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The Artist's Desire: Reflections on the Films of Mizoguchi Kenji

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A PIECE of calligraphy that used to hang on Japanese director Mizoguchi Kenji's wall read: "For each new look, it is necessary to cleanse one's eyes."[1] Like the artists depicted in his films, Mizoguchi was aware that he was the kind of director who had to start anew each time he tried to create an important film. He was never content with merely the realistic, the romantic, or the transcendental. Mizoguchi did not rest content with either the traditional or the innovative; neither was he so fascinated with beauty as to ignore relevant scenes of the most profound horror. Prophetic yet filled with nostalgia, a superior Mizoguchi film can elevate, and yet unsettle, the viewer's emotions.

The development of the theme of the artist and desire in Mizoguchi's oeuvre was not a steady one, but rather was one that appeared intermittently over the course of his career. Specific films that depict the struggles, and triumphs, of an artist include: *Hometown* (*Furusato*, 1929), *White Threads of the Cascade* (*Taki no shiraito*, 1933), *The Straits of Love and Hate* (*Aienkyō*, 1937), *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum* (*Zangiku monogatari*, 1939), *A Woman of Osaka* (*Naniwa onna*, 1940, no extant print), *The Life of an Actor* (*Geidō ichidai otoko*, 1941, no extant print), *Utamaro and His Five Women* (*Utamaro o meguru gonin no onna*, 1946), *The Love of Sumako the Actress* (*Joyū Sumako no koi*, 1947), and *Ugetsu* (*Ugetsu monogatari*, 1953).

The two major lines of development in the lives of artists as depicted by Mizoguchi – success in the world of the imagination and fulfillment in meaningful personal relations – grow progressively closer to each other with each successive film. In the earlier films, such as *White Threads of*

the Cascade, these two spheres of creative success and personal happiness are of unequal import to the artist-protagonist, who chooses an attachment to a distant lover over survival itself. With films like *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum* (which I have loosely grouped into a middle period), the creative endeavors of the artists become a higher priority as they also move (albeit tentatively) toward finding a satisfying spiritual partner. Finally, with *Ugetsu,* the poles join within a sphere of mutuality, after a long and arduous journey in which the artist first descends toward the illusory object of desire and then ascends, transformed.

In the nine Mizoguchi films mentioned above, the theme of the journey toward a merging of the creative and the personal is intimately tied to the theme of desire. Julia Kristeva (1984, 131) points out that "desire is the desire of the Other, which includes the subject as divided and always in movement." This state of constant movement in desire impels the desiring one to take risks – at times to embark on a metaphoric, or actual, journey – in order to approach the Other. Desire is inherently disruptive of the established order – Desire seeks change.

To the Mahayana Buddhists, whose thought influenced Mizoguchi as he grew older, desire is delusory, but it provides the fuel of ultimate enlightenment. In other words, desire itself is seen as a means toward the transcendence of desire. No matter how lowly a person might be, he or she is considered by the Mahayana Buddhists to be capable of becoming enlightened at any time. The journey, therefore, becomes a journey within desire, toward detachment from desire. The artists in Mizoguchi's films move toward a transcendence of desire, not by repressing it, but by incorporating it into their lives.

The journey, with its pattern of embarkation, return, and renewal, is associated in Mizoguchi's films with the working through of a metaphysical or psychological problem concerning the nature of desire. This threefold nature of the journey is also tied in with the journey's progression from possession, to loss, to a (partial) restitution of what is lost. It is thus more of a subjective or metaphoric journey than a geographical one, although all of the artists in Mizoguchi's films undertake an actual journey from one place to another during the course of the film. In these journeys, there is a tendency for the central figures to first descend, both in status and geographically, before ascending again, either in a real or metaphoric sense (see Cohen 1980, 313–319).

In his discussion of this same pattern in the Japanese puppet drama

(Bunraku), Andrew C. Gerstle (1986, 64–69) contrasts the rising and falling pattern of the *jōruri* narrative storytelling, particularly in history plays, with the opposite pattern, the fall through hubris, seen in tragic drama in the West. The Japanese pattern of a journey "downward" in fortune, followed by a return "upward" to one's original point of departure, transformed, is especially evident in films like *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum* and *Ugetsu,* reflecting the fact that these are more fully conceived works. This pattern also mirrors the Buddhist teaching that each person passes through cycles of death and then rebirth as he or she traverses different levels of illusion before emerging spiritually transformed.

In addition, this cyclic pattern is also connected to the *jo-ha-kyū* (slow-medium tempo-fast) pattern in the five different types of Noh plays.[2] As Kunio Komparu (1983, 42) explains:

> The pattern of a cycle of Noh plays, from the blessings of a god to the salvation of a demon, and then back to the beginning, is an overall configuration that accords with the Buddhist theory of salvation, that aims to achieve artistic realization by weaving together the workings of the human heart under the protective power of the gods and mercy of the Buddha, and, moreover, that reflects the concept of an unending cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Thus, the compilation of five plays in a program based upon the principles of *jo-ha-kyū* is a linear flow but, understood in the light of this idea, it becomes a circle beginning with the god Noh.

Arthur Thornhill (1989, 17) distinguished between three types of *mugen* (phantasmal) Noh, which are related to this descending/ascending schema: (1) visitation Noh, in which the god (of either the Shintō or the Buddhist tradition) descends to earth from a more exalted realm in order to confer blessings; (2) exorcism Noh, in which the demon ascends from a lower level in order to propagate evil; and (3) salvation Noh, in which the spirits (usually ghosts of women) correspond to an "internalized, psychological portrayal of human souls who yearn for spiritual release." These spirits first appear in the (false) form of a local resident and then, during the second act, reveal their true ghostly nature and their lingering attachment to the human world. With a release from these painful attachments (usually with the help of the *waki* [deuteragonist] in the form of a priest from the Pure Land sect of Buddhism), the ghost's "descent" to the human world could be followed by an "ascent" to the Western Paradise of Amida Buddha. In this sense, the "ascent" aspect is intimately connected with a

view of transcendence and salvation inherent in the newer sects of Bud-
dhism, such as the Pure Land sect.

Despite the positive implications of this journey motif, the fact of the
artist's actual *power* in society remains problematic in Mizoguchi's work.
The only artists the director allows to survive are those who are able to
lower their ideals and become reconciled to their own limitations and to
the limitations society imposes on them. Implicit in this reconciliation
with one's environment is a political implication that the best artists are
those who remain in simpler, poorer circumstances (like the potter Gen-
jūrō in *Ugetsu*) or who accept traditional roles (like the actor Kikunosuke
in *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*). Those who remain isolated
from a supportive community (like the *shingeki*[3] actress Matsui Sumako[4]
in *The Love of Sumako the Actress*) do not survive.

With a lowering of their motivating ideals, and a return to concentra-
tion on work within a sheltering setting, the Mizoguchian artists acquire
an ability to endure and create.[5] In Mizoguchi's films, the artists who suc-
cessfully maintain their vision and yet return to society fulfill a basic drive
inherent in Japanese society: that of remaining part of a larger whole,
reflected not only in Nature but also in ties to other persons. In Japanese
traditional thought, individuals can be seen as aspects of each other and as
needing each other for completion and for the linking of destinies.[6] Even if
these "essential others" are now dead (as is the case with Genjūrō's wife
Miyagi in *Ugetsu*), the return of the artist has ensured the renewal of basic
ties so fundamental to his or her sense of identity.

Changes in Mizoguchi's depiction of the artist over time can be seen
metaphorically in the changes in the media the artists use for expression:
water for the "water juggling" act of the carnival performer Shiraito of
White Threads of the Cascade, parodies of words and gestures for the
traveling actors Ofumi and Yoshitarō in *The Straits of Love and Hate,*
impersonation for the *onnagata*[7] Kikunosuke in *The Story of the Last
Chrysanthemum,* puppets for the puppeteer Danpei in *A Woman from
Osaka,* imitation (of the father) for Kabuki actor Ganjirō in *The Life of an
Actor,* wood and paper for the *ukiyo-e*[8] artist Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–
1806), translations of basically foreign words and themes for the contem-
porary actress Sumako, and earth and fire for the potter Genjūrō in
Ugetsu. Concentrating on just the first and last examples, we can see a
movement from the most fluid and shapeless medium (water) to the most
tangible and yet still malleable (clay). This parallels the general movement

from isolation to union that the artists travel, with varying degrees of success.

In the case of *White Threads of the Cascade,* juggling water is juggling nothing at all. When Shiraito's act ends, nothing remains but a few stage props, such as the conduits through which the water is propelled. In the same fashion, the performer becomes but another conduit, remaining spiritually depleted by the close of the performance. An object of desire for the admiring, yet distant, audience, she yearns for a more substantial response. By the end of the film, however, her fate, and that of the object of her desire (her former lover Kinya), flow away like the ephemeral nature of her carnival act.

Equally illusory is the parody of Kabuki performed by Ofumi and Yoshitarō in *The Straits of Love and Hate,* and the *onnagata* role of Kikunosuke in *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum.* In both cases, the performers don roles separate not only from daily life but also from their own gender (since part of Ofumi's performance involved a parody of the Kabuki *aragoto* [masculine, rough style] acting). As Tamotsu Hirosue (1971) has pointed out in terms of the *onnagata* and actors in general, an aura of desire mixed with disgust remains attached to these theatrical figures, partially because of their power of illusion.

A Woman from Osaka brings forward the image of the puppeteer. In Japanese culture, puppets are often considered more "real" than human beings themselves and are constructed and clothed with great attention to detail. Despite this, they merely mimic the human form. As Roland Barthes (1982, 60) perceptively stated: "*Bunraku* does not aim at 'animating' an inanimate object so as to make a piece of the body, a scrap of a man, 'alive,' while retaining its vocation as a 'part'; it is not the similation of the body that it seeks but, so to speak, its sensuous abstraction." At this juncture in his career, Mizoguchi still had not produced the image of an artist who is integrated with the medium of his or her creation.

In the case of Utamaro, Mizoguchi moves into a new arena – that of the visual artist who draws inspiration, not from the world of entertainment, but from an interaction between the artist's imagination and his environment, notably the "floating world" of the Tokugawa-period pleasure quarters.[9] Like performing artists, the *ukiyo-e* artist's medium is a syncretic one. Mizoguchi's depiction of Utamaro as an "artist of the people" was, of course, partially a ploy to appease the Occupation forces, but it also reflected a new trend in his art, toward the artist as Everyman.[10]

The Love of Sumako the Actress returns again to the story of an exclusive love affair (as in *White Threads of the Cascade*), but it also recounts the brief career of a woman who represented, on a microcosmic level, modern Japanese women aspiring to a more truthful expression of self. The medium of Sumako's expression – translations of modern European plays and original Japanese *shingeki* productions – closely and concretely mirrored her own struggles as an artist, and as a woman.

Finally, *Ugetsu* presents, in itself, a movement toward the concrete and redeemable. Like Utamaro's *ukiyo-e* prints (and like Mizoguchi's films themselves), Genjūrō's pots have the potential of remaining, in a spatial sense, and of producing pleasure beyond the actual life span of the artist. Molded by the human hand, they can also exist independent of it. Unlike the puppet, which is an elaborate metaphor for a human being, molded clay represents an intimate, and essential, metaphor for the human form. The potter, like the woodblock artist, and like the actor and actress, remains a conduit, but the medium of creation has grown progressively more intimately connected with the essence of the artists themselves.

Ugetsu stands as the pinnacle of Mizoguchi's exploration of the soul of the artist.[11] As a film, it is both immediate and transcendental, an engrossing narrative based on possible historical circumstances and a cosmogony.[12] Taking the artist on a journey of purification downward, through violence and near self-destruction, it then returns him home, a new kind of man. The artist has not lost desire, but he has become more detached from its obvious manifestations. Moving through stages of temptation, in a Dantean or Buddhist sense, the artist, on a journey within desire, moves to a greater detachment from desire; from the marketplace of the world back to a present enriched by memory. Genjūrō's return calls forth all of the closure, and all of the openness, of memory, with its visions of family and creation.

Genjūrō returns, not only to his home and his village, but also to himself, in a new, and more humble, encounter *(deai)*[13] with the true nature of his own story and of the false mediator of his desires. Rene Girard (1965, 295) explains this dynamic in the following revealing statement:

> In renouncing divinity, the hero renounces slavery. Every level of his existence is inverted, all the effects of metaphysical desire are replaced by contrary effects. Deception gives way to truth, anguish to remembrance, agitation to repose, hatred to love, humiliation to humility, mediated desire to

> autonomy . . . [The genuine heroic conversion] cannot be expressed either in terms of absolute solitude or in terms of a return to the world . . . True conversion engenders a new relationship to others and to oneself.

He "recaptures the past" (Girard 1965, 38) by realizing that he must form his own impressions of the world. The potter's wheel, highlighted in the beginning and end of the film, can be seen as a catalyst of material creation, but also as emblematic of the Buddhist wheel of life and death. In Buddhist cosmology, the wheel is both the symbol of the endless spinning of time and of the Law. Initially, the potter's wheel is a central gathering place for the family, with Miyagi helping her husband spin the wheel. After the war and his misguided adventures, the circle is completed. Genjūrō has returned and receives the unseen, but still invaluable aid of his wife, having learned the lesson that "art must be a balance between form and function" (Cohen 1980, 672).

As figures of the fantastic in *Ugetsu,* the ghostly figures of Lady Wakasa, and later Miyagi, serve as representations of the imagination of the artist (Genjūrō), showing him how to deepen his talent. Like great directors, these women (who are often associated with lanterns or hearth fires) literally light the scenes in which the artist is placed. Through the aid of the ghosts, each awakening (of desire, inspiration, ambition) leads Genjūrō into a deeper dream until he becomes totally immersed in the dream of his art.

Just as we must take an intermediate stance between illusion and involvement in viewing Mizoguchi's films, so must we recognize that Mizoguchi takes an intermediate, objectified stance in relation to the artist-figures in his films.[14] Although Mizoguchi's treatment of women perhaps grew "warmer" and more empathetic following the onset of his first wife's illness,[15] his treatment of the artist grew more philosophical with each subsequent film on that theme. This philosophical stance does not imply a lack of sympathy, but rather a greater perspective which allows the viewers more insight into the fundamental desires of the artists (and of themselves). On the one hand, there is a detached, objective plane in which the human form, like that in a Chinese painting, is subsumed into the environment. And yet, also as in a Chinese painting, the landscape is empty without the human form. The natural world requires the reunion of community, the return of father to son, of child to mother. Only within the dignity possible in the human world is the journey completed.

Figure 1. Genjūrō (Mori Masayuki) and Lady Wakasa (Kyo Machiko) in Ugetsu. *Photograph courtesy of the Kawakita Memorial Film Institute.*

As critic Robin Wood (1975, 86) points out:

> What is consistent through all [of Mizoguchi's later films] is the emphasis on personal integrity and self-definition, growing out of an awareness of self and the conditions of one's existence. Awareness is one of the supreme Mizoguchian values, expressed everywhere in the style of the films. The other is the preservation of essential human feeling in a violent and brutalizing world.

The fragile triumphs of the artists largely center on these issues of artistic integrity and dignity. The necessity of being true to oneself and one's art is raised by Kinya in his courtroom speech to Shiraito in *White Threads of the Cascade,* by Ofumi in her self-definition as an "artist" to her rigid former husband Kenkichi in *The Straits of Love and Hate,* by the family nursemaid Otoku to Kikunosuke in the riverbed sequence in *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum,* by the geisha Okita in her farewell speech to Utamaro, by noted literary critic/director Tsubouchi Shōyō in

his encouragement of Sumako after Shimamura Hōgetsu's death, and by Miyagi in her consoling words to Genjūrō from her place in the world of death at the end of *Ugetsu*.

Mizoguchi's drive, his desire to succeed (both on a commercial and an artistic level), was a drive he subsequently imbued into each of the artist-figures in his films. Like those artists, Mizoguchi himself was mainly able to reconcile his art and his life on a higher plane than that of mundane consciousness. Yet, like the artists he so lovingly depicted, he never removed himself, or his films, from the travails of daily life, displaying what screenwriter Yoda Yoshikata termed "something deeper than empathy" *(dōjō yori fukai mono)* for those who had been discriminated against by society.[16] Although his films may tend toward darkness rather than light,[17] he remained, somewhat paradoxically, "the film director of the invisible light without which nothing appears" *(le cineaste de l'invisible lumiere sans laquelle rien n'apparait)* (Masson 1978, 36). His work is described by one Japanese critic (Okada 1961, 64) as *ningen kusai* (literally, "smelling of human beings," that is, showing compassion and realism). The artists Mizoguchi depicted shared with him a desire for beauty mixed with action, even rebellion, and a desire for refuge mixed with resignation – a combination only a director of the caliber of a Mizoguchi could successfully project.

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Notes and References

1. *A chaque nouveau regard, il faut se laver les yeux* (Mnouchkine 1964, 22).
2. The five categories of Noh plays are: god (*kami* or *waki*) plays (*jo* level); warrior *(shura)* plays (introductory *ha* level); woman *(kazura-mono)* plays (developmental *ha* level); madness *(kyōjo-mono)* plays (conclusory *ha* level); and demon *(kichiku)* plays (*kyū* level).

Mizoguchi was greatly influenced by the traditional Japanese theater and by the *shimpa* theater (see note 3). Screenwriter Narusawa Masashige reports that Mizoguchi advised him, before writing a film scenario, to see Kabuki for its beau-

tiful form *(yōshiki)* and sense of space and timing *(ma),* comic banter and story-telling *(manzai* or *rakugo)* for their "exclamation points" *(ochi),* and Japanese classical dance *(Nihon buyō)* for its sense of rhythm. Interview with Narusawa Masashige, 14 April 1988, Tokyo, Japan. Narusawa was the screenwriter for Mizoguchi's *Red-Light District (Akasen chitai,* 1956).

3. The *shingeki* movement sprang from a fascination with new alternatives presented by Western literature and drama, which began to enter Japan with the beginnings of the Meiji period and which gained special prominence during the Taishō period (1912–1926). *Shingeki* was never really a popular theater; rather it was a theater of the intellectual, the disaffected. The rise of *shingeki* signaled the decline of the more hybrid, melodramatic *shimpa* drama. While the *shimpa* was more of an attempt to assimilate Western-style conventions of performance, the *shingeki* was a more serious attempt to deal with the content of Western drama.

4. The historical Matsui Sumako (real name Kobayashi Masako, 1886–1919) became known for her interpretations of female roles like Shakespeare's Ophelia, Ibsen's Nora, and Magda of Sudermann's *Heimat.* Her name is associated with that of her lover, director/scholar Shimamura Hōgetsu (1871–1918), with whom she formed the Geijutsuza (Art Theater). Hōgetsu's death from pneumonia in 1918, followed by Sumako's suicide by hanging in January, 1919, spelled the end of the Geijutsuza.

5. This concept of "motivating ideals" is inspired by the discussion of literary critic Rene Girard (1965).

6. Conversation with Dr. Lucy Lower, University of Hawaii, 1988.

7. An *onnagata* is a female impersonator in the Kabuki theater. Originally women were allowed to perform in Kabuki, but this form of theater *(yūjo kabuki)* was banned in 1629. It was replaced by *wakashū kabuki* (young boys' *kabuki*), which was subsequently banned in 1652. Men then assumed women's roles and developed this acting style into a refined, if artificial, theatrical form.

8. *Ukiyo-e,* literally "pictures of the floating world," was originally a school of painting but later became better known for its woodblock prints, especially those of genre scenes from the "gay quarters" of Edo and Kyoto in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Artists associated with the *ukiyo-e* include Moronobu, Harunobu, Utamaro, Sharaku, Hokusai, and Hiroshige.

9. The demimonde of the "floating world" *(ukiyo, irozato, yūjomachi)* was so called because of its separation from the more mundane commercial and residential areas, but also because of the sense of "unreality" and evanescence, in a Buddhist sense, connected with the kind of pleasure this district provided.

10. *Utamaro and His Five Women* was produced with limited means during the postwar Occupation period (1945–1952), a period in which American authorities (who were aware that cinema can be a powerful force in shaping the mores of

a people) did their utmost to suppress and destroy films that they deemed propa-
gandistic, militaristic, or feudalistic, while encouraging values they considered
"democratic." This practice lasted up until three months before the end of the
Occupation. See Hirano 1987.

11. It is interesting in this light to consider the history of the making of *Ugetsu*.
According to Shindō Kaneto, Mizoguchi had meditated on this theme for fifteen
years before its actualization in 1953. Although *Ugetsu* only ranked third in the
Kinema Junpō listings for 1953, it was received with great acclaim in the Venice
Film Festival. Critic Iwasaki Akira explained that the lukewarm Japanese
response was due to the confusion over the way Mizoguchi had interpreted the
original story, an interpretation that was viewed as dissonant (Sadoul 1964, 32).

12. Note the statement of French New Wave director Jean-Luc Godard (1972,
70): "If poetry is manifest in each second, each shot filmed by Mizoguchi, it is
because, as with Murnau, it is the instinctive reflection of the film-maker's crea-
tive nobility. Like the director of *Sunrise,* the director of *Ugetsu Monogatari* can
describe an adventure which is at the same time a cosmogony."

13. The word *deai* is made up of the characters for "going out" and "joining,"
implying a need to go out from oneself in order to join with another, or with an
ideal.

14. Dudley Andrew (1984, 192) states that, in viewing a Mizoguchi film (espe-
cially one of his later films), we are "captive neither of artwork (traditional illu-
sionism) nor of our own constructions (modernism)."

15. Interview with Shindō Kaneto, 15 April 1988, Tokyo. Shindō, now a direc-
tor with his own professional reputation, was Mizoguchi's assistant art director
for *The Loyal 47 Rōnin* (*Chūshingura,* 1940) and co-writer of his *The Victory of
Women* (*Josei no shōri,* 1946) and *My Love Has Been Burning* (*Waga koi wa
moenu,* 1949). Shindō's own films, as a director, include the first postwar film on
the atomic bomb, *Children of the Atom Bomb* (*Genbaku no ko,* 1953); *The Island*
(*Hadaka no shima,* 1960); and *Onibaba* (1963).

16. Interview with Yoda Yoshikata, 10 April 1988, Kyoto, Japan. Yoda served
as Mizoguchi's chief screenwriter for twenty films, from *Osaka Elegy* (*Naniwa
hika,* 1936) to *New Tales of the Taira Clan* (*Shin Heike monogatari,* 1955). The
films they collaborated on include *Sisters of the Gion* (*Gion no shimai,* 1936), *The
Story of the Last Chrysanthemum, The Straits of Love and Hate, Utamaro and
His Five Women, The Love of Sumako the Actress, The Life of Oharu, Ugetsu,*
and *A Story from Chikamatsu* (*Chikamatsu monogatari,* 1954).

17. Interview with Miyagawa Kazuo, 9 April 1988, Kyoto, Japan. Miyagawa
described Mizoguchi's films as having more of a contracted, yin *(in)* quality than
an expanded, yang *(yō)* quality. Miyagawa Kazuo served as Mizoguchi's main
cinematographer for eight films during the latter part of the director's career,

from *Miss Oyū* (1951) to *Red-Light District (Akasen chitai)* in 1966. During that period, Miyagawa and Mizoguchi collaborated on such masterpieces as *Ugetsu, Sanshō the Bailiff,* and *A Story from Chikamatsu.* Miyagawa also filmed his first color film for Mizoguchi, *New Tales of the Taira Clan.* Miyagawa is also famous for his inspired camerawork in such films as Kurosawa's *Rashōmon* (1950) and *Yojimbo* (1961), Ichikawa Kon's *Conflagration (Enjō,* 1958) and *Tokyo Olympiad* (1965), and, more recently, Shinoda's *Gonza the Spearman (Yari no Gonza,* 1987).

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Satyajit Ray's Secret Guide to Exquisite Murders: Creativity, Social Criticism, and the Partitioning of the Self

ASHIS NANDY

MANY YEARS AGO, in the 1940s at Calcutta, I read some of the science fiction of H. G. Wells (1866–1946).[1] I had just crossed the boundaries of childhood then. On reading Wells, I remember being especially impressed by *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). The last two novels I read in Bengali, my English being till then uncertain.

While all four novels intrigued me, two of them did something more; they jolted me out of conventionality. They made me aware that everyone in the world did not look at science the way my school teachers and my parents did, or said they did. The criticisms of science in *The Invisible Man* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* were so direct and impassioned that they could not be ignored even by a teenager being constantly exposed to the then-new slogans about scientific rationality, being vended systematically at the time by India's brand-new, youthful prime minister.

It was therefore quite a surprise when, more than a decade later, I began to read Wells on history and society. For I discovered that there was not a whiff of the criticism of modern science that I had confronted in my teens in his novels; there were criticisms of only the social relations of modern science. When Wells wrote on the political sociology of science self-consciously, as for instance in his *Outline of History* (1920), he was prim and predictable. This was disappointing to me at the time but also consoling in some strange ways, for the criticisms of science in his science fiction *had* shaken me.

Everyone tries to forget one's childhood heroes. Mine were going out of fashion right before my eyes in my adolescence. Wells, like George

Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) and Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), was yielding place to the new heartthrobs of our times. Before long, I was keeping the company of others. I had nearly forgotten the two Wellses until, many years later, I discovered that one of the other heroes of my teens, Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930), was a practicing spiritualist and theosophist. Here was a major writer of crime fiction – whose hero Sherlock Holmes had done so much to sell the ideas of induction, empiricism, and value-neutral, dispassionate, rational knowledge to us in our teens – and he turned out to be, in his other incarnation, a direct negation of all the right values (see the discussion of this issue in Nandy 1989).

I was to remember both Wells and Conan Doyle when, after another two decades, I read some of Salman Rushdie's nonfiction soon after reading his *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*.

When I read *Midnight's Children,* I had not even heard of Rushdie. Parts of the novel, therefore, came to me as a revelation. Few had written about the Indian middle-class consciousness of our times with such sensitivity. The middle classes Saratchandra Chattopadhyay (1878–1938) wrote about with such deep understanding were no longer there, and few had sensed the new potpourri of multicultural life the middle-class Indians lived in the 1960s and 1970s. Before Rushdie, even fewer had tried to capture the interplay among the popular, the folk, and the nascent pan-Indian mass culture in urban India, creating new contradictions and absurdities for millions. Only a handful of writers has matched the insight with which Rushdie speaks in *Midnight's Children* of elements of the new popular culture in urban India, such as Bombay films and professional wrestling bouts, entering the interstices of the middle-class worldview. Rushdie's novel recognizes the inner dynamics of India's upper-middle-brow metropolitanism better than almost anyone else's – the fragments of self derived from the parochial, the local and the cosmopolitan; the peculiar, shallow mix of the East and the West which makes many Western-educated Indians what they are; the cauldron of emotions consisting of the profound, the comic, and the trivial.

Rushdie's formal social and political comments are a direct negation of these sensitivities. They have all the "right" values in a predictable social democratic format, but, on the whole, what he has to say in his nonfiction is cliché-ridden and pathetically dependent on categories derived from the popular Anglo-Saxon philosophy of the interwar years. Rushdie's social and political comments are terribly like what someone like Jawaharlal

Nehru (1889–1964) would have said about the public realm today if he were recalled in a seance by an enterprising medium. And when Rushdie writes on public issues in a nonfictional form, he even seems to lack the grandfatherly charm of Nehru. He speaks in a tone that may be very comfortable to the aging left, but which is not even good radical chic, being at least thirty years too late to be even vaguely interesting.[2]

Nothing reveals the insensitivity of the self-declared political sociologist Rushdie, as compared to the novelist Rushdie, better than his article on Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), written soon after Richard Attenborough's blockbuster *Gandhi* was released and had captured the imagination of filmgoers, if not of film critics (Rushdie 1983). Rushdie's essay is on the film, but it tells a lot about his understanding of the subject of the film. Rushdie's Gandhi is a slippery partisan of things medieval – a shrewd, if not slimy politician who could be forgotten but for his tremendous capacity to mobilize public sentiments for irrational, primordial causes. Implicitly, it is a Gandhi who was responsible for the partition of India on religious grounds, a better-edited version of that spokesman for Muslim atavism, Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876–1948). Rushdie's Gandhi is not even the ultimate social base of the bicultural, alienated Nehru but a political equal of the future prime minister of India, debating crucial issues with the young, modernist social reformer and hero of India's middle classes.

Now, not being a Gandhian, Rushdie's criticism of Gandhi did not disturb me. What disturbed me was my discovery in Rushdie of the last serious disciple of the late Professor Harold Lasky and Rajani Palme Dutt, and the shocked recognition that this lost child of the 1930s was behind the creation of *Midnight's Children*. Later, it was to help me understand better the reaction of the Islamic world to his *Satanic Verses*, but the discovery, when I first made it, was disheartening, to say the least.

After reading Rushdie, I was back to the curious case of H. G. Wells and the vague awareness it had spawned in me years ago – about the ability of the highly creative to partition their selves, disconcertingly but effectively. Effectively, because by now I had begun to suspect that this partitioning was something that Wells and Rushdie had to do to protect their creative insights – painfully dredged out their own less accessible self – from being destroyed by their "normal," "sane," rational self. It was as if they sensed that their conventionalities would overwhelm their vulnerable

but deeper insights into the changing nature of the human predicament, unless they took care to morally defend that conventionality in another sphere of life, a sphere in which "pure cognition" and "rationality" dominated.

Perhaps psychoanalysis tells only a part of the story. The conditionalities under which human passions get less contaminated by interests than do human cognition have remained an understudied aspect of personality theory. As a result, the pathologies of irrationality today are more vividly recognized than the pathologies of rationality and intellect. Perhaps the trend began not with Sigmund Freud but with the crystallization of the culture of Galilean Europe – with Francis Bacon (1561–1626) himself. After all, over the last three hundred years, to the pathology of rationality only some lesser thinkers like William Blake, John Ruskin, Joseph Conrad, Hannah Arendt, and Herbert Marcuse have paid more attention in the Western world, though the pathology has continued to be a major concern of many non-Western thinkers, Gandhi being the most conspicuous recent example. The great minds of Europe after the Enlightenment – from Giovanni Vico to Karl Marx to Sigmund Freud – have all been more keen to unravel the pathologies of human irrationality than the pathologies of rationality.

Both Wells and Rushdie, self-declared products of Western modernity and Enlightenment, demonstrate in their own ways the perils of this intellectual imbalance. To make my point in a more roundabout way – after all, that is what scholarship is all about – I shall now discuss the same process in more detail in the case of a highly creative, contemporary Indian film director Satyajit Ray.

II

The outlines of Ray's life and career by now are well known. For those who do not know, Ray was born in a well-known family of litterateurs and social reformers in 1922. It was originally a kayastha family that had probably come from Bihar to settle at Nadia in western Bengal in medieval times. Since the sixteenth century, the Rays also had an east Bengali connection through their zamindari in Mymensingh, now in Bangladesh. They had acquired the surname Ray when someone in the family worked as an official under the Mughals. Previously, they had been Deos and then

Debs. Unlike a majority of Bengali kayasthas who are śāktos, the Rays were vaiṣṇavas (on the psychological correlates of Śākto and Vaiṣnava cults, see Nandy 1980a, part 2).

