jacques Lacan affirms that a dream, like any language, has sentence structures which appear in the form of a rebus. A child's dream represents the primordial ideography of such "writing," while an adult reproduces the simultaneously phonetic and symbolic use of signifying elements. The hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt and the ideograms of Chinese writing would be examples of this syntactic "simultaneity":

The important part [says Lacan] begins with the translation of the text, the important part which Freud tells us is given in the [verbal] elaboration of the dream — in other words, in its rhetoric. Ellipsis and pleonasm, hyperbaton or syllepsis, regression, repetition, apposition — these are the syntactical displacements; metaphor, catachresis, antonomasia, allegory, metonymy, and synecdoche — these are the semantic condensations in which Freud teaches us to read the intentions — ostentatious or demonstrative, dissimulating or persuasive, retaliatory or seductive — out of which the subject modulates his oneiric discourse.¹⁰

⁸*L'Oeuvre ouverte*, trans. Chantal Roux de Bézieux (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965), pp. 89-90.

⁹*The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* (New York: The Modern Library, 1938), pp. 181-553.

The link between key and phallic symbol is probably necessary and inevitable. We may be inclined to dismiss the fact that someone in *L'Eden* takes Violette's key and steals a picture from her room. But when the key reappears on the piano keyboard at the Eden café, the juxtaposition is startling. Thus, the object "key," in association with the keyboard, emerges as the probable code for Schoenberg's twelve-tone system and the "key" to the film. The key, the painting, the stranger, and a documentary film on Tunisia send Violette's imagination spinning off into associative fantasies in which the students assume double identities as bad guys, natives, artist's models, and victims. Duchemin, the stranger, becomes Dutchman, the artist; Frantz, the waiter at the Eden café, becomes a "shady" rug merchant, Violette finds a twin, etc., as the theme of exoticism (no. 6) and its corollaries of evasion and of the double come into focus.

In this context, Violette's inquisitive, fantasy-wanderings through Djerba in search of the stolen painting correspond to her "flight" from an uneventful life as a student: sado-erotic encounters, prison tortures, abduction by Bedouins galloping on horseback compose a stereotyped romantic fantasy that contrasts effectively with, yet is an extension of the games played in the Eden café. Her mind "plays" inventively with this new reality which is a "departure" from the previous boring dramatizations of her peers. Nevertheless, Violette's alienation, fantasy, and imagination subsume two other themes: art (no. 1) and freedom (no. 3). Whereas her estrangement prompted submissive behavior and fear of the semen-like material in the "menacing" factory, by the time her North-African sojourn ends, she is gleefully smearing her arms, face, and body with a glue-like sperm, daring to slap Dutchman who is now in bed with her. This "trip" is her deliverance; her newly-found freedom, which contrasts with her previous subservience and diffidence, allows her, in due course, to escape from her "prison." The North-African "reality" is Violette's since her voice narrates the elaborate, contradictory sequences of events. Nevertheless, her concluding remarks at the end of the Tunisian sequence, subvert the screen's referential realism:

I am once again alone in my room. Nothing has happened yet. In a while I will go out to rejoin my friends at the Eden.

¹⁰ Jacques Lacan, as quoted by A.G. Wilden, *The Language of the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), p. 31. See Erich Fromm, *The Forgotten Language* (New York, Toronto: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1951).

All of them will have the tired expressions of people returning from distant places To relieve our boredom we will play hide-and-seek or blind-man's buff.

Toward the end of the evening, when play will have reached its high point, everything will suddenly be silent.

Slowly, one by one, we will turn our heads toward the glass doors. Behind the transparent partition, we will see the stranger who has just arrived, who is looking at us with his pale eyes, who is already opening the door¹¹

The interpretation of sexual symbols such as a key, handbag, or glue, etc. cannot proceed "innocently" or "spontaneously" because Robbe-Grillet has read Freud and deliberately uses Freudian symbols. Robbe-Grillet's most recent films and novels are, in fact, a form of Freudian pop art. Their role is to expose "ideology" as well as to subvert its unconscious social codes.

In my last books [and films] phantasms have been used as generative themes; they no longer function as the hidden phantasms of post-Freudian works. From the moment that the mechanisms of the psyche were taken apart by Freud, they became part of a cultural, even popular material, since they are now used in advertising, in brochures, in widely disseminated books. Such phantasms are no more than images cast as the platitudinous objects of the assembly line. Inevitably, from the very moment that psychoanalysis exposed the depths of man, those depths disappeared.¹²

Robbe-Grillet's serial art, by virtue of its arbitrary, anti-natural, and defamiliarizing effects

¹¹"Je suis de nouveau seule dans ma chambre. Il ne s'est rien passé encore. Tout à l'heure, je vais sortir pour retrouver les camarades à l'Eden.

"Ils auront tous la mine lasse de ceux qui reviennent de loin. . . . Pour nous désennuyer, nous déciderons de jouer à cache-cache ou à colin-maillard.

"Et vers la fin de la soirée, quand le jeu atteindra son point culminant, il y aura tout à coup un silence.

"L'un après l'autre, lentement, nous tournerons la tête vers les portes de verre. Derrière la paroi transparente, nous apercevrons l'inconnu qui vient d'arriver, qui nous regarde de ses yeux pâles, qui déjà pousse la porte"

¹²Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Sur le choix des générateurs," *Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui*, Vol. 2, p. 141. Parenthetical references will appear within the text as *NRHA*, 2.

tends to devalue conventional forms. Kandinsky used to say that abstract art had "discredited" the object, while Schoenberg claimed that serial music had "emancipated" dissonance. He used this expression to characterize the release of dominant seventh and other dissonant chords from their tonal "obligations" to resolve according to convention.¹³ When these conventions are devalued, when the artist opposes the normative cultural code, then he is "an avant," simultaneously conscious of and ahead of the destabilizing forces that are undermining the historical, social, and religious heritage:

We have often been asked [says Robbe-Grillet] why we preferred our system of generative [themes] to the traditional narrative sequence. The answer is that, for the first time, a mode of [artistic] production has manifest itself as anti-natural; and that in itself seems to me extremely important, because the myth of the natural, as you know, was used by a social, moral, and political system in order to establish and prolong itself (*NRHA*, 2, p. 159).

Neither Schoenberg nor Robbe-Grillet, however, considers these innovations or the accompanying desacralization to be artistically irresponsible. Schoenberg believed that dissonances were "emancipated" when sounds which had once been incomprehensible had been understood and assimilated. Likewise, it can be deduced from Robbe-Grillet's work, particularly *Souvenirs du triangle d'or*, that a triangle and two circles need not necessarily represent certain objects described within the novel. They should be viewed rather as dynamic systems capable of generating different objects from one context to another. Thus, in *Souvenirs du triangle d'or* (1978), the novel's alchemical theme emerges from the color gold, the numerical theme from 79 (the atomic number for gold), the carnal theme from the shape of the inverted triangle, and the mythological theme from the word "souvenirs." The words "remembrances," "triangle," and "gold" are the three generators which produce the structure, images, slippages, inescutcheon, polysemy, paronomasia, and hopefully, the pleasure that the reader experiences in reordering the themes.

L'Eden's circular time-scheme, its incongruities, and narrative contradictions, like music, mean everything and nothing. *L'Eden* invites the active

participation and recreation by the viewer who is the missing link in the film's search for meaning. This emancipation from conventional forms asserts the superiority of a system in which contradiction, opposition, and play — a deliberate structural dialectic — are perceived as valuable because they open new channels of information and insight.

In spite of the film's atomicity, the stolen picture of Djerba is still a picture of a town. The town through which Violette wanders is still a labyrinth. *L'Eden* itself is a labyrinth. The audience is held captive in the labyrinth of Violette's romantic fantasy — a fantasy which is an extension of Robbe-Grillet's art. The construction and deconstruction of the film's twelve themes provide a way out of the prison of cultural stereotypes which govern our modes of thinking. Escape from these molds leads to freedom. Free behavior, in turn, depends on the bringing into consciousness of the repressed imagery of our subconscious — those fantasy images and cultural stereotypes which correspond to and define the film's twelve themes. Escape from the repressed stereotypes of taboo and social imperative, as well as the reenactment of a corresponding though previously repressed imagery, is catharsis. But catharsis is freedom — a *purification* — the film's twelfth theme.

Reading is a "catharsis," the spectacle a purgation. Those moralists who wish to interdict the showing of sex and blood are the ones we find behind the most repressive societies: Nazism was Puritan, Hitler chided Goebbels for his mistresses, persecuted homosexuals, burned the books he deemed immoral (*SCP*, p. 48.)

L'Eden et après, like the Judeo-Christian emblem that it is, unifies the film's twelve themes by demonstrating that life "after Eden" is indeed composed of fear, death, freedom, eroticism, bondage, etc. — twelve themes that can be stated, combined, and recombined in any order, at any time, in any place, with anyone willing to invent, take a chance, and play.

today we [the artists] are ready to fully underwrite the artificiality of our work: there is no natural, moral, political, or narrative order; there are only human orders created by man, with all that that implies concerning the provisional and arbitrary (*NRHA*, 2, p. 160). □

¹³Stephen S. Vise, *Wassily Kandinsky and Arnold Schoenberg: Parallels in Form and Meaning* (Washington University, Ph.D., 1969; Music, University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1969), p. 60.

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Michael Burns

RENOVATION

The antique pattern
papering the bedroom
of the house they'd bought

would have been soothing
to a woman on her back
when she couldn't sleep,

when she found herself
staring up through the dark
at stems curving to roses.

He wouldn't have it.
The stains were eyesores.
They painted over and over

but nothing covered.
The stains bled through.
The paper dried and bubbled.

Steam: plate, hose,
tank of hot water,
and the sheets peeled

from their own wet weight
showing old problems —
cracks in all directions.

Plaster: he strove
to make it new again.
But the faults showed through,

and at night when she
couldn't sleep, when moonlight
flooded the room, those

slight, uneven waves
rolled over her and she
was sick, tossing and turning.

Brook Thomas

CYMBELINE AND THE PERILS OF INTERPRETATION

Cymbeline is Shakespeare's case study of misreadings. At one time or another, all of the major characters in the play fall prey to blindness and misinterpret the words and actions of another character. Cymbeline "misreads" the character of his queen, his daughter, his son-in-law, his stepson, and his courtiers, Posthumus misinterprets the actions of his lover, and Imogen misreads the intent of Posthumus's letters.¹ One cause of these misreadings is that the characters are thrust into a world of disorder, which the play establishes with unique insistence from the outset. Shakespeare introduces so many complications into the early part of the play that Northrop Frye suggests titling *Cymbeline*: "Much Ado about Everything." By undermining the normal conventions by which a character can interpret another's words and actions, the play's disorder leaves the characters with no certain grounds upon which they can base their judgements, thus their attempts to interpret other characters become problematic. But the characters' difficulties with interpretation are not only a result of the play's disorder, they are also a cause of it. If it were not for Cymbeline's, Posthumus's and Imogen's misreadings, there would be much less chaos to worry about.

