THE CADAVER'S PULSE
Film Theory's Construction of the Viewer and the Real

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Abstract

The thesis examines the nature of the "real" in the cinema; I overview the theories that are historically used, and offer some alternative models. First, I survey how the "real" has been traditionally theorized in film theory. The realist/anti-realist debate is addressed; the psycholinguistic theory of Jacques Lacan and Jean Baudrillard's postmodern model of the hyperreal are reexamined in light of their profound effect on film theory's model of the cinematic "real." I argue against these theories as models of spectatorship and the "real" because of their hermetic nature.

I then consider Walter Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* and the "dialectical image" as an alternative approach to the problems of the "real." Benjamin's model takes into consideration both the epistemological nature of the image and the problematics of cultural context. In conclusion, I analyze the problem of mediation in any model of the cinematic "real."

Résumé

Cette thèse interroge la nature du "réel" dans le cinéma; je survole les théories du "réel" utilisées le plus souvent dans les études cinématographiques, et j'y offre des alternatives. Dans un premier temps, j'examine comment le "réel" a été construit dans la théorie du film. Le débat réaliste/contre-réaliste se met en cause; la théorie psycholinguistique de Jacques Lacan et la modèle postmoderne du "hyperréel" de Jean Baudrillard se font reinterroger à cause de l'effet profond que ces discours ont eu sur le modèle du "réel" cinématique élaboré dans la théorie du film. Je soulève des objections contre ces conceptions du "réel" et de la nature du spectateur cinématographiques en ce qui concerne leur hermétisme.

Dans un second temps, je considère le *Passagen-Werk* de Benjamin ainsi que "l'image dialectique" comme un méthode alternatif d'aborder les problèmes du "réel." Le modèle de Benjamin tient compte de la nature épistémologique de l'image aussi bien que la problématique du contexte culturel. En conclusion, j'analyse le problème de la médiation dans tout modèle du "réel" cinématique.

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Pauline Kael writes that "being able to talk about movies with someone--to share the giddy high excitement you feel--is enough for a friendship" (1991: xii). If there is an underlying theme to this thesis, it is that films do not exist in a vacuum and that their relationship with the real world and real people needs reconsideration. As such, it only makes sense that my family, friends, and colleagues have effected this text as much as any film--in *some* cases I dare say more.

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If we shadows have offended,
Think but this and all is mended,
That you have but slumb'red here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend.
If you pardon, we will mend.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

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INTRODUCTION

THE CADAVER'S PULSE: Film Theory's Construction of The Viewer and The Real

The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images.

Guy Debord, *Society of The Spectacle*

I love going to the movies, the only thing that bothers me is the image on the screen.

Theodor W. Adorno, "Transparencies On Film"

Television is like eating potato chips--garbage is garbage.

Anthony Berman, *Captured Visions*

Part I. Two Historical Anecdotes

There are numerous stories surrounding the response the first paying audiences had to the moving picture. Legend has it that when the Lumière Brothers screened their first film, *L'Arrivée d'un train* (1895) on December 28, 1895, viewers ran from the Paris screening room, fearing that the train on the screen would momentarily crash through the wall and crush them to death.[1]

The central concern of this thesis arose from the aforementioned dilemma. From this first screening onward, people have presumed that the cinema, far more so than the fine and plastic arts preceding it, had the uncanny ability to mimic reality. Since the Lumières' screening, the paradox between artifice and reality has played a large part in theories of the cinema and the spectator. Indeed, this paradox was mocked as early as 1902 in Edward S. Porter's *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show*, a film that parodied the reaction of the Lumière brother's audience. The concern of the cinema audience, then, was not that the image was equal to the real world, but that the similarities between the real world and cinematic representation were uncanny.

This paradox has also informed the formal, structural, textual, and political concerns of many filmmakers, producing a wide variety of films. "Classical Hollywood cinema," *neorealismo italiano*, *la nouvelle vague*, New American Cinema, the *avant-garde*, and experimental feminist cinema have all shown concern over the cinema's ability to mimic the "real." One can see this in works as diverse as Robert Montgomery's *The Lady in The Lake* (1946), Frederico Fellini's *Umberto D* (1952), Jean-Luc Godard's *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1966), Stan Brakhage's *The Act of Seeing with one's own Eyes* (1971), and Yvonne Rainer's *The Man Who Envied Women* (1985). Because of the camera's mimetic abilities, both realist and anti-realist cinematic styles are inextricably tied to concerns about the "real." Indeed, the radical anti-realism of Brakhage, Rainer, Godard, and Laura Mulvey all developed, in part, as a response to the realism of the

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[1] See Roy Armes, *Film and Reality: A Historical Survey* (London: Penguin, 1974): 22-29.

Hollywood cinema.[2]

This thesis addresses how the spectator comes to terms with the "real" in the cinema, and how this differs from the manner in which the "real" has been historically theorized. To undertake this study, the first half of the thesis examines models concerned with the relationship between the cinema, the spectator, and the "real" that I suggest are inadequate; the second half attempts to suggest how the "real" in the cinema can be theorized more profitably.

While it is understood that the cinema is, first and foremost, artifice--a representational construction on the part of the filmmaker--the intuition that the image somehow represents reality remains a concern of audiences. The first aim of this thesis is to reevaluate the models that have been traditionally used to define the "real" in the cinema. The second aim is to offer some new avenues of inquiry that could shed more light on the relationship between the cinema's mimetic representation and the viewer's belief in the illusion that what she sees on the screen has a direct relationship to the real world.

From the cinema's inception, the "real" has hovered behind the viewer's notion of the cinematic image. The "knowledge" that the viewer derives from newsreels, docuramas, documentary and ethnographic films is based largely on the filmmaker's claims about the reality of their representations, even if this reality was itself an illusion. If the viewer did not believe, in some sense, in the reality of these images, there would be no reason for her to watch these movies; a point that is brought to light in films such as Napolean Chagnon and Timothy Asch's *The Axe-Fight* (1975) and Michael Rubbo's *Waiting For Fidel* (1975). Narrative cinema, while telling fictional stories, also made claims about the realism of its images. Hollywood cinema adopted realist models of representation to engage in verisimilitude, allowing the viewer to equate realism with the "real."

For different theorists, the term "real" has radically different meanings. Therefore, each chapter looks at a different facet of the "real"; psychological,

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[2] See Stan Brakhage, *Brakhage Scrapbook* (New Paltz: Documentext, 1982): 235-240; Yvonne Rainer, "Some Ruminations around Cinematic Antidotes to the Oedipal Net(les) while Playing with De Lauraedipus Mulvey, or, He May Be Off Screen, but . . . " *The Independent* 1 (1986): 22-25; and Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16.3 (1975): 6-18.

textual, and cultural versions are all considered. There is an underlying motif throughout the different theoretical models of the "real"; all three areas of inquiry are, in different ways, concerned with the relationship between images and the real world.

The psychological, cultural, textual, and conventional background of the audience all come into play when addressing questions of the "real" in the cinema. The cinema sets up expectations on all these levels, as can be seen in the following example. Almost twenty years after the Lumière Brothers' first screening, Windsor McCay premiered his animated film *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914).[3] Designed for his Vaudeville show, McCay structured the film so that Gertie could catch an apple in her mouth when he threw it at her. The audience was reportedly amazed by this feat, wondering how it could be accomplished, similar to the way one attempts to figure out a magician's *légère de main*. What fascinated the audience was the blending of the "real" and representation, and how this trick-film blurred the lines between the two. The audience *knew* Gertie was not there, but it *seemed* like she was. This effect arose from her realistic action ("catching" an apple), not the realism of her screen presence. The central point of this anecdote is that the audience did not run away, fearing that dinosaurs again ruled the earth. Instead, they wanted to know how and why the artifice worked in such a convincing way.

As the cinema added sound with *The Jazz Singer* (1927), two-strip technicolour with *On With the Show* (1928) and three-strip technicolour with Walt Disney's animated short *Flowers and Trees* (1932), the sense the audience developed of the reality of the representations became stronger and stronger. The addition of sound and colour did not make the cinema seem more like reality, but it did make the artifice and the mimesis more "real," more life-like. The McCay example points to how quickly the audience understood the technical properties of the cinema. I am not arguing that the cinematic spectator was deluded into believing that the images on the screen were real world events, that flowers and trees *really* came to life in the eponymous Disney short. Instead, the

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[3] See Donald Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film 1898-1928* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982): 110-113.

argument is that as the cinema, through technological advancement, mimicked the "real" more and more, the film spectator was placed in a quandary between "artifice" and "reality." The tension between "artifice" and the "real" is at the centre of the viewer's understanding of the cinema, and also at the centre of this thesis.

To undertake this study of the cinematic "real," three areas are explored in depth: psychoanalytic and phenomenological models of psychology and their connection with mind-dependent and mind-independent models of the "real"; the difference between inferences about the reality based on the "real" in cinema and on simulation; and the function and structure of cultural history and cultural artifacts as signposts of the "real." In exploring these questions, the primary models of contemporary film theory are re-examined: Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis; postmodern notions of the simulacra; and the dialectical materialism emerging from the Frankfurt school. The relative values and limitations of these models are considered, and new approaches to the questions of the "real" in cinema are proposed as areas of further research. Finally, an attempt is made to point to the potential intersections between these contrasting theories. In doing so, it will be seen if it is possible to raise new questions about the "real" in the cinema that take into consideration both the nature of cinematic mediation and the problematics of cultural contexts.

The chapters themselves function as three separate areas of inquiry, but certain themes recur throughout: the role of surrealism as a textual strategy; the differing approaches to the "real" adopted by realist and anti-realist texts; the notions of "secret," repressed or oppositional histories; and the various definitions of the "real," ranging from the empirical to the realist to the simulacra of the postmodernist. The conclusion draws these strands together, and attempts to schematize the nature of the cinematic image's relationship to the "real."

Part II. The Real and The Reel

Many film theorists have argued that the film image is a "construct," mediating between the viewer and the external, real world. On a theoretical level, film theory's concern with the dichotomy between the presence embodied by the cinematic image and its' simultaneous evocation of absence points toward this. This debate focuses on the inherent mediation of the cinematic image as a representational system which mirrors and reconstructs reality; the cinema becomes the spectator's window onto the world, which then reflects back onto the viewer. The increasing realization that what we take to be "real" is not necessarily a reference to reality, but instead a reference to what we construe to be reality through the mediation of the cinematic text, has not led to a greater understanding of how audiences relate and respond to visual images. If anything, both popular and theoretical discourses now dismiss any claim about reality as the referent of the image.[4] This works well as a rhetorical strategy, but it does not explain the faith we still have in images in everyday life; our intellectual and emotive responses to images now seem more split than ever. The present work begins with this problem, and tries to understand how there are some images within the cinema which, in spite of the theoretical claims we make about the nature of fictional and subjective discourse, strike us with an immediacy that can only be explained in terms of the "real." Films as diverse as Alain Resnais' *Nuit et brouillard* (1955), Stan Brakhage's *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959), Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (1975), and Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *In einem Jahr mit dreizehn Monden* (1978) fall into this category.

The use of the term "real" is fraught with problems. Its use here, unless otherwise stated, is not to be taken in the sense of either Lacan or Baudrillard, and its evocation in many ways stands in opposition to their theoretical models of the "real." For both of the above theorists, although in different ways, the "real" is a phantasm the subject embellishes with meaning. Despite its use by

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[4] See Christian Metz, *Language and Cinema* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974): 22-49.

other theorists, I cannot forsake the term; the word implies too much in everyday language. When we, as theoreticians or "regular" film viewers, make the claim that what we are viewing is "real," I argue that we are *not* making an ontological claim about the world. Also, we are not speaking of the power of the text to 'replicate" the "real" through verisimilitude. Instead, I suggest that we take the cinematic image to be "real" when the conventional signals that mediation is taking place *seem* to break down. The presence of what we deem as "real" startles us, because of its emergence from a constructed, fictional text. Yet, we are able to view the text as "real" because we simultaneously know it is a representation. The "real" in film, I argue, strikes us with an emotional and intellectual presence, but in our role as viewers, we acknowledge absence and the fundamental gap between representation and reality. This keeps us aware that film is only a fleeting image, a phantasm.

Yet, there is still the recurring feeling that what we have seen cannot be easily categorized or shunted aside. This swing between presence and absence guides our responses to many horrific and disturbing images. For example, the obsessive documentation of concentration camps by the Nazis and our subsequent fascination with these images points to a tenuous relationship between knowledge, understanding, and the cinematic image. The Holocaust is a historical fact one can attempt to analyze and explain through psychological and socio-political motivations, but to distil this knowledge into a set of images that show incomprehensible horror does not "explain" the event in any traditional sense. We can confront the images, but we cannot come to terms with why these images were generated in the first place. This attempt to "understand" can be seen in the incremental length of films attempting to "explain" the Holocaust, such as Marcel Ophuls' four hour and twenty minute *Sorrow and the Pity* (1970) and four hour and twenty-seven minute *Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie* (1987); Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's seven hour *Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland* (1977); and Claude Lanzmann's eight hour and twenty-eight minute *Shoah* (1985). In an attempt to include "everything," these films try desperately to "tell the whole story." The gap between the production of the Holocaust footage and the current meaning of these images precludes this possibility. The cinematic text,

no matter how much it shows the viewer, cannot stand in for the historical events, or for the real world, and any explanation it gives must be partial. In this sense, the "real" works in a fundamentally different manner from "reality" or the "real world." The "real," in my view, arises from the cinema's mimetic ability, the viewer's *belief* in the referent of the cinematic image, and the belief systems of the viewer herself. These beliefs provide the viewer with background knowledge, as inadequate as it may be, as to the feeling of the reality of the representation.

The theories that have attempted to address these problems of the "real" all fall short. Empirical models, such as the ones proposed by Noël Carroll, Kendall Walton, and Gregory Currie, do not, on their own, answer all the questions about the relationship between reality and photographic and cinematic representation: these models do not address culture, intuition, or meaning in any strong sense. Here, the viewer only has to correctly identify the "object" shown in the image to discern the "real."[5] The models of the "real" extrapolated from Lacan and Baudrillard are nowhere near adequate, either. Of course, the meanings ascribed to the "real" by Lacan, Baudrillard, and the film theorists which followed them are of importance to this question; these versions of the "real" are intensely metaphysical, and will be dealt with in turn.

While arguments addressing questions of the "real" are central to the theoretical concerns of most film theory, the arguments put forth in this thesis will, for the most part, side-step film theory; instead I will return to the primary theoretical texts from which much of contemporary film theory arose. There are two reasons for this. First of all, this thesis is not a critique of film theory as it presently exists *per se*; I only wish to readdress the problems of the "real" in a manner that does not lead to the same dead-ends much of film theory has now reached. In most cases, film theory has looked at the cinema in one of two ways. Film is either a text like all others, waiting to be read, or a psychological phantasm that replicates certain psychical functions. The question of mediation

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[5] See Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror* (New York: Routledge, 1990): 60-96; Kendall Walton, "Transparent Pictures," *Critical Inquiry* 11.2 (1984): 246-277; and Gregory Currie, "Photography, Painting and Perception," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49.1 (1991): 23-29.

and the "real" is abandoned, as both the cinema and the real world become relativistic texts where meaning is arbitrary. Christian Metz writes that "[t]he cinema is the 'phenomenological' art *par excellence*, the signifier is coextensive with the whole of the significate, the spectacle of its own signification, thus short-circuiting the sign itself" (Metz, 1974b: 43). If this is true, then, the cinema is a hermetic phantasm. The argument about the relationship between the cinema and the "real" then goes something like this: if the image is not synonymous with the real world (meaning that no mediation takes place and that the viewer has direct access), it then stands to reason that films are solely fictional texts consisting of either sign systems (or, in the psychoanalytic argument, externalized mental processes). I argue that our relationship with images is far more complex than this, and furthermore, that events of the "real" can come through the fictional text.

In Jean-Luc Godard's *Weekend* (1967), this negotiation between the "real" and the fictional comes to the forefront when Corinne (Mirielle Darc) and Roland (Jean Yanne), during their road trip, join the cannibal-terrorist group. When a pig is sacrificed, the conventions of fictionality fall away. The death of the pig transgresses the narrative and juxtaposes the fictional text with the real world. The effect can be quite jarring. I still find this image disturbing, after seeing the film five or six times, because of the presence of what I take to be an actual animal corpse. In effect, it does not really matter whether this particular scene is created through an amazing feat of prosthetics, as the image convinces me that the sacrificing of the pig is a real event in the real world, and not a cinematic illusion. The "death of the pig" scene in *Weekend* points to an interesting reversal in the viewer's usual comprehension of the cinema: when a viewer watches George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), she continues to believe that no matter how graphic, gory, and realistic the film seems, the images are cinematic illusions, ingenious constructions on the part of the filmmaker. Seeing the "pig scene" in Godard's film, the viewer believes that the event really happened, and no level of reassurance that this is only a film is going to change the viewer's mind. But the power of the image, and the way in which it disturbs the viewer, goes beyond this.

In Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now'* (1979), there is a similar scene of animal sacrifice. Yet, within Coppola's film the sacrifice is far less disturbing, as the action fits within the fictional diegesis of the film; the viewer is not pulled away from the fictional, cinematic world.[6] Similarly, the butchering of the cow in the penultimate sequence in Sergei Eisenstein's *Strike* (1924), is far less "real," because of its use as juxtapositional metaphor. In Eisenstein's film, the slaughter has a metaphorical and dialectical function that reflects the brutality of the Czarist regime. The juxtaposition of the butcher and the soldiers evokes the brutalization of the proletariat; the sympathy of the audience goes with the revolutionaries, not with the animal. Because of his Brechtian strategies, Godard's animal sacrifice stands apart from the narrative of the film (as do many other scenes, such as the Algerian garbage collectors passage). This, as much as the sacrificial act itself, convinces the viewer that what they are seeing is "real."

Pauline Kael picks up on the narrative transgression present in *Weekend*. She writes:

> [. . .] Godard shoves at our unwilling eyes the throat-cutting of a pig and the decapitation of a goose. Now, when people are killed in a movie, even when the killing is *not* stylized, it's generally O.K., because we know it's fake, but when animals are slaughtered, we are watching a life being taken away. No doubt Godard intends this to shock us out of our intended responses [. . .] but I think he miscalculates. I look away from scenes like this, as I assume many others do. Is he forcing us to confront the knowledge that there are things we don't want to look at? But we knew that. (Kael, 1968b: 141)

The point that Kael misses is that while there are things that we do not want to look at, perhaps we need to question what exactly we *are* looking at when we go to the cinema in the first place. Godard undertakes this critique in a number of ways. Earlier in *Weekend*, when the couple arrive at Roland's mother-in-law's farm, the viewer sees a skinned rabbit. Godard shows "blood" running around the rabbit, supposedly from the mother-in-Law, whom the couple just murdered.

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[6] Yet, this same scene turns up in Fax Bahr and George Hickenlooper's documentary *Hearts of Darkness: The Making of* **Apocalypse Now**! (1991), and here, because of documentary conventions, the scene has the same effect as the death of the pig in Godard's film. In this case, the referent, then, is less important than the conventions which are embodied within the cinematic text.

As in many of Godard's films, the "blood" is obviously red paint, yet this intrusion of artifice on the rabbit corpse only makes the image more "real," hence horrific; by pointing to the usual level of construction used in the depiction of death, Godard makes the dead rabbit all the more disturbing. Here, the paradoxical nature of the cinematic image comes to the forefront. We may already know that we do not want to look at these images, but what does it tell us about the relationship between the viewer and the "real"? I argue that it is not that the spectator does not believe film can represent the reality; the spectator just believes that usually, film does not. As such, the "real" in the cinema is a powerful tool that affects the way the viewer watches all film. This is one example; there are conceivably countless others which override what the viewer believes to be the fictional nature of the text.

The second reason I circumnavigate film theory is that while I have reservations concerning the way film theorists have arbitrarily appropriated many theoretical models, this does not discount the primary models themselves *a priori*. Indeed, a large part of this thesis is a re-evaluation of the value of the dominant models appropriated by film theory: psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and dialectical materialism. Apart from the brief overview in the Introduction, relevant film theory, and its relationship with, or opposition to, my arguments can be found in the footnotes.

Part II of the Introduction contextualizes the historical concerns of realism, anti-realism, and the "real" within film theory. This section can be used as a reference point to see where this thesis stands apart from the arguments of traditional film theory. This will also give the basic framework of psychoanalytic and Marxist derived contemporary film theory.

Chapter 1 re-addresses the problems of the "real" through a return to psychoanalysis. The traditional model is briefly recapitulated and other psychological avenues are explored. Using Freud's theory of Otherness, derived from his model of identification during the oral stage and Lacan's notion of *objet petit a*, we will see if identification and the "gaze" can, in a metaphoric sense, be of use in analyzing the relationship between the viewer, fictional aspects of the cinematic text, and the "real." Does the viewer believe in, and identify with,

the images on the screen while concurrently knowing that they are fictional representations?

The use of Lacan's writings in film theory has been myopically selective, predominantly drawing from "*Le stade du mirroir*" and "*La Signification du Phallus.*"[7] Concentrating on the second of Lacan's *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, we will see if a more nuanced version of psychoanalysis, which argues for both metaphoric identification and distanciation, can explain the viewer's relationship to film and the concept of the "real."[8]

Chapter 2 explores the postmodern model of the "real" established by Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard's theory that the image has taken over the "real," leaving simulation in its wake, will be criticized. The American political thriller, specifically Oliver Stone's film *JFK* (1991), is considered in light of Baudrillard's claims about simulation. Baudrillard's statement that America is, amongst other things, like Disney World and has fallen into the simulation of the "real" will be scrutinized.

In chapter 3, the notion of cultural history and the "real" is explored. In this model, the historical and the cinematic "real" are connected through their mutual status as cultural artifacts. Central to this chapter is Susan Buck-Morss' reconstruction of Walter Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk.*[9] Her reworking of Benjamin's theories of culture and history raise pertinent questions about the relationship between seeing, history, identification, and mass culture. Also, the relevance of political theory in the discussion of mass culture, of which the cinema is no doubt a part, is addressed in light of Benjamin's marxist aesthetics. The notion of the historical *Ur*-text is considered. The concepts of *Trauerarbeit*

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[7] See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966); the English versions of these essays can be found in *Ecrits: A Selection* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977).

[8] Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XI, "Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse"* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1973); English translation, see *The Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978): 67-105.

[9] Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in New German Cinema are examined in light of Benjamin's theory of the "dialectical image." Finally, the relationship between the historical and the "real" is questioned in light of Benjamin's spatio-temporal theories of history and culture.

After exploring these three intellectual traditions and their validity as theoretical models of film theory and the "real," we will examine the effects of the "real" on the way in which we view films. Do we take the paradox of what we experience as the "real" in the cinema to be the point of identification between the cinema and the real world?

Part III. A Short History of Film Theory

On an evolutionary scale, to paraphrase Basil Fawlty, film theory is barely out of the trees. It is a very young discipline. Unlike most other forms of art and culture, the theoretical study of film and the movie itself emerged at roughly the same time. As early as 1916, treatises on the effectual relationship between the cinema and the spectator were emerging.[10] Some early film theorists were concerned with film's ability to replicate reality. This is of interest, as this pursuit was diametrically opposed to the theoretical and aesthetic developments in virtually all the other arts at that time, as will be seen.

Despite the large volume of material written on the subject, the cinema remains very much an enigma. Film has an amorphous quality to it as it runs through the gate at 24 frames-per-second. Film cannot be quoted with the same facility as the printed word; this brings the interpretive process used to analyze the cinema to the forefront. The cinema is constituted by a series of fleeting instances, unlike other textual artifacts such as painting, photography, or the printed word. In an attempt to come to terms with the cinema's elusive and illusive form, film theory has attempted to pigeon-hole and codify these moments through different epistemological models of knowledge and comprehension. The most recent example of this is the neoformalist method that arose in the early 1980's, which undertook frame-by-frame analysis as a method of understanding the cinema through its smallest possible component.[11] Yet, this example is just an extreme version of the film theorist's attempt to understand and codify film.

From today's revisionary standpoint, film theory is usually broken down into two components. The first consists of the work done, broadly speaking, up until the 1950's, and is primarily concerned with the realist/anti-realist debate. The key theoreticians in this debate are, on the side of the so-called "realists,"

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[10] The prime example of this is Hugo Munsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study, The Silent Photoplay in 1916* (New York: Dover, 1970).

[11] The most well known proponent of this methodology is Kristin Thompson. See her *Breaking The Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1988).

André Bazin, Béla Balázs, and Siegfried Kracauer, and on the side of the "anti-realists," those who argue for the plasticity of the cinema, Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin.[12] The central epistemic question of both these movements is: what is the nature of the relationship between the viewer and the cinematic image? There is no doubt in either camp's mind as to the fact that the cinematic image is an illusion; what is at stake is the relationship between formal strategies and the viewer's belief in the cinematic image as "real." The underlying concerns of both the realists and anti-realists are not only of an epistemological nature, but also a political one. Eisenstein, and others in favour of *intellectual montage*, argued that the construction of cinematic meaning, produced through the juxtaposition of shots and the resulting distillation of that juxtaposition's *representation*, *image*, and *theme*, lead from stasis to pathos, and then on to political action.[13] For Eisenstein, film's ability, through dialectical juxtaposition, to create mental, metaphoric images was of utmost importance. "Knowledge" is not embedded within the images, but in their juxtaposition. For Eisenstein, film is structured dialectically in order to generate meaning for the spectator; meaning is not embedded in the text itself, but through the collision of images through the process of montage. An apt example of this process is the sequence from his film *Strike*, mentioned above. In this scene, Eisenstein juxtaposes the death of hundreds of proletarians with a butcher slaughtering a cow; the dialectical structure of this sequence demonstrates how Eisenstein felt montage could create meaning. Indeed, Eisenstein thought that cinematic images themselves carried no meaning outside of their function to create a more generalized theme stretching throughout the cinematic work. Eisenstein outlined

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[12] See André Bazin, *Que-est-ce que le Cinéma?* (Paris: Éditions de Cerf, 1970); Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari To Hitler: A Psychological History of The German Film* (New York: Princeton UP, 1947) and *Theory of The Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford UP, 1965); and Béla Balázs, *Theory of The Film: Character and Growth of a New Art* (New York: Dover, 1970). As for the anti-realists, see Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense* (New York: Harcourt, 1947) and *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* (New York: Harcourt, 1949); and Vsevolod Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Acting* (New York: Grove Press, 1960).

[13] See Eisenstein, *The Film Sense* (New York: Harcourt, 1947): 3-32.

this process as follows:

> What is essentially involved in [. . .] an understanding of montage? In such a case, each piece exists no longer as something unrelated, but as a given particular representation of the general theme that in equal measure penetrates all the shot-pieces. the juxtaposition of these partial details in a given montage construction calls to life and forces into light that general quality in which binds together all the details into a whole, namely, into that generalized image, wherein the creator, followed by the spectator, experiences the theme. (Eisenstein, 1947: 11)

Eisenstein's theory of montage posited that the cinematic image itself was of no value as a sign related to a referent in the real world; for him the cinema only signified through the juxtaposition of one image to the next. The viewer could picture what the image on the screen was in the real world, but the meaning of that image could only be derived from the larger, cinematic whole.

The problem with this theory is a question of cultural context. Eisenstein believed that juxtapositional montage, by creating dialectically-powered images in the spectator's mind, would spur the viewer on to political action. The argument that the plasticity of the cinema deterministically provoked the viewer toward social change is demonstrably untrue, as can be seen by the reception the films received outside the U.S.S.R. In the States, the early films were applauded for their formal structuring, while in the U.S.S.R., the formal structure of the films was applauded in terms of their ideological effects. This is not to say that Eisenstein's films do not promote any sort of political awareness, but instead that the response to intellectual montage is primarily *intellectual*, not emotional. This is relevant to the question of the "real" in cinema, as Eisenstein argued for cinematic anti-realism, and that the formal differences in the representation of the real world in the cinema would change the viewer's view of, and relationship to, reality. This obviously did not take place: there was no proletarian revolution in the United States. Therefore, a different formulation is needed if one is to understand the relationship between the viewer and the cinematic "real."

In contrast, realists such as Bazin, saw the films of Charlie Chaplin, D.W. Griffith, the French cinema of the 1930's, and movements such as *neorealismo italiano* as a way to represent in a reflective manner the reality of everyday life.

Indeed, if there was a problem with the realist model, it was their frequent use of the terms "reality" and "realism" in a virtually interchangeable manner. For Bazin, the possibility of the "ontological reality" of cinematic representation, as seen in films by Vittorio De Sica, Roberto Rossellini, and Luchino Visconti, led to his theory that socio-cultural change could be reached through an essentially aesthetic strategy based on the realist notion. Bazin often blurred the distinction between mimesis and ontology, leading to a somewhat foggy view of the role and function of realism.[14] For example, in writing on the relationship between the film image and the object, Bazin wrote that:

> Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation, a kind of decal or transfer. The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it [. . . .] The photograph as such and the object in itself share a common being, after the fashion of a fingerprint. Wherefore, photography actually contributes something to the order of natural creation instead of providing a substitute for it. (Bazin, 1967: 14-15)

Bazin's work stands in opposition to that of Christian Metz; Bazin believes the cinematic image and the phenomenal object are intrinsically part of each other. This also leads to a reductive, and to my mind wrongheaded, view of the relationship between the cinema and the "real," as the viewer must have access to the real world through the image. Despite this, Bazin pointed to the cinema's power of verisimilitude and its implications, such as the cinema's ability to reflect onto a culture what it believes to be an image of itself.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, young film scholars adopted new critical paradigms coming from Paris, in an attempt to analyze film from a socio-ideological point of view.[15] Psychoanalysis, as refurbished by Jacques Lacan,

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[14] Bazin shifts back and forth between ontology and mimesis. For an example of his equating the cinematic image with the real, see André Bazin, "The Ontology of The Photographic Image," in *What is Cinema?* vol.1 (Berkeley: U California P, 1970): 1-8.

[15] The work done in the film journals *Cahiers du cinéma* (1968-1974), *Cinéthique* (1969-1971), *Screen* (1972-1979), and *Ciné-Tracts* (1976-1981) are probably the best examples of what could be considered contemporary film

the Marxist-Leninist models of Louis Althusser, the linguistic models of Ferdinand de Saussure, and the structural anthropological models of Claude Lévi-Strauss were applied to a wide range of cultural artifacts. Models were adopted and abandoned at an alarming rate. The shift from semiotics and structuralism to post-structuralism took place in about three years; considering the intellectual history of these movements, this was exceptionally quick.

The structuralist movement was preoccupied by mapping the text. If the theorist came up with the ideal map of the film, as Metz attempted with *la grande syntagmatique*, it was argued that the model could then convey both the structure and meaning of the cinema. Post-structuralism took this mapping process to its logical extreme, where one could map "against the grain," negating dominant meanings, and reducing the hermetic text to relativistic rubble. This approach not only problematized fixed meaning, but also the viewer's relationship to it; if film was no longer a hermetically sealed object, meaning could easily be generated by the socio-historically placed viewer, herself a split subject.[16] The screen image became a refracted image of the viewer's psyche--not representative of anything in the real world, whether the film was documentary or fiction. The post-structural approach in film theory successfully avoided questions of realism by making them superfluous. If textual meaning and authority was in a state of perpetual shift, and meaning resided solely in the hands of the viewer, the text's claims about the "real" were irrelevant.