By the time Satyajit was born, the Rays were already an important presence in Calcutta's social and intellectual life. Satyajit's grandfather, Upendrakishore Raychowdhury (1863–1915), had renounced orthodox Hinduism and embraced Brahmoism early in his life, as an act of social defiance and a statement of commitment to social reform. He had joined the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, the most radical of the Brahmo sects, and married into a well-known family of Brahmo social reformers. His father-in-law, Dwarkanath Ganguli, was one of the founders of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, and Dwarkanath's wife and Upendrakishore's stepmother, Kadambari Basu, was the first woman graduate in the British empire, South Asia's first modern woman doctor, and a delegate to the fifth session of the Indian National Congress. Despite these connections, however, Upendrakishore did manage, in life as well as in death, to avoid being typed as an abrasive activist. He was primarily known as a famous writer of children's literature, printer, and publisher.

Upendrakishore's eldest son and Satyajit's father, Sukumar Ray (1887–1923), has been described by many as India's greatest writer of children's stories and verses in modern times. He began to publish from the age of nine, specializing in writing nonsense verse. Apart from Gijubhai of Gujarat, one cannot think of another major Indian writer during the past one hundred years whose fame depended so entirely on what he or she wrote for children. Sukumar was also a talented printing technologist, illustrator, amateur actor, and the editor of Bengal's finest children's magazine, *Sandés,* founded by Upendrakishore.[3]

There were other eminent names in the family, too. Sukumar's cousin, Leela Majumdar, was a gifted humorist and writer of children's fiction; so was Sukhalata Rao, Sukumar's elder sister. Upendrakishore's brother Sharadaranjan pioneered the game of cricket in eastern India; another brother, Kuladaranjan, was a recognized artist. Kuladaranjan and his younger brother Pramadaranjan translated into Bengali popular English science fiction and crime thrillers meant for children.

On the whole, the family had a special relationship with children's literature, art, and theater. It was as if it had specialized in writing and publishing for children and turned that specialization into a family tradition. Each member of the family had to carry the weight of the tradition and,

simultaneously, affirm his or her own distinctive style of creativity by striking a balance between continuation of the tradition and breaks with it. The balance in turn was influenced by the ideological tilt the family had acquired. By the time Satyajit was born, the family culture had become, through the Brahmo connection with Victorian England, predominantly rationalist, antihedonistic, and, despite their nationalism, Anglophile. The Rays were proud of their British connection, of the fact that many of them were trained in England, and that they played the civilizing role demanded of them by the modern institutions introduced into the country by the raj.

The problem of striking a balance among these diverse strains was, however, complicated for young Satyajit by Sukumar's tragic death at the age of thirty-six, when his only child was less than two years old. Sukumar died of *kālājvar,* literally black fever. It was at the time a fatal disease that, like tuberculosis in Victorian England, had acquired a special meaning for some sections of the Bengalis. *Kālājvar* carried the contradictory associations of pastoral life and the new threats to it, the growing chasm between the city and the village in Bengal, the lurking fear of the abandoned countryside, taken over by the darker forces of nature and thus no longer hospitable or nurtural, as well as associations of fatalism, melancholia, and self-destruction. When offset against Sukumar's robust humor and lust for life, the disease must have looked a strange, ominous, tragic presence. Its impact certainly was magnified by the awareness in the family that Sukumar's impending death would also mean the death of the family's publishing business and lead to its economic decline. They were not wrong; the business folded up soon after Sukumar died, and the family economy did suffer steep decline.

It is likely that the memory of his father survived in Satyajit's life partly as a mythic figure larger than life, serving both as a prototype of charismatic but distant male authority and as a figure that was at the same time vaguely vulnerable and fragile.

By the very nature of things, Satyajit was close to his young widowed mother, an impressive, firm, and self-disciplined woman and a good singer. Suprava constituted not only his first and immediate model of nurture and adulthood but also of power and resilient authority. Indeed, one critic has hinted that she was for her only son also an authoritative symbol of purity and expiation through widowhood which was to recur in his works in two different guises – as a nurtural mother who invests in her

son her all (as in *Aparajito,* 1956) and as a seductive, eroticized presence, fighting against and finally yielding to the demands of her "lost" conjugal self (as in *Aranyer Din Ratri,* 1970).[4]

Compared to the tragic figure of her husband, Suprava was of course a more immediate, "real" authority for her young son, and she might have even been for him a sturdier, more tenacious, nuanced, and probably a worthier target of ambivalence. Many years afterwards, the son would say,

> In my movies I have brought in a certain detachment in the women. I like to think of women as lonely, unattached and self-absorbed. I can understand the power and the beauty of women easily. I think women have more power of mind. (Bandopadhyay 1988, 32)

In sum, one guesses that the family culture and mythologies underpinning it were to shape Satyajit's life and work through four dominant themes. First, the Ray family, within itself, encompassed and capsuled the cataclysmic changes that had taken place in the social world of the Bengalis over the previous 150 years. Marie Seton and Chidananda Dasgupta have succinctly narrated these changes and shown how the Rays represented as well as responded to the changes and turned them into distinctive strains – and sources of creativity – within the family life-style (Seton 1971, ch. 2–3; Dasgupta 1980, 1–14). Indeed, the very fact that the family had arrived at a large frame of reference, within which to locate these representations and responses, brought the family traditions close to being a worldview that could not be easily defied but within which there was some scope for in-house dissent.

Second, since the end of the nineteenth century, the family had consistently been at the forefront of social changes in Bengal and faced the consequences of it. The emphasis on humor and children's literature, and the self-confident style most of them cultivated, often hid the fact they they were part of a small minority, isolated and perhaps even with a sense of being beleaguered. When Seton speaks of the combination of "sensitivity" and "imperviousness" in Satyajit the filmmaker, one is tempted to relate it to the experience of the Rays over the last one hundred years, to the peculiar mix of respect, love, and social defiance with which the family has learned to live (Seton 1971, 64).

Also, it was a dissenting family, and in that dissent the ideology of modernity had been a major ally of the Rays. The ideology justified their nonconformism and gave meaning to their "odd," occasionally "eccen-

tric," experimental careers. The Rays had reasons to be grateful to the process of Westernization in Indian society and to post-Renaissance Europe for the distinctive style of creativity they evolved.

Third, their Brahmo faith – a quasi-puritanic protest against the hedonism of the babus of greater Calcutta, in turn triggered by the disorienting, uprooting, violent entry of the colonial political economy in eastern India – gave a sharp edge to moral issues, especially those that involved sexual norms and the channeling of violence in the society. In a culture that was traditionally less inhibited in the matter of heterosexual relationships, this quasi-puritanic strain was paradoxically not an indicator of conformity but of dissent.

As a part of this attempt to reinstate a moral universe, the emphasis on the public role of women and on the problems of women was something more than a matter of ideology for the Rays; the emphasis represented an unselfconscious, probably latent, attempt to rediscover one's relationship with a culture that included an identifiable substratum of matriarchy and with a society that, in facing the alienation and the anomie produced by the colonial political economy, had turned with a vengeance on women as symbols of traditional authority that had begun to falter and sometimes was capricious enough fail altogether (see Nandy 1980b).

Finally, as a result of this configuration of cultural and psychological strains, there persisted in the Rays an inner tension between unfettered imagination and disciplined rationality, perhaps even a tendency to live at two planes, which they could and yet could not fully reconcile. The imaginativeness was primarily reserved for what they wrote, drew, and fantasized for the children; the rationality for organized intervention in society and for defining their social responsibility in an adult world in which children, too, were a part of one's trust.

III

> Because you believe in the indivisibility of life,
> you seem to me to be the most Indian of all film
> directors.
> RANJAN BANDOPADHYAY TO SATYAJIT RAY

Against these partial details of Ray's background and early life, I shall now attempt a capsuled reading of his creativity and the "controlled split" and divisibility of self the creativity presupposes.

Let me admit at the outset that my understanding of Ray's films is limited. But then, this is not an authoritative critical assessment of his cinematic work. What follows is a brief introduction to the general personological issue of partitioning the self, which emerges in many guises in South Asian societies, and, by way of a digression, a partial exploration of the relationship between low-brow popular culture and classical or high culture in these societies.

Satyajit Ray simultaneously lives in the East and the West and operates at two levels. As a filmmaker, which is what Ray at his best is, he is a classicist; his style is classical, even though it is heavily influenced by post-World War II neorealism. In the context of the Apu trilogy, Dasgupta (1980, 65–66) defines this classicism as follows:

> . . . Ray disciplines his structure and concentrates his feelings into a tightly-knit pattern. Partly, this is born of necessity; partly . . . of preference. The depth of feeling which Ray creates . . . , all his fragile and ineffable evocations of beauty and mortality, are contained firmly within the story framework and expressed with the utmost economy. . . . Ray's own stories are even more tightly constructed, to the point of being over-structured.

As a person, however, Ray lives in the prewar, bicultural world of Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), somewhat Edwardian in flavor and in style. "Ray's classicism like so much else in his out look is derived from Tagore," says critic and friend Dasgupta. For "it was in Tagore that the restless reformism of the 'Bengal Renaissance,' of the East and West, had found its equilibrium" (Dasgupta 1980, 68). The ideological basis of that equilibrium is, to a significant extent, constituted by the Enlightenment values – scientific rationality, uncritical acceptance of the theory of progress, and secularism being the most conspicuous among them – and aspects of Indian high culture. Among aspects of the indigenous high culture are some particular readings of Vedanta and the Upanisads, once aggressively pushed by the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal and Prarthana Samaj in west India. These readings are monistic – many would say monotheistic – and puritanic in scope and rationalist in orientation. To this mix of the West and the East, some of the nineteenth-century social reformers of India, especially the Brahmo forebears of Ray, gave respectability.

The "Tagorean synthesis," as Dasgupta names it, however, had its own distinctive strengths and weaknesses.

> At its best, . . . it resulted in the emergence of noble images of character; at its worst, it was hypocritical, a little puritan, a little afraid of Freud. It was never suited to the depiction of life in the raw. (Dasgupta 1980, 69)

It is long since the passions that drove the Bengali social reformers of the last century have subsided, but they do survive as an intellectual and cultural underside of the modern consciousness in Bengal of which Ray is a distinguished product. Understandably, in his world, neither the mass culture of the postwar West nor the Indian folk or popular culture has much of an entry. An exception is made for some elements of Bengali non-classical culture, but that is probably an accidental product of Ray's personal socialization.

As a part of the same cultural-psychological baggage, Ray is not satisfied by being a mere film director. He sees himself as a Renaissance man in the tradition of the great Calcuttans of the last century, and his movies themselves are witnesses to this self-definition. Like the works of some other great directors – Charles Chaplin and Orson Wells immediately come to mind – he is more than a director. He usually writes the scripts as well as the music for his films, and at least one cameraman, Banshichandra Gupta, has left his unit on the ground that Ray only technically hires cameramen for his films, for he is primarily his own cameraman. Ray has also written the stories for four of his movies.

Outside the world of cinema, Ray has a number of other professions – he is a well-known art designer and the editor of a highly respected children's magazine. He is most famous, however, as a writer. Ray has written immensely successful crime thrillers and science fiction. He does try to maintain a distinction between the two genres – between his science fiction and his thrillers – but there are clear continuities. Much of his science fiction, too, veers around crime, and violence remains the central concern of both genres. During the last two decades, Ray has published more than twenty books of popular fiction, two of which he has also turned into successful films.

Though his popular fiction is apparently meant for children, Bengalis of all ages adore Ray's crime thrillers and science fiction and eagerly wait for the next adventures of the young private detective Pradosh C. Mitter alias Feluda – the Anglicization of the surname is Ray's – and Professor Śanku – some of whose Western friends affectionately call him Shanks – a researcher-inventor who looks like Professor Calculus of the Tin Tin series and lives alone in a small town near Calcutta, while keeping in

touch with the best scientific minds in the world. The Bengali middle classes respect the filmmaker Satyajit Ray, but they love the thriller writer Ray. The writer Ray reminds them of his father, Bengal's most loved humorist and writer of nonsense verse, and his grandfather, Bengal's most loved writer of fairy tales in this century.

In response to the respect and the love, Ray has partitioned his self into two neat compartments. In one he fits his classical ventures – the feature films he has made over the last three decades. In the other he fits his popular, low-brow ventures – his crime thrillers and tales of mystery, adventure, and violence. Of the latter, the most popular and famous are the two series of the Feluda and Śanku stories.

The first category has a number of identifiable features. The most prominent of them is the centrality given to women and the use of women as windows to some of the core social problems of his society and his times. This place given to women's issues is not unique to Ray. Since the time when Rammohun Ray (1772–1833) made the cause of women central to his platform of social reform in the first decades of the nineteenth century to Gandhi, who saw the role of women as vital to his movement for winning political freedom for India as well as for expanding the sector of freedom for humanity as a whole, nearly all great thinkers and social reformers in Ray's part of the world have consciously viewed womanhood as the arena where the moral consciousness of Indic civilization has to be recontextualized in response to the new social forces emerging in the Indian scene (see Nandy 1980c).

What is true of the social reformers has also been true of the creative writers who have influenced Bengali social life. From Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894) to Rabindranath Tagore and Saratchandra Chattopadhyay (1876–1938) – the great Bengali writers have been consistently concerned with the problems of women and used the problems as a mirror to the crises of the society in general. (I am deliberately avoiding using here the examples of women reformers and writers, lest their attempts to make the problems of women central to the society may look natural and sectoral to many.)

In Ray's case, however, both these strands of awareness have been further underscored by the experiences of his family. No wonder that he sees himself as an heir to the nineteenth-century Bengali "Renaissance" and, though some scholars now find the term inadequate and misleading in the context of Bengal, the term and its progressivist implications have not lost

their shine for Ray. For he still lives intellectually and morally in the pre-war world of Tagore. To Ray, the continuity between the problems of women and the crisis of Indian society seems obvious and inevitable. And, in his more weighty cinematic works, women constitute a formidable maternal as well as conjugal presence. Even in movies where there is a paucity of feminine characters – as for instance in *Parash Pathar* (1957), *Jalsaghar* (1958), and *Goopi Gyne Bagha Byne* (1969) – the issues of gender and potency indirectly enter the scene and remain salient.

The second major feature of Ray's movies is the way he tends to excise from his scripts anything that is sentimental and dramatic. Ray loves to tell a story in his films, not provide a political or philosophical text. And he seems to find movies that do away with a proper story line self-indulgent. On the other hand, he seems perpetually fearful of overloading his films with events or of assuming too partisan a tone. One critic repeatedly speaks of Ray's *parimitibodh,* sense of restraint, and has even identified this restraint as a part of Ray's personality (Bandopadhyay 1988, 13). Another has gone so far as to say: "The grace in Ray's films often comes from the way he approaches confrontations, averts actions, decisions, events. Where he tries to be direct, the result is often ineffective or jarring" (Dasgupta 1980, 80–81). Even *Ghare-Baire* (1984) and *Charulata* (1964), movies that stick close to the novels on which they are based, de-dramatize their originals to some extent.

Partly this "bias" comes from the fear of the melodramatic which dogs many contemporary creative writers in Bengal. Reacting to the somewhat maudlin world of Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, which dominated the Bengali – and, for that matter, Indian – middle-class consciousness in the interwar years, Ray, like many creative Bengalis of his generation, is hostile to anything even vaguely smacking of sentiment and romanticism. He is a far cry from being an Indian Ernest Hemingway or Bertolt Brecht, to give two random examples from the Occident, but the fear of producing a tearjerker seems deep in him. Even when he deals with a subject as cataclysmic as the Bengal famine of the early forties, he makes a special effort not to be sentimental. As a consequence, when *Ashani Sanket* (1973) was released, some of his critics accused him of producing a pretty picture postcard on a subject as grim as famine. They have interpreted his somewhat detached gaze as the indicator of the absence of a "true" social commitment.

Partly, however, this *parimitibodh* and "distance" come from the fact

that Ray usually avoids dealing with subjects with which he is directly acquainted in his personal life (Bandopadhyay 1988, 19). By ignoring the stress and the anomie of urban India, by concentrating on rural India, about which he knows little, Ray has paradoxically acquired a comprehensive, bird's-eye view of the gamut of macroscopic changes to which his family has been an important witness. He sees it whole, Dasgupta says, because he sees it from a distance (Dasgupta 1980, 43–44). There are obvious deep, unresolved passions behind his restraint. The demands for direct, impassioned social commitment from him, which many of his critics make, have only managed to cramp his style. He has never been able to match the creativity of his first decade as a director, when his cinematic voice was soft and his commitments were understated.

Third, despite his emphasis on femininity, Ray's films are characterized by a low-key, almost hesitant, treatment of sex. This understatement of sexuality is matched by an avoidance of overt violence.

> In Charulata, intensity of love is expressed without the lovers even holding hands; there is a rather impulsive, rather brotherly, embrace, but it contributes only a minor note in the tension created between the two. The fascinating scene of the memory game in Aranyer Din Ratri, together with the walks, the interplay and repetition of themes, creates a musical statement in which the seduction scenes are only the fortissimoes, not raucous even in violence. (Dasgupta 1980, 81)

The first time Ray showed a couple kissing in his films was in Ghare-Baire in the mid-1980s, and even when he made an avowedly adventure film such as Abhijan (1962), he took care to avoid gory violence. Many have attributed this restraint to his Brahmo puritanic upbringing; others have seen in it a compromise with conventionality and an inability to "let go." Ray himself is clear on the subject:

> People do not seem to bother about what you say as long as you say it in a sufficiently oblique and unconventional manner – and the normal-looking film is at a discount. . . . I don't imply that all the new European film makers are without talent, but I do seriously doubt if they could continue to make a living without the very liberal exploitation of sex that their code seems to permit. (Ray quoted in Dasgupta 1980, 67)

Certainly in Ray's world sex enters stealthily, whether he is dealing with conjugality directly or with eroticized maternity (as in Charulata). In all

instances, it is handled with a certain distance and, some would add, discretion. Similarly with violence. It enters Ray's film in its everyday version, as something that is sinister by virtue of what it implies or what it can be, rather than by virtue of what it is. For instance, *Abhija, Pratidwandi* (1970), and *Seemabaddha* (1971), particularly the first two, offer ample scope for disturbing, if not spectacular, violence. The temptation is consciously avoided. Even in the two movies Ray has made out of his own crime thrillers, overt violence is conspicuous by its absence.

This restraint may have also started as an attempt by Ray to mark off his films from the Indian and Western commercial films and create an audience for his kind of cinema. After all, he pioneered art films in India; he did not have a ready-made audience for at least his early works.

Some of these features are carried into Ray's stories of detection and science fiction. But there are important distinctions in the way in which the features are made to configure in their low- or middle-brow incarnations, primarily designed to amuse children.

First, Ray's works in popular fiction are set in a nearly all-male world. According to a psychologically minded critic, Ray's cinema tends to remove from center stage and distance the details of man-woman relations (Bandopadhyay 1988, 25). In his popular writings, the tendency is given fuller play. Women enter this world rarely and as secondary presences, somewhat in the manner in which they enter the world of some of the writers of classical Victorian crime thrillers, such as Arthur Conan Doyle and G. K. Chesterton. The deeper relationships, whether of love or of hate, are mostly man-to-man. Not only is the pairing of the sleuth with a less-than-acute, imperfect man of science imported from Victorian England for the Feluda stories, even in his science fiction Ray introduces a similar doubling: Professor Śanku has an innocent, loyal servant on whom he tries out his ideas Holmes-like. Occasionally, Śanku goes farther than Holmes; the scientist literally tests out on his servant Prahlād some of his new inventions. To make this inoffensive, there are the "mitigating" aspects of the relationship – Śanku's paternalist concern for the welfare and "uplifting" of the servant, the servant's inferior intelligence and "distorted" awareness of the world (which makes him an intermediate category between the scientist and the "things" on which he exercises control through his scientific-rational, expert cognition), and the load of the inferior culture the servant carries by virtue of being embedded in the local and the parochial. Together they ensure that the subjecthood of the ser-

vant is complete and Ray's voice-as-the-narrator remains unequivocal about it.

Second, Ray's popular fiction places enormous emphasis on scientific rationality, which is identified entirely with Baconian inductionism and empiricism. The stories usually posit a clear-cut division between the cognitive, on the one hand, and the affective and the normative on the other. In this respect, Ray's direct inspiration is again the Victorian crime thriller. The underlying assumption in both cases is that the objective reality lies hidden behind the manifest reality, and the detective, using superior technology and unencumbered scientific rationality – that is, by disjuncting his cognition from affect – tears the mask off the false innocence pretending to be the wisdom of everyday life. The detective, thus, not merely reveals the objective reality underneath, but also ensures that authentic, informed innocence reasserts itself in the society. As I have discussed the psychological profile of such thrillers in more detail elsewhere, I shall leave this issue at that (Nandy 1989).

Third, Ray's tales of detection and science fiction are two forms of adventure story. But his idea of adventure has a geographical content. Many of his stories assume that while crime is equally universal in theory and practice, science is universal mainly in theory, less in practice. The criminals in Ray's stories of detection are home brewed; in his science fiction, they are usually whites or, what the South Africans have learned to identify as, honorary whites (that is, they can be Japanese).

The reasoning seems to be as follows. To do "great science," as the moderns define it, one has to constantly rub shoulders with Western scientists, for creative science is primarily a Western pursuit. Therefore, Śanku's stature in the world of science can only be established through his jet-setting participation in the "global" community of first-class scientists, a community that is predominantly white. Śanku's Indianisms, his home in a small town (not far from a metropolis though), the contradiction between his temperament and self-image as a pure scientist and his actual life, paradoxically lived out as a brilliant practicing technologist and as an inventor legitimizing the idea of science – they all are hitched to this global hierarchy of scientists. If, however, the hierarchy is accepted, its obverse, too, has to be stipulated. The great scientific frauds and the great scientist-psychopaths, like the great creative scientists and the great scientist-savants, should also come from mainly the West.

Fourth, the rejection of many elements of the commercial Bengali and

Hindi movies, which negatively define Ray's concept of the good cinema, is made to stand on its head in his popular fiction. Not only do magical elements return in a different guise to take an important place in his science fiction, so does the element of predictability in his crime stories. One knows that Śanku as well as Felu will negotiate all crises and puzzles in style and emerge intact. It is the content of the style and the events through which the style unfolds that are less than predictable for the readers. And to ensure this unpredictability, there is an emphasis on events and dramatics that would be unthinkable to the filmmaker Ray. In this respect, the popular writings of Ray fit in with the dominant frame of popular cinema in India. Within that frame, the search of both the popular filmmaker and the viewer is not for the unpredictable, the novel, or the unique, but for a new configuration of the familiar which would bring the familiar up-to-date (Nandy 1989).

Finally, one suspects that Ray's identification with his scientist-hero and detective-hero is at least partly powered by his self-image as a Renaissance man, straddling the disjunctive cultures of humanities and science to defy the likes of C. P. Snow. One also suspects that this is an identification without which Ray would feel unfulfilled, for culturally the identification is located in a self-definition on which three generations of Rays and the modern Bengalis have worked diligently for nearly a century. The identification, in turn, seems to be powered at the personality level by a certain insecure narcissism of a once highly protected child who has been the carrier of his mother's hopes, ambitions, and feelings of insecurity and who has internalized the image of a male authority that is overwhelming as well as transient. Whether as a result or not, there are in Ray's films reflections of what appear to be conspicuous forms of anxiety-building strategies – enormously detailed technical work and workmanship and a search for complete dominance or control over the entire technical process of filmmaking.

All three features make Ray the producer of popular fiction complementary to Ray the filmmaker. And in this respect, he is not unique. All the persons we have mentioned in this essay show a similar interarticulation among their partitioned selves. Thus, the Wells of science fiction is not conceivable without the Wells of *Outline of History* (which is, of course, a history of Western civilization, even though written with the innocent belief that it is global history and does full justice to the non-Western world). The Conan Doyle of the Sherlock Holmes stories neatly

complements Conan Doyle the theosophist; and the Rushdie of *Midnight's Children* is possible only because there is the other Rushdie, the brainchild of the easy theories of progress of the 1930s.

Is this complementarity a matter of *ex post facto* search for order, the artificial imposition of a deterministic theory of aesthetics on these authors? No definitive answer to the question is possible. However, psychologically, the Ray of the Apu trilogy, *Devi* (1960), and *Ghare-Baire* seems to have been made possible by Ray the tame, uncritical believer in the emancipatory and pedagogic role of Enlightenment values. In this respect, the complementarity is not merely aesthetic; it is personological. By writing for children and by upholding the conventional Victorian norms as the embodiment of Enlightenment values – thus intervening in child-rearing and education to inculcate, institutionalize, and perpetuate these values – Ray does appear to make peace with his social conscience and to earn the right to be more daringly "free associative" and give free play to his less socialized, less tamed, less "educated," more intuitive self in his serious cinematic work. It is Ray's way of making peace with himself with the help of the immense ego-integrative capacities at the disposal of his self.[5]

Such a mode of partitioning, one sometimes suspects, comes more easily to the South Asians, traditionally accustomed to living in many cultures and, in fact, in many worlds. The alternative is available to creative writers in the modern West, but they have to search more self-consciously for internal consistency in their work. Perhaps that is why, in the instance of Wells, the more well-thought-out cognitive ventures are conventional and conformist, whereas in someone like Ray, the more serious and carefully thought-out ventures are more imaginative and less constrained by values derived from the dominant culture. Wells is more conventional in history, Ray in fiction, which, for him, is a "freer" medium than cinema.

Note that Rushdie, too, driven by his internalization of the West, tries in his nonfiction to be allegiant to Enlightenment values, to win through such conformity the freedom to be more careless about these values in serious fiction. In the West, you can be playful only in fiction, not in science, not even in scientized social analysis. When Rushdie self-consciously tries his hand in serious social analysis through playful fiction, as in *Satanic Verses,* it ends in disaster. He loses almost entirely the targets of his reformism, who feel humiliated by his style of social analysis and intervention.[6]

Also note that in the serious novels of Wells, such as *Ann Veronica* and *Tono-Bungay,* the political and social ideology of the author intrudes to shape the narrative more perceptibly than in Ray. Wells is more influenced by his ideas of scientific history and rationality in serious literature; Ray, perhaps despite himself, in popular fiction. It is a minor paradox that both do better in social analysis when they cease to be self-consciously social-scientific and socially relevant.

It is possible to offset some of these comments against the fate of another tormented, internally split writer, Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936). He, too, came close to partitioning his self in his works in the manner we have described, but could not do so successfully, despite being part-Indian. He failed to keep at a distance his highly conventional, imperial values when writing even his more creative, intellectually daring novels. As Edmund Wilson points out, it comes as something of a shock that in *Kim,* potentially one of the great novels of our times and one of the most sensitive ever written about India – Bernard Cohn calls it the best fictional ethnography of India – the hero, after all his encounters with the mysteries of nature and human nature and after all his encounters with an alternative worldview and an alternative vision of human potentialities (represented in the novel by the kaleidoscope of India's cultural diversity and by the haunting figure of the Lama respectively), ultimately decides to be a servitor of the colonial administration (Wilson 1964, 17–69).

The two Satyajit Rays are not watertight. There is leakage between his compartmentalized selves. He has made charming films based on two of his own crime thrillers. And he once wrote a script for a science fiction movie, *The Alien,* which reportedly became the basis of two Hollywood blockbusters, *E.T.* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind.* Likewise, some of the early Professor Śanku stories, such as the charmingly Gothic "Professor Śanku o Robu," do have a latent critique of science built into them (Ray 1970a). However, here I am not talking of such self-conscious bridges but of the subtler communication and "division of labor" between the two selves. Thus, what we have identified as an understatement of violence in Ray's cinema often becomes a form of sanitized violence in his popular fiction. Professor Śanku's discovery, the anihilin gun, as its name indicates, is a weapon that not only kills but does so immediately, smoke-lessly, and soundlessly. It cleanly vaporizes its target, leaving no messy blood-drenched body or injured victim to be taken care of.

However, the leakage usually is in the other direction. The identifica-

tion with the ordinary person confronting life incompetently but nobly –
as in *Aparajito, Apur Sansar* (1959), *Mahanagar* (1963), *Abhijan,* or even
Parash Pathar (1957) – does enter the world of the other Ray. It even
acquires a touch of romantic grandeur in a story such as "Bankubabur
Bandhu," cast in the mold of science fiction, about a harassed school
teacher who is a constant butt of the crude humor of a village landlord
and his courtiers. The teacher suddenly acquires a new sense of dignity
and self-confidence because he accidentally encounters and befriends
extraterrestrial beings in the village woods. Technology here puts one in
touch with things larger than oneself and with an awareness that positivist
knowledge knows nothing about (Ray 1970b).

Notwithstanding such leakages or interarticulations, there are reasona-
bly clear principles by which the selves are separated. We have already
hinted at the presence of three of the principles. First, the second self is
primarily a pedagogic self. (Though, the public stereotypes about the
selves are exactly the reverse – the filmmaker Ray is seen as a serious
affair, the popular writer Ray as fun). It may be true that "in Ray's stories
there is no crude attempt to provide a moral" (Bandopadhyay 1988, 52),
but the Brahmo concept of what is good for children informs much of
Ray's crime thrillers and science fiction indirectly. Ray's aunt, Sukhalata
Rao, another gifted writer of children's literature, once started a brief con-
troversy in Bengal by writing that ghost stories should not be written, for
they were bad for the character – read moral development – of children
(Bose 1982). Others may not have taken Sukhalata's advice seriously, but
her nephew has. Not literally – Ray has written ghost stories and often
brilliantly – but metaphorically. His popular fiction always has a series of
unstated morals, and it is guided by an implicit concept of "healthy pas-
time" or "healthy fun," parallels to which can be found in only some writ-
ings on cricket produced in Victorian England and in Lord Baden-Powell's
concept of the Boy Scout movement.

Secondly, the second Ray is distinguished by – the term though is not
entirely appropriate – a masculine concern with the world of machines,
power, intrusive or invasive curiosity, competition for priorities and domi-
nance, combined with an often astonishing insensitivity to nature, includ-
ing human nature. As if Ray's concern in his popular fiction was nothing
more than telling a story in which his hero would solve a proper criminal
puzzle. All subtleties of personality are seen as a diversion from a good,
strong narrative. The androgynous sensitivities of Ray, so evident in cin-

ema, seem to give way to a romanticized, two-dimensional, materialistic, phallocentric world where puzzle-solving and tough response to tough problems predominate. I use the word *romanticized* advisedly, for the element of romance does not run counter to the materialism and the tough, positive view of the world. Rather, Ray works with a romantic vision of materialism and positivism with which mostly non-Western ideologues of scientific rationality feel comfortable and which was first popularized in India in the nineteenth century by the babus of Calcutta. There is a perfect and innocent continuity between Father Eugene Lafont's physics classes at St. Xavier's College and Mahendralal Sarkar's science movement, in fin-de-siècle Calcutta, and the prewar enthusiasm for modern science shown by many like Ray in postindependence India, blissfully unaware of the altered social relations of science in the country.