By presenting the perpetual risk of misinterpretation as one of his themes, Shakespeare forces us as spectators (or readers playing the part of spectators) into a very difficult role. No matter how we try to accommodate ourselves to our roles as interpreters of the play, we are caught in a paradoxical situation that strains our efforts to find a rational solution. In order to reach the point where we can isolate the perils of interpretation as a theme, we employ exactly the interpretive process which the play continually shows to result in error. Therefore, we can gain insight only when we recognize not only the characters' but our own propensity towards blindness. We could say that the recognition of our blindness is our insight.²

But even our insight into our blindness is complicated by the fact that Shakespeare continually

reminds us that what we watch is, after all, merely a fictional play. The moment we hope to gain any insight from the play, even the insight that interpretation is always prone to error, we are brought face to face with the fact that our insight is based on a fiction. Any insight based on a fiction is a very precarious, perhaps even fictional one. As a result, our role as spectator is very much like that of a character in the play: in trying to make sense out of the play we share the characters' risk of misinterpretation. Our normal conventions of interpretation have also been undermined and shown as possibly fictitious. What I hope to show, then, is how fictions and the interpretation of fictions relate to the political and domestic discord recorded in the play.

Shakespeare makes the relationship between the problematics of interpretation and political and domestic discord even more pervasive by suggesting that the patriarchal institutions upon which Renaissance England's political and social worlds are based may also be fictitious. Both political and social authority depend on a patriarchal system of inheritance. In the family, power rests with the father who rules over those who have inherited or adopted his name. In the political sphere, power rests with the king who passes his power down through the male line of the royal family. That Shakespeare should question this patriarchal system of inheritance is not surprising once we remember that he lived most of his life in a country ruled by a virgin queen and that he himself had no living male heirs.³ As Stephen Dedalus sums up in the midst of his discussion of Shakespeare in *Ulysses*,

²My choice of terms acknowledges my debt to Paul de Man in *Blindness and Insight* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971). Another piece influential in my thinking is by René Girard, "Levi-Strauss, Frye, Derrida and Shakespearean Criticism," *Diacritics*, 3, (Fall 1973), pp. 34-38. Girard questions the ability of structuralist criticism to do Shakespeare justice: "Literary structuralists take for granted that their object is sufficiently defined as differentiation, as the elaboration of a significant structure. What about those writers, Shakespeare, for instance, who are obsessed with chaos, with the destruction of institutions and hierarchies, the reversal and obliteration of sexual identities, with countless phenomena which amount, in other words, to a dissolving of differences? Can a methodology which cancels out all that, hope to reach anything truly Shakespearean?"

¹Marjorie Garber, "Cymbeline and the Languages of Myth," *Mosaic* X/3, (Spring 1977), pp. 105-115, also calls attention to the reading metaphor.

Shakespeare forces us to confront the possibility that "fatherhood may be a legal fiction."

In *Cymbeline*, for instance, the entire plot is an intricate web of confusion related to the question of legitimate fatherhood. At the beginning of the play King Cymbeline is sonless. Twenty years before, the King had banished a courtier named Belarius for what the King incorrectly interpreted as a breach of faith. In retaliation Belarius kidnapped Cymbeline's infant sons. Raised under pseudonyms by Belarius (now Morgan), the two princes mistakenly consider him their real father. With no sons of his own Cymbeline decides to raise a boy named Posthumus who was born motherless and fatherless, Posthumus's father having died of grief over the death of his first two sons and his mother having died in childbirth. Posthumus pro-

³For an account of Shakespeare's biographical concerns with patriarchal lines of inheritance and how they affect *Lear* and the *Tempest*, as well as other later plays, see: W. Nicholas Knight, "Patrimony and Shakespeare's Daughters," *Hartford Studies in Literature*, 9, (1977), pp. 175-85.

⁴The scene in which Shakespeare most economically dramatizes this dilemma occurs not in *Cymbeline* but in *Hamlet*. In his famous first speech Hamlet tries to express the power of his grief for his dead father by distinguishing between real and mock grief. Responding to his uncle's and mother's questions, Hamlet indignantly announces that his grief is more than mere seeming. "Seems, madam? Nay, it is. I know not 'seems.'" Having observed the court's theatrical display of grief, Hamlet claims that his grief is much deeper. He renounces the "inky cloak" of mourning as nothing more than an external covering. Furthermore, Hamlet denies that even those seemingly unmistakable manifestations of personality, words and actions, can truly denote his grief. This is because words and actions are separated from him the moment they occur. They are merely external manifestations of his feelings — mere appearances. "These indeed seem, / For they are actions that a man might play" (I.ii. 76-84). According to Hamlet the source of his grief is prior to words and action.

But if we remember that we are watching a play, the actor playing Hamlet undercuts the very words he speaks. Because Hamlet is not a real person, but a product of Shakespeare's imagination, he has no existence prior to words and actions. When we refer to the "real" Hamlet what we are talking about is a fictional construct that we have created as a result of reading words on a page or seeing an actor on stage, both pretending to be Hamlet. How else would we know Hamlet's grief or indeed Hamlet himself if it were not for the inky cloak of a text and an actor turning those marks of the poet's pen into "windy suspiration" and actions? So if we let ourselves believe that the actor in front of us feels real grief, we are brought face to face with the fact that it is his skill as an actor, at "seeming," that makes us believe so. And it would take an even more subtle actor (or a poor one) to convince us that Hamlet is merely "seeming," putting on a show for devious purposes. Here Shakespeare makes an adroit variation on the "Cretans are liars" motif, that staple of antique rhetoric, which also happens to be a model for the problematic of interpreting drama.

ceeds to fall in love with Cymbeline's daughter, Imogen, and the two marry. Meanwhile the new queen, Imogen's stepmother, successfully brings the marriage into disfavor so that she can advance her son from a previous marriage, Cloten, closer to the throne.

Such confusion about patriarchal lines of inheritance can occur because of a basic biological fact about fatherhood: a child's paternal origins are never certain. While a female carries her child within her for nine months and is still connected to it at birth by the umbilical cord, after conception a male is totally cut off from his child. The child no longer needs the father to be born or to exist. In a sense, then, every father adopts his child. While a mother's responsibility and authority are thrust upon her (only after birth or through abortion can she abdicate her responsibility for helping to create the child), a father gains authority only when he acknowledges responsibility for his role in creating the child. A father's authority exists as a result of a claim. In a patriarchal society that claim is made through a linguistic act: giving the child the father's name. As a result of the father's claim to responsibility through the act of naming, a child becomes legitimate. But because a father has no connection with his child at birth, because his presence is not even necessary, a male's claim to the authority of fatherhood is always subject to doubt; the child's legitimacy may be a counterfeit legitimacy, the father's authority a counterfeit authority. Unlike a matriarchy, in a patriarchy continuity from generation to generation is always subject to doubt.

Because of uncertainty in tracing paternal origins, faith and trust are essential to the establishment of harmonious continuity in a patriarchy. If a man's wife is not faithful, or indeed if a man doubts his wife's fidelity, he must also doubt his legitimacy as a father. In a society where authority is passed down through the male line of the royal family, uncertainty about fatherhood casts doubt on the legitimacy of the society's ruler. Doubt about the ruler's legitimacy places the entire social structure in question. Originating from these basic doubts about fatherhood, the play's confusion increases as faith and trust are undermined. Interestingly enough, the villains who violate bonds of trust use the techniques of drama to do so: the counterfeiting of words and actions through skillful acting and the production of written texts. Because the characters are unable to read words, actions, and texts with certainty the confusion set in motion by questions about paternal origins increases. In turn, the increased confusion questions even further the

legitimacy of paternal authority.

The most important misreader in the play, because his actions affect the entire society, is the King. Rather than lacking trust, the King continually misplaces his trust. Twice his misplacement of trust causes him to misread the skillful and deceitful actors who surround him at court. First on the word of a traitor, he thinks that the faithful Belarius has betrayed him, and Belarius is banished. Second, manipulated by the deceitful queen, he banishes the loyal Posthumus. These two banishments almost cause him to lose his position as both father and king. Banished, Posthumus entices Imogen away, leaving Cymbeline childless and heirless.

The cause of Cymbeline's confusion as a reader of people's characters is similar to the cause of our confusion in determining rightful inheritance. Both have to do with questions about origins. Cymbeline has trouble interpreting characters for the same reason that we have trouble interpreting other people. No matter how sincere a person may seem, we can never be certain that our interpretation of a person's words and actions is correct. The only way for us to be certain of our interpretation would be for us to discover the source of a person's words and actions. Yet we can no more determine their source with certainty than we can trace with certainty who fathered us. Like a child, words and actions are cut off from the source which "fathers" them the moment they occur. Because their legitimacy always remains in doubt, our belief that what roles he demands certainty where only uncertainty is possible. As a father and as a king, Cymbeline demands blind obedience. He wants to master his subjects and children. This egotistical demand for certain obedience makes him a bad father and king. Like Lear, he becomes susceptible to flattery and deceit, which leads him to accept false counsel. It is his acceptance of false counsel that almost causes him to lose his kingdom and children.

In fact, temporarily Cymbeline is rendered childless. Separated from their blood father, all of the King's children are adopted by males who are better fathers to them than Cymbeline. The two sons believe that Belarius/Morgan is their real father. Meanwhile, in addition to choosing Posthumus as her new lord, Imogen is adopted by the Roman Lucius. Meeting her disguised as Fidele, he accepts her plea to be of service to him with:

Ay, good youth,
And rather father thee than master thee.
(IV. ii. 394-5)

This is in direct contrast to Cymbeline, who when meeting Imogen disguised as Fidele proclaims,

I'll be thy master.

(V. v. 118)

Unlike Cymbeline, an ideal king and father recognizes that the bond between father and child, king and subject, is not based on blind obedience, but on a bond of trust that must overcome the inevitable doubt concerning legitimate fatherhood and kingship.

Shakespeare's notion of ideal fatherhood comes close to Gabriel Marcel's definition. Fatherhood is not merely procreation. As Marcel says, procreation for a male is merely a gesture that "can be performed in almost total unconsciousness and which, at least in extreme cases, is nothing but a letting go, an emptying of something which is overfull." Fatherhood, on the other hand, is a conscious act, acknowledging and carrying out responsibility for what one has helped to create. In acknowledging and carrying out his responsibility a male gains an heir, but the moment that he subordinates his offsprings to his own ends or ambitions, fatherhood degenerates. A father must accept responsibility for his children, but at the same time relinquish total control and allow them the freedom to decide what they are to become.⁵

It is exactly this freedom to develop that Cymbeline denies Imogen when he banishes Posthumus, depriving her of her chosen husband. Posthumus's separation from Imogen creates a situation in which the characters repeat with a difference the errors of doubt, misplacement of trust, and misreading committed by Imogen's father. In addition, we are introduced to a new cause for misreading — the blindness of love. So long as Posthumus and Imogen remain in one another's presence their faith and trust are unbounded. But Cymbeline's rash banishment forces them to test the invisible power of their love. No longer able to love in each other's presence, Imogen and Posthumus must rely on letters — written documents — to maintain their love in absence. Thus, in the Imogen-Posthumus plot the misreading metaphor becomes literal. While the action surrounding Cymbeline reflects on one aspect of dramatic production — the counterfeiting of words and actions by an actor — the Imogen-

⁵Gabriel Marcel, "The Creative Vow as the Essence of Fatherhood" in *Homo Viator*, trans. by Emma Crauford (London: Camelot Press Ltd., 1951), pp. 98-124.