Like the more traditional film theorists, these young academics attempted to address both epistemic and ethical questions. They were successful in opening up political debates within cinema studies. Questions of class, race, and

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theory. A retrospective analysis of the debates and political issues raised by these journals can be found in Teresa DeLauretis, "Introduction: On The Cinema Topic," *PMLA* 106.3 (1991): 412-418 and Ron Burnett, "These Images Which Rain Down Into The Imaginary," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 1.1 (1990): 1-14.

[16] In post-structural literary studies, see Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973) and "Death of The Author," in *Image-Music-Text* trans. Stephen Heath (London: Paladin, 1977): 145-149 and Michel Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie* 63.3 (1969): 73-104. For a good example of ciné-structuralism, see Stephen Heath, "Film/Cinétext/Text," *Screen* 14.1/2 (1974): 102-128.

gender came to the forefront, yet within the massive amount of theory that came forth, at what seemed to be a euphoric rate, questions concerning these models' methodologies seemed to slip between the cracks.[17] While the debates within the contemporary film theory paradigm were great (the split in the *Screen* editorial board in 1976 over the value of psychoanalysis as a theoretical tool is a good example), there were not many critiques from an exterior vantage point.

This thesis, then, re-examines the roots of contemporary film theory to see if there is a way in which we can come to terms with the reality of the representation we experience at the cinema. If there is a common assumption all filmgoers have, it is that there is a relationship between what they are seeing and the real world. The "real" we see when we go to a film is a construction, but within that paradox between the "reel" and the "real" lies the seedbed for the fascination the cinema holds for all of us.

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[17] Many critiques have been written about so-called contemporary film theory. See Noël Carroll, "Address To The Heathen," in *October* 23 (1982): 89-163 and *Mystifying Movies: Fads and Fallacies in Contemporary Film Theory* (New York: Columbia UP, 1988). David Bordwell's *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989) proposes an cognitive model as a counter-strategy to contemporary film theory; other critiques can be found in Paisley Livingston's "Disciplining Film: Code and Specificity," *Cinema Canada* 97 (1983): 47-57, and "Film and The New Psychology," *Poetics* (forthcoming, 1992). A summary of the arguments against contemporary film theory put forth by Carroll and Bordwell can be found in Bart Testa's "Out of Theory," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 1.2 (1991): 49-66.

CHAPTER ONE

THE EXQUISITE CORPSE: The Psychological Real

Narcissus fell in love with his image, taking it to be another.

Jack falls in love with Jill's image of Jack, taking it to be himself.
She must not die, because then he would lose himself.
He is jealous in case any one else's image is reflected in her mirror.

Jill is a distorting mirror to herself.
Jill has to distort herself to appear undistorted to herself.

To undistort herself, she finds Jack to distort her distorted image in his distorting mirror
She hopes that his distortion of her distortion may undistort her image without her having to distort herself.

R.D. Laing, *Knots*

I am he as you are he and you are me and we are all together.

John Lennon, "I am the Walrus"

The effectiveness of Lacan's psychoanalytic model as a mode of textual analysis is open to question.[18] At this point, it is desirable to reconsider Lacanian notions of the "gaze" and identification as both a thematic motif within textual diegesis, and as a model of the cinematic text's communicative properties. The surrealist notions of textuality and their relation to the "real" are considered. Finally, I will argue that Lacan's psychoanalytic paradigm has more to offer film theory as a system of interpretive metaphors than as a psychological model of the spectator. A consideration of Lacan's *objet petit a* is relevant to this argument, as it functions as a metaphoric discourse on Otherness which could possibly explicate film theory's binary opposition between viewer and film, traditionally re-enforced through the use of the psychoanalytic paradigm. This metaphor of partial incorporation will be parallelled to the political attempts, and subsequent failures of the surrealist movement through a reconsideration of the relationship between textuality and the "real." Finally, after this reconsideration of Lacan's relationship to the surrealist movement, we will address whether or not a metaphoric system helps us ascertain the potential relationship between the viewer and the "real."

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[18] The classic debate around the value of Lacan's version of psychoanalysis as a model of textual comprehension can be found in his essay "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'," and the ensuing debates, involving Jacques Derrida, Barbara Johnston, and Shoshana Felman, amongst others. For the complete picture, see John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, *The Purloined Poe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1988).

Freud et Film

Part I. Leçon I: Freud et Film

> The first two big events are when he hears his Mother calling him and he hears the word "Tommy," and he devotes a whole part of his life to this one word. The second important part is when he sees himself in a mirror, suddenly seeing himself for the first time: He takes an immediate step back, bases his whole life around his own image. The whole thing becomes incredibly introverted.
>
> Pete Townshend, describing his mirror stage in ***Tommy.***

> So strong is the belief in life, in what is most fragile in life--*real* life, I mean--that in the end this belief is lost.
>
> André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*

The writings of Jacques Lacan played a major role in the development of contemporary film theory. Yet, the models developed using his psychoanalytic theories have been arbitrarily selective. The use of "*Le stade du mirroir*" and "*La Signification du Phallus*" in film theory has lead to a view of the spectator whereby the relationship between the viewer and the film takes one of two schematic patterns. One is metaphoric, the other incorporative. Both patterns evade the complex viewing process existing between the spectator and the film. This evasion arises through an attempt to schematize what goes on when a viewer watches a film. This takes place, I argue, because of limited, "bad," or irrelevant readings of the psychoanalytic models of identification proposed by Sigmund Freud and reinterpreted by Lacan.

Traditionally, Lacan's theory is applied to film as a model of spectatorship. This argument is made in relation to both cinema's form and content. It is argued that the narratives of "Classical" Hollywood film follow the same trajectory as the psychoanalytic model of Lacan. That is, through the male's anxiety over difference, as symbolized by the female's absent phallus and the ensuing fear of castration, the male protagonist glosses over lack through the objectification of the woman into either a castrating bitch or over-determined object of sexual

desire.[19] Films such as Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1956) and *Vertigo* (1958), and Joseph von Sternberg's films with Marlene Dietrich, such as *Der blaue Engel* (1930), *Morocco* (1930), and *The Devil is a Woman* (1935), perpetuate this phallic narrative. The second part of this argument is that the male spectator, taking cues from the male protagonist, also has control of the gaze, and through this power, continues the objectification of women.[20]

There are a few immediate problems with this approach. First of all, most applications of Lacan have amounted to no more than re-readings of cinematic texts with Lacan superimposed much like an overhead transparency. Secondly, most of these re-readings dramatically change the content of the film under question in order to make the point. Third, the leap from the textual existence of Lacanian (or any other) psychoanalytic thematics to a model of spectatorship *a priori* is not a viable theoretical move. Fourth, by setting up a psychoanalytic model of identification between the spectator and the film, Lacanian film theory presupposes that the cinematic text can be given the illusionary status of subjectivity. This last point makes a reviewing of Lacan's theory of the gaze important, as if the cinema is given the status of illusionary subjecthood, then questions of the "real" in the cinema fall away, as the spectator, through her own psychical processes, is deluded into believing that the cinematic experience somehow recreates a past psychological identificatory experience.

Three questions are asked in the first part of this chapter. First, are the cinematic models proposed by the ciné-psychoanalysts "true" to Lacan's theory; do ciné-psychoanalysts do the same to Lacan's model as they do to their re-

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[19] This dichotomy is also argued from a non-psychoanalytic point of view in Molly Haskell's "virgin/whore" binary model. See Molly Haskell, *From Reverence To Rape: The Treatment of Women in The Movies* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1974).

[20] While this is obviously a summation of Laura Mulvey's argument, it is the theoretical underpinning of a large percentage of all the feminist scholarship undertaken in film studies since 1975. See, for example, the works of Teresa DeLauretis, Kaja Silverman, Tania Modleski, Mary Ann Doane, Constance Penley, E. Ann Kaplan, and Patricia Mellencamp. So, while the above is somewhat reductionist, it does point to the central precept that underlies most of film theory's appropriation of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

readings of films? Secondly, where exactly does the value of the psychoanalytic model lie when one is constructing a model of film spectatorship? Does it lie in the analysis of the diegetic or thematic presence of psychoanalytic motifs, as in Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945) or Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), or is it in the development of a psychological model of spectatorship? In other words, is it a tool for criticism or theory?[21] Does the psychoanalytic model give any insights into the viewer's relationship to the cinematic text, or does it solely present us with a set of metaphors related to the viewing process? Thirdly, what type of insight, if any, does psychoanalysis give the viewer into questions of the "real" in the cinema? If identification takes place as the ciné-psychoanalysts claim, then do questions of the "real" become irrelevant? These issues are explored in the following pages.

One of the premises implicit in the above comments is that it is fairly easy to generate a Lacanian "reading" of a text. This is not because of any inherent simplicity in Lacan's work, but because as critics and theoreticians of film, one is trained to generate readings. This said, in an attempt to supply a brief outline of the Lacanian narrative typically applied in film theory, I have generated a reading of my own. Despite the many claims made by ciné-psychoanalysts about the preponderance of oedipal and mirror-oriented discourses in society and in cultural texts, I am only able to come up with one that both "mirrors" the Lacanian model and, as an analogy, helps explicate it. This is found in The Who's "rock-opera" *Tommy*.[22] A brief summary of the work is needed, not only to elucidate this point, but to schematize the narrative usually given to Lacanian film theory.

As the "rock-opera" begins, Tommy's father, Captain Walker, is shot down during World War II, just prior to Tommy's birth. After his birth, his Mother

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[21] The distinction between the two has been usefully summarized by Christian Metz. See Metz, *Language and Cinema* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974): 70. See also Paul Coates, "The Problematic Status of The Film Critic," in *The Story of The Lost Reflection* (London: Verso, 1985): 1-11.

[22] See *Tommy* (Decca DXSWT-205, re-issued as MCA2-10005, 1969); see also Ken Russell's film *Tommy* (1975) and Jann Wenner's interview with Pete Townshend, "*Rolling Stone* Interview: Pete Townshend," *Rolling Stone* 14 Sept. 1968 and 28 Sept. 1968.

takes on another lover. When Tommy is still a very young boy, Captain Walker returns unexpectedly (they thought him dead), and is killed by the Mother's lover (I: the oedipal scenario). Tommy sees this transpire, and his Mother and her lover admonish him that he did not hear or see the event. As this happens, Tommy sees his reflection in the mirror, becomes transfixed by the image, defines himself as "Other" from his Mother, who is also present, and psychosomatically shuts off his sight, speech and hearing. Through introspection, Tommy sees he is connected to all the world, no longer limited by his body (II: the realm of the imaginary). For example, his cousin beats him, but he only experiences "vibrations," not pain, supposedly because of his lack of cultural and social context. As Tommy grows, his Mother attempts to find out what is the matter with him. She takes him to a Doctor, who says that physiologically, there is nothing wrong. The Mother, frustrated, then breaks the mirror, freeing Tommy. He gains the power to speak, see, and hear--thus entering into the social and linguistic system (III: the realm of the symbolic). Tommy then decides he is the Messiah, and everyone should share his pseudo-theological experience, and so he sets up "Tommy's Holiday Camp." He blocks his disciples' senses, making them, like him, deaf, dumb, and blind. Tommy's methodology is not a success, as his disciples have already entered the linguistic, and like it there; therefore they can not return to the ideal state (IV: the impossibility of returning to the imaginary). Tommy accepts this failure, and realizing he is defined by Others (V: through the slippage of signifiers within the linguistic/symbolic system; c.f. "We're Not Going To Take It/See Me, Feel Me"), abandons his mission and resumes a normal life.

While this is obviously a bit of a caricature, it is more or less the model that ciné-psychoanalysts put in place when "reading" films. A brief perusal of Laura Mulvey's seminal essay would confirm that these are the metaphoric and descriptive strategies of psychoanalytic film theory.[23] The cinema's appeal stems from the nostalgic replay of this founding scene and Mulvey contends that the social and psychological aspects of the cinema make it conducive to the

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[23] See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16.3 (1975): 6-18.

replay of this foundational Lacanian event. Through this continual return to the "mirror stage," the cinema perpetuates a system of "lack" whereby the male is in fear of metaphoric castration. This fear of loss is glossed over by the scopophilic drive. As Paul Coates points out, Mulvey argues that "mainstream film sexes the gaze as male and constitutes the female as victimized object of that gaze, [the essay] finds in the dissemination of unpleasure the remedy for a dispensation that grants textual pleasure exclusively to males" (Coates, 1991: 179). This pleasure is critiqued in the films such as *Penthesilea* (1974) and *Riddles of The Sphinx* (1976), both by Mulvey and Peter Wollen. Mulvey and Wollen attempt to construct a cinematic discourse that metaphorically returns to the imaginary. This attempt is self-defeating; unless the psyche is wiped clean, and a return to the pre-linguistic arises--which happens to Henry Turner (Harrison Ford) in Mike Nichols' *Regarding Henry* (1991), a film that posits the "bullet-in-the-head" theory as a way to realign the psyche--the return to the imaginary is impossible.

In psychoanalytic film theory, the above argument is used to explicate the process of identification. There is more to the theory of identification than this, as Freud's work demonstrates. Freud's notion of identification during the oral stage, outlined in his essay "Infantile Sexuality,"[24] where the desired object is tied to the subject's desire to incorporate is also a central part of any psychoanalytic definition of identification. Lacan's essay "*Du regard comme objet petit a*" builds on Freud's model.[25] Through an examination of these essays, we consider the relationship between the subject and the object and the implications that these terms have in relation to the cinema.[26] The boundaries between the viewer and the cinema are ones that are continuously blurred when psychoanalytic film analysis is undertaken, and this epistemological concern is analyzed.

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[24] See Sigmund Freud, (1905) "Infantile Sexuality," *PFL VII: On Sexuality* (London: Penguin, 1962): 88-126.

[25] See Jacques Lacan, "*Du regarde comme objet petit a*," in *Le Séminaire: livre XI* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1963): 65-112.

[26] For an astute analysis of the methodological constitution of the subject and object see Theodor Adorno, "Subject and Object," in Arato (1988): 497-511.

Part II. Lecon II: Lacan et L'autre

The second of Jacques Lacan's *Quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* addresses the gaze and the Other, two concepts that have been fundamental to the theorization of the cinematic spectator. The models of film theory that have addressed spectatorship are, for the most part, psychoanalytic in orientation. Yet, in reading Lacan, the notion of the gaze seems ill-suited to address the spectator's role in the cinema. Re-reading his essay, some of the fundamental flaws of film theory become apparent. Lacan's use in film theory is interesting, as the models derived from his writings make claims about the psychological realism of the cinema and its ability to replicate certain psychological processes. Yet, Lacan (it seems arbitrarily) separates the phenomenal world from the visual experience of realist images (Lacan, 1964: 101). This means that the value of Lacan as a model of film spectatorship is not as readily apparent as many film theorists make it to be.

Unlike the many contemporary film theorists who base their work on Lacanian models, Lacan does not ascribe the gaze as an effect which is *a priori* within the viewer. The world is a place where all is a part of the spectacle; therefore the gaze is always elided, as "[t]he spectacle of the world, in this sense, appears to us as all-seeing" (Lacan, 1964: 75). Lacan wrongly invokes Maurice Merleau-Ponty here as an example of a theorist who, through phenomenal analysis, also sees the world as spectacle (Lacan, 1964: 107-108). This is a misreading of Merleau-Ponty, as we will see later. Lacan's misogynist description of the gaze eluding the subject runs as follows: "this all-seeing aspect is to be found in the satisfaction of a woman who knows that she is being looked at, on condition that one does not show her that one knows that she knows" (Lacan, 1964: 75). Not only does this make the gaze distinct from the subject's vision, a "sliding away" he calls it, but it also stands in opposition to the ciné-psychoanalyst's reading of the gaze's effect on women in Hollywood cinema.

Lacan's notion of the Other is at the center of his concept of the gaze. His conception of an Other does not function along the lines of the Other in

Freud's essay "The Uncanny," which is the way many film theorists interpret it.[27] In Lacan's argument, the Other is determined through and projected by the self. This projection is determined through desire and misrecognition (Lacan, 1964: 84-85). This does not mean that the Other is dialogistically constituted through linguistic and discursive strategies, as it is for Mikhail Bakhtin, where the object of Otherness is both foreign to and constituted by the subject. If anything, Lacan's model of the Other stands in direct opposition to this, as Lacan argues that the self and the self's relationship to the world are constituted by and through language. Once the subject internalizes language, there is no escape from it. Unlike Bakhtin's model, language is deterministic; the self is not radically changed through its exchanges with an Other. Bakhtin, on the other hand, constitutes the relationship between the subject and the Other as follows:

> As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own sematic and expressive intention. Prior to this, moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language [. . .] but rather it exists in other people's mouth's, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions; it is from there one must take the word and make it one's own. (Bakhtin, 1981: 293-294)

The difference between the models of Lacan and Bakhtin is in the role language plays for the subject. In Lacan, language alludes to the split subject, and to how there is always a gap between the speaking "I" and the "I" spoken of; in Bakhtin the difference only exists on the grounds of language appropriation. For Lacan, language is internalized, and this internalization perpetuates the gap within the subject. For Bakhtin, language is only partially internalized, as we are always speaking in someone else's tongue.[28] For Lacan then, the Other

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[27] See Sigmund Freud, (1919) "The Uncanny," in *PFL XIV: Art and Literature* (London: Penguin, 1985): 339-376.

[28] See M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: U Texas P, 1981). For an analysis of the relationship with and discrepancies between Bakhtin and psychoanalysis, see Gerald Pirog, "The Bakhtinian Critic's Circle: From Positivism To Hermeneutics," *Poetics Today* 8.3/4 (1987): 591-610. For an astute analysis of the relationship between textual and authorial otherness, see James Nielson, *Authors as Others and Others as Authors: Bakhtin's Early Theories of The*

must linguistically emanate from the subject. If this is the case, then the "real" in cinema, and the real world itself, must be constituted through a process of projection on the part of the subject.

This holds true for Lacan's definition of the Other. For Lacan, it pre-exists as an object, but it is the investment that the subject puts into the object which gives it this Otherness. While this otherness is determined, as much as it can be, by the subject, the subject concurrently defines herself as separate from and opposed to it. For Lacan, this split reinforces the linguistic split within the divided subject.

This bind, between projection and Otherness, is central to the incorporative argument used by film theorists to describe the relationship between the viewer and the film.[29] Here, the film theorists are partially right, as their reading of Lacan's notion of Otherness is correct. If one were to use this as an argument about the "real" in the cinema, it would run as follows: Otherness, described by Lacan as the *objet petit a* has its parallel in psychoanalytic film theory. In film theory, the reason certain images, taken as "real," disturb the viewer so much, even while she knows they are only images, is tied to the fact of their "foreign" quality, or their Otherness. This is related to the viewer's belief in the image's status as object. These images seem disturbing precisely because they are Other, not part of the self; this dis-ease emanates from the viewer. Yet, to define images as Other, she must also identify with the image on some level. This identification, the argument goes, arises through the viewer's projection of aspects of herself on to the cinematic text. Yet, in film theory, the notion of both identification and projection are left largely undefined. The question which remains is one of applicability.

Relationship Between The Author and The Hero. Unpublished Master's thesis, McGill University, 1985.

[29] For an example of the incorporative model of psychoanalytic film spectatorship, see Tania Modleski, "Rituals of Defilement: *Frenzy*," in *The Women Who Knew Too Much* (New York: Methuen, 1988): 101-114.

Lacan deliberately leaves the concept of *objet petit a* ambiguous.[30] He describes it as an "algebraic equation" (Lacan, 1964: 83), implying a rigour to the term, yet this rigour eludes the reader, and perhaps Lacan himself. The term is tied to the casting off of parts of the self; a metaphoric self-mutilation where the discarded object leaves the self and has the potentiality to come under the power of the gaze. The closest he comes to a definition of the term is the following:

> The *objet a* is something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as organ. This serves a symbol of the lack, that is to say, of the phallus, not as such, but in so far as it is lacking. It must be an object that firstly is, separable and, secondly, that has some relation to the lack. At the oral level, it is the nothing, in so far as that from which the subject was weaned is no longer anything for him [. . .]. The anal level is the locus of metaphor--one object for another, give the faeces in place of the phallus. This shows you why the anal drive is the domain [. . .] of the gift. At the scopic level we are no longer at the level of demand, but of desire, of the desire of the Other. (Lacan, 1964: 103-104)

The *objet petit a* puts in place a system of exchange between the subject and the object, although the object was at one point intrinsically a part of the subject. To root this term in a stronger fashion, a related, but not parallel concern of Freud's should be addressed: the notion of incorporation during the identification process. For Freud, it is not a process of the subject casting off an aspect of herself and then identifying with that displaced object; instead it is a desire to internalize the world exterior to the body, a narcissistic process. During the oral stage, Freud argues that incorporation is essential. He states:

> The first [. . . stage] is the *oral* or, as it might be called, *cannibalistic* pregenital sexual organization. Here sexual activity has not yet been separated from the ingestion of food; nor are the

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[30] In *The Newly Born Woman* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1986), Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément offer the following definition of the *objet petit a*:

> In chronological, developmental terms, *objet a* would be the earliest perceived instance of differentiation and lack (gap) that the child experiences. The child's perception that it lacks the mother's breast prefigures but is not identical with the child's later construction of an ego through reflections of the Other (166).

Lacan leaves the definition far more vague. Also, he doesn't root the *objet petit a* firmly in the pre-Oedipal or the Imaginary.

> opposite currents within the activity differentiated. The *object* of both activities is the same; the sexual *aim* consists in the *incorporation* of the object--the prototype of a process which, in the form of *identification*, is later to play such an important psychological part. (Freud, [1905] 1973-1986.7: 116-117)

Both Freud and Lacan's models blur the distinctions between the subject and the object, albeit in different manners. In Freud's model, the object given slight otherness is incorporated and then discharged from the body; its otherness comes from the external passing through the internal.[31] In Lacan's model, slight otherness is determined on a psychical and linguistic, not physical, level. This blurs the distinctions all the more. Freud's model of incorporation posits that both desire and repulsion are central to the identification process. Indeed, it again introduces the possibility of an ambivalent, non-causal view of identification. Freud writes that the act of ingestion is one that negates the Other, while simultaneously incorporating it: "[. . .] we recognize the phase of *incorporating* or *devouring* [. . . as] a type of love which is consistent with abolishing the object's separate existence and which can therefore be described as ambivalent" (Freud, [1915a] 1973-1986: 136-137).

Objet petit a is part of Lacan's the model of the gaze. Unlike much of film theory's appropriation of Lacanian psychoanalysis, which positions the gaze and identification firmly with the spectator, Lacan himself sees the visual world as more complex. He states:

> In our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree alluded [sic] in it--that is what we call the gaze. (Lacan, 1964: 73)

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[31] For an exploration of Freud's theory of the incorporation and identification process as a literary metaphor which is continuously regurgitated, see Maggie Kilgour's *From Communion To Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1990): 3-19 and 227-234. For a model of the possible role played by metaphoric incorporation and identification in film theory, see Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1989): 101-114. Films such as Hitchcock's *Frenzy* (1972) and Johnathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) are also relevant to this discussion.

This points to a more complex relationship between vision and the gaze. The gaze is constituted by something which we are somewhat aware of, but which we always miss; it is what we do not see, but desire to see when we look. In a leap of wild speculation, Lacan argues that identification partially incorporates both the subject and object; the gaze functions as the gap, the seam between the two. But this leap takes identification away from the subject, making it a phenomenal event apart from the subject. Lacan goes on to say:

> In the scopic relation, the object on which depends the phantasy from which the subject is suspended in an essential vacillation is the gaze. Its privilege--and also that by which the subject for so long has been misunderstood as being its dependence--derives from its very structure. (Lacan, 1964: 83)

This has interesting implications for film theory. If the role of the gaze described above by Lacan is correct, then the theory that the (male) viewer is in a position of control *vis a vis* the gaze in the cinema is incorrect. The gaze, as described by Lacan, is always slipping--therefore any feeling of control over the inherent ambiguities in the cinematic text on the part of the (male) viewer is an illusion. The idea that the viewer can "control" the gaze (Mulvey, 1975: 6-18, and 1981: 12-15; and Heath, 1981: 76-112) is a misrecognition of the relationship between the subject and the screen. Where does that leave the viewer? In order to expand on this relationship, another passage from Lacan is needed:

> Let us schematize at once what we mean. From the moment that this gaze appears, the subject tries to adapt himself to it, he becomes that punctiform object, that point of vanishing being with which the subject confuses his own failure. Furthermore, in all the objects in which the subject may recognize his dependence in the register of desire, the gaze is specified as unapprehensible. That is why it is, more than any other object, misunderstood (*méconnu*), and perhaps for this reason, too, that the subject manages, fortunately, to symbolize his own vanishing and punctiform bar (*trait*) in the illusion of the consciousness of *seeing oneself as oneself*, in which the gaze is elided. (Lacan, 1964: 83)

The viewer would then attempt to gain control of the gaze and the power of identification "[. . .] through the illusion of consciousness of *seeing oneself as oneself*" (Lacan, 1964: 83), but cannot. This is unattainable. The subject is in a bind, vacillating between her own misrecognition of the appropriation of the

gaze and an awareness of the subject's position as exterior to, and apart from, the image on the screen. The blurring between the control of the gaze and its elusiveness raises questions about the viewer's relationship to the "real," and the value of psychoanalysis in schematizing the relationship between the viewer and the screen. If we are to believe this model, then the film viewer is positioned both "inside" the image as projection, and "outside" the film image as subject, occasionally confronted with the reality of the image through the misrecognized, self-conscious, self-recognition. This self-awareness, then, brought about through the immediacy of an image which strikes the viewer as "real" synonymously puts her in a bind brought about through self-awareness as a viewing subject (Lacan, 1964: 83). The feel of the real is lost through the recognition that the subject is watching a film; this seems to make sense. But, for Lacan, this recognition is always a misrecognition, so where, if anywhere, does that leave the subject? This model does not answer this question. Perhaps we should look at Lacan's theory of the visual arts for an answer.

Lacan's model outlined above is applied by him directly to the visual field of the real world. For Lacan, paintings take on a different function in the visual field than the phenomenal world. The following passage outlines Lacan's view of the function of the picture and its relation to the gaze:

> The function of the picture--in relation to the person whom the painter, literally, offers his painting to be seen--has a relation to the gaze. The relation is not, as it might first seem, that of being a trap for the gaze. It might be thought that, like the actor, the painter wishes to be looked at. I do not think so. I think there is a relation with the gaze of the spectator, but that it is more complex. The painter gives something to the person who must stand in front of his painting which, in part, at least, of the painting, might be summed up thus--*You want to see? Well, take a look at this!* He gives something for the eye to feed on, but he invites the person to whom this picture is presented to lay down his gaze there as one lays down one's weapons. This is the pacifying, Apollonian effect of painting. Something is given not so much to the gaze as to the eye, something that involves the abandonment, the *laying down* of the gaze. (Lacan, 1964: 101)

If this is the case, then the gaze within the cinema would also function in a similar manner. Lacan, for his part, says that the above relationship applies to paintings which conform to the Renaissance perspective, in other words, realist

representation. Expressionism, for example, escapes the above claim, maintaining the gaze, while Hans Holbein's *The French Ambassadors* (1533) falls within the boundaries of this argument (Lacan, 1964: 101). Lacan's argument is that realist representation lets one lay down the gaze, as the subject can look at what she wants. Does film lend itself to the same sort of analysis as the painting? Much of film asks the same question (film provides pleasure; it states "take a look at this!"), and narrative cinema offers the same level of pacification; the same adherence to realist representation, and this is what leads to the displacement of the gaze.[32] The mediation of painting is always apparent, even within the tradition of Renaissance perspective. This holds true for the cinema; despite its ability to emulate the "real," the viewer is continuously aware of the cinema's status as textual artifact.

In Lacan's psychoanalytic model, the place of both the gaze and the *objet a* become of extreme importance, as they point to the supposed gap between the subject and the visual field. If the gaze is lost to the representational image can one speak about the cinematic experience in psychoanalytic terms? More to the point, does it leave any value within the psychoanalytic endeavour in terms of its applicability to film theory? Lacan's response to this is to place lack within the visual process itself:

> Generally speaking, the relation between the gaze and what one wishes to see involves a lure. The subject is presented as other than he is, and what one shows him is not what he wishes to see. It is in this way that the eye may function as the *objet a*, that is to say, at the level of the lack [. . .]. (Lacan 1964: 104)

The visual process can then simulate the "small otherness" of representation. The eye, seeing what is to be seen, but not what it is looking for, even though the painting cries out to be looked at, becomes the lack, and therefore the gaze remains intact. But how does this offer the theorist a viable model of the cinematic "real" and its relationship to the spectator? To examine these questions, cinematic examples are needed. But before we proceed, the relationship between psychoanalysis as a theoretical and interpretive model, and

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[32] For an analysis of this displacement and its relationship to film theory from a very different angle, see Kaja Silverman, "Lost Objects and Mistaken Subjects: Film Theory's Structuring of Lack," *Wide Angle* 7.1/2 (1985): 14-29.

as a textual and aesthetic strategy is explored, in relation to surrealism. André Breton attempts to present a theory that takes into account the "real" and its relationship to, and perpetuation through, varying strategies of textuality. Surrealism is the aesthetic movement of the twentieth century closest to the psychoanalytic movement. Both psychoanalysis and surrealism are concerned with the unconscious mind and with the relationship between language and psychological reality. In order to concretize the points raised above, Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien andalou* (1928) and Man Ray's *L'Étoile de mer* (1928) are considered, to examine surrealism.

Surrealism, or, And Now For Something Completely Different

Part III. Surrealism, or, And Now For Something Completely Different

As a political and theoretical imperative, surrealism arose from the intellectual milieu of 1920's France. André Breton, surrealism's prominent theoretician and defender, argued surrealism gave one the ability to step beyond the rationalist confines of the text, and to explore the multitude of transgressive possibilities standing outside the confines of traditional representation (realism, Renaissance perspective), and narrative (Fyodor Dostoevsky to Charles Dickens).[33] Beyond this, Breton felt that textual transgression led to the freeing of the unconscious, and thus to the end of psychic repression. At his most polemic, Breton argued that only through a transgressive textual revolution can there be a chance for revolution in the real world. According to Breton, infinite possibilities are missed in culture through intransigence. Society is limited by the system used to represent itself to itself, and this cuts off many of the possibilities of social and political change. Culture is therefore straight-jacketed through the acceptance of its own self-imposed representational boundaries as naturally given limits. Through the use of a textuality which displays the ambiguities and the irrationalities of the conscious and unconscious mind, Breton argued that these "false" boundaries will fall away, opening up society to its polymorphous possibilities.

In the first "Manifesto of Surrealism" (1921), Breton states that the writings of Sigmund Freud had a significant effect on his thinking. This is no doubt the case, as surrealism provides the twentieth century with an aesthetic version of Freud's then-developing psychological models. The ferocity surrounding surrealist debates at the time, and the movement's concurrent call for revolution, are a testament to the idea of unleashing unconscious images to

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[33] In "Manifesto of Surrealism," (1924) in *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 1969): 1-48, Breton cites a tradition ranging from Saint Thomas Aquinas to Anatole France as examples of what he derisively calls "rationalism." Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) is cited as an example of a text concerned with the description, and not the exploration of a sort of vision. Textually, Breton argues for a discourse which stands outside a realist representation of the world, with the hope that this sort of transgression can spill over into "real" life.

alter conscious modes of perception. Despite the momentary fascination with the idea, the surrealist movement proper only lasted about five years, although Breton and Dalí continued with it long after. The recuperation of psychoanalysis and surrealism into mass culture can be explained in the same manner--once these unconscious texts are made conscious, once they are given concrete textuality, and once they can be easily rationalized by the conscious mind, they are no longer threatening. The fact that surrealist aesthetics became de-politicized so quickly after their emergence points to this fact. Yet, one of the most interesting, if doomed, aspects of the surrealist movement is its attempt to unite aesthetics with psychological models; even more than Eisenstein, the surrealists thought that the aesthetic text could fundamentally change a viewer's consciousness.