Third, readers may have noticed that, in the partitioning of the self, the values and concepts associated with the European Enlightenment have a special role to play. Among these values are scientific rationality; the idea of dispassionate, impersonal, objective, falsifiable knowledge, obtainable through a scientific method strictly defined by positivist criteria; the idea of expertise, represented by the experimental scientist and the private detective-as-a-professional-criminologist; and a wholly instrumental concept of knowledge that allows one to see true knowledge as value-neutral, usable either for good or for evil. Ray's crime thrillers and science fiction are an homage to these values.

Ray's message in cinema is fundamentally different. We have already described it. It is that message which makes his films, to borrow an expression from Ronald Laing, an experience of experience.

IV

A creative person can be at times a better critic of himself than his critics are. There are at least three stories of Ray, all formally classifiable under the rubric of science fiction, that try to capture the tragedy of the creative person in a conformist society. In all three, but particularly in "Āryaśekharer Janma o Mrtyu," Ray depicts how the creative are forced to opt for survival at the cost of creativity because, in the environment in which they live, the extranormal is no different from the abnormal, and both are repressed by the society to restore and protect the domain of normality (Bandopadhyay 1988, 53–54; see also Ray n.d.). All three stories carry the

latent message that creativity is often destroyed because the creative themselves are not adequately inhibited by the social forces impinging on them and fail to internalize the social need to repress the strange and the mysterious in them. In "Āryaśekharer Janma o Mrtyu," the saddest and the most direct of the three stories, the hero, a mathematical child prodigy, first loses his genius and then dies because he is uncompromising in his scientific curiosity and recklessly confronts his staid, unimaginative father with his socially daring "scientific theory." When dying, perhaps in pain and with an awareness of the futility of it all, he only remembers his mother.

That is about all by way of a hint. We have no direct clue whether Ray sees himself as a survivor who has made realistic compromises, as an uncompromising rebel who nurtures a latent fear of being destroyed by his surroundings, or, more appropriately, as one who has in him elements of both. Ray's stories, usually pitched low, do not seem to address themselves to some of the other questions that dog psychologists researching creativity: Which way do the ego defenses of a creative person operate? In what kind of work can he or she "let go"? Where does he or she tighten the reins of imagination? No clear answers to these questions emerge from Ray's life story either. The only additional comment I can make on the subject sounds, therefore, so naively Freudian to my own ears that I shall have to ask the reader to take it as entirely tentative for the moment.

Creativity – to the extent that it involves an interplay of the conscious and the unconscious, the regressive and the ego-integrative, the rational and the nonrational or irrational – must at some point encounter the demands of the moral self of the creative. Behind this clinical platitude lies, however, the fact that over the last three hundred years the structure of morality in the dominant culture of the world has gradually come to include a number of Baconian values: a specific form of rationality, a specific concept of knowledge, and a specific set of methods to live by that rationality and to generate that knowledge. In the dominant global culture today, these, too, are a part of our socialized – one may say, oversocialized – self and an aspect of the demands of the modern superego.

As a consequence, creativity has begun to demand from the creative person some defiance of conventional morality as also another form of making his or her peace with that aspect of conventional morality which is not prima facie conventional. In this form, the creative person creates a shadow self – this is not the most appropriate term, but it does capture

something of the process – which is perfectly compatible with the dominant special ideals and one's oversocialized self, but wears successfully the garb of unconventionality. This shadow self allows a freer play to one's undersocialized self, having greater access to the primitive, the nonrational, and the intuitive.

The partitioning of the self we have seen in Ray and others is a part of this larger dynamic. It allows a greater play to the internalized aspects of social processes which would have been otherwise irreconcilable. Some manage to do this partitioning painlessly, others painfully; some do it with self-conscious finesse, others clumsily and unself-consciously. But in each case, they pose a challenge to the students of creativity to crack the code of this shadowy self and decipher the writer's language of communication with that other self as a crucial component of the creative process.

This issue of communication often becomes a part of a larger politics of cultures, too. The reader may have noticed that, in the cases of Wells and Rushdie, the imaginal products are less encumbered by their prim theories of life; in the case of Ray, the less serious works are more encumbered. Is this accidental? What about the fact that in all three cases, time and the changing concept of social knowledge have shown the concepts of reliable, valid, scientific social knowledge of the authors to be less valuable by their own standards of reliability and validity? Does the very fact that these two questions can be asked today have something to tell us about the changing landscape of social knowledge?

I shall leave the reader alone with the questions, in the belief that all questions cannot – and need not – be answered by the ones who raise them, for there may be others more capable of grappling with the questions than those who raise them in the first place.

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Notes and References

1. A section of this paper borrows from a brief essay, "The Home and the World," published in *The Illustrated Weekly of India,* July 30, 1989. An earlier

version of the paper was written for the International Conference on Perceptions of Self: China, India, and Japan, held at Honolulu, August 14–18, 1989. I am grateful to the participants of the conference for their comments and suggestions.

Sanskritized versions of Bengali names and titles and diacritical marks have been used in this paper only when the person or the author concerned has not provided an English spelling for the name or title.

2. Though Rushdie is Bombay-born, in his adult life he may have been in closer touch with Pakistan. And his social and political naivete may have something to do with the Pakistani connection. For I have noticed this touching, unqualified Nehruism in many Pakistani intellectuals. I suspect that certain social or cultural processes were short-circuited in Pakistan by the country's obtuse military rulers, and what was a natural and necessary phase in Indian politics has become an unfulfilled dream in Pakistan. Perhaps Pakistanis need Nehru more today that Indians do. I say this not in empathy with the unthinking though understandable anti-Nehru posturing of many Indian intellectuals, but in the belief that Nehru's humane, "progressivist" concept of the public realm once had an important role to play in Indian politics but has been, alas, badly mauled by time and almost entirely coopted by India's ruling elite.

3. The most elegant and charming invocation of Sukumar Ray as a person is in Majumdar 1969.

4. Bandopadhyay (1988, 39) reads the second image differently. He sees in it Ray's inability to discover in his widowed characters the stern, sanitized standards set by his own mother.

5. On the ego-strength as a crucial personality factor in the highly creative, see, for instance, Barron 1965.

6. See, for instance, an impressive analysis of the responses to *Satanic Verses* among the Muslims in Parekh 1989.

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Ideology of the Body in
Red Sorghum: National Allegory,
National Roots, and Third Cinema

YINGJIN ZHANG

IN HIS FAMOUS essay, "World Literature in an Age of Multinational Capitalism," Fredric Jameson postulates a theory of "national allegory." The primacy of national allegory is, he says, a remarkable feature apparently common to all Third World cultural productions and radically distinguishable from analogous cultural forms in the First World. As he forcefully argues:

> Those [Third World] texts, even those narratives which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic, necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public Third World culture and society. (Jameson 1987, 142)

Jameson's theory, to be exact, is based on his observation of "a radical split between the private and the public, between the poetic and the political" (or "Freud versus Marx") that characterized much of capitalist culture, "the culture of the western realist and modernist novel." Third World culture, on the contrary, is "necessarily" allegorical in that "the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself" (Jameson 1987, 141, 158).

Given his mapping of Third World cultural "totality" (in complement with another mapping of the present-day Western, postmodern world),[1] Jameson's theory of "national allegory" has obvious relevance to the study of Third World literature and cinema – even though the theory itself does not go without an immediate intellectual challenge (see, for example, Ahmad 1987). The purpose of this paper is, however, not to reflect on the

hypothetical nature of Jameson's theory, but rather to see how its theoretical components, such as the concepts of the private and the public, the poetic and the political, can better inform our reading of Third World texts.

    The chosen text in this paper is a Chinese film, *Red Sorghum*.[2] Our discussion will necessarily take into account the problem of "national roots," partly because the film itself is incorporated into director Zhang Yimou's broader project to search for the distinctive nature of the Chinese people and Chinese culture. The fact that *Red Sorghum* won the Golden Bear at the 1988 Berlin Film Festival, the highest honor a Chinese film has ever achieved, also leads us to consider the film in its international, or cross-cultural context, specifically in relation to a Western film discourse, the "Third Cinema."[3] Before entering these and other relevant issues, let us first begin from the film's very beginning.

VIOLENCE AND OBSCENITY: IMAGES OF THE BODY

What impresses the audience first in *Red Sorghum* is the exuberance of its initial celebrating mood. The opening sedan-chair dance is typically Chinese: against a setting of barren yellow land, eight bare-shouldered sedan carriers are dancing with a red sedan chair, chanting in their hoarse voices a song full of vulgar and obscene words and shaking the bride who is helplessly confined in the sedan. For about ten minutes, the audience is delighted by a cinematographic display of color and action, accompanied by exotic music and punctuated with obscene, sexist remarks. The audience is only later reminded of the impending fate of the young bride, who is forced by her father to marry a fifty-year-old leprous owner of a sorghum wine distillery in exchange for a small mule.

    A number of shots repeated in this initial scene deserve closer attention: From within the sedan, the bride, profoundly upset, at times anxiously peeks through the curtains. Her vision, again and again, is blocked by the strong muscles of the sedan carriers, covered as they are with sweat and dirt. To the bride confined in the sedan, the presence of the muscles is posed here as a fascinating threat – "fascinating" because by comparison, the lack of muscles (and sexuality) in her leper "husband" is even more threatening. This idea of fascination is further enhanced in the same scene when the robust sedan carriers overpower a masked highwayman who has kidnapped the bride with his fake pistol.

In terms of this "repressed" fascination with muscles, or more precisely, with the human body, the bride's willing submission in a subsequent scene to a violent act of abduction and "rape" (Vincent Canby's word) by the strongest of the sedan carriers is perhaps more understandable to a Western audience. As a matter of fact, the "rape" (or rather, "love-making") scene is poeticized and enthusiastically celebrated in the film. After running through the thicks of wild sorghum, the sedan carrier stamps out a space in the field, a round circle much like a sacred place for sacrifice. The bride lies motionless on the ground, her eyes closed, while the man kneels down, his face up toward the empty sky. Obviously, there is a sacred moment in the film: a moment of deification, a moment of returning the human to its natural elements, and a moment of desperate triumph of the primitive "body," with all its undaunted violence and vitality, over the repressive tradition of the Chinese (patriarchal) society.[4]

Another celebratory scene, with equal emphasis on the human body, is set in the wine distillery after the mysterious murder of the leprous owner (who makes only one appearance in the film). The male workers, bare-shouldered as in the first scene, sweat by the heated wine distiller. The bride, now the sole owner of the distillery, is invited to see the conclusion of winery work – the pouring out of new wine. All partake of the moment of joy and fulfillment as they taste the newly brewed wine in turn.

The festive mood, however, is abruptly destroyed by the arrival of the sedan carrier. He was previously driven out of the winery when, in his drunkenness, he had insulted the bride with obscene references to their love-making in the wild sorghum fields. This time, however, he is sober and looks very determined. He shows off his strength by carrying big pots of new wine, placing them in a row, and then urinating into each of them. In spite of such a blasphemous affront (which later turns out to be a "blessing" because the wine proves better than before), the sheer presence of muscles overwhelms the workers and, significantly, "intoxicates" the bride into a semi-(un)conscious state. With a triumphant air, the sedan carrier carries the "bride" under his arms and walks right into the privacy of the bride's room. They live together hereafter and have a son before long.

From the violence, vulgarism, indecency, and abusive language highlighted in these two scenes – all linked to the human body – we can see clearly that in *Red Sorghum* the image of the human body is deliberately exaggerated, primitivized, and so projected onto the screen as to fulfill a special ideological function. To better understand this function of the

bodily images in the film, we shall now turn to Bakhtin's theory of "carnival."

Carnival: The Private (Re-)Turned the Public

In his brilliant study, *Rabelais and His World,* Mikhail Bakhtin offers an exhaustive examination of what he calls the "popular-festive forms" (for example, eating, drinking, cursing, abusing) and "the grotesque images of the body" (for example, sex, defecation, pregnancy, birth, and death). To him, all forms of "degradation" in carnival are not just entertainment in the negative sense of the word; rather, "with all its images, indecencies, and curses," carnival "affirms the people's immortal, indestructible character" (Bakhtin 1984, 256).

Bakhtin arrived at this positive view of carnival in a dialectic way through his recognition of the original (and by now almost "lost") meaning of the human body. In the Middle Ages and up to the Renaissance, there was little question as to the unifying forces within the human body. According to Bakhtin, two characteristic tendencies existed in the Renaissance philosophers:

> First is the tendency to find in man the entire universe with all its elements and forces, with its higher and lower stratum; second is the tendency to think of the human body as drawing together the most remote phenomena and forces of the cosmos. (Bakhtin 1984, 365)

The human body, seen in this light, is a unity of heaven and earth, of the public and the private, and even of death and rebirth.

This primordial unity, however, was lost in the subsequent development of human (especially bourgeois) societies. As Bakhtin puts it, "In the modern image of the individual body, sexual life, eating, drinking, and defecation have radically changed their meaning: they have been transferred to the private and psychological level. . . ." In other words, the public features of the human body have since been transformed and confined exclusively in a private, psychologized space. From this observation, we can realize that Bakhtin's theory of carnival carries with it an important historical mission – to return the human body from its now private and psychological status to its original public domain.

Red Sorghum can also be viewed as an attempt along this line. In the film, the private space has always been transgressed or destroyed (the

bride's closed sedan chair at the beginning of the film is just one instance; her "wedding" room, which is later violently "shared" by the sedan carrier is another). Private, intimate acts (such as urinating and sweating) are performed before the eye of the public. The implication of these private-turned-public moments, arguably, is to emphasize the interconnectiveness of all human bodies. In Bakhtin's apt words:

> The individual feels that he is an indissoluble part of the collectivity, a member of the people's mass body. In this whole the individual body ceases to a certain extent to be itself; it is possible, so to say, to exchange bodies, to be renewed. . . . At the same time the people become aware of their sensual, material bodily unity and community. (Bakhtin 1984, 255)

Given the original, material unity within the human body, the dominance of the bodily images in *Red Sorghum* is actually a signal toward a reunion of the private and the public. The process of such a reunion is interestingly demonstrated in the configuration of the central object of the film, the red wine.

Red Wine: A Poetic Spirit Shared by the Public

In terms of the carnivalesque nature of *Red Sorghum,* where the bodily images dominate the screen, red sorghum wine, as a specifically symbolic object, invites interpretations at various levels.

On a popular level, red wine perfectly fits festive images and is readily consumed in a celebration of life or death on a largely collective scale. It is both the product of collective labor and the crowning glory for the workers. Drinking wine, to quote Bakhtin's observation, is therefore "not a biological, animal act but a social event" (Bakhtin 1984, 281). In *Red Sorghum,* the winery workers' drinking and chanting prayers in front of the wine god is a good example in this connection. In the film's two praying scenes, drinking is not only done as a social event but virtually performed as a serious ritual, thus acquiring a mythic dimension that outweighs any isolated individualistic aspect of configuration in *Red Sorghum.*

On another, less obvious level, wine (red or otherwise) is a poetic image deeply rooted in Chinese culture. It is, for one thing, a frequent means for a solitary poet to escape his or her immediate realities; it is, for another, a spirit that inspires a poet's individual vision (for example, Li Bai's solitary drinking to the moon and to his own dancing shadow) and further sustains his or her independent, often secluded life. Red wine, seen in this tra-

dition, symbolized a (wild) passion for an intoxicated, ecstatic life (rather than a mediocre, repressed one) – a passion, that is, for a unique vision of life in the true sense of the word (vitality, productivity, and creativity).

On a more specific level, red wine in *Red Sorghum* refers to a special type of sorghum wine that is brewed by collective labor (led by the experienced foreman Luohan), "finished up" magically by the sedan carrier's urine, given name ("red over eighteen miles") by the bride, devoured by workers in the ritual scenes, and finally deployed as the dynamite to destroy a truckload of Japanese soldiers. It is not difficult to identify several individual elements in the wine – which is a strange mixture of, among other things, the sedan carrier's urine, the bride's inspiration, and her power of naming. Nor is it surprising to see that it becomes in the end an object of the collective memory of an individual, Luohan, who leaves the winery in the middle of the film to join the Communist armies and is later captured and skinned alive by Japanese soldiers. This specific red wine, as a locus of the unified private and public, encompasses the whole cycle of life, death, and rebirth (we see the son running on the screen and hear the grandson speaking off the screen), serving as a witness to the glory of collective work and the tragedy of lost freedom and independence (in the wake of the Japanese invasion).

Red wine, then, can be regarded in *Red Sorghum* as a spirit characterized by its powerful unifying force. As such, it immediately evokes another image in the Western tradition – that of Nietzsche's Dionysus (the Greek god of wine). In *Red Sorghum,* we are often touched – or "intoxicated" if you wish – by the scenes similar to what Nietzsche so enthusiastically celebrates in his *Birth of Tragedy:*

> Not only does the bond between man and man come to be forged once more by the magic of the Dionysiac rite, but nature itself, long alienated or subjugated, rises again to celebrate the reconciliation with her prodigal son, man. (Nietzsche 1971, 637)

The love-making scene in the sorghum fields is a good example of such a "magic" moment; so are the scenes of two wine praying rituals. As if all intoxicated by the Dionysian spirit, the individuals in *Red Sorghum* often express themselves, in Nietzsche's words, "through song and dance as the member[s] of a higher community," and their collective power is manifest "to the glorious satisfaction of the primordial One" – an ultimate unity (Nietzsche 1971, 638).

To further illustrate how an individual "loses" himself or herself in the

public (community), we observe two points here: First, the red wine, from its initial production to its ultimate destruction, is closely associated with the bride; second, the bride is virtually the only one in the film who consistently claims a real vision. At the beginning of *Red Sorghum,* she feels (and thus lets the audience feel) the fascination of the muscles; in the middle, she realizes the importance of collective work and thus leads the winery to a spectacular success; in the end, she senses the responsibility to avenge the death of Luohan and thus brings the whole story to a tragic, yet heroic conclusion. If we confine our view to this particular angle (red wine), *Red Sorghum* can well be seen as a story of the bride – a story about her individual poetic vision shared and realized by the public.

The idea of an individual's poetic vision shared and realized by the public is effectively visualized in the final ritual scene. Before they set out for combat, the male workers line up in a row in front of a portrayal of the wine god, performing their ritual prayers while drinking the red wine. "Drinking our wine," they chant, "you won't kow-tow to the emperor." The idea of fighting is originated by the bride, but when she airs it, it is readily picked up by the collective with no questioning. Ironically, the bride sees the significance of fighting not in terms of the dominant communist ideology but simply in terms of the loyalty an individual should demonstrate to his own folks in the community. Their ritual sacrifice, in other words, is performed exclusively by and for themselves, not for any abstract concept such as "anti-imperialism." This evident absence of a canonical ideology in the protagonists of the film leads us now to the question of the cinematic narration in *Red Sorghum*.

AN INNOCENT NARRATOR: POLITICS OF DEPOLITICIZED NARRATION

The final scene of *Red Sorghum* is a projection of the sedan carrier and his nine-year-old son standing in the thicks of a rummaged sorghum field, the body of the bride by their feet, stained with blood and red wine. The music of a folk song fills the sound track, presumably sung by the son. At this moment the narrator (that is, the grandson) speaks about his father's "red" vision, and this voice-over, which has been heard on and off throughout the film, finally pulls the audience back to the present and brings the film to a closure.

A contrast, then, exists in *Red Sorghum* between the visual narration

(synchronic with the events in the film) and the verbal narration (more like a number of added commentaries). Whereas we actually see the visual, poetic presentation of the winery people's "epic" life, we only listen to the "phantom voice" that has unsuccessfully attempted to encode that life in a more overtly political terminology (for example, "Uncle Luohan" tried to "mobilize local armed bandits into anti-Japanese forces" – knowledge simply beyond the comprehension of the winery workers in the film). Such a contrast amounts to a confession that the "innocent" narrator knows very little of the richness of the narrated story – a consequence that obviously results from his limited perspective at a fully politicized present and yet evokes an ever-increasing yearning for the "lost" meaning of a primitive life.

From the narrative point of view, therefore, we are confronted in *Red Sorghum* with a strange ideological phenomenon: the whole story is presented in such a way as to reduce its political overtones to a minimum. This deliberately depoliticized narration is "strange" and noncanonical in the overall cultural-political contexts of contemporary China, where the Communist Party dictates that literature and art must serve politics.[5] Nonetheless, this phenomenon is not so strange if we take into account the recent Chinese literary tendency toward a depoliticization in narration (exemplified, in cinema, by the so-called fifth generation directors – including the director of *Red Sorghum,* Zhang Yimou – and, in literature, by the "avant-garde writers" – including, not surprisingly, the original author of "Red Sorghum," Mo Yan).[6]

The film *Red Sorghum,* it may be quite clear by now, belongs outside of Chinese mainstream literary ideology. The marginality of the film can be demonstrated sufficiently by observing a number of obvious absences in the text.

First, the setting of the story in a remote wine distillery indicates a deliberate absence of the historically typical mode of production in Chinese society – what Jameson (1987, 140) calls "the great bureaucratic imperial systems." Its celebratory presentation of another mode of production, that of "primitive, or tribal society" (Jameson's term), with all its backwardness, vulgarism, and blasphemy, places the film in opposition to traditional Chinese values of culture and civilization.

Secondly, the depoliticized narration of *Red Sorghum* results in a complete absence of class distinctions and political consciousness (for example, self-conscious "patriotism") in the film. The only character with a

political vision, Luohan, is given little function in the film; perhaps even worse, he is portrayed as a helpless victim of the invaders' cold-blooded brutality (being skinned alive in public).

Thirdly, the primitive life-style poeticized in the film displays a challenging disregard of traditional moral values. Instead of exemplary virtuous women (we see many of them in Chinese mainstream films), *Red Sorghum* valorizes the wild passion of "my grandpa," the sedan carrier, and "my grandma," the bride. (I have insisted on using the term "bride" because, lacking a proper name for "my grandma," the woman protagonist is more meaningfully regarded as a bride than a "widow," the latter being a legal term imbued with "civilized" values.)[7] Such a wild passion, invigorated by red wine and regenerated by wild sorghum fields, gives poetic expression to an ideology of the body in the film.

The strategic absences in *Red Sorghum*'s depoliticized narration thus testify fully to the subversive nature of its marginality. The film's positioning of itself outside mainstream Chinese filmmaking and the canonical communist ideology enables (and actually invites) the audience to reflect critically on larger social and cultural issues in contemporary China.

IDEOLOGY OF THE BODY: SEARCH FOR NATIONAL ROOTS

The depoliticized narration in *Red Sorghum* is achieved by a process of "degradation" of what used to be the gentle (in human behavior), decent (in human speech), moral (in human relations), and honorable (in social interaction). The purpose of degradation, as Bakhtin (1984, 19) points out, is "the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract." The civilized becomes uncivilized; the indecent glorified; and the blasphemous blessed. The result of such a degradation, unavoidably, is a restructuring of the existing (concepts of) world orders.

That is exactly what Bakhtin (1984) so enthusiastically embraces in his notion of carnival:

> [Carnival] is outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socioeconomic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the festivity. (p. 255)

> Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed. (p. 10)

Carnival celebrates the destruction of the old and the birth of the new world. (p. 410)

During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its freedom. (p. 7)

As the subversive and destructive force is true and real in the theory of carnival, so is it in an ideology of the body – an ideology boldly articulated in *Red Sorghum* and ascertainable to varying degrees in recent Chinese cinema, literature, and literary theory.

The essential principle of the ideology of the body is to return the body to its "primitive" origin. The image of the body can be a human body, thus returning it to its most basic biological needs (that is, eating, drinking, defecating, making love, rearing children – the themes that are also explored in recent films such as *Horse Thief* and *Old Well*). The image of the body can also be the body, in an abstract sense, of one's ontological status, thus returning the long-forbidden topic "subjectivity" to Chinese intellectual milieux.[8] The image of the body can yet be further extended, even to that of the whole nation, thus returning Chinese culture to its original cradle, the Loess Plateau (as is clearly the case in the film *Yellow Earth*). A recent Chinese cultural phenomenon – a search for national roots, which means both a search for national characteristics of the Chinese people and for literary styles to capture that characteristic Chineseness – can thus be meaningfully discussed in terms of the emerging ideology of the body (Ji 1989).

As in the case of an ideology of the body, the search for national roots in China entails a conceptually downward movement, exploring the most fundamental elements of human life. What are considered most "national," not surprisingly, are often (re)discovered in rituals (like rain prayers in *Yellow Earth* or chess games in Ah Cheng's story, "The Chess Master"), in folk customs (most frequently marriage and funeral proceedings as in *Old Well*), and in religious ceremonies (like those in *Horse Thief*) – all invariably and significantly set in locales remote from China's contemporary cultural-political centers. The search for roots, therefore, is frequently executed in the form of myth (with all its emphases on legends, rituals, even superstitions). What Nietzsche says in the end of *The Birth of Tragedy* is very illuminating in this connection: "Man today, stripped of myths, stands famished among all his pasts and must dig frantically for roots, be

it among the most remote antiquities" (Nietzsche 1971, 641). It is as if
"modern man," having lost his vital tie with history and nature, can only
move backward and downward to search for their lost origin – the mythic
home or the mythic womb. In the context of contemporary China, it is as
if only by moving away from the interfering forces of the dominant politi-
cal dogmas and doctrines (a movement yet exemplifying the "politics" of
absence and marginality) can a new ideology be fully established, an ideol-
ogy that embodies the high and the low, the far and the near, all in a truly
material, tangible, and hence comprehensible self – the body.

One message in *Red Sorghum* is quite clear by now: it eulogizes the life
of a nameless couple whose unabashed confrontation with their own bod-
ies brings home to us a realization of a new ideology of the body. The
body in question, to borrow Bakhtin's brilliant expression, is not "the bio-
logical body, which merely repeats itself in the new generations, but pre-
cisely the historic, progressing body of mankind. . . ." From here we can
proclaim, by following Bakhtin further, that an ideology of the body is
"not abstract thought about the future but the living sense that each man
belongs to the immortal people who create history" (Bakhtin 1984, 367).
Indeed, it is the body of people, not dogmas and doctrines, that can ever
be immortal; and it is this immortality of the body that director Zhang
Yimou celebrates so enthusiastically in *Red Sorghum.*[9]

LIBERATION: THIRD CINEMA AND NATIONAL ALLEGORY

Having expounded the ideological implications of the bodily images poeti-
cally represented in *Red Sorghum,* we can now turn to the two concepts
we introduced at the beginning of the paper. The final tragic scene in *Red
Sorghum* conforms, in a sense, to what Jameson calls the Third World's
"life-and-death struggle" with First World imperialism (Jameson 1987,
140). Such a struggle, by its very definition, must be a political struggle.

Jameson's insistence on the political nature of the allegory form in
Third World culture may find support in the recent discussion of the
"Third Cinema" in the West. Initially proposed by Fernando Solanas and
Octavio Getino in a manifesto in 1969, the "Third Cinema" now refers to,
in Teshome Gabriel's words, "a cinema of decolonization and for libera-
tion" (Gabriel 1982, 1). Given the political agenda built in the proposition
of the Third Cinema, it is no surprise that its style must be very subversive

and revolutionary, "full of the imagery of guerrilla combat," as Roy Armes (1987, 99) describes it.

Judging from this political criterion, *Red Sorghum* (like some other Chinese films in the 1980s, such as *Yellow Earth* and *Horse Thief*) does not perfectly fit in the category of Third Cinema. While there is no denying that these recent Chinese films also make use of "the major themes in third cinema" – class, culture, religion, sexism, armed struggle[10] – to varying degrees, the concept of Third Cinema may be more usefully applied, as Chris Berry (1989) proposes, to a study of Chinese leftist films in the 1930s, marked by their heavy ideological emphases on anticolonization and anti-imperialism.

The apparent discrepancy between the revolutionary politics explicit in Third Cinema and the seemingly depoliticized narration of *Red Sorghum* (and other recent Chinese films), to be sure, does not rule out all possible grounds for comparison. The central tenet of liberation is still eminently evident in *Red Sorghum*. What need to be differentiated at this point are the various levels at which the concept of liberation is applied. At the top level, that of nationhood, the liberation of the country from the Japanese imperialists is overtly set as the background of the story. At a lower level, that of the individual, the liberation of women from patriarchal oppression is touched on in the film. Yet these two kinds of liberation constitute only a small proportion of the entirety of the film. *Red Sorghum* pronounces through its consistent and colorful visual images a total liberation and desperate triumph of the body.

It is this ideology of the body that undermines other political concerns in the film. By valorizing the "primitive" way of living and the simple nature of the Chinese people – intact as they seem to be from any form of political indoctrination, *Red Sorghum* aspires to a liberation of the human body, a liberation that will return the Chinese people from their now uniform life-style and sterile way of thinking to their nurturing, regenerating origins (roots). According to director Zhang Yimou, the fast-moving pace and the celebratory mood in *Red Sorghum* are intended to awaken and return the Chinese people to their lost vitality, thus rejuvenating (the body of) the whole nation.

Red Sorghum, in the final analysis, is not a story of any individual (be it my "grandpa" or "my grandma" or the two together); its poeticized narration, no matter how depoliticized it appears, is ultimately political in

nature. The aspiration to liberate people's thoughts from political indoc-
trination, to subvert the seemingly insurmountable authority of the domi-
nant ideologies, and, in short, to advocate a new ideology of the body in
contemporary China, is, and must be, a political aspiration.

It is in this sense that Jameson's theory of "national allegory" can be
meaningfully applied to *Red Sorghum*. The individual experience of "my
grandpa and grandma," narrated as it is in a seemingly depoliticized way,
is ultimately an allegory of China, an allegory involving the experience of
the whole Chinese nation – the experience, this time, not of liberating the
country from colonization or imperialist invasion, but of liberating its
own body, or more precisely, liberating itself. Given the contemporary
Chinese situation, the present task of liberation, as assumed by the ideol-
ogy of the body, is as political as the first one in nature.

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1989); and "The Idyllic Country and the (Post)Modern City: Cinematic Configu-
rations of Family in *Osmanthus Alley* and *The Terrorizer*" in a forthcoming col-
lection of essays on cinema and family.

Notes and References

1. Jameson 1984 and 1987 are both clearly attempts to map the totality of the cultural scenes in the First and Third Worlds.

2. For reviews of the film in English, see Canby 1988, Kauffmann 1988, and Zhang 1989.

3. For the definition of the "Third Cinema," see Solanas and Getino 1976 and Gabriel 1982, especially pages 121–122.

4. In an article comparing the film with its original story, Zhong Chengxiang asserts that the "love-making" scene is a celebration of "man's freedom" and as such is "a classic shot" in Chinese film history. See Zhong 1988.

5. This party line was originally laid down by Mao Zedong and has been kept quite consistent in the past forty-eight years, though the present version – literature and art must serve socialism – is comparatively mild in tone. See McDougall 1980.

6. For Chinese "fifth generation" directors and their films, see Rayns 1986 and Ma 1987. As for Chinese "avant-garde writers," see Li, Zhang, and Wang 1989.

7. The woman protagonist does at one point in the film ask the winery workers to call her "Jiu'er," but that is a nickname (literally, "the ninth birth"), lacking any value of identity. It can be argued that by denying its major protagonists their proper names, *Red Sorghum* aspires to a mythic representation of the "primitive" life where the private and the public always converge.