Posthumus plot reflects on a prior aspect of drama — the counterfeiting of words and actions in a written text.

The reason why writing is as prone to deception as acting is once again a question of origins. The moment a writer commits his thoughts to paper, they, like a child, have a life of their own cut off from the author/father. Despite the fact that both a text and child owe their identities in part to author and father, we cannot determine with certainty either author or father by examining text or child. For example, critics have waged a long battle over whether parts of Act Five were written by a playwright other than Shakespeare. And, as convincing as textual scholars try to be, we will never be sure, because the author, like the father, is absent from his creation. This discontinuity between creator and creation always leaves the authentic identity of a text or child in doubt.

In fact, the mechanics of writing make deceit in texts even easier to accomplish. Face to face, Posthumus and Imogen can communicate with the spoken voice, which is a seemingly unmistakable manifestation of personality, impossible to duplicate. But since in a written document the author's words are not his voice, but marks of ink on a white page, documents are more easily counterfeited. While in the case of handwritten manuscripts the counterfeiter must learn how to forge the unique trace that each one of us makes, the Renaissance invention of the printing press makes the counterfeiter's task less demanding. He no longer has to duplicate a unique handwriting, merely impersonal print. All texts issued from a press are copies; we have no more originals. Of course, in *Cymbeline* all of the texts are handwritten, but the Renaissance's increased awareness of textuality makes it easier to see that every letter is a kind of counterfeit because its words masquerade as the presence of the author's spoken voice. Thus, if a writer is intent on deceit, as Posthumus is, he can exploit the fact that a piece of writing is cut off from its author to increase the chaos already set in motion by other confusions over lost origins.

Posthumus's desire to deceive Imogen occurs when he loses faith in her fidelity. Soon after settling in Italy, Posthumus is tricked into doubting Imogen's integrity by Iachimo, a deceitful Italian. Just as Cymbeline is deceived by the words and actions of the skillful actors at court, so Posthumus chooses to trust Iachimo's visible theatrics rather than the invisible integrity of his lover. Initiated into the world of deceit, which he wrongfully concludes originates from Imogen (and women in general),

Posthumus delivers his famous tirade against women.

Posthumus.

Is there no way for men to be, but women
Must be half-workers? We are all bastards,
And that most venerable man which I
Did call my father was I know not where
When I was stamped. Some coiner with
his tools
Made me a counterfeit; yet my mother
seemed
The Dian of that time. So doth my wife
The nonpareil of this. O, vengeance,
vengeance!

(II.v. 1-8)

This soliloquy expands on Hamlet's famous "Frailty, thy name is woman"; the difference is that Hamlet comes to doubt his lover as a result of his mother's infidelity, while Posthumus doubts his mother as a result of what he thinks to be his lover's infidelity. But the result is the same. If men must always doubt a woman's fidelity and if there is no way to prove fatherhood, all of us become bastards.

If Posthumus is to become worthy of ruling as the patriarchal head of a family, he must learn, as Cymbeline must learn, to overcome his doubt. It is appropriate that as long as Posthumus is ruled by doubt he "fathers" bastard texts not legitimate ones. No longer naive and trustful, Posthumus vows to write against women. He has learned how to exploit the act of writing for lying rather than telling the truth. This occurs when the writer breaks the contract of trust set up between himself and the reader by using his pen to trace out counterfeit texts, just as Posthumus claims a coiner stamps out counterfeit children. Shakespeare uses Posthumus's separation from Imogen to show how the author's absence from his text always makes the legitimate meaning of a text uncertain.

When first separated, Posthumus and Imogen naively believe that a text embodies the presence of the writer, just as naively one might believe that a person's words and actions embody a person's true intentions. Departing, Posthumus pleads:

Thither write, my queen,
And with mine eyes I'll drink the words you
send,
Though ink be made of gall.

(I.i. 99-101)

And Imogen, opening a letter from Posthumus,

declares supreme faith in her lover's words.

Good wax, thy leave. Blest be
You bees that make these locks of counsel.
Lovers
And men in dangerous bonds pray not alike;
Though forfeiters you cast in prison, yet
You clasp young Cupid's tables.
(III.ii. 35-39)

But this scene ends with Imogen admitting that love blinds her.

I see before me, man. Nor here, nor here,
Nor what ensues, but have a fog in them
That I cannot look through.
(III.ii. 79-81)

What the naiveté of love blinds her to, of course, is that love letters themselves can be deceitful. Posthumus's letter is not one of Cupid's tables, but a counterfeit. Indeed by Act V Posthumus is the forfeiter cast in prison for violating the contract between lover and lover, author and reader. The letter that Imogen reads is a betrayal of her trust. Masquerading as a letter promising to invite her to a lover's rendezvous, it actually plots her death. Pisanio, the loyal servant and bearer of the letter, knows of the treachery and denounces the paper it is written on in terms of sexual fidelity.

O damned paper,
Black as the ink that's on thee! Senseless
bauble,
Art thou a fedary for this act, and look'st
So virgin-like without?
(III.ii. 19-22)

Writing, despite its look of authenticity, is not to be trusted. Looking at this same letter Imogen asks.

What is here?
The scriptures of the loyal Leonatus
All turned to heresy? Away, away,
Corrupters of my faith.
(III.iv. 82-3)

But later, when she sees the beheaded Cloten and imagines him to be Posthumus, her love rekindles and she accuses Pisanio of forging the letters. Because one can never be certain who wrote a written text, or what it really means, Imogen rejects all writing and reading.

To write and read
Be henceforth treacherous!
(IV.ii. 3-16-7)

Her rejection of writing and reading is, however, too hasty. Banishing writing and reading because they can deceive is as silly as Cymbeline's banishment of Belarius and Posthumus because he cannot totally control or trust them. If Shakespeare had shared her belief we would not have a play to expose the possible treachery and deceit in writing as well as acting. The fault lies not so much in writing and reading as in how we write and read. While writing can contribute to an inability to distinguish between the real and the counterfeit and to a disruption of continuity, it can also help to establish identity and maintain continuity. To become a socially cohesive force, however, writing must be viewed in an atmosphere of faith and trust.

For instance, Posthumus, who has never seen his father, is sheltered in Italy by a friend of his father's on the basis of a letter (I.i. 97-99). Posthumus has no other way to prove his identity. Yet the friend's acceptance of him requires an act of faith because of the absence of father and writer. This absence always subjects our reading to doubt. And doubting, as Imogen tells us, and Posthumus and Othello prove, can lead to irreversible harm:

Doubting things go ill often hurts more
Than to be sure they do.

(I.vi. 95-96)

All that can overcome the harm that springs from doubt is a leap of faith. Only through trust can Imogen's and Posthumus's love grow.

If Imogen is to keep her faith in Posthumus, she must also keep her faith in the means by which communication between them is possible. The communication between Posthumus and Imogen breaks down so easily because their initial trust was a naive trust. Imogen and Posthumus must learn along with Cymbeline that the bond of love is created on the void of incertitude, not certitude. The bond must be able to withstand absence as well as presence. For their love to be truly cemented they need to restore their trusts after a ritual death, disguise, and rebirth, just as Cymbeline is restored as father and king after almost losing fatherhood and kingship. In both cases it is the techniques of disguise and counterfeiting, which have contributed to the play's confusion, that eventually help to restore order.

In our fallen world contracts of trust between

child and father, subject and king, reader and writer are maintained only when possible duplicity is recognized.⁶ As we learn throughout the play, true obedience often requires disobedience. Believing that Pisanio has carried out his order to kill Imogen, Posthumus cries out:

O Pisanio,
Every good servant does not all commands;
No bond but to do just ones.

(V.i. 5-6)

Or as Pisanio says, rejecting Cloten's orders:

Thou bid'st me to my loss, for true to thee
Were to prove false, which I will never be,
To him that is most true.

(III.v. 159-161)

In order to remain faithful, Pisanio, Imogen, Belarius, the King's two sons, Posthumus and Cornelius, the physician, like Kent in *Lear* or Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*, all have to adopt disguises, or else be deceitful.⁷ By staying faithful and true these characters restore Cymbeline to his rightful position as father and king. These acts of faith, despite overwhelming doubt, redeem not only Posthumus's and Imogen's love, but also the kingdom. In turn, the disguises and deceptions of Pisanio, Imogen, Belarius and Posthumus are redeemed because they act in good faith and restore harmony, while Iachimo's and the Queen's disguises and deceptions are not redeemed because these two act in bad faith and tear apart family and society.

The ease with which we can distinguish between good and bad actions, however, is itself deceiving. Because both good and bad actions involve techniques of acting, they normally cannot be distinguished from one another. The external world can always be deceptive. As Cymbeline laments referring to his misreading of the Queen:

⁶The movement *Cymbeline* dramatizes from a naive trust to a trust that has faced doubt is paralleled today by Paul Ricoeur's discussion of a hermeneutics of suspicion. See especially, "Religion, Atheism, and Faith," in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. by Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 440-67.

⁷See also Cornelius's decision not to obey the queen.

She is fooled
With most false effect, and I the truer
So to be false with her.

(I.v. 42-44)

Mine eyes
Were not in fault, for she was beautiful;
Mine ears, that heard her flattery; nor my
heart
That thought her like her seeming. It had been
vicious
To have mistrusted her.

(V.v. 62-66)

The only reason that we are in a more privileged position to judge the characters' actions is because they occur in a fictional world controlled and manipulated by Shakespeare. How privileged, however, is an insight based on a fiction? While the play might make us aware of the duplicity of the world and thus help us to avoid naive trust, it does not aid us in distinguishing between sincere actions and insincere actions. In fact, the play itself, fathered, as it is, by a playwright dead and absent and employing, as it does, the same techniques of deception that lead to so much confusion, forces us to question the extent to which it can be trusted. The risk of blindness remains and in fact is heightened in interpreting works of literature which hold as their central insight that they must lie in order to tell truth.

