

Screen Theory and Film Culture, 1977-1987

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**APPLICATION FOR A RESEARCH DEGREE BY PUBLISHED WORKS,
MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY
MARK NASH 2003**

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Abstract

Introductory Statement in Support of Application (1996)

My work in the 1970s and 1980s was developed with the evolving body of work now loosely called 'Screen theory'. It centred on notions of authorship, spectatorship and art cinema with specific reference to the films of Carl Dreyer. In my research and writing on Dreyer's film Vampyr I applied the literary concept of the fantastique to cinema, one of the first substantial theoretical contributions to a now established area of publication and research. According to one writer¹ this work was "probably the most ambitious attempt to apply Todorov's approach to cinema", a "notable exception" in the theoretical writing of that time. This was part of the wider movement associated with SEFT and Screen to interrogate the uncritical realism which dominated 1970s film studies.

In my subsequent writing on Dreyer I explored a structuralist but more psychoanalytically informed discussion of genre, developing the concept of the "Dreyer text" as a way of bringing psychoanalytic concepts to compliment and complicate structuralist notions of authorship and genre.

I was part of a loose group at Screen which was passionate both about cinema and ideas. While polemically defending the new concepts we were bringing to bear on cinema, we were equally concerned with their institutional placing. Our work concentrated both on regimes of looking allowed to the spectator by texts and their institutional placing. We focussed on political and discursive structures of the cinematic institution and developed a concept of 'cinema as social practice'. In particular I pushed for a cultural critique of British Independent cinema and its institutions, which was continued in my work on screen acting. I was also instrumental in extending Screen theory to other visual arts. I felt that the sometime parochialism of film studies lay in part in its separation from analysis of other forms of visual culture.

In my full context statement I wish to explore limitations in the political, semiotic and psychoanalytic models which I (as did many others) adopted at the time. What I now see as Screen theory's 'blind spots' in relation to issues of sexual orientation and race can be traced back to the problematic of this period. My own subsequent research on gay and lesbian cinema as well as film and television projects on screen acting (Acting Tapes) psychoanalysis (Between Two Worlds) and Frantz Fanon (Frantz Fanon: Black Skin White Mask) came out of dissatisfaction with that earlier project as it was then conceived. The form chosen - the essay and review - reflects the difficulty of thinking through these issues.

¹James Donald (ed), 'Fantasy and the Cinema', British Film Institute, London 1989

In essence my proposal involves looking back at my work around Dreyer and what one could broadly call my 'film culture' work, and arguing that what was sometimes felt and described as a theory: practice division between these two domains could be more usefully thought of in retrospect in terms of two overlapping modes of theoretical production involving different notions of institution, conjuncture, subject etc. In looking again at the strengths and weaknesses of the work I am submitting here, however, I still expect key terms of subject and history, discourse and institution, to remain in place, modified and nuanced by the substantial range of work in psychoanalysis, cultural studies and queer theory that Screen in part engendered and which my work participated in.

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Full Context Statement

I Introduction

In the introductory statement in support of this application for a research degree by published works, I proposed to look back at my 'work around Dreyer and what one could broadly call my "film culture" work' and argue that 'what was sometimes felt and described as a theory: practice division between these two domains could more usefully be thought of in retrospect as two overlapping modes of theoretical production involving different notions of institution, conjuncture, subject etc.'

The texts of mine concerning Dreyer that are presented here are involved in a series of debates concerning primarily, but not exclusively, issues of authorship and genre, spectatorship and art cinema as developed in 1970s film-studies. The aim of 'Vampyr and the Fantastic'¹ was to situate that film generically and in so doing to take issue with previous readings, in particular notions of a cinema of deconstruction that evacuated notions of history and the social. The aim of 'Dreyer'² was find ways of developing a more psychoanalytically informed discussion of authorship and genre, to develop readings of the films which situate that work as 'cinema d'auteur' but also within a genre of 'art cinema' defined both textually and through the modes of distribution and exhibition of cinema.

The texts I am presenting which bear on issues of 'film culture' include theoretical reflections on the relation of history and cinema and what constitutes an intervention in film culture (with Steve Neale)³; an exploration of the relation of politics and aesthetics in Contemporary Chinese Cinema (with Rosalind Delmar)⁴; a review of the British Film Institute's engagement with a 'social practice of cinema'; and a discussion on British Independent Cinema with Marc Karlin, a member of the Berwick Street Film Collective⁵.

Re-reading this material now I would say that while the key terms of subject and discourse are substantially present and elaborated, those of history and institution are, from a contemporary perspective, less developed. It is clearer to me now than it was at the time that this 'holding together' of theory and practice was a complicated manoeuvre and one which was perhaps too utopian to be sustained long-term. However at the time, it enabled one to participate as a fully-fledged member of the Screen 'high theory' set, while not having to abandon the political in the everyday sense of the term.

My editorial to Screen Summer 1979 vol 20 no 2 used a quotation from Raymond Williams⁶ about the need to connect the thinking about institutions to the 'ordinary political system', emphasising the danger of analytic work becoming theoreticist when it becomes self-

1 Mark Nash, "'Vampyr" and the Fantastic', Screen vol 17 no 3, Autumn 1976 1977. [work submitted]

2 Mark Nash, Dreyer, London: British Film Institute 1977. [work submitted]

3 Mark Nash and Steve Neale, 'Film "History/Production/Memory"' Screen vol 18 no 4 Winter 1977/78. [work submitted]

4 Rosalind Delmar and Mark Nash, 'Breaking with Old Ideas: Recent Chinese Films', Screen vol 17 no 4 Winter 1976/77. [work submitted]

5 'Problems of British Independent Cinema: A discussion between Marc Karlin and Clare Johnston, Mark Nash and Paul Willemen' Screen vol 21 no 4 1981. [work submitted]

6 Raymond Williams, 'Television and Teaching, an interview with Raymond Williams' Screen Education no 31, Summer 1979.

sufficient. Williams linked this efflorescence of theory to blocks on production: 'Many people doing analysis would have been doing production in different circumstances'⁷.

When circumstances changed, as indeed they did with the advent of Channel 4 Television in 1984, a number of people doing analysis did venture into production, myself included. The fact that nearly 20 years of Channel 4 may not have borne out all the hopes we may have had of it at the beginning cannot alter the fact that the UK media landscape was completely altered by Channel 4⁸.

Williams was an exceptional thinker, a formative influence on many of my generation at Screen (Heath, Brewster, MacCabe, and myself all studied with him at Cambridge). His defence of the progressive potential of realism in the poetics of British Television⁹ gave us pause for thought. He exhorted us not to abandon historical, 'conjunctural' approaches when embarking on the structuralist adventure and always to bear in mind the institutional aspect of aesthetic issues. One could also argue that Williams' rejection of the fashionable avant-garde: realist dichotomy facilitated Screen maintaining an interest in both dominant ideological practice (Hollywood) as well as aesthetical and politically oppositional work (the avant-garde).

Much independent UK media production in the early 1980s came out of a dialogue with theoretical work of Screen. The Acting Tapes project (a collaboration with James Swinson)¹⁰ was concerned to focus an under-theorised area in film studies (acting)¹¹ with a specific focus on the history of acting codes and the rhetoric of performance that independent film-makers neglected at their peril.

I have decided to limit the primary frame of the corpus of work I'm discussing in this thesis to the decade 1977 to 1987 which encompasses my work with Screen up to and including my first steps as an independent producer and director, my move 'from analysis to production'.

In the mid 1980s the relations of theory and practice changed. The second decade of Screen theory moved to theorise difference not just in terms of class and sexuality but also crucially in terms of issues of race and representation. It would have course have been possible to focus another corpus from the mid 1980s on concerning my collaborations with Isaac Julien, from the archive research for his Looking for Langston 1987 to Frantz Fanon: Black Skin White Masks 1996¹²). However before looking back at this period (which I do briefly in conclusion below and which I hope to do more substantially in editing materials on the Fanon film and 1996 conference¹³), it is necessary for me to focus on this first decade of work.

7 Mark Nash, Editorial Screen Summer 1979 vol 20 no 2 p10 1977. [work submitted]

8 It should be added though Channel 4 as it finally emerged was a creation of Thatcherism, much of the groundwork had been done by the UK Independent production sector.

9 Raymond Williams, 'A lecture on Realism' Screen vol 18 no 1 Spring 1977.

10 Acting Tapes, dir Mark Nash and James Swinson, script by Mark Nash and James Swinson, Zero One 1984. A two-part TV documentary, and accompanying film season, Channel 4 1984.

11 I had previously published John O Tompson 'Screen Acting and the Commutation Test' Screen Summer 1978 vol 19 no 2 in the attempt to begin a discussion of this neglected area of cinema studies.

12 Frantz Fanon - Black Skin White Mask, dir Isaac Julien, script Isaac Julien and Mark Nash, Normal Films 1996.

13 'Frantz Fanon - Critical Genealogies', Conference organized by Mark Nash, Isaac Julien and Martha Gevert, Centre for Media Culture and History, Department of Africana Studies and Institute of Afro-American Affairs, New York University 1996.

What can we say now about the problematic my works were trying to enounce and be part of then? I would argue that the 1970s Screen project of investigating the terms in which cinema constructs and deconstructs gendered (and in the 1980s raced) subjects is still remarkably intact. Opening old issues of Screen from my editorship I am struck by the range of material from differing theoretical positions that we included. It was often a struggle to create dialogue and mediate between positions in Screen - one always risked being accused of the sin of 'eclecticism' by those who wanted to consolidate the 'Standard Edition' of critical film theory. I was interested, however naively, in going beyond Althussero-Lacanian film theory.

Francois Dosse¹⁴ suggests that an indicator of the 'swansong' of structuralist paradigm proper was the emphasis on pleasure that was signalled by Roland Barthes beginning with his 1973 The Pleasure of the Text¹⁵. When Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes¹⁶ came out in France in 1975 it was seen above all as 'the symptom of a real turning point that ... led the intellectual world far from scientific shores and closer to the search for self'.¹⁷

Because of the time lag of translations from French to English these post-structural explorations of authorial subjectivity co-existed on Screen's pages with a structural narrative analysis approach to cinema which drew on linguistic and semiological references from an earlier stage in the structuralist project¹⁸. My Vampyr essay written in 1976 for example is more in tune with the 1964 semiological manifesto of the French journal Communications¹⁹. The post- structuralist adventure occupied a completely different emotional and epistemological universe, and one that my Dreyer publication attempted to register, however the effect of this 'return to self' is still being felt in contemporary film criticism today.²⁰

II The Cinefantastic

I was originally introduced to Carl Dreyer's film Vampyr²¹ by Noel Burch, who, in the early 1970s, conducted film analysis seminars in both the Royal College of Art and The Slade Film Unit at University College London, where I was a post-graduate student. In his theoretical approach, Burch was in many ways pre- or proto-structuralist. His work was important because of the stress he put on avant-garde texts, and in his insistence on detailed film analysis he was completely in tune with the structuralist approach.

14 Francois Dosse, History of Structuralism vol 2 The sign sets 1967 – present. London, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1997. The English translator has rendered *le chant du Cygne* (swansong) as 'the sign sets', which loses the tragic connotations of the French, and its reference to the untimely deaths of many of the key figures.

15 Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text trans R Miller New York: Hill and Wang 1975.

16 Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes Berkeley: University of California Press 1994.

17 Dosse, p 332.

18 Vladimir Propp's Morphology of the Folktale (Austin and London: University of Texas Press 1968) was only partially translated and published in France in 1965. The second half of his study 'The historical roots of Supernatural tales' was finally translated and published in France in 1983. Dosse (vol 2 p 364) argues this as emblematic of structuralism's lack of interest in history.

19 Communications no 4 1964.

20 eg Sam Rohdie, Fellini Lexicon BFI: London 2002.

21 Vampyr, dir Carl Th Dreyer, script by Dreyer, Christian Jul, adapted from the collection of short stores by Sheridan Le Fanu, Tobis KlangFilm and Carl Dreyer Filmproduktion, 1932. For fuller credits see Nash, Dreyer p 55.

I thought it important however to contest the formalism I perceived in his notion of deconstruction²² - In an important article 'Propositions' written in 1974 for the British journal Afterimage Burch and his co-author Jorge Dana developed a politique based on an opposition between the structural and the serial. The 'structural' referred to a codedness, to socialised meaning, the 'serial' referred to a negation of socialised meaning achieved 'though a kind of dialectical *aufhebung* "uplifting" from the level of the structural to that of the serial'²³ This involved them in a commitment to Italian (Umberto Eco) rather than French structuralism, and as I realise now involved me in what was really an implicit critique of the phenomenological heritage of their work. This debate (on phenomenology) was beginning to divide film studies along national and nationalist (French vs German) as well as philosophical lines, to emerge only relatively recently in Anglophone film-studies²⁴.

My problem with the Burch/Dana position at the time could also be put as follows: Their 'crest line' of 'serial' films, all of which I happened to admire as films, involved a trans-historical notion of film history. The 'codedness of the western episteme' that they contested and of which they were yet a part seemed to me a very essentialist notion. I was also concerned about the growing opposition in British film studies between the avant-garde and the mainstream and wanted to insist, as I have continued to do ever since, in the possibility of engaging with both kinds of film-making practices.

First published in French in 1970 and in English in 1973, Tzvetan Todorov's structuralist study 'The Fantastic'²⁵ broke new ground by insisting that the genre cannot be logically defined, either in terms of a fantasy/reality opposition, or in terms of the text's supposed psychological effects on the reader. Instead Todorov defines the fantastic in the now familiar terms of textual operations and modes of reading. My work on Vampyr was involved with reinscribing the film within a discourse on genre. As Ben Brewster put it in the editorial introducing the issue of Screen containing my article 'Vampyr and the fantastic'. 'Genres are precisely 'specific instances of equilibrium' between transgression and canon, canonic systematisations of deconstruction. In his article Mark Nash argues that Vampyr, recently proposed as a crucial film deconstructing specific and non-specific cinematic codes, can be seen precisely in these deconstructions as an instance of a genre well-known in literature if rare in the cinema, and that the cinematic rarity is itself contained by the location of the film through the foregrounding of its 'author' in the institution of the art cinema'²⁶.

In 'Vampyr and the fantastic' I extend structuralist analysis of the literary fantastic to film and suggest an analogous cinematic genre, the Cinefantastic - I was the first Anglophone writer to do this²⁷. Carol J Clover credits me with coining the term cinefantastic. Through an analysis

22 Noel Burch, Jorge Dana 'Propositions' Afterimage no 5 Spring 1974. I discuss their article in Nash Vampyr, section IV Serial or Fantastic?, pp 60-65.

23 Nash, "'Vampyr' and the fantastic' p 61.

24 eg Richard Allen, Murray Smiths (eds), Film Theory and Philosophy Oxford: Clarendon Press 1997.

25 Tzvetan Todorov, The Fantastic, a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre, Ohio: Case Western Reserve University 1975.

26 Ben Brewster, 'Editorial', Screen vol 17 no 3 Autumn 1976 p 10.

27 Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film', in Carol J Clover Men Women and Chainsaws. Gender in the Modern Horror Film London: BFI 1992 p 56 fn 52

of Dreyer's film *Vampyr* I demonstrate that the conditions necessary for this genre are provided for in part by a code of 'pronoun functions'. In particular I draw on that part of Todorov's work which focuses on two literary modes of the fantastic - concerned with themes of the self and imagination (his example is Gérard de Nerval) and of vision (ETA Hoffmann). *Vampyr* I argue partakes of both of these: "But once Gray's action within the narrative begins, the film's problematic shifts to that of vision, the status of what Gray (and, by identification with him, the reader) sees."²⁸

I instance many examples of uncertainty - hesitation between real and supernatural explanations for events within the diegesis - that is one of the characteristic features and necessary conditions of the fantastic. A further condition is that the reader must adopt an attitude, which rejects allegorical and poetic interpretations, I demonstrate this *a contrario* with examples from literary criticism trying to force *Vampyr* into these modes of reading.

In his book *Caligari's Children* SS Praver devotes a chapter²⁹ 'Book into Film II: Dreyer's *Vampyr*' which draws heavily on this work:

"In an important essay ... again and again, Nash demonstrates, Dreyer deliberately induces doubts about the reality status of the images and sounds... Nash usefully distinguishes two levels of uncertainty in the film: that relating to the status of what Gray sees...and that relating to the status of what the viewer sees... These different kinds of uncertainty, which constitute for me one of the marks of the 'uncanny', Nash justifiably links with Tzvetan Todorov's definition of *le fantastique* "

Having established the pertinence of Todorov's analysis, I then embark on a discussion of cinematic point of view drawing on the work of Yuri Lotman, Emile Benveniste, and Roman Jakobson in linguistics as well as that of Stephen Heath in relation to cinema. Benveniste³⁰ is key to the linguistic aspect of my argument and it should be noted here that his exploration of the linguistic concept of the person is, as Dosse points out³¹ 'already part of the post-structuralist paradigm, ie one where the barred Cartesian subject stages something of a return: "As Emile Benveniste has shown... The category of 'person' in verbal language is organised according to two oppositions: person/non-person and 'I'/'non-I' (within the first term of the first opposition). Person is further specified according to gender and number, but these distinctions are of minor importance to the genre of the fantastic"³² .

28 Nash, 'Vampyr and the Fantastic' p 31.

29 SS Praver, *Caligari's Children, the film as tale or Terror* Oxford, New York Toronto Melbourne: Oxford University Press 1980 (pp148-149).

30 Emile Benveniste, *Problems of General Linguistics*, Coral Gables, FLA: University of Miami Press 1971. David Bordwell in *Narration in the Fiction Film* London: Routledge 1986 p 23 criticises myself, Raymond Bellour and Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier for our (very differing) uses of Benveniste. We are taken to task for our failure to make the case for the relevance of linguistic models (although he admits that the foundations for a linguistic theory of cinematic representation have not been firmly laid [p 24]) and at the same time criticized for not developing the analogy with language more fully! Bordwell has his own agenda - he is in fact concerned to abandon these linguistic researches ("I suggest that we abandon the enunciation account' (p 26)) so that he can develop his alternative approach to film narration.

31 Dosse 1977 vol 2 ch 4 'Benveniste - The French example'.

32 Nash, "Vampyr" and the fantastic' pp 35 -36.

Drawing on Christian Metz's³³ analysis establishing cinema as a language system (fr *langage*) and leaving the issue of its detailed mode of operation (*langue*) open, I argue for a transposition of the narrative code of the fantastic from the literary system to the filmic system, with the fantastic constituted as a system common to both matters of expression. I then propose that the film system has incorporated pronoun functions that are the equivalent to pronouns or shifters: "These filmic shifters must be seen as a system functioning throughout the film and affected by it. As Metz points out one must distinguish between the treatment a code receives and the code itself. It is part of the system of the fantastic to create "polysemic, uncertain codings"³⁴.

I leave open the question of whether the code of the fantastic is single or multiple, a point however which subsequent discussions of the fantastic take for granted, as not an issue, perhaps in part because of their relative lack of interest in matters linguistic.

For the more precise definition of these pronoun functions and their distribution in Vampyr I can refer the reader to the article itself submitted here. One important feature of my analysis however deserves mention. I do not assume a simple correspondence between individual shots and 'pronoun functions' (unlike many subsequent writers who have made use of this research). I am careful to account for the change in subjective register which can occur during the duration of a single shot and criticise some writers, eg Edward Branigan, for the tendency to 'take the shot, rather than the duration of an interplay of codes, as the minimum narrative unit'. I then present detailed analyses of segments of the film beginning with an analysis as per Metz's *Grande Syntagmatique* to demonstrate the Vampyr text's spatio-temporal incoherence.³⁵

In my concluding section 'Serial or Fantastic?' I engage with the work of Burch/Dana already mentioned, which in my view over-emphasises the work of the signifier - an issue in much of the debates on avant-garde cinema at the time. In particular I criticise their notion of deconstruction as transhistorical, transcendental even. In referring the reader to Brecht³⁶ I critique Burch/Dana's formalist 'laying bare of the device' reading of Dreyer's Gertrud (1965) referring instead to Screen's ongoing theorising of Brecht in terms of dialectic between separation and identification. (The Screen Brecht event had been recently held in Edinburgh in 1975 and papers published in Screen³⁷). Indeed (since this also links to later arguments) it is important to stress my continuing engagement in subsequent work with Brechtian ideas through their psychoanalytic reformulation.

It is sometimes suggested³⁸ that film studies' move into fantasy was in part a reaction to the impasse of Screen theory's work on realism and its attempt to think through notions of politics, and the political. The continuing popularity of fantasy and horror genres both in terms of cinematic production as well as film studies, it is argued, is in part due to its quasi-

33 Christian Metz, Language and Cinema, The Hague: Mouton 1974.

34 Nash, "'Vampyr' and the fantastic' p 42.

35 Nash, "'Vampyr' and the fantastic' pp 42-43.

36 Nash, "'Vampyr' and the fantastic' p 63.

37 Screen Winter 1975/6 vol 16 no 4.

38 Eg James Donald 'Introduction', Fantasy and the Cinema, London: BFI 1989.

escapist attributes, where the viewer or researcher apparently do not have to confront the social order as directly as in realist genres. While it is the case that a vast body of critical work on the fantastic, and on fantasy more generally, developed in the course of the late 1970s and 1980s, I would however agree with Franco Moretti³⁹ that this shift could be seen both as a move away from a cultural politics of criticism - which is what the Screen project involved - as well as involving the return of the political at an ideological level - in the case of fantasy and horror, the use of fear and unconscious identifications to secure consent.

My essay on the Cinefantastic has been widely quoted - Rosemary Jackson in her bibliography to "Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion"⁴⁰ lists my Vampyr essay in her category of 'more incisive and theoretical studies' and refers to it in her text on several occasions. She refers to my drawing attention to the "need for a study of the relations and differences between literary and film presentations of the fantastic, and has pointed out that it is the obscuring of a clear vision of a recognizable 'he' or 'I' (with whose eye the reader or spectator can rest secure) that is one of the features common to both", which she supplements with a long quotation from the article itself.

She refers to my argument "as to the centrality of the play of pronoun functions in the fantastic" (p 86), and uses my text to explicate how the fantastic is concerned with themes of the other, of the 'Not I', with problems generated by desire and the unconscious characterised by ambiguities of vision (p51). Reference to the linguistic aspect of studies of the fantastic tends to disappear from subsequent literature on the fantastic and Cinefantastic - Jackson's references here are exemplary however.

In retrospect, my linguistic analysis could have been extended into a consideration of gender - which I address in my subsequent publication 'Dreyer'. However it is a mark of how soon linguistic analyses were to be superseded and/or taken for granted that when in 1989 Carol Clover argues for a feminine or feminising point of view structure in the genre of the slasher film, in an essay that draws quite heavily on my work⁴¹, she doesn't feel obliged to engage with its linguistic premises. Indeed the subsequent debate in film studies as to whether the gaze is gendered⁴² could usefully have been clarified by recourse to linguistics. More recently others eg Jack G Voller⁴³ continue to argue for the pertinence of Todorov's account of the fantastic for literary analysis.

In its concern with the linguistics and semiotics of cinema, my work on Vampyr participated in both structuralist and post-structuralist debates. It would not be particularly relevant here to rehearse the central role of linguistics in the structuralist paradigm in any detail. Structuralist

39 Franco Moretti, 'Dialectic of Fear' in Signs Taken for Wonders, London: Verso 1983.

40 Rosemary Jackson, Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion London, New York: Methuen 1981, pp 192 - 205.

41 Carol J Clover, "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film", Fantasy in the Cinema ed James Donald, London: BFI 1989.

42 eg E. Ann Kaplan, 'Is the gaze male' in Feminism and Film ed E Ann Kaplan, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000.

43 Jack G Voller, The Supernatural Sublime, the metaphysics of Terror in Anglo-American Romanticism Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press 1994.

analysis of cinema in Screen was initially associated with the work of Christian Metz⁴⁴. Before the advent of French structuralism however, there was a series of attempts by Soviet and Prague school linguists to describe (silent) cinema's relation to language. Boris Eikhenbaum was singled out by Screen authors such as Paul Willemen for the sophistication of his analysis of internal speech as 'a specific mode of organisation differing from that of spoken/written language'⁴⁵. This subsequently led Willemen to extend the idea implicit in Eikhenbaum of the unconscious register of inner speech, to inner speech as the cement between 'text, subject and the social'. As Meaghan Morris points out in her introduction⁴⁶, Willemen's concern with the conditions for social discourse marked him out from other members of the Screen group. In fact this was the concern of several us on Screen – Claire Johnstone was equally polemical on this issue but sadly died young and my work always had a lower profile.

My essay on Vampyr is clearly influenced by this thinking on language and cinema even if its conclusions are relatively modest – concurring with Todorov that the fantastic text, while not modernist, was nevertheless progressive in that the category of the real was at least under scrutiny. Indeed today I would still argue for the importance of a linguistic approach and my Vampyr piece as exemplary.

Shot by Shot analyses are one of the few analytic tools that film studies has and while their connection to critical commentary may be indirect, the slippage or differential between the conclusions one can draw from analysis at the level of the shot and that of the text as a whole is important. In addition one of the many things such analyses teach is the degree of variation between copies of films made in the silent period. Moreover the move in film studies away from such kind of analytic work has resulted in a new kind of impressionist criticism on the one hand and what one might call 'hyper-academic' on the other (where there is no attempt to reintegrate the detail of a specialist reading with the film's context).

'Vampyr and the Fantastic' appeared in the same issue of Screen (Autumn 1976) as Stephen Heath's 'Narrative Space' and Colin MacCabe's 'Principles of Realism and Pleasure' on American Graffiti. The previous issue (Screen Summer 1976) concentrated on analyses of the films of Ozu, and a structural analysis of the television message using the theories of Propp, Greimas and Metz. 'Vampyr and the Fantastic' used classic structuralist tools but was not (yet) concerned with the emerging discourse of pleasure. Neither was it centrally concerned with the by then well-established set of debates on realism in Screen, my having chosen a film and analytic framework which put these questions on one side.

III Breaking with old ideas

While issues of politics were put to one side in my article on Vampyr, the following issue (Screen, Winter 1976) contained a jointly researched and written article by Rosalind Delmar

44 A special issue of Screen Spring/Summer 1974, vol 14 nos 1 and 2 was devoted to the work of Christian Metz including his 'Methodological Propositions for the Analysis of Film'. Metz's 'The imaginary signifier' appeared in Screen Spring 1975 vol 16 no 2.

45 Paul Willemen, 'Reflection on Eikhenbaum's Concept of Internal Speech in the Cinema' Screen Winter 1974/75 vol 15 no 4 p 60.

46 Meaghan Morris, 'Introduction', Paul Willemen Looks and Frictions London: BFI 1994 p 15.

and myself on Recent Chinese Cinema⁴⁷, which took the occasion of a 1976 season of Chinese films at the National Film Theatre to discuss the Cultural Revolution in the cinema.

The structural approach was continued in this essay, where we read various signifiers of the Cultural Revolution across the body of films in the NFT season and present a set of preliminary reflections on the politics and aesthetics the Cultural Revolution. In my own mind therefore, terms of political analysis were well established even if in my writing I was not able to bring them together in the same piece of writing but rather in contiguous texts (ie *Vampyr: Chinese Cinema*).

From the beginning of National Chinese cinema with Joris Ivens' donation of his camera and film in Yan'an in 1938, we move to the struggle to revolutionise Peking Opera and focus on the Cultural Revolution concept of ideological struggle linking the economic and subjective: "A particular aesthetic was developed in the theatre and the cinema, that of the demonstration and exemplification of the two-line struggle... By engaging with the film any individual would experience in him/herself the conflict between two kinds of subjectivity, or rather two ways of describing and reproducing themselves as subjects – bourgeois individualism and class consciousness"⁴⁸.

We discuss the Socialist Realist use of exemplary heroes and heroines. The final section 'traces the manifestation of words and images referring denotatively to 'mountains' across some of the films shown and relating them where appropriate to the work of Mao Zedong given that he as bearer of the revolutionary work operates as a simultaneous presence and absence within the films we have seen"⁴⁹.

As we were to discover somewhat later, the politics of the Cultural Revolution were very different from the reality presented in the films and official discourses we analysed. Nevertheless this piece provides a fascinating glimpse into our sense of the potential the analysis of representation for ideological struggle (the Althusserian problematic central to *Screen's* work at that time).

After this successful collaboration Rosalind Delmar and myself collaborated on a project on Joris Ivens. Originally we were going to produce a jointly edited publication, but in the end I focussed on organising the National Film Theatre retrospective, leaving the publication to Rosalind. Ivens' work embraced a wide range of aesthetic forms – his early experiments with the Amsterdam Filmliga (eg *Regen* 1929), close alliance with socialist movements and socialist realism (eg *Komsomol* 1932), agitational documentary (eg *Indonesia Calling* 1946) the embrace of post-war verité with the impressive series on the Chinese Cultural Revolution *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* 1976. I recall I was quite perplexed as to how to reconcile these very differing articulations of the political and aesthetic and uncomfortable with Ivens' socialist humanism that I alas could not mesh with my post-humanist structuralist approach. On the other hand Delmar's fellow feeling with Ivens enabled her to give an important overview of Ivens' work⁵⁰.

47 Rosalind Delmar, Mark Nash, 'Recent Chinese Cinema' *Screen* Winter 1976 vol 17 no 4.

48 Delmar and Nash, p 72.

49 Delmar and Nash, p 79.

50 Rosalind Delmar, 'Joris Ivens: 50 Years of Filmmaking' London: British Film Institute 1979.

IV Notes on the Dreyer Text

While my work on Vampyr was a contribution to a structuralist linguistics of cinema, specifically concerning the concepts of person and point-of-view, Dreyer⁵¹ raised the stakes in a number of ways, developing a dialogue with post-structuralist criticism.

Following my introduction to the films of Carl Dreyer at the Slade Film Unit already mentioned, I was one of the few members of the British public who sat through the projection of Dreyer's Gertrud⁵² at London's Academy Cinema in Oxford Street, enthralled, in the Autumn of 1968. Formative also were screenings organised for me by Jonas Mekas at the Anthology Film Archives in New York in their cinematic version of the reverse panopticon at the Public Theatre⁵³ and where I saw several Dreyer films including Mikael, which was particularly important for me.

Dreyer clearly designated itself as an intervention in film culture, specifically as to show how the works of this canonical art cinema film-maker could be re-presented through current Screen debates on authorship (and, to a lesser extent, genre). At a theoretical level Dreyer sought to incorporate a more elaborated post-structuralist problematic by engaging with the work of Julia Kristeva, whose work was only then beginning to be translated into English⁵⁴. Kristeva was becoming an important influence on Anglophone theoretical feminism at that time, more so than Lacan in some ways. Indeed in this text of mine one can say that the Lacanian notion of desire, which is central to my argument, is clearly filtered through Kristeva.

As I point out, the division in Kristeva "between the symbolic and the semiotic implies a critique of structural linguistics and of its central concept, the sign as union of signifier and signified... Sign and signification... are... effects of the division between semiotic and symbolic through which social identity is instituted"⁵⁵ and it was her reference to the social, as well as her concern with theorising sexual division within the realm of avant-garde art practices, which made her more immediately attractive than Lacan (who in any event was much less interested in art than Kristeva.). In retrospect we had perhaps too easily taken on board her

51 Mark Nash, Dreyer, London: British Film Institute 1977.

52 Gertrud, dir Carl The Dreyer, script by Dreyer based on the play by Hjalmar Soderberg, Palladium 1961. For fuller credits see Nash, Dreyer pp 67-68. British Critics were divided, Penelope Mortimer of the Observer (The Observer 29/9/68) quoted Bosley Crowther: "The tax of Dreyer's slow and ponderous tempo upon the average person's time is a rather presumptuous imposition for any motion-picture artist to make. Maybe the cultists can take it. But is it justified? Is it art?" The Financial Times disagreed "for those who are prepared to adjust and succumb to its rhythm and its world Gertrud is a unique and rewarding experience, a film of complete purity and something like perfection".

53 see Annette Michelson 'Gnosis and Iconoclasm: A Case Study of Cinephilia' in October Volume 83 / Winter 1998. In this article Michelson reviews the history and practice of The Anthology Film Archives. Anthology established an art and avant-garde pantheon parallel to that of Cahiers du Cinema, presented as an on-going cycle or loop, influenced by Peter Kulbelka's design for the Vienna Cinemathèque which maximizes the viewers sensory deprivation in the cinema. Michelson accurately describes a perverse, oppositional and transgressive cinephila, which I also experienced, where Dreyer's films co-existed with those of the New American Underground Cinema.

54 Dreyer refers specifically to Julia Kristeva, "Signifying Practice and Mode Of Production" Edinburgh Magazine 1977.

55 Nash, Dreyer pp 18-19.

critique of the Lacanian patriarchal emphasis without working through more thoroughly the work of Lacan himself. Other researchers like Jacqueline Rose⁵⁶ were less cavalier in this respect.

Dreyer was researched⁵⁷ at the National Film Archive in London and the Danish Film Institute in Copenhagen and published to coincide with a complete retrospective of his films and seminar, which I had organised for the National Film Theatre in London in October 1977. It was part of a BFI Occasional Publication series commissioned by Paul Willemen to publicise contemporary critical thinking on cinema⁵⁸. Dreyer took a major figure of film history and so to speak 'rescued' them from the old-fashioned critical discourse of the masterpiece and 'resituated' that work, demonstrating the productivity of the post-structuralist approach.

A film-maker's film-maker, Carl Dreyer was an important influence on a generation of film-makers and critics such as Jean-Luc Godard (Une Femme Mariée 1965, which includes an extract from Dreyer's La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc 1927) and André Techiné, extracts from whose writing I included in the 'Dreyer Dossier'⁵⁹ section of my Dreyer book. As well as a series of critical and theoretical reflections, this book was also designed as an educational and programming resource and so included an extensive filmography with my own interpretative commentary supplemented by quotations from those authors of particular relevance to my approach. Cahiers du Cinéma was the major continuing focus of Dreyer criticism for me at that time; they had produced a special Dreyer issue in December 1968⁶⁰.

In the materials submitted here I include a copy of the October 1977 NFT programme as well as one the programme⁶¹ notes as an illustration of my involvement with both criticism, exhibition and education activities which we gathered under the rubric of a 'social practice of cinema'⁶².

56 eg Jacqueline Rose, Sexuality in the Field of Vision London: Verso 1986.

57 I was sufficient of a Dreyer expert to be interviewed on UK Channel 4 TV in 1986 as to the significance of the discovery of the complete print of his The Passion of Joan of Arc in a Norwegian mental institution. This was written up as Mark Nash 'Joan Complete – A Dreyer Discovery', Sight and Sound, London vol 54 Summer 1985. [work submitted]

58 Contemporaneous titles included Tony Rayns (ed) Fassbinder, BFI London 1976; Richard Dyer ed Gays in Film BFI London 1977 and Sylvia Harvey May '68 and Film Culture BFI London 1978.

59 Nash, Dreyer Dossier Dreyer pp 36-81.

60 Cahiers du Cinéma nr 207, Dec 1968. In Nash, Dreyer Dossier, Dreyer p 36 I am intrigued by Cahiers producing an analysis focusing on problems of language and subjectivity with almost no attempt to theorise within a materialist framework, so close to the 'events' of May 1968.

61 Carl Dreyer, National Film Theatre Programme, October 1977 [work submitted]. Almost all of the copy for the programme notes was derived from the dossier section of the Dreyer publication. In the Shorts Programme II, Programme Note [work submitted] I refer to two conflicting concepts of authorship which surfaced during the NFT seminar on the season, in an attempt to provide an ongoing dialogue with the NFT audience.

62 "What must have priority in any emerging social practice of the cinema involving a dynamic and meaningful relationship between production/distribution/exhibition is creating a situation in which both film-maker and film viewer both have an equal part to play in the process of text construction which is the film. The act of filming and the act of viewing become 2 [sic] moments of equal value, neither having priority over the other" Claire Johnstone 'Cinema as a social practice – some problems', paper delivered at the SEFT Weekend School, 'British Independent Cinema/Avant Garde' organized by Claire Johnstone and Mark Nash at the Institute of Education, London January 1977. unpublished mss.

In the introduction⁶³ I referred to the way the object of film study and concepts deployed within it had shifted in a relatively few years. In particular I described how problems within the Althusserian concept of ideology had prevented the development of “concrete strategies for ideological struggles in relation to the cinematic institution” and how post - Althusserian reformulations of notions of ideology and the state were beginning to enable work towards an altogether more political understanding of these problems.

I continued:

“While it is important that critical texts investigate the functioning of the cinematic institution and consolidate the transformation of the theoretical space from the object cinema to the operation cinema, they can only have progressive effects if consciously articulated with their surrounding co-text, eg the contradictory shifts in production, distribution and exhibition within the industry”⁶⁴.

Indeed this shift from object to operation was one of the key conceptual moves at the time, as was the representation of the apparatus of production, distribution and exhibition as a co-text. This notion of co-text is an interesting attempt to try and make the connection between textuality proper, the material textuality of the work of art, and the context that produced and sustained it: an attempt to avoid the Manichean dimension of discursivity tout court, though some doubtless saw us as attempting to re-introduce a base-superstructure model by the back door.

I make reference to the arguments for a third film distribution circuit, which would break the monopoly of the then two major chains, ABC and Rank whose monopoly deprived British filmgoers of so many different kinds of films (Dreyer’s included). In noting the potentiality for the return of religious values within art cinema, alerted no doubt by Paul Schrader’s Transcendental Style,⁶⁵ (with its explicit references to ‘transcendental’ qualities in Dreyer, Ozu and Bresson), I was also concerned to draw attention to the relative fragility of both British Art Cinema and British Independent Cinema.

My text then proposes quite a sophisticated reworking of notions of authorship. The emphasis of Dreyer is “anti-*auteurist*: against attributing an imaginary unity to the ‘author’. The notion of the ‘Dreyer-text’ refers then to a process theoretically constructed/reconstructed”⁶⁶. Individual film texts are regarded as provisional unities of a segment of that discursive Dreyer-text: “These notes on ... the Dreyer-text are concerned with the ideological processes of text construction played out in the space between the author’ of the filmic discourse and the reader/viewer.”⁶⁷

Through this reading, the question of what kind of reader the text constructs is raised. In its insistence on the ways in which the act of reading/viewing reconfigure and reconstitute the

63 Nash, Introduction Dreyer.

64 Nash, Introduction Dreyer p 2.

65 Paul Schrader, Transcendental style in film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer Berkeley, Los Angeles; London : University of California Press, 1972.

66 Nash, Dreyer p 3.

67 Nash, Dreyer p 3.

text, my argument could be described as quasi-Barthesian. However unlike the later Barthes, it is nevertheless concerned to keep some kind of separation between text and viewer.

The essay 'Notes on the Dreyer Text' which forms the core of the Dreyer book⁶⁸ begins by recapitulating notions of ideology and suture as developed by various Screen writers before embarking on an analysis of signs of desire within one of Dreyer's earlier silent films Michael (1924)⁶⁹. I argue that in this film light itself can function as a signifier which, through a metaphoric process, stands for desire⁷⁰, that the look itself is foregrounded as an object of desire, and that paintings in the diegesis have a specific role to play in trapping the look. My account here is close to Lacan's essay on the look as object petit a,⁷¹ although I do not reference it as such.

I draw attention to a 'ceaseless displacement of signifiers of desire' - Michael's removing a set of valued crystal wineglasses for a tryst with the Princess Zamikov, the painter Zoret's inability to render the look in her eyes, and the way Zoret's paintings 'produce' the artist in an analogous way that images 'produce' their viewer. Indeed I am struck how close my formulations come to contemporary Lacanian theory of the role of the art object: "All these objects function as if they could give meaning but they can't. So then we come back to the beginning, to the sense that loses sense. That is what the Lacanian 'objet a' is about. It is about something that lacks. Its this object cause of desire [sic]"⁷²

I then move on to discuss the way the film text poses and unsuccessfully attempts to contain the problematic of bisexuality⁷³ arguing that "what is repressed and therefore represented in the interstices of the text is not homosexuality, the faithful shadow of heterosexuality. It is bisexuality which constitutes the trouble of the text and generates and organises its complete set of displacements and exchanges". I refer to a feminisation of the characters in terms of an expulsion of overt homosexuality from the diegesis. Here too I find my reading of this film surprisingly modern, already anticipating the possibility of a 'queer' reading of this and other Dreyer films, which draws attention to their refusal of what Michael Warner has called 'heteronormativity'.⁷⁴

In the third section of "Notes on the Dreyer-text"⁷⁵ I discuss what I call the 'barred image' as a signifier of repression and further elaborate the notion of a central organising fantasy which 'appears to operate around light as a material visual signifier of the look, generating, metaphorically, plots about divine light and semantic structures organising a variety of

68 Nash, Dreyer pp 5-36.

69 Michael (Mikael), dir. Carl The Dreyer, script Dreyer, Thea von Harbou. Based on the novel by Herman Bang, Decla-Bioscope for UFA, 1924.

70 Nash, Dreyer p 9.

71 Jacques Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis edited by Jacques-Alain Miller: Penguin: Harmondsworth 1979.

72 'A little object' Danuza Machado interviewed by Alex Potts, AN Visual Arts, September 1997 p 12.

73 Nash, Dreyer pp 11, 12.

74 Michael Warner (ed), Fear of a queer planet. queer politics and social theory. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press. c1993.

75 Nash, Dreyer, II Notes on the Dreyer text, C The barred image pp 11-16.

permutations on the concept (ie signified) of 'light'⁷⁶: 'Light becomes a representation... of the act of looking itself'⁷⁷. Critical writing on film noir explores the idea of repression being visually figured in the dark areas of the screen: 'Some dangerous object or person could emerge from those blind spots at any time'⁷⁸. I distinguish Dreyer's appropriation of German expressionist cinema's *chiaroscuro* lighting from that developed in film noir. Dreyer I point out works with shades of grey – vision is never completely obscured.

I devote several paragraphs to a parallel between cinema and religious discourse. My comparison between the medieval doctrine of signatures and the contemporary critical practice (which I critique) of reconstructing the author 'as god' from 'his' traces in the text follows Michel Foucault's attempt to recast discussions of authorship⁷⁹ (see below). And indeed there is an implicit argument that certain kinds of cinema (eg films by Dreyer and Bresson) participate in ongoing theological and philosophical debates. In the Dreyer film Gertrud⁸⁰ for instance, the eponymous central character refers to her father's belief in predestination, which her doctrine of pure love 'Amor Omnia' uncannily reduplicates. This recalls Dreyer's comments on the opposition of 'light' Gruntvigian Protestantism versus 'dark' Inner mission Calvinist predestination which structures the plot of Ordet⁸¹. In Scandinavian societies with a long tradition of dissenting secularism (Søren Kierkegaard being the most famous to a non-specialist), it is not surprising to find film-makers whose work is not just haunted by this loss of faith but actively re-enacts its dilemmas within a materialist cinematic philosophy. Ordet (literally 'the word') refers to the language of faith that will bring the dead to life. Dreyer's cinema in this and other films directly engages with the issue of religious doubt.

Developing this line of thought further today would involve an engagement with Deleuze's comments on Dreyer in The Time Image, where he reformulates the issue of belief in terms of an epistemological break in the relation between cinema and thought which effectively founds a new cinema:

"Gertrud finally develops all the implication and the new relation between cinema and thought- the 'psychic' situation which replaces all sensory-motor situations; the perpetual break of the link with the world... the grasping of the intolerable even in the everyday and insignificant... Gertrud inaugurates a new cinema"⁸².

Deleuze also reflects on the connections between belief (both religious (particularly Catholic) and socialist) and the cinema, pointing out that it is precisely at the point when these belief systems collapse that film-makers as diverse as Dreyer, Rossellini, and Godard (one could also

76 Nash, Dreyer pp14.

77 Nash, Dreyer p13.

78 Paul Willemen, Jacques Tourneur Edinburgh: Edinburgh International Film Festival 1975 quoted in Nash Dreyer p 13.

79 'The doctrine of signatures - the theory that each and every natural object has stamped upon it some sign of its utility to the relief of man's ills' Marie Boas The Scientific Renaissance 1450-1630 (London: Collins 1962, p 182). My references to Paracelsus and Crollius are taken directly from Foucault's The Order of Things (London: Tavistock Publications 1970).

80 Gertrud, dir Carl Th Dreyer, script Dreyer, based on the play by Hjalmar Söderberg, Palladium Film, 1961.

81 Ordet, dir Carl Th Dreyer, script by Dreyer based on the play by Kai Munk, Palladium 1954.

Dreyer's discussion of these two forms of Christianity is quoted in Nash, Dreyer pp 64-65.

82 Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 2 The Time Image Athlone: London 1989 p 170.

add Bresson) engage in forms of religious representation. Several films by these film makers including Dreyer's Ordet and The Passion of Joan of Arc feature in the pantheon list distributed by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications to mark the centenary of cinema⁸³.

The fourth section of Notes on the Dreyer Text⁸⁴ revisits Kristeva's 'Signifying Practice and Mode of Production' essay already referred to⁸⁵ and uses that to show that The Dreyer Text can be read as an exemplary site where the discourses of religion, art and the feminine intersect⁸⁶. Following Kristeva I use Dreyer as an example of how art has taken over the function of religion and how the "return of the repressed feminine in signifying practice causes a crisis in poetic language and how Dreyer's films participate in the problematic of the modern text."

I continue with a reading of Dreyer's Gertrud⁸⁷, focussing on issues of hypnosis and bisexuality, and through detailed reference to the songs in the film argue that the singing voice can be read as a vehicle of the semiotic. In conclusion⁸⁸ I argue that the Dreyer-text can be characterised as a type of hysterical discourse: "To summarise and conclude, it appears that the Dreyer text can be characterised as a type of hysterical discourse. This conclusion is based on the emergence of particular sets of representations at three different levels in the films: the diegesis, the *mise en scene* (ie the filmic writing) and the body of the text"⁸⁹, "an exemplary site where discourses of religion, art and the feminine intersect"⁹⁰.

There are occasional passages in this section where my formulations run ahead of my ability to fully demonstrate or explicate them. For instance in my discussion of the screen image as a representation of the maternal body I'm clearly trying to make connections with Kristeva on the one hand while maintaining connections to Paul Willemen's discussion of incestuous fantasies in Raoul Walsh's Pursued.⁹¹

V Concerning Art Cinema and Authorship

Screen devoted its Spring 1979 issue to questions of authorship, arguing that while indeed it had been an impasse in auteur theory that had originally lead to work on psychoanalysis and cinema and its focus on the theory of the subject, more recent work had not returned to the issue of authorship. As a precondition for handling 'the major ideological construction' of authorship with some conjunctural specificity', Screen theory had moved away from

83 John Thavis, 'Vatican Picks its Best Films List'

< <http://www.dio.org/links/info/vfm.htm> > [accessed 1 August 2003]; Steven D. Greydanus and Jimmy Akin 'The Vatican Film List' 2003 <<http://decentfilms.com/commentary/vaticanfilmlist.html>> [accessed 1 August 2003].

84 Nash, 'Notes on the Dreyer Text' D I Dreyer.

85 Julia Kristeva, 'Signifying Practice and Mode of Production' Edinburgh Magazine'76 no 1 1976.

86 Nash, Dreyer p19.

87 Nash, 'Notes on the Dreyer Text' D II Dreyer.

88 Nash, 'Notes on the Dreyer Text' E Dreyer.

89 Nash, Dreyer p 30.

90 Nash, Dreyer p 19.

91 Paul Willemen 'The Fugitive Subject' Raoul Walsh ed Hardy Edinburgh: Edinburgh Film Festival 1974.

authorship to psychoanalysis but now it was important to return to this issue. In an editorial jointly written with Steve Neale we argued that the separation of author and text characteristic of much film (as well as literary) criticism still implied that the author was a "punctual source, a creative individual giving expression to a work":

"The notion of the author, even as developed in structural criticism, separated out the text with its own interior unity, from ideology which might appear in the text in a form mediated by the text's structures, participating in its theses and shifting antinomies, but nevertheless separate and distinct from the text."⁹²

We therefore included an article by Michel Foucault originally presented at the Collège de France in 1969.⁹³ Foucault's aim was to open up the question "What is an author?". In this article he theorised the conjunctural function of authorship, arguing for its ties to "legal and institutional systems which circumscribe, determine and articulate the realm of discourses". Our editorial did not specifically mention my own work on the Dreyer text and authorship though it clearly fits into this paradigm. And my particular interest as editor in publishing the Foucault piece was a response to the difficulty of thinking through the conjunctural issues surrounding authorship.

Further on in that editorial we refer to "the force of discourses of authorship in the social formation" which "poses particular problems for independent film-making groups and collectives who find their work however oppositionally conceived, taken up by discourses of authorship". In retrospect we can say that the death of the author was widely mis-reported. In fact those same oppositional and collective practices that sought to supersede the author have themselves fallen into desuetude.⁹⁴

There was however a problem in reconciling Foucault's notion of discourse to that of social formation and its legal and institutional systems in particular. As Lapsley and Westlake point out "The general absence of explanation as to how discourses and regimes of power came about could be seen as a serious deficiency."⁹⁵

They continue: "Because cinema is not a single discourse like those on sexuality or madness but is, rather, a site for discursive conflict, it is neither institutionalised as knowledge nor is its relation to other discourses easily specifiable."⁹⁶ Foucault gave no account of the process of the constitution of the subject comparable to Althusser's notion of interpellation.

92 Mark Nash and Steve Neale, 'Editorial' *Screen*, Spring 1979 vol 20 no 1. [work submitted]

93 Michel Foucault, "What is an author?" *Screen*, Spring 1979 vol 20 no 1.

94 A historical account of the Independent and Grant-Aided sectors in the UK is long overdue. The workshop model drawn from 1930 models of collective organization was not entirely appropriate for 1980s media production, and by the end of the 1990s none of these continued to exist in the UK. In their espousal of collective forms of cultural work they provided a powerful model for alternative creative practices. I was involved in the trade union and cultural sector discussions to establish these workshops as well as subsequent attempts to profile these practices, most recently with the inclusion of a number of their films in Documenta 11. A preliminary account is given in Noeleen Grattan 'The Workshop Declaration – History Problems and Potential' Dissertation submitted for BA (Hons) Degree in Film and Photographic Arts Derby College of Art 1984.

95 Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, *Film Theory: an Introduction* Manchester University Press: Manchester 1988 p 21.

96 Lapsley and Westlake p 22.

It is also characteristic of the writing of the time that one would invoke the notion of conjuncture as a reference point for the political and philosophical aim of our critical practice in Screen without always being clear of the difficult epistemological ground on which it was being developed. Were we still Althusserian, comforted by a Marxist notion of determination in the last instance, or had we accepted Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst's attack on epistemology as a form of dogma, focussing instead on the conditions of existence of social practices and institutions⁹⁷?

The final section of my Dreyer essay is entitled "Postface: A note on the textual subject 'Dreyer' as commodity". In my essay on Vampyr I had extended my analysis of subjective marking (pronoun functions) in the film to speculate that art cinema might be characterised as a genre by a specific form of subjective coding. I indicated that further work would be needed to "determine in what ways the authored textual discourse offers this mode of appropriation as authored. This may consist in part in the degree of prominence or insistence of the authorial subcode".⁹⁸

In the Dreyer book I attempted to reformulate issues of authorship by replacing the notion of author with that of 'textual subject':

"The textual subject 'Dreyer' is neither the biological individual, now dead, nor the totality of that individual's traces in the real but the effect of a specific series of transformations, the result of a process of play with signification on the terrain where the cinematic institution and given social formation intersect"⁹⁹. I continued: "The work of the Dreyer-text within this institution is to foreground the phantasy structure at play in it, ie the way the institution structures phantasy"¹⁰⁰

My trajectory from 'Vampyr and the Fantastic' to Dreyer was to move from a structuralist to post-structuralist paradigm, from a semiotic to a psychoanalytic frame. Institution in the above passage was understood as the Screen notion of 'cinematic institution', as a mode of engaging and creating spectatorship, rather than a social and economic production distribution and exhibition framework, a set of practices which provide the conditions for the production of cinema in the first place, the particular sense in which I use 'institution' when discussing independent cinema and film culture. This was a period as I have already mentioned characterised by what I would call a co-habitation between post-structuralism and structuralism, with authors, myself included, in effect ducking and diving between (Althusserian) structuralism and (Foucauldian) post-structuralism.

I continued to return to these issue in a number of essays and conferences focussing on the work of Carl Dreyer: at Verona in 1984¹⁰¹; in a review article of Maurice Drouzy's biography

97 Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst, Mode of Production and Social Formation, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1977.

98 Nash, "Vampyr" and the fantastic' p 66.

99 Nash, Dreyer p 32.

100 Nash, Dreyer p 32.

101 International Conference on the work of Carl Th Dreyer, Verona Nov 16-18 1984. My presentation 'Dreyer questions of authorship: the Anglo-American Critical Debate' was published as 'Dreyer e il Cinema d'Autore. Il dibattito della critica Anglo Americana' in Martini (ed) Il Cinema di Dreyer, Venice: Ed Marsilio 1987. [work submitted]

of Dreyer in 1986¹⁰² and at New York University in 1989¹⁰³. The Verona presentation and essay that was published subsequently (translated into Italian) focussed on Anglo-American critical debates on Dreyer and in particular my continuing attempts to engage the formalist accounts of Dreyer both by Burch and Dana as well as David Bordwell¹⁰⁴.

My Verona text¹⁰⁵ briefly traces a history of radical cultural criticism, focussing in particular on Cahiers du Cinema now familiar five-part categorisation of the relationship of the relation of film and ideology. Dreyer had been cited along with Rossellini and Ford under category (e): 'Films which at first sight seem to belong firmly within the ideology and to be completely under its sway, but which turn out to be so only in an ambiguous manner'¹⁰⁶ Though overtly reactionary (not a position I would subscribe to in this bald formulation today) they are nevertheless subject to an internal criticism 'which cracks the film apart at the seams'

I distance myself from Cahiers arguing that: "In the case of the Cahiers argument it seemed to me not very useful to say they present ideology at work. The way we make sense of the formal experimentation of Dreyer's films is more complex and indirect than the notion of ideology at play in their argument at that time allows for".

I summarise my argument with Burch and Dana:

"What is at play it seems to me in their discussion of Dreyer's deconstruction of codes is in fact a notion of art cinema. Its not just that the films circulate fairly easily as individual commodities under that general rubric, but they constantly make reference back to themselves as works of art"

I also discuss the limits of the psychoanalytic approach in my own work on Dreyer:

"The psychoanalytic approach poses cinema as a drama or theatre of the subject in process, an institution for representing, a machine for the production and maintenance of representation. The problem with this approach is that there is the danger – as with the deconstruction argument mentioned earlier - of each film being reduced to an illustration of a thesis". I continue: "This approach has the danger of turning into the very impressionist criticism which more 'scientific' attempts were designed to replace".

As a way out of this impasse I invoke the question of history: "Only by returning the text to our understanding of history can we confirm our hypotheses". I proceed to sketch some determinants from the Scandinavian theatrical and literary scene on the Dreyer text: The concern with women's emancipation in Ibsen, Strindberg and Söderberg whose 1907 novel Gertrud¹⁰⁷ was the basis for Dreyer's eponymous film¹⁰⁸; the cinematic fluidity of some of the

102 Mark Nash, Framework no 25, 1986 review of Maurice Drouzy Carl Th Dreyer né Nilsson ed du Cerf: Paris 1982. [work submitted]

103 Presentation entitled 'Dreyer and the Debate on Art Cinema' A Symposium on the Films of Carl Th Dreyer, New York University Feb 25 1989.

104 David Bordwell, The Films of Carl-Theodor Dreyer University of California Press 1981.

105 Since the text was only published in Italian, I have taken the liberty of quoting from my English version at some length, since I cannot assume a reader fluent with Italian, but also because it contains useful reflexions on the previous published work which is the subject of this thesis.

106 Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism' Screen Reader 1 London: SEFT 1977 .

107 Hjalmar Söderberg, Gertrud Stockholm: Bonniers 1907.

108 I could also have referenced Herman Bang's exploration of homosexual desire in his novel Mikael.

theatrical presentations, particularly Strindberg (eg his 1901 A Dream Play¹⁰⁹). With reference to Raymond Williams's analysis from Modern Tragedy¹¹⁰ I argue that Dreyer's cinema was part of an anti-bourgeois movement in culture 'hostile to the characteristically fixed and enclosed forms of the established culture'. Or as JM Straub put it: "What I admire about Dreyer's films... is their ferocity in treating the bourgeois world"¹¹¹

"The years in which the motion picture camera and projector were being developed – the 1880s and 1890s – were also the years in which there was a decisive break within avant-garde drama, towards new kinds of dramatic compositions. Strindberg ... was writing what are in effect screenplays, embodying shifts of location, sequences of images, fragmentations, transformations and dissolves which were only just technically possible in the most experimental kind of stage production, but which would become even commonplace in film".

I also revisit the question of Dreyer's 'modernism' and transpose the distinction between the "two (political and formal) avant-gardes" developed by Poggioli¹¹² and Wollen¹¹³ into one between the avant-garde and modernism arguing for Dreyer as modernist rather than historical avant-garde.

A year or so later I returned to Dreyer in a review article of Maurice Drouzy's biography. This psychobiography of Dreyer contained astonishing chapters devoted to the history Dreyer's biological parents and their putative influence on his work. This despite the fact that Dreyer was adopted and never knew his parents! "[Drouzy's] interest becomes an obsession when he devotes a chapter to JC Torp, the biological father of Dreyer... At this point, biology and psychology, nature and nurture become confused".¹¹⁴

In the years following my Dreyer publication my position on the separation of the textual and the biological author softened somewhat, accepting that anyone interested in Dreyer's films would want to refer to this book. As well as critiquing the logical short-circuit created by moving back and forth between textual analysis and psychobiography, my article was concerned to critique this strange search for genius in genetics as symptomatic of the durability of discourse of the artist as genius:

"Drouzy confuses the central issues by referencing our understanding of the films back to the author while at the same time using our knowledge of the author further to decipher the films. A critical response to Drouzy's work would be to challenge the ways the fascination with author – the code of authorship - continues to dominate film criticism and production"

My presentation at NYU in 1989 was my last contribution to Dreyer studies to date. By then I had become interested in exploring the notion of art cinema as encompassing modes of narration, consumption and production often in contradiction with each other', and referenced David Bordwell's account in Narration and the Fiction Film¹¹⁵. For Bordwell, art

109 August Strindberg, A Dream Play Seattle & London: University of Washington Press 1973.

110 Raymond Williams, Modern Tragedy London: Chatto & Windus, 1966.

111 JM Straub quoted in 'Carl Dreyer NFT Programme' October 1977 p 6.

112 Renato Poggioli, The Theory of the Avant-Garde Cambridge, Mass & London: Harvard University Press 1968.

113 Peter Wollen, 'The Two Avant-Gardes' Studio International London 1975.

114 Nash, review of Maurice Drouzy Framework 25 p 25.

115 David Bordwell, Narration and the Fiction Film London: Methuen 1985.

cinema represented a domestication of modernist film making, softening its attacks on narrative causality by creating mediating structures: realism, character subjectivity, and authorial vision that allowed a fresh coherence of meaning. Re-reading Bordwell's account of art cinema narration today, there is little that I would quarrel with and indeed a lot that I find useful at the descriptive level. What is clear is that he is resolutely uninterested in extending his analysis of authorship and art cinema in the spirit of post-structuralist enquiry. Gilles Deleuze's writing on cinema mentioned above provides a more contemporary and philosophically stimulating interpretive machinery for that ambiguous narration which characterises 1950s and 1960s art cinema and one much closer to the project of 1970s Screen theory.

I had moved into film and television production myself in 1984 and so the questions that had driven my previous work on Dreyer were less urgent for me than in 1989. My insistence on the generic aspect of the art cinema discourse I would argue is still pertinent today. Even if some of the ways I formulated the question were over-general, it still seems to me that 'art-cinema' is a useful theoretical concept in film studies¹¹⁶. One aspect of my argument was that art cinema was as much concerned with issues of form as those of content, closer in other words to genres like film noir and horror which are distinguished as much by their affective engagement of the spectators as by their content per se.

In revisiting this notion of art cinema today one would also need to discuss its interrelation with notions of national cinema. The coming of sound clearly facilitated the development of national linguistically bound cinemas and again may have pushed those minority language artists such as Dreyer into a kind of cinema that would function at the supra national European level.

My work on the Dreyer text could also have benefited from greater attention to institution understood as the specifics of production distribution and exhibition of the films. It would be interesting for example to review the history of Palladium, the company that produced most of Dreyer's films and continues to hold the rights today. In the first decade of the twentieth century Palladium was the most successful film production company in the world. Financially buoyant with revenues from 'white slave trade' films, it returned to soft-core pornography in the post-war period (and which probably supported its funding of Dreyer's films!).

Equally the financing of Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc by the Société Générale de Films or of Vampyr by the Baron Nicolas de Gunzburg (in return for his playing the role of David Gray) would make equally fascinating reading. In the post-Screen era, film studies has returned to detailed history of the financing of American cinema, but attention to this is still an urgent requirement for European cinema. It would also enable one to revisit and reformulate some of the questions I posed above.

116 I find Steve Neale's ongoing work in this area the most sympathetic eg Steve Neale 'Art cinema as an institution' Screen vol 22, no 1 1981.

VI Degrees of Independence

Though it was not possible to adequately theorise the relation of the textual to the social in my work on Dreyer, in the arena of independent cinema we were grappling with analogous issues - how to understand the institution of cinema in relation to the particular situation in the UK.

A number of us on the Screen editorial board were particularly concerned with 'independent cinema', British independent cinema. An editorial put it as follows:

"Some people regard as 'independent' any film or television production not directly financed by the commercial film and television industries. We, however, are concerned in this issue of Screen with a sector of production that is producing a *different* kind of cinema to the mainstream - different in its aesthetic and political aims, not just in the source of its financing... Radical aesthetic work which struggles against naturalisation, which defamiliarises, which does not take representation for granted has been developed together with exhibition practices concerned with changing the audience's relationship to cinema... While the notion of the social practice of the cinema, that the spectator is a producer rather than consumer of meanings, marked an important shift in our understanding of the relationship between spectators and cinema ... the idea of the active spectator cannot be taken as a political guarantee'¹¹⁷.

Independent Cinema is still a notoriously difficult area to define - the notion of independence is used in many contexts, with conflicting meanings - and its use has become more confusing over the years¹¹⁸. On the other hand, low-budget or no-budget cinema has tried to develop a sense of independent as oppositional or avant-garde. What we sought to do in the 1970s and early 1980s was to provide a theoretical foundation for discussion of the terms of opposition and avant-garde in independent cinema by linking Screen's theoretical concerns to the issues of current film production within the UK. In 1979 I organised a Screen season at the National Film Theatre with members of the editorial board. The aim of the season was to "break down the traditional distinction between film viewing and discussions in an attempt to develop a social practice of film reading, pulling film, theory and general questions of ideology into the same context"¹¹⁹. The season featured a wide range of mainly contemporary films which it was felt could serve as an example and inspiration to contemporary UK film-makers¹²⁰.

In the editorial for Screen vol 20 no 2 I wrote:

"Much of the effectivity of Screen's analytic work stems from the political implications of the psycho-analytic and semiotic discourses it has explored. These implications centre on the

117 Mark Nash, Editorial Screen vol 21 no 4 pp 5-6. [work submitted]

118 Relatively mainstream producers and film-makers have continued to claim the term (and with it some connotation of newness or cutting edge aesthetics), viz The British producers association PACT (Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television) formerly called IPPA (Independent Producers Association) where 'Independent' signalled simply a process of 'contracting out' - autonomous production companies funded by the main broadcasting organisations. Equally 'New American Cinema' is often described as 'independent' which belies its intimate and more recently constitutive relation to the studio system.

119 'Films and Seminars presented by Screen', NFT programme booklet June 1978 p 23.

120 eg Theo Angelopoulos The Huntsmen 1977, or Marguerite Duras Le Camion 1977, (with Jean Luc Godard's 5 hour Sur and Sous La Communication 1976 as a centre piece. The season also featured two explicitly avant-garde films: Michael Snows Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (thanx to Denis Young) by Wilma Schoen 1974 and Malcolm Legrice's Blackbird Descending 1977 as well as Tsui Wei's Hung Yu 1975 a Chinese Cultural revolution fiction about the campaign for barefoot doctors discussed in my and Rosalind Delmar's article 'Breaking with Old Ideas already mentioned.

development of practices which will alter the balance of forces within discursive formations and institutions... The development of a radical practice of cinema will involve the production of critical discourses directed at production, distribution and exhibition of films themselves, as well as film texts themselves”

As an example I might cite the discussion my review of Richard Woolley’s Brothers and Sisters (1980) for the aptly titled The New Social Function of Cinema: British Film Institute Productions 1979/80¹²¹ which argues that Britain’s lack of an art cinema presents opportunities for filmmakers such as Woolley to combine the ideas of the political avant-garde without sacrificing mainstream appeal – to adapt Brecht’s phrase, a cinema both of pleasure and instruction:

“Political” and “Entertainment” cinema are often not as radically different as they are made out to be. One of the problems in England is that there isn’t an art cinema so that there is much more of an opposition between Hollywood styles and independent cinema and art cinema is represented by Continental imports. So there’s a kind of vacuum in British film culture which this film is trying, in a sense, to deal with”.

The NFT season of films was designed to illustrate and engage with the work of filmmakers that had been privileged in previous issues of Screen. At one level this simply represented the engagement one would expect from a film journal with contemporary film-production in the UK. However Screen was not an “ordinary” journal in this respect. As a journal of film-theory it was engaged in a level of discussion that one would now recognise more clearly as philosophical, and its attempts to engage in issues more appropriate for a review of cinema were not always well received. The more practical engagements had to be forced alongside the theoretical ones since they did not necessarily follow from them.

Those of us who were involved in this movement came to it through involvements in the women’s movement and feminist filmmaking (Claire Johnstone), trade-union/community/labour politics (myself) and so on. This kind of activity, as well as engagement with the avant-garde, was a necessary counterpoint to the notion of a theoretical practice.

Independent Cinema figures in my argument here both as a way of thinking about and responding to independent and avant-garde productions and policy initiatives as well as a form of *politique* - creating a theoretical object ‘independent cinema’. If my work on the fantastic and the Dreyer-text represented engagement with the central issue of spectatorship in the cinematic institution and a way of figuring the barred subject within that, independent cinema was the terrain where the cinema machine could be rethought and changed.

121 Graham Humphries ‘Comment’ and ‘Interview between Richard Woolley, Mark Nash, Hilary Thompson and Rod Stoneman’, ‘Brothers and Sisters’ in The New Social Function of Cinema: British Film Institute Productions 1979/80, Rod Stoneman and Hilary Thompson eds, BFI: London 1981. [work submitted] Graham Humphries was a very occasional *nom de plume* that I used when I could not see eye to eye with editors! Alas all I can recall was that the piece was rushed for a deadline which turned out to be over a year before the actual publication date.

My writing and work in this area has an initial focus in my and Steve Neale's reflections the Edinburgh Film Festival 1977 Special Event 'History/Production/Memory' ¹²². It then figures strongly in Screen's concerns during my editorship notably our discussion with Marc Karlin ¹²³. The production and writing about Acting Tapes (1984) ¹²⁴ was conceived as addressing issues raised by the Independent constituency (both aesthetically and structurally). Later in the 1980s my attention shifts to more structural concerns with more journalistic accounts of European Media Initiatives ¹²⁵, the state of the Czecho-Slovak film industry in the transition ¹²⁶ as well as detailed research for the AIP ¹²⁷.

At the same time I was involved in a range of film cultural political engagements with the IFA and the ACTT - In the IFA with encouraging both theoretical and practical reflection on film cultural and policy issues ¹²⁸. In the ACTT with the proposals for restructuring the then London and Grant Aided sector with widening the membership base ¹²⁹ and the establishment of the Workshop Declaration ¹³⁰. These more practical, activist engagements together with film programming and more journalistic kinds of writing made up the ensemble of what I would describe as my film cultural work.

122 Mark Nash and Steve Neale, "History/Production /Memory" Screen vol 18 no 4 1978. [work submitted]

123 "Problems of British Independent Cinema: A Discussion between Marc Karlin and Clare Johnston, Mark Nash and Paul Willemen", Screen vol 21 no 4 1981. [work submitted]

124 Mark Nash and James Swinson "Acting Tapes", Framework no 29 London 1985 [work submitted] ; "Acting Taped - Andrew Higson discusses a new project on cinema performance with Mark Nash and James Swinson" Screen London 1985 vol 26 no5, London 1985. [work submitted]

125 Mark Nash, 'What's in an Acronym? Deciphering New Media Initiatives', The Independent, New York, March 1990.

From the mid 1980s I was actively involved in European organizations lobbying for the UK's adhesion to the MEDIA programme (the Thatcher government had opted out of European support for culture with the result that producers distributors and exhibitors missed out on a raft of funding critical for their work and survival. I had participated in one of the founding conferences in Paris in 1987 which I reviewed - Mark Nash "Point '87, Paris March 4-8 1987" IFVPA Newsletter, London August 1987. I subsequently joined the General Assembly of Euroaim the UK Representative, 1988-1991 and studies for the Postgraduate Diploma in Film Production promoted by one of the successor organizations to Euroaim, EAVE (Les Entrepreneurs de L'Audiovisuel Européen).

126 "After the Velvet Revolution: A Tour of Czechoslovak Film Institutions", The Independent New York October 1990.

127 Independent Producers and Television, Association of Independent Producers, London 1989 (research & edited, Mark Nash).

128 'Notes on Cinema as a Social Practice for the Workshop on the Social Practice of Production, Distribution, Exhibition and Criticism - part one'. Discussion paper IFA Annual meeting and conference York 1977. Mimeographed document. This paper was drafted by myself. Part 2, which bears a similar title by Claire Johnstone, Fran McLean and Marion Dain. In my paper I resumed the arguments of Tom Naim 'The English Enigma' published in Bananas no 4 and subsequently in the Break-up of Britain, London: NLB 1981 and Perry Anderson, 'Components of a National culture' New Left Review no 50 July/August 1968 arguing that our debates on 'film culture' lacked any specific analysis of British and English cultural institutions, critical at a time of the Radcliffe Maude report which presaged the regionalization of arts-funding in the UK.

129 As Chair of the London and Grant-Aided section of the ACTT film union I was particularly involved in working with the Black Media Workers Group and organizing and recruiting black and Asian Union members in London (at this time the broadcasting unions still operated a closed shop).

130 "The Workshop Declaration is an agreement between the BFI, Channel Four, the Regional Arts Associations, the Independent Film and Video Association and the ACTT which ensures ACTT approval for properly funded and staffed production units who want to engage in non-commercial and grant-aided film and tape work 'ACTT Workshop Declaration' ACTT June 1984.

In our review of the Edinburgh Film Festival Special Event "History Production /Memory" Steve Neale and myself discuss the attempt to "rethink what is meant by an 'intervention' in 'film-culture' ¹³¹ Notions of the state, independence, institution and the avant-garde were focussed theoretically and in relation to the political economic and ideological instances in the conjuncture and with a specific reference to the film of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, Fortini/Cani (1976).

In our account we insist on a plurality of channels, cinematic machines in the plural. Indeed we felt that the notion of a cinematic machine in the singular was problematic, implicitly allied to earlier Althusserian formulations and idealist in its implication of an ideology of and for cinema. In retrospect it is clearer now how Screen was caught up in the Marxism and Culture debate in a kind of pincer movement between determination (in the last instance) and complete autonomy.

The essay of Screen containing our Edinburgh review also contained a key debate on Marxism and Culture between the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and Rosalind Coward. The hub of the difference between Birmingham and Coward was "The emphasis on the absolute autonomy of signifying practice... constructed through... a certain reading of Lacan coupled with Paul Q Hirst's recent remarks... about the 'necessary non-correspondence' of the levels in the social formation"¹³².

The determination model had dominated several previous generations of debate on Marxism and culture. The complete autonomy position was to increasingly dominate debates in the 1980s and indeed is the effective position in film studies today, (without the Marxist tag). In effect one would now argue that Cinema was being analysed in a range of philosophically incompatible ways: completely independent of the social formation (the position of Structuralism); through the post-structuralist return of the split subject, focussed through psychoanalysis on the individual viewer; at the same time it was also being discussed 'conjuncturally and institutionally' in the debates on independent cinema.

Our thinking about the 'operation cinema', the machines of cinema, was affected by the impasses of the Althusserian-Lacanian model being developed in the mid- 1970s. Indeed one might argue that theoretical reflection was rhetorically over-developed partially as a response to the potential of this theoretical instability. Of course one could equally reply that holding together of radically different notions of - in this case institution - was a necessary part of a temporary holding operation awaiting a fuller and more adequate theorisation.

Alas this did not happen, or at least not as expected. The Althusserian-Lacanian model split into component parts which went their different ways: the Althusserian model becoming increasingly besieged with its own author's revisions and committal in the early 1980s; The Lacanian model on the other hand, freed from any constraints of having to refer to the political, blossomed to become a new orthodoxy with all the problems that entails.

131 Nash and Neale, p 77.

132 Ian Chambers, John Clarke, Ian Connell, Lidia Curti, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson 'Marxism and Culture' Screen winter 1977/78 vol 18 no 4 pp 115-116.

History took a different tack. Our notion of independence though initially taken on board by Channel 4 television, became gradually diluted and equated with a cinema as simply representing 'minority voices'. A subsequent attempt was made to revive it with the notion of 'third cinema', which tried to radicalise that notion of 'minority' (cf the work of Paul Willemen and Framework for instance).¹³³ However the political and institutional conditions were not right.

In retrospect I also suspect that our interest in the aesthetics of oppositional film and art practices was compromised by a political naiveté with regard to the forces at play in the media economy at large. The free-market arguments of AIP and PACT had more weight than that of the trade union and cultural left at a time when Thatcher was beginning 17 years of Conservatism.

VII The ideology of the visual

The Winter 1979/80 issue of Screen initiated a major shift in the magazine's direction. This was an attempt to take stock of Screen's achievements in the 1970s, and to shift its emphasis away from its role as 'the' academic journal of film studies to engage a wider and more diverse readership. It was concerned to extend its debates from film and television to "other forms of cultural work" and, supported by a new format and layout to enable more extensive use of stills, present material in a wider range of formats and modes of writing than hitherto, including extensive film culture coverage "providing a 'critical' voice for independent production"¹³⁴.

This was a development I helped initiate and steer, but it was very much a collective project and the outcome of many discussions in the Editorial Board and SEFT. This is not the place to discuss the success of this enterprise in any detail. In retrospect I think it fair to say that the new look Screen enabled a new generation of contributors to engage with a wider range of issues, particularly in the area of gender and cultural studies. We had managed to transform the magazine for a 1980s context even though we did not manage to get that much closer to the model of Cahiers du Cinéma that inspired us.

My particular concern with this transformation was to focus our attention on Screen's engagement with the wider field of the visual arts, anticipating by some ten or more years the development of the fields of visual culture and visual cultural studies. It seemed to me that it was logical to extend Screen's analysis of the ideology of the visual to other visual forms and practices, and that the limitation to film and television was somewhat arbitrary.

Mary Kelly and myself put it as follows in our editorial to the Spring 1980 issue of Screen: "A certain area of the ideology of the visual has remained unexamined, including a whole range of positions from notions of the image as an excess of signification, escaping narrative constraints, to an affect founded in pre-linguistic processes or as an extra-discursive phenomenological essence"¹³⁵.

133 J Pines and P Willemen (eds), Questions of Third Cinema London: British Film Institute 1989.

134 Editorial, Screen vol 20 no 3/4 Winter 1979/80. [work submitted]

135 Mary Kelly and Mark Nash, Editorial Screen Spring 1980 vol 21 no 1, p 7. [work submitted]

Tim Clark's essay on Manet's Olympia in that issue¹³⁶ specifically entered into the "area of artistic practice traditionally designated as fine art" with an essay which prompted a debate in the following issue with Peter Wollen on Monet's relation to modernism¹³⁷ who argued that rather than Realism it is fetishism and the "complex forms of seeing' which modern art practice provides ...[which] enables a coherent account of the contradictory readings which Manet's painting appears to offer'¹³⁸. This engagement with methodology of art history was followed up by an essay by Griselda Pollock on the mythologies of the artist as genius¹³⁹.

When I left the magazine in 1981 a wider cultural remit had been established for the magazine even though this specific engagement with the fine arts was not pursued. For myself, however, this led to an ongoing engagement with debates in the visual arts: a review of an exhibition by Mary Kelly¹⁴⁰, a debate with Peter Fuller questioning his neo-Ruskinian approach¹⁴¹, as well as curating moving images with one of the earliest shows of US video art which is only now being properly seen and presented¹⁴².

I returned to these interests in the late 1990s, co-curating film and moving image works in a number of international exhibitions including *The Short Century*¹⁴³, *Force Fields*, *Phases of the Kinetic*¹⁴⁴ and *Documenta 11*¹⁴⁵. The terms of my questions and analysis are very much set by the formative *Screen* period and I include my catalogue essays here as a subsidiary corpus if you will, a body of work which demands its own contextualisation and analysis.

VIII Into production

I have already addressed something of the ontological impasse that hung over the *Screen* project at the end of the 1970s. Having been so involved in this project and its transformation, I personally felt the need to 'break out' into other forms of practice, continuing the work within the British Independent Production Sector that we had pioneered in the 1970s. This move into film and television production is less amenable to detailed discussion here in the context of a thesis submission, because of the necessity of presenting moving image film and video work and establishing the detail of my own contribution to each production.

136 Timothy J Clark, 'Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of 'Olympia' in 1865' *Screen* Spring 1980 vol 21 no 1.

137 Peter Wollen, 'Manet – Modernism and Avant-garde' *Screen* Summer 1980 vol 21 no 2

138 Mark Nash, Editorial *Screen* Summer 1980 vol 21 no 2, p 9. [work submitted]

139 Griselda Pollock, 'Artists, Mythologies and Media – Genius Madness and Art History' *Screen* vol 21 no 3.

140 Mark Nash, 'Mary Kelly's "Post Partum Document"' in *Un Certain Art Anglais*, Paris 1977.

141 Philip Corrigan and Mark Nash, "Response to Peter Fuller" *Art Monthly* no 42 October 1980 pp 24- 25.

142 'American Video, 4 programmes selected and introduced by Mark Nash', an Arts Council of Great Britain Video Programme: 1983, (re-shown at the New Serpentine Gallery Bookshop, London 1996).

143 Mark Nash, "The Modernity of African Cinema" catalogue essay in *The Short Century. Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994* Prestel, Munich 2001. [work submitted]

144 Mark Nash, "The Art of Movement" catalogue essay in *Force Fields. phases of the Kinetic* Hayward/Macba London/Barcelona 2000. [work submitted]

145 Mark Nash, "Art and Cinema: Some Critical Reflections" in *Documenta11 Catalogue*, Kantz 2002.

Combining a *Screen* concern with the psychoanalytic complexities of spectatorial positioning this essay revisits the 'third cinema' paradigm in a discussion of contemporary moving image art and cinema practices. [work submitted]

A range of projects followed the Acting Tapes already mentioned: a science fiction script Memoirs of a Spacewoman and a short film Between Two Worlds (1992)¹⁴⁶ for the British Film Institute and from 1987 a collaboration with Isaac Julien which involved the formation of a company Normal Films to explore the possibilities of New Queer Cinema in the UK. This resulted in the production of a feature film Postcards from America (1994)¹⁴⁷ and the experimental short The Attendant (1992)¹⁴⁸. Frantz Fanon Black Skin White Mask (1996) was a television commissioned film by Julien and myself which explored Fanon's life and ideas with a specific focus on the constitution of raced subjectivity. Our approach to this film is explored in a jointly authored essay submitted here¹⁴⁹.

Detailed discussion of these projects would take me too far from the central focus of this submission, however I think it is important to stress that the interest in gay lesbian and queer cinema as well as that of race and representation were indicative of limitations to 1970s Screen's notion of alterity and the other. More recently, working on Frantz Fanon re-introduced me to a whole field of postcolonial history and cultural politics that I had originally encountered as a student visiting The Other Cinema screenings of Third World Cinema in the early 1970s but which I had not found relevant during my period at Screen. It has however returned to help focus issues of globalisation in curatorial practice as well as film studies.¹⁵⁰

IX Conclusion

This project of a PhD by published works has enabled me to get a perspective on Screen theory and the history of independent production in the 1970s and 1980s, recalling areas and issues to which I feel I have made important contributions and which could be further developed today, for instance in exhibition format (as recently at the Vienna Secession where I presented films and archival written material from this period¹⁵¹) or in a collection of essays drawn from these published works.

Much of my early writing is dense, too dense by today's standards perhaps, and certainly rather burdened with the weight of the theoretical perspectives it seeks to present, clarify and advance. While it is now customary to critique the Athusserian approach for its lack of productivity, faced with years of discourse on film that lacks political or historical grounding one might be forgiven if one is at times almost nostalgic for the certainties of this period.

History however did not go in the direction one aspired to or hoped for. And we cannot exactly put the post-structuralist epistemological shift associated with Derrida and Deleuze

146 Between Two Worlds, dir, script Mark Nash, Produced by Wendy Ellerker for the British Film Institute 1996.

147 Postcards from America, dir Steve McLean, Executive Producer Mark Nash, Producer Christine Vachon for Normal Films 1994.

148 The Attendant, dir Isaac Julien, Produced by Mark Nash for Normal Films and Channel 4 Television 1992.

149 Isaac Julien and Mark Nash, "Frantz Fanon as Film" in The Film Art of Isaac Julien, Bard Centre for Curatorial Studies, NY 2000; Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art no 11/12, Fall/Winter 2000. [work submitted]

150 "Experiments with Truth", film programme in the re<local>isation series, Oberhausen Film Festival, Oberhausen 2003.

151 Mark Nash, "The moment of Screen" Fate of Alien Modes curated by Constanze Rhum Vienna: Secession 2003. [work submitted]

into reverse, nor would we wish to. However we can hopefully still make use of the achievements of the Screen period in our ongoing work. I hope I will now be in a better position to continue a dialogue between contemporary curatorial practices and the ideas and issues of 1970s and 1980s Screen.

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Mark Nash, 'Experiments with Truth', film programme in the re<local>isation series, Oberhausen Film Festival, Oberhausen 5/03.

Tom Nairn, 'The English Enigma' published in Bananas no 4 and subsequently in the Break-up of Britain, London: NLB 1981.

Steve Neale, 'Art cinema as an institution' Screen vol 22, no 1 1981.

J Pines and P Willemen (eds), Questions of Third Cinema London: British Film Institute 1989.

Editorial, Screen vol 20 no 3/4 Winter 1979/80.

Renato Poggioli, The Theory of the Avant-Garde Cambridge, Mass & London: Harvard University Press 1968.

Griselda Pollock, 'Artists, Mythologies and Media – Genius Madness and Art History' Screen vol 21 no 3.

SS Prawer, Caligari's Children, the film as tale or Terror Oxford, New York, Toronto, Melbourne: Oxford University Press 1980.

Vladimir Propp, Morphology of the Folktale (Austin and London: University of Texas Press 1968).

Jacqueline Rose, Sexuality in the Field of Vision London: Verso 1986.

Paul Schrader, Transcendental style in film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer Berkeley; Los Angeles; London : University of California Press, 1972.

Hjalmar Söderberg, Gertrud Stockholm: Bonniers 1907.

August Strindberg, A Dream Play Seattle & London: University of Washington Press 1973.

John Thavis, 'Vatican Picks its Best Films List'

< <http://www.dio.org/links/info/vfm.htm> > [accessed 1 August 2003].

Tsvetan Todorov, The Fantastic, a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre, Ohio: Case Western Reserve University 1975.

Jack G Voller, The Supernatural Sublime, the metaphysics of Terror in Anglo-American Romanticism Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press 1994.

Michael Warner (ed), Fear of a queer planet - queer politics and social theory. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press. c1993.

Raymond Williams, Modern Tragedy London: Chatto & Windus, 1966.

Paul Willemen, 'Reflection on Eikhenbaum's Concept of Internal Speech in the Cinema' Screen Winter 1974/75.

Raymond Williams, 'A lecture on Realism' Screen vol 18 no 1 Spring 1977.

Raymond Williams, 'Television and Teaching, an interview with Raymond Williams' Screen Education no 31, Summer 1979.

Paul Willemen, 'The Fugitive Subject' Raoul Walsh ed Hardy Edinburgh: Edinburgh Film Festival 1974.

Paul Willemen, Jacques Tourneur Edinburgh: Edinburgh International Film Festival 1975.

Peter Wollen, 'The Two Avant-Gardes' Studio International London 1975.

Peter Wollen, 'Manet – Modernism and Avant-garde' Screen Summer 1980 vol 21 no 2.

Paul Willemen, Looks and Frictions London: BFI 1994.

Chronology 1973- 1986

(This is a pretty exhaustive list of my 'film culture' activities during the 1970s and 1980s that provide the context in which the majority of the Published Works submitted was produced.)

Treasurer, Society for Education in Film and Television, London, 1973-1975

Officer, executive committee Independent Film-Makers Association (IFA, later IFVPA), London, 1975-77

London Film-Makers Coop, occasional programmes 1975-1981

Co organiser IFA Conference, London 1975. Paper 'Englishness and Independent Cinema'

Editorial Officer (editor Screen) Society for Education in Film and Television, London, 1976-1981

Co-organiser Realism and Cinema Conference, SEFT London 1976

Co-organiser Psychoanalysis and Cinema Conference, SEFT London 1977

Catalogue essay on Mary Kelly's "Post Partum Document" in Un Certain Art Anglais, Paris 1977

Editor Screen 1977-1981

National Film Theatre, London seasons: Joris Ivens, 1977, Carl Th Dreyer, 1978 A Screen season, 1979

'The Discourse of Television', paper for The Future of Television conference, Kitchen Centre for Video Music and Dance, New York 1980

Review article "The Biggest Show on Earth" (on Documenta 7) (with James Swinson) City Limits no 44 August 6-12 London 1982

Member ACTT/BECTU (film makers) union 1982 – present, Chair London and Grant Aided Sector 1983-1985

American Video, 4 programmes selected and introduced by Mark Nash, an Arts Council of Great Britain Video Programme: 1983, (re-shown at the New Serpentine Gallery Bookshop, London 1996)

Sensuous Certainty art video 20 mins 1983

Arts Council Touring Programme, Surrealism and Cinema, 1984

Acting Tapes (2 part documentary series for Channel 4 TV, on history of screen acting) co-director, co-producer (with James Swinson), Zero One, London for Channel 4 TH 1984

Awards: Tyneside Film Festival Video Award, Athens (Ohio) Video Festival, Salerno Film Festival

"Acting Tapes", a series of films supporting the Channel 4 screening of Acting Tapes, Channel 4 TV, 1984

Co-organiser Distribution of Independent Film and Video, Conference IFVPA London 1985

Islington Against the Cuts Campaign Video for London Borough of Islington, with James Swinson Zero One London 1985

Programme "British Independent Video", Bracknell Video Festival, 1986

One Hour Later (video fiction) co-director, co-producer with James Swinson, Zero One London 1987

**APPLICATION FOR A RESEARCH DEGREE BY PUBLISHED WORKS,
MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY
MARK NASH 2003**

PART 2

Published Works Submitted:

I Dreyer

II Film Culture

III Screen Editorials

IV Production and Curating

Published Works Submitted

I Dreyer

"Vampyr" and the Fantastic', Screen London vol 17 no 3, Autumn 1976

Dreyer, British Film Institute: London 1977

Carl Dreyer, National Film Theatre Programme October 1977

"Review of Carl Th Dreyer né Nilsson by Maurice Drouzy" Framework London no 25 1984

'Joan Complete - A Dreyer Discovery', Sight and Sound, London vol 54 Summer 1985

"Dreyer e il cinema d'autore. Il dibattito della critica angloamericana" in Martini, Il Cinema di Dreyer, ed Marsilio, Venice, 1987

II Film Culture

'Cuts at the Slade', Screen vol 16 no 4

"Breaking with Old Ideas: Recent Chinese Cinema" (with Rosalind Delmar) Screen vol 17 no 4 1977

"BFI Production Board Catalogue" Screen Education London Spring 1978 no 26

"History/Production /Memory" (with Steve Neale) Screen vol 18 no 4 1978

Joris Ivens part 1, NFT Programme September 1979

Joris Ivens part 2, NFT Programme October/November 1979

Comment by Graham Humphries and interview between Richard Woolley, Mark Nash, Hilary Thompson and Rod Stoneman, 'Brothers and Sisters' in The New Social Function of Cinema: British Film Institute Productions 1979/80, Rod Stoneman and Hilary Thompson eds, BFI: London 1981

"Problems of British Independent Cinema: A Discussion between Marc Karlin and Clare Johnston, Mark Nash and Paul Willemen", Screen vol 21 no 4 1981

"Acting Tapes", Framework no 29 London 1985 (with James Swinson)

"Acting Taped - Andrew Higson discusses a new project on cinema performance with Mark Nash and James Swinson" Screen London 1985 vol 26 no5, London 1985

"Innocence and Experience", Afterimage, Derek Jarman... of Angels and Apocalypse London 1985 no 12

"Point '87, Paris March 4-8 1987" IFVPA Newsletter, London August 1987

'The Moment of Screen' catalogue essay and exhibit The Fate of Alien Modes, curated Constanze Rhum Vienna Secession 2003

III Screen Editorials

Screen, London 1978 -1981 editorials:

Vol 19 no 2 (with Annette Kuhn)

Vol 19 no 3

Vol 19 no 4

Vol 20 no 1 (with Steve Neale)

Vol 20 no 2

Vol 20 nos 3 and 4 (with the Editorial Board)

Vol 21 no1 (with Mary Kelly)

Vol 21 no 2

Vol 21 no 3

Vol 21 no 4

Vol 22 no1

Vol 22 no 2

Vol 23 no 3

Vol 23 no 4

'The moment of Screen' Fate of Alien Modes curated by Constanze Rhum Vienna: Secession 2003

**IV Production and Curating
(selected recent publications)**

"The Art of Movement" catalogue essay in Force Fields, phases of the Kinetic Hayward/Macba London/Barcelona 2000.

"Frantz Fanon as Film" (with Isaac Julien) in The Film Art of Isaac Julien, Bard Centre for Curatorial Studies, NY 2000;

"The Modernity of African Cinema" catalogue essay in The Short Century, Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994 Prestel, Munich 2001

"Art and Cinema: Some Critical Reflections" in Documental1 Catalogue, Kantz 2002

**APPLICATION FOR A RESEARCH DEGREE BY PUBLISHED WORKS,
MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY
MARK NASH 2003**

Published Works Submitted:

I Dreyer

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Regional Reading Groups

For some time SEFT has been looking for effective ways of expanding its work outside London. Recently there has been a development which we want very much to support and which we hope could be the basis for a new pattern of activity.

In March 1975 a SEFT reading/study group was formed in North Staffordshire. This happened independently, but the group has kept in close touch with the office in London, sending copies of minutes of discussions, etc. (A report of this group's work can be found in the companion issue of *Screen Education*, n 20.) We would like to encourage the creation, wherever possible, of similar SEFT groups, basing their work, like the North Staffs group, on reading and discussing material from *Screen* and/or *Screen Education*, but of course making their own decisions about organisation, procedure, field of interest and programme of study. Teachers, for example, might be particularly interested in establishing curriculum development groups.

In order to encourage this potential area for development we have produced a complete regional list of our membership organised according to the counties of Great Britain and countries of the world. If any readers who are also members of SEFT are interested in helping to form such groups they should contact us and we should be very pleased to provide, free of charge, a copy of this list, so that they can contact other members in their area. We hope to be able to assist such groups (and their creation) financially, initially with postage costs, but eventually, if the venture proves to be successful, with possible film hire, duplication of materials, travel costs, etc. Our weekend schools could eventually be related to the work of the SEFT groups (the North Staffs group are already trying to set up a weekend school in Manchester on 'Coronation Street') and, by liaison with the Regional Education Officers of the Educational Advisory Service of the British Film Institute, more directly practical help might be given through Regional Film Theatres, etc.

We hope that as many of our members as possible will feel able to help in the formation of such groups, for we are very keen to increase the intercommunication both within and between regions, including London.

Vampyr and the Fantastic*

Mark Nash

I The Fantastic

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is a victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination – and the laws of the world remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality – but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us. . . . The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighbouring genre, the uncanny or the marvellous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event' (Tzvetan Todorov: *The Fantastic, a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Press of Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio 1975, p 25).

Recent work on the structural analysis of literature has succeeded in defining a genre of the *fantastic*.¹ In extending this work to

* This article forms part of ongoing post-graduate work at the Slade Film Unit, University College London, under the guidance of Paul Willemen. An earlier version, containing a complete shot-by-shot analysis of *Vampyr*, is available for reference at the British Film Institute. I should like to thank Jeremy Bolton and the National Film Archive staff for their help in making a print of the film easily available, and Erich Sargent and Nicky North of the Educational Advisory Service of the British Film Institute, and Kari Hanet for their help and advice.

1. For the purposes of this article I have adopted this not very satis-

film, I suggest an analogous cinematic genre, the cinefantastic, and demonstrate in relation to Dreyer's *Vampyr* that the conditions necessary for this genre are provided for, in part, in this filmic text by a code of 'pronoun functions'.

For a text to belong to the genre of the fantastic, two conditions must be fulfilled, according to Tzvetan Todorov:

First, the text must oblige the reader to regard the diegesis as a complete world, and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation for the events described. The reader's hesitation is often, though not necessarily, inscribed in the text through an individual character in the diegesis who also experiences the hesitation.

Second, the reader must adopt an attitude to the text which rejects both allegorical and poetic interpretation. An allegorical interpretation is only possible when the text explicitly demands a systematic double reading for each element of the work. A poetic interpretation can only be demanded by those texts which do not present fictions, ie coherent diegetic worlds, whereas the fantastic is clearly a genre of fiction.

The structural unity of the literary fantastic is achieved by procedures at the levels of enounced and enunciation (*énoncé* and *énonciation* — see *Screen* v 16 n 2, Summer 1975, p 14 n 2). Those in the enounced derive from a special use of rhetorical figures, which, since they depend on the verbal nature of the enounced, have no immediate application to film with its different matters of expression, and I shall therefore ignore them in this study of *Vampyr*. In the enunciation, a common procedure is the use of narration in the first person. This is particularly suited to the fantastic because it facilitates the identification of the reader with the character of the narrator in the diegesis, whose discourse can then be used by the author to lie, creating uncertainty as to the reality of the events described. When the problem of belief is not at issue, as in the neighbouring genre of the marvellous (where it is a condition of the genre that we accept everything we are told), the impersonal mode of narration is more often used.

In *Vampyr*,² hesitation between natural and supernatural explan-

2. My analysis is based on the National Film Archive viewing copy, but I use a shot numbering based on that of Buzzi and Lattuada (*Vampyr*, Sceneggiatura n.3, second series, Biblioteca Cinematografica, Milan 1948). It should perhaps be pointed out here that the print of *Vampyr* currently being distributed in England by Cinegate is shorter than the Archive print. In it the first meeting between Gray and the doctor is intercut with the visit of Marguerite Chopin which immediately succeeds it, and includes a shot (of a servant running downstairs) from the scene of the father's death. This latter scene is cut short (some of the shots illustrated in the stills accompanying this article are missing from the Cinegate print). The point-of-view shots from the coffin are cut together, eliminating shots of Gray seen in the coffin. These variations can be accounted for

ations of diegetic events concerns particularly the 'reality status' of the father's visit to Gray at the hotel (Shots 28-53 — cf Table 2) and Gray's 'seeing' his own body in a coffin (Shots 318-381 — cf Table 4). 'There exist certain beings whose very lives seem bound by invisible chains to the supernatural. They crave solitude — to be alone and dream. Their imagination is so developed that their vision reaches beyond that of most men. David Gray's personality was thus mysterious. One evening, lured by the fascination of the unknown, he came after sunset to the inn which is by the river in the village of COURTEMPIERRE'. The status of the reality revealed by the two functions, imagination and vision, introduced in this opening intertitle (Shot 1) in relation to the central character of David Gray, is central also to the problematic of the two literary modes of the fantastic, concerned with themes of the self, the 'I' — that typical of the stories of Gérard de Nerval, centring on imagination, and that found in those of E T A Hoffmann, centring on vision. The text of *Vampyr* partakes of both of these. Only 'so developed' an imagination as David Gray's could be drawn into the events of the narrative. He is as it were predestined for it. But once Gray's action within the narrative begins, the film's problematic shifts to that of vision, the status of what Gray (and, by identification with him, the reader) sees.

The scene — 'after sunset... the inn which is by the river... — is denotatively twilight, that time of day when vampires can emerge, no longer fearing the direct rays of the sun, and also connotes Hades, the Greek realm of the undead. This broad semantic field is soon specified more precisely by diegetic events and further intertitles (eg the reaper at the ferry, the tolling of the bell as Gray crosses the threshold of the inn, the etching in the room in the genre 'Death pays a call', all strengthen this 'Hades' element). Gray is shown to a room in the inn. Hearing a sound of muttering outside his room he investigates, meeting a man with a deformed face. He retreats to his room, locking the door. Shot 27, the second intertitle — 'Such a wonderful night. Unreal, wierd, fantastic — Strange omen? David Gray has retired for the night but an atmosphere laden with mystery keeps him awake' — suggests in its indication that Gray is awake, a reading of the subsequent action, the father's visit, as real. The events represented

by loss, errors in reprinting, etc. For the purposes of this article the most significant changes are in the intertitles which were rewritten by H G Weinberg in 1967 such that they obscure the way they work in the Archive print, in particular to structure our reading of the film as a fantastic text; the new intertitles attempt to motivate and gloss the action of the opening segments of the film. For example, David Gray is presented as a specialist in the occult, the hesitation between imaginary and real in Intertitle 3 is elided, etc. The pages of the book have also been retranslated with some confusion of sense.

— the door key moving in the lock by itself, the change in light intensity as the door opens and the father enters, and the lack of eyelid matching and verbal communication between Gray and the father all suggest the supernatural. The subsequent intertitle — 'Is it a ghost or a dream or some poor creature seeking his help?' — re-marks the hesitation between real and supernatural explanations already established. The father leaves a package inscribed 'To be opened after my death' (Shot 49), and hesitation is again re-marked, reinforced in the filmic text, when the package reappears in Gray's possession, is opened (Shots 179, 179') and found to contain a book — *Strange Tale of the Vampires* — giving an account of the events at Courtempiere as if the present of the film's narrative were already past, inscribed in the book.

Further instances of uncertainty are manifested in the large segment of the narrative (Shots 318-381) initiated by the splitting of Gray's image into two as he rests on a bench. One image remains sitting down, as if sleeping, the other gets up (suggesting that the subsequent action is to be read as a dream) and runs through the park to a building where he discovers his own body in a coffin. With the approach of the doctor and the corporal, he hides under a trapdoor, and looks on as a coffin is prepared. At this point (Shot 351). Gray's image is no longer the translucent image (produced by the superimposition of separately filmed action) which separated at the bench in the park, but one of ordinary density (see stills accompanying Table 4). This apparent 'reality' of Gray as observer suggests that this 'dream' might after all be real, yet the events (Gray seeing his own body in a coffin) are too implausible for that. This mark of hesitation is reinforced by a change in the character origin of the point-of-view shots from shots of Gray observing the preparation of the coffin via point-of-view shots of the corporal preparing the coffin to shots from the place of the 'corpse', followed by an extended series of point-of-view shots from the coffin as it is carried to the churchyard.

* In Dreyer's *Vampyr*, as a friend points out, the camera moves from house to cemetery recording *what the dead man sees*: such is the extreme limit at which representation is outplayed; the spectator can no longer take up any position, for he cannot identify his eye with the closed eyes of the dead man; the tableau has no point of departure, no support, it gapes open' (Roland Barthes: 'Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein,' *Screen* v 15 n 2, Summer 1974, p 38).

The eyes of the 'dead' man are, however, physically open. Barthes's friend's faulty remembrance is significant, for if the eyes *were* closed, then indeed the scene would be unreadable. It is through this possibility that he is not dead, that (through the coding of subjective shots, point of view) his eyes do see, that the hesitation is brought into play, allowing this series of images

to be read, as part of the fantastic. The 'point of departure of the tableau' is precisely the fantastic, representation is not 'outplayed', it remains intact. The loss of Gray as observer, the lack of any re-marking of the text as 'dream' (no distortions of the images, ripples, gauzes, etc), yet the impossibility of the events being real, of the reader identifying with the point of view of a dead man, maintains that reader's uncertainty as to the status of these diegetic events. That there follows a shot (Shot 381) of the two images of Gray joining back together only marks a momentary ascendancy of the 'dream' coding of the diegesis. Later (Shot 421) Gray will return to this building to rescue Gisèle whom he found tied up there during this same 'dream'. Thus the constant reinscription of figures of uncertainty into the text counteracts the tendency of film to 'naturalise' the diegetic reality of events (*l'effet de réel*).

The second condition for the fantastic can be illustrated a contrario by reference to some examples from criticism lacking Todorov's conception of the fantastic and tending in its place to force allegorical or poetic readings on to the text of *Vampyr*. For instance the 'inadequate' motivation of David Gray (as of the other characters in the film) has been read as indicating an allegorical search for self-identity as the theme of the film. Such a reading would require the presentation of a systematic double interpretation for each element of the work to substantiate the claim for allegory, rather than simply using the appeal to allegory to retrieve the character of Gray for psychological realism. It is part of the system of the fantastic to deny our sense of causality, of the motivation for characters' actions, so that we are uncertain as to the interpretation of those actions.

A more systematic example of the allegorical fallacy is to be found in Philippe Parrain's 'Dreyer, cadres et mouvements,' (*Etudes Cinématographiques* n° 53-6, Paris 1967), in which structures are isolated and allegorical significance attributed to them in the manner of a simple equation. Light values, for instance, are said to be coded as follows:

Signifier	Carried by	Signified
black	shadows	error
grey	mist	error in search of truth
white	light	truth

Parrain also claims that horizontality and verticality are opposed, and (drawing on the procedures of art criticism and significations supposedly constant in post-Renaissance art) signify as follows:

Signifier	Carried by	Signified
horizontality	exteriors	rest, openness, freedom
verticality	interiors	drama, intimacy, oppression

This goes some way towards the systematic double interpretation characteristic of allegory, but by no means far enough. It merely indicates areas of possible connotations which could only be sub-

normal scenic filming. In order to present a sequence of film text as embodying the point of view of a particular character, it is necessary (through montage) to alternate the shots taken from his point in space with shots which fix his position from somewhere outside him, from the audience's (ie nobody's) point of view or that of other characters' (Jurij M Lotman: 'Point of View in a Text,' *New Literary History* v VI, n 2, 1975).

Point of view has a long literary history, it being the mechanism by which the author articulates his relation to the cultural text in which his work is inscribed. In mediaeval sacred texts, for instance, this relation was conceived as one of identity. The cultural text, 'the world', had the same creator as the particular written text, the human writer being merely a medium for the divine.

In his examination of point of view in *Touch of Evil* (*Screen* v 16 n 2, Summer 1975, pp 110-12), Stephen Heath isolates a continuous impersonal mode into which characters' perspectives are inscribed. At certain moments this impersonal mode is 'doubled' with an accompanying character point of view. The reader identifies with a character in the impersonal, then with the character's point of view when the impersonal is doubled with the 'personal' in the point-of-view shot. Certain 'exceptional' moments in the classical realist text - subjective distortion, usually signifying character abnormality, and authorial demonstration with stylistic deviation in formal devices such as tilts, unusual angles, etc - are, I suggest, systematised in this fantastic text and constituted by the inscription of authorial personal marks into the 'subjective' (point-of-view) shots of Gray ('subjective distortion') and the 'descriptive' impersonal shots ('authorial demonstration'). These two modes of authorial inscription I designate below as the displaced and non-assigned first-person functions respectively.

In the classical realist text, narrative control depends on the maintenance of subject continuity in the impersonal and the rhyming variation of 'personal' marks over that continuity. In the fantastic text, on the other hand, the authorial marks disrupt subject continuity. Undermining character point of view (Gray's and, by identification, the spectator's) and 'authorial demonstration' will be seen to constitute the figures of the fantastic.

Thus the fantastic revolves around the issue of person, and in order to specify these figures more precisely we must consider this central linguistic concept in some detail. As Emile Benveniste has shown (*Problems in General Linguistics*, University of Miami Press, Coral Gables Fla 1971), the category of 'person' in verbal language is organised according to two oppositions: person/non-person and 'I'/'non-I' (within the first term of the first opposition). Person is further specified according to gender and number,

34 stantiated if the analysis showed them to be multiply coded across a range of matters of expression, constituting a system of some coherence, rather than being vague open signifieds naturalising *Vampyr* into the discourse of a humanist art criticism instead of bearing some specific relation to it. Parrain has no way of dealing with what he himself describes as the 'lack of homogeneity in the film', its 'labyrinthine, disorientating qualities', produced by the 'breaking of the ninety- and 180-degree rules' (p 134).

Readings of *Vampyr* embodying the poetic fallacy, ie effectively denying its representational aspect, can be exemplified by the combination of impressionism and formalism that notes 'certain rhythms . . . a strange pre-established harmony . . . a gliding white storm' (Claude Beylie in *Midi-Minuit Fantastique* n 20, October 1968, p 68), and by the invocation of the notion of the surreal by the critic of *Anthologie du cinéma* n 53, who writes, with reference to the problematic 'dream' sequence already discussed: 'Seen or imagined? Real or imaginary? The difference is irrelevant for the imagination liberated from logic' (p 130). This is precisely a dismissive recognition of the problematic of the fantastic.

In the fantastic text the reader's hesitation may be represented through the experience of hesitation by a character in the diegesis. In *Vampyr*, the implicit reader's hesitation is presented both through the perception of David Gray - through the point-of-view shot - and independently of it. An example of the former is Shot 331, where we see over Gray's shoulder his 'double' in the coffin; an example of the latter is Shot 318, the 'splitting' of Gray's image already mentioned. An interesting combination is provided by the disturbing change in the position of the look already mentioned in which a shot of David Gray watching from under a trapdoor (Shot 351) is followed by a subjective shot from inside the coffin, implying that Gray has somehow been transferred into the coffin alive. In Todorov's words, 'We wonder if what we saw was not a trick, or an error of perception. In other words, we do not know what interpretation to give to certain perceptible events' (op cit, p 36). I shall later want to argue that the dialectic between the impersonal shots (those independent of Gray's perception) and the point-of-view structures in the film is the major structure supporting the fantastic, and further examples will be given then.

II Pronoun Functions and Point of View

'The concept of point of view is analogous to that of perspective in painting or film. . . Many experiments have proved that shooting long sequences from the viewpoint of one of the characters results in a loss of the sense of subjective focus rather than a gain, since the audience starts to interpret the shots as

but these distinctions are of minor importance to the genre of the fantastic.

- $$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{Person (+)/Non-person (-)} \\
 \text{+} \\
 \text{discours} \quad \text{histoire} \\
 \text{+} \\
 \text{'I' 'you' 'he' 'she' 'it'}
 \end{array}$$

The opposition of person and non-person corresponds to two distinct discursive registers: *discours* and *histoire*; the former presupposes both a narrator and a listener (addresser and addressee) and an intention on the narrator's part to influence the listener in some way, and its time (tense system) is adapted to the temporality of the speaker-narrator; in the latter 'it' is a question of the presentation of facts having occurred at a certain moment in time, without any intervention of the narrator in the 'écrit' (Todorov in Macksey and Donato, eds. *The Structuralist Controversy*, Baltimore 1970, p 130), so the tense system is adapted to the recounting of past events without any intervention by the speaker and is in consequence deprived of present and future, with the aorist as its specific tense, the only tense missing from the system of *discours*, its presence and absence, together with the presence and absence of personal marks, articulating the opposition between *discours* and *histoire*.

Any of the graphic instances 'I', 'you', 'he', 'she', 'it' may function in either of these discursive registers. The one they are in fact functioning in can be determined by commutation. If in a particular utterance the graphic instance 'he' is semantically commutable with the 'I' of the originator of the discourse, then this instance of 'he' belongs in the system of person. (Thus what I shall call 'pronoun functions' to distinguish them from linguistic pronouns *stricto sensu* might perhaps more accurately be called 'shifters', following Roman Jakobson, in that they are coded elements - establishable by commutation - which nonetheless only signify by reference to a particular message or enunciation. See Roman Jakobson: *Selected Writings* Vol II, The Hague 1971, pp 130-47.) As Barthes points out (*The Structuralist Controversy*, op cit, p 140), narrative signs of the person adopt ruses, give no clear indication of the underlying status of the utterance. The character in the novel who says 'I' is not necessarily the 'I' of the *discours*, of the subject/origin of the utterance; he or she may only be a character and the status of his or her utterances in the novel need not bring them closer to the origin of the utterance, the authorial subject.

Todorov (*The Structuralist Controversy*, op cit, p 132) gives an outline classification of point of view in literature according

to the degree of separation of these two 'I's. One class has an omniscient narrator whose 'I' constantly surfaces through the 'she' or 'he' of the character (eg character as the author's voice in Jane Austen). In another the narrator's 'I' is repressed, the narrative pretending to complete objectivity, the absence of any privileged position (eg the 'objective' writing of Hemingway and others in America in the 1920's and 1930's). A third, most characteristic of the discourse of the 'traditional' realist novel, contains first-person narration, but with the narrator's and the character's 'I's difficult to separate: 'On the one hand [the traditional novel] alternates the personal and the impersonal very rapidly, often in the course of the same sentence, so as to produce, if we can speak thus, a proprietary consciousness which retains the mastery of what it states without participating in it; and on the other hand, in this type of novel . . . when the narrator is explicitly an "I" . . . there is confusion between the subject (ie origin) of the discourse [*discours*] and the subject of the reported action [*histoire*], as if . . . he who is speaking today were the same as he who acted yesterday' (Barthes in *The Structuralist Controversy*, op cit, p 140). Modernist writers like Barthes himself and the authors he is discussing, such as Philippe Sollers, insist on a clear assumption of the separation between these two instances, refusing the narrative convention that would hide their position as authorial subjects. As writers: 'When I use the sign "I", I refer to myself inasmuch as I am talking: here there is an act which is always new. However, arriving at its destination, this sign is received by my interlocutor as a stable sign, product of a complete code whose contents are recurrent. In other words, the "I" of the one who writes "I" is not the same as the "I" which is read by you' (ibid, p 141).

The hesitation Todorov isolates as central to the system of the fantastic is often mediated through the subjectivity of a character in the diegesis. The reader's uncertainty as to whether what was given in the name of 'I' of experience, was true or not, suspends his decision as to the register to which he is to assign the pronouns representing the narrating subjectivity. This play with the expectation of coming down one way or the other is far from the open assumption of the separation in the modern text. It does, however, constitute the play of pronoun functions as a privileged element of the fantastic as a genre. The thesis that *Vampyr* is a cinematic example of that genre would be greatly strengthened by demonstrating a similar play with pronoun functions within it.

Ben Brewster has argued (*Screen v 12 n 1*, Spring 1971, p 55) that cinematic narrative shares with *histoire* its indifference to the enunciation, to tense and person. Subsequent work by Christian Metz has made possible a different definition of film as a language system (*langage* as opposed to *langue*), allowing one to propose

the transference of semiotic figures from one system to another. In this instance we are concerned with a transference of linguistic functions to allow the transference of the narrative code of the fantastic from the literary system to the filmic system. My thesis in this article is that while the change in the matter of expression has changed the disposition of signifiers and signifieds, sufficient similarity is retained to constitute the fantastic as a system common to both matters. The system of linguistic signifiers has been replaced by a system of filmic signifiers spread over a number of cinematic codes. The pronouns of the literary system are transposed into what I suggest are filmic shifters, manifested in the punctuation and the angle of shots, that is, in the codes of multiplicity, motion and mechanical duplication. Whether the functioning of *Vampyr* as a fantastic text can be strictly accounted for in this way as the manifestation of a single code (where 'one' can speak in all rigour of one and the same code being manifested in several arts or language systems': Metz: *Language and Cinema*, Mouton, The Hague 1974, p 216), or rather requires the terms of 'distinct, more or less isomorphic codes, each of which is manifested in a different language system' (ibid, p 217), is at present unclear.

I must now define these cinematic pronoun functions more precisely and consider how their distribution in the text of *Vampyr* helps sustain the functioning of the fantastic.

Every narrative film consists of a series of looks of the camera (a continuous mode), which may, through the conventions of subjective camera and reverse field (the point-of-view shot) be doubled with the look of a character in the diegesis. The coding of such conventions by what I call pronoun functions may, however, be displaced by marking the shots as if they pertained to a character in the diegesis and then revealing (by the articulation of surrounding shots) the absence of any such character, that is, by creating 'false' pronouns ('false' only in the sense that they refer to no character in the diegesis - their reference to the organising subject of the discourse constitutes them, as we have seen, as linguistically 'true' pronouns). By means of these 'false' pronouns the presence of the camera, unmediated by character, and by implication the organising subject, are (re-)inscribed into the text.

For the purposes of analysis, I suggest, then, the following functions, corresponding to the phonetically enunciated pronouns 'I', 'you', 'she', 'he', 'it': Conventional cinematic descriptions are given in ordinary brackets (), and my own notation in square brackets [].

Histoire (impersonal)

'I' - 'first-person' function (subjective shot) [1].

This presents character 'I' (through point of view) without

any intervention of authorial 'I'.

'you' - 'second-person' function

As an instance of *histoire* this is not found in *Vampyr*.

'she', 'he', 'it' - so-called 'third', ie non-person function (descriptive shot) [3].

The impersonal narrating instance.

The first two of these functions are in inverted commas to distinguish them from the corresponding positions in *discours*, where they bear a linguistic mark of person.

The addition of an authorial personal mark displaces these functions from their role in the impersonal mode of *histoire* into instances within *discours*.

Discours

The displaced first person [1d]

The first-person function proper is exhibited when the subjective shot becomes displaced from the character with which it is doubled in the impersonal and is no longer stably attributable to character, the text exhibiting a dialectic between authorial 'I' and character 'I'. This manifestation I call the 'displaced first person'.

The second-person function [2]

The second-person function bears the mark of the author's address to the implicit reader, 'direct address'.

The non-assigned first person [1na]

The non-person cannot be marked with person, so instances of descriptive shots with additional personal marks must be regarded as instance of the authorial 'I'; the first-person function, only unmediated by character. I call this the non-assigned first person function to distinguish it from the other manifestation of the linguistic mark of 'I', the displaced first person [1d].

Let us now consider examples of these functions as they occur in the text of *Vampyr*.

Histoire

The 'first-person' function [1] is manifested in what is often referred to as 'subjective camera', that is series of shots where the implicit reader, through identification with a character privileged at that point in the narrative, reads certain shots as subjective, ie as taken from the viewpoint of that character. This corresponds to the classical point-of-view shot as described by Edward Branigan in 'Formal Permutations of the Point-of-View Shot', *Screen* v 16 n 3, Autumn 1975. Most segments of *Vampyr* contain no clear instances of this function, and the few that do, privileged by this very infrequency, occur at important moments in the elaboration of the film's semantic system. One such segment is that in which Gray, exploring, meets the doctor for the first

time (Shots 94-96). There are alternating shots of Gray and the doctor, with matching eyelines. This first occurrence of the pronoun function in the film marks the scene as the first 'meeting', according to the literary convention (eg in Donne) that intersection of eyebeams signifies the meeting of souls. (This exchange with the doctor is overdetermined by a number of significations: the doctor is the main agent of the vampires - his hypnotic look will later trap Gray; their verbal exchange about whether they hear the sound of a dog or a child is contradictory - Gray asserts he hears both, the doctor neither, and the film's sound track has only dog-like noises; and the exchange of looks also functions in the context as a test of truth, it being conventional wisdom that liars deflect their gaze, the outcome of the test being precisely uncertainty on the reader's part as to what the diegetic reality is.)

What is often called the 'descriptive shot' is characterised by the presence of the impersonal narrating instance [3]. For example, at the beginning of *Vampyr*, the opening title (Shot 1) refers to David Gray going to 'the inn which is by the river'. There follows Shot 2, a medium shot of the river bank with Gray entering screen right carrying fishing rods, and exiting towards camera; and Shot 3, a close-up of the 'Hotel' sign silhouetted against the sky. These two shots combine to illustrate the action described in Shot 1. There are other instances of this pronoun function which do not have the graphic support (the words of the intertitle), for example, the alternating series (Shots 9-15) describing, through the convention of parallel montage, the simultaneous actions of the reaper at the ferry and Gray entering the inn. The pages of the book (black script on white paper, with roller caption movement more marked than the intertitles, which have white script on black) can also be regarded as examples of the impersonal narrating instance - 'This is what is read'. However, the book can also be read as in the imperative mood (ie second person) - 'read this!' or 'This is what you the reader read', or (at times) as displaced point-of-view of Gray or the domestic reading the book. This polysemy can create uncertainty as to how a shot is to be read and as such sustains the fantastic.

Discours

Second-person function [2] occurs in two titles (Shots 27 and 53). While most of the titles in the film function in a purely descriptive impersonal mode, these two directly address the reader, ie present questions to the implicit reader using written language.

Displaced first-person function [1d] is exemplified by Gray's encounters with the girl at the inn and with the father (before his meeting with the doctor). These sequences are marked by eyeline mismatching, signifying a lack of 'meeting', a blocking of the exchange of looks.

Non-assigned first-person function [1na] is found in the many instances where one or a series of shots is coded as 'first person', but this codification is then revealed to be false, the camera appearing to act as an independent observer. When Gray arrives outside the inn (Shot 5), there is a medium shot of the roof, then a pan left over the roof and down to reveal Gray standing outside the door. His look up, off screen, in Shot 4 and the initial part of the pan in Shot 5 suggest the point-of-view structure [1], but since by the end of the shot Gray is in frame, a different reading is suggested, that of the camera/author observing Gray. Parrain's hypothesis that such shots are from the point of view of spirits observing the action seems unjustified in that they are never assigned to any character in the diegesis, spirit or flesh. Branigan (op cit, p 61) uses these shots as an example of the undermining of the closed point of view, illustrating 'a structural principle of the film whereby the camera is unable to "keep up" with the events (ie it is not omniscient)'. This structural principle is of course that of the fantastic genre. (By formulating the point-of-view structure as usually composed of two shots articulated by a cut, Branigan makes the existence of the point-of-view structure in a single shot - as in Shot 80 - difficult to account for, an instance of the tendency for criticism to take the shot, rather than the duration of an interplay of codes, as the minimum narrative unit, because of its convenience in textual analysis.)

In some of Ozu's films there are close-ups functioning as impersonal 'descriptive' shots [3], but there are also those details of a domestic environment which Noël Burch has called 'pillow shots', where the holding of an impersonally coded shot for a long time causes it to acquire strong connotations of individual style and diegetic superfluity, thus constituting it as an instance of the non-assigned first person [1na]. In considering close-ups one could also instance the examples in Hitchcock of close-ups strictly addressed to the implicit reader, and impossible to assign to a character in the diegesis. In the terms of my analysis, these function polysemically, being coded both as second person [2] (the address to the reader) and as impersonal [3] (their descriptive element). One might want to argue for an additional second-person coding for the Ozu example.

As a problematic close-up in *Vampyr* one might instance Shot 49, where the shot of the package inscribed 'To be opened after my death' breaks into a sequence of alternating displaced 'subjective' shots [1d] between Gray and the father. Neither of the two characters is so positioned in previous shots as to constitute this as possibly either of them's point of view - only the audience can 'read' it. Although clearly addressed to the audience (and as such an instance of the second person [2]), one could also argue for the coding of displaced first person [1d] which predominates in the scene as a whole.

These filmic shifters must be seen as a system functioning throughout the film and affected by it. As Metz points out (*Language and Cinema*, op cit, p 213), one must distinguish between the *treatment* a code receives as the result of the work of the other codes and the code itself. It is part of the system of the fantastic to create 'polysemic', uncertain codings, in this instance as to whether the package is seen by Gray [1d] or by the reader alone [2]. The reading of any shot will depend on the movements of the codes already in play, not on any hypostasised function gained from analysis of single frames separated from the flow of the film. In particular, the tendency for the narrative to balance, to exhibit a kind of homeostasis traversed by a tendency to run down, works at the level of the shots (alternating systems – usually Gray/non-Gray) over and above the demands of point of view to create a field of possibilities-probabilities within which the filmic shifters have to function. In this instance, the strict alternation Gray/non-Gray, with its accompanying alternation of pronoun functions, means that for the shot in question an expected coding [1d] is already established by the alternations of previous shots.

III Tabulation

In my work on *Vampyr* I have prepared a complete shot-by-shot analysis of the film text, but since it is only practicable to refer in detail to a few segments, these have been chosen to illustrate the structure of the fantastic text and the pronoun functions, and also to comment on problems of interpretation in the practice of the analysis.

In order to present some account of this work in relation to the text as a whole, and to ensure that the detailed analyses may be seen in context, I shall first consider the results of a segmental analysis of the whole film on the basis of Christian Metz's 'Grande Syntagmatique' (see *Film Language: a Semiotics of the Cinema*, London and New York 1974, pp 124ff), the only rigorous model available for the investigation of the cinematic code organising the spatio-temporal order of the sequence. The results show that, apart from Autonomous Shots (which are all diegetic or non-diegetic inserts), three of the syntagmatic units defined by Metz are present in *Vampyr*: Alternating Syntagm, Sequence and Scene. These categories only apply to some half of the segments of the film (25 out of a total of 39). The other segments fall into two classes, which could be designated Alternating Syntagm/Sequence (seven segments) and Sequence/Scene (seven segments). These classes cut across the distinctions Metz makes within narrative syntagms between one or several linear times, continuous or dis-

continuous sequentiality and organised or non-organised continuity. The strict applicability of Metz's model is restricted to the 'classical' film after 1935, that is, once the disruptive effect of the introduction of sound into the silent system had been absorbed, reinforcing the cinema's project of spatio-temporal continuity. *Vampyr* was shot in 1930 and premièred in May 1932. Sound versions in French, German and possibly English were made, as well as a silent version 'prepared with the greatest of care, so that it should not only be on a par with the talking version but also equal through its technical construction to the best silent films of the period preceding the arrival of the talking film' (*Close Up* v 8, 1931, p 50). In other words, *Vampyr* is very much a transitional film, and it is thus not surprising that Metz's classification is not completely pertinent to it. But over and above this transitional character, the articulation of spatio-temporal coherence, so important for the texts Metz is concerned with, is marked in the fantastic text as incoherent, uncertain.

The segmentation also confirms the central role of David Gray in the diegesis. He is present in most of the segments (31 out of 39), and in the majority of these (24 out of 31) his look alone is articulated between shots (the only significant exceptions being five instances where Gray exchanges looks, ie both looks and is the object of someone else's look, once with the father and Gisèle, three times with the doctor). Of the eight segments from which Gray is absent, five privilege the look of another character (the domestic and Gisèle once each, the doctor three times). There is a constant level of additional personal marks (only four segments are apparently free of them) non-assigned to characters in the diegesis, undermining the articulation of Gray's look and asserting the look of the camera unmediated by character. This 'disruption' of eyeline matching and the exchange of looks is used to create uncertain spatio-temporal relationships in the film, and by implication, the reader. Of the four segments free of this authorial intervention, I regard only one, the final segment, as significant. According to the logic of classical narratives (those not completely reversible, as is the modern plural text according to Barthes in *S/Z*, London 1975, p 13), the contradictions in the text must finally be felt to have been resolved in (apparent) harmony, a lack of disruption, closure. Hence the adoption of an ending to *Vampyr* accepting more conventionalised rules of editing, closing the work with an impression of 'smoothness': spatio-temporal continuity.

The following tables show the distribution of pronoun functions within some of the segments of the film already referred to. The accompanying text gives a brief description of the diegesis for each segment and comments on the coding as to pronoun function in the context of the articulation of the series of shots of that segment and the system of the fantastic. The stills are intended

44 as no more than an aide-mémoire to the reading; my theses should of course be checked against the film itself.

The notation used for the pronoun functions has been explained above. When more than one coding is present in a shot, both are noted in their order of appearance; thus 3,1na means an authorial intrusion during an impersonal shot, or rather a shot that began as impersonal. Apparently contradictory codings are separated by an oblique stroke thus: 3/1na. The tables present the codings as to pronoun functions along two or more axes according to whether the shots contain a dominant character, usually Gray, or not. As well as making them more legible, this allows the tables to present an aspect of the filmic system already referred to in passing, namely a tendency to balance, in this case at the level of the series of individual shots. Shots additional to those in the print described by Buzzi and Lattuada are marked with a dash: thus shot 365' occurs in the National Film Archive print between shots 365 and 366 as numbered by Buzzi and Lattuada.

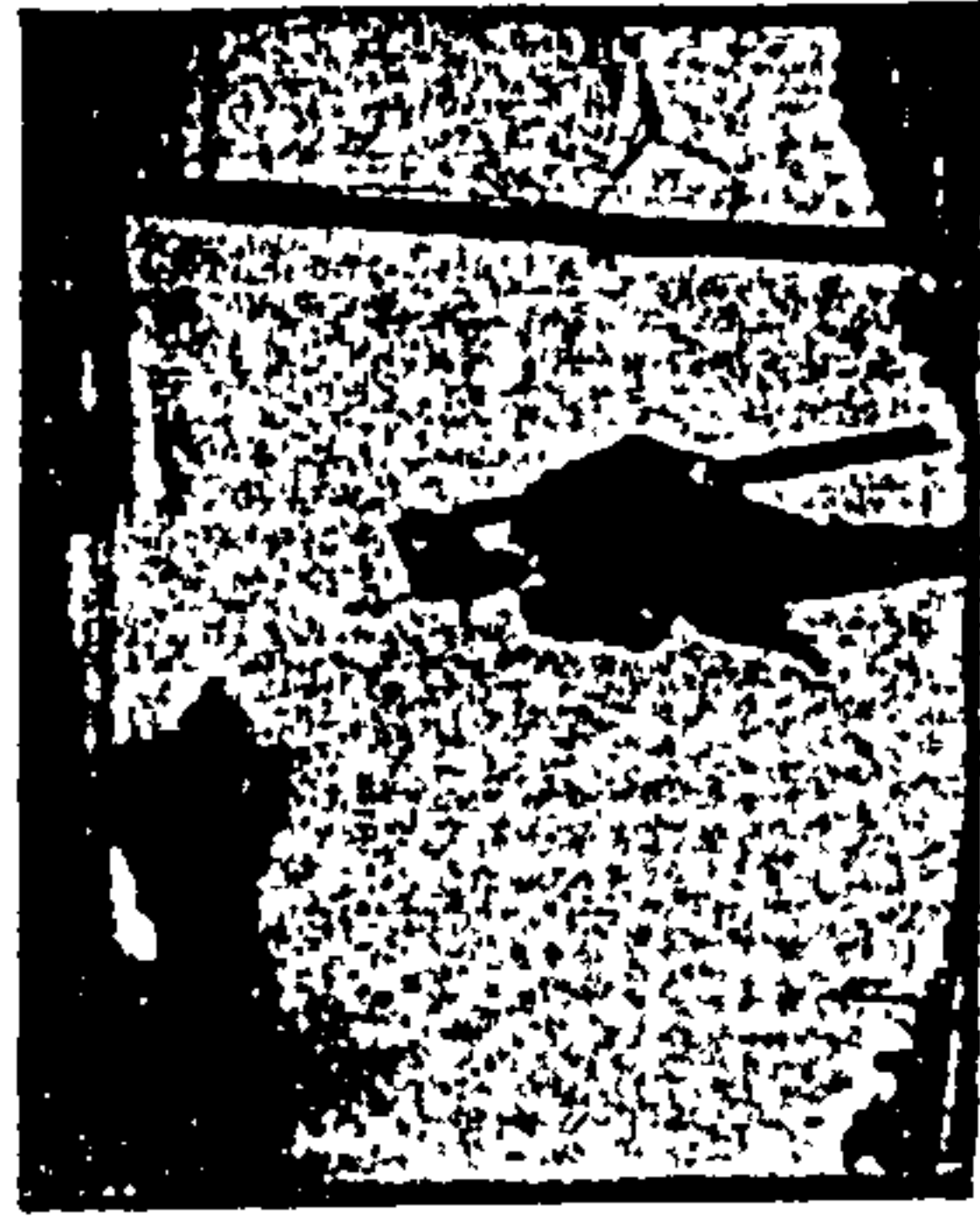
Table 1 The Opening Segments, Shots 1-27

Shot Number	Gray	non-Gray
1		
3		intertitle

Autonomous Shot, non-diegetic insert. First intertitle.