8. The best example in this connection is Liu Zaifu's aesthetic projects of subjectivity. See, especially, Liu 1985–86 and Liu 1986.

9. Zhang Yimou's enthusiasm is critically acclaimed in China, so much so that one critic even hails him as "the Dionysus of today's China." See Chen 1989.

10. These are subtitles in Gabriel's book (pages 15–20). As a matter of fact, common knowledge can easily tell that these themes are by no means confined to a revolutionary treatment in Third Cinema; literature of all times and all schools has tackled these themes in one way or another.

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Vietnam and Melodramatic Representation

ANDREW MARTIN

> In Viet Nam . . . G.I.s re-created the world back
> home. . . . The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese
> army were shadowy figures in this family tragedy;
> stage center, it was sibling riflery.
>
> *Time,* JANUARY 26, 1987

IT TOOK A long time for the American institutions of popular culture to
come to terms with the Vietnam War. Only John Wayne's *The Green
Berets,* which was released in the apocalyptic year of 1968 to a whirlwind
of protest, made any attempt to directly represent the war to a domestic
audience. And this film, it is generally agreed, was little more than a badly
skewed piece of propaganda, a "cliché ridden throwback" to World War II
"potboilers, its artifice readily exposed by the nightly actuality of TV news
coverage" (*Hollywood Reporter,* July 17, 1968, p. 3). Indeed, the *New
York Times* film critic, in an article interestingly entitled "The Absolute
End of the Romance of War," found *The Green Berets* so "vile and insane"
that she was moved to "grieve, not for our soldiers or the Vietnamese (the
film could not be more false or do greater disservice to either of them) but
for what has happened to the fantasy-making apparatus in this country"
(Adler 1968).

   Now, almost twenty years later, with Rambo-style fantasies seeming to
pervade aspects of both filmmaking and foreign policy, it is possible to
read into the *New York Times*'s critique a good deal more irony than was
intended. After two decades in which the fantasy-making apparatus gen-
erally did little more than nervously pick around the edges of this taboo
war, representations of Vietnam have now returned to American popular
culture with a vengeance. First came the Rambo films with their car-

toonesque appropriation of the ominous "stab-in-the-back" myth. In an extension of this development, there emerged a whole series of films that played upon the rumors of American prisoners still being held in Vietnam. This subgenre has been viewed by some film and literary critics as a present-day reappearance of seventeenth-century Indian captivity narratives; a replaying, that is, of ancient Puritan fantasies and fears of being subjected to unspeakable horrors by the pagan Other (see, for example, Auster and Quart 1988, 101–105).

Then, in 1986, came the award-winning *Platoon,* the film that finally convinced Hollywood and its financial backers that Vietnam was good box-office. The embargo on war-related topics was broken, as it were, and a flood of Vietnam War films and films set in the Vietnam War era followed. This state of affairs was not lost on television programmers and producers. Following quickly on the heels of *Platoon,* the television networks came up with two weekly series, "Tour of Duty" (CBS) and "China Beach" (ABC), both of which have managed to survive into their third season. The Vietnam War, in other words, has now been invested with a range of narrative modes which embrace elements of satire, comedy, tragedy, and melodrama.

But as the epigraph to this article suggests, the American war in Vietnam has now become an *American* family tragedy, displaced halfway across the globe and recreated as an essentially American family melodrama, replete with the familiar trope of sibling rivalry. These terms, taken from the reviews of *Platoon,* are not atypical and can found littering the critical responses to the growing number of films that have attempted to deal with the Vietnam War. In their recent book-length review of Vietnam War films, for example, Albert Auster and Leonard Quart describe one director's attempts to contain the "real" experience and conditions of the war "within the confines of romantic soap opera and heroic melodrama" (Auster and Quart 1988, 112–113). Indeed, they go on to suggest that a desire to reduce historical experience to established Hollywood formulas is typical of American commercial filmmaking in general. It would seem, then, that there is little hope of a more accurate rendering of the nature of the war so long as Hollywood sticks to its tried and tested "fantasies and stereotypes." The best we can look for are those moments of breakthrough that stem not from the intentions of filmmakers, but from the processes of reception; that is, when the images themselves awaken the "memory of an actual event" and "suggest something of the harrowing

quality of that experience." Meanwhile, the pressure to confine the war experience within the structures of melodrama is likely to be the most common form for representing the Vietnam War.

That films dealing with the Vietnam war are approached by critics in terms of their melodramatic affects and effects is, on the face of it, somewhat surprising. Although the term *melodrama* has been notoriously unstable in film studies – "a fragmented generic category," as Christine Gledhill (1987, 6) called it – and, since the 1970s, has been attached to a complex array of film genres, it has generally been exempted from use in the study of those films in which the action is of an exterior nature, such as the Western, gangster, and action/adventure film. In these films, the protagonist's search for an oedipal identity usually involves the conquering of the determinants of the setting itself. Melodrama, on the other hand, has been associated with an interior or closed space, with the domestic sphere of family and private reflection where the externalization of psychological states is magnified in the music and in certain elements of the mise-en-scène. Moreover, pathos and irony are assumed to be the crucial tropes around which the narratives of film melodramas have been organized, as well as forms of social and emotional alienation brought about because of failed family or sexual relationships. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1987, 73) describes the contours of this particular aspect of the family melodrama this way:

> What is at stake . . . is the survival of the family unit and the possibility for individuals of acquiring an identity which is also a place within the system, a place in which they can both be "themselves" and "at home," in which they can simultaneously enter, without contradiction, the symbolic order and bourgeois society. It is a condition of the drama that the attainment of such a place is not easy and does not happen without sacrifice, but it is rare for it to be seen as radically impossible.

In general, when melodrama features a male character as its central protagonist, the narrative often traces a failed oedipal trajectory and the consequent problems of achieving a stable patriarchal identity. Frequently, this involves a protagonist who suffers from "an impairment of his masculinity – at least in contrast to the mythic potency of the hero of the Western" (Nowell-Smith 1987, 72). However, as Gledhill points out in her engagement with Peter Brooks's study of literary melodrama, this does not mean that melodrama is exclusively about "either the family or indi-

vidual psychology." Rather, it exteriorizes "conflict and psychic structures" in a process that aims to produce a "melodrama of psychology" (Brooks 1976, quoted in Gledhill 1987, 31). In other words, the general work of melodramatic conventions and structures is not necessarily concerned with "the release of individual repression" so much as it is with the "public enactment of socially unacknowledged states" (Gledhill 1987, 31). Extending this argument into the debate between the different functions of realism and melodrama, Gledhill suggests that whereas realism usually assumes that "the world is capable of both adequate explanation and representation," melodrama offers no such confidence. On the contrary, much like the condensed and displaced cinematic presentations of the Vietnam War, melodrama "attests to forces, desires, (and) fears which, though no longer granted metaphysical reality, nevertheless appear to operate in human life independently of rational explanation." This, Gledhill concludes, is a mark of "melodrama's search for something lost, inadmissible, repressed," binding melodrama "to an atavistic past" (Gledhill 1987, 31–32). And this, I would propose, is an accurate description of what the media spectacles of the Vietnam War are about. For years, the war was repressed in American culture, and those who were called upon to fight in it were, upon their return, condemned to silence; forced, that is, to internalize the defeat as personal psychological trauma. Throughout the 1970s, the Vietnam veterans seemed to stalk the culture like a bad conscience, the living reminders of a conflict (seen both as a defeat and as a domestic upheaval) that was approached by some in terms of a struggle between the forces of good and evil – the terms being politically reversible depending on the opinion of the user – and by others as an eruption of atavistic tendencies that had now been finally laid to rest. Thus, when the war finally reentered the popular consciousness via the mass media, realist representational modes tended to be elided in favor of the melodramatic.

When we take the terms of these arguments, then, and join them with the remarks of the above-mentioned review of *Platoon,* it is possible to identify a structural topography in the various representational systems which portray the Vietnam War in American culture as drawing upon the traditional terrain of melodrama. This becomes all the more obvious when the etymology of melodrama is recalled – drama set to music *(melos)*. For if a single distinction marks Vietnam War films from films about previous American wars, it is the special place accorded to the musical sound track. No film about the Vietnam War seems quite complete

without a 1960s rock-and-roll accompaniment, and, perhaps beginning
with *Coming Home* (1978), no moment of pathos, tragedy, or reflection is
allowed to pass which has not been amplified by a significant selection
from the popular music of the period. This by now established convention
of Vietnam War films has been appropriated wholesale by television
approaches to the subject. In "China Beach," for example, which is set in a
combined recreation and casualty evacuation center, music and perfor-
mance are a regular feature of each episode. Thus, moments of pathos and
distress, and scenes that generate intense feeling, are usually emotionally
amplified either by the musical sound track or through one or more of the
characters performing a suitably charged rendering of a contemporary
popular song. Indeed, during the series' first six weeks, one of the central
female characters was a professional pop singer whose career becomes
entangled with the daily dramas of the combat casualty hospital.

That certain kinds of 1960s popular music have come to signify an
important emotional dimension of the American war in Vietnam is also
attested to by *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1988). In this film, the music itself
is claimed as a contested site of popular meanings within the larger con-
tested terrain of the war. The combatants in this contest are an armed
forces radio disc jockey, played by Robin Williams, who is versed in the
popular forms and cultural needs of the GIs, and opposed to the out-of-
touch army officers who run the radio station and who demand a quieter,
pre-1960s, form of musical programming. In this way, music comes to
stand in for a more pressing historical drama of class and race as this is
played out between a careerist officer corps, which is removed from the
daily terrors of the war, and the combat "grunts" who would rather fight
the war to the accompaniment of Jimi Hendrix than Mantovani.

Obviously, this appropriation of the music of the period is at some level
an attempt to conjure up an authentic sense of what Raymond Williams
has called an era's "structures of feeling"; at another level, however, it rep-
resents a profitable media tie-in ("now available in all formats at your
local record store") and further emphasizes the attempt to adapt the Viet-
nam war to basic melodramatic conventions.

Until the recent spate of Vietnam War films, *Coming Home* offered
what was perhaps the most excessive use of music in its effort to con-
stantly underline the film's basic melodramatic structures. More generally,
it is also a good example of the ways in which melodramatic forms have
been used to give expression to the Vietnam experience. Although *Com-*

ing Home is ostensibly the story of a paraplegic Vietnam veteran, Luke Martin (played by Jon Voight), who must come to terms with his disability, the central dramatic structure of the film is that of a love triangle. In his passage from infantilizing confinement in a Veterans' Administration hospital to a point where he can achieve a domestic independence, Luke becomes romantically involved with Sally Hyde (Jane Fonda), the wife of a marine captain (Bruce Dern) who is in Vietnam.

Luke is first introduced as a violently bitter and frustrated victim of both the war itself and of the pre-Vietnam cultural determinants of American masculinity which caused him to desire heroic participation in the war in the first place. Consequently, Luke is having a difficult time accepting the physical results of his "tour of duty" in Vietnam. Instead of providing Luke with a traditionally celebrated passage into male adulthood, the war has in fact arrested his oedipal trajectory, at least temporarily, at the level of an unstable psychological state which swings wildly between child-like aggression and passive resignation.

It is during Luke's confinement in the hospital that he meets Sally. Sally, too, is a product of pre-Vietnam cultural and psychological modes and is initially portrayed as a rather passive and deferring military wife. With her husband Bob now in Vietnam, however, Sally is forced to move into civilian housing, where there is less pressure to conform to the proprieties and prescriptions of life on the military base. Encouraged by a friend, Sally volunteers for part-time work at the VA hospital, where contact with the disabled veterans begins to open her eyes to previously invisible aspects of the war in Vietnam. Moreover, as the world outside of the confines of the marine base impresses itself on Sally, she begins to change and to question her former attachments and assumptions. These psychological shifts are registered in her changing dress and hair style, which reflect the free-flowing fashion styles of the era. Sally also becomes more spontaneous and independent in her behavior and is eventually drawn into having an affair with Luke.

At this stage of the narrative, Luke's initial anger and resentment have been tempered somewhat as he becomes increasingly mobile – first in a wheelchair and then in a specially customized car. No longer violent and unpredictable, Luke emerges as a sensitive and even nurturing character whose psychological and political determinants now lean toward passivism. As a male protagonist, however, his weakness and paralysis have, in effect, moved him outside of the traditional cinematic codes of assertive

masculine subjectivity. In her recent book, *The Remasculinization of America,* Susan Jeffords sums up Luke's progression:

> His physical weakness . . . is foregrounded throughout the film as a non-threatening posture in sharp contrast to the stiff-backed soldiers who still believe in war. And although his actions toward the end of the film . . . indicate a strength and decisiveness, this strength is clearly a nonviolent and passive one. . . . The price of his release from the hospital was his gradual containment of this anger and violence, now effectively neutralized (feminized/castrated). And Luke's increasingly feminine . . . characteristics parallel his growing expression of blame for his activities in the war. . . . (Jeffords 1989, 146–147)

Luke and Sally, then, are able to change and readjust previously held beliefs in the light of present experience; they are shown to be capable of casting off the constricting remnants of their former selves. And although this process introduces moments of psychological and sexual instability and stress, they manage to acquire (or reacquire) identities that are, to quote Nowell-Smith again, "a place in which they can both be 'themselves' and at 'home.' "

Sally's husband, Bob, on the other hand, is incapable of change and continues to be pathologically locked into male fantasies of a heroic manhood which can only be legitimated on the battlefield. It is this pathology, moreover, which ultimately leads to Bob's suicide following the disillusionments and confusions of Vietnam. In ways that turn out to be more disabling than Luke's experiences, Bob discovers that the Vietnam War, instead of providing a proving ground for a heroic masculinity, has instead totally undermined his sense of identity. His discovery of Sally's affair with the crippled Luke merely adds to his already intense feelings of dislocation; it is clear that the war itself has irrevocably violated all of the masculine fantasies that Bob desired in and for himself.

Although the war in Vietnam is not directly represented in *Coming Home,* it has, nevertheless, an enabling textual function in pointing to an unspeakable experience. When Sally asks Bob to tell her what it is like in Vietnam, for example, he is unable to articulate a response at first. Eventually he is able to blurt out that "It's in my head and I can't get it out. I don't know what it's like, I only know what it is. TV shows what it's like . . . it sure as hell don't show what it is." Vietnam is thus literally unspeakable in *Coming Home* – it cannot be "granted metaphysical reality"; it is a structuring absence that can only be made legible through the

exteriorization of Luke's evolving passivity and Bob's psychic stress. This process of exteriorization is given further expression through the sound track, which must stand in for the inability of ordinary language to articulate Bob's deteriorating state of mind. An increasingly frenetic acid rock number guides the spectator through the buildup to Bob's emotionally explosive confrontation with Sally over her affair with Luke. The confrontation then takes place in the living room, where the television set becomes a suggestive prop for Bob to lean his assault rifle on. Luke arrives in time to diffuse the situation and to talk Bob out of any further violence. In the process, Luke also disarms Bob and, while Sally attempts to comfort her husband, very deliberately unloads the rifle and retracts the extended bayonet. Bob, too, is thus neutralized, and his symbolic castration is now complete. The war has irreversibly altered the gendered determinants of both Luke's and Bob's sense of masculine identity. For the rest of the film, the only remaining signifier of Bob's former male status is his marine captain's uniform – and in effect, this merely points to the absence within, the lack that cannot be acknowledged in language. Finally, with the sound track again articulating Bob's traumatized and unstable state, this time through a quiet folk song ("Once I Was a Soldier"), he symbolically removes his uniform, dog tags, and Sally's ring, and swims out into the final embrace of the "Great Mother Ocean."

Although *Coming Home* is perhaps the clearest example of how melodramatic conventions were used to represent the Vietnam War experience in the late 1970s, it is not the only one. It is quite possible, for example, to identify melodramatic conventions in *Taxi* (1977), *Tracks* (1977), *Heroes* (1977), *Who'll Stop the Rain* (1978), and *The Deer Hunter* (1978), all of which present a crisis in male subjectivity which is then acted out within the domestic arena. In the changed cultural and political conditions of the 1980s, however, a rather different range of discourses, media representations, and public spectacles of healing, came to constitute the psychological and emotional terrain of the war. As I have already noted, the American cinema's approach to the Vietnam War is stretched between Ramboesque fantasies, on the one hand, and the claims to realism of *Platoon* and *Hamburger Hill* (1987), on the other. And somewhere in between stand the dark comedies of *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) and *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987). More recently, these have been joined by the emotionally pitched *Casualties of War* (1989) and the family melodrama of *In Country* (1989).

In this ongoing search for a usable range of dramatic forms deemed

commensurate with the oft-claimed need to heal the wounds of the war,
television has emerged as perhaps the most consistent, and, of course, the
most accessible, site of Vietnam representations. Beginning in 1980 with
the "Magnum P.I." series, and quickly followed by "The A Team" in 1982,
numerous television action/adventure heroes are now constructed as
Vietnam veterans of one sort or another. A short list would include "Air
Wolf," "Miami Vice," "T.J. Hooker," "Simon and Simon," "Rip Tide,"
"Matt Helm," and "The Equalizer." Other shows, such as "Hill Street
Blues," "Barney Miller," and "Trapper John, M.D." regularly featured one
or more characters who were Vietnam veterans. At another generic level,
television has also been instrumental in representing its own genealogy of
American involvement in Vietnam. This act of digging through the
archives has resulted in a number of documentary series that have
attempted to stitch together a television history of the war. The CBS multi-
part version of this archive is also widely advertised as available for sale
on an installment basis ("And you can own the Tet Offensive for just
$4.99," the advertisement claims).

But it was the advent of the weekly Vietnam War dramas "Tour of
Duty" in 1987, and then "China Beach" in 1988, that attracted the most
critical and popular attention. Indeed, "Tour of Duty" was greeted with
lengthy review articles and editorial comment in most major newspapers,
and both *Time* and *Newsweek* ran double-page spreads on the new show.
The *New York Times* seemed to catch the general tone of the response
when its critic wrote:

> It's Back – napalm, firefights, body bags, Hueys, rice paddies, Victor Char-
> lie, search-and-destroy, the quagmire, the Living Room War. After 16 years,
> the Vietnam War returns to American television. This time, it's playing
> prime time, and the enemy is Bill Cosby. (Boyer 1987)

As this quotation suggests, the Vietnam War has returned to the American
domestic arena, and television, which has been alternately celebrated for
bringing the war home to American living rooms during the 1960s and
then criticized for turning American viewers against the war, has now
brought the image of men at war in Vietnam back to the American scene
in the form of television melodrama. To be sure, whereas "Tour of Duty"
operates for the most part within the parameters of traditional combat
dramas, "China Beach," with its emphasis on women at war, offers a very
different perspective – not the least of which is its attempt to situate the

war within the women's sphere and to represent Vietnam from the woman's point of view.

Set in a casualty evacuation station near Da Nang, which is also attached to a military beachside recreational center, "China Beach" has provided multiple opportunities for creating dramatic tensions. One episode in particular merits special attention, both for its use of melodramatic conventions and for its overlay of these conventions with a hyperbolic, excessive patriotic sentiment. Entitled "Independence Day," this episode focuses on three major lines of action, which feature strikingly conventionalized (indeed, allegorical) figures: the romance between the American nurse, Colleen McMurphy, and a handsome French doctor, Girard; the interaction between a Vietnamese cleaning woman and a "Donut Dolly" who both claim national possession of the Declaration of Independence; and an altercation between K.C., an American prostitute ("officers only"), and the black mortician, Beckett, over the oppression and opportunity wrought by American capitalism. These stories are interwoven through the events of a single day (the 4th of July) which is marked by the continuous downpour of monsoon rains. The rain not only underlines moments of emotional conflict, but thunder and lightning also punctuate certain scenes with a sense of the Gothic.

The first and lengthiest narrative line to be developed involves Colleen and Girard and, among other things, sets up themes of cross-cultural conflict and misunderstanding. Girard appears unexpectedly at the base to invite Colleen to lunch and catches her in the midst of eating American candy bars from a care package provided by the Donut Dolly. Colleen is caught off guard by this sudden appearance and is somewhat embarrassed to be seen with the heavy residue of a mudpack on her face. Nevertheless, the pair settle down to eat a casual lunch, composed of American fast-food items from the care package. Although this is perfectly friendly meeting at first, a remark from Girard concerning the way Americans always "trail" their culture along behind them wherever they go, initiates a debate about the American presence in Vietnam and its political consequences. Colleen trots out the official line, which, in spite of its obvious hackneyed quality, appears to be her heartfelt sentiment: "We are giving the Vietnamese an opportunity to decide their own destiny . . . freedom of choice." Girard responds by accusing Americans in general of having a far too simple understanding of such complex concepts as freedom. He then continues with a history lesson on the thousand-year struggle of the

Vietnamese to rid themselves of occupying armies. It is clear that Girard views the American presence as simply another military occupation which will be inevitably defeated and driven away. Indeed, Girard goes on to link the American presence in Vietnam to an even larger political history of occupation: the "Romans in Palestine, the British in India . . . the Nazis!"

Notwithstanding their differences, however, in parting Girard invites Colleen to his house for dinner that night, an invitation that leaves Colleen in a quandary over what the correct dress code might be for dinner with a Frenchman. In what has become an established motif in "China Beach," Colleen turns to K.C., whose support and advice have become a matter of trust. In the scene that follows, Colleen is shown trying on one of K.C's body-hugging dresses which strikes her as more of "a declaration of war" than a piece of clothing.

Thus dressed, Colleen arrives at Girard's impressive French colonial villa, only to find that dinner is to be very casual. Instead of the expected show of French cuisine, dinner consists of American hot dogs (although on French bread). Moreover, not only is she overdressed for the occasion, but dinner turns out to be a family affair. Much to Colleen's surprise, Girard, who has been positioned in the series as a man with a mysterious past, has two Vietnamese children.

As the dinner proceeds, with the children in attendance (the boy is wearing an American cowboy costume), the Independence Day theme reappears as Colleen and Girard argue about the relative political merits of the French and American revolutions. Girard attempts to quote the French revolutionary claim of liberty and equality, but before he can finish the sentence, Colleen interrupts and substitutes "the guillotine" in place of "fraternity." Girard immediately comes back with a quote from Thomas Paine which denigrates the American revolution as merely "a military exercise for the preservation of the bourgeoisie's property." Colleen, taken aback, can only ask in surprise, "Our Thomas Paine said that?" To which Girard adds, "Yours until you threw him away for being too revolutionary."

In a last determined effort to keep the flag flying, Colleen proclaims her allegiance: "I am not going to apologize for indoor plumbing and air lifting ravioli half way around the world. I might not get the big picture but I can live where I please, I can do as I please, and I can think as I please. I'm an American, dammit!" Girard and the children respond by applauding

with cries of "bravo." However, before either of the adults can continue
the argument into deeper political differences, the young boy asks Colleen
if she knows Roy Rogers. Instead of replying, she sings "Happy Trails"
(thus "trailing" American culture behind her) and everyone joins in. And
so the scene ends, not with political debate, but with an example from
America's ubiquitous popular culture which seems to follow these charac-
ters where ever they go.

Eventually, Colleen and Girard are alone. Unsure of Colleen's feelings
at this point, Girard says that he would understand if she wished to leave.
Instead of leaving, however, Colleen approaches Girard and they begin to
embrace and kiss, a moment of romance that is quickly punctured by a
Vietnamese servant who, speaking in French, informs Girard of an emer-
gency at the nearby convent. At this point Colleen's and Girard's intercul-
tural love affair begins to take on elements of the Gothic, replete with
flashing lightning and crashing thunder and a mad woman in the attic.
Although Colleen has no idea what the emergency consists of, she does,
nevertheless, insist on accompanying Girard to the convent. Upon their
arrival, a nun ushers them up a flight of stairs, with candles and lightning
supplying an eerie ambience. At the top of the stairs is a mysterious room
that houses one of Girard's former wives, a Vietnamese woman who was
driven insane by the death of her and Girard's child.

Back at the base, the Donut Dolly and a Vietnamese cleaning woman
take up the theme of confinement and independence in a different key.
The Donut Dolly is reading aloud from the Declaration of Independence,
while the Vietnamese woman cleans up around her. Obviously stirred by
the reading, the Vietnamese woman interrupts with the question, "You
know Ho Chi Minh?" This query then generates a dialogue between the
two women, who both claim national possession of the same document.
"That is our Declaration of Independence," the Vietnamese woman
insists, "I have heard Ho Chi Minh say these words many times on the
radio, in the newspaper," while the American woman contends that the
words are those of Thomas Jefferson. Unlike the American woman, how-
ever, who is unsure of the words of the Declaration even as she reads them
from a prepared script, the Vietnamese woman can recite the document
from memory. The suggestion here is that the American Declaration of
Independence has been, through rote repetition, reduced to little more
than a prop in an annual ritual and thus drained of its revolutionary con-
tent. In the context of the Vietnamese revolution, however, Ho Chi

Minh's version of the Declaration provides powerful political motivation
to an embattled people. This story line concludes with the Vietnamese
woman, now dressed up as George Washington, reading the Declaration
during the 4th of July celebrations at the base.

The final narrative line to be discussed here involves K.C. and the black
mortician, Beckett. In typical opportunistic fashion, K.C. has volunteered
for the job of registering GIs for upcoming elections. For this she is being
paid for each soldier registered. In order to insure a good turnout, she
commandeers Beckett's mortuary and sets it up as a combination registra-
tion station and nightclub – complete with free beer and blue movies.
When Beckett unexpectedly discovers this carnivalesque scene, in a place
where he had been attending to dead soldiers only hours before, he
becomes enraged and demands that the mortuary be cleared. K.C., how-
ever, is not so easily dismissed and in a show of machine-type politics calls
upon the soldiers to vote on whether to stay or leave. Beckett not only
loses the vote but, in the process, is also intimidated by the all-white group
of soldiers.

Later, Beckett confronts K.C. about this incident and also about her
stealing of his files, which contain the names of all the dead soldiers that
have passed through his mortuary. Apparently, this graveyard vote is also
worth money to K.C., a fact of political corruption that reminds Beckett
of the political situation back home, where African-Americans have regu-
larly been denied the vote. But his idealism and anger do not impress
K.C., who also comes from the wrong side of the tracks. Indeed, her
response is equally as impassioned as Beckett's: "America is not about
democracy," she claims. "It's capitalism, cash, that's what makes America
hum and that's why I love it. In America a poor girl can be a queen." To
this, Beckett can only reply, "I'll never stop believing in the other
America." In a final frustrated gesture, Beckett tears up a roll of K.C.'s
money and stalks out.

These three narrative lines are tentatively resolved within their separate
contexts, but only the conclusion to the episode attempts to bring them
together in a final, hyperbolic display of emotionality and patriotic senti-
ment. Undaunted by the rain, a group of American soldiers and nurses
attempts to play softball in the downpour. Bob Dylan's "Hard Rain" is
heard on the sound track, as if to underscore the futility of their efforts
and, indeed, as if to comment upon the futility of the American occupa-
tion of Vietnam. Shots of Colleen and Girard in an embrace, and of the

Vietnamese woman dressed as George Washington, are intercut with shots of the softball game (which now include a friendly K.C. and Beckett). Almost imperceptibly, Dylan's "Hard Rain" is replaced by "The Battle Hymn of the Republic": a massive display of fireworks, accompanying close-ups of the central characters, remains on the screen for some time until finally, mercifully, the concluding credits appear.

As I have attempted to show, then, the evolution of Vietnam War representations has been inextricably bound up with questions of melodrama which operate simultaneously to expose and to cover over the contradictions of the war. The "China Beach" series remains just one example of a current trend toward valorizing the Vietnam War experience and of creating a place for American spectators to be both "themselves" and, quite literally, "at home."

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Melodrama, Temporality, Recognition: American and Russian Silent Cinema

Mary Ann Doane

From Griffith to Sirk, Western melodrama – in particular, the Hollywood version – has relied on an intensification of the temporal dimension of narrative. Time is tightened and structured to the point of perceived excess – when the machinations of narrative are laid bare. As Thomas Elsaesser (1972, 2) has pointed out, melodrama is characterized by a "foreshortening of lived time in favor of intensity." Time is, indeed, foreshortened and condensed so insistently that the genre often sacrifices realism. Steve Neale claims,

> Inasmuch as there is little causal preparation for the way events unfold, the *generic* verisimilitude of melodrama tends to be marked by the extent to which the succession and course of events is unmotivated (or undermotivated) from a realist point of view, such preparation and motivation as does exist is always 'insufficient'. There is an *excess* of effect over cause, of the extraordinary over the ordinary. Hence the emergence of terms like Fate, Chance and Destiny. (Neale 1986, 6–7)

Neale's observations point to the extent to which credibility and the temporal dimension are aligned. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century codes of realism dictate a minimal duration required to sustain the belief in action or event. "Too much, too soon" might be seen as the motto of melodrama, which, in its thickening or condensation of time, often violates such codes. Yet, melodrama as it emerges within the cinema is articulated with the indexical realism of the photograph, and the two signifying tendencies (the realist and the melodramatic) are often intertwined in intriguing ways. Nevertheless, it is clear that melodrama is dependent upon an

orchestration of emotional effects which could be said to *oversaturate* time.

   The "events" that crowd each other within melodrama often have to do with meetings and recognitions that are mistimed or barely in time: just-missed arrivals or departures, recognitions that occur "too late," last-minute rescues, blockages of communication that could have been avoided. Hence, Franco Moretti claims that the pathos of melodrama, its moving effect, is generated by a "rhetoric of the too late." In melodrama, what "should have happened" is self-evident, but one would have to effectively *reverse* time in order to attain it. The characters continually struggle against the passage of time. Recognition or agnition takes place, but in the most moving narratives, it is mistimed.

> Agnition is a 'moving' device when it comes *too late*. And to express the sense of being 'too late' the easiest course is obviously to prime the agnition for the moment when the character is on the point of dying. . . . [the] irreversibility [of time] is perceived that much more clearly if there are no doubts about the *different direction* one would like to impose on the course of events. . . . [Tears] presuppose a definitive estrangement of facts from values, and thus the end of any relationship between the idea of *teleology* and that of *causality*. (Moretti 1983, 160, 162)

What melodramatic narratives seem to demonstrate above all is the irreversibility of time, its unrelenting linearity. Even in melodramas with a happy ending, where meetings or recognitions take place "just in time," the structure of time is revealed as constrained inevitability, as irreversible progression, in relation to which one either conforms or loses.

   Hence, melodrama strives to conceptualize time as pure punctuality; it is composed of moments whose status is that of the crisis or catastrophe, condensing within themselves the excessive affect and signification that lend them their privileged place in the narrative. Duration would seem to be foreign to its epistemology. Furthermore, melodrama's representation of time as a series of compressed blows or traumas is fully consistent with Walter Benjamin's theorization of film as the ultimate incarnation of a peculiarly modern experience of shock: "There came a day when a new and urgent need for stimuli was met by the film. In a film, perception in the form of shocks was established as a formal principle" (Benjamin 1973, 132). In his delineation of a theory of shock, Benjamin makes few distinctions between such technological developments as the match, the tele-

phone, the camera, and the experiences provided by journalistic advertis-
ing and the increased flow of traffic. In the field of representation, the
shock experience is associated with mechanical reproduction, while the
"auratic" experience is linked to older forms of art such as painting and
lyric poetry: "The price for which the sensation of the modern age may be
had [is] the disintegration of the aura in the experience of shock" (Ben-
jamin 1973, 154).