Freud was not well-known in Paris at the time, and knowledge of his work was fragmentary. This left Freudian theory open to a wider range of interpretation than accepted after Freud's cultural canonization. David Macey states: "When Breton began to study psychoanalysis towards the end of the First World War, Freud's work was in a state of flux and he was very much an unknown quantity in France. The discrete corpus known as 'Freud' did not exist" (Macey, 1988: 51). Freud's theories had certainly not entered the public consciousness to the extent they would by the 1950's.[34] Breton's use of Freud is therefore not theoretically rigorous. What is interesting about his appropriation of psychoanalysis for surrealism is that he was conscious of many of the debates surrounding the nature of the mind Freud was then exploring. Unlike Freud, though, Breton was interested primarily in aesthetics, not human psychology. The fact that he, and other founding members of the surrealist

[34] The mass popularity of Freud's work by the 1950's is seen in many ways. First of all, his *Introductory Lectures* and *The Interpretation of Dreams* were both released as mass market pocket books. There was also a popular comic book called *Psychoanalysis* (New York: E.C. Publications, 1955), which offered case studies from issue to issue. The diagnoses in these comics were the typical "glamorous" Freudian ones--repression and Oedipal complexes. For a critique of the use of psychoanalysis in this comic, and the psychoanalytic connection to popular culture in general, see Leon Hunt's "E.C. on The Couch," *The Comics Journal* 133 (1989): 54-63.

movement, had previously studied medicine makes the reason for their aesthetic concerns all the more apparent, as giving up "hard science" was part of the move away from traditional cultural norms (Roudinesco, 1990: 5). Breton's surrealism posited a textual aesthetics which had strong parallels with Freudian theory, but he proposed a textual way to liberate the unconscious. For Freud, the unconscious was unleashed through talking; for Breton, through surrealist texts of the unconscious. But Breton's claims were as much rhetoric as theory. His polemic attempted to find a way to define "freedom" outside the confines of the industrial-capitalist model, where freedom is respectively dictated by, and confined through, economic forces and sexual repression.

Because of its attempts to rethink not only textuality, but also the psychological constraints of society, the surrealist movement raises many questions about the relationship between the viewer and the "real." Breton theorized that surrealism was a "higher" form of perception; not a distortion, as surrealist images are used today, but an access route to a plane of consciousness heretofore unknown. This could only be achieved through a liberation of the mind, as Breton argued that the imagination could be faced with the same constraints one encounters in the real world. Breton writes that "among all the many misfortunes to which we are heir, it is only fair to admit we are allowed the greatest degree of freedom of thought. It is up to us not to misuse it. [. . .] Imagination alone offers us some intimation to what we can be" (Breton, [1928] 1962: 5). Reality itself could then be changed through a significant change in perception; if the imagination is freed, there is the possibility for the mind to find new ways to exist. Surrealism therefore is not the ultimate goal of Breton; he sees surrealist representation as a portal to the untapped aspects of the psyche. Once these areas are tapped, the possibility for cultural revolution emerges.

However, one should consider how a political and textual aesthetic, which supposedly lead to a new reality through the surreal, so quickly turned into a self-conscious parody of dream images. Much of Salvador Dalí's work, such as *The Persistence of Memory* (1931), *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War* (1936) and Max Ernst's *Europe After the Rain Fall* (1940-1942) can be accused of this sort of parody and appropriation. These paintings

are otherworldly, evoking a different way of seeing, but one that is tied to an artist's "vision" and not a transgressive approach to the viewer's understanding of the world. As David Macey points out "[a]s so often, revolt has been turned into style" (Macey, 1988: 47). The dream sequence Dalí filmed for Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945) is symptomatic of this type of cultural appropriation, because of its self-conscious symbolism, far removed from the transgression and impenetrability of Dalí and Buñuel's *Un Chien andalou* (1928). This is also the case with the surrealist-derived symbolism of the "art-rock" movement of the 1970's, exemplified by works such as *H to He Who am the Only One* (1970), *In the Wake of Poseidon* (1970), *Acquiring the Taste* (1971), and *Ded Löser's Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1990). Even further removed from the original surrealist imperative are the recent "postmodern surrealist" films such as Velcro Ripper's *I'm Happy, You're Happy, We're All Happy, Happy, Happy, Happy* (1991) and J.P. Jeunet and Marc Caro's *Delicatessen* (1991), both of which use surrealist images to solely aesthetic, and quite superficial, ends. The original movement, however flawed, was about something substantially different. For Breton, realism had limited culture's ability to transgress its own perceptual limits; the possibility for change was stagnant.

Yet Breton's theory suffers from precisely the same problems. The problems of textual revolution point to the gap between representation and reality, and how a change in one does not necessarily lead to a change in another. The problem with Breton's writings is that his radical shift in textuality presupposes a similar shift within the real world. He does not provide a transitional praxis to accomplish the desired changes.[35] Yet, surrealism points

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[35] A colleague of mine pointed out this problem, not in the works of the French surrealist, but in the work of Nicholas Breton, the Renaissance pamphleteer. In Nielson's summation of Breton's pamphlet, *A Post With a Mad Packet of Letters* (1602), he states:

> Breton shows here his ability to write in different styles, and also to create--if only briefly--a dramatic exchange, but the collection demonstrates well what is most provocative and most frustrating about Breton's prose: any meaning, any intrigue, any argument, is short-lived, and rather than being *articulated* in a larger whole is simply *included* (1992: 10).

This fits rather nicely with André Breton's work, as it is the lack of contextual

to an interesting moment in twentieth century history, where textuality and psychology intermingled in a bizarre and interesting way, especially within the cinema.

Lacanian psychoanalysis owes a debt to the French surrealist movement of the 1920's and 1930's. Surrealism was hardly a "hard science" or even a programmatic approach to textuality; it meant to revolutionize these fields. The same can be said for Lacan's psychoanalytic model of the subject. Looking at Lacan's work, it is easy to see the influence Breton, Bataille, Dali, and the Dadaists had on his theories of language and consciousness. Dali, the surrealist, the dadaists and Lacan were all concerned with the nature of the relationship between language, interpretive practices, be they analytic or aesthetic, and the human psyche (Roudinesco, 1990: 110-113). More so than Freud, and certainly more so than the other French psychoanalytic movement, the *Société psychanalytique de Paris*, headed by Marie Bonaparte, Lacan saw psychoanalysis primarily as a discursive, linguistic practice. The way he treated his patients reflected this.[36] For him, language was the key to both the conscious and unconscious mind; indeed language was central to any concept of the world. The fact that metaphor, word-play, and puns are central to Lacan's work points to that, despite his flirtation with science,[37] his work, like that of the surrealists, is most concerned with the relationship between the subject and language. As such, his work falls prey to many on the same critiques levelled against the surrealists, such as the inability for a theoretical model based primarily on language, text, and discourse to fundamentally change the real world, let alone

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articulation that leaves the surrealist movement shackled to a revolution which is solely textual.

[36] For an overview of Lacan's therapeutic practices and the critiques levelled against them by the *SPP*, see Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France 1925-1985* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1990): 318-323 and 352-359.

[37] See Lacan's dissertation, *De la psychose paranoiaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité* (Paris: Le François, 1932); republished by Seuil (Paris, 1975). See also Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1973): 93-94.

repatriate the unconscious. Because of its reliance on language, which meant its discourses could easily become part of the conscious world, surrealism quickly fell prey to the system of representation it criticized, and was then recuperated by the textual tradition it sought to dismantle.[38] To assess this claim, Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien andalou* (1928) and Man Ray's *L'Étoile de mer* (1928) are considered as representative cinematic texts of the surrealist movement.

Dalí and Buñuel's *Un Chien andalou* is typically regarded as the representative film emerging out of surrealist intellectual milieu of the 1920's. Its imagery is supposedly based not primarily on dreams, but instead on the free-flowing consciousness of the two filmmakers. Significantly, this point is often missed in the analysis of both the film and surrealism in general; the aim of surrealism is not to mimic the dream-state, but instead to open up a possible means of accessing the unconscious mind through the conscious one. This process supposedly leads to liberation. This shift in textual strategies from the realism of the nineteenth century to the crises in representation that took place in the 1910's and 1920's was a gradual process. In the early twentieth century, a crisis in representation arose, following the nineteenth century challenges of

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[38] Perhaps now, in the 1990's, with the massive appropriation of "high art" texts into popular culture, texts such as *Un Chien andalou* can be repoliticized, although to different ends than the ones the surrealists espoused. Peter Brown, in his recent pamphlet, *Something Else: Popular Music From 1977-1991--An Imaginary Treatise on Punk Rock and Its Fallout* (1991), writes:

> This discursive appropriation or cultural piracy informs much contemporary popular music, from Malcolm McLaren's bastard hybrids of hip-hop and Shakespeare to De La Soul's allusively over-determined rap to the more "traditional" [. . .] garage rock of The Fall or The Pixies. An example--The Pixies' "The Debaser"--cultural debasement as subject matter and aesthetic strategy. The classic surrealist film *Un Chien andalou* serves Black Francis as both pretext and target. Linguistically recast in the colloquial, the "movie" is assaulted, beaten up in four-four time, by a crude battery of guitars, bass, drums; The Pixies use the film as a tool--one of many in their suburban garage/workshop--to construct a home-made cultural artifact, a discourse of aesthetic degradation: "I wanna grow/up to be/be a debaser." (Peter Brown, 1991: 1).

In this postmodern model then, recontextualization then becomes a political act in itself.

Impressionism. Language and representation were significantly redefined through texts such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1914); T.S. Eliot's *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) and his poem "The Wasteland" (1922); movements such as Dadaism and the works of Joan Miró; the works of Marcel Duchamp, such as his "ready-made" urinal sculpture (1917), his paintings, such as *Nude Descending a Staircase no. 2* (1912), and later, his film *Anaemic Cinema* (1926); and Georges Bataille's "art-erotica" *Histoire de l'oeil* (1928). All these texts questioned the real world by exploring language, textuality, realism, representation, and the unconscious through stylistic transgression.

Stream-of-consciousness as a methodology, in regard *Un Chien andalou*, is supposedly applied to both the filmmaker's process of making the film and to the viewer's themselves. As Buñuel outlines in his autobiography, the inspiration for the film came from two dreams, one of his and one of Dali's. Beyond this, the script arose from an eminently rational approach to dreams and irrationality. Buñuel and Dalí's "pick and choose" method selected images in a democratic, and quite self-conscious, manner. As Buñuel writes:

> Our only rule was very simple: No idea or image that might lend itself to rational explanation of any kind would be accepted. We had to open all the doors to the irrational and keep only those images that surprised us, without trying to explain why. The amazing thing is that we never had the slightest disagreement; we spent a week of total identification. (Buñuel, 1984: 104)

Dalí and Buñuel argued that if the viewers' expectations were subverted at every turn--whenever a narrative was about to appear--the unconscious mind could be accessed through the cinematic image. This would lead to a view of the "real," a "real" dreamscape, that was fundamentally changed through this process of access.

Underlying this argument is the notion that the phenomenal world changes along with the psychological one. Differing mental states reflect different views of "reality." Whether the means to access these different experiential levels lies in the structure of the film itself; through the subversion of narrative; in the sets of images, drawn from the free-flowing consciousness of the filmmakers; or in the cinematic spectating process which, according to some, mirrors the dream-state, is left unstated and undetermined.

Dalí and Buñuel's film functions in a different manner than the theoretical arguments they and others put forth. In the opening, and infamous, set of shots, narrative cinematic convention is followed perfectly. The viewer sees a man (Buñuel) sharpening a straight-edge razor and a complacent woman sitting nearby. He walks behind her, opens her eye, and lifts the knife towards it. The film then cuts to a moon with a cloud slicing over it. Metaphorically, the cloud stands in for the eye, and relief, through the presence of the metaphor, is felt on the part of the viewer. The film then cuts back to the straight-edge slicing through the eyeball, and then the film cuts to an inter-title: "*huit ans après...*"

Surprisingly, this opening scene unites to the narrative traditions of both Bazin and Eisenstein, and functions as an example of juxtapositional montage relying on metaphoric interpretation, roughly coinciding with Eisenstein's work on *Strike* (1924) and *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). The spectator feels she is spared the view of the knife cutting through the eyeball, then the film cuts back in time to see the image of the knife slicing through. The fact that this opening scene generates a visceral response even on repeated viewings (and still after the viewer realizes that the eye is an animal's) points to the precarious balance between the "real" and the surreal. The strength of the image itself, the fact that it is so different from the viewer's normal perceptual experience, comes from the surrealist act of transgressing expectations and cultural norms; in doing so, the surrealists wished to open the possibility of cinematic images being structured like unconscious thought. This is an interesting polemic, but one that does not hold true, even if one firmly believes in the Freudian notion of the unconscious. Like Freud's case study of "Dora,"[39] *Un Chien andalou* is a consciously restructured version of what Dalí and Buñuel *took* to be unconscious thought processes. Yet, in their retelling, the text becomes part of conscious discourse, and not the unconscious world. In the end, even the most transgressive aspects of this film are stylistic and methodological choices, not new perceptual avenues. Yet, the images still hold a certain power. These are not everyday images, and the viewer is shocked by the fact that they are

[39] See Sigmund Freud, "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria 'Dora')," in *The Pelican Freud Library: vol. VIII, Case Histories I*: 31-164.

generated in the first place. But the fact that the visceral response is so strong lies not in the surreal, but the "real," as the cutting of the eye no longer functions solely as a visual metaphor; the image is so strong and disturbing, the viewer's normal distanciation, caused by the meditative function of the cinematic image which usually lets the viewer watch what she could not in the real world, falls away. The slicing of the eye distanciates the viewer more it liberates her textually. This negotiation between the surreal (a textual strategy) and the "real" (the viewer forgetting about fictionality) is what gives the image its immediacy and its power. The eye-slicing cuts through the artifice of the cinema, no matter what sort of textual strategy is engaged.

Like Godard's *Weekend*, *Un Chien andalou* has a profoundly ambivalent relationship to voyeurism, as the viewer again wants to look and look away. Voyeurism in these texts is far stronger than it is claimed to be in Hollywood cinema, as the desire to see something Other is compounded by the desire to look away, not be disturbed, to return to a state of equilibrium. The tension makes viewing a painful and pleasurable process, reinstating the quandary that lies at the heart of the voyeuristic impulse; the relationship between vision and power. *Un Chien andalou* foregrounds this relationship, as the viewer can watch the "unwatchable" and wish to look away, yet not be caught in the ethical question of what one is viewing. This point is stripped away by most cinematic accounts of voyeurism.

The rest of the film functions as an anti-climatic twist on the opening scene; one can have an amused, intellectual detachment from the other "unconscious" imagery throughout the film, but it seems impossible to have that type of response to the opening scene. In many ways, this film points to the future incorporation of the surrealist aesthetic into mass and popular culture. The scenes that follow seem more self-conscious, such as the scene where a man drags two priests, a piano, and two dead donkeys toward his obscure object of desire. While interesting to watch, these scenes do not provoke the tension in the viewer that the opening scene does. It is as if the filmmakers were already realizing that imagistically, the cinematic surrealist movement could never again live up to its opening image; one which both gives and takes away vision.

To see where this shift from a violent, transgressive surrealism, that blurs

the boundaries between realism and the surreal, and a more intellectually cool, but politically bankrupt surrealism takes place, one only has to look at Man Ray's *L'Étoile de mer* (1928). Ray's film, in the tradition of the American *avant-garde*, proposes a different way of looking, a new "metaphor of vision," to use Brakhage's term, but does not attempt to revolutionize the way the viewer interrelates with the world or the self. Concerns with the cinematic "real" fall away. In Buñuel and Dalí's film, claims about the relationship between cinematic representation and the "real" are implicit throughout the text, challenging the viewer's desire to codify and narrativize, while simultaneously jarring the viewer with images that could only could be taken as an assault on the "real" as characterized by the conscious, rational mind. In Ray's film, the problems of surrealism as a solely aesthetic practice come to the forefront. On a stylistic level, many of the same concerns are present in *L'Étoile de mer* and *Un Chien andalou*; both films are dream-like in their imagery and contain non-conventional narratives strategies. Yet, in Ray's film, the focus is not on different psychological views of the real world, but instead on different visual ones. P. Adams Sitney describes the film's "story" as follows:

> *Étoile de mer* opens with the encounter of a man and a woman on the road. They go to the woman's apartment where she strips and he immediately bids her adieu. Twice again in the course of this elliptical and highly disjunctive film, the same man and woman encounter each other at the same spot. The last meeting may even be a dream, since it immediately follows a scene of her going to sleep. (Sitney, 1979: 19)

The film's concern with repetition and dream-like imagery is no longer an assault on the viewer's presuppositions about the world; instead it functions as an interesting, but ultimately trivial perceptual diversion. Unlike *Un Chien andalou*, *Étoile de mer* leaves itself open to a variety of interpretations. This points to the film's reliance on fictionality as a guiding principle. *Un Chien andalou* loses its strength when one attempts to apply a reading to the film; Ray's film gains interest. With Ray's film, the desire is to narrativize; this strategy does not come to mind when viewing *Un Chien andalou*. Sitney, for example, writes that "the comic substitution of legs for teeth manifests a deeper allusion to the vagina dentata, a mythic obsession which seems to motivate many of the images [. . .

]" (Sitney, 1978: xvii). This may be a very competent reading of the film, but there are probably many others. This points to the interpretive drive toward narrativization. Buñuel and Dali's film attempted to avoid the possibility of narrativization, whereas the Ray film is conforms to somewhat traditional cinematic conventions, combined with aesthetic ambiguity. Because of this, it is not a text that is profoundly concerned with the relationship between images and the "real"; instead *Étoile de mer* is about a different way of seeing, a solely aesthetic ploy. When aesthetics became the primary concern of the surrealist movement, the movement as a socio-political entity died.

* * *

How does Lacan's notion of the *objet petit a*, Freud's concept of Otherness, and the surrealist's radical aesthetics relate to the theoretical problems of the "real" as posed by the cinema? It can be argued that, as metaphors, the relationship between "real" images and the viewer can be understood based on the concept of the *objet petit a* and on Freud's theory of Otherness, and that the models of identification and the gaze that have historically inhabited film theory provide a great service in the viewer's understanding of the cinematic "real." This would make the viewing process a fundamentally internalized, passive process. Further, it can also be argued that the surrealist movement fundamentally questioned the way in which the subject perceives the aesthetic object; if the object changes the subject, through the freeing of unconscious discourse, then the "real" changes along with it. Conversely, as empirical models, it can also be argued that these theories can lead to *reductio ad absurdum* versions of both psychology and the cinema.

Perhaps the role of the *objet petit a* and Otherness in film theory functions most powerfully as an interpretive metaphor. This, by and large, is already true in film theory's use of psychoanalysis. The potential problem with this approach is the extrapolation of a whole theory of the cinema based on a few key, Hollywood films. The theoretical leap of faith usually made by ciné-psychoanalysts is that they have noticed where a psychoanalytic metaphor is present in films such as Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), Orson Welles' *Touch of Evil*

(1958), and Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960). From this, the theorist extrapolates a psychoanalytic metaphor for the viewing process itself. This leads to a totalizing model of film spectatorship derived from the reading of the psychoanalytic metaphor in a few films.[40] The essentialism of this model is pointed out, somewhat sardonically, by Susan Moore:

> [W]e cannot be satisfied with a theory premised on a unified spectator sitting alone in the darkened cinema luxuriously free of the constraints of race or class, history and other texts. This idealization is attractive because we could so much more easily talk about the 'female gaze' as though it were an attribute of anatomy--the rational retina, the iris free of ideology . . . All men could then be offered a choice of operations--straightforward castration or removal of their phallic cataracts! (Gamman and Marshment, 1988: 50)

This passage (humorously) faults on the side of transposing the metaphor into a biologistic statement the ciné-psychoanalysts do not make themselves. Nevertheless, Moore does point to one of the potential problems with the psychoanalytic model: its potential for essentialism. Christine Gledhill picks up on this in aspect of the Lacanian model. The critique that Lacan offers and the problems that critique entails, according to Gledhill, is as follows:

> [T]he recourse to Lacan seeks a 'materialist' theory of the subject in the discovery of the so-called primary processes that construct the true subject. The problem here is that the theoretical juncture of Lacan and Althusser in the de-centering of individuals from their consciousness seems to remove them from much else as well, for although the Lacanian subject accounts for different sexual locations in the symbolic order, it says little about class; the constitutive force of language, primary in both chronological and formative sense, appears to displace the affectivity of the forces and relations of production in the social formation. (Mast and Cohen, 1985: 842)

[40] See Laura Mulvey's reading of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1957) in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16.3 (1975): 6-18; Raymond Bellour's reading of Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) in "Psychosis, Neurosis, Perversion," *Camera Obscura* 3/4 (1978): 105-129; Stephen Heath's reading of Orson Welles' *Touch of Evil* (1957) in "Film and System: Terms of Analysis," *Screen* 16.1 (1975): 7-77 and 16.2 (1975): 91-113; and Kaja Silverman's reading of Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) in *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988): 32-41. It is true that all these films embrace psychoanalysis on a thematic level, yet this is not a strong enough reason to extrapolate *a priori* a psychoanalytic model of viewing *these* films, let alone all so-called "classical Hollywood cinema."

Surrealism, or, And Now For Something Completely Different

Because of the hermetic nature of the Lacanian model, its use as an interpretive model seems much stronger than as an actual model of the psychic functioning of the viewer. Yet, one must be careful when taking the interpretive approach, so as not to simply generated more readings of a specific film, or as a friend of mine put it, the theorist should avoid "serv[ing] up more McReadings" (Nielson, 1991: 4).

If one wishes to follow the model of identification as set out by Freud, and the model of the gaze by Lacan, then film theory's concept of "passive identification" (Mulvey, 1975: 6-18; Rose, in Heath and DeLauretis 1978: 172-186) should be abandoned. By doing this, the film theorist loses the ability to easily chart the relationship between the viewer and the screen through psychoanalysis. This is a positive occurrence. Film theory's position is that the relationship between the viewer and the screen is one where many questions have already been answered; I do not think this is the case. By proposing a model of spectatorship that is, in a sense, inter-subjective, one quickly loses the position of authority that usually goes along with theory, reducing psychoanalytic doctrines to speculative claims. I think this is also a positive development, as it forces the film theorist to reconsider her theoretical strategies. The ambiguity of a model based on the interdependence between the viewer and the film is a positive remedy to the increasingly programmatic approach taken by film theorists of all critical persuasions. In terms of the cinematic "real," psychoanalysis can only be of use if one abandons the model of the gaze as an actual psychical process. There are two reasons for this; firstly, Lacan's model of the gaze's relationship to both phenomenal and visual representation does not work the way ciné-psychoanalysts claim, as demonstrated above. Secondly, in order to speak of the "real" in the cinema, to speak of the cinema as a system of signs that are both part of culture and reflect culture, one has to escape the model of passivity and determinism the theory of the gaze puts in place. Yet, as an interpretive strategy, as was seen in the example of surrealism, the psychoanalytic model can offer thematic and textual insights into the motifs and beliefs that occupy twentieth century culture; it can offer insights into texts that seem "real," but are not.

CHAPTER TWO

SIMULATION, DISTANCIATION, AND HYPERREALITY: The Textual Real

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Hamlet, Act V, sc. i

Don't you love theory? It can justify anything for you!

Kathy Ward, correspondence, 1 June 1990.

I think we should look at the dark underbelly of this theory . . .

Jeannie Matuk, *The Alley*, 1992.

I thought that the insects in *Naked Lunch* were real. The cockroaches lived in my kitchen and in my heart.

Carrie Hintz, *The Alley*, later that same year.

Part I: Jean Baudrillard: America's Jerry Lewis

> In America, not the least charm [. . .] is that even outside the cinemas the whole country is cinematographic. You cross the desert as if in a western; the metropolis is a continual screen of signs and formulae. Life is a travelling shot, a kinetic, cinematic, cinematographic sweep.
>
> Jean Baudrillard, *The Evil Demon of Images*

> Is Jean Baudrillard our Jerry Lewis, or are we his? Given the French genius for appreciating American popular culture, it is only a matter of time before America itself--the Burger King K-Mart and Eye-Witness News drive-in, the plastic parthenon, the whole airbrushed "Have a Nice Day" theme park that we've grown to love or ignore--would return to enchant us a la française.
>
> J. Hoberman, *Vulgar Modernism*

While the psychoanalytic writings held sway in the late 1960's as a model for the analysis of cultural artifacts within the humanities, in the 1970's postmodernism, influenced by the work of situationists such as Guy Debord, began to gain critical currency in France. Psychoanalysis was embraced in part to develop a critique of psychological determinacy, yet in the end these models fell prey to the same problem. In the 1970's, postmodernism, as theorized by Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard, gained cultural currency because of its supposedly radical critique of modernist culture. Lacanian psychoanalysis attempted to destabilize psychological reality; in doing so, its appropriation in the humanities attempted to posit that the real relationship between subject and textual artifact was based on unconscious, linguistic forces that lead to the divided subject. With postmodernism, culture itself was addressed with radical scepticism--artifacts and subjects became interchangeable.

Throughout the 1980's, Jean Baudrillard's media theories of hyper-reality held an imaginative power for French and North American intellectuals in the humanities. His theories, taking relativism to the extreme, posit that the "real" is either a lost, nostalgic dream, as in *Simulations*, or an illusion which never

existed, as in *The Evil Demon of Images*.[41] While Baudrillard's popularity was relatively short in France, in America he became a cultural guru of the 1980's. There are many reasons for this; I think the main one is that Baudrillard let American academics rewrite the U.S.A.'s recent history. Noël Carroll, writing on horror fiction, raises an interesting point about America's fascination with post-modernism, the recuperation of the Viet Nam War, and the dissolving *Pax Americana*. He writes:

> The present horror cycle and postmodernism correlate insofar as both articulate an anxiety about cultural categories; both look to the past, in many cases with pronounced nostalgia [. . . . T]his cluster of themes becomes intelligible when one realizes that both the horror genre and the flap about postmodernism have emerged on the heels of the evident collapse of *Pax Americana*. [Horror and postmodernism . . .] arise at just that point in history when the international order set in place at the end of the second world war seems to have fallen into unnerving disarray. (Carroll, 1990: 212)

Much the same way *First Blood* (1982), *Rambo: First Blood Part Two* (1985), and *Top Gun* (1986) let American audiences "feel good" about the loss in Viet Nam, Baudrillard lets American academics loosen up after the dismaying results of the politicization of the campuses in the 1960's and 1970's, the collapse of *Pax Americana*, and the subsequent apathy in academic and mass culture.[42] Baudrillard himself is more like director John Ford than movie character Rambo, though. Baudrillard's critical evolution took him from the certitude of marxism to the radical scepticism of postmodernism, all the while having his eye on America. Like Ford's progression from moral certainty about the American value system, in films like *Stagecoach* (1939), to the social critiques of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) and *Tobacco Road* (1941), to the utter uncertainty of *The Searchers* (1956) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), Baudrillard always kept his faith in America; he just lost faith in the cultural myths that, for him, constitute

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[41] See Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction* (Montréal: New World Perspectives, 1979); *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983); and *The Evil Demon of Images* (Sydney: Power Publications, 1987).

[42] Charles Taylor traces the history of this issue as a question of the crisis of modernity. See Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, ON: Anansi, 1991).

reality. Recently, Jean-Luc Godard stated that Jerry Lewis, like all great artists, has an amazing unconscious mind.[43] Perhaps Jean Baudrillard's unconscious was America's consciousness for a short time, as he offered America something that France seemingly did not need--a dose of intense scepticism.

This chapter explores the cultural and cinematic ramifications of Baudrillard's theories: how does the denial of the existence of Baudrillard's model of the "real" help us understand the role played by film and other media in society? More to the point, is the denial of the "real" a theoretically sound position to adopt? If the subject's view of reality is supplanted by "the evil demon of images," what exactly are we doing when we speak of the "real"? Finally, is Baudrillard functioning as an *agent provocateur* or is he an easily dismissable metaphysical reductionist? These questions are explored in the ensuing pages. The analysis begins with Baudrillard's strong claim, stated in *The Evil Demon of Images*, that the "real" never existed, that it is an illusion, and that human subjects are all floating within a world of simulacra. Following this is an exploration of his earlier, more moderate, claim that the "real" which once existed is now lost. Because of the pervasiveness of technological media, and the proliferation of images, only "simulation" within the "hyperreal" now exists.

To frame Baudrillard's arguments, the films under consideration are ones which seem symptomatic of the loss of the "real" Baudrillard points toward. In Baudrillard's mind, the political thriller is the political discourse of American culture. Politics are replaced by poly-texts. The political is only addressed through technologically reproduced images, so "real" politics are the simulation of politics. Films such as Alan J. Pakula's *All The President's Men* (1976), James Bridge's *The China Syndrome* (1979), and Oliver Stone's *JFK* (1991) present and problematize the notion of "hyperreality" Baudrillard espouses. This is especially true of *JFK*. Stone's film reconstructs both historical discourse and documentary film and recreates the images of kennedy's assassination--images which, up until now, have "objectively" told the "official story." The underlying question is whether postmodernism gives us a viable theory of the relationship between

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[43] *The Montreal Gazette* 11 June 1991: C1.

technologically-reproduced images, history and the "real." Political, social, and textual elements are considered in light of the role Baudrillard says these types of films play in culture.

One of Baudrillard's main descriptive paradigms of America--Disneyland--is also considered. The ideology of "Disney" is considered in light of Disney's desire to restructure the "real," to build an imaginary version of America that is better than America itself, a desire manifested in both his films and his theme-parks. While Baudrillard's evocation of Disneyland as the epitome of America is fraught with problems, Disney and Disneyland provide interesting paradoxes in addressing questions of the "real."

To analyze Baudrillard's claim that Disneyland *is* America, brief consideration is given to Disney's vision of EPCOT (**Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow**), the ultimate in hyperreal existence. Disney planned EPCOT during the last months of his life as an artificially constructed environment where all the problems of the world would be eliminated, including perhaps death. These plans, obviously never realized, point to the similarity between the utopian desires of Disney and the cultural prognosis of Baudrillard--though unlike Baudrillard, I will argue that EPCOT points to the failure of the hyperreal as a theoretical model, and not to its existence and pervasiveness.