This shot has already been referred to above as introducing Gray and the terms of vision and imagination as central to his character and to the problematic of the fantastic, and as an example of the impersonal narrating instance [3].

Shot Number	Gray	non-Gray
2	3	
3		1, 3 hotel sign



2



3

4 3, 1na
5



4

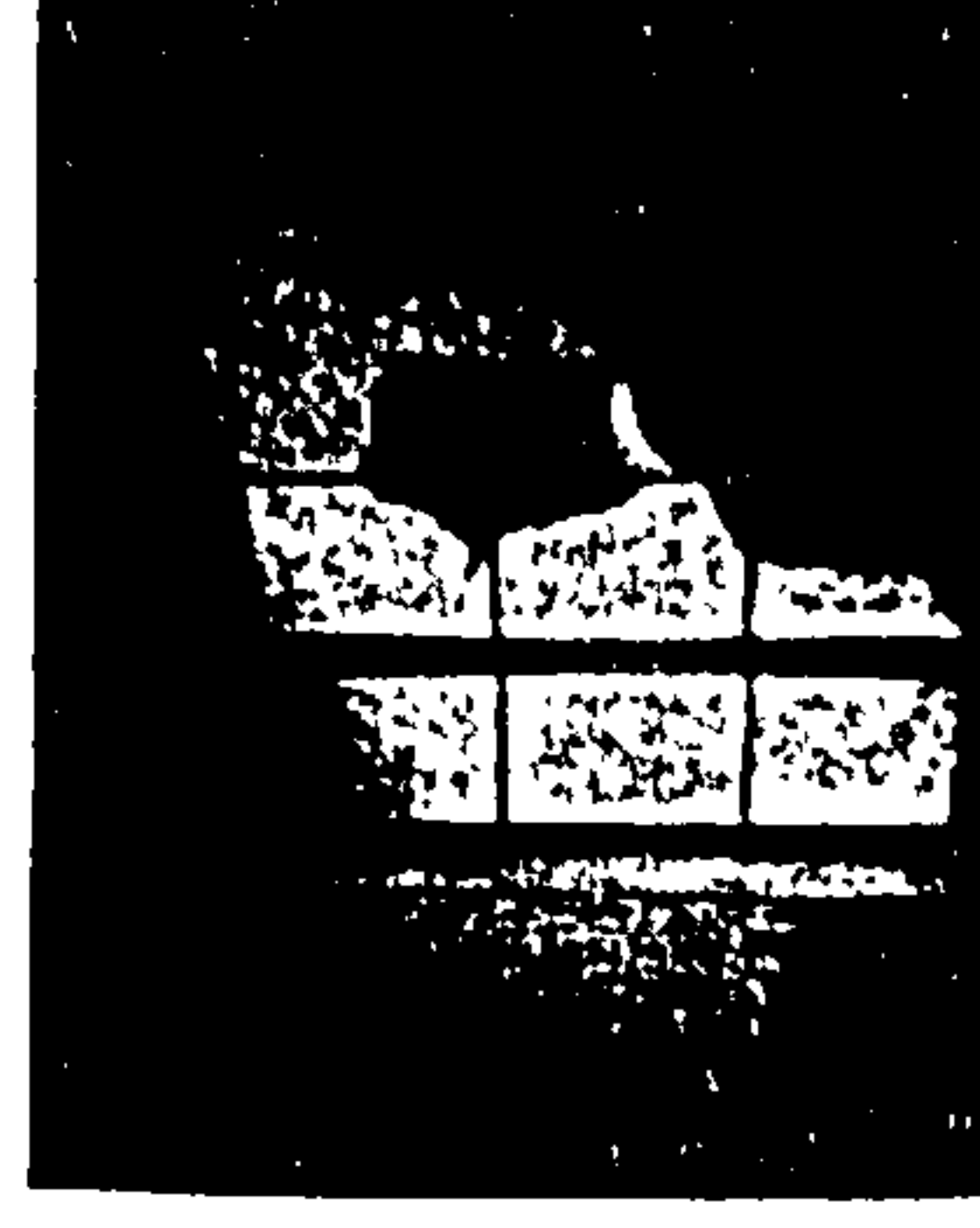
1, 1na
the inn → G



5a



5b



5c

6 girl's head at window
7 outside bar, looking right
8 1
reaper

Sequence. Gray approaches the inn, knocks (Shot 4), and sees a man carrying a scythe (Shot 8) whom I shall call 'the reaper'.

We have already considered Shots 2 and 3 as examples of the impersonal narrating instance [3] illustrating the text of the intertitle, Shot 1. In addition to being marked as impersonal, Shot 3 is marked as 'being read' [1] by a downward reframing, and by Gray's position in the previous shot, exiting towards camera, which would permit a point-of-view structure with the hotel sign of Shot 3 as the object of Gray's look. The placing of the camera within the building in Shot 4 and its movement forward towards the door at which Gray is knocking suggest a double coding, both impersonal, descriptive [3], and personal [1na] — as a look not assigned to character. Shot 5 has already been referred to as an instance of a personal coding [1] then revealed as non-assigned

[1na], the arrow in the table indicating that the shot begins without Gray (the roof of the inn) but then includes him. Shot 3 is the first instance of ambiguous coding [1, 3] in the film. Shot 4 has the first irruption of *discours* in its insistence on the role of the camera unmediated by character. This is repeated in Shot 5, where we are confused as to whether we see what Gray sees or our perception is independent of his. This uncertainty about our position in relation to Gray, whether the camera's look will be doubled by Gray's or not, establishes a major figure of the text's functioning, the problem of the relationship of our vision to Gray's.

Shot Number	Gray	non-Gray
8		1 reaper
9	3	
10		3 reaper
11	3	
12		3 reaper
13	3	
14		3 reaper
15	3	
16		1d, 1na girl closing door
17	3	
18		1d reaper
19	3	
20		1d reaper
21	3	
	with etching	
22		1 etching (close-up)

Sequence (with non-diegetic inserts)/Alternating Syntagm. The girl comes to the bar (Shot 9), lets Gray into the inn (Shot 11), he enters the hall (Shot 13) followed by the girl who shows him to his room (Shot 15). Shots of the reaper (10, 12, 14) alternate with these shots. Looking outside from his room Gray sees the reaper approach the ferry (Shots 18, 20). He then examines an etching of death on the wall.

The connotations of death, one of the thematic concerns of the fantastic, are reinforced in this segment by the parallel actions of Gray and the reaper, whom we see approaching the ferry independently of Gray inside the inn being shown to his room.

Shot from approximately the same camera angle in relation to the subject, the shots of the reaper get progressively closer, the closest (Shot 20), showing him at the ferry, being followed by the etching, so that all the non-Gray shots except one (Shot 16) in this segment have connotations of death. I have indicated the uncertainty about the diegetic status of these shots of the reaper — do they have a symbolic, non-diegetic function, or rather represent a diegetic element separate from Gray's actions? — by giving this segment an ambiguous Metzian syntagmatic coding. The presence of the camera as an independent observer is marked in Shot 16, where the girl is seen from an angle quite different from that required for a point of view from Gray's position in the previous shot, and again in Shots 18 and 20, where the shots of the reaper are displaced from the angle necessary for them to function unambiguously as Gray's point of view from the window. In this segment, the relation between the camera's look and Gray's is marked as uncertain as a result of the intervention of *discours*, a figure repeated throughout the film.

Shot Number	Gray	non-Gray
23	3	
24	3	
25		1 man with deformed face
26	3, 1na/2	
27		2 intertitle

Scene. Gray hears a sound of muttering, investigates, meeting a man with a deformed face, retreats to his room, locking the door, the camera moving in to a close-up of Gray's hand (Shot 26) as he locks it, suggesting the additional coding of the look of the camera [1na] or direct address [2].

The text has adopted one of the elements of the fantastic: narration through the central character, Gray, and a disruption of that narration by the foregrounding of the authorial look of the camera. The first-person coding on which this narration depends is usually ambiguous, as can be seen from the table (the predominance of *histoire* [3, 1] with several interventions of *discours* [1d, 1na, 2]); character 'I': continuity of character point of view, is continually inflected and confused with authorial 'I': with *discours*. In addition the text has presented a diegetic world with contradictory connotations (is it the world of the living or the world of the dead?). The subsequent section introduces another element of the fantastic by creating uncertainty as to whether what happens to Gray is real or not, whether Gray is visited by a living person or a ghost.

48 Table 2 The Father's Visit, Shots 28-53

Shot Number	Gray	non-Gray
28		
		3, 1na
		hotel sign

Autonomous Shot. The hotel sign.

This shot functions as an explanatory insert, recalling that the action still occurs at the inn. This function is in a sense superfluous, since we have been given no reason to assume any change of place in the action. The framing, excluding the word 'Hotel', gives the shot an emblematic quality, with connotations of victory (the wreath, the palms) and death. The redundancy of this shot is noted in the mark of *discours* [1na] attributed to it in addition to the impersonal coding [3].

Shot Number	Gray	non-Gray
29	3	
30		1d, 1na
		key turning (close-up)
31	3	
32		1d, 1na
		door opens, light changes
33	1d	
34		1d
		father enters



34



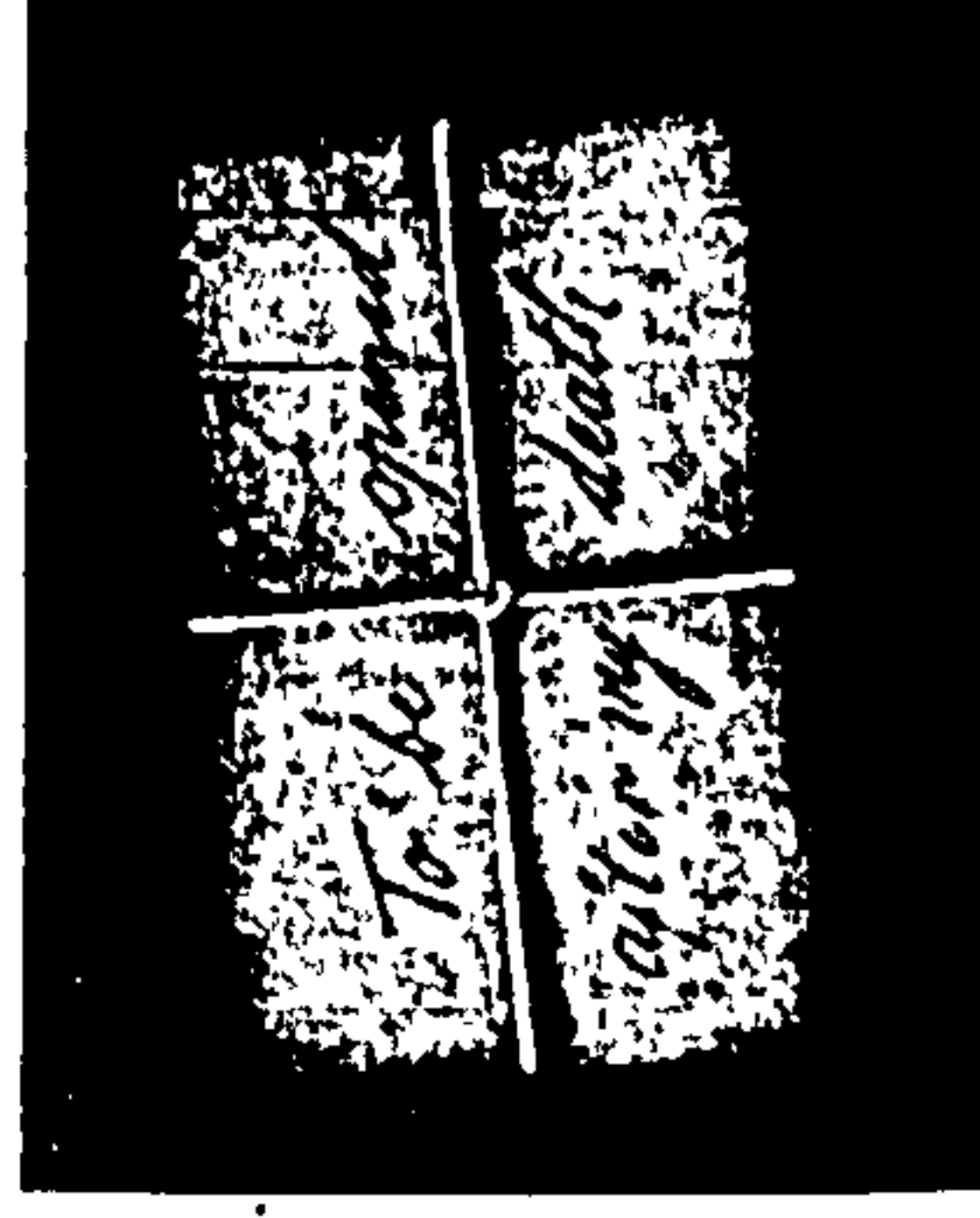
35

36		1d
		father
37	1d, 1na	
38		1
		father
39	1na, 1d	
40		1
		father

41	1na, 1d	
42		1
		father
43	1na	
44		1
		father
45	1na, 1d	
46		1d
		father
47	1na	
48		1
		father
49	1na/2	
	parcel (close-up insert)	



48



49

50		3, 1
		father leaves, light changes
51	3	
52	3	

Scene. Gray lies in bed, the key turns of its own accord in the lock and the person we later learn to be the father enters, leaving the parcel inscribed with the words 'To be opened after my death'. Gray asks with staring eyes 'Who are you?' being met with the reply, 'Quiet. . . She must not die. Do you hear, she must not die.'

The uncertainty of the diegetic reality of this segment is marked in a number of ways. The key's turning (Shot 30) and the lighting round the door which changes before the father enters and is then restored when he leaves are both cues suggesting the supernatural, since the preceding intertitle has stated that Gray remains awake. While the organisation of the alternating shots of Gray and the father could have suggested spatio-temporal continuity, a continuation of the coding of the supernatural, this is systematically undermined by the displacement of these looks by *discours*, also present in the close-ups of the key in the door and the parcel.

50 While the father is the object of both Gray's and our looks, the return of his gaze is, as it were, reappropriated by *discours*: the shots of Gray which might, because of the system Gray/non-Gray, be from the father's position are strongly marked by *discours*, the insistence of the place of the camera. This interaction is placed outside that convention of alternating looks which would enable the events to be read as 'real'. The articulation of successive shots in this segment creates uncertainty - is it part of the text that ghosts are real, or is this perhaps a dream?

Shot Number	Gray	non-Gray
53		2 intertitle

Autonomous Shot, non-diegetic insert. Intertitle: 'Is it a ghost or a dream or some poor creature seeking his help?'

The text of the title precisely re-marks the real/supernatural hesitation already noted in the previous segment.

Table 3 The Father's Death, Shots 135-164

Shot Number	Father	Gray and Domestic	Gisèle and others
135	1na, 3		
136	3		
137		3 Gray and domestic	
138	1na		1na servant at stairs
139			
140	1na		
141			3 nun in corridor
142	3		
143		1na Gray	
144			3 domestic's wife and Jeanne with lamps
145	3, 1		
146			3 nurse and Gisèle at stairs
147		3 domestic	

1na, 1d.
Gisèle enters room

148
149 1na
150 domestic

151 1na
152 domestic and Gisèle

153 1na, 1d
154 1na, 1d
Gisèle

155 3
156 1na
Gray



145



154



155



156

157 3
158 1na
domestic, his wife and Jeanne

159 3
160 domestic's wife and Gisèle

161 3
162 domestic's wife and Gisèle

3
domestic's wife
and Gisèle

Sequence/Alternating Syntagm. Gray and the domestic reach the father, help him to rest on a cushion (Shot 138), other servants and his daughter Gisèle arrive from different parts of the chateau, he dies (Shot 159) and is carried to another room (Shot 163).

This segment can be divided into two sections: first, the tail-end of a series of movements on the part of Gray and the domestic to save the father, opposed to shots of his being shot and falling to the ground (Shots 121-138); second, alternating shots of the father and the actions around him (servants running downstairs - Shot 139 - along a corridor - Shot 141 - Gray feeding him some liquid from a cup - Shot 143 - etc). Both series are organised round shots of the father, from 139-161 close-ups of his face contrasting with the many different alternating (non-father) shots. One shot near the middle of the segment (145), more of a medium shot than earlier ones and conventionally designable as an establishing shot signifying a single diegetic space, anchors the previous shots where the intervention of *discours* had signified spatio-temporal incoherence. This anchorage is then undermined by the rest of the segment in a series of violent disruptions (Shots 148-154) involving 180-degree change in angle of shot. This especially confuses the relative positions of Gray, Gisèle, the domestic and the father, creating a kind of equivalence between Gray, Gisèle and her father (the last gives a silver heart to Gisèle - Shot 154: Gisèle; 155: father placing the heart in a hand; 156: Gray - but the organisation of the shot angles and their sequence suggests he gives it to Gray). This disruption of spatio-temporal continuity in the scene of the father's death precedes Gray's adoption of a more passive role in the narrative. Gray inherits the heart, the place of the father, establishing him as a son, barred from access to Gisèle by the ban on incest (the same images establish her in the role of 'sister' to Gray). Only after he has been partially relieved of this filial role, it being taken over by the domestic, does Gray again participate in the action, helping the latter and rescuing Gisèle. My analysis is particularly concerned in this segment with the lack of shots of Gray and the frequency and systematicity of the privileging of the father. The point-of-view structures are inserted into the impersonal mode [3], mainly as interventions of *discours* which undermine that coding, making it difficult to read, creating uncertainty in the reader as to what is going on, how the different characters are related in space, what relations the film establishes between them. This creation of uncertainty in the reader independently of Gray's perceptions is, I suggest, an equivalent of the use of the narrator's discourse to

lie in the literary fantastic. Yet it is also, because of our predominant identification with Gray throughout the film, a kind of equivalent of his own confusion, as it were displaced on to the syntagmatic organisation of the film, on to the organisation of personal marks. This scene of the father's death reveals semantic elements of that confusion: What is Gray's role? He is almost excluded from it, the domestic having equal prominence, a prefiguration of the latter's usurpation of the function of hero (reading the book to its conclusions and putting these into practice, driving the stake through the vampire's heart) and Gray's relegation to an auxiliary role. It also indicates confusion as to sexual roles, the 'equation' of Gray and Gisèle already referred to.

Table 4 Gray's 'Dream' in the Park, Shots 318-381

Shot Number	Gray	non-Gray
318	3	



318

319	3	sky
320	3	
321	3	sky
322	3	

Sequence. Gray's image splits (Shot 318), one shadow running through the Park (Shot 320) to a building (Shot 322). These shots alternate with shots of the night sky.

The shots of the sky function as reference to time ('it was night') and incidentally as a series with other shots of the sky throughout the film. Their connective function in the narrative is reflected in the impersonal coding.

Shot Number	Gray	non-Gray
323	3	

body in the coffin (noted as Gray'). Shot 331 shows Gray looking down at his own body (both are in shot together, the shot being taken over Gray's shoulder looking down at the coffin). There are 180-degree cuts between Shots 328 and 329 and Shots 330 and 331, noted as interventions of discourses [1na]. In Shot 332, Gray looks up, his look providing the link with Shot 333 of a door. In Shot 334, Gray walks towards this door, and through a glass panel in it sees Gisèle tied up (Shot 336). He is unable to open the door (Shot 337).

Where pronoun functions and their articulation of point of view are concerned, we should note in this segment that at Shot 332 the camera is more or less in the position of the 'corpse', an anticipation of later segments, and that several shots, 324, 336 and 339, are ambiguous as to whether they present Gray's or the camera's point of view. The discovery of the body in the coffin, like the discovery of Gisèle, is accompanied by interventions of discourses, and the 180-degree cuts around the coffin recall the death of the father (Table 3).

Shot Number	Gray	non-Gray
339		3 doctor
340	3, 1d	
341	3	
342		3 doctor enters
343	3	
344		1d doctor removes key
345		1na steps (close-up)
346		1 doctor
347	3	
348		3

Sequence. The doctor enters the building (Shot 339). Continuity of angles in cutting suggests that Gray is in a position (Shot 340) to see the doctor, but from the next shot (341) it is clear that he is not. Gray moves to another room (as if in reaction to the doctor's entry) and establishes himself in a position (Shot 343) to observe the action of the doctor picking up a key to the glass-fronted door, behind which we have seen Gisèle tied up. This is a displaced point-of-view shot [1d]. Shot 345, a slightly panning close-up of a few steps, strongly marks the camera's presence. The doctor does not open the door but replaces the key (Shot 346). Gray observing the action (Shot 347) withdraws behind the door jamb. The corporal comes from the stairway and carries tools to

54 324 1na, 1 coffin

325 3

326 1d coffin lid and inscription

327 3 1na coffin head right

328 1na coffin head right

329 1na, 1d Gray' in coffin head top left



328 3 coffin head right

330 3 coffin head right

331 1 na Gray' in coffin head top right

332 3 camera in position of corpse

333 1 doorway

334 3

335 3 looking through glass

336 1, 1na Gisèle

337 3

338 3

Scene. Gray enters the building, kneels by a coffin (Shot 328), pulling back the cloth covering it (Shot 329) to show his own

56 the foreground, obscuring our view of the doctor as he does so (Shot 348).

The hesitating narrative coherence of this scene is constituted by the now familiar procedure of displaced subjective shots marking Gray's observing look. In this instance they link together two actions (the doctor's entry, Gray's movement about the room) which are not initially linked, a moment of diegetic 'falsity'. A lie is told by the camera, then 'corrected' by the subjective coding [1d] (Shot 344), then undermined again by the further intervention of *discours* [1na] (Shot 345) etc -- a constant dialectic of the film's process.

Shot Number	Gray	non-Gray
349	1na	
350	3	3
351	3	

Sequence/Scene. The above sequence is broken by a shot (349) of a room with woodshavings on the floor. Gray runs in and climbs under a trapdoor in the foreground. A shot of the corporal going through a doorway, possibly the one Gray was observing in Shot 347 (Shot 350) is followed by a return to Gray looking from under the raised trapdoor, his image now having regained solidity; the corporal's leg enters the doorway, a link with the next shot.

The woodshavings, trapdoor and camera set-up of Shot 349 link this space to that of Gray's earlier exploration (Shot 84). Shot 351 sets Gray up in the position of observer, yet the expected return to his look is first delayed by shots of the doctor and then completely overturned by the POV shots from the coffin (see below).

Shot Number	Gray's Corpse	Doctor	Other
352			1 corporal bending
353	3		
354			1na coverlet rolled back
355		3	
356			1d
357	3		
358			1na corporal puts lid on coffin (corpse's view)
359	3		



358



359

3

360

361

31d
corporal picks up
brace

362

363

1

corporal turns brace

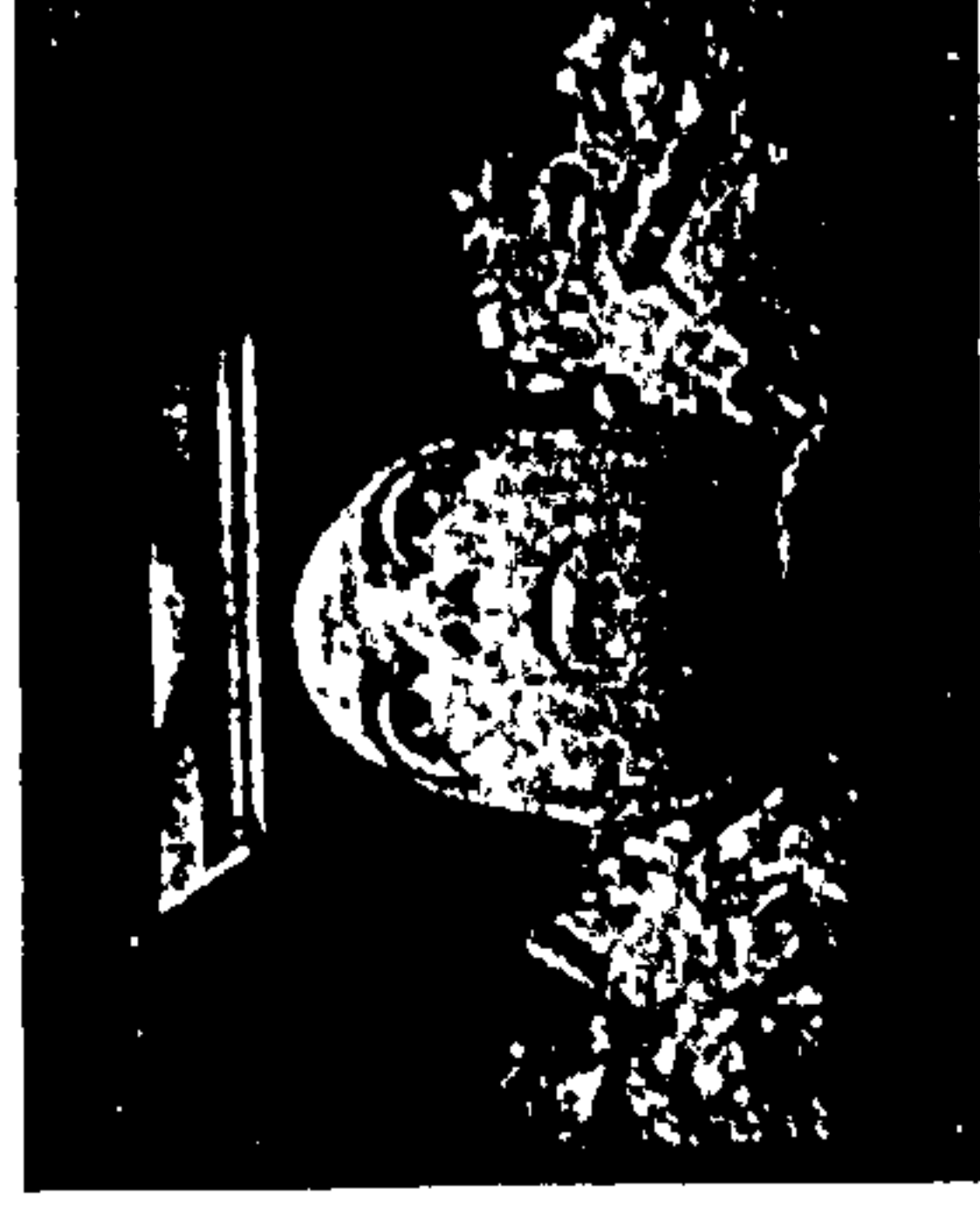
364

365

1
old woman



363



364



365

365

366

3
with bearers

367 3
368 3
369

1
shadows on ceiling

370 3
371

1
shadows on ceiling

372 3
373 1



372



373a



373b



373c

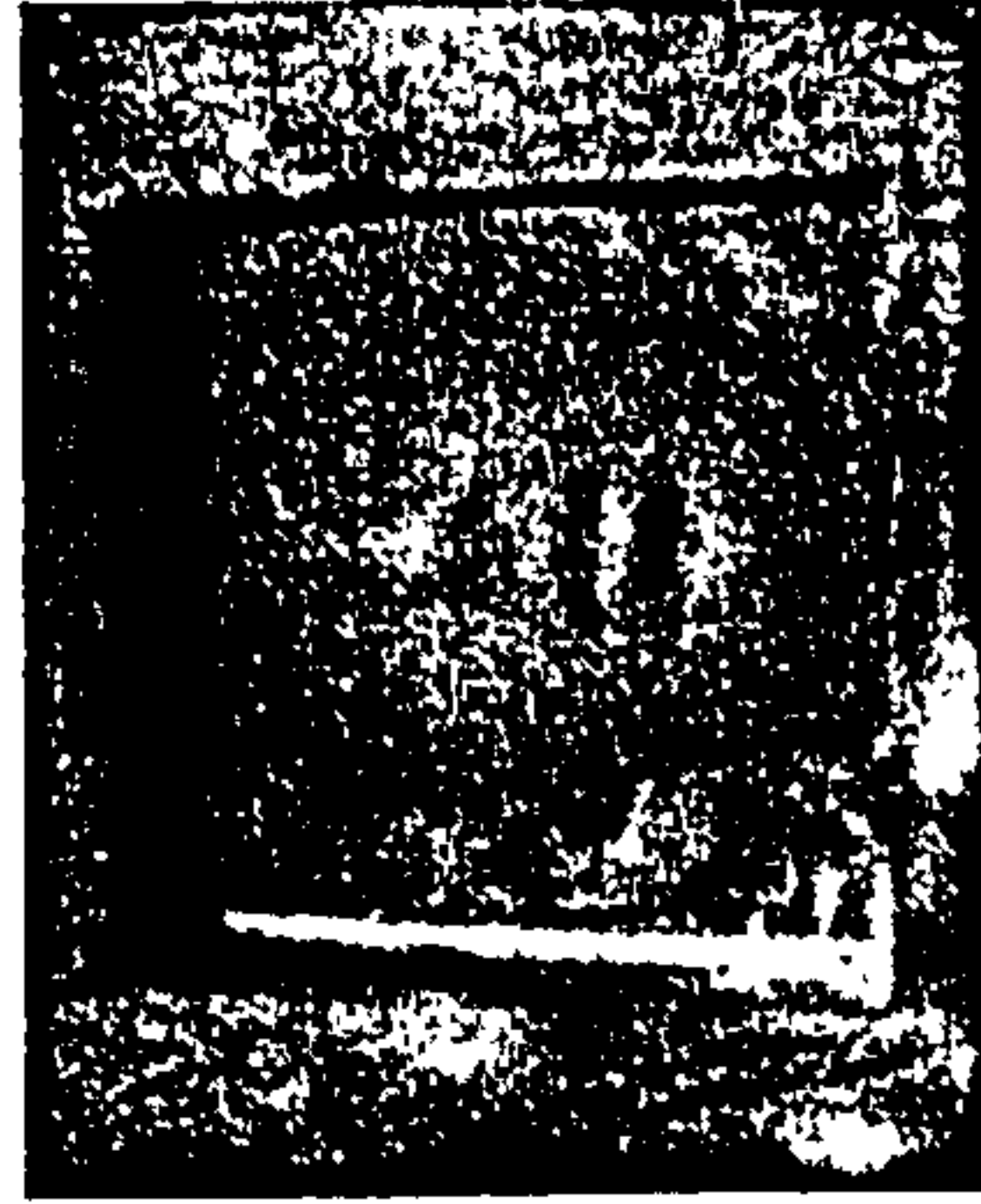
374 3
375

1na
pan up
church tower

376 3



375



376



377

378 3
379
380 3
381 3



381a



381b

Scene/Sequence. The corporal bends to pick up tools (Shot 352). the doctor lights a cigar (Shot 353). and the corporal comes in behind him and begins removing the coverlet of the coffin (Shot 354). The doctor observes (Shots 355 and 357) while the corporal picks up the coffin lid (Shot 356) and puts it on the coffin (Shot 358). Watched by Gray' in the coffin, the corporal makes holes in it and then hammers nails in. The old woman looks into the coffin (Shot 365) which is picked up by some bearers (only seen in this segment) and carried out to the churchyard, this being observed by Gray' in the coffin. In Shot 381, observed by Gray's two images, the cortège vanishes as the church bells stop tolling. Gray's 'doubles' merge into one solid image again.

This segment is organised around, ie constantly returns to, shots of Gray's body in the coffin, all of which are from points of view taken up by the camera separately from characters. The first shot of the segment is marked as Gray's point of view (Shot 352). The next breaks with the alternation Gray/non-Gray which might have

been continued (Shot 351: Gray: 352: non-Gray, etc). Instead, Shot 353 is an impersonal shot inaugurating a series doctor/non-doctor, shots of the doctor alternating with shots of what the doctor sees. This makes possible the shock of Shot 358, which breaks into the series, substituting for the expected shot from the point of view of the doctor a shot of Gray's 'corpse' in the coffin. Shot 359 indicates that this non-assigned point of view must be that of the 'corpse'. During the interval when Gray's point of view has been replaced by the doctor's, we can only assume that Gray's shadow, hitherto an observer of the action, has become trapped in the body in the coffin. Following this there is a series of shots in which we see Gray looking out of the coffin, his eyes staring, alternating with shots of what he 'sees'. The shock of the transition in point of view, its continuation (there is no further reference to Gray observing the action from the trap-door), is increased by the gliding motion of the camera, so clearly marking the shots as subjective that it is as if all the previous displacements of subjective shots existed to contrast with this matching of seer and seen. The continuity of action is maintained from the room to the church, yet the interruption at Shot 375 (a pan up the church tower, which like Shot 345 of the steps provides an alternative axis - that of the camera - to that of Gray's subjectivity for reading the segment) prevents this movement from coming to represent the narrative's approach to resolution, the point of equilibrium. Instead the camera's independence is re-marked and the disturbance leads to other attempts at resolution. Shot 358 and the series that follows it also function as the conclusion of a series of previous shots of shadows and shots taken from 'strange' angles in relation to character point of view (eg Shot 127 of the shooting of the father). These stylistic 'pre-figurations' have accumulated the effect of uncertainty and the sum of that uncertainty produced by the displacements is discharged at this moment in the narrative, producing the effect of shock.

IV Serial or Fantastic?

'I never succeed in defining literary history independently of what time has added to it. In other words, I always give it a mythical dimension. For me, Romanticism includes everything that has been said about Romanticism' (Roland Barthes in *The Structuralist Controversy*, op cit, p 150).

Critical discourse is 'about' both the textual object proper and also the other discourses added to it through history. In my discussion of *Vampyr* I have considered some examples of criticism

as failing through their lack of Todorov's conception of the fantastic, but I have not so far mentioned perhaps the most important instance, the article 'Propositions' by Noël Burch and Jorge Dana in *Afterimage* n 5, Spring 1974, pp 40-66. This article places *Vampyr* within a cinematic *politique* which deserves a more serious consideration both in terms of the theoretical issues raised and of their effects in educational practices than can be given here. Nevertheless, an outline of it is necessary in order to understand how *Vampyr* fits in.

The *politique* is based on an opposition which Burch and Dana find in the work of Umberto Eco between the structural and the serial, the structural referring to a notion of codedness, socialised meaning, the serial to 'the negation of socialised meaning, above and beyond the simple ambiguity of the aesthetic message' produced when the codes are 'set in crisis'. They argue that this area of the serial is manifested in a redistribution of signifiers in certain films homologous with procedures in other arts such as serial music where 'series is no longer the negation of structure, but structure questioning itself and recognising itself as part of history' (Eco: *La Struttura assente*, cit *Afterimage* n 5, op cit, p 42). This discourse of the serial 'questioning and recognising itself' is manifested in a series of films, a 'crest line': *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, *Potemkin*, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, *L'Argent*, *M. Man with a Movie Camera*, *Vampyr* and *Gertrud*. The three works by Dreyer are present not as products of a cinematic auteur, but as instances of an exemplary textual practice, a kind of dialectical 'uplifting' (*Aufhebung*) from the level of the structural to that of the serial: 'In Dreyer in particular, it is very evident that it is through montage itself that the codes of montage are deconstructed.' This dynamic of the serial constitutes it as textual, materialist, as a work of deconstruction.

In order to situate their 'crest line', Burch and Dana present a taxonomy of four categories in terms of the degree to which films 'escape the ideological determinations of the codes', the degree to which the signifier escapes being 'flattened under the tyrannical weight of the signified':

Category A consists of 'films totally accounted for and informed at all levels by the dominant codes', the domain of 'true "transparency"', ideological expression in its pure state'. Much of Hollywood is included here, examples being Minnelli and the American work of Lang (*The Secret Behind the Door*).

Category B consists of films 'totally accounted for by the codes, but in which this fact is marked by a Stylistic'. This includes the 'staples of the art cinemas', films marked by an author but in a manner which does not allow the texts to accede to 'genuine Form, "textuality"'. (This opposition between Stylistic and Form is a version of the 1950's *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics' opposition between *metteurs-en-scène* and *auteurs*.)

In Category C are films which achieve intermittent access to Form, films which 'intermittently escape the dominant ideological determination of the codes' but also contain 'passages where the codes incontestably resume their hegemony'. *L'Argent* and *Potemkin* belong to this category.

Category D is characterised by the absence of this hegemony of the codes, containing films 'informed by a constant designation/deconstruction of the codes which, however ideologically determined at the strictly diegetic level, implicitly question this determination by the way they situate the codes and play upon them'.

Films of the 'crest line' fall into both C and D. Thus *Gertrud* is classified as belonging to C, *Vampyr* to D. However, it is hard to see the difference between these classifications in the accounts of the two films the authors give.

Burch and Dana's notion of an extra-codic area may have value in opposing scientific extensions of semiotics, but in suggesting the possibility of signification without codification it can only create confusion. The article's reference to an effective liberation of the signifier from the signified is reminiscent of the exclusive concern with the signifier evidenced by avant-garde film-making and criticism, particularly in America (as Peter Wollen has outlined in an article in *Screen* v 17 n 1, Spring 1976), and Burch and Dana tend towards a similar elision of the difference between the concepts of material and (dialectical) materialism. They demand serious consideration, however, because their vocabulary – signifier, signified, materialist, deconstruction, modernism, etc – overlaps in a constellation of terms with that present in *Screen's* discourse. Just as this vocabulary is contaminated by its juxtaposition with traditional aestheticising notions such as 'Form', the crest line they propose creates confusion in that while containing some arguably modernist 'textual' and materialist works (such as *Man with a Movie Camera*) it includes films which would more aptly be assigned to what is conventionally called the 'art cinema'. While I would not deny the influence of avant-garde practices on Dreyer's work, I would maintain that his films function in quite other ways than those Burch and Dana suggest and in particular that the 'textuality' they refer to in the case of *Vampyr* is a product of an interplay of the codes of the fantastic and the author, such that the film quite clearly situates itself within a particular and not especially progressive mode of production and consumption of cinematic meanings. Their *politique* has value in championing certain contemporary textual practices in cinema and in directing our attention to 'neglected' works of the past, but as an account of film history it is quite inadequate. There is no attempt to place these texts in relation to the combination of ideological, political and economic determinations which could constitute a history. Their position also assumes too homogeneous a hegemonic role

for dominant film-making practices, an identification of the theoretical model of the classical realist text with the whole of Hollywood-Mosfilm's cinematic production, to use Godard's phrase.

Burch and Dana consider *Vampyr* to be a work 'whose "textual" depth – the consequence of a persistent deconstruction directed against the set of codes brought into play (most of which had scarcely been the object of any such previous critique) – is almost unique today'. When they write, *vis-à-vis Gertrud*, of Dreyer adopting a Brechtian attitude towards the text, everything contributing to 'stripping, relieving it of its dramaturgical charge, revealing all the "strings" which hold it together' and a mode of delivery by the characters 'almost completely devoid of any expressive modulation, which is the source of [this] extreme alienation'; they underline the formalism inherent in their position which, as Colin McCabe has pointed out (*Screen* v 16 n 4, Winter 1975/6, pp 46-57), in stressing the moment of separation in fact ignores the politics of that moment, that in order to work within representation to produce an understanding of its formations, the text must enable the audience to separate themselves from an identity given in the text, to participate in a learning process. The function of the audience in Burch and Dana's discourse is as problematic as that of history. Deconstruction can only occur within representation (hence the concept of counter-cinema), and only through a displacement of meanings by other meanings.

Vampyr's exemplary, self-consciously polemical features, its system of 'deconstruction', are considered by Burch and Dana under three heads:

1. The film is seen as 'revealing, or questioning the already traditional dichotomy between the "subjective" camera and the "objective" camera by introducing a third term – the camera designated as an omnipotent and omniscient presence which defines or unmarks the other two attitudes as roles'. One of the structural axes of the film is constituted for them by the trace left by the successive passage from one to another among these three 'roles'. I would read this 'third term' as a function of the systems of the fantastic and authorial discourse. The force of 'defines or unmarks . . . as roles' does not convey that play with subjective and objective camera necessitated by the systems of fantastic and author. (To characterise the 'third term' as 'omnipotent and omniscient', ie as imaginary in the psychoanalytic sense, misses its possible symbolic function and its instability in this film text, foreclosing access to the symbolic – a point I hope to develop in later work.)

2. The second structural axis is the 'use of cross-cutting, showing the relativity of established codification by producing a whole series of messages ambiguous as to temporal simultaneity/causality'. Now the production of such messages, in my reading, is precisely the function of the fantastic. Although cross-cutting is

important in establishing our perception independently of Gray's, it is not the main source of ambiguous messages, which is rather the use of pronoun functions already elaborated. ('Established codification' really demands more study of the codes of silent film than the authors perform, and without it we are not in a position to distinguish at what points *Vampyr* is innovative in relation to established codification'.)

3. The film is seen as attacking the non-specific codes in a systematic way: 'The rules of the genre [of vampire movies] are subjected to permutation and transformation.' Any sense of play with rules should be taken rather as part of the process by which genres are established and which later films, constituting most of the generic corpus, only partially explore. One of Burch and Dana's examples, the fact that the element 'vampires fear the light of day' occurs reversed in the film, confuses the profilmic event, in which light is used to create shadows, and the text, in which the convention of 'day for night' is in operation. The shadows in the film are not asserted to be vampires anyway, so whether they are shown in the light or seen reflected in water is irrelevant; the only 'shadow' with a clear diegetic function is that of the corporal, who is, along with the doctor, an accomplice of the vampire Marguerite Chopin. As we know from other examples, for example Renfield's sea voyage in Browning's *Dracula*, accomplices are not subject to the same constraints as vampires themselves, they can 'cross flowing water', do not 'fear the light of the sun' etc. Burch and Dana also cite the fact that in the doctor's house a door blows open 'of its own accord just as the vampire emerges . . . through another door!'. In fact the passage through which she enters is established in another sequence (Shot 92), and this use of the unexpected is in no way unique: in *Nosferatu*, for example, the vampire's entry into Harker's room is preceded by a door opening of its own accord and the vampire appearing a relatively long time afterwards — the denial of expectation is the same as in the *Vampyr* example — the expected appearance behind the door withheld), and in the latter the door's opening can be attributed to the wind. Moreover, the fact that the vampire 'appears' to enter through a wall could be said to reinforce a constant reference in *Vampyr* to the operation of some more general malign force than Marguerite Chopin herself, as when the door of the doctor's room becomes locked preventing the corporal's escape, or the doctor's disappearance from the chateau is accompanied by doors banging and lights flickering in the wind as he appears to pass through the window, the *locus classicus* for vampiric entrances and exits. At most this last example exhibits on the diegetic plane another manifestation of uncertainty, namely, are the vampire's accomplices vampires or not? All these examples could only have the force Burch and Dana give them if a generic norm were established for a body of texts belonging to a 'vampire' genre. They could then be assessed as to their degree

of transgression of the norm and that transgression interpreted. It should be emphasised that a certain degree of transgression may be necessary for the maintenance of a genre: 'Every work modifies the sum of possible works, each new example alters the species', as Todorov puts it (*The Fantastic*, op cit, p 6). It appears more fruitful to examine *Vampyr* as I have done as an example of the genre of the fantastic, one little used in the cinema, examples being *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Saragossa Manuscript*.

V Conclusions

Todorov divides the content of the literary fantastic into two semantic classes, themes of the 'I' and themes of the 'you', the 'non-I'. The former class are concerned with the structuring of the relationship between man and the world, the world perceived through his eyes, his 'I', his consciousness, the relation of the structuring subject to its objects. The fantastic tends to put this relationship into question, the problem of vision becoming a main thematic. The latter class concern the dynamic relations of human action in the world through the mediation of others, and are characterised in the fantastic by themes of discourse and desire, the latter in excessive forms as well as in its various transformations (perversions) in themes of cruelty, violence, death, life after death, corpses and vampires. On the expression plane, these are arranged by the use of the narrative sub-code, often as first-person narration. As far as the text of *Vampyr* is concerned, the themes of the cinematic fantastic are similar to those of the literary fantastic. The pronoun functions, part of the narrative sub-code, which also includes the 'grande syntagmatique' insofar as it is applicable, are necessary for narration, though not specific to the fantastic. The interventions of *discours* create disruptions in the plane of expression corresponding to those on the plane of content, and as such the interventions of *discours* participate in the realisation of the fantastic in this particular text. In addition, however, these marks of authorial presence function as part of an authorial code/sub-code which can be shown to have other manifestations in this and other texts, thematically — eg 'narcissism', a concern common to the fantastic and to other texts by Dreyer — and structurally — eg the 'disruptive' continuities in *Jorn of Arc*.

It might seem appropriate to separate more clearly two 'levels' of uncertainty in the text: that relating to the status of what Gray sees (is the father 'real', is the body in the coffin 'real?'); and that relating to the 'undermining' of the position of the reader, who is in a relation of uncertainty to the whole text as is Gray to his part in it, the reader not knowing how to read the whole text which includes the uncertainty of David Gray about his own per-

ceptions. Analysis of other cinefantastic texts would enable one to establish whether the configuration of character 'I' and authorial 'I' peculiar to *Vampyr* is also characteristic of the genre. One could certainly imagine a text using only 'conventional' coding, still raising issues of uncertainty by refusing to mark sections as to whether they pertain to dream or to reality. One could also imagine the reverse, for instance E T A Hoffman's *The Sandman* rewritten by James Joyce so that the problematic of vision would effect systematic displacements at the level of spelling, choice of substantives referring to vision, syntax, and so on, yet the structure as a fantastic text remain the same. Whether the insistence of *discours* is specific to the economy of *Vampyr* as a metonymic displacement from the uncertainty at the level of content, or is rather characteristic of the cinefantastic as a genre, can only be deduced after analysis of other possible members of that genre, which has yet to be done. At the present stage the demands of economy in analysis require the hypothesis of a code of pronoun functions to cover both these types of fact.

Further work is necessary on Dreyer's films to specify the content of the sub-code constituting Dreyer as auteur. His films are appropriated as *films d'auteur*: they are exhibited in 'art cinemas', described as 'non-commercial' - 'It contained an atmosphere of excitement I never found in a commercial studio' (Gavin Lambert) - and so on. In his writing on his own films, Dreyer constantly reinscribes his chosen role of 'creative artist' into his criticism:

'I think it is precisely the task of criticism to encourage them [film directors] to remain loyal to ideas and not to stagnate, and at the same time to force the producers to spend part of their profits from entertainment films on new artistic experiments. I wonder if it isn't an overall failing of the film that it has too few individualists - too few whole personalities' (*Dreyer in Double Reflection*, ed Skoller, New York 1973).

Further work will also be necessary to determine in what ways the authored textual discourse offers this mode of appropriation as authored. This may consist in part in the degree of prominence or insistence of the authorial sub-code. Is the difference here between *The Searchers* and *Vampyr* the fact that the former offers primarily modes of consumption as a genre (Western) and a star (John Wayne) film and only secondarily the author 'Ford', whereas the latter offers primarily the author - 'Well it was really regarded as a Dreyer film and no nationality seemed to be applied to it' (Interview with Baron Nicolas de Gunzburg, pseud Julian West, *Film Culture* n 33), and only secondarily a genre (the fantastic)? This suggests a theoretical model of the 'art cinema' in which a system of authorial intervention clearly distinguishes the film from the 'transparency' of the classical realist text (a model elaborated in recent numbers of *Screen* by Colin McCabe) and facilitates read-

ings in terms of the 'truth' of the authorial subject as origin.

The fantastic is predicated on the category of reality: 'The reader and the hero . . . must decide if a certain event or phenomenon belongs to reality or to imagination, that is, must determine whether or not it is real. It is therefore the category of the real which has furnished a basis for our definition of the fantastic' (Todorov; *The Fantastic*, op cit, p 167). A dialectic between the categories of the real and the unreal characterised the thinking of the nineteenth century: 'The nineteenth century transpired . . . in a metaphysics of the real and the imaginary, and the literature of the fantastic is nothing but the bad conscience of this positivist era' (ibid, p 168). The twentieth century, on the contrary, has tended to emphasise the autonomy of the text from any 'real' referent; it is the era of the modernist text, of Joyce, the nouveau roman, etc. In the cinema, however, this nineteenth-century debate persists in the issue of realism, the problem of the 'reality' of the cinematic referent. The fantastic text is not modernist in the sense say of Robbe-Grillet's *L'Immortelle*, where there is only a reversible series of representations, where the issue of diegetic reality is irrelevant, but it is progressive in that in it the category of the real is at least under scrutiny.

Credits

Vampyr France/Germany 1932

Director - Carl Theodor Dreyer. Script - Carl Theodor Dreyer and Christian Jul, freely adapted from the collection of short stories by Sheridan Le Fanu, *Through a Glass Darkly*. Art Direction - Hermann Warm (graveyard scene). Photography - Rudolph Maté, Louis Née. Sound - Dr Hans Bittmann. Synchronisation - Paul Falkenberg. Sound System - Tobis Klangfilm. Music - Wolfgang Zeller. Production - Carl Dreyer Film Production, Paris. Cast - Julian West (pseud for Baron Nicolas de Gunzburg) (*David Gray*). Maurice Schutz (*the owner or the chateau or the father*). Rena Mandel (*Gisèle, the owner's daughter*). Sybille Schmitz (*Léon, the owner's daughter*). M Hieronimiko (*the village doctor*). Henriette Gerard (*Marguerite Chopin the vampire*). Albert Bras (*the domestic*). A Babiani (*the domestic's wife*). Jane Mora (*the nurse*).



DREYER

By Mark Nash



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1977



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I. Introduction

One of the significant features of our film culture over the past five years has been a certain blockage around the notion of authorship. The productivity of the *auteur* theory has been limited, as whole areas of cinematic practices fell outside its scope. Critics often fell back on the instinctive designation of artistic individuality unsubstantiated by actual analysis. This blocking of *auteur* analysis was brought about largely by the failure of the works analysed to correspond to the theoretical models used, and coincided with a more general awareness of the theoretical and political problems inherent in the limitations of structuralism. The work initiated by the Edinburgh Film Festival, e.g. in their publications on Raoul Walsh and Jacques Tourneur¹ constituted an attempt to reformulate these problems in terms of textual practice with the emphasis shifting onto the relations, the *process* of signification, rather than the value or 'meaning' of particular discrete signifying units that can be isolated in the filmic discourse. This work essentially tried to dialecticise the ailing *auteurist*-structuralist model and open out the questions which it repressed or was otherwise unable to pose, questions which foreground the problems of reading and text construction.

Other recent developments in the Edinburgh Film Festival, which is one of the most progressive institutions in British film culture and an accurate index of advances in work on/in cinema, have evidenced a further series of shifts in the concepts deployed and the ways in which the object of study has been redefined. As the introduction to the *Edinburgh '76 Magazine*, no. 1, stated: '... the positivist separation between film as an object of study and the politics of film culture [became] progressively untenable... The key issue at stake was film as an ideological practice rather than as a predetermined and self-sufficient object of study. It was not until recently that the question of film as a signifying practice, of film as a process of articulation, tracing relations of subjectivity within film texts which themselves are embedded in the discourse of ideologies present in a given social formation, has been systematically examined).²

The Brecht event in '75, informed by the at that time widely available work of Althusser, indicated a rearticulation of notions of the politics of cinematic and critical discourses. The limitations of the unitary notion of ideology became apparent in attempts to extend Althusser's work on ideology³ to the discourse of criticism. The event underlined the necessity to contest the undoubted hegemony in film culture of the journalistic discourse

of the majority of newspaper and magazine writers on film, and to fight control of that discourse over models of reading available to audiences. It has been clear for a long time that this discourse was deeply implicated in the diverse and often contradictory interests of the international film industry but it was impossible to work out the terms of that implication within a theoretical framework which did not allow sufficient autonomy to the ideological as a specific set of practices containing (in the active and passive senses of the verb) specific contradictions. Consequently, that theoretical framework, at best producing excellent formal analyses, was unable to tackle the fundamentally political nature of the hegemonic journalistic discourse on cinema, to analyse the specifics of the contradictions within it, its relation to the industry and to ideological hegemony in general. As a result, there were insuperable difficulties preventing the development of concrete strategies for ideological struggles in relation to the cinematic institution. Current, still ongoing work such as that of the Edinburgh Film Festival, *Screen* and the Independent Filmmakers' Association, arising from post-Althusserian reformulations of notions of ideology and the state, is beginning to enable work towards an altogether more political understanding of these problems.

While it is important that critical texts investigate the functioning of the cinematic institution and consolidate the transformation of theoretical space from the object cinema to the operation cinema, they can only have progressive effects if consciously articulated with their surrounding co-text, e.g. the contradictory shifts in production, distribution and exhibition within the industry marked by the work of the Independent Filmmakers' Association towards an oppositional/independent cinema, the emergence of the Association of Independent Producers and the opening of several independently owned cinemas, which, together with the Regional Film Theatres linked to the British Film Institute, offer the possibility of a viable 'third circuit' (with the precedents of the 'alternative' circuits of distribution of workers' films as well as Government sponsored films in the 30s and 40s). Unfortunately, at present this development is still wide open to the institutionalisation of a British art cinema, an animal so far rarely seen on these islands, except in its European varieties.

One of the interesting features of the Dreyer-text is that it has been taken up both by the ideologues of art cinema and those working towards an independent cinema. Even though such work is, in some respects at least, hostile to the establishment notions of art as essentially the repository for those religious values (the experience of transcendence, etc.) which no longer function effectively enough within organised religion, but which now operate more indirectly, resurfacing in the realm of 'Art'.

It is important that we address ourselves to these problems, not only because of this possibility of a surge of relatively independently financed art-cinema features of the type which characterised European production in the 50s and 60s, but also because of the need to shift the focus of the critical discourse away from Hollywood in order to examine the specific features of

the institution cinema as it operates in Europe. Moreover, one discourse of which the persistent and chameleon-like functioning is often ignored is that of religion as a determinant in the social formation. It is overlooked, disavowed, as if somehow it shouldn't still be there. Yet we know that the institution of the church has survived politically for longer than any other state apparatus, and we also know that religious ideology is a constant point of appeal for some of the most reactionary elements in our culture, as indicated by e.g. the recent prosecution of *Gay News* for religious blasphemy.

These notes on certain features of the Dreyer-text are concerned with the ideological processes of text construction played out in the space between the 'author' of the filmic discourse and the reader/viewer, and the structure and functioning of the subject Dreyer produced in this reading. As Claire Johnston points out⁴, the central question raised for film theory by psychoanalysis is what kind of reader the text constructs: how does today's patriarchal ideology position the subject? The emphasis of the following essay is on a reading in this sense, and as such is anti-*auteurist*, i.e. against attributing an imaginary unity to the 'author'. The notion of the 'Dreyer-text' refers then to a process theoretically constructed/reconstructed, in the first place (but not exclusively, as other discourses necessarily impinge upon the way such a process is constructed) from the sets of signifying relationships proposed by the films signed Carl Th. Dreyer. The 'film-text', is to be understood as a construction at the intermediate level of the individual film, the provisional unity of a segment of the discourse.

It should also be said in this introduction that metropolitan film culture should no longer be seen as the only significant domain of political and theoretical work. The work of consolidating the advances made, the struggle against the tyranny of journalistic models of reading, by means of texts and genuinely critical programming (e.g. as is attempted by some Regional Film Theatres) is equally important if we are not to fall into elitist theoretical vanguardism. The structure of this booklet tries to bear these problems in mind by providing several points of entry, so that readers unfamiliar with Dreyer's work or with some of the concepts deployed in the first essay can start from some point in the 'dossier' and work their way to the beginning. It is also hoped that readers, whether they attend a full National Film Theatre retrospective of Dreyer's films or more selective regional screenings, will be able to engage productively with the features of the Dreyer-text to which this booklet attempts to draw attention. It goes without saying that I hope the theoretical and ideological implications of the analyses presented here will be of interest and helpful to anyone interested in reading films and changing today's film culture, regardless of the degree of any individual's cathexis to Dreyer's films.

Notes

1. *Raoul Walsh*, ed. Phil Hardy, EFF 1974; *Jacques Tourneur*, ed. Claire Johnston and Paul Willemen, EFF 1975.
2. For further elaboration of this issue see the last few volumes of *Screen* and all Edinburgh Festival publications since 1974.
3. 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in *Lenin and Philosophy*, London 1971.
4. *Edinburgh Magazine*, '76.

II. Notes on the Dreyer-text

- A. 'In the beginning was the picture' (Dreyer).
'I am looked at, that is, I am a picture' (Lacan).

My interest in the cinema and in the functioning of cinematic texts is in understanding the ways in which cinema functions as an institution in conjunction with other institutions in the social formation. I study this institution not so much because I am fascinated by film, but because that fascination is an essential aspect of our production as ideological subjects.

There are no subjects outside of ideology and outside of the social formation, and while 'orthodox' Marxism has been relatively successful in its analyses of the political and economic areas of the social formation, the area of the ideological has proved much more problematic. It is in this area of our trying to come to terms with the functioning of the ideological, that psychoanalysis intervenes (though in a manner which is as yet conceptually difficult), attempting to provide some understanding of our production as speaking subjects: biological individuals with an identity constituted in language. The fictional nature of that identity was theorised by Freud with his discovery of the unconscious, and it was the work of Lacan which made possible the linking of that discovery with the work of linguistics, showing how the unconscious is produced in language. Ideology functions in such a way as to present us with a series of fictions: 'we' in our assumed identities 'are' those fictions, fictions which are constantly fissuring (the evidence of parapraxes, dreams neuroses etc). The work of ideology is to paper over these cracks, to shore up the fissuring edifice.

The discussion of the mechanisms of this operation of ideology have been in terms of the process of *suture*. This term has a history of use in anatomy. In the words of Stephen Heath: 'a stitching or tying as in the surgical joining of the lips of a wound', it also refers to the point at which articulations between bones (particularly those of the cranium) harden, are held together protecting the organism against fragmentation under physical stress. In addition, the word has a history of use in relation to literary composition, so its extension to the functioning of ideology within the cinematic text is not without precedent.

The functioning of ideology is then to be discussed in terms of this suturing function which has been developed by Lacan to mean a join between the orders of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, creating a fictional

identification, a pseudo-identification, for the subject. These terms need some further comment. The reader may be aware of the three areas of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real which in Lacanian analytic theory co-exist and intersect in the subject. The Symbolic function is primary in the sense that it is the sphere of the production of the subject in language, (no Symbolic, no subject). Its functioning however is always modified by the Imaginary, it always acts in conjunction with the Imaginary. Without the simultaneous use of these two correlative functions the subject would have no experience of the Real. Symbolisation is not possible without Imaginary support and for our purposes these functions are perhaps best understood as two forces, the vectorial product of which 'is' the subject produced in a particular ideological 'direction'. (N.B. 'The psychoanalytic subject for Lacan . . . is not any *thing*, is defined topologically and not punctually, is the action of a structure' (Stephen Heath)). Ideological representation then turns on, supports itself from the production of the subject in the Symbolic order, and directs this production as a set of images and fixed positions, fictions of coherence. Stephen Heath points out that suture functions in the cinematic text to 'bind the spectator as subject in the realisation of the film's space'. The spectator is bound to the image-frame and to the narrative in such a way that his/her fictional coherence as subject is maintained: 'The functioning of suture in image, frame, narrative, etc. is exactly a *process*: it counters a productivity, an excess that it states and restates in the very moment of containing in the interests of coherence' (Stephen Heath).²

One of the figures of that constraint to which I want to draw attention is Dreyer's celebrated attention to decor, the presentation within the diegesis, (the realm of the narrative's signified, the fictional world) of furniture, *objets d'art*, mirrors and paintings, and the way these participate in a 'freezing' of the flow of the film, a reinscription of stasis and centrality. In *Michael* this functions in terms of the reinscription of frame within the frame, in the use of paintings in the diegesis and the reduplication of the subject's relation to the visual field in the representation of a process of exchange between the characters in the diegesis and these frames within the frame: the paintings of Zoret, the comments of his friends, the reviews of the press.

The question of desire is also important in relation to the discussion of suture. As Claire Johnston points out: 'Desire is essentially the difference between satisfaction sought and satisfaction obtained. The object of desire is thus the memory trace of a previous gratification which can never be attained, but will always be the lost object forever reincarnating itself in a series of objects. Desire is set in motion with the first cry and the posing of the first signifier and with it a series of signifiers which are interchangeable, generating a perpetual metonymy, described by Laplanche and Leclaire as a scar, by its inexhaustible power of displacement made precisely to mark and mask the gap through which desire originates and into which it perpetually plunges'. This metonymy is what is in play in the cinematic text tracing desire in image flow and narrative, the metonymic play of desire aiming to suture over the lack, the absence. In the film's movements, 'its framings, its

cuts, its intermittences, the film ceaselessly poses an absence, a lack which is ceaselessly recaptured for—one needs to be able to say 'forin'—the film' (Stephen Heath).¹ The process of desire set up, set going by this structuring of absences that is film, effects the suture while undermining it. It generates the excess which constantly threatens to overwhelm the subject and which in turn generates additional symbolic constraints, frames within the frame, a centering of the image. In this initial section of my essay I want to focus on three signs of desire in *Michael*, the paintings already referred to and the English glasses, both at the level of the narrative, and in addition the process of the look which they articulate and help inscribe in the diegesis.

An early scene in *Michael* concentrates on a picture, The Victor, painted by Zoret, a great artist modelled according to Dreyer on Rodin. It represents a young man, barely clothed, with arms outstretched towards the viewer in a possibly defiant pose. It is also indirectly a portrait of his model, Michael. This painting circulates through the diegesis, the framed gesture an image of excess constrained, contained. Zoret gives the painting to Michael who in turn sells it to help the Princess Zamikow who happens to be in financial difficulty. Zoret, hearing about this, insists on buying it back ('the price is immaterial') and having it rehung in Michael's room. Other paintings circulate in the diegesis: the Algerian sketches, the portrait of Zamikow, and the Job in the final tryptich which particularly functions to hold the spectator to the frame, centred in close shots in front of the audience come to view the masterwork. Paintings circulate as part of the narrative, containing, 'summing up' its flow. They also function simultaneously as signs of desire, representing a love object: Michael, Zamikow, or the process of desire itself (the 'Job'). Their cash value represents a particular modality of desire. Zoret, already a 'master', refuses the Princess's commission to paint her portrait. He doesn't need the money, because to him, money is a means of holding Michael, the object of his desire. In that sense, Zoret controls the money, he already has it. Michael's position is the inverse. He constantly seeks to distance himself from Zoret by appropriating his money, converting his paintings into money, a process Zoret finally stops in the finality of his death when all of his possessions pass to Michael (the-text understands—'possess' in the sexual sense, an indirect representation of homoerotic relations: Zoret's love only achieves its aim in his death). That Zoret changes his mind and agrees to paint Zamikow is because she appears momentarily in Michael's position as object of desire, she suddenly 'looks' attractive, *i.e.* her eyes and body begin to reflect more light, paralleling Michael's appearance to Zoret several years before (Zoret had rejected him as an artist: 'Your sketches are no good, come back when you've learned to see', but then 'saw' his possibilities as a model). The portrait of Zamikow represents Zoret's attempt to suture, refurbish his desire for Michael. He attempts a relationship with her, in effectively excluding Michael from the dinner, but she is no more than Michael's stand-in.

This dinner is the occasion for the appearance of another sign of desire: the English glasses. They inaugurate a festival of luminous photography,

Zamikow and Zoret turning the glasses in their hands, savouring their properties in the light (cut-glass, along with painting and cinema depends for its 'life' on light), savouring the wine poured into them. Later in the narrative these same glasses are 'borrowed' by Michael also to entertain Zamikow, but placed in his room, with the row of childhood toys which is also Zoret's (*i.e.* supported by his money) and with The Victor hanging on the wall, they don't have quite the same effect. The glasses celebrate the succession of couples: Zoret/Zamikow, excluding Michael and Michael/Zamikow excluding Zoret. The third time they are mentioned, when Zoret wishes to celebrate a by now infrequent visit from Michael, the absence of the glasses indicates that this is not a return to the couple Zoret/Michael, but rather signifies the effective absence of Michael, the impossibility of Zoret to communicate with him. These glasses function as signifiers of desire, they are co-present with desire, predicated on the absence of the loved one, the separation of Michael and Zoret: they are absent from the diegesis when Zoret and Michael are together and they appear for the—illusory—formation of other couples.

Both the paintings and the glasses are stand-ins for and attempt to suture the forever renewed absence of the object of desire, of which Michael is the privileged sign. Michael passes from Zoret to Zamikow as a sign of their desire, and the narrative of the film is essentially the narrative of his passage from the field of Zoret's gaze to that of Zamikow's: her gaze ensnares him, as in the close shot of her eyes when she is sitting for her portrait. But that passage from an implicit homosexuality to the narcissistic/imaginary capture by the mother's face in his relation to Zamikow (who 'mothers' him and cradles him in her arms) is in fact no more than a passage from one modality of imaginary capture to another, represented in the mirroring correspondence in the names Zoret-Zamikow. The paintings can all be said to be about the absence of Michael; or rather about the presence of desire in the absence of its object. Zoret sets the narrative in motion with his project of painting 'Caesar as he was murdered by his adopted son Brutus', figuratively and symbolically anticipating his death by Michael's hand. This picture is mentioned in conversation but never seen, perhaps because the desiring relation is absent: it would represent Zoret already dead, when the process of the film is about his dying (for love); and the tableau of his death is a representation of Zoret killed by Michael's effect on him, *i.e.* killed by desire.

What is common to the paintings, the glasses and Michael as signs of desire is their function within a system of exchange based on the look and the light which supports it. This process is foregrounded in an early scene in the film when Zoret shows Zamikow his paintings. In that scene, Michael is told by Zoret to carry a spotlight and to shine it on The Victor, the painting for which he modelled. Turning to Michael, Zamikow recognises 'the original'. Zoret draws her attention onward, to another frame, another scene, this time a romantic heterosexual embrace, suggesting a transposition of Rodin's sculpture *The Kiss* into a pictorial form. While the two of them engage the

painting in their gazes, Michael runs the light from the painting over Zamikow's body, returning the movement of her sexually appraising gaze.

Light itself can function as signifier which, through a metaphoric process, stands for desire. The text privileges it in this way in a number of instances: Michael's entry, at a dramatic moment in the ballet Swan Lake, haloed in a beam of light which penetrates the depth of the auditorium up to the stage, exactly like the projector's beam in a film theatre; the scene where he relaxes by an open window, bathed in light (originating metonymically in his embrace with Zamikow in the previous scene), with Switt to his right and Zoret facing the two of them (*i.e.* Zoret's past and present lovers illuminated) with a fountain suggestively playing in the foreground. Michael's departure is equated in the text with the blocking of light, the closing of the shutters, the blocking of communication with Zoret, as when the chess board is sent away. Another instance of the privileging of light occurs in relation to the Algerian sketches, which to Zoret represent the finest memories of his time with Michael. They are dominated by the effects of light to the exclusion of figures, and it is this same light effect which Zoret used in his final painting representing the biblical figure Job, symbolising the effects of his desire for Michael.

The many scenes of viewing in the film function as analogous to the acts of viewing of the film by another set of spectators whose eyes are directed by beams of light at images, *i.e.* the audience. Similarly, the scene of the painting of Zamikow's portrait rehearses this process of image construction with the painter/director organising a field of visual marks in a frame. In this instance, it is a double movement of inscription into the visual discourse of that which disturbs the desiring relation between Zoret/Michael: the female body. The object fixed in the visual field of the eye of the painter is also that which is privileged by the eye of the camera, and by extension, of the director as the organiser of the filmic discourse. The diegetic figure of Zamikow, object of desire fixed and contained in the painting, is also the sequined body of Nora Gregor, already radiant with anticipated stardom. The star-system, founded on the structure of fetishism, producing a fetish for the film and for the viewer, doubly contained in the film-frame and the painting within it, thus doubly inscribed as 'disturbance to be contained', doubly threatening, doubly fetishistic. Further—the use of the spotlight to throw light on the painting parallels the process of filming (lighting a set) and the process of film viewing, the projector beam redoubled by the viewer's gaze. In other words, the structuring of the diegetic story enlightens us about the cinematic process, reflecting the process of construction of a visual discourse back at us.

"The look is outside because "I am looked at, that is, I am a picture" the subject sees and is seen and is instituted in that dialectic, the dialectic of eye and look which can know no coincidence' (Stephen Heath)³. Zoret, Zamikow and Michael are all looked at by intradiegetic spectators and the extradiegetic viewer, and they become, literally, pictures. Michael was one already at the beginning of the diegesis in the painting entitled *The Victor*.

In their attempts to materialise the act of seeing, paintings 'materialise' the object in the field of the look, attempting to grasp the 'reality' in front of the eye in a representation. The look as object of desire constantly eludes attempts to capture it. It cannot be represented, except marginally, e.g. the marginality of the side panels of the triptych, the looks of/at the side panels elided in the framing of the central panel as if it were a single painting. Another example can be found in *Vampyr*: David Grey's look at himself looking, marginalised into a structure of uncertainty⁴. This marginality is equally evident in the oblique return of the viewers'/painter's gaze by figures in the paintings, paralleling the discretion of matching gazes in classic shot-reverse-shot configurations. It is the marginality, says Lacan, of the infant's turning towards a person present but not directly implicated in its game of looks with its mirror image. The attempt of painting to trap the look, freeze excess and fix desire only results in their becoming objectified, alienated and therefore available for entry into the circuit of financial exchange, only to be replaced by a new painting. The act of painting only finishes with the final tableau: Zoret's death.

B. "The dramatisation of the structure of phantasy plus the introduction of the founding lack which marks the entry into the symbolic produces a text which appears to be the dramatisation of desire itself, the tracing of desire over/in the body of the text" (Paul Willemsen).

The look, as the object of phantasy in the scopical field institutes the subject in the visible, or rather the subject is instituted in the visible on the trace (with its double sense of 'mark' and 'search') of the look. It cannot be seized because the subject's existence is predicated on it. The 'evanescent' property of the look is foregrounded in *Michael* with its play on light as material signifier of the look, penetrating darkness, surrounded by absence. In this respect, the look as that which bridges and thus also signifies the divide between two terms (the looker and that which is looked at), functions as a signifier of desire. Some representation of absence always circulates in the Dreyer-text—within the frame there is always some kind of barrier, something which bars access to the fictional world whether it is a reduplication of framing as in *Michael*, a dark halo surrounding the lit scene, or the 'barred' image as in *Day of Wrath* (see cover), or some articulation of the two as in *Gertrud*. Further study of the text will elucidate other articulations, but the basic structure of the institution of a lack, of some signifier of separation, persists.

That ceaseless displacement of signifiers of desire—Zoret cannot render Zamikow's eyes, he cannot 'get' them, the English glasses are elsewhere when he wants them—also applies to the presence of Michael, all evanescent carriers of Zoret's desire which is ceaselessly renewed by the absence they represent. Zoret's desire appears to be predicated on Michael's absence.

Michael does not desert him, rather in order for Zoret to love he must first be deserted, so that when he repeats as he is dying, the motto of the film: 'Now I can die in peace, having known a great love', he also states the central process structuring the diegesis. The interest of the film resides precisely in its ability to represent so 'clearly' this constant slipping of the object of desire, this constant attempt to possess through looks, to find a desirable 'I' in the eyes/objects which, by being subjected to a look, locate the 'looker'.

The process of the subject, its production and placing in and by the text, hinges in *Michael* on Zoret as the authorial representative. It is in relation to him that the problematic of looking and of its concomitant, the construction of images, functions. But this process is also one of subjection (the paintings produce the artist in the same way that images produce the viewer) and of suffering, in that the process only continues to function on the basis of the repetition of absence and separation, i.e. the repetition of loss. In religious terms, it is total loss—Job/Zoret, 'A man who has lost everything . . . Vivat Claude Zoret'—which for Job also constitutes the state of Grace, that tamed and oppressive version of ultimate joy (*jouissance*). In the scene where the 'painter of suffering' is offered 'the glory of our country' in the form of the *Légion d'honneur* or some such decoration conventionally the object of male bourgeois ambition, the medal firstly serves as a marker of Michael's absence: the medal is 'meaningless' because Michael is not there to witness the ceremony. The image produces the artist, but this process of 'subject production' needs the sanction of a third: the look of the witness. The medal bestowed upon Zoret acts only as the signifier of the absence of that look. The child seeing its I in the mirror, looks at the mother to guarantee the relation of subjectivity thus instituted; but Zoret, although he had his mirror (the Job—painting) misses the look in return from his object of desire, Michael. This absence is also what causes Zoret's mirror, his painting, to reflect the desolate figure of Job, the christian symbol of utter loss, back at him.

The sexual ambiguity present throughout the film in the homoerotic values inherent in the relationship is crystallised in this scene, but the terms are reversed. Zoret-the-master becomes Zoret-the-infant anxiously seeking the look of Michael, who thus comes to occupy the place usually occupied by the mother. This reversal also highlights indirectly the problematic which the film text poses and, unsuccessfully, attempts to contain: that of bisexuality. Although bisexuality was primarily carried by the figure of Michael (in relation to the Zoret/Zamikow nexus), the oscillation of Zoret between father and infant adumbrates the same problematic. In a third movement (the play of looks and the implied play of sexed identifications being the first two), the founding problematic of bisexuality is re-inscribed into the film-text quite explicitly, though marginalised. The triptych of which Job occupies the central panel is at times, almost accidentally, seen *in toto*, even though shots of the triptych invariably present the figure of Job as the whole painting. In fact, the Job panel is framed by paintings of a young male and a young woman, as if he were caught in the divide between

male/female, a divide crossed by their looks, a space in between sexed identities where the sexual indeterminacy of old age echoes that of infancy. But it is in fact a sexual indeterminacy partaking of both sexes: the Job painting is still part and parcel of the tryptich, it is not an isolated, autonomous work. Moreover, the reversal in relation to age mentioned above (*i.e.* Zoret and Michael) is also echoed in the painting: it is traditionally the child which is caught and placed in the intersection of the male and female parental looks; instead, in the painting, the place of the parents is occupied by images of youth, while the place of the infant is occupied by old Job. But the film text necessarily marginalises this barely masked representation of the problematic of bisexuality: the price the representation pays for its presence in the text is precisely its marginality, its incidental, accidental emergence in long shots ostensibly motivated by the psychological logic of the story which 'requires', at that point, that Zoret be shown isolated in a crowd.

'In every man who speaks of the absence of the other ['Where is Michael?'], the feminine declares itself: he who waits and suffers is miraculously feminised. A man is not feminised because he is homosexual, but because he is in love' (Barthes)⁵. *Michael* foregrounds the (necessarily repressed) bisexual drive of the spectator in relation to the scopoc drive, polarising it in terms of the conventional hetero/homosexual dichotomy. This process can be traced in Michael's fascination with and his distancing from his own image and in his confusion between ideal ego (image of himself) and ego ideal (Zoret). It also functions in Zoret's scopoc contact with the objects of his desire: Michael and Zamikow' (an unsuccessful transition from Michael), inscribed on behalf of the author in the privileged lighting of both their bodies. What surfaces in the viewer and is reinscribed into the figure of Zoret, is that feminisation attendant on waiting, the waiting attendant on absence, the flow of desire. The feminisation could be read in terms of the traces in the diegesis of the expulsion of overt homosexuality. The text's avoidance of any direct representation of homosexuality is not just because it is also avoided in Herman Bang's novel, nor because of the socio-moral codes which surrounded both novelistic and filmic productions, but rather because there is a discretion necessary to the text for it to put absence in play, a vacillation of subject position between the terms of 'author' and 'viewer'⁶. The vacillation, the uncertainty of position producing on the level of sexed identity a similar uncertainty and vacillation. In this sense, what is repressed, and therefore represented in the interstices of the text, is not homosexuality, the faithful shadow of heterosexuality. It is bisexuality which constitutes the trouble of the text and generates and organises its complete set of displacements and exchanges.

C. The barred image

In *Day of Wrath*, Anne's face is invariably shown in partial shadow up to the point where she asserts her own desire, when her face becomes literally radiant, reflecting light. This turning point, this access to sexuality is marked by her change in dress, the laughing and singing, and her needlework design showing a woman leading a child by the hand and an apple tree with a single blossom. The connection of sexual repression with this 'barred' lighting effect is made particularly clear in the shot of her watching Marthe Herlof being burnt (see cover). The window forms a bar over her face, the light from the fire (where a desiring woman is being consumed—the same light which will soon be seen in Anne's eyes) casting shadows on it. This barring, the signifier of repression, reappears in a different register in *Ordet*, *e.g.* in the check pattern of the dress Inger wears about the house. It is also the pattern of the table cloth on which she cuts special biscuits and on which she is later lain and herself cut in the difficult delivery of her stillborn child. A potentially productive female body precisely 'in check'.

At the end of the first reel of *Day of Wrath* when Anne enters the church, a long tracking shot follows her as she spies on her husband Absalom's interrogation of Marthe, who has been accused of witchcraft. A balancing camera movement follows Anne's return through the aisles while choirboys are heard singing the *Dies Irae*. Martin, her stepson, enters and explains to her that the music is for the burning of Marthe. We see the score of the music in close-up obscured by the shadow of the choir master: the shadow, the bar of symbolic restraint. Anne says she can already hear Marthe's shrieks, which then appear on the sound track as we cut to a slow pan round the torture chamber. This can be taken as a nodal point in the film from which a structural feature of the Dreyer-text can be deciphered. It is the only point at which what I call the 'barred image' denotes potential threat (of torture), as in the convention of the horror film where 'such black areas usually signify that some dangerous object or person could emerge from those blind spots at any time' (Paul Willemen)⁷. If this torture sequence is examined in detail and compared for instance with Jacques Tourneur's *mise-en-scène*, some significant differences come to light. The areas of darkness hide much less than either the camera's edging away from the scene of torture, the implication of the screams-off, etc. Shadows in Dreyer rarely go beyond grey, they do not really hide anything, but on the contrary indicate that there is nothing to hide (the kind of reassurance a night-light provides in a child's bedroom), or rather they indicate that there is a problem around the presence/absence of light such that the full field of its presence is marked by certain traces of its absence, shadows.

This leads to a suggestion of a central organising phantasy in the Dreyer-text, in which light becomes a representation within the space of the frame of the act of looking itself, the active incidence of light on the space demarcated by the edges of the frame. In this context, this space can be seen as the space

of phantasy, the imaginary space in which the play of subject production is enacted via a set of shifting identifications and projections. In other words, the space of the frame which always necessarily includes a relation with the one for whom it constitutes a space (i.e. the viewer), becomes analogous to the body of the mother, the Imaginary other who functions as the privileged object of desire, the locus from which total satisfaction can/will emanate and whose presence/absence constitutes the limit of the subject: the subject needs the presence of this other so that separation from it may acquire the significance necessary for the subject to come into being. In this way, the incidence of light onto the (maternal) body represented by the screen image (a succession of frames from which even the dividing gaps have been erased to produce/preserve an imaginary plenitude) stands as the material trace, the signifier of the relation between looker/look/object. In other terms, the specific inscription of light in the Dreyer-text functions as the signifier of desire (the look), binding the viewer into the framework of a phantasy structure.

A similar process was analysed in relation to Raoul Walsh's *Pursued*,⁸ where the Western phantasy was found to be organised around the verb 'to shoot'. In Dreyer, the phantasy appears to operate around 'light' as a material visual signifier of the look, generating, metaphorically, plots about divine light and semantic structures organising a variety of permutations on the concept (i.e. signified) of 'light': the fire of passion versus divine light, the ordered light of reason versus the flickering flames of desire, light versus dark versions of christianity as well as the various types of absence of light (see my earlier remarks about the function of shadows in Dreyer's films). Yet in the insistence on the light of vision, that nothing escape the eye (shadows which mark but do not hide), on the absence of lack, have we not reached the phantasy of the phallic mother generated at the moment when the child becomes uncertain whether the mother does (still) possess/is the phallus? This castration-anxiety appears to be displaced into the act of looking itself and the blotting or barring of the visual field operates as a mark, a trace of the subject's separation from the imaginary plenitude which existed 'before' and which persists as an ongoing temptation. These incestuous fantasies, which (male) creativity relieves and relives, are structured by the doubly signifying presence of light representing both the child and the parent's act of looking: in the phantasy of the primal scene the child looks on and is caught in the act of looking by a returned look, re-enforcing the symbolic and painful separation from the object of his/her desire. The play of identifications open to the child in that phantasy situation being an important element in the construction of the sexed identity of the child: identification with the mother producing female positions, with the father male positions, regardless of the biological sex of the infant. Both types of identification representing strategies to escape the painful experience of exclusion, of separation. In the Dreyer-text, the identifications proposed produce male positions in that the light, the signifier of the look, functions in relation to objects of desire troubled by their positioning as females. Or

rather, troubled by the socio-cultural presuppositions and constraints attendant upon being placed as female in a strongly patriarchal order.

The 'communicational model' developed in relation to the institution of cinema in Paul Willemen's above mentioned analysis of *Pursued*, can, in a general sense, be applied to the Dreyer-text which foregrounds authorial marks, e.g. the system of pronoun functions and interventions I analysed in *Vampyr*⁹. In the *Pursued* analysis, it is the process of the text which constructs within a historically determined context, the 'reader' and the 'author' as agencies where each constructs their fantasy of the other. 'This conception of the subject (the one time author)' writes Willemen, 'may appear bewildering, but in fact any interview of a director or a viewer will show evidence of this: the director's referring to what viewers 'want', viewers referring to the 'world' of the author and holding him/her accountable for notions the reader him/herself produced in the very act of reading'. Such a model is clearest in *Michael* with its diegetic foregrounding of the discourse of art and its implicit parallels with film-making. Although this has widening consequences for the analysis of other films by Dreyer, it is perhaps necessary to elaborate a little on the general model. In the analysis of *Pursued*, we read: 'As soon as the 'signified subject' makes its appearance, it immediately freezes into a mark of itself, i.e. into another signifier, the subject fading away once more, eternally ungraspable except in its elusive and deceptive effects'. Now this 'constant freezing' which applies to the process of painting in *Michael* also applies to the field of the frame where such freezing can be traced in the emphasis on composition, aesthetics and the order of the signifier in general. In fact critics constantly return to this effect in the form of comparisons between the organisation of the visual field of Dreyer's films and painting. For instance, Bazin compared *Day of Wrath*'s compositions to Dutch 17th century painting and a Danish reviewer compared *Ordet* to the 'quiet' interiors of the 19th century Danish painter Hammershøj. This process also operates at the syntagmatic level—the succession of 'frozen' tableaux, the restrained rhythm, the carefully orchestrated dislocation of character point-of-view with that of the authorial 'I', etc.

We can also speculate (speculation: the creative assumption by the viewer of the dialectical relation between 'author' and 'reader' the text sets up) on the parallelism of cinema, particularly so-called art cinema, and the institution of religious discourse. The cinema puts in play the viewer's phantasy of the director, the author of the discourse, in an attitude paralleling the 16th century doctrine of signatures: 'It is not God's will that what he creates for man's benefit and what he has given us should remain hidden . . . And even though he has hidden certain things, he has allowed nothing to remain without exterior and visible signs in the form of special marks—just as a man who has buried a hoard of treasure marks the spot where he may find it again' (Paracelsus: *The Nature of Things*); 'Just as the secret movements of His understanding are manifested by His voice, so it would seem that the herbs speak to the curious physician through their signatures, discovering to

him... their inner virtues hidden beneath nature's veil of silence' (Crollius: *Treatise on Signatures*)¹⁰. The viewer, 16th century physician/20th century spectator, reads the marks that 'God' has inscribed, and re-constructs Him from his traces.

This process, following the strategy of the Dreyer-text in foregrounding the signifying processes of the text in its construction of 'reader' and 'author', is often diegetically represented in Dreyer's films in terms of a religious discourse¹¹. In *Ordet*, the articulation of light and dark within the frame is presented diegetically in terms of 'light' and 'dark' (Dreyer's phrases) versions of Christianity, Grundtvigian versus the Inner Mission. The Inner Mission is presented negatively, its 'dark' destructive potential originating in its adherents who are persuaded to declare the inner conviction that they are destined for salvation, indeed that they are already saved (note the testimony of Mette Martin, who has found this God in her rejection of sin—read sexuality—and who speaks with the same hypnotic delivery as Gertrud, another woman whose words are not her own), whereas the life at Borgensgaard is axed around the issue of belief: does God exist or not? (Mikkel, the doctor); what can be read as a trace of His presence? (Inger and her daughter Karen, who believe in 'daily' miracles); Old Borgen and the pastor who doubt or disbelieve. The intolerance of Johannes' assertion that he is the risen Christ is due to his removing the space for doubt, the possibility of distance from God, the uncertainty about His interventions, even His existence, all of them paradoxically the implicit conditions for believing in Him and loving Him. Religion underscores Barthes' assertion of the lover's need for the uncertainty of absence¹².

The main interest of the Dreyer-text is that, although caught up in the traditional theological view of cinema with its 'god-like' author, mysteriously present 'everywhere', i.e. nowhere, it nevertheless presents this ideology as a highly problematic one. Dreyer played the game: the 'tyrannical Dane' who ordains (orders, decrees) the processes constructing the films, a God rejecting any creation others interfered with (e.g. *Two People*) yet manifesting his own uncertainty about his paternal status.

It is the uncertainty, the oscillations, in short, the 'trouble' haunting the Dreyer-text which makes it such a productive signifying process and as this trouble is none other than the impossibility to totally repress/resolve the problem of bisexuality within a rigidly patriarchal culture, the structures set up to try and deal with it produce texts that directly engage with the fundamental issues at stake in the cinematic institution: the relationship between the sets of signifiers which constitute cinematic discourse, involving all its materials of expression (sound, writing, music, images, speech) and the division within each set between on the one hand its Order, its systematicity and on the other its repressed, its excess.

D. I. One of the problems that has beset Marxist attempts to relate artistic production to general economic production has been the base-superstructure model in which works of art and in some versions language,

are mere reflections of a socio-economic base. This theoretical reduction of ideology to an unproblematic reflection has facilitated the persistence of romantic ideologies of the individual artist supposedly outside of or marginal to society. Another result was that it opposed or misrepresented the kind of work with which e.g. the name of Brecht is usually associated, because it challenges idealist practices with work which can participate in the struggle to change consciousness, recognising that artistic practices have their own levels of specificity and are not simply a transcription of politics in another field. The work of Julia Kristeva¹³ directly addresses this problem by posing the 'speaking subject' as the area where signifying practices and mode of production intersect, and by theorising the function of art as potentially subversive of the dominant conceptions of the speaking subject.

Kristeva develops the concept of signifying practice as a double movement; both a setting in place and a traversing or cutting through of a system of signs. This setting in place requires the identity of a speaking subject in a social institution recognised by this subject as the support of its identity. The opposite, traversing movement occurs when this speaking subject is put 'in process' and cuts across the social institution in which it had previously recognised itself. In any mode of production, a signifying practice is that through which the mode of production signifies its stabilisation and its (self) expenditure, the condition of its renewal. In other less abstractly schematic terms, Kristeva's thesis is that the mode of production of a socio-economic ensemble and the mode of signification are intrinsically related, and that the speaking subject is the terrain on which this relationship acts itself out. A particular historical conjuncture will manifest a certain type of relation between unity and process, between the unity, the stasis of a system, and the process 'traversing' that system, cutting across its boundaries. In the second half of the 19th century, following the bourgeois revolutions, a particular unity of the state and family was achieved at the price of a specific, largely secularised strategy of repression/containment of desire; a strategy which consisted firstly in attempts to fix the fundamentally unstable, processual energy (flux) of desire and to contain it within the terms of coherent, totalising systems. In this way a dialectical process was set in motion perpetually re-ordering, re-organising systems in order to try and account for the libidinal energy which previous/other systems needed to expel or disavow. In his lucid introduction to Kristeva's essay, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith summarised some of the fundamental arguments underlying Kristeva's thesis. I will quote from this introduction at some length because a) the points I intend to make in relation to the Dreyer-text rely heavily on Kristeva's argument, and b) it is difficult to see how Nowell-Smith's formulations could be improved upon. He writes: 'Language, she argues, and with language a variety of signifying practices connected with either art or religion, is essential to human sociality, since the institution of social relations (production, reproduction) brings with it the co-institution of ways in which these (and other) relations are to be represented. The social animal is also a symbolic

animal. Traditionally, however, symbolic relations have always been seen as somehow non-contradictory. They bind together the social organism, either masking its contradictions or, at most, reflecting them. For Kristeva, on the other hand, there is a basic contradictoriness immanent in symbolic relations themselves, parallel to, and closely connected with, the contradictions discerned by Marx at the level of the process of social production. Symbolic relations do not simply reflect 'real' relations. They are a necessary condition of existence of any sociality, but they are established only at the cost of a sacrifice, and the effects of this sacrifice continue to make themselves felt in the social body and to compound the antagonisms generated at the base. The crisis of social relations brought about by capitalism helps to determine a crisis already endemic in the symbolic forms through which these institutions are thought, and this second crisis, in the course of laying bare its own contradictions, also illuminates the contradictions of the social forms and the possibility of a revolution at both levels at once. It is here that Freud is brought to the aid of Marx. Crucial to Kristeva's argument is the notion of the human subject as site of symbolic practice, and as being set in place by the institutions through which it recognises its own identity. It is not a question of there being an 'individual' who comes to terms with 'society' and the 'real world'. Rather the subject is constructed through practices by which it finds itself from a position of alterity. This model of the constitution of the subject is a Freudian one, and Freudian too is the explanation Kristeva gives of the necessary sacrifice—'castration'—on which sociality is founded. In Kristeva's account the formation of a subject which finds its identity in social and symbolic institutions necessitates a division between a 'symbolic' area proper and another area to which she gives the name 'semiotic'. This semiotic area, analogous to the Freudian unconscious, is the site of those signifying or pre-signifying practices which do not take the form of signification in the linguistic sense and which language so to speak represses so that they can only emerge into the symbolic area in the form of interruptions of ordered discourse. Whereas the symbolic is a structure, the semiotic is a process, and in this process there is the constant production of an overflow whose release is experienced as pleasure (*jouissance*) in the course of the cutting across of the boundaries separating process and structure.

The division between the symbolic and the semiotic implies a critique of structural linguistics and of its central concept, the sign as union of signifier and signified. Whereas in structural linguistics (and structuralism generally) systems of signs are seen as autonomous wholes and as linking together the socio-economic and the physical instances, for Kristeva there is always something radically heterogeneous in the process she calls 'signification' (semiotic + symbolic). Signification (the binding of signifier and signified) she sees as only part of the overall process.

Although sign and signification exist (on the side of the symbolic) they are not pre-given concepts but effects of the division between semiotic and

symbolic through which social identity is instituted. The constant re-working of the boundaries of social, psychological and signifying makes impossible any totalising project for a semiotics (in the linguists's sense) which would give a once and for all account of what signifying practices are and what they signify. Certain 'structuralist' pretensions therefore fall by the wayside, since their positivist bias fails to take account of the contradictions inherent in the process on which they themselves are founded.

The western episteme, it should also be noted, is patriarchal. Whether in Judaism or in Christianity, or for that matter in secular rationalism, the division between the homogeneous-symbolic and the semiotic which is heterogeneous to it, always sets the feminine on the side of the heterogeneity. The coincidence of language and patriarchy as foundations of sociality and identity makes woman literally the unnameable and the unsaid. As such the feminine—in so far as it can be spoken—has a profoundly subversive function. The danger of course is that the power of the division is such that it can only be breached at the risk of psychotic breakdown. Hence Kristeva's interest both in those avant-garde literary practices in the Capitalist West whose operations on language have got dangerously close to breaking down the barrier, and in the signifying practices in other modes of production where patriarchy is not instituted in the same way.

It must be pointed out that Kristeva's concept of the symbolic is not the same as Lacan's. Indeed the order of the symbolic as presented by Kristeva would in Lacanian terms be closer to an Imaginary order (an attempt to unify, to render sets of relationships homogeneous), whereas Kristeva's semiotic manifests itself precisely in the site of Lacan's Symbolic: the drives break through in the fissures, the gaps, the absences, the exclusions upon which any Order is founded. In this sense the marks of the semiotic process in the order of language speak its absences, and are therefore allied to Lacan's Symbolic (the institution of separation, the assumption of castration upon which the subject is predicated).

To return to Dreyer, I will endeavour to show that the Dreyer-text can be read as an exemplary site where the discourses of religion, art and the feminine intersect. At the level of content, Dreyer's films rehearse the playing out of politico-religious doctrinal struggles within the context of a patriarchal order marked by Judaeo-Christian monotheism: the problems of anti-semitism in *Love One Another* and the projected Jesus-film; witchcraft in *Day of Wrath*, *Joan of Arc*, *The Parson's Widow*, *Vampyr*; catholicism and the crucifixion in *Leaves from Satan's Book*, the Jesus-film and the Mary Stuart project. It is most notably in *Ordet*, literally meaning The Word, and in *Gertrud* that the religious discourse is spun out across cinematic constructions which in return show up the closely complicit relation between the religious discourses and the languages of sexuality and art. The central question of the film, 'Who has it?' (*i.e.* the word), echoes the child's anxious questioning as to who has/is the phallus, with the oedipal drama as the scene in which the confusion between having/being is

supposed to be resolved in terms of questions relating to 'having'. The film's answer is equivocal: *not* the mother (Inger is not allowed her baby¹⁴), and yet a child, the mother's phallus separated from her, can be a vehicle for the Word.

In *Moses and Monotheism*, according to Kristeva¹⁵, Freud suggests that Christianity, albeit through a misrecognition characteristic of religious discourse, comes near to a recognition of the act of murder involved in the founding of sociality. Rather than the son's murder of the father in Judaism, Christianity formulates this act of murder in terms of the murder of the son (the Crucifixion), where the word having become flesh returns to the father, ('thus speaks my church on earth . . . the church that has betrayed me, murdered me in my own name', *Ordet*). The force of Bataille's remark quoted by Kristeva: 'The truth of language is Christian', comes from this double movement in Christianity: the death and resurrection of the Word which comes close to a recognition of the process of loss in language, its structuring of absence. 'And the word became flesh': both the formula for conversion hysteria and the pointer to that linguistics of the Word which has had certain effects on semiotics and psychoanalysis, e.g. the emergence of a right-wing Lacanianism in France. A linguistics which cannot present an adequate theory of the drives, of the articulation of the Semiotic with the Symbolic. This fixation on the level of the word is put into play in the Dreyer-text. The French critic and now also filmmaker, A. Téchiné, perceptively remarked in relation to *Gertrud*: 'We know from Blanchot that speech replaces the concrete by an essential equilibrium close to immobility', action. * The film makes visible the final stages of the acquisition of the order of language, acknowledging the living movement from which it has become detached and with which it will never again merge.' Yet the film also makes immobility, sitting or standing, leaning against furniture etc. Yet within that same film, this weight of language is partially suspended by the infiltration of the drives into language in the form of the rhythm of the speech, intonation and music. As Téchiné writes: 'Words echo, tending to rhythm, away from action. The film makes visible the final stages of the acquisition of the order of language, acknowledging the living movement from which it has become detached and with which it will never again merge'. Yet the film also makes visible that this acquisition occurs at the price of a sacrifice: the men in the diegesis can speak but cannot love; women cannot identify with the order of language in that fashion. Gertrud's mother-in-law cannot remember what she has just been reading nor why she visits Gertrud and Kanning. The whole problematic of Gertrud's life is in her having been a singer destined to sing men's words, a contradiction she can't sustain. The emergence of the drives through the body of the Dreyer-text (diegetically through the body of Gertrud, for instance) demonstrates the relativisation of religious discourse faced with an other, another mode of introducing heterogeneity into the social ensemble, i.e. 'art'. As mentioned earlier, the process of the Dreyer-

text derives its interest precisely from the clarity with which this articulation is presented. It suspends not only disbelief, the romantic precondition for the aesthetic, but also, in its religious signification, belief. The discourse of religion is relativised to the point where it invalidates any specifically religious readings of the films. Of course the catholic *Revue du Cinéma* was very interested in the use of Dreyer's films 'for the cause', but at the same time manifested some unease about possible contamination from his imagined Protestantism (as opposed to the protestantism with a small 'p' which his films do present).

In the 19th century crisis of finitudes that Kristeva discusses, art both takes over the function of religion as container of heterogeneity and, in the form of the avant-garde text contests the unity of the social ensemble that other artistic practices are complicit in attempting to re-establish. Art makes a 'game out of everything which has been a part of the repressed sector of society', but in doing so causes those repressed elements to speak out. Such a repressed sector which begins to speak out in the late 19th century is that of the feminine. We can note for instance in the Scandinavian literary culture from which Dreyer draws much of his material, preoccupations with women's social position and desire (Ibsen, Söderberg) and the implicit problem of homosexuality (Bang) initially raised at this time in terms such as 'the intermediate sex'¹⁶ (e.g. 'the feminine mind in man') discussions of which are also linked to the repressive function of the 'Holy' family.

The return of the repressed feminine in signifying practices causes a crisis most easily read in verbal avant-garde practices where the subject produced by poetic language is produced under torsion, in male as well as female roles¹⁵. This process of subject production in poetic language does institute sexed roles, but it does so in a double edged manner: the production of meaning-for-a-subject in avant-garde practices inaugurates structure and identity, mastery and finitude, but it simultaneously undercuts this by means of processes multiplying and dispersing that meaning, opening it up to the force of semiotic, centrifugal drives culturally located on the side of the feminine, the maternal. A good example of this process is the role of rhythm in language and its relation of force to the order of syntax and meaning: it can be present as an undercurrent still dominated by the orderly signifying structure of grammatical language, or it can totally disrupt that order, exceeding the bounds of meaning and syntax, fragmenting the 'ordered' discourse even to the point where linguistic units are dispersed into a-signifying babble. In this sense, the texts still produce subjects as sexed, but ambiguously so. Poetic processes do not merge these subject positions but play on their very differentiation, oscillating between them, introducing heterogeneity into what would otherwise be regarded as homogeneously unified sex-identities. For Kristeva the modern avant-garde text points out that the family and the relations of re-production while functioning to maintain the stability of a particular social order, also demarcate the area within which the pleasure process is allowed to operate. Modern avant-garde texts interrogate the functions of paternity and sexual

*For the complete text of Téchiné's essay, see p 72 [Ed. note].

prohibitions associated with this familial nexus and foreground the (maternal) woman as the repressed bearer of pleasureable overflow. However, the incestuous pleasures thus evoked cannot be articulated directly without an accompanying shift in authorial position, either re-fetichising the mother to again make her inaccessible or identifying the place of the mother with the repressed, the unnameable.

Dreyer's films participate indirectly in this problematic of the modern text. The puritanism, the level of repression in the text of 'his' films is so extreme that sexuality can only be expressed indirectly through libidinal displacement, to produce a text which can be called a hysterical text, in many ways the counterpart to the (Victorian) hysterical body. The movement of this essay, tracing the symptoms of this displacement through the body of the Dreyer-text parallels the development of psychoanalysis which was founded on listening to the discourse of hysterics. And since I am talking about subject positions rather than individual subjects, these texts can be retrospectively included within the globality of hysterical discourse in relation to which psychoanalysis was and continues to be developed. My reading will attempt to show a similar shift under the pressure of the incest taboo towards an identification with the place of the mother as 'repressed/unnameable'.

The primary process is experienced by the child within the familial nexus in terms of melodic, rhythmic and intonational structures. His/her dependence on the mother is a semiotic one, which will later surface 'through' the use of language structure in an exemplary manner this Kristeva¹⁷, the Chinese language illustrates in an exemplary manner this interaction of the semiotic and the symbolic: on the one hand there is the knowledge of grammar, logic and syntax belonging to the secondary process and the symbolic, but on the other there is a complex utilisation of the body, of kinaesthetic senses, important manifestations of the semiotic. Kristeva argues that this childhood relation to the mother is relived during the creative process in adulthood. The production of art reactivates the emotional trauma of transition away from the incestuous child-mother relationship in which the semiotic is dominant. In this respect, women experience the incestuous relationship in a specific manner, in that a level of identification with the mother persists unproblematically into adulthood. Whereas for men the degree to which they retain traces or indeed fixations stemming from the pre-oedipal level, when there was still an identification with the mother's body, creates fetishistic or paranoiac structures. The importance of the 19th century and early 20th century avant-garde work is partly to do with the way in which the identification with the mother, with the feminine, can be explored.

It is of the greatest political importance, however, to contest in this notion of the modern text—and therefore in my own reading of the Dreyer-text—the implicit idealist tendency to separate off artistic practices from other social and especially political practices. Without an *other* social-artistic practice, without e.g. a social practice of the cinema¹⁸, Dreyer's films are as

'lost' as the copies of Joyce on the shelves of University bookshops. It is important to emphasise the social nature of this practice, not merely the assumption of the implicit anarchistic position towards the state and political action Kristeva correctly identifies as the dominant political tendency in avant-garde signifying practices.

II. 'I cannot talk about film without saying a couple of words about music. It is Heinrich Heine who has said that where the words come out short there the music begins' (Dreyer).

'But about the Professor there was music certainly; there was music in every syllable he uttered and there was music implicit in his name, the *Sieg-mund*, the victorious voice or utterance' (H.D.).

Let us return to *Day of Wrath* and the shadow on the sheet of music. There are several musical elements in the film, such as the dramatic opening music, which also accompanies Anne's visit to the church. Two musical elements dominate the film and are to some extent variations on a single theme: a) the *Dies Irae* itself, sung by a choir of 'angelic' young boys who thus give the music connotations of pre-pubertal innocence; and b) a more lyrical piece associated with Martin and Anne outdoors, walking, taking trips on the water (symbolic imagery already present in *The President* and *The Bride of Glomdale*), making love in the fields, which easily transforms into the more sinister *Dies Irae*-theme, e.g. in the scene where they encounter a cart loaded with fire-wood, foreshadowing the burning of the witch.

This image of the shadow cast on music which is written down, a semiotic process contained and constrained within the symbolic order of graphic notation, condenses meanings operative on a series of different levels. It highlights the symbolic/semiotic dialectic fundamental to artistic production, including the shadow-trace of the Master (i.e. the choir-master) literally conducting, organising and presiding over the tricky business of making sure the musical performance (dominated by the semiotic) remains within the bounds of the notation (dominated by the symbolic). As the Master, the agent of the law, whose mark of intervention (in this case: the shadow) constitutes the bar between semiotic/symbolic, he imprints the stamp of death, of stasis onto the flux of musical rhythm, doubling the connotation of death already inherent in the image of sheet-music, music frozen into an abstract pattern of notations. This doubling is re-enforced by a further mark of death: the title on the music, *Dies Irae*, being in the same script as the one used for writing the sentencing documents. At which point we are more explicitly referred to the real function of the Master as Sentencer, the one whose words signify death. That the music itself, the *Dies Irae* should be a hymn about the Last Judgement, rounds off and in a sense binds together all these various strands of meaning.

The connotations of pre-pubertal innocence, the repressed sexuality of the latency period, is marked by the boys' as yet unbroken voices. This 'feminine' pitch which can only be maintained into adulthood by that act of

feminisation which yet preserves an erstwhile culturally acceptable bisexuality, to which the body and the voice of the castrato bear witness (cf Barthes' *S/Z*). The feminine body is not allowed this ambivalence. Women's active expression of desire is read as witchcraft, punished by torture and burning. The pitch appropriate to a feminine bisexuality can be heard in the scream, the scream exactly that Anne hears *before we do* in the voices of the choirboys, translating their song as if she were singing it, from male dominated to female dominated bisexuality. Here we see the semiotic component of the voice differentially inflected by the symbolic order so that desire in the male can be sung, but in the female only when elided with death. When Anne reads from the *Song of Songs* (itself a lyric with bisexual connotations) she is stopped by her mother-in-law, who will denounce her and therefore send her to her death. A death, a dying that Barthes locates in the voice of the loved one: 'The fading of the other holds itself in her voice. The voice supports, makes visible and so to speak accomplishes the disappearance of the loved one because death belongs to the voice'¹⁹. The voice, as is the cinematic machine through which it is rematerialised for the spectator/listener, is marked by 'death at work'. The marks of death which according to Barthes constitute the modulation of the voice: 'This ghostly being of the voice, is its modulation. The modulation, defining characteristic of each voice, is that which is keeping silent, it is that grain of the voice which disintegrates and fades away'¹⁹. The voice can function similarly to the look and be the object or creation of a phantasy, equally ungraspable, present only in traces, always in the process of vanishing. This is supported in a general way in relation to the Dreyer-text by Dreyer's insistence on modulation as the final element in the profilmic event to be 'filled in'. More work is needed on the text in this area. For instance, it is likely that the sound track and in particular the musical scores, also play with absence, with silence. One of the effects so often referred to in relation to Dreyer is silence as an active value, silence produced from sound oppositions.

A. Téchiné writes: 'For at the heart of a system as rigorous as this, at the centre of so meticulous a structure, the least vibration figures as an uncertain gravitation, as an equilibrium disturbed and causing a divergence in the contours. The blink of an eyelid, a gesture by a hand, become irretrievable, because they incessantly elude the schematism that provokes and haunts them at every moment. Because they vaguely trace an élan one thought not possible here, and which is seen to persist, an outcropping on the surface of volumes'. This quotation accurately captures the value of semiotic interruptions, e.g. the movements when the voice 'cuts across' the song that is being sung, or the values created by a series of slight differences of camera position. The movement towards abstraction and 'minimalism' can also be understood in these terms. Not simply a repression, a putting out of sight, but a realisation that this interaction of symbolic and semiotic can occur whatever the number of elements present, and the pleasure of the 'least vibration' somehow resides in the minimal effort needed to produce it, a sense perhaps of an approach to a potential 'explosion' of the semiotic.

Work such as Kristeva's outlined earlier begins to pose the problems of the articulation of desire in a historical perspective. One indirect way in which semiotic excess finds expression has been described by Freud as conversion hysteria. The unaccommodated excess is somatised, appearing elsewhere, in the wrong place, transcribed into a different substance. For instance in the case of Dora²⁰ the patient felt the reverse of sexual stimulation, disgust, localised not in relation to the genital area, but in the mucous membrane of her throat. When it cannot receive direct genital expression, desire can be displaced onto other areas, other parts of the body thus become eroticised and their manipulation can give orgasmic satisfaction. These converted signifiers have an ideational content, they express repressed ideas through the medium of the body, and the Symbolic relation linking symptom and meaning is such that a single symptom may express several meanings either simultaneously or consecutively. Those symptoms which persist into the analytic situation take on a new sense in relation to the transference of affect onto the person of the analyst. This transferability of affect which forms the basis of psychoanalytic practice (and text construction) is that same 'suggestibility' isolated at the turn of the century by theoreticians of hypnosis but given wider theoretical and practical power by the elaboration of psychoanalysis.

In his essay *On Leaving the cinema*²¹, R. Barthes comments on the similarity between the film viewing situation and that of the hypnotic scene: the pre-hypnotic situation of entering the cinema, the primary fantasy being that of becoming a spectator; the eroticisation of darkness; the immobile, but flickering light; and the sound and music which in Dreyer's films do not aid the effect of reality as Barthes suggests, but rather increase the suggestibility. Indeed Barthes recalls the healing use of music in hypnotic suggestion, and I think it is possible to see the music in Dreyer's films in this way, healing the fragmented body of the text. The Dreyer-text is particularly susceptible to analysis in terms of hypnosis as well as the more extended model of conversion hysteria. Not only does hypnosis emerge as a specific thematic concern in *Gertrud*, but many of the stylistic devices of the films have connotations of hypnosis. The emphasis on music, the modulation of the voice (the last element to be filled in by Dreyer in rehearsal), the slow pans, the light reflected off white walls back into the audience, the intense white light for flashbacks and remembrance in *Gertrud*, interiors lit with pools of light, characters moving into them to speak. Even critics have noted this apparent parallel with hypnosis: 'The audience forced into the illusion [of *Ordet*] is almost hypnotised' (Rasmussen)²².

However, the relations of psychoanalysis and cinema do not rest there. Crude versions of psychoanalysis are an important element of some filmic contents, e.g. in Preminger and Hitchcock. The 'birth' of cinema is contemporaneous with that of psychoanalysis. Hypnosis has a privileged place in early cinema: e.g. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the representations of the doctor with his thick spectacles and his gaze into camera, who sees into

psychological (and supernatural) problems; Lang's *Dr. Mabuse*; the doctor in *Vampyr* where the result of the hypnosis is Gray's uncanny dream (central to vampirism) of losing his own blood. Moreover, the diegesis of *Gertrud* is contemporaneous with the birth of psychoanalysis: Dr. Axel Nygren, her old friend who visits her at the same time that Gabriel Lidman returns, lives and works in Paris with a group who study psychology and psychiatry and experiment with hypnosis and telepathy. They discuss and argue about 'psychosis, neurosis, dreams and symbols', and they perform hypnotic experiments on an old woman. In fact, the theme of hypnosis can be read as a metaphor for the relation between Gertrud and the camera throughout the film.

In *Group Psychology and the analysis of the Ego*²³, Freud compares hypnosis with being in love but distinguishes it from that state by the absence of directly sexual trends. He continues: 'It contains an additional element of paralysis derived from the relation between someone with superior power [the hypnotist] and someone who is helpless [the patient], which may afford a transition to the hypnosis of fright which occurs in animals'. Hypnosis might be understood in terms of a particular identification of the scopic drive in such a way that the look itself becomes the (impossible) object of fascination. Is perhaps the paralysis of hypnosis which overtakes the spectator who looks at the Medusa's head, the paralysis of fear mitigated by the assurance of potency when 'becoming stiff' means an erection? The intensity of the subject's gaze at the hypnotist's little object which reflects light is conjoint with the hypnotist's gaze at the subject. The active exhibitionist component 'I am looking, I have a penis', copresent with the passive narcissistic component 'I am looked at and am therefore feminine'. The hypnotic state would then correspond to a certain vectorial balance, a bisexual positioning. Furthermore, what is also particular about hypnosis is the way the hypnotic subject does not speak, but is spoken. The representative of the subject, the 'I' is outside looking at the ego, the 'I' which voices but is not the speaking subject. In *Gertrud*, this 'I' speaks the language of the 'eternal feminine': the question from her lover Erland 'Who are you really?' (a version of the question Freud posed, 'What does woman want?') and the reply: 'I am the dew falling from the leaves and a white cloud passing overhead, going no one knows where . . . I am the moon, . . . I am the sky . . . I am a mouth seeking another mouth . . . it's like a dream, it is a dream . . . Life is a dream . . . a long succession of dreams which glide past one after the other'. In this dream-like state, the light flickering on her face, the desiring 'I' speaks Gertrud. Is not her body, spoken, the site of that framed discourse discussed in relation to *Michael*? There is the same problematisation of the system of address founding the cinematic institution: men/light, representatives of the subject of the discourse interrogate a 'you', the Gertrud who cannot enunciate, but only be enounced, spoken. She cannot speak ('I have not lived, no, but I have loved!') but is subject to the tyranny of being spoken, of being the passage through which desire enters the lives of others and around which she

constructs a misrecognised identity.

It has been pointed out that critics comment on the experience of viewing a Dreyer film, its slowness, controlled rhythm, its silences, as being like hypnosis. Indeed special hypnotic viewing situations are created for the films. For the first run of *Order*, the projection booth was especially soundproofed to erase any trace of the sound of the projector (think also of the Anthology Film Archives in New York—which hold Dreyer high in their pantheon—, a cinema with all surfaces covered in non-reflecting black, each seat constructed like a medieval cell-like choir stall with one concession to sociality: the small incision through which people in adjacent seats may make hand contact. This cinema shifts the scopic drive towards the production of 'animal fright', terrorisation by the beam of light). The parallel of hypnosis with the viewer's position in the contemporary institution of cinema is evident: viewers are spoken as they follow the thread the story unwinds for them, they are not supposed to compose their own story line. They are addressed in that suggestible passivity, where one is sometimes forced to suspect the film of surreptitious sexual aggression (e.g. the debate about subliminal advertising; Tony Conrad's *Flicker*, etc). In the above mentioned essay, Barthes posed a mode of watching cinema, of a double fascination, as if one had two bodies at the same time, a narcissistic body 'lost in the mirror of the screen', and a 'perverse body' comprised of all that exceeds the screen; the sound, the room, the darkness, the obscure presence of others, the rays of light. If these fetishistic and narcissistic structurings of desire are abandoned, cancelled out, the subject then becomes prey to the light beam, as is Maria in *Metropolis*, terrorised by the beam of light, caught in a structure of looks in which she can have no libidinal investment.

'Amor Omnia—Love is everything', the tyranny of Gertrud's love has a material base: on marrying Kanning she is not allowed an independent life as a singer. Her doctrine of love can be read as the only outlet for her desire, her only way of retaining any autonomy. The film points to this problem in the scene where Kanning visits the opera hoping to find Gertrud. The attendant says he would have recognised her if she had been there that evening. On the wall is a poster of *Fidelio* (an opera with an ending connoting bisexuality). In the right hand side of the frame are two portraits, the larger of a man, the smaller of a woman, connoting the power relation: male dominance; and stating the problem: bisexuality. Both Gertrud's past and future are elided in the diegesis. Her time in Paris where she plays an active role, participating in the work of the study group, is not represented even though she renounces sexual relationships: she can work with Axel because they are not in love.

In the film, Gertrud sings two songs. The first is to the music of Erland Jansson's nocturne, the tune which also opens the film, and which recurs for instance in the sound of the church bells when she leaves her house for the last time, and in the music heard off-screen during the reception: 'Eternal and winged child and god/Once more I have heard your stern

command/Once more my heart has obeyed/Once more I am lonely amid the satisfied crowd [camera moves to centre Gertrud and Erland at the piano with mirror behind//Your burning severity will bring me sufficient happiness [exchange of looks, centering of frame]/Darkness has made a pearl/Night has created a dream/It shall live within me [camera returns L//Dazzling white and tender/The song must sound within the heart/Painfully sweet and cruel/While my shining pearl grows within its dark surroundings' [Camera returns to original position]. This is a love song, but about love as pain, as suffering, opposed to Lidman's 'love without pain'. This concealed burning love is a product of a dream and of darkness. The *mise-en-scène* of the song is very precise, paralleling the movement of its sense towards intimacy, turning on the exchange of looks at line 5: a balancing movement such that the shot ends where it begins (one might speculate as to the medieval music framed on the wall, it might be Guillaume de Machaut's *My end is my beginning*), and within the shot a series of framings reinforcing the framing/reframing tension, which creates the 'static' quality of the film as a product of photography. The second song occurs following the reception, after Gertrud's old lover Gabriel Lidman reveals meeting her current lover Erland at a party, boasting of his conquest of her. The party is in fact the one Jansson, after sleeping with Gertrud, had promised he wouldn't attend. She sings: 'I feel no resentment, although my heart is broken/In the midst of my despair I see how you suffer/and I feel no resentment/Although your forehead is youthful and unlined/I know the heavy burden your heart must carry/I have known it for a long time/I feel no resentment, my friend now lost for ever'. At that point, she breaks down collapsing on the floor. The address of the song focuses the complexity of her situation. She is singing in front of all the men in her life: Kanning, Lidman, Jansson and Nygren. Jansson is separated from her by the piano, in opposition to the previous song at their first meeting where they were together at the keyboard. Facing them is the tapestry inscription of her dream: a woman attacked by hounds. The 'I' of the first line can refer to her, or Lidman who has just burst into tears. The 'you' can refer to all the men (except Axel) but also herself as addressed by an imagined other. Who does the song address? Who speaks? Her fainting reinforces the hysterical element of her headache brought on by the public appearance of her husband. It signifies the intensity of desire which can't be expressed even through the conjunction of words and music. The centrality of this dramatic scene with all the elements for expression apparently available, underlines the problem of her speech. A woman naked and vulnerable in her desire: 'I dreamt I ran naked through the streets, pursued by hounds', confronting these demanding men (they all want her back, misrecognising her). This is a nodal point of the film where the diegesis foregrounds the problem of address,—which 'I?', which 'You?', the framed discourses: the tapestry square on the wall, Gertrud framed by the arch in front of the piano, the structure of conversion hysteria diegeticised in her fainting.

Pictures in the diegesis operate an inner 'framed' discourse freezing desire

into a series of marks, a representation, held only to be displaced by the movement of the narrative, by the next picture. This movement of frames follows a complex trajectory, reinforced by the interplay with other *objets d'art*, particularly mirrors. To isolate certain moments: firstly, Gertrud appears framed by double doors, behind her a Gainsborough-like portrait of femininity; later, parting from Lidman, they both sit under a Munch woodcut or engraving of a man and a woman looking separately out to sea, their backs to the viewer. Lidman sits under the man, Gertrud under the woman; finally over her desk at the cottage, a painting of pine trees, a cold early 20th century version of that genre to which Barthes' words *à propos* of Caspar David Friedrich apply: 'a desolate space which demands that I project myself there . . . forever abandoned . . . in need of maternal warmth'²⁴.

There is another poem in the film, not set to music, but spoken by the young leader of the welcoming group at the reception for Lidman. Addressing Lidman and the assembled guests, man to man (the women confined to waving scarves from the gallery), he recites: 'He never relinquished her lips/Ever deeper did they sink into one another/He felt as if he were journeying into space/A red star shone in the white haze of the moon/dimly at first, almost dying/then brighter and nearer it grew/became a flaming pool/He burned without pain/And the flames cooled his tongue like sharp wine'. It is clearly a masculine poem. The address is also made clear in the film: the young man speaks the poet's words while the poet listens as his words come back to him not quite recognising the self mirrored back. The address of the poem is equally clear: He never relinquished her lips—his to desire, hers to be desired. It presents a collection of romantic symbols, e.g. the loss of self in space, the red star of male desire in the white haze of the feminine moon, etc. The white haze, incidentally that is also the lighting convention for Gertrud's memories. And perhaps most importantly, it speaks of love without pain, i.e. without suffering, the opposite of that which characterises love for Gertrud. The youth continues with a speech: 'We discover infinity and eternity in sexual ecstasy. This is the greatness of your concept of eroticism. This is love without boundaries. For this love man was created and called upon'. In his reply, Lidman situates his romantic notion of love implicitly in the past. He doesn't speak of eroticism, but of truth, the product of love and thought. Later Gertrud reminds him of other words he spoke and which he has long forgotten: 'I believe in the pleasures of the flesh and the irredeemable solitude of the soul', a more sensualist philosophy into which she herself is forced by his betrayal and the note she discovered on his desk: 'Women's love and man's work are enemies from the start'. With fame, Lidman has become 'cold as marble' and Gertrud now disputes his knowing anything about love: 'I saw that of all the men who became great, none knows or understands love, they look down on love. You have become one of them and I don't love you'. In this film the singing voice, the voice carried by music is the vehicle of the semiotic. Singing is the performance of desire, though ultimately blocked (her collapse). The male voice does not

sing, its desire remains firmly within symbolic bounds, circumscribed by 'work', reduced by 'thought' to 'truth'. Men may make a career out of speaking about love, but they know nothing of it.

E. To summarise and conclude, it appears that the Dreyer-text can be characterised as a type of hysterical discourse²⁵. This conclusion is based on the emergence of particular sets of representations at three different levels of the films: the diegesis, the *mise-en-scène* (i.e. the filmic writing) and the body of the text as unified segments.

a) *Diegesis*: a representation of the subject of the discourse is thrown into the diegesis, but caught up in the blocks and facilitations encountered, including, for instance, the flexibility of the literary models used. An analogy for this process of symptom formation might be that of a moving human shadow thrown over such uneven ground that it at times appears completely unrecognisable. In the case of the Dreyer-text, there is a whole series of such figures acting as the representative(s) of the organising instance, the authorial subject of the discourse: primarily idealised women and feminised men.

b) *Mise-en-scène*: the inscription of discharged emotion which cannot be accommodated within the action, subordinated as it is to the demands of family lineage and inheritance. It can only find representation in narrative dislocation, the loss of certainty as to whose point-of-view is being represented, and the displacement away from the inherent emotionality of the action, the 'burning character of the dramatic content', onto the *mise-en-scène* and music, 'the chaste form of photographic compositions' as the Danish critic Bjorn Rasmussen put it. As formal analyses of the Dreyer-text have shown (Burch, myself, Parrain), those breaks, that loss of certainty is organised as a system in the Dreyer-text, so much so that Parrain can state: 'The filmic writing of Dreyer is founded on the non-identification of spectator and character'²⁶. In fact it is more a play with that non-identification, which has two aspects: a) the assertion of an authorial 'I' unmediated by character, unfictionalised; and b) the secondary revision, the Symbolic reinscribed into the text, systematising the breaks which, covered over in one place, appear elsewhere such as in the modulations of voice and music. Those qualities of immobility and abstraction often referred to as hallmarks of Dreyer's style, become, in this reading, symptoms which form part of the hysterical discourse, a kind of hysterical paralysis at the level of the *mise-en-scène*, a fictionalising pressure working through the diegesis pushing towards a resolution of the problems represented, against a counter-pressure tending to fixity, immobility. In *Gertrud* this vectoral balance may be said to be represented in the scenic tableaux. In *Ordet*, the economy is slightly different: a series of moving shots link the scenes, marking a process of exchange between town, church, farm and country, with these scenes as it were compensating for that mobility by their own immobility, with 270 degree pans, markedly more centred on the camera's axis. A fixity of movement all the more striking when compared to *Gertrud*.

c) *The body of the text*, the text as body itself marked, traversed by certain torsions, displacements, erotisations and symptom formations characteristic of conversion hysteria. At this level we are dealing with the phantasies which the filmic discourse 'as a whole' sets in play for the audience, independently of, or rather in addition to form and content. But we can also speculate on the significance of the act of filming as presented in/produced by the various texts. While the act of say oilpainting as self-expression (e.g. Pollock *et. al.*) may be seen as essentially an anal activity, what are we to make of the processes of film production as it emerges from Dreyer's films? A number of Dreyer's procedures in the film-making process are worth commenting on from this perspective. Such as the tendency towards a 'rigid' organisation of the pro-filmic event, methodically going through a series of stages, filling in the action, movement, dialogue and finally the modulation of the voice, so that a successful take can be printed immediately and editing becomes merely a mechanical operation of assemblage completed in a few days. Moreover this is combined with the tendency towards ever longer takes minimising the elements to be assembled. The aesthetics of montage posed problems for Dreyer largely resolved by the introduction of sound. He wanted *Joan of Arc* to be a sound film because the *découpage* effected on the body of the film and representationally on Joan's body, demanded a reparation within the film in the form of music and the sound of the human voice. The reparation of the body in pieces not only restores narcissism, but reconstitutes the body of the mother from the infant's sadistic, punishing attacks²⁷. If the fantasy of the body in pieces dominates in *Joan of Arc*, *Ordet* and *Gertrud* demonstrate different economies in which the body is both fragmented and reassembled, i.e. long takes bound together by music, a process duplicated at the diegetic level: in *Ordet* the reanimation of Inger's cut body, while *Gertrud* is cemented together by means of music. The body of Gertrud is continually framed, placed within an order from which she cannot escape, except through her hysteria and her singing voice in which her desire can surface (before being blocked by her marriage). The body of the mother re-assembled, 'maternal warmth' re-created as in the final phantasies of its resurrection: in *Ordet* this happens literally; in *Michael* it is represented by Zoret's smiling death under the cross and Michael comforted by the maternal Zamikow; in *Gertrud* 'the body disappears in the final absence of décor, where it exists as indication/trace' (Téchiné), the body of Gertrud merging with the body of the text, the visual surface of the film, the blank expanse of the door which dissolves into the blankness of end leader. The final scene in the cottage, which Dreyer added so that the audience would know that Gertrud 'had chosen solitude and accepted it'²⁸, is shot in whiter, more intense light, the same as the memories of her past with Erland Jansson and Gabriel Lidman. This final scene of old age is presented by means of the same conventions used for the inscription of the nostalgia for or the memory of the past from which she suffers but to which in the end she returns in that phantasy unity with the mother.

F. Postface

A note on the textual subject 'Dreyer' as commodity.

"The cinema's 'bad conscience' known as 'art cinema' " (John Ellis).

Much criticism of Dreyer's films has been a straightforward authorial cult, quite independently of the systems of signification of the films. Little attempt for instance has been made to relate Dreyer's style to 'his' earlier silent films. Much of this criticism purports to found itself on the alleged intentionality of the author, with the critic as some kind of privileged go-between, bolstering his/her claims for the cinema as the manifestation of authorial presence by his/her special access to the word and body of the director, as evidenced in interviews, the 'telling' anecdote or photograph indicating the physical proximity of critic and director. What is such criticism which talks of mastery, genius etc., other than the reinscription of the critic-subject's fantasy of being in the (incestuous) place of the son/daughter, 'at the feet of the master', etc? The notion of self-expression at play in this discourse is, of course, hopelessly idealist. The textual subject 'Dreyer' is neither the biological individual, now dead, nor the totality of that individual's traces in the real, but the effect of a specific series of transformations, the result of a process of play with signification on the terrain where the cinematic institution and given social formations intersect. The work of the Dreyer-text within this institution is to foreground the phantasy structures at play in it, i.e. the way the institution structures phantasy. As such, the text can be read as foregrounding the problem of reading,²⁹ putting into play its coherence in ways which are open to progressive forms of reading. What is described as Dreyer's qualities, is in fact the result of inflections of more general phantasies basic to the institution as a whole and put into play, played with by 'Dreyer'. It is not insignificant that he should speak of the cinema as his only great passion. It is with the double sense of that term passion that this essay has concerned itself. The active and passive, bisexual positioning implied by the words: passion = love, masculinity; and passion = suffering, femininity. Positions which each of us constantly traverses in our own history, which includes that history of encounters with cinematic texts and the processes of producing/being produced by them.