In line with Benjamin's analysis of film and its special relation to shock,
Tom Gunning has described the early prenarrative cinema (1895–1903/4)
as a "cinema of attractions." The spectator of such a cinema is engaged not
through narrative involvement or empathy/identification with characters
but through a type of fascination and curiosity that has a great deal to do
with the apparatus itself. What is at stake is the cinema's ability to provide
the illusion of an event – and an event that appears to assault the specta-
tor would more easily produce the desired effect, would underline the
power of the apparatus. Gunning aligns the aesthetic of the cinema of
attractions with popular art's discourse of "sensations" and "thrills." He
refers to "the particularly modern entertainment form of the *thrill,*
embodied elsewhere in the recently appearing attractions of the amuse-
ment parks (such as the roller coaster) which combined sensations of
acceleration and falling with a security guaranteed by modern industrial
technology" (Gunning 1989, 37). Although Gunning is dealing with a
filmic phenomenon which precedes the consolidation of narrative and he
would not, perhaps, sanction such an extension of his analysis, the melo-
dramatic aesthetic could also be described as an organization of "thrills"
and "sensations." One could even see within melodrama in its cinematic
incarnation the toning down, the enforced channeling through narrativi-
zation of the aesthetic of the "thrill." Here, the "cliff hanger" would be
exemplary, and the sudden turns of its narratives would make metaphori-
cal the literal turns of the roller coaster. Within narrative, there is a certain
transposition of the "thrill" of the attraction so that melodrama's revela-
tions, loaded moments, sudden reversals, last-minute rescues, together
with its lack of satisfactory cause-effect relations, indicate a profound dis-
connection, where the moment of discontinuity becomes a somewhat
more subdued form of the thrill.

Melodrama's incorporation within the cinema is coincident with and
dependent upon the conjunction of entertainment and urban space (hence
the speculations of Kracauer and Benjamin about the relation of cinema

and a peculiarly modern urban perception). And the city itself, in its archi-
tecture and organization of space, was fully aligned with what Christine
Gledhill refers to as "an expanding culture of the visible."

> Aside from the toys and spectacles which anticipated cinema, Michael
> Booth cites the building of art galleries and museums, the development of
> lithography and the craze for illustrated editions of the 'classics', the inven-
> tion of the plate-glass window and electric lighting which introduced store
> fronts and the shopping arcade as sites of spectacle and consumption, and
> the architecture of the city itself with its public monuments and mercantile
> and industrial structures, constituting visual evidence of the spoils of com-
> merce and imperialism. 'The world', he comments, 'was saturated with pic-
> tures.' (Gledhill 1987, 22)

This insistence of the visible and its articulation with a commodity culture
suggest that the status of the woman and of femininity in such a milieu is
subject to radical changes. Women gain a new significance in the city as
active consumers and spectators but an increased fascination with the fig-
ure of the prostitute, as the epitome of the female *flaneur,* is also emblem-
atic of the woman's relation to urban space. The conjunction of the
woman and the city suggests the potential of an intolerable and dangerous
sexuality, a sexuality that is out of bounds precisely as a result of the
woman's revised relation to space, her new ability to "wander" (and hence
to "err"). Cinematic narrative is often obsessed with this wandering/
erring of the woman-in-the-city. Hence, the thrill of melodrama is often a
sexual thrill, closely allied with the representation of the woman. In cine-
matic melodrama, the subgenre where the intensification of temporality is
arguably at its extreme is that of the maternal melodrama, a subgenre
addressed to and about women. Here, the erring may not explicitly be
that of prostitution, but the woman's sexuality is generally characterized
in some way as "deviant" and her problematic relation to her child a result
of that deviance. In maternal melodramas such as *Way Down East* (1921),
Stella Dallas (1925 and 1937), *Madame X* (1920, 1929, 1937), and *Blonde
Venus* (1932), the woman rejects a man, or men in general, commits adul-
tery or in some other way transgresses the cultural limitations on female
sexuality. The resulting narrative is often a highly compressed series of
recognitions and misrecognitions, communications or miscommunica-
tions, meetings or near misses. What seems to be at stake, given the pre-
ponderance of scenes of recognition and misrecognition, is the possibility

of knowledge in a world where female sexuality is unbound. The insistence of the temporal dimension and its relation to recognition and resolution – characteristic attributes of melodrama – are arguably most visible in the subgenre of the maternal melodrama.

Precisely because melodrama seems so unvarying in its invocation of a precise temporal structure (one in which time is constricted and irreversible), one can pinpoint in its analysis a problem with the current injunction to historicize film criticism. The persistence of formal elements is one reason why the term melodrama seems so applicable to such a wide range of films across an extended period of time. There is a peculiar time lag associated with melodrama in the twentieth century. As Peter Brooks points out, melodrama is committed to the revelation of meaning and signification in a desacralized world. Fueled by an egalitarian ideology, it is

> radically democratic, striving to make its representations clear and legible to everyone. . . . Desire triumphs over the world of substitute-formations and detours, it achieves plenitude of meaning. . . . In the tableau more than in any other single device of dramaturgy, we grasp melodrama's primordial concern to make its signs clear, unambiguous, and impressive. (Brooks 1976, 15, 41, 48)

In the face of modernist developments within the arts which stress the slippage and fragmentation of meaning, melodrama's investment in plenitude and clarity of meaning harks back to nineteenth-century polarizations of good and evil which often seem incompatible with the modern world. This peculiar time lag also functions to give melodrama a kind of strength and forcefulness in its assurances. One could argue that the basic elements of the form have remained surprisingly constant from the late nineteenth century to the 1950s, particularly with respect to the organization of temporality. The difficulty in localizing and defining the term melodrama – it has been applied to other forms (e.g., crime films, film noir, the Western) and even to the cinema as a whole – gives evidence of an understanding of melodrama and its effects that denies historical specificity. Or, perhaps the implication is that the historical period we are confronting here is so large that it encompasses all of cinema (along the lines of the historical periodization invoked by Foucault, where "periods" become the more extensive categories of the "episteme" or the "discursive formation"). In any event, the sheer endurance of the form would seem to disallow the attribution of specificity to melodrama – particularly with respect to that which im-

presses one as most persistent and general, its structuration of time. From this perspective, it would be especially productive to examine another melodramatic cinema in which the organization of time is strikingly different – pre-Revolutionary Russian film.

In the course of the recent Pordenone Film Festival dedicated to the pre-Revolutionary Russian cinema, it became clear that, in the melodramas of the 1910s, the spectator is confronted not with the condensation and constriction of time but with its thinning out, its expansion. The eventlessness and duration of such a time also suggest that it is reversible. What is specific to this cinema's organization of temporality emerges as a perceived difficulty in closure, often read as a propensity toward "unhappy" or tragic endings. In fact, Russian studios frequently produced two versions of a film: one with a tragic ending for Russian consumption and one with a happy ending for export. As Yuri Tsivian points out, the Russian remake of Griffith's *The Lonely Villa* (*Drama on the Telephone,* Yakov Protazanov, 1914) revises the ending so that the husband, who is not in time to rescue his wife from the burglars, arrives home to find her dead body (Tsivian et al. 1989, 24). One of the few Russian films to conclude with a happy ending – a wedding (*Jenny the Maid,* Protazanov, 1918) is set in a foreign country (Tsivian et al. 1989, 26). Tsivian claims that the tendency to emphasize unhappy endings is related to a history of melodrama unique to Russian theater.

> 'Russian endings' came into cinema from 19th century Russian theatrical melodrama, which always ended badly. Unlike the Western theatrical melodrama, the Russian variant derives from classical tragedy adapted to the level of mass consciousness. Hence the only conclusion that we can draw about 'Russian endings' in cinema is one that relates to Russian mass culture as a whole: the peculiarity of Russian cinema and of Russian mass culture is its constant attempt to emulate the forms of high art. (Tsivian et al. 1989, 26)

Russian melodrama is a transformation or rewriting of tragedy in relation to popular imperatives, not a mute form existing in the shadow of a legitimate theater (the only theater allowed to "speak") representing high art (as in France, for instance).

Conventionally, tragedy is concerned with internal conflict rather than external events and their resolution. In Western European and American melodrama, the fact that the narrative conflict is located *between* charac-

ters rather than *within* a single mind makes it possible to attain a *visual* resolution of conflict more readily. Russian cinematic melodrama, as the heir to tragedy, stresses the internal conflict of the protagonist, a situation that does not necessarily encourage either development across time or resolution. Another point frequently made about tragedy has to do with its mode of address. In Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's account, the democratic tendencies of melodrama determine its status as a discourse between "equals" – the characters in the fiction and the spectators occupy similar social positions. Tragedy, on the other hand, presupposes a certain distance or imbalance between the social level of its characters and that of its audience (tragedies, classically, are about royalty – kings and princes) (Nowell-Smith 1987, 71). To the extent that Russian melodrama aspires to high art (or at least works to adapt it to the level of "mass consciousness"), there are sometimes hints of a lack of equilibrium in the class statuses of its protagonists and its spectators (although the distance between the two is not so great as in classical tragedy). This is not always the case (and may be particularly true of only one director, Evgenii Bauer). Nevertheless, the pre-Revolutionary Russian cinema, unlike the American melodrama of the same period, generally does not produce narratives that circulate around issues of social mobility or class strife. Neither does it tend to side with the social underdog or victim. One of the few films where it appears to do so, *Silent Witnesses* (Bauer, 1914), can be read as a kind of allegory of the social discrepancy between spectator and protagonist, for the narrative concerns a maid who falls in love with her employer and is forced to look on as he pursues a woman of a higher class.

However, we need to know more about the class composition of the audience for this early Russian cinema. We need to know whether or how it was divided along class lines. David Robinson claims that "Unlike other countries, Russia's cinema attracted an educated middle class rather than a working-class audience" (Robinson 1989–90, 52). He goes on to detail the influence of the works of the Symbolist-Decadent era on many of the films. And certain remarks by Tsivian seem to suggest that the cinema drew an upper-middle-class audience which was quite literate. He points to the links between this cinema and the literary texts that provide its pretexts and the fact that a literary culture is often presupposed. Tsivian also notes that intertitles were viewed favorably, indicating a desire to read on the part of the audience, which was linked by Meyerhold to the "logocentrism of our perception" (Tsivian et al. 1989, 36). One could potentially

argue that the more significant distinction is not one of class but of rural versus urban – and, of course, the cinema was primarily a phenomenon of the city. Literacy rates in Russia were growing throughout this period, but they remained highest in urban areas.[1]

The emphasis on the "unhappiness" of the endings of Russian melodrama may, however, be misdirected. Regardless of its tone (and there are certainly tragic endings within the Hollywood cinema as well), the "Russian ending," more importantly, does not have the same narrative function as the Hollywood ending. The ending of the Hollywood melodrama, whether happy or unhappy, always works to tie together the various threads of the narrative, to answer a question posed at the beginning of the film, or to resolve an enigma. Resolution here is understood as coherence, repetition, and recognition. The temporal process of the narrative is a process of working through a problem. In the Russian melodrama of the 1910s, on the other hand, the abruptness of the endings is frequently marked and closure does not fulfill the same functions. It is not burdened with the weighted expectations of its American counterpart. A few examples will help to clarify this point.[2]

The Brigand Brothers (Vasilii Goncharov, 1912) is a screen version of the epic poem by Pushkin. In the first scene, a man tells the story of his past and that of his brother to a group of men gathered around a fire on the banks of the Volga. A flashback returns the viewer to the period of the brothers' youth. Their father dies by drowning, and their stepmother sends them away from their father's house. Growing up in a family they do not know, both brothers work for the same man and both fall in love with his daughter. It becomes clear that she prefers the younger, but he allows an animal he is shepherding for the owner to die, and the girl's father sends both brothers away. The girl follows, her father begins to beat the younger brother, and the elder brother kills him. The brothers flee, and subsequently the elder kills an old man in the course of a robbery, despite the pleas for mercy made on his behalf by the younger. The brothers continue a life of robbery and rape and eventually are arrested and imprisoned. In the course of their escape from prison, the younger brother dies. The film returns to the "present tense" as the elder brother finishes his story by asserting, "Sometimes when I remember the cries of my brother I cannot kill old people."

Although the film is unique among pre-Revolutionary melodramas for its invocation of a framing story, pinpointing the source of the narration,

the enigmatic nature of the closing statement, the difficulty of assimilating it as pathos, tend to undermine the formal resolution of the return to the film's opening site (literally the geographic place – by the side of the Volga – and figuratively the site of the enunciation). The father dies, and the lover/daughter slips out of the story at its midpoint, leaving no opening for a scene of recognition or return that would loop the narrative back over itself in the tightening operation familiar in Hollywood melodrama. Instead, the film privileges a long scene depicting the death throes of the younger brother and the intense grief of the elder. Very little of the process of digging his grave is elided; rather, the motions of doing so are depicted in a detailed manner usually reserved for narratively crucial actions in the Hollywood cinema. Pathos here is expansive rather than sharp; it is dependent upon duration instead of privileged moments.

   The Daughter-in-Law's Lover (Aleksandr Ivanov-Gai, 1912) also takes place in a rural setting and has been described by one critic as "a dark oppressive rural drama, [which] culminates in a shocking sequence where the daughter-in-law is found dead in a barn" (Tsivian et al. 1989, 154). It is important to note, however, that her death does not constitute the ending of the film. The story concerns a young woman (Lusha) whose husband is always lazy and frequently drunk. She is raped by her father-in-law, who continues to harass her despite her pleas that he not "ruin" her "soul." Like other Russian films of this period set in a rural area, the emphasis is on a strong patriarchal figure and a marriage gone wrong (often, but not here, this is the result of an arranged marriage). Lusha consults an old miller with a reputation as a soothsayer in an attempt to discover her destiny, but the scene is strangely inconclusive. Finding the miller amidst an enormous pile of rocks, she finally convinces him to tell her future. He cuts the throat of a chicken and holds it over a stream as it bleeds to death, but the result of his "reading" is not evident, and the scene seems to act as a gruesome prefiguration of Lusha's own death. In a striking scene at a village well, it becomes clear that Lusha's neighbors censure her and consider her a whore. That night, the father-in-law goes to the barn for what he thinks will be a secret rendezvous with Lusha but finds her dead body, hanging from the rafters.

   Yet, as pointed out earlier, the film does not end with her death, which, as a tragic punctual moment, would have sealed the narrative and conclusively addressed its fundamental question. Lusha's body is carried to the house, where she is laid down on a table. As her husband mourns, the

father-in-law creeps along the windows outside the house, attempting to get a glimpse of the scene (this is the only interior set of the film). He finally enters the house and confronts the son, falling to his knees and begging his forgiveness. The son leaves the house, and the father is alone with Lusha's body. He subsequently leaves as well, runs toward an embankment, and stands there, looking offscreen into nothing. It is as though there were a strongly felt need to add an epilogue, a unit of narrative that would come after, extend, and prolong the moment of recognition or disaster. A similar ending is found in *Silent Witnesses*. The maid is finally forced to recognize, at the end of the film, that her employer is hopelessly in love with the high society woman, who, in her turn, is cheating on him with another man. The spectator is left with a sense of the inevitability of the dilemma, the sheer impossibility of any resolution. In the final shot, whose duration is strongly marked, the maid ascends the stairs slowly and in evident distress, while the camera holds on her for an inordinately long time. The function of such endings seems to be precisely to fill out time, to avoid its condensation or consolidation through discursive tightening. Time is treated not as a series of points marking developments of the narrative trajectory, but as an expanse, effecting a fundamentally different sense of an ending. The films construct an experience of time that differs markedly from that of the Hollywood melodrama.

Nevertheless, the specificity of the "Russian ending" cannot be reduced to the example of the surplus scene or expanded epilogue. Often, the difficulty (from the Hollywood point view) would seem to be just the opposite – the ending is too abrupt, denying any sense of resolution. *Children of the Age* (Bauer, 1915) is a story of a young woman, the wife of a bank clerk, who through a chance meeting with an old school friend is introduced to a man with a great deal of influence at the bank. He is attracted to her and when she resists has her husband fired. She is ultimately forced to leave her husband, returning only to kidnap their baby. In the final scene, the husband writes a short note to his wife and commits suicide. *Child of the Big City* (Bauer, 1914) also ends with the suicide of the man. In this instance, the final shot is a close-up of the face of the dead man lying on the steps. As she steps lightly over his body, the woman who led him to his doom proclaims it is a good omen: "They say that a meeting with the dead brings happiness." In *Merchant Bashkirov's Daughter* (Nikolai Larin, 1913), a woman whose father has arranged an unwanted marriage for her is forced to have secret meetings with her lover. In the

course of hiding from the father under heavy layers of bedding, he suffo-
cates, and the mother and daughter hire a local blacksmith to get rid of the
body. The blacksmith blackmails the daughter (financially and sexually),
and she subsequently watches him get drunk, locks him in the tavern, and
sets fire to the building. In the final shot of the film, the daughter laughs
hilariously in front of her bedroom window, through which one can
glimpse smoke and flames from the tavern fire. Bauer's last film, *For Luck*
(1917), details a scenario in which a woman's daughter, who suffers from
an eye ailment, falls in love with her mother's boyfriend. When the mother
and her lover realize this, the lover returns to the city. The mother and
daughter visit him, and the mother pleads with him to marry her daugh-
ter, claiming the daughter's illness will intensify if he declines. He refuses,
telling the daughter that he is in love with another woman, her mother.
The film ends as the daughter goes blind. But blindness signifies nothing
in this context except the banal fact of itself (unlike blindness in the Amer-
ican cinema, for example, *City Lights* or *Dark Victory*). The sense of loss
here cannot, as in Hollywood melodrama, be linked to a problem of mis-
recognition or a just-missed moment. Instead, inevitability becomes a
static concept. What these films – particularly *Child of the Big City, The
Merchant Bashkirov's Daughter,* and *Children of the Age* – indicate
through their difference is the extent to which closure is articulated with
morality in the American cinema. The void at the end of many of these
films, for a spectator accustomed to the Hollywood mode, is linked to the
absence of a textual balancing act associated with the concept of narrative
justice. Events take place, but they are not organized in the direction of a
binding of meaning, morality, and desire. Nor does the end necessarily
provide an echoing response to the beginning.

In pre-Revolutionary Russian cinema, there is a marked difference
between films with rural and those with urban settings – a difference that
circulates around the question of sexuality. Films set in the countryside
tend to link the pathos of sexual relations to the constraints imposed by a
strong patriarchal figure (as mentioned earlier, disasters associated with
arranged marriages are common). In the urban setting, on the other hand,
the father disappears (or is weakened, marginalized), and the films dwell,
like their Western counterparts, on the figure of the wandering/erring
woman-in-the-city, on the tragic potential of a sexuality unbound, freed
from the traditional constraints of patriarch, family, home. Posters from
this period indicate the extent to which the woman in this cinema becomes

the sign of a generalized trouble. In the poster for the apparently lost film, *Abyss,* a woman leans back in the ocean, her face barely breaking the surface of the water, as the tentacles of an octopus embrace her submerged and naked body. It was chosen as the official Pordenone festival poster and is a particularly striking representation of the metonymic links between sexuality, danger, the woman, and death. The films seem to corroborate the woman's status as what Christine Buci-Glucksmann has labeled an "allegory of the modern" (Buci-Glucksmann 1986, 220). Nevertheless, the figure of the woman operates quite differently as a narrative mechanism of the Russian cinema.

In *Child of the Big City* (Bauer, 1914), the woman is irrecuperable, her excess left unpunished, uncontained – but its by-product clearly indicated as death. "Little Mary" is the daughter of a laundress who dies of consumption. Left in poverty, she grows up to be a seamstress who is discontented with her fate. Bauer's mise-en-scène in this film tends to produce a congestion or tension of space rather than time. Early in the film, there is a medium close-up of Mary sitting pensively in front of a large window allowing a view of the crowded modern city. Condensed in one shot are the fundamental causal determinations of the narrative trajectory – the various articulations of the feminine and the urban. Mary's desire here is unreadable, but it is a vaguely consumerist one that finds its only concrete expression later in the film as she gazes through a shop window at the jewelry she cannot have and cries. An upper-class gentleman named Victor, who has been introduced earlier as having a "longing for an unspoilt creature," sees Mary's distress and invites her to dinner. They become a couple, and an ellipsis is the only mark of the time necessary to transform Mary into an elegant woman with insatiable desires. A title indicates that "Mary, with rare perhaps innate skill is bringing Victor to ruin." The film's style is characterized by the persistent use of veils and curtains to heighten the effect of several spatial planes, unmotivated high-angle shots to display a space, several impressively smooth tracking shots, and the cluttered mise-en-scène typical of Bauer's work. It is a confirmation, according to one critic, of Bauer's "reputation as a champion of decadence and as a master of visual aestheticism" (Tsivian et al. 1989, 218). A narratively unmotivated dance in a nightclub scene indicates the Orientalism associated with upper-class tastes. Mary's desires for elegant things and surroundings effectively determine the mise-en-scène, and questions of social class are erased. As Victor is gradually impoverished, Mary's atten-

tion is caught by other men, and she rejects his desperate plea to join him
in renting a cheap flat and living within his means. They are separated,
Victor living in poorer, more modest surroundings as Mary continues her
life of decadence. In the final scene, embellished by elaborate camera
angles and coy compositional strategies, Mary dances the tango with one
of her new partners. Victor sends her a note, pleading for one last meet-
ing. She refuses, sending him three rubles instead. Victor puts a gun to his
head and shoots himself on the front steps of Mary's house. As discussed
previously, the film ends as Mary steps over his corpse, proclaiming it a
good omen and announcing to her guests, "To Maxim's."

The trope that links the city-woman and sexual danger or decadence is
not foreign to the Western melodrama (*Sunrise* is a particularly good
example of this). But here there is no "good" femininity to counter that
which is excessive, no containment of aberration. On the contrary, aber-
ration constitutes the narrative mechanism. If there is pathos, it is asso-
ciated with the male, whose existence is literally cancelled out by the
woman. There is no misrecognition, no final revelation, no turning point
– simply the gradual unfolding of an inevitable scenario marked by a cer-
tain stasis. There is no sense that one could have "done something" to
change the course of events.

The Twilight of a Woman's Soul (Bauer, 1913) constitutes a different
case since it at least *cites* the narrative mechanism of misrecognition and
the sense of being "too late." Countess Dubrovskaya hopes to alleviate her
daughter's ennui (insistently represented by a slow forward track as she
reads without enthusiasm behind a veiled curtain) by involving her in
charitable work. The daughter, Vera, responds readily and accompanies
another woman to the slums to visit some men who turn out to be unscru-
pulous gangster types. Ultimately, Vera is raped by one of them, Maxime,
and retaliates by killing him as he sleeps. The murder is represented
abruptly by a single shot of her raised arm holding a knife. Later, Vera is
introduced to Prince Dol'skii and gradually falls in love with him. He pro-
poses to her, but as he does so the horrible memory of the rape/murder
returns to haunt her as an image of Maxime is superimposed over that of
the prince. She falls ill but in time recovers and agrees to the marriage.
Vera wrestles with her conscience in attempting to decide whether she
should confess her earlier experience to the prince and finally decides to
write him a letter. However, the letter is undeliverable, the prince having
left town temporarily, and Vera burns it. They marry and afterward, in

the country home of the prince, Vera reveals her secret. Prince Dol'skii can barely contain his horror and, although he struggles with himself, allows Vera to leave without stopping her. Much later, the prince regrets this action and searches for Vera, who in the meantime has become an internationally famous actress. When he finds her, he pleads for her forgiveness, but she rejects him, claiming that it is too late, her love for him is finished. The prince leaves, his life in ruins, and shoots himself.

This film, in which the woman functions at least briefly as the sign of interclass tension, comes closest to duplicating the structure of misrecognition and near misses that characterizes the Hollywood melodrama. The letter undelivered due to a chance absence and the notion that it is "too late" to resume their love or to mitigate the effects of his response to her confession suggest that there is a "could have been" – an alternative future – that haunts the narrative. Nevertheless, these moments are underplayed. The spectator is not encouraged to fixate on the letter, and the ending is vaguely anticlimactic. Instead, what is memorable about the film are the scenes where veils and darkness dominate the mise-en-scène and where actions or departures are slowed almost to the point of unbearability (the scene of Vera's departure from the prince's country home is one example of this). Yuri Tsivian links the "aesthetics of immobility" associated with the Russian style to a certain mode of acting.

> Genetically speaking, the aesthetics of immobility can be traced back to two sources: the psychological pauses of the Moscow Art Theater and the acting style of Danish and Italian cinema. When they met in Russian cinema these sources transformed one another: the operatic posturing of the Italian *diva* acquired psychological motivation, while the intonational-acoustic pauses of the Moscow Art Theater – the so-called "Chekhov" style, which was far from presupposing a slow tempo on stage – found its plastic equivalent on the screen. (Tsivian et al. 1989, 28)

Tsivian goes on to cite one of the manifestoes of the Russian style which argues for long or "full" scenes: "A 'full' scene is one in which the actor is given the opportunity to depict in stage terms a specific spiritual experience, no matter how many metres it takes. The 'full' scene involves a complete rejection of the usual hurried tempo of the film play. Instead of a rapidly changing kaleidoscope of images, it aspires to *rivet* the attention of the audience on to a single image" (Tsivian et al. 1989, 28–29). Such an approach tends to undermine the Benjaminian notion of the cinema as a

machine for the generation of "shocks." It seems, oddly enough, to aspire to the frozen immobility of the still photograph.

Parallelling the scenarios in which the woman acts as a harbinger of death for the male are the narratives, particularly insistent in Bauer's work, that conflate the desire inspired by the woman and the death drive. *Daydreams* (1915), *The Dying Swan* (1917), and *After Death* (1915) all give evidence of the pivotal role of dead women in Bauer's cinema. Louis Skorecki argues that Bauer is a kind of "tragic double" of Lubitsch's since both "take delight in the depiction of a superficial and corrupt universe, dedicated to destruction." Yet, in contrast to Lubitsch, Bauer "prefers necrophiliac passions which he stages with an entirely personal mixture of brutality and refinement. His camera often passes from a perverse stasis, which pursues with masochistic slowness the torments of a character, to unexpected and sumptuous panoramas. One is thus engaged in a world of love and of death, saturated with flashes of desire" (Skorecki 1989, 42). Bauer's characters are frequently represented not acting but thinking, desiring, mourning, brooding. Women become agonizingly desirable when they are dead and absolutely unattainable.

Daydreams, whose plot is strikingly similar to that of *Vertigo,* begins with an extended scene in which a husband, Sergei, mourns over the body of his dead wife Elena. He cuts off a long braid of her hair, which, throughout the film, he treats as a fetish, preserving it in a glass case. Surrounding himself with pictures of Elena, he refuses to forget her. As he walks along the street, Sergei believes he recognizes Elena in the face of a passerby and pursues her, only to find that he is mistaken. As a spectator of a play set in an eerie graveyard which chronicles the reemergence of the buried corpses, Sergei fixates on an actress who also reminds him of Elena. He rises from his seat and holds his arms out to her, drawing the attention of the audience to himself. Backstage after the play, the actress introduces herself to him as Tina Viarskaya, and a relationship develops between them. Sergei decides to have his artist friend, Solskii, paint a portrait of Tina and attempts to force her to wear his dead wife's dress and jewelry for the sitting. Tina, whom Solskii describes as "unworthy" of Sergei's love, is very much aware of the extent to which the dead wife haunts Sergei. Whenever he is with her, dissolves return to him the image of Elena. In the final scene, Tina visits him and mocks the portrait of the dead wife and the fetishized braid in the glass case, referring to it as "your

precious flea breeding tuft," dancing around the room while sacrilegiously holding it in the air. Infuriated, Sergei strangles Tina with Elena's braid of hair. As a contemporary reviewer points out, "in a fit of rage he kills the woman who has mocked his dreams" (Tsivian et al. 1989, 256).

This gesture by means of which the live woman is forced to incarnate the image of the dead is repeated, somewhat more abstractly, in *The Dying Swan*. Giselle is a mute dancer who has been disappointed in love. She becomes famous as a ballet artist, particularly in the dance of the film's title. An artist who is obsessed with the idea of representing death becomes fascinated with her mournful face and her ability to mime a dying swan. He convinces her to pose for him in a studio filled with pictures of skeletons and skulls. However, before the painting is finished, her lover returns and Giselle's happiness is apparent in her face and bearing. The artist, claiming that she has "too much life," strangles her in order to once again capture the perfect pose of death.

Yet, the quintessential Bauer, the very embodiment of the temporal problematic of the "Russian style," is *After Death*, a film that Carlo Montanaro claims "makes the impossibility of loving almost tangible, physical" (Tsivian et al. 1989, 288). The protagonist is another character obsessed with death, Andrey Bagrov, who is introduced gloomily contemplating the portrait of his dead mother. A friend attempts to engage him in an active social life and takes him to a party, where a sustained tracking shot traces his path until the moment where a cut reveals a woman, Zoe, staring at him. But Andrey is oblivious to this woman – despite her evident desire for him – until the moment when he learns she has committed suicide. At that point his fascination increases to such an extent that he visits the woman's mother and sister, who gives him Zoe's diary and her portrait. From that moment on, the narrative is exclusively focused on a series of "dreams" in which Andrey meets Zoe in a hayfield or Zoe appears just behind his armchair, in his room. She is persistently present to him. The excessive "stretching" of narrative time is a function of the continual return to these dreams and the almost absolute stasis of the protagonist. The hayfield scenes are stylized to the point where they are nearly space-*less*, evoking pure temporality. Little, if anything, "happens" in the conventional sense of the term, but the effect on the spectator is somewhat hypnotic. The one moment that might be said to have the status of an "event" is contained in an image of Andrey clutching a strand of Zoe's

hair, an indication that the dream has successfully invaded the materiality of his life. Ultimately – and this comes as no surprise to the spectator – Andrey dies, fulfilling his wish.

In Hollywood melodrama, death as a narrative device frequently comes too soon – it signals lost opportunities, what "could have been." In the Russian melodrama, at least insofar as it is represented by the work of Bauer, death is the object of desire. Neither is death momentary, punctual, sudden, as in much American melodrama. Instead, it is protracted, and an extended mourning is its chief figure. It is a cinema that seems to favor "reading" over "looking" as the most appropriate relation to images. Tsivian quotes an article in a 1916 issue of the film journal *Proektor (The Projector)* as proclaiming, "The time has gone when we just looked at the screen: the time has come to read it . . ." (Tsivian et al. 1989, 34). Neither the gaze nor the temporal experience of the film is directed. Death, outside of time, outside of history, would clearly be a crucial trope in this cinema.