Rather than banishing fictions as untrustworthy, we might better expend our critical efforts trying to decide which fictions to trust and which not to trust. Should we, for instance, believe in the play we are watching? On the one hand, we know that it employs all of the techniques of "seeming" condemned in the play. On the other, if we were to believe in it, perhaps it would turn out to be as trustworthy as the many servants who disguise themselves throughout the play. On the one hand, the play offers as one of its "truths" that there is no way externally to distinguish between "good" and "bad" disguises; on the other, it shows us that harmony will only be restored if we maintain our faith in possibly deceitful words, actions, and texts.

"Seeming," therefore, takes on positive as well as negative connotations.⁸ While "seeming" can mean pretense and deception, the fact that the chaos and death of this world may also be a deception opens up the possibility for hope. It is, after all, the "seemingness" of both Posthumus's and Imogen's deaths that allows them to be reborn. As Imogen says when awakening from her counterfeit death,

The dream's here still. Even when I wake it is
Without me, as within me; not imagined, felt.

(IV.ii. 306-7)

If our dreams can be felt rather than merely imagined, they can exist outside of us as well as within us.⁹

It is no surprise, then, that it is in Posthumus's dream that Jupiter appears and leaves behind a text, which Posthumus finds on his breast when he awakens.

A book? O rare one

Be not as is our fangled world, a garment
Nobler than that it covers. Let thy effects
So follow to be most unlike our courtiers,
As good as promise.

(V.iv. 103-108)

Although the dream seems a pure product of the imagination, it produces a "real" text that promises to clarify our chaotic world. No longer ruled by doubt, Posthumus can now contribute to the production of legitimate texts. Indeed, while writing earlier contributed to chaos, restored from banishment, like Posthumus and Belarius, writing now helps restore harmony to the world. But not before problems of interpretation are overcome; the text is still as puzzling as a dream.

'Tis still a dream, or else such stuff as madmen
Tongue, and brain not; either, both, or nothing;
Or senseless speaking, or a speaking such
As sense cannot untie. Be what it is,
The action of my life is like it, which
I'll keep, if but for sympathy.

(V.iv. 116-121)

Jupiter's writing seems as impenetrable as his world. The text that Posthumus finds could mean almost anything. Its confusion reminds Posthumus of his own life, which, we remember, is fathered by a text tongued out of one of "madman" Shakespeare's dreams — a text also posing problems of interpretation. Originating in the mysterious world of dreams and lacking an originating presence that will authorize a legitimate interpretation, Jupiter's text defies rational attempts to make sense out of it.¹⁰ Without a structuring center, its words interrelate in a domain of free play, giving the text count-

⁹See Garber, p. 106.

⁹For the best discussion of the relationship of the dream to reality in Renaissance drama see Jackson I. Cope, *The Theater and the Dream* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

¹⁰See Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play" in *The Structuralist Controversy*, ed. Macksey and Donato (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), pp. 247-72.

less interpretations, just as without the structuring center of a certain father the world of *Cymbeline* becomes chaotic. Finding the "real" meaning of the text remains in the realm of the mysterious.

Indeed, it takes the special qualities of a soothsayer (today he would be a professor) to perform the act of interpretation which allows the text properly to clarify the world of the play. It is important to recognize, however, that belief in the soothsayer's interpretation is only possible because the characters have overcome their earlier doubts and now look at writing in a context of faith. Because they believe that the text originates with Jupiter, and thus has a real meaning, the characters are able to accept a possibly counterfeit text as legitimate, just as only a context of faith allows a father to accept his child's legitimacy. In this context of faith, authority — paternal, political, and textual — has been restored. As a result, *Cymbeline* ends reflecting the ideal hierarchical structure for England in Shakespeare's time: a nation ruled by a legitimate king who has been consecrated by the authority of a sacred text originating with Jupiter/God and interpreted by a soothsayer/priest, who serves the king. Having conquered chaos and doubt, the entire society can join with *Cymbeline* and participate in the peace that he proclaims over the kingdom at the end of the play.

Publish we this peace
To all our subjects. Set we forward; let
A Roman and a British ensign wave
Friendly together.

(V.v. 478-481)

Our complication as spectators, however, is that we are invited to question both the authority of Jupiter's text and the play in which it appears. First of all, we know that the soothsayer is not an official spokesman for God but a pagan priest, just as Jupiter is not God but a pagan god. Indeed, as *Cymbeline* says, the soothsayer's interpretation has "some seeming." Equally important, we know that Jupiter's text is not Jupiter's but a text appearing in a play fabricated by a mortal playwright. Because Shakespeare is not God, he cannot create a world but only a text that produces a play that produces a text masquerading as a text of Jupiter. The play we are watching is not the real world but a counterfeit world, just as the playwright is a counterfeit god. Uncomfortable in his role as a counterfeit god, Shakespeare is at pains to remind us of the play's fictional nature.

The obviously artificial and over-done unraveling

of so many difficulties in the last act only occurs as a "fierce abridgement," manufactured, like Posthumus's dream, in the poet's imagination (V.v. 382). Posthumus has called death the sure physician, but the physician in this play, Cornelius, concocts Friar Laurence-like a potion that restores Imogen to life after a counterfeit death. Heaven does mend all, but the saving figure of Jupiter enters the play only as a figure in a dream, the same dream that calls forth the shades of Posthumus's father, mother and two brothers, all of whom he has never seen. In dreams and imaginative works of art, poets, like Posthumus, can not only fabricate certainty about fatherhood, they can even beget their own fathers (and sacred texts).

Sleep, thou has been a grandsire and begot
A father to me.

(V.iv. 93-4)

The ability of the poet's imagination to produce certainty as well as doubt, harmony as well as chaos, is responsible for the triumphant ending. The peace at the end of the play is a published one — proclaimed not only by *Cymbeline*, but also by Shakespeare. Whether we are to trust that proclamation as a real possibility or as a fictional contrivance depends upon our own faith in fictions.

While, on the one hand, Shakespeare's exposure of the play as a fiction keeps us from believing in the happy ending, on the other, it reminds us of the real power emanating from fictions. If the play is a fiction, so perhaps is the institution of fatherhood upon which *Cymbeline's* system of patriarchal authority is based. Because paternal origins are always in doubt, we have no foolproof method of distinguishing between a legitimate king and a pretender to the throne, just as our inability to trace origins leaves us no way to distinguish between real and counterfeit words, actions, and texts. In a world where the King's own sons can believe that their adopted father is their real father, it seems that, so long as his subjects believe him to be legitimate, a counterfeit king could rule as effectively as a real one. More important for holding power over a kingdom than actual legitimacy seems to be whether or not the subjects are willing to accept someone as a legitimate king. If this is true, the real and counterfeit merge. If his subjects consent to his authority, a counterfeit king gains more power than the real king; just as the "real" king's authority may be

counterfeit. The real origin of power would seem to rest, not in the king, but in the subjects' willingness to believe in the possible fiction of the king's legitimate authority. If so, our willingness to believe in possible fictions becomes more than an aesthetic question since the fictions we choose to believe in affect the nature of the world in which we live.

But the key word in the previous sentence is *possible*. While questions about paternal origins cause confusion in *Cymbeline*, there is never any question in the spectator's mind as to who the legitimate king and legitimate heirs are. In the play power rests with the King, not in the subjects' willingness to believe. It is when misuse of power and trust threatens the legitimate line of inheritance that chaos takes over. The King may use his power in a questionable manner, but it remains his to use. His authority is real, not counterfeit.

Of course the moment we call the King's power real, we are brought face to face with the fact that it is only real with any certainty in the fictional construct of Shakespeare's play — a play which warns us against belief by self-consciously drawing attention to itself as a fiction. The King's legitimate power still depends on belief in a fiction. Thus, our position as spectators of the play is the same as that of the characters' in the play. Just as the characters must reaffirm their faith in the society's patriarchal system of authority by willingly suspending their disbelief and believing in words, actions, texts, and fathers indistinguishable from counterfeit ones, so we can only affirm our faith in the patriarchal system of authority posited by the play by willingly suspending our disbelief and believing in words, actions, texts, and authors indistinguishable from counterfeit ones. If as spectators we can bring ourselves to believe in Shakespeare's fiction, then we consent, as it were, to become Shakespeare's subjects, and truly join Shakespeare's characters as they celebrate the restoration of paternal authority at the end of the play. In other words, if the audience shares the characters' context of belief, then both the King's and Shakespeare's proclamation of harmony has a real possibility of being enacted. If real people believe in it, Shakespeare's fiction can affect the world in which we live.

If, on the other hand, the audience heeds Shakespeare's warnings and doubts his fiction, it can expose the suggested metaphoric connections between the life and art as "mere" fictions, unable to effect change in the world. For example, an author writes a play; he does not father it. Fatherhood may

not be a legal fiction. Reading a character in a play is different from reading a character in life. The world is not a stage. Unconnected to the world in any constative sense, the play becomes merely an entertaining performance.

Thus, the final authority for interpreting the play has been inherited by each spectator. The believers choose to believe despite all cautions to doubt, running the risk of being deceived by a play which is after all merely a fiction. The doubters, on the other

hand, face as their final doubt the possibility that it is their refusal to believe in fictions, because of their possibly deceitful nature, that helps create the chaos that so many fictions feel compelled to order. □

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Welch D. Everman

THE STORY

I don't understand.
It's not your fault, she says, it isn't anything you've done.
He watches her as she paces through the living room.
She is wearing the sweater he bought for her last Christmas.
She walks back and forth quickly and speaks without looking at him.
He does not understand what she is trying to say.
Still the voice he hears is hers.
He knows her voice better than he knows his own.
But he cannot understand her.
He understands only that she is leaving.
If there were something he could say to make her stay, he would say it.
But because he cannot understand what she is saying to him, he cannot reply.
He can only listen.
I need something else, something more, she says.
She has said this many times before.
She has been saying it for months.
Julia says I can stay with her until I find a place.
Why?
I've told you.
Yes.
I'll give you her number.
Why?
I'd like you to call, and I'll call you.
OK.
We'll see each other often.
Is there someone else?
You never listen to what I say.
I listen.
It isn't because of anyone else, and it isn't because of you.
She still has not looked at him.
She stands at the bookcase, picks up a wooden figurine, and turns it over
and over in her hands.
I want something else, she says.
He does not reply.
There is nothing he can say to help himself.
He knows nothing about her.
One afternoon a month or two ago, he was on his way to lunch when he
saw her walking by on the other side of the street.
He had not expected her to be downtown that day.
Still she was there in the city, walking quickly.