Carl Dreyer worked in most of the major European production centres of his time and with a number of different production companies. He took no interest in the financing of his films, nor in box office returns,³⁰ with the result that the rights to his films are held by various companies and individuals whose interests are more likely to be obtaining the best return on capital rather than any altruistic exhibition of his films in complete prints of good quality. One of the production companies, Palladium, allowed distribution rights to lapse on the films they held, for reasons that are not altogether clear. Perhaps, as one of Denmark's more successful producers of porno films, they did not regard Dreyer as a continuing commercial

proposition. In any event the films have recently appeared in this country, some of them in rather grey, worn prints, refugees from the American distribution market, and since one of the major pleasures of Dreyer films is precisely dependent on the light values, the use of delicate shades of grey, of high and low contrast lighting and photography, it is a particularly painful experience to have to witness this new mutilation of the body of the text in the name of profitability. The case of *Vampyr* is slightly different. True, the print in distribution in this country is a particularly mutilated version of the original, such that at points its system becomes completely opaque, but the main reason for its absence from our screens is due to wrangles over copyright.

I doubt, however, if there is still a future for Dreyer's films in the straight commercial distribution. Their successes have tended to be *succès d'estime* rather than financial successes. Journalists have always been divided: Dreyer's films are a point of contention, a scene for struggle, which can become extremely abusive (for example the première of *Gertrud* in Paris, where despite or perhaps because of his great critical standing with magazines like *Cahiers du Cinéma*, journalists refused to take the film seriously and vilified it in the press)³¹. In a sense, the problem is quite simple. Compared with other 'art films', Dreyer's films are too 'boring', they make too many demands on the spectator, they resist passive consumption, a degree of mobility is required for the inscribed reader that audiences find difficult to adopt because of the long and vigorous rule of journalistic models of reading terroristically imposed and maintained by the industry as well as cultural institutions such as film theatres, magazines, etc.

The production systems within which Dreyer worked were resistant to his way of film making particularly to his demand for total control. A legal battle with Société Generale apparently resulted in a reputation for not bringing films in within their budgets, the effect was that he had to serve a second apprenticeship in documentary film-making before being offered another contract he felt able to accept, i.e. *Day of Wrath*. Otherwise, Dreyer rejected all contracts, such as the one with Film Traders for the production of *Mary Stuart*, which didn't give him total artistic control. He preferred not to make films rather than compromise, and this hatred of compromise shows, I think, in his over-reaction against *Two People*. But apart from *Vampyr*, which was financed independently, and his short films, which were state financed, Dreyer was funded as everyone else, because he was expected to bring some return on the investment. Moreover the commercial situation in which his films were placed benefited from critical elaborations in terms of art, which in turn reacted back on the kinds of projects financed. Towards the end of his life the Danish State subsidised Dreyer by giving him the license of a cinema, the Dagmar in the centre of Copenhagen, where he apparently only showed films he liked. It was his own personal 'art house'.

The extension of the notion of 'art cinema' to cover an element of European production, is in need of a more theoretically coherent

articulation of the apparatuses of production, distribution and exhibition at a nation state as well as European level (if indeed these are the relevant unities) and the ideologies with which they intersect. The notion of a European culture within which the Dreyer-text is placed is obviously an ideological one. The notion of a Scandinavian cultural placing has more substance in that most of the source materials for the films are drawn from the Danish linguistic formation (Danish is intelligible to Norwegians and Swedes, and was hegemonic in Norway until the 1930s), which gives it some unity at the literary level as well. This work has yet to be done, difficult as it is since any such reconstruction is also 'a construction in the present, for today' (Stephen Heath)³². Therefore, we should be clear about the kinds of questions we want to ask in the present. Hopefully, the following dossier as well as my own notes may contribute towards the formulation of such questions.

Notes

1. For a discussion of the problem of suture, see Stephen Heath, *Screen*, vol. 17 nr. 3; Claire Johnston, *Edinburgh Magazine* '76, nr. 1; J. A. Miller, J. P. Oudart, Stephen Heath, *Screen*, vol. 18, forthcoming issue.
2. Stephen Heath, *Screen*, vol. 17 nr. 4.
3. Ibid.; the quote within S.H.'s argument stems from Lacan, *Le Séminaire*, vol. XI.
4. See my essay on *Vampyr* in *Screen*, vol. 17 nr. 3. The structure of uncertainty, as the essay argues at some length, refers to T. Todorov's definition of the fantastic in relation to the shots of David Gray in the coffin, depicted with open eyes whereas he is supposed to be dead. The film in fact plays on this 'uncertainty' throughout its text.
5. R. Barthes, *Fragments d'un Discours Amoureux*, Paris 1977.
6. Paul Willemen, 'The Fugitive Subject' in *Raoul Walsh*, Edinburgh 1974.
7. *Jacques Tourneur*, Edinburgh 1975.
8. *Raoul Walsh*, Edinburgh 1974.
9. *Screen*, vol. 17 nr. 3. See also the remarks on point-of-view structures in David Bordwell's *Filmguide to La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, Bloomington 1973.
10. Both quotations from Foucault's *The Order of Things*, London 1970.
11. Other determinants for this drift towards semantic structures turning on religious notions were mentioned earlier in this essay. The overall implication of these notes is that 'religion' as a thematic nexus is overdetermined by different processes at work in the very fabric of the texts. If a dominant determining process must be identified, it would appear to me that the arguments put forward in relation to the 'light' as the signifier of the structuring phantasy of the Dreyer-text, are the decisive ones.
12. R. Barthes, op. cit.
13. Little of Julia Kristeva's work is available in English. In the present context, I will be referring primarily to her essay *Signifying Practice and Mode of Production*, published in the *Edinburgh Magazine* '76, nr. 1.
14. There are no children in Dreyer's films!
15. Kristeva, op. cit.
16. See e.g. Edward Carpenter's discussion of these issues in *Love's Coming of Age*, London, first published 1896, 12th edition 1923. The terminology is Carpenter's.
17. Interview with J.K., *Substance*, nr. 13, Madison 1976.
18. For the concept 'social practice of cinema', see C. Johnston and P. Willemen, *Brecht in Britain—The Independent Political Film in Screen*, vol. 16, nr. 4, and C. Johnston, *Notes on the Idea of an Independent Cinema*, unpublished SEFT—seminar paper (1977), which contains some valuable correctives to the former essay.

19. R. Barthes, op. cit.
20. S. Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol. VII.
21. In *Communications*, nr. 19.
22. In *Catholica*, nr. 1, 1955.
23. S. Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol. XVIII.
24. R. Barthes, *Fragments d'un Discours Amoureux*, Paris 1977.
25. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Minnelli and Melodrama' in *Screen*, vol. 18 nr. 2, offers some interesting comments on the nature of the hysterical text.
26. In *Études Cinématographiques*, nr. 53/56.
27. Incidentally, this hypothesis casts a new light on the Bazinian arguments in favour of realism. Regarding the phantasy of 'the body in pieces': 'This fragmented body, the term for which I have introduced into our theoretical frame of reference, regularly manifests itself in dreams when the movement of analysis encounters a certain level of aggressive disintegration in the individual. It then appears in the form of disjointed limbs, or of those organs figured in exoscopy, growing wings and taking up arms for intestinal persecutions ... but this form is even more tangibly revealed at the organic level, in the lines of 'fragilisation' which define the anatomy of phantasy, as exhibited in the schizoid and spasmodic symptoms of hysteria'. J. Lacan, 'The Mirror Phase' in *New Left Review*, nr. 51.
28. Dreyer in an interview in *Film Comment*, vol. IV nr. 1.
29. See Paul Willemen's remarks about the categorisation of textual systems in his essay in *Jacques Tourneur*, Edinburgh 1975.
30. This is stated in a letter from Ib Monty to Ernest Lindgren of 20.9.65.
31. See the report on this distasteful occasion in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, nr. 207.
32. *Edinburgh Magazine* 1977.

III. Dreyer Dossier

Apart from the basic filmographic information, the material in this section has been chosen because it complements the theses outlined in my article, and also to suggest points of entry to that piece starting from the individual films. Except where indicated, all quotes are from *Cahiers de Cinéma*, particularly their special issue on Dreyer (nr. 207, Dec. 1968). At times *Cahiers'* remarks about the films come very close to the position I have tried to develop in my essay.

It is interesting to speculate on the reasons why *Cahiers du Cinéma* produced this type of analysis of Dreyer's work shortly after the events of '68, which were characterised by, amongst other things, a massive politicisation of cultural and particularly aesthetic practices. *Cahiers'* focus on the problems of language and subjectivity combined with an almost total absence of any attempt to theorise these problems within a materialist framework, may well be symptomatic of some serious shortcomings inherent in the ideologies which helped to produce and dominated the progressive cultural practices accompanying May '68. In fact, it was not until the early 70s that *Cahiers'* vanguard position, somewhat idealist in this respect, began to be rectified.

A. Biography

Born: February 3rd 1889—Died: March 20th 1968.

His Swedish mother died soon after he was born and he was adopted by a Danish family. He was given piano lessons and got a job as a pianist in a cafe. However, it lasted only for one evening. After working in various offices, he became a journalist writing theatre reviews for small provincial papers. Subsequently, he worked for three influential papers in Copenhagen, e.g. he was the Air Sports correspondent for the *Belingske Tidende*, and became an active member of the University Student's Club. Among his journalistic duties for the *Extrabladet* was the writing of a series of satires called *Heroes of our Time* under the pseudonym Tommen.

In 1912, he joined the Nordisk Films Kompagni as dialogue writer, soon graduating to scriptwriter. He adapted novels acquired by the studio at his suggestion, such as Rousthøj's *Hotel Paradis*, filmed in 1917. In 1918, having worked in every department of film making, he asked to direct his adaptation of K. E. Franzo's novel *The President*. The film was released in 1919.

After making *Vampyr*, Dreyer apparently came to Great Britain to work with Grierson and the documentary film makers. At one point, he went to North Africa to prepare a film about a white man 'going native', but this project was abandoned by the producers. For several years he continued his journalistic activities, writing reports from the law courts under his old pseudonym Tommen. He recommenced directing in 1942.

When *Cahiers du Cinéma* asked Dreyer about his early years, he commented:

'I did a few reviews, a little theatre criticism but mostly I covered trials. Every day I gave a complete account of what had happened at the Court House. This work also gave me the opportunity of studying many middle class personalities. It was as a theatre critic that I saw the play from which *Day of Wrath* was taken. It was in this way as well that I saw *Ordet*, out of which I was to make a film in 1954. I also did a little cinema criticism. There was also a period during which I worked in journalism in the mornings and the cinema in the afternoon. I began in the cinema by doing titles for silent films. At that time, Nordisk was making about a hundred films a year. There were five or six directors who worked the four summer months and who did not edit their films themselves. They sent them to the laboratory. Well, that's where I was, together with someone who was the director of the laboratory. We worked together, and put in the necessary texts. This was a genre of work that constituted a marvelous school. Following that, I wrote some scenarios and then I began to film novels. But before that I "went to school" for five years. Today, when I work, the film edits itself in my head, gradually, during the shooting. It is part of the *mise-en-scène*.'

President of the Court), author (A novel by Karl Emil Franzos) and place of publication (Copenhagen), with 'Nordisk Films' as the publisher. Then we see Karl Victor's asymmetrical family tree, followed by the credit 'adapted for film and directed by Carl Th. Dreyer'. The film tells of a particular constellation of familial and class relations common to much 19th century melodramatic literature and theatre.

Aware that he is dying, Franz Victor writes in his diary that that very day his son Karl Victor shall learn the wrongs he, Franz Victor, has committed against the family. In a flashback sequence, set in the ruins of the family estate he confesses to his son how he once fell for a gamekeeper's daughter who 'bewitched' him. He had refused to marry her when she was pregnant, but she wrote to his father, who forced him to marry her with the words: 'A von Sendlingen can be a rake, but not a scoundrel'. Franz Victor gets his son to swear, over a fallen family crest among the ruins, that he will never repeat his father's mistake: 'Never make any common girl your wife, because no good will come of it, only a curse for the both of you, a curse and remorse'.

From the very beginning, the terms of melodrama have been introduced: the family problem, the inheritance, tradition, the family's ruination because of an interclass marriage. In fact, the ruination is quite literally represented by decayed property, as the intertitle states: 'The once proud castle is now a playground for the children of the poor'. The son's oath then commits him to retain property relations intact by restraining his sexuality. The problem of generations is reinforced in the opening shots by the tracery of ancestral cameos covering walls of Karl Victor's house, as they are contrasted with austere walls of the servants' quarters. Indeed the lower classes are not supposed to have a history as history = property. Sexuality is split into desire (aristocratic, symbolised by idyllic images of water) and procreation (evil, symbolised by the intercutting of shots of the children of the poor with images of toads). At this stage, mothers do not appear to exist, only fathers and children. The only 'mother' on the scene is referred to as the gamekeeper's daughter.

Thirty years later, Karl Victor is a successful lawyer, 'the town's honoured and loved President of the Court' who carries out his duties in accordance with the family motto: 'The majesty of justice is the most holy thing on earth. Returning from an official journey, he looks over the documents of an impending trial of a woman, Victorine Lippert, for infanticide. From another letter he learns that the alleged murderess is his daughter, named after him by the mother whom he has (presumably) abandoned. He confesses this to his deputy Berger and the circumstances of the affair are shown in flashback. He fell in love with the governess of his uncle's daughter (they are seen on a bridge, kissing, with water below). Quoting his grandfather, he resolves to marry her, but being reminded of his oath to his father he deserts her. Returning to the diegetic present, Karl Victor requests his deputy to take over the case.

In the trial, Victorine's story is spoken by the defence counsel (again depicted in flashback). On the death of her mother, who was a governess, the 17 year old Victorine also takes a post as a governess with a Countess. She becomes involved with the countess's son, who promises to marry her when he returns from a voyage he is about to make. She writes to him about her pregnancy, but receives no reply. Instead he writes to his mother suggesting Victorine is equally to blame for the unfortunate affair. Victorine is immediately expelled still in her nightdress. A dog chases her off the estate. The next morning she is found unconscious with her dead child beside her. In the diegesis, the eviction, the birth and death of the child are all collapsed into one another. It would perhaps be an understatement to say that

B. Filmography

1919 *Praesidenten*

(*The President*)

Production

Script

Director of Photography Hans Vaagbø

Art Director

Nordisk Films Kompagni (Copenhagen)

Dreyer. Based on the novel by Karl Emil Franzos.

Halvard Hoff (*Karl Victor von Sendlingen, the President*), Eliith Pio (*his father*), Carl Meyer (*his grandfather*), Olga Raphael-Linden (*Victorine Lippert, his daughter*), Betty Kirkebye (*Hermine Lippert*), Richard Christensen (*Lawyer Georg Berger*), Peter Nielsen (*prosecutor*), Axel Madsden (*Vice-President Werner*), Hallander Hellemann (*Franz*), Fanny Petersen (*Brigitta*), Jacoba Jessen (*Maika*), Jon Iversen (*Victorine's fiancé*).
Length: 1700 m.

Dreyer introduced a more naturalistic style into the staple Nordisk melodrama, insisting on building his own scenery and using non-professional actors:

'I made this film somewhat as a study and for the experience. What was pleasing to me was the flashback, which at that time was something new. But even then I was beginning to do my own décors, and I also tried to simplify them. As for the actors, at that time there were very few. There were, notably, at Nordisk, two or three actors who absolutely played all the parts that called for old people, who specialised in it and who were always called whenever you needed someone old. For the first time, I took, to play old people, *old* men and *old* women. Today, this is a completely normal thing but at that time I was breaking with a tradition. I also took, for bit parts, instead of certain other actors who were proposed to me, people I met on the street. I chose two second rank actors as well, who were better than the famous but routine actors who were offered to me.'

The approach used here was suggested in part by a question posed by Laura Mulvey at a SEFT* weekend school as to the mechanisms in films such as Dreyer's and Sirk's which enable the foregrounding of the problem of representing woman's desire, a problem central to *All that Heaven Allows* for example. Although this question is more productively pursued in relation to Dreyer's later films, such as *Gertrud*, the conventions of melodrama are also central to this first film.

The President is a film literally dominated by the novel (the film as novel, the filmed novel). We see its opening and closing pages, the title page giving the title (The

something is repeating itself! The play on law and more precisely patriarchal law, is also clear. Moreover, in a court of (patriarchal-bourgeois) law, women have no voice: Victorine does not speak, she—her story and defence—is spoken by her lawyer.

The death sentence is pronounced. Her father, the President asks his deputy Berger to prepare Victorine for his visit. Her reaction to this is presented in the film as three uncommented tableaux: one of her mother's death, then a shot of herself in mourning, and finally we see her reading a letter (yet another letter) from her mother which says: 'Should fate ever take you to your father, then tell him that I have forgiven him'. These memory scenes are presented in static, frozen tableaux. Father and daughter are then reunited in best melodramatic fashion. Her father, the President, says he'll try for a reprieve, adding: 'Thank God I am alive to repay my debt'. A letter (sic) arrives communicating his advancement to President of the Provincial Court, and this enables him to avoid carrying out the death sentence on Victorine, i.e. he will no longer be tempted to break the law for having to enforce it. He lies to his daughter informing her that the appeal has been successful. He has to go to a farewell ceremony in his honour (with a spectacular torchlight parade), but still feels tormented. Eventually he withdraws from the party, gets Victorine out of her cell and bundles her off in a coach. He writes a letter(!) of resignation claiming failing health and departs by train, as if nothing had happened. At a certain point in their journeys, the paths of train and coach cross. Von Sendlingen secretly joins the coach and drives across the border.

Three years later. On a journey abroad, on board a river steamer, advocate Berger meets a plantation owner from Java, who has come to Europe to get married. Berger recognises the picture of the wife to be as that of Victorine. There is a hastily arranged marriage (complete with blind organist) and the couple return to Java. Parallel to this is the domestic business of preparing the return home prefaced by a bizarre scene in which one of von Sendlingen's servants completes a memorial to a recently dead cat, watched by three dogs, who then observe the wedding ceremony from the back pew of the church, and follow the bride into the carriage. These animals were introduced as puppies and kittens earlier in the diegesis, and so serve to mark the passing of time, as well as marking the loss (the death of the cat) of the daughter.

Returning home, Karl Victor admits his 'crime' to the new President: 'I have come to ask for the punishment due to me as a criminal'. However the new President responds to this confession with the words: 'What you have told me here must remain a secret. If it becomes known it will completely destroy respect for the judiciary'. When Karl Victor then threatens to accuse himself publicly, the new incarnation of the Law, Werner, threatens to find and arrest his daughter and carry out the death penalty. Bowing to the will of Werner, Karl Victor writes his testament and returns, past the old gallows' place, to the ruins of his forefathers' castle. On top of the same wall below which he walked with his father, he slips or jumps. Then follows a final shot of an hour glass that has run out and the book closes with an inscription to Karl Victor: 'Honoured be his memory'.

As is predominantly the case in Dreyer's films up to *Joan of Arc*, the viewer is placed in the privileged position of knowledge, characteristic of most 19th century fiction. Point-of-view structures or subjective shots are not present in the film. The time relations in the film read as a transposition from the novel rather than as anything specifically cinematic. Titles are invariably used to indicate the time, except for the detail of the ageing of the domestic animals already mentioned. The film generally presents a surplus of signification, not structured overdetermination as in

the decor of *Michael*, but simply excess, with long titles fixing the meaning of the scenes. However the main source of this excess is to be found in the obsessive repetition of structure which itself presents one of the main characteristics of desire: the compulsion to repeat.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the film is the insistence of letters. Usually the motors of narrative action, sometimes duplicating it, they are almost invariably written by men and addressed to men. This is perhaps not surprising in a diegesis dominated by male characters, but it connects with the general refusal to give women a voice in the film. Hermine, Victorine's mother, is said to have written to the Countess' son, but this letter is not shown. Hermine does write to Victorine, saying she has forgiven Karl Victor, but this letter is marked as different by the 'memories' it evokes in Victorine: whereas 'male' letters provoke or explain actions, Victorine's memories are frozen tableaux, almost alien inserts into the fiction. The legal correspondence accounts for about half of the letters in the film but they also underscore the male discourse as the agent of the patriarchal Law organising sexuality.

At the end of the film the 'once proud family' is still 'in ruins'. The ruins remain, as Karl Victor has not been able to confess. There is no resolution to the conflicts other than his (childless) death. To have had his confession accepted, would have marked his return to the letter of his grandfather's edict (which decreed that if one gets a girl pregnant, one must marry her) and his actions would have become once more legally recognised and codified. In fact the grandfather's words constitute a compromise: they permit marriage across class boundaries, privileging the maintenance of the family as the only place for sexuality, overriding considerations of property. The father's injunction never to marry a common woman represents the more uncompromising position of rampant virility presented by the film as self contradictory. By contradicting the grandfather's edict, it is itself in violation of the Law. Karl Victor's father, of course, did exactly what he forbids his son, and so his successfully socialised son is destined to disobey him. Bearer of the law (as Judge), he must also break the law. To resolve this dilemma, all that is left is death, whereupon the 'problem' can be evacuated from the fiction. Victorine is packed off to Java.

1919 *Blade af Satans Bog*

(Leaves from Satan's Book)

Production

Script

Nordisk Films Kompagni

Edgar Høyer, Dreyer. Based on the novel *The Sorrows of*

Satan by Marie Corelli.

Director of Photography George Schnéevoigt

Art Director

Dreyer, with technical assistance by Axel Bruun, Jens G. Lind.

Helge Nissen (*Satan*). *First episode*: Halvard Hoff (*Jesus*), Jacob Texiere (*Judas*), Erling Hansson (*Jolin*), Wilhelm Jensen (*Carpenter*). *Second episode*: Hallander Hellemann (*Don Gomez*), Ebon Strandin (*Isabella*), Johannes Meyer (*Don Fernandez*), Nalle Halden (*The Majordomo*), Hugo Bruun (*Count Manuel*). *Third episode*: Tenna Kraft (*Marie Antoinette*), Emma Wiehe (*The Countess of Chambord*), Jeanne Tramcourt (*Geneviève*), Eliith Pio (*Joseph*), Viggo Wiehe (*Count of Chambord*), Emil Helsingreen (*The People's Commissar*), Sven Scholander

(*Michonnet*), Viggo Lindstrøm (*Père Pitou*), Vilhelm Petersen (*Fouquier-Tinville*).
Fourth episode: Carlo Wieth (*Paavo*), Clara Pontoppidan (*Siri*), Carl Hillebrandt (*Rautaniemi*), Karina Bell (*Naima*), Christian Nielsen (*Corporal Matti*).
Length: 3254 m.

Explaining that he had conceived the Christ-episode as a kind of 'iconographic image', he told *Cahiers du Cinéma* that his favourite episode was the last one:

Dreyer: It was there that, for the first time, I used a close up of the principal actress, in which she did what I asked of her and rendered a whole range of feeling, with a long succession of changing expressions.

CdC: In the Finnish episode, we find one of those young women who appear constantly in your films and around whom it seems your work is organised.

D: It wasn't wilful. Each time, it was the subject that attracted me. Here in this Finnish story, the subject pleased me very much: the story of a woman who sacrifices her life for her husband and her country, in spite of everything that rises against her and the threat of her children being killed. In the end she commits suicide.

CdC: In your first films montage is very important.

D: Very much so. The modern section was I think 750 metres in length, in which there were 600 shots. It was rapid montage. (But) it just came out like that, I didn't do it intentionally, there just were a great many movements and actions in that section.

CdC: Were you not influenced by theories of montage?

D: No. Although I'd just seen *Intolerance*. It was possible that I'd been influenced by that . . .

CdC: Did you yourself have any theory of montage, regarding your work, then or later?

D: No . . .

CdC: Certain filmmakers are also theorists. Are you in any way one of them?

D: No. I follow my inspiration. The secret is inspiring during shooting, during the editing . . . While shooting, one is already editing, one has already done the editing mentally. If I do a number of shots today, I will edit them during the night, and if I notice that the montage would be better with a close-up, then I will shoot the close-up tomorrow while the set is still there . . . [*Leaves from Satan's Book* and *Joan of Arc* both] have white walls. I have always loved white walls and I use them in nearly all my films. Even the last act of *Ordet* was against a white background.

J. L. Comolli described the film in the following terms:

'As early as 1920, almost the whole of *Dreyer's oeuvre* seems to be contained within the four episodes of his second film, summarised or rather sketched in outline. Here the threads used in weaving that *oeuvre*, few in number, making them all the easier to pick out, are already in position. Though barely removed from the conventions of the Film d'Art, *In Palestine* (or *The Passion of Jesus Christ*) is a first (emphatic) intimation of the *Jesus of Nazareth* that was so often projected and invariably postponed.

But it is with *The Red Rose of Finland* that one attains the essence of *Dreyer's* work, and *Siri* is justly placed alongside *Anne*, *Inger* or *Gertrud* as one of the great *Dreyerian* heroines.

Yet aside from this figure of a loving woman, she too a sacrifice, and aside from this very theme of sacrifice, of resistance to any intolerance or violence (the theme of the entire film, which the later works were of course to develop), there is nothing to remind one of the more familiar *Dreyer*. Just as *The Parson's Widow* simultaneously reveals and consummates what must be described as the

comedy in *Dreyer's* work (a comedy, or rather a mocking irony, first given free rein in his humorous-moralistic reports and sketches as a journalist, and running like a watermark through his work, long masked by the extreme solemnity of the subjects, repressed in the interests of stringency and austerity, and unexpectedly reappearing in more than one scene in *Ordet* as well as in *Gertrud's* view of men and of the vanities that fetter her), so *The Red Rose of Finland* opens and closes the 'adventure film' chapter in *Dreyer's oeuvre*. But for the Finnish snows and forests in which its chases take place, this episode would in fact be a perfect Western no less than those of *Ince* or *Hart* (though of course *Stiller*, with the same not too important reservation, was also a master of the Western). Nothing else is missing, really: the lonely cabin in the woods, the telegraph station, a woman between two men, the good guys and the bad guys, innocent or guilty, fair or foul in the best tradition. Not to mention all the cavalry pursuits, the gunplay, the dramatic reversals, the boundless courage and the worst of intentions, the heroic or heinous actions. And here is this filmmaker who might (at first glance) seem to be confined to a more limited focus, bounded by close-ups and dedicated to subtly caressing movements, now letting himself go, organising fights, on the trail of galloping horses, expanding his frame to take in hills and rivers (yielding in passing some wonderful—perhaps all the more so for being so out of character—scenes 'of nature').

Though a Western, however, it is not without its politics: the good guys are of course the innocent Whites, and the bad guys are the Reds. The peaceable telegraph operator, betrayed by his 'brother' who vainly loves *Siri*, is delivered by him into the hands of the Communists but saved by the reactionaries. And the leader of the Reds is the selfsame *Satan* who, in the three preceding episodes, had spun the webs of temptation and recantation. One should probably not conclude too hastily from this that *Dreyer*, scarcely conversant with political ideas, had yielded to his class prejudices, thus proving himself a reactionary. His hatred of the bourgeoisie and of all the repressions it has imposed in the name of religion or morality is well known. What then is the reason for this curious alliance, seemingly aggravated by the French Revolution episode, in which *Satan* assumes the mask of a people's commissar in order to bring apparently innocent aristocrats to perdition? Two explanations may be put forward: the first, perhaps a little too simple, is that *Dreyer* always takes the side of the weak and the oppressed against the oppressors, no matter what camp they belong to. The second is that for *Dreyer* oppression, with its manifestations of intolerance or violence, is all the more to be condemned and the more strongly denounced in that it stems from those who are supposedly responsible for justice, in that it is the stigma besetting good causes, and here one is reminded of *Paulhan's Lettre aux Directeurs de la Résistance*: 'It is worse that the Inquisition should be conducted in the name of God, the Terror in the name of Equity, the Repression in the name of the Revolution'. A certain gradation in the means employed by *Satan* to incite his agents to treachery in *Leaves from Satan's Book* may perhaps support this argument. A few pieces of silver suffice for *Judas* to betray *Jesus*; but the ruling class is corrupt, itself treacherous, and *Jesus* passes for something of a revolutionary. Next it is the jealousy inspired equally by his fortune, his daughter and his knowledge that is the astrologer's undoing, placing him in the hands of the Inquisition. Then, nothing but love and desire can serve the Devil's interests: for love the valet betrays his masters, and for the same reason *Siri* dies. As if, concurrently with changes in the nature of the societies depicted, the

motivations for betrayal had shifted from a political and social plane (the alliance of Judas, the Romans and the Pharisees against Jesus; the conspiracy of the Church, but also of eminent citizens, against the power and knowledge of the astrologer) to a wholly personal one: nothing can be taken from the aristocrats, already dispossessed and destitute, but honour and love; nothing can be taken from Siri and her husband except simply their happiness. It is probable that Jesus would have been betrayed and the astrologer burned even had Satan not taken a hand; but his intervention with the French revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks had to be in order that, before being *tornt** from it—and thereby exorcised!—these last two pages (being *pages of history*) should figure in his Book.¹

Critics always compare this film, to its detriment, with D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*. Dreyer admits being influenced by the film, but despite the thematic similarity with Griffith's film (which one might characterise as naïve/reactionary versions of history and historical change), it has none of the structural radicalism of *Intolerance*. The episodes of Dreyer's film are presented sequentially, and in chronological order, as opposed to Griffith's alternating syntagmatic structure. Technically one could point to 'advances' on his work in *President*, such as the use of masks, camera movement, POV structures to direct attention, close-ups, the gradual mastery of narrative montage within the episodes as the film progresses, etc. Our present concern is with a particular area of the film's work: the intersection of its presentation of history with that of desire. The episodes represent a series of social forces through the conflicts between the protagonists, broadly treated in terms of religion: the Jews versus a heretic religion, i.e. Jesus; the Counter-Reformation and the heretic New Science; the false religion of the Republic and the false religion of Communism.

Following the conventions of early 19th century melodrama, a series of libidinal struggles encouraged by Satan intersect with these 'historical' concerns; and the object of masculine desire is 'naturally' an abjectly suffering woman (or Jesus . . .). The major female protagonists and Jesus are all sacrificed or sacrifice themselves: Jesus anticipates and accepts his betrayal (a parallel that later *Michael* will draw on); Isabella is burnt after being raped by a member of the Inquisition; Geneviève is not raped, but betrayed to the republic's officers because she resists. Her mother by refusing to lie, and Marie-Antionette, by refusing to take orders, condemn themselves to death; Siri commits suicide, rather than be raped. It is easy to see how Jesus fits into this series of exemplary sufferers.

Male desire initially located outside of institutions, has to be harnessed to them (the Jewish Law, the Jacobin Club, the Inquisition, the Red Army) by means of the promised reward of eventual sexual gratification. Such desire is however presented as basically evil (it is encouraged by Satan) and there is no question of a mutual attraction or indeed of women even having any desire at all. And in true patriarchal fashion, access to the women involves removing them from their familial attachments.

* * *

1920 Prästänkan

(The Parsons's Widow/The Fourth Marriage of Dame Margaret/Youth to Youth)
Production Svensk Filmindustri (Stockholm)

Script Dreyer. Based on a short story by Kristofer Janson.
Director of Photography George Schnéevoigt

Hildur Carlberg (*Margarete Pedersdotter*), Einar Rødd (*Söfren*), Greta Almroth (*Mar*), Olav Aukrust and Kurt Welin (*The aspiring pastors*), Mathilde Nielson (*Gurvor*), Emil Helsengreen (*The Gardener*), Lorentz Thyholt (*The Beadle*).
Length: 1500 m.

At the time of its release in Britain (1921) even *Kine Weekly*, a publication not noted for its perceptive remarks or critical positions, gave the film a publicity boost. Commenting on its comedy qualities, its pastoral appeal and qualifying the whole as 'a work of artistic genius', the review went on: "There can be little doubt that *Youth to Youth* will prove an exceptionally strong attraction both for those who look to the screen for sheer entertainment and for those who appreciate it as one of the fine arts". (*K.W.*, 21/4/21.)

Sylvie Pierre was more coherent:

'Probably the Dreyer film in which the theme of female supremacy is most clearly stated . . . Rarely has more ferocious malice at the expense of the male been exercised in the cinema. Vainly trying to escape the patriarchal vigilance of his wife in a pathetically obvious adulterous affair (he introduces his mistress into the house as his sister), the young pastor suffers every conceivable obstruction, indignity and humiliation while the moral and aesthetic—and therefore poetic—stature of Dame Margaret steadily increases. One is reminded of *The Golden Coach* and the Viceroys who is "too small" compared to Magnani. An interplay of pettiness and generosity, of greatness and smallness, that constitutes one of the finest films ever constructed on the mechanisms of subterfuge and openness, of mendacity and its discomfiture, of the tangled circumnavigations of guilt and the straight course of rectitude. The machinery thus set in motion is so finely tuned that the script's rather operetta-ish plot is tinged with a curious asperity from the brutal economy of the *mise-en-scène*. For instance in the scene where, avoiding his wife's eye after being caught in the act of an adulterous misdemeanour, the pastor hides behind a huge tapestry at which an old servant is working who discomfits him by suddenly seizing his hand and revealing her shaming presence.

This gravity with which the comedy is thus weighted should doubtless be taken as a demonstration of the profoundly Protestant character of Dreyer's oeuvre, confirmed rather than invalidated by the many subversions that challenge it. An oeuvre, preeminently, of mortified flesh, condemned to the chastisements of shame and suffering (*Gertrud, Day of Wrath*), unless joyously consummated in the blessed fecundity of marriage (the Inger-Mikkel couple in *Order*).

A film which finally confirms the genius of Dreyer's sense of the plastic and, more particularly, defines one of the poles of his register. Whereas *Jeune d'Arc* offers a pure plastic effect *independent of any light*, and *Vampyr* a play of white and black independent of any naturalism in the lighting, here we have a third form of exemplary experimentation: a *natural* play of lighting or, at least, one

*One of several titles used for this film in France is *Pages arrachées au livre de Satan* (Leaves Torn from Satan's Book) [Transl. Note].

where any abstraction tends towards the natural. The exteriors (no matter whether the sun is real or otherwise) luminous to the point of dazzlement, the house crepuscular to the point of mystery. Never has Dreyer seemed so Dutch.'

Two of Dreyer's early films present women in apparently powerful roles, humiliating a central male protagonist into some accommodation to their needs/desires. *Master of the House* presents a patriarchal figure so tyrannical that the life of his wife, the survival of the family is endangered. *The Parson's Widow* presents an apparently matriarchal figure, Dame Margaret, whom one must marry if one is to become Pastor and who has already outlived several such candidates. She manages to confound her husband's adulterous schemes, but nevertheless when his passion has been socialised, she dies and he is finally able to marry his girl-friend. Margaret is a victim of that primitive patriarchal law (commented on in *All that Heaven Allows*: 'that old Egyptian custom of burying a husband's wife together with his possessions'—I quote from memory) which locates woman as part of the husband's property. In this case, the church is the representative of patriarchy.

The husband, Sofren's desire is a—social. He comes from Nature, as suggested by the mountains and waterfalls of the opening shots, with ragged clothes and no food or money, accompanied by his girl-friend. He accepts marriage because he's starving and drunk. The film links the socialisation of his desire to the institution of marriage, where, among other things, one realises there are 'higher' things than sexuality.

* * *

1921 Die Gezeichneten

(Love One Another)

Production

Primusfilm (Berlin)

Producer

Otto Schmidt

Script

Dreyer. Based on the novel by Aage Madelung

Director of Photography

Friedrich Weinmann

Art Director

Jens G. Lind

Polina Piekowska (*Hanna-Liebe*), Vladimir Gajdarov (*Jakov Segal*), Torleif Reiss (*Aleksander 'Sascha' Sokolov*), Richard Boleslawski (*Fedja*), Duwan (*The Merchant Suckosworski*), Johannes Meyer (*Klimov, alias Rylowitch, alias Father Roman*), Adele Reuter-Eichberg (*Hanna's mother*), Emly Wyde, Friedrich Kühne, Hugo Döblin. Running time: 105 mins.

As Dreyer pointed out, the film was made with a number of refugee artists from the 1917 Revolution: 'Bolevslavski and Gadarov, the two principal actors, as well as Polina Piekowska, were Russian. Duwan was also known. He had been the director of the Russian cabaret *The Bluebird*. As for the others, they were Russian, Danish, German and Norwegian. Besides that, the film was made in Berlin. But the film was adapted from an enormous novel (*Die Gezeichneten*, which sort of means *The Stigmatized Ones*), which we had to compress a great deal. Perhaps it was wrong to want to condense this big work in order to make a film out of it. It was necessary to cut, to prune, endlessly . . . This proves that novels shouldn't be filmed. It's too hard. I prefer to film theatre'. In his article *Among Russian Emigré in Berlin*, published in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, nr 207, Dreyer made a point of expressing his

political sympathies with the White Russian emigrés.

The story of the film can be summarised as follows: Hannah-Liebe is a Jewish child living in the ghetto of a small Russian provincial town. Anti-Jewish feeling is such that she is unable to attend the Russians' school. It also bars friendships with Russian children, including one peasant boy, Fedja, who fancies her. Hannah falls in love with Sascha, but because of gossip about their interracial friendship, he leaves for St. Petersburg. She follows later, to avoid an arranged marriage, visiting her brother Segal who has accepted Christianity for social and business purposes. Segal finds lodging for her in the home of a scientist, Lorov, and his wife. There she meets Sascha again. He has become a member of a revolutionary club, and they both join in its activities. Fedja, disguised as a monk, informs the authorities about Sascha's ideas and he is arrested together with Sascha. Segal succeeds in freeing his sister, but as Jews they are both deported to their home town, where they find their mother dying. Fedja also returns to the village, trying to incite the peasants against the Jewish community. A pogrom begins in which many Jews, including Segal, are shot. Hannah-Liebe falls into Fedja's hands but is rescued from that fate worse than death by Sascha, who has been liberated in a general strike which marks the beginning of the revolution of 1905.

What troubles this text appears to be the assertion of feminine desire across class and racial boundaries. Hannah falls in love with Sascha, a bourgeois Russian, and rejects the peasant-boy, Fedja. This opposition is made quite clear via an alternating syntagm, cutting from the couple Sascha-Hannah, walking by the water (signifier of desire, as always when we come across images of water in Dreyer's films) to a peasant girl attracted to Fedja who is lying, stretched out on the grass, both sensually less restrained than the quasi-bourgeois couple. Hannah's relation with Sascha is acceptable within revolutionary circles, but it also provides the possibility of revenge by Fedja. The pogrom he initiates involves murder of the Jews and rape of Hannah. His posing as a monk recalls Ivan in *Leaves from Satan's Book* but this time he is on the anti-revolutionary side.

In many ways this film resumes the concerns of *Leaves from Satan's Book*. Male desire is frustrated but finds an institutional pretext to achieve its aim, clearly designated as evil because of its sexuality and the crossing of class and racial barriers. We might note that racialism is absent from *Leaves from Satan's Book* while *Love One Another* could be regarded as the equivalent to the St Bartholomews episode in *Intolerance*.

The revolution, allowing for a last minute rescue, is clearly a *deus-ex-machina* to bring about the necessary tolerance invoked in the novel's title, *Love One Another*. But it is also the rescue of a woman by a man. The interests of patriarchy, class (it is still a bourgeois revolution in many respects) and race are preserved in that order.

If Hannah is brought back within patriarchal (though not Jewish) law, Segal, who has broken Jewish law by marrying a Christian wife and living like a Christian atones for this 'crime' by his own death in the pogrom. In this way, the fiction re-inscribes in its motivational logic the very theme the film is supposed to condemn. Indeed, if it is 'evil' to uphold the Jew/Gentile distinction (Fedja), why should Segal be punished for transgressing it?

* * *

1922 Der Var Engang

(Once Upon A Time)

Production
Script

Sophus Madsen (Copenhagen)
Dreyer, Palle Rosenkrantz. Based on the play by Holger
Drachmann

Director of Photography

George Schnéevoigt

Art Director

Jens G. Lind

Editors

Dreyer, Edla Hansen

Clara Pontoppidan (*The Princess of Illyria*), Svend Methling (*The Prince of Denmark*), Peter Jerndorff (*The King*), Hakon Ahnfeldt-Rønne (*Kaspar Roghat*), Karen Poulsen, Gerda Madsen.

This film was based on a play of the same title by Holger Drachmann (1846-1908). E. L. Bresdorff, in the *Penguin Guide to European Literature*, characterised Drachmann as 'by turns a socialist, a radical and realist disciple of George Brandes, a traditionalist praising marriage and home, a neo-romantic fairy-tale playwright, a bohemian poet inspired by a music hall singer'. The theme of the play, as it can be deduced from the surviving fragments of the film, does not come from Drachmann's socialist period, concerning as it does the 'taming of a shrew': a princess forced into domesticity by a prince who abducts her, and who learns to love her oppression and oppressor.

It is difficult to assess Ebbe Neergaard's claim that the lyrical quality of Drachmann's dialogue could not be transposed into silent-film. Certainly in the register of photography, George Schnéevoigt's photography is very lyrical indeed. The opening court scene shows Dreyer ably directing farcical comedy.

1924 Michael

Production

Decla-Bioscop for UFA (Berlin)

Producer

Erich Pommer

Script

Dreyer, Thea von Harbou. Based on the novel by Herman
Bang.

Directors of Photography

Karl Freund (interiors), Rudolph Maté (some exteriors)

Art Director

Hugo Häring

Music

Hans Joseph Vieth

Benjamin Christensen (*Claude Zoret*), Walter Slezak (*Michael*), Nora Gregor (*The Princess Zamikow*), Robert Garrison (*Switt*), Grete Mosheim (*Alice Adelskjold*), Didier Aslan (*Duc de Monthieu*), Karl Freund (*Leblanc, the art dealer*), Mady Christians.

Running time: 1966 m.

The main essay in this booklet discusses this film at some length. However, Dreyer's remarks, especially his comments on the use of decor, are worth quoting at some length: 'For *Michael*, I had a practically free hand. As for their success, the first was well enough received by the public but it was, above all, *Michael* that was a big critical success in Germany. It was called the first *Kammerspiel* (chamber music?) film, and I was very flattered by that, for this film was very important to me. The

action takes place during a period when passion and exaggeration were in fashion, when feelings were willfully exacerbated; a period with a certain very false manner, which is seen in its decoration with all its outrageously supercharged interiors. The author of the novel, Herman Bang, belonged to the same period as Hjalmar Söderberg, the author of *Gertrud*, and it was even said of Söderberg that he imitated Bang, although it was Bang who imitated Söderberg. Well, it turns out that they knew each other and were even very friendly.

It was, for example, the period when, in France, the monasteries were expropriated by the government. Piles of accessories that came from churches and monasteries were put up for sale, and many people bought sacerdotal ornaments, chairs, benches and other furniture. For example, I knew a Danish actress who, when she moved back to Copenhagen, set herself up in an apartment filled with horrible things of this genre, all lighted by a bunch of chandeliers. Well, all that was also part of the film's atmosphere which reflects this rich taste . . . which was in bad taste but which, obviously was considered excellent at that time.

I collaborated on the decors but they were done by an architect who understood my intentions very well and who was absolutely amazing. This was Hugo Häring. He had never done decor for the cinema, and after that he never did any again, for following *Michael*, he went back to his true métier, to being an architect. For him, it was an *entracte* in his career (and the period was not so much one for the construction of new houses), an amusement, a fantasy that offered itself . . .

As principal actor in the role of Zoret, I took a Danish film director: Benjamin Christensen, the director of *Witchcraft Through the Ages*. In the role of Michael, there was young Walter Slezak, whom you must know for his American films. It was also the debut for cameraman Rudolf Maté. Before that, he had done only one short. In fact, Maté did not work on the whole film. Karl Freund was the cameraman who actually was supposed to do the film but he was obliged to leave, as he had other work to do. That is when it was proposed that Maté do the last takes. I was very satisfied with him and took him for my following film, *Jean of Arc*.

1925 Du Skal Aere Din Hustru

(Master of the House/Thou Shalt Honour Thy Wife)

Production Palladium Film (Copenhagen)

Script

Dreyer, Svend Rindom. Based on the play *Tyræmens*
Fald by Svend Rindom.

Director of Photography

George Schnéevoigt

Art Director

Dreyer

Johannes Meyer (*Victor Frandsen*), Astrid Holm (*Ida*), Karin Nellesse (*Karen*), Mathilde Nielsen (*Mads, the nanny*), Aage Hoffman and B Cyril Harvig (*The Boys*), Clara Schønfeld (*Ida's mother*), Petrine Sonne (*The Washerwoman*), Johannes Nielsen (*The Doctor*).

Running time: 107 mins.

This film's use of comedy in a working class milieu and its combination of realism with naturalism were particularly successfully received in France, where Renoir's first films were just beginning to be shown. Its success prompted *Société Générale des*

Films to invite Dreyer to France to make his first large budget film, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*.

Master of the House could still be of use within the women's movement today, because, operating within an extremely humorous fictional form, it breaks down a woman's role into its component elements, clearly showing up the cash value of each element. Incidentally, it is worth noting that in some versions, the names of the characters have been anglicised: Ida becomes Mary, Victor becomes John, Karen changes to Kathleen, Mads changes to Nana Marsh, etc. Similarly, the anglicised version's undertitles are not always translations from the original Danish ones.

The title which opens the English version sets the tone of the film: 'This is the story of a spoilt husband, a type that is extinct in this country, but still exists abroad . . . And it is the story also of a heroine . . . not the brilliant, beautifully groomed and shingled heroine of the film play—but just an ordinary wife and mother whose life is compassed by the four walls of her suburban home' . . . 'Because Mary faced the sacrifices, the heavy tasks, the drab monotony so cheerfully, John, her husband, had come to take everything for granted'

In an interview in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Dreyer referred to the film as a good example of his drive towards purification: 'In a theatre play, there are always so many little inessential things. Well, everything that is not absolutely necessary is a stumbling block. Things that block the way must be removed. The path must be clear, and lead towards what is essential, which is at the end of the road. When you take a theatrical dialogue there are too many accessory possibilities in it. And there is too much risk, in an adaptation, that the words, the sentences will be lost. It calls for pruning in such a way that what remains has an importance. By purification I want to make it possible for the spectator, who is following the images, the words and the intrigue, to have an open path so that he may get to the end of the road. It is for him that the dialogue must, so to speak, be put in close-ups.

In the theatre, you have time to write, time to linger on words and feelings, and the spectator has time to perceive these things. In the cinema it is different. This is why I have always concentrated on the purification of the text, which I compress to the minimum. I did this as early as *Master of the House*, for example, which was also originally a play. We compressed it, cleaned it, purified it and the story became very clear, very clean. That was the first time I employed this method. Later, I employed it for *Day of Wrath*, *Ordet*, *Gertrud*, which are also plays.'

In the same magazine, Sylvie Pierre noted:
'Adapting a play for the silent cinema was a commonplace transaction (the theatre conceived as a reservoir for plots). And the film makers who fearlessly did so, whether *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*, seemed to take no note of the hazard involved in their dizzy leap from word to image. Dreyer is far removed from this "primitive" innocence, and all his work is acutely aware of the problems involved in this transition, haunted by the cinematic gain immanent in their solution. Unless used as an entirely separate filmic space (as significant typography, e.g. Vertov, or as play on words, e.g. *Tire au flanc*), the inter-title is an emergency solution offering information at right angles to the image space. An expedient inevitable in certain cases, but a dangerous additive: easy for the film maker, wearying for the spectator. Using titles sparingly in *Master of the House*, Dreyer attempted to resolve the problem of the dialogue *within the shot*. His technique for doing so introduces an entirely original innovation to the expressionist method, which was to exaggerate dramatically all the silent signs negotiable as speech. Dreyer, without *provoking theatricality*, is content to

define rather than stress these signs, to a point where they alone speak and the actors' lips parting in silence do not hinder the dialogue of expressions and gestures from functioning with serene clarity. For instance in the short and superb dialogue scene—but the dialogue is entirely *drained*—where the mother makes her son recite some lesson or other, lets him go, has second thoughts and calls him back for a last question, some snare, then finally packs him off, satisfied that he hasn't fallen into it.

Between words and gestures, things. The only consideration in the film, really, is shoes to be resoled, washing to hang up, butter to spread on slices of bread. And all this materiality, often making its own statement, supports and crystallises the drama.

A drama that is refined, of course, drained of any extraneous episodes, so that the "rudimentary" semantic system can function as an energetic force rather than as a ponderous weight.

* * *

1925 Glomdalsbruden

(The Bride of Glomdal)

Production

Victoria-Film (Oslo)

Script

Dreyer. Based on the stories, *Glomdalsbruden* and *Eline*

Vangel by Jacob Breda Bull

Director of Photography

Einar Olsen

Art Director

Dreyer

Stub Wiberg (*Ole Glomgaarden*), Tove Tellback (*Berit, his daughter*), Harald

Stormoen (*Jacob Braaten*), Einar Sissener (*Tore, his son*), Einar Tveito (*Gjermund*

Haugsett), Rasmus Rasmussen (*The Pastor*), Sofi Reimers (*The Pastor's Wife*),

Alfhild Stormoen (*Kari, Braaten's Wife*), Oscar Larsen (*Berger Haugsett*).

Length: 1237 m.

This film is much more than the 'little intermezzo' it is sometimes made out to be. Shot in one Norwegian summer, it is regarded as the film where Dreyer comes closest to Stiller, its sensuality and spontaneity surpassing Stiller in Dreyer's 'attention to texture and density of emotion' as Tom Milne puts it. In fact critics have speculated that the comparative absence of repression, the film's celebration of 'innocent adolescent sexuality, might be connected with Dreyer's improvisational film making procedures.

The story concerns the love of Torre, a poor farmer's son, for Berit, the daughter of a neighbouring rich farmer. The families are symbolically separated by a river which, as usual in Dreyer, is a setting for the *mise-en-scène* of desire, including a final bravura struggle against its current.

The disruption which this narrative is designed to evacuate or contain is provided by the central couple's insufficiently socialised desire in the face of an excessively repressive patriarchy. The fathers of Berit and another local boy, Gjermund, had already agreed on a deal involving the marriage of their children. In fact, the representatives of patriarchy overstepped the bounds by omitting to consult Berit, an

*For the use of this term in connection with Dreyer, see André Téchiné's article reprinted as an appendix in this booklet.

'oversight' for which they can be prosecuted, according to the pastor. When Berit refuses to be handed over as a piece of property, she is disowned by her father and looked after by Torre's family. When Torre and Berit's love threatens to exceed the bounds of this arrangement, she is taken in by the pastor's family where the appropriate degree of moral authority can be applied to channel the erotic relationship into a socially sanctioned format.

The film clearly equates sociality with a degree of balance between the paternal and the maternal, in the sense that 'rampant' patriarchy is condemned in the tyrannical fathers and replaced by the feminised pastor's family. In other words, the correct type of patriarchal law must allow for a degree of heterogeneity by accommodating a necessary feminine element. The point is reemphasised when Torre and Berit enter into sociality via their marriage performed by the pastor, a ritual from which the parents are excluded.

Another interesting aspect of the film is its unstable system of eyeline matches and point-of-view structures. It would appear that in general, the matching adheres more rigorously to the rules of classic fictional cinema when the dramatisation of space requires it, *i.e.* when the two sides, Torre's and Berit's families, are opposed to each other. It is perhaps ironic that a disjunction in the diegesis is emphasised by means of a strict adherence to rules of editing designed to bind together, to unify. This underlines the point that the system of eyeline matches used in classic cinema, usually described as a procedure to hermetically seal, close off the diegesis, in fact constitutes a procedure to bind *the spectator* into the fiction. In other words, classic editing systems do not necessarily unify contradictions within the *énoncé* (the diegesis), but they appear to function primarily as means of papering over the potentially disruptive split between *énoncé* and *énonciation* (between what is narrated and the process of narration).

1927 *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*

(*The Passion of Joan of Arc*)
Production

Script Société Générale des Films (Paris)
Dreyer, Joseph Delteil. Based on the original records of the trial (and supposedly on two novels, *Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* and *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* by Joseph Delteil).

Director of Photography Rudolph Maté

Art Directors Hermann Warm, Jean Hugo
Music Victor Alix, Léo Pouget

Maria Falconetti (*Joan of Arc*), Eugène Silvain (*Pierre Cauchon*), Maurice Schutz (*Nicholas Loyseleur*), Michel Simon (*Jean Lemaître*), Antonin Artaud (*Massieu*), Ravet (*Jean Beupère*), André Berley (*Jean d'Estivet*), Jean d'Yd (*Guillaume Evrard*), André Lurville, Jacques Arna, Alexandre Mihalesco, R. Narlay, Henri Maillard, Jean Aymé, Léon Larive, Henri Gaultier and Paul Jorge (*Judges*).

Asked about the production circumstances of the film, Dreyer explained:

"When I arrived in France, in order to make a film for the *Société Générale des Films*, I proposed three subjects. One on Marie Antoinette, another on

Catherine de Medici, and the third on Joan of Arc. I had several interviews with the people at the *Société Générale* but we couldn't arrive at a choice of subject. Then someone said, "Let's take three matches, and draw." I agreed. We drew. I got the headless match: it was *Joan of Arc*. *Joan of Arc* was a big thing for me. Previous to that I had never undertaken such a big film. I had a free hand, I did absolutely what I wanted and, at that time, I was very satisfied with what I had done.

For me, it was, before all else, the technique of the official report that governed. There was, to start with, this trial, with its ways, its own technique, and that technique is what I tried to transpose to the film. There were the questions, there were the answers—very short, very crisp. There was, therefore no other solution than to place close-ups behind these replies. Each question, each answer, quite naturally called for a close-up. It was the only possibility. All of that stemmed from the technique of the official report. In addition, the result of the close-ups was that the spectator was shocked as Joan was, receiving the questions, tortured by them. And, in fact, it was my intention to get this result.

Cahiers: The thing that the heroines of Day of Wrath and Joan of Arc had in common is that they were both accused of sorcery . . .

Dreyer: Yes. And both ended on the stake . . . Except that Lisbeth Movin didn't come to it in the same fashion . . . Moreover, I envisaged another ending for *Day of Wrath* that I found nicer. You didn't see the sorceress going to the stake. You only heard a young choir boy singing the Dies Irae and, from this, you understood that she, too, was destined for the flames. However, the actual ending, in certain respects, appeared to me to be necessary. It was necessary to give a material form to the consequences of this intolerance.

With Falconetti, it often happened that, after having worked all afternoon, we hadn't succeeded in getting exactly what was required. We said to ourselves then: tomorrow we will begin again. And the next day, we would have the bad take from the day before projected, we would examine it, we would search and we always ended by finding, in that bad take, some little fragments, some little light that rendered the exact expression, the tonality we had been looking for.

It is from there that we would set out again, taking the best and abandoning the remainder. . . .

Cahiers: How did you discover that Falconetti had something to give?

Dreyer: I went to see her one afternoon and we spoke together for an hour or two. I had seen her at the theatre. A little boulevard theatre whose name I have forgotten. She was playing there in a light, modern comedy and she was very elegant in it, a bit giddy, but charming. She didn't conquer me at once and I didn't have confidence in her immediately. I simply asked her if I could come to see her the next day. And, during that visit, we talked. That is when I sensed that there was something in her to which one could make an appeal. Something that she could give: something, therefore, that I could take.

For, behind the make-up, the pose, behind that modern and ravishing appearance, there was something. There was a soul behind that façade. If I could see her remove the façade it would suffice me. So I told her that I would very much like, starting the next day, to do a screen test with her. "But without make-up," I added, "with your face completely naked."

She came, therefore, the next day ready and willing. She had taken off her make-up, we made the tests, and I found on her face exactly what I had been seeking for Joan of Arc: a rustic woman, very sincere, who was also a woman

who had suffered. But even so, this discovery did not represent a total surprise to me for, from our first meeting, this woman was very frank and, always, very surprising.

I therefore took her for the film, we always understood each other very well, we constantly worked very well. It has been said that it was I who squeezed the lemon.

I have never squeezed the lemon. I never squeezed anything. She always gave freely, with all her heart. For her heart was always committed to what she was doing.

The Passion of Joan of Arc is Dreyer's perhaps most discussed and most regularly screened film, a 'monument' of film history, a monumentality from which I find it difficult to disengage. It is a film which awaits another history of the cinema, some reassessment of the history of avant-garde and independent cinema. One thing is certain, this is not an independently produced film, but a 'mainstream' industrial product, regarded by Dreyer as his commercial breakthrough, and critics wishing to categorise the film as avant-garde, experimental etc. must take this crucial economic and ideological fact into consideration.

As Paul Willemen suggested to me during the production of this booklet:

'What appears to have disoriented journalists and critics, provoking the labels "art" and "experiment" (journalistic dumping grounds for all films not adhering totally to rules codified in Hollywood) is Dreyer's tentative emphasis within a commercial fiction film, on the poetic function of discursive practice. In other words, the process of enunciation is foregrounded and at times aggressively impinges upon the narrative, reversing the usual relation of dominance between the two levels.'

The trial, Joan's passion, which constitutes that narrative, results in her apparent submission. She accepts the removal of her man's clothing—a sign of the "trouble" she causes—and makes the transition to the "appropriate" place of women, i.e. that of suffering femininity. The degree of suffering involved in that submission forcing her retraction and her final annihilation. In fact the image of the burning is particularly significant in the Dreyer-text. Joan is punished for her daring to demand and assume the supreme signifier of desire, the phallus (in her man's clothing). By "unmasking" her, the male inquisition defines her as a woman, but she still remains a desiring woman. This means that when she arrives at the place the male order reserves for the female (i.e. a place defined by patriarchy as "elsewhere" as outside) her passion, her desire can only be eradicated, effaced by the disintegration of her very body. A purification by fire in which the fire functions as a double edged image.

As the male/symbolic order is there to contain desire, the female, identified with the danger of the breakthrough of pure desire/the semiotic, when "put in her place" by patriarchy, cannot but be engulfed by the "fires" of desire. In this way, the fire is in fact a male signifier for representing female desire. It is in this trouble of the feminine, the motor of the fiction, which also constitutes the "trouble" of the narration, disrupting the "impersonal", god-like narration characteristic of classic cinema, and thus foregrounding the process of enunciation, the discursive process itself. But once again the discursive marks double the "trouble" of the fiction: the sadistic aggression on the body of the fictional Joan perpetrated by the inquisitors, is doubled by the cinematic

aggression of the image of Joan/Falconetti, aggressing the integrity of her face. Other examples are provided by the fragmentation of the image where a "classic" style would have striven towards homogeneity, as pointed out by Tom Milne in his book on Dreyer when he refers to "the irritating cross cutting which ruins the beautiful scene where Joan smiles at seeing a cross on the floor of her cell made by the shadow of her barred window, fragmenting it *unnecessarily!*" (my emphasis). This scene in fact offers a double fragmentation: the syntagmatic fragmentation produced by the cross-cutting and the compositional fragmentation of the image.'

1932 Vampyr

Production

Tobis-Klangfilm (Berlin) and Carl Dreyer
Filmproduktion (Paris).

Producers

Dreyer, Nicolas de Gunzburg

Script

Dreyer, Christen Jul. Freely adapted from the collection of short stories by Sheridan Le Fanu, *Through a Glass Darkly*

Directors of Photography

Rudolph Maté, Louis Néé

Art Directors

Hermann Warm, Hans Bittmann, Cesare Silvagni

Music

Wolfgang Zeller

Julian West, i.e. Nicolas de Gunzburg (*David Gray*), Henriette Gérard (*Marguerite Chopin, the Vampire*), Jan Hieronimko (*The Doctor*), Maurice Schutz (*The owner of the castle*), Sybille Schmitz (*Leonce*), Rena Mandel (*Gisèle*), Albert Bras and A. Babanini (*Servants*), Jane Mora (*The nurse*).

Running time: 70 mins.

My detailed analysis of *Vampyr* (*Screen*, vol. 17 nr. 3) discussing its point-of-view structures and its discursive system, concluded with the following remarks:

Todorov divides the content of the literary fantastic into two semantic classes, themes of the 'I' and themes of the 'you', the 'non-I'. The former class are concerned with the structuring of the relationship between man and the world, the world perceived through his eyes, his 'I', his consciousness, the relation of the structuring subject to its objects. The fantastic tends to put this relationship into question, the problem of vision becoming a main thematic. The latter class concern the dynamic relations of human action in the world through the mediation of others, and are characterised in the fantastic by themes of discourse and desire, the latter in excessive forms as well as in its various transformations (perversions) in themes of cruelty, violence, death, life after death, corpses and vampires. On the expression plane, these are arranged by the use of the narrative sub-code, often as first-person narration. As far as the text of *Vampyr* is concerned, the themes of the cinematic fantastic are similar to those of the literary fantastic. The pronoun functions, part of the narrative sub-code, which also includes the *grande syntagmatique* insofar as it is applicable, are necessary for narration, though not specific to the fantastic. The interventions of *discours* create disruptions in the plane of expression corresponding to those on the plane of content, and as such the interventions of *discours* participate in the realisation of the fantastic in this particular text. In addition, however, these marks of

authorial presence function as part of an authorial code/sub-code which can be shown to have other manifestations in this and other texts, thematically—e.g. 'narcissism', a concern common to the fantastic and to other texts by Dreyer—and structurally—e.g. the 'disruptive' continuities in *Joan of Arc*.

It might seem appropriate to separate more clearly two 'levels' of uncertainty in the text: that relating to the status of what Gray sees (is the father 'real', is the body in the coffin 'real?'); and that relating to the 'undermining' of the position of the reader, who is in a relation of uncertainty to the whole text as is Gray to his part in it, the reader not knowing how to read the whole text which includes the uncertainty of David Gray about his own perceptions. Analysis of other cinefantastic texts would enable one to establish whether the configuration of character 'I' and authorial 'I' peculiar to *Vampyr* is also characteristic of the genre. One could certainly imagine a text using only 'conventional' coding still raising issues of uncertainty by refusing to mark sections as to whether they pertain to dream or to reality. One could also imagine the reverse, for instance E. T. A. Hoffman's *The Sandman* rewritten by James Joyce so that the problematic of vision would effect systematic displacements at the level of spelling, choice of substantives referring to vision, syntax, and so on, yet the structure as a fantastic text would remain the same. Whether the insistence of *discours* is specific to the economy of *Vampyr* as a metonymic displacement from the uncertainty at the level of content, or is rather characteristic of the cinefantastic as a genre, can only be deduced after analysis of other possible members of that genre, which has yet to be done. At the present stage the demands of economy in analysis require the hypothesis of a code of pronoun functions to cover both these types of facts.

The fantastic is predicated on the category of reality: 'The reader and the hero . . . must decide if a certain event or phenomenon belongs to reality or to imagination, that is, must determine whether or not it is real. It is therefore the category of the real which has furnished a basis for our definition of the fantastic' (Todorov).^{*} A dialectic between the categories of the real and the unreal characterised the thinking of the 19th century: ' . . . In a metaphysics of the real and the imaginary, and the literature of the fantastic is nothing but the bad conscience of this positivist era' (Todorov). The 20th century, on the contrary, has tended to emphasise the autonomy of the text from any 'real' referent; it is the era of the modernist text, of Joyce, the *nouveau roman*, etc. In the cinema, however, this 19th century debate persists in the issue of realism, the problem of the 'reality' of the cinematic referent. The fantastic text is not modernist in the sense say of Robbe-Grillet's *L'Immortelle*, where there is only a reversible series of representations, where the issue of diegetic reality is irrelevant, but it is progressive in that in it the category of the real is at least under scrutiny.

Now, having further investigated the structures of subjectivity at play in the Dreyer-text, the above conclusion appears, although still valid, to be stopping short at a somewhat formalist level of analysis.

Vampyr does indeed function according to the rules which Tzvetan Todorov found to be characteristic of the fantastic in literature, i.e. the systematic inscription of hesitation. The question of the reality status of the fictional events is constantly posed to the implied reader, who is then forced to hesitate between mutually

exclusive explanations: in this event 'real' or 'supernatural'? This type of systematic undercutting of certainty occurs in a number of Dreyer's films, e.g. *Joan of Arc*, *Ordet*, *Day of Wrath*, *They Caught the Ferry*. It also occurs in *Gertrud* in the form of the question: What is real for the subject? or rather, what is real for Gertrud? who, in the words she is forced to misrecognise as hers, has never lived. The most striking inscriptions of this principle of hesitation in Dreyer's films, opening up an understanding of what is at stake beyond a mere formalist identification of the strategy, resolves around problems of witchcraft. The previous notes on the Dreyer-text showed that witchcraft functions as a terrain on which social definitions of sexed identity intersect with the fundamental bisexuality of desire as libidinal energy. It is perhaps another merit of the Dreyer-text that it so clearly draws attention to the questions underlying Todorov's principle of uncertainty: the questions provoked by the fantastic as a genre are not simply of the order: is this real, or not?, but directly address the question of the sexed identity of the subject. The process of the socialisation of desire, its containment by and within the cultural order, clearly implies a fixing of what is male and/or female. Transgressions of this rigorously enforced cultural distinction between sex-roles are punished in several ways (e.g. *Joan of Arc*, the witches in *Day of Wrath* and *Vampyr*, who all exceed the limitations imposed on female desire by the male order). In fact, the questions provoked in the implied viewer by the structure of the fantastic text, are diegeticised in Dreyer's films in the form of a confusion of sex-roles or identities: Joan of Arc is dressed in man's clothing, the 'Vampyr' is of an indeterminate sex. In return, this direct diegetic representation of the question: what sex is this person?, rebounds on the viewer, who is at the other end of the look binding text and spectator together, and is there transformed into the question: what sex am I? Or, in simpler terms, it raises the problem of bisexuality and its mode of representation, of inscription in discursive systems.

1942 Mødrehjælpen

(Good Mothers)

Production

Script

Director of Photography

Music

Narrator

Running time: 12 mins.

Mogens Skot-Hansen Nordisk Films Kompagni for
Dansk Kulturfilm and Ministerierne Filmudvalg.

Dreyer

Verner Jensen, Poul Gram

Poul Schierbeck

Ebbe Neergaard

During the Nazi occupation, the state production of documentary films, insisting on a clear and socially conscious line, was intended as a discreet countermeasure to Nazi newsreels. *Good Mothers* is a good instance of this, describing, through the experiences of one mother, the social facilities of pre- and post-natal care available. The celebrated 'autonomy' of Dreyer's camera is much in evidence. As in a number of his short films, the role of music is important in giving the film a unity it might otherwise not possess. In this case, that unity is the all too familiar ideology of 'the state cares for everyone'. In a slightly modified form and with an English commentary, this film was also nr. 2 in the *Social Denmark* series of documentaries.

^{*}The book referred to is: Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic, a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Cleveland, Ohio, 1975.

1943 Vredens Dag

(Day of Wrath)
Production

Script

Palladium Film
Dreyer, Mogens Skot-Hansen, Poul Knudsen. Based on
the play *Anne Pedersdatter* by Hans Wierts-Jenssen.

Director of Photography

Karl Andersson

Art Director

Erik Aaes, Lis Friberg

Music

Poul Schierbeck

Editors

Edith Schlüssel, Anne Marie Petersen

Thorkild Roose (*Absalon Pedersson*), Lisbeth Movin (*Anne Pedersdatter*), Sigrd

Neiiendam (*Merete, Absalon's mother*), Preben Lerdorff Rye (*Martin*), Anna

Svierkier (*Marte Herlof*), Albert Høberg (*The Bishop*), Olaf Ussing (*Laurentius*),

Sigurd Berg (*Choirmaster*).

Running time: 100 mins.

In an interview with *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Dreyer made the following points about the

aesthetics of composition and rhythm:

D. '... in a long shot the rhythm comes automatically with movement.'

CdC. 'In the horizontal travelling shots, you say that the eye easily follows objects... but

there are moments when the eye is stopped by verticals.'

D. 'That's how one obtains a dramatic effect. In *Day of Wrath* the witch is tied onto a

long ladder, which is vertical and stays there just until the signal to let her fall is

given, and then this change gives a great dramatic effect,—that's the vertical effect.'

CdC. 'You play with vertical and horizontal lines. In doing so, do you know exactly what

effect you are going to obtain?'

D. 'Yes, I think so. In *Day of Wrath*, I started to use long shots with slowish rhythm,

because when serious things are in question, the replies mustn't come too quick: in

this type of film one must have time to hear and understand the reply, not let the word

on the screen escape.'

In 'A Little on Film Style (1943), Dreyer develops these points at some length,

elaborating on the formal values of horizontal and vertical, the rhythm and length of

shot. Regarding oppositions between *Day of Wrath* and his traditional procedure of

purification, he commented:

'*Day of Wrath* was a play I saw in 1920. But, at that time, it was still too soon to

make the film. Therefore I put the play in a drawer and, later, in 1943-1944, I

took it up again and began thinking about how one might transpose it, as

cinematically as possible. For that, I was obliged to proceed exactly as I had

already done previously, but even more so: I had to clean the text as much

as possible.

If I proceed in this way, it is because I believe that in the cinema, one may not

permit what is permissible in the theatre. In the theatre, you have words. And

the words fill the space, hang in the air. You can hear them, feel them, experience

their weight. But in the cinema the words are very quickly relegated to a

background which absorbs them and that is why you may retain only words

which are absolutely necessary. The essential is sufficient.'

Jean-Louis Cornolli regarded *Day of Wrath* as the key to Dreyer's work. He

wrote:

'A focal point in an *oeuvre* to which it is manifestly the key—a readily

decipherable blueprint—*Day of Wrath* simultaneously assembles, organises and defines the signals coming (of course) from *Joan of Arc* and *Leaves from Satan's Book*, and in its turn irradiates *Ordet* and even *Gertrud*—in Anne, the heroine of *Day of Wrath*, there is something, though in a natural and almost savage state, of Gertrud. But the relationship to *Vampyr*, though less direct, proves to be even more fertile. In a sense *Day of Wrath* shows the diurnal, "sacred" or "sublime" side of the same conflict between the "innocent" and the "devotees" (of blood in one film, of Christ in the other, each akin to the other, indeed exact equivalents on the level of myth, and equivalent furthermore in their terrorism): a tragedy (classical in every sense) as opposed to *Vampyr's* tale of the fantastic (in direct descent from the corresponding German literary genre); harsh, violent contrasts between black and white, as opposed to their equivocal marriage in the greys of *Vampyr*.

But superimposing these two films also brings out the exact contours of the theme of intolerance in *Day of Wrath* (and by extension in the entire *oeuvre*): it is both more and worse than the particular circumstance of a dogmatism run mad at a more or less specific historical time; it becomes the condition, even the rule of any society (whether that of the devout or that of the vampires), it is the terror which lies at the root of any order. "No intolerance, ideological intransigence or proselytism but reveals the brutish basis of enthusiasm," says Cioran. "One kills only in the name of a God or its imitations: the excesses aroused by the goddess Reason, by the idea of nation, class or race are akin to those of the Inquisition and the Reformation." The displacement is thus effected revealing that in Dreyer's work it is the face of authority in power (here priest and pastors, elsewhere politicians and bourgeois) that is aimed at and pierced behind the corporate mask of God.

What makes this displacement possible, curiously enough, is that *Day of Wrath* is one of the very rare films to answer the classical definitions of tragedy: from the outset, in fact, the conflict is established, the trap set, the outcome inevitable (and proclaimed by the mother); these are not "characters" confronting each other—so no psychological digression becomes necessary—but two antagonistic forces, two ideas: against the forces of life are ranged those of the repressive system; they are stated from the outset, integral, immutable, obdurate; but with the same inevitability that makes the initial malediction come true, the exception is defeated by the rule, and the logic of power destroys the revolt by life.

So the feeling of horror in *Day of Wrath*, the sense of intolerable tragedy, springs from nothing else but this ineluctability. It is not the witches who terrify but the arbiters of justice; and the "wrath of God" is only the more monstrous in being interpreted by these coldly frigid men (ghosts or vampires, already dead) as much as by these glacially chilling forms.'

The trials and burning of the witch are presented as the responsibility of men. Women may appear in the crowd, but that is all. Besides signifying 17th century patriarchal social relations with men representing both the law and God, this fact also dramatises, inversely, the mechanism of conversion hysteria. The woman who challenges the male order with her own desire, belief in her own power (Anne), insistence on masculine dress and her access to God unmediated by the (male) church (Joan), is represented to the social body as literally consumed in her (by

definition) evil desire, so misrecognised by the social body that desire is 'thrown out' with the body of the woman, its constant return necessitating constant vigilance and the certainty of future victims.

The process of symptom formation in conversion hysteria is inscribed in the body of the text in the form of its obsessive return to the witch, emphasising that it isn't a matter of one individual witch, but a constant stream of women repressed in their own desire and marked by that of men. Indeed, witchcraft, the expression of desire, is considered to be contagious, as evidenced by the flame in Anne's eyes.

As desire begins to burn in Anne, i.e. as she claims the right to become a sexual being, the film's narrative and semantic structures once more betray the male cultural discourse presiding over its organisation. Although Anne's desire is positive in relation to the puritanical oppression incarnated by Absalon and the church fathers, but nevertheless rendered guilty because of the disturbing effects a 'sexual mother' is supposed to have on her son, Martin. His desire being provoked (in terms of the film) by Anne, he must leave the house. Indeed, it was this aspect of the film which was supposed to be of overwhelming interest to viewers in rural Italy, where it was released under the title: *The Lover of His Mother*.

* * *

1944 Två Människor

(Two People)

Production

Producer

Script

Director of Photography

Art Director

Music

Editors

Georg Rydeberg (Dr. Arne Lidell), Wanda Rothgardt (Marianne), Gabriel Alw.

Running time: 78 mins.

Svensk Filmindustri (Stockholm)

Hugo Bolander

Dreyer, Martin Glanner. Based on the play *Attentat* by

W. O. Somlin.

Gunnar Fischer

Nils Svenwall

Lars-Erik Larsson

Dreyer, Edvin Hammarberg

CdC: 'Don't you think that this film also has a certain relationship to *Gertrud*?'
D: 'Oh no! There is absolutely no comparison. And it is a film that was doomed from the start, completely.'

The story is constructed around the events of a single day in the flat-cum-laboratory of a Swedish doctor, Arne Lidell, and which the camera never leaves except for a flashback, and in which his relationship with his wife, Marianne, is subjected to the pressure of a crime which threatens to overwhelm them both. The crime, the murder of a Professor Zander, who was apparently blackmailing Marianne threatening to reveal a past sexual relationship which ceased when she met Arne. His price was that she inform him of the results of Arne's work. She accepted his terms because she wanted their marriage to continue. So their marriage continues (if it was ever seriously threatened) at the price of Arne's work (cf *Gertrud* 'Women's love and men's work are enemies from the start'). The film sets up an equation between her childlessness and the destruction of his work (his symbolic child), a process most clearly marked in the final scene: the death of the couple shows her cradling Arne in her arms like a dead child, singing a lullaby to him as she dies. In other words, like Inger in *Ordet*, she becomes a mother as she dies.

This film appears the most melodramatic of all Dreyer's films. Its credit sequence contains images and music worthy of Douglas Sirk. Yet the articulation of the woman's point-of-view, so evident in Sirk's films, remains unclear—at least on one viewing. The film is also interesting for the rigour with which the tragic unities of space, time and place are maintained, disrupted only by the shadowy figure of Zander. The rest of the world only intrudes in the form of messages: letters, newspapers and the radio. Moreover, the camera-work and the way subjectivity is inscribed by/in relation to it, appears similar to the kind of disjunctions Burch and Dana described in *Gertrud*. *Two People* is not nearly as uninteresting as Dreyer makes out. It is only Dreyer who always insisted on total control, who would think of disclaiming responsibility for a film which he could only imperfectly control. If John Ford or Sternberg ever had been granted as much control over their work as Dreyer had over *Two People* . . .

* * *

1946 Vandet På Landet

(Water from the Land)

Production

Script

Director of Photography

Music

Narrators

Running time: 11 mins.

Palladium Film for Ministeriet Filmudvalg.
Dreyer

Preben Frank

Poul Schierbeck

Henrik Malberg, Asbjørn Andersen

Water from the Land was begun under the occupation, but banned before release because of its disturbing/inaccurate picture of the health of the water supply in rural Denmark. The material in the Danish archive suggests that the film showed the contamination of a well by rats, human excreta and traffic, then the passage of that polluted water around the house and its connection with outbreaks of typhoid. One shot of a baby sucking a typhus infected sponge was probably too much for the

Dreyer emphatically refuses any responsibility for this film: '[the film] doesn't exist.'

Cahiers du cinéma: 'But I've seen it. I am thus in the position of having a point of view. It exists.'

Dreyer: You know, for this film, I was placed in a precarious situation. It was in 1944. I was told that perhaps I was in danger, because of the Germans. Therefore I left for Stockholm with *Day of Wrath*, for the official reason of selling the film. Then I stayed in Stockholm and wanted to make this little film. Unfortunately, the producer decided to choose the actors himself. He wanted a great career. Well, the actors in question represented the exact opposite of what I would have wanted. And, for me, the actors are extremely important. Thus, I wanted the woman to be a bit theatrical, a little hysterical, and, for the actor for the part of the scientist, I wanted a man with blue eyes, naive but completely honest, who was interested in nothing but his work. Well, they gave me an actress who was the personification of a little bourgeoisie and, for the man, instead of a blue-eyed idealist, I was given an intriguing demoniac with brown eyes . . .

authorities. It goes on to depict the building of a new system of water supply and the drilling of a new, more hygienic well. The source of the water supply and the percolation of surface water into the well are clearly illustrated with diagrams. The typhoid problem is highlighted by a montage of newspaper cuttings. It could have been a very useful and shocking film about the need for piped water and hygienic construction (and health education). Not particularly socially radical as a film on a similar topic by Joris Ivens would have been (no mention of the causes for people's ignorance, their lack of resources) the shots address the viewer via careful, slow panning movements.

1947 Landsbykirken

(The Danish Village Church)

Production Preben Frank Film for Dansk Kulturfilm
 Script Dreyer, Bernhard Jensen.
 Director of Photography Preben Frank
 Music Svend Erik Tarp
 Commentary Dreyer, Ib Koch-Olsen
 Narrator Ib Koch-Olsen
 Running Time: 14 mins.

To a commentary by a parson, this film shows the development of rural church architecture from the earliest simple wooden churches to the present day. Using a model, this history is then reversed and a similar history of the changing interior, and relation of the audience to the ritual, from spectators to congregation, is presented. Throughout, the 'sparse' aesthetic of the Reformation receives a lot of emphasis. With its backward and forward movement, the film inscribes the continuity of the church's relation with the community and the libidinal investment it represents, creating a 'memory' of religion.

1947 Kampen mod Kraeften

(The Struggle Against Cancer)

Production Preben Frank Film for Dansk Kulturfilm
 Script Dreyer, Carl Krebs
 Director of Photography Preben Frank
 Music Peter Deutsch
 Narrator Albert Luther
 Running Time: 15 mins.

1948 De Naede Faergen

(They Caught the Ferry)

Production Dansk Kulturfilm for Ministeriernes Filmudvalg.
 Script Dreyer, based on a short story by Johannes V. Jensen.

Director of Photography Jørgen Roos
 Running Time: 12 mins.

This film is basically an extension of a short story by J. V. Jensen, who received the Nobel prize for literature in 1944. It links the story of a motorcycling couple's encounter with death as they rush across an island to catch the ferry, to a moral lesson about speeding and road safety. There is virtually no dialogue, a fact which may account for much of the film's effectivity.

1949 Thorvaldsen

Production Preben Frank Film for Dansk Kulturfilm
 Script Dreyer, Preben Frank
 Director of Photography Preben Frank
 Music Svend Erik Tarp
 Narrator Ib Koch-Olsen
 Running Time: 10 mins.

A documentary about the famous 19th century sculptor whose style was described in *The Oxford Companion to Art* as 'lucid and harmonious, perhaps over-studied' and 'somewhat anaemic by reason of the unrelieved whiteness.' This latter remark, juxtaposed to Dreyer's declaration of love for white walls, indicates why Dreyer may have been interested in Thorvaldsen's work. What the *Oxford Companion* described as 'over-studied' is in fact a particular combination of repression and sensual excess, another possible reason for Dreyer's interest. The film is about a few of Thorvaldsen's major pieces, including those executed for Copenhagen Cathedral. In its movement around the sculptures the camera creates an equivalence between itself and the imagined spectator's eyes caressing the sculpture.

1950 Storstrømsbroen

(The Storstrøm Bridge)

Production Preben Frank Film for Dansk Kulturfilm
 Script Dreyer
 Director of Photography Preben Frank
 Music Svend S. Schultz
 Running Time: 7 mins.

This film continues the strategy of *Thorvaldsen*, e.g. the movement of the camera around an object (this time Denmark's longest bridge linking the islands of Seeland and Falster) which is fragmented by the montage of differently angled shots but 'reassembled' by the rhythm of camera movement and music. There is no commentary, as in Joris Ivens' *The Bridge*, but whereas that film betrayed a fascination with machinery and the functioning of the bridge as a means of communication in relation to road, rail and shipping traffic, *The Storstrøm Bridge* merely celebrates the existence of the bridge itself.

1957 Et Slot i et Slot

(The Castle within the Castle)
Production Teknisk Film Co. for Dansk Kulturfilm
Script Dreyer
Director of Photography Jørgen Roos
Narrator Sven Ludvigsen
Running Time: 9 mins.

This is a useful 'architectural' film about the ruins of the castle 'Krogen' discovered within the Kronborg castle at Helsingør, which replaced it. Dreyer's mark can be seen in the carefulness of the lighting with characteristic pools of highlight, the simplicity of composition tending to the minimal, and the very slow camera pans. The use of dissolves and wipes to show architectural changes is very effective. As in *Danish Village Church* the film emphasises historical continuity.

* * *

1954 Ordet

(The Word)
Production Palladium Film
Producer Erik Nielsen
Script Dreyer. Based on the play by Kaj Munk
Director of Photography Henning Bendsten
Art Director Erik Aaes
Music Poul Schierbeck
Editor Edith Schlüssel

Henrik Malberg (*Morten Borgen*), Emil Hass Christensen (*Mikkel*), Preben Lerdorff Rye (*Johannes*), Cay Kristiansen (*Anders*), Birgitte Federspiel (*Inger*), Ejner Federspiel (*Peter, the tailor*), Sylvia Eckhausen (*his wife Kirstine*), Gerda Nielsen (*Anne, his daughter*), Ove Rud (*The Pastor*), Henry Skjaer (*The Doctor*), Anne Elizabeth (*Maren*), Susanne (*little Inger*), Sylvia Eckhausen (*Peter's wife*), Hanne Aagesen (*Karen*), Edith Trane (*Mette Maren*).
Running time: 126 mins.

Regarding the history and the cultural impact of the religious conflict presented in *Ordet*, Dreyer said:

'I was so much happier doing *Order* when I felt myself very close to the conceptions of Kaj Munk. He always spoke well of love. I mean to say, of love in general, between people, as well as love in marriage, true marriage. For Kaj Munk, love was not only the beautiful and good thoughts that can link man and woman, but also a very profound bond. And for him there was no difference between sacred and profane love. Look at *Ordet*. The father is saying, "She is dead . . . she is no longer here. She is in heaven . . ." and the son answers, "Yes but I loved her body too . . ."

What is beautiful, in Kaj Munk, is that he understood that God did not separate these two forms of love. That is why he didn't separate them either. But this form of Christianity is opposed by another form, a somber and fanatic faith.'

Cahiers du cinéma: The first form relates, I believe, in Denmark, to the reform of Grundtvig, and the second to the ideas of the Interior Mission, born of the teachings of

Kierkegaard. These are the two forms that define—or defines—the Danish faith. Did you experience this opposition?

D.: The latter form of Christianity, severe, often fanatic, which establishes a divorce between thought and action, is above all the faith of western Jutland. Me, I'm from Seeland . . . But I remember certain cases . . . Yes: one time in particular, an affair made quite a stir, born of the intransigence of a priest of the Interior Mission. He had given proof, in his church, of a particularly outrageous violence and harshness. The entire country was shocked by it. Everyone rose against this black Christianity. The Everyone opposed him with the other form of Christianity: clear, joyous, illuminated . . . This is the antagonism incarnated by the rich farmer and the poor tailor.

But Kaj Munk, who obviously had sympathy for that bright form of Christianity (which, in the play, is that of the farmer), also had some for the other. He understood that there was much good faith among them, that they sincerely believed, acting as they did, they were living up to the mission of Jesus, which for them excluded indulgence. There was the same problem with this priest I spoke of, who was more Christian than Jesus himself; who burned, or believed he burned, with the same fire as he.

CdC.: I believe that a large part of Danish literature at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th was influenced by this struggle.'

D.: Yes. Denmark was marked by a schism. In France you had something analogous at the time of Jansenism. For me, that also relates to a question I have always posed myself: that of tolerance and intolerance. That intolerance between two religious parties is a thing I did not like. Never have I accepted intolerance.

In *Day of Wrath*, for example, Christians show their intolerance for those who are attached to remnants of ancient religions, to superstitions.

In her review of the film, Sylvie Pierre attached less importance to the religious aspects of the film, focussing more on its construction and *mise-en-scène*:

'Its qualities too often evaluated on the same "elevated" level as its subject—and after all, expectations of tedium are surely justified concerning a film whose subject is no less than a miracle of faith—*Ordet* suffers, one might say, from too high a reputation. Happily, however, embalmed in respect, it is reborn again at each new viewing, as though the metaphor of its own life were being realised in its fiction.'

As in all of Dreyer's films except *Vampyr*—even those where the script is not adapted, as here, from a play—the life in *Ordet* is first and foremost that of the theatre. For it has of course nothing to do with filmed theatre. If I examine the theatricality of *Ordet* (and not of *Gertrud*, even though more exemplary), it is because a number of affiliations, transpositions and metamorphoses make their appearance here in a particularly subtle and flexible manner in order that certain theatrical necessities, become an option for the cinema, should nevertheless not restrict the latter's freedom but rather enhance it.

1. Rarefaction of the settings. The principal setting in *Ordet*, Borgensgaard, is both enclosed in its unity (by the shots showing it from outside) and articulated as separate cells—different rooms—whose constellation is oriented, in the very image of a family hearth, by a central communal room. A setting ceaselessly explored, exploited in whole or in part—Who will finally put the myth of Dreyer's immobile camera out of its misery? ("It is important to have a

live and mobile camera fluidly following the characters, even on a close-up, so that the décor constantly changes place": Dreyer, *Cahiers*, nr. 127).

2. Density of the characters. Here concerned less with any solemnity or hieratic manner as a priori formal system of emphases (being "theatrical") than, in the case of the Borgen grandfather and his daughter-in-law Inger, with the tangibly rendered reality (Inger's marvellous movements as she bakes) of the peasant-aristocracy nature of the characters. As for the authority of Johannes the fool, it comes paradoxically from a sort of absence of weight in him—as though his own absentmindedness made his authority more weighty—from the eventuality of a levitation.

3. Speech as substance of the film. A speech in the literal, edifying sense which, from word to word makes both spectator and film hang on its enunciation.

The most remarkable thing about *Ordet*, however, is that the spoken word (of which it has been perhaps too often said, making facile reference to the mystical connotations of The Word, that it is the subject of the film) is not in fact equally weighted and saturated with meaning throughout the film. Doubtless the tone at times became overweighted, momentous, and lest it become too much so and therefore meaningless, had to be interrupted by an astonishing number of scenes in which the characters drink coffee, or have its solemnity counteracted by the homespun simplicity of a kitchen, the crudity of a pigsty. To this end, Dreyer (as he has himself explained: see *Cahiers*, nrs. 127 and 170) also employs a technique of decompressing speech—here, by simplifying the dialogue from the play—which acknowledges the different kind of word space in the cinema: the shot space, which limits more or less to its duration the different verbal remanences—sound, emotion, music. Hence the simplicity of the Word in *Ordet*.

4. Abstraction. The theatre is more abstract than the cinema: a commonplace whose ineptitude Dreyer demonstrates by making his film even more abstract than Kaj Munk's play, which he reduces to a scenario highly theoretical in structure, restricted to two dimensions:

—One is vertical: the contrast between the tailor's dark Christianity and the grandfather's enlightened faith, with between them a sort of tertiary religious sector where two apathies meet: the functional ministry of the pastor, and the hesitant rationalism of the doctor.

—The other is horizontal, within the Borgensgaard farm, where the grandfather's faith is countered by the three forms of religious aberration—misalliance, atheism, mystical mania—perpetrated by his three sons. "The talking picture is thus seen to be like a play in concentrated form" (Dreyer, *Cahiers* nr. 127).'

The diegesis of this film is open to a number of contradictory readings. For instance Bjorn Rasmussen, in the magazine *Catholica* (1955), asserts that the film will serve Christianity more because 'Dreyer has depicted the miracle of faith without giving in to the sneaking underlying doubt one always finds a trace of in the poet [Kaj Munk] himself. For Rasmussen the necessary faith which both 'bright' and 'dark' interpretations of Christianity lack is provided for in the final scene by the child's faith in her uncle Johannes. The film, he says, is a 'simply sublime' sermon. Rather, what seems to me very clear in this film is the persistence of a certain aspect

of the fantastic which I described in relation to *Vampyr*, i.e. the uncertainty—principle. Are the events miraculous, do they represent divine intervention, or is there a 'rational' explanation? The text is very carefully constructed around a range of positions: from the scientific rationalism of the doctor to Inger and her child's belief in daily miracles, via Mikkel Borgen's stubborn unbelief and the preacher's scepticism. In a sense, it is the doctor who is most prepared to accept the 'resurrection' because of its challenge to the explanatory schemes of modern science. Dreyer also makes this point somewhere in an interview when he claims that new perspectives have been opened up by the relativity theory 'that make us realise a deep connection between exact science and intuitive religion. The new science brings us closer to a deeper understanding of the divine and is well on the way to giving a natural explanation for supernatural things.' This uncertainty is foregrounded, for instance, when the doctor's car leaves, the light from his headlamps throwing a shadow on the door leading to Inger's room. Is this merely a shadow or is it, as Johannes thinks, the scythe of Death.

1961 Gertrud

Production

Palladium Film

Script

Dreyer. Based on the play by Hjalmar Söderberg.

Director of Photography

Henning Bendtsen

Art Director

Kaj Rasch

Music

Jørgen Jersild

Songs

Grethe Risbjerg Thomsen

Editor

Edith Schlüssel

Nina Pens Rode (*Gertrud*), Bendt Rothe (*Gustav Kanning*), Ebbe Rode (*Gabriel Lidman*), Baard Owe (*Erland Jansson*), Axel Strøbye (*Axel Nygren*), Vera Gebuhr (*The Kanning's maid*), Anna Malberg (*Kanning's mother*), Eduard Mielche (*The Rector Magnificus*).

Running time: 115 mins.

Regarding his choice of subject matter, Dreyer said in an interview published in *Films and Filming* (Vol.7, nr. 9):

'I had chosen the work of Hjalmar Söderberg because his conception of tragedy is more modern, he was overshadowed far too long by the other giants, Ibsen and Strindberg. Why did I say he was "more modern"? Well, instead of suicide and other grand gestures in the tradition of pathetic tragedy, Söderberg preferred the bitter tragedy of having to go on living even though ideals and happiness have been destroyed . . . But what is so fascinating about Söderberg, and I think you can apply it to our present-day society, is that conflicts materialise out of apparently trivial conversations. In simple terms, his characters frequently fail to communicate, and mean different things with the same words. The doctrines of love held by Gertrud might be interpreted to mean "Love is all . . . Either her ideal of love fully realised or else loneliness" . . . I think we shall see the new generation giving greater recognition to the genius of Söderberg.'

Dreyer absolutely rejects any accusations of 'artificiality' in relation to *Gertrud*: 'Obviously, the dialogue is not artificial! I simply wanted to make a film that is

set in a certain period—the turn of the century—and that unfolds in a well-defined milieu. It is therefore certain that the language reflects something of this time and this milieu, that it possesses a special coloration. Good actors understand the necessity for this work. They know that poetic phrases must be brought out in a certain fashion, with a certain rhythm, and every day speech in another fashion. And it is not only the tone that is concerned.

If you are in front of a screen, at the cinema, you have the tendency to follow everything that unfolds on it, which is different from the theatre where the words move through space and exist there, hanging in the air. At the cinema, as soon as they left the screen, the words die. Therefore I tried to make little pauses in order to give the spectator the possibility of assimilating what he hears, of thinking about it. That gives the dialogue a certain rhythm, a certain style.

In addition, it is a proof of stupidity not to recognise the very important role of the dialogue. Each subject implies a certain voice. And one must pay attention to that. And it is necessary to find a possibility for expressing the voice as much as one can. It is very dangerous to limit oneself to a certain form, a certain style.

I would very much like to have made *Gertrud* in colour. I even had a certain Swedish painter in mind, who has studied the period in which the film takes place and who has made many drawings and paintings in which he utilises very special colours.

The painter of whom I speak, whose name is Halman, above all does drawings for newspapers. You know, these big coloured pages for the Sunday edition. It is very pretty and done with very few colours. Four or five at the most. It is in that spirit that I would have wanted to do *Gertrud*. Soft colours, few in number, that go well together.

The main essay in this booklet devotes quite a lot of attention to *Gertrud*, and to avoid repeating myself, I would like to quote, *in extenso*, André Technic's perceptive review of the film:

'After a long silence, Dreyer begins to speak. No need to wonder whether this is a testament or a summing-up: the simple fact that he has taken the floor suffices to warrant our attention. We know from Blanchot that speech replaces the concrete by an essential equilibrium close to immobility. Structured in separate fragments, the film imposes an initial perspective. Indeed, this structure decants the dramatic effect in that it proclaims through highly allusive verses what colouring the events presented will assume. The apparent chronology of the narrative introduces no inflections to its unfolding. There is really no evolution or succession, because the present is never lived as it emerges but as it is spoken, i.e. already thought. Man leaves his passions to turn to words. The gesture accomplished by the actors clearly indicates this intention. Being preeminently a peaceful gesture, the act of sitting down permits a recuperation of forces, a certain detachment that impels the voices to take stock. In the way the decor is used, the seat becomes the stimulant element: the benches in the park, the rim of a fountain, the various armchairs, even the stool at the end. The film space in which the characters talk is never in direct contact with Nature, with the apparent exception of the scene in the park, but "The nature found in gardens is not the country meadow but an evocation, an artifice, a dream; it should be added that the dream develops only on condition that the person strolling through it moves as though conducted by music". (Baltrusaitis and Starobinski.)

Everything happens in interiors, indeed in "chamber" (as one would say of music), because these figures considered in their totality plastically incarnate all possible landscapes. "You are the moon, the sky, the sea..."*** According to the process to which Dreyer has remained faithful, filming an attitude, a facial tremor, is enough to open perspectives instead of closing them. It is not so much the amplification as the reduction which liberates and suspends the meaning. Corresponding to the constant hierographic impulse traversing the bodies is the call to song as the culmination of speech. Directed towards a seat, a movement abolishes the nature of the decor as "appliance", purifies it of any functional element. And the speech instigated is no longer purposive, is no longer addressed to the real considered as a field of action, but sets up a sort of echo, a sound capsule of troubles lived and therefore past. The words are no longer pronounced but effaced by the preponderance of rhythmic fluidity. Perhaps this vocalisation should be compared to the modulation effected by Mizoguchi in *The Empress Yang Kwei Fei* (but not in *Sansho the Bailiff* or *Ugetsu Monogatari*, because the kingdom of man is no longer the only one apprehended).

The film makes visible the final stages of the acquisition of the order of language, acknowledging the living movement from which it has become detached and with which it will never again merge. This is not so much dream as the death of another life, slowed down, equable, continuing, as though cast off. Until the body, itself speaking, finally disappears in the final absence of decor, or lingers as a landmark, a springboard, a trace.

As for Dreyer's modernity, perhaps the open doors should be battered down since they are not open to all. Like Mankiewicz, Guitry or Godard (for example), unlike Cacoyannis (*Electra*) or Yutkevitch (*Orhella*) among others, Dreyer proves that the physical approach to speech is the business of cinema and therefore of man, and that an attentive eye on two figures talking even in a prolonged and static shot will never cease to astonish us.

C. Work as scriptwriter

1912

Bryggerens Datter (Dir.: Rasmus Ottesen)

1913

Balloneksplosionen (Dir.: unknown)

Krigskorrespondenten (Dir.: unknown)

Hans og Grethe (Dir.: Wolder)

Chatollens Hemmelighed (Dir.: Hjalmar Davidsen)

1914

Ned med Vaabnene (Dir.: Holger-Madsen)

Penge (Dir.: Karl Mantzius)

Pavillonens Hemmelighed (Dir.: Karl Mantzius)

Editorial Notes

* Society For Education in Film and Television.

** See the second editorial note of *Appendix I*.

- 1915
Juvelernes Skraek (Dir.: A. Christian)
Den Hvide Djaevel (Dir.: Holger-Madsen)
Den Skønne Evelyn (Dir.: A. W. Sandburg)
Rovederkoppen (Dir.: August Blom)
En Forbryders Liv og Levned (Dir.: A. Christian)
Guldets Gift (Dir.: Holger-Madsen)
- 1916
Den Mystiske Selskabsdame (Dir.: August Blom)
Hans Rigtige Kone (Dir.: Holger-Madsen)
Fange No. 113 (Dir.: Holger-Madsen)
Lydia (Dir.: Holger-Madsen)
Glædens Dag (Dir.: A. Christian)
Gillekop (Dir.: August Blom)
- 1917
Hotel Paradis (Dir.: Robert Dinesen)
- 1918
Grevindens Ære (Dir.: August Blom)
- 1947
De Gamle (Dir.: T. A. Svendsen)
- 1950
Shakespeare Og Kronborg (Dir.: Jørgen Roos)
- 1954
Rømmes og Nexø's Genopbygning (Dir.: Poul Bang)
- 1956
Noget om Norden (Dir.: Bent Barfod)

* * * *

D. Other work

Dreyer worked as editor on a short film, directed by Otto Schray, entitled *Radioens Barndom*, *The Childhood of Radio* (1949), and later, 1956, Bent Barfod wrote and directed a short film based on an idea by Dreyer: *Noget om Norden* (*Something Happening in the North*).

Among his unrealised projects, perhaps the most important one was a film to be called *Jesus fra Nasaret*.

Dreyer spent a considerable amount of time and energy after the war trying to set up a film on the life of Christ. Many producers were interested, including J. Arthur Rank, and it is not clear why the film was not made, since the money appears to have been available.

Dreyer went to Israel to study the locale, and taught himself Hebrew. In the

scenario, Palestine is a country occupied by foreign aggressors, as Denmark was under the Nazi's when he first conceived of the project. The Zealots are presented as resistance fighters, the Pharisees as supporters of the *status quo*, and the upper-class Saducees as collaborators with the Romans.

Jesus is portrayed as a politically inactive, mild mannered Rabbi, forced into leadership by the oppressed. Since witnessing the persecution of European Jews by the Nazi's, Dreyer became concerned to show that the Romans rather than the Jews were responsible for the crucifixion.

Other projects included an adaptation of Euripides' *Medea*, Faulkner's *Light in August*, O'Neill's *Mourning becomes Electra*, Ibsen's *Brand*, Strindberg's *Damascus*, and a film on *Mary, Queen of Scots*.

Each new film is not approached as an isolated venture having only distant resemblances to past experiences, but as a voyage of discovery constantly penetrating deeper, an investigation that constantly becomes more exacting. Dreyer exhausts the resources of his own vocabulary, working his material until all resistance is overcome and he contrives to mould the scant and stubborn forces with which he set out and to which he limits himself. For what Dreyer accepts, or to be more precise acquires, is a refusal to resort to the appurtenances, details, incidental hurdles, external flourishes and irrelevant variations, the whole gamut of effects offered by an expedient rhetoric.

So manifest an absence of elegance and virtuosity may lead one to think that Dreyer's range is seriously lacking in scope. But this poverty purely and simply indicates the only riches possible in Dreyer's view: those of discovery and of creation. Instead of taking up and integrating the successive modifications sustained by an aggregate of signs considered in an evolutive perspective, Dreyer sets up his own independent system and steadfastly sticks to it, permitting no borrowings. If he is commonly assumed to be outdated as a film-maker, it is because each of his films demonstrates his insistence on marking out a distinctive cinematic policy that remains resolutely aloof from other concurrent discoveries. This does not mean that influences are non-existent (that of Griffith is even acknowledged). Nor does it mean that Dreyer has established a language all on his own. He remains dependent upon the cinema, but does not acknowledge its evolution or take it into consideration except where the change is radical (for instance, the passage from silents to sound). In that case, faced by a different means of expression, he adopts and moulds it to his own use. 'A reorganisation and a simplification are necessary. One can, if you like, say that it's a question of purification because all elements not engaged in the central idea are suppressed. One concentrates and one compresses.' This strict reduction is effected with the object of commanding increasingly precisely a specific articulation. It sets up a sort of univocal, indeed autonomous, field of action. A divestment as ruthless as this infallibly throws into relief its configuration, lays it bare in other words, reveals its mechanism. There is a scheme, a sort of architecture exhibiting, contrary to an apparent complexity (as is the case with Lang, for instance), an extreme simplification. This simplification enables one to pick out the elements Dreyer has at his disposal and which he contents himself with developing. It is hardly the result of an omission—from any lack of consideration, that is—but on the contrary of a structuring in the most artisanal sense of the term; of an accretion, in other words, a selective montage. Dreyer learns his art by experience, staking out his path to restrict it more surely and reinforce it even more strongly than before. For the elementary sketch the creator arrives at without application or verification of fundamental rules is attained only by way of tentative efforts and approaches. But wouldn't the nordic archaism show itself somewhere in this broadly outlined, simply made sketch? Wouldn't the schema reveal an ambiguity deeper than the

Appendix 1

The Nordic Archaism of Dreyer
by André Techniné

'A man walking along was casting his shadow, and one could not tell which was the man and which the shadow, nor how much shadow he cast.'
(Yeats)*

It isn't always easy to recognise in passing certain premonitory signs catering to the urgent interrogation the cinema as a whole is subjected to by each film. It can even happen that this purely interrogative relationship maintained by each individual film with the seventh art in general is not only modified but defined in other terms. Nothing is more fugitive and suspect than an innovative conception of no matter what means of expression. For the theory of novelty rests directly on a need not to be left defenceless, when in fact everything ineluctably passes us by. Our inability to encompass what has been contributed is demonstrated along with clear evidence of these contributions. An elucidation then attempted can only be a wrong approach, falsified from the outset by the need to refer, even for the purpose of rejecting it, to a scale of values that is already outdated. Film-makers are like guests. Some appear at the appointed time, as expected, fulfilling or disappointing our hopes.

Others arrive at the last moment, unannounced, dismaying the assembled company by presenting them with an unfamiliar or simply forgotten face. Then whatever means one has to hand are used to place the newcomer. Eyes firmly fixed on the quest for modernity at all costs, we have seen the unexpected suddenly turn up—unexpected enough, at any rate, for us to be unable to foresee that it would succeed in disrupting our closed circuit debate. A man from the north has come to talk to us and to talk of cinema, not the cinema as we know it but the cinema as he knows it. Not of documentary (that is, elimination of the expressive through the ambivalence of the expression), not of construction (that is, participation in the expressive through the effectiveness of the expression), but of rudiments. For there is no film-maker more rudimentary than Dreyer. Unqualified to lay down the law or to pressurise in any way, Dreyer makes talking pictures considered and reconsidered strictly subject to the means he employs or, if you prefer, the elements on which they are founded.

implications carried by all the innovations descending from too freshly acquired cultural heritages?

Faces and setting, by preference enclosed, are immediately apparent as firmly delineated guidelines, not contenting themselves with organising the sketch according to an established geometry but setting up—at the risk of some imperceptible disturbance—an irreducible dynamic. This impulse, skilfully regulated from within by an arrangement in which each element predisposes in favour of immobility, introduces the narrative force that is at once tranquil and menacing. For at the heart of a system as rigorous as this, at the centre of so meticulous a structure, the least vibration figures as an uncertain gravitation, and an equilibrium disturbed and causing a divergence in the contours. The blink of an eyelid, a gesture by a hand, become ir retrievable. Because they incessantly elude the schematism that provokes and haunts them at every moment. Because they vaguely trace an élan one thought not possible here, and which is seen to persist, an outcropping on the surface of volumes. Joan's naked face is presented to the spectator quite independently of any psychological or dramatic determination. By dint of grimaces and contorted expressions, the precise intentions (fear, joy, grief) disappear or melt away, obscuring the message so as to leave only a transparent face which at each blink of the eyes yields indeterminate indications that no precise significance can cover. A denotational impossibility as acute as this shows the extent to which so rudimentary an art can lead to ambiguity, instantly establishing a free relationship with the spectator. For the means employed (and their economy should again be stressed) are entrusted not with a decorative role but, on the contrary, a 'generative' one. Speech and expressions do not reduce the perspectives, do not make the dimensions narrower, but open horizons, engender possibilities. The elements (easily enumerated) comprise a diffuse, latent plurality of 'imaging functions'. The sign, in its entirely primitive crudity and clarity, never in fact ceases to foster allusions. During the progress of an action systematically condensed in time and decanted by a schematic disposition into tableaux, the ponderous speech effaces itself between four walls and a woman's face even in the cinema as it is today, just as the extravagant communications on Joan's face effaced themselves in the silent days. For Dreyer proposes precise forms only in so far as they conjure imprecisions. When he films a figure sitting in an armchair, one sees 'the moon, the sea, the forest', as one of the characters says while looking at Gertrud.** Reverie is sparked off by a gesture or a look, as though conducted by music and propagating itself against an inner background stripped to the point of abstraction. 'My only desire is to show the world of the imagination,' Dreyer says. In this respect *Vampyr* accumulated in the course of its progress every imaginable opening independently of any coherence. The level, however, may seem somewhat incidental in this sombrely surreal story. This melodic oneirism requires a rigid framework before it can come into being and venture its modulations. *Two People*, on the other hand, stifles the rhythmic fluidity beneath a framework whose

density encroaches too much. But in either extreme the equilibrium has nothing to do with careful proportionment, compromises, precautions. Dreyer is not a stylist. He uses the cinema, or rather invents his cinema in order to imagine life through feminine characters bruised in their passions and disappointed in their dreams (Anne in *Day of Wrath*, Inger in *Ordet*, Marianne in *Two People*, and Gertrud). For dreams are more important to nordic than mediterranean peoples. The hearth convenes, whereas the sun disperses. When night comes, the old man tells his stories and finds the right words. There is no literature. In the warm interior one can talk slowly of the seasons, of new beginnings. What we learn from Dreyer is that one must be attentive to the apportionment of light, to the landscape fleetingly glimpsed in Gertrud's eyes, to the world that rocks as a voice dies away.

Rudimentary, solitary, timeless, Dreyer owes nothing to anyone and seems to owe nothing to the cinema itself. If one wants to see what is going on in the seventh art one must look elsewhere. Whereas Rossellini or American films are informative about certain conditions in cinema, here there is no guide.

In the cold north it seems that long evenings spent in company are pleasant and never-ending. This is how Dreyer's stories come down to us. And instead of talking, or indeed through talking, the voice of the storyteller lingers on saying it is listening to us.

From *Cahiers du cinéma*, nr. 170. Transl.: Tom Milne

Editorial notes:

*The quote from Yeats has been re-translated from French.

**Téchiné slightly mis-remembers the scene in question. It is Gertrud herself who speaks. For a more accurate rendering of the words spoken, see p. 26.

Appendix 2

*Spiritual Men and Natural Women.*¹

By Frieda Grafe

There should be so many pictures on this page that written words could only advance in fits and starts. Stills which break through the text, just as in Dreyer's films holes are broken in the walls by objects hung upon them, by mirrors, pictures and windows. Pictures of tribunals, secular and ecclesiastical, of councils of men sitting in judgement on child-murderers, witches and saints; of fathers giving away their daughters in marriage according to their own ideals. Also pictures of texts which, obstinately and violently, arrest the flow of film images again and again: decrees, judgements, instructions on how to deal with a vampire by driving a stake through its heart at midnight. And poems, the love poems in *Gertrud* singing of things which can only exist in the realms of poetic freedom.

Then, often, there are pictures of men's outstretched arms holding wool so that women can wind it up into balls more easily. Another picture: a bride and bridegroom eating from one pot: with two spoons chained together. And the table with the check oil cloth in *Ordet* where Inger rolls out her pastry and on which she later lies giving birth to her still-born son. And finally the last shot from Dreyer's last film: a white door in a white wall which Gertrud, white haired and already half a ghost, has just shut behind her. She can no longer bear to hear the sterile men's talk of duty, honour, labour, law and passion. The highest concepts, and in Nietzsche's view the most general and the emptiest, 'the last puff of smoke of the most attenuated reality'.

Gertrud had taken the concepts at their face value and wanted to fill them with life. She was an inconvenience. She could not understand that Law and Reality are opponents, that by their very natures they belong to different worlds.

A Sieve-like Space

Dreyer said that he was particularly attracted by white walls, and there are white walls in nearly all of his films. One can see white walls coming into being in *Vampyr* where the rhythmic flow of the floor becomes a prison, a trap and a grave for the old doctor. For Dreyer, white walls consist of a multitude of glowing, transparent, tiny fragments. Reality becomes

diaphanous: contours and stable features dissolve. The material develops a life of its own—in *Vampyr* the quality of the light and the structure resulting from it is due to a mistake in the copying laboratory. *Vampyr* should be seen after *Michael*, a film version of the Hermann Bang novel, which tells the story of a painter-prince who lives his life as if on the stage. With him the 19th century and with it Idealism have shut their last window and lie down to die.

In *Michael* there is a view of nature and of landscape, functioning as an undercurrent, threatening all around it. *Vampyr* gives shape to the consequences of this: the pictures of the end of the 19th century are dissolved and superceded by the images of the cinema.

It is unimportant to establish whether Dreyer was conscious of a change of epochs. His films bear its imprint. They are corridors, transitional worlds. One is so clearly aware of what moves his figures because he lets the actors move slowly, and the camera as well. One has time to hear the words, to explore the spaces. Dreyer said that he let speeches occur in close-ups, (and that he filmed theatre,) so that cinema could bring theatre through and beyond itself.

Before they are exchange of meanings, his dialogues are modulations, musically overdetermined, a multitude of accents. That part of speech which is expressed in echo: its end—in *Vampyr*, or in *Ordet* where the mad Johannes quotes the Bible in a voice like cotton-wool and expressionlessly repeats words and sentences. And in *Gertrud* there are the moans of the men. Its beginning is in *Day of Wrath*; the raw state is the child-like scream of the old woman, penetrating from the attic into the presbytery below, when the constables capture her to bring her to trial as a witch.

Between them lies the intrinsic realm of language, order, spoken order. Where all that is permitted is what appears to be clear, unambiguous and can be checked, the world of judicial enquiry, of the *procès-verbal*, where it is always the same sentences which must be proffered if justice is to be maintained and order upheld. Of *Joan of Arc* with its succession of close-ups, the purest and most cinematographic of all his films, Dreyer has said that it is a film about language, about language as a means of torture, about the terrorism of language.

Too much honour

In Dreyer's films the representatives of the Word form a strange sect. The bearers of the Word are holders of spiritual office: priests, judges, family tyrants, homosexual foster fathers, and artists with words, poets. The Danish title for *Master of the House* is, literally, *Thou Shalt Honour Thy Wife*. The story of the head of a family, broken by the three women who formed him: his mother, his old nurse and his wife. Dreyer brings forms onto the screen that have no other function than to make understandable the structures lying beneath them and generating them. As one watches the film one does not notice that there is still a little sympathy remaining for this rather repulsive patriarch. But his mournful face gives us a clue. Whereas all

the rest of the family are constantly conspiring with one another, he is always the great outsider. His exclusion is not the result of his detestable behaviour, it is just that his position as a father places excessive demands upon him.

The film is about the often cited role playing of men who become fathers against their wills, because they are born into Symbolic systems which they are unable to assume and embody. For Dreyer the father, the defender of Order, is overwhelmed by his own prestige, by what his place, his social position in the widest sense, demands of him: the father in *The President* and the father in *Day of Wrath* who have to be both father to their family and to their community. When the two fathers in *Ordet* quarrel over the children whose marriage the older generation want to prevent because of religious differences, two mongrels can be heard fighting in the background.

They justify their behaviour In The Name of the Father, not in terms of the paternity which is in fact their's. The Symbolic Order places its stamp upon the real. Gertrud opposes them both by refusing to have any name, either that of her father, or that of her husband, cut upon her gravestone. All she allows is *Amor Omnia*. She wanted, finally, to be herself and only herself. The mirror that men had given her and that they had loved was a prop she found she no longer needed.

Gertrud is the invention of a man; rather the invention of two men since the film was based on a play by Hjalmar Söderberg. Like many of Dreyer's women, Gertrud is a statue, a memorial. Her demands are as absolute as the contours of the film, its spaces and the gestures of the figures in it are hard and angular. Her demands are too idealistic, a sign of their detour through men. But sometimes one can hear the rattle of the long dresses: some little intimacy is established. And then she travels off to Paris to study with Charcot, Freud's teacher. The real name in the fictitious context operates as a breakthrough, which can be compared with the pictures of nature in *Michael*. An order, long valid, is challenged. Reality announces the appearance of a new dimension.

The return of the repressed

What then appears was not dead, merely covered over; invisible because of the sediments of deliberate and cautious conventions. Age-old but still changing, that is *The Parson's Widow*. The elderly pastor's wife, getting into her fourth marriage with a good-for-nothing (who has a mistress of his own) because the job is tied to her person, shakes off everything that life had provided her with just as that life is drawing to a close. From being an object of exchange, an object amid other objects upon which she is dependent, because, as she puts it, they are her life, she finds the way back to the feelings of her youth. To the astonishment of those around her, she leaves the house more and more often to visit the grave of her first husband who she links with feelings which she rediscovers in the two young swindlers.

The virulence of the subject is increased by the humour of the film, which is an important element in the undermining of any fixed positions one may feel inclined to adopt. The end of the film is, indeed, terrible, horrifying—

horrifying as only a Dreyer film can be. The old woman dies and the young one is seen trying on her clothes.

Even the most frightening of the mother figures, the self denying old Merete in *Day of Wrath*, more papal than the Pope himself when it comes to defending the laws of a man's world, has weaker moments when she is unable to maintain her poise. When she finds her son dead, a completely different aspect is revealed alongside that of the character of the figurehead of the parsonage. Something which reminds us of the mild old witch whose death at the stake she had deemed to be just.

In a paper written in 1926, Freud states that the sexual life of women is a *dark continent* for psychology, and it seems all the darker as this is the only English expression to be found in the entire text. By this he meant less what Wilhelm Reich was to stress later: the threat and danger to authoritarian ideology posed by women if their right to sexuality were to be officially recognised. What concerned Freud more was the fact that femininity evaded the possibility of representation: sublimation. The fact that female sexuality did not conform to the laws of repression, so that its restraint required stronger censorship.

Anne, the young witch in *Day of Wrath* is married to a much older man. The most perverse and poorest of priests, who, after the death of his first wife used the power of his position to get himself a young bride. From his first marriage he has a son, the same age as his young wife, who he has never touched. And when the son appears the system begins to crack: the succession of the generations begins to become confused. Anne is merely the weak link in the chain. Nature breaks through the covering layers of culture. 'In the Bible, as in all traditional systems of law, the confusion of the succession from one generation to another is accursed . . .' One feels how the danger slowly mounts: a harmless game of hide-and-seek at the beginning to surprise the old pastor is the start of deception, the original sin.

At her trial Anne admits to having witches' powers only when she sees her love betrayed by the man returning to conformity within the paternal order. Where there was a difference, a contradiction, harmony reigns once more. The burning of the young woman at the stake is eased by choirboys singing the *Dies Irae*.

Interior Exterior

The fissure which yawns for a moment, the disorder which spreads, the danger to the law, reveal the basis on which order rests. *Maitre* (master) is to this day a french synonym for lawyer. In *Michael*, the painter-prince is addressed as master, and his mastery comes to an end because Nature casts it aside. Shut the window, the painter says to his servant, and as he does so, the last trace of the external world vanishes from his studio. In *Michael*, the entry of Nature is linked with the entry of Woman; She is natural, Baudelaire said, and that means abominable. Dreyer lets one recognise that the nature of Woman can accommodate all forms of masquerade. As Princess Zamikow in *Michael*, Nora Gregor is in fact a scarecrow.

To look behind things is not for Dreyer a matter of seeking their ideal depths. Their beyond is not, as with Fritz Lang, the underground, the paths, cavities and dungeons under the earth. It operates on the same level as the visible. The crucial thing is not what is behind the images, but what is visible in them as a speck of white. The beyond of Dreyer's films, which he often hides behind historical materials or period dress is the repressed, censored portion of the 'this-side' of things. 'I build houses', complains the mad Johannes in *Ordet*, 'in which no one wants to live', taking two lit candelabra and putting them in the window. Gertrud could say exactly the same thing.

Often it seems that Dreyer's mystical themes are in total conflict with the realistic nature of his medium. True, at times Dreyer acts like a wizard, like Anne in *Day of Wrath* when she tries out her supernatural powers and finds to her astonishment and terror that they work.

Dreyer uses cinema to wake the dead. But to follow him, one must go a step further. He uses cinema not just to show reality, but also the sign-laden nature of reality, he makes the Symbolic Order and its constraints visible. He changes the normal relation between sign and idea. With his insistence upon objects and the imperviousness of the body, he protests against the notion of the total translatability of everything into everything else. For him there is something that the symbol, the cycle of representation, misses. 'Labour' wrote Marx, 'is not the only source of material abundance, it is its father, and the earth its mother'. When Inger dies in *Ordet*, the father tries to comfort his son with the idea that she is in heaven, but the son, uncomfortable, replies: 'But it was her body that I loved as well'.

The centre of Dreyer's films never appears directly. Only its outline is marked. The images are only scraps of the infinite, of the unformed, the possible, hieratically and rigidly demonstrating their own limitations. One can never wholly identify with any single figure in a Dreyer film: there are no heroes and no villains. The conflicts are cosmic but not historical. Different types of order clash with one another, or rather order clashes with disorder. One should not be misled by the quietism of the endings of many of his films. They arouse anger. And when one thinks of the miracle at the end of *Ordet*, the raising of the dead, that is in fact the real triumph of disorder.

An event beyond all interpretability, outside any context. A zero point, another white speck, a gap in the chain of causality. When Freud began to describe the Unconscious and to comprehend it in a theoretical manner he could only establish that he was in an area where the conceptual apparatus of the existing sciences broke down. That it was the great Other on which we all depend, and which, at first, could only be conceptualised by means of negative categories.

When one sees Dreyer's films today one is often struck by the thought that they are not of this world. When, at Dreyer's request, *Gertrud* had its first showing in Paris in 1964, the audience was numb with horror. Pathetically, they tried to explain away what they had seen by saying that Dreyer had become totally senile. The film was utterly different from what had been

expected, had nothing to do with what one remembered of earlier Dreyer films. 'The actors', said Dreyer, 'are completely natural. They speak and move in a completely natural rhythm'. Once you have seen them, they can never be forgotten.²

From *Süddenstruhe Bertung*, 9/10 Feb. 1974

Editorial Notes

1. The German title could also be translated as *Priests and Natural Women*. Moreover, the author uses 'Hevien' and 'Damen', terms belonging to a more elevated and weighty semantic sphere than the everyday men and women ('ladies and gentlemen').
2. From *Im Off—Filmartikel*, by F. Grafe and E. Patalas, Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich 1974. First published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 9/10 Feb. 1974. Transl. by R. Mann.

Further Reading

The most useful collection of Dreyer's writings on film is *Dreyer in Double Reflection*, ed. Skoller, New York 1973; Tom Milne's *The Cinema of Carl Dreyer*, London 1971, is still the most useful for extended plot summaries and perceptive commentary on individual films. Since it is still in print I have tried not to overlap with this book so that readers interested in Dreyer will find it a useful complement to the present work.

Of the writing on individual films from the perspective of avant-garde/independent filmmakers, see: Burch and Dana, 'Positions', *Afterimage* 5. For a critique of their positions see the articles by Stephen Heath and myself in *Screen*, vol 17 nr 3.

There is a lot of material in foreign languages, particularly French and Italian, motivated primarily by the different functions of religious ideology in those countries. Good examples can be found in the short reviews by André Bazin in *Le cinéma de la cruauté*, Paris 1975. For detailed phenomenological accounts of the films see the special issue of *Études Cinématographiques* nr 53/6 by P. Parrain.

Regarding the screenplays of *Joan of Arc*, *Vampyr*, *Day of Wrath* and *Ordet* in *Four Screenplays*, London 1970, the reader should be warned that these are screenplays and bear only a very indirect relation to the actual film-texts as they exist on celluloid.

CARRI DREYER



Dreyer's films have been admired equally by bourgeois critics, avant-garde theorists and film-makers. On the one hand his work figures in the tradition of cinema classics — the pantheons of *Sight and Sound* or André Bazin — while on the other Dreyer's work is claimed as an exemplary avant-garde cinematic practice, deconstructing the codes of cinema (Noël Burch), revealing the ferocity of bourgeois society (Jean-Marie Straub). Why these two contradictory sets of positions?

Carl Dreyer was born in 1889 of a Swedish mother, but was orphaned as a baby and adopted by Danish parents. He began a career in journalism writing for Copenhagen newspapers, and was engaged in 1912 by Nordisk Films Kompagni, then one of the world's leading companies, to advise on script purchases and adaptations. He was allowed to direct his first feature (*The President*) in 1919 and soon developed a reputation as the 'tyrannical Dane': his demand for total control led to a belief that his work was uncommercial and during the 30s he directed no films at all. He re-entered production via an apprenticeship in documentary films with *Mødrehjælpen* (*Good Mothers*) in 1942. Towards the end of his life the Danish state, in recognition of his cultural services, gave him the lease of a cinema in central Copenhagen where he could show the films that he liked. He died in 1968. Traditional cinema journalism found in Dreyer's demand for total control a basis for their assessment of Dreyer as a great artist, a genius in the European cinema. The usual arguments about 'sensitivity' and 'profound' psychological insights, particularly around his preoccupation with women characters and women's problems, were trotted out. Simultaneously his work was described as 'majestic', 'cool', etc. In short, all the standard

features of the 'artistic Scandinavian' stereotype. What I argue in my Occasional Publication on Dreyer, and which can be explored during a seminar/discussion accompanying this season (18th October), that these readings of 'the great artist' and his 'sensitivity' is the product of the work of Dreyer's films on the mechanisms of cinema itself, the ways his cinema binds the spectator into the film, the way basic psychological phantasies around vision and hearing are put in play. His bringing into focus such fundamentally cinematic processes does indeed make Dreyer's work available for a superficial appropriation into the traditional canons of 'high art'. But the real interest of his films lies elsewhere: they, perhaps more than any other 'classic' director's work, engage directly with questions relevant to the way cinema works, but also directly address the essential issues at stake in artistic production itself. Obviously, which reading and what type of pleasure individuals produce while viewing the films depends on the position adopted in the field of cultural politics.

The juxtaposition of this season with the Sjöström/Stiller season will enable some assessment of Dreyer's place within the particular representational concerns of Scandinavian cinema. Critics have ignored this work for too long; little consideration has been given to the literary culture on which Dreyer's films are based and from which they create a 'Great Tradition'. This critical neglect has a material base, however. Even today many of his films are still unavailable for public exhibition.

I would like to thank the staff of the British and Danish Film Institutes for their work in preparing this complete retrospective of Dreyer's films.—Mark Nash.