In *The Evil Demon of Images*, Baudrillard addresses what he considers to be the "diabolical" problem of the "real's" existence within technological images. Baudrillard argues that the media theorist has traditionally looked for the relationship between the image and the referent within the "real," or conversely, the absence of the image's phenomenal referent. Baudrillard argues that more and more, technologically generated images exist without this referent; the image precedes the referent. This referent has not absented itself, it has become an effect of the simulated image. He explains the current situation as such:

> *A propos* the cinema and images in general (media images, technological images), I would like to conjure up the perversity of the relation between the image and its referent, the supposed real; the virtual and irreversible confusion of the sphere of images and the sphere of a reality whose nature we are less and less able to grasp. (Baudrillard, 1987: 13)

For Baudrillard, it is not the nature of technologically produced images that the

theorist has to reconsider, but the "real" itself. This is "obvious," as images seem to overpower the "real." This throws reality itself into question. The image's ability to recreate and refract the "real"--a recreation that is, no question, an illusion--questions the nature of reality itself. If the image is a construction and the image can overpower the "real," it stands to "reason" that reality follows suit. This dilemma is explained in the following manner:

> It is precisely when it appears most truthful, most faithful, and most in conformity with reality that the image is most diabolical--and our technical images, whether they be from photography, cinema or television, are in the overwhelming majority much more "figurative," "realist," than all the images from past cultures. It is in its resemblance, not only analogical but technological, that the image is most immoral and most perverse. (Baudrillard, 1987: 13-14)

Images, in Baudrillard's reality, are in no way neutral--they are evil cultural agents. Images go beyond either the reflection of reality or the reconstruction of what we take to be reality; instead images begin to "contaminate and model" (Baudrillard, 1987: 16) reality--they take it over. Images then precede reality; they set the agenda for the direction reality takes. Baudrillard states:

> [. . . T]he image is interesting not only in its role as reflection, mirror, representation of, or counterpart to, the real, but also when it begins to contaminate reality and to model it, when it only conforms to reality the better to distort it, or better still: when it appropriates reality for its own ends, when it anticipates it to the point that the real no longer has time to be produced as such. (Baudrillard, 1987: 16)

Baudrillard argues that the nuclear disaster at Harrisburg and *The China Syndrome*, the war in Viet Nam and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now'* (1979), Auschwitz and the American mini-series *Holocaust* (1979) are all fundamentally inter-changeable in our image-based society, as contagion is fundamental to mass media's relationship to the "real." If the camera crew (Michael Douglas and Jane Fonda) in *The China Syndrome* can effect the outcome of the potential nuclear meltdown within the film, why can't the film itself effect the real Harrisburg incident? Baudrillard argues that it is not "causality" that brings about the interrelationship between these images and events, but an "unspoken analogy which link the real, models, and simulacra [. . .]" (Baudrillard, 1987: 20). The intertextual is given primacy over both images and

the real; textual similarities wipe out epistemological differences. Paisley Livingston questions the critical textual practice of intertextuality, stating: "Although it is no doubt true that we can take pleasure from juxtaposing different textual items in our minds, what is the cognitive importance of a critic's reports about such *correspondances générales*? It may be humorous, and even riotously transgressive, [. . .] but what is learned from the juxtaposition?" (Livingston, 1992b: 4).

Certainly, an intertextuality that treats reality as yet another intertext raises many of the same concerns. If reality functions only as an illusionary "text" that proceeds the media image, what can this juxtaposition tell us about either textuality or reality and their construction? Baudrillard, in a postmodernist leap of "faith" goes on to state:

> It is only a further step, which we should briskly take, to reverse our logical order and see *The China Syndrome* as the real event and Harrisburg its simulacrum. For it is by the same logic that the nuclear reality in the film follows from the television effect and Harrisburg in "reality" follows from the cinema effect of *The China Syndrome*. (Baudrillard, 1987: 21)

Yet, in Baudrillard's "reality," this is not the whole "truth," as he argues in "reality," both *The China Syndrome* and Harrisburg are simulacra. In doing so, Baudrillard glosses over important, and readily apparent, points. While it can be argued that the media's representation of Harrisburg and Three-Mile Island have strong similarities to the *China Syndrome*--our understanding of both events comes from a set of media produced images--what is lost in his argument is the effectual relationship between the referents in the real world, the production of the sets of images, and the images' contextual meaning. Baudrillard writes:

> For some time now, in the dialectical relation between reality and images (that is, the relation that we wish to believe dialectical, readable from the real to the image and vice versa), the image has taken over and imposed its own immanent, ephemeral logic; an immoral logic without depth, beyond good and evil, beyond truth and falsity; a logic of the extermination of its own referent, a logic of the implosion of meaning in which the message disappears on the horizon of the medium. (Baudrillard, 1987: 22-23)

While Baudrillard would argue that "meaning," in and of itself, is an illusion, it would still be apparent that Harrisburg and *The China Syndrome* are different

types of "illusion"--a different slight of hand would be at work in both texts. Beyond this, the fundamental difference in the images' modes of production undermine his illusionist claim. While it is obvious that *The China Syndrome* and the evening news are both constructions, the latter strikes the viewer as "real" because of the sets of conventions which surround the production, dissemination of the images, and an abstract belief in the event itself. Even if the images are utterly falsified, their context gives them reality's "seal of approval." No matter how close *The China Syndrome* comes to the real event, its system of signification, its lack of a referent that the viewer would consider real and not artifice, whether this decision is arbitrary or not, prevents the film from becoming "real." Films such as Michael Moore's *Roger and Me* (1990) and Stone's *JFK* blur these lines quite a bit further than *The China Syndrome*. But as we shall see, a fundamental difference between the two types of text remains.

Baudrillard argues that the cinema has wedged itself between the imaginary and the real and, because of this, the nature of image as representation, an idea that has had currency since the Renaissance, falls to the wayside. Technological images no longer offer the viewer "meaning" and "message"; instead they "telescope" reality, making existence itself seem mystical; everyday life now invites the same fascination viewers once had for the stars of the silver screen. Images multiply themselves and continuously refract the world to conform with this new mythology. Baudrillard tries to illustrate this point by citing films such as Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974), Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (1975) and Peter Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show* (1971): films that embrace cinema of the past and, for the viewer, become virtually interchangeable with films styles of the period they emulate. Polanski replicates *film noir* Kubrick, the early costume films of the 1930's; and Bogdanovich simulates Hollywood films of the past--an amalgamation of genres. From this it is not a far step to a film like Lawrence Kasdan's *Body Heat* (1981), a postmodern *film noir* which cites films that never existed; the whole film seems to be in scare quotes. Yet, this is solely a textual proclivity, not one which implicates the "real" world. Baudrillard's tendency to equate *a priori* the textual with the real leads to substantial flaws in his theory.

Baudrillard argues his model of hyperreality is based on a new logic. But

what is this logic Baudrillard speaks about? Baudrillard is proposing an illogical metaphysics of the real and the image, based on fundamentally irrational principles. He states that his theories are based on Manichaeism, and his metaphysical turn, a return to transcendentalism and negative theology, upholds the view that signs now run the universe; the subject is determined by them. For Baudrillard, the world is constituted solely by signs, which are totally mind dependent (Baudrillard, 1987: 44). He claims that his employment of any sort of analysis is a strategic move, a role he must play to "uphold the reality of the illusion [. . .] to play upon this illusion itself and the power it exerts" (Baudrillard, 1987: 15). His evocation of terms such as "meaning" or "logic" becomes solely a gambit--signs disassociated from any "true meaning." It then stands to "reason" that if the terms "disco" and "ejaculate" make his illusionary "argument" work better, or are more provocative for the naive masses who still believe in the "illusion" of "reality," he can easily substitute them without changing his "argument" in any "real" way. Yet, despite Baudrillard's claim that analysis is only "strategically necessary" (Baudrillard, 1987: 40) and that he is "compelled to *produce* meaning in the text, and [. . .] produces this meaning *as if* it arises from the system (even if in fact the system lacks meaning) in order precisely to play that meaning against the system itself as one reaches the end" (40-41), there is a flaw in the logic here. It probably still holds true, as Livingston somewhat caustically points out, that postmodernists "[. . .] no doubt would complain vehemently should their royalty checks be paid out to *Monsieur LeTexte*" (Livingston, 1992b: 6).

On a more serious level, Livingston's critique points to the flaw in Baudrillard's work, one which privileges the textual over all else. Baudrillard addresses representations that are fictional constructs (like *The China Syndrome*) and representations that supposedly stand in for reality (like the evening news), but reality itself, subsumed by textuality, is left out of the equation. This makes Baudrillard's agenda of "the issuing a challenge to the 'real'--the attempt to put the real, quite simply, on the spot" (Baudrillard, 1987: 46) quite a bit easier, as the principle of non-contradiction, at the base of all arguments concerning logic and what Baudrillard would like to eliminate, is much easier to subvert textually

than epistemologically.

A case in point can be made about two recent films which attempt to examine the Montreal Massacre, where Marc Lépine shot 14 women dead at *l'École Polytechnique* of *l'Université de Montréal* on December 6, 1989. Around the second anniversary of this tragedy, two films were released. The first, Gerry Rogers' *After the Montreal Massacre* (1990), focuses on Sylvie Gagnon, a massacre survivor. The film takes a feminist perspective, arguing that what happened at *École Polytechnique* was not an isolated event, and that it is an extreme case of the day-to-day brutalization of women. The film functions as a feminist tract, implicating patriarchal culture as part of the cause of the massacre.

The second film, Catherine Fol's *Au-delà du 6 Décembre* (1991), co-produced by the National Film Board, tells the story of student Nathalie Provost, who yelled at Lépine, "I am not a feminist . . . " as he shot and killed women at *École Polytechnique*. The film explores the ramifications of Provost's statement, which she continues to stand by, and how her life has progressed since the massacre. After Baudrillard, it could be argued that both these films, along with the television coverage the massacre received, precede the event itself; the event is determined by it. The politics, and therefore the texts, of these films contradict each other. One is "feminist," the other "post-feminist." This places the viewer in a quandary over what is "real." These films then stand in for the event--what we know of the event we know through these texts, and what we know is ambiguous, contradictory, and artificial. This is patently ludicrous. While the mediation of the images distances the subject from the event, the presence of distance *alone* suggests that there is a difference between representation and reality. If the "hyperreal" is a viable theory, then knowledge itself is utterly relativistic; we would all digest the same irrelevant "facts" about any event. Sitting at home and watching reports from Viet Nam, of starvation in Africa, and of the Montreal Massacre would be identical to the event itself--patently a falsehood. Ron Burnett describes Baudrillard's system of hyperreal signification in the following manner:

> In the world of Jean Baudrillard the viewer of the film becomes the screen as an *effect* of the screen itself. The driver of a car becomes the effect of the car. Objects signify in order to manipulate and overpower subjects. Signification creates a world

> beyond the control of those who, so to speak, bathe in its waters [. . . .] The world of simulation precedes the real, and thus history, in a paradoxical and undialectical twist, has already *been* written. It is as if the future has overpowered the present, rendering all human activity, praxis, into an overwhelming and oppressive pattern of predictability. (Burnett, 1991: xvi)

Baudrillard then, instead of placing technologically produced images within the realm of reality, as socially and historically constructed texts, places them as the determining effect of the "real." Signs and texts do not intermingle with the real world; they precede and construct it.

There are obviously other problems with this view of the "real" and textuality. First of all, this theory does not acknowledge that films such as *After the Montreal Massacre* and *Au-delà du 6 Décembre* are separate from the event itself; try as they might, they can not co-opt or stand in for the event, no matter what "reading" they give to it. Both films engage in politics under the guise of "explanation." On this level, despite the painful subject matter, these films are coercive. They may recast the event, but they do not precede the meaning the viewer has invested in the historical event itself. Finally, Baudrillard's theory does not address the impossibility of the cinema standing in for, or even adequately explaining, an historical event such as the Montreal Massacre; unlike the strategies attempted in films such as Alain Resnais' *Nuit et brouillard* (1955), Michael Rubbo's *Waiting For Fidel* (1975), Michelle Citron's *Daughter-Rite* (1978), Wim Wenders' *Lightning Over Water/Nick's Movie* (1981), or Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Reassemblage* (1982), there is no self-consciousness about their systems of representation. The above films, despite their varied successes and weaknesses, point to the problems of textual mediation, and to the problems of realist illusionism as a model of "knowledge." These points--the difficulty of representing historical events through the cinema, and the cinema's inherent subjectivity--point to the fact that there is a real, external, mind-independent world, which escapes the cinema's representational systems Baudrillard sees as hegemonic. Baudrillard's conceptions of both politics and representation are, in this instance, far too reductionist to be of any use. As "texts," both films are attempting to recast, politicize, and explain the Massacre; yet neither film precedes the event through simulation.

Baudrillard's "strong" model of the hyperreal in *The Evil Demon of Images* is then indefensible on any grounds, and certainly not on his own. To employ a notion of "logic" as a strategic ploy is a flagrant abuse and misuse of language and rhetoric, as the terms are rendered meaningless. His argument is, however, simulated; while appropriating the argumentative form, it also points to the absence of rhetorical and logical structures behind it. We now move on to Baudrillard's more moderate version of the hyperreal.

In *Simulations*, Baudrillard posits that with the advent of technologically reproduced images, the "real," as culture has historically defined it, becomes a nostalgic dream society can no longer recuperate. "Simulacrum" negates difference and binaries--juxtaposition no longer works as a way to separate the illusion from the "real." Baudrillard argues that "simulation" is different from the concept of "dissimulation," as the latter term implies a binary and presence--"dissimulation" is a question of difference. Baudrillard writes:

> To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn't. One implies a presence, the other an absence. But the matter is more complicated, since to simulate is not simply to feign: 'Someone who feigns an illness can simply go to bed and make believe he is ill. Someone who simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms.' (Littre). Thus feigning or dissimulating leaves the reality principle intact: the difference is always clear, only masked; whereas simulation threatens the difference between "true" and "false", between "real" and "imaginary". Since the simulator produces "true" symptoms, is he ill or not? (Baudrillard, 1983b: 5)

Thus, simulation partly incorporates the false representation, and makes it its own. The incorporation of the deception makes it "real." Baudrillard argues that in the field of images, simulation has replaced dissimulation; verisimilitude and mimesis are no longer of any concern, as images have taken on the role of reality, and vice versa. The "precession of simulacra" points to the stages the image in culture have gone through. Baudrillard maps it out in the following manner:

> This would be the successive phases of the image:
> --it is the reflection of a basic reality
> --it masks and perverts a basic reality
> --it masks the *absence* of a basic reality
> --it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.

(Baudrillard, 1983b: 11)

Underlying this shift is a theological concern; Baudrillard equates the death of God with the shift from image as reflection to image as free-standing simulacra. Baudrillard's argument is that the death of God led to an intense questioning of the function that images held in Western culture; if God is not behind Christian icons, then Christian signs are autonomous and arbitrary. This metaphysical approach to the nature of signification, a metaphysics of absence, is fraught with problems. Like the classic Marxist argument, Baudrillard argues that there is a duplicity to religious iconography's representational strategies, but unlike Marxism, Baudrillard argues that once the theological underpinning is stripped away, the people do not see reality clearly--instead reality falls away. Images are produced in a panic, in an intense attempt to re-ascribe meaning to the world, but to no avail. It seems that by affirming the death of God, Baudrillard is also mourning God.

Baudrillard traces the history of the change from dissimulation to simulation by citing historical cases where people were afraid of the power images had to supplant what was considered "real." The iconoclasts are a case in point. Baudrillard does not believe that the biblical basis for the iconoclast movement is the reason that icons were feared. He cites the traditional reading: "I forbid any simulacrum in the temples because the divinity that breathes life into nature cannot be represented" (Baudrillard, 1983b: 7), and then argues that the real fear was that the icons were all there was--that the simulacrum was the God. Baudrillard writes:

> Their rage to destroy images rose precisely because they sensed this omnipotence of simulacra, this facility they have in effacing God from the consciousness of men, and the overwhelming, destructive truth which they suggest: that ultimately there has never been any God, that only the simulacrum exists [. . .]. Had they been able to believe that images only occulted [sic] or masked the Platonic Idea of God, there would have been no reason to destroy them. (Baudrillard, 1983b: 8)

Baudrillard argues that because of this revelation about the nature of images, the iconoclasts were not the haters of images they were purported to be. Actually, they understood the true power of the image and the simulacra. This points to

the true power of the simulacra, that images are the "murderers of the real" (Baudrillard, 1983b: 10). There is a sleight of hand taking place here, as Baudrillard's argument relies on metaphysical claims, such as the (non-) existence of God to substantiate his argument. I am willing to grant that God is about as real as the simulacrum, but this admission does not substantiate Baudrillard's argument. Baudrillard's claim that God is a societal construct is a viable, but not terribly new, argument.

Friedrich Nietzsche, over whom Baudrillard waxes poetically in *The Evil Demon of Images*, pointed this out long ago. In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche writes: "If I understand anything of this great symbolist [Christ] it is that he took for realities, for 'truths', only *inner* realities--that he understood the rest, everything pertaining to nature, time, space, history, only as signs, an occasion for metaphor" (Nietzsche, 1888: 156). Nietzsche was ridiculing the tenets of Christianity, but Baudrillard's questioning of God is central to his argument, as a mourning for, and return to, transcendental metaphysics lies at the work's heart. He embraces what Nietzsche derides. Baudrillard is nostalgic for the Christian view of the world that Nietzsche detested. Yet, Baudrillard finds his model not in Christianity itself, but in the religion's entry into the simulacra. His nostalgia for the past is a pining away for a cultural innocence, for a time where society could, in an existential leap of faith, believe in its images. This loss, peaking with the advent of the technological reproduction of images, throws Baudrillard into an abyss of representation; it is as if he is crying plaintively that the "real" is "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 5.5 [1606] 1974: 1337).

Consumerism in the late-capitalist society also feeds the fire of simulation. The "real" is no longer accessible, partly because of the series of choices we must make on a daily basis that give us the feeling we are choosing--that we recognize difference. Baudrillard argues that we are limiting our reality, as the artifacts we pick from are removed from reality; we can only make a *reading* of the real through these objects. This echoes Breton's view of realism, although Baudrillard also rejects surrealism as a subversive attack on simulation. Baudrillard writes:

All is presented today in a spread-out series, or as part of a line

> of products, and this fact alone tests you already, because you are obliged to make decisions. This approximates our general attitude toward the world around us to that of a *reading*, and to a selective deciphering. We live less like users than readers and selectors, reading cells. (Baudrillard, 1983b: 121)

Another discourse to arise concurrent to capitalism is the literary quest for realism.[44] Baudrillard traces the process of mimesis as the gradual death of the "real." As representational forms (writing, then stage, then photography, then cinema, then television, and then video) generated more and more realist images, mimesis, and verisimilitude, reality was threatened and began to fall away. He writes: "[T]he collapse of reality into hyperrealism, [is] in the minute duplication of the real, preferably on the basis of another reproductive medium [. . . .] From medium to medium the real is volatized [. . .]" (Baudrillard, 1983b: 141). The power of the reproductive medium is to appropriate reality and then give the representation back to reality. Yet, the representation is no longer of the real; it is instead its representational image. The real "[. . .] becomes an allegory of death, but is reinforced by its very destruction; it becomes the real for the real, fetish of the lost object--no longer object of representation, but ecstasy of degeneration and of its own ritual extermination: the hyperreal" (142). Both realism and surrealism are implicated within the shift from the real to the hyperreal: "The rhetoric of the real already meant that the status of the latter had been gravely menaced [. . .]. Surrealism is still solidary with the realism it contests, but augments its intensity by setting it off against the imaginary" (142). This leads inexorably to the realm of the hyperreal, "[. . .] a much more advanced phase, in the sense that even this contradiction between the real and the imaginary is effaced. The unreal is no longer that of the dream or of fantasy, of a beyond or a within, it is that of a

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[44] It is typically argued that realism began with the advent of the novel, exemplified by the works of Samuel Richardson, such as *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1748), and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1754), and the work of Henry Fielding, such as *Shamela* (1741), *Joseph Andrews* (1742), and *Tom Jones* (1749). For background, see Paul Coates, *The Realist Fantasy: Fiction and Reality Since* **Clarissa** (London: Methuen, 1983): 23-49; and Roy Armes, *Patters of Realism* (London: Tantivy Press, 1971): 17-22.

hallucinatory resemblance of the real with itself" (142). This shift is profoundly concerned with, and developed in response to, the advent of technologically reproduced images.

The fundamental flaw in Baudrillard's argument, despite his indictment of realism and surrealism, is his obstinate reliance on textuality. It seems that the hyperreal is the realist text with all the signifying conventions of fictionality and verisimilitude stripped away. Difference fades as the original referent is obliterated by the image's power. There is an almost biblical intensity to images begetting images in this work.

Both textual self-consciousness and the signification of mediation are obliterated by Baudrillard's model. Like Monty Python's "Emigration from Surbiton to Hounslow" sketch (1972), all culture is relativised by its transubstantiation through textuality. Yet cultural self-consciousness has been present since the 1930's, when Luis Buñuel amalgamated ethnographic documentary with surrealism, a juxtaposition that James Clifford later examines.[45] The result was Buñuel's film *Las Hurdes* (1932). The resultant discord within this text is amazing, and has been described as follows: "The film's primary technical device is that of setting its appalling visions against a disengaged, anaesthetized voice-over narration, and--literally at the same time--against the incongruous accompaniment, romantic yet stately, of Brahms Fourth Symphony" (Rubinstein, 1983: 3). The contrasting discourses in the film point to the text's artifice, but also to the struggle of the Hurandos; pointing to the destruction taking place in Spain, the film makes it obvious that any "knowledge" the viewer gains from the film is irrelevant to the plight of the indigenous people. The film is an indictment of society, not a cry for help. This points to the distance between textuality and reality, and not to reality's utter falsification. The self-consciousness that arises from the type of effort Buñuel engages in should be intertwined with an empirical, realist notion of ethnography. George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fischer present what they call the "experimental moment" in ethnography as such:

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[45] See Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1988): 117-151.

> The task [. . .] is not to escape the deeply suspicious and critical nature of the ironic mode of writing, but to embrace it and utilize it in combination with other strategies for producing realist descriptions of society. The desirability of reconciling the persistence of irony with other modes of representation derives in turn from a recognition that because all perspectives and representations are open to critical review, they must finally be left as multiple and open-ended alternatives. (Marcus and Fischer, 1986: 11)

This does not lead to the type of relativism which Baudrillard espouses. Instead, it points to the problems of the classic realist text, both as documentary and as fiction, and attempts to solve the discursive problems of presenting the "real" within the ethnographic text itself. The amalgamation of ironic, self-reflexive, self-conscious discourse with the traditional empiricism of the anthropological endeavour enables the negotiation of meaning within the "real" in a manner that Baudrillard fundamentally rejects. For Marcus and Fischer, the problem is not that reality has become textual simulacra--it is a problem of enclosing reality within the limitations of a text.

Within Baudrillard's argument, there is a trace of the "real" left, the "real" that he vehemently denies. The "real" become the original object of desire; the simulacra is the fetish. This leads to the somewhat contradictory nature of Baudrillard's study. One of the underlying problems of Baudrillard's theory of simulation is the lack of historicity. For Baudrillard, the "real" that once existed was atemporal, yet ephemerally tied to the past. This is a contradiction that cannot be ironed away through the evocation of "paradox." Unlike Walter Benjamin, who radically reframes history, Baudrillard chooses to ignore it. If the theory of simulation is accepted, then history itself becomes an illusion without roots. Baudrillard can not have it both ways. To speak of the past in historical terms (Baudrillard, 1983b: 11) and to simultaneously deny history (1983b: 15), without a model of history in place, is obviously insufficient. Like many of Baudrillard's other claims, it points to the privileging of textuality over all else, and shows a noticeable disregard for the "real," even if the "real" is pure simulation.

This privileging of textuality is different from the radical scepticism of Jacques Derrida, who relies on a notion of textual relativism derived from Martin

Heidegger. The difference between the reliance on textuality put forth by Derrida, and the textual relativism of Baudrillard is important. Derrida, in spite of his epistemological scepticism, still works within what he would call *logocentrism*--the Western philosophical tradition, based on the principles of logic and non-contradiction. As Christopher Norris points out:

> [D]econstruction is a rigorous attempt to *think the limits* of that principle of reason which has shaped the emergence of Western philosophy, science and technology at large. It is rigorous insofar as it acknowledges the need to engage with that principle in all its effects and discursive manifestations. Thus, the activity of deconstruction is strictly inconceivable outside the tradition of enlightened rational critique whose classic formulations are still found in Kant. (Norris, 1987: 162)

Baudrillard, on the other hand, subsumes the text and the real into the simulacra, without questioning this move on theoretical, metaphysical, or epistemological grounds. His profound doubt undermines any claim he can make about the world, as to him, it is all an illusion. This sort of mind-dependent theory, a retreat for any claim of "knowledge," is problematic. As the various psychological movements of the twentieth century have shown us, we know much more about the external world than about our own psychological processes. This reversion of knowledge (a sceptical view of the material world, and not of the psychological one) is the central flaw to many of the anti-realist models.

Part II. From Walt Disney to Watergate, or, The Skeleton Dance

> The Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false; it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real.
>
> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*

For Jean Baudrillard, one of the ultimate metaphors for America is Disneyland. This section examines two points that are fundamental to both Baudrillard's argument and to any consideration of the "real" in film: the tenets of realism and the gap between fiction, representation and the "real." Baudrillard's fascination with Disneyland is central to this analysis for two reasons. First, in his model of simulation, Disneyland functions as the illusionary sign that conceals the fact that all of America is within the simulacra; Disneyland is the "real." This concept is analyzed in light of Walt Disney's desire to built EPCOT, which he felt would be the epitome of future American culture, and his own safeguard against death. Disney's projection of America's future is startlingly similar to Baudrillard's "hyperreal" America, and this interesting nexus will be considered.

We then move on to the American political thriller, as Baudrillard sees this genre standing in for real politics; like Disneyland, these films attempt to cover up the simulation politics of the hyperreal. The political thriller that "duplicates" events like the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Watergate, Viet Nam, and Iran-Contra, become the "real" events themselves, especially since the "actual" events are shrouded in mystery.

Baudrillard's notion that Disneyland is America in its distilled form is a problematic formulation. Again, textuality stands in for the "real," leading to another "reading" of the "text" called America. Of Disneyland and America, Baudrillard writes:

> The objective profile of America, then, may be traced throughout Disneyland, even down to the morphology of individuals and the crowd. All its values are exalted here, in miniature and comic strip form. Embalmed and pacified. Whence the possibility of an

> ideological analysis of Disneyland: digest of the American way of life, panegyric to American values, idealized transposition of a contradictory reality. To be sure. But this conceals something else, and that 'ideological' blanket serves to cover a *third-order simulation*: Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the 'real' country, all of 'real' America, which *is* Disneyland. (Baudrillard, 1983b: 24-25)

Baudrillard's distillation of the heterogeneous American landscape into the homogeneous world of Disneyland again points to his privileging the textual. There is a missing link in this analysis: if Disneyland stands in for American culture, in an attempt to preserve difference, even though it has dissipated into the simulacra, the fundamental notion of difference still exists. For Baudrillard, this difference itself is an illusion, but one that has a currency precisely because it keeps the notion of real difference alive, glossing over the actuality--that there is no difference to speak of. The illusionary difference is not one of profound signification, but of infantilism and naive ignorance. Baudrillard writes:

> [. . . T]he debility, the infantile degeneration of this imaginary. It is meant to be an infantile world, in order to make us believe the adults are elsewhere, in the "real" world, and to conceal the fact that real childishness is everywhere, particularly amongst those adults who go there to act the child in order to foster illusions as to their real childishness. (Baudrillard, 1983b: 25-26)

Disneyland creates a space of otherness that stands in for an imaginary childhood which never existed. The utopian aspect of this is clear. Disneyland becomes the idealized world of childhood naiveté, the Garden of Eden recreated and rediscovered for the adult. There is a certain truth to the theory that Disneyland functions as a childhood myth, but the argument falters when Baudrillard posits that the illusionary difference that Disneyland creates masks its simulation of the real world. Disneyland may refract a retrogressive, conservative and fundamentally reactionary ideology that is quintessentially American. Yet if it functions in this manner then that distances it from society, not on an illusionary level, but in quite a material manner. The fact that Disneyland is an American illusion, but one that does not stand in for America can be seen in Disney's desire to build the hyperreal city, a desire which ultimately failed. Disney's plans for Disney World in Orlando, the precursor to EPCOT, contained the ultimate in hyperreality. The description of Disney World

in Disney's biography, *The Real Walt Disney*, points to this:

> [O]ne of the features Walt had particularly wanted for Disney World was a real jungle, not one of the kind you have in Florida, not even like the jungles of Africa and South America, where the same old plants keep repeating themselves for mile after mile. He wanted a really dramatic jungle, full of sensational plants [. . .] from Australia, Africa and Asia, all telescoped into a few hundred yards and giving more of an exotic jungle vision that you'd get in the real location without travelling hundreds and hundreds of miles. (Mosley, 1985: 272)

Disney's model of EPCOT, to be built adjacent to Walt Disney World, also projected a hyperreal future, but here he went to a much further extent. With EPCOT, Disney wanted to reconstruct the America of old through the use of new technology:

> EPCOT would be a metropolis which would control its own climate, recycle its own waste, feed, preserve and nurture its citizens and do so in conditions from which disease, hunger and nagging want would be eliminated forever. It would be his masterpiece, the culmination of his thinking. It would demonstrate that if people would only learn from this example how to live properly in an enlightened and sanitized environment, they would be able to cheat not just war and disease but death as well, and enjoy, life, health and happiness everlasting. (Mosley, 1985: 6)

Disney was pursuing utopia, but one that was peculiarly American. The vision that through capital and technological progression, anything could be overcome--much like Disney's animated films striving for realism in the face of representation, and Disneyland embodying conservative American values and the pioneering spirit--EPCOT was to prove that American know-how could pull the U.S.A. out of its decline and restore to its former glory, solving all of the world's problems:

> He had, for example, forecast not simply the longevity for EPCOT's citizen's, but maybe even ever-lasting life for those born and raised in the city of the future's germ-free environment. It had even been predicted that there could be a second chance at life--a resurrection from the dead, no less--for those who succumbed before the processes for the achievement of mortality have been perfected. Providing their bodies had been preserved, that is. Did Walt really believe there was something to it? Could dead people be brought back to life again? (Mosley, 1985: 7-8)

This, of course, was not about to happen. That Disney even believed in its possibility is quite debatable. What is important is that the plan was even conceived of in the first place. Walt Disney's EPCOT and Jean Baudrillard's "hyperreal" America are both attempts to make sense of a rapidly changing world, where the values that once seemed so ingrained now quickly fall away. This is why it is interesting that as the *Pax Americana* dissolved, Disney wanted to build the America of the future--a utopian world with dangerously fascist undertones. At the same time, while Baudrillard's influence in Paris was limited, he was a phenomenon in North American critical circles, becoming America's Jerry Lewis--a profoundly cultural phenomena. This is seen in the appropriation of his theories in mass market publications as diverse as *The Globe and Mail*, *The New York Times*, and *The Village Voice*. Redux versions of his theories appeared in all these papers, as mass culture attempted to explain the popularity of postmodernism, as both a critical discourse and an architectural and aesthetic strategy. Out of the ashes of the decaying world power, Baudrillard was constructing a new, "real" America, one he argued had always been there, underneath the death and decay, for those who know how to look. This assertion can be analyzed against films which address the dissolving *Pax Americana*--that concurrently blur fiction, documentary, and realism. In doing so, these films attempt to address, and in some cases re-write, through both history and cinema, the "real" America.