She turned at the corner and was gone.
She had not seen him standing there in front of his office building.
But he had seen her.
Now she was gone.
He wanted to go after her.
He had been with her in their home only a few hours before, first in the bedroom, then in the kitchen at the table.
They had had breakfast together as they did each morning.
As he remembered, they had not had much to say to each other, but he had been with her.
He wanted to be with her again.
She puts the figurine back on the shelf, then lights a cigarette.
I've been here with you almost as long as I can remember, she says. Before that, I was with my parents. I was theirs, and now I'm yours.
He watches her closely, trying to see if there is something different about her, something he has not seen before.
But she is the woman he has always known, tall, thin, dark-haired.
The face he sees is hers.
The eyes are small and dark, the nose straight, the mouth broad.
It is the face he sees whenever he closes his eyes and tries to picture her to himself.
She has not changed.
Neither has he.
Only their life together is changing.
He hurried after her, trying to push his way through the lunch hour crowd.
The traffic was heavy, and it took some time for him to cross the street.
At last, he reached the corner where he had seen her turn and disappear.
There were not as many people on the narrow sidestreet, and he could move more quickly.
He walked the first block, then began to run, but he did not see her again.
She puts her cigarette out in the ashtray on the coffee table, then sits in a chair near the window and looks down into the street.
I need something for myself, she says.
Her pack of cigarettes is on the table next to the ashtray.
It is the same brand she has smoked for years.
What do you need? he asks.
Something.
He retraced his steps, looking in through the front window of every shop and restaurant along the way.
He did not know what he would say to her if he found her, but he was

still looking.

He wanted to see her again.

If he found her, there would be things to say.

There were always things they could say to each other.

In time, he was back on the corner where he had last seen her.

She was gone.

He had lost her.

I've been checking around for a job, but I haven't found anything yet.

He sees her only in profile, but it seems that she is smiling.

He wishes she would not smile.

I'm sorry, he says.

Don't apologize. There's no need.

He wants to say that he is sorry again, but of course he does not.

He says nothing.

He stood on the corner for some time, though he did not expect to see her again.

There was nothing else he could do.

That night at supper, she mentioned that she had done some shopping in the afternoon.

He said nothing about having seen her in town.

Now he wants to tell her the story, but he does not know how to begin.

There is no reason for him to speak of something that happened weeks ago.

There is nothing he can say.

Julia's going to stop by for me in the morning, she says.

What about your things?

We can settle that later.

She is still looking out of the window.

He wonders what it is that she sees there.

There can be nothing to interest her.

She has looked out of that window many times before.

You do understand, don't you?

He says nothing for a moment.

Then: I saw you in town once.

She turns to look at him.

Now she is not smiling.

What did you say? she asks.

I saw you in town, he says, a month or so ago. You were walking near the office. You didn't see me.

She is staring at him now.

She does not speak.

She looks confused and frightened, perhaps as frightened as he must look to her.

I don't understand, she says.

He says nothing more. □

Charles Ramírez Berg

MEXICAN CINEMA:
A STUDY IN CREATIVE TENSION

There is a tension in the Mexican cinema, present in many of the best Mexican films, which reflects a national preoccupation: the search for identity. For Mexico is a country in search of itself, made up of a rich mixture of races and classes, of a people who want to know who their parents were. Like many children from mixed backgrounds, Mexicans want to find out where they came from to help them figure out where they're going.

Mexico is obsessed, poet-essayist Octavio Paz once said in an interview, to the question, "what is it to be Mexican?" The best Mexican cinema attempts to answer that question. It is a cinema that delineates the duality of the Mexican experience, Mexico's twin heritages — the native and the European. It is a cinema that persistently places these two Mexicos in conflict, that continually depicts the historic struggle of Mexico as a nation: the tension between the Indians and the Spaniards, the New World and the Old, the primitive and the civilized, the peasants and the gringos. Through their films Mexicans could be said to be trying to work out their historical identity crisis: to define themselves based on the reality of their history.

Are they Indian or European? Should they, like their Indian ancestors, rely on magic? Native intuition? Should they trust nature? Or should they instead depend, like good Europeans, on the recognized formulas of Western civilization: Science, Reason, Art, the Church? And if they choose the European alternative, must they become, like La Malinche, the Indian woman who became Cortés' mistress, a traitor to half their heritage? Is there, finally, any way to live as a modern Mexican and still be true to both the native and European sides of their family tree?

This tension is seen in an early film of Emilio "Indio" Fernández, *María Candelaria* (1943), a movie that gained international recognition for the Mexican film industry when it won one of 11 grand prizes at the first Cannes Film Festival in 1946.

María Candelaria's earliest images are telling: faces of pre-Colombian gods dissolve into a face of a Mexican woman. An artist is painting her portrait. As he works, a woman reporter asks him to clear

up one episode of his past that has eluded her in her research. There is a portrait of his of a beautiful Mexican Indian woman that the artist has refused to sell. Why? The painter is hesitant to tell the story. "There are things that upon touching begin to bleed," he tells her evasively. "This is one of them."

But she persists and he takes her upstairs to a private studio and shows her the painting, the portrait of María Candelaria. Describing her he says she was "*una india de pura raza mejicana*" ("an Indian of pure Mexican roots"). Then he starts to tell the story behind the painting, which, in flashback, is the story of the film. "There is in this story," he begins forebodingly, "something so terrible that I've never been able to get it out of my mind."

In Xochimilco, near Mexico City, in 1909, a young girl, María Candelaria (Dolores del Río) is resented by the other villagers because her mother was a woman of the streets. She is engaged to Lorenzo (Pedro Armendáriz), but a rich merchant desires her and takes his revenge when she is ill with malaria by refusing to sell Lorenzo quinine. Lorenzo steals the medicine and María recovers, but Lorenzo is arrested for the theft and jailed.

Meanwhile the painter sees María and is attracted to her as a subject for one of his paintings. She agrees to sit for him, but will not pose in the nude after he has painted her head. Another woman stands in for her and the painting is completed.

When the villagers see the nude portrait, they are scandalized, become enraged and stone María to death, just as they had killed her mother.

The tension is schematically clear in *María Candelaria*. María is "*pura india*" and so is Lorenzo. So are most of the peasants in Xochimilco, except for three probable *criollos*: the priest, the doctor and the artist. (There might have been a fourth — the judge who would hear Lorenzo's case — but he is away on business.) The dichotomy is plain: María Candelaria, the pure innocent native on the one hand, and the European (in this case, Mexican-born of European stock) on the other. The noble savage versus Science, the Church, Art, and the Law.

The *criollos* in *María Candelaria* represent at best

benign impotence, at worst, death. It's not the doctor who saves María from malaria, it's Lorenzo. The priest offers pious words but no tangible help. The artist arranges for Lorenzo's release from jail, but inadvertently causes a catastrophe. The judge is out of town.

Interestingly, the Old World's representatives in the film aren't painted as evil men. On the contrary, the artist, the doctor and the priest are considerate, compassionate, refined. These aren't cardboard villains. So it isn't the European himself that is dangerous, it's what he stands for, what he believes, what he says and does — in short, his influence, no matter in how good-natured a guise it presents itself.

María Candelaria's verdict is harsh and definite. For the pure Mexican, trusting in the ways of civilization, the ways of modernity, the ways of Europe, means death. That's quite a warning.

Furthermore, *María Candelaria* says that the natives have developed no antibodies. Without immunity, mere exposure to Old World civilization for the native can be lethal.

Another, more recent Mexican film, *Cascabel* (1977), one of the finest Mexican films of the past decade and one of the most provocative and innovative, presents the same tension but with reversed results.

Directed by Raul Arraiza, *Cascabel* (*Rattlesnake*) tells the story of a young Mexican theatre director, Alfredo (Sergio Jiménez), who is commissioned by the Mexican government to direct a documentary film about a primitive tribe of Indians, the Lacandons, who live around Chiapas. (Alfredo, again, looks *criollo*, or at least nearer the Spanish end of Mexico's heterogeneous racial spectrum, which stretches from pure Indian on one end of the scale to full-blooded Spaniard on the other, with all manner of mixtures in between.) Alfredo takes the job even though it means he must adhere to the government's carefully censored and edited script.

But later, on location, Alfredo dispenses with all the bureaucratic limitations, disregarding instruction to shoot the typical footage of the happy savage at hunt, at hut and at play. Instead, he tries to capture the real story of the tribe of miserable Lacandons who in their ignorance scorch the forests in order to sell the remaining charcoal, of a poor, backward people scratching out a wretched existence.

But the truth makes the bureaucrats back in Mexico City nervous. (In the film's opening sequence, a meeting between a government minister and the head of the documentary unit, it's evident

that the truth never was what was wanted, but only a bland, inoffensive "official version." The government minister does say, "Today you can say the truth," but he quickly hedges that with a standard, paternalistic bureaucratic qualification: "There are some things that should not be said." There is the truth and there is the authorized truth.) Alfredo is fired.

The night Alfredo is to leave the film location, one small Lacandon village, Arraiza places two incidents in bold counterpoint. First, the wife of one of the natives goes into labor. Second, Alfredo finds that a rattlesnake has crawled into his sleeping bag with him. As the Indian woman delivers the baby, Alfredo dies an excruciating death from multiple snake bites. Juxtaposed are birth and death, old and new, rough and refined.

Once again a fatal encounter between the civilized and the primitive, this time ending in death for the civilizing force. And once again, civilization's representative is not a villain but, if anything, a friend who sincerely wanted to improve the lot of the ostracized, politically ignored Lacandons.

Cascabel, an endlessly interesting film, suggests, like *María Candelaria*, that any interaction between the civilizers and the natives will end fatally.

So does *Canoa* (1975), winner of the Silver Bear Award (Second Place) at the Berlin Film Festival. The conflict in *Canoa*, directed by Felipe Cazals, is, on the surface, manifest. It deals with an actual case of mob violence. The mob is the stirred-up villagers of a small Mexican town, San Miguel de Canoa. Their target: five young university workers passing through on a camping trip.

Here is another confrontation between an Old World structure, the university, and the simple Mexican folk, between urban and rural, between progress and tradition. But there is a deeper reading possible. The real victims of the violence are not only the workers (two of whom die at the hands of the mob) but the villagers who let themselves be driven into uncontrolled fury by their ultra-conservative priest. Two pillars of European civilization, the university and the church, catch the peasants in the middle.

For the Mexican, then, *Canoa* says that the institutions of the Old World are ensnaring and enslaving. Without the church, without the university, there would have been no riot at San Miguel de Canoa. *Canoa's* message: Mexicans, trust yourselves, not Europe, not the gringo, not Western civilization.

But for the Mexican to take heed is problematic, for Old World and New are mixed and forever

flowing in his veins, flowing like an endless river with twin fountainheads. Can the past ever be escaped? Should that even be attempted? This is the problem of Tarzan, the protagonist of Arturo Ripstein's *Cadena Perpetua*.

The film is a cinematic illustration of modern man at war against himself, the man Octavio Paz spoke of when he said: "Great poetry, great literature, doesn't reveal man as an affirmation, as a unity, as something solid, but as a cleft, a fissure. Man fighting with himself. This seems to me the modern vision of man."

Cadena Perpetua (perpetual chain, endless or vicious circle) traces the fall of Javier Lira (Pedro Armendáriz, Jr.). Lira has a good job as a collector for a bank, has gained the confidence of his boss (who knows about his criminal past), has a wife, a child and another on the way, at least one mistress, and, best of all, a new life.