Sat 1 Oct 6.15. 8.30

The President (Præsidenten)

Dreyer's first film is a complex melodrama about the ruin of an aristocratic family resulting from the sexual indulgences of its male heirs. The plot concerns the last of the von Sendingsens, forced to choose between his judicial career and saving his illegitimate daughter from execution as a child-murderer. The sexual encounters are elided in sensuously photographed lakeside scenes, an element of the naturalistic style Dreyer introduced into the staple Nordisk melodrama. *Denmark 1919.*



Sun 2 Oct 6.00. 8.30

Leaves from Satan's Book

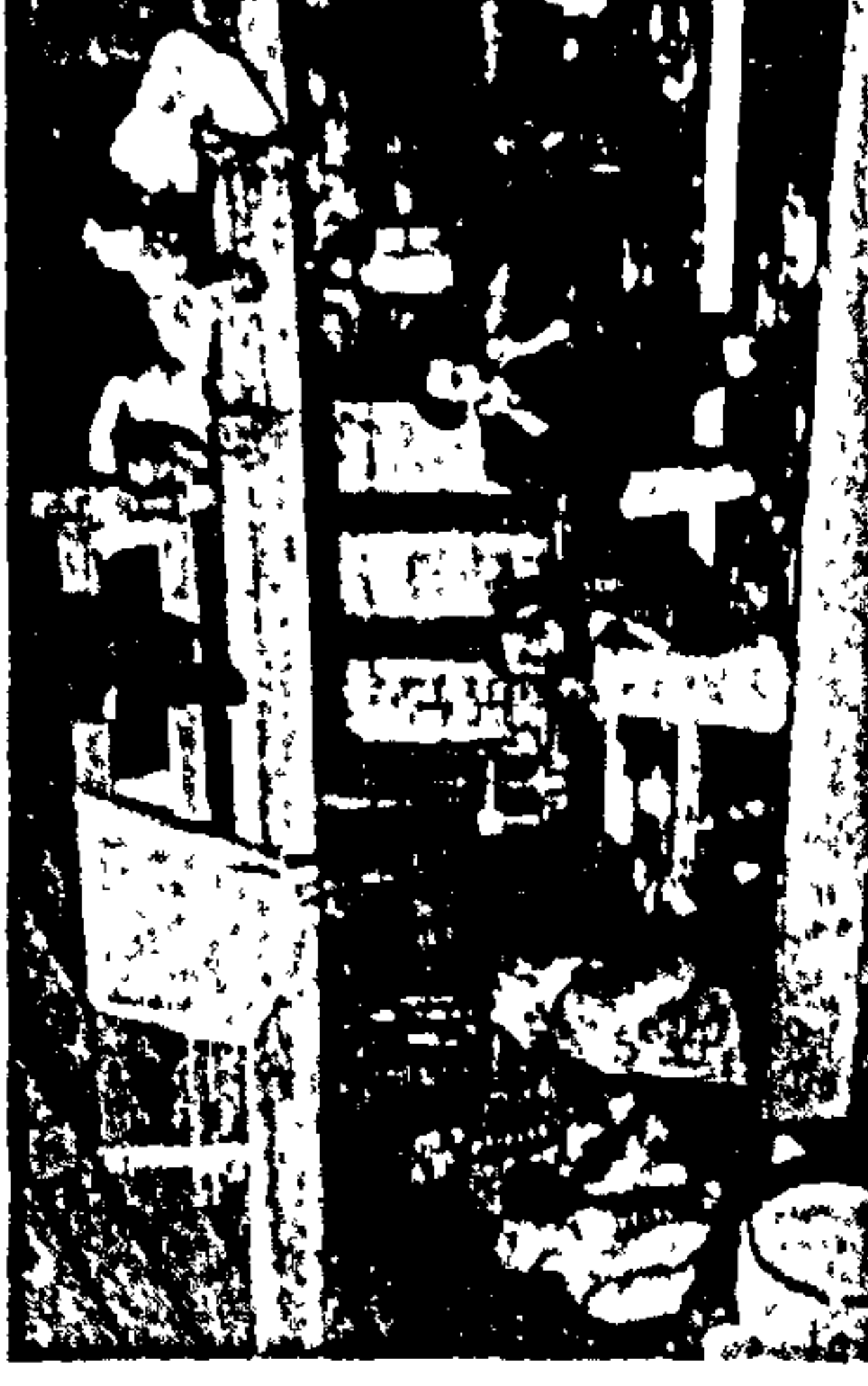
(Blade of Satans Bog)
Though influenced by the theme and structure of *Intolerance*, Dreyer's implicit interest is with the way male desire (which Satan encourages) disrupts the social and familial order. Satan appears as the Pharisee leading Judas to betray Christ; as a Spanish Grand Inquisitor; as a police officer in the French revolution; as a revolutionary monk in the Finland of 1918. Dreyer continues the experiments with decor and type-casting begun in *Præsidenten*. The montage style editing of the final episode (with average shot length of 3 secs) was also new and extremely accomplished. *Denmark 1920.*



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The Parson's Widow (Præstankens)

A film influenced by Sjöström, in the quality of its photography and its story — based on an authentic 17th century case of a young divinity graduate, forced to become the fourth husband of a parson's widow to obtain the living she holds. The theme of feminine power is presented in a film which is both repressive and sensual, pointing to the protestant influence in Dreyer's work. "Rarely has a more ferocious malice against the male been seen in the cinema" — S. Pierre. Contradictorily, this film also demonstrates Dreyer's abilities as a director of comedy. *Sweden 1921.*



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Die Gezeichneten/Der Var Engang

(Love One Another)/(Once Upon a Time)
Die Gezeichneten, an elaborate melodrama, linking the 'trouble' of feminine sexuality with antisemitism, is set in Russia during the 1905 revolution, using actors/refugees from the 1917 revolution. *Germany 1922. Der Var Engang* was based on a play by the poet Holger Drachmann, on the 'taming of the shrew' theme — a princess forced into domesticity by the prince who abducts her, and learns to love her oppression. Unfortunately, only fragments remain, but enough to demonstrate Dreyer's skill in comedy and exterior locations. *Denmark 1922.*



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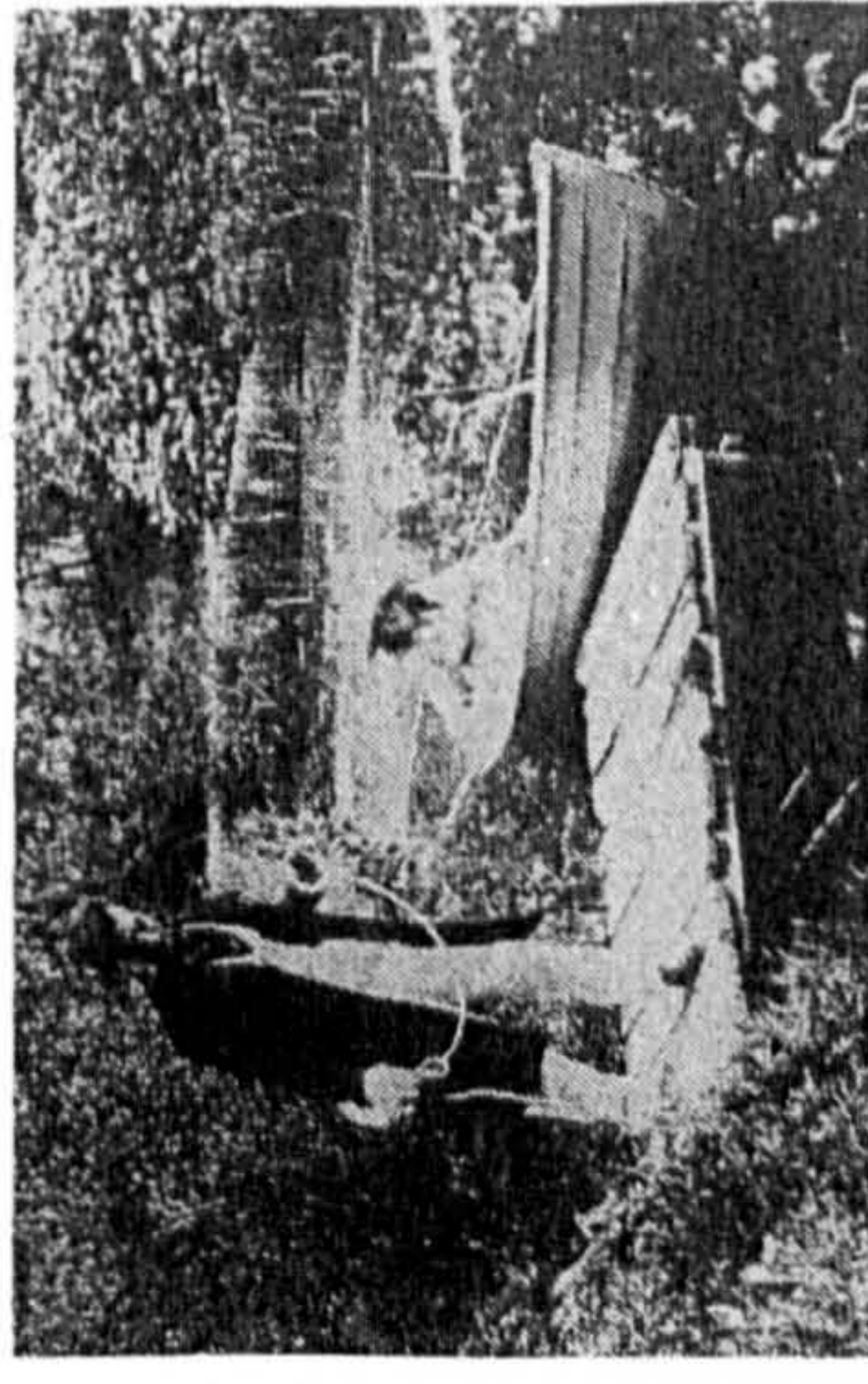
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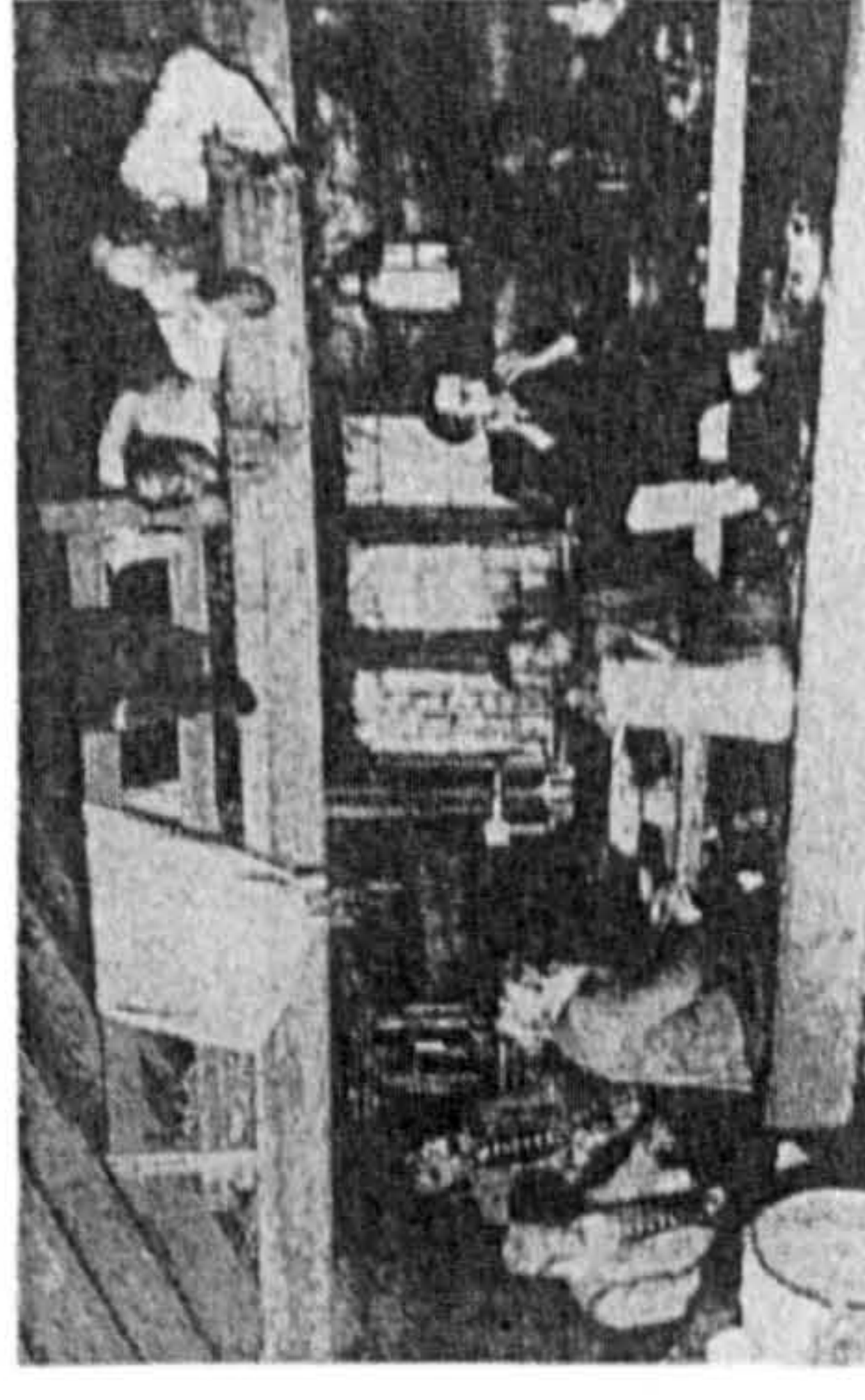
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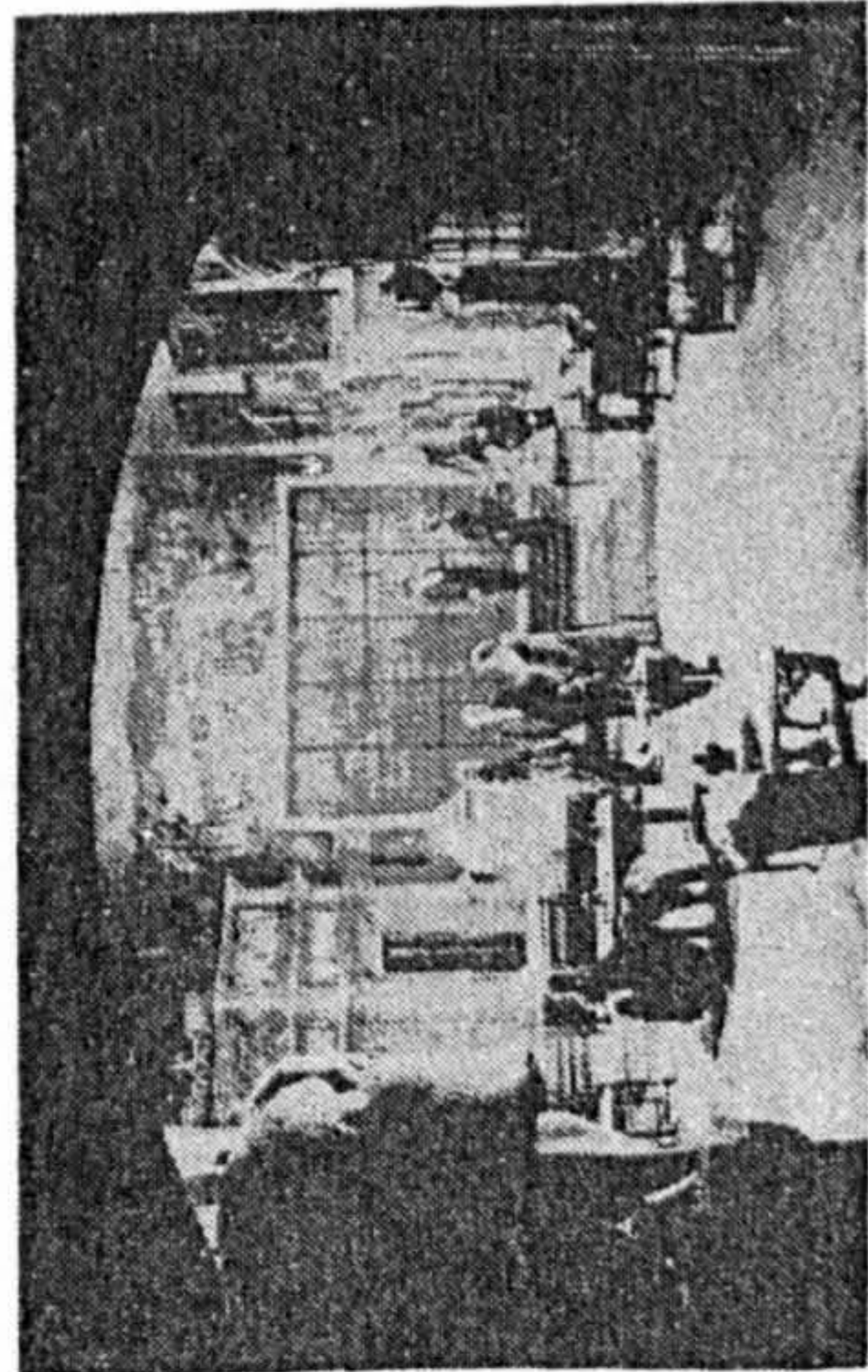


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Sun 9 Oct 6.15. 8.30

Mikaël

Dreyer's interest in characters in passive, suffering roles finds its most direct expression in this story of a great artist, modelled a little on Rodin, and his love for his model Mikaël, which can only find expression in the fantasy of desertion Zoret causes to be enacted around him, and which forms the subject of his last painting. The Danish director, Christensen, plays the artist Zoret. Karl Freund's photography is very beautiful. The film was a great success in Germany, being called the first *kammerspiel* film. *Germany 1924.*



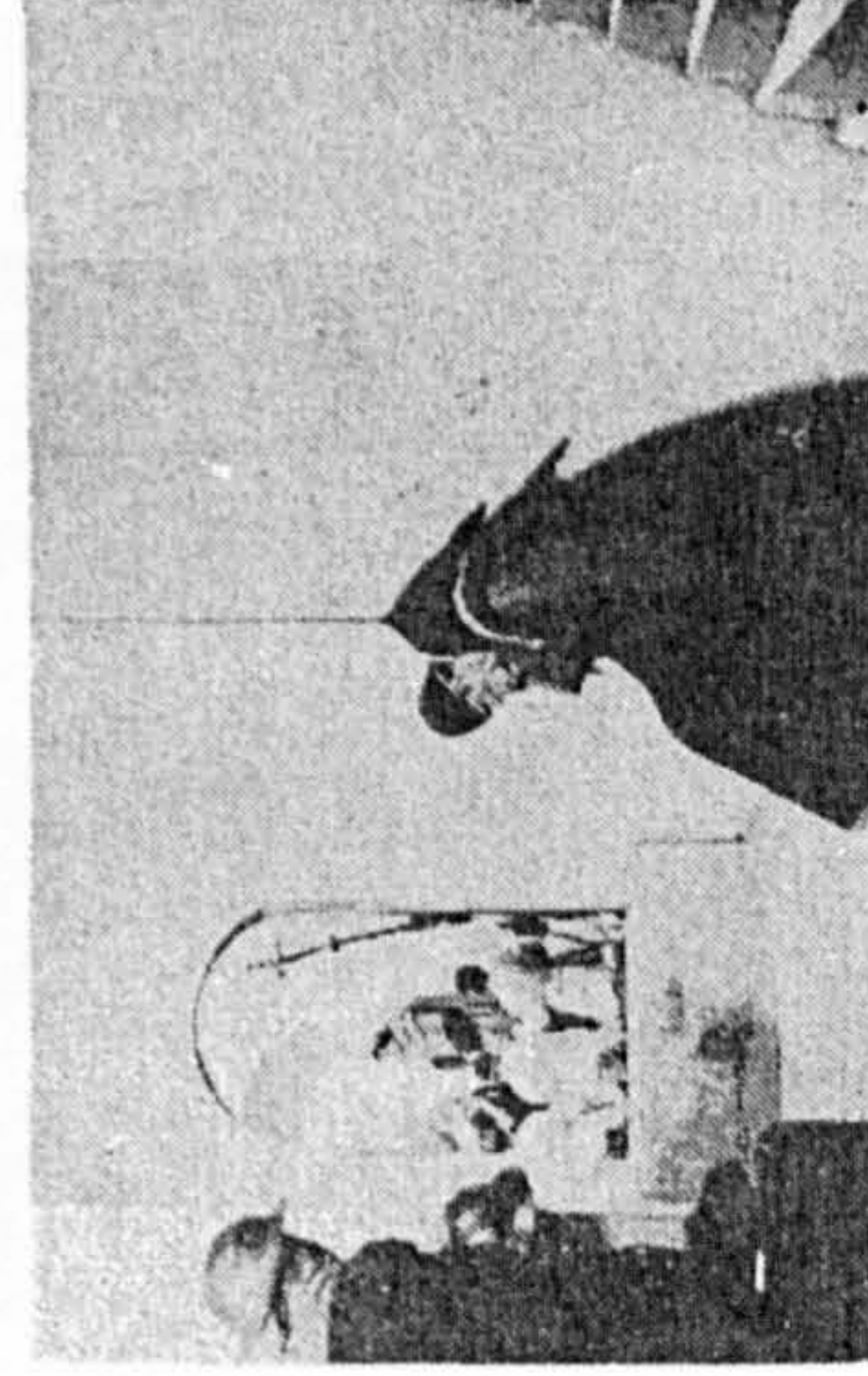
Tue 11 Oct 6.15. 8.30

Master of the House (*Du Skal aere din Hustru*) An extremely funny film. Its theme, the domestication of a tyrannical husband by the combined forces of his nanny and mother-in-law. Dreyer built an exact replica of a Danish flat in the studio to show the detail of domestic slavery that passes for family life. Its breakdown of the woman's role into elements with a cash value – the husband has to pay for the services his wife normally performs – is still valid today. Its combination of naturalism and comedy (including a struggle over an aspidistra and canary) made it a great success. *Denmark 1925.*



Wed 12 Oct 8.30

The Bride of Glomdale (*Gidmsdalsbruden*) "This is much more than the 'little intermezzo' it is sometimes made out to be. Shot in a Norwegian summer, it is the film where Dreyer comes closest to Stiller in its attention to texture and density of emotion" — *Tom Milne*. The story, a Griffith-like melodrama about the love of a poor farmer's son for a rich farmer's daughter, and the socialisation of their sexuality was, unusually for Dreyer, improvised from a short story but which provided exactly the kind of pared-down structure he excels in building on. *Norway 1925.*



Thu 13 Oct 8.45

La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc A 'monument' of film history, its montage of extreme close-ups originated from the official report of the trial – 'each question and answer demanded a close-up' (Dreyer). "An almost intolerable richness of forms pushed the notions of the French avant-garde on angle and close-up to new extremes" — *Langlois*. Memorably, too, for Falconetti, transferred from a boulevard theatre, make-up removed, hair cut short, under the relentless gaze of the camera. Dreyer's project of 'revealing the soul beneath the facade' prompted Bazin to call the film both "extremely realistic and mystical". *France 1928.*

Tue 18 Oct 6.30. 8.45

Vampyr

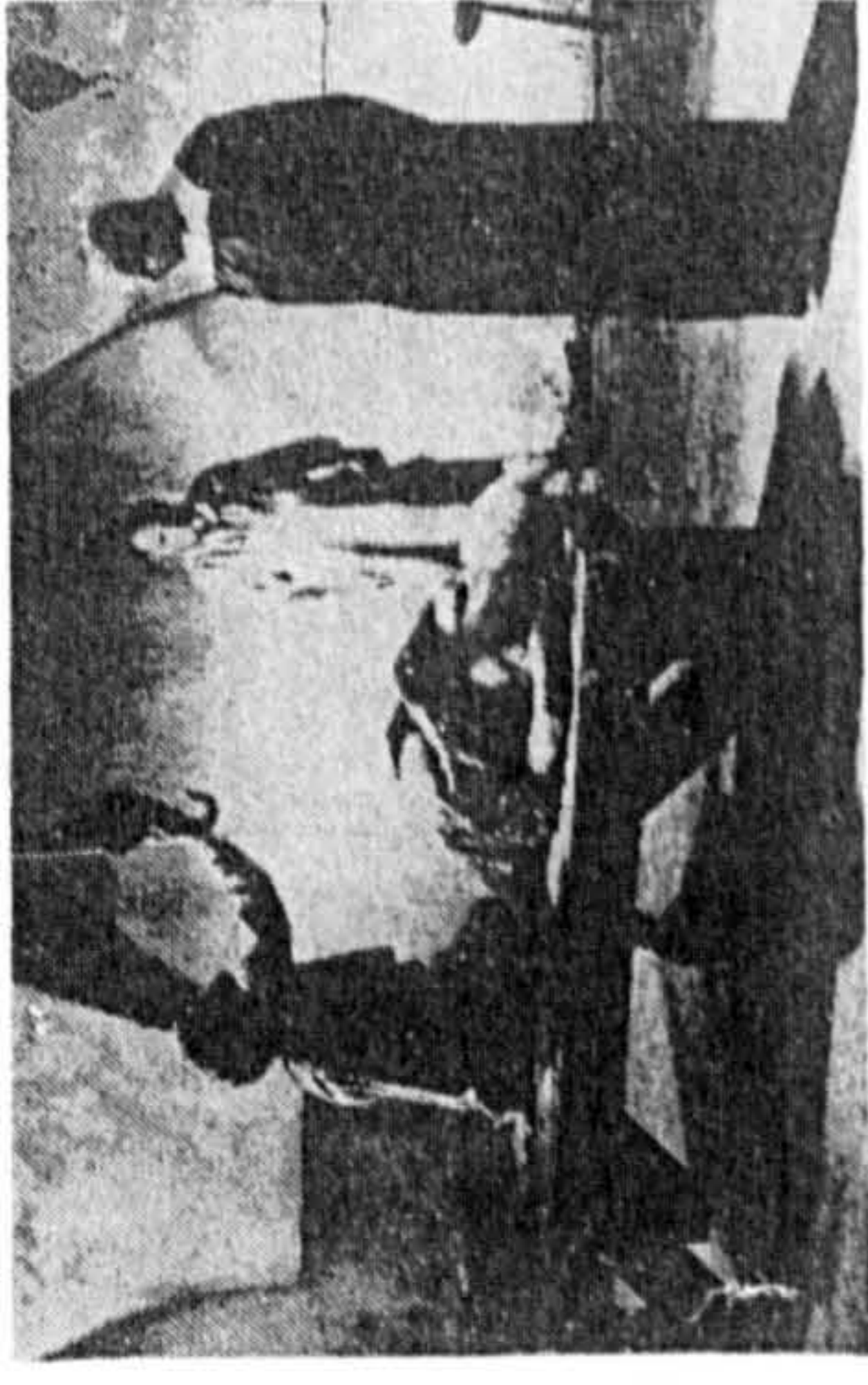
Dreyer's first sound film, and the film in which his concern with basic properties of film and cinema is much in evidence, particularly with the luminous photography developed especially for the film with Rudolph Maté. Based on the genre of the *fantastique*, where we are constantly unsettled in our reading of the events shown, it also resumes concerns of many of his other films (witchcraft, the supernatural, ambiguous sexuality). The level of visual abstraction is paralleled in the plot which uses the vampire elements to generate a uniquely disturbing film. *France/Germany 1932.*



Fri 21 Oct 6.30. 8.45

Day of Wrath

Day of Wrath continues the structures of uncertainty Dreyer had already explored in *Vampyr*. We are offered both a rational account of the events which lead up to a young pastor's wife being accused of witchcraft, in terms of projected male desire and anxiety about sexuality, but we are ourselves also implicated in the process by which women come to believe themselves witches. Bazin saw the originality of the film in achieving the style and status of painting, in "advancing cinema even at the risk of being out of tune with public opinion". *Denmark 1943.*



Wed 26 Oct 6.30

Shorts Programme: 1

Mødrehjelpen (*Good Mothers*), a film about social services available for unmarried mothers made during the German Occupation (1942), shows the influence of the British documentary movement, as does the later *De Gamle* (*The Seventh Age* – 1947). *Thorvaldsen* (1949) evokes the sensuality of that sculptor's work; *Den Danske Landsbykirke* (*Danish Village Church* – 1947) creates a history and memory of the changing architecture and associated ritual of Danish churches; *De Naede Fargen* (*They Caught The Ferry* – 1948), a road safety film, and the most celebrated of Dreyer's shorts, is about a literal race with death.



Wed 26 Oct 8.45

Shorts Programme: 2

After returning to feature film production, Dreyer continued to work on short films: *Storstrømsbroen* (*The Storstrøm Bridge* – 1949) in which the moving camera 'celebrates' Denmark's longest bridge; two films around the Renaissance castle at Elsinore, its medieval pre-history, and the castle as Shakespeare and his actors would have seen it, intercut with scenes from a production of *Hamlet*; a 'document' on the reconstruction of the towns of Rønne and Nexø (1954) bombarded by the Russians.





Tue 25 Oct 6.30. 8.45

Two People (Tva Människor)

This screening allows us to assess the value of this film which has never been previously shown in this country. Critics have been overinfluenced by Dreyer's rejection of it because he couldn't control the casting of its two actors. The story is constructed around the events of a single day in a Swedish doctor's flat-cum-laboratory, which the camera never leaves except for a flashback, and in which a marital relationship is subjected to the pressure of a crime which threatens to overwhelm it. The rest of the world intrudes only in the form of messages and shadows. The camerawork links this film crucially with *Gertrud*. The most melodramatic of Dreyer's films, it has a credit sequence with images and music worthy of Douglas Sirk. Sweden 1945.

Thu 27 Oct 6.00. 8.35

The Word (Ordet)

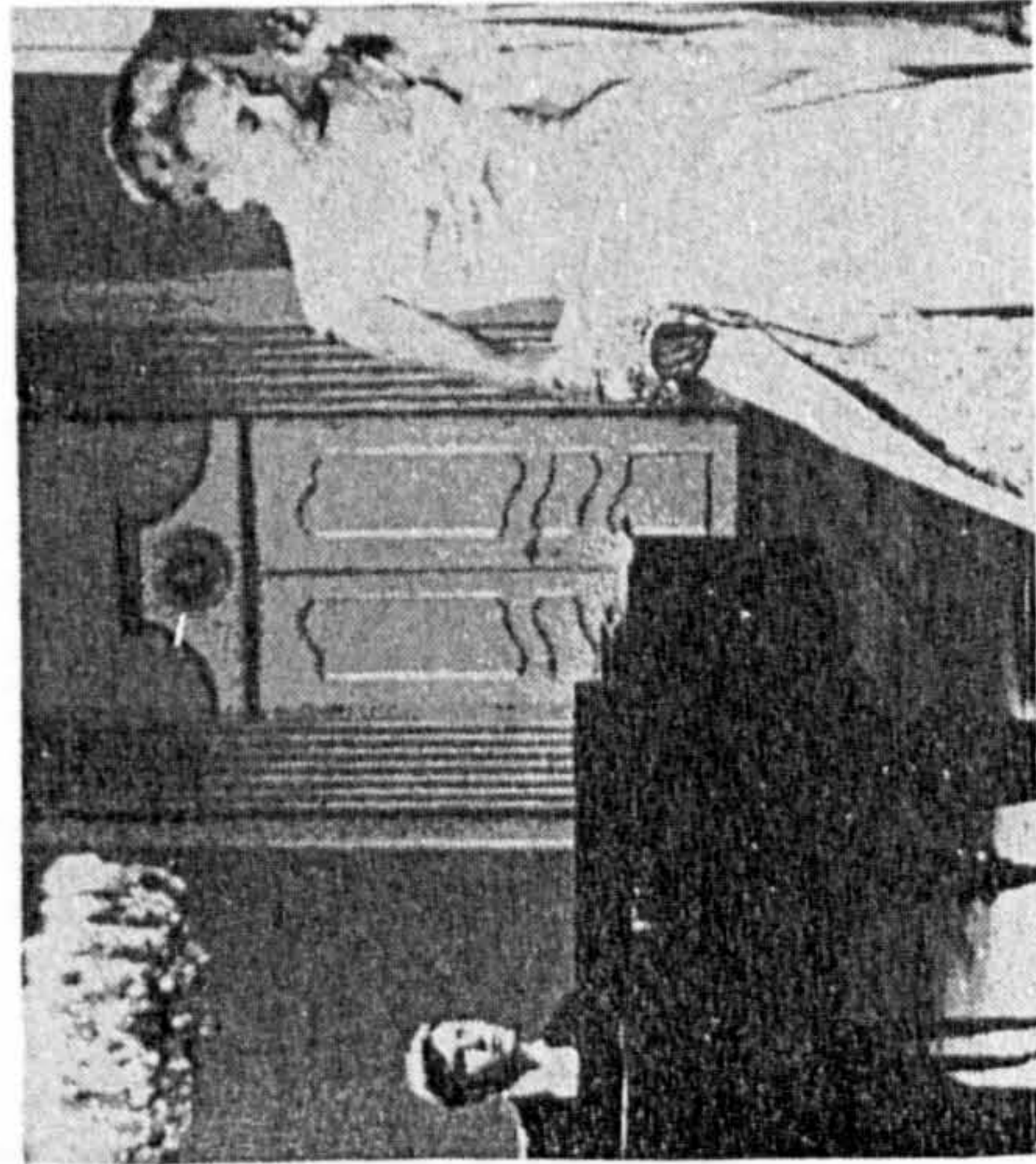
A riveting film about a central religious and psychoanalytic problem, 'the word made flesh'. Is Johannes a theology student 'driven mad by reading Kierkegaard, or is he really the risen Christ? This is the question which the film acts out against the lives of farmers in West Jutland, a struggle for life which enables Johannes to enact his 'miracle'. Based very closely on the play by Denmark's most famous 20th century dramatist, Kai Munk, it was regarded as a masterpiece on its first release. In it, sacred and profane love are equated: the father says of his dead daughter-in-law, "she is in heaven"; the son answers, "but I loved her body". Denmark 1955.



Fri 28 Oct 6.20. 8.45

Gertrud

If one must talk of masterpieces, films for desert island viewing, then *Gertrud* is my choice. Dreyer's last film, based on a play by Hjalmar Söderberg, according to Dreyer more modern than Ibsen in his treatment of the bourgeois world and woman's uncertain place in it. "What I particularly admire about Dreyer's films... is their ferocity in treating the bourgeois world"—J.-M. Straub. It charts a woman's desertion of her husband, home and 'respectability', in the name of a vision of authenticity in human and sexual relationships. As one always expects from Dreyer, the film is beautifully shot, mesmerisingly constructed. It is also a film about music: Gertrud's voice becomes the only vehicle for her desire. Denmark 1964.



Sjöström

Christensen

Stiller

Two years ago, the NFT screened a season of nearly all the surviving films of Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller. Film Availability Services of the British Film Institute have now subsidised the acquisition of a group of these films (which also includes Benjamin Christensen's *Häxan*) in order to make them available to Regional Film Theatres and to those involved in film education. The prints have been struck from the original negatives, and where possible they are tinted according to the original instructions. This short season is a preview of the first eight of these films. Both Sjöström and Stiller began their careers in the theatre, but joined Svenska Bio, the most important Swedish film company, in 1912. Both wrote scripts, directed and acted for Svenska Bio, Sjöström being especially successful as an actor, continuing his acting career after ceasing to direct in 1937. He appears in many of his own films, and also in some of Stiller's, notably the *Thomas Graal* films, one of which is included in this season. Both directors also filmed adaptations of the novels of Selma Lagerlöf, and both worked with the Jaenzon brothers,

Henrik and Julius (the latter usually under the pseudonym J. Julius) as cameramen. Nevertheless, their films are qualitatively distinct: Stiller's being more stylish and sophisticated in tone, even in his historical epics or outdoor films, whereas Sjöström's are more directly concerned with the moral problems of their characters and their environment, even the comedies.

Made at the time when the Swedish cinema had a wider influence than at any other time in its history, these films show many of the qualities that give it that influence: the Scandinavian landscape and the power of nature — the sea in *Terje Vigen*, the winter cold in *Sir Arne's Treasure*; the sophisticated handling of flashback narrative — already adumbrated in *Terje Vigen*, but to develop in *The Ingmarssons* and *The Phantom Carriage*; and the Lutheran themes of guilt, faith and grace — in *Love's Crucible* and *Sir Arne's Treasure*. *Ben Brewster*. (Ben Brewster will introduce a seminar on this season in NFT3 on Thursday 6th October at 8.15 pm).

Tue 4 Oct 6.15

Erotikon



Tue 4 Oct 8.30

Thu 6 Oct 8.30

Thomas Graal's Best Film/Terje Vigen



A comedy about divorce, similar to films made slightly earlier by De Mille and slightly later by Lubitsch and Chaplin. The comedy centres on a sculptor (Lars Hanson) in love with his best friend's wife but shocked by his complacency. The friend (Anders de Wahl) is an entomologist lecturing on the sex life of beetles who is quite prepared to give up his sophisticated wife (Terje) for a girl (Karin Molander) who wins his affection with stuffed cabbage. Other characters include an absent-minded professor and a rakish aviator. Sweden 1920/Dir Mauritz Stiller.

Terje Vigen, Sjöström's second surviving film, adapted from a poem by Ibsen, tells how a fisherman (Victor Sjöström), embittered by the death of his wife and child, finds himself in a position to exact vengeance on the family of the man who caused their deaths, but saves their lives instead. Sweden 1917/Dir Victor Sjöström. *Thomas Graal's Best Film*, by contrast, is a comedy about film-making. The first of a series starring Sjöström and Karin Molander, and written by the latter's husband Gustaf. Sweden 1917/Dir Mauritz Stiller.

REVIEWS

garde/modernist etc. dichotomy - or at least forcing Wollen's writings into service in its cause - becomes easily apparent. Wollen's position, or positions, simply do not lend themselves to characterisation in this way. Artistically and politically he believes in the idea of an avant garde, but he does not identify this avant garde with modernism. He takes seriously "popular" as well as non- or anti-popular cinema, but to the extent that it belongs within a twentieth-century art practice which cannot be dichotomised between high art and popular culture. He is not particularly interested (if at all) in finding progressive content in Hitchcock, or in deploring its absence. In relation to Brecht and to Breton and the surrealists he is prepared to make both political and aesthetic judgements, but not of a summary kind or in terms of a

contribution to a unitary progressive cause.

To read *Readings and Writings* in the terms of the orthodoxy's 'debates' is therefore to misread it, or to destine oneself to not getting much out of it. To read it on its own terms (allowing that these terms are shifting, or have shifted over the years separating the earliest texts in it from the last) is, on the contrary, very rewarding, and politically challenging. Film-culturists might even find themselves tempted to read the "fictions" which, it is true, have little to do with film culture; but they do have to do with culture, and a way of critically being part of culture. In these days of institutionalised anti-culture this is no bad thing.

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith

CARL TH. DREYER
NÉ NILSSON

by Maurice Drouzy

Eds du Cerf, Paris, 1982

IN HIS OPENING CHAPTER, MAURICE Drouzy makes a wry apology for the direction his researches on Dreyer took him. He wanted, he said, to write a sociological study, placing the film-maker Dreyer and his films in a socio-historical context. Despite himself, says Drouzy, his material led him away from the

passé qui n'est pas simple, "details the complex circumstances of Dreyer's upbringing. The second, "Le Monument à la mère," covers his career as a film-maker. Drouzy is fascinated with the inaccessible nature of Dreyer's past. The film-maker's reticence only served to stimulate his investigation. He abandons sociology in his search for Dreyer's ancestry.

Dreyer's secret, which he tried to keep as obscure as possible, was that of illegitimacy: he was the child of a Josephine Nilsson, a governess at a farm in Granlinge, Sweden, who had an affair with the landowner. When he refused to recognise that the child would be his, Josephine Nilsson travelled to Copenhagen to have the baby and arrange for his adoption, a process which took over two years to arrange satisfactorily, during which time the child was shuttled between orphanages and adoptive parents. Finally a family was found - that of a typographer Carl Theodor Dreyer, after whom the young boy was named.

Drouzy then reads Dreyer's films through this biographical detail. He sees them as informed by elements of a family romance common to many adopted children. The idealisation of the absent mother, exploited by the biological father, manifests itself in the range of Dreyer's passionate heroines, at the mercy of male culture and the state (Gertrud, Joan of Arc, Herlof's Marthe and Arney in *Vredens Dag* and so on). The rejection of the father is carried over into the rejection of the adoptive family, hence the problematic rela-

tionship in *Mikael* between the father Zoret and his adoptive son/lover Mikael.

Personally, I find Drouzy's search for Dreyer the most fascinating part of the book: his elation on tracing the records of Dreyer's mother which had eluded previous researchers, the detail of his archival research supported by well-reproduced photographs of Swedish and Danish buildings in which the protagonists of his story lived. He even reproduces Dreyer's mother's advertisements for adoptive parents for her child.

His interest becomes an obsession when he devotes a chapter to J. C. Torp, the biological father of Dreyer, whose main claim to fame is his seduction of a governess. At this point, biology and psychology, nature and nurture become confused. Are we seeking a Dreyerian secret in this Swedish farmer's genes, or in the apparently repressive upbringing of his adoptive parents?

The chapters on the individual films usefully summarise the circumstances surrounding their production. I would have preferred more of this historical detail - such as Wolfgang Zeller's experimental recording of the *Vampyr* soundtrack in Brelin, or the clerical censorship of the violence in *Joan of Arc* - rather than psycho-biographical speculation.

Structural analysis of Dreyer's work has focused attention on features of a Dreyer-text, and attempted to find a form of cultural and psychoanalytic analysis appropriate to this.

Drouzy says that it is impossible to ignore who made the films of Dreyer. Of course in a sense this is true, and anyone interested in Dreyer's films will want to refer to this book. But at the same time, Drouzy confuses the central issues by referring our understanding of the films back to the author while at the same time using our knowledge of the author further to decipher the films.

A critical response to Drouzy's work would be to challenge the ways the fascination with the author - the code of authorship - continues to dominate film criticism and production.

Mark Nash

LA NOUVELLE VAGUE 25 ANS APRES

Ed. Jean-Luc Douin
Coll. 7ieme Art,
Eds du Cerf, Paris 1983
238pp

DOUIN HAS COLLECTED A SERIES of reflections, retrospections and memories of the main protagonists and commentators associated with the French New Wave, officially dated back to 1958-59. The journalistic parade of names, some famous others not, includes Georges Delerue, Nestor Almendros, Raoul Coutard, Paul Gegauff, Roger Leenhardt, Anatole Dauman and Charles Bitsch as well as Pierre Kast, Rohmer, Chabrol and Godard. Truffaut was not re-interviewed but he is copiously quoted. The final

part of the book presents an anthology of critical opinions on the topic with contributions ranging from Sadoul to Jean Cau via Benayoun, Rivette and Michel Ciment as well as an extract from John Hess's very useful account of the New Wave originally published in *Jump Cut* n. 3 & 4, 1974. In fact, Hess's article is as close as the book gets to a historical analysis of the phenomenon. But although the various accounts of film-making life in the late 50s and early 60s add little to the available information, the contributions can be read as indicating something of the mood, the expectations and nostalgias of the contemporary French cinema: the myth of an irrevocably lost golden age, of an artisanal 'community' dedicated to individual(ist) artistry. Criticisms, (only one contributor raises the

question of the war in Algeria) tend to be couched in terms of moral flaws rather than emphasising the examination of the nature of the 'window' that relatively briefly opened in the cinematic institution as it tried to reorganise under the impact of TV, providing opportunities for 'new' types of production which found a wide international echo, not merely because of their intelligence and cinematic sophistication, but because other national cinemas were experiencing a very similar recognition of the need to change the existing production/distribution exhibition apparatus. For the British reader, this collection contains some timely reminders that the notion of a "new wave" was a journalistic gimmick launched in 1958. As Truffaut points out in a quoted interview, journalists got a lot of mileage out of constructing such a "group" and even more mileage out of denigrating the work of those on whom they had inflicted the label. As Truffaut remarks, many film-makers who had denied being part of a "new wave" subsequently identified with the label on polemical grounds, especially when the Denys de La Patelliere/Michel Audiard/Jean Gabin movie *Rue des Prairies* (1959) was explicitly promoted as an "anti-new wave picture settling accounts with the young upstarts". But even more timely and perhaps slightly unnerving is the reminder that this publicity gimmick accompanied the accession to power of de Gaulle. The new, downright chauvinistic and reactionary regime was greeted by a

journalistic discourse trotting out all the clichés about "new beginnings", a new era having dawned full of opportunities for the young and enterprising who were prepared to dedicate themselves heart, soul and savings to their chosen profession. In that context, the re-use of the label in Reagan's America and, later, in Thatcher's Britain, cannot be a mere coincidence. It would appear that the label "new wave" is deployed by journalists and self-promoters in relation to individuals willing and able to provide a radical gloss to regressively oppressive political regimes, promoting themselves as authors in the old familiar (Victorian-romantic) mold, suggesting that "real talent" will succeed in the same way that hard work and dedication will automatically lead to a seat on the board, power and wealth. Any mention of a "new wave", therefore, must be suspected of referring to a profoundly hypocritical, mercenary and conservative politics: the promotion/adoption of an antiquated notion of artistic practice by the courtiers of a newly refurbished authoritarian conservatism. It is the merit of John Hess's article in this collection that he draws attention to the complexities and contradictory aspects of such a development in relation to the French cinema of the time, while the rest of the book tends to be useful primarily as furnishing yet more raw material for, and confirmation of, his analysis.

sent down to the cellar to fetch the potatoes, told with a visual virtuosity and a wayward sense of humour that earned the film the Critics' Prize as well as captivating the perhaps more significant arbiters of public taste at the *Kinderkino*.

SHEILA JOHNSTON

Berlin

Family stories from Japan and Germany

Dogged by last-minute defections of stars and directors, the Competition section of the 1985 Berlin Film Festival was relatively low key. This is not to say that the selection was quite as bad as most people made out, but simply to indicate that the main programme has come increasingly to rely on a high level of glamour and glitter in order to provide the 'angles' necessary to keep up with the rich and varied programmes of the other sections. The Competition, with its focus on visible new product, was designed to pull along the Market, the Forum, the Information section and the Children's Festival. Now, it seems, these vigorous sideshows pull along the Competition.

As at the 1984 Venice festival, the French fielded a strong Competition team. The most surprising was Michel Deville's lively adaptation of René Beletto's novel *Sur la Terre comme au Ciel*, appropriately retitled *Péril en la Demeure* (*Danger in Delay*), a welcome change from his less demanding comedies. The most accomplished was Marguerite Duras' *Les Enfants*, which proves that her novel *Ah Ernesto!* (from which the Straubs also drew inspiration for their wonderful *En Rachâchant*) is one of her most open, intriguing and amusing texts. The most controversial (though not as controversial as the selectors hoped or expected) was Godard's *Je Vous Salue, Marie*, which must surely mark the end of the old fox's flirtatious relationship with feminism.

This is the philosophical Godard, the nagging, self-lacerating Godard who tries to prevent you enjoying the airier but fairier, gentler, *Breathless* to *Slow Motion* Godard. Interestingly, though, its short companion piece, *Le Livre de Marie* by Anne-Marie Miéville, manages to off-balance the depressing feeling of another blind alley up which Godard expects all who have loved him in the past to follow without question. The prizes, however, apart from the Best Script award to Duras, went elsewhere. *Wetherby*, of course, took a notable first prize (though this was slightly diminished by the political ex-aequo to Rainer

Simon's East German *The Woman and the Stranger*).

The Forum focused on a selection of Japanese films headed by what is fast becoming the year's cult movie, *Crazy Family*, by Sogo Ishii, who at twenty-six has already made five features and four shorts and was recently in London taking a crash course in English so he can fill in the forms handed him in Berlin by the world's festival directors. *Crazy Family* is the logical extension of *Family Game*, made by Ishii's friend Morita Yoshimitsu. The absurdist explosion of the 'Convenient Society' (an extra character intrudes on the space designed for a nuclear family) and a zany chipping away at the conventions governing Japanese life (played out through the measures taken against an invasion of white ants) are evidence of a cruel sense of humour not to everyone's taste. However, Ishii's imagination and verve are most taking. *Crazy Family* will open in the autumn at The Other Cinema's new London venue, the Metro, and Ishii's short punkish extravaganza, *Shuffle*, should be seen at the London and Edinburgh festivals.

The other Japanese films showed a more orthodox concern for the ecological and ideological health of their country. *The Stolen Sea* by Noriaki Tsuchimoto examined the effect of a spillage of nuclear waste on the life of a fishing community, while *The Lute of the Blind Monks of Satsuma* by Atsushi Suwa and *I Lived But...* by Kazuo Inoue meditated, respectively, on the spiritual power of Buddhist conceptions of music and on the cinematic magic of Ozu. The Japanese film in competition,

Seburi Monogatari by Sadao Nakajima, dealt elegantly with the effect of itinerant groups on distrustful village communities. There was, in addition, a special screening of *Tokio Saiban*, a 310-minute documentary on the postwar military trials by the veteran Masaki Kobayashi, which attracted the type of individual attention (rare at festivals where spectators are forever looking over their shoulders) that was accorded to *Heimat* at Venice last year.

There was a similar feeling of an 'event' about the controversial screening of Thomas Harlan's *Wundkanal* and Robert Kramer's *Unser Nazi*, a 'package' already opened in Venice but obviously more pertinent in Berlin, where the story of Alfred Filbert, deputy head of the Nazi secret service, is with reason better known. In *Wundkanal: Execution for Four Voices*, Filbert plays himself, a Nazi kidnapped and interrogated about his war crimes. It began as a fiction but turned into a documentary on an attempt to destroy, psychologically, a man still convinced he is the victim of insufficient recognition by his country for the loyalty he showed in doing his job. *Unser Nazi*, on the other hand, started off as a documentary on the making of *Wundkanal* and ended as a powerful analysis of the conflicting expectations built up around the project by just about everybody concerned.

The two films, it may be noted, are as much about Veit Harlan, the 'official' director of the Third Reich and Thomas' father, as about the 80-year-old Alfred Filbert. Harlan feels that the emphasis which has been placed

on the unresolved relationship with his father (who died on Capri 'unrepentant') has perhaps been overplayed due to the reluctance of the audience to confront the Nazi within us all.

Finally, to confirm the dangers of showing classics from the time when films used to be movies, the Jazz Retrospective and the screenings of a reconstructed *Queen Kelly*, with an excellent score by Adolph Tandler and stills to patch up the gaps in the story, and the extraordinary coloured version of *Dr Caligari*, with a score by Giuseppe Becce performed by a 20-piece orchestra, would on their own have justified the trip to Berlin.

DON RANVAUD

Joan complete

A Dreyer discovery

Carl Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* was first shown on 21 April 1928 in Copenhagen. There are records of two prints being viewed by the Danish Censors at the time. Both of these were considered lost. In December 1928, the original negative was destroyed in a fire at UFA in Berlin. Dreyer later made a new version using surviving outtakes and rushes (of 85,000m shot, the first version used 2,210m). This second version was itself considered lost until Lo Duca found it in Paris in 1952. He added music by Albinoni, Bach, Vivaldi and Scarlatti, and took the opportunity for some creative re-editing. This print—understandably detested by Dreyer—went into circulation in the 1950s.

In the 1960s, the Danish Film



Sogo Ishii's *Crazy Family*.

Museum assembled as complete a version as possible using the prints of foreign archives, but were very clear that this was not the original film. Now one of the 1928 prints has been discovered and for the first time in 57 years it is possible to see the film as Dreyer intended. It was found in, of all places, a psychiatric hospital outside Oslo. A print had, apparently, been bought or borrowed to screen to the patients, and had remained in the hospital ever since. It is in perfect condition—there is only one join in the entire print. Though a dupe positive, the print—whose visual quality was attested by a National Film Theatre screening in May—is in better condition than many new prints from old negatives.

The newly discovered print is, as it happens, almost the same length as the reconstructed version. It is clear that the reconstruction broadly followed the development of the original. The differences are mainly aesthetic (though I don't recall the blood-letting scene being so horrific): the original uses different camera angles, shots are held longer or cut off in mid-flow. Dreyer's idiosyncratic montage technique, his particular sense of rhythm and of keeping the spectator in suspense by constantly drawing up short in his editing, are much more in evidence in this print. In short, it fully confirms Dreyer's reputation as an avant-garde film-maker.

MARK NASH

Don't shoot!

Colonel Redl and the search for security

Istvan Szabo's *Colonel Redl*, which premiered at the Budapest Film Week in February, is the tale of a poor boy at the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire who rises to become the head of military intelligence. He is instructed by Archduke Franz Ferdinand to uncover—or invent—a plot among his fellow-officers. The ensuing prosecution will cause a scandal about the 'enemy within' and stiffen the loyalty of the officer corps. As Redl goes about his unsavoury work, it becomes clear, however, that he is the fall guy. Finally, locked in a hotel room, he is offered a revolver and the chance to do the honourable thing. The year is 1913.

Beneath this story of political provocation is a portrait of the kind of man suitable for such a task. Redl seeks to make himself the ideal military man by subordinating every emotion to loyalty to the Hapsburg Empire: denying family, betraying friends, marrying for political

connections and to disguise his homosexuality. 'He is not a conman,' Szabo said. 'He really and truly wants to become another person.'

It is here that the links with Szabo's other films become clear. The award-winning *Mephisto*—and *Colonel Redl* was made by the same team, actor Klaus Maria Brandauer, director of photography Lajos Koltai, screenwriter Peter Dobai—also had at its centre a man whom ambition made vulnerable. And both *Mephisto* and *Confidence* dealt with the theme of security. 'It's a basic, universal problem: without security you can't live. Different people find it in different ways: in love, in family, in work, in power. Sometimes, however, in war, at important historical moments, you can see the fight to achieve security more accurately. In *Confidence*, the people who have to go underground against the Nazis find it defensively. *Mephisto* on the other hand goes on the offensive—he thinks that by having everybody's love he will achieve security. Redl tries to find it by becoming a member of the ruling elite.'

The star role given to Brandauer—and he is as excellent as he was as *Mephisto*—focuses the film on the single central character. 'My earlier films were about several characters,' Szabo said, 'but this did not give me the opportunity to go deeply into one character. The psychological analysis remained on the surface. In *Mephisto* and *Colonel Redl*, I

was really interested in finding out a lot about one person. I tried to use a literary method, the so-called development narrative. I wrote the script for Brandauer: it was a kind of Christmas present.'

Colonel Redl was loosely based on a true story, which had already inspired John Osborne's *A Patriot for Me*, but Szabo considers the original relatively unimportant. 'Who knows what the truth was? The only version we have is that issued by the Austrian War Office, and they had an interest in getting their version accepted.' Did Redl commit suicide? 'They said he did. But perhaps his last words before shooting himself were "Don't shoot!"' It's worth noting that several films at Budapest this year had distant historical themes. Many recent Hungarian films have examined and tried to come to terms with Hungary's modern history; the films set in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, however, seem to be using the period as a source of metaphors about the present.

Szabo discourages direct political interpretations. None the less, the parallel with the treason trials of the Stalinist era is striking. When leading members of the Soviet Communist Party were tried and executed in 1936 and 38, when the Hungarian Foreign Minister Lazlo Rajk suffered the same fate in 1949, the victims almost seemed accomplices in their own denunciations. Their profound loyalty to the Party went as far as

accepting the necessity of their own deaths, perhaps *Redl* may be about the kind of provocation of v. himself is simultaneous organiser and the victim.

Szabo is currently to direct Mozart's *M. Figaro* in Vienna—before *Redl*, he directed *T. in Paris*—and is at v new script, subject but another historical time set in the period of World War, with a st militarist feeling. It is American production, in Europe, set in Ger probably using Hunga ties. Szabo's script c this time is David Rob critic of *The Times*.

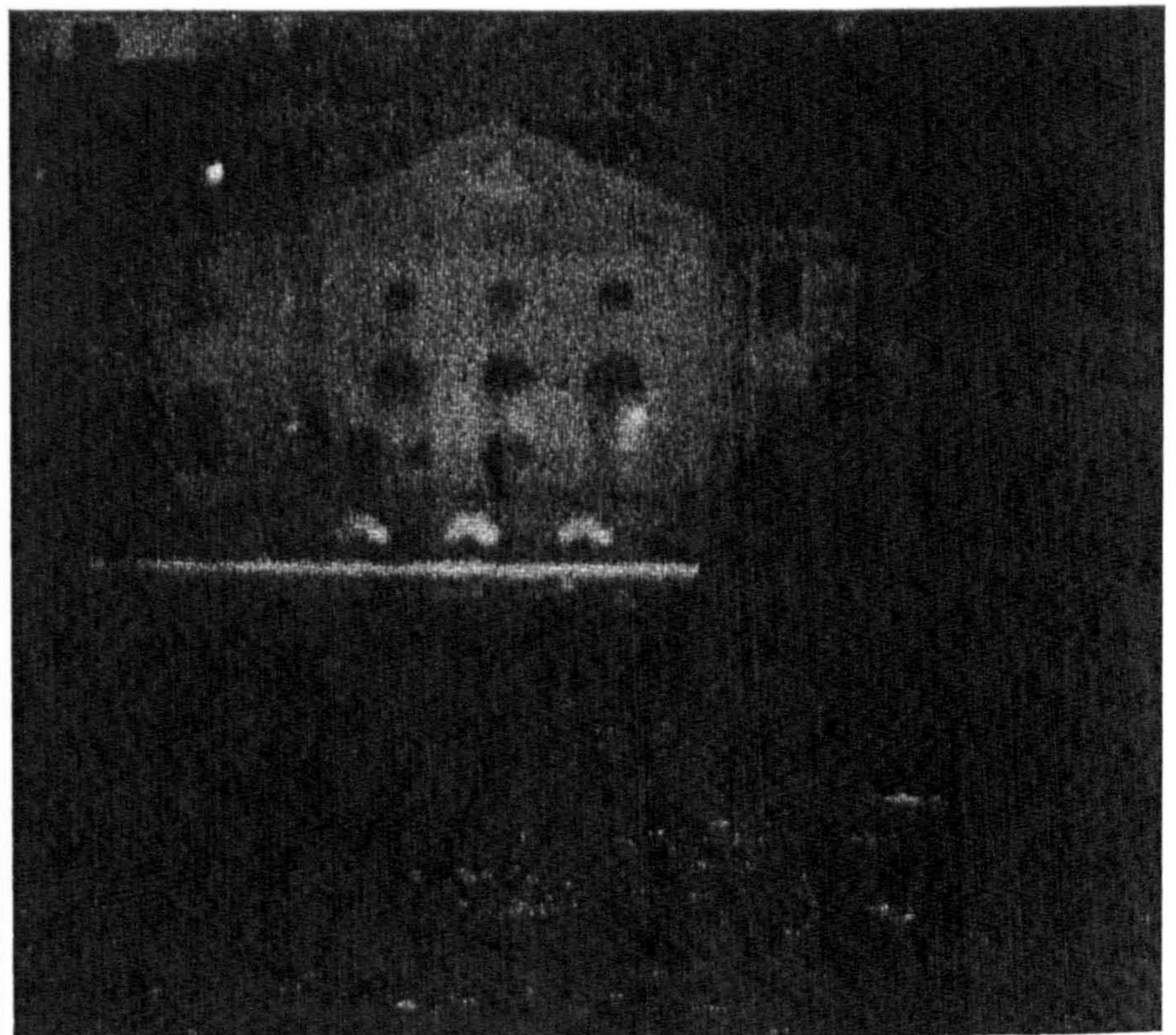
JERI

INPUT

Sponsorship and television

Public television is em the United States, th administration is cu thin but crucial feder Throughout Europe, p vice networks, fearful c losses and 'wall-to-wa are angling for fore and co-production mo in Britain, with the Committee now at spectre of advertising looms.

Nor, judging from r



Colonel Redl: Klaus Maria Brandauer.

GUIDO ARISTARCO

L'incredulità ha perso il suo pathos sociale liberatore, il cielo vuoto come oggetto di lutto (Dio che ha abbandonato gli uomini, non gli uomini Dio) non è che una proiezione del mondo umano che ha perduto ogni speranza di rinnovamento; di conseguenza, il desiderio religioso di consolazione e di salvezza perdura altrettanto vivo e fa confluire tutta la sua intensità nel nulla che si è così determinato. Sulla parola «nulla» si chiude il monologo bergmanniano di *Persona*; sul «niente» della porta chiusa, il vuoto, *Gertrud*. E tuttavia, dinanzi al «trono di Dio vuoto», in questa sua forma moderna di ateismo borghese, il desiderio religioso di salvezza perduta in Dreyer (e in Bergman) dinanzi alla sua Gertrud che non crede, che non può più credere, come invece Inger, al «miracolo» e strindberghianamente potrebbe annotare in un ipotetico diario: «Il cielo è nero; si è vissuti come si è potuto, e non come si è voluto!».

Dreyer nell'ultima sua grande, irripetibile opera ha rappresentato poeticamente questa situazione dell'intelligenza borghese atea.

MARK NASH

DREYER E IL CINEMA D'AUTORE. IL DIBATTITO DELLA CRITICA ANGLOAMERICANA

Sono molto grato al Comune di Verona, all'Istituto culturale danese e al Museo del cinema danese per avermi permesso di rivedere l'opera di Carl Dreyer. Sono passati ormai vari anni da quando mi sono occupato di Dreyer, e già dieci anni circa da quando mi sono recato a Copenaghen per vedere i suoi film più rari. Recentemente, non mi sono occupato di Dreyer in modo specifico.

Perciò, quando scelsi il titolo «Dreyer e il cinema d'autore», era una sorta di sparo nel buio, un titolo che pareva corrispondere nel modo migliore al discorso interrotto tra Dreyer e me. Ma quando cominciai a scrivere, mi accorsi che il mio interesse si concentrava su problemi critici, e in particolare sulla visione di Dreyer nella critica angloamericana. Devo anzi scusarmi con un uditorio interessato ai film di Dreyer, poiché io parlerò di un argomento meno noto e piuttosto specialistico, ossia Dreyer in rapporto ai dibattiti critici angloamericani. Ciò mi consentirà tuttavia di fare la seguente osservazione pedagogica: l'opera d'arte non può essere separata dalle sue condizioni di ricezione. Ad ogni modo, farò qualche riferimento ai film, e tratterò in modo indiretto il problema del cinema d'autore.

Farò una breve digressione storica sui problemi della critica cinematografica in Gran Bretagna; poi riesaminerò due metodi critici applicati a Dreyer — quello formalistico e quello psicoanalitico — che ho adottato in passato, e cercherò di trarre delle conclusioni.

Innanzitutto, qualche commento sui contributi che mi hanno preceduto. Considero questo convegno estremamente proficuo per

me; mi ha permesso di dare un nuovo sguardo ai film di Dreyer, di vederli sotto una luce nuova, e di rendermi conto della serie di problemi che essi suscitano per la storia e la critica.

Mi ha interessato particolarmente il tentativo di situare il cinema nei movimenti culturali del suo tempo; su questo aspetto resta molto lavoro da fare.

Mi è più chiara adesso la portata di quel complesso fenomeno culturale che fu il movimento realista, tra la fine dell'Ottocento e l'inizio del Novecento. Lo sviluppo della fotografia e del teatro naturalista diede origine ad un cinema documentario in cui si vede la realtà, ed il personaggio è determinato dall'ambiente.

Eppure, già nell'Ottocento ci fu una reazione al naturalismo, a favore della psicologia: ad esempio, in Dickens, il passaggio dalla descrizione della nuova società industriale all'esperienza individuale all'interno di quella società. Anche in Cecov prevale la psicologia, ed il punto di vista individuale.

Il cinema di Dreyer combina i due movimenti: il naturalismo fotografico che rivela mostrando, ed il realismo che si limita piuttosto a suggerire. Ad esempio, nei film sonori, il fatto che Dreyer non mostri la provenienza del rumore di un bambino che piange, o di cani che abbaiano, attira l'attenzione sui suoni stessi e sul loro senso possibile.

L'attenzione speciale di Dreyer per il volto è importante in questo senso, non solo in quanto il volto è un documento naturalistico dell'individuo, ma per quanto riguarda il cinema come percorso verso l'interiorità, la psicologia individuale.

Ritengo tuttavia che il cinema di Dreyer non si interessi molto all'evoluzione psicologica: personaggi che si muovono, imparano, cambiano. *Mikael*, rivedendolo, mi ha particolarmente colpito perché questo film non fa che simboleggiare la situazione dei personaggi; ad esempio, il modo in cui il tritico finale riassume l'isolamento di Zoret e l'abbandono da parte di uomini e donne. Questo film è un esempio eccellente della poetica della chiusura di cui ha parlato David Bordwell.

Ovviamente, non è sorprendente che Dreyer sia stato influenzato dai vari movimenti artistici del suo tempo, e che presenti caratteristiche comuni al simbolismo, al naturalismo e al realismo.

Tuttavia pensavo che questo sarebbe un settore interessante da esplorare ulteriormente...

Nota sulla storia del cinema e sulla critica cinematografica

Per cominciare, una citazione dal recente libro di Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*:

«La critica moderna nacque dalla lotta contro lo stato assolutistico; se adesso non definiamo il suo futuro come lotta contro lo stato borghese, essa potrebbe non aver alcun futuro».

La critica si fece strada nelle prime società borghesi come elemento centrale di una «sfera pubblica» in cui i giudizi politici, etici e letterari potevano mischiarsi sotto la guida benigna della ragione. In quel tempo (nel Settecento) la critica si occupava della politica culturale. Nell'Ottocento la sua preoccupazione principale era la morale pubblica, e nel nostro secolo, la «letteratura». Quest'ultima fu privilegiata in quanto mezzo espressivo di questioni vitali profondamente radicate nell'insieme della vita intellettuale, culturale e politica di un'epoca.

Attualmente la critica è diventata parte integrante dell'industria culturale. È diventata una sorta di pubbliche relazioni non retribuite, e fa parte delle richieste di ogni azienda corporativa su larga scala.

Non è difficile includere la critica cinematografica in questa accusa.

Appunti sulla critica cinematografica inglese

La critica cinematografica inglese ha avuto i suoi momenti di formazione:

1) nel periodo anteriore all'ultima guerra, si intendeva proteggere il nuovo pubblico di massa, istruendolo ed informandolo al tempo stesso. Questa tendenza produsse il British Documentary Movement e lo stesso British Film Institute;

2) all'inizio degli anni cinquanta critici come Lindsay Anderson, associati con la rivista di Oxford «Sequence» si batterono violentemente per un nuovo cinema ed una nuova critica. Ma i termini della questione non furono sufficientemente chiariti e sostenuti;

3) negli anni settanta, soprattutto intorno alla rivista «Screen» (che io direi verso la fine del decennio), ci fu il tentativo di dare inizio ad una forma più radicale di critica culturale. I concetti del

marxismo, della semiotica e della psicoanalisi stavano cambiando l'assetto della critica nella società inglese. Retrospectivamente, tutto ciò appare alquanto idealistico. In realtà, gli studi cinematografici si istituzionalizzarono. La critica culturale rimase un'attività marginale e specialistica.

Il mio interesse per Dreyer si manifestò all'inizio degli anni settanta. Naturalmente, la maggior parte dei film di Dreyer arrivano in Gran Bretagna un po' di tempo dopo la loro realizzazione. E nell'insieme, la critica inglese incoraggiava il mito di Dreyer autore austero e difficile.

Dreyer e la decostruzione

Il contesto critico della mia iniziazione a Dreyer furono quei dibattiti dello scorso decennio sulla critica culturale. Come è noto, il «fallimento» delle rivolte studentesche del 1968 portò ad una revisione del ruolo dell'ideologia.

Finché non avessimo capito il funzionamento dell'ideologia (il modo in cui soggetti umani individuali ne diventano schiavi) non avremmo potuto cambiare i rapporti sociali nei paesi a capitalismo avanzato. Il cinema era considerato un importante linguaggio ideologico mediante il quale il mondo si rappresentava a se stesso. Comprendendo il funzionamento ideologico del cinema e di singoli film sarebbe stato possibile a poco a poco cambiare l'ideologia che li condiziona. La rivista «Cahiers du Cinéma» realizzò una topologia in sette categorie sui rapporti tra forma e contenuto di un film, e l'ideologia. Tale ripartizione è così nota che fa già parte della storia del cinema, ma le questioni dibattute sono ancora pertinenti.

Nella categoria (e) sono inclusi alcuni dei miei film preferiti, quelli di John Ford, Roberto Rossellini e Carl Dreyer.

Film che a prima vista sembrano appartenere solidamente all'ideologia ed essere completamente sotto il suo controllo, ma che poi si rivelano tali solo in modo ambiguo. Infatti, anche se partono da un'ottica conservatrice, che va dal decisamente reazionario al moderatamente critico passando per il conciliante, sono stati poi trasformati, tanto che c'è uno scarto notevole, un divario tra il punto di partenza ed il prodotto finito... Nei film di cui stiamo parlando... interviene una critica interna

che distrugge e scardina il film. Se leggiamo il film obliquamente, in cerca di sintomi, se guardiamo oltre l'apparente coerenza formale, vediamo che si spacca sotto l'effetto di una tensione interna, semplicemente assente da un film ideologicamente innocuo... Tali film si criticano da soli, anche se non c'è traccia di una simile intenzione nel copione e ciò è irrilevante e irrispettoso.

Questo testo, come il volto di Elena di Troia, provocò l'imbarco di mille navi alla ricerca di film che si criticassero da soli. Penso che si possa rintracciare la questione nelle osservazioni di Althusser su alcuni allestimenti brechtiani, laddove egli afferma la possibilità di uno spettacolo che sia autocritico senza il coinvolgimento dinamico dello spettatore su cui tanto insisteva Brecht. Ma in sostanza si tratta sempre di un modello behaviorista di propaganda.

Uno degli argomenti originali a favore dell'analisi dettagliata dei film era la convinzione che si potesse districare il meccanismo della loro operazione ideologica. Tra gli altri, i film di Dreyer furono oggetto di una attenzione particolare, in parte a causa di questo.

Per esempio, non era possibile considerare progressisti gli interessi di Dreyer, e politica la materia del suo cinema. In certi casi (l'episodio finlandese di *Pagine del libro di Satana*, e la stessa *Giovanna d'Arco*) egli assume posizioni che sono state considerate reazionarie. Tuttavia, esplorando e schematizzando gli esperimenti formali delle sue opere potremmo sostenere che esse innestano un processo di decostruzione ideologica: presentano l'ideologia all'opera.

Questa tendenza fu approfondita dai critici e cineasti Noel Burch e Jorge Dana. Essi sostituiscono la nozione di codice a quella di ideologia nella topologia dei «Cahiers». Secondo loro a partire dagli anni venti si è instaurato un modo dominante di rappresentazione cinematografica. Si sono costituiti dei codici specifici di rappresentazione e narrazione. A quel punto ciò che interessa ai due critici è il cinema che spezza (distrugge) quei codici mettendo in primo piano il quadro vivente, la piattezza dello schermo, il rifiuto dell'illusionismo, la sovversione della narrazione lineare. La *Giovanna d'Arco* è importante secondo loro perché privilegia la rottura dell'immagine:

«Dreyer evidenzia l'immagine piatta creando così uno spazio

filmico che si presenta come serie di fotogrammi, come catena narrativa autonoma». *Giovanna d'Arco* si affianca così a *Man with a Movie Camera* nel pantheon dell'avanguardia.

Burch e Dana riservano lodi particolari a *Vampyr*, in quanto film di profondità testuale, «esempio quasi unico a tutt'oggi per la costante decostruzione dei codici della situazione soggettiva. Mette in discussione la tradizionale dicotomia tra soggetto e oggetto introducendo un terzo termine: la macchina da presa in quanto presenza onnipotente ed onniscente che definisce e smaschera le altre situazioni, rendendole allo statuto di ruoli». I critici sottolineano anche l'ambiguità della causalità temporale del film, ed individuano l'interferenza di codici appartenenti alla letteratura sui vampiri.

Quando iniziai a lavorare su Dreyer, ciò dipese in parte da queste posizioni critiche, e dai problemi logici che esse presentavano. Nel caso dei «Cahiers», non mi sembrava molto proficuo sostenere che il cinema di Dreyer presenta l'ideologia all'opera. Infatti l'interpretazione del lavoro e della sperimentazione formale in Dreyer è più complessa e indiretta di quella basata sul concetto di ideologia, secondo la rivista francese. E credo che nessuno probabilmente dissentirebbe da me nel momento attuale.

La posizione di Burch/Dana è più problematica, e concorda con certe letture diffuse di Dreyer; quindi mi soffermerò un po' su di essa. Ritengo che nella discussione della decostruzione dei codici in Dreyer entri in gioco in realtà la nozione di cinema d'arte. Sotto tale categoria generale le opere cinematografiche non solo circolano facilmente in quanto prodotti singoli, ma designano continuamente se stesse in quanto opere d'arte. Sappiamo anche, sebbene ciò non sia essenziale nel nostro discorso, con quanta insistenza Dreyer sottolineava l'aspetto artistico dei suoi film.

Il saggio che scrissi su Dreyer nel 1976 per «Screen» tentava di risolvere alcuni di questi problemi. Mi sembrava che quel che era considerato una decostruzione sistematica dei codici del punto di vista fosse in realtà l'elaborazione di un codice narrativo del soprannaturale, tipico della letteratura fantastica, la quale, come ha mostrato Todorov, si impenna sull'incertezza riguardo alla realtà dei fatti narrati.

Il fantastico si basa sulla categoria del reale: «Il lettore e l'eroe della storia... devono decidere se un dato avvenimento o fenomeno appartiene alla realtà o alla fantasia; in altri termini, devono

determinare se è reale o no. Dunque è la categoria del reale che ci dà le basi per la definizione del fantastico»¹. La dialettica tra le categorie del reale e dell'irreale caratterizzò il pensiero dell'Ottocento «...in una metafisica del reale e dell'immaginario, e la letteratura fantastica non è che la cattiva coscienza del periodo positivistico»². Il Novecento al contrario, tende ad affermare l'autonomia del testo da qualsiasi referente «reale»; è il periodo del testo modernista, di Joyce, del «nouveau roman» ecc. Però nel cinema tale questione ottocentesca resta valida, riguardo al problema del realismo, della «realtà» del referente cinematografico. Il testo fantastico non è modernista nel senso, poniamo, de *L'immortelle* di Robbe-Grillet, in cui c'è solo una serie reversibile di rappresentazioni e l'esito della realtà diegetica è trascurabile, ma è innovativo poiché almeno la categoria del reale è messa in discussione.

Vampyr funziona esattamente secondo le regole tipiche della letteratura fantastica individuate da Tzvetan Todorov, ossia la sistematica introduzione del dubbio. Il problema del grado di realtà degli avvenimenti testuali si pone continuamente all'implicito lettore, il quale di conseguenza è costretto ad esitare tra spiegazioni che si escludono a vicenda: il dato avvenimento è «reale» o «soprannaturale»? Questa sistematica eliminazione della certezza interviene in molti film dreyeriani: *Giovanna d'Arco*, *Ordet*, *Dies Irae*, *Presero il traghetto*... Gli interventi più clamorosi del principio di dubbio nei film di Dreyer, che avviano alla comprensione di ciò che è in gioco al di là della semplice individuazione formalistica della strategia, si concentrano nelle questioni di stregoneria. Quest'ultima funziona come campo di intersezione delle definizioni sociali di identità sessuale e della fondamentale bisessualità del desiderio in quanto energia della libido. È forse un merito ulteriore del testo dreyeriano il porre l'accento sulle questioni soggiacenti al principio di incertezza todoroviano; infatti le questioni implicite nel genere fantastico non sono soltanto del tipo: ciò è reale, o no?, ma coinvolgono direttamente il problema dell'identità sessuale del soggetto. Il processo della socializzazione del desiderio, la sua limitazione da parte di, e all'interno, dell'ordine culturale, implica naturalmente una separazione del maschile e del femminile. Le trasgressioni della distinzione culturale dei ruoli sessuali,

¹ Citiamo da T. Todorov, *The Fantastic, a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Cleveland, Ohio, 1975.

² T. Todorov, *op. cit.*

così rigidamente imposta, sono punite in vari modi (per esempio *Giovanna d'Arco*, le streghe di *Dies Irae* e di *Vampyr*, tutte donne che non rispettano le limitazioni imposte al desiderio femminile dall'ordine maschile). In effetti, le questioni sollevate nello spettatore implicito dalla struttura del testo fantastico si esplicano nei film dreyeriani sotto forma di confusione dei ruoli o delle identità sessuali: Giovanna d'Arco indossa abiti maschili, il «Vampiro» è di sesso indeterminato. Viceversa, tale diretta rappresentazione diegetica del quesito: di che sesso è questa persona?, ricade sul destinatario, che si trova all'altra estremità dello sguardo che unisce testo e spettatore, e che si pone quindi la domanda: di che sesso sono? Più semplicemente, si pone in questo modo il problema della bisessualità e del suo modo di rappresentazione, di introduzione nei sistemi discorsivi.

La riuscita di Dreyer in questo film dipende secondo me dalla trasposizione semiotica dalla letteratura al cinema. Gran parte del senso di disorientamento che il film suscita risulta direttamente dalla sua funzione di «film du fantastique»!

Altri aspetti disorientanti dei film di Dreyer possono essere letti come conseguenza di riferimenti indiretti al mondo delle belle arti o del teatro. La teatralizzazione della messa in scena attraverso le scene e le luci rimanda specificamente ai codici della pittura: i chiaroscuri di Caravaggio ripresi nei quadri di de Hoogh, oppure i disegni astratti per il teatro di Adolphe Appia e Gordon Craig, o del pittore danese Hammershøj. Il film *Mikael* è particolarmente emblematico, nel suo riferimento all'arte:

«Una delle prime scene di *Mikael* è imperniata su un quadro, *Il vincitore*, dipinto da Zoret, grande artista creato sul modello di Rodin, secondo lo stesso Dreyer. Il quadro rappresenta un giovane seminudo con le braccia tese verso lo spettatore in una posa probabilmente provocante. Si tratta inoltre, indirettamente, di un ritratto del modello, Mikael. La diegesi è attraversata da questo quadro... Zoret lo dona a Mikael che a sua volta lo vende per aiutare la principessa Zamikow, che si trova in difficoltà finanziarie. Zoret, venutone a conoscenza, insiste per ricomprarlo («il prezzo è immateriale») e perché Mikael lo riappenda nella sua camera. Altri quadri circolano...: i disegni algerini, il ritratto di Zamikow, e Giobbe nel trittico finale... come parte della narrazione, che contengono e «riassumono» il suo corso».

Mentre altri critici hanno parlato di rottura e decostruzione

dei codici, da parte mia preferisco dunque riferirmi ad essi: codici della letteratura, dell'arte e del teatro.

Dreyer e la psicoanalisi

Nel mio breve libro su Dreyer, scritto nel 1977, considero l'opera dreyeriana un corpus unico – il testo dreyeriano –, in cui individuo il segno di un discorso isterico, provocato da, e che tenta di reprimere, le questioni sollevate nei vari film dal desiderio e dalla sessualità.

A livello della diegesi, noto la presenza di donne idealizzate (in *Gertrud*, per esempio) e di uomini femminei (David Gray in *Vampyr*; Mikael ecc.). A livello di regia, descrivo l'incursione di emotività scaricata, che non può trovar posto nell'azione, e si esprime quindi in una dislocazione narrativa, in uno spostamento dal «carattere ardente del contenuto drammatico» alla regia e alla musica, «alla forma più casta della composizione fotografica», secondo i termini del critico danese Bjørn Rasmussen.

Ad esempio, riguardo a *Mikael*, faccio le seguenti osservazioni sulla funzione dei dipinti:

«Essi... hanno al tempo stesso la funzione di segni di desiderio, che rappresentano un oggetto amoroso: Mikael, Zamikow, o lo stesso processo del desiderio (il «Giobbe»). Il loro valore in contanti rappresenta una particolare modalità di desiderio. Zoret, che è già un «maestro», si rifiuta di dipingere il ritratto commissionatogli dalla principessa. Il denaro non gli serve, perché per lui il denaro è un mezzo per trattenerlo Mikael, oggetto del suo desiderio. In questo senso, controlla il denaro, lo ha già. La posizione di Mikael è opposta. Egli cerca continuamente di distinguersi da Zoret appropriandosi dei suoi soldi, trasformando i suoi quadri in soldi, azione interrotta alla fine dalla morte di Zoret, il cui intero patrimonio passa nelle mani di Mikael... Quando poi Zoret cambia idea ed accetta di ritrarre Zamikow, è perché essa gli appare momentaneamente nel posto di Mikael, come oggetto di desiderio; improvvisamente gli sembra attraente: i suoi occhi e il corpo sembrano riflettere più luce, parallelamente all'apparizione di Mikael a Zoret alcuni anni prima (Zoret lo aveva rifiutato come artista: «I vostri disegni non sono niente di buono, tornate quando avrete imparato a vedere», ma poi «vide» le sue possibilità

come modello). Il ritratto di Zamikow rappresenta il tentativo di Zoret di rinvigorire e rinnovare il suo desiderio di Mikael. Egli tenta una relazione con la principessa, escludendo effettivamente Mikael dalla cena, ma la donna non è altro che la controfigura di Mikael».

Nel mio studio considero inoltre il testo come un corpo, segnato/attraversato da sostituzioni, erotizzazioni, formazioni di sintomi, caratteristiche dell'isteria di conversione. *Giovanna d'Arco* è ossessionata da visioni del corpo in pezzi, «le corps morcelé», *Ordet* e *Gertrud*, dal corpo spezzettato e ricomposto. Una funzione-chiave del contenuto psicoanalitico di questi film è la riparazione/risanamento del corpo dall'aggressività che esso implica.

La psicoanalisi ci permette di abordare alcuni temi cari al regista, come la condizione femminile e la funzione della religione (entrambi, come si è detto nella prima giornata del convegno, parte integrante della cultura scandinava). Però è facilissimo usare la psicoanalisi come mezzo di interpretazione arbitraria, per far dire ai film ciò che si vuole che significhino.

In uno dei suoi saggi sul cinema, Roland Barthes propone un modo di guardare il cinema basato su una duplice seduzione, come se lo spettatore avesse due corpi al contempo, un corpo narcisistico «perso nello specchio dello schermo», ed un corpo perverso costituito da tutto ciò che trascende lo schermo: il suono, la sala, il buio e l'oscura presenza degli altri, i raggi di luce. Il metodo psicoanalitico pone il cinema come teatro del soggetto in divenire, istituzione per la rappresentazione, macchina per la produzione ed il mantenimento della rappresentazione.

Il problema di un simile metodo è che c'è il rischio — come nella lettura «decostruttiva» esaminata più sopra — che ogni film sia ridotto all'illustrazione di una tesi. E la ricchezza potenziale di questo metodo, che permette al critico di esplorare più a fondo la propria esperienza delle singole opere, rischia di trasformarsi nella critica troppo impressionista che sforzi più «scientifici» finirono col sostituire.

I metodi critici che ho appena discusso erano tutti concentrati sui procedimenti testuali, i modi di enunciazione, e rimuovevano sempre la questione della storia, della determinazione storica. Questa è a mio avviso la loro debolezza principale. Poiché solo riconducendo il testo alla nostra visione della storia possiamo con fermare le nostre ipotesi. Per fare un esempio: ho parlato di come

Gertrud esplora la repressione del desiderio nella protagonista, e la sua posizione subordinata nel mondo degli uomini, attraverso una serie di dislocazioni filmiche. A questo punto è utile ricordare il contesto storico del romanzo di Söderberg, l'interesse particolare e progressivo della cultura scandinava per gli aspetti psicologici dell'emancipazione femminile. Il mondo creato da Dreyer è quello letterario e artistico della Scandinavia nei primi decenni del nostro secolo. Il fatto che Gertrud ci sembri moderna dipende forse dallo sviluppo disuguale delle relazioni sociali.

Gli anni in cui si perfezionarono la macchina da presa cinematografica ed il proiettore (ultimi due decenni dell'Ottocento) furono anche gli anni della rottura decisiva nel teatro d'avanguardia, verso nuove forme di composizioni dinamiche. Strindberg, per esempio, scriveva opere che sono in pratica delle sceneggiature contenenti spostamenti spaziali, sequenze di immagini, tagli, trasformazioni e dissolvenze realizzabili tecnicamente solo nei tipi più sperimentali di allestimento scenico, ma che sarebbero diventati quasi scontati nel cinema.

Come ha osservato il critico inglese Raymond Williams, la corrispondenza tra cinema e teatro era possibile nella misura in cui non solo le tecniche di allontanamento, mobilità e dislocazione, ma anche un'intensa curiosità per il movimento e per forme dinamiche nuove partecipavano di un più profondo e generale movimento culturale... L'ostilità di tale movimento alle forme tipicamente fisse e chiuse della cultura ufficiale era davvero forte.

Nella cultura ci fu dunque un movimento antiborghese, che ruppe con le forme fisse e le immagini dell'arte borghese ufficiale. Il movimento si interessò alle forme popolari, tramite l'interesse per i movimenti popolari; ciò è rintracciabile nell'uso delle folle nel cinema, e negli elementi non realistici e non-rappresentativi della cultura popolare presenti nella commedia e nel melodramma del cinema muto.

Certamente, il cinema di Dreyer fa parte di quel movimento di rifiuto e abolizione della cultura borghese. Ritengo però che non si tratti di un regista d'avanguardia in senso stretto. In questo periodo di transizione (il primo quarto del secolo) egli crea piuttosto un cinema che definirei modernista o d'arte.

Ejzenštejn e Vertov sono registi d'avanguardia: il loro lavoro

sulla forma cinematografica si accompagna ad un imperativo politico. Essi cercano coscientemente di creare un nuovo modo di vedere, adatto al mondo nuovo che essi contribuivano a edificare.

La stessa etimologia, militare, della parola «avanguardia» implica una serie di nessi storici. Come è noto, in principio fu una frase presa dai socialisti utopistici francesi, che sottintendeva domande come: avanguardia di che?, per andare dove? e a che scopo? Il testo d'avanguardia comprende un misto di codici, è contrario alle indagini ontologiche, e a favore della eterogeneità.

D'altra parte il modernismo ridusse la nozione di pratica artistica ad una serie di caratteristiche formali, di procedimenti che si irrigidirono in una pratica generica: nel nostro caso il cinema d'arte, e più specificamente il cinema d'arte di Dreyer. Direi anche che si tratta di uno stile episodico, per quanto di notevole durata: di fatto diventa sempre più impossibile realizzare un tale cinema oggi.

Con il suo interesse per la riflessività e la riduzione semiologica, il sostrato materiale, lo specifico cinematografico, la critica usa il modernismo come categoria normativa per distinguere tra vari tipi di cinema. Gli esperimenti sulla prospettiva visiva, la struttura narrativa, la logica temporale e così via, compiuti in modo gratuito, sono i marchi di garanzia del cinema modernista, e della critica modernista.

Ciò non significa che tali elementi non si trovino individualmente nel cinema d'avanguardia. Ma in esso fanno parte di un processo più ampio. L'opera ha un rapporto più esplicito col discorso politico (non necessariamente progressista). L'opera d'avanguardia riconosce il proprio debito verso il contesto sociale con cui cerca di stare al passo, e che tenta di anticipare; ha un rapporto con la storia.

I critici che vedono nell'opera di Dreyer un cinema della de-costruzione, che mette in crisi i codici o chissà che altro, non fanno a mio avviso che sostenere l'ipotesi di un Dreyer cineasta modernista. I procedimenti di enunciazione che essi dimostrano sono in realtà i vari modi mediante i quali il testo può dire «questa è arte». Si tratta di una preponderanza antidialettica della funzione poetica. I significati dell'arte e dell'autorità sono intercambiabili.

L'errore critico, cui il mio lavoro va soggetto come quello di chiunque altro, consiste nel fatto che mostrando i procedimenti di

enunciazione nel cinema dimentichiamo la nostra parte nella ricostruzione del processo, e quindi proiettiamo il nostro sistema di valori nel film come segno del suo valore. Così si arriva facilmente ad un'alleanza profana, alla reciproca ammirazione che la società ha istituito tra il critico e il cinema.

Quanto detto non intende diminuire l'importanza di Dreyer nella storia del cinema. Indubbiamente gli sarebbe piaciuto molto essere considerato il padre del cinema d'arte. Bisogna piuttosto segnalare una certa corrispondenza tra il suo conservatorismo poetico con la «c» minuscola, e il desiderio di creare un solido universo estetico, conservatore anch'esso a mio parere, per quanto io ammiri quest'opera.

APPLICATION FOR A RESEARCH DEGREE BY PUBLISHED WORKS,
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Published Works Submitted:

II Film Culture

and offers middle class ones in their place. By saying this we are not arguing that working class values are sacrosanct but suggesting the need to carefully scrutinise positions that seek to replace them. If SEFT is to contribute to the development of film education it is important that its commitments to film and education should be brought to bear on each other.

In relation to psychoanalysis our general conclusion is, to return to a point made at the beginning of this article, that a greater critical distance is needed. It is at this point it seems to us that there are the strongest divisions between our position and that of other members of the board. Much of the writing about psychoanalysis comes from a commitment that doesn't allow a critical distance to be taken. The presentation of Lacan's ideas (*Screen* v 16 n 2, Summer 1975) provides a convenient example of how this commitment blocks criticism. We believe that no socialist educationalist could be happy with Lacan's authoritarian account of the learning process.

'The master breaks the silence with a sarcasm, a kick - anything at all. It is thus in the quest for meaning that a Buddhist master proceeds according to Zen technique. For it is the pupils' business to seek the reply to their own questions. A master does not teach ex cathedra a completed science; he brings forth the reply when his students are on the point of discovering it themselves.' (Our italics.)

Yet this is enthusiastically presented as an example of Lacan's unorthodoxy.

Lacan's position as presented raises many of the problems that have become familiar in discussion of F R Leavis's critical position - the refusal of a metalanguage, the attempt to explicate concepts only by showing them at work. Indeed in confronting the use of Lacanian concepts in *Screen* we have come up against one of the special problems of Leavisite criticism, the use of terms whose repetition suggests they are important for the system of thought but whose meaning is hard to specify.

Screen has often been criticised as parasitic on ideas developed elsewhere. We reject this criticism in that we regard it as important to make available ideas which seem potentially fruitful wherever they are first developed. But the criticism has force if the ideas are presented and used uncritically without a sufficient awareness of the political situation they are likely to operate in. Which brings us back to *Screen's* relationship with its readers - the fundamental issue underlying the particular discussion of psychoanalysis we have tried to open up.

EDWARD BUSCOMBE

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Edited by Edward Buscombe

Cuts at the Slade

The last issue of *Screen Education*, n 16, Autumn 1975, raised questions of the effect that the educational cuts, resulting from the current recession, have for film education. There is a clear instance of this in the proposals for severe curtailment of the work of the Slade Film Unit, now under discussion in University College, London (of which the Slade School of Fine Arts is a department).

A course in film study was initiated at the Slade in 1960 by Thorold Dickinson, who was appointed to a personal chair in film in 1967. James Leahy currently directs film studies. The unit has built up a two-year full-time postgraduate diploma course in film studies and recently an MPhil course open to full-time and part-time students. The unit also provides teaching and facilities for the rest of the Slade and University College, has made a number of documentary films, and initiated the Slade Film History Register. Slade students are making increasing contributions to the development of film culture in Britain and internationally. As the only full-time course in film studies in the country it has been an important example and precedent for initiating other courses in film in higher education (Newcastle, Warwick, Exeter).

The continued existence of the unit in its present form is threatened by proposed cuts in its budget and the closure of the post-graduate diploma course. When the new Slade Professor of Fine Art, Lawrence Gowing, took up his post this October (on the retirement of Sir William Coldstream) he discovered that cuts of the order of £12,000 were necessary to avoid deficit in the Slade's budget. After reviewing the Slade School's work as a whole it seemed to him that the only area which could be cut back without severely undermining the whole functioning of the school, was that of film studies. (Spreading the cuts across the Slade as a whole could result in a reduction of anything between 25 per cent and 50 per cent in the level of the Slade's activities.) Consultations are at present going on with staff and students as to the implementation of the cuts.

The first meeting of staff and students was held on November 18; the Slade's rationale for the cuts ran as follows:

1. The lack of funds was placed squarely on the refusal of the

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Department of Education and Science to make up departmental grants to a level to cover inflation. This has hit the Slade particularly hard in the areas of materials, visiting lecturers and part-time staff, who provide an important part of the teaching of art at the Slade, but whose salaries must be paid out of departmental funds, unlike staff on contract whose salaries are paid out of college funds which the DES protects from inflation.

2. Since Professor Gowing's brief on appointment was to strengthen the undergraduate work, and 'protect' the postgraduate work in fine arts, that left only the film unit open to cuts. Gowing stressed the centrality of the fine-arts work to the Slade's conception of itself. (The Slade has made an important contribution to the history and conception of the art school, and has been represented in many of the developments of British painting and sculpture in the last hundred years.) To spread the cuts throughout the school would threaten the existence of the school as we understand it.

3. Consequently it is up to the film unit to make the necessary sacrifice, though that entails changing the whole basis of film studies at the Slade. It is proposed to centre the cuts on the most cost-intensive area of the unit's activities, the screenings, of which there are at present four a week. This would mean effective abandonment of the diploma course, since it would be impossible to provide sufficient screenings to teach film history. Most of the cuts would be delayed until the current diploma students had completed their work. The film unit's work would then be redefined, confining itself to doctoral research and some service teaching.

It was stressed that this was not the first step in a campaign to cut off different sections of the Slade.

From the situation outlined above it is clear that arguments about the implementation of cuts in educational expenditure inevitably involve decisions on educational priorities within that institution. In the ensuing debates it is very easy for implicit assumptions about the relative lack of importance of film studies to gain ground. In University College I would say that film is at the bottom of the hierarchy: academic work/fine arts work/film work. To question that hierarchy not only raises issues of film education, but also of the role of the art school in the educational system.

The decision about the cuts has already been made. The only way to reverse it is by persuading the Provost of University College and the College's finance committee that the importance and uniqueness of the film unit necessitate exceptional prudence in reducing the expenditure of the Slade.

MARK NASH

As Screen goes to press we learn that a supplementary grant to the Slade will allow another intake of diploma students. This good news does not detract from Mark Nash's major thesis; the fragility of film studies even in institutions where they are well established.

A Year of Film Study in Paris

This account of some courses taught last year at the Centre d'Etudes Universitaires Américain du Cinéma provides a point of comparison with film study work being done in this country at higher education level. Screen and Screen Education will from time to time be publishing accounts of teaching at British universities, polytechnics and film schools.

Some of the courses described below are being repeated at the Centre this year. Further details can be obtained from Mary Milton, Council on International Education Exchange, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, New York 10017, USA.

The Centre d'Études Universitaires Américain du Cinéma à Paris is a programme organised jointly through the University of California and the Council on International Educational Exchange in New York. The programme is intended principally for graduate students in film theory, though it is appropriate for undergraduates with adequate background; its bias is structural-semiological. The opportunity to work with Christian Metz and several students of Metz may be considered its primary attraction. Courses are held in cooperation with the Department of Cinema at Censier, a branch of the University of Paris otherwise known as Paris III, but are (apart from several I did not attend) restricted to the American students in the programme. Courses at Censier, and for that matter the whole University of Paris system, are open to the American students, although not as an official part of the programme. Although the programme's structure did limit contact with French students, this was nonetheless made up for by the pains most of the teachers (teaching in French) took to make themselves understood by people like myself, with a limited background in French. Thus, my two years of college French as an undergraduate proved quite adequate for my needs.

The year was organised into four quarters of about eight weeks each. Each class generally met about once a week for several hours at a time. Several courses started in either the first, summer session, or the second which began in November, and continued throughout the whole year. Thus, these courses maintained considerable continuity from quarter to quarter.

Initiation to Film - Jacques Aumont (5 hours, summer quarter)
 This course, which met two afternoons a week, was not so much an initiation to film as an initiation to recent French film thought. The professor, Jacques Aumont, is a former editor of *Cahiers du Cinéma* and a scholar of the Russian cinema who has translated many of Eisenstein's writings into French. A film was screened at each session. Among the topics were: the nature of the 'classic' cinema (Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln*, Hawks's *Only Angels Have Wings*, Rossellini's *Open City*); cinema as a dream medium, the

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back over his shoulder in Still 1 (compare Still 4 with Still 5 which comes from a shot before Still 1). The crux is not the film in itself looking at the viewer but what drops between shots, that interruption and its negativity.

Which brings us to iv. In fact, the fourth look as real is only in the breaking of the film – the breaking, that is, of the pattern of looks, the relay of identifications, the coherence of film, cinematic institution and spectator. But the real is then of the order of that area specified in its difficulty in the preceding note. Analysis would have to begin from there.

For Oshima, and to finish a little differently with the problem, a story where the real in these terms is on the outside of all the elements breaking together. The night of February 25/26, 1936 Tokyo is under a layer of snow. A reception takes place at the American Embassy in honour of Viscount Saito Makoto, recently Prime Minister and now something like Lord Privy Seal. As a treat, Ambassador Joseph C. Grew has had a copy of *Naughty Marietta* – the Van Dyke musical starring Nelson Eddy and Jeannette MacDonald – brought over from Hollywood. Will Saito like it? He stays, delighted, to the end of his first sound film. *In the Realm of the Senses*, released this year (in one or two countries), opens in snow-covered Tokyo, tells the story of Sada, a story from 1936; Oshima's voice over at the close, Sada wandering for four days in Tokyo with her lover's severed genitals in her hand; shots of children in the film, children with the Japanese flag, soldiers marching, more children, more flags – in February 1967 Japan decides to reinstate the national celebration day lapsed since the war; in November 1969, Nixon agrees with Sato the return of Okinawa. Saito is assassinated the day after *Naughty Marietta*, in an abortive putsch, part of the history of the growth of Japanese militarism in the 1930's. X in *Sight and Sound* finds that *In the Realm of the Senses* shows how boring sex is on the screen. . . . The real in cinema is somewhere in all that, and between you and the screen – question of the real: *anata mo . . . ?*

Erratum

In Stephen Heath's article 'Narrative Space' in *Screen* v 17 n 3, Autumn 1976, p 71, Stills 3 and 4 have been misplaced, so that 3 should be 4 and vice versa.

Breaking with Old Ideas: Recent Chinese Films*

Rosalind Delmar and Mark Nash

'The night was long and dawn came slow to the Crimson Land. For a century demons and monsters whirled in a wild dance. And the five hundred million people were disunited.'

Mao Zedong

I The Cinema in China

Before the Japanese invasion the Chinese film industry was small and dominated by American capital and ideology. The invasion curtailed projected expansion. National Chinese cinema properly speaking began in the Communist base area of Yan'an (Yenan), established after the Long March, with the production of documentaries by revolutionary film-makers.¹ Joris Ivens says that he gave the Chinese revolutionaries their first camera and 2,000 m of film in 1938, after the completion of *400 Million*, and that this camera was, 'for the revolutionaries, the beginning of the Chinese cinema' (*Cahiers du Cinéma* nos 236-7, March-April 1972). With liberation in 1949, the new government took over an underdeveloped urban industry, a projection and distribution system of 600 theatres in the whole country, and a negligible number of

* In this article, Chinese words and names have, as far as possible, been transliterated according to the *pinyin* Romanisation system, with the exception of Peking (*pinyin* Beijing), which has been left in the more familiar form. In a few cases where the *pinyin* form could not be established, names have been left in the Romanisation in which they were found, and these names have been marked by an asterisk. At the first appearance of well-known names which are very different in *pinyin*, the more familiar Romanisation is given in brackets. We should like to thank N-K Leung for his help in this matter.

1. For a different view, see Jay Leyda: *Dianying: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China*, Cambridge, Mass 1972, esp chs 1-5.

mobile projection units for the countryside. All film material and equipment had to be imported. By 1960 there were 15,000 projection teams, and the home industry produced everything for its own needs with the important exception of film-stock. This gap was filled, despite the withdrawal of Soviet aid, and in 1965 the first colour stock was manufactured. In 1976 there are 40,000 projection teams and half of total film production is in colour. During the Cultural Revolution a new gauge of film-stock, 8.75 mm, and new projection equipment, suited to the purpose of carrying film to mountainous regions, was developed. This new, lighter equipment facilitated the growth of the projection units, and meant that films held to be ideologically important could be seen and discussed by all. In national-minority areas the projectionists also have the task of providing a running commentary in the local language.

The initial transformation of the production infrastructure, of which these figures are an index, was carried out using the experience of the Soviet Union, which acted as China's main helper and adviser in the early years. The Russian cinema pioneered the work of mobile projection units, for example. However, the adaptation of Russian styles of work also encouraged, according to some Chinese film-makers, the setting up of many separate departments, hierarchical organisation and a system of material incentives and royalties (if a film was sold abroad, the workers who had made it got an extra bonus). It also quickly helped to make film a centre of debate and political activity. A worker in the documentary studio in Peking, for example, recalled to Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan (see *Cahiers du Cinéma* nos 236-7, op cit) how the one-time mayor of Peking, Peng Zhen, managed to get them to make a film valorising the achievements of the municipality of Peking rather than those of Dazhai, the exemplary commune whose experience of self-reliance came to prominence in the critique of Liu Shaoqi (Liu Shao-chi). It is evident that even before the Cultural Revolution the possibilities of film as a nationally diffused bearer of ideology were noticed and seized upon by many politicians.

During the Cultural Revolution the organisation of the studios was transformed, and a sustained attempt was made to break down the hierarchy of privilege: an editor had to become able and prepared not just to carry film-cans, which he had refused to do before, but also to make the tea or sweep the floor. Film production was still organised on a studio system, but with a much more limited bureaucracy, with individual films made by self-constituted autonomous collective work groups. Tasks were still divided, but a more equal relation between the workers was argued to be more fruitful, politically and productively, in the long run. The director remained the central organising and leading figure, but with an obligation to be politically responsible to the group and to see that all ideas of group members were taken into consideration. A new emphasis was also put on 'learning from the masses' in line with

one of the central questions of Marxism: 'Who educates whom?' Film-makers were encouraged to go collectively to the site of the work which they were transforming into the film medium, to remain there for a time and to utilise the experience of common work and interchange in the process of cinematic production. For example, in making *Breaking with Old Ideas*, a fiction film based on the Jiangxi Communist Labour University, the film crew and actors all visited and worked in the University, and when *Red Detachment of Women* was being reworked, the ballet-dancers and scriptwriters were encouraged to visit Hainan Island and meet the members of the original Women's Red Detachment on whose experience the ballet was based.

II Art and the Cultural Revolution

A recent season of seven Chinese films at the National Film Theatre in London provided an opportunity to see and reflect on some of the products of this new style of work. Of the seven, only the opera-ballet films *Red Detachment of Women* and *The White-haired Girl* had been shown before in this country.

Before proceeding to a more detailed discussion of the films, it seems necessary to provide some background to the ideological struggle of which they form a part and some reference to features of the Chinese film aesthetic. The Peking Opera provides a convenient starting point in both respects, for two reasons. In the first place, the struggle over the Peking Opera was one of the most hard-fought and best-publicised battles of the Cultural Revolution. Secondly, some of the elements of the Peking Opera are apparent within the system of representation of fiction films.

As an art form Peking Opera is about two hundred years old. Although it is called Peking Opera it is not confined to Peking, and there are about two hundred local forms; although it is called Opera there are no composers as such and the form is a combination of singing, recitative, mime and acrobatics. Some of its specific aspects are: (a) scarcity of props, which are symbolic rather than naturalistic; (b) falsetto singing; (c) symbolism of gesture, which is meant to express intensity and concentration of feeling, the precise shade of political emotion; (d) the *liang xiang*, a still pose performed at the entrance or before the exit of the principals, which resumes the meaning of the scene or preceding action; (e) face-painting, which is used to reveal the symbolic place of the character; (f) stylised costumes.

Already in Yan'an the question of how to revolutionise Peking Opera in order to make it 'serve . . . the millions and tens of millions of working people' (Lenin, in *Party Organisation and Party Literature, Collected Works Vol 10*) was an immediate practical

concern. A Yan'an Peking Opera Group was set up and produced a new opera *Driven to Join the Liangshan Mountain Rebels* which was based on the fourteenth-century novel *Heroes of the Marshes*. It was after seeing this opera that Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung), already the acknowledged leader of the liberation struggle, wrote: 'History is made by the people, yet the old opera . . . presents the people as though they were dirt and the stage is dominated by lords and ladies and their pampered sons and daughters. Now you have reversed this reversal of history and restored historical truth and thus a new life is opening up for the new opera.' The problem was, how to continue to make this 'reversal of the reversal' into a common practice.

Throughout the Cultural Revolution, reference direct and indirect was made to the 'Yan'an spirit' (of the films under discussion *Breaking with Old Ideas* contains the most direct appeal to Yan'an) and this quotation from Mao Zedong was much used in debate. At the 1964 Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes, Jiang Qing (Chiang Ching), Mao's wife, declared: 'Our operatic stage is occupied by emperors, princes, generals, ministers, scholars and beauties, and, on top of these, ghosts and monsters. . . . Theatres are places in which to educate the people, but at present the stage is dominated by . . . feudal and bourgeois stuff' (*On the Revolution in Peking Opera*, Peking 1968), and this was surely a conscious re-echoing of one of the points Mao Zedong had made in Yan'an as well as being a pointer to some of the directions the Cultural Revolution would take.

Jiang Qing had been herself an actress and film star of the 1930's, imprisoned for Communist activities. In 1940 she went to Yan'an, and in 1949, at the time of Liberation, was in charge of the cinema section of the propaganda bureau of the Communist Party Central Committee. After Liberation she continued to be engaged in cultural work in film and theatre and in 1964 became one of the main standard bearers of the Cultural Revolution. Although in China art and culture had never been treated by Communists as an area detached from politics and social relations, but rather as an expression of political life, Jiang Qing posed the connection between culture and politics much more sharply and dramatically than did other cultural figures.

After 1949 the main theoretician of cultural work was Zhou Yang, who had been active before liberation in the organisation of art troupes and propaganda teams. From his experience of work in the liberated areas, Zhou drew the conclusion that the correct approach was that of 'reforming old opera gradually, first in content and then in form. . . . We are . . . opposed to the viewpoint and method of those who regard the whole of the old opera as feudalistic and therefore assume an attitude of completely discrediting it. . . . We should realise that, as the political consciousness of the masses rises they will naturally become critical towards

the feudalistic and retrogressive traits of the old opera and discard them'. Zhou assumed that this 'natural' process of re-orientation would continue after liberation, so that the 'harmonious' solution of intellectual conflict would be possible (Zhou Yang: 'The People's New Literature and Art' in *China's New Literature and Art*, Peking 1954).

During the Cultural Revolution the appeal to 'natural' transformation came under attack. Indeed, one of the most important theoretical elements of the Cultural Revolution was the assignment of an active place to ideological structures in confrontation with a theory of their inevitable passivity and subordination to the economy. The dominant theme of the Cultural Revolution was not the 'two merging into one' of harmony, but the 'one dividing into two' of the discordance of continuing class struggle during the socialist period of transition. A further factor in the debate was the break with the Soviet Union after the sudden withdrawal of technicians and the initiation and continuation of a critique of Russian methods of work in the countryside, in industry and in culture. It is interesting to note that Liu Shaoqi, President of the Republic, displaced from office during the Cultural Revolution, was reported as saying of one traditional opera which was revived and criticised in the 1950's and early 1960's: 'It doesn't matter much if it is staged. It has been performed for so many years; didn't New China emerge in spite of that?' In other words, does culture carry any political weight? This question came very much to the fore in the Cultural Revolution and carried a resonance which was felt far beyond its place of origin.

In 1963 Jiang Qing worked with a theatre company in Peking to produce a new Peking Opera on a modern theme, *The Lakeside Village*. When it was performed in Peking, Peng Zhen, the mayor, having seen a performance, dispersed the company, effectively preventing the work from being seen again. It was at that point that Jiang Qing moved to Shanghai and began to organise productions there. Around this activity the 'Shanghai group' was formed, and within five years all of its members had seats on the Central Committee and Political Bureau of the Communist Party. Whatever his differences with the Shanghai group, their success was only made possible by Mao Zedong's support. In Shanghai there were difficulties similar to those in Peking: the mayor and First Party Secretary refused to attend performances of new model Peking Operas such as *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, and attempted to have them banned, but at the same time there were strongholds of the new practice: a local newspaper, *Liberation*, sympathetic factories -- in short, a political base. The importance both of political support and of the place occupied by cultural production can be illustrated by the argument over a play by Wu Han, deputy mayor of Peking, *Hai Rui Dismissed From Office*, which was read as a direct attack on Mao Zedong and the 'Yan'an spirit'. Jiang Qing

72 tried to get a criticism of it published in Peking, but failed. Yao Wenyuan succeeded in publishing a criticism in the Shanghai paper *Wenhui Bao*, sparking off a debate which led to the dissolution of Peng's group. Mao Zedong commented: 'Yao Wenyuan's article is also very good: it has had a great impact on theatrical, historical and philosophical circles. Its defect is that it did not hit the crux of the matter. The crux of *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* was the question of dismissal from office. The Jia Qing emperor dismissed Hai Rui from office. In 1959 we dismissed Peng Dehuai from office. And Peng Dehuai is Hai Rui too' (Stuart Schram, ed: *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, Harmondsworth 1974, p 237). The general political conflict, of which opposition over the theatre was only a part, achieved perhaps its most spectacular moment when the Shanghai Commune was set up in February 1967 (and deliberately named after the Paris Commune). Jiang Qing gained direction of the film industry. Yao Wenyuan became editor of the national *People's Daily*, and Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen, their allies, assumed leading positions in the local Shanghai Party and nationally as well. In the last few months this group has suffered a reversal in political fortunes, but it is important to emphasise that the films shown at the National Film Theatre are products of the period of their cultural dominance and should be read as such.

During the Cultural Revolution the economic and the subjective were inter-linked in the priority given to the work of transforming the superstructure: 'To transform the cultural and educational positions according to the image of the proletariat is more difficult and complicated than to seize political power and change the system of ownership' is a typical statement of this outlook. The transformation of the world according to the image of the proletariat, it was predicted, would arouse antagonism: 'The proletarian revolution in the superstructure impairs the fundamental interests of the bourgeoisie within the Party, it is therefore bound to meet with its desperate resistance.' In the context of this formulation of the problem, a particular aesthetic was developed in the theatre and cinema, that of the demonstration and exemplification of two-line struggle, which in its turn allocates a particular relationship of the audience to the film material. By engaging with the film, any individual would experience in him/herself the conflict between two kinds of subjectivity, or rather two ways of describing and reproducing themselves as subjects — bourgeois individualism and class consciousness. In order to accomplish the revolutionary task of transformation, those feelings described as 'bourgeois individualism' had to be transposed, recast to the class struggle. It is notable that in *Azalea Mountain*, and to a lesser extent in *Hong Yu*, there is an emphasis on the retrograde nature of the desire for personal revenge, and a striving to replace it, or rather to channel it into a general political and collective

endeavour. According to the actors who came from the old Peking Opera, their new work meant that they were forced to transform their political thinking before they could portray a model proletarian heroic figure. The actress who played Ke Xiang in *Azalea Mountain* commented: 'It turned out that what I had learned in the old school not only did not help me portray Ke Xiang but became the biggest obstacle to my acting. The first problem was that I did not have the proper thoughts and feelings for my part' (*China Reconstructs*, v 25 n 8, August 1976). Training in the *liang xiang* symbolism of pose also operated as an obstacle to those who began to work on more naturalistic projects. Li Xinming, who plays the lead in *Spring Shoots* (not yet seen here, but the centre of great controversy in China after Teng Xiaoping walked out of a performance, denouncing it as 'ultra-left'), has written about her difficulties with her role: 'In the past whenever I acted a heroine I would hold my head and chest high. In real life, however, I found heroes most unassuming because they are deeply rooted amongst the masses' (*China Reconstructs* v 25 n 6, June 1976). In her article Li Xinming points to a central question of the aesthetic: how do you represent an exemplary hero in such a way that he or she is recognisable to the audience at the same time as drawing lessons from a 'real life' where such heroes might be unrecognisable, and where a part of their heroism might consist precisely in that?

Teng Xiaoping, in walking out of *Spring Shoots*, was criticising the aesthetic practice, visible in most of the films shown at the National Film Theatre, of having one main heroic figure with an already formed political consciousness whose struggle against a leading villain educates, attracts and transforms the politics into which they are inserted, often from the outside (*Azalea Mountain* and *Breaking with Old Ideas* are good illustrations). According to Teng this is 'unMarxist' because it represents only 'a single flower'. His criticism indicates an aspect of the debate over the twin terms of 'revolutionary romanticism' and the 'positive hero'.

In the production of model Peking Operas during the Cultural Revolution, there was developed the aim of 'combining revolutionary realism with revolutionary romanticism'. Realism consisted in the portrayal of the working class as the makers of history, romanticism in the mode of portrayal, which eschewed, at that point, naturalism. The model operas, like the later films, became the bearers of a cultural-political *prise de position* which takes as central mechanisms identification and idealisation. The argument is summed up neatly in an exhortation from *China Reconstructs* v 25 n 8, August 1976: 'Persist in the principle of creating characters in which the best and highest of the working class is portrayed, unrestricted by real life and people. Take these characters from life but portray them higher than life. Bring out

the character of such heroes by putting them in the thick of sharp class struggle. Give prominence to positive characters among all the characters, to heroes among the positive characters, to the principal hero among the heroes. Create special environment, character and personality and use all kinds of artistic media to make the proletarian heroes stand out. Reveal the heroes' inherent communist spirit. Unify their common characteristics and their individual characteristics.

The dominance of the positive hero was a direct outcome of the lines developed in the argument over Peking Opera, where Jiang Qing declared that the 'artistic exaggeration' inherent in the form had tended to make the villains more interesting and striking than the heroes and that this balance had to be redressed. At the same time conflict sharpened over the aesthetic choice between the presentation of opposite poles of attraction in different figures and the representation of 'middle characters', who combined negative and positive characteristics. The argument for giving 'middle characters' pride of place in the centre of the stage, was that they were more 'true to life'. Thus once more the argument circled around the mode of representation of the 'real' and its constitution (see the *Forum on Literature and Art*, Shanghai 1968).

III The Films: Politics

As we remarked earlier, the seven films at the National Film Theatre all came out of the lines developed during the Cultural Revolution and thus help to show some of the features of this aesthetic. Each film is remarkable for the way in which, during the opening sequences, the political problems which the filmmakers are attempting to pose are spelled out. In *From Victory to Victory* the question is: 'Why is it that after a successful battle it is sometimes best to retreat rather than plunge immediately forward into another attack?' In *Breaking with Old Ideas* it is: 'What sort of educational institutions and methods are most suited to the needs of the peasants?' *Hong Yu* poses the problem: 'What sort of health service is needed in the countryside and how is it to be constructed?'; and *The Pioneers* asks: 'Is China's economic backwardness the result of colonial domination or of some basic geographical lack?' Each film takes up its problem and grapples with it through twists and turns in the plot, political argument and debate between the principal characters, leading sometimes to open and violent conflict. Each film also deploys an iconography by means of which the spectator is provided with a privileged position in relation to the events witnessed. Much of this iconography seems to be taken from the opera. Even the most naturalistic, *Breaking with Old Ideas*, delineates principals from the rest

by the use of make-up; amongst the principals villains are easily distinguished by the use of a pallid, greenish tinge to their skins in contrast to the healthy freshness of the peasant heroes. The claustrophobically enclosed space of the landlord's house in *White-Haired Girl*, where the wicked Confucian mother sits surrounded by antiques, is echoed in the settings of the meetings of the Guomindang generals of *From Victory to Victory*, in their darkened smoky rooms with baize-topped tables, jade horses poised for flight on old carved side-tables. The Liberation Army, on the other hand, meets in sunlit rooms or, at the moment of decisive victory, poised on mountain tops in the open air. In *Hong Yu*, as in *Red Detachment of Women*, the most testing moment for the hero comes during a thunderstorm, where the forces of nature illuminate and underline his achievement. It is important not to flatten out the films by forcing the representation into a single meaning: each of them has a complex imagery and symbolisation which have to be understood in their specificity. But it is also important to note that the positive class hero/heroine is always opposed at some point in the various plots to a negative class enemy, and this is always visible to the audience. We always know who is right and who is wrong. In *Hong Yu*, even without the privileging moment of the film-within-a-film flashback sequence, the villain is easily 'discernible' as he sits shrouded behind mosquito nets whilst his wife waits on him. In *The Pioneers*, the enemy within the Party offers cigarettes out of a case and foreign liquor, while the exemplary worker and the political commissar roll their own cigarettes and drink tea. The audience enjoys a supremacy of knowledge which brings with it a certain exemption from the work of deciding who the class enemy really is, and in some ways belies the complications of the enmeshed contradictions which emerge during socialism.

This observation marks a certain reservation about what the politically educative effectiveness of such exemplary and somewhat moral tales can be, and it is worth exploring more closely some of the plot features. The 'positive hero' is, in *Hong Yu* and *Breaking with Old Ideas* for example, conscious of the exemplary nature of his role in the struggle in which he is engaged. In *Hong Yu* this hero is a boy who has learnt about the corrupt practices of the old quacks, in *Breaking with Old Ideas*, a man who was once a cowherd and who received his education in Yan'an, by-passing traditional institutions. Their heroism does not lie in their grappling with the contradictory demands of individual conscience and social mores, which is where it is often situated within bourgeois drama, for extremely determinate reasons, but rather in the posing of a relationship between the vanguard and the masses through the logic of their actions and consciousness. In order to have a vanguard that can be presented in this way, it is necessary to have a conception of the 'correct' political line and tactics.

There is a sense in which there is a correct line, always already there in the films – it is a presence, rather than something which has to be constituted. In *Azalea Mountain*, it is the Communist Party. In *The Pioneers* and *Breaking with Old Ideas*, it is a tendency within the Communist Party. In *Hong Yu*, it lies in quotations from Mao Zedong. The hero is exemplary because he or she is a bearer of this line and uses it in action and in interpretation. The hero both has the will to revolt (revealing inherent Communist spirit) and a desire to articulate that revolt in relationship to a particular political orientation and understanding. Thus in *The Pioneers*, the exemplary worker Zhou Tingshan is enabled, by a study of *On Contradiction*, to grasp and understand the central problem facing the team and therefore to resolve it. But the existence of positive heroes also, of necessity, focusses attention on the way in which their politics are expressed.

Hong Yu and *Breaking with Old Ideas* both contain explicit references to the 'Yan'an spirit' and the present political conflict and tasks as a continuation of the Liberation struggle. In this context, the rather militaristic references of the texts should be noted. In *Breaking with Old Ideas*, the ex-cowherd is asked to go to the Labour University in these terms: 'Want to do some fighting? Yes, storm a stronghold?' – the stronghold in this case being the educational apparatus, posed as being in the hands of bourgeois ideologists and even, at one point in the film, 'foreign journalists'. Hong Yu is handed as he goes for his training a water-bottle captured by his father from the Japanese, asserts his right to go on the grounds that children participated in the Long March, and when in conflict with the quack doctor about the treatment of a woman suffering from flu, refers to the patient as 'ground the proletariat has already occupied'. There is a distinct impression that Clausewitz's dictum has been turned on its head and that politics has become the continuation of war by other means.

The 'Yan'an spirit' also evokes the situation of a small but determined vanguard. *Breaking with Old Ideas* can find its political resolution in the arrival of a letter of support from Mao Zedong, much in the manner of the *deus ex machina* of classical drama which was neatly caricatured by Brecht in *The Threepenny Opera*. The vanguard in *Breaking with Old Ideas* is apparently an encircled minority, needing external intervention to validate its position.

The existence of the twin poles of attraction – positive hero and villain – also demands consideration of the other characters, who have to be won over to one position or another. They are often held back for different reasons: over-caution, in the case of the production-brigade leader in *Hong Yu*; commitment to tried technique, in the case of the engineer in *The Pioneers* and the Dean in *Breaking with Old Ideas*. However, both *White-Haired Girl* and *Breaking with Old Ideas* present another sort of figure – a heroic representative of the masses, who in his/her specific combination

of strength and weakness constitutes a particular object of desire for the representatives of the Communist Party.

The White-Haired Girl is a ballet based on a story produced and performed during the Anti-Japanese war. The story has gone through many changes before its present form (in earlier versions the girl is raped and left with an illegitimate child by the landlord's son). The foundation of the story lies in tales of women driven mad and forced into isolation by oppression, which were recorded in Sichun, Hebei, and Yan'an (Edgar Snow recounts one such experience). The story was first written down in 1945, and its authors were awarded the Stalin Prize.²

Xier, who becomes the white-haired girl, is demanded in payment of her grandfather's 'debts' to the landlord, and after his resistance and death is taken as a slave into the landlord's household. Her betrothed has already left to join the Red Army. Enraged by her new situation, she is helped to escape and retreats to the mountains, vowing 'I will become a storm, I will become thunder that shakes the nine heavens'. In the course of her escape and confrontation with the elements and wild beasts her hair turns white and she herself becomes almost a force of nature. Taking refuge in a ruined temple, she confronts her oppressors, who have been driven there attempting to escape from the united force of the peasants and People's Liberation Army, in which her former betrothed is an officer. Xier appears to her past oppressors, and they mistake her for a ghostly spirit, and are thus confounded by their own superstitious fears – the religion which once oppressed her now works for her. When the Liberation Army approaches she flees, but is glimpsed by her former betrothed, who follows her to the cave in which she now lives and persuades her to rejoin her fellow peasants and to join the Red Army. In the final moment she is handed a gun.

The White-Haired Girl is rich in suggestive metaphors. What is important for present purposes is, first, the fact that if the complaint was that ghosts dominated the stage, in *The White-Haired Girl* we see the ghost made flesh and blood: mistaken for a ghost by her oppressors, she is recognised by her fellow villagers and the People's Liberation Army as a potential comrade-in-arms, and her humanity is affirmed by the recognition. This is, in a sense, the revolutionary laying of the ghost. Second, Xier represents a particular combination of weakness and strength, which turns her into a figure of poignant isolation as well as a desirable ally. It would be wrong to argue that Xier is an object of desire for the liberation struggle because of her betrothed's trajectory, for her functions solely as the moment of recall to society. In that sense,

2. See Lois Wheeler Snow: *China on Stage*, New York 1972, for a history of ballet in China. The book also reprints the scripts of *The White-Haired Girl* and *The Red Detachment of Women*.

Red Detachment of Women is a much more romantic film, charting a love-story. Xier is weak, in the sense of being left undefended; she is strong in the sense that she takes her individual chance to escape — dares to struggle — and by joining with the general struggle, dares to win. It is precisely because she has made her individual choice that she constitutes an object of desire.

In *Des Chinoises* (Paris 1974, English edition forthcoming), Julia Kristeva claims that this represents the 'disarming heroism' of the feminine. If so, the notion of the 'feminine' has to be extended beyond a study of female characters. For in *Breaking with Old Ideas*, a young man, the only potentially proletarian figure, the blacksmith, is represented as similarly weak. Too shy to speak his desire to join the college, he has to be spoken for by the new principal; as words are spoken on his behalf, he blushes with embarrassment. Alone amongst the students he accepts the humiliation of expulsion, and has to be pursued by the bearer of the correct line back to his smithy, where he is clasped in an emotional and tearful embrace and then persuaded to return to the college. The dual moment of escape and return, through a character whose specific combination of weakness and strength is rather precisely pointed to in his job of blacksmith, suggests a wider conception of what constitutes an object of desire for the Party representative than a simple account based on male/female might give. It also suggests the continuation, and new beginning, of the articulation of a more complex notion of the proletarian hero.

IV The Films: Imagery

To give a full account of the films would be impossible here, given their individual complexity. All that we can hope to do is to signal points of reference and discussion for future work. However, we feel it is important to deal with two elements of the cinematic discourse present in the films: first, briefly, with their visual style, and second, at more length, with the complex imagery which they have in common.

Any detailed discussion of specifically cinematic features such as the use of camera and montage would best be initiated by a study of a single film, and we hope that such a study will be published in a future number of *Screen*. Nonetheless, certain generalisations can be made. Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan report (op cit) that Chinese cameramen tended not to have a conception of the possibilities of a mobile camera, still using a montage shooting style. They link this to weaknesses in sound technology and lack of knowledge of the documentary tradition. In the films shown at the National Film Theatre, camera movement is in

fact quite prominent, particularly in *Hong Yu*, *The Pioneers* and *From Victory to Victory*, but without abrupt shot changes being abandoned. In these films, the camera plays the part of a privileged eye, which by a combination of movement and editing can emphasise the position of the spectator as privileged. The Peking-Opera films are intended basically as records of a theatrical performance, but in some of them, notably *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (not included in the National Film Theatre season), camera position and editing are used to break the confines of the proscenium arch, once again emphasising spectator privilege. In the fiction films, montage is used especially to produce a series of evocative images, external to the action yet providing an important level of connotation, that of symbolic commentary.

In the final part of our discussion, we would like to begin to explore this more fully. Our reading, based on limited access to the material, can only be preliminary. It traces the manifestation of words and images referring denotatively to 'mountains' across some of the films shown, and relating them where appropriate to the work of Mao Zedong, given that he, as bearer of the revolutionary word, operates as a simultaneous presence and absence within the films we have seen.

It seemed that, in this context, to start with *Azalea Mountain* would be best. The azaleas of *Azalea Mountain* are 'red with martyrs' blood'; the mountains themselves directly connected to the first moments of the constitution of the liberated areas. In 1927, after the Guomindang assault on proletarian bases in the cities, Communist forces regrouped in the Jinggang mountains, and eventually set up the Jiangxi soviet, from which the Long March set out. *Azalea Mountain* is set in 1927 in an area adjacent to Jinggangshan, but also other than Jinggangshan, so that Jinggangshan functions as a reference place — the place where the struggle is being organised and from which the Party representative has come. One of the important aspects of the struggle is winning over 'bandit' groups by teaching them new modes of struggle and a new conception of what that struggle involves. In *Azalea Mountain*, as in *From Victory to Victory*, one of the key questions is 'Why withdraw?'. Learning this tactical and strategic lesson intersects in the film with learning how to recognise the Communist Party. Right at the beginning, after rebellion has been attempted and failed three times, it is asserted that 'What we've got to do is find the Communist Party'. When the Communist Party presents itself, it is, rather disconcertingly, in the figure of a woman. Under her leadership the group begin to ask the question 'Who is the target, who is the ally?' Early on they capture some of the landlord's goods and his men. They want to beat his employees and keep the goods. Ke Xiang, the Party representative, asks them 'Which of you has never worked for the landlord?' and gives a first lesson in class analysis and the basis of alliances. She

also insists that they distribute the captured grain to the peasants.

Ke Xiang's strategy is based on 'retreating in the face of overwhelming enemy force' and the group have been given orders to join up with other sections. When the enemy capture Granny Du, adopted mother of Lei Gang, the leader of the rebel group, Ke Xiang puts class feeling 'deep as the ocean' and political priorities before individualistic feeling because of the inevitability of defeat if they are lured down into the town. Lei Gang, however, ignores her directive and advice and goes alone (the condition of individualistic action) on a rescue mission. He is caught and imprisoned along with his adopted mother. This doubling of the human bait splits the peasant force into a faction committed to Lei Gang, and one loyal to Ke Xiang. Faced with this imminent split, Ke Xiang changes her strategy and organises a rescue mission. Lei Gang's deputy attempts to suborn those who remain behind and lead them into a trap. He represents the enemy within, a member of the landlord class who is in private opposition to the local landlord because of a dispute over his ancestral burial grounds. The arguments of the negative character are two-fold through the film: first, an appeal to local feeling in the claim that Ke Xiang is only prepared to leave the region because she doesn't come from there and doesn't understand their situation; second, an appeal to male prejudice and the fear that they are being misled 'by a woman'. Ke Xiang wins the peasants' acceptance and their recognition of her leadership because she is able to supplement the word of the Communist Party by her own example, even to the point of risking her life for the sake of the unity of the peasant force. Although her being a woman presents greater scope for the men's resistance, and so makes the two-line struggle more acute, this is to some extent compensated by her maternal function, continuing that of the adopted Granny Du, who originally initiated the search for the Communist Party. Ke Xiang makes the rebel group new sandals, binds their wounds and teaches them to read and write.

There is a sense in which this maternal function of woman remains central but uncriticised in all the films. In *From Victory to Victory* exclusion of women from the army means that they remain behind in the villages, engaged in production and child-care as well as the organisation of local defence units. At one point a young husband and wife have an argument about who should fight and who should stay at home and look after the children, but the challenge is localised and subordinated to a question of political difference: the young man is uneasy about the strategy of retreat and would rather remain to defend the village; in that case, the wife responds, you can look after the baby too. One of the high points of *The Pioneers* is the arrival at the drilling site of the women, who have come to do the cooking, to support the oil workers by their domestic labour. The men have prepared a meal, which the women eat. But it is made clear that

whatever the resourcefulness of the men, the women will now take over. *Azalea Mountain* contains this important difference, that in the characterisation of Ke Xiang, the Communist Party as maternal figure is being developed in a break with the usual characterisation of unmarried but paternal authority. It is worth noting that *Azalea Mountain* was an important film in the movement to criticise Confucius and Lin Biao.

Once the rescue is successfully completed, Lei Gang realises his error in putting individual feeling (for his adopted mother) before class feeling (allegiance to the maternal representative of the Communist Party). As the principal character whose ideology changes, he learns this restructuring of feeling through the example of Ke Xiang, and at the end discovers that she had let her husband die in similar conditions, and through that experience had learnt to 'swallow grief and keep the world in view'.

The climactic scene in *Azalea Mountain* occurs when Ke Xiang and her small group return from the rescue of Lei Gang and Granny Du by way of a perilous gorge, arriving just in time to relieve the remainder holding the mountain stronghold from the pressures on them to desert. There is a correspondence between this gorge, thought uncrossable, but which the Communists get through, and Huangyangjieh, the most perilous pass in the Jinggang mountains, which is described by Mao Zedong in his poem 'Return to Jinggangshan' in these terms: 'Once Huangyangjieh is passed, no other perilous place calls for a glance'.

In being placed in geographic contiguity to the Jinggang Mountains the events depicted in the film can be read as a representation of Mao Zedong's struggle at that time and the difficulties of its extension to the rest of China. It is a place where the peasants' self-defence force is developed and organised ('bamboos grow apace') and lessons are paid for in blood. The setting is dominated by the various reds of azaleas and dense bamboos. The insistence of the azaleas through all the mountain scenes offers a level of identification of meanings for the spectator, a constant reference to lessons already paid for by the people, represented in the film by Ke Xiang's dead husband and the Communist Party member who is killed in the rescue operation, and at whose death the azalea is foregrounded. An implication is that the people must be prepared for a further shedding of blood in the continuing political struggle.