What is striking about the pre-Revolutionary Russian cinema is the extent to which it seems to give little or no direct evidence of its own historical context. One would expect to see symptoms, signs, or even traces of political unrest and the impending revolution. But, in the face of the films, it is hard to imagine a Kracauerian approach that would read them teleologically. Nevertheless, it is possible to outline what differentiates them from the Hollywood version of melodrama and to attribute to them a certain national and historical specificity, linked at least to some extent to differing formulations about mass culture and its function and the relation of cinema to literature. Ultimately, what is at stake here are widely divergent and culturally constructed notions of cinematic specificity.

The Hollywood melodrama operates with the premise that movement and, by extrapolation, action are the specific attributes of the cinema. Russian melodrama, on the other hand, repudiates movement and strives for a death-like stasis. As Tsivian points out, "The psychologism of the Russian style was defined as a denial of the external sign of 'cinematic specificity': the dynamics of action and the dramatic quality of events" (Tsivian et al. 1989, 28). The "dynamics of action" in American melodrama are embodied in narratives that tightly structure the rise and fall of emotions along the axis of a constricted temporality. Since pathos is defined here as a certain disproportion – between means and ends, transgression and punishment, desires and their fulfillment – reducing the amount of time between these "events" would heighten the sense of disproportion

and intensify the pathos. When time is stretched and extreme duration becomes the norm, as in the Russian cinema, disproportion is no longer the measure of pathos.

Russian and American melodrama can also be compared with respect to the relations they establish between cognition, recognition, and temporality. Misrecognition is a crucial narrative mechanism in American melodrama and often constitutes the *raison d'être* of the story. Recognitions take place, generally as concluding moments that are either "too late" or "just in time." In Lacan's frequently cited account of the mirror stage, recognition and misrecognition are simultaneous; they exist in a dialectical relationship and this is precisely what insures the fractured quality of identity. In American melodrama, misrecognition and recognition are dissociated, the better to confirm the wholeness of identity – to stage it as a process whose fulfillment is finally assured by the unfolding of the plot. Misrecognition is the aberration rather than the norm. The irreversibility of time in this cinema tends to reconfirm the stability of identity, which is always present but either known or not known depending upon the time available to recognize it. Since the Russian melodrama does not depend on repetition, recognition, and coherent resolution to the same extent, it frequently suggests that time is reversible, rejecting the rigorous and relentless linearity of the Hollywood plot. What is at stake has more to do with cognition than with recognition and identity. In American melodrama, cognition/recognition is in the service of emotion or affect; in Russian melodrama, affect is in the service of cognition – Bauer's painter who strives to *know* death and represent it is a crucial figure.

Hollywood melodrama obsessively structures itself around just-missed moments, blockages of communication, and decisive recognitions that occur "too late." In this sense, the text of pathos appears to insist that the gap between desire and its object is not structural but accidental and therefore to reconfirm the possibility of a fullness in signification – a complete and transparent communication. Cinema itself would appear in this case to be the very model of fullness, immediacy, and transparency in signification. The crying associated with melodrama testifies to the loss of such a fullness but also to its existence as a (forever receding) ideal. In the Russian cinema, on the other hand, the structuration of time seems to insist that the gap between desire and its object is not accidental but *structural*. Desire is envisaged precisely as the absence of the object. And since the most extreme absence is death, this is a cinema which is obsessed with

and constantly returns to the figure of death. In the American cinema, death often constitutes a critical narrative moment; it is punctual, final. But ultimately it is that which is to be avoided since it represents, in a cinema understood as specifically destined to the depiction of movement and action, that which is antithetical to the medium – absolute and irrevocable stasis.

In its insistent psychologism, in the slowness of its pace, the pre-Revolutionary Russian melodrama strikes the viewer accustomed to Hollywood melodrama as resolutely anticinematic. If cinema's unique character, particularly in contrast with photography, to which it is technologically the heir, is bound up with movement across time, the Russian cinema would appear to operate in profound ignorance of its own material base. Tom Gunning claims that the moment of fascination for early spectators of the cinema in the West was the point at which the cinema's difference from photography was established.

> It is too infrequently pointed out that in the earliest Lumiere projections the films were initially presented as frozen unmoving images, projections of still photographs. Then, flaunting a mastery of visual showmanship, the projector began cranking and the image moved. Or as Gorky described it, ". . . suddenly a strange flicker passes through the screen and the picture stirs to life." . . . This *coup de theatre,* the sudden transformation from still to moving illusion, startled audiences and displayed the novelty and fascination of the cinematographe. (Gunning 1989, 34, 35)

The Russian cinema of the 1910s operates a reversal rather than a continuation of this process, and its fascination resides elsewhere. It appears to strive for the immobility of the photograph. And ultimately it can be seen as not so "anticinematic" after all. For in the apparently regressive movement from moving image to static photograph, the films offer a revelation of the stillness that is the "real" basis of the cinema. Hollywood melodrama is a machine for the denial of this stasis; the Russian cinema affirms it. Perhaps this goes some way toward explaining the differences in their respective attitudes toward death. "Cinematic specificity" in Hollywood melodrama is linked to the movement and the irreversibility of time, which are perceived as specific attributes of the filmic apparatus. What becomes unique to the cinema in the Russian approach is a curious dialectic between duration and immobility, movement and stasis. At the very least, these differences should alert us to the extent to which notions of

cinematic specificity are not ontologically guaranteed but bound to the time and the culture in which they are produced.

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Notes and References

1. In *When Russia Learned to Read,* Jeffrey Brooks breaks down the statistics dealing with literacy: "Literacy rates rose from 21 percent of the population of the Russian Empire in 1897, according to the census of that year, to an estimated 40 percent on the eve of World War I. Literacy among new recruits in the army rose from 21 percent in 1874, the first year of the new national service army, to 68 percent in 1913. Although literacy among the rural population was low – no more than perhaps 6 percent in the 1860s and 25 percent in the 1910s – male literacy was high throughout the industrialized provinces of central Russia" (Brooks 1985, 4).

2. The analysis of the pre-Revolutionary Russian cinema in this essay relies fairly heavily on plot synopses for two reasons. First, the films are relatively unfamiliar and have only recently become accessible to a wide international audience. Second, for the purposes of this analysis, it is necessary to convey a sense of the peculiar temporal structure of the films and the effect of their endings.

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The Romance of Maoriland: Ethnography and Tourism in New Zealand Films

MARTIN BLYTHE

T HE LINKS between tourism and ethnography are by now well-known. Particularly since Claude Lévi-Strauss's masterpiece *Tristes Tropiques,* many anthropologists have begun to examine these links against the wider context of European and American imperialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the gradual "democratization" of both practices in the twentieth.[1]

So far as New Zealand is concerned, tourism and ethnography were there right from the beginning. The main period of racial conflict was over by the late nineteenth century, and the transfer of exotic trophies, totems, and legends from Maori custody to newly established Pakeha museums, private collections, and literary anthologies virtually complete.[2] Not only did these trophies provide excellent devices for attracting tourists (and ethnographers) to New Zealand, they also provided a reservoir of images on which to build the burgeoning postcard industry and the early tourism films. The Maori were, from the beginning, a key part of that package, and as early as the turn of the century Thomas Cook Tours were advertising them in the following way:

> The Maoris, whose presence, together with their strange habits, customs, and legendary lore, adds greatly to the interest of a visit to New Zealand. . . . They are undoubtedly a splendid race, although, unfortunately, the type met with along some of the well-worn tourist routes presents anything but a fair representation. (Cook Tours 1902)

Already within this passage – well before the explosion of mass-market tourism – can be read the archetypical tourist's (or ethnographer's) frus-

tration at witnessing the paradox of his activity: tourism (like colonialism) destroys the very authenticity it desires.

As the transfer of Maori space (land and *taonga*/treasures) continued in exchange for time ("progress"), this necessitated at least some token preservation of Maoriland before it died out completely. There were two favorite locations for this, and they were both rather like frontier zones. The first was the model village of Whakarewarewa near Rotorua – the most filmed location in New Zealand – which came complete with its own geology, archaeology, and anthropology. The second was the Whanganui River – extremely popular at the time for its riverboat tours – which appeared to provide the primeval Bush virtually untouched by human habitation. Furthermore, if Maoriland was on display in model villages, in thermal areas, on riverboat tours, and in museums, then primarily it was arranged visually, implying that tourism and ethnography were processes by which a moving spectator imbued with life that which was essentially dead or frozen in time because it was static. The tourist or the ethnographer moved through time and in time, resurrecting a life for objects and places almost lost to time and not yet pressed into the service of progress (that is, pastureland). It was all an illusion, of course, for Maori and mixed Maori/Pakeha communities were dotted all over New Zealand, and they were not dying out by any means, despite periodic epidemics of influenza.

There is a strange paradox here: if the Maori were as exotic as the land itself and therefore a source of tourist income, then this also tended to imply that much of the land was "theirs." Although colonialism was a process for wresting the land from the indigenous people, it was also predicated on a strict demarcation of "theirs" from "ours." For one thing, if this distinction was not maintained, then the Maori could no longer be useful as a tourist or ethnographic resource. For another, there was never any alternative to this anyway since Pakeha New Zealand and Maori New Zealand occupied different territories. Necessarily, "Maoriland" – that sentimental fantasy of the imperial era – was useful as a point of comparison: it demonstrated that contemporary Maori had abandoned Maoriland's "barbaric" ways and now the rest of New Zealand could be subjected to the system of property acquisition and ownership that arrived with colonization. Advertising of the period was directed as much at prospective settler-farmers as it was at the leisured or ailing tourist, and in the publicity books available at the time (many of them published by the

Department of Tourist and Health Resorts), the appeal was always three-pronged: to "the tourist, the health-seeker, the home-seeker" (Baeyertz 1908, xi). While tourism photography specialized in waterfalls, bush scenes, and erotic/exotic Maori, and most of the business advertising was for traveling rugs, cigarettes and tobacco, hotels, and shipping companies, there was also regular advertising by land and real estate agents seeking to attract more British immigrants and investment.

If there are differences between the grand tour-ism of the upper-middle classes and the early ethnographers, then it is only a question of the degree to which they spent time annexing Maori culture and translating it into the space occupied by their writing. Some tourists went home and wrote voluminous books about the highways and by-ways of Maoriland; early ethnographers were like long-term tourists motivated by the same fascination as the day-tripper, except that they went to almost obsessive lengths to match it to a prevailing ideology. Film likewise belongs with these two practices. As a technology that developed historically at exactly this time, it might have been made to order for them. Far more than writing, film technology and its narratives amount to the almost complete reduction of space to time and thus resemble their contemporaries the telephone and the airplane (see Kern 1983).

Two kinds of fictional genre are often at the basis of all national and cultural myth-making – the timeless romance and the historical romance (Blythe 1988). The former operates via a rhetoric of exclusion: for example, the Maori are removed into another space and out of time, the distance being traversable only by the filmmakers' prestidigitation and conjuring tricks. This is Maoriland (see *Tabu, King Kong,* the films of Robert Flaherty, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*). The latter operates via a rhetoric of annexation: the Maori share the same space and time but are rendered peripheral and somewhat "behind" the progressive Pakeha. This is New Zealand (most New Zealand films). The subject of the rest of this paper is the two further genres that criss-cross between the two original genres, namely, the ethnographic romance and the tourism romance. They provide an excellent illustration of just how contradictory imperial and national story-telling really is, in the sense that the films discussed here can be read equally as tourism romances and as ethnographic romances, though for the sake of keeping their intentions clear I have bracketed them off from each other (see figure 1).

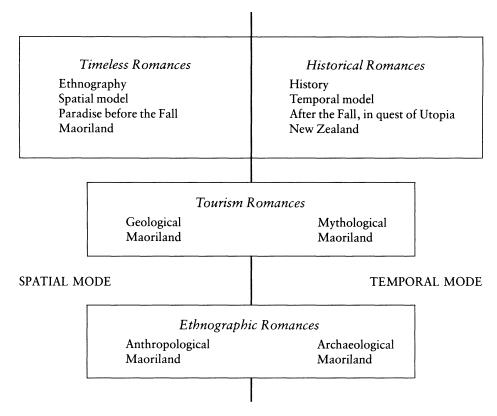The key to the tourism romance or travelogue is the juxtaposition side-

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│        Timeless Romances          │        Historical Romances        │
│                                   │                                   │
│    Ethnography                    │    History                        │
│    Spatial model                  │    Temporal model                 │
│    Paradise before the Fall       │    After the Fall, in quest of Utopia │
│    Maoriland                      │    New Zealand                    │
│                                   │                                   │
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                                    |
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              │         Tourism Romances                  │
              │                     |                     │
              │    Geological       │    Mythological     │
              │    Maoriland        │    Maoriland        │
              └─────────────────────┼─────────────────────┘
                                    |
 SPATIAL MODE                       |               TEMPORAL MODE
                                    |
              ┌─────────────────────┼─────────────────────┐
              │       Ethnographic Romances               │
              │                     |                     │
              │    Anthropological  │    Archaeological   │
              │    Maoriland        │    Maoriland        │
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Figure 1. The four basic film genres of Pakeha image-making are products of Western notions of space and time.

by-side of two separate worlds, one of which is inherited from the timeless romance (the world of Maoriland), and the other is inherited from the historical romance (the world of Pakeha New Zealand). They are spatially defined: Maoriland is a world outside time, a lost world even, into which the tourist may step briefly and tantalizingly before returning to the luxury and comfort of the nearby hotel, and the hotel is of course in real historical time (the present). The tourist/thermal area around Rotorua was the favorite location for this: Maoriland hisses and bubbles, and its geology is profoundly unstable, but in nearby New Zealand the hotels are havens where one can obtain a cup of tea and a good night's sleep. There is also an alternative (though less common) narrative strategy in which the two worlds are juxtaposed temporally, where New Zealand physically displaces Maoriland. Instead of offering Utopia, this narrative offers the Fall, making use of romantic legends drawn from Maori mythology.[3]

Ethnographic romances also have both spatial and temporal options: either they juxtapose the timeless world of Maoriland as next to (or within) present-day historical New Zealand, and the ethnographer ventures into it on his anthropological mission of salvage and recovery; or they repress Maoriland to the past before the New Zealand of today and thus closely resemble archaeology. Usually they try to do both and so confuse themselves.

Both tourism and ethnographic romances are founded on the contradictions of the Historical Myth: do their Maori people live in Maoriland or New Zealand? Do they live in the historical past or the ethnographic present? Do the films record the reconstructed past or the soon-to-be-lost present? Are they an archaeology or an eschatology? As we shall see, neither the James McDonald films nor the Government Publicity Office films of the 1910s–1930s ever resolved this contradiction. Certainly the Maoriland they represent is assumed to be in a state of terminal cultural decay, with both genres being motivated by the fear of lost authenticity. But did this also imply that the Maori were fast becoming New Zealanders, and did it also necessitate repressing the whole regrettable weight of colonization? These were, of course, questions for a later age.

The Films of James McDonald

James McDonald began work for the Dominion (now the National) Museum in 1904, and by 1907 he was also shooting "scenics" for the Tourist Department. The four films "about" the Maori that he made for the Museum from 1919 till 1923 are now regarded as the highlights of his career. They were intended to be part of a larger series, with further expeditions planned to Taupo, the Bay of Plenty, Rotorua, and the Urewera, but these never took place. The expeditions consisted of the Museum's ethnologist and director, Elsdon Best; the librarian at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Johannes C. Andersen; and McDonald. The films fall into two groups: in the first two, a *hui* (ceremonial occasion) serves as a starting point from which to record informal demonstrations of "traditional" activities. The other two are confined solely to the demonstrations themselves. There is no evidence that the films were ever edited into exhibition copies, although apparently some of the Whanganui footage was shown in towns with electricity during the East Coast expedition and at a lecture given by Sir Peter Buck (Te Rangihiroa) in Auckland in June 1923.[4]

Figure 2. Scenes of Maori Life on the Whanganui River (He Pito Whakaatu I Te Noho A Te Maori I Te Awa O Whanganui), *1921. Photograph courtesy of the National Museum of New Zealand.*

Essentially, the McDonald films are products of the 1980s as much as the 1920s in that they were restored and assembled for public screenings between 1981 and 1985 with titles and subtitles based on McDonald's original notes. Historically, they preceded the main surge in government-sponsored filmmaking, and in a sense they were never more than "occasionals" shot by enthusiastic mavericks operating on the margins of government. Although the government of the day could see the benefits of tourism publicity, it was not especially interested in preserving on film and for posterity the "traditional" activities of a race who were supposedly abandoning their old ways and becoming "modern" New Zealanders. Furthermore, there was the more negative view around that the Maori were a drain on the taxpayer.

Stylistically, a number of things are apparent from what survives of the films. First, there is no narrative structure as such and the camera remains

static. The action moves in and out of frame, suggesting aesthetic deci-
sions by McDonald not to intervene too obviously in the activities being
filmed. Andersen and Best themselves frequently appear in frame, and
there is a good deal of banter and humor between the "subjects" in front of
the camera and those off-camera. Dogs and children wander past in the
background or observe in the foreground, and the effect is the kind of
unself-conscious and relaxed rapport usually associated with home mov-
ies. Second, and pulling against the informality, is the serio-comic busi-
ness of recording ethnographic "facts." This is partly the effect of using
subtitles to provide the names of the people being filmed and the bare min-
imum of descriptive information about what they are doing, and partly
the effect of many of these people looking directly at the camera, even
bowing to it to end a scene. In the tension between these two perspectives
– between insider knowledge and objective representation – can be read
one of the anthropological dilemmas of the age: can a relative insider for-
mulate an objective picture of a culture?

Significantly, until Television New Zealand's *Tangata Whenua* series in
1974, these were the only films ever produced under the auspices of the
New Zealand government in which the filmmakers themselves appear,
and perhaps that only goes to suggest that these were the last films on
Maori themes for some fifty years in which there was substantial Maori
input. Certainly they were made partly at the insistence of a Maori mem-
ber of Parliament, Sir Apirana Ngata, and so occupy a peculiar place at
the bicultural edge between a Pakeha-controlled technology and the
Maori subjects of the film. In that sense, as films of the 1980s and beyond,
they are a window into the past and the future, particularly for those
Maori whose *tipuna* (ancestors) and tribal areas appear in them. These
films are not simply "historical records"; they are also "home movies" –
both literally and figuratively.[5] From 1922 onward, unfortunately, govern-
ment and independent filmmaking resumed the master narratives of
empire and nation, against which the Maori were inevitably measured. If
the McDonald films have benefited from never being edited into release
prints with subtitles (except recently), then it is precisely in their ambi-
guously "silent" status that their appeal resides. They evoke neither a time-
less eternal nor the historical past.

It would help at this point, I think, to ask what the McDonald/Best/
Andersen expeditions wanted from these films. The work of Elsdon Best,
for example, is now generally placed in the transition period between the

nineteenth-century "armchair" anthropologists such as James Frazer, who relied almost solely on the reports of others from the imperial margins (travelers, government officials), and the new "salvage" professionals who emphasized fieldwork and a rigorous objective scientific method. McDonald and his cameras can be placed more logically with the latter group. Best, of course, is one of those rare and fascinating figures who appears in the twilight of the imperial era with his faith in a common humanity intact and with an ability to be "at home" in both Pakeha and Maori worlds, not least of all because of a certain spiritual dissatisfaction with his own culture.[6] As Best's biographer, E. W. G. Craig, describes him, he was "an amateur imbued with the highest motives in getting to know the Maori and the keenest regard for their feelings in attempting to wrest the sacred knowledge" (Craig 1964, 9). Best was above all a particularist, a relentless recorder of arcane details, and, consequently, his work is refreshingly free of the totalizing theories associated with Malinowski and British functionalism. He was also one of the first anthropologists to work in a national context – under the auspices of the Dominion Museum from 1910 until his death in 1931.

It was Best's valuable contacts with Maori people which led to his being included in the McDonald party on the expeditions of 1919–1923. No doubt film seemed a second-rate method for recording the "sacred knowledge" when compared with his own notebook and innumerable questions; all a film camera could do was record/preserve/reify actual physical and material form and movement. It simply could not enter the spiritual and intellectual world of the Maori, nor could it pass on the sacred knowledge, and its sole usefulness to history and ethnography lay in its power to evoke past life-styles and to record string games, dance movements, and so on, which were in danger of being forgotten. Did Best believe this would turn out to be valuable to future generations? Even if he was not a totalizer, he was still wedded to the grand project of recovery and salvage, as anthropologists everywhere recognized that their discipline was inextricably woven in with the Myth of the Dying Race and the Fatal Impact of Western conquest. Certainly, salvage/recovery seems to have been the intention of Andersen and McDonald, whose other works are strongly nostalgic in style. The titles of most ethnographic works of this time – books, photographs, paintings – were cast in the tragic mode, Charles Goldie's paintings being emblematic here.[7] They belong to the same historical process and cultural tradition that produced colonization in the

first place and that sought to design a technological record of both the human past in general and the nation's past in particular as a justification for its own existence. It assumed that ghosts in the machine are better than no ghosts at all.

A sign of the increased interest in all this is that G. H. L. Pitt-Rivers of the British functionalist school accompanied Best on one of the Whanganui River trips. Pitt-Rivers was looking for evidence to support his modernist thesis of global disintegration: "Close study of the world of reality gives no assurance of any present tendency towards integration, harmony, and unity, but reveals a contrary tendency towards disintegration and the dissolution of aggregates, whether of empires, nations, races, creeds, or classes" (Pitt-Rivers 1927, 1). Predictably enough, Pitt-Rivers's book is concerned mostly with "cultural decay," and his "Maori" chapter is titled "Culture Clash in a Maori Village – Some Observations on the Passing of the Maori Race and the Decay of Maori Culture." In it he expresses what seems like disappointment at finding Maori culture on the Whanganui River rapidly adapting to Pakeha ways!

> I hoped that I might be privileged to observe, not exclusively with the eyes of a stranger and a twentieth century European, but that I might, with his assistance, gain something of perspective and peep back through borrowed spectacles into the intimacies of history that is past, and attempt to understand the viewpoint of a forgotten as well as of the present Maori generation. (Pitt-Rivers 1927, 217)

What he finds is three distinct generations of Maori where the decay has indeed set in with the erosion of the Maori *tapu* system and *mana* of the chiefs, and where "the younger generation are guarded from all knowledge of their pagan past" (Pitt-Rivers 1927, 219).

It is tempting to interpret Pitt-Rivers's analysis as not much more than the discovery that it was British imperial power that was decaying rather than "Maori culture." Curiously, it is the Maori in this scenario who do not have a collective memory, and it is their culture which is supposedly decaying because there is not the technological sophistication to "record" the data which constitute a memory. Hence the necessity for anthropologists, just as there would one day become a necessity for historians, archivists, and literary theorists.[8]

Government Publicity Office Films

New Zealand Government Publicity Office interest in things Maori was
relatively late in coming and was as much as anything an attempt to capi-
talize on the general interest in Maori themes shown by independent and
foreign filmmakers from 1925 onward and peaking around 1928. Earlier,
in May 1922, the Publicity Office had taken over the Photographic and
Cinematographic Section of the Agriculture Department so as to be able
to produce more scenic films for tourism promotion. This usually
extended to shooting newsreels of visits by famous people and paeans to
the nation's triumphant agricultural and industrial progress. However,
none of the films made before 1925 now survives. By 1926, the Publicity
Office was making one reel a week for MGM release, a practice discontin-
ued in 1930 with the advent of the talkies.

   As far as Maori themes are concerned, the Publicity Office did shoot
Maori Hui at Tikitiki in 1926, presumably an ethnographic study of con-
temporary Maori celebrations (it does not survive). Then followed some
early tourism romances: *Whakarewarewa* (1927), *Valley of Enchantments*
(1930), and *New Zealand's River of Romance* (1930). These identify a
tourist "spot" and enumerate the local glories, the emphasis being on lei-
sure activities – sports, boating cruises, strolling in the thermal areas,
with relatively little attention paid to the mundane details of accommoda-
tion, dining and entertainment, and transportation that one finds in con-
temporary tourism romances. The main ethnographic study of the period,
the five-part *The Maori As He Was* (1928), was also shot around this time,
as was the unusual Maoriland legend *Amokura,* shot in 1928 but not
released until 1934. After 1930, the output of government films dropped
off steeply, a consequence of the Depression and the expense of recording
soundtracks. In June 1930, the Government Publicity Office was trans-
ferred from the Department of Internal Affairs to the Department of Tour-
ist and Health Resorts.[9] The leanest year was 1932 when only two films
were produced. By 1934, a tentative stability had been achieved, and sev-
eral films released in that year (out of eleven or so) were on Maori themes:
the ethnographic romances *Ka Mate!* and *Maori Days,* the sound version
of *Amokura,* and (in 1935) *Holiday Haunts.* In late 1934, there also began
the first of the *Maoriland Movielogues* series to deal with Maori themes:
numbers *5* (1934), *9* (1936), and *14* (1939). Maoriland is used in these titles

as a synonym for New Zealand, and of the three or four items in each epi-
sode, one might be on Maori themes.[10]

   First, the tourism romances. In *Whakarewarewa,* a group of tourists is
shown around the "old-time Maori village" by a contemporary Maori
maiden dressed in traditional costume. The tourists see the famous Hine-
moa-Tutanekai gate, Pohutu geyser, steam cooking, and so on, and the
guide literally draws their (and our) attention to the pertinent information
in the guide book. The narrative structure juxtaposes a primitive past
(Maoriland) next to the modern present (New Zealand) so that tourists
can jump back into history and "see" how early man lived in primitive
times – the steam cooking, canoe travel, storehouses. Once one enters
Maoriland, one has left history, stepped out of it into the timeless eternal,
only to return to history on leaving for the hotel or golf course nearby.
The Maori guide serves as the link between the two worlds. In that sense,
national tourism romances colonize Maoriland for themselves, preserving
it within New Zealand. "New Zealand" in these films is therefore not a
state of mind so much as a geographical location which has existed
throughout history, once formerly under Maori sovereignty and now a
Pakeha-dominated modern nation with oases of timelessness preserved for
tourists.

   The evolutionary historical model anchors these films in a self-justify-
ing circle, the message being that the romance of history underpins New
Zealand's pride in nation-building. "We" got where we are today by mov-
ing from this form of "picturesque barbarity" to modern civilization, and
we have preserved places like this as scientific evidence of that fact. This
does not mean that the films consign contemporary Maori to the romantic
past; as government films, they would of necessity subscribe to the thesis
that the Maori were moving into the twentieth century very successfully.
However, this evolutionary model has the effect of positioning Maori cul-
ture within the double bind of the Integration Myth: the Maori must
either be identified with the lost past of Maoriland or move into the Prom-
ised Land of New Zealand. Not surprisingly, the contemporary Maori has
to disappear, though some Happy Maori of Whakarewarewa appear in
Valley of Enchantments, in which "dusky native children" dive for pennies
tossed from a bridge by tourists. These images are sentimental and nostal-
gic rather than racist, but in confining the Maori within a tourist frame-
work (as guides, Maoriland maidens and warriors, and children), their

Figure 3. Funeral of Te Rauparaha's niece, Heeni Te Rei, in Historic Otaki (Tangi), *1921. Photograph courtesy of the New Zealand Film Archive Stills Collection.*

status as New Zealanders was still obviously in doubt in the films of the 1920s and 1930s.

The ambiguous identity of the Maori is even more apparent in independent filmmaking of the period. Newsreel-style historical romances were shot to commemorate visits by famous people and historical events of national importance such as *Prince of Wales in Maoriland* (1920), *Waitangi Celebrations* (1934), and *Maoris Demonstrate Their Goodwill and Loyalty at Waitangi* (1934), while others were more regional in outlook, blending the newsreel with the tourism romance, for example, *Historic Otaki* (1921). Some filmmakers aimed to showcase the offbeat and the exotic, such as *Journey Into Rua's Stronghold* (1928). There were also the conventional tourism romances, for example, those shot by the American Fox Movietone News around 1930: *Rotorua NZ: Penny Diving, The Maori: Everyone Bathes on Washing Day at Rotorua,* and the film frag-

ment known as "Koura Fishing." Operating quite separately from every-one else, Jim Manley shot some footage that is currently being reedited and that has been known informally as the "Manley Canoe Film" (1937–1940).

It is in the tourism romances of Fox Movietone News that these films come as close as any to charges of racism. For example, *Rotorua NZ: Penny Diving* (c. 1930) is a two-minute fragment consisting of Maori children diving for pennies tossed by Pakeha tourists. It nowadays comes across rather badly, the voice-over enthusing, "Wildly, gamely, they scramble for the pennies of the Pakeha, pennies from heaven." There is also a shot of a young girl jumping in while the voice-over maintains, "Maori maidens, graceful naiads of the stream, and talking of springs, how's this?" and the shot is run in reverse. Straining after catchy phrases produces some execrable clichés. The same can be said for *The Maori: Everyone Bathes on Washing Day at Rotorua* (c. 1930), another two-minute fragment. It shows a Maori family bathing, and the cheerful if pater-nal voice-over states: "Rotorua, New Zealand – an earthly paradise with hot water laid on, and the Maoris love to bathe in these warm springs. Men, women, and children together, with no costumes and no false mod-esty. Like most things in life, bathing is fun to these happy children of the happy isles." Mum says, "Come on in, the water's fine," and when Mum and Dad dunk each other, the voice-over makes a reference to the Dying Race mythology: "Now we know what they mean when they say the Maori is becoming submerged." The film concludes with their son and daughter doing the same, and the voice-over states: "And here are the water babies – a shampoo for little boy brown . . . but he's got to take it. Never mind son, in future just keep away from water and masterful women."

I accept that many readers will find these films racist, but I think this overstates the case. After all, these Movietone News films are fundamen-tally no different from other films of the time, which forces us into the proposition that genres and narratives used by Pakeha cultural producers at this time were, or were not, inherently racist. There can be little doubt now that they were intended to be facetious, and certainly they were eth-nocentric in the sense that they were Pakeha-centered, since they date from a period when there were few alternatives to this point of view.[11] However, if racism assumes a hierarchical value system that places the

Pakeha above the Maori, then it is difficult to read this off directly in the films. If anything, the reverse conclusions can be drawn just as easily. After all, the Maoriland tourism romances sketch a Noble Savage Utopia in order to wax enthusiastic about the supposedly wonderful carefree life and material comforts the Maori have which the Pakeha tourist can share in. This suggests a nostalgia for the old imperial fixities when the Maori were (supposedly) authentically Maori, before the ravages of Western history and technology. Therefore, the success or otherwise of these films depends on the degree to which any viewer is prepared to accept that the Maori on screen are/were typical of all Maori, and this is not unambiguously provided for within the films themselves.

The argument can be better made perhaps in reference to the Government Publicity Office's *Holiday Haunts* (1935), a gem of a film that is replete with the contradictions of the age. The first half is a showcase for Whakarewarewa and its Happy Maoris; the second is a showcase of Pakeha tourists visiting other local sights.