By unhappy chance he comes across a crooked police commandant, Prieto (Narciso Busquets), who knew him from the old days when Lira was known as Tarzan, petty thief, pickpocket and pimp. Prieto steals Lira's briefcase containing thousands of the bank's pesos and demands from Lira 600 (pre-devaluation) pesos a day extortion. In return, Prieto will give Lira/Tarzan police immunity. As a bonus, Lira/Tarzan can keep everything he steals beyond the 600 daily. But Lira has no desire to return to crime. He has made a good start on a new life. "It's not fair," he protests. "Too bad," Prieto replies, "that's life. Someone has to lose."

Lira decides to tell his boss exactly what happened and seek his help in foiling the extortion attempt. But he can't find him. With the day quickly ending, Lira knows that the longer it takes to find him, the harder his story will be to believe; he'll be accused of stealing the bank's cash and going back to his thieving ways.

Which is precisely what he does. That night, outside a soccer stadium, Lira carefully buys his favorite newspaper (the one that can best hide the wallets he'll pick) and turns back into Tarzan. After he has made his first pinch, Tarzan, in close-up, stares into the camera for a long moment in the film's final, frozen image. Meanwhile, the crowd inside the stadium incessantly chants "Mexico!" after repeated drumrolls. Tarzan's look is a vile one, full of disgust and hatred, and it's unique in modern cinema: the look of a man doubly cheated, of a man who never had a chance, of a man who couldn't shake his past and maybe shouldn't have tried.

In *Cadena Perpetua*, the tension splits a man, Tarzan/Lira, in half. Tarzan was a petty thief, a

ratero, but at least he had freedom, self-sufficiency and self-pride to the point of arrogance. Lira, in contrast, is a whimpering, robotized, company yes-man. *Cadena Perpetua* warns Mexicans to beware of hiding from their past. It shows that there is a disturbing trade-off taking place in the hearts and souls of modern Mexicans who exchange a more primitive, instinctive life for modernity and progress. Too often it's a trade-off in which "someone has to lose." What's left behind, what's lost in the bargain says *Cadena Perpetua*, is the modern Mexican's humanity.

Another María will bring us full circle from *María Candelaria*, our starting point. It is the María in a small budget movie, *María de Mi Corazón*, directed by Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, scripted by Hermosillo and Nobel Laureate Gabriel García Márquez. The film won the Mexican equivalent of the Oscar, the Ariel, for best film in 1980.

María de Mi Corazón is a tragic love story and pits sacred, trusted beliefs of the Old World against the New: in general magic against science, in particular, the magical María and an insane asylum.

Magic was important for the Aztecs. They not only believed in it, they relied on it. It was the last resort Montezuma turned to after his pleas and veiled threats to Cortés had gone unheeded. Montezuma sent three sorcerers to confront the advancing Spaniards. The three met a drunken ghost on the way, and they were so spooked that they returned without meeting the invaders. A dejected Montezuma accepted a fate, the conquest of his people, that magic was powerless to forestall.

So it is with María and her lover, Héctor.

María (María Rojo) is a good witch who earns her living performing magic at children's birthday parties. She falls for Héctor (Héctor Bonilla), a burglar. In *María de Mi Corazón*, magic is a gift, like perfect pitch or an eye for color. It won't make you rich or make life any easier (on the contrary, it's a heavy responsibility that takes its toll) and has, like art, no utilitarian purpose (María won't use it for material gain — that wouldn't be respecting the gift). It serves to divert, to entertain, to bring pleasure.

María de Mi Corazón, a film of sharp contrasts, is in its first half, recounting the beginning of María and Héctor's love affair, like early childhood: enchantment and promise, sunshine and ice cream. The second part, the separation of the lovers and María mistakenly trapped in an insane asylum, is embittered, illusionless maturity, a chronicle of missed chances and wasted opportunities — life after the luck runs out. Or, using the Old World-

New World dialectic, you might say that the first half of the film, the lovers in love, is Mexico before the conquest. The second half, María wrongly institutionalized, is Mexico conquered.

By the end of the film, María has quit trying to prove her sanity. In the film's last shot she joins the asylum's other patients as they form a circle and sing a children's rhyme. Magic, in the face of authority and the whims of fate, is, for María as it was for Montezuma, impotent.

Magic is sweet but weak; life harsh and strong. Faced with too much reality, magic becomes, like an animal from the wild, a small child or even, say, a New World culture, confused, confounded, crushed. The two-sided *María de Mi Corazón*, then, comes to the same conclusion Montezuma came to centuries before: believe magic, but expect reality.

There are numerous other examples of similar dualities in Mexican cinema. In Raul Arraiza's *En la Trampa* (1979), there's the tension between the two poles of the husband's character, between libertine and responsible family man. There's the class split between the construction laborers and the owner-engineers in Jorge Fons' excellent Marxian mystery, *Los Albañiles* (1976). The marked irony in Emilio Fernandez's *Salón México* (1948) is that the same over-heated dance hall where Aaron Copland was inspired to write his "El Salón México" also serves as the background for a tawdry, tragic Mexican melodrama.

Everywhere there's the clash between native and Western values. Everywhere, whether as main or as contributory cause, whether as outright motive or ironic subtext, everywhere there is the conflict between New World and Old. Everywhere there is evidence of this Mexican schism, this split.

The best Mexican films show how Mexico's two heritages have divided the national psyche. And if tragedy teaches by sad example, Mexico's tragic cinema may be looking for an end to a national tragedy, a reconciliation, a new way that unites the duality, that makes Mexico's past whole.

Depicting the split and its effects, these films may be also expressing a yearning for unity. Perhaps these films see Mexico in the same way that Octavio Paz sees her in his long, brilliant poem about Mexico, "The Broken Waterjar." Paz, a Mexican

speaking to Mexicans, says, "We must break down the walls between man and man, reunite what has been sundered," for "we are one stem with twin flowers." "We must," Paz writes, "dream backwards, toward the source, we must row back up the centuries" and return to "the crossroads where all roads began."

Listen as Paz reconciles the paired conflicts, listen as he diffuses their violence and blunts their jagged, cutting edges, listen to how comforting he paints life with this tension resolved:

for the light is singing with a sound of water,
the water with a sound of leaves,
the dawn is heavy with fruit, the day and the
night
flow together in reconciliation like a calm
river,
the day and the night caress each other like a
man
and a woman in love,
and the seasons and all mankind are flowing
under the
arches of the centuries like one endless river
toward the living center of origin, beyond the
end
and the beginning.

Mexican cinema has seen Mexico as a water jar broken squarely in half. The other side of this sternly fatalistic view may be the hope that one day Mexico will cement these two mirror-image fragments into one good jar, a jar fine enough to hold the water in Paz's poem, the water of the "one endless river" of Mexico's history.

The new Mexican cinema, the Mexican cinema of the future, may not be the cinema of tension, but the cinema of fusion; a cinema illustrating not the pathology of schizophrenia, but the calm well-being of wholeness; a cinema not of weak victims, but of a strong, self-determined people who consider their mixed parentage not a divisive curse but a vitalizing blessing. □

Charles Ramírez Berg is currently writing a book on Mexican cinema.

Hillel Schwartz

THOUSANDS OF SMALL HANDS

The children hang like wet umbrellas,
upside-down, open, ribs exposed.
They are headed back into the earth
and screaming. So many of them now
along the parallel bars, it seems
that we must grow them hanging,
age and cure them in this suspense —
crooked knees, thin hands flailing.

They worry these days among themselves
about the water, the land, the burrows
we call silos. We watch them playing
Freeze Tag and London Bridge and Hide-
Or-Seek as if they were practicing.
They know the metaphors.

At home they dream of flying
into chaff, collapsing into husk, and run
hysterical to our beds, still whole but trembling
with countdowns. Each night the news
seems less new and the world old enough
to wither.

Strong bodies twelve ways,
the wrapper says. The children swing
across the bars toward our wonder
bread but waiting all the while
to fall.

Out here in the summer sun
of course, there's a reassuring warmth
to the playground, a warmth to the metal
rubbed by thousands of small hands,
a warmth to the circle of benches
planted like evergreens and sat smooth.
Not everything forebodes.

And the children
watch us watching, hoping in their last
great charity to seem too happy to die
and so deceive us all the little longer
we have, or had.

Elaine Mancini

THEORY AND PRACTICE: HUGO MUNSTERBERG AND THE EARLY FILMS OF D.W. GRIFFITH

Hugo Munsterberg can be considered the first American film theorist. In his 1916 book, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*, a study of film modeled on scientific principles, Munsterberg treated cinema as an aesthetic directly related to human mental and psychological processes.

His particular interests were outcomes of the young science of psychology, studying at the Universities of Leipzig and Heidelberg, and participating in the first international congress of psychologists in Paris in 1899. In 1892, he went to Harvard to act as director of the newly-established psychological laboratory and later returned to head their (what was then called) Philosophical Department. He quickly became a leading figure of the American scientific community, seeking to popularize a science that was in its infancy. He published prolifically: *Psychology and Life*, *Psychology and the Teacher*, *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency*, *Psychology and Social Sanity*, *Psychology: General and Applied*.

Once cinema became one of his interests, he devoted all of his energies to it. For example, he visited the Vitagraph studio in Brooklyn in order to see first-hand how movies were made. He was also engaged as contributing editor to W.W. Hodgkinson and Adolph Zukor's magazine, the *Paramount Pictograph*, in which his articles appeared, as well as his picture puzzles designed to test "attention, memory, constructive imagination, capacity of making quick estimates, etc.," the results of which provided the basis for *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*, published the year before his death. These results form the first systematic study of cinema which seeks to explain how the spectator actively participates in film's artistic processes, such as the flashback and the close-up and which remains applicable today (the reason why Dover reprinted the book in 1970 under the title *The Film: A Psychological Study*).

In order to match the film theory of Munsterberg to the filmmaking practices of Griffith, we must first of all determine if Munsterberg was aware of Griffith's work. When Hugo Munsterberg turned his attention to theoretical aspects of film, his ideas

were fortified by frequent visits to the cinema. Predominantly a psychologist, Munsterberg's film-going experience was apparently limited to the period immediately preceding the writing of *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*, that is, 1915. Within the book, he does not cite external examples with which to explain his points. The only films he specifically mentions are the 1915 *CARMEN*, starring Theda Bara, and *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*. Munsterberg must have studied closely *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* since it was playing all over the United States and was a topic of conversation with anyone interested in any aspect of the cinema. Since D.W. Griffith was the leading filmmaker — even internationally — in those years, we can further deduce that Munsterberg may have been familiar with other Griffith films as well, although it is impossible to determine specific titles. Therefore, considering Griffith's status, Munsterberg's ideas on film could not contradict Griffith's filmmaking practices.