In Baudrillard's model of simulation, media and politics become the same. Both are illusions of knowledge and power. The ultimate amalgamation of these areas was the Watergate scandal. Baudrillard argues that Watergate, like Disneyland, is an illusion. The scandal of Watergate covers up the fact that scandal is the everyday way of life--by highlighting Watergate, one deflects the scandal of everyday existence. All systems of power function in the same manner: "identical methods are employed by the C.I.A. and the *Washington Post* journalists" (Baudrillard, 1983b: 27). This same, cold relativism is at work in the fictional reconstruction of the Watergate "scandal." Baudrillard describes the death of cinema in the following way: "I am thinking here of those exact, scrupulous set-pieces such as [. . .] *All The President's Men*, the very perfection of which is disturbing. It is as if we were dealing with perfect

remakes, with extraordinary montages which belong more to a combinatory process [. . .] with large photo, kino, or historio-synthetic machines, rather than real films" (Baudrillard, 1987: 30-31). Yet, "old" Hollywood was concerned with telling a story. *All The President's Men* was not even a "docudrama," but a fiction film telling about a real event. Throughout the film, the lines are clearly drawn. When Baudrillard claims that the film is a perfect recreation and simulation, he is wrong. The film follows cinematic conventions of narrative structure; Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman are idealized in their roles as Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein; and all the complex, Gordian knots of the Watergate scandal are ironed out in a long, but straightforward narrative. "Deep Throat" (Hal Holbrook) ties the behind-the-scene story together with his information. It is clear that through cinematic condensation and the tying up of loose strands, the film narrativizes historical events. This is strikingly different from the randomness of real world events. It could be argued the viewer is aware that this is a simulated view of the real event, that tells the truth and gives the facts about Watergate. It can also be argued that *All The President's Men* arose in the context of the images of Nixon denying involvement and then resigning; this film does provide an imagistic prehistory to the images on the nightly news. Yet, this is a long way from the simulated images themselves *producing* Watergate as an *effect* of the simulacra. The conventions of narrative cinema distinguish this story from the "real." This type of hermetic narration is not true of the films of so-called "New Hollywood," as can be seen in Oliver Stone's film *JFK*. If this film has a motto, it could easily be:

> I shouted out "Who killed the Kennedy's?"
> When, after all, it was you and me.
>
> "Sympathy For The Devil," *The Rolling Stones* (1968)

The blur between representation and reality comes to the forefront in this film, as it combines the narrative aspects of Hollywood cinema, that can easily "explain" or codify ambiguous, ethereal events, with documentary footage. In doing so, *JFK* recontextualizes documentary images into the narrative tradition of Hollywood. Stone's film activates Eisenstein's principle of *intellectual montage* in a bizarre manner. The juxtaposition of the documentary and fiction footage

has a two-fold effect; the fictional images are given credence through the "reality" of the documentary images and the "ideas" the documentary images raise are contextualized by the fictional image. The effect of this juxtaposition evokes Baudrillard's claims about power in America, which echoes Stone's conspiracy theory. Baudrillard writes:

> Power can stage its own murder to rediscover a glimmer of existence and legitimacy. Thus with the American presidents: the Kennedy's are murdered because they still have a political dimension. Others--Johnson, Nixon, Ford--only had a right to puppet attempts, to simulated murders. (Jean Baudrillard, 1983b: 37)

JFK tells the story of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison's attempt to prove that the Kennedy murder was a conspiracy.[46] It is a fascinating film, especially in light of the problems presented by Baudrillard. While in the previous section, it was demonstrated that Baudrillard's theory of America becoming simulacra through the simulacra of Disneyland was hopelessly problematic, this film provides us with a new ground to test his theory.

Kennedy's murder points to the problem of speaking about the historical and the "real" in the same breath; the truth we have is that Kennedy was shot, after that the field of speculation opens. The official report made by the U.S. government--the Warren Commission Report--is deemed ludicrous by almost everyone. Even a U.S. government report on assassinations from 1979 states that Kennedy's murder was a probable conspiracy. (Mailer, 1992: 127). As so much contradiction and ambiguity surround Kennedy's murder, Stone is given the perfect chance to restructure the past to fit his conspiracy-narrative, and in doing so, to rewrite recent American history.

Stone combines documentary texts with his fictionalized narrative. Somehow, he acquired the photographs taken at Kennedy's autopsy, supposedly locked away until 2029. He also includes parts of Abraham Zapruder's 22-second, 8mm colour film of Kennedy's assassination. Stone's technique, which mixes in restaged black and white shots, sepia-coloured film (supposedly to distinguish facts from speculation), television footage of the period, and traditional Hollywood

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[46] See Jim Garrison, *On the Trail of the Assassins* (New York: Warner Books, 1988).

narrative, places the viewer in a bind. Yet, not even the documentary images are presented in their original form, as Stone aestheticizes the Zapruder film through optical printing. His reenactments are uncanny, especially the television footage where Jack Ruby kills Lee Harvey Oswald. At other times, he intercuts old television footage with shots of actors playing the characters T.V. anchors are supposedly speaking about. Stone calls this the "Rashomon effect," after Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashomon* (1950).

In Kurosawa's film, the same story is continuously retold from the point of view of different characters; in *JFK*, the effect is used to rewrite history according to Stone's version of the events. As there is not a verifiable story to compare the film against (he even rewrites Garrison's account), Stone is able to write his speculative "secret history" and make it stand as a historical document. The presence of "big name" actors dissuades a reading that reinstates the boundaries between fiction and reality; stars are willing to endorse Stone's product. With all the "star" cameos (Ed Asner, Donald Sutherland, Sissy Spacek, John Candy, and Jack Lemmon), the viewer can be left with the feeling that these roles are "reality" endorsements, not fictional constructs.

There is obviously a real story, a truth, somewhere, but there is no "history"; no culturally sanctioned narrative. The only existing story has been discredited. This film attempts to reconstruct history, to create a new cultural myth in the ashes of the old one. Stone's film, in a very real sense, rewrites recent American history by telling the "story" of the Kennedy's assassination in a way that will probably stand in for the "official truth" in mass consciousness. As Norman Mailer points out: "[. . .] Stone's mythic presentation of the murder of President Kennedy [. . .] is going to be accepted as fact by a new generation of moviegoers. One can only shrug. Several generations have already grown up with the mind-stultifying myth of the lone assassin" (Mailer, 1992: 171). Stone himself writes:

> [T]he *Warren Commission Report* [is] inadequate as a record of facts, [but] was a stunning success as a mythical document. [. . .] Still grieving over the loss of the president, people wanted to accept its soothing conclusions, regardless of whether these conclusions were true, because they wanted to believe that the death of a president was a tragic accident, like a car wreck or a bolt of lightning.

(Stone, 1992: 72)

In that sense, the film is "hyperreal," as it takes a set of arbitrary historical signs and injects them into constructed context; a context backed by with the use of "documentary" artifacts. Because of the lack of facts, one does not have to believe Stone's reconstruction of reality in order to believe that the attempt to restructure has a historical validity. Stone writes that:

> In the end, the importance of an historical episode is not just its factual content but its emotional and ethical impact as well [. . . . The] process of evaluation, when undertaken by a whole society, eventually leads to the creation of a cultural myth [. . . . M]yths have always expressed the true inner meaning of human events. Myths are dynamic. They reinterpret history in order to create lasting, universal truths [. . . .] From Griffith to Kubrick, moviemakers have operated on the principle that the dramatic force of a story transcends the 'facts'. (Stone, 1992: 72)

One can believe in the conspiracy without believing in Stone or Garrison, and can use the film to substantiate these beliefs. If the viewer thinks the official story is a lie, then there should be no problem creating a new, alternative "history." Mailer puts it more bluntly than Stone when he states that "[a]t times, bullshit can only be countered by superior bullshit" (Mailer, 1992: 171).

JFK, like most of Stone's films, is also about power and impotence. All of Stone's films attempt to address a very male concern about power and its distribution. This is also true of the two films he scripted before becoming a director: John Milius' *Conan the Barbarian* (1982) and Brian DePalma's *Scarface* (1983). Baudrillard's analysis of political power in the "hyperreal" seems an apt description of the search taking place in Stone's film:

> Power, too, for some time now produces nothing but signs of its resemblance. And at the same time, another figure of power comes into play: that of a collective demand for *signs* of power--a holy union which forms around the disappearance of power. Everybody belongs to it more or less in fear of the collapse of the political. (Baudrillard, 1983b: 45)

This search for diffuse and ethereal power is a central part of Stone's film. Kennedy conspiracy theories attempt to answer questions about the American political system, but the system seems so large and so powerful that responsibility is not easily assigned to one person. Indeed, by indicting

everyone, Stone makes the film seem more believable. Stone writes: "The assassination was America's first *coup d'état*, and it worked. It worked because we never knew it happened" (Stone, 1992: 72).

This is why *JFK* can function as the hyperreal sixties text that Stone had been attempting to make with *Platoon* (1986), *Born on the Fourth of July* (1990), and *The Doors* (1991). In these films, Stone was attempting to rewrite history by turning socio-political issues, such as Viet Nam or the "hippie" movement, into individualist, bourgeois liberal concerns. History becomes part of the character's life narrative: Viet Nam becomes a coming-of-age story in *Platoon*; it is an angry veteran's struggle with paralysis and impotency in *Born on The Fourth of July*. The historical failings of these films becomes readily apparent, as the viewer can readily compare the cinematic text with the historical event under reconstruction. In these films, Stone attempts to recapture the spirit of the 1960's, to represent the time in a way that would make it current. Instead, rewrites the period badly. The topics of these films do not hold the ethereal position in the collective American mind that the death of John F. Kennedy does. While Viet Nam still is an emotionally charged topic in the States, there was a public debate about why the war took place, and what it meant to the country. This is not true of Kennedy's assassination; the "official story" was quickly accepted by the left and right alike.

JFK is a plaintive wail, questioning those in charge--once Garrison and Stone believe that the power to murder John F. Kennedy is in place, it stands to reason that someone, or something, must be responsible. It no longer matters that the public can not know *who* did it; the awareness that there was someone else, a second shooter, is enough. As Mailer points out, "[t]o the degree that the murder of J.F.K. was a conspiracy, so one could assume that the most salient evidence and the most inconvenient witness had been removed long ago" (Mailer, 1992: 127).

Stone's film, unlike the other ones addressed in this chapter, does work as a simulation of history, but that is only because the "real" history does not exist; at the very least, it is unknowable. In *JFK*, images do beget images; more precisely, the fictional images beget the context of Zapruder's film. The formal

structure of the film leads the viewer to believe that the Zapruder footage explains Garrison's theory; that the cinematic image tells the truth. Yet, Stone, who is so self-conscious about the artifice and construction taking place in other people's documents (the Warren report, the *Life* photo of Oswald), does not address the inherent construction of his own work, and how his own formal strategies are what give the documentary images in the film their meaning. In the end, Zapruder's film can be used to justify either Warren's or Garrison's versions of history; this problem is not addressed.

Stone's use of documentary footage lacks these claims up. Documentary footage recontextualizes the fictional text and makes it seem "real." It is much like the documentary debate that opens Michelangelo Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* (1970); Stone appropriates the form, but its function in the film does not lead to a greater understanding of the nature of images. For all Stone's formal playing, there is no self-consciousness to his use of documentary footage, unlike what is found in films as diverse as Orson Welles' *F For Fake* (1973), Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1982), Wim Wenders' *Lightning Over Water/Nick's Movie* or Peter Brook's *Tell Me Lies* (1968). *Tell Me Lies* is a good example of a film that self-consciously questions its recontextualization of documentary images. Unlike Stone's film, Brook realizes that in producing more images, he is implicated within the system of representation he criticizes. Peter Ohlin makes the following observation about *Tell Me Lies*, a film which stands in stark contrast to Stone's use of documentary footage, as this film is profoundly concerned with the implications of textual mediation:

> [. . .] *Tell Me Lies* [. . .] distrusts itself to the *n*th degree. The title seems to refer to the conflicting claims on the individual made by the need for truth and the simultaneous need for victory in a just cause (which must justify lies to obtain the end result desired). Throughout the film two characters keep staring at the audience as if it were the film projected and wondering if this is a semi-documentary fiction film or a semi-fictional documentary. Surrounding these reminders is a wide range of skits, interviews, songs, debates, and documentary sequences, all arguing the necessity of taking action. [. . .] *Tell Me Lies* finds itself caught in the trap between on the one hand its conviction of the destructive distortions of all communications media, and on the other, the necessity to act and to use distortive techniques to understand this need for action. (Ohlin, 1979: 114)

Brook's film, in its use of documentary footage (the monk's self-immolation), restaged footage (Morrison's suicide at the Pentagon) staged footage (the songs and skits), and footage that blurs the lines (the interviews with Stokely Carmichael and the British M.P.'s) problematizes the relationship between mass communication and political knowledge of the real world. The film points out that cultural context must be kept in mind when taking political action. More importantly, it points to how media images mediate the viewer's view of the real world. The picture of the Napalmed boy which opens and closes the film is a good example. One character asks another "How long could you look at this picture?" and "How long could you look at the child if he was in the room?" This points to the mediation between representational images and the "real," but not to the "real's" obliteration. On the other hand, in *JFK*, Stone takes all the documentary images to be accurate and unmediated, and uses them to invest his own, fictional images with the power of the "real." This arises from his profound inability to find what he would call "truth," and his subsequent reliance on images to prove his point. While he points to the fact that Oswald's picture on the cover of *Life* could be a fake--that the image may not represent the "real"--his images are never put under this sort of scrutiny. There is no critical awareness as to the images he is producing. His utter faith in his own images is a bizarre attempt to re-ascribe power within the American system. Baudrillard writes:

> [. . . I]n the end the game of power comes down to nothing more than the *critical* obsession with power--an obsession with its death, an obsession with its survival, the greater the more it disappears. When it has totally disappeared, logically we will be under the total spell of power--a haunting memory already foreshadowed everywhere, manifesting at one in the same time the compulsion to get rid of it [. . .] and the apprehensive pining over its loss. (Baudrillard, 1983b: 45)

JFK reflects the view of the media Baudrillard posits. This in no way valorizes Baudrillard's theory of the hyperreal--the film buys into these theories, but there is no sign that the film works in culture in the manner Baudrillard espouses. Instead, I argue that both Stone and Baudrillard are obsessed with the same facets of American late-capitalism and the demise of *Pax Americana*.

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Where does Baudrillard leave us in terms of the "real"? With Baudrillard's model, there is no way the viewer could believe that some images within the cinema strike one as "real," as reality itself has been subsumed by the proliferating images. The problem with Baudrillard's model of the relationship between images and reality is at the opposite end of the spectrum, when compared to Lacan's approach. Lacan's model in film theory points toward the psycholinguistic as the defining relationship between the subject and the Other. As such, if one were to endow the cinema screen with subjecthood, a dubious proposition at best, then the relationship between the two would be deterministic and hermetically sealed from other social and cultural practices. Baudrillard, on the other hand, dissolves the boundaries between the screen and the "real," leaving images as the intertext of human knowledge. In this model, the "real" also dissipates, as reality becomes part of the hyperreal, image-controlled environment. With Baudrillard, reality dissolves into a house of mirrors, the cinema being only one of many distorted images of the world that fool the subject. Neither model offers the viewer a position as a subject who interrelates with cinematic images as part of the cultural landscape, where the cinema is one among many systems of signs the subject frequently encounters. In contrast, Walter Benjamin constructs his model of history on these very suppositions, and to investigate the relative value of this approach, his work is considered next.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DIALECTICS OF SEEING: The Cultural Real

Real people tend to fall through the cracks in a culture, and this why it is only from such prosaic fissures that their personalities are to be expiscated.

James Nielson, *Elizabethan Realisms: Reading Prose From The End of The Century*

To read reality *like* a text is to recognize their difference.

Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*

[I]n "Anarchy in The U.K.," a twenty-year-old called Johnny Rotten had rephrased a social critique generated by people who, as far as he knew, had never been born. Who knew what else was part of the conversation? If one can stop looking at the past and start listening to it, one might hear echoes of a new conversation; then the task of the critic would be to lead speakers and listeners unaware of each other's existence to talk to one another. The job of the critic would be to maintain the ability to be surprised at how the conversation goes, and to communicate that sense of surprise to other people, because a life infused with surprise is better than a life that is not.

Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of The Twentieth Century*

Walter Benjamin and The End of Historical Progression

Part I. Walter Benjamin and The End of Historical Progression

Unlike those of Baudrillard and Lacan, the model of culture and history Walter Benjamin attempted to build in his *Passagen-Werk* was primarily concerned with culture as cultural artifacts. Benjamin pointed to the fundamental interrelationship between cultural artifacts and society, allowing him to formulate a dialectical of culture, radically different from the deterministic ones of Lacan and Baudrillard. The ramifications of his model of history for the study of the cinema and the "real" are explored in the following pages.

Benjamin's work forms an enigmatic part of twentieth century intellectual history. At different times, Benjamin embraces Jewish theology and Cabbalist mysticism, aphoristic montage, Brecht's theories of Epic drama, and materialist philosophy. Yet, within film theory, he is known primarily for one essay, "The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction."[47] While vastly influential, this metaphysically-suspect essay goes nowhere near exploring the full ramifications of Benjamin's theories of art, culture, and history. To contextualize his critical discourse within film theory's concern with the "real," Susan Buck-Morss' book *The Dialectics of Seeing*, her reconstruction of Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk*, is considered.

Benjamin's project stands in opposition to traditional notions of "historical progress" and points to the possibility of a dialectical mapping of cultural history onto mass cultural artifacts. Benjamin's redefinition of Modernist culture is considered; New German films are used as mass cultural examples. Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* is central to this discussion, as it addresses how a mass cultural artifact (in this case, film) can speak of a culture whose history has been obliterated and repressed.

Benjamin traces the beginnings of these sorts of cultural repressions to *fin de siècle* Europe. As the state gained more control and interest in the socio-industrial development of the capitalist society, the role of the individual became important in maintaining the rise in industry. Because of this, Benjamin argued, more ways to control the populace were needed. These controls were embedded within the historical discourse of progression. Greil Marcus characterizes the

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[47] See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1967): 217-251.

change that took place after Baron Haussmann redesigned Paris in the late nineteenth century. Paris became the centre of the Modernist world view:

> Paris became new; so did Parisians. The separations between work, family, and leisure forced by the new map of the city were internalized by newly atomized, autonomous individuals of the new Paris--after all, the whole notion of individualism was a modernism, a function of one's subjective choice of what to do with free income and free time. The commune was a comma in Haussmann's sentence; he had won. Paris became a city of symbols, power and desire. Social life was like a lottery: if everyone had a chance to buy, everyone had a chance to win, and since only one out a million can win, the separation of the one from the million, of each from everyone, was complete. As commodities spun through their circuits, each person became, in fantasy, a ruler: the Commodifier. (Marcus, 1990: 138)

For Benjamin, the reconstruction of Paris by Baron Haussmann constitutes the obliteration that has embedded within it an *Ur*-history (Buck-Morss, 1989: 89-90), which I will argue is similar to the type found in post World War Two German culture. Buck-Morss quotes Benjamin:

> The true goal of Haussmann's works was the securing of the city against civil war [. . . .] The width of the avenues was to prohibit the erection [of street barricades], and the new streets were to provide the shortest routes between the barracks and the working-class sections. Contemporaries christened the undertaking "strategic beautification." (Buck-Morss, 1989: 90)

Buck-Morss goes on to write that "Haussmann's 'strategic beautification' is the *Ur*-form of the culture of modern statism" (Buck-Morss, 1989: 90).

The concept of the "dialectical image" is central to both Benjamin's study and to this thesis. Benjamin's notion of the "dialectical image" begins to schematize the relationship between the cultural artifact and history. Benjamin, unlike the other Frankfurt school theorists, had an appreciation for mass and popular culture, not in and of itself, but as a cultural barometer. Embedded within the commodity are conflicting traces of the past, along with wish images of the future. Buck-Morss describes the "dialectical image" as such:

> The concept of the "dialectical image" is over-determined in Benjamin's thought. It has a logic as rich in philosophical implications as the Hegelian dialectic [. . . .] In its present context it refers to the use of archaic images to identify what is historically new about the "nature" of commodities. The principle of

> construction is that of montage, whereby the image's ideational elements remain unreconciled, rather than fusing into one "harmonizing perspective." (Buck-Morss, 1989: 67)

The "dialectical image" is, then, a construct heavily invested with meaning, although the meanings themselves can become contradictory through time. Benjamin argues that *Ur*-phenomena are constituted by artifacts of the past that contain an archetypal essence of historical development, giving rise to new meanings in the future. Buck-Morss writes that "[w]hen Benjamin spoke of the transient historical objects of the nineteenth century as *Ur*-phenomena, he meant that they exhibit visibly--and metaphysically as an 'authentic synthesis'--their developmental, conceptual essence" (Buck-Morss, 1989: 73). History is then dialectically constituted through a culture's artifacts. These artifacts are "[a] concrete, factual representation of those historical images in which capitalist-industrial economic forms could be seen in a purer, embryonic stage [. . .]" (73). The transiency of these artifacts can be used to reconstruct the *Ur*-history of the past. Benjamin writes that "[a] final abandonment of the concept of 'timeless truth' is in order. 'The truth will not run away from us' [. . .]. Herewith is expressed the concept of truth from which these representations decisively break" (218).

Can Weimar and Nazi cinema function as the *Ur*-phenomena of post-World war II German culture? Benjamin's model could be of use here, as his reframing of history removes historical research from its typical function as the objective, chronological study of events. The notion of the *Ur*-phenomena means that cultural artifacts are continuously reinvested with new meaning. There is no historical determinacy to the commodified object. Within the "dialectical image, there are four different historical functions: "natural history," "mythic history," "historical nature," and "mythic nature." As "natural history," the object holds a trace of its past, to the time of its production; as "mythic history," it embodies the fetish of what it has become, displaced from its mode of production and cut off from its "trace." As "historical nature," it functions as allegory, representing the historical past through the context of the present; as "mythic nature," it functions as the "wish image" or symbol of the future projected onto the object, a future more than likely unattainable.

This model could be especially useful in speaking of the Nazi period, because of their astute use of technological media. The textual artifacts (films in particular) representing National Socialism to the Germans in the 1930's and 1940's are the same ones western culture defines Nazi history by today. Benjamin's model points to the fact that cultural artifacts, in this case moving images, are invested with a past, present, and future when they are created, but the precise meaning of these temporal investments can not be known at the time of production. The "wish image" of National Socialism found in Leni Riefenstahl's *Der Triumph des Willens* (1935) and *Olympia* (1936), or Hans Steinhoff's *Hitlerjunge Quex* (1933), has a radically different meaning now than it did in 1930's Germany. This is not as simple as "now we know Nazism is bad!"; the "wish image" of Nazism, a Third Reich for a thousand years, is now a fossilized relic, but one that still has socio-temporal and cultural implications. The meanings that we, as a culture, now ascribe to the Nazi period are mediated through these texts.

These images of Nazism are also the texts to which many of the New German filmmakers of the 1960's and 1970's were responding. This response was evoked by the cultural void pervading Germany after World War II. Where do the cultural traces of the "real" emerge in German culture and film history, when the last forty years are forgotten? What takes place in New German Cinema, I argue, is a debate over the appropriation of history through historical artifacts. These artifacts can then address concerns of the "real," as historical discourse and images are traditionally taken to fall under this rubric. The artifacts themselves are embedded with a transient cultural history that both the left and right want to call their own. Because of this, the films of the Nazi and Weimar period do function as the *Ur*-texts of post-World War II German culture, as their dialectically constituted historical origins are used by German filmmakers, and the German culture itself, to reframe history. To learn a lesson from history is then to speak of the present and not the past. As Benjamin writes in his "Theses on The Philosophy of History":

> To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes

> to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to a man singled out by history at a moment of danger. (Benjamin, 1955: 255)

This points to a definite concern with the "real" running through both Benjamin's work and that of the New German filmmakers, as the cinematic text becomes the battleground for the return of a repressed cultural history. This is especially true of the work of Syberberg. His attempt to repatriate German culture embraces the focal point of both German aesthetics and Nazi ideology: the aesthetics of irrationalism and the Romantic ideology. He writes:

> We know about the glory and misery of irrationalism; but without it, Germany is nothing but dangerous, sick, without identity, explosive--a wretched shadow of its possibilities. Hitler is to be fought, not with the statistics of Auschwitz or with sociological analyses of the Nazi economy, but with Richard Wagner and Mozart. (Syberberg, 1981: 9)

Syberberg's argument echoes Benjamin's, as the meaning of German history is up for grabs; it is fought over through historical artifacts. Unlike Syberberg, Benjamin argues that while cultural artifacts are in a state of transiency, these artifacts are imbued with historical essences waiting to be discovered. For Benjamin, history is not another means to generate interpretations, but a way to get to the "truth." The relationship between the reappropriation of historio-cultural artifacts and the "real" is relevant in the analysis of New German Cinema, as German culture in these films is refracted through the Hollywood films directors like Wim Wenders and Rainer Werner Fassbinder grew up on--films by Douglas Sirk, Nicholas Ray, and John Huston.[48] Because of this, cultural

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[48] The reason for the dominance of American films is as much an economic question as a cultural one. After World War Two, American cultural imperialism devastated the indigenous European film market through the use of repressive trade quotas. It is significant to note that the major cinematic movements that emerged from post-World War Two Europe came about only after the American share of the market was dramatically reduced. This is true of the Italian neo-realist movement, the French *nouvelle vague*, The Spagetti Western, and New German Cinema. It is arguably also a major reason why, outside Québec, Canada has yet to develop a strong national cinema. This economic fact is now also present in the former Eastern Bloc, as Soviet power quickly evaporates. For an analysis of the effect of U.S. cultural imperialism on the post World War II German market, see Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1989): 8-18.

artifacts are not hermetically sealed to the country or nationality of origin, as cross-cultural pollination takes place. New German Cinema then becomes a discourse of the historical replacement of German culture with American discourses, and with the discourse of the repressed, German past.[49]

A short history of Weimar film and its relationship with and response to the Nazi period (1933-1945) is needed, as the cultural texts of this period function as the *Ur*-texts of New German Cinema, providing a cultural discourse for the new generation of filmmakers to respond to, in lieu of the cultural history that has been repressed. Benjamin's project is analyzed at length, to see if it offers us new insights into the cinematic construction of the "real." We must consider whether the *Passagen-Werk* is a text of the present, reflecting an understanding of cultural space and textuality today; or of the past, at the time of Benjamin's writings. Benjamin's aesthetics are central to his reframing of history, since, like Brecht, his formal strategies are also his theoretical ones. Therefore, we reconsider some of Benjamin's writings on cities, specifically his essays "Marseilles," "Hashish in Marseilles," and "Paris, Capital of The Nineteenth Century."[50] In these essays, the "real" is not embedded within a seamless point of view that subscribes to the principles of realism; it functions in a more abstract and impressionistic manner. In Benjamin, the city is like an image to which one responds; for the *fin du siècle* writers preceding Benjamin, such as Theodore Dreiser or Henry James, the city functions solely as a textual backdrop. For comparison's sake, Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* is briefly considered, as it also

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[49] For examples of the role played by absence in German history and New German Cinema's attempt to function as *Trauerarbeit*, see Ron Burnett, "Lumière's Revenge," *Border/Lines* 16 (1989): 24-29; Paul Coates, *The Gorgon's Gaze: German Cinema, Expressionism, and The Image of Horror* (London: Cambridge UP, 1991): 108-155; Thomas Elsaesser, "Primary Identification and the Historical Subject," *Cine-Tracts* 11 (1980): 43-52 and "Myth as The Phantasmagoria of History: H. J. Syberberg, Cinema, and Representation," *New German Critique* 24/25 (1981/2): 108-154; and Wim Wenders, "That's Entertainment: *Hitler*," in Wenders, *Emotion Pictures* (London: Faber, 1989): 93-99.

[50] See Walter Benjamin, "Marseilles," 131-136, "Hashish in Marseilles," 137-145, and "Paris, Capital of The Nineteenth Century," 146-162, in *Reflections* (New York: Schocken, 1978).

points to the shift from the realism of the *fin du siecle* novel to the later, modernist approach of Benjamin.

In *Sister Carrie*, a young woman, Carrie Meeber, heads for the big city, Chicago, for the first time. In the tradition of the realist novel, the narrative attempts to appropriate reality in some sense, giving the reader the feeling of the experience. Of course, the realist tradition does not mimic the real to the extent that its theories claim.[51] A strange, metaphysical view of the world is meshed with Dreiser's realist representation:

> To the child, the genius with imagination, or the wholly untravelled, the approach to a great city for the first time is a wonderful thing. Particularly if it be evening--that mystic period between the glare and the gloom of the world when life is changing from one sphere or condition to another. Ah, the promise of the night. What does it not hold for the weary. What old illusion of hope is not forever here repeated' (Dreiser, 1900: 10)

While the above passage makes realist claims, they are eminently literary ones: the description of the city fits with the protagonist's future developments, as can be seen in this first description of the city:

> The city has its cunning wiles no less than the infinitely smaller and more human tempter. There are large forces which allure, with all the soulfulness of expression possible in the most cultured human. The gleam of a thousand lights is often as effective, to all moral intents and purposes, as the persuasive light in a wooing and fascinating eye. Half the undoing of the unsophisticated and natural mind is accomplished by forces wholly superhuman. A blare of sound, a roar of life, a vast array of human hives appeal to the astonished senses in equivocal terms. (Dreiser, 1900: 1)

One can see that within this realist mode of representation, the real world is personified, foreshadowing the character of Drouet, the American version of the

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[51] See, for models and critiques of realism, Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1953), who surveys mimetic tendencies in the novel; Paul Coates, *The Realist Fantasy: Fiction and Reality Since* **Clarissa** (London: Methuen, 1983), who among other things, posits that Hegelian dialectics are at the center of the supposedly straightforward narrative of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*; Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1988), who examines the social realism in the works of Dreiser; and Karen Valihora, *Reading the Late James* (M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1991), who examines the suppressed discourse of feminine selfhood in Henry James' later works.

flâneur, who is to appear in Carrie's life momentarily. The "real" in the realist tradition "fuses [the sign and referent] into a deceptive totality [. . .]" (Buck-Morss, 1989: 67). In Benjamin's essays on cities, the descriptions have much more of an aphoristic quality to them; he is not constructing the city as a text in order to convey a story. Benjamin attempts to construct a textual "dialectical image" of the cities he examines. In "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," Benjamin traces subjects that reappear in the *Passagen-Werk*: iron as the Parisian "wish image" of the future; Haussmann's restructuring as the *Ur*-text of *fin du siècle* Paris; the influence of the Daguerre and photography of *fin du siècle* culture; and Baudelaire and the role of the *flâneur*. These texts juxtapose images and perceptions in the same manner that Benjamin constructs his philosophy. It is also similar to the juxtaposition of images one finds in films. Like the anti-realist tradition of Eisenstein, one can see the collisions; in the realist version of the world, as embodied by Bazin and Dreiser, all the seams are hidden. This again is an example of Benjamin's desire not to tell, but to show.

It is significant that the "cities" essays were to be part of the *Passagen-Werk*, as they attempt to present spatio-temporal history of cities through textuality. In an important sense, these texts are anti-realist, but not in the way anti-realism is typically described; they are not like the works of Proust, Pirandello, or Brecht. Instead, they are constructed from disjunctive impressions of cityscapes, foreshadowing the textual montage Benjamin was beginning to favour.