References to mountains and mountainous scenery almost invariably privilege these connotations of the revolution and its history. In *From Victory to Victory* the need to win is posed in terms of a threat to Yan'an, many miles from Shandong where the battle we witness is taking place, but similarly mountainous. Nearby the peasant militia is preparing for supportative fighting in their mountain base, whilst the army successfully defends 'Phoenix' Mountain and 'Sky' Peak. *Breaking with Old Ideas*

begins with scenes from mountainous East China, where the ex-cowherd is working on a State plantation, successfully navigating a rapid river on a raft of logs. When he moves to the University he expresses their objective thus: 'The Anti-Japanese Military and Political College trained large numbers of cadres for the revolution in caves. Today we will train a new generation of successors to the revolutionary cause in these mountains.' The students repeat that experience of self-reliance, building the college out of bamboo and other local materials. The site is chosen 'far from the city, close to the lower and middle peasants', contrary to the wish of the Vice-Principal: 'We'll build our lecture buildings, library and laboratories on the other side of the river. Fine scenery, fresh air and easy to get into the city.' Desire for the city is posed within the films as refusal of 'the grass roots, the mountain regions', and denial of class origin through change of dress from cotton work clothes and the rope sandals that 'the Eighth Route Army won its decisive victories with' to Western-style jacket, shirt, trousers and patent leather shoes. The abuse of the college is shown through the young boy who is forced by his father to use his skills in the private sector, gaining money by over-charging for castrating pigs.

The articulation of the town/country opposition is highlighted by the stress on mountainous regions with their connotations of difficulty and revolutionary purity - 'scaling the heights'. The mountains are as yet uncultivated, in a double sense: economically they are the place of untapped resources (raw materials, agricultural development), politically they contain the incompletely transformed peasantry, representing work which still needs to be done. Together the stress on reaching the most inaccessible areas signifies the wish to 'cultivate' the whole of rural China.

The opposition is inflected somewhat differently in *The Pioneers*. There, a plan for the integration of town and country, presented in terms of building the town as the main priority and exploring the oil field as secondary is rejected as premature and diversionary, an attempt to direct the work of the teams away from the main task of making China self-reliant in oil. The model workers want the work to be moved from Tiensin* village, through 'taming the dragons and tigers' of Dragon Tiger flats, to Nameless Field, where in the end most of the oil will be found to lie and which will, by implication, only be named after the success of the political and economic struggle for oil and self-reliance. In place of the mountains, the site of conflict and work are the isolated, inaccessible and inhospitable regions of the Gobi Desert and the grasslands of Heilongjiang, with their harsh climate and long winters. The credit sequences pose a central question. They are superimposed on a shot of uniform coal fragments extending to the edge of the frame and filling the scene, followed by a shot of stones in the desert. The question lies in their juxtaposition: can such rich reserves be found in such an apparently infertile and inhospitable country?

Feng Chao, the deputy director, follows the line of the Russian advisors for whom he worked and the Americans before them in denying the possibility, in being 'against buried treasure'.

The theme of treasure waiting to be 'unearthed' from previously inaccessible areas is important within Hong Yu. After his initial training and first period of practice, Hong Yu travels a long distance to find an experienced traditional doctor of whom he has heard, to get a prescription from him for an old stone-mason. On a ferry-boat a traveller drops a small box inadvertently into the river and Hong Yu jumps in to save it. There follows, on the shore, a 'recognition' scene, in which the traveller is revealed as the doctor he is looking for, and the casket is identified as containing his herbal prescriptions, his 'treasure chest'. The saving of the secrets of traditional medicine is accomplished by Hong Yu literally in his element, water (Hong Yu means 'Crimson Rain'). On his return to the village, he goes into the mountains to find the essential plants which until then have grown unrecognised, re-discovers a medicinal spring, and traces the source of the river which is being dammed up for irrigation purposes by the production brigade. In this sequence the mountain is portrayed as the repository of historical knowledge, which has to be re-appropriated by the new generation.

Thus mountainous regions are a constant point of reference for the films, both as an index of the degree to which nature has been controlled and as epitomising the irreducibly natural and elemental within a dialectic man/nature. We can remind ourselves here that such a dialectic was central to the development of the bourgeois romanticism of Western Europe.

In this article we have tried to indicate the importance of studying the interconnection of politics and aesthetics in the cinema of socialist countries. Only by an understanding of the specificity of the politico-cultural conjuncture within which the films are produced can their meanings be investigated.

Checklist of Chinese films shown at the National Film Theatre
Names in these lists have not been transcribed into pinyin but left in the Romanisation given by their distributors, to aid reference.
Red Detachment of Women (opera-ballet), directed by Hsieh Tsin, Peking Film Studio, 1970
The White-Haired Girl (opera-ballet), Shanghai Film Studio, 1972
Azalea Mountain (opera-ballet), directed by Wang Pu and Shui

- Hua, Peking Film Studio, 1974
From Victory to Victory, Shanghai Film Studio
 Hung Yu (Hong Yu), directed by Tsui Wei, Peking Film Studio, 1975
Breaking with Old Ideas, directed by Li Wen-hua, Peking Film Studio, 1975
The Pioneers, directed by Yu Jen-fu, Changchun Film Studio, 1975

Recent Chinese films in distribution in Britain
 Three opera-ballet films are available from Contemporary Films:
Red Detachment of Women, *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (1970, subtitled) and *White-Haired Girl*. (An earlier - pre-Cultural Revolution - version of *White-Haired Girl* is also available from ETV.)

Hung Yu can be obtained from the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding, 152 Camden High St, London, NW1. The print is unsubtitled, but an accompanying English text will be made available shortly. SACU also hold a recent full-length film called *Bright Red Star* (English-language print) and various short films and documentaries made in the People's Republic.



WEEKEND SCHOOL

Hollywood Melodrama

The aim of the school will not be to define melodrama generically, but to explore two aspects of the Hollywood melodrama of the 1950's: its relationship to its ideological background; and its popularity and social role as 'family romance' in the Freudian sense. The school will be held in London on the weekend March 25-27, 1977. Further details and application forms will be available shortly. Application is open to all, but in view of oversubscription to recent SEFT Schools, priority will be given to SEFT members who apply before February 18, 1977. Applications received after that date will be accepted and dealt with in order of their reception.

Paranoia and the Film System*

Jacqueline Rose

* If the image content has been projected onto the P[erception] end, its libidinal cathexis must first have been removed from it. Then it has the character of a perception. In paranoia, the libido is withdrawn from the object: a reversal of this is *grief*, in which the object is withdrawn from the libido* (Freud: 'A Few Theoretical Remarks on Paranoia,' Sigmund Freud/C G Jung: *Letters*, p 39).

* The aggressive tendency appears as fundamental in a certain series of significant states of personality, the paranoid and paranoiac psychoses* (Lacan: 'L'Aggressivité en psychanalyse,' *Ecrits*, p 110).

This paper emerges from the need to query a semiotic practice which assimilates its own systematicity to an institutionalised psychoanalytic exigency - integration into the Symbolic through a successful Oedipal trajectory. That dissatisfaction with this practice should focus on a film (Hitchcock's *The Birds*) in which the woman is both cause and object of the aggressivity which drives the narrative to a point at which its resolution is coincident with her 'catatonia' is not incidental to the query. The woman takes up the place of the delusion whose progressive realisation is charted by the film (in the final sequence, Melanie Daniels fights off (sees) birds which are not there). Since her assignment to this place is the price of the narrative closure as well as the symptom of its subversion, it is from here, properly, that the query can be posed.

* This article was first presented as a paper at the 'Psychoanalysis and the Cinema' event at the Edinburgh International Film Festival 1976. That paper has here been modified slightly in response to criticisms and comments at the event, for which I am grateful. Discussion of major problems and future avenues I have restricted to a final Comment

Catalogue of British Film Institute Productions 1951-1976

edited by John Ellis BFI 1978

The recent emergence of critical catalogues such as the *BFI Distribution Library Catalogue* and the present one can be seen as a response to critical concerns with the practices of distribution and exhibition which SEFT amongst other organisations has been instrumental in developing. The first of such catalogues was produced by the Other Cinema (and designed, as is the one under review, by Oscar Zarate) and aimed to break with commercial cataloguing practice by providing substantial background information for individual films. This information was contextualised by descriptions of production, distribution and exhibition practices in relation to the independent film, and of its relationship to its most substantial audience – the education sector. Both the catalogue under review and the recent *Distribution Library Catalogue* (reviewed by John Caughie in *Screen Education* 24 Autumn 1977 but only just published) are much more ambitious, viz – the Distribution Library's concern to foreground important critical debates, and the Production Board's concern 'To make a constructive contribution to an understanding of independent filmmaking as produced by the BFI over the 25 years . . . and to locate that tradition within developments in film culture in the UK and the history of the film industry over that crucial quarter of a century'.

The catalogue represents a relatively new found determination on the part of the Production Board to take the practices of distribution and exhibition seriously. Hilary Thompson, the Production Department's first Film Promotions Officer, makes it clear in her introduction that the catalogue's function is a complex one:

'Firstly, to list the films produced by the Experimental Film Fund (1951-1976) and the Production Board (1966 onwards) and to provide notes which situate each film within its own frame of reference. Secondly, to give a commentary on, and details of, the activities and circumstances of the Fund and the Board over the period 1951 to 1976. Thirdly, to locate the work produced by the Fund and the Board within British cinema as a whole in that period, and consequently to locate filmmakers, producers, commentators and critics, and prevalent theoretical positions and key statements.'

Elsewhere in the catalogue, Peter Sainsbury, Head of Production, suggests that it will be seen as 'something of a hybrid – part film catalogue, part descriptive record, part critical magazine'. Thompson tries to make a virtue of necessity in asserting that the necessarily hybrid function puts the catalogue 'in the unique position of relating a specific and available body of work to the economic, social and ideological traits of a defined period in recent British history' – heady talk! Of course the catalogue does not achieve this end, though it contains some useful work pointing in this direction.

The core of the catalogue is organised according to the following

chronological sections: 1951-1969 – the period of the Experimental Film Fund and the Free Cinema movement; 1960-1969 – covering the transition from the Fund to the institution of the Production Board in 1966 and the appointment of Bruce Beresford as the first full time Head of Production; 1970-1976 – covering the periods of Mamoun Hassan, Barrie Gavin and the appointment of the current Head, Peter Sainsbury. In addition to this chronological grouping the last section is divided into a number of sub-sections headed: narrative feature films, short narrative films, work on narrative, modernism and documentary. The latter is the most controversial section and I'll return to it below. In addition the catalogue is prefaced by a whole which raged around the Board itself – debates with which most *Screen* battery of pieces: an Introduction by Hilary Thompson, prefaces by the past and present chairpersons of the Fund and the Board (Sir Michael Balcon and Michael Relph), and a substantial introduction by Peter Sainsbury. The catalogue is concluded by a section on Animation 1951-1976; two appendices by a former director (Stanley Reed) and Head of Production (Barrie Gavin); a series of indices including a distribution guide, and information on a pilot exhibition scheme. All this prefacing and afterwording is rather confusing. It would have been made less so if there had been included some more direct statement of the politics of the Board's history. It received some extreme criticism from organisations such as the Independent Film-makers Association, voiced in several public discussions of the Board's role, at the NFT in 1976; at the IFAs AGM in 1977; in interviews with Production Board members themselves, filmed by Liberation Films. Alan Lovell's booklet, *BFI Production Board* (BFI Occasional Publication 1976) documents criticism by film-makers who were financed by the Board, but the catalogue makes no mention of these criticisms.¹ Film-makers will see this catalogue as a welcome sign of change in Production Board policy, but a history of independent cinema cannot do without an accurate history of the debates *Education* readers will probably be unfamiliar.

Both Distribution Library and Production Board catalogues are addressed to users in film education and will need feedback from their users to function efficiently. Despite the drawbacks Caughie points to I find the *Distribution Library Catalogue* invaluable as a teaching aid. It is difficult to make the same claim for the Production Board catalogue because its mode of address oscillates between the promotional, as in Thompson's Introduction in 4 languages (presumably aimed at festival directors), and the genuinely critical contribution to film culture. Some of the work in the sectional introductions represents original research on the history of the British cinema, addressing an informed reader of *Screen* or *Screen Education*, while some of the comments on the films are worthy of *Sight and Sound* – in fact they are from *Sight and Sound*. There are further contradictions in the catalogue's crediting of authorship for individual pieces of writing. A series of 'writers' are credited in the frontispiece, yet the nature and extent of their contributions is not acknowledged. On the other hand a series of 'contributors' are acknowledged – members of the Fund, Board and Production Department. This suggests an unclear opposition between film criticism ('writing') and bureaucratic discourse ('contributions'); in addition it suggests an implicit hierarchy separating those films which only merit a reprint from the

¹ Strictly speaking though, these events/criticisms fall outside the period covered by the catalogue: we are told however that they will be documented in the next catalogue, which will also cover the most recent films funded by the Production Board.

Monthly Film Bulletin or *Sight and Sound*, and those which have had a specifically commissioned section. This failure to credit individual pieces of writing gives these sections a metadiscursive force denied to other sections, yet there is no editorial by John Ellis setting the terms of such a metadiscourse. At least the single authorship approach of the *Distribution Library Catalogue* avoids this confusion as to whether we are being offered a single perspective or a series of differing points of view.

In abandoning the traditional cataloguing criteria of the industry (listing by date, director and genre) and shifting attention, however imperfectly, to the needs of those in the education system (teachers, film society programmers etc) there is, as Caughie points out in relation to the *Distribution Library Catalogue*, the danger that in opting for critical categories the sections will be allowed to seem rigidly discrete, hermetically sealed. "The problem" he continues, which is an educational one, is to find a way of presenting the central issues in such a way that they will permeate the whole catalogue rather than posing one issue per section'. My main criticism of the Catalogue is that, particularly in its section on 1970-76, it fails to deal with exactly this problem. In particular the headings 'work on narrative'; 'modernism'; and 'documentary' are to my mind evidence of misplaced categorising zeal. Firstly, it is insensitive to the wishes of many filmmakers, that their work be seen as engaging with more than one of these areas. *Whose Choice?* for instance, is situated in the 'documentary' section, while only a reading of the introduction to the 'work on narrative' section indicates that this film is also concerned with such work. Secondly, the different conceptual status of these categories will be particularly confusing to those working in education, where, because of the embryonic state of film studies, it is especially important that concepts be clearly defined and separated. For example: current debates stress the production of meaning from the critical models applied to films. In this approach it depends very much on the critical model used as to which categories particular films are assigned. For instance, 'narrative' is used to refer to cinematic operations throughout the history of film; 'modernism' and 'documentary' refer both to a style and a movement. Reading the texts on the three films in the 'work on narrative' section (*Central Bazaar*, *Resistance*, *Justine*) makes clear that these films could also be said to be modernist and possibly documentary as well.

The problem of categories might be alleviated by a system of cross-referencing, as partially attempted in the *Distribution Library Catalogue*. Several years ago, the *Other Cinema* catalogue provided 25 categories cross-referencing its films. Such a system would facilitate the use of the catalogue and would also help to relativise such categories.

While the catalogue is weakest in its handling of independent cinema, it is strongest where it is dealing with historical and theoretical perspectives, and with the commercial industry. There are really useful introductory accounts of the narrative procedures of commercial cinema and the documentary form. A substantial economic history of post war British cinema runs through the catalogue: it may be said to have created some of the conditions for a critical examination of our recent cinematic history. This is perhaps its most important achievement. The series of contradictions which mark this catalogue are inevitable in a project of such scope. However, in handling such a heterogeneous body of work produced under such varying production conditions, it tends to mask those contradictions, creating false unity: an overriding sense of homogeneity and continuity. The way the crit-

ical debates are implicated in the terms of such homogeneity creates the inherent danger that this catalogue may be seen to represent a trend towards a new form of promotional catalogue in which critical debates are just the latest mode for consuming films.

Despite these reservations I would encourage *Screen Education* readers to buy and use the catalogue since it does provide access to a whole range of films which have never been made available within the terms of a critical apparatus before. The sectional approach, where the reader has as it were to 'run the gauntlet' of the debates section to 'get at' the films, marks an important advance from the simple commodity presentation of individual films and represents a clear illustration of the Production Board's commitment to critical debates. Finally, I would draw particular attention to the pilot exhibition scheme in which the Production Board will provide funds for a visiting speaker (filmmaker or critic) to accompany the film. This could become a real breakthrough in the practice of film distribution/exhibition, providing that it operates within the filmmakers' conception of the distribution/exhibition practices appropriate to their particular films.

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The new BFI Distribution Library Catalogue functions both as a source of information and as a critical guide to the feature films, shorts, compilations and study extracts available from the Library. Its 250 large pages are lavishly illustrated, include introductory critical essays to the major sections and are comprehensively cross-indexed according to title, period, director and country of origin. Invaluable to film users - and to everyone interested in film.

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already pushed its way through. If there are difficulties in the way of mastering this single pathogenic memory – as, for instance, if the patient does not relax his resistance against it, if he tries to repress or mutilate it – then the defile is, so to speak, blocked. The work is at a standstill, nothing more can appear, and the single memory which is in process of breaking through remains in front of the patient until he has taken it up into the breadth of his ego. The whole spatially extended mass of psychogenic material is in this way drawn through a narrow cleft and thus arrives in consciousness cut up, as it were, into pieces or strips. It is the psychotherapist's business to put these together once more into the organisation which he presumes to have existed. It is as though, at the very moment of its birth, Freud is describing the cinematic apparatus, with the difference that that apparatus is constructed to ensure the constancy of the flow of images, a unity of presentation, a stable memory.

Which last brings us back to narrativisation: the economy of the film's flow in a binding coherence, its remembering, the realisation of a single forward time within which multiple times can be given play and held. The system of suture, be it noted, breaks as soon as the time of the shot hesitates beyond the time of its narrative specifications (demonstrated throughout Benoît Jacquot's *L'Assassin musicien*).

The subject of a film is the play between its multiple elements, including the social formation in which it finds its existence, and the spectator; no film which does not grasp the spectator in terms of that heterogeneity, which does not shift the spectator in ties, joins, relations, movements of the symbolic and the imaginary, with the real a constant and impossible limit (impossible for the film, involving a transformation that would have to include the film). A film may also – will also? – project a subject, some unity of the play produced; most constrictingly, a narrative image. Suture, finally, names the dual process of multiplication and projection, the conjunction of the spectator as subject with the film – which conjunction is always the terrain of any specific ideological operation of a film.

These have been notes on and around suture. As such, they have no particular conclusion other than the acknowledgement of the concepts that now need to be examined in this connection with film: *identification, repetition, resistance, the history of the subject*.

Film: 'History/Production/Memory'

Mark Nash and Steve Neale

This year's special event at the Edinburgh Film Festival, 'History/Production/Memory', was conceived as an attempt to rethink what is meant by an 'intervention' in 'film culture' at the present time. The event concerned itself with an examination of notions such as 'the state', 'independence', 'institution', and 'avant-garde practice' in an attempt to focus these notions not just within theory *per se* but specifically in relation to political, economic and ideological instances in the conjuncture. The contexts chosen around which to focus this examination were: state sponsorship in Britain in the 1930s (with screenings of various short films); the period of socialist transition in the Soviet Union in the 1920s (in relation to a retrospective of the films of Dziga Vertov); the dominant mode of 'commercial' film production in Britain in the 1940s (with screenings of films from Ealing Studios); and film and television production post 1968 in relation to the 'popular memory' debate foregrounded by *Cahiers du Cinéma* (*J. Pierre Rivière, Civil Wars in France, Days of Hope*).

Three possible articulations of the terms 'history' and 'cinema' can serve to indicate the areas that the event sought to focus. These are: 'history of cinema', 'history in cinema', and 'cinema in history'. Perhaps what emerged most forcefully from the discussion was less the confusions and problems specific to any single one of the three articulations than those which arose from the need both to differentiate them and at the same time to hold them together in their various inter-relations.

Underlying the event there was a polemical insistence that history, over and against various forms of empiricism, is neither the past as such, nor yet a discourse in which the past is revealed, but rather a set of discourses in which the past is constructed, and constructed not simply from 'the past' itself, but from the various discourses that the past has thrown up and that have been accumulated in various forms of 'archive', to use that term in the sense given to it by Michel Foucault. In *The Archeology of Knowledge* (London, Tavistock 1972, p 129) Foucault writes:

'The archive is not that which, despite its immediate escape, safeguards the event of the statement [*énoncé*], and preserves, for future memories, its statement as an escape; it is that which, at the very root of the statement-event, and in that which embodies it, defines at the outset *the system of its enunciation*. Nor is the

archive that which collects the dust of statements that have become inert once more, and which may make possible the miracle of their resurrection; it is that which defines the mode of occurrence of the statement-thing; it is *the system of its functioning*.

What is stored in the archive (using the term here in its more traditional sense as well as in Foucault's) is governed by socially specific criteria. Access to it is restricted in socially determined ways. And the discourses known as history are produced within specific social institutions. History, therefore, is not only an order of discourse, a discipline, but also an apparatus of power.

To say that history is a particular discursive institution is not yet enough, however, to allow a complete re-posing of the set of problems the event set out to examine. Symptomatically the term 'history' or at least its adverbial and adjectival modalities constantly returned, even — and perhaps especially — in the articles and presentations which sought to pose most sharply the radical nature of the reconceptualisation that the event aimed to focus. Thus John Ellis, writing in the *Edinburgh '77 Magazine* (p 59):

... such an institution as cinema, occupying a still not inconsiderable social role, should have both a space within the social formation (a space whose definition *varies historically* [our italics]) and an internal organisation that determines its activity within the social formation.

Or Stephen Heath, in a presentation:

We know that the reading of a film is neither constrained absolutely nor free absolutely, but *historical* [again our emphasis].

What the terms 'historically' and 'historical' seem to be doing here is specifying certain practices on the one hand as *social* and on the other hand as subject to change, both in the sense of being in process and in the sense that their existence as practices, and the modalities of that existence, together with the nature of the changes they undergo and the processes they are caught in, are dependent upon determinations and productive of effects that vary in time. 'History' here, therefore, is less an order of discourse than a term serving to indicate social temporality — and a term that it seems necessary, at the moment, to retain. Purely temporal categories — the 'past', the 'present' etc — miss the force of the social that 'history' is there to mark.

The other term in the three articulations, 'cinema', was proposed as a concept specifying a set of signifying practices as constitutive of an ideological institution. 'Institution' here means not, or not simply, a particular locus of practice, but rather what Metz and Heath have referred to as a 'machine' for the production of ideological meanings and positions, for regulating and contain-

ing subjectivity. In fact, the term 'machine' may well be preferable, since both cinematic and non-cinematic institutions (using the term in its usual, existing sense) also need to be specified in relation to the cinematic machine as a whole (and therefore crossing institutional boundaries) during specific conjunctures. In other words, there needs to be a differentiation of terminology through which to point to: on the one hand, regularised loci of practices within specific fields, both inside and outside cinema (these practices, even within ideological institutions, are not confined to the production of ideology as such, but also involve politics and economics); and, on the other hand, orders of the production of ideological meaning and position as located in relation to systems of signifying practice. The use of 'machine', however, in the singular, tends to suggest a homogeneity that does not exist, and never has done. While it stresses, correctly, the constant processes of binding and suture, it on the other hand underplays the variety and heterogeneity of different practices (and different forms of suture) at any one point in time and the contradictions that necessarily exist within and between them. In the 1930s in Britain, for instance, as Claire Johnston pointed out in her paper, a variety of practices were operative, ranging from the production of feature films, to the production of documentaries (both state and non-state funded), to the 'amateur' newsreels of the labour movement, to the 'experimental' work of Len Lye. Not to mention the exhibition of various forms of American and European film. There was no single overall modality of address binding these forms and practices together across the whole field of cinema, or across the whole social formation. Rather there were specific regulations of address, specific classifications of practice and audience, that served to separate and differentiate each practice from the others and to produce a coherence, a mode of regulation, within them. (Consider here the examples of the various experimental films produced under the auspices of the GPO Film Unit and shown to audiences such as the Film Society, or the Workers Newsreels with an 'amateur' aesthetic — no coherent POV, no coherent strategy of address in the sequencing of images — shown at socialist meetings, and so on.) This is to say that the processes of suture do not operate in the same manner across all manifestations of film. Rather, therefore, than locate each of the practices involved in terms of a single mode of subjectivity, it is important to specify the different orders of subjectivity inscribed in relation to each practice.

The term cinematic 'machine' would then refer less to a single englobing operation, than to the plurality of channels, demarcated spaces and orders of regularity that occur across the instances of practice, text and subject, to the way in which practices, texts and subjects are constantly bound into regularised spaces and modalities of production and consumption, and to a plurality of

regulations of subjectivity distributed across, and constitutive of a variety of audiences. Meanwhile, over and above this plurality the dominance of certain practices would also have to be stressed since it is the relation of dominance which provides the terms within which differentiation largely takes place. Thus the dominance of Hollywood can be situated, as it was by Claire Johnston in terms of a coupling with logocentrism (ie, a privileging of the voice, a marking of the presence of the speaking subject), which in the 1930s, can be seen as relating both to the notion of the full subject requiring artistic freedom (as epitomised in Griersonian documentary) or the collective subject as a class speaking with its own voice (as in some workers newsreels). It is however also important to specify more exactly the differentiations thus produced, since it is in this way that one can define — or come to an understanding of the possibilities of defining — crucial points of stress and contradiction and thus of potential transformation. The rest of this article will seek to concretise some of the questions raised by the three articulations of 'history' and 'cinema' mentioned above, first singly and in their own right and then in relation to the Straub/Huillet film, *Fortini/Cami*.

HISTORY OF CINEMA In a forum given by members of the editors of *Cahiers* and *Ça Serge* Daney attributed the interest in 'popular memory' after 1968 to a leftist polemic against the French Communist Party's 'monopoly of the history of the working class', and its refusal to acknowledge the individual experiences of leftists, what the left had been doing, and so on.

This period also saw the publication of Comolli's articles on deep focus in *Cahiers du Cinéma*. These articles set out to problematise any simple notion of 'the history of the cinema', and to interrogate the epistemological bases of traditional histories. They were clearly a part of the post-68 interest in history as well as being specifically related to the then current work of Althusser. The institutional and theoretical space in which history has developed and been debated in Britain is very different: the Communist Party in this country has never had a degree of influence comparable to that of the French Party, and the development of 'working-class' history in Britain has largely involved the documentation of groups marginalised in traditional historical discourses. This has influenced the kind of work developed around it, which has been very generalised and also distant from institutionalised political forces.

The most rigorous and challenging work has been produced by Paul Hirst and Barry Hindess, who, most explicitly in the last chapter of *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production*, have attacked the whole notion of history and, as a corollary, the whole set of practices involved in its production. Since they state that any form of 'regional' history is merely and necessarily a particular

mode of history in general, their position involves the rejection of any work constituting itself, or capable of being constituted as 'history of cinema'.

In focussing issues around history in this way, their work performed a role at Edinburgh analogous to that performed by Althusser in relation to the work of Comolli and *Cahiers*. However, while it correctly involves a break with empiricism and ideology, insisting that history is a work on representations rather than a work on the past as such, that insistence is coincident with a rejection of history which does not necessarily follow from such a break, but which can rather be seen as a product of the space it occupies in relation to the tradition it is reacting to, a space limited both by the poverty of that tradition and by the absence of any effective political forces with which to link itself, and which has very limiting consequences. It involves, firstly, the cutting off of theoretical work that could lead to a specifying of the problems referred to above concerning terms like 'historical' and 'historically'; secondly, a denial of the possibility of alternative forms of historical discourse, forms involving different articulations of representations produced in the past; and, thirdly, a rejection of political struggles around the archive. Such struggles, and the problems to which they are a response, are very real ones, and precisely because history is not the past but a matter of production in and for the present. Access to materials can be a crucial matter for ideological struggle, as well as for the theoretical work which may also be involved.

For instance an immediate problem for Edinburgh and the Vertov retrospective was the lack of availability of material relating to the Soviet Union in the 1920s, and indeed the unavailability for prior viewing of many of Vertov's own films. As a result there was no way of relating the theoretical work on *Man with a Movie Camera* either to the other films in the retrospective or to the conjunctural specificities of the initial production, distribution and exhibition affecting the films concerned. This is not a problem produced by a project of attempting to discover the 'real meaning' of Vertov's films by returning them to their historical origins, but rather the reverse — a problem of attempting to avoid reading back into the past a meaning produced in the present, and a problem that derives from the inability to locate historically certain differences of meaning, reading, audience and address and hence the reasons for the continuing hypostasisation of *Man with a Movie Camera* and its author.

What is raised here, and requires careful consideration, is the status of the production of historical accounts of cinema, or of aspects of the cinema, as interventions. What has to be stressed is, firstly, that the production of histories involves the production, modification and use of concepts and theories in and for the present, and, secondly and relatedly, that interventions in the form

of such histories are as much interventions into current discourses and the institutions that support them as they are into producing 'lessons for the present'. There is always a mediation of the directly political issues. Firstly, 'the past' is never the same as 'the present'. Situations change, are historically different: There is thus never a question of simply 'learning from the past'. Furthermore, concepts and theories are as much at stake as 'plans for action' or whatever. The investigation of the past may be validly motivated by theoretical problems - problems which certainly and necessarily have political implications, but which none the less, may not be immediately productive of strategies or guidelines for action. Thus the work on the 1930s presented by Claire Johnston and Annette Kuhn is as important for the problems it raises concerning conceptualisations of the State and of film-making practices in their articulation with both state and non-state institutions during a specific conjuncture as it is for immediate insertion into specific debates on current conceptualisation of such institutions within various sectors of independent film-making in this country at the present time and as a political intervention into the ideological assumptions of film-makers against their attempts to falsely make direct links between past and present. Equally it could be said that work on the 1920s in Europe, though perhaps of less immediately obvious importance for these debates, is of potential importance for the conceptualisation of the various practices involved currently in 'independent cinema' in that it would focus the moment at which practices began to be fully and rigidly differentiated, separated, classified and institutionalised as 'entertainment', as 'art' and as 'avant-garde'. The examination of the conditions for such differentiations would begin to produce concepts not only for the understanding of various forms of 'independence' in cinema, but also for specifying more clearly and substantially the differentiations and articulations, the struggles and contradictions, crossing and constituting the 'cinematic institution'. This kind of work is of great importance, and its importance lies as much in producing theoretical concepts (since part of its value derives from stressing the differences between past conjunctures and the present, from stressing history, in its sense as sociality in process) as in producing representations of the past.

HISTORY IN CINEMA The topic of 'history in cinema' at Edinburgh largely concerned the issue of textual forms in relation to the production of ideological positions for the spectator such that the question of the historicity of the representations involved in the production of such positions and of the ways in which representations can be articulated as historical - of the ways, therefore, in which a subject can be inscribed into a text as historical - were

brought to the fore. Discussion here focussed largely on Allio's *Pierre Rivière* and the *Days of Hope* series.

Stephen Heath's presentation pointed to a crucial issue here as being one of considering 'historical films' as always involving not just 'history', but also film and cinema, as always being concerned, therefore, not just with 'history in cinema' but also with 'history of cinema'. One of the basic problems of the film *Pierre Rivière* was the way it took a set of discourses and articulated them according to the dominant mode of the production of historical films: its problem, in a sense, was that it did not take account of its own location as a mode of discourse in relation to the history of modes of articulating history in film. The result was firstly that film and viewer were locked in a fantasy of the document, as that which reveals the past, and secondly, that that past was produced as present, present for the viewer - a production of subject, text and past as an identity. What is posed here is the possibility of the production of an 'historical film' which disengages and dislocates the three terms of that identity, which addresses itself therefore to a non-coincident set of histories: that of 'the past', that of cinematic texts, and that of the subject, this latter through its location as in process in a contradictory, fissured, non-homogeneous present.

Days of Hope raises the same kind of issues, but it also poses a problem for the conceptualisation and specification of what is meant by the term 'subject', since it attempts to inscribe its subject as a class subject:

'Where *Days of Hope* differs from the majority of ideologically conventional films is that [its] subject is posed as collective. Our identification with Ben is marked primarily in terms of his class-membership; his truth (his view) is not individual but collective. *Days of Hope* positions a class as viewer, as subject' (Colin McCabe, *Edinburgh '77 Magazine*, p 15).

The problem with this, McCabe, argues, is that: 'A class . . . is not a subject, an identity, but rather the ever-changing configuration produced by the forces and relations of production' (ibid, p 13). However, leaving aside the specific issue of *Days of Hope*, the equation of subject and identity here contrasts with the psychoanalytic conception (which relates, ambiguously, but nonetheless forcefully and fundamentally, to the *individual* as subject), where the subject is precisely a *non-identity*, is heterogeneous. The issues are very complex, but they relate, basically, to the whole problem of the relationship between Marxism and psychoanalysis, and the way in which psychoanalysis has been inserted into theoretical work on ideology. The theorisation of the modalities of the subject in discourse has proceeded through concepts derived from psychoanalysis - necessarily so since psychoanalysis was the only theoretical area in which human subjectivity was posed as

84 a heterogeneity-in-process. However, this has meant that the concepts used have been, to date, bound by psychoanalysis – in they have been thought solely in terms of individuality in relation to family structures. Moreover this limitation has been compounded by the nature of the work undertaken in textual analyses. The problem is one of producing analyses of discourse which can theorise human subjectivity in its psychic relations and structure across ideological representations of 'the social' – across, therefore, ideological representations of the political and the economic of producing descriptions of subject positions in discourse as they relate to politics and economics. Such theorisations and descriptions can only be produced by work which attempts the analysis of texts in conjunctural – ie, historical – terms, particularly since the issue of class and class identification, which is a vital part of such work, is precisely a conjunctural issue.

We can return here to *Days of Hope* and the problem of class identity as posed by MacCabe. To quote him more fully:

'A class is not a subject, an identity, but rather the ever-changing configuration produced by the forces and relations of production. A set of economic, political and ideological forces constantly constitutes classes in struggle and classes can find no definition outside those struggles' (op cit, p 13).

Thus, while classes have no given identity in general, identities are produced in particular conjunctures through the production of political and ideological representations – although such 'identities', it should again be stressed, are in no sense derived from. motivated by, 'read off from', any 'real' identity existing at the economic level. The problem here, we would argue, concerns less 'class' or 'subject' as such, than 'identity' in relation to both. *Days of Hope* produces the viewing subject as an identity, in homogeneous identification with a class whose discursive representation similarly constitutes it as an identity. The consequence of this for the articulation of history is that both viewing subject and class are produced as, in a sense, non-historical, outside of conjunctural specification, differentiation and contradiction. These problems are precisely a result of the discursive strategies adopted by the *Days of Hope* series. 'Modernised' classical realist forms, of the kind the *Days of Hope* films represent, cannot but produce history, class and subject in this way, since their construction inevitably produce, not difference, absence, contradiction and process, but presence and identity.

1. Psychoanalysis here has met its mirror image; the individual subject outside specific and historical social determination and construction is analysed in relation to an individual text, similarly outside specific and historical social determination and construction.

history are essentially those already pointed to in section one on the analysis of cinema in specific conjunctures whose field is the social formation as a whole rather than simply the 'cinematic institution' as such, and those in section two on the production and analysis of forms of address as forms of social address, again in relation to particular conjunctures in specific social formations. Rather than simply repeat or amplify a number of remarks made already in relation to these problems, it is worth posing here two issues, one of which emerged fairly explicitly at Edinburgh, the other of which did not but is nonetheless fundamentally important to the concerns that Edinburgh focussed. The first is the issue of theoretical discussion of the political; the second concerns concepts of class and class struggle, though in a slightly different way to the problems indicated above in relation to *Days of Hope*.

Problems around discussion of the political arose largely in the context of debates on television, particularly in relation to possible interventions in the Television Festival, where the spontaneous vocabulary adopted was largely that of conspiracy. It became increasingly evident that work on the conceptualisation of the political in relation to the ideological was urgently needed if any kind of considered and effective intervention in the institutions of television is to be possible. There seem to be two areas of work in which such conceptualisation can begin to be produced. Firstly, there is work in relation to cinema on the kind of conjunctural analyses already pointed to (specifically, perhaps, development of the work already begun on the 30s, where the political is involved both through the State funding of documentaries and through propaganda produced by political parties and groups such as the anti-fascist front) together with work on the relationship between political struggles and texts produced by institutions of entertainment in specific conjunctures. (Purely speculatively, it might be interesting here to analyse the British cinema of the late fifties and early sixties which saw the rise both of Free Cinema and of Hammer in conjunction with a set of interesting ideological and political shifts.) Secondly, an obvious area in need of urgent work is that of television, where relationships between the ideological and the political, in institutional terms and in terms of the production of discursive representations of politics in news and current affairs programmes, are immediately and inescapably present.

Again, as with the problematisation of the concept of history, the question of the specification and analysis of class and class struggle, in relation to the kinds of concerns focussed at Edinburgh, has been actualised by the work of Hindess and Hirst. It demands an investigation of the way, once the base-superstructure model is abandoned, the relations between economic, ideological and political practice can be conceptualised. In theorising these

relationships Hindess and Hirst replace the concept of determination with that of conditions of existence. If such a conceptualisation is pursued, and if, as Hindess and Hirst maintain (eg in *Mode of Production and Social Formation*, Macmillan, London 1977), class is an economic category, it means that class struggle, and its specification in relation to cinema and television, can only be analysed in conjunctural terms, since there is no automatic relationship, either of determination or reflection, across any given social formation: its effects can only be specified in relation to specific conjunctures. What the work of Hindess and Hirst effectively insists on, is not that practices are autonomous, but precisely the opposite, that they have conditions of existence, and that those conditions, and the forms they take, are not specifiable in general. What this means, or should mean, is that practices must be analysed in relation to each other in conjunctural terms, and that a necessary part of such analysis is the specification of class and class struggle – though, to date, rather the opposite has happened and their work has largely been read as validating, and has been used to validate, positions and analyses which effectively maintain the almost total autonomy of each of the instances of practice. It is important that the effective insistence pointed to above is recognised, and that the kind of work it implies be produced, not least because it may begin to produce analyses of class and class struggle that are not marked by economism and reductionism. Interestingly enough, given Hindess's and Hirst's position on history, such work will necessarily and inevitably be historical.

It is worth concluding these remarks with a point which, although it was not present centrally at the event, is nonetheless an important one, concerning the history of cinema, history in cinema and cinema in history, the point being that, historically, cinema can be seen as being produced precisely in order to produce an ideology of history and of historical evidence, an ideology of history as the visible, in order to shift the terrain of history and its discussion and dissemination at a point when they were becoming 'socially dangerous': ie potentially revolutionary. Two further points arise here. Firstly, the interconnections of the three conjunctures of 'cinema' and 'history' cross at the point of textual address and subject: how do particular texts relate to cinema conceived as an institution for the production of the ideology of history as the visible? Do their textual strategies confirm or challenge that ideology? Secondly, as John Ellis suggests in his paper, this function may have shifted recently onto television, opening up a space for cinema such that the problematisation of representation, and hence the problematisation of that ideology of history may be an immediate possibility in a number of areas of cinematic practice. What this means is that television's role is in need of urgent analysis, since it is a similar role to that played by cinema in the first half of this century, and yet displays signifi-

cant differences.

FORTINI/CANI Straub and Huillet's film *Fortini/Cani*, which was shown at Edinburgh, though not as part of the event, is discussed here because of its importance in relation to nearly all the issues around history and cinema referred to above: class, politics, address, conjuncture, and discourse. Its central textual problematic concerns the relationship between various conjunctures in the past and the present, and history as discourse, and the various forms that may take, as each relates to the individual subject (both Franco Fortini and the viewer). It can be seen as a film which meets the *Ça* group's suggestion for 'a history that would assume the terms of its enunciation . . . a film that recognised its fiction'.

The film carefully produces a differentiation between a series of layers of history and times of enunciation in relation to similarly differentiated modes of discourse, which may be sketched as follows:

Discourse of television and newspapers	Enunciation and enounced: around the Six Day War in 1967
Franco Fortini reading his book, <i>I Cani del Sinai</i>	Enunciation: the present Enounced: 1967 (time of writing and publication of <i>I Cani del Sinai</i>)
Voice over commentary	Enunciation: the present Enounced: 1967 and the present.
Visual discourse 'accompanying' the commentary	Enunciation and enounced: the present
Handwritten discourse (identified in the script, but not in the film, as that of Fortini)	Enunciation and enounced: the present

In addition, there is the time at which viewing takes place, the performance of the film to/with a viewing subject.

The different registers of discourse (graphic, voice, music, image) support different, sometimes contradictory 'times' of enounced and enunciation, so as to foreground the time and fact of enunciation, and the intersection of different layers of history, different times in the process of the film. This may be illustrated by Fortini's voice-over commentary, remembering both his past and the past of his father in Florence. It ranges over his father's youth, memories of his father, Fortini's youth in the 20s and 30s, encounters with fascism and so on. The time of the enunciation

of these memories is the present, its referent different points of personal and political history. This verbal discourse accompanies/is accompanied by images corresponding to geographical references – for example the *Via dei Servi* (shot 32) and the monument on the Arno (shot 40) – but images which, in their articulation in, for instance, the length of shot, the lack of detailed correspondence, exceed any illustrative function, leading to an emphasis on the fact and time of enunciation similar to that produced by the shots of Rome in *Othon* and *History Lessons* (a strategy which seems bound up with the use of direct sound).

Another example: the time of the enunciation of Fortini reading from his book is the present, yet in reading passages from the book, he is quoting from the past. Here, the emphasis on the fact and time of enunciation is found in the hesitations of the reading voice, the rigidity of the body of the reader, duplicated in the 'rigidity' of the camera framing. The viewer is caught in this intersection of times, encountering this past in this present, an encounter which the process of the film rehearses with the viewer as it is viewed and as such cannot be rehearsed 'beforehand' (Straub and Huillet have stressed the importance of not preparing Fortini, of not having any run through; the film is the only run-through).

The process of foregrounding enunciation, and of differentiating the discursive elements of the film, works against any imaginary construction of 'Fortini' as coherent identity, as an origin/source of discourse. The remark, 'You are not where your destiny is decided' (shot 103) can be read as a description of the processes of history and subject construction. The film's careful differentiation of the various historical modalities of Jewry/racism/fascism equally works against any tendency on the viewer's part to construct a set of 'eternal' themes around the persecution of Jews. Fortini/Cani thus constantly works to historicise the discourses of which it is composed, to separate them in relation to different times.

The problematic of history is also there in its references to memory and in its visual emphasis on the monument and the trace: memory and monument figure together as the terms of a constant emphasis on the constitution of history within a text and the historicising of that text itself, a process necessarily involving the historicising of the spectator, who has to place him/herself in relation to those monuments and traces: does he/she have a memory of the period of their initial inscription/construction? does he/she have a knowledge in relation to them? how and what do they mean for the spectator? The problematising of that, the offering of those traces and monuments without full exposition by a governing discourse, means that the spectator is placed in the position of thinking about both the presences and the absences in him/herself in relation to a set of histories. The text

refuses the production of history as a present identity for a full and present subject.

For instance, a circular pan (shot 17) from the monument at Vinca, through the town, country and mountains back to the monument, cutting to an upward pan (shot 18) over the inscription on the monument which finishes framing the tops of cypress trees against the sky. The inscription on the monument reads as follows: 'Vinca. Let the flame destructively lit by German barbarism remind you, enclosed in your marble mountains, of the martyrdom of your people'. The inscription retrospectively motivates the previous pan: Vinca/the town/its hills/the flame on top of the monument, already traversed in shot 17. The inscription is itself reinforced by the movement of the pan upward with the denotation of 'reading' and the connotations of the upward movement of the flame, of the soul, and its ending with the cypresses and their connotations of death. The time of the viewing, of enunciation, is also emphasised by the duration and movement of these pans, which are part of a large series of pans through the countryside, the rest of which have no discourse to aid interpretation. What knowledge/memory of Italy does the spectator bring to bear? Do these pans just provide a field for the projection of fantasies of 'holidays in the sun'? Do they enjoin the spectator to recognise scenes of other atrocities? Such questions concern absence – possible amnesia, absence of memory – and difference – difference between the 'real' spectator and the imagined spectator produced in the text.

This discourse about difference is developed in relation to the oedipal problematic, to a series of paternal representatives – the Jewish Law, the fascist authorities, the Party, Fortini's father. In relating to his family, Fortini presents himself as already distanced from, separated from what he sees as the 'secret rites' of Judaism (a point on which he identifies with his father). Equally, in the family he recalls a lack of insistence on the Christianity of his mother's side of the family. Fortini's struggle is to locate himself in the history of the European and Italian petty-bourgeoisie, and to locate himself in relation to his father. 'If we want to change reality it is necessary to know something about this immediate past' (shot 29). Fortini recalls being linked with his father at a moment of loss, separation in a crowd through the 'grain' (Barthes's term for the marking of the symbolic) of his father's voice, its tone of anguish and despair disturbing Fortini's assumed calm (his sutured identity).

For Fortini the act of writing is part of that investigation of political and personal history, a production of history through memory across an oedipal logic. The strategies of Straub and Huillet displace the attempted coherence of Fortini's writing into a juxtaposition of writing (past) and speech (present) onto different segments of writing in an order which focuses on the

act of speech as the production of presence and absence, the act of remembering and forgetting. The stress on difference, the gaps and absences in the film text, its construction of a contradictory, fissured subject in and for a contradictory, fissured present, reinscribes textuality as a criterion of aesthetic and political value: a value implicit in Fortini's discourse. The production of separation in/from the text is duplicated in the text at the level of content in various discourses about difference, around problems of opposing tendencies to homogeneity, a suturing of contradictions.

The impossibility of 'equality' between people - the 'complex of historical forces in the simultaneity of the world' (shot 39) - imposes difference. Difference is essential to the relation to the other: 'My nearness to you, your separation from me'. The founding of the state of Israel, the 'fixing' of a Jewish God in relation to the State, produces a kind of parent figure in relation to whom identity is constituted - but identity over and against the difference of the other such that it produces racism, an identity constituted around that same 'hatred for difference' (shot 30) created by bourgeois anti-semitism as a diversion from class struggle. The identification of Church and State, described as proceeding from a 'medieval' mentality, overinscribes identity to the paradoxical loss of Jewishness as a figure of universalism (an identity constituted from the recognition of difference). Fortini's discourse distinguishes a similar process in the development of Marxist parties: 'As regards "Messianic Marxism", I know well that its identification-surpassing of State and Church (ie Party) is its most tragic weakness' (shot 36). The problem of the Party conceived in terms of identity rather than difference is central to Fortini's neglected essay 'The Writers' Mandate and the End of Anti-Fascism' (*Screen* v 15 n 1, Spring 1974). The Party is always conceived in a fantasy of reunification of difference, which blocks the recognition of the possible radical otherness of the revolution. Here Fortini quotes Lu Xun:

'I realised that all revolutionary poets who had ideals and illusions before the Revolution could be driven to their death by the reality that they themselves had yearned for and sung of. And if the reality of the Revolution does not destroy the illusions and ideals of such poets then it is worth no more than an empty name' ('The Writers' Mandate', p 42).

Living in the real involves the living through of heterogeneity, of difference, and coming to terms with death: 'In exchange for reality you have been given a perfect illusion, a passable imitation of life. Comfortably distracted from your death in the enjoyment of a kind of immortality' (shot 24).

Fortini/Cani operates precisely to dislocate the terms of identity pointed to in relation to *Days of Hope*, the terms of class and subject. Separation, difference, contradiction constitute the

functions of its textual strategies, and indeed become aesthetic and political values in themselves. The film acts to insist not only on its relation to 'history in cinema' but also on its relation to history of cinema and, through its insistence on absence, fissure, invisibility, to 'cinema in history' as this latter relates to the ideology of history in the visible.

NOTE *Fortini/Cani* is now obtainable in Britain from the Artificial Eye Film Company, 3 Tottenham Street, London W1, whom we should also like to thank for making a print available to us during the writing of this article.

The Television Festival

John Caughie

The Television Festival held in Edinburgh in conjunction with the Film Festival last summer has already been well reported, most notably by Rod Allen in *Broadcast* (September 12, 1977) and by Charles Barr in *The Listener* (September 15, 1977). What the following notes attempt to do is to place the Festival in the context of developing work on television, and to draw out for a theory of television some of the implications of what emerged and what was repressed. At the same time as being a critique of the Festival, the notes attempt to propose some kind of auto-critique (as participant, rather than reporter) of the nature of the opposition which was offered to the dominant structure and ideology of the event, and to formulate a basis for future strategies of intervention in television. Centrally, the argument is that intervention should not be thought simply as oppositional, intervening in a monolithic institution - or even a monolithic festival - but should be seen as establishing the grounds for productive theoretical work within the institutions, within theoretical practice itself, and, crucially, within the bringing together of the two.

The present surge of interest in the analysis and theorisation of television is itself a phenomenon which might usefully be analysed and theorised. Each new article, each event, seems to initiate for itself the history of television theory, and there is a pervasive sense

JORIS IVENS

PART ONE

Joris Ivens' film work is probably best known through his recent collaboration with Marceline Loridan on the series of films about China, *How Yukong Moved the Mountains*. This retrospective presents a career which spans over 50 years of documentary films which were directly or indirectly related to the political struggles of their time. Ivens' early experimental films such as *The Bridge* were produced when he was involved with the establishment of one of the first and most active film clubs, the Filmliga in Amsterdam, which like the London Film Society was a centre for screenings and discussions amongst film makers and critics. The success of his early films and the development of the Liga led to invitations to make films for the Dutch trade union movement (*We are Building*). He also made promotional films for industrial concerns. However, he chose not to continue with this kind of work, opting instead to make films in close alliance and identification with socialist movements. Invited to Russia to make a film on shock brigades (*Komsomol*), he began to develop a form of documentary which included some reconstruction and re-enactment as well as occasional fictional elements. It should be remembered however that Ivens is highly critical of the entertainment film industry, and his documentary practice has been developed in opposition to it.

Most of his films adopt a personal approach to their subject matter, which has included, for instance, post-revolutionary Chinese society, the bringing of electricity to rural America and the war against the USA in Vietnam and Laos, which he presents by portraying the lives and struggles of individuals and families caught up in these events. With the exception of two of his 1930s militant documentaries, *Borinage* and *New Earth*, the films rarely develop any complex analysis of the societies he is filming. This emphasis on ordinary

people is very much an Ivens hallmark. It is through identification with these people that the audience is expected to come to understand social change and struggle. It should be pointed out that Ivens is working within an important strand of the documentary movement, one which has been used to support the aims of the international socialist movement, in which film is often seen as a means of communication and unification between people in different cultures in their struggle for socialism. *Song of the Rivers* is the most direct representation of these ideas.

His move away from *montage* to a more realistic cinema was accompanied by the development of the poetic elements of his earlier films into the explicitly lyrical cinema of, for instance, *Power and the Land*.

The political achievements of Ivens' practice are considerable: *Indonesia Calling*, for instance, was used in recruitment and organisation of the Indonesian independence struggle after World War II, and *The Threatening Sky* was important in the movement against the Vietnam war. The range of aesthetic strategies in his films – experimental/agitational use of montage, socialist realism, *cinéma-vérité* – will, we hope, be useful in examining the relationship between film aesthetics and political struggles.

We are very pleased that Joris Ivens will be able to introduce the season in a discussion on September 18 (for details see p. 22).

A BFI publication, edited by Rosalind Delmar, on Ivens is also available. We would like to thank the National Film Archive and the Netherlands Film Museum for helping to make this season possible. The Netherlands Film Museum has organised an exhibition on Ivens' work which will be at the ICA in October to coincide with the second part of this season. —Mark Nash.

Mon 17 Sep 6.20

Programme 1

Ivens' first experimental films enabled him to explore basic elements of film technique and the emotional effects of rhythmic repetition of motion. *The Bridge* (De Brug, Netherlands 1928) is a study of the Rotterdam railway bridge over the Maas river. *Rain* (Regen, Netherlands 1929) is an atmospheric film of rain in Amsterdam. *Breakers* (Branding, Netherlands 1929) is a love story of an unemployed fisherman, with an emphasis on the elements similar to that in films of Jean Epstein. *Borinage* Ivens and Storck Belgium 1933) and *New Earth* (Nieuwe Gronden, Netherlands 1934) are militant documentaries: *Borinage* presents the effects of the defeat of the 1932 miners strike on the workers; *New Earth*, with an impressive score by Hanns Eisler, deals with the completion of the Zuiderzee drainage project.



Mon 17 Sep 8.45

Programme 2

In *The Spanish Earth* (USA 1937), filmed in the front lines of the Spanish Civil War, Ivens explores connections between editing and the ideas it evokes, a concept learnt from Dovzhenko's films. Ernest Hemingway provided the commentary for this film, which was used to mobilise American opinion for the Republican side. In *Power and the Land* (USA 1939/40), produced on the initiative of Pare Lorentz for the US Rural Electrification Administration, a mid-west farming family re-enacts the transformation electricity has brought to their lives.



Tue 18 Sep 6.15

Programme 3

Ivens first visited China to make *The 400 Million* (to be seen September 23) to mobilise American opinion against Japanese aggression. His camera was later used to shoot the first films in People's China. He returned in 1958 to make films for the Peking Newsreel and Documentary Studio. *Before Spring* (Letters from China, China 1958), filmed in Mongolia and Yangzi shows the influence of traditional Chinese art. *The Football Incident* (China-France 1976), from the *Yukong* series, indicates the freedom of ideological discussion possible between teacher and pupil in a Chinese school after the cultural revolution. Plus *Rencontre avec le Président Ho Chi Minh* (France-Vietnam 1969), made with Marceline Loridan and with the help of a Vietnamese cameraman.

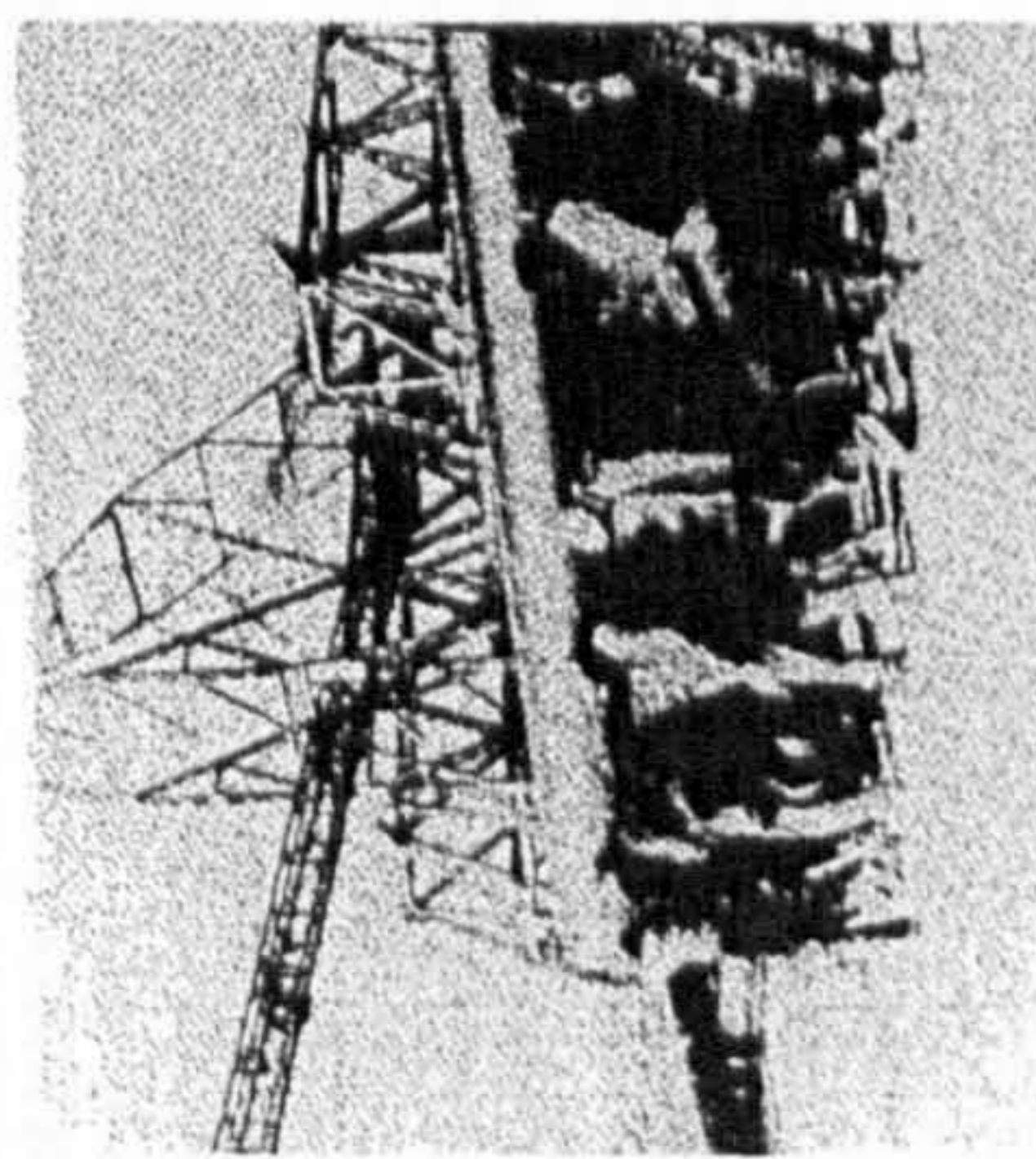




Tue 18 Sep
8.30

Joris Ivens: Discussion

Joris Ivens, currently living in Paris, will be in London for this season and has agreed to be interviewed on stage at the NFT. Discussion will cover his career from its beginnings in 1911 when, at the age of 13, he made his first film, a Western entitled *The Flaming Arrow*, to his better-known political documentaries, and from production in the Netherlands to France, USSR, USA, GDR, China and in many other countries, most recently in South East Asia. The discussion will be preceded by an extract from *How Yukong Moved the Mountains*.



Wed 19 Sep
6.00 8.30

Programme 4

De Wigwam (The Flaming Arrow, Netherlands 1911) is a delightful Western filmed when Ivens was 13 with 'actors' from his family. The first surviving films from his period of involvement with the Filmliga include *The Bridge (De Brug, Netherlands 1928)*, *Rain (Regen, Netherlands 1929)*, a *Breakers (Branding, Netherlands 1929)*, a love story of an unemployed fisherman. Plus *Heien (Netherlands 1929)*, the first episode of *We are Building*, which was made to mark the 25th anniversary of the Dutch trade union movement.



Thu 20 Sep
6.15 8.30

Programme 5

Philips-Radio (Netherlands 1931) concentrates on the experience of work in a modern mechanised factory. Ivens' experimental use of sound and music resulted in its being retitled for release in France as *Symphonie Industrielle*. Despite the critical success of such films, Ivens felt the use of cinema in the service of advertising prevented him showing the kind of social truth appropriate to documentary cinema. Plus *Komsomol (USSR 1932)*, Ivens' contribution to the first Soviet 5-year plan. The choice of subject, members of the communist youth organisation working in a steel centre was his. The film marked the beginning of his association with Eisler.



Sat 22 Sep
6.15 8.30

Programme 6

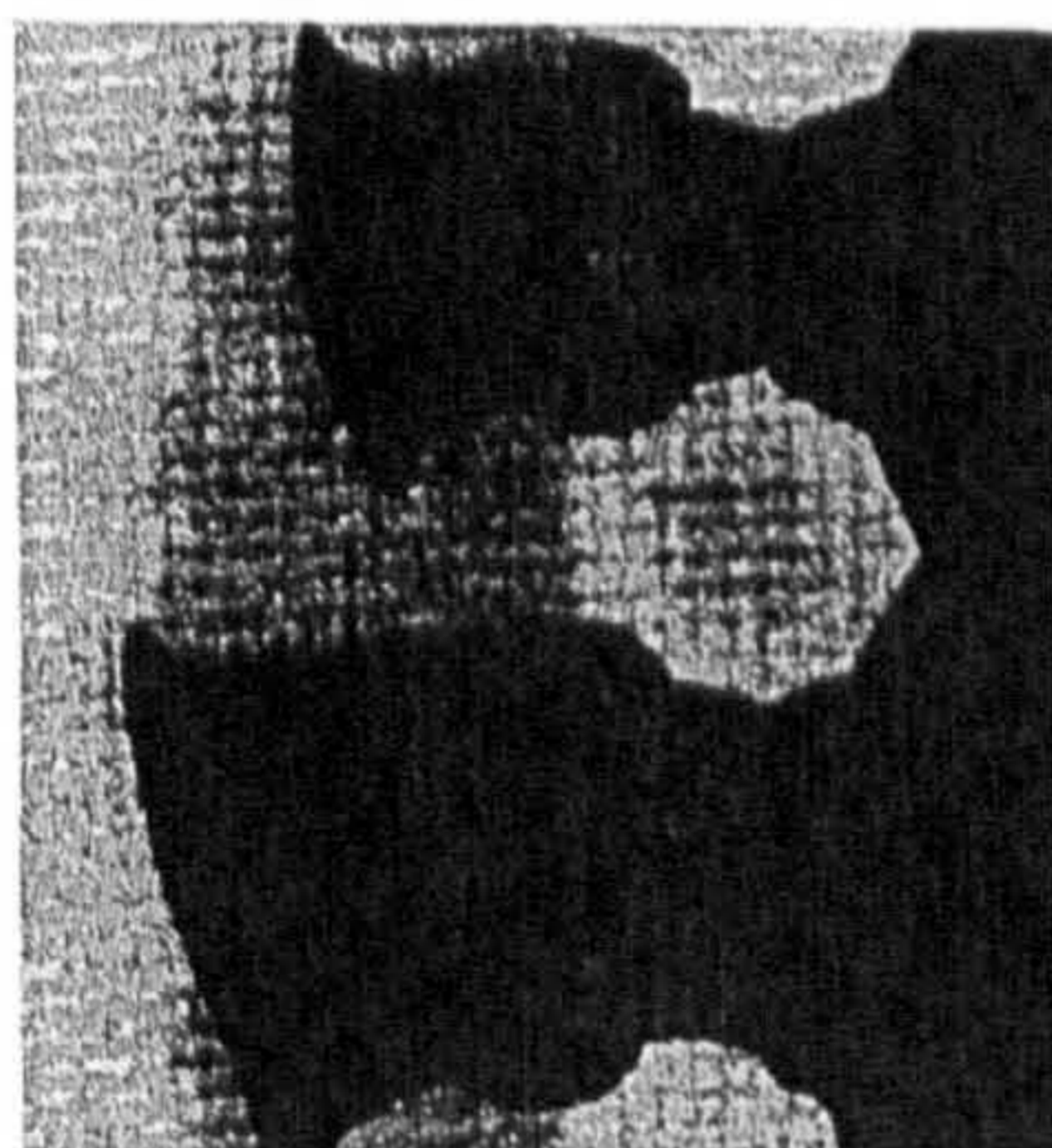
Borinage (Misère au Borinage, Ivens and Storck, Belgium 1933), about the aftermath of the miners' strike in the Borinage, was seen by critics as marking a shift in Ivens' work from largely experimental, aesthetic concerns, to more social considerations. *New Earth (Nieuwe Gronden, Netherlands 1933)*, deals with land reclamation in the Zuidersee as well as analysing the economic absurdities of a capitalistic economy. In *The Spanish Earth (USA 1937)* the theme of working the earth and fighting for the Earth dominates the film. Ivens is particularly proud of Helen van Dongen's editing of this film.



Sun 23 Sep
6.15 8.30

Programme 7

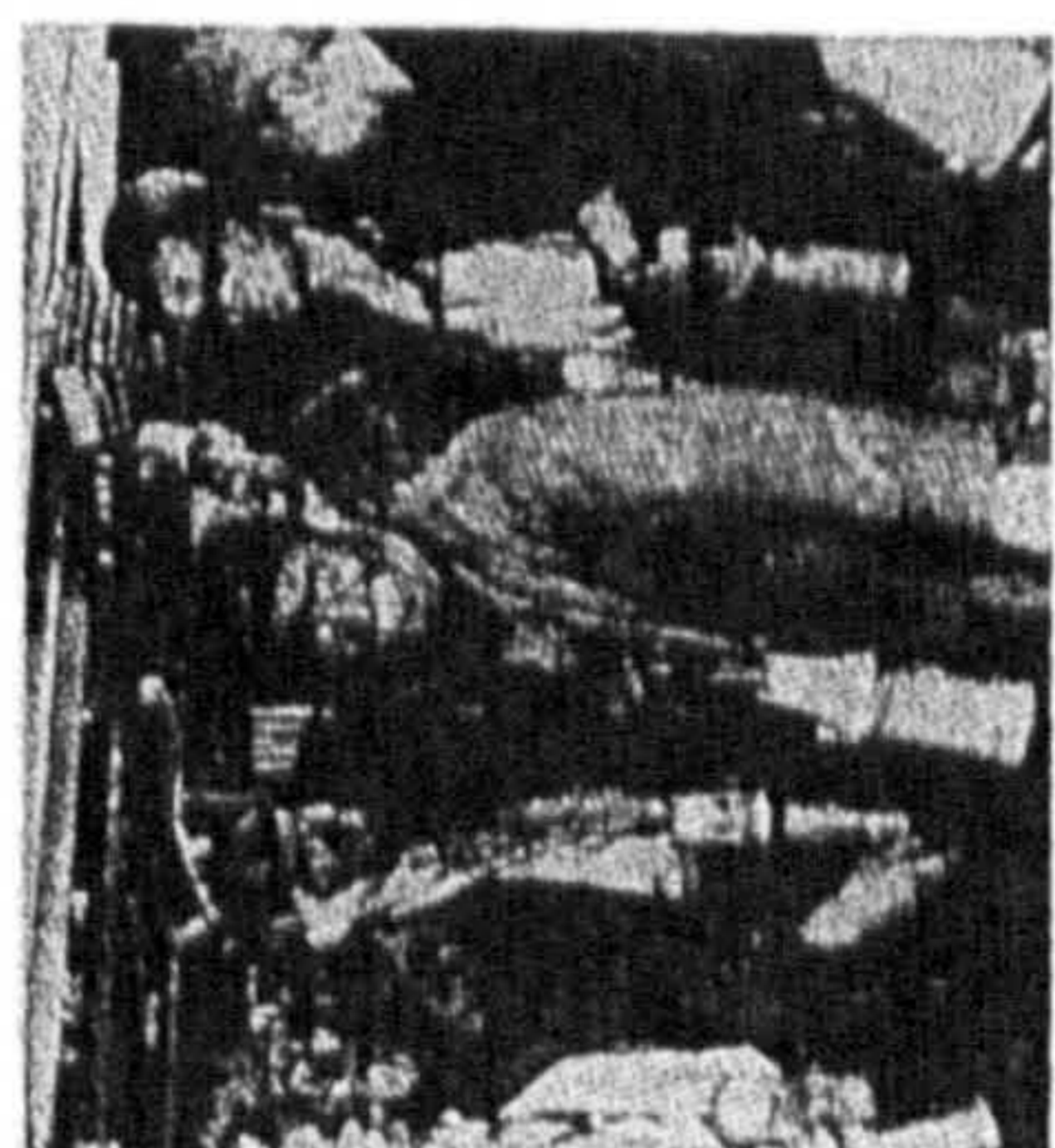
The 400 Million (USA 1938), like *Spanish Earth* produced by History Today, was an attempt to alert American public opinion to Japanese imperialist advances on China by recording the effects of the war on the Chinese people. *Power and the Land (USA 1939/40)*, photographed by Flaherty's collaborator Floyd Crosby, dramatises the process of electrification in isolated areas of the USA and documents American rural life through the story of the Parkinson family of Saint Clairville, Ohio.



Mon 24 Sep
6.00 8.30

Programme 8

Our Russian Front (Ivens and Milestone, USA 1941): Using film shot at the front by Russian cameramen, Ivens and Milestone produced this compilation film arguing for US support for Russia following the German attack in 1941 and before the US had entered the war. It includes music by Shostakovich and Eisler. *Action Stations (Canada 1942/3)*: In December 1941 Ivens proposed a series of propaganda 'film letters' - stories of different people and their involvements in the war. John Grierson commissioned this film about the work of Canadian vessels and their crews in escorting transatlantic convoys.



Tue 25 Sep
6.15 8.30

Programme 9

In order to make *Song of the River (Das Lied der Strome, GDR 1954)*, a film of the 3rd congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions, more than just another conference film, Ivens asked cameramen throughout the world to shoot footage of the announcement of the congress and the work of the trade unions in their countries. Film was then sent or smuggled to Vienna, where he organised it around a theme of the six great rivers of the world. The international labour movement is celebrated as the seventh and greater river in a concluding song by Bertolt Brecht.



Thu 27 Sep
8.45

Programme 10

The First Years (Pierwsze Lata, Czechoslovakia-Poland-Bulgaria 1949) was co-produced by three socialist countries. It uses a range of 'human stories' to develop its arguments about the post-war development of these countries. The Bulgarian section concerns an irrigation project, the Czechoslovak section the development of economic independence. The Polish section is about the life of a piano teacher, now working in an iron foundry, adjusting to the loss of her family in the war. Plus *Indonesia Calling (Australia 1946)* which demonstrates the solidarity of Australian dockers with Indonesia's struggle for independence.

JORIS IVENS

PART TWO

In this second part of our Joris Ivens retrospective we concentrate on the last 30 of his 50 years as a film maker. Both his more personal lyrical films, such as *La Seine a rencontré Paris* and *A Valparaiso* and the more direct documentary cinema, such as the films of the Vietnam conflict, focus on problems of finding images representative of political and social processes. Whatever the subject matter (poetic statements about nature or political struggles) he always emphasises the social transformation of nature, the changes this brings to people's lives. This comes over particularly clearly in the Yukung series, which deliberately refuses an external political analysis and concentrates rather on Chinese people's perceptions of how the revolution changed their lives. Ivens' concern with social reality, which his films often present in explicitly socialist terms, marks his films off from those of the British documentary movement, which, although influenced by Ivens, developed, within the framework of bourgeois democratic state funding, rather more conservative

analyses. Paradoxically, the strength of the British movement has tended to eclipse the existence of this alternative Ivens tradition, a failure which this retrospective hopes to remedy.

Though Ivens welcomed the development of *cinéma-vérité* in the early 1960s, he cautioned against confusing the reality of social processes with authenticity of detail. His gradual adoption of this form was consolidated by his collaboration with Marceline Loridan, the leading participant in Rouch's *Chronique d'un été*, and who has worked with Ivens as a co-director since 1967. Ivens has devoted much of his time to teaching, producing several of his films, such as *A Valparaiso*, with students. International recognition facilitated his return to the Netherlands in 1965 after 30 years' absence (his criticisms of Dutch policy in Indonesia had resulted in the withdrawal of his Dutch passport) and has helped the establishment of an Ivens archive at the Netherlands Film Museum in Amsterdam. —Mark Nash.

Mon 1 Oct
6.15 8.30

We are Building



In 1929 Ivens was commissioned to make a film for the Dutch Building Workers' Trade Union as part of a membership drive, and for the union's 25th anniversary celebrations. It was *Wij Bouwen*. The central theme was the professional pride of the building workers. This was really the old guild idea: the pride and importance of a man who works with his hands, who builds factories, homes, schools and dams. The pride of labour in itself, in its results and its function in society and the feeling of dignity, solidarity and force that comes through that pride' (Ivens). *Netherlands 1930.*

Wed 3 Oct
6.00 8.30

Peace Will Win/Peace Tour



After the war Ivens was living in Poland, teaching at the Lodz film school and working on co-productions dealing with socialist countries' economic reconstruction and creation of socialist ideology. *Peace Will Win* (*Pokoj Zwycięzy Świat*, Poland 1951) is an account of the international peace conference in Warsaw in October 1950, originally due to be held in Sheffield but banned by the Attlee government. *Friedensfahrt* (Poland-GDR 1952) is a youth cycle tour between three socialist capitals; Berlin, Prague and Warsaw.

Sat 6 Oct
6.15 8.30

The Seine has Met Paris/Letters from China



La Seine a rencontré Paris (France 1957) is one of Ivens' most lyrical films, relating images of the river to a poem by Jacques Prévert. *Before Spring* (*Letters from China*, China 1958), Ivens' first film in the People's Republic, was made with technicians from the Peking documentary studio and presents winter and spring in two areas of China, including the performance of an ancient play during the Spring Festival. Plus *Six Hundred Million are With You* (China 1958) which, like a very combative poem, a political pamphlet' (Ivens), documents Chinese protests at British landings in the Lebanon in 1958.

Mon 8 Oct
6.00 8.30

Italy is not a Poor Country



L'Italia non è un paese povero was commissioned by Enrico Mattei, director of the Italian Natural Gas monopoly, ENI, who, despite pressure from American oil majors, was expanding Italian oil exploration. The film stresses Italy's undeveloped natural resources and links aspects of the work of the industry of the Po valley, Lucania and Sicily with the possibilities offered to transform the lives of Italian peasants. Italian TV objected to its analysis and only showed fragments of the film. It received its first public showing in a complete version earlier this year. *Italy 1960.*

Wed 10 Oct
6.00 8.30

Work in Cuba and Chile



In 1960 Ivens taught in Cuba, making two films with students: *Carnet de Viaje* (Cuba 1961), about first impressions of the country, and *Pueblo Armado* (Cuba 1961), about preoccupations with fears of an American invasion. He subsequently taught in Chile, making *A Valparaiso* (Chile-France 1963), which presents surrealist images of that city to a commentary by Chris Marker, and is one of Ivens' best known films. Plus *Le Petit chapiteau* (France-Chile 1963), about a circus in Valparaiso, and *Le Train de la victoire* (Chile 1964), a report on Allende's campaign for the presidency.

Fri 12 Oct
6.30

The Mistral

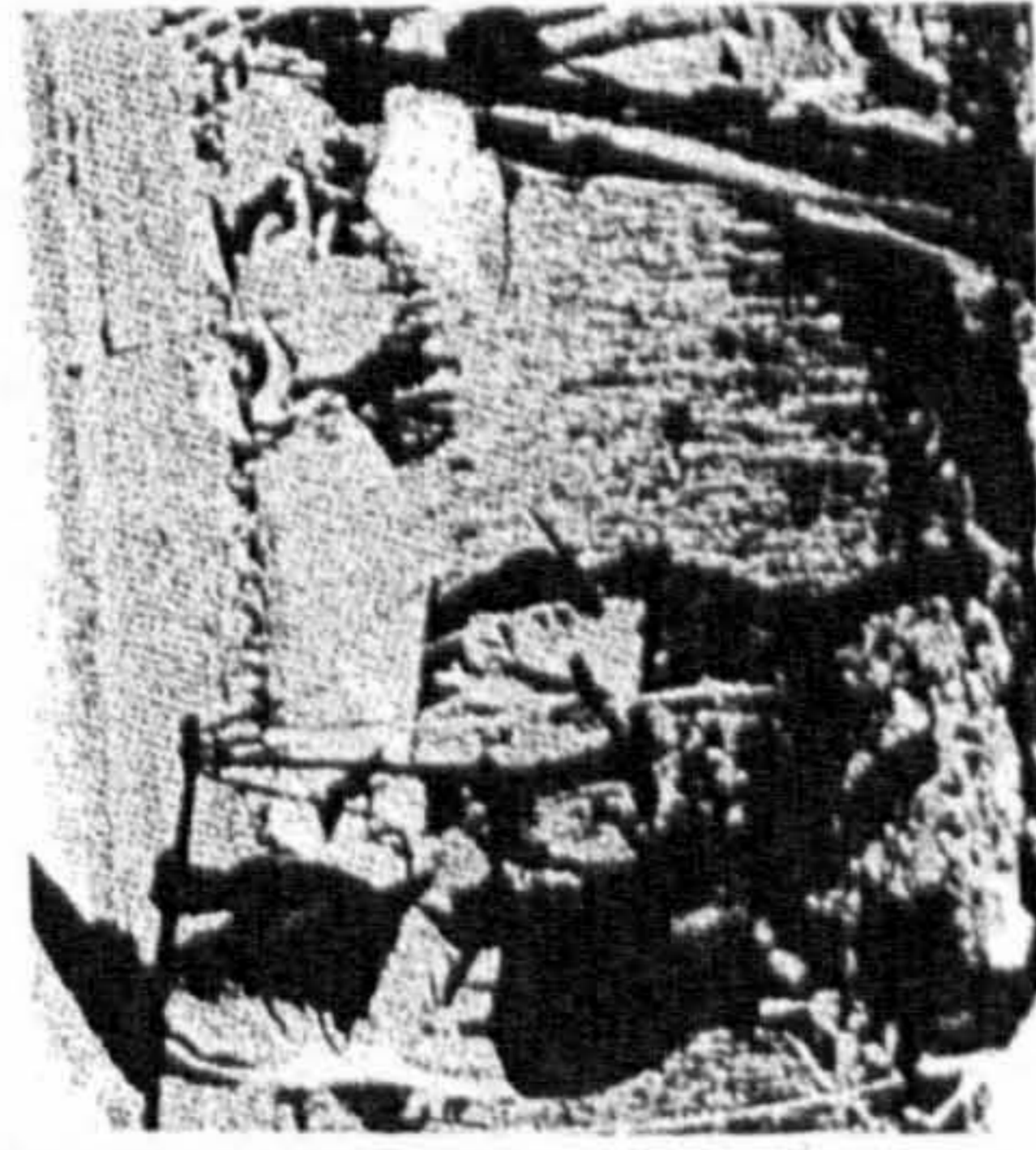


Ivens used specially constructed boxes to catch the sound of the wind in *Pour le Mistral* (France 1965), a lyrical film about the wind that has such an important influence on life in the Midi. Plus *Le Ciel, la terre* (France-Vietnam 1965), one of the first documentary reports from the Vietnam war to take the Vietnamese side in the conflict, and *Rotterdam-Europort* (Netherlands 1966), Ivens' first film in Holland since *The New Earth* (1934), which takes up the myth of the Flying Dutchman (with whom Ivens has been compared), plotting his return to the modern harbour of Rotterdam.



Fri 12 Oct
8.45
Far from Vietnam

Loin du Vietnam, produced by the SLON film collective and edited by Chris Marker, was an important attempt by a group of film makers to assess their relation to the Vietnam war and its repercussions in Europe and America. Material was shot by Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Lelouch, Agnès Varda and Ivens and Loridan, who supplied colour footage of life in Hanoi. In a letter used as a voice-over to their section, Ivens describes the strange 'peace' of Hanoi despite the constant threat and actuality of American bombardment. *France 1967.*



Mon 15 Oct
6.15 8.30

The Seventeenth Parallel

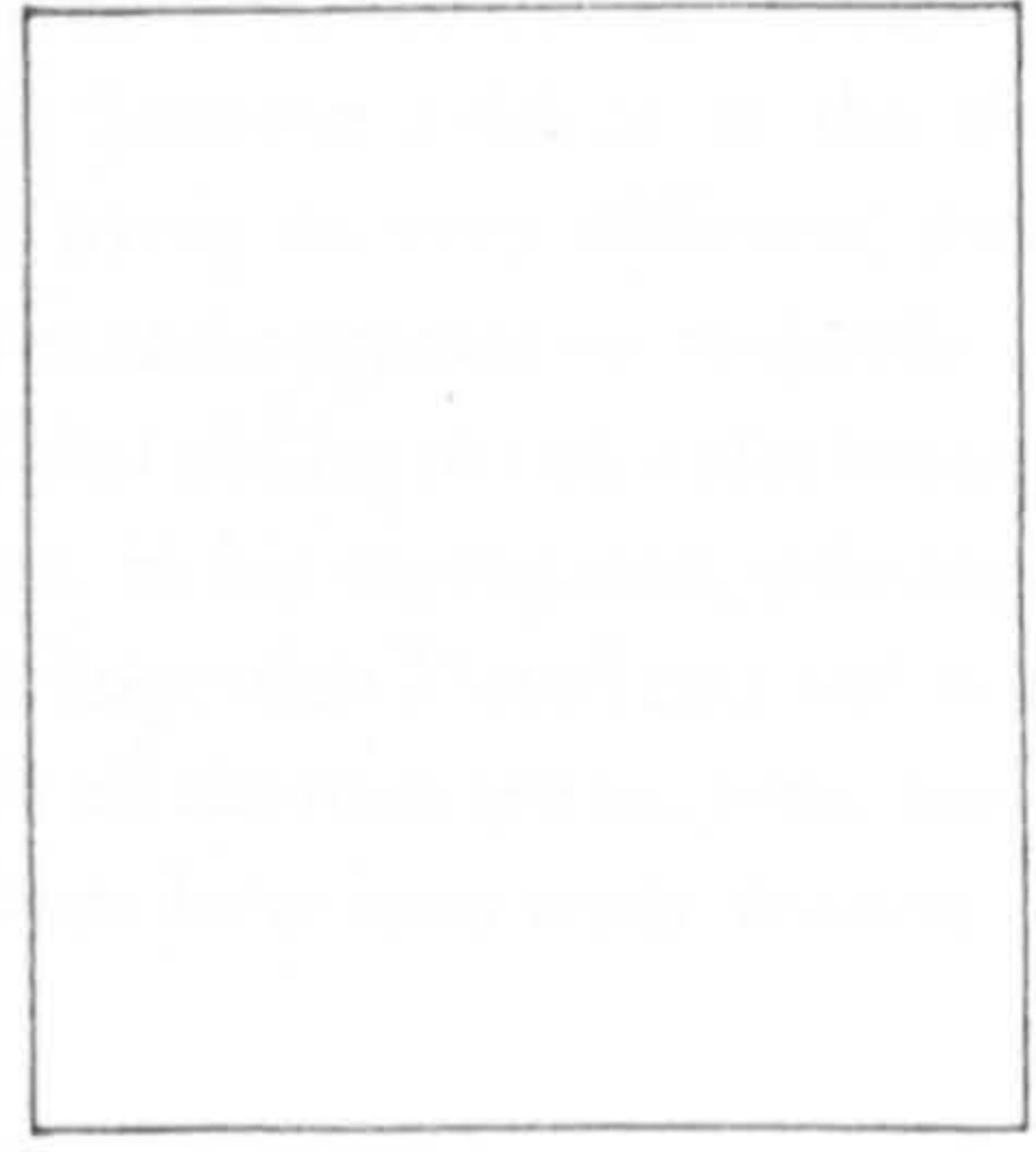
Widely regarded as the best film on the Vietnam war, *Le Dix-septième parallèle* concerns the life of a particular village community as it was affected by the constant bombardment of the war. It was filmed dangerously close to the 17th parallel, the truce line with South Vietnam fixed by the Geneva convention. This is Ivens' first co-direction with Marceline Loridan, and her influence can be seen in the film's sustained use of synchronous sound and other vérité techniques, such as the sequence-shot. *Vietnam-France 1967/Dir Ivens, Loridan.*



Wed 17 Oct
6.15 8.30

The People and their Guns

Le Peuple et ses fusils, filmed with the guerrilla forces in mountain caves, is a consciously didactic film on the practice of armed struggle, edited by a nine-person collective, including Ivens and Loridan, formed in Paris after the events of May '68. Its non-dramatic, fragmentary construction is heightened by the many distancing explanatory titles. The French government banned its export until recently. *Laos-France 1969.*



Fri 19 Oct
6.30

The Kazaks - A National Minority - Sinkiang

This film shown here in the UK for the first time, concerns a national minority living in Sinkiang, near the Chinese frontier with the Soviet Union. Ivens and Loridan lived with this nomadic tribe and filmed their daily life. The film includes scenes of training the militia, a course on herbal medicines for doctors, a commune meeting and children learning their mother language. *France 1977/Dir Ivens, Loridan.* Plus *Rehearsal at the Peking Opera* from *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* (China 1976), showing the training of acrobats and dancers in the Peking Opera.



How Yukong Moved the Mountains
This series of films about daily life in China grew out of a project to make a film about the effects of the Cultural Revolution, and an invitation by Chou En Lai to film in China. The version we are showing has an English commentary.

Fri 19 Oct 8.45

A Woman, a Family

The life of a worker in a locomotive factory and with her family and neighbours in a Peking suburb.

Sat 20 Oct 4.15

Impressions of a City - Shanghai

Launching a ship, problems of traffic control, an exhibition of children's paintings, various incidents of street life. Plus *Behind the Scenes at the Peking Circus* and *The Football Incident.*

Sat 20 Oct 6.30

The Oilfields - Taching

Pioneer workers developing oilfields in North China and the parallel reclamation of the steppe by women.

Sat 20 Oct 8.45

The Pharmacy

The daily work of a Shanghai pharmacy known for its outstanding attempts to 'serve the people' together with regular self-criticism meetings. Plus *Traditional Handicrafts.*

Sun 21 Oct 4.15

An Army Camp - Nanking

Democratic army life - officers and men eating together, each performing their own domestic labour, working with villagers, their wives employed in army factories.

Sun 21 Oct 6.30

The Fishing Village

The life and work of a village centred on the fishing industry - young women sailors, old fishermen preparing sticks used by the children to farm seaweed. Discussions and interviews.

Sun 21 Oct 8.35

The Generator Factory

Life at a turbine factory - a campaign against the management, political study and education sessions, work with peasants and an account of the first railway strike. *China 1976/Dir Ivens, Loridan.*



BROTHERS AND SISTERS

1980/35/16mm/colour/110 mins..

D: Richard Woolley. Lighting C: Pascoe MacFarlane. C: Russel Murray. Focus: Steve Harrison. Clapper/loader: Anne Cottringer. Electrician: Malcolm Davis. S: Alf Bower. S ASST.: Peter Care. A D: Miranda Melville. Art ASST.: Tessa Rickards. E: Mick Audsley. E ASSTS.: Li Guy, Joke Van Wijk. Re-recorded at: Delta Sound. Effects: Peter Harvey. Hans Kramski. Sound Mix: Doug Turner, Bob Jones.

Theresa Bennett and Jennifer Collins: Carolyn Pickles. David Barratt: Sam Dale. James Barratt: Robert East. Sarah Barratt: Elizabeth Bennett. Tricia Snow: Jenifer Armitage. Pete Gibson: Barry McCarthy. Helen Dawson: Barrie Shore. Father: Norman Claridge. Mother: Mavis Pugh. Detective: Fred Gaunt. Constable: Nick Jensen. 2nd Policeman: David Theakston. Client: Jack Platts. 2nd Prostitute: Mary Wray. Winston: Nelson Fletcher. Milton: Alexander Cruise. Charlie: Leroy Mills. Taxi Driver: Bert Oxley. White man at bar: Ken Hastwell. Black man at bar: Mitch Lewis. Drunk: Ken Burgess. Man fighting: Brian Hibbard.

Original music composed and conducted by: Trevor Jones. © Original music: Trevor Jones. 'Where Do You Think You're Going?', performed by Dire Straits, words and music: Mark Knopfler. © 1979 by Straitjacket Songs Ltd. Rights throughout the world controlled by Rondor Music (London) Ltd. Recording rights: Phonogram Ltd. 'Reggae Reggae Music' by: Anthony King, Jackie Edwards and Pamela Douglas. Original screenplay by: Richard Woolley. Rewritten in conjunction with: Tammy Walker. Additional script assistance from: Stephen Trafford, Robert Lavender, Tim Lang, Liz Castledine, Kate Housden. Research assistance: Julie Joyce, Su Maddock. Casting assistance: Michael Attenborough, Elizabeth Mansfield. P Sup: Jim Pearse. Assisted by: Philip Abrams. P Assts.: David Belden, Gary Dore, Brian Hibbard, Joss Browning. P: Keith Griffiths. EXEC P: Peter Sainsbury.

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of: Delta Sound Services Ltd., Shepperton; CTS, Wembley Music Centre; ATS Casting (Leeds); Bruce Kington Lighting; Rank Film Laboratories Ltd; Cine-Europe Ltd; Samuelson Film Service Ltd; Lady Stoddard-Scott; Yorkshire Arts Association Communications Centre.

Our approach to BROTHERS AND SISTERS tries to grasp the film's historical moment, to understand the socially constructed and historically located function of its meanings, and begin to specify the production relations of that meaning for different audiences. BROTHERS AND SISTERS can be seen in terms of the impact of feminism and the Women's Movement on male conscience/consciousness (with oblique but discernible effects on the construction of male desire) in certain areas of the social formation at this time.

Experiences of the film may range from incomprehension of its starting points by audiences outside the politicised sub-culture who remain unaware of fundamental sex-pol issues and debates; a forcefully self-critical disturbance to the myopic and complacent attitudes of men who believe that their progressive politics have completely transformed their relations of power; to criticism from certain feminist positions that the film utilises an entirely male perspective — 'all the women are still victims.'

The context of its production is important as it came at a time when the Production Board's funding policy was beginning to be receptive to more ambitious types and sizes of project.

SYNOPSIS

BROTHERS AND SISTERS is a film about male attitudes to women and about class attitudes to dealing with life and people. It is also a thriller, a 'whodunnit'. A woman, Jennifer Collins, is murdered. She is involved in prostitution. The events leading up to her murder are depicted bit by bit throughout the film in a conventional cinematic style. David, a middle-class left-wing intellectual and social worker, lives in a house shared with three others near where Jennifer was murdered. He is firmly committed to political struggle on the economic and work front, but is less clearly worked out at a personal level. He happily moralises about the exploitation and oppression of women, but keeps his affair with Theresa, nanny to his brother James's family and sister of Jennifer, a secret from Tricia with whom he lives and has had a long standing sexual relationship. His attempts to change his attitudes towards women (at a level deeper than remembering to say 'person' instead of man) build towards a crisis — but perhaps also (after an argument with Tricia and a talk with Peter, a working-class member of David's household) towards a potential way forward for men. Similarities between David and his brother James (a major in a cavalry regiment stationed not far outside the northern city where the murder happened) also become evident in the film. Although diametrically opposed politically, and living in very different social milieux, they have both been brought up to control and organise — to divide and rule. The actual impermanence and immorality of that ability to control is brought out for both brothers. James does not (or perhaps, in his segregated, privileged position, does not need to) learn from it, there is hope that David can and will. BROTHERS AND SISTERS is a 'whodunnit' in which all the men are suspects, and in which all the clues lie in looking and learning from how men treat women.

'On the night of the 1st of November a prostitute was murdered in a northern city...'
 As in all thrillers the question of 'who did it?', 'who killed Jennifer Collins?' is present throughout *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* (though by no means the only important thread). Was it the client, the tramp, or even the detective? Or was it one of the two brothers whose lifestyles at the time of the murder are looked at in some detail. Was it David? Or was it his brother, James? Superficially the two brothers are very different. However, as the dead woman's sister Theresa Bennett says, after over-hearing a conversation between them 'You're two of a kind, you Barratt brothers.' So, as the film progresses and the events of the murder night unfold, it emerges that both brothers — perhaps all men — are suspect.

COMMENT GRAHAM HUMPHRIES

The importance of *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* results from the attempt to bring left discussions on questions of sex and class, questions of personal politics, into cinema in an enjoyable way. It is a film with a political position, which it sets out to communicate to an audience, but in ways which engage that audience both emotionally and intellectually. It is both entertaining — using cinema as a medium with its particular structures and fascinations, and politically provocative — challenging the forms of left idealism and vague moralism that have been posed in relation to personal politics.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS is a film with a *politique* which proposes a cinema combining ideas and entertainment. Ever since Hollywood came to dominate cinema screens in the 1920s, these terms have been seen as opposed by most (left) critics and writers on cinema. Indeed Hollywood 'entertainment' cinema was implacably opposed by many documentary film-makers fighting for a more socialist view of reality.¹

The entertainment cinema which developed in Europe in competition with Hollywood was a form of cultural nationalism, often dealing with national issues in indigenous languages and within the terms of 'Art Cinema' (Cf Steve Neale's article in this catalogue). While these forms were different from Hollywood to some extent in that they were able to deal with issues of class and social power more progressively they could not be described as a 'socialist' cinema. No (Independent/European/Art) cinema has been able to extricate itself from the

¹ Joris Ivens 'Notes on Hollywood' *New Theatre III*, 28 October 1936.



THE PRESS

At the time of going to press BROTHERS AND SISTERS had not received a London opening. Below are four press responses so far, appearing after the film was screened at the Edinburgh Film Festival in August 1980.

The best of the British Film Institute films was Richard Woolley's *BROTHERS AND SISTERS*. A kaleidoscopic crime thriller — who killed prostitute Jennifer Collins? — is used as the stalking-horse for an examination of sexist notions in Britain today. The police inquiry homes in on two brothers, divided by their life-styles and political beliefs — one is a commune-dwelling liberal, the other a starchy army major — but joined by their veiled, insidious misogyny.

Through a clever juggling of murder-thriller suspense and soap-opera naturalism, Woolley anatomises Anglo-Saxon attitudes to sex and the sexes, and by his playful, inventive visuals he injects at least a little cinematic vitality into the BFI's currently unstoppable determination that the movies they fund should be a platform for socio-political preaching.

Financial Times
 Nigel Andrews
 20 August 1980

BROTHERS AND SISTERS (Caley, 6 p.m.) is a fable about sexual politics, and the British Film Institute's biggest budget feature to date. It uses the murder of a prostitute and its reverberations to explore the attitudes of a variety of consciously stereotyped men and women. Their deadpan delivery of propagandist clichés from left and right is counterpointed by the equally deadpan narrative of the police investigation.

My first response was to say I've read this movie, or at least the text books which inspired it. But it is still rare to find the feminist case and the confusion of closet sexists explored in celluloid; and the director and scriptwriter, Richard Woolley, has cleverly sugared the pill with the tension and teasing of murder mystery. An interesting film.

The Scotsman 23 August 1980.

Another British film on view was the British Film Institute's *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* — the most expensive Production Board movie yet, largely because of a new agreement with the unions. I wish I could say it was the best. But Richard Woolley has tried to do a very difficult thing, and has only partially succeeded. His film, though specifically a thriller about the death of a Leeds prostitute (no connection with the Ripper), is also a kind of soap opera about the battle of the sexes. And the mix often seems striving and artificial.

What one can say is that it has some marvellously evocative location photography and that, despite its lack of real fluency, *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* still holds the attention and gives food for thought. Woolley knows the Leeds scene well and at times hits a number of provincial nails squarely on the head.

It also discusses the class system as it reflects on the man-woman situation. I guess prostitutes at least will like it because what it ends by saying is that most men are fairly lousy, even those who profess impeccably liberal feelings. Sometimes, of course, the last-named are the worst of all.

The Guardian
Derek Malcolm
29 August 1980

Woolley's highly schematic picture examines the murder of a part-time prostitute in a Leeds suburb, with the police investigation throwing suspicion on two upper-middle-class brothers. One is a left-wing social worker living in a commune, the other a rigidly conservative cavalry officer who happens to employ the dead woman's younger sister as a nanny.

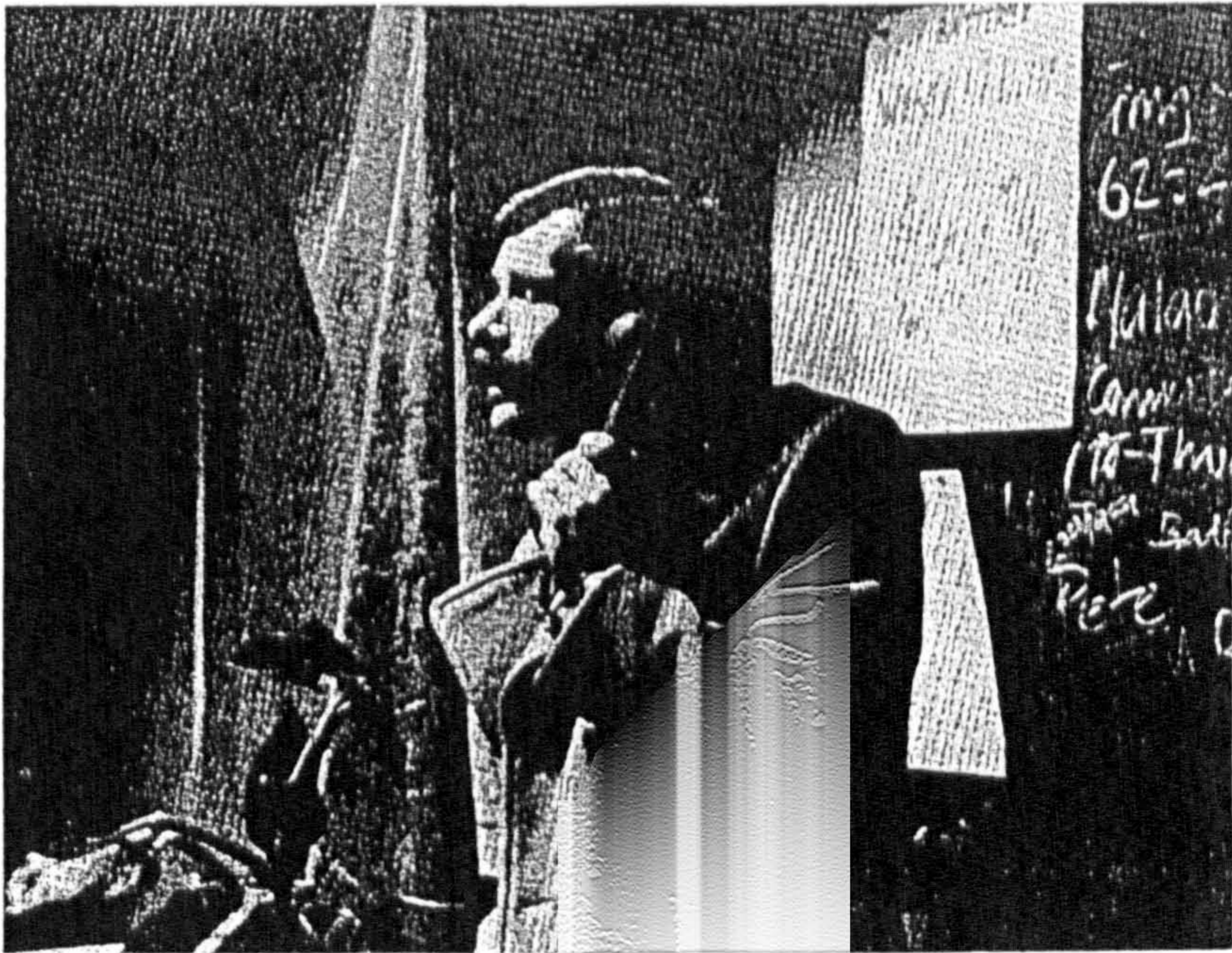
Merging Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls' with Bertolucci's *THE GRIM REAPER*, it is a continuously interesting picture, formally adroit and persuasively acted (the same actress, Carolyn Pickles, plays both sisters). But Woolley's dialogue is over-explicit, he's uncertain in distinguishing between cliché and the common coin of everyday life, and (unlike Joseph Lewis) he can't trust the conventions of the genre to carry his message.

The Observer
Philip French
31 August 1980

limitations and constraints of traditional forms of exhibition, distribution and the confusion of aesthetic and political arguments and interests involved.

One touchstone for criticism has been the ideas and work of Bertolt Brecht, who attempted both to engage an audience and to provoke it intellectually, to provide enjoyment but also an understanding of how one can change things. One film-maker who it might be argued has come close to a Brechtian position in cinema is Godard. His films are particularly interesting for the way in which they have moved from engagement with (Hollywood) cinema and its pleasures to a didactic, distancing cinema of ideas, and more recent attempts to combine the two elements in films such as *TOUT VA BIEN* and *SAUVE QUI PEUT (LA VIE)/SLOW MOTION*.

Although it was produced in a different context *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* should be seen in relation to the problems which similar strategies face in work such as Godard's. Woolley's film stands as an indication both of the work to be done in developing an 'alternative' British cinema as well as a pointer to the problems inherent in the Brechtian/Godardian strategy (which can easily lead to a reductionist attitude to American cinema which is no less about ideas, but that's another story . . .)



CLASS

Like Woolley's earlier film *TELLING TALES*, the plot is constructed around two households of (apparently) opposed class positions. *TELLING TALES* involves a middle-class family in a country house and a working-class family that 'services' them. In *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* class cuts across family: the film concerns two middle-class brothers — one James Barratt (Robert East) a career officer in the army who lives in a large country mansion the other David (Sam Dale), a social worker living in a collective house. There are three main working-class characters in the film — Theresa Bennett, a nanny at James's house, who David also has an affair with; her sister, Jennifer Collins, an amateur prostitute (both sisters played by Carolyn Pickles) and Peter Gibson (Barry McCarthy), one of the two men in the communal household and a surrogate or alternative working-class brother for David.

While the action for the middle-class characters centres on the domestic situation, we see the working-class characters Theresa and Jennifer 'at work' as nanny and prostitute — we don't see their families. Peter's family is also not mentioned. Not only are the working-class characters outside the familial nexus of the film, that nexus, the middle-class family, is the source of their income. The working-class characters are also placed to one side of the debates — they *act*, on judgement and instinct, rather than *talk* — Theresa walks out on David rather than

engage in fruitless analytic discussion with him. Peter interestingly describes the way his mates talked about football 'when they have woman trouble'; 'talking about relationships' is presented as a primarily middle-class/left-intellectual preoccupation.

One of the problems the film poses through this complex class opposition is that of middle-class identities — How do you move, how do you change that identity, is any change possible? David the lefty brother is trying to change his attitudes towards women in a confused and voluntary way, he has repressed the issue of power, retreating into left orthodoxy, the (inverted) prejudices of dogmatism. 'It couldn't have been a *black* person who murdered your sister,' he says at one point. James is portrayed as having immense self-confidence which comes from identification with ruling-class ideology. He is more direct about issues of power — he declares that a creche is irrelevant for army wives, and reminds his brother that their collective household is based on Daddy's money; he finally admits to sexual double standards — a wife to look after the home, the kids and himself, a prostitute for (messy, brief) relief and pleasure; basically this is the same double standard which David operates when having an affair with Theresa while deceiving both her and Tricia, the woman he lives with, about the affair.

SEX

In order to dramatise opposing values the film maps a complex critique of sexism in British society and in the sub-culture inhabited by its left critics onto one of class and life-style. The title *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* points to the mix of familial and sexual divisions that the film is explicitly concerned with. The 'sisters' of the title refers both to the two sisters, Teresa and Jennifer, but also the women in the collective house, Tricia and Helen, 'sisters' of the women's movement. Women provide the motive force for questions about sexuality — Jim has internalised discursive elements of a critique of sexism which effectively prevent him from confronting the emotional issues involved and recognising that his attempt to examine his sexism is rather too well-meaning and voluntaristic 'There's nothing more pathetic than men arguing about what is or is not degrading to women' remarks Helen at one point.

The film criticises the left's adoption of sexual politics in a way which can be simply a means of continuing male domination in other forms — men *know* about their sexism and therefore can rationally set out to change it while continuing to be in control of the terms of debate. As the film makes clear this is not an issue to be faced by an act of will alone.

The film also engages in a more straightforward critique of unreconstructed sexism evident in Jennifer's dealings with her clients — 'you business men are all alike' . . . 'one stroke for the law — keeps the local police happy'.

NARRATIVE

The film interweaves two narratives: the events of the evening of the 1st of November leading up to the murder of Jennifer Collins and the investigation of that murder which also becomes a presentation of two households, and particularly two brothers, James and David.

The murder narrative is presented as a thriller — the night-time photography emphasises the contrasts of light and dark characteristic of the *film noir* (although this effect is changed through the use of colour film); camera movements which emphasise connotations of menace, creating the presence of possible attackers by a series of 'false' point-of-view shots. We are constantly in suspense as to when Jennifer will be murdered, and the camera points this up by focussing — classically enough — on a door handle turning, adopting the point-of-view of a voyeur and then revealing a harmless onlooker, spying on Jennifer and her mate as they wait for clients. This is a very effective structure, holding the audience through the other, looser, narrative of investigation with which it is interleaved.

The investigation has two strands with different times — one starts from the moment the police call at David's house, investigating Jennifer's death; the other from James' visit to David on the night of the murder. These strands are interweaved with each other and with the thriller to create a complex movement

backwards and forwards in time. Visual rhymes and repetitions and the use of occasional voice-over give just enough cues and clues for the audience to orient themselves, the overall effect is one of an *unravelling*: an unravelling of events surrounding the murder and which may or may not be significant.

This process of unravelling is also one of unravelling correspondences making connection across and outside of the narrative connecting the behaviour and ideas of the two brothers and the two households, which the other narrative, centred as it is on prostitution, forces towards questions of sexuality and sexism.

STRATEGIES

It is interesting that Godard's *SLOW MOTION* — another recent film to deal with sexuality also uses prostitution to point to exploitative, patriarchal attitudes in men; in both films women are outside of the critique. *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* presents a more active questioning of sexual values — some men in Woolley's film are at least conscious of their sexism, even if like James they are voluntarily and ineffectively trying to extricate themselves from it. On the other hand *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* directs a reading which perhaps does not allow sufficient *time* for the image, for the poetics of film and film viewing to take place, which the Godard film emphasises in its use of slow motion, 'beautiful' landscapes etc. There are considerable pleasures in *BROTHERS AND SISTERS*, though, pleasures of individual sequences and images — the richer milieu of Robert is lovingly (almost too lovingly) presented in a series of images which might have been modelled on *Country Life*.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS engages the values of an entertainment cinema, not only through the use of thriller conventions, but through the references to a TV culture within which the audience is presumed to move. It uses 'lesser' TV stars, Carolyn Pickles and Sam Dale, and what one might describe as a televisual image — lighting and decor are organised according to a mixture of television and cinematic codes (TV has a simpler repertory of shots tending to avoid extremes of close-up and long shots, or complex editing and lighting effects). There are various references to TV in the images — at the beginning of the film involving the torture and rape of a woman; Tricia and David have a desultory conversation with an Open University programme on social class in the background; Sarah Bennett leaves James cleaning his riding boots to watch a programme on Edwardian village life. These references underline aspects of the characters' identities, but also in their differences propose an alternative culture of TV images — although TV is present in David's house, images of collective houses do not appear on TV.

One of the strengths of the film is that it is straightforwardly polemical — offering itself as a starting point for discussion of a number of political and aesthetic issues, and it clearly believes in a cinema of 'social practice' which is also a cinema of entertainment. Audiences will disagree about the effectiveness of the strategy, the convincingness of the thriller, characters or whatever, but will want to engage in debate about the ideas it raises for independent cinema and film culture.

INTERVIEW

The following discussion/interview, edited by Hilary Thompson, took place in October 1980. The participants are Richard Woolley, Mark Nash, Rod Stoneman and Hilary Thompson.

RS: How do you see certain formal 'intentions' in your earlier avant-garde work, like the 'unmotivated' image/sound play in a film like *TEN SHOTS*, inflecting or moving through your last few films?

RW: *ELUSIVE CRIME* set up some sort of story and basically began to have a plot and then I stopped making films completely for a year and joined Red Ladder (Theatre Company) and that was a sort of major event because here accessibility became the prime object. And so *TELLING TALES* became the ultimate statement that

goes right back to *TEN SHOTS*; it was about manipulation. It was a film not only about class conflicts and the conflict between the sexes, but it was *the* film about manipulation. I mean the two colour sections actually say, 'this is how colour film manipulates you and it was manipulating the audience and manipulating the people in the film, so it was *the* most explicit representation of something I'd been working on right from the moment I started a structural film. But I moved away from structural films and by the time I got onto *BROTHERS AND SISTERS*, I wasn't quite sure where my feet were going to land. I think the thriller is still rather like the colour bits in *TELLING TALES*, still a manipulation different from the rest of the film, but because it's so enmeshed the

difference isn't easily spottable; its interwoven much more tightly. You can watch *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* like an art film. There have been some very interesting reactions already in Leeds, for example 'oh, you've made a real film at last'. And that's a very interesting dilemma, because what people mean there is that it is more traditional in its presentation and so on. Therefore they feel more at home with it, and they therefore feel directly able to go straight into the content and talk and argue about it and criticise or praise.

RS: Do you think that *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* is available to accompaniment and productive discussion in the way that Red Ladder's theatre practices were and *TELLING TALES* was? Does it also have the possibility of being usefully shown without discussion of any sort?

RW: I think with *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* it is possible for it to come across in a way that I would have been most critical of five or six years ago and that is to come across in a straight cinematic sort of way, probably without that much distancing and using the devices which are used across the board in commercial cinema. But there are differences.

HT: One of the most obvious ways in which those earlier formalistic concerns have been carried forward is in the way in which you handle the characters.

RW: Something that goes right from *INSIDE AND OUTSIDE* to *TELLING TALES* and lands up in *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* is an acting style which I can best describe as 'up-front stereotyping' and 'up-front acting'. 'Cardboard's' a bad word, but you get a feeling of the character being presented to you and you've got to take it full-frontal, almost like in a theatrical situation without getting the build-up and intricate details.

HT: I found that the female characters in the film were much less stylised whereas David and James dominated partly because they were relatively heavily stylised.

RW: I think that's probably true. Most people in the film are hung around the two brothers. That, in the end, was a sort of limitation that I placed on myself in the film because I wanted them to come across as the two sides of the same character and they had to be there as a front and the other people had to be round about them. But, nevertheless, Pete, Trish, Helen and all the other smaller characters are not presented in quite the same way as Terry and Jennifer. So there is a distinction there and even though Terry doesn't say much and Jennifer doesn't say much, nevertheless they've got a very strong presence in the film.

RS: Although the relation of the two narrative elements in terms of time is that the thriller, the 'whodunit', occupies a much smaller proportion of the film, and the digressions around sexual and class relations, the political meat of the film, a much larger proportion of time, would you say that the emotional effectivity of the thriller element effectively nullifies involvement in the digressory elements?

RW: The thriller is in itself saying quite a lot. It's not as if the thriller is detached from the subject matter, and therefore it is integral. So if someone is just waiting for the next bit of thriller each time, I don't think that they could possibly ignore or have the bits in between nullified, because the bits in between are all to do with a murder investigation and they are to do with the behaviour of people who are patently to do with this murder. So the thriller isn't just working as an enjoyable bit of Hammer Horror coming in which you can sit back and wait for but it is schematically very strongly interlocked. There is a vested interest in following that 'political meat'.

HT: I think that the film is very much more about 'Brothers' than 'Sisters'.

RW: In one sense it's quite traditional in that the central man is dealt with a lot and the women come in tangentially, but the idea was to inform his situation by presenting very, very different

relationships. It is dominantly about 'Brothers' and about brothers' attitudes to sisters inasmuch as it's about 'brothers and sisters'.

HT: Yes, it seems to me quite traditional inasmuch as women are represented as victims. Was that intentional?

RW: I think Terry isn't a victim, I think she escapes by the end, she just goes off. Jennifer obviously is a victim, in the literal sense, of the murder. But also she is, in a way, the person who symbolises what's wrong with male behaviour in general, not just at the level of murder but the whole gamut of insecurity that leads to hypocrisy and violence. The one character where it hasn't quite worked is with Trish. I haven't quite got that balance right, and that was a very, very difficult thing to do. It falls short of being right because perhaps Trish, at the end, is potentially still readable as continuing to be a victim. At the very end, when David comes in, it looks as if she's going to fall for his 'repentance'.

MN: Can we go back to how you worked with actors? One of the problems to me with independent production generally is the lack of time given to rehearsing actors. What that often means is that all the action you get in those films is actually determined by other forms. You get television acting, stage acting; you never get acting in any sense really connected with film unless it's a very straight documentary action film and styles overlap.

RW: First of all, all the characters are dealt with within a fairly standard method: the principle of actually finding out the background. We spent two days going through each character's background. So, Pete knew exactly who his dad was, where he lived and what he did. And then in terms of the inter-relationships between the characters, that also was worked out. How had they been getting on before the film? Who gets on with who? Taking David as an example, what I said to David was that basically all through this film you are on edge. You are on edge because of the work load, because of not having told Trish about Terry, because of being at your parents' house, because of various situations that you are on edge about. And you probably are an edgy person most of the time anyway. So that was his brief. He had a lot of difficulty. He kept wanting to change lines and change approaches, so that he would get a better deal. We basically said, 'you have got to say these lines, you have got to believe in this character'. And particularly important was Terry. She was convincing like a character in a Hollywood film. In that sort of way. And she was particularly cast for that reason. She had by far the most film experience of all the people in the cast. She had worked for Polanski. I think the contrast is very strong. And I used the contrast to emphasise her naturalness as opposed to someone whose point of view was conditioned by intellect. Hers was conditioned by her experience, coming from her family and her family background and so on, and working for the Major.

MN: I am not sure how successful these different styles are in this film, because I think audiences are confused because they are reading different characters according to different conventions.

RW: I know it reads as confusing sometimes. It is a difficult thing. I felt that that strategy of not making characters 'easy' was very important because the characters have to be processed in the mind. They weren't integrated into the film so that they could be digested straight into the feelings. There are expectations for a 'Hollywood' film but there is something slightly uneasy about it.

MN: Thinking about the film, looking at it several times, it seems to be working with what you might call a television approach. It was shot very much with television codes in mind, television kinds of lighting. It would be decipherable on television. But I think the acting cuts across that, because it does create problems for people. It's really a question of how productive those problems are.

RW: One thing which really intrigues me is soap opera. They are, I think acted in a very similar sort of way. Take an extreme example of *CROSSROADS*, where you get this almost Brechtian acting. It's so atrocious that some of the characters almost aren't

believable. And something like DALLAS, too, where you get these very, very flat characters. But there are inherited feelings that people have for the characters in those sorts of soap operas. With the music, with the kind of cutting — and with all of that put together they have a distinctive character unique to television. In Britain it's not as yet so established as a code as it is in America. We only have two major ones, CORONATION STREET and CROSSROADS. And that's an area I am very interested in. In TELLING TALES, for instance, people who hardly went to the cinema at all talk to me about TELLING TALES after they have seen it, and don't even doubt the characters as being 'all right', because they felt they were similar enough to the people they saw on television, so they read them like that. So there's a way in which when it is on the cinema screen, not on tele, it becomes an uneasy mechanism for the audience, which could be confusing but which makes them not quite as at home with the film as rounded, modern-day realism.

RS: You have remarked upon the way in which the central protagonist could be seen to be acting out the problems of the sub-culture, but there was still a possibility of those issues being developed at another level. One should think of how this film will operate in history, remembering that it does not operate in the same way, homogeneously, everywhere at the same time. There are different levels of development in history; and that in terms of sexual politics, firstly there's the necessity of posing initial questions of the power relations between differently sexed individuals, and that at another stage later there is the question of redeveloping and questioning the position of supposedly or would-be sympathetic, anti-sexist men. One wonders at what point in this process is this film most useful? Do you think that the issues that feminism raised and asserted in the last decade and still does can be assumed for people even outside the sub-culture?

RW: I think basically that the film is in some ways about a reaction without necessarily being reactionary. A reaction to feminism. It is informed entirely by the women's movement. The character in it, is spouting stuff which has been brought up by the women's movement and not by men. In a sense it's a film that is a response without the answers. I know men who are writing scripts for a men's film, reacting to feminism and trying to deal with it. A man who would have made his films in the 1950's about David would have been totally sympathetic to him in his dilemmas but I have taken an anti-hero who's basically just in a total confusion about the whole thing. And that's what the film in some ways is about. I think people can see the film is dealing with all those things on a very serious level, or trying to deal with them. The central issue is how does David manage to confront all the issues and give himself power with them. And it's also about how those issues can be co-opted. And in a way to me that's been the most dangerous thing. Living in a socialist feminist sub-culture there is a continual debate as to what is the alternative to separatism, basically. And I think that's very difficult in situations where people want to have heterosexual relationships. I think that's partly why the film is maybe a little bit depressing because it does seem a difficult circle if heterosexual relationships are going to carry on without the power structures being radically changed. I think that is quite difficult, to put it mildly. I think the other thing which comes out, particularly when David is talking to his brother is the sense in which men take feminism to make themselves different. There's a sense in which when David, the epitome of that, is talking to his brother, when he's going to crush his brother by showing how radically different he is with these arguments about 'consuming' and 'sex' and using his wife as a sex object and all of that, that the whole thing just flies straight back in his face. But that is often what happens. I think a lot of men, including myself, have sort of re-vamped a personality using feminism, for approval. And also he's not just a sub-culture person, he's another bloke. And

he's dealing with it like 'another bloke'. You see also his class position, which is very important because he is middle class, slightly uptight, which means that he's not very emotional either, he can't get the emotions out, he can't actually short-circuit the whole thing by being emotional.

MN: I wanted to raise the issue of class because it seems that I felt that connected up with this business about talk, there's an image in there of a working class which actually 'acts' rather than gets involved in thought. It knows when to act; there's a kind of intuitive level of knowledge. Therese is able to walk away from David at a certain point — she 'knows' when there's no point in talking further. And the film actually ends on David saying 'well, can we talk'. I have this slightly split sense of, on the one hand, this image of a working class and a middle class where people are constantly bound up with the process of discussion and it seems to me that that's left open in a way. You can either opt for what I would say is a rather romantic view, rather an attractive view of action and passion rather than reason and discussion.

RW: Yes, I think that was an important balance which is not quite that simple but although Terry doesn't talk that much she does make some quite fundamental statements. They are done intuitively — without great intellectual ramblings.

HT: That's also true of Pete — whom we haven't talked about at all. He seems to be a really crucial low-profile character. In some ways he embodies the male version of Terry — he 'understands' and he can deal with David and take David through all his traumas.

MN: He's an alternative brother to David.

RW: Pete, I think, is just about 'all right'.

HT: He comes across as very 'all right'.

MN: There is a way in which the middle-class characters have a lot more problems and the working-class characters have almost made it. And that is quite a schizophrenic sort of experience, because it actually does fit with a dominant middle-class view of denying one's class tradition. Paradoxically, although there is some talk about the working class, you don't see working-class people in their homes, you see the middle-class homes.

HT: I had a strong suspicion of Pete. It reminded me of a time when Germaine Greer was saying things like 'the only men that middle-class women should be interested in are working-class men' — and Pete was really perpetuating that idea and a larger proposition behind it, that if you transfer the working class into a middle-class environment then that is your 'new society'.

RW: It's true, I have spoken with women who have said that they are the best men to have relationships with because they are much more trustworthy. There is a sense in which the working class are already 'there' on one level because they have learnt, all of the standard blows have been experienced. The bloke in the pub talks about his wife having gone to Women's Aid and of having beaten her up, Jennifer's out in the street having to work in the most violently immediate situation, her kids are with her mum, so in a straight sex situation if they do learn they've learnt from the straightforward, head-on confrontation of men and women. That confrontation is softened in the middle-class situation although it is actually just as bad. James and Sarah are pretty horrific but it's softened because of the fact they've got a nanny, the fact they've got enough space to go off into separately etc. Physical violence can be avoided all the time by space and by the workload being less, the woman not having to do all the work and so on. There is a danger of idealising, but to me there's a sense in which some things that seem to have taken middle-class people a lot of time to think through other people, working-class people, seem to understand very quickly. They just sort of say 'well, that's obvious'. And you've just spent ten years working it out.

MN: One of the things which I wanted to talk about was the way the film seems to me to be trying to bridge a gap between what

we can call a cinema of social practice and an entertainment cinema.

RW: There was a lot of almost commercial thinking in terms of audience potential that went on and there was a version that was about two and a quarter hours long which was more like the original script with very many more complicated shots. And that to me fed a particular sort of audience in terms of entertainment — it provided the entertainment aspect for art cinema perhaps more than this final version does, because there were a lot more glossy shots and effects. But we decided to reduce that because I wanted the debate to have the potential of going further, not just towards the entertainment idea, to get closer to a mass audience, but also to go a stage further. Certain elements of it, for example the thriller, were very planned, but the way in which some of the discussions were presented, the use of music, things like that, were things that slowly developed as the film was being made. And the music was very interesting because originally the music was banned from anything but the thriller. Now it creeps in all over the shop. In a way that was good both for people who are interested in new ways of making films where you're using a device like that and also it integrated the film for a wider audience. So in the end I found myself dealing with a film that was being moulded for maximum entertainment value.

MN: One important thing to consider is that 'political' cinema and 'entertainment' cinema are not as radically different as they are often made out to be. One of the problems in England is that there isn't an art cinema so that there is much more of an opposition between Hollywood styles and independent cinema and art cinema is represented by Continental imports. So there's a kind of vacuum in British film culture which this film is trying, in a sense, to deal with and it is interesting, the parallels between your film and the new Godard film. There are a whole number of levels from the content — prostitution for example, where you are involving the audience in ways that at the same time introduce quite complex ideas, but because there is an art cinema tradition within which Godard is working, it has a rather different effect and seems to have effect effortlessly because of the cultural context. Whereas you are obviously working in a very different situation where people are going to come to the film from different kinds of backgrounds and they are all going to have problems of one kind or another, because there is not going to be enough 'entertainment' or 'independent' concerns. And the film is not 'like television'. What I think is very important is to develop an art cinema strategy which attempts to fuse these different elements. And so the film could be seen as the beginnings of that.

RW: Well, I think that's the area I was trundling around in. I think on one level it has worked because that group of people who are very politically and culturally aware but nevertheless have never had anything whatever to do with the avant-garde and who have never understood what on earth I was doing making my other films — they have said to me: 'when are you going to actually make a film?' And there is a sense in which this film was enjoyed by a cross-section of people, so one of the hurdles was surmounted by the way it looked and the general feel of it. People enjoyed it, I think, as a mixture of British television, British Sixties film, and art film all rolled into one, and it wasn't confusing to say 'well, I enjoyed it.'

MN: I've just been watching Michael Powell on TV and I think that maybe he's the last British film-maker, because of his engagement with British subjects. There is a sense in which he engages the ideologically central images of Englishness. They come across in areas which really involve people. And Powell is also eclectic in this respect. And in a sense there's a slight problem with your film in that because of its concentration on a left subculture, that there is a danger that it will potentially be seen and viewed within that subculture.

RW: What I am arguing for is a cinema which deals with 'Englishness', British culture, and if you imagine a cinema producing twenty, thirty films a year and my film is one of them, and Ken Loach has made another and so on, you cover a range of different experiences. And then you have some kind of representation of the country, a truly national cinema. Which is what the German cinema does. It goes across lots of different areas.

MN: There is the other area around social practice. As you have said, the notions of working differently from the industry, more collectively, of more collaborative forms being produced, also involves a way of experiencing film, the possibilities of discussions and so on being introduced determining the way the film is 'consumed'. And the film is very clearly directed towards that. One can easily imagine discussions flowing quite easily from the film. It doesn't even induce a strong emotional involvement. I suspect people will be able to come back with questions on the film. The point is that I could imagine quite conventional auditoria where at the end of the screening people can begin immediately to explore responses towards it. My other point is about the different way of working during the making and how different it was. There is, in my opinion, a lot of rhetoric about that. My suspicion is that a lot of the practices that go on are just like Hollywood practices except that there isn't so much money and so there has to be improvisation.

RW: I think what was interesting about *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* was that there was enough money to do things pretty much as we wanted within certain limits. So then it was a matter of how we actually worked and the main way the social practice worked, even though the work was divided up into fixed roles of working on the film crew-wise and so on, was that there was a sense of non-demarkation. If somebody had to do something it wasn't felt that somebody was taking somebody else's job away. And it was really the two main people who worked at different points on the film who came most directly from the industry who really enjoyed working on the film because there was a much more relaxed atmosphere and they were involved.

MN: Were you in control?

RW: Oh yes, very much. People could not put things in or do things that I didn't want at all.

MN: That is obviously a very difficult concept to get across: on the one hand you are working with people in a collaborative, collective way but on the other hand at certain points you have to take responsibility because otherwise you end up with a complete mess.

RW: Yes. In that sense I am quite autocratic. It's more like constituency consultations. I think it's very difficult because the thing that used to happen in *Red Ladder*, which was my main collective experience, and I know happens in films, is that you've always got to watch the difference between collectivity as an attempt at genuine democracy and collectivity as a mutual cop-out whereby nobody has to quite put in the effort that they would have to put in if it wasn't a collective situation. It was a very difficult thing to explain. I like the way that, for instance, there have been five or six films made within the Sheffield Film Group and that each time someone makes a film it's their turn in charge and that's how it works. It's their project and everybody will put a certain amount of collective advice in but it's their film and they run it. The success of the Group and its way of working is partly because, even though there isn't an enormous amount of political agreement among the Group, they all like independent films and like working on them. Ideologically speaking there isn't that much agreement but there's political commitment to the independent practice. It is a commitment to working outside television, outside the industry; it is the political practice of making films in an independent situation.

PROBLEMS OF INDEPENDENT CINEMA

A DISCUSSION BETWEEN
MARC KARLIN AND
CLAIRE JOHNSTON,
MARK NASH AND PAUL WILLEMEN

IN THE EDITORIAL to Volume 20, no 3/4 of Winter 1979/80, *Screen* announced a 'reassessment of the role and intentions of the magazine' which, amongst other things, included a renewal of our commitment to independent cinema in terms of the provision of 'a critical "voice" for independent production' and the presentation of 'important but usually unheard voices'. Although this terminology is somewhat vague, it can be read as *Screen's* acknowledgement of the importance of independent cinema while insisting on a critical distance from that sector of the cinematic institution and resisting any overt identification with or support of its aims and practices. Some members of the editorial board, from the outset, have been active participants in the movement of which the Independent Film-makers Association became the organisational concretisation in 1975-76 (in fact, the IFA was set up in 1974, but as a film-makers' solidarity group to protect their interests in the face of a specific issue relating to the BBC). For a variety of reasons, *Screen's* attention to this area of cinema has not always been unproblematic. The most important factor in play here was that by definition *Screen's* primary area of intervention and concern has been that of film and television education rather than production. Consequently, by focusing on the area where educational institutions and practices overlap with the cinematic institution, the magazine has intended to concentrate, quite legitimately and productively for a period of time, on issues relating to the reader's production of the text as opposed to those attendant on the film-maker's production. This is not to say that *Screen's* work has not affected film-making. It patently has, as can be seen from

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the references by film-makers to the issues discussed in the magazine when writing or speaking about their own work. The point is that the convergence of concerns between film-makers and *Screen* has implied a one-way process whereby film-makers take on board, in addition to the problems generated by their relationship with institutions and practices of funding, exhibition, production and distribution, the kinds of issues revolving around the reader's production of the text which *Screen* addresses. Moreover, *Screen's* address of these issues has been further circumscribed by its involvement in formal, mostly tertiary, education. Again, this does not mean that the magazine's relevance is confined to this or any other specific sector of either formal or informal education, it merely indicates which institutions, ie which practices and discourses preside over the trajectory of the magazine's work. For instance, issues of reading cinematic texts would be addressed differently if considered in relation to the way films circulate within the existing exhibition and distribution apparatuses as opposed to the way they can function in an explicitly educational context. Moreover, if there are pressures and constraints on writers-critics-theorists emanating from the necessity to survive (and perhaps even flourish) within educational institutions, this too will have its effects on the issues singled out for discussion as well as on the way they are formulated and criticised or promoted. However, this attention to the problems of reading as a constituent moment in the process of text construction is by no means to be undervalued. As has become widely acknowledged, partly as a result of *Screen's* work, the construction of a different film culture cannot be equated simply with the setting up of different production, funding or exhibition mechanisms only, or merely with arguments about the purely economic (administrative) control of the means of production. All such changes will be severely limited or even meaningless unless equal importance is given to the production of a different understanding of cinema, different ways of looking and different regimes of pleasure-production. But while it is true that these two constituent moments in the process of text production theoretically have an equal weight, and while it is also true that any change affecting one side of this process will have effects on the other, any strategy for change which ignores the terms of this dialectic of inter-dependence and the way this dialectic in its turn is caught up in other, encompassing and intersecting social practices and institutions, is likely to be more of a hindrance than a force for progress. The IFA founded its organisation on the recognition of this dialectic allowing it to become the

nucleus of a national movement specifically addressing the problem of the construction of a film culture under the programmatic slogan 'cinema as a social practice', opposing this to the consumerist definitions of cinema as entertainment or art propagated by the industry and its ever so relatively autonomous representatives in journalism, advertising, education and other cultural institutions.