In the opening to the "Maori" half, a jaunty Pakeha voice-over asks, "Want a guide? Want a guide? Of course we want a guide to show us Rotorua and New Zealand's thermal regions. And who wouldn't with a guide like this?" and the film cuts to a Maori maiden. The sequences that follow include the Hinemoa-Tutanekai gate, penny-diving, geysers with Maori maidens strategically placed in front of them, boiling mud pools, and Maori cooking and washing in the steam pools. The film's voice-over is at once paternalistic, ironic, and affectionate, especially over the matters of cooking and washing, since this automatically keys the film into decades of Pakeha moralism over Maori hygiene! It is all intended to be droll of course; the voice-over remarks that the steam pools "make housekeeping easy" and "gas bills are quite unknown," and then, over a shot of an elderly *kuia* (grandmother) doing some cooking, it adds, "Luncheon will be served in twenty minutes." Over a shot of children and adults in a steam pool, the voice-over goes on to declare, "Washing day is held here on Monday . . . or Tuesday, or Wednesday, or any other day. It makes no difference." While on the one hand these juxtapositions evoke the stereotype of Happy Maoris without a care in the world and serve as the utopian reproof to a timebound Pakeha work ethic, the intention is nevertheless to promote the "get-away-from-it-all" of tourism discourse. Furthermore, some images, such as a naked Maori naiad and smiling children playing

cute for the camera, distantly echo the "coon humor" of the time. No Pakeha woman would ever be so filmed, and the shots are obviously staged.

The "Pakeha" half of the film begins with the local golf links (it includes a "thermal hazard"), diving, and bowls. Significantly, the film is equally wry in its treatment of these Pakeha. The sight of Pakeha golfers on the green with a subtitle which reads, "The ladies are waiting with the tea-cups," is followed by a shot of the "ladies" waving to the camera. Later on we see some tourists dutifully tramping around a Maori Wishing Tree to the tune of "Here We Go Around the Mulberry Bush," and in a bathing sequence at Lake Rotoiti, we learn that "New Zealand girls do not believe in lunching off a lettuce leaf and a lemon in order to keep their schoolgirl figures" (a "lucky dog" witnesses the spectacle). The film attempts to build a confidential and informal relationship with its target viewer – tourism must be fun, it seems to say. While this encourages charges of paternalism, both sexually and culturally, the film seems to be equally wry toward the Pakeha tourists with their strange golfing attire and cups of tea, ironizing its own self-importance as a narrational authority.

In the tourism romances discussed above, Maoriland exists as an erotic/exotic land of geological and anthropological wonders which is spatially rather than temporally separate from Pakeha New Zealand. It therefore remains accessible to the modern tourist just as it does to the eth-nographer. *New Zealand's River of Romance* (1930) offers the alternative temporal narrative and belongs more properly to the genre of the histori-cal romance in that the Maoriland it portrays is no longer accessible except in films. Like the "lost world" of the archaeologists and romantic fiction writers, Maoriland is swept away by New Zealand within the nar-rative structure! This film was designed to promote riverboat tours on the Whanganui River, and it begins with a clumsy dramatizing of Fenimore Cooper-style romance: "Long ere the white man reached New Zealand, the river was a highway for the slender canoes of Maori braves" – and two Maori braves are demonstrated paddling their canoe. With wild ges-ticulation and painted *moko* (tattoo) they evoke Maoriland, but the char-acters and costumes jump around without much sense of continuity or chronology, and they are finally swept away by scenes of a modern paddle steamer and canoe-racing carnival.

This use of the historical romance exactly matches that of the official historians who between the 1920s and the 1950s all but abandoned the

Figure 4. Amokura, *1934. Photograph courtesy of the New Zealand Film Archive Stills Collection.*

Maori at the siege of Parihaka *pa* (village) in 1881, aside from a brief mention of their "venturesome daring" in World War I (Reed 1945, 427). The Maori simply did not exist as such, presumably because as "New Zealanders" their Maori identity became invisible. Interestingly, this was also the time that romantic legends of Maoriland were beginning to mushroom in Pakeha writing. Therefore, set alongside the blank in official histories, the only conclusion to be drawn is that not only did "Maori history" cease around the same time that the creation of the Dominion of New Zealand nominally converted settler colonists into nationals, but that the only history the Maori were to be entitled to was in romantic legends. This has the effect of consigning Maori culture to the past and of leaving the momentum of domination with the Pakeha. It is a clever conjuring trick by which the (then) present Maori vanish into the gap neatly opened between official history (annexation) and romantic legends (exclusion).

Finally, there are two films that perfectly exemplify the fake dichotomy

that underwrites these discourses. For example, the romantic legend *Amo-kura* (1928/34), a Government Publicity Office film, is set entirely in Maoriland. Its opening titles describe it as "A romance of Old New Zealand" and "A legendary love story of New Zealand's Maori people." However, the setting is quite definitely Maoriland in its Fairyland incarnation, not old New Zealand. The story tells of a young Maori maiden, Amokura, who has the misfortune to be tattooed in the manner of a man because her father really wanted a boy. She is able to experience "no joy of womanhood" until she falls in love with Turi, the flute player. After prayers to the gods, Tane removes the *moko* for one season and Turi's pity blossoms into love. When the season is over, Turi's love remains constant, so Tane removes her *moko* forever and the lovers find happiness: "My children, you have stood the test. For true love dies not like the fading flowers. Amokura, the tattoo is removed forever." Delightful as the legend is, the film serves as an implicit criticism of traditional *moko:* "Her dark eyes look sadly out from a face whose beauty was marred by the heavy lines of the tattoo."

It could be argued that the New Zealand government stands in here, allegorically, as a benevolent father figure supervising the Maoris' abandonment of supposedly savage customs like the *moko* (in fact, some Maori women were still maintaining the *moko* even into the 1920s). In other words, Pakeha value systems are implicit in the film's thematic organization. On the other hand, the film, which was shot in Rotorua in 1928, was not released that year because it did not seem likely to fill hotels with tourists. How could it do so when it suggested that New Zealand was still wild and uncivilized? Surviving copies date from 1934, when it was finally released (in shortened form, with a lush new orchestral score and, most unusual for the time, a woman's voice-over) to ease the dearth of new product.

The other film is the five-part ethnographic series *The Maori As He Was* (1928), which was named after Elsdon Best's influential book of the same name. According to *The Dominion* newspaper (December 9, 1927), the series was designed "to serve as a historical record of the dawn of civilization in the Dominion . . . for screening in all parts of the world," and the headline reads: "The Maori Race: Historical Record in Film Form." In short, not ethnographic but historical. But as if to contradict such claims to historical truth, the article also claims that the series will portray "every phase of daily life among the Maoris, including their arts and crafts, their

customs and superstitions, the preparation and cooking of food, war dances and exercises." This implies ethnography: The Maori As He Is. So where does this leave the contemporary Maori of 1927: in the historical past or the ethnographic present?[12] The contradiction is also evident in what is essentially an identical article in *The New Zealand Sporting and Dramatic Review* of a week later (December 15, 1927), which headlined this same piece with "New Government Film: Life Among the Maoris."

The films themselves sometimes support this ambiguity when women carrying reeds from a lakeshore wear Western clothes and performers in the poi dance sport flapper hairstyles. The subtitles are fairly respectful, emphasizing the ingenuity and skill of the Maori, sometimes with a touch of lugubrious humor: "The sewing circle where nimble tongues vie with nimble fingers." However, many of the subtitles in parts IV and V are excessively sentimental and key into legendary Maoriland: "Keeping Maori blood at fighting heat, the thumpings and jumpings of warrior braves."

Basically New Zealand filmmaking has not changed that much since the 1930s: tourism romances still celebrate the Maori as a repository of "traditional" and "spiritual" values which the Pakeha has lost, and social problem documentaries continue to bemoan the "gang problem" or Maori economic travail. Some Maori filmmaking even duplicates the clichés once perpetrated by Pakeha filmmakers. However, there have been attempts to break out of the double bind that avoid the older nationalist paradigms. During the 1990s, Maori filmmaking looks set to give the entire archive of "Maori" images discussed here a most thorough overhaul.

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Notes and References

1. Ethnography, like tourism, was basically an aristocratic preserve until after World War II and the advent of the passenger jet. For general reading on the subject, see Lévi-Strauss 1984, Smith 1977, Pi-Sunyer 1981, Clifford and Marcus 1986, and Gates 1985.

2. Pakeha make up approximately 85 percent of New Zealand's population; Maori make up approximately 12 percent. These two terms only make sense in relation to each other: though their meanings are contested, "Pakeha" generally refers to any New Zealander of European descent (some include Polynesians as well), while "Maori" generally refers to any New Zealander whose ancestry in that country predates the arrival of the Europeans.

3. These two narrative strategies are sometimes distinguished as "cultural primitivism" and "chronological primitivism."

4. From a New Zealand Film Archives publicity brochure.

5. The concept of "home movies" can equally be applied to all the films discussed here, since any viewer may recognize family, friends, and relatives in them. This recognition must affect external judgments as to whether such films are "racist" or not and opens up the possibility of both ironic and highly nostalgic personal readings.

6. Hints of this appear in Craig's (1964) biography, but I base my assertion mainly on Best's fascination with the Maori, which he transposed into his voluminous writings. Craig includes short discussions of background information on the four McDonald films, in particular the Whanganui River film (pp. 186–188).

7. The titles of Goldie's paintings include *The Passing of the Maori, The Last of Her Tribe, One of the Old School, The Last of the Chivalrous Days, Weary with Years,* and *A Noble Relic of a Noble Race.*

8. The New Zealand Film Archives has preserved and restored a number of films on the Maori. Perhaps the most notable are the McDonald films, but others include the Manley collection, reel 1 of *The Romance of Hine-Moa* (from Britain), *The Adventures of Algy, The Maori as He Was* (from Denmark), and a section of *Historic Otaki.* Funding and assistance for such projects have come from the New Zealand Film Commission, the Federation of Film Societies, the Lottery Board and the Minister for the Arts, Television New Zealand, the National Film Unit, a small number of corporations and film producers, and other interested parties. A number of overseas archives were involved in these recovery programs, including the Australian National Film Archive, the National Film Archive of Britain, the American Film Institute collection at the Library of Congress in the United States, and Danske Filmmuseum in Denmark.

9. For listings of the films produced by the New Zealand Government Publicity Office between 1922 and 1941, see Dennis and Sowry 1981.

10. The *Maoriland Movielogues* series began life as *NZ Pictorial Reviews*. Numbers 1–5 were issued under the earlier title, although it is likely that number 5 was issued as *Maoriland Movielogues 5*. The irregularly named series ended with *Maoriland Movielogues 14*. It is not to be confused with the "Maoriland Movielogues" of independent filmmaker Lee Hill, who used it as a subtitle for some of his films, including *Land of Hinemoa* (1950). "Maoriland" also appears in the title of another film which is not on Maori themes per se – *Romance of Maoriland* (1930) – of which only a section of Part 4 now survives.

11. Stanhope Andrews, the National Film Unit's first producer (in the 1940s), certainly considered them "facetious." See *Here & Now*, December 1952, p. 7.

12. "None of the serious writers of the period between Grace and the depression wrote of the Maori as he was living at the time" (Pearson 1958, 51).

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Man and Revolutionary Crisis
in Indonesian Film

SALIM SAID

THE INDONESIAN revolution (1945–1949) was a great race for inde-
pendence that set off the most extensive social change ever to occur in the
Indonesian archipelago. Attempts to capture this revolution on film fall
into three categories, which I call development campaign films, films
about man and revolutionary crisis, and docudramas.[1] Of the three
groups of films, those in the second category are likely to be the most
important in their long-term effects on Indonesian cinema. These films
derive their appeal from the presentation of human problems and conflicts
against the incidental backdrop of the revolution, rather than from
attempts to document the revolution itself.

The Long March (Darah dan Doa, 1950) was the first Indonesian film
to deal with the subject of man and revolutionary crisis. The film, whose
plot was taken from a short story by Sitor Situmorang, tells the story of
several officers and soldiers of the Indonesian army's Siliwangi Division
who were involved in the battle of Madiun, East Java, and, thereafter, the
long march back to West Java. Captain Sudarto (Del Yusar), the leading
character in this film, is a teacher and former engineering candidate who
becomes caught up in the revolution. An intellectual, he is not completely
suited for his role as commander of a battalion. Contrasted with Sudarto
is his highly militaristic chief of staff, Captain Adam, a man who appears
to have been born for his time. With their very different personalities, con-
flict between the two men is unavoidable.

The battalion is sent to Sarangan in Madiun regency to squelch a Com-
munist uprising. Sudarto, it seems, is a lonely man with an unhappy fam-
ily life and in Sarangan he meets a Eurasian woman whom he begins to
court. Captain Adam, a happily married man who regularly receives let-

ters from his wife in Bandung, instructs Sudarto's girlfriend that she must leave the area. He fears that the commander's relationship with a woman of mixed blood (whose sense of nationalism is, in his opinion, somewhat questionable) will adversely affect troop discipline.

During the battalion's march back to West Java, Sudarto meets Widya, a nurse. Once again he falls in love and once again Captain Adam objects to the relationship. On one occasion when Sudarto is away from camp with Widya, the troops are attacked by members of Darul Islam of the Indonesian Islamic Army. Captain Adam views this transgression as a case of desertion and sends a report on Sudarto back to division headquarters.

In Captain Adam's defense, this report was sent not out of personal enmity; he had no reason to resent Sudarto. He acted only on military regulations to which he fervently adhered, despite the fact that the revolutionary period was a time of many uncertainties. In other words, what Captain Adam was trying to do was to establish certainty in a world or a time where uncertainty ruled.

Toward the end of the film, Adam is mortally wounded by an enemy bullet. As he is dying, he apologizes to Sudarto and begs his forgiveness for his actions. Sudarto readily accepts the dying man's apologies; their difference of opinion has not hampered their sense of mutual respect and admiration.

One scene in the film shows the execution of a collaborator and spy (R. Ismail). The execution is to be carried out by the staff sergeant, but several hours prior to the execution, because something seems to be troubling the sergeant, one of the officers (Awaluddin Djamin) asks him, "Do you know the man?" The sergeant answers, "Yes, he's my father." Later the sergeant does carry out his order, thus executing his own father. This scene is presented in a very matter-of-fact manner with no attempt on the part of Usmar Ismail, the director, to overdramatize the situation. It is precisely because of the lack of such dramatization that the audience is able to feel the tragedy that the revolution wrought.

The film ends on the day the Netherlands acknowledges Indonesia's sovereignty. Back home, Sudarto's men are given a hero's welcome, while Sudarto himself is brought before an inspection team formed to investigate the contents of Captain Adam's report. Disillusioned with the treatment that is given him, Sudarto chooses to resign from the armed forces and return to civilian life, but when returning to his rented room, he is killed by a survivor of the Madiun uprising.

Even forty years after the film's release, the sentiment of *The Long March* remains firm and strong. Its strength lies in its frankness. Although the film generated strong opposition from certain factions, Usmar Ismail was allowed the freedom to express his vision of the revolution and personal tragedy of people who were caught under the revolution's wheels.[2]

From a current perspective, some of the techniques used in the making of *The Long March* are outdated. Nonetheless, the film's honesty and frankness compensate for these technical shortcomings. It is this very honesty and frankness that are often missing in many of the films about revolution made recently, even though they employ the latest techniques in cinematography. The predominant element in *The Long March* is the story and not the techniques with which the story is conveyed.

Even though the two main characters of *The Long March* die before they can see the results of their struggle, the film can not be said to be overly pessimistic in tone; after all, the younger veterans live on. The deaths of Captains Adam and Sudarto must be seen as one phase in the cycle of regeneration. By depicting their demise, Usmar Ismail appears to be foretelling the future of an Indonesia when the reins of the country are in the hands of people neither as serious as Adam nor as intellectual as Sudarto.

Carrying this view further, Usmar Ismail seems to be saying that the future of Indonesia lies in the hands of the characters played by Aedy Moward and Awaluddin Djamin. Moward is a man preoccupied with himself and his interests. Usmar Ismail shows him as a man constantly in search of a new girlfriend, even in the middle of the battalion's long march! This character is also forever on the prowl for the best cigarettes and food. While most of the rest of the men are starving, he is shown hiding behind a rock and eating a large plate of rice.

Awaluddin plays an officer of unclear disposition. When Captain Adam declares Sudarto missing and orders the search for him to cease, Awaluddin's character secretly orders some of the men to continue the search. Nonetheless, when he learns that the sergeant has had to execute his own father, he shows no comfort to the young man. One suspects that this character is a combination of the different traits of Captains Adam and Sudarto.

In *After Curfew (Lewat Jam Malam)* and *The Rebel (Pejuang)*, Usmar Ismail once more presents a prophecy of the kind of people who will lead Indonesia. In *After Curfew,* the traitor Gunawan (R. Ismail) dies from a

bullet fired by Iskandar (Alcaif), who is himself then shot by a patrol on night watch. Puja (Bambang Hermanto), a veteran who owns a brothel and seems to have few firm opinions, is a man who has little idea of what the future will bring. The character played by Aedy Moward is similar to the one he played in *The Long March.* In this film, too, he, along with Puja, is permitted to live.

In *The Rebel,* Sergeant Imron (Bambang Hermanto), a street fighter in prewar days, becomes a hero of the revolution but dies before the final victory. Karma (Ismed M. Noor), the intellectual, another major character, is killed in action. Amin (Rendra Karno), an army lieutenant, is injured in battle but survives. Further, as a result of his injuries, he is assured early retirement and a pension. Seno (Rambang Irawan), a young man preoccupied with love even in the midst of battle, deserts in order to find out what has become of his girlfriend, Latifa (Farida Arriani), who is being held by the Dutch forces. For Usmar, the future of Indonesia is in the hands of the characters played by Awaluddin, Aedy Moward, and Bambang Irawan. These characters, the ones he allows to live, share obvious (and not always good) similarities.

Usmar's most important film on the subject of man and the revolution is *After Curfew,* a joint production of PERFINI and PERSARI, whose screenplay was written by Asrul Sani. In the film, Iskandar (A. N. Alcaff), a former army lieutenant, unsuccessfully attempts to fit back into society after several years of guerilla warfare. Unlike in "development campaign" films, in this film a woman's love is insufficient to save Iskandar. After failing in his job as a government employee, he gets into a fist fight with his superior on his first day of work. Iskandar seeks out his former army buddies. When finding Gunawan (R. Ismail), his former commander, he is severely disappointed to learn that Gunawan has built a business on capital gleaned from the property of refugees whom Gunawan had charged with espionage and ordered Iskandar to kill. Iskandar now sees that the charges were false and that he was duped. On the night that Iskandar decides to settle his score with Gunawan, he is killed by a night patrol.

The disappointment and pessimism that permeates *After Curfew* should not be overly surprising given the indications of disappointment that had already begun to surface in development campaign films. In real life, one can point to the incident of October 17, 1952, when the frustration felt by veterans of the revolution peaked (see Nasution 1982, Pauker 1962).

In technical terms, *After Curfew* is a much better film than earlier

Usmar Ismail films. The film techniques used offer clear support to the story of the film. The film opens with the camera following a pair of worn army boots as the film's protagonist proceeds down a dark street, a fitting introduction to a character who would fail to readapt to a society he had long ago left behind. The drama of Iskandar's passage through the night toward Gunawan's house sits in dramatic contrast to scenes from a party at the home of his fiancée (Netty Herawaty). The juxtaposition of these scenes creates a strong impression of the two worlds that Usmar created: the world of parties, where party people control normal life, and the darker world from which Iskandar can find no way out. Iskandar's fiancée's attempts to reintroduce him to the party world not only fail, but, without her knowledge, Iskandar disappears into the darker world.

After Curfew is one of the few Indonesian films that have met with applause from Indonesian cultural and intellectual circles. In a review of *After Curfew,* Sitor Situmorang said of the film that ". . . in its personification of the events and emotions of people today, the film has attained the level of artistry achieved by modern Indonesian painting and poetry. . . . From an artistic point of view of art, *After Curfew* might show some shortcomings, but it does, quite nonetheless, represent a very worthwhile and valid attempt . . ." (Said 1983, 43).

Usmar Ismail was not the only director to evidence pessimism in his work. In 1954, the same year that *After Curfew* was released, Ratu Asia Film Company released Sjamsudin Sjafei's film, *Fallout of the Revolution (Debu Revolusi).* This film focuses on Amran (R. Sukarno), a young guerilla soldier seriously wounded and separated from his troops during battle. Taken into the care of a chief of a nearby village head, Amran falls in love with Isrihati (Ismah B.), the chief's daughter. After the Netherlands recognizes Indonesian sovereignty, Amran returns to the city, but not before he has promised to return and marry Isrihati. Back in the city, Amran becomes involved with and marries Martini (Mimi Mariani), a fast girl who is also involved with a low-life character by the name of Johny (R. Ismail). Amran's marriage to Martini fails, and Amran winds up in jail, where he finally remembers the promise he once made to Isrihati. After getting out of jail, he returns to the village but there finds that Isrihati is happily married to a man she met when she came to the city in search of Amran.

Fallout of the Revolution is a stark look at the dead end of many revolutionary veterans' lives. The illusion of quick enjoyment from the spoils of the revolution drives Amran to Martini, a modern woman already cor-

rupted by urban life. When he finally recognizes the error of his ways and returns to the village and the woman he once cared for, neither village life nor the village girl can save him.

While in previous films the alternative to corrupt city life was a clean and friendly village and the alternative to a fast city woman was an innocent village girl, by 1954 this situation had changed. In *Fallout of the Revolution,* the village is quite worn out from its role of saving veterans from their disappointment. Unfortunately, the veterans themselves have remained the same. Unlike the veterans of previous films – such as Sulaiman in *Dew Drops (Embun)* – in *Fallout* Amran is not rejected by urban society; he is in fact all too eager to become a part of urban society, which is why he is so easily sucked into the whirlwind of urban corruption. With the loss of his principles, Amran must suffer beside the corrupt city figures (including Johny, who is shot dead by one of his own men). Upon returning to the village, Amran is no longer the hero he once was. The village and the young woman who once loved him are very much aware of this and no longer have a place for him.

The Ways of the World (Tjorak Dunia), a 1956 film directed by Bachtiar Siagian, puts the fate of former heroes in a much worse light. Djohan (Sukarno M. Noor), a disfigured veteran, finds for himself a place in the life of Lela (Mike Wijaya), the beautiful daughter of a coffee vendor, but that is only because the girl is blind. Near the end of the film, after Lela's sight is restored (through an operation performed by Djohan's former commander), Djohan loses her, too. Now able to see, Lela is repulsed by Djohan's disfigured face. Knowing his place, Djohan leaves the only woman who ever showed him love.

For Bachtiar Siagian, the situation for veterans had become so bad and the hope of their achieving their ideals had been so diminished that even their faces were horrific in appearance. At the same time, however, unlike the heroes of other films about the revolution, Djohan, the character that Bachtiar created, learns from his sad fate. At the film's end, he concludes that his miserable physical state and the failed ideals for which he had fought need not always haunt him. War, as a source of misfortune, is a force stronger than fate, but because war is man-made it is possible for one to fight against the recurrence of such mindless tragedy. With this in mind, Djohan joins the peace movement.

What is interesting about *The Ways of the World* is the attitude of the characters toward the revolution. In previous films about the revolution,

the struggle enacted on screen is one between the colonialists and the colonized. In the eyes of Bachtiar Siagian, the issues are far more complicated. For him, colonialism emerged from capitalism to reach its ultimate form in imperialism. For this reason, Djohan joins the peace movement, behind which stood the Communists. In other words, the director, a Communist himself, was saying that the only way to save the ideals of the struggle for independence was by joining the Communists.

It is easier to understand the development of attitudes shown by veterans in Siagian's film if we place the film in the context of the time in which it was produced. The film was made only one year after the 1955 general election, an electoral exercise that had been riddled by ideological conflict. With freedom of expression guaranteed by law, each of the various political groups was free to campaign on its own ideological platform. With Indonesia being torn apart at that time by varied political views, it is not surprising that the veterans, too, were influenced by ideological conflict (see Feith 1962, 331–450). It was at this time that PKI, the Indonesian Communist Party, made a concerted effort to gather veterans of the revolution into PKI-controlled organizations. Djohan presumably was just such a veteran who, disappointed with the way things had turned out, decided to join the Communists.

As no copy of *The Ways of the World* is available, we must rely on published film reviews to judge its cinematic quality. In one review, Sitor Situmorang wrote:

> Overall, this film shows a range of new and encouraging possibilities. Although the story line and its adaptation into film pretty much follow the standard melodramatic format and even though psychological or character development is not always what it should be (a common failing in Indonesian screenplays), it is clear that the director's use of film techniques and, more significantly, their adaptation in the Indonesian context with the use of real Indonesian scenery and people . . . do combine to yield encouraging results.
>
> As for the use of ideas, the director has inserted positive ideas into the film in logical fashion through the characters of the drama (the idea of working for peace, for example, appears at a logical time), ones that can be found among Indonesian people today. It is a pity, however, that the screenplay relies too heavily on the use of flashbacks. (Sitomurang 1956)

A few more films on the revolution were made prior to the close of the decade, including Usmar Ismail's *The Rebel,* in 1959. This film, for which

Bambang Hermanto received the best actor award at the Moscow Film Festival, told the story of four friends involved in the revolution: Karma (Ismed M. Noor), Amin (Rendra Karno), Imron (Bambang Hermanto), and Seno (Bambang Irawan). Little is made of Karma, as he is the first to be killed in action. Following his demise, Amin is seriously wounded, and leadership of the troops is taken over by Sergeant Imron. Imron, a former street fighter, is attracted to Amin's girlfriend, Fatimah (Chitra Dewi), a young middle-class woman who has followed as a refugee behind the troops. This rivalry, it seems, leads Imron to abandon Amin, who is fatally wounded following a sudden Dutch attack.

In flight from the village, Imron makes advances to Fatimah. Aware that his social background is not quite that of Fatimah, Imron feels no great compulsion to leave the jungle. He tells Fatimah, "In the jungle you depend on me. In the city you wouldn't even notice me." This, it seems, is also why Imron rejects Seno's plea that they attack the Dutch camp and free Amin. Imron is sure that Seno supports an attack for selfish reasons, only to free Latifa (Farida Arriani), Seno's girlfriend, who happens to be Amin's younger sister. Meanwhile, Seno feels that Imron's refusal is due only to his desire to gain more control over Fatimah. In the end, to prove his loyalty to Amin, Imron leads an attack on the Dutch, and while Amin and Latifa are freed, Imron loses his life.

In cinematographic terms, the techniques used by Usmar Ismail and the development of the story line represent a vast improvement over the director's earlier films as well as other films produced in Indonesia prior to this time. Somewhat questionable, however, is the ineptness of the Dutch troops near the end of the film. Imron's troops were able to penetrate the enemy camp with such ease that one would think the Dutch were not aware that a war was going on. This, however, can probably be linked to the time in which the film was made. *The Rebel* was made in 1959, the same year that Indonesia readopted the 1945 revolutionary constitution, when the talk of the nation was the need to revive "the spirit of 1945." At that time, with the Indonesian nation nearly torn apart by political conflict and civil wars in Sumatra and North Sulawesi, the air was full of slogans supporting the campaign to revive revolutionary solidarity. It is interesting to note, therefore, that Usmar Ismail, who in 1954 had expressed such bitter disappointment with the results of the revolution through *After Curfew,* now rebounded to express optimism and solidarity among veterans. Differing from *After Curfew, The Rebel* has no dialogue about post-revolution conditions. In *The Rebel,* Usmar Ismail translates the enthusi-

asm of the time into a film of hope. With changes in the nation's political structure that followed President Sukarno's decree of July 5, 1959, this filmmaker apparently envisioned a time when the nation would be free of the disappointment that had sapped the energies of the young nation in the early 1950s.

In the first half of the 1960s, Indonesia was a country of slogans and rallies. In an attempt to distract people from the bitter experience of the 1950s, the government gave its full support to a campaign of national unity. President Soekarno tried to unite the nation under the banner of NASAKOM, a philosophical blend of nationalism (NAS from *nasionalisme*), religion (A from *agama*), and communism (KOM from *komunisme*) (see Feith 1963, 309–409). The president also hoped to promote national unity and solidarity through planned confrontation with the Netherlands over West Irian and later Malaysia over the formation of that new federal kingdom. People were asked to look back to the revolutionary period when collective interests were of much greater importance than personal or selected group interests.

During the first half of the 1960s, a five-year period of great economic difficulty, thirteen films were made about the revolution. In general these films were optimistic in tone, much like the films of the early 1950s. Though I have included these films under the category of man and the revolution, their tone is much more like the earlier "development campaign" films.

Undoubtedly the most significant film of this period was *The Barbed Wire Fence (Pagar Kawat Berduri),* a film directed by Asrul Sani and released in 1961. The story of *Barbed Wire* was taken from a novel by Trisno Yuwono that focused on the lives of a number of Indonesian military officers being held in a Dutch prison camp run by Sergeant Major Kunen (Suryabrata). Sergeant Major Kunen was an Amsterdam medical student who had been drafted into the army and sent to Indonesia. This Dutchman held great respect for Indonesia; when the Netherlands was under German occupation, he had fought in the Dutch underground with an Indonesian, and because of that friendship, Kunen decided to study Indonesian culture and history before he came to Indonesia. He was a simple intellectual type and believed without question the Dutch government propaganda that the Indonesian people loved the Netherlands and were not ready for independence, that the Indonesian revolution was merely a movement by political agitators led by Sukarno.

In the film, Kunen's first confrontation with an Indonesian nationalist is

with Armed Forces Major Chairul (Sukarno M. Noor). Chairul represents the voice of the Indonesian people, who had been forced to revolt in order to gain independence. Kunen's thoughts on the situation reach a critical point when his superior, Lieutenant de Groot, tells him the real reasons for Holland's invasion of Indonesia. "It's the rubber and oil they have here," he tells Kunen. Through de Groot, Asrul Sani expresses the opinion that the Dutch colonization of Indonesia was the result of vested interests and capitalism and that capitalism had been transformed into imperialism.

Unlike Bachtiar Siagian, Asrul Sani does not encourage Kunen to join the peace movement. The director has Kunen commit suicide instead, through which he depicts the loss of Kunen's belief in the Netherlands' holy mission in Indonesia. Kunen's death symbolizes the defeat of imperialism by nationalism. Nonetheless, the cost of victory is not small and demands the deaths of Major Chairul and his troops in front of a Dutch execution squad.

Barbed Wire is interesting not only because of the philosophical confrontation between imperialism and nationalism but also the conflict that arises between the various republican characters in the Dutch prison camp. The director makes skillful use of internal conflict to heighten the dramatic interest of this film. One can assume that the conflict among the Indonesian prisoners is a sample of the conflicts that abounded in republican circles at that time. These conflicts grew into full-scale divisions among veterans of the revolution following recognition of Indonesian sovereignty.

From a cinematographic point of view, *Barbed Wire* stands as the best of all films about the revolution. The acting, camera work, lighting, and sets all served to support the flow of the story. It might not be too far-fetched to say that this is the best film that Asrul Sani ever made.