Generally Munsterberg's theory — a psychological approach to aesthetics — seems to be made for Griffith's style of filmmaking. Munsterberg does not consider the photographic reproduction of reality to be the basis of cinema. Like Arnheim two decades later, Munsterberg maintained that, because of the lack of color, flatness of the image, and silence, film is so bad at imitating nature that it can succeed only where it departs from nature. Film art is therefore not reality but the shaping of reality to a peculiar form that cannot be judged as "real" but only as a work of art. Also, since film is pictures with movement, a two-dimensional display of three-dimensional figures, a narrative without words, it is unlike any other art form. Consequently new critical tools with which to appreciate the cinema must be found. These tools Munsterberg borrowed from psychology and measure the effectiveness of the photoplay by its ability to reproduce psychological states of the human mind. Film's success had to be judged by its capacity to portray mental processes.

Munsterberg summed up his ideas as follows: "The photoplay tells us the human story by over-

coming the forms of the outer world, namely, space, time, and causality, and by adjusting the events to the forms of the inner world, namely, attention, memory, imagination, and emotion." How are space, time and causality in the cinema different from the real world? First, the space of the filmed image does not correspond to real space mainly because of the lack of depth in the image. It is the mind that tells us that a filmed table is a table; we compensate for the lack of three-dimensionality by using our knowledge of the real world. The three-dimensionality we perceive is that result of depth cues and other foreground-background distinction within the picture and not of the picture itself. In this way, Munsterberg saw film overcoming space. Second is time. One way filmed time differed from real time is a result of the silence. Munsterberg said, "By the absence of speech, everything is condensed, the whole rhythm is quickened, a greater pressure of time is applied . . ." Third, what is the role of causality? Certainly it is unlike space and time; they are given conditions within each frame of film whereas causality encompasses series of thoughts and/or actions. Munsterberg contended that the "overcoming" of causality was precipitated by the filmmaker who accomplishes a new order by arrangement. Since pieces of film can be put into any order, causality often gets rearranged; we may see the effect before the cause. Or we may see an action which will undoubtedly have an effect and then cut to a totally different situation. Causality can be arranged in a manner differing from the way it is manifested in the real world.

Munsterberg's central claim is that film tells us the human story by adjusting the events in the film to the forms of the inner world, namely, attention, memory, imagination and emotion. Munsterberg wrote, "Of all internal functions which create the meaning of the world around us, the most central is the attention." What is focused by our attention wins emphasis and irradiates meaning. How does the cinema control our attention to the particulars? Munsterberg's answer is the close-up, which "has objectified in our world of perception our mental act of attention." In Griffith's early films, he used close-ups of objects as inserts with which to clarify the plot. An example of this is the bar of soap in *BETRAYED BY A HANDPRINT*, released September 1, 1908. In the film, Florence Lawrence has stolen some jewels and carves a hole in a bar of soap into which she places the necklace. Griffith then furnishes us with a close-up of the soap, as she is carving it, mainly so that the audience can under-

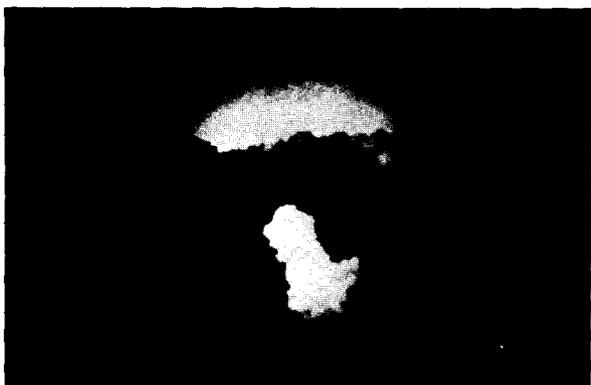
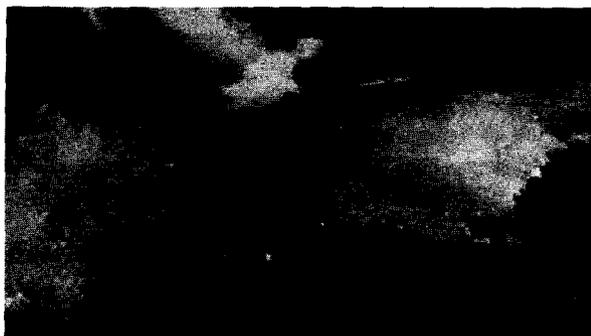
stand the action. The same technique was employed in the 1909 *THE MEDICINE BOTTLE*. Instead of the child giving her grandmother her prescribed medicine, the girl picks up another bottle. To make his plot completely clear, Griffith shows an inserted close-up of the second bottle, really a bottle of poison. Griffith's next step was to move the camera closer to the action for climaxes or scenes of psychological importance. In the film *A SUMMER IDYLL*, released September 5, 1910, Henry B. Walthall plays a rich socialite from the city who has promised to marry a debutante. The city life is depicted, as it often is in Griffith films, as somewhat sordid, free-and-easy for the moment but always with dire consequences. Walthall goes to the country for a break from his routine and meets a country woman. They fall in love during their meetings at a gate in the woods. When they have exchanged their affections, there is a final scene at the gate and this is when the camera is much closer to them. Their figures fill the screen as their feelings reach their heights. The final scene is filmed at a closer distance than usual to stress the difference of its atmosphere compared to the rest of the film.

Nonetheless, there was still too much distraction within the frame; Griffith had succeeded in emphasizing the climactic scenes by having the camera closer to the subject but he was still not creating a device that mirrored the act of attention. He found his solution in the close-up of the human face. He continued to use close-ups of objects, for example in *A GIRL AND HER TRUST*, but the facial close-up heightened the vividness of the emotional, physical and psychological state of the character and that "on which our mind is concentrated." When we are thinking of Enoch Arden's wife's suffering during his long-overdue return, Griffith supplies a close-up of Linda Arvidson's face. When we are horrified by the attack on Elsie in *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*, Griffith gives us a close-up of Gish's terrified expression.

The close-up was an excellent way to manifest what the audience wanted to attend to but it was not Griffith's only device. The iris or masked shot really did make everything else in the frame "fade away" because it showed only what the audience needed or wanted to see. In *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* Griffith used the iris to focus our attention on what the homeless people on the hill are looking at: Sherman's troops and his March to the Sea. We are given a long shot of the troops, a shot of the mother and her children, then an iris shot of the troops. Griffith even repeats the series to emphasize the movement and the emotional re-

sponse on the part of the family. In *TRUE HEART SUSIE*, there is an iris shot of a flower, Susie's gift from her beloved. Since a flower is a small detail, Griffith divorces it completely from the surroundings by an iris so that the audience can clearly see what the lover's gift was. The audience's view lingers on the flower, giving it plenty of time to appreciate what the flower means as a gift and what it will mean to Susie later on.

Nevertheless, Griffith expanded the uses of the close-up and the iris beyond what Munsterberg envisioned. First, Griffith also used close-ups to describe a mood different from previous scenes. He does this in the film *AN AWFUL MOMENT*, released December 18, 1908. The story has told the action of a crazed woman whose husband was imprisoned. She seeks revenge from the judge who presided over the trial by going to his house and rigging a gun to a door so that when the judge opens the door the judge's wife will be shot. Of course all turns out right in the end, no one is hurt, and the last shot is a pleasant one: a closer view of the parents and their child in front of the Christmas tree. Second, in *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*, Griffith used an iris for a bugle call; here the iris is a replacement for sound. Third, yet another purpose for the iris in the pause. The iris slows down the action because it removes the figure from its surroundings. The pause would be a dramatic tool. Fourth, the iris could be used for abstraction, drawing attention to the rise of smoke after a shell has burst, totally separate from the action of the battlefield or the characters involved.



A rare device for focusing our attention was an attempt at almost pure abstraction.



This shot is so different from other shots that we attend to it strongly. It does not provide any narrative content; we are not concerned with who those dead soldiers are, but it works on the level of metaphor, largely because of its frieze-like quality, à la Delacroix, rather than a real three-dimensional world.

Munsterberg's second form of the inner world to which film adjusts itself is memory. In short, the spectator has a host of details stored in his/her memory after the very first scene. To accommodate the audience, a film technique was found which visually demonstrated the act of memory. That technique was what Munsterberg called the cut-back, a technique which was "as if the outer world itself became molded in accordance with our passing memory ideas." (The cut-back and flashback are two different notions as applied to Munsterberg's theory. The cut-back is "any going back to an earlier scene." The cut-back, then, gives us a chance to see what we have already seen. The flashback depicts what has happened before the filmed story began or in the past of the characters.)

Let's look at the use of the cut-back in the film *A SALUTARY LESSON*, released August 11, 1910. The story is that a young girl is always ignored by her parents. When her father takes her to the beach, he avoids her after meeting a female friend. The child goes wading in the ocean and falls asleep on a rock. Hours go by, the tide rolls in and the girl is surrounded by deep water. Meanwhile Griffith has given us shots of the father going home and the mother returning from her afternoon party. They look for the child; they ask the servants where she is; they ask the neighbors. The audience is, of course, remembering the situation of the girl on the rock and Griffith indeed cuts back to that image three or four times until she is found. The cut-backs

here do accommodate the memory process. We remember the girl surrounded by water; we are shown the girl surrounded by water.

Griffith still used the cut-back as a memory device in *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*. A good example would be the Stoneman-Summer-Lydia Brown sequence. First of all, we see Stoneman and Summer having a conversation in the library of Stoneman's house. Summer then exits and goes into the hall where Lydia Brown, the housekeeper, is dusting. She is very rude to the politician, shudders with hatred, and falls to the floor. She looks toward the library and we remember that Stoneman is still in there. Griffith again accommodates our memory by showing us Stoneman in the library. Only after this shot, that is, after the memory process has been satisfied, does Stoneman rise, leave the library and meet Lydia in the hallway.

The third process of the inner world that Munsterberg discusses is imagination. Imagination would be that

our mind turns not only to that which has happened before and which may happen later; it is interested in happenings at the same time in other places . . . Events which are far distant from one another so that we could not be physically present at all of them at the same time are fusing in our field of vision, just as they are brought together in our own consciousness.

We can safely assume that parallel action would be the device Munsterberg has in mind for portraying parallel currents.

In his first effort, *THE ADVENTURES OF DOLLIE* (so successful that the Biograph Company doubled their usual number of distributing prints to meet the demand from exhibitors), Griffith demonstrated a knack for portraying two types of action, physical and psychological. By establishing the kidnapping of Dollie (physical action) and the anguish of the parents (psychological) and cutting from one to the other, Griffith laid the basis of a technique he would use consistently throughout his career.

The structuring and length of scenes needed to be tailored according to expressive requirements, not only plot requirements. We can find a good example of Griffith's division of action in *THE CHRISTMAS BURGLARS*, released Dec. 22, 1908. In this early film, a pawnbroker has given a wealth of Christmas presents to a poor mother and her child.