Along with questions of textuality, Benjamin is also concerned with the notion of cultural artifacts as texts. The distinction Buck-Morss makes between "mass culture" and "culture" is important. Within this distinction lie the seeds to Benjamin's dialectical reading of culture and progress. A fundamental point continuously overlooked in film studies is the interrelationship between "mass culture," usually described as consumer-oriented, and "culture" which, in the vernacular, "we're all part of"; it is both external to us, as reflections of our perception of ourselves in the world, and internalized through our own societal self-definition. These terms are mutually inclusive, but not interchangeable. In this light, "mass culture" has the connotations applied to it by the Frankfurt

school, and specifically Theodor Adorno, where the commodification of mass culture supersedes any intrinsic value of the cultural artifact.[52] Mass culture is the product of the "Culture Industry." Benjamin's analysis addresses a time slightly before the proliferation of technologically produced culture, yet the seeds of what Adorno derides in his seminal essay lie within the Paris Arcades. The Paris Exposition and the urbanization of Paris by Haussmann constitute the *Ur*-histories of the "Culture Industry" of the twentieth century, as these developments "undermine the revolutionary potential of the working class" (Buck-Morss, 1989: 90). This leads, through the proliferation of "false choices," to the commodification Adorno describes as the central function of mass culture.

Through a consideration of Benjamin's work, we will see if it is possible to redefine the viewing experience as a process intrinsically tied to history and the "real" through the cinema's reconstruction of other aspects of interaction in society. Buck-Morss writes that Benjamin's goal for both textuality and history, through the use of juxtaposition and the notion of the "dialectical image," is as follows:

> Not the medium of representation, not merely the concreteness of the image or the montage form is crucial, but whether the construction makes visible the gap between sign and referent, or fuses them in a deceptive totality so that the caption merely duplicates the semiotic content of the image instead of setting it into question. (Buck-Morss, 1989: 67)

This seems central to any concern about the relationship between the cinema and the "real." In Benjamin's model, as described in the above passage, the cinematic "real" is fundamentally stripped away from the concepts of realism adopted by theorists such as Kracauer, Bazin, and by the *neorealismo italiano* movement, and concurrently positioned as an oppositional force within social interaction. Using Benjamin's notion of mass culture, it becomes possible to construct the cinema as a "dialectical image" which works as one of the antithetical discourses within society, pointing to the "decay of modern progress" taking place in the modernist period.

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[52] See Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in Horkheimer and Adorno, (1972): 120-167, and Theodor Adorno, "The 'Culture Industry' Reconsidered," *New German Critique* 6 (1975): 13-19.

Part II. The End of History: Cinema and National Socialism

The New German Cinema of the 1970's had a strong preoccupation with history, redemption, and ideology in the post-World War II German society. Obviously this has its roots in Germany's twentieth century history. Much of New German Cinema, in this context, can be seen as an attempt to come to terms with both the actions and ideology of the National Socialist Movement in the 1930's and 1940's, and the cultural and social repression which followed. Three German filmmakers of the Weimar period, Douglas Sirk (b. Detlef Sierck), Leni Riefenstahl, and F.W. Murnau are briefly considered here, as they are all concerned with history and myth during the Nazi period, and are contemporaries of Benjamin. The works of these three filmmakers can be used to shed light on the four dialectically charged aspects of the cultural artifact, or commodity, as described by Benjamin: "natural history" or the "fossil"; "historical nature" or the "ruin"; "mythic history" or the "fetish"; and "mythic nature" or the "wish image."

F.W. Murnau's work embraces German romanticism and cultural history to a great extent. His work also has some parallels with later Nazi era German films. *Faust* (1926), Murnau's reworking of Goethe and Marlowe, is an example of this, embracing the irrational ideology of Romanticism. Yet, like the Nazis' use of German cultural history, *Faust* is, in many ways, a debasement of the tradition it is drawing upon. Kracauer wrote that the film "could not compensate for the futility of its misrepresentation [. . . of] all the significant motifs inherent in its subject-matter" (Kracauer, 1947: 148). *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922) is concerned with racial purity, although in a quite enigmatic manner. Lotte Eisner writes that *Nosferatu* contains "[. . .] rigorous abstraction which is inherited from the finest development of Expressionism" (Eisner, 1964: 118). Yet, in looking at this film now, it is hard to determine whether the ambiguity arises from the Expressionist tradition, or from half-formed "wish images" of what is to come. Many of the symbols used in this film, such as the vermin and the fear of the foreign/Other, foreshadow the intensely anti-Semitic films of the Nazi period, such as Viet Harlan's *Jud Suss* (1940). Yet symbols themselves do not necessarily constitute an ideological position or its lack. Can these symbols only

be read as *Ur*-phenomena of Nazi iconography, or are they read as such because they are the "historical nature" or the "ruin" of the pre-Nazi period? That is, are they given this meaning because of what is in the past for us, but what came after these texts were produced? Buck-Morss writes "The *ruin* [. . .] is the form in which the wish images of the past century appear, as rubble, in the present. But it also refers to the loosening building blocks (both semantic and material) out of which a new order can be constructed" (Buck-Morss, 1989: 212). Like the works of Nietzsche or Wagner, *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* is a text Syberberg would want to save from the "historical nature" or "ruin" of the past. Yet, with the spectre of Nazism hanging over post-War Germany to a far greater extent than early capitalism ever did over *fin du siècle* Paris, is this possible?

Leni Riefenstahl's *Der Triumph des Willens* (1936) is of relevance because of her construction of ideology through the use of film, and the relationship between this sort of construction, and what Syberberg attempts in *Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland* (1977). Riefenstahl's film, more so than any other of the Weimar or Nazi period, contextualizes and signifies both the historic and cinematic tradition New German Cinema attempts to challenge and paradoxically, to exorcise and recuperate. *Der Triumph des Willen*'s propagandistic structure was at the center of the Nazi program. Adolf Hitler wrote:

> After my entrance into the German Workers' Party, I at once overtook the management of propaganda. I regarded this department as by far the most important. For the present, it was less important to rack one's brains over organizational questions than to transmit the idea itself to a larger number of people. Propaganda had to run far in advance of organization and to provide it with the human material to be worked on. (Hitler, 1924: 579)

The perpetuation of ideology through the use of cinema is quite apparent in *Der Triumph des Willens*. The oblique line between documentary and propaganda lies at the film's center. The film is "about" the 1934 Nazi Party Congress at Nuremburg. Through both polemical speeches and its formal/aesthetic structure, the film glorifies the Nazi Party by presenting it as an elegant, beautiful machine. People are transformed from bodies into mechanical objects. Yet, the film is messy, as it blends documentary conventions with Nazi mythology. As the film starts, Hitler descends from the clouds down to Nuremburg, and the voice-

over speaks of Germany's rebirth after the Nazi's rise to power nineteen months earlier. The film leaves the realm of the "documentary" it supposedly is, and enters into the realm of mythology, constructing the image of Nazi's "purification" of Germany. The force that this image has, and how it stands outside of the realm of "pure" documentation can be seen in the following passage from Buck-Morss:

> Unlike natural aura, the illumination that dialectical images provide is a mediated experience, ignited within the force field of antithetical time registers, empirical history and Messianic history. The airplane, miraculous object of the new nature, has no theological meaning in itself. That would be phantasmagoria (--one thinks of the image of Hitler's plane flying divinely through the clouds in Riefenstahl's film *Triumph of The Will*). The airplane's theological meaning [. . .] emerges only in its "construction" as a historical object. (Buck-Morss, 1989: 245)

Within this film, then, Hitler becomes Germany's "mythic history"; the "pure" fetish object around which German history will be rebuilt. From the present, that view is ultimately contradictory, as Hitler stands in for German history's end. The pull between this film's status as a cultural artifact of the past as "trace" and present as "fossil" points to the film's contradictory nature underneath its seemingly straightforward ideology. This is not an attempt to valorize the film on political grounds, or to claim that it is fundamentally ambiguous; instead it is an attempt to point to the shifting status the film has throughout its existence. No question, it was a fascist film in 1940 and remains so. The power of Benjamin's approach is to forefront the changing role the film plays as a cultural artifact. What most analyses of the film cannot explain is its power and popularity at the time of its production. What Benjamin points to is that these types of "facts" are hard to grasp, because the film was about the future, a "wish image" when it was produced; it is now a propagandistic relic. Indeed, *Der Triumph des Willens* is more of a documentary today than it was 50 years ago.

Riefenstahl, in her 1965 *Cahiers du Cinéma* interview, calls the film a "pure documentary" (460), but then goes on to talk about the film being about "beauty [. . .] and purification" (460/1); terms explicitly tied to Nazi aesthetics and ideology. This foregrounds the film's subjective construction, as a political rally

is hardly objectively "about" purification. If anything, it is about "purity's" inverse--the fetish. This fetish, Hitler, is at the center of many of the concerns that would arise as Germany attempted to retrace its culture.

This film is quite important to New German Cinema. The historical memory this film represents has a great deal to do with the history of German film. This is especially true of Syberberg, as will be seen. *Der Triumph des Willens* functions as the historical memory of Nazism for the New German filmmakers, as all other cultural memories have been blocked out; it has a paradoxical relationship to the history of German cinema and Germany. On one hand, it represents the Nazi past which must be examined, explained, and perhaps most importantly, remembered. On the other, it represents the level of subjective construction inherent in any film text, and the increasing impossibility of political cinema to function as a vehicle of awareness and change, instead of propaganda. In a strong sense, the most political New German Cinema is an attempt to unmake *Der Triumph des Willens.* This can be seen in the work of a vast array of politically committed filmmakers. Examples that come to mind are Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's formal and structural experimentation in *Nicht versohnt* (1965); the feminist models of cultural inquiry found in Helke Sanders' *Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit--Redupers* (1977); the variety of styles employed in the omnibus film *Deutschland im Herbst* (1978), organized by Alexander Kluge; in Helma Sanders-Brahms' *Deutschland, bleiche Mutter* (1980); and in Syberberg's *Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland.*

Der Triumph des Willens is not a historical document in the traditional sense. It is a text that stands in place of history, creating a mythical history for Germany. In doing so, it points to the fact that Nazism, so strongly symbolized by Hitler, functioned as a "mythic history" for Germany; the ultimate fetish. Yet, in viewing this film now, it is possible to see the conflicting elements within it as a cultural artifact. Hitler, at his peak, was also the "mythic nature" of the future for the German people; at the very least, he played this role of the "wish image" in his use of mass communication--as an orator and a cinematic artifact. In many ways, one could see Nazism as the product of early capitalism; the fetishization of technology was certainly bound into the Nazi myth. Hitler's Nazis, and indeed Hitler himself, came to represent the unification of mind

and machine; the "false" Maria in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926) is an apt image. As such, when the "myth image" failed, and turned into something substantially different (the Holocaust, for example), it was still pre-ascribed within the historical movement. The viewer is left with *Der Triumph des Willens* as an allegory for National Socialism. It stands as the "historical nature" or the "ruin" of twentieth century German history. Benjamin writes that:

> The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up again at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again. "The truth will not run away from us": in the historical outlook of historicism these words of Gottfried Keller mark the exact point where historical materialism cuts through historicism. For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably. (Benjamin, 1955: 255)

The nature of the "dialectical image" comes to the forefront in this instance. As a cultural text, *Der Triumph des Willens* traces Germany's twentieth century history backward to *fin du siècle* Romanticism and forward to the post-War cultural abyss. Riefenstahl, in producing these images, had no way of knowing their past and future cultural signification, as the "wish image" of the future is a distorted view of her present. The "traces" the text offers point toward the value of Benjamin's model of history and how it can be applied to film. Instead of generating arbitrary readings of texts, Benjamin's model lets one trace the historical and cultural function of a text through history.

Douglas Sirk's German work is dramatically different from his much-valorized Hollywood melodramas. One of the questions raised by his German films is whether a historical trace can be found through rear-view mirror of historical contextualization. Sirk, in one of his many interviews in the late 1960's, attempts to rewrite himself and his films, arguing that his German films contained a strong social critique. Yet in viewing his last German film, *La Habanera* (1937), it can be easily seen that he is upholding the myth of purity so favoured by the Nazis. This film raises interesting questions about the recontextualization of the past into the present; an argument central to Benjamin's theory of history. Is this film simply indefensible, or does it provide the "fossilized trace" of the Nazi period? In other words, is there an undercurrent to his film that is lost in the

mists of history because of the overpowering spectre of National Socialism?[53]

Compared to Riefenstahl or Murnau, Sirk's German films are less straightforwardly ideological. Sirk, an expatriate German filmmaker, came to Hollywood from Germany in 1938, after a brief stop-over in Holland and France. In the context of both Weimar cinema and the Hollywood melodrama, Sirk is an important figure. Historically, he plays a pivotal role in the analysis of New German Cinema, as he made films in Weimar Germany, then came to the United States and directed Hollywood melodramas, which in turn had a great influence on the work of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, with films such as *Die bitteren Tranen der Petra von kant* (1972), *Angst Essen Seele Auf* (1973), *Fontane Effi Briest* (1974), and *Lili Marleen* (1981). Fassbinder, in turn, attempted to mesh the subversive melodramas of Sirk with the anti-realist theories of alienation found in Brecht.[54]

Sirk's last German film, *La Habanera* is a problematic, fictionalized text of German culture and history. *La Habanera* tells the story of an unhappy Swede, Astrée (Zarah Leander) who is trapped in Puerto Rico. She thought it was paradise when she married her Puerto Rican husband there, but turned out to be a foreign hell. A mysterious flu is killing Puerto Ricans by the hundreds, but

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[53] In this instance, there are similarities between Benjamin's work and Siegfried Kracauer's book *From Caligari To Hitler: A Psychological History of The German Film* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1947). Kracauer argues that German Expressionist film played a major role in the rise of Nazism in Germany. He does this through retracing the Nazi's perversion of romarticism and irrationality to Weimar period films, and combines this with a rudimentary analysis of the psychology of film spectatorship. Benjamin and Kracauer have similarities in their desire to construct the present out of traces found in past cultural artifacts; they fundamentally differ in their analysis of the role played by these artifacts. For Kracauer, film had a direct causal power; for Benjamin, an artifact's historical role could only be conceived through its fossilized trace in the present. For a further analysis of the relationship and discrepancies between Benjamin and Kracauer, see David Frigsby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernism in Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1985).

[54] For an analysis of the relationship between Sirk and Brecht in the works of Fassbinder, see Thomas Elsaesser, "Primary Identification and The Historical Subject: Fassbinder's Germany," *Ciné-Tracts* 11 (1980): 43-52 and Paul Willeman, "Distanciation and Douglas Sirk," *Screen* 12.2 (1971): 63-67.

her husband (Ferdinand Marian) does not want a cure to be found, as this would prove the disease exists, and ruin his produce business and the economic stability of the country. Sirk sees this film as a piece of social criticism, "[. . .] an anti-capitalist film" (Halliday 1971b: 50). Yet, it is also quite possible to read the film as proto-Nazi. The hierarchical binary opposition put in place between the beauty and purity of the Swedish woman (she is metaphorically described as pure, white snow; this is represented both verbally and visually) and the hell-like sickness of Puerto Rico implicitly holds up the Aryan ideology of the Master Race. Significantly, Astrée's young Aryan son does not die when he gets the fever, he just gets a bit sick. Once Astrée, her son, and a Swedish doctor leave the island, the disease is forgotten, implicitly signifying that as long as it does not effect the white people, it is irrelevant.

Sirk argues that proto-fascism is not an element of his film, as he was not a Nazi. This, of course, is irrelevant, but it is interesting that a German filmmaker who took a decidedly anti-Nazi stance could end up directing a film which had so many fascist implications. Many critics (notably Andrew Sarris, and in a strange twist, Laura Mulvey) argue that Sirk was able to interject a bit of his own personal style into the studio-produced Hollywood films.[55] It is interesting to see that this mode of analysis is not so easily applicable to his Weimar films, unless one wants to claim that Sirk was a Nazi.[56]

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[55] See Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema* (New York: Dutton, 1968), "Toward A Theory of Film History," 19-37, and "Douglas Sirk," 109-110; Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: U Indiana P, 1989), "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama," 39-44 and "Fassbinder and Sirk," 15-18.

[56] It has been argued that Sirk's Hollywood melodramas attempted to engage in social criticism. To a certain extent, they succeeded. The importance of looking at Sirk's Hollywood films, in this context, lies in the strategies he used, as these strategies were appropriated by Werner Rainer Fassbinder, which he used to critique German culture in the 1970's. Sirk's work in the melodramatic genre, exemplified by films such as *Magnificent Obsession* (1954), *All That Heaven Allows* (1956), *Written on The Wind* (1957), and *Tarnished Angels* (1958), self-consciously demonstrated how the genre was structured, and paradoxically how the genre could be transcended and subverted for the purposes of social critique.

In *Written on The Wind*, the problems which face Kyle Hadley (Robert Stack), Lucy Hadley (Lauren Bacall), Marylee Hadley (Dorothy Malone), and Mitch

Along with the films of Riefenstahl and Murnau, Sirk's film raises interesting questions about German history and film. One could easily read Sirk's film as an allegory of the cultural developments in Germany at the time, and again Benjamin's notion of the "wish image" seems appropriate. The purified view of the future is embedded within the tale of a nineteenth century woman going off to a "primitive" land. This mix of the old and the new is important, though in dramatically different ways, to both Nazi ideology and Benjamin's theory of history. This sort of determinism is problematic; the notion of the collective unconscious functions as a guiding light underneath the interchange of cultural images. Buck-Morss quotes Benjamin at length:

> To the form of the new means of production which in the beginning is still dominated by the old one (Marx), there correspond in the collective consciousness images in which the new is intermingled with the old. These images are wish images, and in them the collective

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Wayne (Rock Hudson) are all based, implicitly, on discrepancies within the American class system. Sirk describes it as "[. . .] a piece of social criticism, of the rich and the spoiled of the American family [. . .] a condition of life is being portrayed, and in many respects, anticipated, which is not unlike today's decaying and crumbling American society" (Halliday, 1971b: 116). The tension between Kyle and his best friend, Mitch is based on their mutual love for Kyle's wife, Lucy, but this tension is played out through the discrepancy between the rich, Kyle, and the not-so-rich, Mitch. Because of this, the social system is implicated as the cause of the despair between the three people. The concluding scene, with Marylee, who loves Mitch, holding onto a miniature oil well, mirroring the image of her father hanging behind her, shows the final, ironic falsity of the American value system (i.e. capitalism). As Sirk says:

> [. . .]The end of *Written on The Wind* is highly significant as far as [the failure of the America class system] is concerned: Malone has lost everything. I have put a sign there indicating this--Malone, alone, sitting there, hugging that god-damned oil-well, having nothing. The oil well which is, I think, a rather frightening symbol of American society (Halliday, 1971b: 119).

Sirk succeeds at his project of injecting melodrama with a critical edge, as his film works on more than one level (functioning both as entertainment and social critique). This is what Fassbinder draws from, except he wants the relationship between melodrama and social critique on the same level, dialectically positioned within the cinematic text; a strategy he uses in *Die bitteren Tranen der Petra von Kant* (1972), *Angst Essen Seele Auf* (1973), and *Die Ehe der of Maria Braun* (1978). His later films, such as *Lili Marleen* (1980), *Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss* (1981), and *Querelle* (1982), lose any sign of the possibility of social criticism, and become "pastiche" melodramas, which reify the exact systems (fascism, for example) they supposedly oppose.

> attempts to transcend as well as to illumine the incompleteness of the social order of production. There also emerges in these wish images a positive striving to set themselves off from outdated--that means, however, the most recent past. These images turn the image fantasy, that maintains its impulse from the new, back to the *Ur*-past. In the dream in which every epoch sees in images the epoch that follows, the latter appears wedded to elements of *Ur*-history, that is, a classless society. Its experiences, which have their storage place in the unconscious of the collective, produce, in their interpenetration with the new, the utopia that has left its trace behind in a thousand configurations of life from permanent buildings to ephemeral fashions. (Buck-Morss, 1989: 114)

At the cusp of the Weimar and Nazi film movements lies this ambiguity between past and present. But on the level of the collective unconscious, the future is predetermined. Benjamin, like Kracauer, would argue that the future Nazi symbols present in the Weimar films of Murnau and Sirk could only lead to one logical conclusion: National Socialism.

Yet, because of the outcome of the war, both the "wish image" and the "fetish" of the Nazi period films were displaced and repressed. The new means of cultural production, and the presence of cultural artifacts arising from that production did not take place. To speak of the history of the Nazi period in terms of national identity leads one directly to the cultural gap that followed. These texts, the films of the Weimar and Nazi periods, I argue, are the "fossils" of New German Cinema.

After a more thorough analysis of Benjamin's theory of history and culture, we will look at New German Cinema, and the cinematic texts from German cultural past upon which it has built its own "mythic nature," its image of the future, through an analysis of its "natural history," its memory of the past.

Part III. Culture, Mass Culture, and Ur-History

Fundamental to Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* is the distinction between "culture" and "mass culture." Unlike the common distinction, which argues the difference exists between "high" and "low" forms of cultural production, Benjamin's strategy is to distinguish between the historical function of culture and mass culture. Mass culture is intrinsically tied to Adorno's notion of the "Culture Industry." In this model, culture is inextricably tied to history. Yet, Benjamin's model of history is a radical break from the concept's traditional definition. His model of history, based on the dialectical nature of the historical object, and not linear progression, forms an interesting point of intersection between history, culture, film, and memory. When one writes or talks about film, the cinematic text is always filtered through the process of memory; the film is therefore remembered as a series of parts constituting a whole, and not a linear continuity. After all, it is impossible to remember an entire film at once; parts are selected and sifted through from the whole. Benjamin's model of history functions dialectically, as mass cultural artifacts bang off each other, creating combatting discourses that do not point to progress, but do point toward change. Both Benjamin's concept of history and the way the viewer remembers and interprets film is based on a spatio-temporal model that does not conform to linear causality; in other words, history is not constituted by the domino effect. The following example, while somewhat bizarre, points to the type of thought I am attempting to describe. Kurt Vonnegut, in his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, describes the way his little green alien creatures, the Tralfamadorians (suction cup bodies, a little hand at the top with an eye lodged in it), see time as a whole, not a continuity. Vonnegut writes:

> All the moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist. The Tralfamadorians can look at all the different moments just the way we can look at a stretch of the Rocky Mountains, for instance. They can see how permanent all the moments are, and they can look at any moment that interests them. It is just an illusion that here on Earth that one moment follows another one like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone, it is gone forever. (Vonnegut, 1966: 27)

While this is a fictional construct of a fictional race of suction-cup people, it

strikes me that it is as good an example of the viewer's experience at the cinema as any."[57] This has a parallel in Benjamin's model of history.

To begin with, Buck-Morss outlines the traditional view of history as follows:

> Within the concept of history, time indicates social change and the uniqueness and irreversibility of human events. Traditionally, it has taken on meaning in opposition to "nature," in which time is change only in the sense of cyclical repetition. (Buck-Morss, 1989: 59)

Theodor Adorno points to where Benjamin's radical break with this notion of history takes place. In his essay "A Portrait of Walter Benjamin," Adorno describes Benjamin's theory of history. He states:

> The essay as form consists in the ability to regard historical moments, manifestations of the objective spirit, "culture," as though they were natural. Benjamin could do this as no one else. The totality of his thought is characterized by what may be called "natural history." He was drawn to the petrified, frozen, or obsolete elements of civilization, to everything in it devoid of domestic vitality no less irresistibly than is the collector to fossiles [sic] or to the plant in the herbarium. Small glass balls containing a landscape upon which snow fell when shook were among his favourite objects. The French word for still-life, *nature morte*, could be written above the portals of his philosophical dungeons. (Adorno, 1967b: 233)

Adorno's highly anecdotal analysis contextualizes Benjamin's version of history as a radical break from tradition. The "petrified, frozen, or obsolete elements of civilization" (Adorno, 1967b: 233) are the historical traces that Benjamin, through his analysis of the Arcades, attempts to liberate and recontextualize. The immediate question is, of course, why? Benjamin argued these historical traces pointed to the failures of both historical progress and of the bourgeoisie. These marginalized, mass cultural traces within the Arcades had to be addressed in a self-conscious manner by the passer-by; indeed cultural self-consciousness

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[57] For a philosophically rigorous view of memory that echoes Benjamin's approach to history and Vonnegut's approach to Tralfamadorian memory, see Benedict de Spinoza, "On The Improvement of Human Understanding," *Chief Works of Spinoza*, vol. II (1951): 18-33, esp. 31-33.

is at the center of Benjamin's work.[58] "self-consciousness," in this instance would imply a critical awareness of one's surroundings. Buck-Morss writes: "The way the past confronted one in these neglected Arcades as freely associated, long-forgotten images, was an external physical experience that paralleled the internal, mental experience of 'involuntary memory' described in Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* [. . .] (Buck-Morss, 1989: 38).

If this is so, then culture is what we exist within as historical subjects; mass culture is formed by the artifacts which, through their historical root and existence in the present, blow apart culture, leaving room for a radical, dialectical historical materialism. This stands in opposition to Adorno's version of the role played by the artifacts produced by the "Culture Industry." Buck-Morss summarizes Benjamin's argument as follows: "Benjamin was struck by an incontestable, empirical, fact: Consistently, when modern innovations appeared in modern history, they took the form of historical restitutions. New 'forms' cited the old ones out of context" (Buck-Morss, 1989: 110). But, unlike the postmodernists proceeding him, Benjamin did not look at this occurrence as the relativization of history.[59] Instead, Benjamin argued that this was the way in which mass culture re/contextualized the past in the present as a dialectical praxis.

The mass cultural commodity is then central to the notion of history Benjamin puts forward. Commodities within culture take on different meanings as time goes by. Unlike postmodernism, these meanings are ascribed in the object from the moment it is manufactured; Benjamin's analysis is an attempt to

[58] This is distinct from the self-reflexivity found in the work of Adorno, and to a certain extent, Herbert Marcuse. The difference between self-consciousness and self-reflexivity is a question of the placement of the dialectic. In Adorno's work, the dialectic is between subject and cultural object; in Benjamin, it is between artifacts, as the subject is distanciated from the artifacts, while complicit in their production and cultural significance. See, for example, Theodor Adorno, "Subject and Object," in Arato (1989): 197-511.

[59] For an analysis of the related metaphysics in the works of Theodor Adorno and Lyotard's postmodernism, see Anne Mette Hjort, "*Quasi una amicizia*: Adorno and Philosophical Postmodernism," *New Orleans Review* (1984): 74-80. See also Chapter Two of the present study for an examination of Jean Baudrillard's relativistic view of culture.

"defossilize" objects in order to forefront a radical, dialectical break between past and present. Objects are both in a state of stasis, as they are prescribed, and in flux, as they are forever being recontextualized. The object is not in a state of "becoming" or *Dasein*; instead it changes as the culture changes. It is also important to note that culture is not engaging in this process, but mass culture; the commodity undergoes the change. Yet, culture is radically altered by the historical chaos caused by the mass cultural artifact's intrusion on the present. Buck-Morss describes the role played by mass cultural objects as follows:

> As fore-history, the objects are prototypes, *Ur*-phenomena that can be recognized as precursors of the present, no matter how distant or estranged they now appear. Benjamin implies that if the fore-history of an object reveals its possibility (including its utopian potential), its after-history is that which, as an object of natural history, it has in fact become. Both are legible within the "monadological structure" of the historical object that has been "blasted free" of history's continuum. (Buck-Morss, 1989: 219)

For Benjamin, then, the past and present are concurrently present within the object under question. Yet, recontextualizing an object in this manner does not seem, at first glance, to be the revolutionary act Benjamin desires. If objects have existed in this manner since the rise of industrialization, how does this "blasting free from the historical continuum" become a radical act now? A theorist such as Adorno would deny the revolutionary nature of this shift in the commodity, claiming that Benjamin, in his quest for philosophic "truth," reifies the commodity fetish in a manner tantamount to that of the bourgeoisie. Adorno writes:

> The Hegelian concept of "second nature," as the reification of self-estranged human relations, and also the Marxian category of "commodity fetishism" occupy key positions in Benjamin's work. He is driven not merely to awaken congealed life in petrified objects--as in allegory--but also to scrutinize living things so that they present themselves as being ancient, "ur-historical" and abruptly release their significance [. . .] Benjamin's thought is so saturated with culture as its natural object that it swears loyalty to its reification instead of flatly rejecting it. (Adorno, 1967b: 233)

Yet Benjamin's concern is precisely how these objects, which do not deserve reification, take on such a powerful role in culture. Furthermore, Benjamin asks

how the power of these objects can be harnessed to radically change culture and to destroy the myth of historical progression. Buck-Morss summarizes Benjamin's argument as follows:

> In the traces left by the object's after-history, the conditions of its decay and the manner of its cultural transmission, the utopian images of past objects can be read in the present as truth. It is the forceful confrontation of the fore- and after-life of the object that makes it "actual" in the political sense--as "presence of mind" (*Geistesgegenwart*)--and it is not progress but "actualization" in which *Ur*-history culminates. "Thus, as a flashing image, in the now of recognition (*im Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit*), the past is held to be fast." Benjamin was counting on the shock of this recognition to jolt the dreaming collective into a political "awakening." The presentation of the historical object within a charged force-field of past and present, which produces political electricity in a "lightening flash" of truth, is the "dialectical image." (Buck-Morss, 1989: 219)

These objects can be described more concretely as *Ur*-phenomena; objects which form the *Ur*-history of the nineteenth century. These are the objects which leave a trace to the past and constitute a "mythic history." Yet this history is not constituted at the time of the object's emergence or production; this secret history only emerges through the cultural object's "break" with history in the present.[60] Tying this in with technological change and with archaic forms of images, Buck-Morss writes that "[. . .] even as they mask the new, these archaic images provide a symbolic representation of what the human, social meaning of technological change is all about' (Buck-Morss, 1989: 117).

Cultural texts take on different meanings because of this. Buck-Morss points to the writings of Victor Hugo (H. G. Wells is another example) as an example of utopian images which emerge from collective dreams, arising "too early" (Buck-Morss, 1989: 118) in the history of production; these images are intrinsically tied to the history of the era and stand as the first signposts of change ahead. Adorno critiques this as a theory that is not suitably dialectical,

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[60] Greil Marcus picks up on the dialectic between history and mass culture in fruitful ways, tracing "secret histories" of revolutionary moments from the middle ages onwards, but focusing mainly on twentieth century movements such as surrealism, dadaism, situationalism, and punk. See Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of The Twentieth Century*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989), esp. 66-75, in relation to the cultural critiques of the Frankfurt School.

but instead "immanent"; each society dreams its successor (Buck-Morss, 1989: 73). Yet, Benjamin's theory is not based on a model of linearity. He is addressing the fundamental contradiction that exists in cultural artifacts as fetish commodities. The model of "immanence" Adorno applies to Benjamin is misguided, as Benjamin is not looking for either the transcendent society through cultural artifacts or dialectical synthesis. Instead he is looking for a fundamental nexus where both meaning and history can be ascribed to the object.

Benjamin makes the above argument because for him technology, that is new commodity inventions, and nature are fundamentally linked. Both are artificial discourses of history, a point also made by Georg Lukacs.[61] Technological development functions as a mythic indicator, a "wish image" of the future. In the nineteenth century, iron was a commodity that was discovered before its use was. The culture, not knowing the future, is also longing for the past, and attempts to ascribe the "wish image" of the future, projected on to the new technology, with meaning derived from a sense tradition or progression. Aesthetics, architecture, and technology become subsumed by this dream of the future. Buck-Morss writes:

> Under the archaic masks of classical myth and traditional nature, the inherent potential of the "new nature"--machines, iron shaped by new processes, technologies and industrial materials of every sort--remained unrecognized, unconscious. At the same time, these masks express the desire to "return" to a mythic time when human beings were reconciled with the natural world. (Buck-Morss, 1989: 111-114)

These new technologies, developed without a concrete purpose, are put to work in re-articulating the past--the architectural designs of the Arcades are Benjamin's prime example of this. Until recently, the same could be said about the laser; this is now true of much of the research currently underway at the M.I.T. Media Lab.[62] These technologies, like iron in the nineteenth century, were developments of the future without a concrete use in the present.