It was to discuss issues and problems connected with the relations between *Screen's* work and independent cinema, which in many ways can be regarded as having developed in parallel although occasionally intersecting in the work of individual board members, that *Screen* approached Marc Karlin as someone with a wide experience of all aspects of film culture and particularly of independent cinema. As a member of the Berwick Street collective, Marc Karlin was crucially involved in the making and the exhibition of *The Nightcleaners*, a film that in many ways anticipated future developments of independent cinema. He is a founder member of and activist within the IFA as well as within other organisations such as The Other Cinema (distribution and exhibition), the film union ACTT and The Fourth Channel Group. [PW]

Ireland and 'Nightcleaners'

Screen: You formed the Berwick Street Film Collective in 1972 together with Richard Mordaunt, Humphrey Trevelyan and James Scott. Your first film together was on Northern Ireland, Ireland Behind the Wire (1974).

*Marc Karlin: Northern Ireland was a political activity that held us together for four years, it didn't consist only of a film but, for instance, of our arranging a benefit for internees at the Round House in London three months after the institution of internment; of our getting involved in newspaper campaigns and in the Troops Out movement; of our going to Belfast to show films such as *October*, *Salt of the Earth* and films for children in Republican areas. We also had to deal with the Special Branch who searched the film cans and took away some footage; the Ministry of Defence also put on some pressure and the ACTT blacked work on the film. During this period we felt very isolated.*

One of the strengths of Berwick Street was that you continued producing films even though particular moments were very difficult for you. You have always had a relationship with the labour

movement, but 'out of synch', as it were. Nightcleaners, for example, had considerable co-operation from women in the women's movement yet, when the film was released, there was a lot of criticism from the women's movement pointing up a disjuncture between your work and socialist feminist currents.

Well, that experience of Berwick Street is now over. We are now all working individually. Berwick Street remains as a production unit with material and resources used by independent film-makers and is in the process of being reshaped. *Nightcleaners* has had more repercussions in film culture than in the labour movement. One would have to ask the question: how can a film have repercussions in the labour movement, and did *Nightcleaners* address itself to that question originally? Was its enterprise to make a film for the labour movement, which meant that by its very nature as a film it would have to engage with representation, with ideas about film communication, need and so on? It was rejected and severely attacked by the women's movement. A petition was even organised against it. Demands were being made of the film to service the image people had of themselves and of that struggle. The cleaners were never asked what kind of film they would like to be made — which would have been an impossible task, a complex ideological struggle which just a few people cannot undertake by themselves. There wasn't the kind of atmosphere in which this would have been possible. I think it was about two years after that petition that one of the people who organised it went back to see the film, and generously conceded: 'I was really wrong, now I can see the film.' In other words, at the time there were so many constraints operating on the vision of that film, that it took two years to be able to see it. So one comes down to the fact that the film suffers from being caught up in a whole series of uneven developments. One has to see it in the light of when it appeared and what constraints were operating on its reception.

Nightcleaners appears to have been shot in a fairly traditional cinema verité way. Yet I would have thought from your own position as well as from James Scott's, with his formation in the visual arts, that you were both searching for something else. Did you at that time have a notion of reworking the material at a later stage?

No, that developed during the filming. It started, I remember quite distinctly, at a meeting in a pub where a union official was address-

ing Jean Mormont, who is a nightcleaner. And he was saying: 'I can't unionise you because you're not in the union.' She was listening, and I said to the person who was filming: 'Forget about the guy who's talking, forget about the action, just focus on Jean listening.' And it was a shot that lasted all of about six, seven minutes, which is more or less in the film. And suddenly out of that came the problem of listening, of people listening on film, of the notion of documentary always having to follow what seems to be the action and never going behind it. And then, working on the rushes after one and a half years of filming, years of enormous rows and tensions between us and the group, came two problems. One was the problem of how to show labour on film, especially cleaning, which in one sense is not a very 'interesting' task to watch. How physically can you present such an enormous thing as working ten hours in the night? Then emerged the idea of spacing it. The technique of using black spacing was developed while working on an interview. We began to elaborate a core of the work through which it would be understood. And through that you could understand what the film *should* have been but wasn't ie the history of an image. How suddenly — and this is what I wanted to film — the *sighting* from outside a window of a woman cleaning, how that sight is arrested by a consciousness that informs it, looks at it, interprets it, challenges it and wants to change it, and how the whole political organisation can be built around that 'sighting' and consciousness. I wanted the film to be the history of that sighting of that image, but it was too complicated. The second time I tried it was in a film I shot for Chris Marker's group in a motor car factory in Sochaux in France. It was the first time I had ever gone to a car factory. We didn't have very long and I suddenly realised that the workers before and after each action touched each other or looked at each other or something, and then went on working. It was for an nth of a second. And I thought if we can capture *that* and ask the audience to imagine what kind of work creates that kind of resistance, then maybe the imaginative capacity can work a little harder. Because if you just show a guy working some machinery, you've seen it before in Godard's tracking shots which obey the architecture of the car factory, imitating the production line. The use of spacing and the idea of slowing down and re-filming started from this engagement with the problem of how to represent working. You want to slow things down, you want to work with a texture, you want to render back to that person a certain physicality, a certain presence, which is always absent from filming at 24 frames a

second. That's what people call romantic or whatever. But the point is that at that stage it was very important for us not to use the cleaners as they had been used before in films, as metaphors for 'it's night, so you see a lot of night cleaners', or for class reconciliation: 'This is Milly talking in a common-sense way early in the morning to her boss' as in a *Mrs Mop* programme on the radio in the 1940s - she was always telling the boss what to do while she's cleaning his desk, the nightcleaner was always presented as the throat of England, voicing common sense. So the concerns of the film elaborated questions of tension between classes, between women, between unions, which means that you have to articulate the film differently.

Going to the Cinema

*There have not been many films made about the activity of going to the cinema, about what that experience is like. Many of the films you have been involved with, not only the TV film on *The Other Cinema for the Open Door* programme (1978), which is most directly and expertly about this, but also films like *Nightcleaners* (1975) and *'36 to '77* (1978) imply a notion of an audience which puts a lot of emphasis on the intensity of response.*

I suppose my 'serious' interest, my fascination with cinema developed really after leaving drama school, when I spent near to every night for one and a half years at the NFT. There are in cinema certain rare moments when all kinds of things are confronted inside you. If you're honest with it cinema is a sort of hand to hand combat most of the time, depending on the kind of films you're seeing. Watching *The Deer Hunter* is literally that: you *fight* every single image because you know damned well where it comes from. A different example: do you remember the scene in *Rome Open City*, Anna Magnani sitting on the steps outside her apartment with her Communist lover and she asks him: 'When is it going to end: Is there going to be a future?' and the Communist militant comes up with this big statement: 'We are fighting for a much better world'. And then there is a close up of Anna Magnani and she lends him her belief, like you lend a book, in an amazing passage, which I still can't relate to the fact that she's going to die later in the film. It's sort of a document of time: Magnani, the face and the look: you know that she lends him her belief to sustain his fight, while at the same time in a way retaining the emotion, the logic that's been inscribed in her through the knowledge that poverty has brought, knowing full

well that no amount of priests, Communists, coming along saying 'you'll get up one day', will amount to anything. It's at those moments that you remember where film becomes a testing ground for your own activities, for your own sense of belief.

That idea of film as a testing ground is very important to you?

Yes, its like this church in Norfolk which I've been interested in. In the seventeenth century Puritan revolution, iconoclasts stripped it of decoration and so on. So suddenly you would have been very much on your own in relation to the church, no longer caught up in the obeisance to the Latin Mass, caught up in the incense, that way of seeing man, as it were, only in relation to the high altar. Instead you were given an autonomy — you had to listen to the heartbeat of God in your own heart, you were very much on your own. My fascination with that church brought me to understand certain things that went on when I went to see a film, which is that you're always refusing the Mass, while at the same time yielding to it. Seeing *The Deer Hunter* which is part of the stock-exchange of images and sounds going around now, involves a kind of different combat than seeing *Rome Open City* or a silent film or a Humphrey Jennings film, because the questions are different, obviously. But the combat is still there wherever you go. Involvement, projection, need, desire, are very real in cinema. Cinema is an area where, if you like, certain sacraments happen. You can have agnostics, atheists, believers, but all of them using that time out, that one and a half hours, that specific area for all kinds of combat. It's odd that after a film you can travel home in the Tube with people you don't know who have been to the cinema and you know that you are all more or less retracing, reworking a film — certain things are being renewed, certain things are being reunderstood, renegotiated, and then it's forgotten until the next 'sacrament'. The awful thing is that people don't keep diaries of how they see film, they don't write about how they see films. When the curtain opens there is a kind of comradeship even amongst the most disparate people in the cinema; and if people really knew how important going to the cinema was instead of dismissing the memories of themselves watching it, and actually wrote about the experiences, it could be amazing. This side is always missing when people talk about photography. Just think how very few documents there are of people saying 'I saw a photograph', what it must have been like for people to see their boss there in the work place all the time.

In the 1940 going to the cinema was a major activity — people went two or three times a week. Since then the experience of going to the cinema has changed — television is one thing that has changed that relationship, yet there seems to be in what you say a desire to recover that earlier, pre-television experience of cinema.

If people started really reflecting, formulating, having some conception of themselves inside a cinema, then the cinema would have to change. It is precisely that refusal to be conscious of it that makes for certain repetitions. If you were to see *Close Encounters* and then write about yourself in *Close Encounters*, you might not just immediately have to go and watch *Alien*, — on the other hand you might.

You put a lot of emphasis on certain kinds of pleasure generated by dominant forms of cinema. Would you hold to the need to transform that notion of pleasure in cinema, to include the possibility of reflection in that experience?

Absolutely. Those practices have to be transformed qualitatively. I mean the cinema that I want to engage in and work with is to do with the possibility of calling on a sensibility of yourself, of being more conscious, more open. We have now to work with images, to rework images, to re-find ourselves in front of the cinema; by going into the past, to see past documents, past images, to reframe those past images, in order to see what goes on in the archive. The continuous flow and exchange of images that is going on now in television, cinema and newspapers, this continuous assault, this binding, this holding on to people, has to be changed completely by the way you work images. You have to consider the amount of things that have been seen in the past and the amount of things that have become immemorable — you have to see images like monuments or tombstones and say, what do they call upon in you as a viewer, as a relayer, you who have been so transient, hopping from one image to the other, from one programme to another, from one film to another?

Your notion of engagement with dominant notions of pleasure in the institution of cinema as it has developed historically and re-working that is clearly very different from the position of someone like Peter Gidal who seeks to negate that area.

There is a story about Bresson in an interview being asked: 'How many films did you see in the last month?' 'Oh', replies Bresson, 'I

don't go to the cinema ever'. So they hired a private detective to follow him around, and apart from the fact that they discovered that before going to a screening he looked at himself in the mirror to comb his hair, they discovered he'd been to something like six or seven films in one week! Now I think that a lot of Gidal's propositions are of self-denial. I don't believe anybody can be so obsessed as he is about the dominant cinema and not get pleasure from it. I think in his written work he wants to be seen as a person that is rigorous, whole, with no ruptures, no fissures, no invisible ink. I do not think *Screen* should have published the article by Peter Gidal, without inviting independent film-makers to reply to it. I do enjoy certain things with him and do recognise his force as an iconoclast in the liberal academic area. But at the same time what he has to say is extremely sectarian and extremely negative and in the long run is extremely damaging to the whole activity of independent cinema. His refusal to connect political activity and enthusiasm in cinema for instance. It's to do with asking questions that are unresolvable, not living in your time but always attempting to transcend it. It's not just Gidal of course, it has a lot to do with the Left concept of Utopia, and with the idea that you've already 'arrived' at the correct position but it seems that nobody's followed you so you might as well stay where you are and ensure that they stay where they are, 'in the wrong'. It doesn't recognise how you live politically in and of your time, it reinforces certain kinds of academic discourses. It's a matter of how one conducts one's struggles.

I think we have to accept that it was an unfortunate piece to have published for the way it caricatures and divides the independent constituency. But it is not just a matter of Gidal: the piece was accepted by Screen and as such indicates Screen's notion of the kind of intervention it wanted to make at the time. And of course it was the experience of discussing that piece that has made us re-think our relation to independent cinema.

'36-'77'

Memory is obviously a central concern of yours, not simply as nostalgia, but as a re-working, a transformation even, of the past. Perhaps we could discuss this in relation to '36-'77 and questions around representation.

I should just say that the film was a group production — I worked on the film with James Scott and Humphrey Trevelyan — and as

such I speak personally and not on behalf of the group. To me '36-'77 is very important for the way it changes the understanding of how you live with representations. The normal film or television experience leaves you without any trace, it doesn't hurt you at all to look at it. With '36-'77 I realised how people desperately desire a certain normality for film. It's such an obsessive need, and when for instance political people see the idea of rendering their politics *visible*, it completely breaks them apart. A film does test how real your politics are, to the extent of confronting you with something that breaks the very boundaries in your writing. Film acts as a sort of dislocating lever. There's a lot of left rhetoric about personal politics which is actually a refusal to take personal politics seriously — it's a refusal to dismember yourself, to re-think, re-phrase, re-constitute yourself in the light of your actions and the things in front of you. It's a refusal to see age, to see change, to see distances . . . always taking the same photograph of yourself, wherever you are. How can you make a political intervention on the left if you're not prepared to put yourself on the line? Politics as a learning process is about how you live with pessimism and how you work on yourself in relation to that pessimism — forcing yourself to read bad news every day and then elaborating the possibilities of liberation, demanding an invigoration, a sense of determination, from film.

That reminds me of a similar idea in Fortini¹ where he talks about the necessity of pessimism before you can begin to understand anything, a necessary attention to the minutiae of change.

That's the body, isn't it? How against this photograph of your body do you relate things that you live with, things that you yield to. People obviously can't do that continuously but it's important to be able to work out the kind of solidarity in which things are possible and to refuse the automatic answer to that kind of pessimism as in the kinds of films which voluntaristically just say 'I'm leaving my past behind'. How do you operate that change in solidarity with others? It's really a question of how you observe change; how you categorise change; how you stop seeing change in apocalyptic terms. The women's movement at least has been able to start giving us the chartings of that change. What's important is how the left observes change and transformations and allows itself to be changed. But to come back to '36-'77, I have to speak very personally because of my feeling of not belonging, of statelessness, of living as a foreigner and yet being very English

1 Franco Fortini, *The Writer's Mandate and the End of Anti-Fascism*, *Screen* vol 15 no 1, Spring 1974.

and therefore having to re-memorise myself each and every day because I feel that I can't take anything for granted. The film deals with that specific experience, with Myrtle, a West Indian, an exile and a foreigner. It's to do with how, in a sense, working class people feel about themselves. Myrtle, for instance, like me or anyone else, could go through life in repetition formulations, which means that in the act of being mother to her three children, as well as in being the extended mother all around her, she is physically, concretely, every single day, dealing sensuously and blindly with things: cutlery, children, floors, ceilings, beds. It's a continuous repetition within which there's no room for self-consciousness. Her children never ask her: Myrtle — what do you think of yourself today? — or whatever.

Now, to get away from the level of representation in which someone caught up in such patterns of representation would automatically answer from within that pattern, we gradually began to develop two strands. One was to do with an exercise I learnt training as a theatre director, concerned with talking about something very personally but in terms other than the language that person would usually use. For instance, you might have to convey what you felt through the tonality in which you said a neutral word like red, green, or whatever. As for the other strand, do you remember in *Nightcleaners* the woman talking about the number of rooms she has to clean? Through the rhythm of words, 'one, two, three, four, five . . .', she builds distances, so that even a blind person, listening to that, could more or less chart the relationship between the numbers and the spaces of the room, so that the relationship between what is said and what is actually imaged in it has a much closer connection. What we wanted to do with Myrtle was that she should only speak of things which she really felt the need to speak of. Having remembered the thing, and at the same time the act of naming things would have a relationship to possession. So she would recall a tree and then, informed by that memory, she would say 'tree': she would suddenly see herself, and then things were sort of built up sensuously, things became what she was saying of them — like a photograph, like the face built up from dots in an emulsion. If you go up to a lot of working class people and say: 'We want to make a film about you', at best, they will accept a film being made about them in terms of their situation as workers, or as part of a strike, as part of this, or part of that. The representation of workers on film is normalised because it's always surrounded by and held in the situating of them as workers in a recognisable political situa-

tion, and which a lot of people might not be sharing. The idea that they might have other things that would contradict your idea of them never obviously comes into play now. We asked Myrtle to keep a diary, and what came out is that what is unseen for her begins to be seen. Suddenly a consciousness takes place because the act of writing makes it so. And what was incredibly painful, long, difficult, complicated, and still is so in the relationship between myself — ourselves — and Myrtle, was that enterprise of breaking boundaries as to how we see and portray people. The language of Myrtle in terms of what she remembers from her diary and what she says is really political poetry, a restoration of sensibilities that have been totally bombed out by that informational level on which they are normally spoken.

What part did refilming have in that process?

It was James Scott's idea to have the portrait — and I want to say how much James' work both before as well as after the Collective influenced and inspired us. It confirmed my feeling of seeing things too quickly, too fast, of being too safe. Certainly there were things that I was continuously missing in life, let alone film, and film had to have within it a relationship to what we were missing outside it. We filmed the portraits in super 8, on a time lapse. During which time I was asking of Myrtle to 'print' things on it, as it were. I've always been struck in early portraiture by the idea that because of the low speed of the emulsion, people had a long time to compose themselves. And therefore it was *they* who were taking a photograph of themselves as much as it was the photographer. And we extended this by taking a series of 'portraits' which were then re-filmed on a further series of time lapses. Now the re-filming is really very complex, because in some ways it is a compensation. It's taking very banal gestures, giving them an optic that you would only see, say, in football matches, in replays on TV. Obviously in football it works for all sorts of reasons. Most goals are so damn quick you can't see them, or there's such a confusion around the goal that nobody can see who scored the bloody thing. It is there also for the immense pleasure of seeing something slowed down — you've got your time, you become much more at ease with what's going on. And all those kinds of techniques obviously operate in our refilming, except that they are not done with football, but with very minute gestures. So in our opening, in the fifth portrait, it takes ten minutes. It can be accused of being romantic speculation, though it isn't. It is to do with political attitudes towards time, taking account of what is being forced in time. TV and film com-

mercials take a lot of interest in time: through the use of slow motion they force a series of connections between a series of arbitrary images. And the films we make have to develop a political attitude to time as well.

The BFI Production Board

The BFI Production Board's acceptance of your television project would seem to indicate a shift in the Board's attitude to television.

I think the Production Board's recognition of the *Holocaust* project should be seen in the light of their wish to be seen as a productive force within television. And one might add that with the development of Channel 4 there's every reason why SEFT should propose a series of programmes say on cinema for educational viewing.

This happened in the 1960s with The Movies — a series in which people such as Victor Perkins and Peter Wollen were involved — which was shown in the afternoon for educational use and then in the evening for entertainment. That's about the only serious kind of TV programme that's been made about cinema.

The recent history of the Production Board has been marked by its attempt to get recognition as a major production agency. When the British Film Authority seemed a possibility it was important that the Production Board was strong enough to survive potential incorporation. Their funding policy favouring larger budget productions seemed to have a certain logic. At the same time the IFA has constituted itself often in direct opposition to some of the Production Board's policies but has managed to force a recognition of a need for different kinds of funding, small budget grants for more artisanal kinds of production, script research grants, although ongoing funding for groups is still a problem.

Well, the scarcity of resources can render people quite mad. There is certainly a logic which says that to get more money from industry you have to be seen to be responsibly engaging with an audience and not be 'experimental', political or whatever. A logic which leads to a certain kind of budget for film-making. Now if you analyse independent film-making in the same terms and with the same categories that you would have for commercial film-making; in terms of audience figures, influence, visibility and so forth (and I do think the Production Board has judged independent film-making with these categories) then you start the process of making films for £80,000, £100,000 or whatever, which would then

perforce have an art house distribution.

The immediate reaction of independent film-makers to this was: there's little enough as it is, why should it be spent in that way; the Production Board's becoming commercial; it's not recognising the independent political needs, and so on. I think that one then has to analyse how the Production Board and the BFI conducted its politics *vis-d-vis* independent film-makers in the past; how it recognised the work of London Film-Maker's Co-op; how it recognised Cinema Action, Four Corners, Nottingham IFA, Newcastle, Bristol; how it sees its policy in relationship to that; how it sees this kind of production. And one could say then that because it sees it in terms of a judgement, their *sighting* of these productions is filtered and covered by quantifiable and commercial categories that are pressurising the Production Board. The Board is always being motivated by forces outside itself. It's never the instigator, because in the BFI people can't initiate productions. The BFI's not going out and saying: 'We'll commission this, we'll commission that'; rather it's continuously pushed by whatever production proposal comes its way. I think it is politically useless to say: the BFI hasn't done this or hasn't done that, because they perforce have to recognise what actually comes to them. So then you have to criticise their method of recognition of projects and of how they are influenced. Also I think that the IFA has to recognise its own plurality. It has to recognise that within its forces are people who are not collectives, groups, organisations, but individuals who want to make films that cost a hell of a lot of bread— for all sorts of reasons. How do the collectives, groups, organisations express their solidarity with that kind of work? Can the plurality of the IFA be held by that work, or is it going to atomise it? I like to think that it is the job of the IFA to make sure that that doesn't happen. It is also our task to make sure that the BFI does not *dismiss* the last ten years' work but recognises its importance and develops policy from that.

Working for TV

You've managed to fund your film-making by working as a facility company mainly for foreign TV.

We started this business because of economic necessity — if *Nightcleaners* and *Ireland Behind the Wire* were to get made we needed money. We got a contract with an advertising agency, to make a film on the Common Market. They wanted to shoot this in two weeks in six countries, edit it in one week and show it at

the Queen Elizabeth Hall for Edward Heath. It was supposed to show how the Common Market constituted a unity even though each country maintained its national characteristics. For instance, the Italians really dig eating pizzas and spaghetti, and so on. There were a lot of problems with that film and it ended up with us being blacklisted for that kind of work. We then decided to try and get a regular income through working for TV companies. We sent a card round advertising our services to foreign companies.

We live in a market economy, and you have to engage with that. You can't depend on the state funding you get every year, in any case it's *wrong* to think of the state as the only source of money. I don't put this kind of work down either — it gets you into places you would otherwise never get into.

You are now also working on a television project yourself. How was that set up?

It started with a proposal to do a 50 minute film on the American serial *Holocaust*. BBC Bristol were very interested in it and late in 1978 a contract came through to write a scenario which was delivered in January 1978. Because at that time most of BBC2's finances were committed to their series of Shakespeare productions the project had to be referred upwards to Somerset Ward, Arts Controller of BBC2. We had a meeting with Ward who accepted the project. I then investigated the production details which would enable it to be filmed independently and then edited and treated inside the BBC using their technology. I had a meeting with Peter Sainsbury, Head of BFI Production, and Peter Clarke, Head of Purchased Programmes, BBC, who then worked out the possibility of a co-production between the BFI and the BBC.

I think that the work on television that independent film-makers could start doing is the kind of work that can be related to the kind of cinema that we're doing. You can intervene with and in the culture of television, in what is produced, and affect that exchange, how people measure themselves up to television, and you can then provide a further relay in the cinema. In other words, you can't do it in a cinema by itself. Independence is not just a matter of economic independence, it's also the ability to work for difference within dominant institutions such as TV. In fact there are many people within TV who feel that the constraints and language within which they make their programmes are too disconnected from what is going on outside. They can no longer create exchanges with the audience, make transactions.

You seem to be implying that one can make those kinds of connections. If you look at Godard's work for French TV, such as Six Fois Deux (1977), he was doing things previously considered impossible: making films very cheaply and allowing on to TV the discourse of disenfranchised sections of the audience such as the peasant in the Louison section, allowing them as much screen-time as would normally be given to an official spokesman or 'expert'. Yet at the same time, partially because he is so privileged as the great French auteur of the 1960s, one also becomes almost convinced of the impossibility of making those interventions. He can make those interventions because he's Godard, because of his privileged place in French cinematic culture. How do you see the kinds of work you are suggesting in relation to Godard?

Godard has been fetishised to such an extent that his work loses any possible collectivity of expression. He's the only film-maker I know that can photograph himself and say 'I' very confidently. Now it seems to me that the 'I' has to be democratised — it should be possible for a lot of people to say 'I'.

Perhaps paradoxically one of the strengths of British film culture is that we don't have the weight of that kind of tradition. There is no way in which film 'authors' could possibly make an intervention in TV in the same kind of dramatic way as in French culture. There is no space which is not over-determined by those kinds of cultural assumptions.

Since '68, the way people have used Godard points to an absence in their own culture. In working in TV here, I'd like to use images as if they are monuments, not personal fetishised creations. As an example, to use a close-up of Magnani, or Anna Karina looking at a Carl Dreyer film or a piece of Humphrey Jennings and to use them and re-use them. Of course this involves a kind of authorship, but there's a whole host of 'authors' ghosting you in front, behind and to the side of you, all the time you are working. I'd like to bring out a greater democracy of purchase on other people's images, a greater energy, a fraternity, a sorority of images.

But isn't there a problem of images in terms of television. Within the current kinds of fictional television programmes, your project of a critique of a representation of certain notions of memory, as in the Holocaust project, would seem to pose problems about how television functions. You can't talk about separate programmes such as Holocaust without talking about the context in which it is presented and the whole way the institution situates such a programme, the debates that inform a reading of that programme

and so on. It seems almost impossible to make a critique of memory in history because of the way it will be subsumed in that flow.

I think it's pessimistic to think in those terms, because first of all you have to see way the written word works round television. A programme like *Holocaust* for instance, can be guaranteed to be outside television's flow, by being a political event of some importance. For example, politicians in France and Germany have now understood, through *Holocaust*, a use of television history. Schmidt made a speech in the German parliament about it. Simone Weill appeared on French TV discussing it. There was a whole set of guarantees working around *Holocaust* to make it 'outside' television's flow and television's concerns. With historical series that happens quite a lot, because history seems to be the kind of hallmark of television, arresting itself and considering another time, another space altogether.

So, first of all, television programmes can't exist on their own. They have to exist and be mobilised in other areas as well. So I'm not too pessimistic about trying at least to work within television. Flow can only work if there's a lack of perspective. But if television starts to be atomised, broken up, if that difference can be established as a solution I think you'll find it very, very different.

The Berwick Street Collective has been very concerned with technological developments as well as making innovations yourselves.

Yes, when Berwick Street did a film for Barry Gavin on the Italian composer Luigi Nono, we used all our optical equipment, which meant that we did for £1,000 what might otherwise have cost £5,000. The *Holocaust* project will be shot on film and then transferred on to tape and edited on tape using all the new technology within the BBC. Then it will be shown as video, but also as a separate film. Technology in England is really of an extremely high standard. It's changing so quickly that nobody feels quite ready to invest in anything because by the time they've invested, it's changed. I was filming at the Tory Party conference recently when the French writer and politician Poniowski made a speech about all the scientific developments in capitalism which even capitalists are hard put to know how to handle and how our lives will be transformed within five years, not quite the reassuring kind of thing the Tories wanted to hear, I think. But of course, these changes are happening without most people having any conscious-

ness of it, except as a threat.

Or of any sense that they could control it.

No, absolutely none. Of course, the Left's answer is that capitalism is giving us all the tools to enable us to democratise the means of production and distribution.

British Film Culture

There's a lot of rhetoric about building a British film culture, but this usually doesn't take into account the cultural marginality of cinema in this country and the absence of any easily mobilisable identities around which such questions could be posed.

Why is it so embarrassing to go and see a film with English actors, *Agatha* for instance? British cinema would be very good if people still made silent movies and no one had to speak. Once English actors speak not only do they speak with an accent and a class accent, but they are definitely trying to say 'I am speaking'. They don't quite trust their own silences, because their own silences are so mobile, evasive. Take Hamlet, and his continuous habit of interior monologues: as soon as English actors speak they try to make themselves definite — there is a certain dishonesty, dislocation. No adequate strategy has been developed in mainstream British cinema to confront all these prejudices and the difficulties of the mobility and interiority of English life.

There is very little questioning as to what the cinema can be about in this country, and if cinema is about any thing, it must be about negotiating the past. There's no so-called 'social-democratic' solution to the British cinema where we suddenly produce a 'New Wave', a national cinema like the 'new' Australian cinema or whatever. There's no way we are going to create a cinema unless we negotiate that past, and in a sense our underdevelopment gives us a unique advantage of producing a cinema that really meets cultural needs.

*There is the issue of the film-makers' conception of their audience, the cultural context in which they're working and also the question of representation, of history and culture. Film-makers are beginning to be aware of the first but they have less sense of the history of representation and less purchase on how their own kind of practice can engage that. In a sense it's the business of critical magazines such as *Screen* to raise these issues.*

There has to be some sort of collectivity, not just amongst those who are making films but also amongst magazines and journals, a sense that one is working to some purpose. One has to get over this bitter competition, this putting down, as happened with the initial reception of *Nighthawks* (1979), for instance. It was made with a lot of trouble and there were certain things in it that were immensely interesting. Now why was no one able to write positively about this film? There was no way of relaying the life of that film, which is one of the things criticism should engage with — enabling films to live.

The Other Cinema

You have been closely involved with the distribution of independent and oppositional cinema as a member of The Other Cinema's council of management and you were part of the group that established and ran their cinema, the Scala, in 1976. Although TOC had wanted its own cinema in the West End for a long time, largely as an economic necessity to make its distribution work more profitable, the operation of the Scala was conceived rather differently and with very ambitious policies. Although it was effectively in competition with other cinemas opened by independent distributors at the same time, such as the Plaza and the Gate, the Scala explicitly refused to become an Art House. This was partly as a result of the debates within the independent cinema opposing the exhibition of films for one-off consumption and promoting the notion of a social practice of cinema that would stress cinema as a discursive practice addressing the process of meaning production with and for specific audiences. The first national congress of the Independent Film Makers Association had been held in the spring of 1976 and the Scala opened in the autumn of that year. TOC tried to develop alternative, socialist practices around cinema exhibition. Discussions were organised together with screenings, socialist and community groups used the cinema, different roles were being proposed for film-makers and audiences alike. All that work was just beginning to take root when the initial undercapitalisation of the venture together with the British Film Institute's refusal to back such innovative policies, forced the cinema to close in late 1978, in spite of a vigorous campaign by independent film-makers.

In retrospect it seems that the contradiction of having to survive in the market place while at the same time developing a socialist practice of cinema was too much for the project at that time. For various reasons, that contraction forced the cinema to rely on BFI funding and, above all, on the BFI's verbal commitment to independent cinema, which proved fatal. Of course, in an

2 'The Other Cinema
— Screen Memory',
Wedge no 2, Spring
1978.

immediate sense, it was the BFI's refusal of a request for funds which forced the closure, and one would certainly criticise that decision. But doesn't the criticism have to go further? Maybe there weren't enough people who recognised the crucial importance of that work at that time? We were all involved in the debates about the social practice of cinema in the IFA, but those ideas were still relatively new and had little purchase on the situation. One felt paralysed in the face of all those contradictions. There was no real analysis of how it would be possible to save The Other Cinema's exhibition initiative.

If you read the account that was given in *Wedge*², of people's opinions on The Other Cinema, it becomes clear that although there is an enormous amount of very justifiable criticism of TOC, there was also very little understanding of what TOC really was. It was vulnerable to political criticism but then one must remember that it was the only thing going of its kind and that immense pressures were put on it with its underpaid and seriously over-worked staff and that very little help was forthcoming. But the fact remains that it showed independent British features, that it was beginning to make alliances between different film-makers and audiences. It did hold important debates and it did offer a space in which meetings could be held, where a consciousness of a certain cinema practice could be developed. I think it is true that all the attention was drawn on to the BFI so that in the end it appeared that only the BFI could save the cinema. This was the first time that I came face to face with that lack of understanding, feeling, passion, desire in those guys in the BFI Boardroom. They spoke as if the only thing that could come into their heads were words like defeat, non-possibility, logic, market, economy, and so on. It seemed as if it were a natural force that nobody could do anything about which was working against the cinema. Yet, if you have a notion of British film culture you also have to consider the fact that of all those people who are continuously yawning on about a British Film Industry, none of them came forward to help. I remember going to the AIP and explaining the situation to them, giving them all the details, and they didn't even turn up to the picket of the BFI we had organised. None of the established film-makers such as Anderson, Reisz, Richardson, not even the trustees of TOC turned up at meetings or showed any interest. We had a few inches in *The Guardian*, that is all. The BFI directorate had advised us that there was no point in any further struggle with them for funds because there just weren't going to be any. We, therefore, had to mobilise people outside the BFI

to fight to keep the doors of the cinema open. And in a sense, TOC wasn't yet well enough known outside the area of independent cinema itself to mobilise people such as trade unions and political organisations in support of it, although it must be said that during the two years of the cinema's life, very many political organisations used the cinema and felt that its existence was beneficial to them.

However, what is at stake in what you say is the ability to mobilise support for cultural work outside the constituency of cinema or theatre or whatever. And that we were unable to do, which does raise questions when one is thinking of political alliances. To what degree does independent cinema meet its constituency and in another sense, go beyond it, to get out of that left ghetto and occupy a more central position? So that is the kind of failure we have to analyse in detail. It is a question of how much failure we have had to cope with for so long and how much that has become almost a sediment inside you. Because of all the past history one can go into an action almost half believing that you won't win because of all the blocks that are in front of you. And yet you want to avoid complete depoliticisation, as for instance in *The Left-Handed Woman*. That is a remarkable film in some ways but in another way it is a study in the proposition that the most minute gesture of survival is all that is possible. Don't worry about what goes on around you, just make a gesture of liberation in your own room. A lot of the new German cinema is about coping with these areas of defeat, with that block that is continuously in front of you.

Maybe there was also a problem with the analysis that underpinned the approach to the BFI? In a sense, the IFA was founded on the recognition that institutions are not and cannot be regarded as monolithic. The alliance of film-makers with theorists, teachers, critics and so on within the IFA at least implied that institutions were sites of struggle, that spaces could be produced, that contradictions were constantly in process, as it were, and that there was no such thing as a monolithic block, out there, that one cannot but crack one's skull against. The model of struggle you seem to imply in order to account for this failure is one where you continuously come up against a brick wall, whereas the IFA was founded on a politics of alliances that intersected with institutions, crossing them, opening up spaces, working on contradictions and so on. In a way, that notion of politics rules out the possibility of the once and for all decisive battle, the total victory of defeat, the sense of total failure. Given the kind of analysis one had of the BFI, or the lack of it, together with the expectations one had of

that institution, it would appear almost inevitable that certainly at that time any struggle with them about independent cinema would be lost and that the cinema would close. Nevertheless, the lessons from that struggle, although not specifically discussed, did feed through into subsequent work such as that of the IFA's contracts committee, the development of regional workshops, the expansion of Cinema Action and Four Corners into production/exhibition centres. It now appears that there never in fact was a monolithic block opposing independent cinema — although the opposition was real enough at the time — but only discourses and positions in movement, in struggle. In that sense the campaign was not a failure because the struggle itself helped change the forcefield that constituted and determined the independent cinema movement, producing realignments and opening up new spaces, feeding those developments we are seeing now.

Your criticism of the way we related to the BFI and the lack of analysis has a lot of weight — I have reflected on those issues since the campaign. It is true that I have always been ill at ease with the dialectic you outline. The point is that it was not merely a matter of keeping the doors of the cinema open, but to save what TOC represented, which was not just a cinema but a series of relationships: production, distribution, exhibition, political alliances, cultural work, political work, imaginations that could have been brought to bear on the practices of cinema. That hadn't happened before and hasn't happened since. Because of its specific relationship with independent film-makers and other social and political groups, TOC could have mobilised certain arguments which now are totally absent from the areas of production, distribution and exhibition. TOC was always situating film-making in a context, in movement. That is what we are trying to keep open. If all the things that were achieved at TOC, the imaginative movement and energy it represented and the questions it had generated could have been concentrated on its survival and development instead of just shutting its doors, I think that now we would have been in a very different state.

So, in a roundabout way, I am saying 'yes, that dialectic was at work and has produced other things' while at the same time I am saying that there is a lack that has not been filled. For instance, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's article on *Radio On*³ is the best thing that has been written on that film and one of the points it makes is that there is no context for *Radio On*. TOC is not mentioned even once in that article, but if *Radio On* has been shown there it would have been a totally different film because it would have been in a

³ *Screen* vol 20 nos
3/4, Winter 1979/
80.

context. Films are affected by the way they are shown and where they are shown, by the enthusiasm with which people are building programmes and everything else. (In fact, I don't think *Screen* has ever addressed itself at all to the closure of TOC.) Alliances, which are incredibly important, should have been made. And although this opens up a whole new set of questions, I think the divisions of labour between film-makers, ideologues, critics and so on should have been engaged with. This has never been done, not even within the IFA. This is the question of how different sectors of work, sustaining contradictions and tensions but nevertheless addressing themselves to the same problem, can combine so that socialism must elaborate itself as an alliance in its richest sense.

As you say, the memory of TOC seems almost to have been effaced. No explicit analysis of the terms and institutions in play has been made and no lessons seem to have been drawn. Although it must be said that practices such as those represented by TOC had been going on for quite a while, based on all kinds of alliances, such as the Edinburgh Film Festival's policies and conferences, Cinema Action's distribution and exhibition practices and so on, although TOC did provide an opportunity to pull all of that together. In a sense, one lesson to be learned from the way the situation changed from the immediate post '68 years to the late 1970s is that however energetically you campaign the result is never quite what you worked for but always somewhat at a tangent, manifesting itself in displaced forms and unexpected configurations. So that one always must be prepared to re-start on the basis of the new situation even if this may mean abandoning the logic inherent in one's own work and re-tracing one's steps. When you suggested that in the Left, criticism of one's friends comes too easily, one must also remember that the Left here has a history of easy enthusiasms and mobilisation. By 'easy' I mean unreflective and trapped in the emotional energy that is merely a necessary precondition for any form of struggle. The problem is how to sustain the split between the requirement for constant analysis and criticism and, on the other hand, the enthusiastic commitment of one's emotional energies. There is a necessary pessimism to be articulated with political productivity because there are always more determinations in play than one is able to address directly so that, even if the hierarchy of those determinations is judged correctly, the effects of one's practice are never quite what one has bargained for. Therefore I would be reluctant to come down too severely either on the tendency towards 'easy' criticism or on the one towards emotional mobilisation, because

they are both constituent elements of the socialist alliance you call for.

The Fourth Channel

The formation of such an alliance is precisely what is at stake in the campaign around the Fourth TV Channel (TV4) which will obviously affect all independent film-making, both the so-called independents who merely want to produce the kind of programmes we have already but to do so outside of the constraints imposed by existing BBC and ITV companies, and the IFA independents whose practices involve a notion of independence as specific difference which we would all support. And yet, it would appear as if the relationship that existed between the BFI and the TOC campaign is being reproduced in the IFA's campaign vis-à-vis the fourth channel. Except that this time we are facing far more powerful institutions than the BFI. Moreover, the 'Independent' Broadcasting Authority doesn't even pay lipservice to the notion of independent practice represented by TOC and the IFA.

Let me answer that in this way: there is a need to analyse what kind of everyday culture we live in. Left activities seem to be cordoned off from everyday culture in Britain. There are some areas of overlap in academia and in places such as the BFI but, these are under constant threat. There remains a very strict *cordon sanitaire* between the Left and the outside world which carries on its everyday activities and culture. There is a fascination and obsession with what the Left does, but they don't produce anything of their own. They only react to what the Left does, responding to it in the most paranoid and abject terms. Because of this *cordon*, we are never able to mobilise and influence outside of our city walls so to speak. The question is then, how able are we, on the one hand, to open our doors, and on the other hand, to produce enough to be able to make an incision in the political everyday culture of this country. Our activities are to be measured by our ability to change the rules of the game and how we can beat the guard-dogs of that everyday culture.

The fourth channel will affect all aspects of independent production. Particularly that tendency which works to establish alternative production and distribution structures outside of the market, because the fourth channel changes the definition of what the market is. One of the IFA's demands is for a foundation to be set up within TV4 to protect independent productions which would go to the wall in the kind of naked market operations which one would expect if the channel were to operate as a

second ITV channel. As part of the Channel 4 Group, the IFA together with other media workers are having to create alliances, strategies, face questions and problems they have never had to face before. Very conservative people are having to come to terms with the notion of independence which up to now they have subscribed to purely in economic terms. In fact the work that the IFA has done up to now — a lot of it the result of Simon Hartog's energy and initiative — is very impressive and incredibly important.

In the Government's White Paper on the new channel it says that it must be innovative in terms of form and content. That can be understood in two ways. In one way, it can be seen as their rationale for having a fourth channel at all, according to the old famous ideological ploy: we have all this British talent here going to waste so we must give them an opening. But it can also be seen from the other side, which is that the IFA in its consistent campaign for a say in what goes on in TV4 has met with some success. The next thing is to analyse in what ways the needs of the IFA meet with a Tory ideology. What are we campaigning for now? Not just for a foundation that will protect the notion of innovation in terms of form and content from the market forces operating in the IBA and in the ITCA companies, but for certain broadcasting freedoms. Bourgeois freedoms if you will, there aren't enough of them. This requires continued analysis of the broadcasting system. Again we must bring into play alliances that go beyond just film-makers. We have to bring in the unions, immigrant organisations, all those who have been the subject of television's concerns but never its producers.

In order to fight for difference in television you have to take account of what has gone on in the past, how television works, what kind of instrument it is, what its specificities are. You have to have some critical force at work in television. I think a lot of independent film-makers are beginning to respond to the issues raised by TV4. There is inevitably a resistance on the part of film-makers to get involved in popular front type activities, a resistance which comes both from suspicion of people in closer touch with market forces, but also a lack of confidence in the importance of the kind of work they are doing. There is now the beginning of a realisation not only that television might fund film production but that it might be possible to engage with television and television's relation to cinema.

London, July 1979-January 1980

ACTING TAPES

by Mark Nash
and
James Swinson



In spite, or perhaps because of, the incapacitating weight of the literary and theatrical millstones that hang around the British Cinema's neck — in addition to the economic ones — the independents have never regarded acting as a particularly important concern. Now, the results of that omission are painfully evident in the way actors are directed in independent films. The ACTING TAPES, made for Channel 4's Eleventh Hour programmes by two long-serving activists of the independent sector, begin to explore the acting dimension within that oppositional context, considering the options and their implications.

I

ACTING TAPES is a two-part video documentary made for Channel 4 TV and explores the ideas and methods behind two major opposing movements in 20th century theatre and cinema.

The first part, "Tape One: Fourth Wall" starts with an exploration of naturalistic acting developed in the Moscow Arts Theatre at the turn of the century, and the system of actor training developed by its director, Constantin Stanislavski. The Stanislavski system had an enormous impact in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in the American theatre. The tape discusses its adaptation by the then newly-formed Group Theatre and its transformation into the Method — a system of training and a style of acting familiar to us from American cinema in the 1950s.

The second part, "Tape Two: Counter Acting" introduces the theatre of Meyerhold, Stanislavski's principal antagonist in Russian theatre up to the 1930s. It discusses the development of an anti-naturalistic performance style in post-revolutionary Soviet cinema with particular reference to the films of Kuleshov. It concludes with some observations about Brechtian acting.

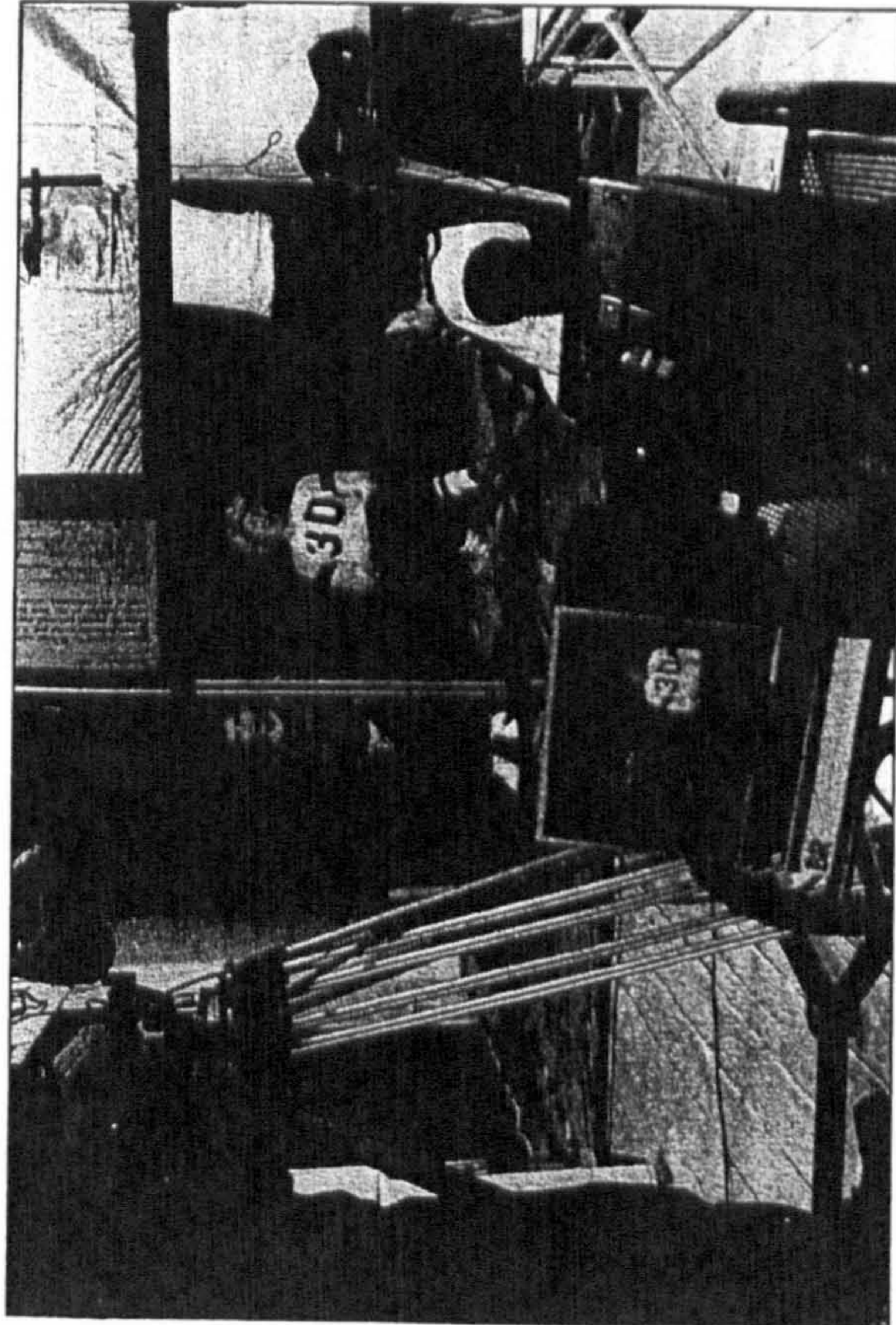
The tapes combine archive stills and film clips with training exercises performed by a group of actors. *Acting Tapes* will be broadcast late in 1985 as an introduction to a short series of feature films on Channel 4 organised around the theme of alternative styles of cinema acting.

II

Acting is one of the main areas of interest to the film-going public. Journalistic criticism focuses on performance, if only at the most popular level. Yet this evidently popular concern has not been reflected in serious film criticism which, in its attempt to distance itself from star-obsessed journalism, even goes as far as arguing that the actor's performance contributes nothing to the meaning of a film.

In auteur theory, performance was part of the pro-filmic material, organised by the director as author of the film text. Psychoanalytic and semiotic-oriented film theory appropriated the notion of performance from acting *per se* to the film's and the spectator's performance. This downgrading of the importance of acting in the cinema reflected the obvious fact that film acting is often very different from theatre acting.

Acting Tapes was intended to explore something of the distinctive history of film acting; to demonstrate that film performance comprises two moments of construction: a construction in front of the camera and a construction in the editing; and to demonstrate the way issues of performance style are embedded in the realist debate. It also seemed to us that questions of acting and performance style were being neglected within British independent cinema. It wasn't simply a question of "bad" acting,



Acting Tapes by M. Nash and J. Swinson

whatever that meant, but rather of the aesthetic traditions independent cinema was drawing on in developing its fictions. It seemed to us that despite much reference to the work of Brecht, fictional styles were, in fact, either derived from the British documentary tradition (which does not have a notion of performance as construction) or from an over-confident appropriation of dominant TV or cinema aesthetics.

We did not set out to make definitive statements about film acting and its history. Rather, we wanted to put an important and neglected area on the agenda for serious discussion.

III

Our original proposal was for a low band (i.e., non-broadcast) experimental video to explore some of these issues for the independent constituency. In 1981, the BFI Production Board supported development work, possibly because they recognised the necessity for greater clarity on the issue of performance in their strategy for cinema, which at that time was divided between proponents of a radical independent cinema and a British Art cinema. When, the following year, the Production Board decided against funding production, we put it to Alan Fountain, Independent film and video

commissioning Editor at Channel 4. He commissioned further development and, in 1983, production.

It was a project, then, that was developed over a number of years and changed direction to some extent in that process. The finished broadcast product retains much of the informative and educational function that we had envisaged at the outset. It has certainly been our experience from non-theatric showings of the tapes that they work well in educational situations, often dividing the audience into opposing camps, disputing the merits of different cinemas and different performance styles. How it will function in the broadcast context, of course, remains to be seen.

As we worked on *Acting Tapes*, we decided to devote most of our resources to exposition of the aesthetic debates which informed film acting styles. We adopted the simplest possible form of argument: Thesis (naturalism); Antithesis (anti-naturalism); Synthesis (Brecht). Although this was an oversimplification of a complex development, putting these arguments seemed a necessary precondition for detailed discussion of the problems acting presents in contemporary British cinema. The tapes establish Britain as the context for their work. It's left to the audience to take that work further.

IV

Acting Tapes combines an informational with a poetic strategy, and sets up a tension between them. In the historical sections there is a direct register between voice-over commentary and the still and clip material which is further placed by the use of captions. This "placing" is foregrounded by showing most of the stills full-frame. Only with an occasional pan do we create anything of the more familiar fictional world of the photograph. Music is also used to displace this register.

In the exercise sections, actors perform exercises with various degrees of success - they work on an exercise which sometimes comes off well, sometimes not. These take place within what in the first programme is a tableau space, with a few functional furniture props, a carpet and black background, revealed during the course of the tape as construction. The title of tape one, "Fourth Wall", refers to the fact that in Stanislavski's theatre, actors were to behave as if the audience were not there, only a fourth wall.

In the second tape, the actors work on biomechanics and exercises developed by Kuleshov. The constructedness of the performance space is immediately apparent with the use of mirrors to reflect aspects of the filming.

Neither set of exercises is exemplary. Nor do they progress towards some kind of narrative closure. Despite the restrictive protocols adopted, the actors inevitably develop something of a "personality" during the course of a viewing. In the first tape, which focuses on the cult of personality in

Acting Tapes

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screen acting, we get a sense of our actors as individuals, even if they do not exactly have any parts to play. In the second, they are more regimented – wearing a uniform and directed as the exercises demand, with no regard to personality, it being a question of performing physical actions precisely, rhythmically, etc. Despite this, elements of a subterranean drama between ourselves as directors and the actors as performers do get constituted in a viewing.

In setting up a conflict between poetic and informational strategies, the tapes attempt to engage the debate which surfaced in the British documentary movement in the 1930s in response to the Soviet documentaries of the time: Grierson's mission to inform and educate on the one hand, the "poetic" licence of *Song of Ceylon* on the other; or Anstey's criticism of *Listen to Britain* that it does not inform the audience about social relations and social struggles in the way that *Peace and Plenty* does. It would, perhaps, have been less ambitious to adopt either a "poetic" personal approach or a wholly informational and didactic one. The challenge we created for ourselves was to try to find a way to hold these together. We don't pretend it is entirely successful. However, this experiment is perhaps more useful than a more achieved documentary in a more familiar mode might be.

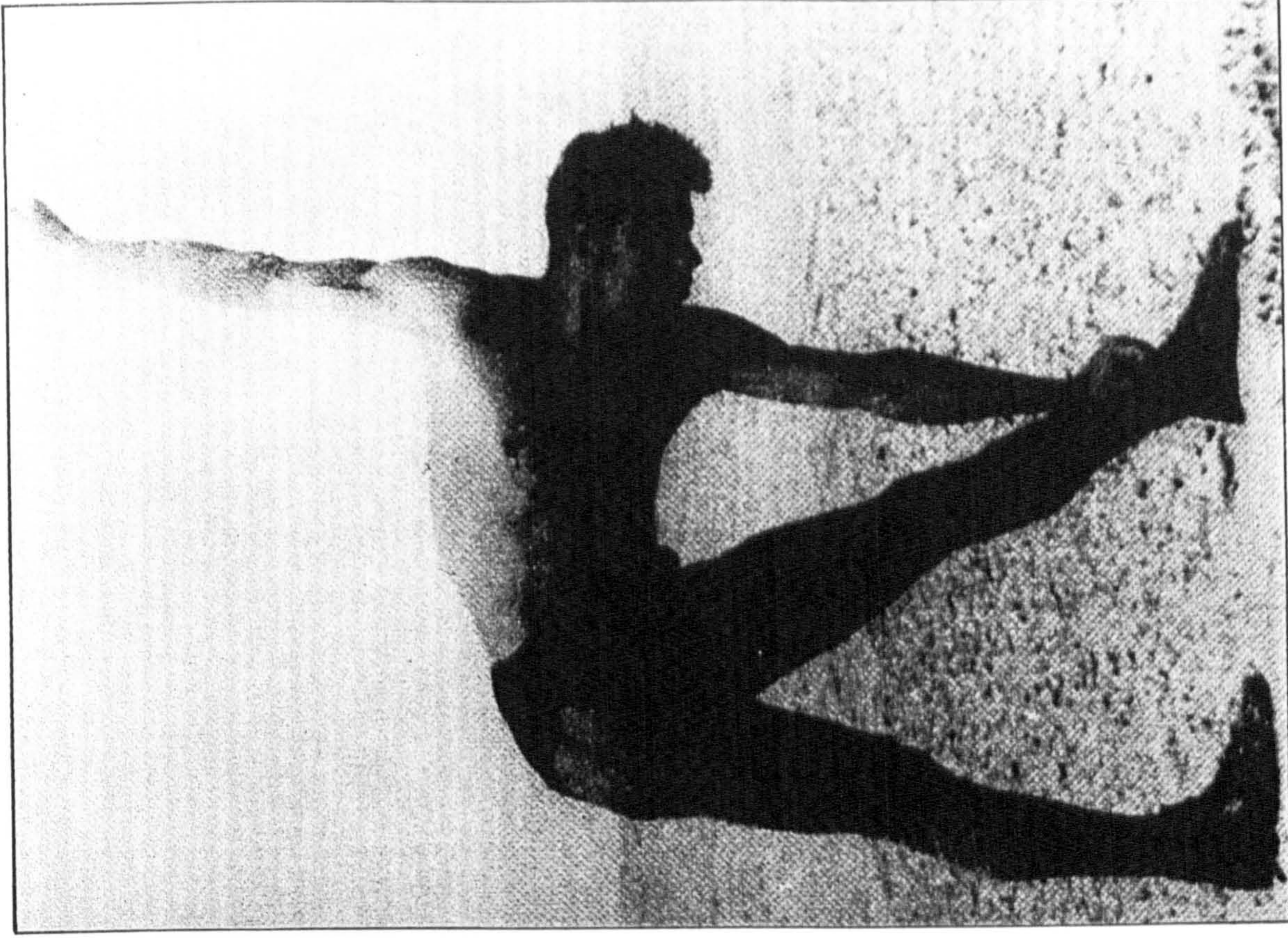
V

There are two levels of argument in *Acting Tapes*. The first and the most explicit one concerns the development of naturalistic and anti-naturalistic strategies. The second reflects on the relation of British cinema to that issue.

Tape one: Naturalistic drama developed away from the mainstream of European cultural life: in Scandinavia (Ibsen), in Russia (Chekov). It demanded a new style of performance, and the very backwardness of the Russian theatrical culture in particular made sweeping reforms possible. Stanislavski's naturalistic style of performance was developed in the context of a theatrical ensemble – producers, directors and actors working and training together.

The Moscow Art Theatre set itself against the old theatre. Imported into America after the first world war, the Moscow Art Theatre effectively exposed the showbiz star system of American theatre. The Group Theatre, founded in the 1930s, attempted to work in the Stanislavski manner, with a range of progressive realist dramas. It was part of the diverse left-wing cultural life in the US in the 1930s. It found it difficult to survive economically in the commercial environment of Broadway, and did not survive into the post-war period.

The establishment of the Actors Studio in the late 1940s, with Lee Strasberg as its artistic director, apparently marked a return to the ideals of the Group Theatre. The career of Elia Kazan is emblematic here of the



Meyerhold's biomechanics exercise (from Acting Tapes)

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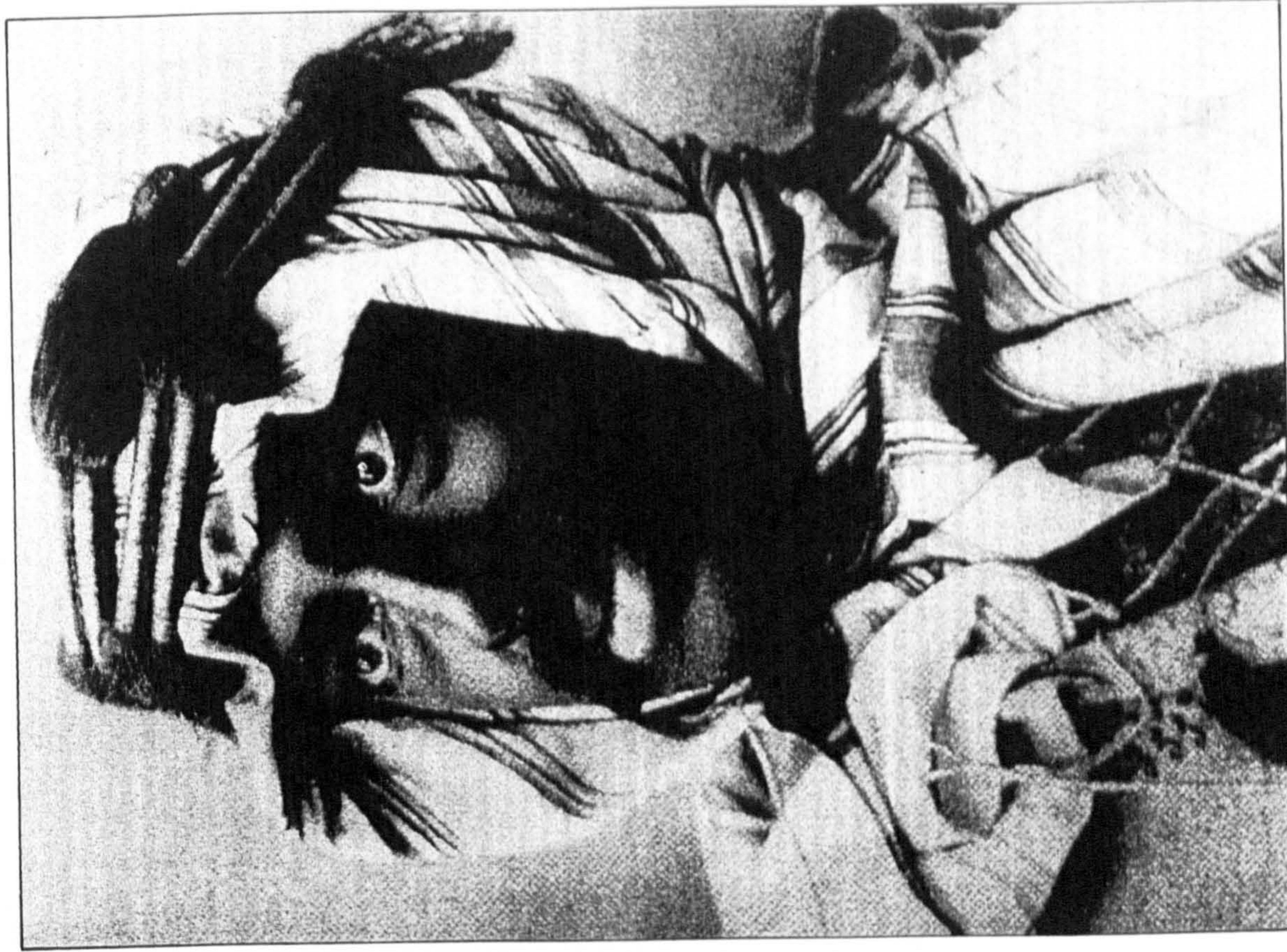
changed circumstances of cultural life. Director and performer of radical plays with the Group Theatre before the war, Kazan's politics shifted with the political climate in the US so that by the 1950s he had identified sufficiently with careerist ideologies to testify to the House Committee on Unamerican Activities.

The Actors Studio stressed *individual* psychology, the development of the actor's personality. Theatre and cinema became a medium for self-expression, a form of collusion between director and actor. This was picked up in critics' comments on Brando's "mumble" and on underacting, e.g., extending the duration of an action such as lighting a cigarette or pulling at a shirt collar, so that the action becomes divorced from its context, becoming a kind of actorial personal signature. This shift of emphasis from the psychology of characters within a scenario to the personalities of the performers themselves was, we argue, decisive for post-war American cinema.

Watching *Apocalypse Now* recently on TV, one is struck by the way Brando had become a complete caricature of his own performance style - a dying god/star of the Method cinema, with fixed mannerisms and gestures, displaced by the new generation of film performers. The Method has become a form of expressionism. In *Acting Tapes* we focus on Brando's career not only because it will be most familiar and emblematic to audiences but because it encompasses two stages of the Method's history: initially presenting a new naturalism of performance within realist dramas of the 1950s, such as *On the Waterfront*, but then gradually changing into its opposite as performances become more stylised.

(One of the difficulties in trying to present complex arguments in televisual form is that important complexities often have to be given up. For instance, the history of the development of female Method performers in post-war American cinema: too often in the 1950s, the roles women were offered meant that nothing was really at stake in the personalities they portrayed - with notable exceptions, of course. More recently, however, as scenarios have changed, we've seen the development of female Method performers - Jane Fonda, Ellen Burstyn, Meryl Streep.)

Our argument, in relation to British cinema, is that it has remained dominated by British literary and cinematic culture. The dominant use of the voice to enunciate and project text or dialogue is key, even if over the years, the range of "permissible" regional and working-class accents has grown. In relation to this backwardness, we argue somewhat tentatively, the Method still might have something to offer. We point to previous attempts at Method-style performances, such as Albert Finney's or Richard Harris' in the British realist dramas of the 1950s and 1960s, such as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* or *This Sporting Life*. Today, television, in which most UK screen actors have to make their living, still maintains the dominance of a theatrical performance style. There is no training for film



Stanislauski as Othello (from Acting Tapes)

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actors, nor for directing film actors, where a specifically cinematic style could be developed.

Tape two: In developing the argument of the second tape we chose to concentrate firstly on the work of Meyerhold, whose training and theatre were formative for many of the Soviet directors and, secondly, on the cinema work of Kuleshov.

Meyerhold's theatre is important for many reasons. It links clearly into a theatrical anti-tradition of vaudeville, the circus, *commedia dell'arte*. In its foregrounding of theatricality, its disrespect for classic texts, its vision of a new theatre actively involving the spectator, it foreshadows the more familiar work of Brecht. Its exercise techniques, which stress physical fitness, coordination and balance, are often in dramatic antithesis to the naturalistic theatre. Their anti-psychological drive is an essential aspect to this (one has only to look at the way fascist cinemas were to develop a culture of the image and of the body by reintroducing psychology into the aesthetics that Soviet theatre and cinema had developed, to have a dramatic demonstration of the dangers of psychologism).

Whereas Eisenstein, or Pudovkin, say, rapidly moved to consider montage as primary, Kuleshov was the only Soviet director to try and combine montage with the development of a radical performance style appropriate for the new Soviet cinema. His work was based on extensive rehearsal and the use of exercises with a small group of performers to develop coordination, rhythm and timing.

In both tapes we chose the simplest, almost banal exercises. While the more complex Meyerholdian exercises would have required trained gymnasts, the dactyl, slap-in-the-face and stab-with-the-dagger exercises are sufficient to demonstrate coordination, balance, physical coordination or lack of it. Kuleshov was particularly insistent on detailed attention to the minutiae of physical action (e.g., entering a room or picking up a glass) before any work on the part could be developed: Stanislavski and Strasberg were similarly insistent. For them the concentration they wished the actor to achieve was best practised with the simplest objects and actions which "unlock" unconscious processes, giving the impression of "true" action and feeling. Graphically simple scenes with minimal narrative coherence also translated best on to the small screen.

In introducing Brecht we make the point that the graphic, demonstrative acting style which he was concerned to develop, had much of its roots in the Soviet period. As is well known, the development of Brechtian strategies in British cinema has proved problematic, not least because British theatrical culture is unable to adapt to the demands his theatre makes on directors and performers. There is no easy way, we argue, that British screen acting could adopt Brechtian strategies or return to the more rigorous anti-naturalism of Meyerhold or Kuleshov.

Mainstream British cinema does not see this as an issue. However, there

are strengths in British cinema which should not be overlooked: i.e., forms of self-conscious theatricalised acting, particularly in horror and comedy genres, from which it might be possible for an independent materialist British cinema to learn.

There is nothing particularly original in this analysis. Many European film directors have felt that an actor's training makes very unsuitable material for cinema: from Bresson's use of "models" to Loach and Garnett's selective use of working-class people to play themselves (in the tradition of Italian neo-realism) and trained actors to play middle-class characters.

Although we argue that more attention should be given to the training of film actors (since there is little if any in the UK at present) this only makes sense within the context of a more general debate about the kinds of cinema that should be produced in the UK. Focusing on acting is only a symptom of a more general debate and discussion. *Acting Tapes* does not lay down a line about the kind of cinema we are arguing for. We wanted to steer clear of programmatic statements. If this leaves the tapes open to a range of liberal interpretations, then that's a risk we felt we had to take.*

ACTING TAPES

Written, directed and produced by Mark Nash and James Swinson; *Camera:* Sean Leslie and Colin Skinner; *Video editing:* Steve Sklair; *Graphics:* Chris Paulsen; *Music:* Steve Skaith and Stephen Jeffries; *Cast:* Aviva Goldkorn, Margaret Wade, Vaughan Williams, Michael Teaman.

Tape 1: The Moscow Arts Theatre and the Stanislavski System/The Group Theatre/The Actors Studio and the Method/The Method Actor and Cinema. 54 mins.

Tape 2: Revolution in the Theatre/Anti-Naturalism/Revolution in the Cinema/Brecht and the British Actor. 54 mins.

*Screen, v. 26, n. 5, 1985, contains an interview with the authors, discussing the issues at greater length.

ACTING TAPES

ACTING IN THE CINEMA



A ZERO ONE PRODUCTION FOR CHANNEL FOUR TELEVISION

ACTING TAPES — ACTING IN THE CINEMA

Why is it so embarrassing to see a film with English actors?

Actors should not appear to act at all (Stanislavski)

Efficiently performed work appears best on screen (Kuleshov)



ACTING TAPES is a two-part documentary which explores the ideas and training methods behind two major opposing movements in 20th century theatre and cinema. It argues that British film and television acting is out of touch with these movements, being too dependent on the traditional training of British stage drama.

TAPE ONE — FOURTH WALL starts with an exploration of Naturalistic acting developed in the Moscow Arts Theatre at the turn of the century, and the system of actor training devised by its director Constantin Stanislavski.

The Stanislavski system had enormous impact in the 1920s and 1930s. In the hands of its keenest American admirers, it was transformed into the Method — a system of training and a style of acting familiar from American cinema of the 1950s.

- 1 The Moscow Arts Theatre and the Stanislavski system
 - 2 The Group Theatre
 - 3 The Actors Studio and the Method
 - 4 The Method Actor and Cinema
- 54 mins

TAPE TWO — COUNTER ACTING introduces the theatre of Meyerhold, Stanislavski's principal antagonist, and its development into an anti-naturalistic performance style in post-revolutionary soviet cinema.

- 1 Revolution in the Theatre
 - 2 Anti-Naturalism
 - 3 Revolution in the Cinema
 - 4 Brecht and the British Actor
- 54 mins

Shot on video for Channel 4 Television's '11th Hour', the tapes combine archive stills and film clips with training exercises performed by a group of actors.

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Vaughan Williams
Michael Yeaman

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Sean Leslie
Colin Skinner

SOUND
Lol Lovett
Malcolm Fisher

VIDEO EDITING
Steve Sklair

DUBBING MIXER
Colin Bowman

GRAPHICS
Chris Paulsen

DESIGN ASSISTANT
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MUSIC
Steve Skaith
Stephen Jeffries

PRODUCTION ASSISTANCE
Sue Aspinall
Lee Chester
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WRITTEN, PRODUCED AND DIRECTED
Mark Nash and James Swinson

A ZERO ONE PRODUCTION FOR CHANNEL FOUR TELEVISION

ACTING TAPED

ANDREW HIGSON DISCUSSES A NEW PROJECT ON CINEMA PERFORMANCE WITH MARK NASH AND JAMES SWINSON

Why is it so embarrassing to see a film with English actors? British cinema would be great if we still made silent movies and no one had to speak. Once English actors speak, not only do they speak with... a class accent, but they are definitely trying to say 'I am speaking'... This Englishness of our acting, though still fascinating to some foreign audiences, is a major obstacle to the development of cinema and TV fiction relevant to a modern British audience....

Many British actors are still trained to perform on the nineteenth century stage. Almost inevitably, reflexes of overacting and playing to the gallery are strongly developed....

British theatre and cinema lack demonstrative gestural acting. The problem for British actors is that there is no training for film work.... Reliance on the voice makes it difficult for British actors to adapt to the film acting advocated by Kuleshov or the Method underplaying of American actors. Building a new British screen actor involves challenging our theatrically dominated culture... and taking the training of our own film actors seriously.

— extracts from *Acting Tapes*.

Acting Tapes - Acting in the Cinema are two hour-long videos made by Zero One for broadcast on Channel 4's Eleventh Hour in early 1986. The tapes have already been exhibited in theatrical and educational venues, including the Tyneside Film Festival, where they won the 1984 Tyne Video Award.

The directors of the tapes are James Swinson and Mark Nash (a former editor of *Screen*), who are interviewed below. The discussion concentrates on issues of performance in the cinema, but in so doing addresses the tasks facing the independent sector in constructing a cinema and TV culture for the future. The tapes themselves do not attempt to analyse the characteristic forms of performance which have dominated British cinema or TV. Instead, they explore two traditions of performance which, although exerting some influence in Britain, have been primarily developed and employed elsewhere. The first tape explores the naturalist tradition as practiced by Stanislavsky and developed by the American Method school, while the second tape concentrates on the anti-naturalist tradition of Meyerhold, Kuleshov and Brecht. The ideas and training methods of the two traditions are investigated in a workshop format with

four English trained performers, supplemented by various archival material.

Beneath the detailed look at these different performance practices, there are two central arguments implicit in this work. First, in the tape on naturalism, there is never any sense of a simple derisory dismissal of the tradition, as one might have expected; on the contrary it is given a sympathetic and powerful re-evaluation. In particular, the tape stresses the *collective* work of the Moscow Arts Theatre and shows how, while this ensemble practice was continued at the Group Theatre in the US in the '30s, the subsequent development of the Method at the Actors Studio in the '50s virtually turned the Stanislavsky system on its head. The Method has tended to create marketable personalities, and it has transformed Stanislavsky's ideas about the relaxation and concentration of the actor almost into a form of psychotherapy, emphasising the actor's personal experience.

In the second tape, on the anti-naturalist tradition, what emerges most strongly is the argument that the physical dynamism and expressivity of performance drawing on a biomechanical training is far more suited to cinema than the training which predominates in drama schools in Britain at present. As Kuleshov commented:

Cinema doesn't allow for the faking of appearance. To imagine, to pretend, to act is useless. It all turns out very badly on screen.

We are not concerned with psychology and the emotions but with the body - its liveness, flexibility and rhythmic qualities.

The other valuable argument of the tapes is that there has never developed a strong tradition of either naturalist or anti-naturalist acting in British theatre or cinema. The emphasis has been on the voice, declamation, actorliness. While actors such as Albert Finney and Richard Harris adopted some of the characteristics of the American Method in films such as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *This Sporting Life*, the Method has had little lasting impact on British cinema. To quote again from the tapes,

The challenge for British cinema today is to develop a performance style that comes to terms with our theatrical tradition.

Andrew Higson: How do you see the *Acting Tapes* tying into contemporary debates about cinema in Britain?

Mark Nash: There's an argument running through both tapes, about British cinema and acting, which is summed up at the end of the second tape, where we talk about the need for a form of screen acting that is aware of its own theatricality. We're not arguing for a return to some kind of pure notion of a Brechtian screen acting, but rather that we should look at the resources of British cinema and see what are the most progressive and interesting aspects from the point of view of performance. There's much to be said for valorising certain performance tradi-

¹ Lev Kuleshov, from 'Art of the Cinema' in Ronald Levaco, *Kuleshov on Film*, University of California Press, Berkeley and London, 1974, see pp 41-123

² The late-night Channel 4 slot for independent film and video.

tions within mainstream British cinema which have tended to be dismissed critically – I'm thinking of the more 'theatrical' styles of performance: British Gothic, Hammer Horror and so on – and also the comedy tradition, the 'Carry On' films, etc.

Andrew Higson: It's not clear to me whether your argument is about British cinema as defined by British Film Year, or whether it's an argument specifically about independent cinema.

Mark Nash: Yes, there is a bit of a slippage between dominant and independent. But in a sense, the address is both ways. This hesitation, or uncertainty perhaps, indicates the origins of the project – beginning as a set of observations about independent cinema but developing into an examination of performance traditions in mainstream theatre and cinema. And we leave it as an argument that could be taken up in relation to the dominant cinema or in relation to independent cinema. But we also need to ask whether there is something today that we can call independent cinema which is separate from the mainstream. It's a complex discussion: we might say that *The Eleventh Hour*² represents an idea of independent cinema as an alternative practice, but at the same time attempts to integrate it with the mainstream. I don't think anybody has really made up their minds about which direction to go – or how to take the best of both worlds.

Andrew Higson: Perhaps one of the problems with the implicit and in some ways open-ended argument of the tapes is that it could be mis-read as proposing, say, that Olivier should have adopted a more Kuleshovian style of performance in his Shakespeare films, or that Meyerhold should have directed the performances in *Gandhi* or *Passage to India*!

Mark Nash: Yes, that argument needs to be brought out in discussion around the tapes, at screenings and so on – where we can focus on concrete examples of contemporary films and the problems people have with those films.

Andrew Higson: At times, it seems that the tapes are simply presenting a history of different performance styles, reduced precisely to *just* a style, *just* a form of training, which might be interchangeable between different directors, different films, different forms of cinema. On the other hand, there is also a polemic for a certain form of cinema, and by implication a certain set of ideological effects, and I suppose I'm saying that this isn't addressed clearly enough.

Mark Nash: The tension is partly a result of our decision not to over-contextualise the acting traditions, which perhaps does allow them to be constructed as just another way of acting. But as you say our argument is also very much about the kind of cinema that we *should* have – which embraces dominant cinema and TV and experimental and avant-garde forms. We wanted to steer clear of using Brecht in a canonical way, although of course his work is a reference in the tapes. The influence of Brechtian performance traditions in cinema is very narrow, but you're talking about cinema as it is, as opposed to cinema as it might be and you have to acknowledge the influence of those ideas. So Brecht is a focus of a lot of different elements in the text, but in an implicit way. Acting is

clearly a major element in our dissatisfaction with cinema today – but actually it's probably not where the problems start from, but a symptom of much wider problems.

James Swinson: Those problems are, of course, exacerbated by the fact that dissatisfaction with contemporary cinema in Britain has been almost overwhelmed by the euphoria surrounding its supposed renaissance. It's important to find some way of breaking that conspiracy which has us all fantasising about the rise of a new British cinema.

Andrew Higson: How did you come to make the tapes?

Mark Nash: To some extent the tapes came out of reflecting on some of the things that were going on at *Screen* in the '70s and the difficulty of getting contributions on film acting. There had been a lot of attention to the performance of film and the cinematic experience and there had been a lot of attention to the codes of cinema and of the image itself, but paradoxically there hadn't really been much attention to performance in the simple sense of acting and acting traditions.

James Swinson: Yes, on the one hand, with the important exception of Richard Dyer's work³, there is an absence of address to performance in an enormous amount of theoretical work that's been done on film, while on the other hand popular film culture, in the daily press or glossy magazines, addresses performance all the time, albeit in the most facile way around the star system. While a lot of people, regular film-goers, would talk about going to see a De Niro movie or a Brando movie and actually ascribe the authorship to the performance, this is in complete contrast to the dynamics of dominant film culture which ascribes authorship in terms of directors.

Mark Nash: So, starting from these observations we drafted a proposal to the BFI (British Film Institute) Production Board. Our argument was that British independent movies really suffered from their approach to performance and that this warranted some investigation. We were proposing at that time a couple of workshop tapes, examining acting in a workshop situation, taping actors over a period of time and seeing how they responded to different styles.

James Swinson: The other more modest motivation for using the workshop was to show that acting, performance, is constructed.

Mark Nash: In the meantime, Alan Fountain had become Commissioning Editor for Independent Film at Channel 4 and that was one of the projects that he was interested in taking on at the Channel because it was addressed to independent cinema. As we developed it, we felt it would be very difficult to address independent cinema directly without being extremely critical and we decided to bracket off the address to the independent constituency and to focus on theories of performance in twentieth century theatre and cinema, and also to combine the workshop idea with an informational-critical discourse....

So there were two motivations for making the tapes. One was the straightforwardly critical look at dominant approaches to performance in the cinema, and the emphasis on the star system – and although this is perhaps a very familiar criticism, we felt it needed re-stating. The other

³ Richard Dyer, *Stars*, London, British Film Institute, 1979.

was our interest in performance itself, and in working with actors. We always intended the tapes to have an educational function, raising the issue of acting, so that they could form a focus of debate and discussion within the independent constituency –

James Swinson: – and in other institutions where those arguments are most likely to be taken up: film and TV schools and faculties, etc, where people are more open to the need to work closely with performers.

Mark Nash: One of the problems for independent film-makers is that they don't have that much experience of working with actors. At that level it's important to argue for people having the opportunity to make more programmes, more films, and even, I would say, to make fewer feature-length films, and put more emphasis on working on a lot of different kinds of things. If we are to build up a more definitive independent film culture, film-makers must have some continuity of work. What a lot of film-makers do is just get one film every two or three years, and that does create problems in terms of working with actors. As far as our own limited experience is concerned we chose the workshop strategy because we felt it would enable us to work with actors in the kind of context we had set up without over-reaching ourselves. I think we'd have been very uneasy about shooting a fiction without having done the work that we've done. We've learned a lot both about the kinds of ways we'd want to work aesthetically but also about some of the practical and psychological issues of day-to-day getting-on with actors in rehearsal and shoot situations.

Andrew Higson: Can you say something about the film seasons planned to accompany the tapes?

Mark Nash: The tapes were commissioned and made for Channel 4, but we made sure that we retained the non-theatrical rights so that we could show the tapes outside of the broadcast context. The Channel 4 screenings are to be accompanied by four feature films which the two *Acting Tapes* will preface. The films will probably be: *Death by Hanging* (directed by Nagisa Oshima, 1968) *Mouchette* (directed by Robert Bresson, 1967), *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (directed by Sergei Komarov, 1924) and *Tout Va Bien* (directed by Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin, 1972). The films will have short introductions which will give some background to the film and their interest in terms of performance. They have been selected because they all involve various kinds of non-naturalistic performance and non-naturalistic cinema but they are not that inaccessible to the audience; they are fairly mainstream films but they raise interesting issues around performance.

James Swinson: For the Channel 4 series we did privilege films that people wouldn't have seen necessarily on TV before and films that we liked and where we felt positive about the strategy that directors had adopted around performance. It obviously didn't make a lot of sense to us, given the limited time available, to show, for instance, '50s Method in performance – *On the Waterfront* or something like that – because

Mark Nash: In addition, there are plans to have a couple of regional events following the screenings, probably at Bristol and in the East Midlands. And also a short season at the National Film Theatre in London. These will involve discussion events and related screenings, where we will show the more popular sorts of films that we've left out of the C4 season.

Andrew Higson: What sort of response have you had from audiences when you've shown the tapes publicly? In particular, how have actors responded to your arguments?

James Swinson: When we've shown the tapes, we've found that actors tend to be either very sympathetic to the argument of the tapes if they are trying to do radical work (at the Tyneside Cinema discussion there was quite a contingent of pro-Brechtian performers) or else they are very offended. The tapes really do upset some performers because they think they are being held personally responsible for a criticism which is being levelled at the film industry! This has often diverted the argument in discussion: in the end, we want to focus on cinema – they tend to divert it into a defence of English stage drama. Although we make reference in the tapes to actors being trained in an inappropriate style for cinema, the job of the tapes isn't to take on the British stage.

Andrew Higson: You did some research on the forms of training at drama schools in Britain. What did you learn?

Mark Nash: Our overall impression was that there was very little contact between film and theatre training. For instance at RADA (the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art) they apparently devote one day in their course to film training, working in front of the camera. Now we've begun to show the tapes around, and actors have talked about their experiences at drama schools, it seems that barriers are breaking down a little – but this is, I suspect, in a rather *ad hoc* fashion. For instance, film students need actors who are prepared to work for free and so you go to drama colleges and you get a group of actors who are prepared to work for free and the performances that they'll produce are the performances that they've been trained in, in their colleges. There are very few situations where people are training specifically for film or TV – although some of the more enlightened drama schools are beginning to realise that most actors are actually going to end up working in TV first, film and theatre second.

Andrew Higson: Are there any schools that actually have courses in Meyerhold's or Kuleshov's training methods?

Mark Nash: Some colleges have that sort of work as an element of their courses, but mainly in the context of theatrical performance. Certainly, there is work on Meyerhold, but not, to our knowledge, anything specifically using Kuleshov and adapting it for film work.

James Swinson: It's also worth pointing out that there are only a very few places which follow a course that's based on the Stanislavsky system with any kind of rigour. The problem is that naturalism and even more so anti-naturalism have not really touched British institutions responsible for training actors. What people will come up with is: 'Yes, we did

this exercise here and there and we did a block in the middle of a course, where someone came in and did a few Stanislavsky exercises with us.' There's a kind of eclecticism in drama schools, and the courses are very much worked out around performances. There isn't any consistent theoretical underpinning to that kind of training.

Mark Nash: I think that what we discovered about drama school training is equally applicable to film school training or art school training. That is to say, the school curriculum develops in a rather *ad hoc* and eclectic manner, and in saying that we are expressing a preference for quite structured, rigorous curricula. In terms of art school you might think of a Bauhaus form of training as opposed to the ones that exist at present. Obviously teachers who are quite sympathetic to the arguments of the tapes may say that the realities of teaching situations are such that you have to pick elements from different performance styles and do what you can. I don't think we'd want to set ourselves completely against that, but the problem is that it can lose the specificity of particular approaches. And I suppose the film schools fare no better than the drama schools. In the National Film School, for instance, they've only fairly recently gone over to producing fiction and they still import actors to work on particular projects. It doesn't have any systematic training on performance and fiction directing which is strange given the perceived strengths and weaknesses of British cinema. I think that's the same for other film schools.

There is also the problem of how change takes place, say, in performance styles. There's a fairly standard version of history which says that changes in acting styles are produced by the playwrights. For instance, in the nineteenth century, certainly, the naturalistic playwrights were in advance of the performance styles of the time and the performance styles were developed and adapted to the needs of the playwrights – and I think to some extent that's still the case. In terms of cinema the kinds of scripts that are still written must in part determine the kinds of performance that are produced in the films.

Andrew Higson: Central to the *Acting Tapes* are the workshops with the performers. How did you actually organise that work?

James Swinson: We worked with the actors for two months, so we had a very extensive period of rehearsal before we got into taping and had already established strong relationships with them in a way that filmmakers don't usually. It was unfortunate that we couldn't show more of that as a process, that the relationship between director and performer had to be constructed. Originally, as we've said, the workshops were going to be a more substantial element, and less constructed, and you'd have been able to compare the actors' progress over a period of time and see how they came up against and dealt with problems that were presented by these different styles and training exercises. The workshop did end up being a bit of a compromise because of union agreements. That's to say, we worked with the actors in rehearsals, then we had to reconstruct that work with crews for the actual shots. It's true to say that, in terms of how the actors coped with them, the exercises were always per-

formed better in rehearsal and had more of a rehearsal feel, had more of a sense of people working, than we were able to convey in the conditions of shooting the workshop sequences that actually ended up in the programme.

Mark Nash: The workshop element was perhaps too ambitious in that we had this notion of showing the training in progress, and of exploring the ideological underpinning. And what we hadn't reckoned with was the cost and the mechanics of doing that. As James said, we opted for a compromise; the idea was that the performances were not to be exemplary. Actors were going to be trying different approaches, which they did with varying degrees of success, and certain passages worked better than others, I think.

Andrew Higson: You do get a good sense of how performance is actually constructed both through the editing and the camerawork, and through the presence of the director – which you clearly foreground in the workshop session, by recording the directions you give to the actors, and by seeing you on camera choreographing their actions and movements. But that then raises the question of how audiences have reacted to the workshop sequences, to seeing actors in training, rather than seeing polished finished performances.

James Swinson: With the workshop sequences we are demanding that the audience does a certain amount of work, and those exercises have worked best when the audience has been prepared to reflect on them and to make its own sense of the relationship between the exercise material and the ideas that are expressed in the archive material. At the Tyneside Festival discussion, one really felt that that happened, that people were prepared to do that work. In other places – well, one really indicative comment is when people say: 'actually, what we would have really liked is to get these actors to do a little narrative performance.' Then they could somehow make sense of it. Their feeling is 'we can't really judge whether these people are good actors or not, or whether this performance is useful or not because the only way we can judge performance is within a play when we know what is really happening.' They don't really want to get to grips with the process of performance itself.

Mark Nash: They want to be entertained and I think, instead of apologising for it, one could put it more positively and say that some audiences are very disturbed with the idea of bad performance and watching people trying and succeeding or failing. As James said, they want the performance to be placed in some fictional context. If you have a sense of people working towards some end, that's fine – but if you don't see the finished achievement then that seems to create problems. And of course, the exercises that we show are all exercises, they are not necessarily incorporated into performances. Historically, it's worth noting that some of Meyerhold's exercises were incorporated into his theatrical performances – but some of them are just general training exercises and would not be easily incorporated into finished performances. If they were it would negate the work that was being done. They are actually exercises which are done separately, so the only way of incorporating



Focusing on the simple things: pouring tea in the *Acting Tapes*.

fiction really would have been to do another tape, which was at that point not within our resources. We deliberately chose extremely basic exercises but some people seem to misunderstand this. They seem to think that we are missing out a level of complexity in focusing on the very simple things of how to peel an orange or how to make a cup of tea or whatever, without taking the point which people like Lee Strasberg and Stanislavsky make: if you can't get those things right then the other more complex requirements will be even more difficult. It's the things that people take for granted, the unconsciousness of entering a room, for instance, which are important in performance. Too often, it's assumed that anybody knows how to enter a room and go over and close a window or whatever, we don't have to think about that. And what we *do* have to think about is building up big emotional statements!

James Swinson: This is also very much a director's problem. It's a question of the degree to which you are aware of how specific an action is, and of the specific qualities which you can build into an action. One of the fundamental things about cinema direction is how you shoot and put together those very basic actions – and it's something that's often overlooked.

Actors who are not trained for cinema cannot content themselves with such an elementary task as how to enter a room, approach a window and open it. Ordinarily such a task is done with a scornful derision, so easy and elementary does it seem. If you ask an actor to perform this task several times you will see that it is performed variously, with different motions, and comes out sometimes better, sometimes worse.

– Lev Kuleshov⁴

Andrew Higson: Did you do the exercises in the order that they are in, in the film? Did you work on Stanislavsky first and Meyerhold second?

James Swinson: Yes, they were done in that order, so as we say in the tapes, in the Stanislavsky section, they went from the most basic kinds of sensory exercises into more complex, conceptual kinds. We actually did more exercises than are shown in the tapes. In fact we went through the whole of both Stanislavsky's and Strasberg's schedule of exercises and then did the same with Meyerhold and Kuleshov.

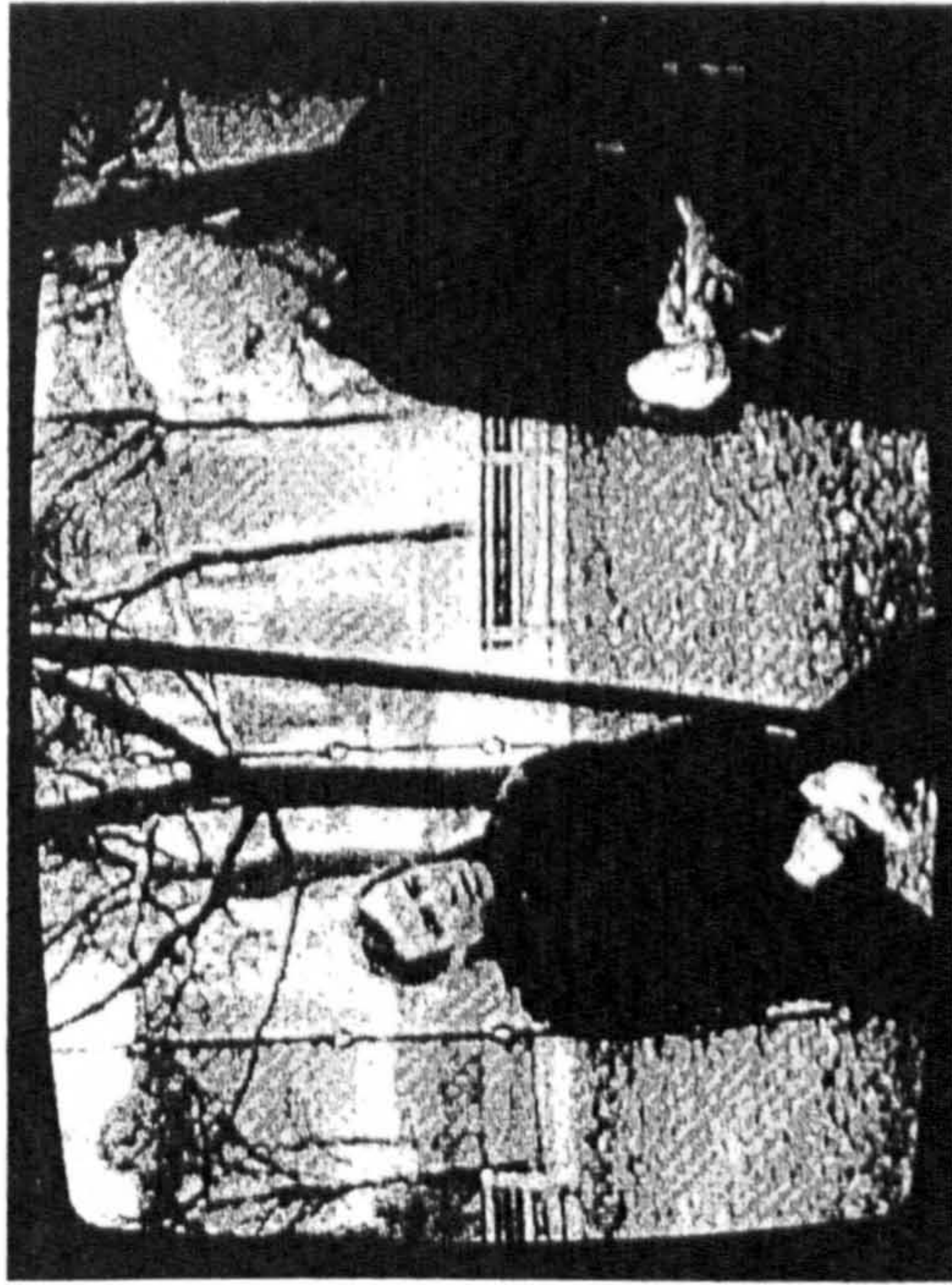
Mark Nash: We decided to work through the exercises in that systematic way because we felt that the performers would really get confused if they had to move between those different styles in a concentrated shoot. It would have become incredibly artificial and confusing to them and to us, especially since, as we discovered, the Strasberg approach is so seductive. In fact, we did end up reducing the actors to tears, not by being aggressive but actually by this process of a kind of therapeutic investment of their own psychology into the exercises they were playing. In fact, we were surprised at the extent to which this psychological approach came as a complete revelation to the performers. We assumed that their training would have given them more of that experience but obviously over here this isn't the case. In America, it definitely is the case, and if you talk to actors who have trained in the States and then come over and work here, they find it extremely difficult given the nature of British theatrical training.

James Swinson: With a lot of the exercises, the concept seems so simple, and yet unless you actually go through them, they are hard to understand. For instance, Stanislavsky's idea of concentration is such a basic idea – you hold back and take your time to think about what you are doing and to get yourself into the mood of what you are doing. That seems such a basic step, but it proved quite difficult for our performers. If you say to an actor 'I want you to walk in and pick that up off the table', immediately, before you can even stop them, they are doing it – you feel



Concentration in the Stanislavsky tradition.

⁴ Lev Kuleshov, op cit.



Marlon Brando improvising with the glove in *On the Waterfront*.

that the performers want to get it over with. Actors don't like repetition. What struck us was that if you keep them working at something they tire incredibly easily, and things start to fall apart, and the performance itself gets worse and worse. Also, it is very hard to represent the basic notion of concentration in the Stanislavsky tradition in a cinematic way – basically, you have someone sitting there doing nothing!

Mark Nash: Working with the actors definitely clarified our understanding of the Method. It enabled us to see much more precisely and be much more critical of performances in American cinema – particularly, for instance, the move from early Brando to later, mannered, Brando, or James Dean's mannerisms and Meryl Streep's mannerisms. A tension develops when American cinema begins to concentrate more and more on performance. Having worked with actors and got a concrete sense of the process of that training, you could register it going on much more in the performances in the films.

Andrew Higson: The tapes also work in that way for the spectator, by drawing attention to the details of different performance styles. Some of the sequences are very powerful in this respect. I'm thinking particularly of the passage where you work on a scene from *On The Waterfront*, where Marlon Brando and Eva Marie Saint are talking in a park. Brando is playing with one of her gloves, unconsciously, it seems. It's a very clear example of the way in which the Method uses objects to enable the actors to concentrate, to take their minds off the fact that they are performing for an audience.

James Swinson: There's an interesting passage in an interview with Elia Kazan (who directed the film) where he talks about those moments in his films of the '50s which derived from work at the Actors Studio; he discusses in some detail the transaction with the glove by Brando in *On The Waterfront*:

There's another example of this use of objects in a scene that was partly accidental and partly the talent of the actor who was in it: that scene in On the Waterfront where Brando is walking Eva Marie Saint home, rather against her will; and she on the one hand is attracted to him, and on the other hand wishes that he'd leave her alone because there's a social stigma attached to him, so she'd rather lose him, and at the same time she's attracted to him and would rather keep him. And he, too, is attracted to her, but he's also shy, and tense about connecting with her because he was responsible for the death of her brother. But mainly Brando wants to keep her, despite her desire to get rid of him. As they were walking along, she accidentally dropped her glove; and Brando picked the glove up; and by holding it, she couldn't get away – the glove was his way of holding her. Furthermore, whereas he couldn't, because of this tension about her brother being killed, demonstrate any sexual or loving feeling towards her, he could towards the glove. And he put his hand inside the glove, you remember, so that the glove was both his way of holding on to her against her will, and at the same time he was able to express, through the glove, something he couldn't express to her directly. So the object, in that sense, did it all.⁵

⁵ Elia Kazan, quoted in Michel Ciment, *Kazan on Kazan*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1973, pp 45-46.

improvised, which is why the camera is in wide shot. What we see is Brando's response to the scene, given his training. It wasn't a scripted performance.

Andrew Higson: Another sequence which brings home very clearly the function of a particular style of performance training is at the end of the second tape, where one of your workshop performers is shown speaking Shakespeare while cleaning her teeth! The amazing thing is that the obstacle in no way affects the articulation of the English-trained actor's voice. Is that an exercise which you developed yourselves to make that point?

James Swinson: We got the idea from an Edward Bond workshop. I think that he would be ready to admit that it was quite Brechtian in its influence. Brecht has a whole series of exercises where he deliberately goes out of his way to give people such resistances. It really knocked us out that there was no way that cleaning your teeth was any impediment to the text.

Mark Nash: Bond uses those exercises to demonstrate the materialist approach to acting, and the thing that struck us about them was actually the reverse. He was putting the National Theatre actors through them and they had no problems and the audience was amused by it – but they didn't get the point that even under fire the actors could still produce these speeches.

Andrew Higson: The tapes stick very closely to two performance traditions. Can you say why you didn't look at other work – post-war developments in the West, for instance, or the Commedia or vaudeville traditions, or Eastern traditions of performance, such as Kabuki or Noh?

Mark Nash: Part of the original proposal that went into Channel 4 was for a larger series of programmes, in which some of these other areas would have been explored. It seemed that the anti-naturalistic traditions

in both Japan and India could be linked into their cinemas, but then we'd have had to look at those cinemas in some detail. This seemed like taking on too much, and we decided to focus on the European traditions. On the other hand, we didn't feel that more recent developments in theatre, such as Grotowski's work or the American theatre movements had influenced film, and I think that you can trace that to the way the film industry has developed. There are certain points in film history where theatre and film have come together quite closely – around the coming of sound, for instance. And possibly at certain points in avant-garde film-making too, where there have been cross-overs.

James Swinson: The original proposal followed up almost every conceivable discourse around performance. We wanted to question in a much more analytical way what performance is. We were also very drawn to the anti-naturalism of art performance work.

NATURALISM AND ANTI-NATURALISM

Andrew Higson: Although the implicit argument of the *Acting Tapes* is greatly influenced by Brecht, you are in fact sympathetic towards Stanislavsky.

James Swinson: Brecht himself had some very positive things to say about Stanislavsky, and really what we discovered when we looked at Stanislavsky in detail was very much the sense of a moment when someone got to grips with a whole cultural area. What Stanislavsky says really is: 'let's be systematic about how you train actors, let's be systematic about how you perform on stage.' That's very attractive in an area where people are so undisciplined in what they say and do. It goes back to this whole thing about eclecticism: when it comes to performance, almost anything goes, and it's very useful to go back to this kind of rigour. I suppose we were slightly surprised at just how rigorous it was. We also feel very strongly that it is hard to understand anti-naturalism, Brechtian acting and so on – however familiar we may feel we are with it – without the context of naturalism, without actually understanding that. Even people like Strasberg, as the advocate of a certain kind of naturalism, show an unexpected sympathy to Brecht. In one of his books, Strasberg describes going to Berlin to see the Berliner Ensemble and being quite knocked out at how naturalistic Brecht's work was. He describes it in detail, and then talks about the way in which Brecht actually breaks with that:

For years everyone has read that the Brecht Theatre goes in for something called 'alienation', which means that the audience is encouraged not to be involved or to believe in the play. The intention supposedly is to make the audience see the production simply as a theatrical performance. Well, I waited for 'alienation' to be used in rehearsals, and I was rather shocked because the first thing that the directors said to the actors was something like this: 'Now, please, make it realer. A little realer. What the hell are you doing there? Don't make it so stylized. Don't do all that theatricality. Drop that

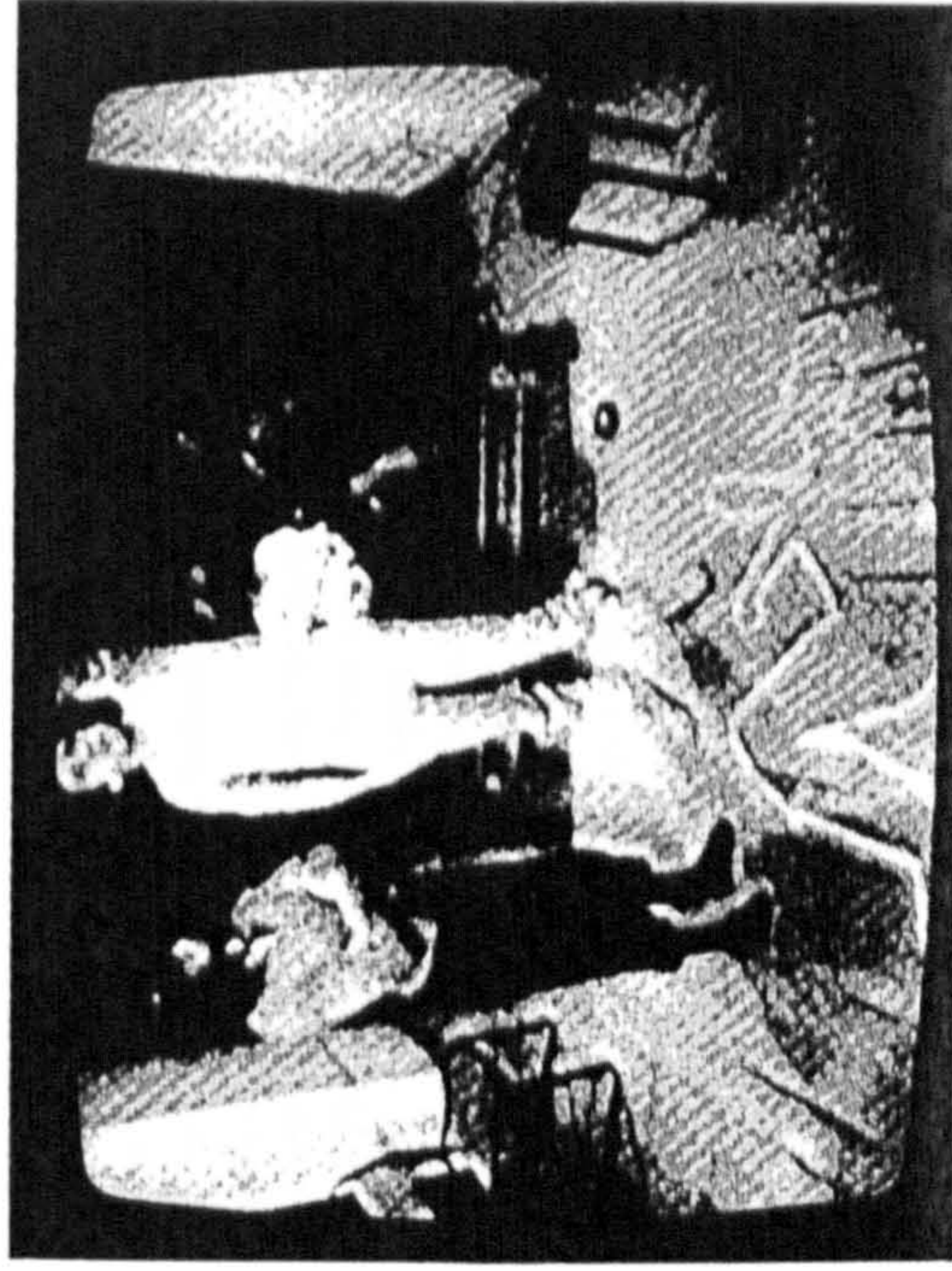
actor's tone. This is the real thing. Just tell it to him.' And then they would explain very simply and try to show the actor how to speak very naturally.

*Their acting was the simplest acting I have ever seen in my life. I would not have the courage to permit actors to be as simple as these people demand that their actors be. The acting is stripped of all mannerisms, of anything whose purpose is to show the actor's skill or his special talent. It is character acting in its simplest form. The actors are usually well chosen. The character is clearly stated. The actors then with the utmost simplicity and at times the utmost lack of theatricality – which in itself comes across as a kind of theatricality – act out the events and the situations in the play.*⁶

James Swinson: I do think that an understanding of naturalism is particularly important because over the last ten or fifteen years there's been so much talk in theatre and film about returning to Brecht, and quoting Brecht as a source, but, as we see it, in this country at least, people don't have the benefit of a naturalistic mainstream against which to judge it.

Andrew Higson: That quotation from Strasberg, on how naturalistic he found Brecht, is exactly how I felt about those sequences in the tapes where you explore Brechtian demonstrative acting – particularly about the sequence where you elaborate on the suicide scene from *Kuhle Wampe*, and also the 'demonstration' of a customer talking to a sales assistant in a shop. The exercises did seem very naturalistic, partly, I think, because you've seen those sorts of ideas in so much theatre and television work and in some independent film work – in a sense, it's been naturalised. But it's also partly because it is at that moment in the tapes where you have a little narrative sequence: it's much less a workshop session and much more a little fiction.

James Swinson: The work that we did on Brecht came down really to working on the suicide scene. It was incredibly instructive because it was the area with which the actors had most trouble, when you might have



Brechtian acting: an elaboration on the suicide scene from *Kuhle Wampe*.

thought that they were at last going to get into something. The actors were actually putting the pressure on us to do a bit of a performance, to act out a little dramatic sequence. They were getting slightly edgy about doing these vignettes in the training exercises, and you do find that the resources that actors easily revert to are fairly limited. That's not a criticism of those actors – in some ways they were very courageous because they were prepared to let themselves be seen, warts and all, in a quite unprotected situation. But what we found was that those basic things that Brecht demanded in terms of social observation and so on, are things that actors are not used to doing. It surprised us how much we had to feed them the social observation, because they didn't have it: that specificity of people's social attitudes, how a person might react in a given context....

Mark Nash: I would agree with Andrew that part of the problem was that those Brechtian exercises were narrativised – but then, looking back at the exercises that we found in Brecht's notes, they all actually involve narrative elements; they are little scenes between two people; or the actors are required to use objects but usually with some kind of connotation immediately being established. That was obviously his interest in focusing attention, but the use of narrative doesn't quite fit into the scheme that we were working with.

Andrew Higson: How did the actors cope with the two different traditions of training? Were they much happier with the more psychological, emotional demands of the naturalist exercises?

James Swinson: No, not necessarily. All having been trained as English actors, it was both very hard for them to deal with the more external kinds of performance, and hard for them to get into the part, or cope with the different concepts of concentration, and so on.

If we observe a skilled worker in action, we notice the following in his movements: an absence of superfluous unproductive movements; rhythm; the correct positioning of the body's centre of gravity; stability.... The artist should also be an engineer, and have an engineer's knowledge of the mechanics of the body. Like the skilled worker on the production line, the actor must aim for economy, for maximum productivity in his work.

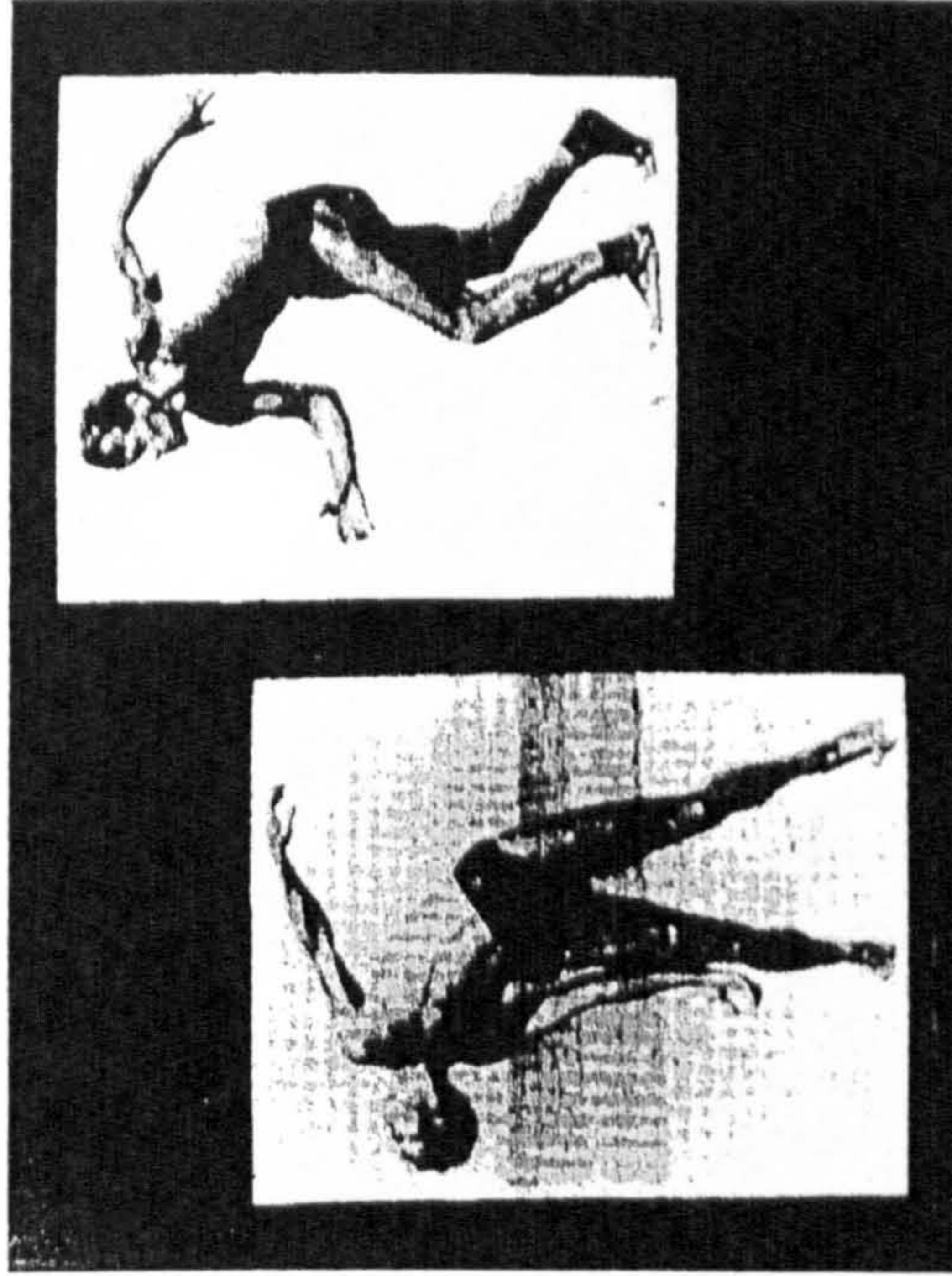
– V E Meyerhold⁷

People performing organised efficient work appear best on the screen.

– Lev Kuleshov⁸

Andrew Higson: Your actor in some ways is more fluid than you really want him to be. That's fairly clear, I think, in the Meyerhold exercise, 'Shooting the bow'. He never quite manages the intensity of action, the dynamism of the body, that is evident in the stills of the Meyerhold performer doing the same exercise. As you say in the tapes, one is struck by the energy and expressiveness of the Soviet actors of this period.

Mark Nash: There is a historical side to that, in that the physical exercise training that was very popular in the Soviet Union was a kind of *... as well not necessarily with weights, but it was certainly*



The actor as gymnast: stills of Meyerhold's exercises.

gymnastics-orientated. You can see that in the stills of the Meyerhold performer as well as in images of other performers. Our actor was trained as a dancer, and dancers, I would have thought, are less concerned with building muscles in that visible way. It's two different aesthetics of the body really.

James Swinson: There was a series of exercises in Meyerhold's repertoire that our performers just didn't have the strength to perform – where you have to pick each other up and so on. Of course, there are lifts in dance, but this is rather different from picking someone up as a dead weight from the floor. In dance, you are generally assisted. The Meyerholdian notion of actually doing work establishes a relationship with the labourer who is used to carrying heavy loads which are picked up as dead weight. That's very different from dance. Some of our performers did want to dance in a sense, because in dance you create the illusion of weight, or movement.

Andrew Higson: Rather than the illusion of real work.

Mark Nash: The point of those exercises is to convey the notion of physical co-ordination. In a sense, it's a kind of externalised version of concentration in physical co-ordination; it's inner and outer, if you like, and that was the key point.

James Swinson: Yes – we wanted to draw attention to that very physical use of the body in the Meyerholdian tradition of performance, and to juxtapose that both with the methods of working in the first tape on naturalism, and with the way the anti-naturalist tradition has been incorporated into some independent film work.

Andrew Higson: The way in which you valorise this tradition does seem to assume a certain form of narrative cinema, embodying narrative energy, action and so on.

⁷ V E Meyerhold, quoted in Edward Braun (ed), *Meyerhold on Theatre*, Eyre Methuen, London, see pp 197-200.

⁸ Lev Kuleshov, op cit.

'Shooting the bow': the male body on display.

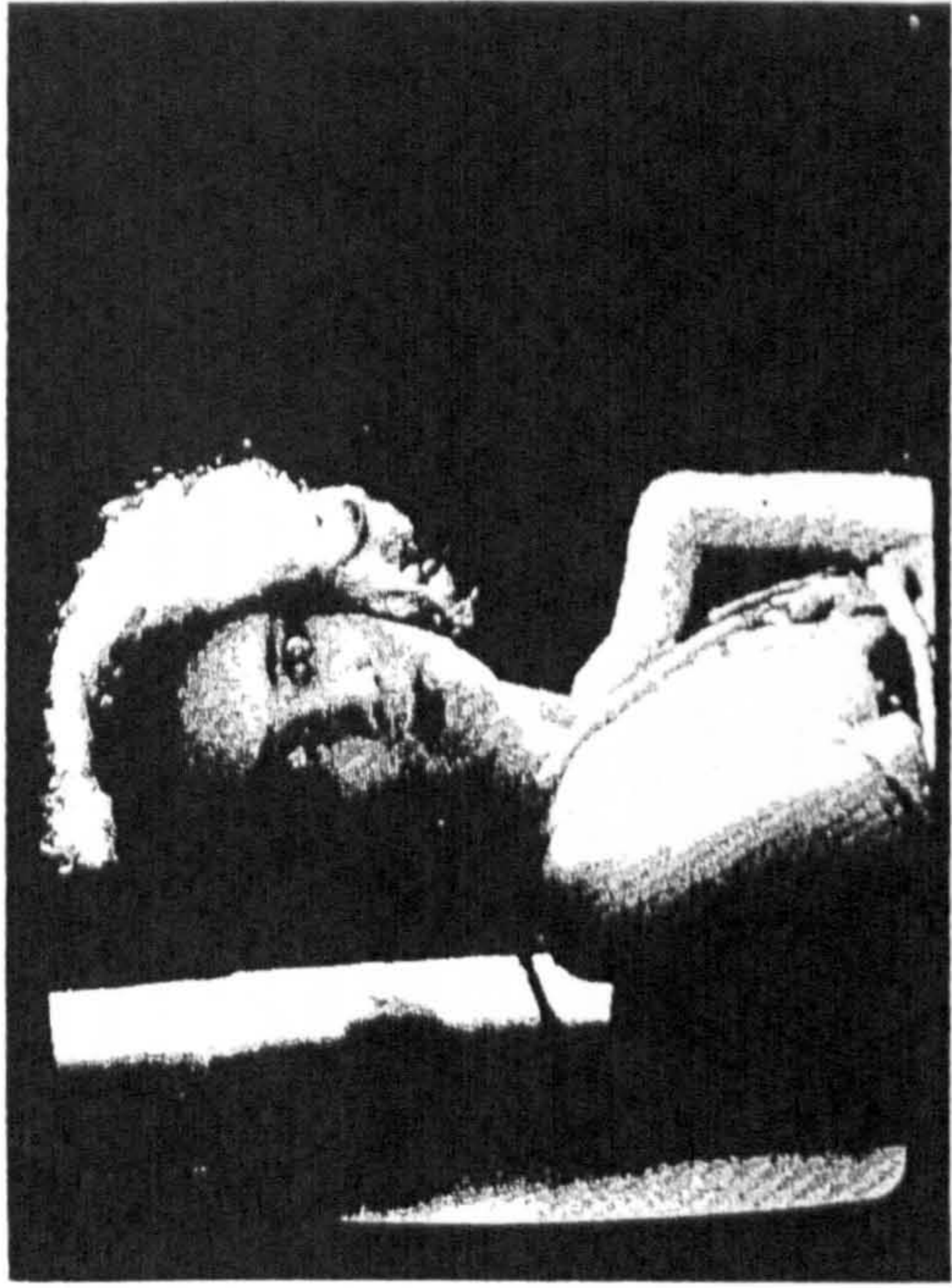


Mark Nash: Yes, that's true. And implicit in this is the belief that, as Raymond Williams has stated on a number of occasions, realist narrative cinema, and realism in general, still has a lot of life left in it as a form, despite all the deconstructions and reconstructions that one would like to do on it. This connects back to the points that we made earlier about Brecht being both an anti-naturalist and a naturalist.

It's really in the spirit of this line of debate that we have selected the films for the National Film Theatre season: for instance, Richard Woolley's *Telling Tales*, and Nick Burton and Anthea Kennedy's *At The Fountainhead*. They're all from a particular period in the '70s when there was an attempt to re-define performance styles. Burton and Kennedy, for instance, use different performers to play the same character, and there's an attempt to re-work narrative cinema and to some extent question the role of performance within that. I don't think in the end that it works successfully, partly because they use actors who are not secure in the new style, and partly because they too perhaps are not clear about the kind of cinema that they want to produce. It's a question of constantly trying to construct a cinema for the future.

Andrew Higson: For yourselves, the way in which you foreground the dynamism and energy of Kuleshov performance styles suggests a nuanced call for a cinema of strong narrative action, which does carry with it certain assumptions about gender roles. That is to say, in the Hollywood tradition, narrative action is almost always weighted as a *masculine* pursuit. Indeed, there is an emphasis in the tapes on the male body in action, the male body on display . . .

Mark Nash: You're obviously right about Hollywood cinema, but in Soviet theatre and cinema, those codes are not sexed in the same way. We have both the male and the female performers in the second tape wearing uniforms, which in part is a reference back to the uniforms which men



Soviet actress Alexandra Khoklova: the dynamism of the female performer.

and women in the theatre movement wore; and the cult of physical dynamism involved both men and women. Khoklova⁹ herself was extremely dynamic and energetic. What you're saying indicates the problem of reading Soviet cinema of the 1920s from the point of view of the present.

There's another issue in relation to masculinity which might be worth bringing out here, in relation to our emphasis on male actors in the first tape. There is an argument about the role of women in the Method, and the tendency of the Method to reinforce stereotypes of maleness, and in particular newly emergent post-war definitions of masculinity.

Andrew Higson: Yes, in some ways you can read the Method as a re-investment of emotionality into the narrative film, where emotionality is conventionally associated with the feminine.

(The Method) emphasises the inner nature of the actor's self, the truth of their private emotion, as the prime source of artistic creativity.

—Harold Clurman¹⁰

Mark Nash: In that sense, the men become more feminised and emotional. And the role of women becomes slightly problematical, because it's not clear what the female character is supposed to be carrying in terms of the film.

James Swinson: In fact, it's not until the '60s that the Method has any impact on female performance in Hollywood. Then, in the '70s and '80s, reacting to the influence of feminism, Hollywood tries to construct new roles for women. They fall back on women actors trained in the Method school. Even so, these same women actors have pointed out that these roles are still few and far between.

⁹ Alexandra Khoklova, a Soviet actress prominent in Kuleshov's films and a founder member of the Kuleshov Workshop.

¹⁰ Harold Clurman, quoted in Christine Edwards, *The Stanislavsky Heritage*, New York University Press, 1965, p. 269.

TAPING THE PERFORMANCE/ THE PERFORMANCE OF THE TAPES

Andrew Higson: How did you decide on the strategies for taping the exercises?

James Swinson: We deliberately chose a static camera, and generally the exercises were shot in wide shot; we didn't want to dramatise the exercises because that would have complicated the whole relation of the camera to the performers and the exercises. This does seem to give some audiences a problem with the workshop material, because they expect the conventions of dominant cinema and TV. We could, say, have shot the exercise of drinking a cup of tea from five or six different angles and intercut them. But we felt this would have given a level of drama, through the camera and editing, which would have obscured the exercise as it was performed. That was definitely a problem, and we chose a different style of camerawork in the two programmes for filming the exercises.

Andrew Higson: I did wonder after a first viewing of the tapes whether there was something of a conflict between your argument for what we might call a montage cinema, and, on the other hand, your use of sequence shots and wide shots and so on. But, in fact, the first tape seems to depend much more on the sequence shot while the second tape builds up towards montage editing of the performance.

Mark Nash: Yes, that was the intention....

Andrew Higson: One way of describing the structure of the tapes is that they work as a montage of attractions, so that, even if you have got sequence shots of the workshop performances, they are always montaged against a variety of other materials; so you don't lose the montage aspect of it, even though you are at one stage talking about naturalism.

Was it an integral part of your strategy to use video? Was there any particular reason for not using film?

Mark Nash: We chose to use video because of our extended rehearsal method of working, and in fact we initially worked with a low-band camera and did our own taping, before we got the broadcast crew in. It was much easier and more flexible to work with video.

James Swinson: Also we wanted to avoid the fetishistic film image. Cinema lighting for instance could have made the images much more attractive, where with high-key TV lighting, it's almost like you're not trying to hide anything!

Andrew Higson: In some ways, I'm reminded of Bazinian aesthetics: the idea of not dramatising the performance, of using wide shots and sequence shots, and high-key TV lighting and so on - all this seems like an attempt to 'allow' the unity and integrity of the performance to unfold in front of the camera. It's quite close to certain tendencies in cinematic naturalism, although that closeness is problematised, as we've already noted, by your montage strategies.

Mark Nash: We like to think that a strength of the tapes is that they do, through their montage and juxtaposition of different material, analyse

the performances - so that it's not just the voice-over directing our attentions. That does link in with the problems of audience, because the more familiar an audience is with the procedures of experimental avant-garde cinema the easier it is to make sense of the movement through the material. So, it's a familiar reading device for some people, while for others it's confusing, which is partly why we decided to use the voice-over strategy as part of the montage of the tapes. I think we do, in a sense, encourage contradictory readings: we encourage the tapes to be read as straightforward documentary, but we also encourage them to be worked upon as both a deconstruction and a reconstruction.

James Swinson: We would like to have allowed the audience to be more reflective on the material, by presenting it without the level of voice-over that there is accompanying the archival material. But when we showed it to various people in its early stages, they were not clear about what was actually going on in the exercises and so on. The material itself was so unfamiliar to most audiences that they wanted much more assistance in how to get into it. Certainly when we showed some of the early material to the Commissioning Editors at Channel 4, they were quite categorical that in order to put it out on the Channel more explanation would have to be gone into.

Andrew Higson: So there is a sense of television professionalism, making demands in terms of what is possible and what isn't possible on TV, and to some extent cutting against some of the assumptions of independent film- and video-makers.

Mark Nash: Certainly the tapes bear the traces of a strategy that hasn't been entirely worked out!

James Swinson: And we have ended up with more of an educational feel than we had originally intended, I think.

Andrew Higson: Perhaps we can take up these issues of mode of address, audiences, and particularly this notion of the tapes producing contradictory readings. Personally, I find the voice-over one of the more problematic aspects. At times, it seems too close to that familiar form of TV discourse where images simply illustrate the voice-over, while the voice itself carries the 'significant' information. As such, it also ties back to the instructional, didactic documentary tradition, the *Housing Problems* tradition, if you like.

Mark Nash: I think that's accurate. It was a strategy that we felt obliged to adopt at a fairly late stage. Having accepted the argument that the tapes needed introducing, then we essentially adopted the modes that TV already had. In a sense, we needed to be more conservative, and produce something which was pacier, so that now we go through the images much more quickly. It was felt that faster cutting would tie in better with the assumed attention span of TV audiences.

Andrew Higson: Still, that conventional relationship between voice-over, and images and stills which simply illustrate the voice-over, seems at times almost to be a *resistance* to the production of meaning.

Mark Nash: I know what you're getting at, but it was somehow beyond us to find a way of introducing what we felt to be enough visual material

and structuring it to create meaning without leaving the images there too long, and losing the interest of the viewer . . . It's a question of how you anchor the images, and we anchored them in a quite conventional way. If we could have found another strategy for introducing and contextualising the material, then we would have changed it. But the only strategy that we did find ended up being too long and unmanageable for a TV audience.

Andrew Higson: I'm again very much reminded of debates within the documentary movement in Britain in the '30s and '40s, particularly the conflicts between on the one hand the Edgar Anstey/instructional documentary/*Housing Problems* position, and on the other hand, the idea of a poetic montage of associations, which we can identify as the Humphrey Jennings position. In some ways, Anstey's criticisms of Jennings' *Listen to Britain* as being the rarest piece of fiddling since Nero let Rome burn are similar to the demands made on you from the point of view of TV professionalism: Anstey felt the film didn't work as good propaganda because it didn't fix its meanings strongly enough, and the poetic ambiguity of the montage needed to be contained by a voice-over.