The final scene is of the mother and child awakening to discover a Christmas tree and a pile of gifts in their room.



But Griffith wanted to emphasize the joy of giving as well as the joy of receiving. He then cuts to the hallway outside the apartment where the pawnbroker's employees, looking through the keyhole, are thrilled at the reception of their good deed.



An instance of portraying events "at the same time in other places" in Griffith's *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* occurs on the eve of the war. Griffith begins with a shot of the celebration dance but the only people there are young women accompanying men in uniform. The audience is most likely wondering about the Cameron family whom we have seen so often until this point in the film. Griffith anticipates our "imagination" with the intertitle "While youth dances the night away, childhood and old age slumber." We are then supplied with a shot of Mr. Cameron and his youngest daughter asleep in the drawing room. Griffith then goes a step further: he shows activities on the street, crowded with people running to and fro amidst bonfires.

Griffith often used parallel action in *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* for a dual purpose: to satisfy the imagination and to counterpoint different moods or movements. For example, during the visit of the Stoneman boys from the North to the Cameron house, Griffith used parallel cutting to display the contrasting reactions of the different characters. All the actions are occurring at the same time but the cutting expresses different moods. The sister and her beau go for a walk through the field, by "way of Love Valley." This is supplied in a long shot; the rhythm is slow because there is hardly any movement on the screen. The next shot is of the young boys, who are wrestling with each other. This is supplied in medium shot; the pacing is quickened because of their fast and jerky movements. Two shots, two different actions, two different moods at the same time.

The fourth and final process of the inner world that Munsterberg says the photoplay depicts is that of emotion. He gives emotion a primary position, saying that the picturing of emotion is the central aim of the photoplay. Emotions are not limited to acting; they are manifested in the sets and in the compositions. What Munsterberg meant is that the sets and compositions will dictate "those emotions in which the feelings of the persons in the play are transmitted to our own soul . . . (and) those feelings with which we respond to the scenes in the play." Griffith was a master of portraying both those kinds of emotions. For the first, the character's emotions, we can again consider the walk through Love Valley sequence from *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*. Griffith places the characters in a particular setting that reflects their emotions: the lake in the background, the cows grazing, the bright sunlight all reflect the peaceful joy the characters are feeling at that time. Concerning the second kind

of emotion — the spectator's response to the actions — we can consider the Stoneman-Sumner conversation in *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*. While the two politicians converse, we are given a long shot of them and the library, a close-up of Stoneman and a masked close-up of Sumner. What this last does is isolate Sumner completely from his surroundings and from Stoneman. The result is that we feel that he is isolated, and we understand that he will have no effect on Stoneman's subsequent plans. Munsterberg had said that our "feelings may be entirely different, perhaps exactly opposite to those which the figures in the play express" and this is indeed the case here. The two men are eagerly trying to communicate with each other; Sumner could not possibly know that he will not be able to exert any influence on Stoneman in the future.

Surprisingly, Munsterberg does not discuss editing as a tool with which to express emotions; he talks about emotions within the shot but not between the shots. But editing for expressive purposes was perhaps Griffith's forte. Even in his early films he would juxtapose two different scenes to create an emotional message. In *THE INGRATE*, released November 20, 1908, he shows us the wife happily working at home and then shows us the ingrate lurking at the door. This gives us an omniscient view and thereby makes us afraid for the women's life. In *THE MANIAC COOK*, released January 4, 1909, the cook puts the baby of the house into the oven. Griffith cuts from a shot of the oven to a shot of the baby's parents sleeping. These examples fit perfectly into Munsterberg's second type of emotion, the audience's response to the scene. Griffith does this even more effectively in *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* when the young Cameron boy dies in the war. He dies in combat; he raises his weapon to attack the Union soldier, he recognizes the soldier as a friend, he is shot, he falls, he dies caressing his friend. All this action takes place very quickly. The next shot is of the Cameron family receiving the news of young Cameron's death. In this shot, there is almost no movement, the four members of the family stand almost motionless, with their heads lowered.



The only juxtaposition of the pacing develops the different moods. This is contrasted by another shot within the same sequence: Elsie and Austin, Stoneman's reaction to the casualty list, a tightly composed scene with faces full to the camera and darkness surrounding them.



Thus, for the most part, Griffith's filmmaking practices correspond to Munsterberg's comparisons between the film and psychological processes, such as his use of parallel cutting to objectify the process of imagination and the use of the close-up to objectify the process of attention. On the other hand, Griffith's genius could not be categorized so easily; he goes beyond what Munsterberg envisioned, for example, in the use of the close-up and the iris.

To conclude, I would like to refer to the early Griffith film, *SUNSHINE SUE*, released November 14, 1910, to illustrate how Griffith controlled the processes of memory, attention, imagination and emotion solely by means of the mise-en-scène, and not relying on any special cinematic techniques.



This shot establishes Sue playing the piano in her parlor and establishes the piano playing as a symbol for the notions of happiness and unity. Notice that the piano is on the far left of the frame.



The placement here triggers the audience's emotional response, because Sue is turned away from the piano. Indeed, the city-bred character, played by Charles West takes her to the city on a joy ride and then abandons her.



Sue's family is always shown in the same part of the frame during her absence, signalling the audience's memory process. That on the left is therefore good; that away from the left of the frame is harmful. The kitchen is to the left of the parlor; the road away from home is on the right. The stranger had also entered from the right side of the frame.



The family and Sue's boyfriend whom she left behind are gathered together on the left of the frame. The unity of their composition triggers the audience's emotions as they grieve over Sue's absence.



The memory and attention processes are enacted as the father (W. Chrystie Miller) returns to the piano (which we remember as a symbol). Within the film's action, the father elevates the piano from a musical instrument to a symbol of his daughter, thereby focusing our attention on it more than before.



Imagination is satisfied by showing us Sue in the city. She repeats her father's actions by attending to one particular piano in the music store where she works, and using it, on the left, as the symbol of her past happy days on the farm.



Attention is demanded; father and piano are repeated.



Sue (Marion Sunshine) returns home, and falls crying at the piano bench. The symbol and the remembered actions become one and the same.



Particular attention is demanded because the figures are frontal. The father and the piano are on the left of the frame, triggering emotions that home and family will never again be disturbed. Sue is reunited with her fiancé from the farm, played by Eddie Dillon. Even though the betrothed are toward center frame, they are closer to the left, remembering that harm awaits them at the right side of the frame. Such a careful placement of characters and props to objectify mental processes, as Griffith uses in *SUNSHINE SUE*, (a film he filmed in two days at the studio and in Westfield, New Jersey) prefigures Munsterberg's theory by five years. It demonstrates that Griffith was already using, and perfecting, elements of film grammar for which he would become so famous, and paying careful attention to compositional elements back in 1910 in a one-reel film. □

Elaine Mancini resides in New York City.

FEATURED ARTISTS

Franco Alessandrini, originally from Sansepolcro, Italy, now lives and works in New Orleans. He has had numerous shows in the United States and Europe. His next show will be at the Museum of Modern Art in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Angela Ball lives in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where she teaches in The Center for Writers, University of Southern Mississippi and is Assistant Editor for the *Mississippi Review*. Her poems have appeared recently in the *Memphis State Review* and the *Black Warrior Review*; she is a recipient of a Sotheby's International Poetry Award for 1983.

Robert E. Bjork received a Ph.D. in Old English poetry from UCLA and is currently Assistant Professor of English at Arizona State University. His essays and translations have appeared in several scholarly and literary journals. The University of Nebraska Press will publish his translation of Jan Fridegård's novel *I, Lars Hård* in the fall of 1983.

Charles Black is the Sterling Professor of Law at Yale University and the author of three books of poems.

Michael Burns teaches English at SMSU in Springfield, Missouri. His poems have appeared in *Quarterly West*, *Poetry Now*, *Mid-American Review*, *Intro 11*, *Intro 12*, *Midwest Quarterly*, and other magazine. A chapbook of his poems, *When All Else Failed* (Timberline Press), and an Ozark anthology he is editing, *Jumping Pond*, are due out this year.

Kelly Cherry has two novels forthcoming from Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: *In the Wink of an Eye*, due out this April, and *The Lost Traveller's Dream*, due out in early 1984. The New South Co. is publishing a revised edition of her first book of poems, *Lovers and Agnostics*, in 1984.

Debra Daspit lives in New Orleans.

Welch D. Everman has published one novel, as well as short fiction and criticism in *Chicago Review*, *Mississippi Review*, *The North American Review*, *Center*, *Assembling*, *Pequod*, *The American Book Review*, *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and many other magazines. He has won an N.E.A. Creative Writing Fellowship.

Zoe Filipkowski lives in the Palouse, a rich farming area of eastern Washington, and spends too much time working with horses.

Jon Griffin lives in Rochester, New York.

Leigh Hauter lives in Charlottesville, Virginia and is currently active in the teacher's union in a neighboring county.

Kajii Motojirō (1901-32) was a Japanese writer whose short stories were not only regarded as some of the finest examples of Japanese modernism, but were also representative of various important Japanese literary genres, such as the *watakushi shosetsu* (first-person novel).

Renate Latimer teaches German at Auburn, received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Michigan, and has translated among other things Adalbert Stifter's novel *Der Nachsommer*.

Christopher Middleton has published five books of poetry and numerous works of translation including, most recently, Robert Walser's *Selected Stories*.

Fritiof Nilsson Piraten (1895-1972) did not publish until 1932, when his first book, a Swedish *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, appeared — *Bombi Bitt and I*. Although his work since then was somewhat less comic, he remains a popular, widely read author. "Big Game" comes from *The Girl with the Scriptural Quotations* (1959), a collection of short stories.

John R. Reed is a professor of English at Wayne State University. His book of poems entitled *A Gallery of Spiders* was published by the Ontario Review Press in 1980. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Sewanee Review*, *Tri-Quarterly*, *Bennington Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, and many other journals.

Sandra Reyes is an English instructor at the University of Arkansas, where she also holds an editorial assistantship in *Style*, a journal of literary stylistics. Her work has appeared in *Poetry Miscellany* and other journals.

Heinz Risse, the contemporary German author, began publishing at the age of 50 and has since written eight novels.

Larry S. Rudner's recent fiction — all set in Eastern Europe before the Holocaust — has appeared in *The Arizona Quarterly* and *The Croton Review*. He teaches at North Carolina State University in Raleigh.

Hillel Schwartz has a chapbook out from State Street Press — *Phantom Children* — and poems forthcoming in the *Centennial Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Porch*, *Bellingham Review*, and *Commonweal*.

Manuel Silva is a younger Chilean poet who has published two books of poetry.

Stephen Wechselblatt graduated from the University of Iowa in 1983 with a Ph.D. in English, and is now doing research in the history of translation. His translations of Kajii have also appeared in *The Journal of Literary Translation* and *Modern Poetry in Translation*.