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[61] See Georg Lukács, *The Theory of The Novel* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971): 144-152.

[62] See Stewart Brand, *The Media Lab: Inventing The Future at M.I.T.* (London: Penguin, 1988).

Culture, Mass Culture, and Ur-History

All of the above concerns seem a bit diffuse. Benjamin was not a linear thinker, and therefore his arguments, instead of relying on progression, relied on synthesis. The synthesis, which lies at the center of Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* is the "dialectical image"; it is the work's theoretical underpinning. At the center of this image lies the commodity. The commodity under analysis here is the New German Cinema.

Part IV. The Leaden Years: Forgotten Identity and New German Cinema

From the Oberhausen Manifesto and the New German Cinema which grew out of it, emerged the first generation of filmmakers who attempted to come to terms with Germany's role in the Second World War. Hollywood films, up until that time, had dominated the German screen, and this played a large role in the cultural void that pervaded Germany. As Volker Schlöndorff, one of the first generation of New German filmmakers, pointed out:

> [. . .] I didn't even know there used to be German filmmaking [. . .] during the silence. Later on, I discovered the work of Fritz Lang and von Stroheim and Lubitsch and Murnau, and, of course, like a lot of other German filmmakers, I felt that this was the true tradition that was lost and we should [. . .] try to bridge the gap [. . .]. (Oumano, 1987: 170)

Schlöndorff goes on to say that the films he remembers from his youth are movies like Elia Kazan's *On The Waterfront* (1954) (Oumano, 1987: 170). Hollywood films, part of the Allies "re-education" plan, succeeded at stripping away German mass culture and national identity. Because of this, once German cinema again went into production, one of its main concerns was the Nazi past, and how the repression which followed the end of Nazism left a gaping hole in Germany's historical memory. The past had been denied by the Germans, but like all repression, lying below the surface, it was attempting to find a way to manifest itself. Socio-cultural identity was then fragmented and diffuse because of the ambiguous spectre of Nazism. In many ways, Nazism did not end in 1945 (Syberberg contends that it became the unconscious, the repressed).[63] Fundamentally, it could not, as the beliefs of a nation could not change so profoundly overnight. The German culture's repression and unconscious presence in New German Cinema's concern with memory and ideology are intrinsic to an analysis of the cinematic "real," because of this movement's concern with history.

The cinematic strategies of three filmmakers--Rainer Werner Fassbinder,

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[63] See Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, *Syberbergs Filmbuch* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1979) and *Hitler a Film From Germany* trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Farrar, 1981). Both these texts contain versions of Syberberg's notions of repression, irrationality, and romanticism.

Margarethe von Trotta, and Hans-Jürgen Syberberg--in strikingly different manners, question the ideological and historical suppositions of the cinematic text, German culture, and their relationship to the problems of history, redemption, and ideology. Their different narrative, structural, and ideological stances are of interest here, as Benjamin's model of culture and history seem to transcend these usually partisan attributes.

The films of Fassbinder draw upon Hollywood melodrama, and to a lesser extent, the work of Bertolt Brecht, to discuss German culture, and/or its absence. In *Lili Marleen*, Fassbinder's use of melodrama, kitsch, and pastiche (in Fredric Jameson's sense) reduces the relationship between the Germans and the Jews during the period of the Second World War to a reductive binary opposition. The film reverses the position of the Germans and the Jews, so that the Jews become the exterminators and the Germans, the victims. This reductive binarism, which Fassbinder also uses to represent relationships and despair in films such as *Angst Essen Seele Auf* (1973) and *Faustrechtder Freiheit* (1974), falls apart in *Lili Marleen* because of the film's reprehensible ideological implications. By appropriating melodrama and applying it to Nazi spectacle (which is especially apparent during the scenes where Willie/Lili sings for the German soldiers), Fassbinder reduces Nazism to a simple good guy/bad guy binary opposition. What is worse is that implicitly, the Jews are the winners of the war, and the Germans the losers. In the Hollywood melodramas of Sirk, which Fassbinder uses as inspiration, socio-economic position is integrally related to the problems and despair facing his characters. In Fassbinder's film, melodrama is used as an excuse for political and ideological reductiveness. Fassbinder tells the audience "Hey, its only a film!" *Lili Marleen* draws on what Fredric Jameson calls postmodern pastiche; the film undertakes appropriation, without giving the symbols/images/signs appropriated any political, ironic, or ideological context or underpinning.[64] Because of this, in the context of Fassbinder's film, German history becomes an ahistorical text which can be drawn from without contextualization or explanation; in a sense redeeming history by rewriting it into

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[64] See Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (1984): 53-94.

a melodramatic tract.

Fassbinder's handling of the questions of history and memory within the German culture asks how a discourse can be built to analyze a culture's past, while synonymously attempting to instill the discourse with a critical voice. In *Lili Marleen*, Fassbinder points to the alleged futility of this task by ahistorically restructuring history. The disjunction between factual history, and the reconstruction which takes place on the thematic level denies the past's significance, argues that as if by "blasting apart" the past from the present, one can restructure both the society and history. If fascism is only memories, then film can be used to create new ones. There is a strong parallel here between *Lili Marleen* and the ideological re-structuration of history in *Der Triumph des Willens*. Fassbinder seems to adopt this position because of a sense of futility about trying to revive German culture and identity.

Because of the cultural amnesia existing in German culture, Fassbinder's approach seems to rely on an attempt to re-ascribe the "fossils" of the past with less threatening ideological implications. By doing so, he attempts to free the audience from the collective guilt which lies buried in the rubble of Nazism. Indeed, Fassbinder is attempting to ascribe the *Ur*-phenomena of the past with utopian elements. Benjamin describes it as follows:

> This intermingling [of the past and present] owes its fantastic character above to the fact that in the course of social development, the old never sets itself off sharply from the new; rather, the latter, striving to set itself apart from the recently outmoded, renews archaic, ur-temporal elements. The utopian images that accompany the emergence of the new always concurrently reach back to the ur-past. In the dream in which every epoch sees in images before its eyes the one that follows it, the images appear wedded to elements of ur-history. (Buck-Morss, 1989: 116)

In German culture, there is a difference between what Benjamin is describing and what takes place in Fassbinder s film. In the above quote, the fantastic, utopian "wish images" are of the future, but connected to the *Ur*-forms of the past; in *Lili Marleen*, the utopian images are of the past, so that there can be a future.

Earlier, in *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, Fassbinder attempted to tackle the questions of the Fascist history of Germany, and the redemption of German society by coming at the problem from the other angle; to liberate the future

through the annihilation of the past. His conclusion is that the generation of Nazis who brought about and were complicit with Fascism must be exterminated, in order to free the society from its past. In the film, the men who come into contact with Maria Braun (Hanna Schygulla)--Hermann, her husband; Bill, the Black American soldier; Mr. Oswalde, her employer--are all from the Nazi era, and are all explicitly connected to the Nazi movement. One by one, they all die, as Fassbinder is trying to "purify" the German society. In the end, Maria must die too, as she has become more and more masculine, and therefore tainted by the Nazi men. Again, Fassbinder is trying to come to terms with German history, and the memory of the Nazi regime, but in doing so, he proposes that the Nazis must be dealt with in the same manner as the Jews, in order to reclaim the society from the spectre of Nazism. It is interesting that *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* seems loosely based on another post-war film that attempts to wipe clean and recontextualize the past: Victor Fleming and David O. Selznick's *Gone With The Wind* (1939).

Between *Lili Marleen* and *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, Fassbinder positions the viewer in an unanswerable paradox: either one adopts Nazi actions in order to redeem the society, as in *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, or one dismisses the past and makes it into a culturally acceptable, but ultimately falsified text, as seen in *Lili Marleen*. The dialectic between these two points of view, in Fassbinder's mind, at any rate, can never be solved.

In many ways, the shock Fassbinder wishes to give his film's audience mimics the effects the reconstruction of history does in Benjamin's model. Fassbinder's amalgamation of Brecht and Sirk and his exploration of the Nazi past in Germany puts the viewer in an uncomfortable position between identification and distanciation. Yet, despite the desire on the part of both Benjamin and Fassbinder to "blast apart" history, their differences outweigh their similarities. Fassbinder's film reeks of despair and determinacy. Benjamin's attempt to recontextualize history, on the other hand, takes a far more active role. Buck-Morss writes:

> The "shock" of recognition with which the juxtapositions of past and present are perceived is like electricity. [. . .] "I set forth how this project--as in the method of smashing the atom--releases the enormous amount of energy of history that lies bound up in the

> "once upon a time" of classical historical narrative." [. . .] Cognitive explosiveness in a political sense occurs, not when the present is bombarded with "anarchistically intermittent," utopian "now-times" (Habermas), but when the present as now-time is bombarded with empirical, profane fragments of the recent past. (Buck-Morss, 1989: 251)

If one attempts to use Benjamin's model to examine twentieth century German cultural history, then one must find cultural artifacts that are "bombarded" by the past, blasting apart the present, and recontextualizing it. Fassbinder's films on German history and fascism do not do this, but other filmmakers have attempted to reappropriate German culture in this way.

The films of Margarethe von Trotta attempt to work through the questions of ideology, memory, and history in a manner which leaves a position for German identity to survive. She does not posit any carved-in-stone answers to the questions she raises. If anything, existence of Germany in von Trotta's films is based on the dialectics between memory and repression, action and inaction, and change and stagnation. Her film *Die bleierne Zeit* (1981) addresses these questions directly. In *Die bleierne Zeit*, von Trotta explores the contradictions in the German culture through the lives of two sisters-- Marianne, a terrorist, and Juliane, who works for a feminist journal. The film is based on the real-life story of Christiane and Gundrun Ensslin (Gundrun Ensslin was a member of the Beider-Meinhof gang in the 1970's). The film is about the relationship between the two sisters and their identification with both each other and the German culture in which they exist.

As youths, Marianne was the child who always pleased the family, while Juliane was the rebel. As the women became older, their roles changed, and both of them tried to find a way to come to terms in the world in which they existed. The doubling process put in place between the two sisters here is significant, as the mirroring between the two of them reflects the problematic nature of the possibility of political action in a society. It also addresses the restructuring of the cultural identity that has been obliterated. Both the radical and the bourgeois-liberal position as adopted by the women fail to bring change to the society. Despite this impasse, the film seems to point toward an analysis and understanding of the past in order to make progress in the present, yet this

sort of approach to change seems impossible when the past is repressed. Von Trotta's film points to recontextualization and "coming to terms with the past" as the solution to the dilemmas facing German society. Much the same way Benjamin feels that capitalism can be put into critical perspective through a tracing of the *Ur*-history of nineteenth century Paris, von Trotta argues that *Ur*-texts and repressed discourses of Germany society must be examined, indeed analyzed, and brought out of the twentieth century's shadow history.

Unlike Fassbinder's work, von Trotta's film contextualizes historical occurrences in order to analyze their relationship to the present. A pivotal event is when the two sisters view Alain Resnais' *Nuit et brouillard* (1955). The film repulses Juliane, and she leaves to vomit. The screening contextualizes the problem of coming to terms with the past (*Vergangenheitsbewaltigung*) and the pain of transgressing Germany's cultural repression. This scene also raises questions about the nature of cinematic representation--Resnais' film inserts the Holocaust into the memory of the women, tying the Holocaust to the idea of being German.[65] Von Trotta implies that the paradox between the memory of the Holocaust and the repression of memory are both intrinsically connected to the concept of German identity, and this is what causes the questions of history and memory to arise, and implicitly, lead to the tautology which Marianne and Juliane are caught in.

Once Marianne dies in jail, Juliane attempts to reconstruct her sister's alleged suicide, in order to prove it was murder. By the time she does this, she is told that no one cares any more, as it is not current news; memories have faded. Yet, its not quite that clear. Marianne's son is burned by some children

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[65] This device is not new to the cinema. As early as Orson Welles' *The Stranger* (1946), Nazi concentration camp footage was used to indict war criminals. In Welles' film, the camp footage is projected so that the female protagonist (Loretta Young) will believe her husband (Welles) is a war criminal. Welles uses actual footage of dead corpses and gas chambers; these clips do not prove the character's guilt, as obviously Welles is not in them. Instead, the wife is supposed to be so horrified by the images that she will then believe the claims made by the War Crimes investigator (Edward G. Robinson). This case is then similar to the technique used in *Die bleierne Zeit*, as the horror of the images stands in for rational discourse; the horror of the images themselves are enough of an explanation to produce guilt and condemnation.

who discovered the identity of his mother. Once he begins to recover, Juliane brings him back to her apartment and takes care of him. The boy walks into Juliane's room one day and tears down the picture of his mother. He then asks Juliane to tell him everything about his mother. She thinks about it for a minute, and takes a deep breath, as if she is about to tell her sister's story. As she does this, the film ends. In a sense, the film stops as the real story is about to begin. In *Die bleierne Zeit*, von Trotta argues that the retelling of the past in order to understand and explicate the present is where one must begin to come to terms with German culture and ideology. The past does not have to be relived, but it does need to be contextualized.

Hans-Jurgen Syberberg's *Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland* is concerned with the redemption of German culture and society from the spectre of the Holocaust and the Nazis.[66] Syberberg draws on many media, from both high and low culture, to make his film. In many ways, the film deals with the spectre of Nazi Germany in a highly critical and insightful light. Unfortunately, the film is infused with his own highly narcissistic, meandering philosophical perspectives and treatises. This leads to an interesting, but problematic, paradox. The possibility of the redemptive function Syberberg hopes his film will play is skewed by his own half-structured critical points of view. It is easy to dismiss thirty minute stretches of the film as irrelevant--long passages leave the viewer's mind wandering. An example of this is the valet scene, which tells the viewer of Hitler's daily activities. The purpose, one supposes, is to demythologize Hitler, humanizing him.[67] This scene drags on for what seems like twenty

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[66] See Jake Brown, "The New Irrationalism: A Critique of Romantic Ideology in The Films of Werner Herzog and Hans-Jürgen Syberberg," (unpublished research project, McGill University, 1991) for a textual analysis of the role played by theories of redemption and irrationality in Syberberg's work.

[67] An attempt to humanize Hitler can work as a critical device, in order to point to cultural similarities between his policies, which are utterly condemned now, and present government policies, enforced under the rubric of the social democracy. A case in point is Grant Morrison and Steve Yeowell's "The New Adventures of Hitler," a comic strip serialized in the British anthology *Crisis*. The strip traces the "missing years" in Hitler's life (1912-1913) and places him at his half-sister's in Liverpool, England. Young Adolf is haunted by a street-car

minutes, and the original point of its inclusion seems lost. This passage is emblematic of many of the film's problems, one such being the possibility of the film making any difference in terms of the redemption of either the audience or the German culture. The film is structured in such a manner as to alienate all but the most determined viewer, who does not need "enlightening" in Syberberg's view. The text then becomes consumed by viewers who are predisposed to the film's ideological and political point of view, who do not need to take part in the redemptive process. Because of this, the dialectic between the viewer and the film implodes and plunges Syberberg's desired effect into an abyss. This is compounded by Syberberg's outright contempt for viewers who disagree with his theoretical diagnosis.

With *Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland*, it is a matter of degrees of success, something which Syberberg would not accept, as he sees his film as the prototypical Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*. This "all-or-nothing" binarism plagues the work, as Syberberg relativizes history to an incredible degree. As Henry Pachter points out in his essay "Our Hitler, Or His?":

> The myth [of the movie industry] does violence to people's minds--so does Hitler. Get it? Reviewers have wondered how any man in his right mind could compare the holocaust with the indignities allegedly suffered by Erich von Stroheim at M.G.M. Indeed, no man in his right mind would do that. But Syberberg is not dealing with anyone in their right mind; he is dealing with mythology, especially his own [. . .]. (Pachter, 1980: 27)

The problem arising here is that Syberberg deals with both the idea of the redemption of the German society and his own exorcising of the Hitler-myth. Because of the combination of the political and the personal, the viewer has a hard time positioning herself in relation to the text. *Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland* tries to deal with the problems raised by the spectre of Hitler and Nazism on Germany, yet the film keeps retreating to its own hermetic, personal, cinematic world, where subjective discourse reigns. The paradox is that the exact

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packed full of people seeking revenge for acts he has yet to commit. The strip is actually an indictment of Thatcherite England, and combines a mixture of slapstick humour and surrealist textual strategies. See "The New Adventures of Hitler," *Crisis* 46-49 (1990): 1-12. For a review of the strip, see Rob Rodi, "Cruel Britannia," *The Comics Journal* 142 (1991): 41-47.

topics which the film tries to deal with (ideology, memory, history, and finally redemption) are reproblematized by the film's personal and mythological aspects.

Syberberg's strategy has much in common with Benjamin's approach to history. In both cases "reconstruction" is at the center of their theoretical models. The past is always mediated, therefore the method of mediation becomes very important. For both Syberberg and Benjamin, self-consciousness plays a key role in the mediation of the past in the present. Notions of "objectivity" fall to the wayside; context becomes central. Syberberg argues that Richard Wagner, Caspar David Friedrich, and Erich von Stroheim could all be recontextualized from past to present, saving Germany's cultural tradition from the grasp of Nazism. In this passage from Buck-Morss, the parallels become apparent:

> As a reconstruction of the past, Benjamin's method ran roughshod over von Ranke's sacrosanct principle of showing matter "'as it actually was'": Such history had been "the strongest narcotic of the [nineteenth] century." Benjamin had not the least concern for the conventions of empathic "'appreciation.'" Instead his objective was to "rescue" the historical objects by ripping them out of the developmental histories--of law, religion, art, etc.--into which fictional and falsifying narratives they had been inserted in the process of their transmission. Ur-history was thoroughly political knowledge [. . .]. (Buck-Morss, 1989: 218)

The problem that remains is one of praxis. While Benjamin's theory of history is compelling, texts such as Syberberg's *Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland* do not successfully recontextualize the past into a radical, new present. The film finally posits the utopian, mythological discovery of the Grail (and the return to irrationality and Romanticism) as the only possibility for redemption--but like all utopias, the proposal exposes the artificiality and impossibility of this goal.

New German Cinema's preoccupation with history, memory, and ideology is one that is intrinsically tied to the construction and definition of culture, through both film and society. The above three filmmakers deal with the question of socio-cultural identity in different manners. What becomes apparent after viewing their films is that while they can raise questions about the relationship between the present state of Germany and its Nazi past, redefining the culture through the exorcism of its Nazi past is a problematic process. The films of Fassbinder and Syberberg, while aesthetically and politically diametrically

opposed, focus on finding a manner in which to transcend the past. The films of von Trotta, on the other hand, attempt to contextualize the past, both in terms of its historical and cinematic effects, into the socio-political realities of the present. In doing so, she adopts a dialectical point of view to both the structural (fragmented narrative/identification) and the ideological (feminist Journal/terrorist) aspects of filmic representation, creating the possibility to discursively analyze the past (memory and history) in order to critique the socio-political and ideological structures of modern Germany.

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Intersections:

Benjamin and Brecht

Benjamin, who continuously realigned himself with different theoretical doctrines, was, for a time, a great supporter of Brecht. Adorno, for one, found this to be unfathomable, continuously warning Benjamin that Brecht's "crass" aesthetic would ruin his intellectual insights.[68] Nevertheless, Brecht's theories of the theatre, like almost every other of Benjamin's influences, made their way into his *Passagen-Werk*. This is seen in Benjamin's desire to juxtapose pieces of text; in his theory of history, where a cultural artifact can be "blasted away" from its historical and temporal moorings and recontextualized within another framework; and in his desire to strip away the "artifice" of culture, in order to reveal its modes of production. Benjamin, writing on Brecht in his essay "The Author as Producer," could have just as easily been writing about his own theory of history and cultural artifacts. He states:

> To the total dramatic artwork [Brecht] opposes the dramatic laboratory. He makes use in a new way of the great, ancient opportunity of the theatre--to expose what is present. At the center of his experiment is man. Present-day man; a reduced man, therefore, chilled in a chilly environment. Since, however, this is

[68] For background into the Adorno-Benjamin-Brecht debate, see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origins of Negative Dialectics* (New York: Free Press, 1977): 136-143.

> the only one we have, it is in our interest to know him [. . . .] What emerges is this: events are alterable not at their climax, not by virtue and resolution, but only in their strictly habitual course, by reason and practice [. . . .] It is less concerned with filling the public with feelings, even seditious ones, than with alienating it in an enduring manner, through thinking, from the conditions in which it lives. (Benjamin, [1937] 1978: 235-236)

While Benjamin is writing about the theatre here, the recontextualization that takes place in Brecht's work is similar to Benjamin's own theory of the cultural artifact. Yet, Brecht was a materialist in the most common sense of the word; Benjamin embraces Jewish theology and surrealism, the latter another area of interest that Adorno found detrimental to Benjamin's progress. These interests add a mystical level to Benjamin's theories, which Gershom Scholem points out. Scholem writes that for Benjamin, "surrealism was something like the first bridge to a more positive assessment of psychoanalysis, [although] he was under no illusions about the weaknesses in procedures of both schools" (Scholem, 1981: 134-135). Indeed, Scholem points out that Louis Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926) inspired Benjamin to undertake the Arcades Project (Scholem, 1981: 135).

Benjamin and Surrealism

These connections are all of importance, as Benjamin's initial desire to undertake his *Passagen-Werk* arise from his interest in anti-realist aesthetics. James Clifford, writing on Benjamin's "The Storyteller," points to the following intersection between Benjamin's work, Brecht, surrealism, and ethnography:

> Reality is no longer a given, a natural, familiar environment. The self, cut loose from its attachments, must discover meaning where it may--a predicament, evoked at its most nihilistic, that underlies surrealism and modern ethnography [. . . .] To see culture and its norms--beauty, truth, reality--as artificial arrangements susceptible to detached analysis with other possible dispositions is crucial to an ethnographic attitude. (Clifford, 1988: 119)

Benjamin's debt to the surrealists is obvious; his model of the "real" relies not on realism or verisimilitude, like painters adhering to the Renaissance perspective or *neorealismo italiano*, but instead on what he sees as dialectical forms of mass cultural textuality. This can be seen in his interest in the photo-montage of John Heartfield and in his desire to construct his work solely from literary

textual montage.[69] For Benjamin, like the surrealists, print textuality and cultural artifacts are all part of the "real," because of the text's status as cultural artifact. Both felt that through the reclassification of cultural artifacts (for Benjamin, through history; for the surrealists, through appropriation), the "real" could be changed. Both Benjamin and the surrealists argue that this could happen through shifting the cultural meaning derived from the cultural artifact. Whether or not this could take place solely through recontextualization is , of course, open to question; as far as models for *actual* societal change go, both the work of Benjamin and the surrealists could be considered failures. Clifford points to the intersection between the surrealists, dadaists and Benjamin's interest in dialectical montage:

> The fragmentation of Modern culture perceived by Benjamin, the disassociation of cultural knowledge in to juxtaposed "citations," is presupposed by *Documents* [a journal edited by Georges Bataille]. The journal's title, of course, is indicative. Culture becomes something to be collected, and *Documents* itself is a kind of ethnographic display of images, texts, objects, labels, a playful museum that simultaneously collects and reclassifies its specimens. (Clifford, 1988: 132)

While Benjamin had in mind a different area of analysis than the surrealists and Bataille, his methods were in many ways similar. His attempt to compose the *Passagen-Werk* solely from juxtaposed pieces of text, an idea Theodor Adorno derided, points to this type of approach, as does Benjamin's desire to include images within his study. The concept of "defamiliarization" was central to the approach of both Benjamin and the surrealists. Benjamin wanted to re-frame history through the use of the dialectical image. The surrealists wanted to recontextualize the familiar through juxtaposition and collage:

> Its intent was to break down the conventional "bodies"--objects, identities--that combine to produce what barthes would later call "the effect of the real." In *Documents* the juxtaposition of

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[69] See John Heartfield, *Krieg im Frieden: Fotomontagen zur Zeit 1930-1938.* (Munchen: Carl Hasner Verlag, 1972). Recently, other photographers have picked up on the value of montage or Appropriationist photography, such as Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, and the most prominent, Barbara Kruger. Montage also played a large role in the punk-art aesthetic, as can be seen in the works of Jamie Reid, who designed the Sex Pistols' covers and posters; see *Up They Rise: The Incomplete Works of Jamie Reid 1971-1987* (London: Faber, 1987).

> contributions, and especially their photographic illustrations, was designed to provoke this defamiliarization. (Clifford, 1988: 133)

The debt Benjamin owes to the surrealists extends to the structure of his analysis as a whole. The *Passagen-Werk* was to be an open-ended account of the mass culture of *fin du siècle* Paris. This "openendedness," and the wish to let readers draw their own conclusions from the juxtapositional collage also has a connection to the surrealist journals and the work of Heartfield. Benjamin put it bluntly: "Method of this work: literary montage. I have nothing to say, only to show" (Buck-Morss, 1989: 73). Benjamin's model of montage is more diffuse than that of Brecht or Sergei Eisenstein. The following description of a list of items in one of *Document*'s issues sounds quite similar to Benjamin's concerns:

> *Documents* [. . .] creates the order of an unfinished collage rather than that of a unified organism. Its images, in their equalizing gloss and distancing effect, present in the same plane a Chatelet show advertisement, a Hollywood movie clip, a Picasso, a Giocometti, a documentary photo from colonial New Caledonia, a newspaper clip, an Eskimo mask, an Old Master, a musical instrument--the world's iconography and cultural forms presented as evidence or data. Evidence of what? Evidence, one can only say, of surprising, declassified cultural orders and of an expanded range of human artistic invention. This odd museum merely documents, juxtaposes, relativizes--a perverse collection. (Clifford, 1988: 133-134)

Where Benjamin steps away from the surrealists is in his recontextualization of the cultural objects that enter under his scrutiny. Benjamin replaces these "fossils" of culture into a new cultural history of the "dialectical image."

Benjamin and the Cinema

The nature of the image is of central importance in Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk*. Benjamin argues that through the image itself, cultural artifacts can be used to trace history. I have argued that this can be of great use in analyzing phenomena such as New German Cinema. This cinematic movement, to a large extent, brought about Germany's reconsideration of its own Nazi past in the 1970's. Furthermore, Benjamin's model is of interest because it allows the film theorist to look at the cinema and its relationship to the "real" in terms of the culture at large, and not solely in terms of the image itself.

Benjamin's model of history arises out of *fin du siècle* Paris, as does the cinema, and in many ways, the cinema is the logical extent of both the nineteenth century's "wish image" of the future and of Benjamin's model of history. As stated above, the "dialectical image" lies at the center of his model, providing a nexus for the contrasting strains of historical discourses attached to the object. In significant ways, the cinema provides the ultimate in "dialectical images," as it concretely demonstrates the properties that in a far more abstract way, Benjamin attributes to the "dialectical images" of cultural artifacts. That is to say, the cinema presents the viewer with an image of the past that both has a historical context from the time of its production, and a recontextualized meaning at the time the image is projected. Yet, this meaning subtly shifts with each projection, as the historical and cultural moment also shifts. This provides the film theorist with a nuanced version of the changing meaning of a cinematic text through time, as major aspects of the text may stay the same--an example would be the fascist politics of *Der Triumph des Willens*, mentioned above--while other aspects of the cultural and political context of the film's meaning and dissemination may change. This model, then, provides the cinema with meaning that is both historical and shifting, giving the film theorist the possibility to speak about a film as past, present, and future. This is also of use in speaking about the "real" in the cinema, as both the signifying aspects of the film itself, and the cultural context of the viewer, can be taken into consideration; while this model would be profoundly speculative, it would open up many debates about history, the cinema, and the "real," as the above analysis of Weimar, Nazi, and New German Cinema demonstrates.

CONCLUSION

Cinematic Realisms: Seeing Films at The End of The Century

If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?

The Merchant of Venice Act III, sc. i

Awright, enough is enough, this is the final, the very last straw; who is responsible for this? I demand that you show yourself! Who are you?! Huh?!

Daffy Duck, *Duck Amuck*

How true it is that words are but vague shadows of the volumes we mean. Little audible links they are, chaining together great inaudible feelings and purposes.

Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*

It's too late to stop now . . .

Van Morrison, *The Fillmore West*

The cinema, unlike other twentieth century art-forms that embraced anti-realist tendencies early in the century, has been continuously caught in a dialectic between artifice and reality. The quest for the "real" has dominated many of the critical discourses that have attempted to explain cinematic phenomena. This is apparent in the following description of the cinematic viewing process, offered by Roger Ebert, of the "Siskel & Ebert" team. Ebert, one of the most influential film critics in America, writes the following:

> The audience. It sits in the dark, lined up facing the screen. The light comes from behind their heads--from back where the dreams come from. The movies are the most involving artistic medium ever invented, the one that can temporarily preempt even our sense of self, and give us the vicarious experience of being someone else, somewhere else. Most of us have our first moviegoing experiences at a young age, and our responses to the movies often echo that first orientation. We sit passively in the dark and are told a story. (Ebert and Siskel, 1991: ix)

Ebert's passage is of interest, if only because it points to the popular conception of the relationship between the viewer and the film. In Ebert's eyes, if the film overwhelms the viewer, if the viewer's ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy is suppressed, the film is a success. Yet, this assumption about the "magic" and "fantasy" of the cinema needs to be questioned. This thesis began with the premise that blind acceptance of the power of the cinema to seem "real" needed reconsideration, not because this effect did not at times arise, but because the theoretical models traditionally used in film theory to describe this process were limited. What is needed in order to justify many of the claims I have made in this thesis is a preliminary model for what I have called the cinematic "real." To accomplish this, an argument has to be traced out through a variety of theories; some of which are of use in this description of the "real" in the cinema, and some which are not, but have been traditionally used in an attempt to describe it.

In the course of this thesis, I have rejected two models, Lacan's psychoanalytic paradigm and Baudrillard's notion of the hyperreal, as viable models for the effect of the "real" in the cinema. Lacan's model, while not used directly to speak about the "real" in its appropriation by film theory, nevertheless has far-reaching implications on this very subject. Indeed, on an

implicit level, the Lacanian model of film theory questions the materiality of the image itself. If the cinematic spectator is put in a position whereby her viewing films replicates earlier psychical processes, such as the "mirror stage," then questions of the "real" fall by the wayside, as spectatorship becomes a psychological re-enactment of certain psychoanalytic developmental models; by definition, an internalized process.[70] The determinism here defeats the possibility of the viewer having a response to the cinematic image outside the Lacanian psychoanalytic model. More concretely, in the Lacanian model, cinema exists only in the imaginary; its meaning does not have a material, mind-independent, base. It is my contention that while the psychoanalytic paradigm can be fruitfully used as an interpretative metaphor, it does not adequately answer our questions as to the nature of the relationship between the viewer and the cinematic image.