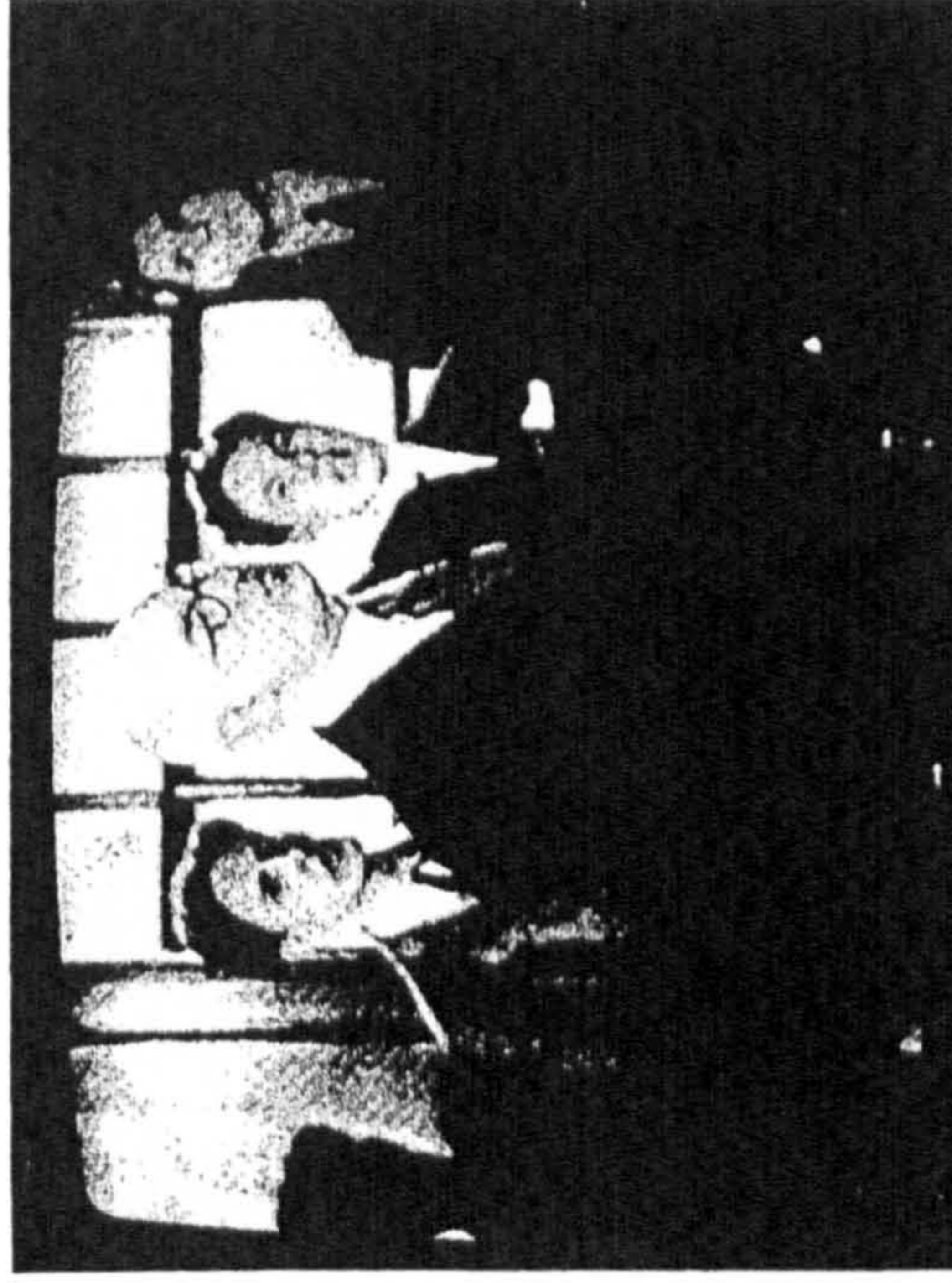
Mark Nash: That's an interesting observation, and in some ways it connects back to a dilemma that I felt when I was working at *Screen* and was more involved in those sorts of debates. One was arguing for more poetic and indirect ways of stating things, I suppose, but at the same time one was very committed to this informational-critical mode of address. In fact, theoretical writing had to be quite rigorous and systematic about the poetic. I think you're probably right to say that that contradiction is there in the tapes and not entirely worked through. We were attracted to the poetic montage approach, and we were more drawn to that as the work on the tapes developed. But at the same time there was a commitment to a more straightforward way of communicating information. Perhaps if we'd been working in a different kind of slot where the programmes would have been presented within a contextualising discourse, we might have been able to play down the informational-critical discourse within the tapes, and be less didactic.

I think the reasons for the tensions within the tapes are also a reflection of the fact that the independent sector as a whole has failed to find a way out of the problem of mode of address. On the one hand, people are drawn into film-making by the artistic possibilities of making creative statements, or however you might formulate that; at the same time, they also have a series of political and theoretical commitments that they want to honour. There's always this oscillation between the bad conscience and the good conscience of politics and information.

Andrew Higson: I'd like to look at another aspect of the conventions of the voice-over as used in the tapes. Early on in the first tape, you have a wonderful extract from a training film for English actors and actresses.

James Swinson: Yes, it's a wartime film called *I Want To Be An Actress*, in which you see these amazing voice-training classes where the actors are being educated to speak Oxbridge English.

Andrew Higson: That then leads into James on voice-over asking 'why



Voice training in *I Want To Be An Actress*.

is it so embarrassing to see a film with English actors . . . ? Once English actors speak, not only do they speak with an accent and a class accent, but they are definitely trying to say "I am speaking". So you have this interesting counterpoint between James' non-Oxbridge English accent and the RADA voices of the actors in the training film. But I'm afraid I find it embarrassing the minute James starts speaking on the voice-over! It's a question of conventions and expectations again: although you use your voices rather than a professional actor to read the voice-over, you do in the end 'mimic' professional conventions. But I don't feel that you do it very successfully in terms of where you breathe, where you pause, where you lay the stress in the speech.

James Swinson: We didn't want to use a professional presenter, because we felt that adds another level of performance. Also, because the voice-over is constructed so much as an argument, we felt we should give it our own voices. Obviously, we wanted the voices to be audible and so on, but, in the same way that we didn't want to use professional presenters, we didn't want to work too much on our own voices. I suppose, though, that this is another place in which we were cornered by the conventions. TV professionalism demands that you perform voice-overs in a certain kind of way, which is actually completely against my style of speaking!

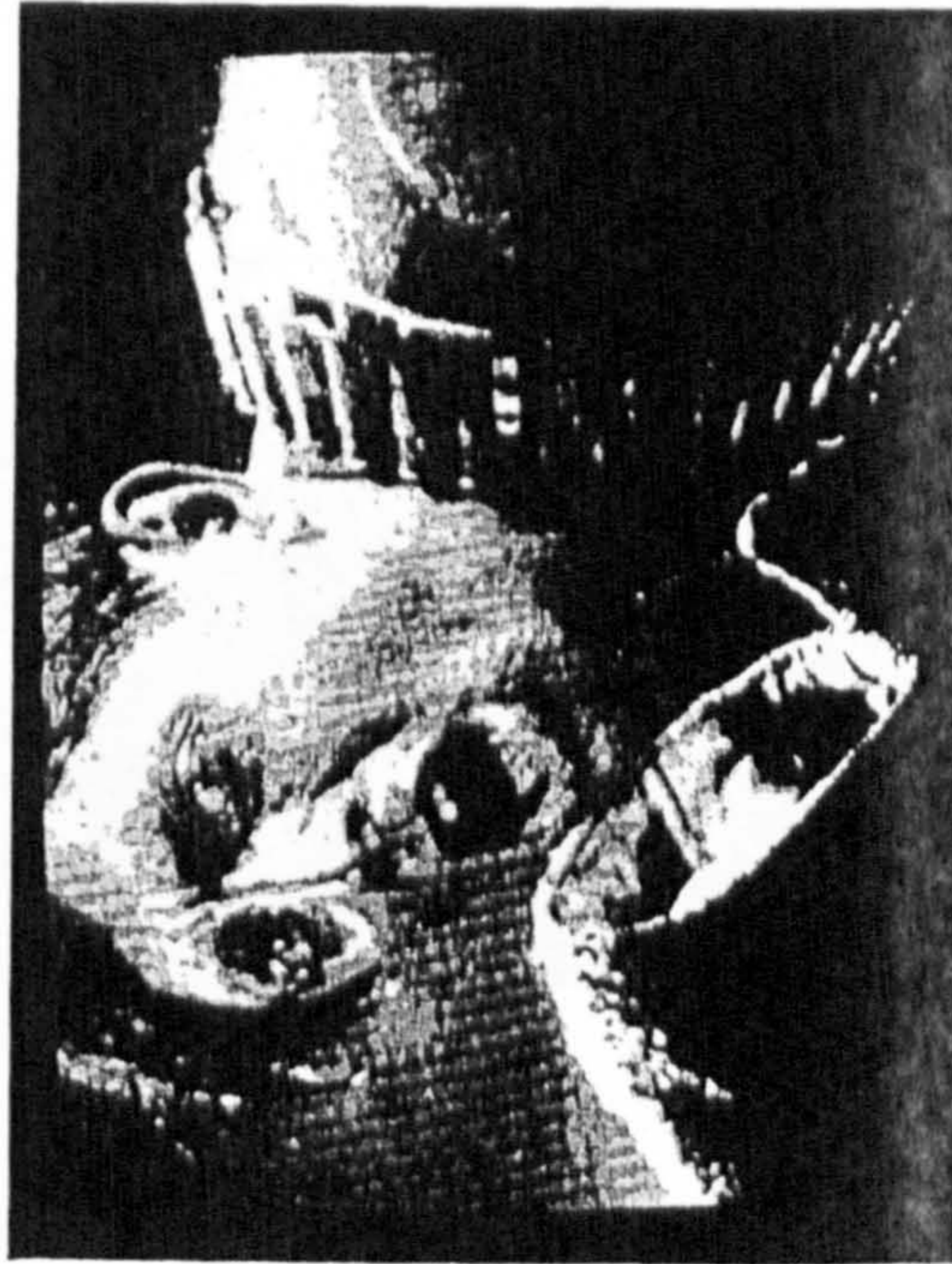
LOST TRADITIONS

Andrew Higson: In some ways, the project of the tapes can be seen as an attempt to re-construct lost traditions of performance, and one of the dangers in such a project must be avoiding a simple fetishisation of them. But in the end, the tapes do avoid fetishising the performance.

Rather than there being an incredible sense of presence – the spectacle of the performance, there in front of us – there's much more of a sense of loss foregrounded in the construction of the performance. That sense of loss is very much a product, I think, of how you use the music: it's very 'evocative' music, it almost has a memory built into it, partly because of the echo you use, and partly because of the repetition in the music track. This is one of the more poetic aspects of the tapes – but immediately, that whole debate about the ambiguity of meaning is opened up again: how are we supposed to read the 'evocative' music? How should we react to the sense of loss? How do we avoid the problem of nostalgia?

At times, in fact, I felt I was watching a sort of 'Left Art Cinema', which celebrates moments of Eisenstein, moments of Brecht. And rather than analysing what is going on in terms of performance in the extracts of *October* that you use, there seems to be much more a sense of recognition: we've seen this before, we know that it's important, we know that it has come out of the post-revolutionary Soviet context. The pleasure of watching this sequence is actually less the pleasure of learning something new, than of recognising the objects of desire of a left conscience. Again, in relation to this particular film extract, my response is very much determined by the use of the music, which, by the time that we listen to it at this point in the second tape, has become 'strangely familiar'.

Mark Nash: When we were working with the soundtrack here, we tried a number of different versions of the music, and we had a long discussion about how elegiac it could be. It seemed inappropriate to make it too rousing, using major chords and so on, so it's set in the minor, and it has that elegiac feel. Implicitly, I suppose, it reflects how we feel about that post-revolutionary period: it's a heroic period, and very formative in our ideas, but at the same time it's very much in the past. So the tapes try to



Left Art Cinema? A shot from *October* quoted in the *Acting Tapes*.

take us back to the period and make it present. People may object to the nostalgia, but in a way I think it's justified.

Andrew Higson: There's also a sort of celebration of constructivist design in the tapes, which presumably ties in with your feelings about this period.

Mark Nash: Yes that's right. That period is so important, and so much went on that has been forgotten, or simply isn't stated: just think of the people that didn't make it through the purges, including Meyerhold. I was very aware, when I went to Moscow, of this generation which has completely disappeared: the buildings are no longer there, there are just a few survivors left, and various artefacts – the photographs, the films, the paintings. So all this is a specific connotation of the way we constructed the tapes. And it applies as much to the first tape too, since we would want to make similar comments about Stanislavsky and theatre history.

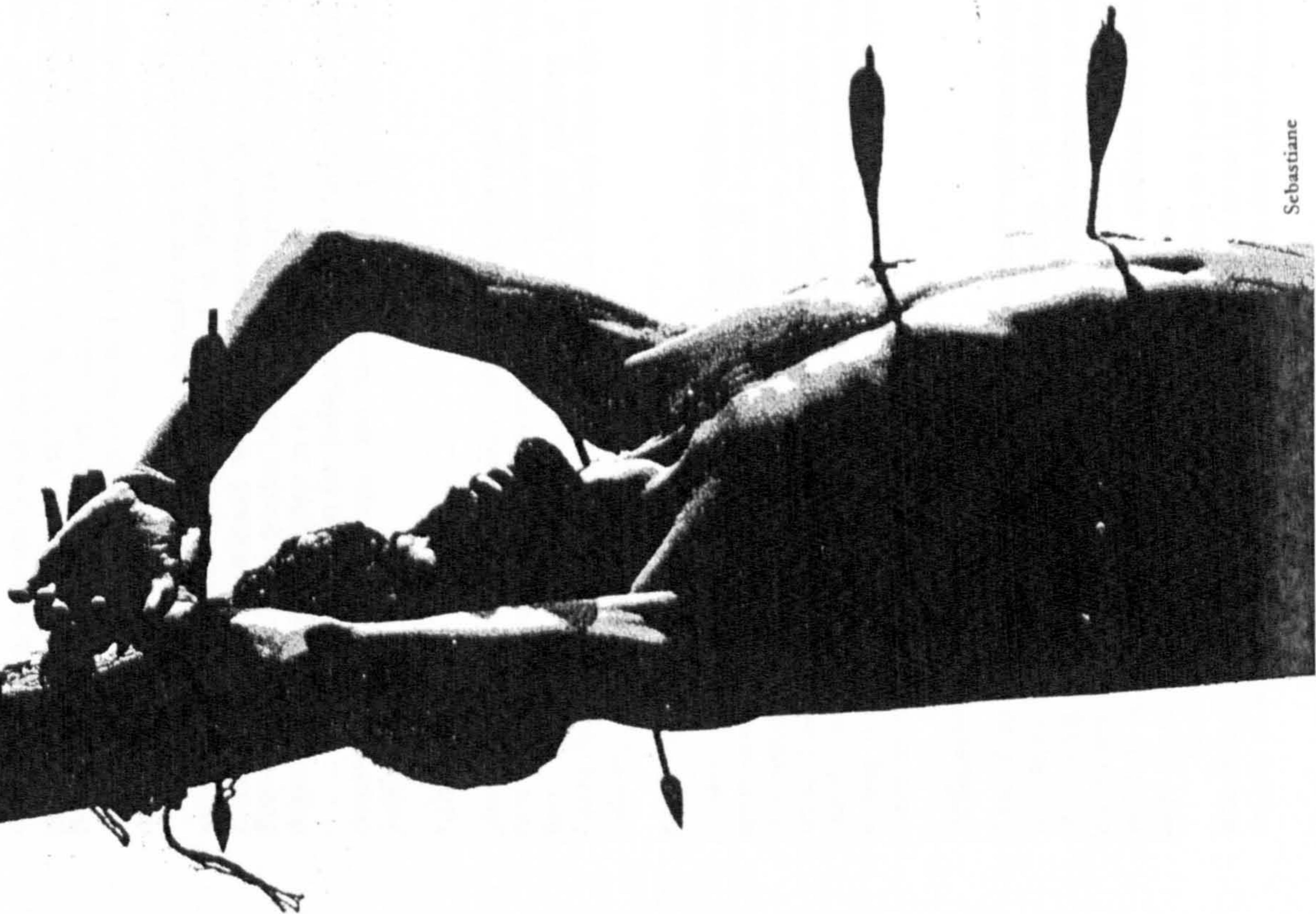
Andrew Higson: What we're saying, then, is that the ways in which the spectator is asked to engage with the work of the tapes are actually quite complex. Firstly, there's the overall strategy of the montage of materials, which demands a fairly sophisticated attempt to hold the different elements together, and which risks being ambiguous. Secondly, there are the more specific demands made on the spectator by the voice-over, in terms of an auditory, observational engagement. You don't *identify*, rather you're kept at a distance, in the position of the observer. But thirdly, there is the seduction of identification: I kept finding myself being seduced into what kept promising to be, but in the end resisted being, a colourful naturalistic world of the actors training. I found myself identifying with the actors in the workshop sections, both as coherent personalities, who become more developed as we get to know them, and as progressively more complex actants within the drama of these bizarre experiences which you, the directors, put them through. As the exercises develop into narrative sequences, the spectator is incorporated into what promises to be a complete and coherent fictional world. But then that plenitude is broken down – the camera pans to reveal the sound engineer . . . You constantly refuse to complete a performance, undermining our empathetic engagement, and, precisely, revealing the construction of performance.

Mark Nash: We did try to produce points of identification, then to undercut them, or frame them, or show them as constructions, and then move back into identification. It goes back to the debates around Brecht in the '70s, and the argument that alienation is never a question of simply destroying identification, but a question of creating an identification and then displacing it, but constantly coming back to it. As a strategy, it's the nearest we've got to a formulation of how to do TV.

The *Acting Tapes* will be screened with a season of related films on Channel Four's *Eleventh Hour* slot and at the National Film Theatre in London during January and February 1986.

INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

Mark Nash



Sebastiane

In *Dancing Ledge*, Derek Jarman develops a view of British Cinema, a tradition of theatricality: Powell, Russell, Jarman himself and his 'neo-romantic', 'neo-decadent' friends and colleagues. This is an interesting lineage. In the notes which follow, Jarman's films are not necessarily exemplary, but they are important pointers as to what that cinema might be.

spectatorship

Who is the spectator of a Jarman film, or rather to whom are the films addressed? *Sebastiane* for instance appears to appeal to a male, homosexual viewer. However in its use of the codes of classical painting and its care to distinguish masculine and feminine positions a more complex statement is being made. Naked becomes nude. It is involved in literalising the sexuality implicit in much religious iconography and putting that into tension with the expectations of cinematic narrative.

sexuality: *Sebastiane*

A band of Roman soldiers banished to a wilderness of dune and seashore, camping out in some ruined buildings. Homoerotic in its presentation and framing of the male body according to the codes of classical painting and those of the modern 'artistic' nude derived from them (Mantegna, Tom of Finland?).

The diegesis in fact presents this group as predominantly heterosexual, verbally fantasising about Roman whores. This is counterpointed to a homosexual relationship, ambivalently celebrated in a 'love sequence' on the one hand, and the problematic emotions which Sebastian provokes: compassion from Justin, predatory sexuality from the Captain. In the eyes of the group as a whole, Sebastian is perversely both feminine and Christian. Transgressing the group's norms he has to be eliminated.

Sexuality in film however is not just a question of what is shown, but *how* it is shown. The film paradoxically is rather chaste in its direct presentation of sex. This 'chastity' is connected with the eroticisation of male bodies in the look of the camera, a look which is not developed intersubjectively. Rather we, the audience, are developed as voyeurs, as desiring these male bodies.

This look is displaced away from the body onto landscape, which has effects in terms of both narrative and mise-en-scène. Jarman uses a restricted range of shots: extreme close-up, extreme long shot, and medium shot. The framing is sometimes carefully eroticising, while at others completely indifferent to the bodies it is filming.

Sebastiane sets up a series of structural oppositions: homo-, hetero-sexual; masculine, feminine; Roman, Christian. It operates a series of narrative delays with the relaxed approach of the 'home movie': the looseness of the editing, the length of individual scenes and the relative arbitrariness of which scene follows which. As the series of terms is elaborated, Sebastian's death becomes inevitable, yet the climax – his overtly sexualised martyrdom – is delayed.

performance

'The cinema I love hardly exists in this country... it will have "real" people not Equity members who will be characters, not "ciphers" which is the mid-Atlantic way'. Jarman in *Dancing Ledge*, p.234)

In true avant-garde fashion, Derek Jarman's films use friends, artists, performers of various kinds, even actors, though they rarely have to 'act'. I share his distaste for mid-Atlantic acting. Certainly there are problems in using actors trained in theatrical and non-cinematic traditions, and this is particularly acute in British cinema. Acting itself is not a problem in Jarman's films because he incorporates something of the dualism of actor and role into the performance: not a Brechtian distanciation and comment, rather a pushing of method styles, an extreme version of actors playing themselves.

In Jarman's films there is no character or character development as mainstream cinema would understand it. Plot and narrative are rudimentary (as in *Sebastiane*) or hardly of consequence (as in *Jubilee*). In *The Tempest*, the Shakespearean text *acts* the performers, allowing them a degree of freedom in relation to it.

There is little room for dialogue in Jarman's cinema – without the constraints of acting dialogue too easily becomes speechifying (as in *Jubilee*).

tableaux

Jarman's films work outwards from tableaux, recalling painting or sculpture: in *Sebastiane*, the 'love sequence' recalls Rodin's *The Kiss*, Sebastian's martyrdom – Guido Reni, the archers – Degas' painting of *The Young Spartans Exercising*. *Imagining October* takes its form from the act of painting and posing for painting.

mise-en-scène

A series of tableaux, carefully staged and executed, brilliant costumes, interesting performers, 'dramatic' camera angles. If I apply the *Cahiers* distinction between auteur and metteur-en-scène to Jarman's work I come down on the side of metteur-en-scène. Staging, art direction, image are the most important qualities. The films are about staging an image, setting it up, extracting the most eloquent passages from it. Narrative takes second place.

reflexivity: *The Tempest*

One of the criticisms of the film when released that I recall was its departure from the sacred text, 'camping up' Shakespeare. Yet, paradoxically, re-viewing the film, it seems remarkably faithful to Shakespeare, or rather my memory of *The Tempest*, which I haven't read or seen performed for 10 years or so. You could say that it is a film for an audience that doesn't have an automatic, built-in respect for Shakespeare.

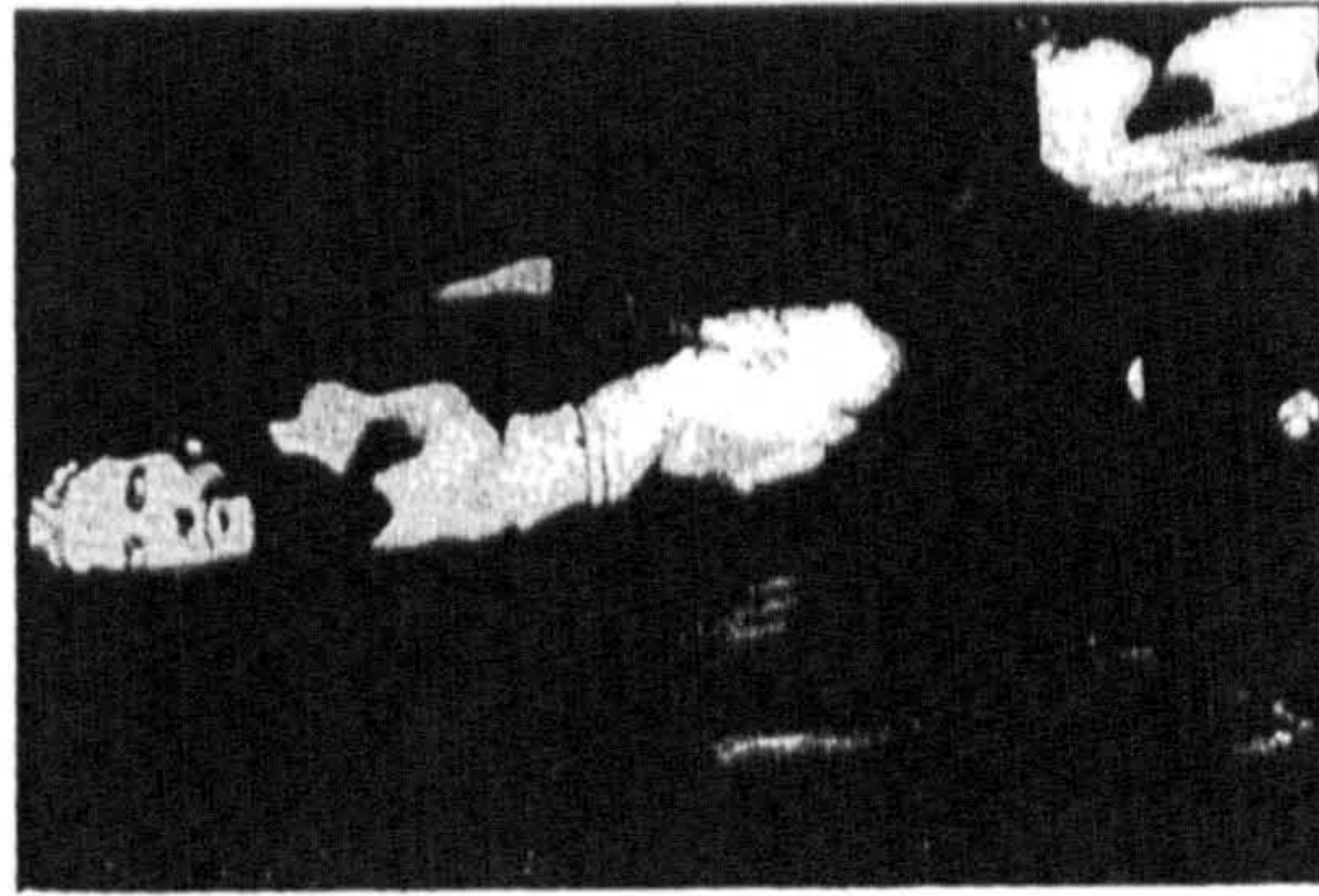
One of the impressive things about *The Tempest* as a play is its characteristically Elizabethan reflexivity. The play refers to itself as theatre, to theatre as life, to life as dream. Jarman's film takes that self-reference as



Caravaggio

his starting point and foregrounds it. Every scene is theatrical. In particular, Elisabeth Welch's 'Stormy Weather' is both a dance (masque) with which the performance is concluded, and the most theatrical of all the scenes, a framing device for the film as a whole.

In *The Tempest* Jarman is not concerned so much with representation as presentation. To those who identify with what one might call the puritan tradition of English literary criticism, the ethic of self-effacement before the text, a decipherment of intentions, a creation of relevance (I'm parodying Leavisian criticism somewhat), Jarman's approach is anathema. He doesn't really offer an interpretation so much as a personal appropriation, a staging of elements.



Sebastiane

the sequence shot

In *Jubilee*, there are many examples of a use of camera movement to hold together a series of tenuously related actions. Whereas in Bazinian aesthetics the 'sequence shot' edges fiction to a documentary, realist aesthetic, in Jarman's films, the opposite is the case. The sequence shot demonstrates, 'reveals', to adopt Bazin's term, an artifice of staging and setting.

theatricality vs. the documentary: *Jubilee*

A fragmentary narrative in which Elizabeth of England led by the spirit Ariel and the magician John Dee view the devastation of 20th century England: 'Look stranger on this island now'. Women suffocate a man after having sex with him, two policemen fuck in uniform, a bishop dances with a chorister. The world turned upside down, a saturnalia? Except this is also the world as it is. Masque and anti-masque are combined. The same police murder the twin brothers Angel and Sphinx and reduce Kid (Adam Ant) to pulp. A direct representation of the violence with which police entrap homosexuals.

In its desire both to document the social reality of 1970s England and to present the violent emotions involved, Jarman pushes the action to extremes of theatricality. Given the inherent theatricality of that culture, it might have been better if the film had found a lower-key approach to its subject matter and let it 'speak for itself'.

Part of the problem lies in the framing narrative. Instead of the notional vantage point of the Elizabethan past, perhaps it would have been better to present an *other* scene which was also part of that political conjuncture (cf *One Plus One*).

reverse angle

In the 1970s, the operation of the cinematic apparatus, and in particular the codes of Hollywood cinema in binding the spectator psychologically into its flow, was much discussed. A genre of cinema which explicitly refused the codes of Hollywood was developed. Mulvey and Wollen, for instance, attempted to work within clearly defined protocols, where editing in its classical sense was avoided – there are no reverse angle shots in their films (eg the circular pans of *Riddles of the Sphinx*).

Both before and parallel to these developments, Jarman was developing a cinema which, despite a deceptive hedonistic richness of content, had many resemblances to this 'theoretical' cinema. It sets its face against many of the procedures and devices of mainstream cinema. In Jarman's films there are few reverse angles – sequence follows sequence with little regard to 'pace' and 'rhythm'. Preoccupation with imagination and personal expression displaces attention from both intellectual and formal issues.

absence: *The Angelic Conversation*

The Angelic Conversation is a meditation on passages from Shakespeare's sonnets. It is a meditation on light, cinema, desire, death. The writer's

beloved shines in the reflection of his gaze. Cinema reflects the gaze, doubling as light, reflected off the water and body of a young man as he bathes, paralleling the projector beam as another youth, holding a mirror, reflects the sun into the camera.

As in Warhol's cinema the camera and we the audience have these faces, these bodies, presented in a slower time than that of viewing. Slow motion increases the sense of mastery over the image. These young men are now literally caught in our gaze. Yet being just film images they escape, already part of the past.

In the *Sonnets*, the writer tries to wrest his beloved from the processes of time and ageing:

'... but you shall shine more bright in these contents than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time...

'gainst death and all-oblivious enmity shall you pace forth... you live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.'

The Angelic Conversation foregrounds the simultaneous presence and absence inherent in the cinematic image. The occasional passage of real-time video footage serves to reinforce this.

I have reservations however about the use of Judi Dench's voice – its associations of RSC/Radio 3 cultural authority push the film to nostalgic reverie. I would have preferred Godardian stutter.

politics, sexual politics: *Imagining October*

Jarman's sexual politics are uncompromising. The subculture and sexuality his films participate in are not simply 'gay' or 'camp'. The films take on board issues of sexual politics, particularly notions of masculinity, prefiguring, anticipating a change in social order and social mores which his films so passionately demand. However this presentation and celebration, this construction of a subcultural aesthetics, also aspires to a more general condition, to speak for England and British cinema. It charts an alternative imaginative direction: away from the aesthetic imperialism of Hollywood (its moral conservatism, its simplistic narrative logic); away too from the chauvinist, yet American-minded 'British' cinema of British Film Year.

Jarman argues for a cinema that doesn't exist, except in marginal ways, a cinema in the tradition of English spectacle (from the Elizabethan masque to 1930s Surrealism).

I find *Imagining October* his most achieved work. The video material – the tableau space of the models and painting – intercuts and interacts with the Moscow 'home movie' film dialectically.

A series of comparisons are made or implied: an absent radical Soviet cinema, a denunciation of US cultural imperialism in the UK. By recreating a theatricalised 'camp' version of the British and Soviet military he develops a 'scandalous' remark in *Dancing Ledge* about getting soldiers off the street and into bed. Thus he connects politics and sexual politics.

As the workshop drew to a close we all returned to the dreaded Chapman Theatre, for an RAA question time. This was a complete non-event, since by the time all the delegates had arrived, time had run out and so the RAAs and the ACGB were very conveniently let off the hook, with no debate on the current state of affairs at all.

This was followed by one of the most ineptly chaired plenaries I have attended. For me this highlighted the confusion and lack of communication at the conference. We were told by the chair that the purpose of the conference had been to move away from the work of the individual and towards a policy-formulating situation. Leaders of the workshops presented a series of proposals ranging from the need to begin work on a code of practice, provision for more colour facilities, information on the new technologies, ACGB policies on visual literacy within education, ACGB and RAA workshop fundraising, the establishment of a black photography centre. While all these proposals are valid and crucial to the development of the sector, who is going to take them on board - the ACGB? Why did the chair find it necessary, in the middle of all this, to engage in a red herring discussion on "what is community photography"? Why were some of the workshop leaders not informed until the last minute that proposals should be formulated?, a point brought home very forcefully by the leaders of the workshop on photography and disabilities - Ruth Bailey and Celia Wood.

What I came away with from this conference was a completely negative attitude towards the present administrators of the independent photography sector. Surely the time has come for practitioners with day-to-day experiences of the consequences of the lack of a unified voice and decent representation to begin to take matters into their own hands, through the IFVPA, for example. The IFVPA has already achieved a great deal for the independent film and video sectors. It is now available to provide a basic structure for photographers to begin organising and networking, to initiate a campaign to improve the present state of affairs.

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POINT '87, PARIS, MARCH 4-8 1987

A report by Mark Nash

"THE SITUATION IN EUROPE NOW: the recent expansion of tv broadcasting networks has not enabled the development of independent production. Independent producers are not organised enough and are marginalised in international markets. There is no global strategy to impose the importance of independent production on audiovisual corporations, and public broadcasting services. There is no homogeneous marketing, communication

and distribution strategy, and no coherent European copyright strategy. Is there no way to ensure a more rigorous editorial policy for independent production?

HOW TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION: to find a common ground for representation beyond national and aesthetic rivalries. To assert the identity of independent producers in the European context. To assert the importance and necessity of independent production remaining innovative and creative.

The European independent production sector should be engaged in establishing a lobby that will enable the financing and promotion of independent production, distribution of information, access to legal expertise, international exchanges and the pursuit of these issues in relation to professional training. POINT 87 is aimed towards the establishment of a quota system, international data bank, independent production market and body for copyright clearance at the European level."

Lightly subbed, this was the rationale for the Point 87 conference at which I represented the IFVPA in Paris at the beginning of March. The conference was held at the Centre Wallonie Bruxelles - the cultural centre of the Belgian francophone community in Paris, equipped with two screening theatres used for the video screenings and conferences, and a videotheque where tapes could be selected on an individual basis. Point 87 was funded by a range of EEC, French and Belgian institutions, as well as the British Council and a Belgian brewery firm, which provided free beer (and hangovers) for the first couple of days.

Point 87 was an initiative of Montbeliard Video - Centre d'Action Culturelle. It was formed in 1980 with three main areas of concern: audiovisual production, training and an international, biennial video festival (held in '82, '84, '86). Point 87 was partly a trailer designed to set the agenda for the '88 Montbeliard festival. However, it was also and centrally concerned with issues which have to be urgently addressed by the European independent community in the immediate future, in particular, the proposed enactment of EEC media legislation in 1988 as part of the European Year of Film and Video.

LANGUAGE

It was essentially a francophone conference, designed, it seemed to me, to reassert French as an important language for media debates on the European, not to say international, level. While opening discussions were conducted in English, French and German, subsequent debate was almost entirely in French. Videos were shown in their original language without translation. This meant that minority language videos, eg: from Denmark, received little or no attention from participants. It is no accident that the EEC's MEDIA programme is conducted by francophone officials. The francophone community in Europe has historically

been the most active in resisting the advances of English and at an ideological level, the American cultural influences that that represents.

UK PRESENCE

The UK was mainly represented by the workshop sector, who had been invited to show their work at the festival: Sankofa, Black Audio and Birmingham. There were also a few independent producers, but no representatives from AIP, IPPA or, apart from the tireless Rod Stoneman, broadcast tv. It was not a conference that the UK took seriously.

British independent production is structured in rather a different way to the rest of Europe, largely due to the existence of Channel 4. Despite the criticisms one may have of the channel, and continental Europe's rather uninformed and starry-eyed view of the UK situation, the fact remains that many European countries will be lucky to achieve anything as progressive as Channel 4 in the ensuing years.

The lack of substantial UK presence was disappointing for the organisers. As far as they are concerned, they will continue to organise at a European level. If the UK cannot be bothered, then that's its problem - shades of the debate on UK membership of the Common Market! If we in the UK do not get involved, however, we lose the opportunity of contributing to a debate that could influence the structure of European audiovisual space for the foreseeable future.

EURO-PARLIAMENTARIANISM

Below the surface, one could detect an air of desperation as the date for enacting European media legislation approaches. Will it protect national cultures and facilitate progressive European production? Or will it merely provide subsidy to multinational Europap produced by the US, Italian magnate Berlusconi and our very own Robert Maxwell? I tried to strike a note of caution as to the possibilities of lobbying at a European level. As the BFI-hosted Eurojamboree at the NFT last November showed, there is very little at present on the table for the 'cultural' sector of European production. For instance, at that NFT conference, a fund of 5 million ECUs for subtitling films into languages of member countries was discussed. You don't get much change from that when you've discounted the costs of European administration.

My own suspicion is that Euro-parliamentarianism is probably even less effective than its Westminster version. Look at the legislation on human rights - the UK government manages to ignore it splendidly most of the time. So what chances for progressive media legislation? Which is not an argument against it, but simply to point out that it can only be one element of any European strategy. In fact, of course, the EEC currently does

provide funds for training (eg: the initiatives in the North East), as well as miniscule amounts for production, distribution and exhibition. At Euro-parliament level, however, the cultural arguments that we in the UK and particularly in the IFVPA are familiar with pursuing, may prove less effective at unlocking funds than the more narrow linguistic one - the militant concern of some language groups, particularly the French, not to be subsumed into some Eurospeak language community.

I also voiced concern at the conference's notions of nationality, and of the 'European'. Legislation at EEC level is one thing, but it neglects countries historically part of Europe - the European socialist countries, as well as Norway, Sweden and Turkey. You could also argue that it neglects ex-colonies culturally very linked to Europe. Point 87 made this important point by devoting a whole session to video production in Mozambique. Once a European colony, and now in a war situation, their means of communication have to be seen within the context of a seige economy. When you realise that the whole of the Mozambican broadcast institutions probably have as much hardware as a UK video workshop, it rather puts our First world expectations in perspective.

GOODBYE TO A EUROPOLITICS OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION?

At the end of the day, it's not the EEC as an institution that's important, but the kind of cultural production that is possible, from within European countries and European culture broadly understood. From the video material I saw at Point 87, I would venture the observation that the most innovative, interesting and politically concerned work (not necessarily synonymous categories) was produced by independent producers without access to broadcast - eg: the Wein Medienwerkstatt (Vienna Media Workshop) or the Centre Video Bruxelles. Within Europe, there still seems to be a notion of independence as culturally and politically defined. Of course that notion was carefully safeguarded within the UK Workshop Declaration, yet the work produced under that declaration often seems to imitate the aesthetic, and ultimately, I would argue, the political, concerns of broadcast institutions.

Are 1970s notions of independence simple a relict species in our rapidly shifting media ecology? This was an issue which seemed to divide the conference. On the one hand, there were those practitioners eager for the funding that deregulation would create. On the other, there were those well-versed in Euro-realpolitik who argued that it was necessary to engage with European institutions in order to transform them. How to transform them and to what end, were questions that were left unanswered. Were we talking about a European media equivalent of the Socialist International, where a certain lip service is paid to progressive concerns?

My suspicion is that at events like these, the absence of

political debate signals the fact that politics cannot be talked about because real political differences threaten the imaginary unity of the conference. There was an evident contradiction in the premisses of a conference using the language of monetarist economics - a market simply composed of market forces mediating relations between buyers and sellers, yet with a benevolent state apparatus implicitly in the wings. This discourse certainly does not sit well with radical aspirations. Equally, a campaign for greater independent access to broadcast institutions (the UK 25% Campaign), which admits there will be job losses and relocations as part of its programme, doesn't fit into my notion of a progressive politics. These hard political issues were not addressed. Yet if European dialogue means anything, they are going to have to be, and soon.

MARKET, DATABANK AND LOBBY

The Point 87 organising group have three aims: 1) to propose a restructuring of the market for independent production; 2) to establish a regularly updated databank for independent production; 3) to establish a lobby for independent producers at a European level.

THE DATABANK: The second aim is fairly unproblematic. Catalogues and databanks are only as good as the information that goes into them and the people who use them. From time to time such catalogues are produced and updated in the UK. For instance the British National Film and Video Catalogue aims to list all UK independent productions, but I imagine few producers receive enquiries from such listings. Informal networks are still often the most cost-effective way of circulating information about independent work, hence the value of festivals and the importance of debate, discussion and socialising at them. The notion of a databank/catalogue, then seems to me to be the least controversial of the Point 87 proposals.

THE MARKET: The question of the market is more complex. As the Montbeliard group point out, a market in independent work already exists in Europe. Our task as producers should be to take control of that market and ensure that buyers come to it more on our terms than on theirs. The aim here is to establish an alternative to the main tv and trade fair MIP and to consolidate the work of cultural festivals such as Edinburgh, Tyneside and Berlin, some of which have a market element.

My own view is that the notion of an independent market (caveats about the ideology of terminology aside) is rather optimistic. Who are the prospective buyers? Montbeliard gave the example of the enlightened Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris which pays more than Belgian tv for the same material. They appear to suggest that there would be a whole range of non-theatric buyers who could be persuaded to join broadcast buyers at such a market. Montbeliard have posed the problem, and in their

defence, they did give the example of their first attempt at a market to which no buyers came. As an indication of the problems to be overcome, Karol Kulik, who ran the London Market for several years, made the pertinent contribution that such a market would always need subsidy. The London Market had to be closed because it continually lost money.

On the other hand, if it were possible to develop greater solidarity amongst independent producers in the face of broadcast tv, in particular its success in reducing programme unit cost and keeping wages down, that would be a great achievement. (A 1986 survey in the ACTT found that the Grant-Aided Sector earned less than the average UK manual wage and had the highest unemployment in the industry). The Montbeliard initiative should definitely be followed up to see what can be achieved in this area.

However, the question of the market should not be allowed to subsume the notion of an international independent video festival at a European level. (And it should be pointed out that for Point 87 video and film are sometimes used synonymously. The video festival is seen as including film originated material shown on video. More properly it should be referred to as a video and film festival. Purists beware!)

Festivals are an extremely effective way of distributing work. Point 87 was not exemplary in this respect. Lack of translation, lack of documentation and very partial selection of material produced very uneven screenings. With no information on production, distribution or exhibition contexts, the videos became just wallpaper. Added to which the long three hour sessions produced that fatigue particular to video festivals - your eyes end up aching continually. (In addition, some of the French material was offensively sexist, and I'm not someone who takes offence easily in this area). Point 87 organisers took this point, arguing that of course the 1988 festival would be better organised. Not a terribly convincing reply. There is a danger in organising events such as Point 87 just for activists and ignoring the concerns of video makers themselves. It reinforces divisions within what is a small and already divided constituency. However, they should be given the benefit of the doubt in relation to further such events, and preliminary discussions are now under way to link both Point 87 and the 1988 Montbeliard festival to UK festivals.

It is in the area of discussion and cooperation at a European level that the initiatives of Point 87 have most force. In the UK, we tend to look to broadcast and state institutions to support our work, rather than develop work in association with other independent producers. Yet, if the broadcast institutions are beginning to produce material at a European level, why not the independent sector? As an example, the London-based group Triple Vision who were at Point 87 are developing a project for a video magazine using material from

independent groups across Europe. Apart from Infermental, the video art magazine which has been running for a few years, there are also several other such projects on the European drawing board. All of them, however, seem to depend on backing from broadcast. Yet the basis for such projects already exists on an informal level - many of the European workshops exchange programme material amongst themselves. Montbeliard could well extend the concept of the festival in the direction both of the touring compilation as well as providing the contacts for European co-production.

THE LOBBY: The aim of the lobby is to coordinate work by pressure groups in individual countries, with a view to raising the profile of independents within Europe. One of the first tasks will be to clarify the situation of current EEC media legislation and so see how that can be influenced. Once in place the lobby could also act as a more permanent organisation structure for independents. A note of caution needs sounding, however. Any lobby needs a clear and agreed brief. Existing UK lobbying organisations IFVPA, IPPA, AIP, ACTT and the 25% Campaign have policies which are radically divergent at points, yet all are involved in lobbying at the European level. Will it be possible to obtain sufficient consensus to proceed, or should existing organisations simply pursue their current European policies more actively, lobbying for what they feel to be the correct position?

SELECTED VIDEOS

I'd like to mention some of the videos I found most interesting at Point 87. At an aesthetic level, I'd single out a video by Jean-Paul Fargier (video critic of 'Cahiers du Cinema') and several of the Mozambican videos.

Fargier's video *Robin des Voix* uses an assemblage of texts to argue that innovations in poetic language in the 20th century have occurred in minority languages (eg: Basque, Finnish, etc.). Placed against that are a series of disparate images concerning a central male figure in rather self-conscious situations and a wonderful sound collage of great moments from 20th century history which somehow, through the timbre and 'grain' of the voice, manage to recall the past with a vividness denied to archive images.

Licínio Azevedo's *The Well* was made with both literate and illiterate viewers in mind. A Mozambican government representative opens a communal well in a small village, with a long speech in Portuguese. Kids play ball, people wander in and out of the village compound as he speaks. We then cut to a series of mainly humorous scenes describing what happens when the well is used incorrectly and in the process educating the viewer about basic hygiene. Two kids who kick a football into the well are marched off home and then out into the field where they are put to work under the stern gaze of the village

teacher. Their friends snigger at their discomfort. A group of women returning from the fields place bundles of plants on the rim of the well and proceed to wash their hands into the well. Immediately one of the well's guardians rushes out and starts beating them. Then she demonstrates the correct way of taking water without soiling the well, and so on. All the points are made gesturally - there is no voice-over or dialogue - so there is no problem with language differences between different communities.

Azevedo also made a video *The Citizen Who Had His Ears Cut Off*, about a man whose ears were cut off by the South African backed rebels, or as they are correctly described in the video, bandits. This video derives its power from its direct presentation of the man in question, who simply tells us his story, and which brought home more of the reality of that situation than many a UK documentary feature.

Melancolico is a poetic video about the dire situation of Mozambique, but with a note of optimism at the end. It is cut to the song of the same name by a famous Mozambican guitarist who we see in the first shot, beginning to play the song outside in the street in a suburb of Maputo. The song concerns a man who dismisses his wife for a younger one. The banished wife and the village children are shown as hungry, depressed and lethargic. The video ends with an image of the woman walking down a dusty road to the horizon followed by a crowd of children. A simple, emblematic statement.

A number of other videos are worth mentioning: *Madame Marcelle* from Belgium, directed by Paolo Zagaglia, consists of an interview with the concierge of a public convenience, interrupted by close-ups of her clients' hands as they drop money into the ash tray on the table. "Merci", she interjects into her non-stop discourse on world events as seen from her comfortable niche. She even sings a Mireille Mathieu song to illustrate her wish to have been a chanteuse.

Carole Laganiere's *Juste un Reve* (Just a Dream) also from Belgium, explores the history of Soeur Sourire (the Singing Nun to us), whose song *Dominique* outsold the Beatles' early singles, despite, or perhaps because of its play on a French word for fucking. She was never able to repeat the success of that original song and in 1986 committed suicide. A strange piece of popular music history, which those of us who heard the song the first time round were fascinated with.

Michel Khleifi's *Maloul Fete sa Destruction* (Maloul Celebrates its Destruction) also from Belgium, is about a Palestinian community displaced from its village which later became a forest planted to the memory of the victims of Nazism (we see the same forest in Lanzmann's *Shoa*, but without the irony of this information). Once a year the villagers are able to return and picnic in the shade of the trees they left behind. Older

villagers wander around remembering the locations of all the plants. They are also interviewed in a room with a backdrop of a large painting of the now defunct village. The film uses simple documentary techniques with some formalist elements to refine visual interest.

Dusch a Loox, a surrealist video by Ferdinand Stahl from Austria, involves women and men taking showers in rather unlikely positions and locations - a real art video, involving considerable set construction (eg: a shower that appears to be working horizontally!)

Finally, Michel Bongiovanni, one of the conference organisers, showed a video, La Parte Maudite, which he co-directed. It interviewed a range of contemporary artists and critics, and made a number of important points about contemporary art practice in a fraction of the time and cost of State of the Art. I was particularly struck by the formulation of one artist that time in painting has now become like tv presentation of football, "only highlights".

A wide range of work then, from avant-garde video to politicised documentary (as well as the inevitable music video commercials for the latest video effects, about which the less said the better). Much of the work shown at Point 87 was as well conceived as any broadcast equivalent. I think it is particularly useful to see a range of material from different nationalities - you realise how specific and to some extent parochial our UK concerns are. Different preoccupations and potentialities of the medium become apparent.

* * * * *

FOYLE FILM FESTIVAL

A review by Mark Robinson

I doubt whether any town of comparable size (population around 70,000) has been so filmed, photographed, written about and generally discussed as Derry in the last twenty years. Pictures of Derry first filled our television screens in 1968 when the Civil Rights Movement came face to face in Duke Street with the Unionist state, and since then television crews and interested observers have regularly returned to check on the state of play. For Derry appears to offer a convenient and manageable paradigm of what Ireland is about, its population mirroring that of Ireland as a whole, their divisions and allegiances seemingly confirmed by the bricks and mortar of the old city walls and the passage of the River Foyle itself.

In all this the people of Derry have been photographed, filmed and sometimes interviewed, but their story has been largely

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A Screen Readers Meeting to discuss the contents of this issue of the journal with contributors and members of the Editorial Board will take place on Saturday 21st October at 11 am at the SEFT Offices: 29 Old Compton St, London W1V 5PN.

Editorial

For Brecht's epic theatre, as Ben Brewster points out (*Ciné-tracts* v 1 n 2, Summer 1977) it is important that a distinction be maintained throughout the theatrical performance between the actors and the parts they are fictionally playing. The theatre audience both assists at the performance – watching the actors on stage – and also participates in the fiction being presented, seeing these actors no longer as actors but as their fictional roles. There is thus a dual movement, an oscillation of identification and separation: 'One can identify with the actor, which implies a separation from the role, and then identify with the role, and that implies a separation from the actor' (Ben Brewster p 47). Such a separation can be exemplified in the cinema by the practice of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's *Fortini-Cani*, the script of which we publish in this number of *Screen*, which sets up and plays with sets of relations of difference, including that between the character 'Fortini' in the film, and the sometime author of the book *I Cani del Sinai*. One can, in retrospect, reply to Brecht's 'fundamental reproach' against the cinema – that it does not allow for distancing – by instancing not only the work of Straub and Huillet but also the star system as a space within cinema where the contradictions of naturalistic presentation are both manifested and contained, and where a dislocation analogous to epic acting, separating actor and role, is manifested. In the article already mentioned Ben Brewster suggests that the traditional costume picture presents this area of trouble most acutely, for in the costume picture however much attention goes into authenticity in the decor, the stars' clothing presents a kind of compromise between historically authentic costume and clothes the stars would wear in everyday life. In relation to this argument we are pleased to be able to publish Jean-Louis Comolli's 'A body too much', which examines with reference to Jean Renoir's *La Marseillaise* (1938) such a point of disturbance within the related form of historical fiction. Comolli argues that while we are able to identify the actor Ardisson with his fictional role in the film of

6 Bomier, 'a figure from the lower classes of Marseilles', the film operates a definite separation between Pierre Renoir as actor and Louis XVI as his not-so-fictional role. The operations of cinematic fiction, Comolli continues, force the spectator into 'difficult' and 'dangerous' denegations of this separation: 'the coded is made more visible, the supposedly known more awkward, the belief more problematic'. In his accompanying analysis of screen acting, John Thompson is also concerned to draw attention to the tendency of traditional narrative cinema to efface this distinction between actor and role. The effects of such a work of naturalisation are demonstrated quite succinctly by the application of the semiotic procedure of the commutation test to the study of acting.

If fictional cinema, by virtue of its necessary inscription of acting and its binding together of two potentially contradictory subjectivities within the apparent unity of the 'role', opens up a possible (if constantly effaced or denied) space of distanciation, documentary cinema by contrast appears to offer no such means of disrupting or subverting the positionality of the spectator. In documentary cinema, one of the guarantees of 'veracity' is that people do not act, they are typically 'themselves', performance and recording are elided. It is exactly the problematic status of actors and acting which may constitute one aspect of the evidently disturbing nature of, for instance, certain forms of drama documentary. From an opposite direction, it arises also as a 'trouble' in those types of documentary which mobilise intra- and extra-textual codes signifying unmediated representation (and therefore, apparently, 'truth', or at least non-fictionality), but which at the same time inscribe elements of narrativity (and therefore connote fictionality): a telling example of this is the public outcry which attended the televising of the BBC series *The Family* (1974) — it is noteworthy that much of the controversy hinged on the 'typicality' or otherwise of the Wilkins family and their behaviour. The evident unease surrounding certain documentary or quasi-documentary representations, particularly when considered in terms of their dominant institutional context of production and exhibition — television, finds a parallel in some of the difficulties faced by attempts to construct a meta-language for documentary cinema, attempts which are constantly dogged by the impenetrability of the self-legitimising discourse of documentary itself, a discourse which tends to hinge on such notions as visibility, evidence and (even if avowedly relative) truth. Bill Nichols' article 'Documentary theory and practice' (*Screen* v 17 n 4) was an attempt in this magazine to engage with this extremely difficult area, in this instance by bringing to bear on documentary cinema some of the notions of filmic address developed in analyses of fiction films. Bill Nichols restricted his consideration of address to documentary films with voice-over, pointing only briefly to the absence of critical work on the 'indirect address' utilised, he argued, particularly rigorously

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in American *cinéma vérité* (Bill Nichols p 41). Annette Kuhn's article in this issue takes up this debate around address in documentary film insofar as it assigns a central place to an *observational* mode of address in films which operate little or no direct address through voice-over. Such films, she suggests, inscribe a particular fetishisation of the visible, whereby the spectator is held in the same position as the camera operator and the camera. Ethnographic film is a limit case of such a mode of address for here the visible-as-recordable is mapped over the visible-as-evidence and thereby invokes a category already constituted within the institutionalised academic discourse — that of anthropology — which presides over the construction of the ethnographic film as a type of documentary. Debates on ethnographic film are at the centre of Liz Brown's article which examines the textual functioning of an ethnographic film produced for television, *Some Women of Marra-kech*. She argues that the film's articulation of a feminist discourse limits the hold of its ethnographic discourse. In his article Noël Burch develops a number of observations about the privileged role of the documentary in British film history and suggests that two recent films operating within the context of the 'documentary on art' actually effect displacements of the dominant documentary mode.

Finally we would like to draw the attention of readers to a number of changes in SEFT personnel. In the Autumn Manuel Alvarado takes up a new post at the University of London Institute of Education. We would like to welcome his successor to the post of Education Officer for SEFT and Editorial Officer for *Screen Education*, James Donald. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has taken up the post of head of the Educational Advisory Service of the British Film Institute. With the production of this issue Mark Nash takes up the post of Editorial Officer for *Screen*.

ANNETTE KUHN
MARK NASH

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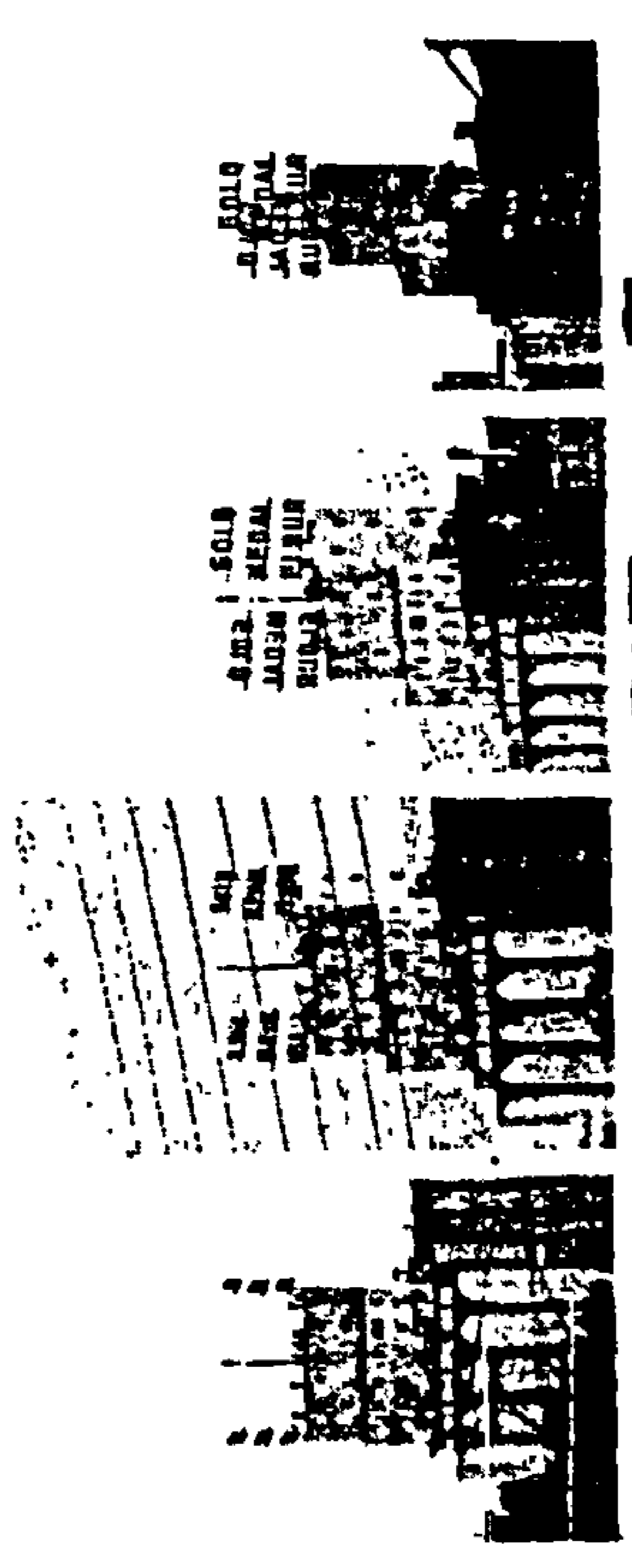
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SEFT Events

A Screen Readers' Day Meeting, to discuss the four numbers of volume 19, will be held in April 1979. Details in the next issue of *Screen*.

A Weekend School, *Documentary and Politics: the 1930s*, will be held on December 1 and 2 1978. The school will examine the attempts of two schools of documentary filmmakers working in Britain in the 1930s to use film as a means of cultural and political education. Details from SEFT.

An Easter School, *Teaching About Television*, will be held on April 9-12 1979. The school will introduce the main issues in recent theoretical work on television and examine pedagogic possibilities. Details from SEFT.

SCREEN EDUCATION

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Gillian Dyer: TV interviews. Bob Ferguson/Armand Matelart: *Sesame Street*. Jill Forbes: French Cinema in education. Kevin Rockett: Irish Film Culture. Chris Rodrigues: Independent film-making and education. Anthony Easthope: Film anthologies.

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Richard Nice/Annette Kuhn: Bourdieu. Philip Simpson: Gramsci. Dick Hedbigge and Geoff Hurd: Reading and Realism. John Tagg: The Currency of the Photograph. John Corner and Sylvia Harvey: Communication Studies. Jill Forbes: May '68.

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Editorial

This year has seen government proposals which if implemented will radically affect the structures of the film and broadcasting industries in Britain for the foreseeable future, and thus in turn the context and possibilities for the work of *Screen* and SEFT. The proposed establishment of a British Film Authority presents an opportunity to argue for a re-structuring of the economic basis of the industry and two organisations in particular – the Association of Independent Producers and the Independent Film-makers' Association – have made submissions on behalf of groupings of independent film-makers in response to the white papers. The article by John Ellis in this issue defines something of the terms of the debate sustained by those submissions, situating historically the discursive emergence and construction of the notion of 'art cinema' – a notion that is strategically determining today in the different representations of the AIP and the IFA.

Independent cinema and its representation is also in question in the pieces by Janet Bergstrom and Constance Penley, both of whom are members of the California-based *Camera Obscura* collective. Bergstrom and Penley are concerned to review the current terms of the critical-historical account and definition of the avant-garde, in order at once to clarify the effects of the limiting assumptions of that defining account and equally to prepare for the argument of an alternative position deriving from and engaging the problems raised for and by them in their work to develop feminist film theory. At the close of her piece, Bergstrom thus raises a number of issues – around problems of discursive organisation, enunciation, positionality – that cut quite directly across *Screen's* own project of work.

These issues are then central too in the article by Stephen Heath which continues that work by examining questions of representation and sexual difference, attempting to understand how the latter is produced in representation and representing relations and how cinema and film are maintained in that production round the fixed – 'visible' – difference of the woman. Alternative practices

8 are argued in terms of the necessity for a representation 'held to use', against representing, against universalising conditions of exchange, the indifference founded on the constant assurance of the difference, the relations of men and women in that representing, by existing patriarchal order.

Lastly, Colin MacCabe, reviewing recent BFI monographs on aspects of television, points to the need for work on the 'specificity and effectivity' of television within its practices and structures and Ian Connell, reviewing a recent SEFT weekend school on 'Ideology/discourse/institution', poses questions of the determination of readings and of the effectivity of texts, of the reception of films and television programmes.

MARK NASH

Art, Culture and Quality
Terms for a Cinema in the Forties and Seventies

John Ellis

Over two years ago, a report in *Screen* examined the movement to reform the British film industry, whose commercial entertainment sector had been in decline since the beginning of the decade. Since that discussion (*Screen* v17 n1, Spring 1976) on the proposals for reform contained in the original White Paper (known as the Terry Report)* a new situation has arisen. An Interim Action Committee, chaired by Sir Harold Wilson, produced another White Paper** outlining a possible structure for a British Film Authority (BFA). This has had a less than rapturous reception, and the Department of Trade is now soliciting direct submissions on the basis of the two White Papers so that it can implement changes in the relation between the state and film production. The present situation is one in which some government action can be expected, regardless of the outcome of the next General Election. At present the idea of support for film as a cultural activity is gaining ground, and the definition of film as a 'cultural activity' is itself being disputed. Finally, independent cinema, through the Independent Film-makers' Association (IFA), is making a strong initiative for increased recognition and financial provision by the state.

This article addresses these developments. The first part attempts to provide an examination of the forces at work in the present situation, the second is concerned with the delineation of

* Report of the Prime Minister's Working Party *Future of the British Film Industry*, presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister, January 1976 (HMSO Cmnd 6372).

** Report of the Interim Action Committee on the Film Industry *Proposals for the setting up of a British Film Authority*, presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Trade, January 1978 (HMSO Cmnd 7071).

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SCREEN DAY EVENT

Instead of its quarterly readers' meetings, the Screen Editorial Board will be holding a day event on Saturday 28 April 1979, at the Polytechnic of Central London, 309 Regent Street, London W1.

The morning session (11.00 am-1.00 pm), introduced by members of the Editorial Board, will be concerned with notions of art cinema. The afternoon session (2.00 pm-3.30 pm) will be an open session, in which we hope readers will raise issues across the range of Screen's work in the last four numbers of the magazine (v19 nn1-4).

The event will be run on the same basis as readers' meetings — there will be no additional documentation, no admission fee and no need to 'book' a place.

SCREEN EDUCATION

Number 28 Autumn 1978

John Tagg: The Currency of the Photograph. Richard Nice/Annette Kuhn: Bourdieu. Philip Simpson: Gramsci. Dick Hebdige and Geoff Hurd: Reading and Realism. John Corner and Sylvia Harvey: Communication Studies. Jill Forbes: May '68.

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Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie: Rock and Sexuality. Jo Spence: Class and Gender in Images of Women. Gregg Blachford: Pornography. Gill Davies: Narrative. Tony Stevens: The Renovation of Eng Lit. Rob Moore: The Value of Reproduction. John O Thompson: Nationwide.

Subscriptions and prices: see page 112.

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Editorial

The conception of the *relative* autonomy of the ideological instance in relation to the other two instances or levels of the social formation — the political and the economic — has allowed the development of the notion of ideological struggle, conducted in and through representation and its institutions, to which *Screen* has been particularly committed, with representation understood as including the production of subjects in relations of signifying practices. The concern to negotiate this space between determinism and autonomy of the instances in their relation to each other is manifested in several articles in the current issue.

In his article (developed from his contribution to the SEFI weekend school 'Ideology/Discourse/Institution' held earlier this year) Colin MacCabe argues that it is important to resist understanding the cinema simply in terms of a representational relation to ideological, political and economic struggles and to analyse the conditions of existence of that representational relation itself. Discourse MacCabe argues functions 'as a term which can hold at one and the same time both articulation and position, the articulation of a position'. By stressing the reality of what he terms the Reading "Subjectivity under Seige": in *Screen* v19 n1 where points in Paul Willemen's article 'Notes on Subjectivity — On Reading "subjectivity Under Seige"': in *Screen* v19, n1, where Willemen argues against a total autonomy of the instances, and for the necessary dialectical imbrication of the economic, the ideological and the political, including a determination in the last instance.

MacCabe calls for an intervention in journalistic discourse which would 'introduce concerns about the discourse of cinema into a regular pattern of reviewing and thus challenge and displace a journalistic discourse which has been able to ridicule or ignore work on signifying practices'. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's article in this issue was developed from such an attempted intervention in *Time Out's* coverage of the 1978 Football World Cup held in

6 Argentina. He argues for television as representation, but also for football itself as living largely in representation. Football as a complex unity of representations (of which the actual match is but a small component) is available for a variety of identifications which can be displaced into politics, identifications which televisual representations participate in and support, without there being the need to posit any pre-given correspondence determining their articulation.

Television's institution of spectatorship is also examined in Mick Eaton's article which considers a hitherto neglected television form -- the situation comedy. He considers its specifically televisual aspects: the inscription of the television viewing situation as guarantor both of the truth of the narrative and of the necessity of watching; and the sit-com itself as particularly televisual, both because of its reproducibility as series (with all the economies of programme scheduling, production and marketing that involves) and its structures of repetition. The situation comedy is seen as an example of television's constant reinstatement of the terms of its own past, its own memory and our memory of it: 'the re-affirmation and re-positioning of the individual in relation not only to the past in television, but also the past of television, and the past or present of him or herself as "television viewer".'

The novelistic is also implicitly at issue in Noël Burch's article on the film-maker Edwin S Porter. Burch argues for early cinema as formed by three different forces: modes of popular representation familiar to and addressed to a working class audience; the pressure of specifically bourgeois modes of representation; and the ideology of scientism -- cinema used as an analytic tool. He distinguishes two phases, two specificities of cinema history: an early 'primitive' mode, in which bourgeois forms are not yet dominant; and an 'institutional' mode marked by the dominance of narrative and the novelistic. The work of Porter is seen as a point of intersection, co-existence of these two modes. He analyses several films, pointing to tensions symptomatic of the conflict between these two modes: on the one hand a 'loose autarchy' of a-centred tableaux 'leading nowhere' and on the other a linearisation, a binding together of the signifying chain in a narrative direction. This analysis raises questions for *Screen* of the conjunctural specificity of the novelistic, and of the significance of a return to such primitive modes in recent avant-garde cinema.

Peter Wollen's article resumes concerns with forms of representation other than televisual and cinematic which have been absent from the pages of *Screen* for too long. In some ways Wollen's article is a companion piece to Walter Benjamin's 'A Short History of Photography' published in *Screen* Spring 1972, v13 n1. Wollen is also concerned with the history of photography, in particular he stresses the continuing and varying relations of painting with photography and the aesthetic issues at stake in

7 the debates around pictorialism: the problem of establishing a distinct identity for photography and its practitioners separate both from 'established' media such as painting and etching, and from photography as record; modernist photography's attempted integration of art and record; and the renewed separation in the pictorialism of the *New Objectivity* photographers (such as Renger Patzsch, one of whose collections of photographs was symptomatically titled *The World is Beautiful*) against whom both Benjamin and Brecht polemicalised. Wollen links Benjamin's search for photography as a means of producing knowledge to concerns underlying most progressive 20th century art, of holding together the apparently opposite are incompatible terms of 19th century aesthetic debates: Lessing's notions of aesthetic purism with Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* aesthetic. Current practices of photography he argues cut across this problematic with their introduction of concerns of narrative and point-of-view.

Finally, we would like to draw reader's attention to our Day meeting on April 28th (further details on p4). The Editorial Board thought that a day event would enable more sustained presentations and discussions to take place and that readers living in the regions would find it more convenient to attend a day event than the short quarterly meetings.

MARK NASH

SCREEN DAY EVENT

Instead of its quarterly readers' meetings, the Screen Editorial Board will be holding a day event on Saturday 28 April 1979, at the Polytechnic of Central London, 309 Regent Street, London W1.

The morning session (11.00 am-1.00 pm), introduced by members of the Editorial Board, will be concerned with notions of art cinema. The afternoon session (2.00 pm-3.30 pm) will be an open session, in which we hope readers will raise issues across the range of *Screen's* work in the last four numbers of the magazine (v19 nn1-4).

The event will be run on the same basis as readers' meetings — there will be no additional documentation, no admission fee and no need to 'book' a place.

SCREEN EDUCATION

Number 30 Spring 1979

State/Education/Media

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith: The State. James Donald: Green Paper, Noise of Crisis. Fredric Jameson: *Dog Day Afternoon* as a Political Film. Ian Connell: The Politics of Anthony Smith. Graham Murdock and Robin McCron: The Television-and-Violence Debate.

Subscriptions and prices: see page 144

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WEEKEND AND DAY SCHOOLS

April 28

Screen Event: Notions of Art Cinema (for details see p 6)

May 19-20

Weekend School: Genre and Authorship

Summer Term (dates to be fixed)
Day Schools:

Avant-Garde Cinema in conjunction with
London Film Makers Co-op
Teaching about racism and sexism in the
media

For further details write to SEFT

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Editorial

Questions around authorship have figured prominently in *Screen's* work: in its insistence that the author is an ideological construction, and that any attention to cinema as ideological construction must come back to notions of authorship. Work on psychoanalysis and cinema, on a theory of the subject, was instituted partly in response to an impasse in *auteur* theory. The notion of author, even as developed in structural criticism, separated out the text with its own interior unity, from ideology, which might appear in the text in a form mediated by the text's structures, participating in its themes and shifting antinomies, but nevertheless separate and distinct from the text. It also separated author and text implying that the author was a punctual source, a creative individual giving expression to a work. Accounts of the theory of the subject in *Screen* re-casts these relations – the notion of the subject, subjectivity produced by the text, of the author as a fantasy construction by the reader, of the text constructing both reader and viewer. The move away from authorship to psychoanalysis was seen as a precondition for handling 'the major ideological construction',¹ of authorship with some conjunctural specificity. *Screen* has not, however, returned to these questions. While notions of authorship may have been displaced from *Screen's* concerns, they have continued to circulate and have effects within critical discourse. Recognising its dominance within film-criticism and its organising role in film production, distribution and exhibition, attempts have been made, for instance in the Edinburgh Festival and through some BFI publications, to raise questions of subjectivity within and across discourses of authorship.

In publishing two articles on authorship we indicate the need to return to considerations of the ideological articulation of

¹ Stephen Heath, 'Comment on "The Idea of Authorship"', *Screen* Autumn 1973, v14 n3.

authorship.¹ Michel's Foucault's article makes clear that notions of authorship are only one possible specification of discursive functioning. Delivered ten years ago, the arguments of his lecture are still relevant to teaching today. He also elaborates the notion of the 'author-function' in ways which insist on the necessity for theorising the conjunctural functioning of discourses of authorship: 'the author-function is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine and articulate the realm of discourses'.

Sue Clayton and Jonathan Curling attempt to chart some of those legal and institutional systems as they affect modes of production and consumption of film, particularly independent film. Referring to the early 1930s, in his analysis of Brecht's relationship to the film industry (*Screen* Winter 1975/76, v16 n4), Ben Brewster pointed out that: 'rather than recognising any degree of collective creativity, or finding individual creativity a bar to artistic production, capital has attributed more and more individual creativity to its more specifically cinematic workers' (p 23). Clayton and Curling take up the question of authorship in relation to film and television production today, where both the nature of the product and the mode of funding are considerably different from the funding of film production in the 1930s. They see the continuing need to identify creative individuals in film and television as an indication of the force of discourses of authorship in the social formation. This poses particular problems for independent filmmaking groups and collectives who find their work, however oppositionally conceived, taken up by discourses of authorship. Clayton and Curling insist on the need to shift the discursive 'placing' of cinema — a shift which can only be produced by the production of other discourses: critical and theoretical discourses to which *Screen* has an important contribution to make; and arguments (which the IFA is currently putting to left-wing sections of the Labour administration) for a greater degree of economic autonomy, and the 'reclassifying' of film as a loss-making operation which should be permanently state financed for cultural (ie ideological) reasons. The contradictions of recognising the wide variety of individual creative contributions while maintaining a commercially saleable unit of work have led to proposed accommodations in copyright law, in particular the recognition of joint-authorship. This can be seen as marking a partial shift back to Brecht and Weill's notion of a contradiction between a system of law based on notions of individual creativity and what they saw as the intrinsically collective activity of film production.

Questions of the autonomy of television's signifying practices

2. Considerations which we hope will be taken up in our day event on notions of the art film, and the forthcoming SEFT school on genre and authorship—see p8 for details.

are raised by Ian Connell in his article on one area of television production, that of news and current affairs. He argues against the terms of the manipulation thesis in which television, as the instrument of certain class interests, produces biased and distorted accounts of social reality. He insists that through its fulfilment of its liberal editorial imperatives of 'neutral', 'unbiased' accounting, it produces discourses which reinforce the *status quo*, which have the effect of blocking politico-economic antagonisms. By producing notions of 'moderate public opinion', 'rational understanding', 'the consensus', 'the man in the street', television produces dominant definitions which circulate and have effects in the social formation at large.

Dominance of institutional television practices is at issue in Stuart Marshall's article on video. He describes how video technology was developed in relation to economic and ideological imperatives. Television receivers are situated in the home with the family as audience, rather than in cinemas. The massive capitalisation of television technology which reinforced radio's constitution of an audience for broadcasts, rather than an audience which itself produces broadcasts (as Brecht, for example, envisaged) prevented any possible appropriation by independent video workers of the means of televisual production. Lightweight video technology, developed as audio-visual aids for marketing, surveillance and education, could have also been used to open up the possibility of a social practice of television. In fact the new technology was taken up within safely separate areas of experiment and individual creativity, which even when it attempted to contest the hegemony of broadcast television, did so through deconstruction of the images of broadcast television, but does not produce alternative broadcastable images. In commenting on the current situation, he indicates various features which deserve further consideration in *Screen*: the fragmentation of the audience which could threaten advertising revenues; the resistance of trade unions to the use of new technology as a means of increasing profits through redundancies; the incorporation of aspects of the video-artists' discourse within broadcast forms; accommodation to demands for a more 'socially responsible' medium by the provision of access programmes.

Following on from his work on propaganda (*Screen* Autumn 1977 v18 n3), Steve Neale's article on *Triumph of the Will* elaborates a notion of spectacle as fascinated gaze, addressing the 'imitation of looking and the visible, not as the prior condition to the construction of a form of knowledge', as in documentary. 'but rather as that which hovers constantly across the gap between the eye and the object presented to it in the process of the scopic drive'. While documentary disavows that gap, subordinating it in its observational mode to codes of exposition required to produce its knowledge effect, spectacle addresses the scopic drive luring

the gaze of the spectator, filling it with the plenitude of the image itself. It is the failure of criticism to deal with these contradictory elements in the film that result, he argues, in the critics' simultaneous valorisation of the film's 'poetry' and 'style', and opposition to the film's content. Only by demonstrating that ideology and politics are implicated within the cinematic, rather than separated from it, as traditional critical discourse asserts, can the discursive functioning of this film be approached.

Finally, two contributions take issue with articles and debates in previous numbers of *Screen*. Tony Beeton argues for a notion of ethnographic film as produced and consumed within the institutions and discourses of television. Nicholas Garnham challenges the direction of *Screen*'s recent work in insisting on the primacy of the economic in determining representations, of representations as expression of determinate economic relations. Debates about positions in *Screen* and the effects of its work tend to take place outside the magazine itself, and while we clearly do not share Garnham's notions of determination, we are concerned to take up such debates as they are elaborated in the film culture as a whole.

MARK NASH
STEVE NEALE

What is an Author?†

Michel Foucault

In proposing this slightly odd question, I am conscious of the need for an explanation. To this day, the 'author' remains an open question both with respect to its general function within discourse and in my own writings; that is, this question permits me to return to certain aspects of my own work which now appear ill-advised and misleading. In this regard, I wish to propose a necessary criticism and re-evaluation.

For instance, my objective in *The Order of Things*¹ had been to analyse verbal clusters as discursive layers which fall outside the familiar categories of a book, a work, or an author. But while I considered 'natural history', the 'analysis of wealth', and 'political economy' in general terms, I neglected a similar analysis of the author and his works; it is perhaps due to this omission that I employed the names of authors throughout this book in a naïve and often crude fashion. I spoke of Buffon, Cuvier, Ricardo, and others as well, but failed to realize that I had allowed their names to function ambiguously. This has proved an embarrassment to me in that my oversight has served to raise two pertinent objections.

It was argued that I had not properly described Buffon or his work and that my handling of Marx was pitifully inadequate in terms of the totality of his thought. Although these objections were obviously justified, they ignored the task I had set myself: I had

† This essay originally appeared in the *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie*, vLXIV n3, 1969, pp 73-104. It was given as a paper to the Society at the Collège de France on 22 February 1969. It is reprinted from Foucault's *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Oxford, 1977, by permission of Cornell University Press and Basil Blackwell. In addition we are publishing sections of the discussion which followed Foucault's paper. All footnotes have been added by the editor of *Screen*.

1 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, London 1970.

WEEKEND SCHOOLS

November 3/4

Manchester SEFT school: The Vietnam Film - Text and subtext (see p 100 for details)

December 6/7

Independent Cinema: 'Before and After the text'

February 9/10

Culture and Politics

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Editorial

Much recent discussion of the cinematic avant-garde has centred on the place of narrative within it, and certain film-making practices have set themselves the aim of rejecting, or totally undermining the narrative construction of mainstream cinema, or any alternative narrative system. Peter Gidal's films and writings – we publish here an article written in 1978: 'The Anti-Narrative' – represent an important strand in this tradition in this country. His article employs a practice of writing described by Deke Dusinberre¹ as eschewing a "transparent technique" to the extent of adopting an almost opaque style; a self-conscious use of language in which the reader has to work to 'make sense' of the text, passing through a 'frisson of contradiction, repetition and humour'. In his afterword to Gidal's article, Stephen Heath draws out a number of Gidal's arguments; he sees them as contradictorily both 'against representation' and for 'a more complex engagement with specific terms and relations of representation'.

But within the avant-garde, Gidal's is not the only position. As Felix Thompson points out in his article, there are other practices which attempt a different engagement with narrative forms, practices which cannot be read productively within an anti-narrative discourse. There is also a danger in taking at its face value the avant-garde's claim to be engaging in a practice that is radically 'other' than the cinematic mainstream. Raymond Bellour, in his article in this number provides a useful corrective to this. In examining the different senses in which we understand repetition to operate in cinema, Bellour indicates how it conditions textual construction both in main-stream narrative, and anti-narrative avant-garde and experimental cinematic practices.

In the current number of *Screen Education* (n13) Raymond Williams discusses the problems of holding together analysis of

¹ Deke Dusinberre, 'Consistent Oxymoron – Peter Gidal's Rhetorical Strategy', *Screen*, Summer 1977, v18 n2.

BLOCK

"Block" is the result of an initiative taken by a group of artists and art historians who believe that there is a need for a journal devoted to the theory, analysis and criticism of art, design and the mass media.

ideological dimensions of the arts in societies past and present. Although we appreciate that the direction of this journal will be partly determined by contributions, our intention is to stimulate debate around specific issues—which could include: Art & Design; Historiography and Education; Visual Propaganda; Women and Art; Film and Television.

Our primary concern is to address the problem of the social, economic and

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the forms of the media with a practical relationship to their conditions of production:

"There has been this absolute efflorescence of intellectual analysis which, although it has been very valuable, is also related to the practical blocks on production. Many people doing analysis would have been doing production in different circumstances. This has had positive and negative effects. Positively, we do have a much more serious body of analysis than I can even remember. On the other hand, it can become a self-sufficient activity – it can become theoreticist, because it has its own pleasures and it also reflects a certain situation within educational institutions.

The trouble with the thinking about institutions has always been finding ways of connecting it with the ordinary political system. When I wrote *Communications* in the early 1960s, there seemed to be a connection because it contained the sort of transitional reforms people felt a Labour government could undertake. In practice, once the Labour government was in office, they entirely dropped that connection. Although people have gone on working and managed to get certain initiatives taken up from time to time – at the level of manifestos or policy documents – the transition hasn't occurred.

Analysis has been *Screen's* priority, but much of the effectivity of *Screen's* analytical work stems from the political implications of the psycho-analytic and semiotic discourses it has explored. These implications centre on the development of practices which will alter the balance of forces within discursive formations and institutions. However, there is a danger of simply transferring concepts from analyses concerned with language phenomena (in the broadest sense) directly to the area of institutions and power: 'repression' is one example of this transfer, and in his article in this number, Paul Abbott exposes the deep-rootedness of this quid pro quo in much contemporary politico-cultural writing and the difficulties of sustaining it theoretically and politically. The development of a radical practice of cinema will involve the production of critical discourses directed at production, distribution and exhibition of films as well as film texts themselves, and thus also Williams' connections with the 'ordinary political system'. Some of these issues will be taken up in the SEFT Weekend School 'Independent Cinema: Pre- and Post-Text' (see p 6).

With this number we welcome John Caughie, Ian Connell, Phillip Drummond, Mick Eaton and Mary Kelly to the Editorial Board. Kari Hanet retires after many years as a member of the Board. The next number of *Screen*, to be published at the end of the year, will be a double issue.

MARK NASH

Authority

Paul Abbott

Preliminary

This article takes its point of departure in an appreciation and a certain dissatisfaction, which have as their object the body of analyses of power produced in and around the work of Michel Foucault. The merits of these analyses are well-known, and do not need spelling out here: at the same time, it can be argued that, precisely in granting power its specific autonomy, these analyses introduce a new problem: the strategy of power is granted its own rationale which, by definition, cannot fail to be fulfilled. Power, and its practices and institutions, thus appears omnipotent. The decisive criticism of this conception is that it paralyzes political analysis: it leaves nothing to be said and nothing to be done. To avoid this position, it is necessary to produce a type of analysis which will return the role of contradiction as productive of change, which will identify sites of struggle and conditions of possible intervention.

The theme chosen for this analysis is 'authority'. Authority designates the articulation of authoritative knowledge on to authoritarian power at the strategic nodes of the power-knowledge conjuncture: hence the concern of the present article with the institutions of education and the cinema, the dominant forms in which currently authoritative knowledge (specifically, knowledges of the subject, the 'psy-complex', ie the ensemble of discourses and practices supported on psychological science) enters on social practices. Authority evaluates knowledges and practices in terms of their relation to power, and is thus able to calculate the feasibility, value and possible outcomes of particular activities and struggles, providing the focus of a politically practical analysis of a social formation. Where concentration on power has led to conceptualisations which are intractably global, or too simply dual and conspiratorial, authority – to complete this preliminary defi-

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EDITORIAL

Screen enters 1980, the 30th year of SEFT, with a revised project and a new format. We are taking the opportunity of the present double issue to introduce a comprehensively planned new design which signals our reassessment of the role and intentions of the magazine.

In 1971 *Screen* was relaunched as a quarterly magazine devoted to film culture. It saw its priorities as the constitution of a body of knowledge about film and television as signifying practices. This involved a radical questioning of existing theories and forms of writing about film and the introduction of new approaches and terminologies adequate to the complexity of the problems posed. The role of *Screen* in developing critical and theoretical work founded on semiotics and psychoanalysis, together with a constant reference to other aesthetic theories (notably those surrounding the areas of realism and authorship) has given the magazine an influential position in a number of distinct, but related fields. In film and television education, *Screen* has helped to define the subject area among educators not just in Britain but in North America and Australia. In film-making it has offered a series of possibilities for the thinking through of particular practices of representation — whether it be in terms of 'deconstruction', 'denaturalisation' or of disrupting the subject positioning usually put in place within the institution of the 'classic text'. For other aesthetic practices, in the fine arts or photography, for example, *Screen* stands for theorisation of particular practices and their politics in a way that there has not been space for in the art world or even in its radical offshoots.

Finally, *Screen* has offered to cultural and literary theory, and to theories of the place of 'ideology' in the social formation, a constant insistence on language in its specificity as signifying practice rather than as communication; in the light of this insistence it has worked to examine the nature of the text as systematic process and to explore the subject, as conceived by psychoanalysis, as an area of political struggle.

To some extent, *Screen* has become the victim of this undoubted, if partial, influence. It is sometimes mistaken as *the* academic journal of film studies. However, *Screen* has not been academic: an academic practice, as we see it, entails an essentially reflective mode of thought and writing. It takes a pre-given, self-defining object and attempts to describe or analyse it comprehensively. But it does not take account of its effects as writing or speech within a particular historical moment. It is not aware of — or does not recognise — the ways in which it changes the object it analyses by virtue of the systematisation it imposes on it. By contrast the analyses of specific films published by *Screen* — eg Cahiers du Cinéma on *The Young Mr Lincoln* in vol 13 no 3 reprinted in *Screen Reader 1*, or Stephen Heath on *Touch of Evil* in vol 16 nos 1 and 2 have tried to make explicit the displacement effected by the analysis on its object and have seen this displacement as a major aim of the analysis.

Academic analysis, furthermore, tends to be unaware of its effects outside its own immediate sphere. It offers itself as self-sufficient for its own readership. But the analysis, if successful, does have wider effects, promoting films or groupings of films for consideration by a more extensive public than exists for the analysis itself. These effects require to be seen in all their strategic implications, which are considerable. Analysis contributes to the production of new objects because every analysis implies a strategy for future work. The implied practices need to be explored because, if they are not, analysis on its own tends to imply rejection of everything that exists in favour of a hypothesised 'purity'. We hope the work of *Screen* has avoided these problems and that in future this will be clearer than it has been in the past.

However, if an academic practice is defined as analytical and theoretical work addressing itself exclusively or primarily to the discourses circulating in and promoted by academic institutions (colleges and universities), then *Screen* is indeed academic. Moreover, the terms in which *Screen* has engaged with those discourses have effectively circumscribed the magazine's place as an oppositional one, simultaneously within and against academic institutions. As such, this contradictory position has made *Screen* extremely vulnerable to the pressures exerted by academia to align itself more closely with the requirements of working and surviving in such institutions.

The current revision of *Screen's* project is one of increasing

the awareness of the effects of the magazine's work in a variety of fields. We will try to calculate what effects are necessary and possible, and to use various forms of writing to influence those diverse cultural practices in which *Screen* has and could have a voice. The magazine's primary commitment is to film and television, but it will continue to be informed by a wider concern for all practices of representation. *Screen* will extend its debates and analyses of current trends in film and television to other areas of cultural work as one major way of promoting the magazine's various approaches in these areas. *Screen* expects, therefore, to publish reviews of films and television output which are seen as representative of key issues in current debates. Similarly, we will give attention to exhibitions, publications and other events in the area of art practice and criticism which are related to these debates. We are keenly aware of the way in which reviewing acts as a promotion for the object reviewed, as well as affecting the terms in which these objects are used and discussed. This situation is particularly acute in relation to film, where reviewing is a major factor in the marketing of particular films, especially in the area of art-house cinema. We therefore intend that a major part of our reviewing commitment should be one of providing a critical 'voice' for independent production (treated to scant and disparaging attention by orthodox reviewers), and we think it particularly important to make our ideas more appropriate in the support of such films.

Screen will continue to comment in a detailed and systematic way upon institutional structures and policies; and will engage with major debates over institutional changes, for example with the Fourth Channel discussions, and with schemes for new state interventions in the film industry. Other possible areas of concern are the Arts Council and the British Film Institute; education, especially the higher and further education sectors; publishing and so on. Another strategy that is now possible is that of searching interviews with particular individuals or groups who have a distinct position which perhaps has not received comprehensive attention in writing before. We hope that this form of opening out of the pages of the magazine to a wider range of writing and of presenting important but usually unheard voices will be complemented by meetings and discussions.

Screen's entry into forms of reviewing and engagement with immediate issues is not intended to be exclusive. It is one

part of promoting the magazine's work in areas where it is capable of having specific effects. It does not imply an exclusive concentration on the present, nor an abandonment of the magazine's established tradition of work in the area of conceptual elaboration. The exclusive concentration on the contemporary is the hallmark of almost all film and television journalism, and is a major factor in producing the blindnesses of the conventional journalistic form. We rather intend that the continuing engagement of the magazine in the matters of the day will set the agenda for both theoretical and historical work. The reviewing of films or television output will inevitably raise wider questions, both about reviewing as a practice of writing, and about filmic institutions and textual productivity. This again is a matter of exploiting an awareness that has been present for some time in the work of the magazine: that research in the areas of theory and history both imply a commitment to and in the present. The present situation prompts the exploration of certain issues, but it cannot be the only determinant upon more extended work. History and theory cannot be chained to current concerns because these concerns in their immediate manifestation may well be short-lived and can certainly be displaced and transmuted by a calculated theoretical intervention. Both theory and history have their own times and their own procedures which mean that they cannot be perpetually called to account by the present. What is envisaged is a process whereby the questions that are always raised (and equally can never be answered) within a particular reflection upon current events will find their elaboration and transmutation in other forms of writing which the magazine will continue to promote.

The multiplication of the forms of writing current in the magazine, together with a productive exchange between them inevitably raises the problem of writing and reading. What sort of writing will become necessary to promote access, and what sort of writing will remain necessary if arguments being put forward are to retain their efficacy? In the past *Screen* has been criticised for the difficulty of at least some of the writing it has published. We do not expect this problem to go away; indeed it may even become more acute as the range of concerns broadens. Greater accessibility does not mean that difficulty will be eliminated. The introduction of new discourses with different terminologies and different stances will inevitably create problems in that each discourse will have a specific

difficulty and — for many readers — a specific unfamiliarity of its own. There is a necessary unevenness here that cannot be ironed out except at the cost of suppressing the difference and the heterogeneous mix which the magazine seeks to promote. The production of a homogenised, ideally transparent style can only defeat the purpose of a project which aims to transform practices of writing about cinema and television. This does not mean that turgid or merely bad writing will be encouraged any more than it has been in the past. Difficulty has to justify itself and the difficulty there has been in *Screen's* writing (which has by no means been uniform) has been the product of specific requirements: first the need to introduce a number of unfamiliar terms, drawn from the discourses of semiotics and psychoanalysis, whose use was justified by the precision with which they enabled certain arguments to be handled; and secondly the need to promote arguments in a way which broke with traditional (and for the most part liberal-academic) formulations and modes of address. A lot of what has been called difficult in *Screen's* formulations of arguments has either been not so for readers who have wished to enter into a process of engagement with the text or has been so only in the sense that the process of engagement involved discomfiting shifts in the mode in which arguments could be absorbed. What was difficult was not so much the writing (or the reading of it) as the mastery of writing — not being given the chance to be confirmed in one's position of already knowing what one has just been told. The forms of 'easy' writing prevalent in our culture are based precisely on this collusive relationship between writer and reader. However impossible or vacuous the argument, the reader is invited to share with the writer a sense of mastery over it. To oppose this collusion it is often necessary — politically necessary — to be difficult, or at least to risk difficulty as a lesser evil than the facility of either academic or bourgeois-journalistic modes. On the other hand, there are times when *Screen* has simply not been understood, and this is a failing. *Screen* does not disturb the film and television establishment as it ought to: it merely irritates it. The magazine's refusal of the collusive, easily absorbed stance has been a major factor in its failure to produce a genuine questioning of the limits and limitations of conventional practice by its practitioners. With a wider and more varied readership to address, the magazine will have to be more attentive than in the past to the dangers of a difficulty that merely and un-

productively blocks understanding and hinders the development of a dialogue between the various positions within the magazine, as well as between writing and reading.

The most acute problem of misunderstanding seems to occur not between the magazine and its readership, nor between the magazine and its non-readers among critics and broadcasters, but between the magazine and some of those who conceive of its project as similar to their own. *Screen* is then criticised as though it were what it has never claimed to be: a marxist journal in the traditional sense. *Screen* engages with a variety of problematics within the overall commitment to a dialogue with socialist and feminist currents within cultural practices, particularly cinema and TV. The magazine has always given an important place to marxist arguments. But that place has shifted as arguments within marxism have themselves developed, both in Britain and abroad. However, the notion of a dialogue with various politically important currents demands flexibility and not the dogmatic adoption of the kind of 'marxist' standpoint whose limitations, particularly on the questions of sexuality and representation, require and receive constant questioning. So to criticise *Screen* for not adopting whatever set of 'marxist' postulates a particular author might at that moment have espoused is to misconstrue the magazine's project and its political commitments. Yet this is precisely the drift of the criticisms offered by Kevin Robbins in *Media Culture and Society* (vol 1 no 4, October 1979) and is also evident to a lesser extent in Andrew Britton's article in *Movie* (no 26, Winter 1978/79). Such pieces are evidence of an obstinate foreclosure of understanding for which *Screen* need bear no responsibility.

With this issue, then, *Screen* begins to inaugurate a process of change in the range of its contents and ambitions which is the logical continuation of the work of the past decade. We hope that this change will produce new articles and writers for the magazine, and that it will stimulate productive exchanges (possibly at the level of informal exchanges with the Editorial Board) about how *Screen* could contribute most effectively in particular areas of debate and struggle. Our new, planned format and design herald this changing project. Page design is both more spacious and more flexible, allowing layout arrangements that are appropriate to particular articles. We have changed our printing process to offset lithography whilst keeping letterpress typesetting and our long-established

Lectura typeface. We hope that lithography printing will provide an improved reproduction of stills and photographs. It is not our intention to use stills and photos as redundant illustrations to the copy as is the practice in most film magazines. We intend to continue the practice of providing stills which provide material that is directly analysed within articles; and to extend our use of visual material to provide statements that are in tension with the written text, or provide commentaries or revisions of it. Wherever possible we will continue to use frame stills taken directly from the film or televisual text, rather than employing publicity stills as though they were equivalent to frame stills.

It is not intended that there should be a new 'house style' nor even 'model writing' in the first issues of this format. We hope that new forms of writing will develop through engagement with current events, the assessment of particular areas of intervention, and the continued development of theoretical and historical work, all of which will now take place within the same covers. Crucial to the success of this enterprise will be our ability to involve new writers as well as new readers, and to encourage readers to become writers for the magazine.

This issue carries articles on a variety of subjects. Brecht's writings on radio have not been available in translation before — we present an account of this work by Stuart Hood together with Brecht's essay 'Radio as a Means of Communication'. With the British government licensing an increasing number of radio stations and considering licensing a 'citizen's band' radio, Brecht's ideas in this area, which he saw as:

a gigantic system of channels [potentially] capable not only of transmitting but of receiving, of making the listener not only hear but also speak.

We also focus on two important areas: independent cinema and feminism. Despite our commitment to independent cinema as providing a space for elaborating different modes of signification, different practices of production, distribution and exhibition, above all in more socially controlled forms, *Screen* has not given the area the attention it deserves. In this issue we give some space to practices of two film-makers associated with the London Film-makers Co-op, one of independent cinema's most longstanding and vital institutions. Malcolm

Legrice presents his current thinking on the theoretical framework to his film practice. Rod Stoneman draws attention to the importance of film-related practices of distribution and exhibition in considering some of the work of Mike Leggett. Independent cinema engages not only with the avant-garde but with the mainstream. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's article on *Radio On* concerns the dilemmas of constructing a British cinema and engaging with the art-house market. We hope that future issues will discuss the components of that cinema and the operation of that market in some detail.

The Edinburgh Festival special event in 1979 was on 'feminism and cinema'. Lesley Stern reviews this event and indicates ways it has advanced understanding of feminist film practice. Pam Cook takes issue with Richard Dyer's treatment of sexual politics in his book on *Stars*.

We continue our commitment to greater coverage of television with a review of the current terms of the Channel 4 debate in the light of the IBA's much criticised proposals for that channel together with a review of the 1979 Edinburgh television event. We are publishing two pieces on Irish film history and literary culture: Kevin Rockett draws our attention to the hitherto unregarded area of Irish film production and its historical location. Richard Kearney reviews Colin MacCabe's book on Joyce, indicating how Joyce's politics of writing can be located within *Screen's* concerns. We continue *Screen's* interest in copyright as providing the legal institutional framework which determines the ownership of images and effects their circulation with two review articles of Bernard Edelman's recently translated *Ownership of the Image*. We hope to give a more extended account of the copyright issue in a subsequent issue of the magazine.

We would welcome contributions to the magazine, both short reviews, correspondence as well as lengthier pieces. With this issue Steve Crofts resigns as a member of the Editorial Board.

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

SCREEN

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EDITORIAL

7

Screen's work on visual representations has displaced traditional criticism of the artistic text as an object 'from' which an inherent meaning can be deciphered, to concentrate on the regimes of looking allowed to the spectator by texts and their institutional placing. This displacement has been effected firstly by semiotic analysis which insisted on the artistic text as the product of a social practice rather than a naturalised representation of reality. The extended consideration of realism which followed *Screen's* discussion of semiotics introduced the crucial area of extra-textual determination that has been central to recent debates in *Screen*. Secondly, the concern with psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic concepts raised the question of the semiotic status and functioning of the image itself — but so far this has been addressed in *Screen* only in terms of the sequencing of images, of film as system and process.

Consequently, a certain area of the ideology of the visual has remained unexamined, including a whole range of positions from notions of the image as an excess of signification, escaping narrative constraints, to an affect founded in pre-linguistic processes or as an extra-discursive phenomenological essence. Perhaps it is in the field of artistic practices which are not specifically cinematic that future issues of *Screen* can examine this area productively for film criticism and also continue our revised project to engage a wider sphere of cultural work.

While the articles by Clark, Burgin and Ellis in this issue deal with radically different codes of representation and institutional discourses, they are crucially related in a political

trajectory which questions received definitions of fine art, photography or pornography as discrete and self-referential systems. This is accomplished on the one hand by analysing the historical specificity of the critical discourses which construct these definitions, and on the other, by considering the specific relations of subjectivity that constitute a 'picture' in terms of the look it solicits and returns.

Tim Clark's article is the first of several to extend *Screen's* concerns with visual representations into the area of artistic practice traditionally designated as fine art, but which is reconsidered here in terms of a critical discourse which examines the conditions of the work's readability as pictorial text. Clark analyses the ways two discourses (representations of women and of aesthetic judgement in France in the 1860s) created an unreadable text in Manet's painting *Olympia*. He maintains that the hostile response of the critics of the *Salon* of 1865 turned finally on the question of *Olympia's* ambiguous sexual identity (effected through the picture's uncertainty of address, the transgression of the codes of drawing and conventions of the nude). He also points to a changing recognition of possible representations of the body which have subsequently incorporated this avant-garde text into mainstream art history. Clark continues *Screen's* discussion of the political effectivity of artistic practice and the sociohistorical determinants of their reading.

Victor Burgin gives extended consideration to the question of fetishism and argues that the understanding it gives of the viewers' implication in the object of their vision enables us to recast the continuing debates about the social role of photography and the possibilities of a progressive photographic practice. In drawing on debates in the Soviet Union in the 1920s he argues for combining the formalist approach (disrupting the viewers' codes of reading — a position advocated by Rodchenko) with an approach privileging progressive content, while at the same time recognising that struggles for meaning occur within discursive formations, at the interface of text and subject. He also argues against a modernist discourse (instanced in the criticism of Greenberg and Szarkowski) which defines categories of 'art' in terms of a medium (material substrate) and calls for a consideration of representational practices within an 'intersemiotic and intertextual arena' (quoting Peter Wollen, 'Aesthetics and Photography', *Screen* vol 19 no 4).

The issue of pornography is raised for the first time in *Screen* in an article by John Ellis. Questions such as what connects representations classed as 'pornographic', of whether we can say anything about their social effects are made particularly relevant in the context of the current debate initiated by the Williams report. This Government commissioned study recommends the criterion of public acceptability in determining what materials should be on restricted or open sale. It differentiates between material media (writing/live performance/film) for which different criteria of potential harm come into play. Whereas writing is not regarded as harmful and therefore should not be subject to restrictions on availability, film's 'realism' is regarded as sufficiently potentially harmful that they argue for the continuation of film censorship. Ellis initiates a study of the 'institution' of pornography and argues that a fuller understanding of the psychoanalytic mechanism of fetishism can help us understand existing forms of representation of sexuality in the struggle to displace current forms with more progressive representations.

MARY KELLY

MARK NASH

ROLAND BARTHES died in Paris on 26 March 1980 as a result of injuries sustained when he was knocked down by a van one month earlier. He was 64.

His work covered many topics central to *Screen's* interests and — from *Mythologies* to *Elements of Semiology* to *S/Z* — has been generally and decisively influential for our thinking, our projects. His last book, published almost simultaneously with the accident that was to cost him his life, was an essay on the photograph, *La Chambre claire*, in which certain of the ideas scattered in previous articles (notably 'The Third Meaning', the analysis of different levels of meaning in the response to some Eisenstein stills) are taken up and developed in relation to that concern for the individual, the particular terms of the subjective, which had been so important to him in recent years (*Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, A Lover's Discourse*).

What we lose now with Barthes, above all and quite simply, is a voice, a writing, an existence that constantly opened new questions, proposed new forms of understanding, changed things for us.

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ENDPAPERS FROM
A DESIGN BY ROLF BRANDT

EDITORIAL

7

Screen's work has been centrally concerned with subjective positioning in the cinematic institution. Several articles in this issue attempt to understand the relations of subjectivity in the interweaving of textual and social, to see subjectivity in social and historical terms. They indicate the need for greater attention to practices (in the areas of production, distribution and exhibition) which attempt to displace dominant discourses in the culture. We are concerned here with both an 'inside' to discourse — challenging the terms of the subjective, and an 'outside' — calculating its effects on other discourses and practices. This issue addresses these questions particularly in relation to areas of feminism, art practice and pornography. We are very pleased to include a number of responses to earlier articles in *Screen* and hope that readers will want to contribute to these and other debates.

Writing about the future development of feminist film culture in Britain, Claire Johnston also extends the question of strategies to women's art practice, maintaining that a unified, non-contradictory feminism is no longer a threat to the institutions of art exhibition and criticism, whereas a feminist art which asserts a discourse about the intersubjective relations which constitute feminine positions in history is far less likely to be assimilated into dominant representations of women. In their account of

recent women's art practice, Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman maintain a similar position. In particular they are concerned to stress the contribution that theoretical work can make to a feminist art practice.

In her article in this issue, Susan Honeyford points to the ways women are organising in relation to the institutions of broadcast TV in this country. At issue is both the images of women that TV maintains and the lack of representation of women in the institutions themselves, in production, technical and managerial positions. As she indicates, there is a growing awareness that both areas have to be worked on together if women are not to be simply co-opted into the existing structures and modes of representation.

In his article responding to John Ellis' piece in our previous issue ('On Pornography', *Screen* vol 21 no 1), Paul Willemen draws attention to pornography as a regime of looking. In particular he elaborates the notion of the fourth look, the possibility of being overlooked in the act of looking, which gains particular force in the area of pornography where the viewer is looking at something at which, for reasons of internal (superego) or external (legal) censorship he or she is not supposed to be looking. He argues that pornographic imagery must be seen as both determining and determined by competing discourses and institutions, and that changes in the public presence and acceptability of pornographic imagery are accounted for by the institutionalisation of the fourth look. An institutionalisation which sets the terms both of the representations and their economic exploitation. In particular he argues that a proliferation of vaginal imagery and of images of women signified as experiencing sexual pleasure is to be regarded as:

An emphatic insistence on the centrality of male pleasure [suggesting] that the male population in western societies now requires to be reassured more often, more directly and more publicly than before.

What emerges is again that pornography is an important area for the exploration of the relations of the textual and social.

In his polemical response to Tim Clark's article in our last issue ('Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of Manet's *Olympia* in 1865') Peter Wollen contests Clark's notion of

the relation of the textual to the political. Wollen argues that if we are concerned with the production of a sexual subject in a particular social formation, then in considering Manet's *Olympia*, for instance, we should be concerned with the production of 'woman' as fetish within a particular conjuncture of capitalism and patriarchy. Fetishism, Wollen argues, enables a coherent account of the contradictory readings which Manet's painting appears to offer and in the face of which Clark proposes an effectively Realist *politique* — that painting should provide a recognisable image drawn from the world of class struggle and class relations. This, Wollen goes on to argue, is to deny the whole enterprise of modern art practice, and the possibility of building a more radical, political, avant-garde on the basis of the 'complex forms of seeing' which modern art practice provides.

Text and conjuncture are also at issue in Paul Kerr's article which discusses the role that the signification of Vietnam has taken in recent American cinema and considers problems raised by some critical approaches adopted at a recent Manchester-SEFT weekend school.

In response to an earlier article by Sue Clayton and Jonathan Curling ('On Authorship', *Screen* Spring 1979 vol 20 no 1), Michael O'Pray takes up the question of authorship in relation to independent exhibition practice, and argues that questions of subject relations in film *production* should also be addressed.

As a further contribution to work on copyright developed in *Screen*, Jeanne Allen argues that the development of cinema as a mass entertainment industry was partly achieved by the way in which the law developed protection for cinema as a form of private property. Cinema was better protected, and hence open to more successful financial exploitation than theatre and vaudeville, because production and distribution were protected by patent law as industrial processes, while cinema's commodity status was protected by copyright law. She also argues that the ideology of legal institutions was such that they discriminated in favour of visual forms of representation.

Finally, we were very sorry indeed to hear of the sudden death of Paddy Whannell, and we publish below an appreciation by some of his colleagues.

MARK NASH

SCREEN

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EDITORIAL

5

The politics and form of television are urgent questions — especially when a fourth ('significantly different') television channel is being planned — yet they have been surprisingly resistant to analysis. Discussion in *Screen* (in particular the article by Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow 'Television—a World in Action', vol 18 no 2) has attempted to delineate the parameters of television's ideological operation: television seen as an extension of the cinematic apparatus, producing and reproducing the novelistic; a mode of providing and maintaining the terms of social intelligibility for the individual in which the individual becomes a *viewer*, 'the point of view of the sense of the programme' held into it, occupied and entertained. In this analysis, not only does television construct viewers, but the social is structured/restructured as television.

The problem then is how to change television (and also how to think of social and political change in an age of television). Organisations such as the Fourth Channel Group, Womens' Broadcasting and Film Lobby, the Independent Filmmakers' Association, have addressed themselves mainly to questions of television's institutional structures. *Screen* has been concerned with the question of changing television representations. The notion of the 'progressive text' has been an important term in this discussion, 'progressiveness' being identified with such programmes as *Days of Hope* and *Law and Order* which confront areas of social and political con-

tradition (the continuing resonances of the General Strike, left and liberal concern about the agents of the law). Critical and political reservations about such programmes concentrated on the use of the realist form which, it was argued, did not confront the viewer with contradiction in such a way that they have to work to resolve them for themselves: such contradictions as were presented were already resolved by the programmes, and both contradictions and programmes were rapidly re-immersed within television's flow.

John Caughie takes issue with this position:

I want to be able to say that, for television, in its specific conditions, it may be politically progressive to confirm an identity (of sexuality or class) to recover repressed experience or history, to contest the dominant image with an alternative identity.

His article concentrates on the area of drama—specifically on documentary drama—arguing that the political importance of television drama cannot be thought only in terms of programme and audience, or in questions of form and content, but has to be thought also in terms of the places occupied by particular programme categories—in this case, drama—in the movement of relationships within the institutions. He, argues that within television two kinds of discourse—the 'official' and 'creative' are particularly unstable in relation to drama, the generally respected demands of creative freedom, social commitment, and controversial boldness on occasion coming into open conflict with the desire for cultural prestige and publicly acceptable standards. This opens an area the boundaries of which are relatively unfixed. Although he stresses the need for different ways of looking, he argues that, because of its instability, drama is one instance where it is and may well continue to be possible to produce representations which contribute to the political formation of a progressive audience. This points to the need to develop work on such representations, and on the possible areas which they might occupy within television.

The question of the formation of an audience is raised by Steve Neale in his account of 'oppositional' practices of exhibition. An increasing number of independent cinemas and film centres in this country are developing a practice of exhibition which attempts to question the relationship between film culture and 'wider' social and political issues. Discussion of

strategies for production, distribution and exhibition in the film culture depend on detailed knowledge of particular areas from which the possibilities for change and development can be better understood. Barry Edson's article in this issue demonstrates how the commercial, 35mm distribution system in the UK works.

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Extending recent debates in *Screen* on authorship and discourse to the area of art practice and art history, Griselda Pollock analyses the ways in which art history constructs the artist as the subject of the work of art producing an artistic subject which is then posited as the exclusive source of meaning for that work. Through an examination of the construction of a personality for Van Gogh—as a paradigm of the modern artist and mad genius—she considers the dominant narrative and psychobiographical modes of art history and parallels the representation of the artist in both psychiatric literature and films like *Lust for Life*. She argues the effect of this ideological work is to remove art from historical or textual analysis, and this makes it very difficult to produce a social history of art which stresses the production of meaning.

MARK NASH

SCREEN

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Editor.

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EDITORIAL

5

Some people regard as 'independent' any film or television production not directly financed by the commercial film and television industries. We, however, are concerned in this issue of *Screen* with a sector of production that is producing a *different* kind of cinema to the mainstream — different in its aesthetic and political aims, not just in the source of its financing. Though this cinema may be seen as culturally marginal, both in the sense of resources devoted to it and its impact on mainstream culture, much important work has been done. A production and distribution sector with a growing number of alternative outlets already exists. Radical aesthetic work which struggles against naturalisation, which defamiliarises, which does not take representation for granted has been developed together with exhibition practices concerned with changing the audience's relationship to cinema. This work, particularly as developed in the IFA (the Independent Filmmakers' Association) has taken two directions: the development of alternative or oppositional discourses and practices on the one hand and engagement with dominant discourses and institutions on the other.

The important issue, as Alan Lovell says, is to *specify* what kind of social practice independent cinema 'aspires to be', and that means considering both rigorously as well as realistically the kinds of engagements between spectators and films that are possible at present. While the notion of the social practice of the cinema, that the spectator is a producer rather than a consumer of meanings, marked an important shift in our understanding of the relationship between spectators and cinema, John Caughie is concerned to point out that the idea

of the active spectator cannot be used as a political *guarantee*. He reminds us that Brecht, raised important questions about it even being *possible*, in cinema, for the spectator to actively intervene, changing and appropriating aspects of a film to the needs of a particular struggle at a particular moment. We are particularly concerned with developing discussion and debate in this area. As part of that we publish a discussion between some *Screen* board members and Marc Karlin which covers a wide range of issues important for independent cinema. In particular we would single out the question of left culture — how is it possible for people engaged in alternative practices to influence the political, everyday culture of this country? How can what is essentially a minority concern engage, in Raymond Williams words, 'potential majorities which can become effective majorities'?

At the time of the last Labour government's plans for film and television — plans which included a British Film Authority to manage a restructured industry and an Open Broadcasting Authority to administer a fourth television channel — the IFA began to develop a *cultural* argument for independent cinema. British cinema, they argued, should be funded as an art, as in many European and socialist countries, rather than on a strictly commercial basis. They argued for a cultural policy rather than simply a financial and organisational restructuring of a basically US-dominated film industry. The IFA argued that only state finance and subsidy would enable the development of a viable British film culture. The current IFA proposals, which we reprint in this issue, extend the argument to television. From terms that a liberal institution might reasonably be expected to accept, they argue that it is possible to produce both a greater variety of television, representing a range of 'minority' viewpoints, and fund experimental and innovative work, within the parameters of the Fourth Channel. Both papers are being used as a basis for discussion with the recently appointed executives of the Fourth Channel.

MARK NASH

SCREEN

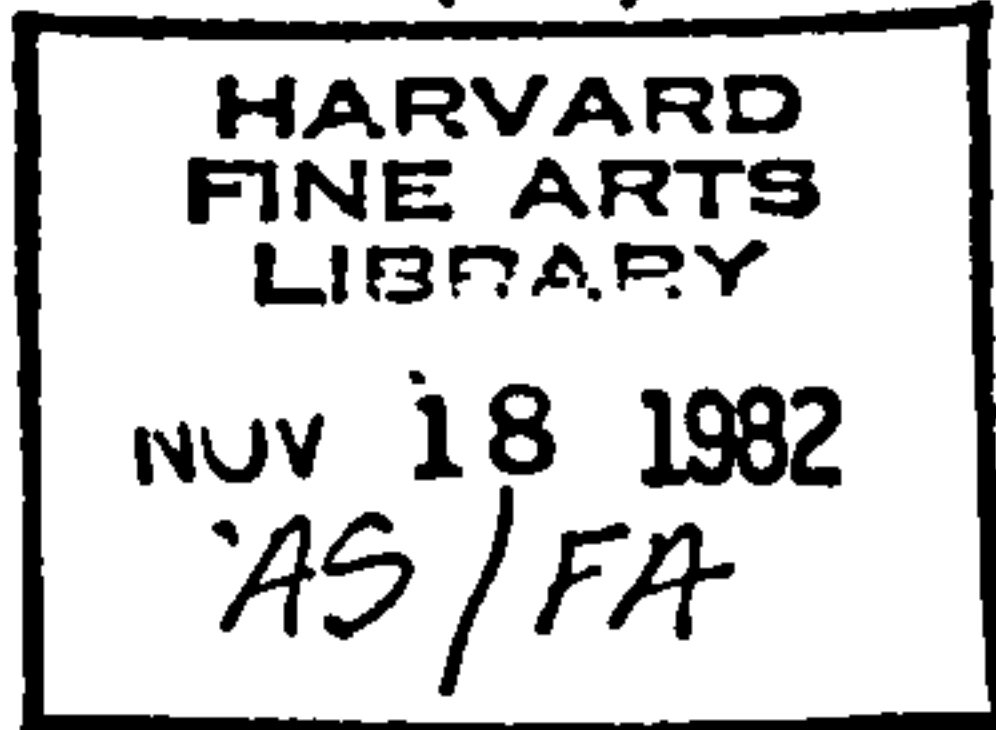
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EDITORIAL

7

American domination of the UK film industry has long been an issue with British film-makers and critics, who make despairing comments about the future for British cinema. Despite decades of such discussion, few strategies have emerged. On the one hand there has been the argument for investment (by private enterprise and the state) in a cinema which will hold its own with American cinema, competing in the same international market as 'popular' American product. On the other, there have been attempts to develop strategies drawing on the film industries of Europe, where cinema has more of a national focus, but is able to find an international audience through its appeal to discourses of art and culture in the form of 'art cinema'.

As Steve Neale points out, there has been little attempt to understand art cinema as textual system or institution, though some of the preoccupations of textual analysis — with questions of reading and authorial voice, as in Edward Branigan's article in this issue — are implicitly those of art cinema. As textual system, art cinema can be distinguished from the traditional Hollywood product by a number of features: an engagement of the individual, rather than the

impersonal point-of-view; an interiorisation of dramatic conflict with an emphasis on character rather than plot and action; and most strikingly, the foregrounding of an authorial voice. These features, of course, change as the Hollywood product from which this cinema seeks to differentiate itself changes, and as the Hollywood product appropriates some of the elements of art cinema. Steve Neale argues that the durability of art cinema and its emergence as a genre, can be attributed to the combination of discourses of art and culture with representations of sexuality more 'explicit' than permissible in Hollywood. He also suggests that while the notion of a national cinema which requires different forms of state support and regulation (quotas, subventions, prizes etc) is general currency within European society and state apparatuses, this is not generally accepted in Britain.

Independent film production, comprising as it does a range of practices — agitational, avant-garde, low-budget feature and documentary — has, through struggles for greater resources and institutional recognition, consolidated itself. As Peter Sainsbury indicates, an institutional basis for support of this sector now exists, but it is still severely underfinanced. The immediate future for such film-making in the UK depends to a large extent on the development of the Fourth Channel — on whether its executives support independent film production. It seems likely, but is by no means certain, that this cinema will be an art cinema of some kind.

In his article Edward Branigan argues that there are two approaches to the question of the relation of spectator and text. On the one hand an empiricist approach which gets bogged down in formalism and taxonomies, on the other a rationalist one which regards the surface features of a text as essentially chaotic and endowed with significance and order through codes applied by the reader. He argues that readings proceed by means of hypotheses that are constantly modified, rather than by positive identifications which are then liable to have been errors. Recognition of reading 'error' collapses meaning into the formal aspects of the text and cannot explain the rules internalised by readers, whereas hypotheses are always open to revision and stress the activity of the reader.

Continuing the debate on pornography, Claire Pajaczkowska takes issue with some of John Ellis' formulations (in 'On Pornography' *Screen* vol 21 no 1, and a weekend conference

organised by SEFT and the Institute of Contemporary Arts) arguing that in the discussions of representation and psychoanalysis not enough attention is given to the primary bisexuality of the drives. She suggests that the apparent address of particular forms of pornography (in this instance to heterosexual men) should not be taken for granted. An analysis which ignores the question of bisexuality simply leads to a reiteration in theoretical terms of the 'heterosexual presumption' which it aims to deconstruct. Similarly, the gay movement is not best served by having 'homosexual' pornography treated as an entirely separate area for political and theoretical work. She also draws attention to the fact that issues of 'women's pleasure' and 'feminism' frequently become the stakes in a displaced sexual and theoretical rivalry between men. A timely reminder that feminism raises issues which are extremely pertinent to SEFT and *Screen* and which have been largely ignored.

MARK NASH

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DEC 1 1981

EDITORIAL

5

The ideological operations of documentary film are difficult to disentangle. The codes of documentary tend to produce textual assurances of the naturalness of their representations. The use of the 'real world' as a referent often obscures textual operations more successfully and convincingly than in narrative fictional cinema, which has been the subject of most ideological analysis and criticism to date. Annette Kuhn's analysis of the British war-time documentary *Desert Victory* points to the textual operations which attempt to secure a 'collective' address for the film, positioning spectators in a unified, ideological relationship to the war, the British nation and history. John Ellis sees this film as marking a shift to the elaboration of a corporate collective address — the homogenising use of 'we' as a term to submerge the difference of 'I' — in British cinema and television.

In his article on some recent political documentary films, Noel King reminds us that left documentary can present extremely problematic strategies of representation. He points to a combination of humanism and historicism within the economy of classical narrative which effectively work against the political aims of such films. The purpose of such criticism is to counter the readings such texts propose and in turn suggest strategies to encourage the development of active and critical viewing.

Mick Eaton and Steve Neale analyse the operation of comedy narratives, arguing that comedy can work to defamiliarise codes and conventions and unsettle the spectator. The psychoanalytic nature of the comic response, however, also works to naturalise moments of disruption within the form of

comedy. Attention must be directed, therefore, to the spaces comedy opens up, the discourses it works with and criticises, and the possibilities for engaged social criticism which laughter can provoke.

The development of critical work on film and television representations has in recent years begun to produce a number of films taking theoretical issues as their direct subject matter. Questions of representation, psychoanalysis and feminism are at issue in one such film — *Sigmund Freud's Dora* — which is discussed in this issue by Jane Weinstock, who was involved in its production, and Felicity Oppé who has been working with the exhibition of the film.

Finally we would like to express our thanks to Susan Honeyford who has left *Screen* as a result of the reorganisation at present in progress. Her editorial work has been essential to the success and development of the magazine.

MARK NASH

Notice of the Annual General Meeting of the Society for Education in Film and Television to be held in London on Saturday 30th January 1982 at 2.00 pm.

Nominations are invited for membership of the Executive Committee for 1982 to serve until November 1982. It is intended that beginning in November 1982, Annual General Meetings will be held in November instead of January as at present. Nominations should be proposed and seconded by members of SEFT and should indicate the consent of the nominee. Nominations must be received at the Society's offices, 29 Old Compton St, London W1 no later than Friday November 13th 1981.

SCREEN

Volume 22 Number 3 1981
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EDITORIAL

5

In her article, which starts from an examination of Michael Snow's recent film *Presents* (1981), Teresa De Lauretis raises some important questions for feminist film practice. She demonstrates how even a radical cinema such as *Presents*, which sets up the problematic of the cinematic apparatus, and demonstrates the relations and terms of its vision (including woman as object, ground and support of representation) nevertheless produces and breaks a nexus of look and identification in relation to the traditionally sexually undifferentiated spectator:

As in classical cinema, Presents addresses its disruption of look and identification to a masculine spectator-subject.

She argues that the question of the modalities of spectatorship available to women should not be confined to the demonstration of the absence of such positions, nor move from that to affirmative action which asserts simply a different 'feminist' position. Rather, the struggle for the feminist critique is to resist the pressure,

towards coherence, unity and the production of a fixed self/image, a subject-vision, and to insist, instead, on the production of contradictory points of identification.

She proposes that narrative (understood as the unfolding of the oedipal scenario, of positionalities of desire) is a condition of signification and identification. Narrative mediates the relation of image and language. Consequently, questions of identification and position of women spectators can only be addressed through narrative. But a feminist practice aims to elaborate different economies which disrupt the masculine: feminine polarities of the oedipal scenario. Or as Mary Kelly puts in her article in this issue, feminist criticism examines

how that contradiction (the crisis of positionality) is articulated in particular practices and to what extent it demonstrates that masculine and feminine positions are never fixed.

Mary Kelly examines the structure of modernist art criticism, demonstrating its dependence on traditional notions of authorship and the authorial subject. The modernist discourse, she argues, constructs a category of the 'expressive' artistic text, in which painting is dominant. The art object's investment with authorial subjectivity is secured (literally and financially in the case of the artist's signature) with the gesture. Progressive aspects of the so-called 'dematerialisation' of the art object in the 1970s are recuperated by this authorial discourse. The effect of much performance art, for instance, was to put into circulation the artistic personality as a commodity. The art object was pared down to its modernist essentials — the authenticity of the artist's experience of his or her own body. Radical practices which contest these notions of expressivity, of the co-incidence of artist and authorial subject, and attempt to raise issues of representation, of production of meaning, of institutions and conditions which determine the reading of texts, and the sexual over-determination of meaning which takes place in that process, are on the defensive. In order to exploit the discontinuities and contradictions which exist in modernism, they need the support of a theoretical criticism which it is the responsibility of *Screen*, as well as other journals, to provide.

Paul Willemsen, in his article 'Cinematic Discourse — The Problem of Inner Speech' returns to concerns of the interdependence of the verbal and visual in cinema first posed in an early issue of *Screen* ('Reflections on Eikhenbaum's Concept of Internal Speech in the Cinema', *Screen* vol 15 no 4, 1974/5). From a demonstration of the structuring effect of

verbal signifiers on the formation of images, he moves to consider psychoanalytic theories of language and proposes that inner speech is the discourse and process binding text, subject and sense into sociality, connecting the psychoanalytic subject and the subject in history. He points to the complexity of the interrelations between the processes of signification and our understanding of how social formations can be changed. The areas of investigation his approach opens up are wide-ranging and difficult to break down into discrete topics for research. This no doubt is a sign that work on inner speech is very much in progress.

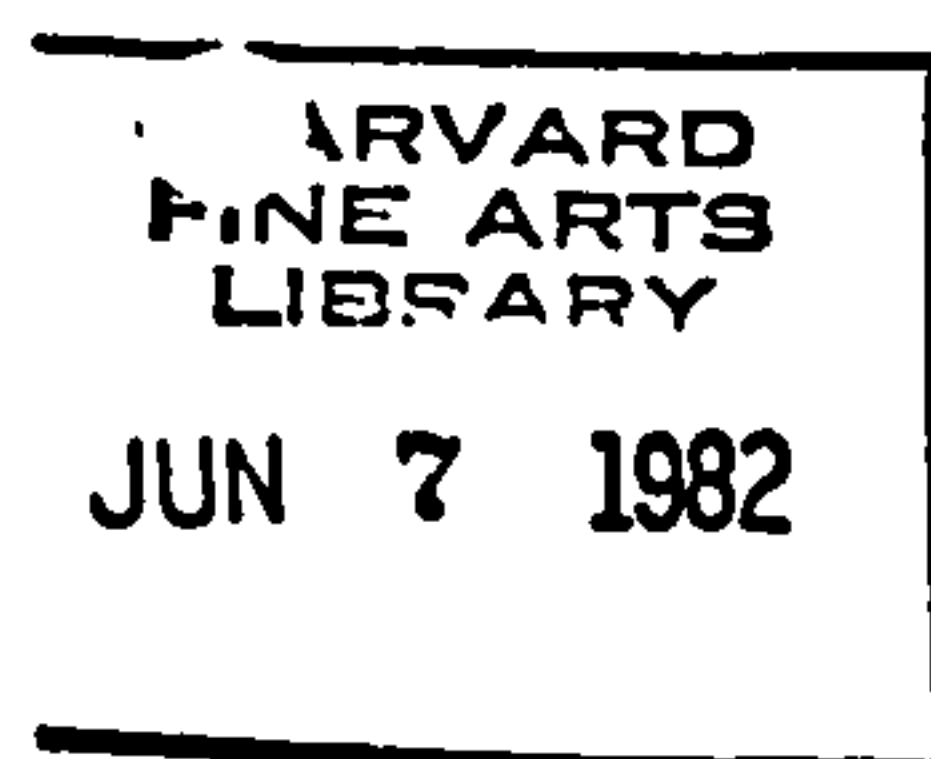
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Finally, we would draw readers' attention to our recently published *Screen Reader 2 'Cinema and Semiotics'*, which is available from SEFT.

MARK NASH

SCREEN

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EDITORIAL

5

This issue brings together a number of articles on different aspects of television. Patricia Zimmerman describes the obstacles which US television networks present to independent documentary producers and argues for a restructuring of the network system. In his discussion of the television production of David Hare's 'film for television' *Dreams of Leaving*, John Caughie elaborates a notion of art television as a working ideology within television and criticism. He sees it as a way of opening out some of the received orthodoxies of institutional and critical discourses about television. Most serious critical work on television has been devoted to the more popular programmes such as news, sport, the series and the serial (the two latter the subject of other articles in this issue). However, such studies sometimes ignore the fact that forms are privileged by both producers and viewers in terms of credibility and prestige, witness the substantial viewing figures for opera on TV. Caughie argues that programmes such as *Dreams of Leaving*, which though not progressive in themselves, are so privileged within dominant discourses, and that progressive discourses have to take this hierarchy seriously if they wish to argue for different priorities and different forms.

From May 1982, *Screen* and *Screen Education* will join to form one single, new magazine to be published as a bi-monthly and to be called *Screen*. There are many reasons for this change, including the current recession which has forced SEFT to reconsider its

publication strategy. While it is true that both *Screen* and *Screen Education* had developed distinct policies and practices and were beginning to increase their sales and subscriptions, this change is to be welcomed. Both magazines were shaped by a commitment to educational and theoretical work in relation to cinema and television which required them to be open to the possibility of innovation. A newly elected editorial board is working on issues which will build on *Screen* and *Screen Education*'s important critical and theoretical work.

The appearance of a cumulative index, vols 12-22, 1971-81, points to the fact that we have been in the business of radical writing on film, television and (to a lesser extent) education, for ten years. *Screen* has become 'respected', though fortunately still able to infuriate some members of the film criticism establishment, such as the *New Statesman* and *Times Education Supplements*. The bi-monthly format will enable *Screen* to challenge critical orthodoxy more directly, through more frequent reviews and journalistic articles.

This is also the last issue of *Screen* which I shall be editing. After nearly four years as editor it is time to let others shape the magazine more closely. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing *Screen* Board for all they have contributed to the production of the magazine.

MARK NASH

MARK NASH
THE MOMENT OF SCREEN
Dedicated to Claire Johnstone

I am presenting a series of artefacts here at the Secession—issues of the film journal *Screen*, as well as "film culture" ephemera from the period 1971 to 1984.

1971 marked the beginning of the "new" *Screen* re-launched under the editorship of Sam Rohdie. At this time I began post-graduate film studies at the Slade School of Fine Art Film Unit, University College London, where Noël Burch, whose work is also featured in this exhibition, was a visiting lecturer. Noël's influence was immense. He focussed our attention on detailed analysis of sequence, shot and frame, on- and off-screen space, and probably did more than anyone to keep us focussed on the materiality of the cinematic experience. (That his students should have subsequent theoretical differences with him was only natural).

1984 marked the beginning of Channel 4 Television—a new fourth terrestrial British broadcasting channel inaugurated during the first term of Margaret Thatcher's Government, that was to have an immense influence in supporting radical work from home and abroad. It also consolidated a move from theory to theoretically informed practice that myself and many friends and colleagues made at that time. The 1984 Workshop Declaration enabled newly established film groups such as Sankofa (of which Isaac Julien represented here at the Secession, was a founder member) to make work which challenged both the existing form and content of film and tv production but also re-asserted the importance of group and collective practice, important in the co-operative and oppositional film movements in pre-WW2 Britain.

The documents exhibited here bear witness to the vitality of those times—discussion groups and weekend schools proliferated. I dedicate my presentation here to Claire Johnstone, founder member of the Women's Film Group, feminist film theorist and cultural activist, with whom I collaborated on many projects at this time and whose handwriting is scrawled across some of the documents here. Claire studied at the London School of Economics, where she learnt a style of polemical argument that stood her in good stead in those argumentative and fractious times.

This was the time of the typewriter and the Roneoed or cyclostyled document. Photocopying was too expensive and too ephemeral, and none of us had personal computers. These wax-coated carbon sheets would be lovingly or despairingly typed and then somehow attached to these complex Gestetner machines which would spit ink but somehow produce all the copies one needed for one's meeting or day-school presentation.

These documents are presented here as a contribution to an archaeology, so to speak, of film theory, and as a witness to the range of connections being made between film theory and practice at this time—

MARK NASH
DER MOMENT VON SCREEN
Claire Johnstone gewidmet

Ich stelle in der Secession eine Reihe von Artefakten aus: Ausgaben der Filmzeitschrift *Screen* sowie Schaustücke zur Filmkultur der Zeit von 1971 bis 1984.

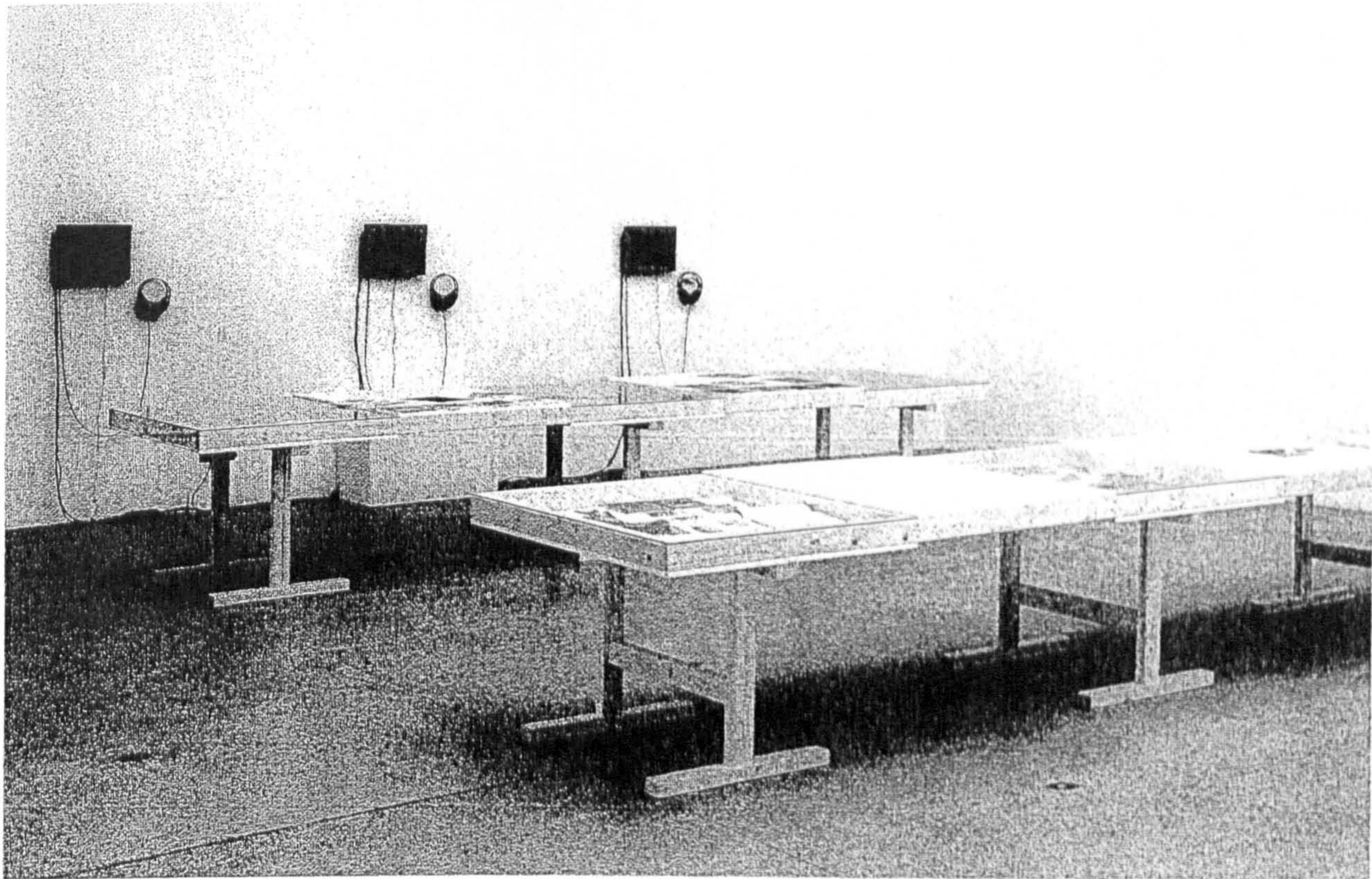
1971 markiert den Beginn des „neuen“, von Sam Rohdie herausgegebenen *Screen*. Zur selben Zeit begann ich gerade eine Postgraduiertenausbildung in Filmwissenschaft an der Slade School of Fine Art Film Unit (University College London), wo Noël Burch, dessen Arbeit ebenfalls in der Ausstellung gezeigt wird, als Gastlehrbeauftragter wirkte. Noël's Einfluss war immens. Er fokussierte unsere Aufmerksamkeit nicht nur auf die detaillierte Analyse von Szenenabfolgen, Szenen und Einstellungen, sondern auch auf den Raum innerhalb und ausserhalb der Leinwand. Damit trug er wohl mehr als jede/jeder andere dazu bei, unser Augenmerk auf der Materialität der Kinoerfahrung zu belassen. (Dass einige seiner SchülerInnen danach theoretische Differenzen mit ihm haben würden, war nur folgerichtig.)

1984 wiederum markiert den Beginn von Channel 4, der während der ersten Phase von Margaret Thatchers Regierung gegründet wurde und als vierter Fernsehsender in Großbritannien radikale in- und ausländische Arbeiten forcierte. Der Sender unterstützte auch den Wechsel von rein theorieelastigen Arbeiten zu einer theoretisch bewussten Praxis, den ich und viele Freunde/Freundinnen und KollegInnen zu jener Zeit vollzogen. Die Workshop Declaration aus dem Jahr 1984 ermöglichte neu gegründeten Gruppen wie Sankofa (von welcher der ebenfalls in der Secession vertretene Isaac Julien ein Gründungsmitglied war) Produktionen, die nicht nur Form und Inhalt existierender Film- und Fernsehformate widersprachen, sondern auch die Wichtigkeit einer Gruppen- und Kollektivarbeit betonten, die in Großbritannien schon in den Filmkooperativen und der oppositionellen Filmbewegung vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg Bedeutung erlangt hatte.

Die hier ausgestellten Dokumente bezeugen die Lebhaftigkeit dieser Zeiten, in denen Diskussionsgruppen und Wochenendseminare gleichsam wucherten. Ich widme meine Präsentation der Mitbegründerin der Women's Film Group, der feministischen Filmtheoretikerin und Aktivistin Claire Johnstone, mit der ich damals an vielen Projekten zusammengearbeitet habe. Ihre Handschrift sieht man über ein paar der ausgestellten Zettel gekritzelt. Claire studierte Wirtschaft an der London School of Economics, wo sie sich einen polemischen Argumentationsstil aneignete, der ihr zu jenen streitbaren und aufsässigen Zeiten einen guten Stand verschaffte.

Es war die Zeit der Schreibmaschinen und Wachsmatritzenabzüge. Fotokopien waren noch zu teuer und wenig verbreitet, und niemand von uns hatte natürlich einen PC. Diese wachsbezogenen Karbonblätter wurden liebevoll oder verzweifelt betippt und dann mehr oder weniger gekonnt auf diese komplizierten Gestetner-Maschinen montiert, die zwar Tinte verspritzten, aber irgendwie doch alle Kopien herstellten, die man für das nächste Treffen oder den nächsten Vortrag brauchte.

Die Dokumente sollen hier sozusagen als Beitrag zu einer Archäologie der Filmtheorie und als Zeugnisse jener vielen Verbindungsglieder dienen, die es



damals zwischen Filmtheorie und Filmemachen gab, nämlich die London Women's Film Group, *The Other Cinema*, das Newsreel Collective, das Edinburgh Festival, The Independent Film-Makers Association usw.

Die Diskusstitel sind ebenfalls bezeichnend für die damaligen Zeiten: „Politik und Produktion theoretischer Zeitschriften“, „Kunstpölitik – Theorie und Praxis“, „Kino als soziale Handlung“, „Warum Theorie?“, „Bemerkungen zur Idee des ‚Alternativkinos‘“ etc.

Ich habe mich dazu entschlossen, als visuellen Kontrapunkt zu diesen Dokumenten auch Auszüge aus Filmen zu zeigen, die Thema zahlreicher Debatten in *Screen* waren. In den 70er Jahren war der Filmauszug ja die beliebteste Filmunterrichtsform. Das British Film Institute hatte ein großes Archiv solcher Auszüge, das tatsächlich als eigener Film gezeigt werden konnte. Doch ob wir nun wollen oder nicht, befinden wir uns heute am Beginn eines digitalen Zeitalters, in dem Film ein schwieriges Ausstellungsmedium geworden ist. Nichtsdestotrotz können wir einige Avantgarde- und Experimentalfilme von damals im Rahmen von *Fate of Alien Modes* im Film-museum und in der Secession sehen.

Parallel dazu zeige ich eine Dokumentation über Jacques Lacan, die den überwältigenden Einfluss der Psychoanalyse in den 70er Jahren belegen soll.

Meine Präsentation pendelt also zwischen dem Archäologischen – in Glasvitrinen ausgestellte Schaustücke einer vergangenen Epoche – und dem Versuch, die immer noch wirksame Vitalität dieser Ideen und Bilder durch die Bewegung des Films selbst und die Bewegung der BesucherInnen von heute in der Ausstellung zu zeigen.

the London Women's Film Group, *The Other Cinema*, the Newsreel Collective, the Edinburgh Festival, the Independent Film-Makers Association, and so on.

In terms of discussion the following are also emblematic of the times: "Politics and the Production of Theoretical Journals;" "Art-Pölitics Theory-Practice;" "Cinema as a Social Practice;" "Why Theory? Notes on the Idea of an 'Independent Cinema,'" and so on.

I have chosen to feature some moving image material as a visual counterpoint, films that were the subject of debate and discussion in the pages of *Screen*, presented here in extract form. In the 1970s the extract was the privileged mode of film teaching. The British Film Institute had an extensive library of such extracts which could indeed be shown as film. Whether we like it or not we are moving into a digital age in which film has become a difficult exhibition medium. However, we are able to screen a number of avant-garde and experimental films from those times at the Film Museum and the Secession.

In a parallel move I'm showing a documentary on Jacques Lacan to reference the over-riding influence of psychoanalysis in the 1970s.

My presentation oscillates between the archaeological—specimens from a past era laid out in glass cases—and an attempt to show the ongoing vitality of these ideas and these images through the movement of film itself and the movement of contemporary spectators through the exhibition.



IN THE INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKERS' ASSOCIATION... THE NATURE OF 'INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKING' IS A DIFFICULTLY DEFINED TERM...

INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKING IN THE UK... An introductory discussion paper from the Granting Committee...

THE OUTCOME OF THAT... OF MORE IMPORTANCE THAN... THE LONG OVERLOOKED...

CINEMA CLUB and THE OTHER CINEMA sent THIRD WORLD CINEMA JANUARY 21 - MARCH 3

Handwritten notes and a calendar grid with the word 'NOSTRO' written across it.

THIRD WORLD CINEMA Programme Notes: 10p NATIONAL FILM THEATRE SOUTH BANK ARTS CENTRE SE1 APRIL 10-16 COLLEGIATE THEATRE 15 GORDON ST. ELSTON RD. WC1 APRIL 12-26

EVERY SUNDAY COLLEGIATE THEATRE 15 GORDON ST. OFF EUSTON RD. JAN 13 6.00 COUP POUR C R 20 ATTICA WOMEN'S CINEMA

THE OTHER CINEMA THE OTHER CINEMA 25 TOTTENHAM STREET (at Chiswick Street), W.11

TORY LESS

afterimage no. 1. Glass and politics. 4 villages

NEWS PAPER ART/POLITICS: THEORY/PRACTICE Wednesday 1st to Saturday 4th May 1974 - Royal College of Art Kensington Gore, London Tel: 584-5020 Ext. 326 Women's Workshop Artists Union

ART: POLITICS THEORY: PRACTICE DUTCH-ENGLISH PAPERS

Mexico: The Frozen Revolution

Minutes of the meeting of the sub-committee on film... 1.11.74

APPLICATION FOR A RESEARCH DEGREE BY PUBLISHED WORKS,
MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY
MARK NASH 2003

Published Works Submitted:

IV Production and Curating

MARK NASH *The Art of Movement*

Guy Brett's exhibition and catalogue essay *Force Fields: The Century of Kinesthesia* reintroduces us to an investigation of movement in art which mid-20th-century became obscured by waves of more fashionable movements: Pop Art, Minimal Art, Conceptual Art etc. It also reintroduces us to the scientific investigations of artists – in particular a theme of cosmic speculation which he traces through the work of artists included in the exhibition. Both elements have been present throughout the century's production of art, and it would be interesting to explore why they have been so repressed in recent years. This is not really the place to do so, except to point out that the exhibition is ambitiously revisionist in its aim to reintroduce us to themes and preoccupations which were central to much 20th-century art practice.

Certainly my own introduction to contemporary art in the late 1960s came at a moment when both the art of movement and the parallels between investigations of scientists and artists were very much in the public eye, in Great Britain at least. While C.P. Snow elaborated on what he perceived as a widening gap between the sciences and the humanities,¹ scientists like embryologist C.H. Waddington pursued an almost inverse tack – exploring the connections between the scientific and artistic imagination.²

In this essay, however, I want to focus on a further paradox, the contribution of cinema to this art of movement, and to remind readers that there is another history of cinema than that classic cinema preserved in the major film archives such as the Cinémathèque Française or the British Film Institute, but instead represented in such collections as those of film Co-ops or the Collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris – concerned with the art of movement.

To avoid being distracted by the flood of terms (experimental, avant-garde, underground etc.) which has accumulated over the years in discussion of this cinema, Jean-Michel Bouhours in his catalogue essay to introduce the Centre Georges Pompidou's collection³ proposes a focus on the fundamental artistic preoccupation with movement in this 'other' cinema. He draws on Gilles Deleuze's argument that cinema repeats at a faster pace the revolution in philosophy that had taken place over several centuries from the pre-Socratics to Kant: "The subordination of time to movement was reversed, time ceases to be the measurement of normal movement, it appears increasingly for itself... The movement-image of the so-called classical cinema gave way in the post-war period to a direct time image."⁴

In his discussion of the movement-image, Deleuze in turn explores Henri Bergson's theses on movement. There are three. The first is that cinema gives us a false movement, reconstructing movement in line with Zeno's paradox of the flying arrow.⁵ The second concerns cinema as the last descendant of the lineage of modern science in its "aspiration to take time as an independent variable". Here "the determining conditions of the cinema are... not merely the photo but the snapshot... the equidistance of snapshots; the transfer of this equidistance onto a framework which constitutes the 'film' (it was Edison and Dickson who perforated the film in the camera); a mechanism for moving on images (Lumiere's claws). It is in this sense that the cinema is the system which reproduces movement as a function of any-instance-whatever that is, as a function of equidistant instants, selected so as to create an impression of continuity." The third thesis, reduced to a formula, is that "not only is the instant an immobile section of movement, but movement is an immobile section of duration". In other words, not only are there the equidistant snapshots, instantaneous images, immobile sections of movement, but there are movement-images which are mobile sections of duration and finally time images "that is duration-images, change images, relation images ... which are beyond movement itself."⁶

As *Force Fields* demonstrates, the historic avant garde's questioning of the status of movement in the arts was just as important as their questioning of vision. Indeed movement was an integral part of what Bouhours calls Marcel Duchamp's "speculative exploration of non-Euclidian space and the fourth dimension"⁷ in his *Rotoreliefs* and *Anémic cinéma* (1925). Marey's cinematographic gun, developed in 1892, seized an instant of time, producing a still from a moving image. When published in *Nature* Marey's images impressed both the Futurists Giacomo Balla and Arturo Bragaglia as well as Marcel Duchamp, whose painting *Nude Descending a Staircase* demonstrates how movement escapes space to become duration.

In its reconstitution of a key trajectory in 20th-century art, *Force Fields* also points to the contradictory position in which experimental and avant-garde cinema found itself from the 1920s on. On the one hand, cinema's founding principle of snapshot images in motion would appear to make it central to the exploration of movement in the visual arts more generally (as envisaged in the 1916 *Futurist Cinema Manifesto*). But on the other hand, the motion picture camera seemed destined to return us to Quattrocento perspective, as well as transmit 19th-century codes of realism into the 20th-century. The advent of the talkies from 1929 on, it is often argued, had the effect of sealing cinema in the novelistic and theatrical dramaturgy of the previous century, dominated by codes of realism and melodrama (the kind of cinema already dismissed in 1925 by Malevich as 'ciné-baiser' [cine-kiss, cine-fuck]).⁸

The involvement of the historic avant gardes – Futurists, Cubists, Dadaists and Surrealists – with experimental cinema is now relatively well documented (though museums and galleries have an uneven record in preserving and exhibiting this history). In his *A History of Experimental Film and Video*,⁹ A. L. Rees suggests that early avant-garde films followed two routes – the abstract film, and the burlesque and parody of early 'pre-realist' film drama. Abstract film followed the Neo-Impressionist claim that a painting is a flat surface covered with colour – some of the earliest abstract avant-garde films were strips of film hand-painted by the Futurist artists Ginna (Arnaldo Ginanni Corradini) and Bruno Corra as early as 1910. Len Lye rediscovered the hand-painted film in the mid 1930s. Lye's later films *Free Radicals* (1958) and *Particles in Space* (1979) utilise the simplest of scratching techniques on the film emulsion and in so doing he opens depths and fields of energy which only his kinetic sculptures had been able to achieve until then.¹⁰

The comic and burlesque artists' cinema was also able to bypass realism, drawing on film-making devices which realist film largely excluded such as stop-frame, variable speed, reverse motion, etc. Both currents were, so to speak, a response to the consolidation of the silent narrative feature film in both mainstream and art house variants around a realist aesthetic.

London 1926. Virginia Woolf is in the cinema watching *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919): "A shadow shaped like a tadpole suddenly appeared at one corner of the screen. It swelled to an immense size, quivered, bulged, and sank back again into nonentity. For a moment it seemed to embody some monstrous, diseased imagination of the lunatic's brain. For a moment it seemed as if thought could be conveyed by shape more effectively than by words."

In her essay *The Cinema*¹¹ from which this quotation is taken, Woolf speculates about a secret language which we feel and see, but never speak. Could this be made visible to the eye, she asks? Is it possible to render thought visible without the help of words? "Yet if so much of our thinking and feeling is connected with seeing, some residue of visual emotion which is of no use to painter or to poet may still await the cinema. The symbols of this cinema, she imagines, will be quite unlike the real objects which we see before us". It will be abstract, "but how it is to be attempted much less achieved no one at the moment can tell us."

Woolf dismisses cinema's attempt to reproduce the experience of literature and theatre as redundant, rather imagining a cinema of abstract emotions. For her the serendipitous appearance of the tadpole is a pointer to a potential in cinema which even narrative art films such as *Calligari* cannot develop. Many writers and artists similarly decried mainstream cinema's dependence on outmoded forms. Picabia in 1932 compared it to a "poor man's Musée Grevin designed to appeal to the most base instincts of the public."¹²

Woolf had not yet seen the abstract and animated cinema that was then taking shape on the Continent in the work of, say, Hans Richter, Viking Eggeling or Oscar Fischinger premiered in Berlin in November 1925 – a programme of Dada, Cubist and Bauhaus artists which also included a presentation of a *Light-Play* projection work by Hirschfeld Mack, one of the originatory moments of abstract cinema. (Films by several of these artists are included in the *Force Fields* exhibition and supporting film programme.)

Synaesthesia/music

Bouhours traces the origin of abstract cinema to the long tradition of synaesthesia which finds its most notable expression in Richard Wagner's concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.¹³ This idea of the interpenetration of different art forms, and of music as, so to speak, a master discourse, was very influential in the early decades of the century.

Much abstract film was preoccupied with attaining what Walter Pater termed the 'condition of music'.¹⁴ Walter Ruttmann's *Lichtspiel Opus 1* (1921) is the first extant abstract film. In his own words: "This photo-dramatic work inaugurates a totally new genre of artistic creation... This young art elevates itself to a purity comparable to music. An optical symphony which until now was a speculation reserved for aesthetics."¹⁵

Both Eggeling and Richter tried to develop a visual equivalent to Ferruccio Busoni's musical counterpoint.¹⁶ Oscar Fischinger pursued a complex, abstract but musically motivated cinema that was different from that of both Richter and Eggeling. William Moritz¹⁷ points to Fischinger's interest in the meditative structures of Tibetan Buddhism, which were to be so important for James Whitney as well as Jordan Belson half a century later (Whitney's early works also developed under a musical paradigm – Shoenberg; and the electronic score for *Yantra* was prepared with Belson's help).

Ballet Mécanique, the film by Dudley Murphy (which traditionally bears Fernand Léger's name), is important here also. Of Murphy's previous visual symphonies – films synchronised to classical music – only one survives apart from *Ballet Mécanique*, which was synchronised to a 'musical engineering' score by George Antheil. Less than abstract, *Ballet Mécanique* connects with the French *cinépème* movement: for instance Henri Chomette's *Cinq Minutes de Cinéma Pur* (1925), which A.L. Rees describes as a "delirious travelogue of Paris", marked by the stress on rhythmic editing, or Germaine Dulac's *Etude Cinégraphique sur un Arabesque* (1929) which observed the beauty of machines and "no more abandoned referentiality than did the poems of Pound or Eliot or the paintings of Picasso or Braque".¹⁸

René Clair's more famous *Entr'acte* (1924) fully 'crosses over' to the non-abstract comic and burlesque artists' cinema. This more referential cinema is not the focus of *Force Fields*, but we do well to remember that individual film-makers crossed between more and less referential work. Norman McLaren is represented by his *Lines Vertical* (1960) and *Lines Horizontal* (1962), but works such as *Neighbours* (1952) – a pixillated comedy of nuclear war – embrace the high burlesque.

Light/Vision

Working at the same time as Man Ray, László Moholy-Nagy developed the idea of an art of light through photograms, films and sculptures. In *Lichtspiel Schwarz-weiss-grau* (Light Play: Black – White – Gray, 1930) he films the *Light-Space Modulator*. His recording of the light transmitted and reflected by the sculpture is more than documentary – it emphasises that the work of art consists of a play of light through the movement of forms. The film is an equivalent to the sculpture itself. It connects to a performative element in the post-war avant garde, of which Anthony McCall's luminous kinetic film sculptures such as *Line describing a Cone* (1973) or Nam Jun Paik's *Zen for Film* (1964) are the most emblematic. (Paik's film uses the Brownian motion of dust deposited on the film as it moves through the projector, McCall exhorts the audience to smoke during the performance, thereby gradually increasing the opacity of the luminous volume through which the projector light passes.)

In both the post-war art and avant-garde cinemas movement has been subordinated to time, to duration. While Deleuze's discussion of the movement-image embraces both the historic avant-gardes as well as the classic narrative pre-war cinema, his discussion of the time-image focuses on post-war art cinema, and does not adequately cover the full range of experimentation with time and the time image in the avant garde. Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1966-1967) or Andy Warhol's early films present a time-image interspersed with faint traces of the movement-image, emblematic of the problematic of movement and time already investigated by Duchamp so many years before. (Warhol is present in the exhibition through Willard Maas's film of an ephemeral Warhol sculpture *Andy Warhol's Silver Flotations*; 1966).

The post-war avant garde's concern with movement and image is complex. Some, for example the *cinéma direct* of Stan Brakhage or Len Lye, continue the investigations of Man Ray's and Moholy-Nagy's rayograms. But many of the structuralist film makers, from Peter Kubelka to Peter Gidal, search for a materiality in and of the image to create a new visual language specific to the cinema machine and distinct from 'natural' human perception, and where the issues of both movement and time are subordinated to a new research of vision. Many of the films of structural cinema bear a superficial resemblance to the investigations of the earlier abstract cinema; however, their resort to a visual aggressiveness (most notable in the films of Kubelka or Paul Sharits), and their concern with work at the level of the frame or photogramme, mark a concern with optical and visual impression that finds an equivalent in the painting or sculpture of Bridget Riley or Victor Vasarely.

James Whitney's *Yantra* is constructed with patterns of dots at the level of the frame, but it is pre-eminently concerned with complex patterns of movement rather than with optical impression. And in its evocation of Buddhist mantras it is paradoxically more tied in to issues of reference than his brother John's films (which more simply reflect the computer machinery that generated them).¹⁹

Structural cinema is outside the remit of *Force Fields*, not because it is less speculative or less concerned with kinetic issues, which one could argue, but because theirs is really a different problematic. In their focus on the interaction of frames, on editing at the level of the photogramme, they are closest at a formal level to the pre-war experimental Soviet cinema, for example that of Dziga Vertov.

In recent years – perhaps under the influence of polemics such as Peter Wollen's 1976 'The Two Avant Gardes'²⁰ which argues for an avant garde which retained an element of representation and referentiality as well as a political discourse in its film-making – there has been a tendency to place all 'poetic', non- or anti-representational experimental cinema in one non-political 'avant-garde' camp. It is the hope of this *Force Fields* exhibition to single out one thread amongst several within the art of movement for serious aesthetic and political debate.

- 1 *The Two Cultures*. London; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- 2 *Behind Appearance*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P., 1969.
- 3 *L'Art du Mouvement*. Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1996.
- 4 *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*. London: Athlone, 1989, p. xi.
- 5 Zeno of Elea, the pupil and friend of Parmenides who, according to Aristotle, invented dialectic, and whose paradoxes concerning the analysis of motion include the fable of Achilles who should not be able to outrun the tortoise and the flying arrow "which is always opposite a length of ground equal to itself and is therefore at every moment at rest." For Zeno this paradox refuted the hypothesis that Being was composed of indivisible magnitudes. The regular film strip – divided into frames – appears to support Zeno's paradox, demonstrating that movement is divisible into moments at rest.
- 6 Bergson quoted in *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image*. London: Athlone, 1986, p. 4.
- 7 *L'Art du Mouvement*, p. 8.
- 8 Quoted in *L'Art du Mouvement*, p. 9.
- 9 London: British Film Institute, 1999.
- 10 Yann Beauvais. *L'Art du Mouvement*, p. 258.
- 11 First published in *Arts* June 1926. This version published in *The Captain's Deathbed and Other Essays*, and reprinted in Michael O'Pray, ed. *The British Avant-Garde Film 1926-1995*. Luton: Arts Council/John Libbey 1996.
- 12 *L'Art du Mouvement*, p. 8.
- 13 *L'Art du Mouvement*, p. 10.
- 14 "I have spoken of a certain interpenetration of the matter or subject of a work of art with the form of it, a condition realised absolutely only in music, as the condition to which every form of art is perpetually aspiring." Walter Pater. *The Renaissance*. London: 1873, p. 156.
- 15 Quoted in *L'Art du Mouvement*, p. 395.
- 16 Eggeling had exhibited paintings at the Cabaret Voltaire from 1916, where he was introduced by Tristan Tzara to Hans Richter with whom he later collaborated.
- 17 *L'Art du Mouvement*, p. 154.
- 18 *History of Experimental Cinema and Video*, p. 35.
- 19 In his essay on James Whitney (*L'Art du Mouvement*, p. 461) William Moritz attributes Whitney's use of the dot to his discovery that some of his engineering design work had inadvertently contributed to the Manhattan Project. As a result he decided to base his future films including *Lapis* and *Yantra on the dot*, eschewing the use of the line which had ended up in the atom bomb! The paradoxical atomic reference of these dots recalls the scientific reference that also occurs in Lye's *Free Radicals and Particles in Space*.
- 20 Reprinted in Peter Wollen *Readings and Writings*. London: Verso, 1982.

FRANTZ FANON AS FILM¹

ISAAC JULIEN

MARK NASH

Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) is one of the major black intellectuals of the twentieth century. He trained in psychiatry in France and explored the original 'black is beautiful' Negritude movement, entering into a dialogue with Jean-Paul Sartre about the experience of being black. In 1952 he wrote his first major work, *Black Skin, White Masks*, as his graduate psychiatry thesis that focused on the psychological interdependence of the colonised and the coloniser, with particular reference to the French colonies.

This book, as current today as when it was written, brings us face to face with the ambivalent identifications the racist colonial and postcolonial worlds offer their subjects—not only of violence, hostility, and aggression, but also of desire.

Fanon worked as a psychiatrist in metropolitan France before he was appointed to a clinical post at Blida-Joinville, a major psychiatric hospital in French Algeria, where he observed the violent colonial subjection and its psychic consequences at first hand. This prompted him to join the Front National pour Libération (FLN) and give clandestine support to fighters in the Maquis. In 1956 he resigned his hospital post because of the French policy on Algeria and was expelled by the French authorities because of his sympathies for the liberation struggle.

Fanon moved to Tunisia where he became the Algerian government-in-exile's Minister of Information for the rest of Africa. He also wrote for the

FLN paper *Li Moujahid*. In Tunisia, Fanon's thinking shifted from the psychology of race to the necessity of armed struggle to overthrow colonialism and institute authentic subjectivities for black peoples. In particular, he represented the FLN at the 1960 All Africa People's Conference in Accra, Ghana, where he discussed setting up a second front in the Algerian war.

Fanon died in 1961, just before *The Wretched of the Earth*, his 'primer for Third World revolution' with an incendiary prefatory essay by Sartre, was published, and just before Algeria finally achieved independence. In the more than thirty years since Fanon's death, Africa has become completely decolonised, politically if not ideologically, yet the questions Fanon poses about race and colonialism are still the most pertinent to an understanding of the problems of postcolonial societies and subjectivities, in both the 'first' and 'third' worlds.

Fanon is perhaps the most important black theorist of decolonisation, but the detail of his ideas has been ignored, affecting the entire project of postcolonial studies. Known today principally for *Black Skin, White Masks*, in the 1970s Fanon was much better known as a revolutionary and theorist of Third World independence struggles and the politics of nonalignment.

However, his writings on psychiatry, which raise important questions about the functioning of psychiatry in the First and Third worlds, have been more or less neglected. One example of the problems such ignorance creates is

a tendency to treat Fanon as a psychoanalyst, confusing psychoanalysis and psychiatry, with consequences for attempts to remedy Third World underdevelopment. Too often, the West (in Paul Gilroy's phrase, the "overdeveloped world") seeks to deny the benefits a basic psychiatric service would provide in such countries and/or fails to deal with the individual psychic cost of postcolonialism and underdevelopment which psychiatry in those countries could begin to address.

FRANTZ FANON: BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASK

Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask is a seventy-minute drama-documentary film we produced in 1996. The impetus for the film project was to restore to academic and artistic discourses a recognition of both the originality and contradictory nature of this major thinker. It was initially conceived as a reflection on the revival of interest in Fanon's ideas¹ in black visual and performance arts. The black arts movement in Britain and North America had sought a more substantial basis for reflection on the black body and its representations. In development, the film's mandate became broader to include other aspects of Fanon's influence and legacy.

A television version of *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask* was broadcast in December 1995 by BBC TV (U.K.) and was seen by approximately 900,000 viewers. The feature-length film has also been screened in festivals, cinemas, and educational institutions around the world, most extensively perhaps in North America, but there has also been considerable interest in metropolitan France and its overseas departments.² Indeed this might be the place to recall that the decree abolishing slavery in France and its colonies was issued 150 years ago (May 1848) and that Fanon is finally being recognised as an important intellectual by the French establishment in its adopting the epigram "I am not the slave of slavery" as the slogan for its celebration of this anniversary.

The film includes archive materials, interviews with witnesses of importance in Fanon's life and within Fanon scholarship, and visual reconstruction. In finding and choosing people to interview, we relied on a range of consultants: Lucien Taylor (editor of *Visual Anthropology Review*,³ who was living and researching in Martinique at the time), Françoise Vergès, whose research on colonial psychiatry has subsequently been published in *Monsters and Revolutionaries*,⁴ and Tunisian film producer Dora Bouchoucha Fourati. They introduced us to Fanon's family and intellectuals

in Martinique, France, and Tunisia, respectively.

We found no previous films about Fanon, apart from a short Algerian television programme featuring a Fanon colloquium in Algeria. We discovered the only extant footage of Fanon himself in the archive of L'Institut National de L'Audiovisuel (INA) in Paris. The lack of archive material focused our minds on using reconstruction to develop key ideas of Fanon's. We consider four elements: the racial encounter, in which Fanon describes the experience of being designated as 'black'; Fanon's contribution to colonial psychiatry; and the issues of nationalism and violence, through which we also explore the position of women in Tunisian and Algerian society. The relevance of Fanon's thinking today is presented through the figure of Homi Bhabha presenting a kind of Walter Benjamin *flâneur*, walking like a ghost in the metropolis.

To adapt a phrase of Stuart Hall's, Fanon's legacy today is a series of unfinished dialogues, with Freud, with Hegel and with Negritude: "I think it is impossible to read *Black Skin, White Masks* without acknowledging that it is also . . . the product of at least three interrelated but unfinished dialogues to which Fanon kept returning throughout his life and work. First, there is Fanon's dialogue with traditional French colonial psychiatry . . . and within that, with psychoanalysis, Freud, and the French Freudians Second, with Sartre, or more accurately through Sartre to the ghost of Hegel, especially the master/slave dialectic outlined in *The Phenomenology* Third, with Negritude, or the idea of black culture as a positive source of identification, and the question of cultural nationalism and race as an autonomous force."⁵

Our film engages a range of voices which bear witness to their personal experience of Fanon or the political and cultural importance of his work: Stuart Hall, already mentioned; Homi Bhabha, who describes how he first encountered Fanon's writing and the questions Fanon raises from his perspective as a theorist of postcolonial social relations and subjectivities. It was important to our film that we also include voices critical of, or with reservations about, Fanon's thinking, since we were not interested in reinforcing his status as revolutionary martyr and hero. To this end we include Maryse Condé, Guadeloupean novelist, who critiques his representation of women; Mohammed Harbi, who knew Fanon from the FLN, but who was subsequently imprisoned by the FLN after Algerian independence, and who considers Fanon's position on women overly patriarchal; and so on.

Reconstruction is used in a variety of ways to give a dramatic cinematic engagement with Fanon's life and ideas—hence our use of well-known black British actor Colin Salmon, most familiar to British viewers for his role opposite Helen Mirren in *Prime Suspect II* (1993), to portray Fanon. We reconstruct an emblematic encounter with the colonial asylum and with the European discourse of race ('Mama, look, a Negro!'). The position of women in Maghreb societies and the inheritance of the Algerian revolution is reflected on in the scenes of reconstructed testimony from women involved in the struggle, as well as the symbolic scenes involving veiled women and the projection of images onto these women of women forcibly unveiled by the French. One purpose of these interviews is to explore the issue of violence in Fanon's work, which forces us to confront the uncomfortable truth of the violence of anticolonial struggles. A quotation from Simone de Beauvoir's autobiography, *After the War: Force of Circumstance*,⁷ describes Fanon from a sensitive personal and culturally informed perspective, and we show him with a composite figure representing both de Beauvoir and Fanon's wife, Josie (who supported his activities as African ambassador for the FLN).

VISUALISING THEORY

Much of our work has been concerned with the relationship between film and critical theory. At one of the early screenings of Fanon at the University of California at Santa Cruz, Donna Haraway commented on the importance of the film being the way it visualised theory. We would even go further and say that the act of visualisation can be seen as a form of theoretical production, one which makes the body in particular a privileged site of imagistic power and mediation. That is to say, it is not a question of simply finding a way to represent Fanon in film, but to use film to engage with Fanon's ideas and perhaps in some way transform them.

The style of the film reflects some of the interests of Isaac Julien's earlier films, including *Looking for Langston* (1989) and *The Darker Side of Black* (1994). *Langston* uses archive film and dramatic reconstruction; *Darker Side* depends on a more conventional documentary approach, but with a stylised aesthetic—using swing-and-tilt lenses to shoot interviews, a device now common but that at the time only used in cinema advertisements. Fanon combines these different strategies so that they work in tandem to question the way documentary and fictional films are categorised.

This is emblematically focused in Fanon's use of Pontecorvo's 'fictional' film *Battle of Algiers* (1965).⁸

In discussions with audiences, we are sometimes asked why we include fictional material such as this in the film, and why it is not more heavily credited during the course of the film. *Battle* was treated like other archive material in this and other of Isaac Julien's films as part of a project of 'undoing the colonial archive.' We took a position that we did not want to litter the surface of the film with a series of footnotes, so to speak—there was no clear argument as to why this film in particular should be singled out for special treatment. Indeed *Battle* could be said to represent the Fanon film itself *en abyme*. *Battle* itself uses similar French newsreel films as a source, as we do, and involves reconstruction in the same way as much political documentary from Joris Ivens on. Fanon is a poetic documentary with a fictional approach; *Battle*, a fiction with a documentary approach. Indeed Fanon could be seen as a palimpsest of quotations written over and against each other, of which *Battle* is just one.

Generally, when looking at archival footage one has to endure the voice-over of a colonial speaker, usually male, who both explains the moving images that are being projected and, through accent and tone, reinscribes the viewer as a colonial subject. Indeed one can argue that the voice-over in colonial cinema is part of a project of maintaining national identity and colonial subjectivity within that. What we tried to do is to make the footage work differently, either by slowing it down, removing the voice-over, reworking the soundtrack, or retinting the image, all of which give back to the image, so to speak, a certain subjectivity that is opposed to that colonial project.

The work of Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi, notably their film *From the Pole to the Equator* (1986), is particularly important in this discussion of undoing the colonial (and imperial) archive. Of their film, a recycling of films from the archive of early Italian cinematographer and collector Luca Comerio, they say, 'We reread, rewrote, reedited the original Comerio film, overturning the original meaning and ideology. Our film was centred on the metaphor of amnesia: the amnesia of Comerio's last years, the general 'amnesia' about primitive cinema, and the desire of early audiences for exotic spectacles, which reflected their dreams of conquest and cultural pillage (their amnesia about earlier cultures)... We wanted to make a film on the violence of colonialism as it plays itself out in different situations

and spheres." 9

Early cinema was involved in maintaining and reduplicating erotic, colonial, and imperial fantasies. The body as we know it today is worked through cinema; indeed our visual experience of others' bodies is almost entirely cinematicised. Cinema was also important in oppositional and anti-colonial struggles, whether we think of the films of Joris Ivens or Jean-Luc Godard, to give two such examples. Our film approaches a body of work—Fanon's ideas—and gives that an eroticised look through the body of our Fanon, Colin Salmon.

STYLISATION

Stylisation in the film takes a number of forms. The dramatic footage essentially 'representing' Fanon's ideas is opposed to the biographical Fanon constructed in the interviews. Neither, of course, is homogenous, and we would draw your attention to one element in the discussion of Fanon's attitude to finding his patients in chains on arrival in Algeria. In our film we show the patients in chains, followed by psychoanalyst Alice Cherkí, who worked with Fanon at Blida and who denies the 'evidence' we have just put before the audience. Certainly patients were still in chains in psychiatric hospitals earlier in the century, but the historical evidence is inconclusive—the image of Fanon unchaining his patients has become a myth, a reinscription of the myth of Pinel liberating patients at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris at the time of the French Revolution, overlaid with the Marxist and anticolonial imagery of removing the shackles of oppression. Cinema works to flatten out contradiction, and unless one consciously adopts some kind of Brechtian approach of foregrounding the device and highlighting contradictions, one's own work easily undoes itself in the process of its own making. Indeed this was one of Brecht's major objections, still valid today, to the cinema.

The still photographic image is an integral part of the Fanon film. We use still photographs by John Riddy, backprojected to create fictional deep-focus interiors; images from French war photographer Marc Caranger¹⁰ are projected onto the bodies of Algerian women. The photographic image is also used as a means of transition from one scene to another—a visual alliteration in which the photograph refers to or anticipates or recalls the subsequent or previous image. It is also present in the film's reference to the *tableau vivant*. The *tableau vivant* (literally, the painting come alive).

which has a long history both in photography and in experimental film, e.g., Raul Ruiz's *L'Hypothèse du tableau vole* (1978), has been an integral stylistic element of Isaac Julien's work for some time now. Films such as *Langston*, *The Attendant*, and *Fanon* involve a dialectic between photographic and filmed images. In *Langston*, for instance, images of George Platt Lynes are restaged; imaginary Van Der Zee pictures of Harlem life are recreated. In *The Attendant* there is a movement to and fro between a nineteenth-century abolitionist painting, *Slaves on the West Coast of Africa* by François-Auguste Biard, and its uncanny reenactment in the space of the art gallery.

In our presentation of the actor Colin Salmon as Fanon we present an image, that of a handsome black man. We don't ask Colin Salmon to act; rather he has to *present* Fanon, similar to the way that Robert Bresson uses actors as models. This has the effect of both drawing him back into the past—of the documentary image of Fanon—as well signaling his availability for the future. This approach is also a response to the problem of historical fiction as outlined by *Cahiers du Cinéma* critic Jean-Luc Comolli some years ago in an essay entitled "Historical Fiction: A body too much." 11 Comolli argues there is always a proliferation of bodies (Napoleon's, Louis XIV's, etc.) in historical fiction, and, by presenting our character as half-in half-out of fiction, we try to signal that he is both representing Fanon and is not Fanon. Colin Salmon literally speaks Fanon's text, bringing it alive so to speak, but in a ventriloquist manner—he speaks and is spoken. Restaging in this way avoids creating character or interiority as in the conventional fiction film. This enables the audience to project their own Fanon into the film, making Fanon' a more open sign. Of course, this will not and does not please everyone, particularly those who wish to see Fanon represented as they imagine, in the role that they see as most appropriate for their project (e.g., as a black icon to produce and prop up African-American philosophy).

In making our Fanon fluid, sexy even in its imaging of interracial desire, we wanted to engage the personal resonance both for Fanon and the filmmakers of this issue, an image indeed that goes against the grain of Fanon's writing. Interracial desire, as well as those desiring relationships that privilege lighter skin complexions, are an integral part of colonial racism. The fact that Fanon's desire took him elsewhere than his writing, i.e., to relationships with white women, is important, as it is to note that, of course, the French women with whom many revolutionary leaders associ-

ated were themselves supporters of that process and the beneficiaries of an education denied to many black women. This also broaches an issue which Maryse Condé raises in the film when she says that she as a young black woman did not recognise herself in Fanon's writing. Lola Young also writes about how the black woman is written out of Fanon's scenario, that she comes, as it were, to be the Other of the Others. She desires but is not the object of desire.¹²

FANON'S LEGACY

In conclusion, we would like to raise a series of questions that announce and address the resonance of Fanon's work today both in the context of the postcolonial, and also in terms of bodies, power, and desire.

Fanon died at the high point of decolonisation. Twelve or thirteen countries became independent states in 1961 alone, the year of his death. Many years later, of course, much of the inheritance of colonialism is still with us and with those so-called independent countries (e.g. the involvement of the French Presidential elite force disbanded by Lionel Jospin following the massacres in Rwanda). Fanon indeed had many critical things to say about the ideology of these emerging nations, and in particular how the bourgeoisie, unlimited by the institutions of civil society, continued the ruthless logic of colonial capitalism into the postcolonial period.

In drawing our attention to the unconscious dimension of racism, Fanon's work is as important today as it was thirty to forty years ago, and it is indeed this aspect of his work that makes it most current. At our first festival screening of the film at Sundance 1997, *Cahiers du Cinema* critic Berenice Reynaud commented on what she described as a melancholic aspect of the film, one which the music reinforced. One could perhaps read this melancholy as coming out of our attempt to deal with Fanon's legacy. In the post-civil rights period in the United States, for instance, it is clear that while some aspects of institutionalised racism have been addressed, racism at the unconscious level is still very much part of that society.

Fanon's hope that the mind could be in some way decolonised has proven to be a more complex task, one that his invocation of a 'third way' through nonalignment and political confrontation with the West still has resonance today, despite the post-Cold War shift in power relations. His notion of 'nationness' without nationalism, of a way of expressing ideologically the national and cultural specificity of a nation without the antagonism and

rivalry of traditional nationalism, seems as far off today as it did then.

The Fanonian subject is split, and the violence of the internal conflict is reflected in various points in his writing. Fanon's dialogues with Hegel and Sartre involve a decentring of the Cartesian subject. Based in a philosophical tradition derived from phenomenology, Fanon's work nevertheless anticipates both structuralism's rejection of humanism and universalism and the return of the political in poststructuralism. In its emphasis on the 'alterity of the Other' his work parallels some of Levinas's formulations on this topic. Moral and ethical issues are at the centre of Fanon's writing, and this emphasis was perhaps lost or maybe too taken for granted in the original reception of *The Wretched of the Earth* as a primer of Third World revolution. He exhorts the most engaged writers of the Western liberal tradition to engage with him in a rethinking of that tradition from the position of what Gayatri Spivak is later to call 'the subaltern':

Fanon was brought up to think of himself as a subject of French (i.e., global) enlightenment. However in his encounter with colonial and European racism he ends up the fiercest critic of that tradition, both from within and without: "That same Europe where they were never done talking of Man, and where they never stopped proclaiming that they were anxious only for the welfare of Man: today we know with what sufferings humanity has paid for every one of their triumphs of the mind."¹³

In Fanon's writing, it is not a matter of being transformed by one's experience of the Other so that we all become good or better citizens, more accepting, more tolerant, though that is no bad thing. It is also about saying there may be experiences which can't be as easily reconfigured within the realm of liberal philosophy. Fascism and terrorism are two further examples. As Ian Chambers puts it so well, "To query and undo that so-called critical distance justified in the name of science, knowledge, and 'truth,' and to take the opportunity of the return of the repressed, of the repressed side of modernity in which reason has also and always been accompanied by terror, is to reconfigure the language in which I dwell and which provides me with my home."¹⁴

Fanon returns us to the issue of terror, which was also the dark side of the French Revolution. '*Liberté, égalité, et fraternité*' were only achieved and maintained through the terror of that Revolution and the Republic's subsequent colonial history. What is important in Fanon's writing on violence is not that he is the advocate of violence that Hannah Arendt imagines, but

simply that he faces up to the possibility of its necessity in particular struggles. As Alice Cherki puts it, there may be a point where violence can help in restoring communication. Indeed this anticolonial struggle involves the violent juxtaposition of the bodies of representatives of the colonial and liberating powers. And in the instance of torture, which is where it is difficult to follow Fanon, he or she who is being tortured scores a moral and ethical victory through their bodies' resistance and submission.

At the end of the film we quote Fanon: "From the moment you and your kind are liquidated like so many dogs, you have to retain your importance. You must therefore weigh as heavily as you can upon the body of your torturer, in order that his soul, lost in some byway, may finally find itself once more . . . And then there is that overwhelming silence—but of course the body cries out—that silence that overwhelms the torturer."¹⁵

In giving one's body up (but not betraying the cause), one is not, as in a Foucauldian perspective, granting authority to those in power, but rather both demonstrating the limits of that power and the possibility of its over-coming. Indeed in our film Bhabha (in his essay in the "Mirage" exhibition catalogue¹⁶) almost makes Fanon into Levinas, in effect calling for the tortured to take responsibility for the torturer.

Indeed our film on Fanon is a palimpsest of films, others and our own: surveillance documentary of and by the French in Algeria, oppositional material from René Vautier [*Algerie en Flammes* (1958)], *Battle of Algiers*, and so on. It is a film about film and the discursively constructed 'Fanon,' as much as about any biographical Fanon himself.

Cinema is not, as is so often imagined, a place of equal exchange between filmmakers and audience. Rather it is a "one-way street," to appropriate a phrase from Walter Benjamin, a site of transformation in which ideas and fantasies are represented and misrepresented. Through its visual engagements, we hope our film takes the audience on some of the journey Fanon would have wished.

In an article on Fanon's 'writing as self-translation,'¹⁷ Teresa de Lauretis emphasises how in Fanon's writing the assertion of a self that transcends history ("I am my own foundation") is immediately undercut by radical negation ("The Negro is not, any more than the white man"). His final words in the *Wretched of the Earth*, "Oh my body, make of me always a man who questions," returns us to that imagined space where body and soul, soma and psyche, materiality and language confront one another.

NOTES

1. This article was presented as a paper at the conference "Between Colonialisms: Frontiers of the Body / Frontiers of Identity," Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples, Italy, May 1998. Forthcoming in *Anglistica*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2000).
2. This film originated as a contribution to the 1995 "Mirage" exhibition and conference at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London, curated by David Bailey. The conference proceedings were published as *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read (London: ICA, Seattle: Bay Press, 1996).
3. The version distributed by California Newsreel in the US is the fifty-minute television version. It is hoped that the film version will be available on video shortly from the British Film Institute.
4. Lucien Taylor, ed., *Visualizing Theory: Selected Essays from Visual Anthropology Review, 1990-1994* (London: Routledge, 1994).
5. Françoise Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries* (Raleigh, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming).
6. Stuart Hall, "The Afterlife of Frantz Fanon: Why Fanon? Why Now? Why *Black Skin, White Masks*?" *The Fact of Blackness*, op. cit., pp. 28-31.
7. Simone de Beauvoir, *After the War: Force of Circumstance, 1944-1952*, (reprint edition, Shooting Star Press, 1994).
8. Gillo Pontecorvo, *Il Battaglia di Algeri*. The FLN invited an Italian, Pontecorvo, to make this first film of the 'new' Algeria and the 'new' Algerian cinema as part of a project of distancing themselves from French colonial culture.
9. Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci-Lucchi, interviewed by Scott Macdonald in *A Critical Cinema 3: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, January 1998).
10. Marc Garanger, *Femmes d'Algerie* (Contrejour, 1960).
11. Jean-Luc Comolli, "A Body Too Much," *Screen* (1978), vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 41-53.
12. Lola Young, "Missing Persons: Fantasising Black Women in *Black Skin, White Masks*," *The Fact of Blackness*, op. cit.
13. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 251.
14. Ian Chambers, introduction to the conference "Between Colonialisms: Frontiers of the Body/Frontiers of Identity" op. cit.
15. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto, 1993).
16. Homi K. Bhabha, "Day by Day . . . with Frantz Fanon," *The Fact of Blackness*, op. cit.
17. Teresa de Lauretis, "Conditions of Identification," Frantz Fanon: *Critical Genealogies*, eds. Julien, Nash, Vergès (Raleigh, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

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Frantz Fanon

Black Skin White Mask



Dir: Isaac Julien UK 1996 70 mins colour

A film by Isaac Julien and Mark Nash

with Colin Salmon as Frantz Fanon

A Normal Films Production

in association with the Arts Council of England, BBC Television and L'Institut National de L'Audiovisuel

***Frantz Fanon: Black Skin White Mask* opens with *The Battle of Algiers*
on 27 June 1997 at The ICA for an exclusive 2 week run prior to
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Frantz Fanon

Black Skin White Mask

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Mark Nash
Nina Kellgren
Ahmed Bennys
Justin Krish
Nick Thompson
Robert Hargreaves
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Paul Gladstone-Reid, Tunde Jegede
Raja Sehgal
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Frantz Fanon and son

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CELEBRATING THE MOVING IMAGE

Frantz Fanon

Black Skin White Mask

Frantz Fanon
(1925 - 1961)



"Oh my body make of me a man
who always questions"

Frantz Fanon

Biography

Frantz Fanon is one of the major black intellectuals of the 20th century.

Fanon trained in psychiatry in France. He explored the original 'black is beautiful' Negritude movement and entered into a dialogue with Sartre about the experience of being black. In 1952 he wrote his first major work, Black Skin, White Masks as his graduate psychiatry thesis. It focussed on the psychological interdependence of the colonised and colonisers with particular reference to the French colonies.

Fanon was appointed to a clinical post at a major psychiatric hospital in French Algeria where he observed the violent colonial subjection and its psychic consequences at first hand. This prompted him to join the FLN (National Liberation Front) and give clandestine support to fighters in the maquis. In 1956 he resigned his post because of the French policy on Algeria and was expelled by the French authorities because of his sympathies for the liberation struggle. He joined the FLN while in Algeria.

Fanon moved to Tunisia where he became the Algerian Government in exile's Minister of Information for the rest of Africa.

Fanon died in 1961, just before The Wretched of the Earth, his primer for 3rd world revolution, was published and just before Algeria finally achieved independence.

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CELEBRATING THE MOVING IMAGE

Frantz Fanon

Black Skin White Mask

Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask

is a portrait of the ideas and influence of the black intellectual Frantz Fanon. Fanon is one of the major black intellectuals of the 20th century. Isaac Julien's film combines the poetic visual intensity of his award-winning Looking for Langston, with its mix of archive and delicate dramatic reconstruction, with an acute analysis from interviews and commentary by those personally and intellectually close to Fanon. The film focusses on two key elements of Fanon's thought relevant today: the racial encounter between black and white, coloniser and colonised and the issue of nationalism and violence.

Since Fanon's death, Africa has become completely decolonized, politically if not ideologically, yet the questions Fanon poses about race and colonialism are still the most pertinent to understanding the problems of postcolonial societies and subjectivities both in the first and third worlds.

In Isaac Julien's film, scenes from Fanon's life as imaged in his writing are strikingly reconstructed. Colin Salmon brings an intensity and elegance to the role of Fanon himself.

Colin bears a striking resemblance to Fanon and will be familiar to viewers for his role in Prime Suspect.

Interviewees include Professor Stuart Hall, French and Algerian intellectuals and Fanon's brother and son, Joby and Olivier Fanon.

This film brings us face to face with the ambivalent identifications the racist colonial and post-colonial worlds offer their subjects, not only of violence, hostility and aggression but also of desire. The film dwells on Fanon's unique insights which may help us understand and combat the destructive effects of racism and islamic fundamentalism which affect many countries. It is time to re-introduce his ideas to a new audience.

The film was shot in a studio in London and on location in Paris, Martinique and Tunisia. Research on the project was guided by Françoise Verges in Paris and Lucien Taylor in Martinique. Françoise has been researching the history of French colonial psychiatry and comes from the same radical Réunionnais background as lawyer Jacques Verges. Lucien lives in Martinique and is researching Martiniquan intellectuals.

An original soundtrack was commissioned for the film from the Axiom Foundation - Tunde Jegede and Paul Gladstone-Reid whose music combining African and classical influences was recently the subject of a BBC documentary.

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CELEBRATING THE MOVING IMAGE

Frantz Fanon

Black Skin White Mask

Interviewees

Professor Stuart Hall introduces us to the range and complexity of Fanon's thinking. Psychoanalyst Alice Cherki and psychiatrist Jacques Azoulay who both studied and worked with Fanon in Tunisia and Algeria, describe his important contribution to the psychiatry of sociotherapy. A precursor of 'Anti-psychiatry', sociotherapy as Fanon practiced it insisted on the need to adapt psychiatry to the culture of the patient. Changes to society had to go hand-in-hand with curing the so-called mental patient. Mohammed Harbi, Algerian intellectual and historian, who has written a history of the FLN, and who was a key member of the FLN during the revolution, discusses Fanon's involvement in the FLN and the revolution. Martiniquan novelist Raphael Confiant and writer Françoise Verges discuss Fanon's relationship with Martinique. Françoise also discusses his ideas about sexuality. Olivier Fanon, talks about his memories of his father. Joby Fanon, his brother has detailed recollections of their close friendship. Mme Felix Fanon, and Francelyne Fanon, Fanon's sister-in-law and niece, and his school friend Kléber Games recall Fanon's youth in Martinique and the oppression during Vichy France which caused young men like Fanon to flee to Dominica to join the Free French Forces.

Archive footage

Extensively researched in Paris and Martinique, the film includes Fanon family photographs seen for the first time as well as the only extant footage of Fanon himself, discovered by the filmmaker in a French archive.

Reconstructions

The drama sequences focus on Fanon's childhood in Martinique, his experience as a student in France and his work as a psychiatrist in Algeria and Tunisia. In particularly striking visual sequences the filmmakers explore his entry into the world of the psychiatric institution where he is mythically presented as a son of Pinel, unchaining the patients just as Pinel did in Paris after the French Revolution. We also present something of his case histories where he treated both torturers and victims of torture in the same hospital and with equal compassion. The reconstruction benefits particularly from the cinematography of Nina Kellgren and the still photography of John Riddy whose luminous images are incorporated through back-projection into the sets. Between interview and reconstruction, cultural critic Homik Bhabka offers insights into Fanon's relevance today.

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CELEBRATING THE MOVING IMAGE

Frantz Fanon

Black Skin White Mask

Isaac Julien

Director
(1960 -)

Isaac Julien currently lives in London and New York where he works as a film director. He also lectures and writes on issues of black cultural politics, film, art and sexuality.

Educated at St Martins School of Art, he received a first class honours in Fine Art Film.

In 1981 he became a member of a black gay group reading post-structuralist texts and debating notions of black popular culture in photography (Mapplethorpe), psychiatry (black mental health), and film (the black male body).

He was a co-founder of Sankofa, (1984) the pioneering group of black film and video makers challenging televisual and cinematic misconceptions about black identity. He is also a founding member of Normal Films.

Filmography

- 1983 *Who Killed Colin Roach ? (documentary short)*
- 1984 *Territories (film essay)*
- 1986 *The Passion of Remembrance (fiction feature)*
- 1987 *This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement (short)*
- 1987 *The Hat Videos*
- 1987 *Media Fictions (tv)*
- 1989 *Shaking the Tree (music video)*
- 1989 *Looking for Langston (drama/film essay)*
- 1991 *Young Soul Rebels (feature)*
- 1991 *Feel So High (music video)*
- 1992 *Black & White In Colour (documentary series)*
- 1992 *The Attendant (short)*
- 1994 *The Darker Side of Black (documentary)*
- 1995 *The Question of Equality (tv)*
- 1995 *Williams on Limbaugh (tv)*
- 1997 *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask*

A  Release

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Frantz Fanon

Black Skin White Mask

Mark Nash Producer

Mark was one-time editor of *Screen* magazine and has written and taught various aspects of cinema. Currently a visiting scholar at NYU he is researching and writing a book on *Queer Cinema/Queer theory* for the British Film Institute.

Filmography

Production

1984 Acting Tapes
(documentary series Channel 4)
1988 Looking for Langston
(fiction short Channel 4)
1992 The Attendant
1992 Between Two Worlds (dir)
1994 Postcards from America
1996 Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask

In development
Memoirs of a Spacewoman

Mark Nash is also a curator for the
National Film Theatre

Colin Salmon Frantz Fanon

Filmography

1991 Bunch of Fives
1994 Captives
1995 All Men are Mortal
1996 Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask

Colin Salmon has worked extensively in television
including his role as D.S. Oswalde in *Prime Suspect*.

Nina Kellgren cinematographer

Film

1988 Looking for Langston
1989 Young Soul Rebels
1996 Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask

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The Modernity of African Cinema

Mark Nash

*If cannot go into a film without seeing myself. I wait for me.
In the interval just before the film starts, I wait for me.*

Frantz Fanon, 1952

The millennium in small-town Sokolo: young men hang out in a narrow strip of shade at the side of the road, adjusting their chairs and beer cans as the sun moves across the sky. In the post office a young woman waits all day to get a call through to her boyfriend in a neighboring town. People make their way slowly across the savannah and through the dusty streets. The local radio station, the aptly named Radio Colonial, intersperses speeches by Aimé Césaire with reports on ski conditions in the French Alps and on preparations for celebrations in the capital (Paris). A local photographer takes portraits of the townspeople in a makeshift outdoor studio, immortalizing their part in this delayed "short" twentieth century that much of Africa inhabits.

Abderrahmane Sissako's *La Vie sur terre* (1999) emblemizes the situation of African cinema today, haunted by the continuing legacy of colonialism:¹ Francophone African countries are still axised toward an imaginary of their former colonial power. *La Vie sur terre* also addresses Africa's simultaneous connection to and isolation from modernity, an issue at the heart of the *Short Century* project. Moving between the speeches of Césaire and the presentation of the world as viewed from Paris, Sissako seems to say that little has changed. Africa's short century—its encounter with modernism and the decolonization movements—has already passed.

The Question of Modernity

Modernity has been described as a social order whose characteristics are "an industrial division of labor, a secular democratic nation-state, rationalism and the market. But it is also . . . not simply a socio-economic order: the 'constitutive outside' of Western modernity involves a philosophy and self-identity constructed through its relation to the colonial other."² One has to remember however that this modernity was subsequent to and economically supported by the institution of slavery. Charles Taylor has an important qualification:

Modernity as lived from the inside . . . is something different . . . Institutional changes . . . always shake up and alter traditional culture. They did this in the original development in the West and they have done this elsewhere. But outside those cases where the regional culture is destroyed and the people either die or are forcibly assimilated—and European colonialism has a number of such cases, to its discredit—a successful transition involves a people finding resources in their traditional culture that modified and transposed will enable them to take on the new practices. In this sense modernity is not a single wave. It would be better . . . to speak of multiple modernities as the cultures that emerge in the world to carry the institutional changes that turn out to differ in important ways from each other.³

As we look at the distinction between modernity and postmodernity, we can be tempted to view many African societies and African cinemas as postmodern without having gone through the modern phase. Much economic devastation has beset African countries as a result of the newly empowered postindependence elites' simple appropriation of national wealth. Ousmane Sembène's *Xala* (1974) has a telling scene in which at the handover of independence the former white masters hand over suitcases (full of money) to the new masters of the country who then symbolically hand them back for safe keeping. Plus ça change. If, however, we substitute "cinema" for "culture" in the quotation above, we may sense an important corrective to the liberal view of African cinema as indebted to the West, and a reminder that European and North American cinema history need to be rewritten as cases within world cinema rather than as founding instances.

Many African filmmakers are ambivalent about this history. On the one hand, the neocolonial powers have "aided" the development of African cinema (although the more important African filmmakers have been able to bite the hand that feeds them). On the other, the attention they pay to Africa's great (male) filmmakers creates a danger of losing perspective on the others (women) who have also managed to emerge (e.g., Safi Faye) and on those countries—Egypt, Mozambique, Algeria—that have attempted, if so far unsuccessfully, to nationalize their film industries so as to wrest economic and ideological control from neocolonial hands. Jean Marie Teno, in his film *A Trip to the Country* (2000), explores the effects of colonial and postcolonial modernization on Cameroon society, and the erosion of local democracy through consumer culture. For him the dilemma is symbolized by "men in overcoats"—sharp dressers who administer nonexistent local services ("We have no plans for the year 2000")—and by two solitary concrete high rises in the capital of Yaoundé, buildings that, when Teno was a schoolboy there, seemed to hold great promise through their symbolic link to the metropolitan culture of the West.

The Short Century: Cinema, Independence, and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945–1994

Seventeen African countries achieved independence in 1960. At the time, unsurprisingly, no African cinema existed that was not dependent on the previously colonizing power. (European and

American filmmakers had been making documentaries and fiction films in Africa since 1900.) The purpose of this essay is to situate the film element of *The Short Century* in relation to some of the main lines of thinking that have emerged on African cinema in recent years, and to explore the issue of cinema and modernity in Africa.

Film and the moving image are presented in *The Short Century* in two modalities: documentation of the independence movements, and creative interpretation of and reflection on the period and its aftermath. Africa's independence movements were the first anti-colonial struggles to be substantially documented in moving images; film and video give actuality and presence to this now-historical period, presenting powerful images of the struggle—images too rarely shown in the Western media, which, preoccupied with stereotypes of Africa as the continent of famine, genocide, and AIDS, rarely venture into the colonial heritage that is often a precipitating factor in these crises. *The Short Century* collects a wide range of material covering key elements of the independence struggles—films made with the Mau Mau in Kenya or the Front de libération nationale (FLN) in Algeria, for example—as well as documents of the conferences convened to establish the framework of a post-independence Africa. Many African liberation movements tried to win the world's attention by inviting filmmakers to witness their struggle; in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, for example, the Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIG) invited filmmakers from Europe and Cuba, as did the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo). Film was also used for instructional purposes within the independence struggles.

After independence, filmmakers in the spheres of culture and entertainment began the process of building up an independent African cinema. As with the agitational documentaries, these films were often initially made by filmmakers from the international community. In 1972, for instance, the French feminist Sara Maldoror, originally from Guadeloupe, directed *Sambizanga* (1972), a liberation narrative, made with MPLA sympathizers, about a woman whose partner is imprisoned in Portuguese Angola. Her search culminates with the news of his death, and with revolutionaries plotting an attack on the notorious Luanda prison.

After 1968, African liberation movements were the focus of worldwide media attention. In 1978, the Brazilian Ruy Guerra worked with French filmmakers Jean Rouch and Jean-Luc Godard in Mozambique, a few years after independence came to the country, in 1974, to train local filmmakers.⁴ A number of the filmmakers took their aesthetic and political agendas from the Latin American "Third Cinema" of Humberto Solanas, Octavio Getino, and Guerra.

The Colonial Gaze

Cinema was introduced in Africa at the same time as it was in the rest of the world; there are reports of Bioscope screenings in Cape Town in 1896 and in Cairo, Tunis, and Fez in 1897, a little over a decade after the Berlin Declaration. During the colonial period, cinema-going was among the privileges of the colonial elites. In the British colonies and the Belgian Congo, Africans were forbidden to watch European and American movies.

Some authorities, however, produced educational films in local languages. In Tanganyika (present-day Tanzania) in 1935, the English Colonial Office sponsored the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment, an autonomous production group set up to produce films in local languages on such topics as farming methods and hygiene. The Belgian Congo saw similar projects supported by Catholic missionaries.⁵ These provided Africans with training in basic film techniques, as did the British Colonial Film Unit, established in 1939, with headquarters in London and branches in Eastern, Central, and West Africa. The immediate concern of the British Colonial Film Unit was propaganda, and the attempt to persuade Africans to enlist in the Allied war effort during World War II. Following a 1949 UNESCO report by John Grierson, a film school was set up in Ghana to enable colonial peoples to make films for themselves and to establish an educational cinema in Africa. Something similar had already been done in the UK and Canada by the Crown Film Unit and National Film Board of Canada.⁶

These histories reveal a simple racial division of the audience into African and European. The well-meaning attempts of Grierson and his colleagues to educate Africans entailed a paternalistic view of the medium. They were a far cry from Bertolt Brecht's celebration of the possibilities of radio as the medium for a two-way communication in which the distinction between producers and consumers could be eliminated.⁷ They also illustrate the contradictions of the colonial enterprise, which worked not to develop African consumption but to provide raw material for consumption in the "mother countries." (It is interesting to observe, however, that when this educational cinema began to emerge, in the 1950s, it reflected the ambition of developing African habits of consumption, so that, after independence had arrived, local populations would be tied into patterns of trade established during the colonial period.)

Frantz Fanon makes several references to cinema in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, discussing, for example, the split subjectivity of the black spectator watching a Tarzan film and identifying with Tarzan (who is of course white) against the (black) natives. He also describes the suspension of identity before the film begins—the expectation of discovering or becoming someone else, if only for the duration of the film.⁸ Western film theorists have analyzed this experience in terms of a cinematic apparatus that inscribes and produces subject positions, reinforcing ideologically constructed identities. In his analysis of the "shifting, situational nature of colonized spectatorship," however, as Robert Stam writes, Fanon is doing something else: he is showing how the colonial context of reception alters the processes of identification. "The awareness of the possible negative projections of other spectators," Stam writes, "triggers an anxious withdrawal from the film's programmed pleasures. The conventional self-denying identification with the white hero's gaze, the vicarious acting out of a European self-hood, is short-circuited through the awareness of being 'screened' or 'allegorized' by a colonial gaze within the movie theater itself."⁹

When Fanon goes to the movies he goes as a Francophone intellectual who wants both to participate in the cinematic spectacle and to critique fundamental aspects of the cinematic apparatus, the schemas of representation it entails, and the Enlightenment

culture that produced it. As a cinephile he shares in the cinematic adventure; as a "third world intellectual," for want of a better description, he is its stern critic. Fanon, it can be argued, is symbolically Africa's first modern intellectual, the thinker, as Manthia Diawara has remarked, who created the intellectual tools with which African intellectuals such as Diawara himself could participate in contemporary theoretical, political, and cultural debates.¹⁰ When he died, in 1961, the decolonization of Africa was well underway, yet the questions he posed about race and colonialism are still pertinent to the problems of postcolonial societies and subjectivities: questions around the interracial encounter between black and white, colonizer and colonized; the issue of nationalism and violence; the role of women in the liberation struggle; and the ambivalent identifications that the colonial and postcolonial worlds offer their subjects, not only of violence, hostility, and aggression, but also of desire.¹¹

Third World Cinema/Third Cinema

"Other" cinemas, from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, entered circulation in the first world in the 1970s. They appeared under the rubric "third world cinema," a term for the colonized, decolonized, or neocolonized nations of the world—nations whose economic and political structures had been shaped by the colonial process. The notion of a third world, or of a group of "nonaligned" countries, developed out of anticolonial struggles in Vietnam and Algeria and specifically from the 1955 Asian-African Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1961, from which the nonaligned movement was formally launched. As R.A. Mortimer writes, "Bandung was in essence a celebration of the wave of independence that swept across Asia and was then cresting in Africa. The very act of bringing together the first generation of nationalist leaders created an unprecedented sentiment of Third World change and potential. Bandung . . . pointed to the two principles that have remained the foundation of Third World solidarity, decolonization and economic development."¹² This movement translated into film, particularly in the desire to emulate the successes of Italian Neorealism, which in the immediate postwar period had provoked optimism about new filmmaking possibilities. Neorealism inspired a range of African filmmakers, including Youssef Chahine in Egypt and Sembène in Senegal.

The ideas of Fanon were central to the notion of a "third cinema," a concept developed in Latin American film theory and originally elaborated upon in Humberto Solanas's and Octavio Getino's 1969 essay "Toward a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiments toward the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World."¹³ Solanas and Getino proposed a tripartite schema: first cinema (Hollywood and its analogues around the world—Godard's term was "Hollywood-Mosfilm"); second cinema (art films, whether European or Latin American—Luis Buñuel, Torre Nilsson); and third cinema, including not only militant Latin American documentaries but the production of various student and left groups around the world.¹⁴ This concept was introduced into Anglophone discussions by Teshome H. Gabriel in 1983, in a polemic on the future of African cinema.¹⁵ Applying the third cinema topology to Africa, Gabriel reworks it in three terms: unqualified assimilation

(identification with Hollywood); remembrance (a critical return to the past roots of African cultures, the examples being the militant cinema of Algeria, Senegal, and Mozambique); and combative (characterized by a concentration on the present struggles of third-world peoples, with film as an ideological tool; the cinema of Med Hondo is among Gabriel's examples).

The eleventh Pan-African Film Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO), in 1989, was the occasion for some soul-searching on the future of African cinema. On the one hand African cinema was felt to have come of age, exhibiting a diversity of styles and a professionalism in production that critics felt had been missing in past years and that reflected a new maturity. On the other hand, both Med Hondo and Cheick Oumar Sissako (when interviewed by Diawara) expressed concern at the end of *mégotage* (filmmaking on a shoestring), which was held to reflect the economic and social reality of African life), the emphasis on form over content.¹⁶ In *African Cinema Today*, Diawara develops his own topology of contemporary African films: "social realist narratives," "colonial confrontation," and "return to the source." Socialist realist narratives

*draw on contemporary experiences, and oppose tradition to modernity, oral to written, agrarian and customary communities to urban and industrial systems. . . . the filmmakers often use a traditional position to criticize and link certain forms of modernity to neocolonialism and cultural imperialism. From a modernist point of view they also debunk the attempt to romanticize traditional values as pure and original. The heroes are women, children, and other marginalized groups that are pushed into the shadow by the elites of tradition and modernity. They draw from existing popular forms such as song and dance, the oral tradition and popular theatre.*¹⁷

Examples are the films of Sembène, from *The Money Order* (1968) to *Xala* (1974), and the earlier films of Souleymane Cissé, such as *Baara* (1978) and *Finyé* (1982).

For Diawara, the cinema of colonial confrontation involves "films of historical confrontation which have put into conflict Africans and their European colonizers."¹⁸ The stories often concern colonial-era encounters, pitting African heroes and heroines against European villains; they are concerned to show African heroism and resistance, the role of women in the anticolonial struggle, and the role of African people in shaping their own history. The re-creation of the liberation struggles on film is intended to keep their memory alive. Examples include Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina's *Chroniques des années de braise* (1975) and Gillo Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers* (1965), both addressing Algeria, Sembène's *Emital* (1971), on Senegal, and Maldoror's *Sambizanga*, on Angola.

The films Diawara considers a "return to the source" set out to prove the existence of a dynamic African culture and history before European colonization. The invocation of precolonial African traditions is intended to contribute to the solution of contemporary problems. By returning to the past in films like *Yeelen* (Brightness; 1987), and so making any political message less overt, filmmakers like Cissé also avoided censorship. Of these three groups, *The Short Century* focuses on the movement of colonial confrontation,

but also examines films from the other two tendencies. There are in any case other ways of analyzing African film: Mbe B. Cham, for example, has developed a topology opposing a radical cinema concerned with political and cultural discourse (effectively combining Diawara's three movements outlined above) to hegemonic foreign film, notably Hollywood and a middle range of entertainment cinema popular with African audiences (for example kung fu movies and Indian romances and melodramas).¹⁹ Indeed relatively little critical attention has been given to the films that African audiences actually get to watch, for better or for worse.

Stuart Hall has pointed out that an essentialist notion of cultural identity, of a unity to be discovered or refound (for example through Pan-Africanism or Negritude), played a critical role in the postcolonial struggle.²⁰ In the postcolonial period, however, a new practice was needed for the creation of identities. Hall argues that the cinema of the diaspora is uniquely placed to effect this, and indeed several films in *The Short Century* were made by filmmakers in the diaspora—films such as *Sambizanga*, Isaac Julien's *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin White Mask* (1996), and Black Audio's *Testament* (1989). The importance of diaspora filmmaking, and its uneasy acceptance in Africa, revolve precisely around its questioning, rethinking, and reconstruction of identities, a practice that is vital for African cinema today.

Cinemas on the African continent can be roughly divided by geographical region: the Maghreb, Egypt, the sub-Saharan, and South Africa. Cinemas of the Maghreb are linked by language and culture to Egypt but have a more recent experience of independence and liberation struggle. Egypt has the only fully functional popular filmmaking industry on the continent. Sub-Saharan film encompasses a range of cinemas that can be roughly divided according to the languages of the former colonial powers: Francophone, Anglophone, Lusophone. Most of the critical attention to sub-Saharan African cinema has focused on Francophone films, which have in fact been produced by some of Africa's most interesting filmmakers. Lusophone directors such as Flora Gomes have also received attention, but the former Portuguese colonies have had difficulty developing a dynamic cinema culture. Even in Angola, though, there are filmmakers such as Antonio Olé who have received international recognition, and Mozambique's attempt to develop a cinema culture is evidenced in the invitation to Rouch and Godard to train Mozambican filmmakers.

The Anglophone countries have put less energy into supporting filmmaking than the Francophone countries, and their production has not been subject to the same international critical interest. Some local cinemas thrive, however. At independence Nigeria inherited a film unit producing newsreels and documentaries, which became part of the publicity department of the Nigerian federal government. According to Onookome Okome, "This unit did not make any appreciable inroads towards creating an indigenous cinema."²¹ A healthy video sector, however, based in part on the popular Yoruba Travelling Theatre movement, began to emerge in the late 1970s. Ola Bagoun's *Ajanl Ogun*, of 1977, was the first such. Woyle Soyinka makes the point that Yoruba film does not resort to aesthetic precepts molded by Western cinemas; the

Yoruba theater comes equipped with its own actors, costumes, stories, and props, and the filmmaker simply stages these narratives in a *verité* style using the cheapest means available (currently digital video).²²

Ghana inherited from the colonial period both a film unit and the best studios in Africa, but has been unable to capitalize on them. Vincent Magombe has suggested that British-colonial indifference to the education of African filmmakers is partly to blame.²³ Of course this is true in an important sense, but a more complex history should be described: first, liberal elements among the colonial powers entrusted Grierson with the task of setting up the Ghanaian film unit to help prepare for independence; then, an economic *realpolitik* by and large left these Anglophone filmmakers with little support for the future. Underdevelopment in the Anglophone countries contrasts strongly with the filmmaking history of the Francophone countries, where France has until recently retained a direct state involvement in film production in its former colonies. This was of course a neocolonial enterprise, and many accounts of Francophone African cinema, in focusing on the monies available from the French state, neglect to mention the fact that such films are still largely "independent" productions. Indeed the so-called Independents of Europe and the United States were inspired by the examples of Latin American Cinema Novo and African films, made with some state monies but also with "free" labor invested by friends and colleagues who dreamt of a different cinema.

North Africa

Before World War II, the main Arabic filmmaking country was Egypt. In 1935, the Egyptian Bank Misr financed production studios that, equipped though they were with imported equipment and foreign technicians, were a landmark in the establishment of an Egyptian national cinema. This was a commercially successful, genre-based entertainment cinema with distribution and exhibition across the Arab world. The Egyptian preeminence continues today: Egyptian soap operas and melodramas are watched avidly throughout the Maghreb.

After the Egyptian film industry was nationalized, in 1961, it set out to produce a more serious, less commercial cinema and supported much important work, including that of Chahine. Unfortunately nationalization proved an economic disaster, which some have argued held Egyptian cinema back from the renewal that would take place in other Islamic countries, such as Iran. Progressive filmmakers had to work outside Egypt for a while. The industry was returned to the private sector in 1972, but the state continues to run a film school, the Higher Cinema Institute. Countries elsewhere in both the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa have by and large been unable to produce such a school.

Chahine's early work was concerned with Arab unity and support for the Algerian revolution (e.g., *Jamila*, 1958). *Cairo Station* (1958) chronicles the psychological breakdown of a crippled newspaper-seller and evidences the clear influence of Italian Neorealism in both its aesthetics and its critique of the Egyptian middle class. Roy Ames sees Chahine's original enthusiasm for Nasser's revolution—expressed, for example, in *Saladin* (1963), with its portrait of a

magnanimous conqueror—supplanted by disillusionment in *The Land* (1969), which criticizes Egyptian agricultural policy, and in *The Choice* (1970) and *The Sparrow* (1973), which explore the traumas of defeat in the Six-Day War of 1967.²⁴ Fêrid Boughedir's film *Caméra Afrique* includes a devastating scene that intercuts Nasser's admission of defeat, and his announcement of his intention to resign, with the despair, incredulity, and tears of working-class Cairo characters.

Independence came to other North African countries in the late 1950s and early '60s, much later than to Egypt, and resulted in a wave of new cinematic traditions. Shortly after Algerian independence, in 1962, the FLN commander Yusef Saadi established a film company called Casbah. In 1965, he would play himself in the international coproduction *The Battle of Algiers*. In 1962, Lakhdar-Hamina founded the Algerian Centre for Documentary, which went on to become the foundation of the country's nationalized film industry. This early cinema, unsurprisingly, was dominated by narratives of the liberation. With Hondo and Sembène, Lakhdar-Hamina is regarded as one of the three pioneers of Francophone African and Maghrebian cinema. His film *Le Vent des Aurès* (1967) describes the rural side of the liberation struggle, the other side of the coin from Pontecorvo's urban *Battle of Algiers*.

Unlike Algeria, Tunisia achieved its independence almost bloodlessly, in 1956. It had a long-standing film culture, and after independence the Tunisian state set up a cultural affairs agency that established film facilities in *maisons de la culture* across the country, began to develop documentary and fiction projects, and in 1966 organized the first session of what was to become the Carthage Film Festival, with a competition reserved for African and Arab films.

Boughedir has remarked on an apparent Oedipus complex in Tunisian cinema:²⁵ why do so many Tunisian films involve the death of the father and show a preoccupation with the role of women, who may be dominating, or be driven mad by social circumstances, but are rarely presented in the negative stereotypes familiar from Western cinemas? Tunisia is the Muslim country that has given most rights to women, abolishing polygamy and discouraging the use of the veil. Even here, however, women are haunted by the Islamic past, and by their awareness of what their future could be under an Islamic fundamentalism. The paradoxes of a "soft dictatorship" defending women's rights are a concern of one of Tunisia's best-known women filmmakers, Moufida Tlati. Her film *Les Silences du palais* (The Silences of the palace, 1994) concerns a woman who works as a singer in Tunisian nightclubs and who returns to the palace where she grew up to attend her nanny's funeral. Received in hostile silence by the women who have not managed to make a similar escape, she recalls her past in the servants' quarters, and the patriarchal law by which the master of the house used to exercise his *droit de seigneur*. The film's melancholy tone comes in part from its framing—it is only by becoming a singer (and so implicitly "of easy virtue") that Tlati's heroine is able to escape the patriarchal family. For Tlati, the freedom and liberation that independence achieved for Tunisian women is now only sustainable at the price of imprisoning funda-

mentalist activists.²⁶ Her film points to the continuing dilemmas of women in both Maghrebian and sub-Saharan Africa.

South Africa

As Martin Botha writes, "Ideology and capital came together to create a national cinema that would reflect South Africa during the Verwoerdian regime."²⁷ Postapartheid South Africa has inherited a deeply fragmented film industry and a crisis of cinematic identity. Nevertheless, the country stands poised to take a position equivalent to Egypt's in African cinema. There was in the past a strong agitational documentary tradition here (in works such as Lionel Ngankane's *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, 1974), but films like these could scarcely be shown in South Africa, and the apartheid-era cultural boycott restricted the possibilities of distribution and exhibition abroad. At home, South African cinema was intended for whites only, and predominantly for Afrikaaners. Production was consolidated into a single vertically integrated company, SATBEL (Suid-Afrikaanse Teaterbepange Berperk). The white Afrikaans audience was relatively large and stable, so that many films attuned to this audience recovered their cost.

In the 1980s an alternative film movement of (white) university students and (black) workers coalesced to produce documentary, short fiction, and video works. The first feature from this movement, *Mapantsula* (1988), directed by Thomas Mogotlane and Oliver Schmitz, was made clandestinely; the story of a typical township hustler or *mapantsula* named Panic, who has to confront the limits of his own rebellion against the systematic oppression of apartheid, it was banned by the South African Censorship Authorities for communicating a clear antiapartheid message. Today, in postapartheid South Africa, a generation of trained filmmakers is emerging, and some important films—Ramadan Suleiman's *Fools* (1998), for example—are beginning to be made.

Francophone Cinema

Francophone cinema has historically dominated the representation and discussion of African cinema on the continent. Two key festivals, FESPACO and Carthage, are both Francophone. France's Ministère de Coopération has consistently supported the notion of an African art cinema—support in the form of funding. These notes refer to a few key filmmakers whose work is important for *The Short Century*.

L. Ousmane Sembène

Sembène was a self-taught writer whose first novel, *Le Docker noir*, was published while its author was a longshoreman on the Marseilles docks in 1956. On returning to Africa he wrote *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* (1960) before winning a scholarship to study film production in the Gorky Studio in the Soviet Union. (Twenty years later, Sissako was to take the same route.) René Gardies has discussed Glauber Rocha's attempt to develop a new film language by fusing the two apparently antagonistic models of Cesare Zavattini and Sergei Eisenstein.²⁸ Sembène's formal renewal of African cinema came precisely along this route: Neorealism plus Soviet realism.

Sembène's first short film, *Borom Sarret* (1963), was the first Francophone African film to be funded by the French Ministère de Coopération in its postindependence program of support for African cinema. (After independence, France decided to use filmmaking and -funding to bind its former colonies into its cultural and economic sphere.) In Sembène's film, a carter plies for trade in Dakar. Each encounter is unprofitable: one woman refuses to pay, a dead child must be taken to the morgue, a griot extols the carter's family but does not pay, and so on. The final passenger forces the carter to enter the European quarter, where, even after independence, Senegalese working people were forbidden to go. Sembène evokes this European dominance through his use of low-angle shots of the area's modernist concrete apartment blocks. As a result of his infringement of the law, his cart—his means of livelihood—is taken from him by the police. Simply shot in black and white, with a first-person voiceover commentary from the carter's perspective, *Borom Sarret* reveals both Sembène's training in Soviet documentary and the influence of Neorealism. A shot of the carter's clenched fist toward the end of the film recalls the emblematic clenched fist in many Soviet productions, for example Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Mother* (1926).

2. *Med Hondo*

"For three centuries," Med Hondo argues, "a whole people has been led to believe that it was superior to the people it had colonized. . . . Such an ideology has not been eradicated in the past twenty years in spite of the independence of African countries."²⁹ Hondo's militant cinema offers "impassioned examinations of colonial history and its consequences."³⁰ *Soleil O'* (1970) denounces the condition of African migrant workers in France, through a framework of political and aesthetic theory derived from the thinking of 1968. Praised at the 1970 Cannes Film Festival for both its thematic content and its formal experimentation, the film takes its title from a West African lament about people transported in the slave trade.

In his wish to escape Western influence and to forge a film language appropriate to African circumstances, Hondo is the most self-consciously Fanonian of African filmmakers. Attempting a radical deconstruction of film language in the interests of African people, he makes works that are both militant (in encouraging anti-capitalist struggles) and political (in their engagement with issues of representation). His denunciation of liberal "good blacks" and "good whites" recalls Fanon's critique of Europe. For Hondo,

*The kind of cinema which was (and is) used to colonize Africa . . . fulfills the needs and conventions of the Western World. . . . By challenging the self-appointed "self-evident" traditional modes of narration, it is possible to challenge the basis of power in the industry. . . . The necessary fight which we must engage ourself in, is one that requires us to constantly reappraise clarify and communicate our ideological position.*³¹

Hondo may also be Africa's most sophisticated director theoretically:

If we for instance talk of depicting the objective reality of the people, or attempting to insofar as this may be possi-

*ble, we must first of all live it in the first person, secondly understand the theoretical infrastructure of narrative representation supporting the traditional cinema in order to provide alternatives . . . and in the end seize the space in the distributory/exhibition circuit.*³²

It is a sobering reflection on African cinema today that many filmmakers have abandoned the language of militant cinema. Hondo's idea of seizing control of the apparatus of distribution and exhibition may be seen as idealistic (though FESPACO has gone some way toward this goal), but the strength of Sembène's cinema is linked to his demand for the economic independence of the Senegalese film industry and his critique of the continuing involvement of the former colonial masters in film culture. Back in 1974, J.C. Edeline, the head of the French distribution chain UGC, was lecturing African filmmakers about their mimicking of Western models, and declaring UGC's interest in distributing films "of a certain quality" dealing with African cultures.³³ The argument was essentially an appropriation of Hondo's.

The issue of distribution is key, and recurs in discussions at Carthage and FESPACO. To penalize countries that had nationalized their film industries—for example Guinea, Upper Volta, Kenya, Tanzania, Congo, Ghana, and Madagascar—Western distributors withdrew their films from local distribution. (This practice echoed the situation in Britain in 1947, when the United States was able to persuade Harold Wilson, then the British trade secretary, to drop the idea of imposing quotas on American films by threatening to withdraw much-needed Marshall Plan aid.) The result, ironically, was that producers elsewhere, particularly in India and Hong Kong, moved rapidly to fill the gap, creating a popular "world cinema" culture in many African countries.

3. *Djibril Diop Mambety*

The cinema of Djibril Diop Mambety provides an increasingly dystopian vision of contemporary Africa. His film *Touki Bouki* (1973) has been described as a document of African postmodernist cinema, but one has to beware of the term "postmodernism" in this context, since African countries have by and large been refused access to the modern. For this reason, catapulting them into the "postmodern" is problematic. In its use of loose *nouvelle vague* camera work, *Touki Bouki* recalls the films of Godard and Rouch. (Indeed it can be argued that Rouch's encounter with African cultures in the 1950s is at least as significant as those of Picasso and Gide in the prewar period; in particular, Rouch's exploration of syncretic performance in African religions is the precursor to much Western performance art, and helped to loosen narrative structures and develop what Gilles Deleuze has termed the "time image."³⁴)

Touki Bouki is about the ambivalence of young Senegalese who dream of leaving the country for the modernity they imagine in France, the former colonizing power, yet are deeply implicated in their own largely rural country. The film explores the postcolonial mixture of colonial and African cultures, on the one hand showing the rural setting from which the peasant boy Morl comes, on the other showing him as effortlessly "postmodern," as symbolized in the cow horns he fuses onto the scooter with which he transports

himself and his girlfriend, Anta, in their search for money with which to emigrate to France. Much of the film takes place on the edge of the sea, against which the characters fantasize an imaginary future.

In his later films Mambety returns to the Neorealist current in African cinema with his black comedies *Le Franc* (1994) and *La Petite Vendeuse du Soleil* (The little girl who sold the sun, 1999). *Le Franc* concerns a musician down on his luck. His *congoma*, a stringed instrument on which he earns his living, has been confiscated by his landlady in lieu of back rent. He is persuaded to buy a lottery ticket, which he sticks for safe keeping on the back of his door. On discovering that he has the winning number, he begins an odyssey to cash in the ticket, dragging the door across Dakar. The story is a parable about the living conditions of many Senegalese, who, in 1994, were suddenly further impoverished by the 50 percent devaluation of the regional currency, the CFA franc. Just as the colonial masters' adjustment of their currency has created economic chaos, the lottery drives the musician mad. In the film's final scene, he runs laughing and shouting into the sea, chasing the lottery ticket, which has been washed off the door. Madness, the film suggests, is not an inappropriate proposal in the face of contemporary African realities. Mambety has said that freedom "includes the freedom not to know, which in turn implies confidence in your ability to construct images from the bottom of your heart."

In Mambety's most recent film, *La Petite Vendeuse du Soleil*, Dakar's central market becomes a metaphor for unchallenged free-market orthodoxy. Transformation is still possible, though, in this case through the insistence of a twelve-year-old handicapped girl from the countryside on her right to compete with teenage boys to sell the local (mildly conservative) *Sun* newspaper.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to comment on two aesthetic strategies in recent African cinema—the turn to allegory and the rise of the *verité* video diary. Allegory in African cinema is often both a response to regimes of censorship and an attempt to elicit a wider audience. Mambety's *Le Franc* and *La Petite Vendeuse du Soleil*, for example, engage in social criticism, focusing, like Italian Neorealist films, on characters who are both local and broadly representative. They verge on the fantastic and the surreal. In *La Petite Vendeuse du Soleil*, a kindly older gentleman takes pity on the heroine and buys all her copies of the day's paper. This is almost her undoing: she is arrested by a policeman who does not believe she can have obtained the money legally (and who also tries to appropriate it for himself). But a genial senior officer she meets in the police station believes her story and orders her release. This is a fairy story, in other words, in which a series of "magical helpers" intervene to move the narrative along.³⁵ These fortuitous events can also be seen as a kind of wish fulfillment, a Brechtian "happy ending" that is intentionally ironic.

In *Bye Bye Africa* (2000), Mahmat Saleh Haroun explores the decline of cinema in Chad through the appearance of a first-person video diary. The film is a documentary-style fiction about a returned expatriate's attempt to raise money for a film, at a time

when the rise of popular video-projection venues has almost eliminated cinemas from the country—one closed and crumbling movie house remains, held on to by a white French Chadienne who dreams ineffectually of the return of celluloid. One of the film's strongest moments is when the director screen-tests a group of Chadian youths for whom cinema still represents the hope and fantasy of a better future. This fantasy of cinema is both a legacy of modernity and an important tool in resisting the despair and melancholy of life in a culture devastated by war.

Like many works in this new genre of video diaries by African expatriates, *Bye Bye Africa* suffers from a sense of self-importance—a by-product, perhaps, of the use of the first-person narrative. Despite its shortcomings, however, this filmmaking attempts to engage with what Stuart Hall, quoting Fanon, has referred to as "profound research." What, Hall asks, is the nature of this research? "Is it only a matter of unearthing that which the colonial experience buried and overlaid, bringing to light the hidden continuities it suppressed? Or is quite a different practice entailed, not the rediscovery, but the production of identity, not an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the *retelling* of the past?"³⁶ This is the work that is decidedly underway in the African cinemas addressed in *The Short Century*.

Notes

1. Like Ousmane Sembène before him, Abderrahmane Sissako was trained in the Soviet Union. The postcolonial world was also the world of cold war politics, and African cinema obtained its "independence" primarily through the support of France and the Soviet Union. Subsequently, in the 1980s, the European Union and progressive European television channels also became involved in the support of African filmmakers.
2. Michele Barrett, "Sociology and the Metaphorical Tiger," in Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg, and Angela MacRobbie, eds., *Without Guarantees: Essays in Honour of Stuart Hall* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), p. 16.
3. Charles Taylor, "Modernity and Difference," in *Ibid.*, p. 38.
4. See Manthia Diawara, "Film Production in Lusophone Africa," chapter 6 of *African Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992).
5. These films were produced by the Congolese Centre for Catholic Action Cinema in Léopoldville (Kinshasa) and by Africa Films in Kivu.
6. See Diawara, "Anglophone Film Production," chapter 1 of *African Cinema*.
7. See Bertolt Brecht, "Radio as a Means of Communications: A Talk on the Function of Radio," between 1927 and 1932, *Screen 20*, nos. 3–4 (winter 1979–80).
8. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952, English trans. 1967 (Grove Press) (reprint ed. London: Pluto, 1986), p. 140.
9. Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Malden, Mass., and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 98–99.
10. Diawara, personal communication with the author, c. 1995.
11. See Isaac Julien's and my own *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin White Mask* (1996), a film that reconstructs scenes from Fanon's writings and combines them with archival footage and interviews with witnesses and cultural critics.
12. R.A. Mortimer, *The Third World Coalition in International Politics*, quoted in Ali A. Mazrui, ed., *Africa since 1935, General History of Africa*, vol. VIII (California: James Curry/Unesco, 1994), p. 841.
13. See, e.g., Teshome H. Gabriel, "Towards a Critical Theory of Third World Films," 1983, in Stam and Toby Miller, eds., *Film and Theory: An Anthology* (Malden, Mass., and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). Humberto Solanas's and Octavio Getino's essay was first published as "Hacia un Tercer Cine" in *Tricontinental*, no. 13 (October 1969).

Over the last thirty or so years, moving image practices and the critical and theoretical debates surrounding them have transformed the space of contemporary art and curatorial practice. In this essay I want to examine some aspects of this contribution and revisit a key moment—that of the mid-1980s cultural theory in Britain—as a way of situating more clearly the work that has already been done in this area. The questions raised then, I argue, are still pertinent for discussions of contemporary visual art practice and international exhibitions today.

"TWO SIDES TO EVERY STORY"

Visitors to recent contemporary art exhibitions, notably the Venice Biennale 2001, cannot fail to have been struck by the series of "dark rooms" provoking encounters with a wide range of video and film practices, albeit often murkily presented by DVD video projection.ⁱⁱ I want to explore some of the paradoxes or contradictions engendered by the presence of artists' film and video in the gallery, which challenges both our relationship to the museum and our perception and interpretation of moving images. In particular, our relationship to the dominant moving image regimes of film and television is brought into question.

At the same time I want to explore what I perceive as a tension between advocates of the single-channel cinema (or TV) experience and those of gallery installation work, which I think comes down to both a mistrust and a misunderstanding of cinema. Mistrust because cinema is often felt to embody the claims of the popular against the more elite pleasures of the traditional art gallery, although this distinction is becoming increasingly irrelevant; misunderstanding because the cinema is an integral if not generative part of twentieth-century art and the cinematic a key mode of twentieth century subjectivity. We are always already in cinema, one way or another.

In discussing the role of the moving image in the art gallery context it is necessary to ask which kind of cinema we are talking about. The history of cinema in the twentieth century is a history of a plurality of cinemas. Indeed, even the arrival of sound film was considered such an epistemological break that many critics (such as Erwin Panofsky) were inclined to define it as a distinct art form, sharing the same support medium as silent film. I am adopting a tripartite division of the field of cinema: narrative, avant-garde, and documentary, derived from recent discussions of genre theory.ⁱⁱⁱ This has the effect of liberating the experimental and the avant-garde from the binary opposition to mainstream "Hollywood narrative" posed both by theorists and practitioners^{iv} and enables us to think more rigorously about its role in the history of contemporary art. It also allows us to analyze documentary cinema's indexical relation to reality independently from the "reality effect" of the classic realist narrative.

Artists' film and video has emerged as a major if not dominant moving image discourse in the museum and gallery circuit: avant-garde and experimental moving image practices are reconfigured and restaged; Hollywood narratives are reworked and represented (Pierre Huyghe, Douglas Gordon) in forms of critical or cynical pastiche. Documentary has also emerged as a major reference point. The twentieth-century archive of photographic and magnetic (film and video) images is preserved and reworked in a range of artists' work: e.g., in the work of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, Pere Portabella, Trinh T. Minh-ha, or Fiona Tan—several of whom have developed a practice of deconstructing and reworking the colonial archive, insisting that the possibility of rereading and engaging with this "past" is as important as creating a present or imagining a future. Filmmakers Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard have eloquently and consistently developed a practice of preserving the history and memory of cinema through the intervention of new technologies.

Chris Dercon has described a developing gallery-based cinema as neither experimental nor classical, but a cinema of fragments:^v "Young artists ... from all over the world imitate a wide variety of Western visual expression, avant-garde techniques and, inevitably, the cinema ... Significantly many young artists are responding to existing forms of mimesis in cinema itself. So we can now speak of a secondary mimesis, which is becoming recognizable in films made by visual artists."^{vi} New kinds of cinemas are being developed, entailing new visual and sonic conditions in the production of subjectivity.

I Also the title of a work by Michael Snow from 1974, included in Chrissie Iles, *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977* (exh. cat.), New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2001.

II Cinephile moving image curators have argued persuasively that video and film have their own medium specificities, even though cash-strapped galleries currently prefer to move works over to DVD. Luckily there are certain artists such as Tacita Dean or Lisa Roberts who insist on continuing to use celluloid.

III See Alan Williams, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism possible?" *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, 9:2, pp. 121-25, quoted in Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, London and New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 20. One can imagine these fields as an overlapping series of circles, and it is often at the overlapping points of the avant-garde with other kinds of cinema that significant work takes place (viz. avant-garde/documentary, e.g., Trinh T. Minh-ha; avant-garde/narrative, e.g. Chantal Akerman and Ulrike Ottinger; avant-garde/narrative/documentary, e.g., Jean-Luc Godard and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea).

IV See, for example, filmmaker Peter Gidal's attempt to produce and theorize a non-representational litrage in experimental films and writings (see his *Materialist Film*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

V It is worth remarking that this fragmentation of vision was already implicit in the Cubist and Duchampian project, and we may indeed now be seeing a "modernization" of moving image practice delayed for so long by the domination of realist narrative. However, this new fragmentation is also bound up with a resistance to and redefinition of narrative temporality as duration (Andy Warhol, Michael Snow) in the development of what Gilles Deleuze in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (London: Athlone, 1989) has defined as the time-image—essentially a post-World War II phenomenon.

VI Chris Dercon, "Gleaning the Future from the Gallery Floor," *Vertigo*, 12:2, spring 2002, p. 3.

In his essay "The Machine in the Museum or the Seventh Art in Search of Authorization,"^{vii} Bruce Jenkins argues that cinema has redefined the way in which we understand contemporary art, which indeed is much more deeply indebted to cinema and the moving image than some critics and artists would like to admit. Experimental cinema in particular, he argues, internalized key questions of modernism very early on (viz. Duchamp's founding critique of cinema's illusionism in *Anemic Cinema*, 1926, and Joseph Cornell's detemporalization of the cinema in *Rose Hobart*, 1939). I would extend Jenkins's argument to include pre-World War II documentary (think of Dziga Vertov or Joris Ivens), which, I would argue, was equally adept at responding to the challenges of modernism in the 1920s and 30s, whereas narrative cinema, in the guise of art cinema, responded rather later. Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1960) is a key instance in art cinema's incorporation of modernism.^{viii} Antonioni is important because of his rigorous separation of the look and the gaze. He breaks the relay between actor, character, and audience, while at the same time elaborating a more fragmented regime of looking. Jenkins makes a further key point that the social organization of film production itself also posed a challenge to artists: "namely the 'unusual and unnatural' situation of an artistic enterprise based on cooperation"^{ix}—an issue I shall return to shortly.

In a recent catalogue essay, "On the aesthetics of video installations," Boris Groys focuses on two ways in which the moving image changes the gallery-going experience.^x The first concerns illumination—the fact that moving image exhibits are not illuminated by the museum's light but emit their own source of light or darkness: "Video and film installations have now introduced deepest night or dusk into the museum." The artist, as Groys points out, now controls the light by which we see their work. The second concerns a shift in the temporal conditions influencing our perception of art. Moving pictures have begun to suggest to the viewer how much time they should spend on contemplation. However, should we "interrupt our contemplation of some video or film work in order to return to it at a later point, we will inevitably be filled with that very same feeling of having missed something crucial and will no longer be sure what is really happening in the installation." Moving images, in other words, return us to the experience of real life, "that familiar place ... where one is forever haunted by the feeling of being in the wrong place at the wrong time." Moving image installations create an anxiety in the viewer for which there is no adequate and satisfactory solution: "Whatever the individual's decision, either to stay put or to keep moving, his choice will always amount to a poor compromise." In the cinema, on the other hand, the audience is traditionally immobile, secure in the knowledge that, provided they didn't miss the beginning of the film, they will have seen everything they need to see to understand the work.

Curators who work with moving images also insist on Groys's point that the installation of film and video in the gallery context represents a freeing up of the spectator from what they regard as the restrictions of traditional cinema. Lynne Cooke, writing on Marijke van Warmerdam, comments: "... since there is no fixed seating, spectators must determine their own vantage points, a process in which they become conscious of their activity as viewers. In this her works are far removed from the classic, passive cinematic experience in which the audience, cocooned in a darkened chamber, traditionally forfeits all self-consciousness, becoming totally immersed, discarnate observers."^{xi} Similarly Chrissie Iles, in a major moving image exhibition catalogue, *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964–1977*, after pinpointing a range of aesthetic strategies (Cézanne, Cubism, Duchamp) which "laid the groundwork for the postminimalist decentering of the viewing subject," continues: "Cinema becomes a cocoon, inside which a crowd of relaxed idle bodies is fixed, hypnotized by simulations of reality projected onto a single screen. This model is broken apart by the folding of the dark space of cinema into the white cube of the gallery."^{xii}

This metaphor of a darkness folded into or inserted into the white cube is a potent one. While for Groys it spells the end of the white cube, for Iles the white cube spells the end of a particular kind of cinema experience. Of course in the gallery context the moving image reads differently and the artists' and curators' insistence on refusing the viewer a safe,

VII

Bruce Jenkins, "The Machine in the Museum or the Seventh Art in Search of Authorization," *Witte de With Cahiers*, no. 3, Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, and Düsseldorf: Rich Verlag, 1995.

VIII

The film, you will recall, is about the search for a missing person, Anna, but halfway through, the film loses interest in this narrative and abandons itself to an exploration of the spaces of southern Italy and the alienation of erstwhile comedienne Monica Vitti.

IX

Jenkins, "The Machine in the Museum or the Seventh Art in Search of Authorization," quoting Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, p. 250.

X

Boris Groys, "On the aesthetics of video installations," in *Stav Douglas: Le Détroit* (exh. cat.), Basel: Kunsthalle Basel, 2001, unpaginated.

XI

Lynne Cooke, "B(e)ring Meaning," in *Marijke van Warmerdam: Single, Double, Crosswise* (exh. cat.), Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1997, p. 8.

XII

Iles, *Into the Light*, p. 34.

protected, old-fashioned cinema space should not be underestimated. However, my feeling is that much writing on film and video in the gallery can too easily gloss "sitting in a cinema with "passivity," or "mobility" with "freedom," overlooking the often overtly political single-channel film work concerned with creating an active spectator in the traditional cinema setting.

Indeed, to watch a film in a cinema in Puerto Rico, Lagos, or Bombay is to encounter a very different, active call-and-response approach to spectatorship not a million miles away from that which Third Cinema struggled to create in developing (in Bertolt Brecht's phrase) cinema of "pleasure and instruction."

Psychoanalytic-based film theory was developed through an analysis of a spectatorial regime—classic Hollywood cinema focused on the role of the gaze sutured into the shot-reverse-shot figure—and a historically specific mode of spectatorship: the regular moviegoer, supported by a panoply of magazines as well as the architecture of the picture palace. However, its key concepts of the gaze and subjectivity as theorized through the experience of cinema were developed to explain the ideological hold of mass cinema: "The goal of the theoretical project was to disengage the spectator from his/her habitual pre-designated location in the dominant cinematic apparatus through a process of critical unraveling of the apparatus and thereby produce a politically conscious audience for another cinema."^{xiii}

One of the reasons for film theory's focus on Hollywood was to find—in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's phrase—"alternatives to Empire."^{xiv} In its move from theorizing sexual difference to issues of race, 1980s film theory began an ongoing theorization of difference which extended into cultural and critical studies *tout court*.^{xv} Despite the importance of this move there is considerable unfinished business in the relative theoretical neglect of other regionally dominant cinemas—Iran, Nigeria, and India, for example. It is no accident that this theoretical project continues today in the Indian subcontinent.

These cinemas propose a range of aesthetics and politics that differ from those of mainstream Hollywood or art cinema: a nostalgia for a rural, religious past in the video theatrics of Nigerian soap opera which emerged out of the Yoruba traveling theater movement (Olu Balogun); continuing feudal relations of power and identity in Hindi narratives; an attempt to develop a theocratic modernism in Iranian art cinema (Mohsen Makhmalbaf), and so on.

In Godard's account there is an acceptance of this major shift in the spectatorial regime of narrative cinema:

Woman: When did the gaze collapse?

Man: 10 years ago? 15 years? Maybe 50, before TV? Who knows?

Woman: Be more precise.

Man: Before TV took precedence.

Woman: Over what? Over current events?

Man: Over Life?

Woman: Yes.^{xvi}

For Godard the loss of cinephilia is compensated for by his investing video with many of the qualities of painting,^{xvii} evidenced, for instance, in his framing of subjects against the light, a device familiar from German Romantic artists such as Caspar David Friedrich or Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Godard's critique refers to the end of the classic Hollywood system and the interlocking aesthetics of National European Cinemas (which he explored in his *Histoire du Cinema* shown in Documenta X).

Godard's own practice involves the three modes of cinema (avant-garde, documentary and narrative, as already referred to), e.g., a modernist reworking of Hollywood narrative by the Nouvelle Vague, or an attempt to produce another way of seeing and thinking about the documentary image as in his and Anne-Marie Miéville's short-lived (and utopian) project to produce images to protect newly independent Mozambique from the international media by creating "an autonomous image which of itself would be a challenge to any new image that they anticipated would soon arrive in Africa."^{xviii}

XIII

M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film*, New Delhi and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 2.

XIV

See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.; Oxford, UK: Harvard University Press: 2000.

XV

See, for example, these issues of *Screen*: *Screen*, 26:3-4, 1985, "Other Cinemas, Other Criticisms"; *Screen*, 29:4, 1988, "The Last Special Issue on Race?"

XVI

Jean-Luc Godard, *Éloge d'Amour* (2000), dialogue.

XVII

One should point out that this equation, not camera-style but video-peinture, has a longer history, viz. Michelangelo Antonioni's *The Oberwald Mystery* (1980).

XVIII

Manthia Diawara, lecture, October 4, 1999, published in *I said I love. That is the Promise. The video politics of Jean-Luc Godard*, eds. Gareth James, Annette Schindler, and Florian Zeyfang (published in English by Ojeblikket, Copenhagen). Cinema Novo film director Ruy Guerra had invited both Godard/Miéville's company Sonimage and Jean Rouch to work with him in accord with the newly independent Mozambique government's desire to establish a kind of television that would empower Mozambican viewers rather than recolonize them.

Spectatorial positioning is complex and relational. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam have coined the phrase "transnational or cross-cultural spectatorship" to emphasize the fact that "spectatorial identification is culturally, discursively, and politically discontinuous, that it is fissured, even schizophrenic, suggests a series of gaps; the same person might be crossed by contradictory discourses and codes."^{xix}

The ideological functioning of cinematic spectatorship has, over the past fifty years, shifted to the wider, more fragmented and dispersed regime of the visual, encompassing advertising, television, mass circulation magazines, and so on. Consequently curatorial and artistic practices that are concerned with deconstructing and reconstructing spectatorship have had to find approaches that are not merely architectural. The construction and problematization of the subject involves a series of discursive relays in which curatorial practice has played an essential role in opening up the signification of individual works into discursive frameworks that have inevitably moved beyond the gallery setting. But I would argue that there can be no necessary connection between a particular formal approach to the conditions in which a work is experienced (e.g., creating a mobile spectator) and a presumed radicality.

The key question is whether the new physical mobility that the spectator is offered in gallery and museum installations really involves a critique of dominant spectatorial regimes of cinema. Do gallery-based moving image practices participate in the construction and problematization of the subject in this way? Do they explore the discontinuities inherent in spectatorship, in the sense in which Homi Bhabha defines it, as an overcoming of binary oppositions and the opening up of a "process of translation"?^{xx}

My argument here, though restricted to a particular issue concerned with the claims being made for film and video in the gallery space, is part of a wider argument about the terms and conditions for radical film and video work in the post-Cold War era, and the kinds of spectatorial engagements they propose. I would argue, for instance, that Stan Douglas's *Win, Place or Show* (1998) is precisely political in its hyperbolic engagement of the cinematic machine with his construction of an endless series of shot variations within a televisual narrative format. Whereas Douglas Gordon's *left is right and right is wrong and left is wrong and right is right* (1999), a reworking of Otto Preminger's *Whirlpool* (1949) into a feature-length flicker film (à la Bruce Conner), is to my mind more formalist. Both works—presented together in New York's Dia Center for the Arts exhibition, "Double Vision" (February 1999–March 2000)—force the spectator into gallery-style mobility. However, one of them, I would argue, proposes the terms of a critique quite absent in the other.

It can be argued that Third Cinema has provided a discursive space for a range of different cinematic practices that contemporary art has not been able to emulate and that the processes of deconstruction and reconstruction of aesthetic discourse in the visual arts have taken a different course to those alternative, experimental, and political cinemas included under the general rubric of Third Cinema. Indeed, one of the aims of this Documenta is to draw our attention to this alternative tradition.

Hamid Naficy has developed the intriguing concept of an "accented" cinema to describe and define a postcolonial cinema of exiled and diasporic subjects based on a "double consciousness"—"constituted both by the structure of feeling of the filmmakers themselves as displaced subjects and by the traditions of exilic and diasporic cultural productions that preceded them."^{xxi} An offshoot of the Third Cinema movement, accented cinema is more situated, less polemical but nevertheless still political.

Let me give some other examples of such accented Third Cinema practices. Shirin Neshat's video and film narratives are engaged in a complex dialogue with the representational schemas of Iranian cinema. Her veiled women protagonists do not simply function as representatives of repression and inequality; her use of the veil acts as a spectatorial lure, drawing the audience's attention to the fact that a different regime of looking as well as power is being questioned in her work. These issues are explicit, too, in the work of Indian filmmaker Amar Kanwar, whose *A Season Outside* (1997) uses the confrontational performance of national identities enacted on an India–Pakistan border crossing as a starting point for the

XIX

Robert Stam and Ella Heitka Shohat, "Film Theory and Spectatorship in the Age of the 'Posts'," in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, eds., *Reinventing Film Studies*, London, G. New York: Arnold, 2000, p. 398.

XX

Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 33.

XXI

Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2001, p. 22.

investigation of the construction of an Indian masculinity divided between the demands of the nation-state and the family and the very different tradition presented by Buddhism. Isaac Julien moves between the single-channel avant-garde and art cinema format and the multi-channel installation with its attendant proposition of a mobile spectator. His work in both formats, I would argue, exposes, deflects, and reconstructs the cinematic gaze (e.g. through the use of the sequence or *le travelling*) and, in so doing, opens the audience to other concerns: to make questions of race or sexual difference a matter of indirect reference rather than embodiment.

Contemporary cinematic practices propose a series of scopical regimes, some voyeuristic, others exhibitionistic, with a concomitant range of aesthetics. This makes it imperative to re-examine the heritage of avant-garde and experimental film and video and in particular the contribution of, to adopt Naficy's term, "accented" artists to these debates.

WHEN WAS THE AVANT-GARDE?

If the avant-garde is a historically conditioned phenomenon and emerges only in a moment of real political disjuncture, it will appear in various forms in different parts of the world in different times.^{XXII}

While it is generally agreed that the collapse of the project of the "historic avant-gardes" coincided with the changed political climate in post-World War II Europe and North America, critics and art historians are sharply divided on whether the notion of the avant-garde is appropriate for postwar art at all. Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Peter Bürger have argued that the avant-garde project is dedicated to the destruction of bourgeois art, and that the postwar avant-garde is, in the words of Hal Foster, "merely neo ... so much repetition in bad faith that cancels the prewar critique of the institution of art."^{XXIII} Foster takes a position in favor of successive vanguards precisely to make contemporary artistic practice viable. Geeta Kapur extends or rather "deflects" this argument in order to unpick its "(Euro)Americanist" bias:

An African or Asian avant-garde will come into its own if at least two moves take place simultaneously. One, a move that dismantles the hegemonic and conservative features of the national culture itself. Two, a move that dismantles the burdensome aspect of western art, including its endemic vanguardism. That is to say, such an avant-garde would have to treat the avant-garde principle itself as an institutionalized phenomenon, recognizing the assimilative capacity of the (western) museums, galleries, critical apparatuses, curators and media.^{XXIV}

What is interesting and useful about Kapur's position is that it allows one to bracket off contemporary art practices which have abandoned any dialogue with issues of politics, the state, or national culture and whose avant-gardism has become institutionalized, while simultaneously investigating other sites where it can be argued that avant-garde work is indeed going on today or was disregarded in the recent past.^{XXV}

In an influential paper, "The Commitment to Theory,"^{XXVI} Homi K. Bhabha proposed the concept of a "third" space which he made the condition for the articulation of cultural difference: "It is the 'inter'—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture."^{XXVII} In seeking to overturn the dualism underlying much contemporary and theoretical practice, Bhabha further sets out the enunciative terms for a vanguard artistic practice, supplementing those of Kapur:

The language of critique is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of the master and the slave, the mercantilist and the Marxist, but to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation ... In such a discursive temporality, the event of theory becomes the *negotiation* of contradictory and antagonistic instances that open up hybrid sites and objectives of struggle ...^{XXVIII}

In the years that have passed since that initial formulation, this notion of a third space has become something of a mantra for artists committed to exploring social-political questions in

XXII

Stam and Shohat, "Film Theory and Spectatorship in the Age of the 'Posts'," p. 374.

XXIII

Hal Foster, "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde," *October*, no. 70, fall 1994, quoted in Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*, New Delhi: Tulika, 2000, pp. 374-75.

XXIV

Ibid., p. 374.

XXV

Vanguard film practices have continued to take place at the fault lines of the Soviet empire, for example: the 1960s Czech new wave; or the films of Dusan Makavejev in Yugoslavia or Sergei Paradjanov in Georgia. Equally, on the Indian subcontinent, filmmakers such as Mani Kaul or Kumar Shahani have questioned the political and aesthetic framing of the investigation of national identity begun by Satyajit Ray under the aegis of Jawaharlal Nehru.

XXVI

Homi K. Bhabha, "The Commitment to Theory," first delivered at the 1986 Third Cinema Conference held in Edinburgh and subsequently published in its proceedings *Questions of Third Cinema*, eds. Jim Pines and Paul Willemen, London: BFI, 1989. "The Commitment to Theory" is also published as the opening chapter in Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*.

XXVII

Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 38.

XXVIII

Ibid., p. 25.

their work while at the same time working to maintain the notion of autonomy in their artistic practice. What was important about Bhabha's formulation at that time was that it broke open a number of binary positions which were constantly being returned to in the cultural field and keeping it mired in its Zhdanovian heritage.^{xxix}

In insisting on a semiotic interpretation of cultural production, Bhabha was building on a line of reflection from Soviet linguists such as Mikhail Bakhtin who asserted the importance of the social in their analyses while insisting on the autonomy of the linguistic or semiotic instance. By deploying Bakhtin, Bhabha was also building on the work of the British film journal *Screen*, which, in the 1970s, had initiated a major epistemological break in the ways we think about visual culture but at the time had been unable to extend its thinking from psychoanalytically inflected discussions of sexual difference to broader questions of cultural difference.

Subsequent development of cultural theory has made notions of cultural difference and "other"-ness almost commonplace—even the mainstream US media such as CNN after September 11 are beginning, albeit in a limited way, to acknowledge differences under the *pax* (or as we should now rename it *bellum*) *Americana*. Although, as Bhabha would undoubtedly point out, much of the burgeoning discourse concerning racism, migration, human rights violations, the "war against terror," and so on, is in fact an attempt to foreclose the enunciative spaces that are constantly opening up. Difference cannot be written out, but it can be managed.

The Edinburgh International Film Festival Conferences from the 1970s until 1986 were probably the most important single location in the anglophone world for the development of theoretical debates on cultural production, with a specific focus on film. Documenta11 could be seen as also participating in the tradition of these combative, theoretically informed cultural events—Documenta11 is first and foremost a series of frameworks, platforms within which issues can be discussed. And we need to approach the exhibition in Kassel and the contributions of its artists in that light, and focus on the enunciative specificity of the works and projects presented.

COLLECTIVE PRACTICE

Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, and Arnold Hauser have all pointed to the collaborative aspect of cinema and its potential for de-individualizing art practice and dislocating regimes of authorship, ownership, and control. In Britain, even as late as the 1980s, a film and video workshop movement enshrining notions of collective practice was established in an alliance between activist filmmakers, the then fledgling Channel 4 Television, and the film and television trade union ACTT.

This was a direct descendant of the Third Cinema debates in the New Latin American Cinema movement. In their manifesto "Towards a Third Cinema," Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino argue that the New Third Cinema "of liberation" will not be that of Hollywood (first cinema), nor *cinema d'auteur* (second cinema), but a cinema which makes films "that the System cannot assimilate and which are foreign to its needs or ... that are directly and explicitly set out to fight the System [italics in original]"^{xxx} and in which films are produced as part of collaborative politico-cultural work.

The aesthetic strategy of the New Latin American Cinema combined Italian neo-realism and Nouvelle Vague *vérité* realism (e.g., Glauber Rocha's *Terre em Transe*, 1967), with anti-realist montage drawing heavily on the avant-garde and militant documentary tradition (e.g., Solanas and Getino's *The Hour of the Furnaces*, 1968, or Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's very different *Memories of Underdevelopment*, 1968). The 1980s workshop movement in Britain was able to embark on an analytical, critical, and theoretical debate with the realist premises of the British documentary movement and art cinema, drawing on advanced work in film theory and cultural studies that had emerged in London and Birmingham in the 1970s.^{xxxi} See, for example, Black Audio Film Collective's *Expeditions: Signs of Empire/Images of Nationality* (1982–83), a semi-abstract tape-slide performance juxtaposing fragments of

XXIX

Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov's theses on Soviet Socialist Realism reestablished the primacy of the social in cultural debates in the Soviet Union and of state control of artistic matters, putting an end to the experimentation of the historic Soviet avant-garde.

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Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema" (1969), in Michael T. Martin, ed., *New Latin American Cinema, Vol. 1: Theory, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997, p. 43.

XXXI

My reference is to the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Birmingham; and the journals *Screen* and *Theoretical Practice* London.

colonial discourse, or Isaac Julien and Sankofa Film and Video Workshop's *Looking for Langston* (1989), which synthesizes several visual genres including documentary footage, fictional narrative, and the *tableau vivant*. A number of workshops (Black Audio, Ceddo, Retake, Sankofa) were also concerned with fighting the exclusionary and often racist practices in the British media industry.

At that time I was part of a London-based group, the Society for Education in Film and Television, and the journal *Screen*, both of which were challenging the terms of the debates on the role of the mass media in contemporary society—through a massive importation of mainly French theoretical work from linguistics, semiotics, and psychoanalysis. The possibility of political and social change through ideological struggle in culture was very much on the agenda in the early 1970s—whence we used to paraphrase Karl Marx, "the point is to change things." Louis Althusser's work, combined with both Soviet and Chinese writing about the social function of art, was very important for us then.

This was the time of Documenta 5, which uniquely brought together avant-garde film and video practices with these elaborate politico-cultural schemas. In the UK, these discourses and their practitioners kept themselves very separate. There were in fact two avant-gardes: the film co-op movement, which was concerned with formal experimentation—Greenbergianism in the cinema if you will—and a looser political cinema concerned with struggles in representation as in the work of Godard, or Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub. These were soon to be joined in the *Screen* avant-garde by an unlikely mix of a range of art cinema filmmakers such as Miklos Jancso and Nagisa Oshima.

In the thirty years that have passed, one would agree with Godard that the project for a political avant-garde cinema appears to have collapsed. The end of the Cold War and the failure of "actually existing socialism" were major factors. The aesthetico-political practices of film collectives—the films and videos produced internationally by the women's movement, Cinema Novo in Latin America, or the wide range of film and video associated with working-class struggles such as the UK miners' strike, or Cinétracts in France in 1968—have disappeared from view. Most of the film co-ops and their supporting institutions closed down, due to both a lack of institutional support and a change in the audience as attention shifted to the major rearticulation of moving image practices in the gallery context.

My argument, however, is that the project for a political avant-garde cinema continues to inform new work staged in the gallery context and that its debates and issues are being rearticulated and restaged by artists and filmmakers for our "bad new times." Much of the tension and hostility that the moving image engenders in the gallery can be attributed to anxiety about restarting a series of political and aesthetic encounters that were both bruising but ultimately productive in the 1970s and 80s.

In Documenta 11, we want to refocus attention on a range of historical and contemporary collective or collaborative practices. However, it is also important to remember the important tradition of the political documentary, central to militant Latin American cinema: "The cinema known as documentary with all the vastness that the concept has today, from educational films to the reconstruction of a fact or a historical event, is perhaps the main basis of revolutionary filmmaking. Every image that documents, bears witness to, refutes or deepens the truth of a situation is something more than a film image or purely artistic fact; it becomes something which the system finds indigestible."^{xxxii} The Chilean Colectivo Cine Ojo based their name on that of the formative Cine Eye movement in Soviet Russia associated with Dziga Vertov. *Memoirs of an Everyday War* (1986) reworks 1980s Chilean media footage to provide an analysis of the bizarre language of the Pinochet dictatorship in which the terms of revolution and fascism were completely reversed (Pinochet was revolutionary; the opposition fascist).

The work of Igloodik Isuma Productions, an Inuit production company in Nunavut, Canada, is about renewing traditional oral narratives in new media, and in so doing provides a support for the cultural survival of a first nations people. Fared Armaly's collaborative project *From/To* is exemplary in its attention to the wide range of oppositional media strategies

in the Palestinian struggle for autonomy and independence. As well as the complex work of reading the traces of the struggle that *From/To* enacts, Armaly also provides a framework, a kind of virtual "pavilion" for a range of other filmmakers and activists. Where else can one find information on Palestinian film history or activist films?

These issues are not the province of groups and collectives alone. Filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha, for example, has consistently engaged a feminist and anti-ethnocentric gaze in her single screen projects, starting from her seminal *Reassemblage* (1982/83).

In his essay for this catalogue, "The Black Box," Okwui Enwezor refers to the uneven way past Documentas have engaged the issues that emerged globally in the second half of the twentieth century, the search for freedom propelled by independence and liberation struggles, the rethinking of the project of modernity among previously dominated and colonized societies, the reconceptualization of the relationship between the West and the non-West. In attempting a diasporic understanding of modernity, Documenta 11 is attentive to this issue of locality emblematically formulated by Hardt and Negri and which needs to be brought into play with Kapur and Bhabha's insistence on the importance of locality or location—location in the sense of Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*,^{xxxiii} or Enwezor's *Trade Routes*,^{xxxiv} referring to the process of movement through which the contemporary diasporic subject is constituted.

Examples of this diasporic consciousness raised in some of the film and video work in the exhibition are the border crossings of Mexican illegal immigrants in Chantal Akerman's *The Other Side*; the traces of the expulsion of Ugandan Asians in Zarina Bhimji's new work *Out of Blue*; Isaac Julien's exploration of the imaginary of the post-World War II Afro-Caribbean diaspora's "circum-atlantic" peregrinations in *Paradise Omeros*; Ulrike Ottinger's journey to Odessa (*Südostpassage – Southeast Passage*) in a reversal of the routes of Eastern European migration, and so on.

Jean-Marie Teno's film *Vacances au pays – A Trip to the Country* (2000) is emblematic here. Teno develops the term "tropical modernity" to explore the effects of colonial and postcolonial modernization on Cameroon society, a modernism that was at the same time imposed, longed for, and never achieved. The two small skyscrapers of Yaoundé come to stand in for the longed-for modernism represented by the Manhattan skyline. However, this film, like so many others in Africa, can only be made from the position of the exile. As Edward Said has pointed out, "Modern culture is in the large part the work of exiles, emigrés, refugees"^{xxxv} since the cultural and political conditions for critical artistic production are not available in the artist's country of origin.

In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri argue that "Globalization, like localization, should be understood instead as a *regime* for the production of identity and difference, or really of homogenization and heterogenization;" and that what needs to be critically addressed today is "the *production of locality*, that is, the social machines that create and recreate the identities and differences that are understood as the local."^{xxxvi} Art practice, in particular moving image art practice, has a key role in this endeavor.

XXXIII

Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993; London and New York, Verso, 1993.

XXXIV

Trade Routes: History and Geography, exh. cat. for the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale, 1997, artistic director: Okwui Enwezor (Johannesburg: Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, The Hague: Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, 1997)

XXXV

Edward W. Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003 p. 173.

XXXVI

Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 45.