Jean Baudrillard, on the other hand, poses a different set of problems. His work is of interest precisely because it points to the anxiety over the image that is currently a concern within mass culture and Film Studies. His negation of the real world, insofar as it is a product of the simulacra, also dismisses the notion of the "real" in the cinema, as the lines between reality and the image dissipate. Again, I believe this is the wrong approach to take in regards to the cinematic spectator. I think that one of the major flaws of much of film theory is to separate the cinematic image from the real world, from the viewer, and from the systems of sign-based, communicative exchanges we all take part in as social subjects. Unlike Baudrillard, I would prefer to argue that the cinema is part of our social and cultural landscape. Also, I would wish to argue that the cinema is a material object that does not overpower the "real," as Baudrillard would have it; instead it functions as a mediating entity, representing other aspects of the real world through what the spectator perceives as mediation; constructing a praxis for the viewer between mimesis and reality.

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[70] See Christian Metz, *Le Signifiant imaginaire* (Paris: U.G.E., 1977).

The Train Left The Station

In examining the relationship between the cinema and the "real," the question of realism is quite important. Often, it is assumed that realism points to a direct relationship between the text and the real world. This argument is found, for instance, in the writings of André Bazin, who believes in photographic realism and the power of *mise-en-scène*.[71] For Bazin, the *neorealismo italiano* films of Francesco Rosi, Vittorio De Sica, and Roberto Rossellini access reality because they contain aspects of the world the cinema does not usually contain, such as chance, spontaneity, non-actors, and improvisation. By filming the real world, the real world seeps through into the cinematic image. Yet, there are obvious problems with this argument. Firstly, the cinematic image does not offer direct access to a real world event, as Bazin argues in "The Ontology of the Photographic Image." Bazin believes that the lack of a human agent between reality and the viewer leads to a non-mediated view of the world. He writes:

> Originality in photography as distinct from originality in painting lies in the essentially objective character of photography. For the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent. For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man. (Bazin, 1967: 13)

Bazin believes that the photographic image, because of its illusionary capacity to replicate reality, allows the viewer to see the world as it is; any subjective input on the part of the photographer is secondary to the mimetic qualities of the camera itself. Bazin goes on to write:

> The objective nature of photography confers on it a quality of credibility absent from all other picture-making. In spite of any objections our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually *re*-presented, set before us, that is to say, in time and space. Photography enjoys a certain advantage in virtue of this transference of reality from the thing to its reproduction. (Bazin, 1967: 13-14)

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[71] See André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* (Berkeley: U California P, 1967), vol. I, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," 9-16; "The Myth of Total Cinema," 17-22; "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," 23-40; *What is Cinema?* (Berkeley: U California P, 1971), vol. II, "An Aesthetic Reality: Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation," 16-40.

What Bazin's model of the cinematic "real" overlooks is the nature of the object being reproduced. The viewer may recognize an object for what it is, for example, she can state "that's a train." While she can recognize the content of that image, the tenuous claims about knowledge the image may be making is radically shifted through the mediating role of the cinematic image itself. This was demonstrated with the use of Abraham Zapruder's footage in *JFK*; watching the footage repeatedly does not provide the viewer with more knowledge about the actual event. Similarly, we can return to the example which opened this thesis: while the train that appeared on the screen when the Lumière brothers screened their first film looked real, the image was fundamentally different from a train in the real world. This was realized by the audience of the time, as soon as the train did not crash through the screen, and reinforced on a mass scale by Porter shortly after, when he filmed *Uncle Josh at The Moving Picture Show* (1902).

Stanley Cavell attempts to circumnavigate this problem by claiming that film does not offer the viewer reality; instead, through the processes of framing, editing, and choosing what to have in front of the camera, film offers the viewer *a* reality.[72] Conceivably, many different filmmakers could present different realities from the same set of images. This also seems to be a dubious claim, as "reality," in this model becomes a meaningless term. When Godard frets over which tree he shoots in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, he is not worried about whether he is showing *reality* to the viewer; he is concerned that the process of selection itself forces the cinema to be, finally, solely representation. As he focuses on some leaves in Paris, Godard's voice-over is heard saying: "For example, we have some leaves and even if Juliette doesn't have much in common with a Faulkner heroine, our leaves could be made just as dramatic as those of wild palm trees" (Godard, 1975: 154). What Godard points to here, and does continuously throughout this film, is that to identify what a sign represents iconically is not to locate its *meaning*. There are leaves in Godard's film, and Lumière's film of a train is a train, but what does that tell us about these

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[72] See Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed* 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1979): 74-107.

images: what do they mean? Examining the same film, Paul Coates writes: "The non-existence of a grammar of film (the only 'grammar' is Wittgensteinian: the pragmatic knowledge of how to use it) torments a Godard in particular, for it deprives him of the certitude that he is conveying his point to the audience [. . .] (Coates, 1985: 5-6). Godard's uncertainty lies addresses the basic conundrum of the cinema. Out of all the trees I have seen in the real world, I have not experienced any of them the way I experience Godard's tree in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*. The reason why is apparent: a tree in the real world is not a representation of a tree; it is not a symbol; it is not an image that refers to something else. The real and the representation are intrinsically tied, yet the meaning of the artifact changes through cinematic mediation. Questioning the role played by mediation is what is missing from Bazin and Cavell's argument.

Realism then refers to how the film is understood by the audience, and not to the claims it is making about the real world. The "real" is not meant to imply a lack of mediation on the part of the image, or an ontological certainly about the nature of the image's referent in the real world. The image may strike the viewer with an immediacy that implies a direct access to the real world. Yet, the image can deceive the viewer; whether or not the image actually corresponds to a real event is, at times, secondary.

Surfaces and Facades

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the French phenomenologist, takes a different approach to the psychological "real" than Bazin or Cavell. For Merleau-Ponty, knowledge and understanding are not mind-dependent phenomena, but mind-independent. The subject responds to the world she is placed in; the mind does not determine reality. His description of *Gestalt* psychology, a psychology of perceptions and surfaces, is as follows:

> The new psychology has, generally speaking, revealed man to us not as an understanding which constructs the world but as being thrown into the world and attached to it by a natural bond. As a result it re-educates us in how to see this world which we touch at every point of our being, whereas classical psychology abandoned the lived world for the one scientific knowledge succeeded in constructing. (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1948: 53-54)

Paisley Livingston writes that Merleau-Ponty thought "[n]ot only would it be

possible to describe the relations between perception, everyday intersubjective understanding, and some of the basic structures of cinematic experience, but it would also be possible to provide a psychological basis and justification for a particular set of aesthetics in cinema" (Livingston, 1992a: 1). Merleau-Ponty argues that the cinema is a primarily visual medium, a mind-independent phenomena. Cinema offers a realistic image of the phenomenal world. Merleau-Ponty writes that:

> [M]ovies do have a basic realism: the actors should be natural, the set should be as realistic as possible; for 'the power of reality released on the screen is such that the least stylization will cause it to go flat' (Leenhardt). That does not mean, however, that the movies are fated to let us see and hear what we would see and hear if we were present at the events being related. (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1948: 57)

Cinema does differ from the real world because of its precision and exactitude. Merleau-Ponty writes: "Cinematographic drama is, so to speak, finer-grained than real-life dramas: it takes place in a world that is more exact than the real world. But in the last analysis perception permits us to understand the meaning of the cinema. A movie is not thought; it is perceived" (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1948: 58). For Merleau-Ponty, this gives the viewer a different take on the "real," as she has the ability to experience what one can not with a novel or a poem--she can see, with exactitude, the way people behave in the phenomenal world. The possibility of this sort of representation does not make the cinematic world equal to the "real"; it instead shows us things about reality that we can not usually notice or see.

Despite some similarities, this is a fundamentally different claim from the ones made by realists such as Bazin, who argues that the cinema offers access to the real world phenomena. Merleau-Ponty is closer to the point of view of Siegfried Kracauer, who argues that "films come into their own when they record and reveal physical reality" (Kracauer, 1960: 41). Kracauer felt that films had to capture the reality that the viewer does not or can not usually see in the phenomena world; his examples are the intricate movements of leaves, water, and people in the Lumière brothers' films such as *Sortie des usines Lumière* (1895), *Le déjeuner de bébé* (1896), and *L'Arroseur arrose* (1895), and early American

films such as D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) and Charlie Chaplin's *A Dog's Life* (1918). Watching these everyday events in detail was, for Kracauer, the essence of the "real" in cinema. This is related to what Merleau-Ponty was suggesting. For him, cinematic representation did not stand in for the "real" through the attempt to replicate it; instead, the cinematic "real" gives the viewer access to insights about reality through the presentation of qualities and behaviours that go unnoticed in the real world.

The difference between Kracauer and Merleau-Ponty is the latter's interest in psychology. It is important to note that for Merleau-Ponty, the experience of the cinema is an external one; the viewer is interested in the surfaces of the characters, not in their internal psychological complexes. Merleau-Ponty writes that the cinema does "[. . .] not give us [the character's] *thoughts* [. . .], but his conduct and behaviour. They directly present to us that special way of being in the world, of dealing with things and other people, which we can see in the sign-language of gesture and gaze and which clearly defines each person we know" (Merleau-Ponty, [1945] 1918: 58). Merleau-Ponty, then, believes that the way in which the subject knows another person in the real world is through phenomenological signs--through appearance, gesture, surface readings--signs which can be replicated within the cinema. The cinema should show the viewer characters in the same manner that they would see them in the real world, and not attempt to express the character's visual experience; we should see cinematic characters the way we would see them if they were real, we should not appropriate their sight. The "dolly out, zoom in" shot in the bell-tower scene in Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) is not the way to represent the "real"; instead the viewer should see Scottie (James Stewart) dizzy and off-balance.

The filmmaker who conforms the most to this type of aesthetic is Robert Bresson. In films like *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1944), *Un Homme Condamné a Mort s'est Échappé* (1956), and *Une Femme Douce* (1969), Bresson embraces this type of aesthetic, denying the viewer psychological motivations for the characters actions, and showing only the character's surfaces. Bresson writes that, in his films, he attempts "to make a film about objects which would at the same time have a soul" (Cameron, 1969: 8). Taken to the extreme as it is by Bresson, this is an interesting aesthetic strategy, but it does not demonstrate

anything other than another model of psychological realism; the questions of mediation, artifice, and the "real" are not solved by Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty, despite his desire for psychological realism in the cinema, wishes to keep it "other," to use the cinema to explain reality, to let the viewer sees things the would usually miss. Psychological realism then leads to the same problems one finds in the realism of Bazin: the desire for realistic artifice does not equate to the cinematic "real."

The Ontology of The Image

There are other arguments that try to establish exactly what the photographic and cinematic "real" is. Kendall Walton, attempting to respond to Bazin's argument, which he finds hazy, claims that the photographic image gives the viewer direct access to the real world. He feels that photographs are transparent, giving the viewer a portal to a real event in the past. Walton writes:

> To view a screening of Frederic Wiseman's *Titicut Follies* (1967) in San Francisco in 1984 is to watch events which occurred in 1967 at the Bridgewater State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Photographs are *transparent*. We see the world *through* them. I must warn against watering down this suggestion, against taking it to be a colorful, or exaggerated, or not quite literal way of making a relatively mundane point. [. . .] My claim is that we see quite literally, our dead relatives themselves when we look at photographs of them. (Walton, 1984: 251-252)

If this were the case, having seen *Titicut Follies*, I have also seen the goings on at Bridgewater, just as the guards and inmates there have. This seems to me to be hopelessly misguided; any notion of mediation is lost in this model. On an intuitive level, I would have to say that I did not see John F. Kennedy's murder, nor did I ever see Adolf Hitler at Nuremburg. I know these people and events existed, but they exist as abstract knowledge. Dissolving mediation then means the dissolving of any form of representation by the photographic image. Gregory Currie, responding to Walton, offers the following example to counteract Walton's claim. He writes:

> A and B are two clocks. The orientation of the hands of A governs the orientation of the hands of B by means, let us suppose, of radio

> signals. I am looking at clock B; clock A is out of sight. There is a natural dependence between my visual experience of clock B and the appearance of clock A. If clock A's hands had been in a different orientation at the moment of my seeing clock B, the orientation of clock B's hand would have been correspondingly different, and so would my visual experience. But there is no plausibility in the claim that I see, or perceive in any way, clock A when I see clock B. (Currie, 1991: 26)

Here Currie demonstrates that mediation does take place between technologies that purportedly show us the same phenomena. But again, there is no clue as to the nature of the phenomena itself. For Currie, like Walton, it is enough to show that there is a co-relation between the object in reality and the object on the screen, but what the presence of that cinematic object means, beyond its visual similarities to the object in reality, is left undetermined.

Walton claims that the photographic image gives the viewer direct access to the real world, more so than Bazin or any of the realists. Both Walton and Currie are also claiming that there is some precise truth content that can be discerned from the photographic image; yet, it seems to me that any real meaning, beyond correctly identifying what the object in front of the camera was, comes from the intentions of the photographer or filmmaker who uses the images to their own ends, even if the meanings are unknown to them at the time of production. Yet, Walton would have us believe that we have actually seen the events in front of the camera, albeit from someone else's somewhat subjective point of view. He writes:

> In *Triumph of the Will*, Leni Riefenstahl, by careful selection and editing, 'interprets' for us the Nazi Party Congress of 1934; she represents it as she construes it. It does not follow that we ourselves do not see Hitler's airplane descending through the clouds, the thousands of marching troops and cheering spectators, and Hitler delivering tirades, even if the film fosters misconceptions about the things we see, inducing us to believe, for example,that the people we see were more enthusiastic about Hitler than they actually were. We can be aware, even vividly aware, of both the medium and the maker without either blocking our view of the object. (Walton, 1984: 262)

This seems overly simplistic, as the cinema itself would have no meaning if this were the case; representation and reality would be, while formally distinguishable, ontologically the same. This does not make any sense. It would not be very

difficult to take the images from *Der Triumph des Willens*, of the crowds cheering for Hitler in 1934, re-edit them, a turn them into what would seem to be V-J Day footage from Britain, or into a comedy--in fact, Len Lye has done just this. Would this still be a subjective view of the crowds that cheered on Hitler? The first problem with this model is the meaning of the object in the phenomenal world. Walton believes that the object itself is devoid of any subjective meaning, or any ambiguity, which as we shall see is not the case.

Walton's claims can be problematized by examining Stan Brakhage's *The Act of Seeing With one's own Eyes*. In this film, Brakhage is far more concerned with the limits of cinematic perceptions than with the real world corpses he documents. Indeed, this film throws the notion of documentary into question, as the power of the film lies in the fact that the spectator believes that what she sees is real: what the film actually tells the viewer about real world phenomena is irrelevant.

The Act of Seeing

Stan Brakhage's films are profoundly concerned with the nature of sight, in both the cinema and reality, as can be seen in *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959) and *The Act of Seeing With one's own Eyes* (1971). Brakhage's *Window Water Baby Moving* begins with images of Jane, Stan's wife, taking a bath while pregnant. This first segment of the film almost seems like a continuation of Brakhage's earlier intercourse film *Loving* (1958): here Brakhage shows he and Jane kissing and caressing each other as she bathes. The camera seems transfixed by Jane's belly button, as the camera keeps returning to it. Also, the shadow from the window forms a cross that intersects at the center of Jane's stomach: these images focus in on the pregnancy. This first set of images is divided from the rest of the film by red leader: then the birth process begins. The doctor inserts his hand into Jane's vagina. These images seem like documentary footage, yet the film does not have a documentary feel to it, as this section is intercut with the images of Jane bathing. As the baby gradually emerges from Jane, the viewer sees shots of her screaming out in pain (the viewer obviously presumes this, as the film is silent), yet these images are also reminiscent of *Loving*.

There is a tension in these images, as the shots of the baby emerging from Jane's vagina have a documentary look to them, yet the images of other parts of her body are fragmented and aestheticized; there are long shots of her buttocks and her thighs. This leads to a bizarre amalgamation of documentary and aestheticized footage. After the baby is born, there is a montage of the images leading up to the birth, recapping the process; then as the placenta emerges, Stan tears it open, picks it up, and films through it. After this scene, as the film draws to an end, Stan gives the camera to Jane, who has just finished giving birth, in order to film his responses to the birth process; Stan looks elated, but it seems strange to have him on camera, as any documentary feel the film has falls away, and suddenly the entire process of filming seems quite narcissistic.

Brakhage's film poses interesting questions about how the film theorist could build a model of the "real" in the cinema. The structure of Brakhage's film is anti-realist, experimental. Yet the subject matter, the birth of he and his wife's first child, and the visceral response these images generate, make the viewer feel that what the images depict are, in a sense, "real." The film, unlike narrative cinema, is predominantly concerned with the nature of the cinematic image. Filming the child emerging from his wife's vagina, and subsequently filming through the placenta strikes the viewer with an immediacy that is not found in movies which subscribe to the principles of verisimilitude or of documentary conventions. Aesthetic conventions that point to the cinema's inherent mediation seem to fall away. Brakhage himself said that it was the presence of the camera that kept him from passing out during the process:

> [. . .] I knew that for that first birth I could have never stood in that room, without passing out or something, if I hadn't had a camera. I'm not so constituted to be able to take an experience like that [. . .] without camera in hand, which is a major reason why I have camera in hand, what my life's work is. In fact, there's very little that's understandable to me about life, or even bearable, except the seeing of it. I have managed my whole sight by making films. (Brakhage, 1982: 196)

It seems, then, that the film is as much about the processes of mediation as it is about the actual act of seeing. As "real" as the images seem, the effects of mediation are what make both the filming and the film itself tolerable to the

audience. Gerald Mast has written that *Window Water Baby Moving* is "an overall description of the process of birth--both the way the process occurred objectively and the way the artist felt about the process as it was occurring" (Mast, 1983: 135). Yet, despite how "real" it seems, surely the film's highly aesthetic style takes away from its power to depict the "process of birth" (135). The viewer is again caught in a quandary, as the image of the birth is quite graphic (and most viewers have probably not seen a child being born), yet the image is aestheticized enough that the viewer can feel distanced. This paradox comes to the forefront when Brakhage films through the placenta; this is both the most consciously aesthetic and graphic moment in the film. The images seem hallucinatory at this point, and the film then seems more concerned with how Brakhage sees the event than the event itself. The feeling that this is "real" dissipates in the face of the "artist's vision"; in some ways, the last part of the film seems like a prelude to Brakhage's next birth film *Thigh Line Lyre Rectangular* (1963), a film that is far more abstracted than *Window Water Baby Moving*.

The tension between documentary and aesthetics comes to a head when Brakhage appears onscreen. When Brakhage hands his wife the camera immediately after she gives birth, the viewer is struck by the fact that the cinema itself is intruding on reality. Up until this point, the viewer could conceivably believe that the film is solely a documentation of birth, but at this moment, those beliefs are thrown into question. This is not because any realist conventions are broken; there were none in this film to begin with. Instead, it is because the cinematic event of filming the birth has, in a real sense, fundamentally changed the event itself. The viewer becomes aware that while the camera was documenting a natural event, a part of the birth event was staged for the camera.

These questions are taken a step further in Brakhage's *The Act of Seeing With one's own Eyes* (1971). This film is part of Brakhage's "Pittsburgh Documents," one of three films (the other two are *Deus Ex* and *eyes*, both from 1971) shot in the Pittsburgh area, in a form that more closely resembles documentary filmmaking than anything else Brakhage has done. *The Act of*

Seeing With one's own Eyes is shot in a Coroner's office in Pittsburgh; during the film the viewer sees autopsies that become more and more graphic as more and more corpses roll by. This is an incredibly hard film to watch, yet it is a film where the pull between the "real" and cinematic mediation is most strongly felt. The viewer is continuously struck by how powerful the images are; after watching this film, one feels a bit distanciated from one's own body, after seeing the innards of a corpse so carefully unpacked. Yet one is also struck by the fact that this is just a set of images, not real at all, just light on a screen; in fact the viewer must keep telling herself this throughout the film. Yet, this is the power of the film: if the viewer can convince herself that these are just images on the screen, then how can anything be considered "real" in the cinema? Yet, for Brakhage, the reason for making this film came from the opposite direction; he felt he had to make the film in order to get away from his more and more introverted visions. Brakhage had to show something "real."

Of Mushroom Clouds

To have the effect of the "real" in the cinema, the idea that the image has a referent in reality does not seem to be a fully adequate definition. William Wees, analyzing found footage films, points to the following: "One might begin by considering the relevance of found footage films to the question of representation; for, the use of found footage cannot help but challenge easy, unreflective assumptions about the cinematic image as a substitution for, or imitation of, a pre-existing, profilmic reality" (Wees, 1991: 2). Wees points out that archival footage is believed to give the viewer unmediated access to the real world, "[i]n effect, representation equals reality" (4). The process he is describing here is different from Bazin's, as here the footage is *believed* to be reality, whereas with Bazin, it *is* reality. At any rate, it is a misapprehension to equate *a priori* the image with reality, as the way in which footage is used is as important as the content itself. Wees points to a useful example of this in atom bomb imagery. The atom bomb detonations at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were, in many ways, the focal points of the development of twentieth century technology, radically changing both the political and scientific landscape. Yet, the footage of these events, along with the footage of the U.S. bomb tests of the

1940's and 1950's, are used mostly in the cinema as visual metaphors, not unlike the butcher sequence in *Strike*. The "real" seems to fall away in these most real of images, becoming almost pure metaphor and representation. The ultimate example of this is the conclusion to Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove, or how I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love The Bomb* (1963), where a flurry of bomb detonations is accompanied by "We'll Meet Again." Wees draws upon two other films which decontextualize bomb explosions. In comparing Bruce Conner's *A Movie* (1958) with Michael Jackson's video *The Man in The Mirror* (1988), he points out that: "In the discourse of *The Man in The Mirror*, the representation of the nuclear explosion signifies *hope*; in *A Movie* it signifies just the opposite; yet in the archive the shot is pure, impersonal history, an event that 'narrates itself' through cinematic representation" (7). Jackson's video points to how the decontextualization of images leads to an effacing the "real" within technologically reproduced images. This type of analysis can be extended to all the images appropriated in the video. The juxtaposition of Lech Walesa with Bob Geldof makes them both seem like cool, cultural heroes, yet says nothing about the vast discrepancies between their political achievements. The images empower the viewer, in a move that could only be described as reverse scapegoating, as she feels that she is part of the changes the Jackson video is arbitrarily listing. Watching "Live Aid" is equated with Poland's Solidarity movement; implicitly, by consuming these images, we're all a part of the changes taking place, despite political, social, cultural, and economic discrepancies. The fact that the images in *The Man in The Mirror* refer to "real" events is, at best, secondary to the role the we play as politically-correct consumers. This is not an isolated, representational event, as the same trend can be seen in The Scorpions' *The Winds of Change* (1991) video.

Wees sees the change taking place in the use of this footage of the "real" taking place along the lines of the model of history that Benjamin built. Wees states: "If compilation films 'quote history,' *The Man in The Mirror* [. . .] quote[s] the media which have taken the place of history" (7-8). This reproblematizes the question of the "real," as the spectator's belief the image has a referent in the "real" world is nowhere near enough. Benjamin's *Passagen-*

Werk and his related theories of history open up some interesting debates as to the nature of the cinematic "real." If cultural texts do act as historical artifacts with a past, present, and future, then the cinematic "real" takes on strikingly different nuances. As the artifacts themselves function as part of the culture, the meaning of the cinema is not an hermetic object; film changes as the culture changes. I think this applies to the cinematic image too, as these mushroom cloud images demonstrate.

Another example of this is found in the appropriation of footage from Riefenstahl's *Der Triumph des Willens*. In Chapter Three, I made the point that this film seems more like a documentary today than it did in the 1930's, even though most of the images were staged. Yet, when these images, which seem "real," despite their status as propaganda, are appropriated, the claims that are made about the "real" with these images fundamentally change. This is seen in Len Lye's 3 minute film *The Lambeth Walk* (1941). Lye takes footage from the Riefenstahl film, re-edits it, and puts it to music, so that the German *Schutz Staffeln* troops are goose-stepping in time with the music; Lye does the same with footage of Hitler making a speech. The film becomes a Chaplinesque comedy about the Nazis; indeed, it is similar to the slapstick found in Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940). Yet, while the film refers to real-world events, it no longer uses them as a referent; Lye turns the footage in slapstick comedy, disempowering the original propagandistic images.

This type of appropriation and decontextualization plays itself out on many levels. In chapter 1, I wrote about the opening sequence of images in Buñuel and Dalí's *Un Chien andalou*, as the series of surrealist images that most clearly evokes the "real," because of the emotional effect the slicing of an eye has on a viewer; this image seems "real" despite the fact that it is obviously staged. Yet, this staged image can also be recontextualized as pure artifice. In his video *L'histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988), Jean-Luc Godard appropriates the "eye" sequence from Buñuel and Dalí's film, and subverts it by using the first half of the sequence (Buñuel preparing to slice the eye), and then he cuts to a colour image of a cloud passing over the moon. The audience knows the film and waits. The audience, of course, is waiting for the infamous image of the eye opening up, but Godard holds on the colour image. The audience believes that Godard is skipping

the image it expects. At this point, Godard cuts to the image of the eye opening up, but he has transferred it to video, and proceeds to play with the speed of the image, so the viewer sees the contents of the eye spilling out slowly. By doing this, Godard is able to reinvest the image with the power it lost as the film became a "classic" of the cinema. But, in doing so, the "new" image refers to the original and, if the viewer is familiar with the original film, the reference to the "real" is lost. The image becomes similar to the ironic gross-out effects of David Cronenberg films like *Videodrome* (1983) and *The Fly* (1987). This points to the fact that the belief in the "real" in the cinema is quite precarious, despite the many claims made to the opposite effect.

Through The Looking Glass

The quest for the "real" in the cinema lies not only in the power of verisimilitude, or in the presence of a profilmic referent, but also within the socio-historical contexts of the twentieth century. Aesthetic, political, philosophical, and technological suppositions that held sway in *fin du siècle* Europe, where the cinema first emerged, have been thrown into radical doubt throughout the twentieth century. The incomprehensible mass destruction of the Holocaust, the bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and events like the Viet Nam war were all documents on film. These images throw into question the power of technologically-reproduced images to inform the viewer about society. Sight does not necessarily equate to knowledge and understanding in the phenomenal world, so how would this hold true for representations? It is of interest that as critical, cultural, and political discourses make profoundly sceptical claims, there is still an amazingly strong desire within the cinema to document and explain the real world. Yet, there is a strong, self-conscious undertone to these attempts; "seeing is believing" is no longer a maxim that holds sway. At the end of the nineteenth century, culture felt it could represent itself to itself; now it attempts to make sense of its own representations.

Tight Little Island

If my family is to believed, my grandfather only saw two movies in his lifetime:

Alexander MacKendrick's *Tight Little Island* (1949; U.K. title, *Whisky Galore!*) and Roger Neame's *Tunes of Glory* (1960), starring Alec Guiness. Both of these films are about Scotland; my grandfather left there in 1922 to come to Canada. For some time, I was fascinated by the fact that he had lived through the depression, two World Wars, and then the Cold War, and never went to the cinema, the medium that spent a large part of its time disseminating images of these very events. I wanted to see both these films, to see if the presence of Scotland within the films were enough to understand why he chose these two from the forty-five years of cinema that passed by while he was in Canada. At first, it seemed banal to attempt to reconstruct his choices, yet upon reflection, I realized that studying cinema, I restructure the past in terms of *entire* cultures; suddenly the idea seemed practical.

Tight Little Island I found thrilling. The plot to this film is, at best, insubstantial. Pauline Kael describes it as such: "[T]he wartime ration of whiskey has run out, and the island [Todday] is devastated by drought. Then a ship [. . .] with 50,000 cases of Scotch is wrecked on the shore, and the parched islanders take on the sweet task of salvage" (Kael, 1984: 602). I think what excited me about the film was that it related to what I constructed to be my own family's history; watching the film, I was projecting myself as my grandfather watching the film. This annoying autobiographical pause does lead somewhere. The "real" in the cinema was present in this film, I am speculating, for my grandfather; while he *knew* the film was fictional, insubstantial fluff to begin with, the presence of a Scottish island in the middle of the ocean on the screen was enough for him to want to see it, to relive the past, to imagine the present there. It only made sense that the two films he chose to saw in his lifetime related to where he originally came from; much the same way you don't carry snapshots of other people's families in your wallet, why go see films that don't project a bit of your real world back at you?

Yet, this is a facile reading of a past I know nothing about; I now feel more than ever that in attempting to theorize the "real" in the cinema, I am attempting to explain my own fascination with moving images by analyzing "Others" who seem far easier to unpack than myself. This is an interesting coincidence, as I suggest that this is exactly what one does when one goes to the

cinema: the viewer sees the world through images--and images are easier to live with than the real world. Lying at the center of this process is the paradox I began with: the problematic role of mediation.

The Cinematic "Real"

The cinematic "real," then, exists within the cinema in different ways. On a base level, one could argue that the viewer's awareness that image on the screen has an unstaged referent within the real world is a fundamental part of the cinematic "real." Yet, the relationship between the referent and the image, that is to say mediation, is also fundamental to any model of the cinematic "real." The images of the burning monks that are present in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966) and Brook's *Tell Me Lies* are examples of this. Yet, if the cinema mediates between the real world and the viewer, how do we know that these images are "real"? I would argue that we believe that they are "real" through the look of the image; the way they are shot, the graininess of the image, the fact that the monks look real. This is all true, in the broadest sense, but nowhere near an adequate model, as the discussion of Walton and Currie's work demonstrated.

The conventions of the cinema can easily present an artificial image that seems "real." The eye scene in *Un Chien andalou* point toward this. Another example is Orson Welles' *F For Fake* (1973), a film concerned solely with this issue; the film "tells the truth" for an hour (as Welles promises at the outset), and then for the last twenty minutes, Welles lies through his teeth. He appropriates the formal strategies of the documentary film and the docudrama, and so the viewer believes, until the last minute, that the whole film is true. The cinematic image plays such a strong role in determining what we invest in it that even though Welles begins the film recounting the *War of The Worlds* (1938) radio debacle, the viewer does not pick up on the implications of what he is saying. Therefore, the "real" in the cinema can also be constituted by images that the viewer believes are real, but are not, through the manipulation of cinematic form. Yet, there still must be more to it than this, as the viewer can know that she is viewing a fiction film, and still it can strike a chord that what she is seeing is "real." The example of *Weekend* pointed to this; the same can

be said for the abattoir sequence in Fassbinder's *In einem Jahr mit dreizehn Monden*. Beyond this, films such as Pasolini's *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*, despite the clear fact that it is a fiction film, crosses the line between fiction and reality in the mind of the viewer, because of its intensely graphic nature.

This is where Benjamin's work seems well-suited to intervene in this debate. Benjamin's model of the "dialectical image" within the cultural artifact begins to allow the theorist to trace out the cultural past, present, and future, through the cultural commodity: in this case, film. In doing so, one can then build a model whereby images that seem "real" are constituted by the cultural beliefs projected onto the image; for instance, a belief in the cinema's potential to refer to reality. In a model such as this, the "real" in the cinema is constituted by the dialectical collision of the cinema's power of signification and the belief systems of the viewer herself. Here, Benjamin's model offers something which neither the psychoanalytic or postmodern models can: a strong, culturally constituted interaction between the viewer and the screen. The viewer's projections onto the screen are tied to both personal and cultural beliefs about the nature of cinematic images and what, on a case by case basis, these images seem to represent. Beyond this, the cinema offers the fullest manifestation of Benjamin's notion of the "dialectical image": a cultural artifact which, as image, exists across time in a state of flux. For these reasons, I believe the possibilities of this option, even if proven wrong in terms of providing concrete answers, outweigh the far more deterministic models that currently hold sway in Film Studies.

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