When *Barbed Wire* was released in 1963, it drew widespread attention, especially because of strong criticism by the Communist-controlled press and other leftist factions. *Bintang Timur,* a leftist daily newspaper, had the following to say about the film:

> Asrul's thoughts on the principle of "universal humanism" become especially clear when he makes Kunen, a Dutch soldier, a "hero of humanity" and the leading character of the film through the man's suicide. . . . Asrul Sani, by virtue of his betrayal of the principle of universal humanism, nullified the patriotism and heroism of [Indonesia's] revolutionary heros.[3]

Those who watch *Barbed Wire* with a more open mind will see that the hero is not in fact Kunen, but Major Chairul. Kunen is merely a tragic victim of his misplaced faith in his own government. Heightening the tragedy of Kunen's suicide is the fact that it is Lieutenant de Groot, his own superior, another Dutchman, who reveals to him the duplicity of the Netherlands' colonization of Indonesia.

The film makes it apparent that the director held the patriots and patriotism of Indonesia's soldiers in high esteem. This he shows through the escape of prisoners, who alert their compatriots to the existence of enemy spies and convince them to alter their plans for attack. When the Dutch fire on the escaping prisoners, Hamid (Ismed M. Noor), one of the detainees, shows himself to be a true hero by throwing himself before the Dutch bullets in order to ensure that his escaping companions will get away. The scene of the Indonesian officers and troops before the execution squad reveals the Indonesians' strength of heart and the conviction of their ideals.

Still on the subject of conviction of beliefs, another quite interesting film on this subject was released in 1964. *The Crossing (Penyeberangan)* was the first, and probably the only, Indonesian film to deal with the involvement of children in the revolution. Directed by Gatot Kusumo, *The Crossing* tells of a group of school children in East Java who become cadet soldiers (as part of Tentara Republik Indonesia Pelajar, Student Army of the Republic of Indonesia). The story revolves around the transport of a cannon across the Brantas River in East Java by these school children in order to ensure that it does not fall into enemy hands. Patriotism and heroism form the real focus of this film. This is quite understandable given that the talk of the nation at the time the film was made was the "unfinished revolution" and the need to eradicate "neocolonialism" wherever it is found. (The primary target of this campaign was British neocolonialism as shown by its establishment of Malaysia.)

The Crossing is also interesting for its depiction of youth at the time of the revolution. Written and directed by Gatot Kusumo, a former student army commander himself, the film presents an accurate picture of the city children who become involved in the guerilla war in rural areas. Gatot Kusumo contrasts the fears of parents who thought their children were too young to bear arms with the heroic enthusiasm of the young people themselves. The film leaves a lasting impression on the viewer. The problems that arise among the children are presented in rather plastic fashion. Though great fanfare is made of heroism, the characters themselves are

very normal people. When trapped by enemy gunfire, Sam (Wahab Abdi), one of the children, expresses his normality quite well when he says to a friend, "I wet my pants!" and shows the fears of a normal child when he remarks to his companion on the ground beside him, "Let's go home."

The film ends with most of the children dead after having successfully ferried the cannon across the river. By ending the film in this manner, Gatot Kusumo was apparently expressing cinematically the popular slogan of that time that "no sacrifices are made in vain."

Toward the end of the period now known as the Old Order (that is, President Soekarno's regime), the slogans and the pumped-up enthusiasm for the revolution gave birth to a new phenomenon. This was the appearance of women in leading roles in films about the revolution (see Sen 1981). Outstanding among this group of films was *No Turning Back* *(Madju Tak Gentar)*, directed by Turino Djunaedi and released in 1964. In almost all previous films, the roles of women in the revolution were limited to Red Cross volunteers *(The Long March)*, couriers *(Six Hours in Yogyakarta)*, girls who took care of guerillas who had been left behind by their troops *(Fallout of the Revolution)*, and women who offered disappointed and disillusioned veterans the succor of love *(Dew Drops)*. In *No Turning Back*, women were finally shown as combat troops, some of them even serving with the troops sent into the city to eliminate enemy spies. In this film, Wati (Sri Rejeki), the leading female character, is a wonder woman who plays a much greater role than that of the male soldiers. In addition to leading troops (with a knife tied to her thigh), she also masterminds the demolition of railway tracks that carry enemy troops and supplies.

As with the leading roles of children in *The Crossing*, the leading role of a woman in *No Turning Back* must be seen within the context of the time in which the film was made. At least two factors made it possible for women to appear in major film roles at that time. The first was the widespread popularity of Herlina, a member of the Voluntary Front for the Liberation of West Irian, who parachuted into enemy territory, thereby becoming a national hero and a role model for women. The bravery of her actions was enough to convince people that women could indeed play an active role in the armed forces.[4]

The second factor was the showing in Indonesia of numerous films made by socialist countries about World War II. A large number of these films dealt with the partisan struggle of these countries against their enemies during the war, and many of them starred women. The influence of

these foreign films also helped make possible the appearance of *No Turn-ing Back*.

No Turning Back is also the only film about the revolution to show a Christmas celebration. Laksmi (Conny Suteja), one of the troops, is Chris-tian and with the approach of Christmas becomes depressed. To cheer her up, her companions plan a surprise Christmas celebration, which all the troops attend. It is possible to view this scene as yet another piece of prop-aganda for the fostering of national unity.

Another film about the revolution released during the Old Order was *Between East and West (Antara Timur Barat),* directed by Turino Dju-naedi and released in 1963. This film spoke of the need for Indonesians to accept as citizens people of Indo-European and Eurasian descent. The film reminds one of *Frieda,* a film with a similar theme released in 1950.[5] It is difficult to place this film in the context of its time. I strongly suspect that Turino Djunaedi made the film primarily to benefit from the rising popularity of Suzana, an actress of Indo-European descent, who starred in the film.

These two films by Turino Djunaedi are not of especially high quality. Both are marked by a severe lack of imagination. The films are broken up into short scenes that are crammed with dialogue. In the latter film, sets are poorly done and costumes are anachronistic. Further, the film is inter-spersed with the songs of two singing artists who were popular at that time, Alwi and Osland Husain, who also played in the film. The film's characters are black and white, and the contrast between the good and the bad is like night and day. In short, the film is completely lacking in the atmosphere of the revolutionary era as is shown in the better films of Usmar Ismail, Asrul Sani, and Bachtiar Siagian.

In the 1970s, more films were made about the revolution. Films that I place in the man-and-revolution category include *The Woman in the Southern Sector (Perawan Di Sektor Selatan),* a 1971 film directed by Alam Rengga Surawijaya, and *After Midnight (Lewat Tengah Malam),* directed by Sjumandjaja and released in 1972. Alam Surawijaya – a director who once said that "films about the revolution are easy to make; the contrast between characters is clear" (*Tempo,* April 5, 1975, pp. 40–41) – readily admits to getting the most enjoyment out of making films on the revolu-tion. In *The Woman in the Southern Sector,* he tells of the panic and con-flict that broke out among troops in the southern military sector following its infiltration by Laura (Farida Faisol), an enemy spy.

Laura herself is one of the more interesting characters in the film. She is

a young woman of mixed blood who saw her family torn apart in the early
days of the revolution. After witnessing the torture of her mother, she
vows revenge and is given the opportunity to exact her revenge by work-
ing as a spy for the Dutch army and spreading disinformation.

Laura is quite successful in her job, and unrest and even bloody quar-
rels begin to break out in the southern sector. What the director was
portraying, of course, was not only the cunning of the Dutch in their psy-
chological warfare against the nationalists but also the conflict between
the irregular troops and the Indonesian armed forces in West Java (the
southern sector).

In less detail, this film also shows conflict between a Chinese man and
his daughter, who has fallen in love with a soldier in the southern sector.
The Chinese man is, it first appears, a neutral party in matters concerning
the Indonesian nation, but his daughter, who considers herself Indone-
sian, is partisan to the nationalist cause. As it turns out, the Chinese man
is a spy for the Dutch and plays a role in Laura's successful operations.
This part of Alam Surwijaya's film is not fantasy: the role of the Chinese
in the revolution was one of great dispute. It is, however, interesting and
encouraging to note that the director has the Chinese girl fighting on the
side of the republic. Although the dialogue among the chinese family
seems leaden and is laced with slogans, the attitude of the director himself
on the issue of the Chinese in Indonesia could not be much clearer:
Because the older Chinese, those who were born in China, found it diffi-
cult to accept the establishment of a new nation and political regime, the
hope for the integration of the Chinese into Indonesia lay with the
younger generation.

The inclusion of the "Chinese problem" as a side issue in *The Woman in
the Southern Sector* can be seen within the context of the period in which
the film was made. Stories of divided loyalty among the Chinese were a
popular topic of discussion in the early 1970s, and in this film, Alam Sura-
wijaya provides a look at his personal opinion on the issue.

The panic of the troops in the southern sector must be seen as the way
the director interpreted conditions in Indonesian society at the time the
film was made. As is common knowledge in Indonesia, the early 1970s
was a time rife with criticism of the economic policies of the New Order
regime (which dates from the downfall of Soekarno in March 1966). It is
quite possible that the controversy and panic among soldiers in the south-
ern sector is a reflection of the controversy that resulted from the govern-

ment's reliance on foreign capital as the springboard for Indonesia's development. And just as the film ends with the defeat of the enemy agents and the regaining of full control by the commander (Kusno Sudjarwadi), so I believe that the director was saying that the upheavals of the early 1970s were a temporary condition only (see Said 1972b, Subardjo 1972).

In 1972 Sjumandjaja directed and released *After Midnight,* a film whose scenario he himself wrote. Set in the 1970s, the film focuses on the character of Lono (Rachmat Hidayat), an old and crippled veteran of the revolution who never married and who lives alone in a luxurious house in Bali. Sjumandjaja shows him as a man disappointed in the social conditions of the country, which he views as contrary to the ideals on which the country was based. Unlike Iskandar in *After Curfew,* who attempts to settle scores by killing Gunawan, in *After Midnight* Lono shows greater cunning; he does not kill the corrupt but robs them of their wealth, which he then uses for various social causes, as well as for his own personal benefit. The difference between Gunawan (in *After Curfew*) and Lono (in *After Midnight*) might well be due to the disparity in age and upbringing of the two characters. Iskandar was still a young man at the end of the revolution, the time in which *After Curfew* was set, whereas Lono, in the early 1970s, was a much older man. At the onset of the revolution, Iskandar was a technical student, which would indicate a much better social background than Lono, who grew up in the midst of poverty. Presumably, Lono's criminal behavior in his older years stems from the destitution of his youth.

Regardless of how great the director's sympathies are for Lono, this man is not the clean character of Iskandar in *After Curfew.* Through his illegal actions, by robbing from corrupt officials, Lono only makes the situation worse. At the same time, however, his offenses can be seen as proof of a crisis of confidence in the nation's legal apparatus as a result of its inefficacy in dealing with the pervasive problem of corruption. The director gives additional emphasis to this point through the introduction of Sukma (Rima Melati), the daughter of a law enforcement officer who falls victim to his own efforts to eliminate corruption.

Sjumandjaja has Sukma working with the police to track down Lono, but here the director faces a dilemma. While he sympathizes with both Lono and Sukma, the two characters are on opposing paths that have to, one day, meet. Lono symbolizes disappointment in the revolution, while Sukma represents the determination to eliminate abuses of power.

Although Lono and Sukma share the same ideals, they differ in the methods used to attain their ideals. Because Lono goes outside the law, he is in direct confrontation with Sukma. Sjumandjaja shows the similarity of their ideals through the affection that grows between Lono and Sukma and, out of respect for Lono and other disappointed veterans, does not have Lono die a futile death. At the close of the film, when Lono can no longer evade the police, he courageously presents his wrists for hand-cuffing.

If *After Midnight* is seen in terms of social conditions in Indonesia at the time the film was made – a period of rising criticism against the government (which later peaked in January 1974 with the Malari Incident, the January Catastrophe, when full-scale rioting and protests broke out in Jakarta) – the message of this film is clear. Sjumandjaja believed that government critics were not without blame. For this reason, the real hero of the film was Sukma and not Lono. She was the person who successfully delivered Lono to the police, though by doing so, as a result of her love for Lono, she too had to suffer.

Although when compared to other Indonesian films from that period, *After Midnight* is a serious film, it is not without its flaws. In a review of the film, I wrote:

> Except as sources of visual information the flashbacks in the film do not achieve the desired effect. . . . The convoluted dialogue is often overly excessively literary. In the dialogue Sjuman[djaja] often shows poor discipline in the development of his characters thereby causing the film's strong sense of nostalgia and romanticism to fall flat. . . . Much of the dialogue is insipid and devoid of meaning. . . . As a director Sjumandjaja is less attentive to detail than he is as a screenplay writer. He gives excessive attention to the lead character but allows the other characters to go off, without direction, on their own. (Said 1972b)

In the 1980s two Indonesian films appeared that might be categorized as man-and-revolution films. For the critical or discriminating viewer, however, these two films, *Ready-to-Die Force (Pasukan Berani Mati)* and *Lebak in Flames (Lebak Membara),* both directed by Imam Tantowi, are really no more than imitations of Hong Kong *kung-fu* films or adventure films much along the lines of *Missing in Action* and *Rambo*. These two films use the revolution only as a backdrop for *kung-fu* fight scenes *(Lebak in Flames)* and the presentation of special effects *(Ready-to-Die*

Force). These two films are examples of films that are based on the standard formula of popular foreign action films, so much so that historic anachronisms are of no concern.[6]

Because of our close proximity to the Indonesian revolution, much of the change caught on film has been depicted in quite literal fashion. This is, for example, why most of the films about the revolution contain battle scenes and scenes of physical confrontation between the Dutch and the Indonesian nationalists. Unfortunately, in most of the films neither side is depicted realistically.

With the gradual passing of the generation of Indonesians who were directly involved in the revolution, more "human" stories have begun to appear. In years to come, one can expect to see more films that use the revolution as the background for presentation of the various kinds of people who were involved in the revolution. The films will place greater emphasis on individual problems and conflicts. Indonesia's revolutionary period is, for its filmmakers, a storehouse of individuals and events whose stories are waiting to be put on the screen.

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Notes and References

1. Unfortunately, most films about the Indonesian revolution are now lost or ruined. All that remain of the majority of these films are their names and a few magazine and newspaper clippings. For that reason, it is impossible to discuss at any length the films of Bachtiar Siagian, even though he is regarded as one of the best directors of films about the revolution. No copies of his films exist. The same is true of the films of Alam Rengga Surawijaya; only his works of the 1970s are still available. Fortunately, several of the films of Usmar Ismail have been preserved in good condition, and that is the reason this article may seem to place greater emphasis on his works.

2. The problems Usmar Ismail faced in making are discussed in "Sari Soal Dalam Film Indonesia," *Star News,* 3, 5 (September 25, 1954):30.

3. *Bintang Timur,* March 23, 1963. As a result of repeated attacks from Communist and other left-wing newspapers, *The Barbed Wire Fence* was recalled by the government for further inspection. President Sukarno himself, as well as

Sitomurang, Sitor
  1956   "Tjorak Dunia," *Aneka,* 7, 12 (June 20):10.

Subardjo, Ismail
  1972   "Perawan Disektor Selatan," *Minggu Abadi,* April 2.

Sutara, Yaya
  1982   " 'PBM' Menampilkan Visi Lain Dari Perjuangan Politik," *Sinar Harapan,* October 2.

Book Reviews

David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989. 368 pages. Cloth $65.00; paper $14.95.

Allegories of Cinema is nothing if not challenging. In his preface, James already distances himself from "The collusion of the film critical establishment with corporate industries in resisting the propagation of the work discussed here." The "collusion" against the work he is about to discuss, James maintains, "is the mark of its threat and also of its importance" (p. ix). From the outset, James insists on his dissociation from film criticism he regards as complicit.

Challenging, too, because the author's prose is exasperatingly difficult, if not obscurantist, which might be considered apposite to his subject: American film in the 1960s – of the alternative sort known variously as underground, structural, or experimental. James later distinguishes between these categories, but they have in common the family resemblance of being somehow marginal and inaccessible, squeezed into the cultural periphery by the mass-produced film product churned out by Hollywood. James states that "a non-commodity film practice is all but inconceivable" (p. 6), a plausible proposition if all one has to go on is the author's tortuous discursive peregrinations.

Although his language does little to make alternative cinema more accessible to the uninitiated, the very appearance of James's book protests just the opposite. This tome of nearly four hundred turgid pages is testament to a kind of salvage operation: to rescue the films and their midwife cultures not only from the encroachment of countercultural nostalgia but also from their co-optation by other "collusive" critical discourses (e.g., P. Adams Sitney). Thus James's rhetoric – his impenetrable diction, inextricable syntax, and portentous tone – marks not the shortcomings and excesses of a merely bad writer but (worse?) the dull grinding of a political axe in the hands of a humorless critic.

Considering the extreme nature of its activity, is it any wonder that activist modernism (i.e., the "avant-garde") has traditionally sought to justify its social relevance in terms of a political or aesthetic vision? The history of avant-gardism is replete with such defenses: political preoccupations dominated the rhetoric of European movements from Berlin Dada and Constructivism through Situationism, Structural/Materialism, and Lacanian Feminism. But the postwar American

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art scene – particularly its most influ-
ential movements, Abstract Expres-
sionism and the New American Cin-
ema – by and large favored the
"apolitical" stance of Romantic indi-
vidualism. Indeed, Sitney's *Visionary
Film* (1974/1979) explicitly adopts the
Romantic perspectives of the New
American filmmakers it discusses.

That *Visionary Film* now seems so
dated is an indication of the profound
influence European theoretical devel-
opments have had on American aca-
demic pursuits. James's *Allegories* is an
attempt to redress the dearth of politi-
cal analysis of American avant-garde
filmmaking by allying aesthetic avant-
gardism with radical political filmmak-
ing. This strategy to justify avant-garde
resistance is as old as Marx's attribu-
tion of opiate passivity to religion,
except that now the opiate is mass cul-
ture: "capitalist cinema . . . recreates
in its spectators the desires and fears,
the conscious and unconscious subjec-
tivity, by which they are accommodat-
ed to capitalist society" (p. 7). This re-
calls Dziga Vertov's similar claim (in
1926) that traditional film drama
"act[s] out before the viewer a roman-
tic, detective or social 'fairy tale'
adroitly and convincingly enough to
put him in a state of intoxication and
to cram some idea . . . into his sub-
conscious."

Unlike James, Dziga doesn't pull his
punches. An ordinary reader will get
the feeling that James wants to separate
the sheep from the goats by using
expressions like "bad movies made
good in the alembic of codic mutation"
(p. 9); "instead of internalizing the apo-
siopetic imperative in the film itself" (p.
54); "the onomastic assumption clearly

signals the presence of some social
urgency in the aesthetic desire" (p. 96);
"The fungability of the activity of the
profilmic, the filmic, and the psy-
chophysiological – the fungability of
style, medium, and content – centripe-
tally reroutes potentially eccentric ref-
erence back into the field of the visual"
(p. 45). Words like *anxiogenic, sclero-
tic, tenebrous,* and *ostinato* pepper the
text; it is no accident that *Diagnostic
and Statistical Manual of Mental Dis-
orders* appears in James's list of works
cited.

Readers are further polarized into
faithful sheep and complicit goats
through a rhetorical technique that is
very popular among writers in contem-
porary film theory: the phony lament.
Rather than engaging in direct criticism
the central tenets of a discredited posi-
tion, James simply writes about, say,
the "metaphysics of presence" in a wist-
ful, even nostalgic tone implying that it
was nice while it lasted, but alas! we've
left it behind forever. James describes
Andy Warhol's aestheticized publicity
prints as a refusal "to indulge a nostal-
gia for an edenic moment before me-
dia, a hypothetical past when people
were supposed to exist" (p. 61). This
passage smuggles a theoretical commit-
ment into the argument under the guise
of straightforward critical description
of textual features. The section on the
Kuchar brothers, entitled "The Cri-
tique of Authenticity," discusses the
"critical double bind" engendered by
"the oscillation between lampoon and
emulation," the difference between
"bad" movies and bad movies. In the
Kuchars' work, "the authentic can be
present in neither art nor nature, film
nor life, but only glimpsed, fragmen-

tarily, in the practice that slips desper-
ately between them" (p. 144).

This is a strategy that tries to head
off potential objections in advance by,
first, employing language that is un-
derstandable only to the initiated and,
second, relying on connotations that
presuppose theoretical commitments
similar to those of the author. James's
book is full of rhetoric that preempts
counterarguments. Ironically, *Allego-
ries* is all about restricting access – to
criticism and to comprehension – by
using discourse that defies understand-
ing without acceptance. This gives
much of the book a dogmatic, gnostic
quality: a poststructural cabal that
insinuates a challenge to take it or leave
it. This quality is not accidental but has
an important philosophical role to play
in the argument.

For James, it is the social practice,
not the text nor the context, that in-
vites assessment by the critic, but of
practices we have only traces mani-
fested in objects (commodities) and
more texts (documents). Michel Fou-
cault heads the section on Vietnam and
the problem of representation: "The
document, then, is no longer for his-
tory an inert material through which it
tries to reconstitute what men have
done or said, the events of which only
the trace remains; history is now trying
to define within the documentary ma-
terial itself unities, totalities, series,
relations" (p. 195). "Documentary ma-
terial" stops standing in for the events
and actions which it was once used to
reconstruct and becomes the space, or
matrix of history itself. James stead-
fastly denies the referentiality of films
and writings about films, even while
relying on their references to make

claims about their allegorical func-
tions. This is also why James forswears
elementary rhetorical courtesies like
exposition, definition, and persuasion.
To do so might risk perpetuating a
logocentric myth of transparency be-
tween language and its objects.

James hems himself in with his phil-
osophical and political commitments:
"Representation, even self-representa-
tion, is a bourgeois aesthetic value
. . ." (p. 119); it is small wonder that he
communicates as many interesting in-
sights about the films as he does, but
they must be wrested from his text as
from a recalcitrant puzzle.

Despite their duplicitous theoretical
tactics, the chapters on Andy Warhol
(chapter 3) and Underground Film
(chapter 4) are very rewarding. War-
hol's films are framed by a discussion
of his earlier photographic and later
entrepreneurial activities, which sup-
ports the claim that Warhol the author
is subsumed in his role as producer/
impresario. This is in direct opposition
to James's reading of Stan Brakhage
(chapter 2), an obscure characteriza-
tion of Brakhage's poetic aspirations
that is redeemed only by some helpful
references to Charles Olson, the latter-
day phenomenologist whose doctrine
of "objectism" inspired Brakhage's ex-
periments with optical perception.

The discomfort James has with
Brakhage is a symptom of the book's
most curious and tenuous gesture, the
conflation of aesthetic and explicitly
political work. In the end, James can
always claim that filmmakers as seem-
ingly hermetic, Romantic, or reaction-
ary as Stan Brakhage, Jordan Belson,
and Ernie Gehr nevertheless, through
their mere "self-definition against the

discourse of hegemony" (p. 276), must be considered in politically radical terms.

Hence the "allegories" approach: James assumes that filmmakers' lives and works can be "read" profitably in light of subcultural resistance to dominant, ideologically oppressive cinema, regardless of that subculture's actual championing of traditional high culture and corresponding ignorance of, or even contempt for, popular culture. Though the author periodically steps back to acknowledge the "utopic" quality of cinematic resistance during the 1960s, he cannot hide his enthusiasm for avant-gardism as a politically justifiable means of "popular intervention" (p. 348). But to argue this strenuously for the leftist political significance of *Dog Star Man, Eat,* or *Wavelength* is to risk two potentially embarrassing consequences: first, the neglect of thorough ideological negotiation of the relevant subculture along with the very theoretical model applied; second, the trivializing of more explicitly political films such as Emile de Antonio's *In the Year of the Pig* and Mike Gray's *The Murder of Fred Hampton.* That these latter works are analyzed by James is laudable, but they seem to be included less for their own sake than to bolster the surrounding political analyses of aesthetic avant-gardism.

James's accounts of the beat generation and Jonas Mekas are inspiring in their focus on the delicate negotiations between film and everyday life, especially in the culture of jazz: "Mythologized as richly promiscuous in both sex and narcotics, with art his way of life, the post-bebop musician represented the mediation of personal and social

values into an aesthetic, whose formal qualities were produced by and themselves reproduced the liberation of the self" (p. 96).

It is surprising, however, that a book as abstracted and alienating as *Allegories* should address this issue – cinema and the quotidian – with such sensitivity. The beats and Mekas are also crucial sections because they set the stage for later developments in the underground, splintered between Political Film/Radical Cinema (chapter 5) and Pure Film (chapter 6). Moreover, the underground is the linchpin between earlier experimental films of the 1940s and 1950s and later structural films of the late 1960s and early 1970s, both of which are defined by formal qualities, whereas the underground is marked by its method of production (p. 94).

Like much of the book, the chapter on political film is historically helpful but critically reductionist. James ranges from protest films of the early 1960s, to films about black liberation, to Vietnam films, but they all fall prey to the ubiquitous "contradiction" between their message of liberation and their commercial mode of production, necessitating the creation of commodity spectacle: "Thus presence and meaning – object and interpretation, denotation and connotation, representation and discourse – are the terms between which sequences of images argue a point of view while maintaining the semblance that their mediation is neutral, merely the articulation of what is implicit in the evidence they create" (p. 197). Only radical revolutionary cinema, which attends to its practice as cinema instead of represen-

tational posturing, escapes this contra-
diction.

Far from performing a rescue op-
eration on films doomed to languish in
the twilight of post-Reagan amnesia,
James remembers these films in the
naked glare of materialist discourse.
With Guy Debord, he understands film
as "a social relation among people,
mediated by images" (p. 5). The conse-
quences of this latter-day Marxism are
twofold. Rhetorically, James is egre-
giously opaque, pedantically interpos-
ing himself between the reader and the
film culture that is his subject. Politi-
cally, he displaces the texts that are his
corpus of alternative films by a "text"
that consists in the social practices that
generated and nurtured the films. This
should not be confused with the old
"text and context" approach that dia-
lectically analyzes cinema in light of an
extratextual historical horizon, even
though James uses this language to
organize his chapter on Pure Film.
Rather, it is an evacuation of any extra-
textual context in favor of an enhanced
textuality in which cinema is one privi-
leged moment. It is a provocative (per-
haps radical, if one is unfamiliar with
poststructural film theory) gesture that
repoliticizes alternative cinema of the
1960s by treating it as a synecdoche, or
allegory of the broader textual and cul-
tural challenges of the times – and of
the present time, in which the author
seeks to validate his critical paradigm
over others.

James's allegory consists of the belief
that every film internalizes its condi-
tions of production and that therefore
every film is an allegory of cinema:
"The direct and homologous relation-
ships among industrial film's textual

properties and the industrial cinema's
social function all intersect at the capi-
talist mode of film production" (p. 10),
but this does not necessarily hold for
alternative cinema. Alternative cinema
can also be conceived as effluvia or
"excess baggage" cast off by the profli-
gacy of commercial film. Mainstream
majority society ultimately determines
the rise of a minority culture and dif-
ferentially gives it shape, as in the
burlesques of Warhol or the Kuchar
brothers.

Alternatively, a "minority social or
interest group" could also be under-
stood as consumers of films that inter-
pret them in skewed, distorted, or sub-
versive ways (e.g., gay appropriations
of classic melodramas for camp pur-
poses or James's own example of the
influence of feminist film theory on
avant-garde filmmaking). But if a sub-
culture doesn't make films, it doesn't
count. Or does it? In James's schema, a
practice encompasses interpretation as
well as material production, so a new
interpretation is functionally equiva-
lent to a new film, if one accepts his
equivalence between textual features
and social function. This strategy is an
outgrowth of Althusser's toppling of
the base-superstructure metaphor: ra-
ther than positing cinema (superstruc-
ture) as growing out of precinematic
social motivations (base), they are con-
flated into an overarching practice in
which cinema is couched and of which
cinema is not even a reflection but
merely an allegory.

This is why, for all its significance as
a critical study of the American avant-
garde, *Allegories of Cinema* already
seems curiously dated. Relying on the-
ories that, having reached their apogee

in the late 1970s, now seem to be fading into the background, this book may in the end be the most traditionally "avant-gardist" defense of the American cinematic avant-garde. That in itself need not be a condemnation, but it does point to the prevailing blinkered outlook of the avant-garde community and to the resulting need for a thorough overhauling of avant-garde ideologies.

Allegories of Cinema is a difficult but ultimately disappointing book. There are occasional rewards, such as insightful descriptions of the outrageousness of the underground and the crisis of representation in films about the Vietnam war. But James expects his readers to maneuver through so much theoretical baggage that even the most sympathetic will find their progress tortuous and their patience sorely tried. As well, James's theoretical foundations are questionable on their own terms and in their indiscriminate use with films ranging from *Superfly* to *Lives of Performers*. James's priority of production and social practice over textual representation and contextual horizon should have led him to adopt a more nuanced, pluralistic approach to his chosen categories of alternative cinema. Instead, *Allegories* is monolithic and monotonous, a heavy, one-note toll from the gong in the ivory tower. Films from the 1960s deserve a better requiem than this.

D. WILLIAM DAVIS
GREGORY TAYLOR

Shampa Banerjee and Anil Srivastava, *One Hundred Indian Feature Films: An Annotated Filmography*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1988. 205 pages. $34.00.

Indian cinema is attracting increasing attention both inside and outside India. India is by far the largest film-producing country in the world. Film is one of the most dominant cultural forces in India, shaping the life-styles, beliefs, and value systems of the people. Eminent Indian filmmakers like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, G. Aravindan, and Mira Nair have won great international critical recognition, while popular filmmakers like Raj Kapoor have vast followings in Russia and the Middle East. Hence, an annotated filmography dealing with one hundred feature films produced in India is bound to be welcomed by students of Indian cinema.

The two authors have selected one hundred representative films from all regions of India and have listed them in chronological order. Each entry contains the names of the producer, director, screenplay writer, lyricist, music director, cameraman, art director, and editor as well as the cast, a summary of the story, critical comments on the film, and points of interest about the production. This filmography contains entries on the works of artistic film directors like Ray, Ghatak, Sen, Gopalakrishnan, Aravindan, Sahani, Mehta, Kaul, and Ghose as well as on the works of popular film directors like Shanaram, Raj Kapoor, Guru Dutt, and Manmohan Desai.

As the authors point out, "One

Hundred Indian Films attempts to bring together a representative selection from the first talkies to the present day. . . . There are obvious gaps – for instance, there are no films of M. G. Ramachandran, the late chief minister of Tamil Nadu. . . . The balance between serious cinema and popular successes is a difficult one to maintain. In a country where documentation on cinema has been sporadic and unorganized, no selection of a hundred from nearly eighty highly prolific years of Indian talkies can possibly do justice to all the films that deserve similar attention."

One can argue with the compilers of this filmography about the inclusion or exclusion of this or that film. However, on balance, I feel that the two authors have done a good job given the constraints under which they have had to work. This filmography can be recommended as a useful resource for all those interested in the serious study of Indian cinema.

WIMAL DISSANAYAKE
East-West Center

Donald Richie, *Japanese Cinema – An Introduction.* Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1990. 102 pages.

Although Japanese cinema is currently facing a crisis, it cannot be gainsaid that Japan can lay claim to one of the richest traditions of cinema in the world. Filmmakers like Ozu, Kurosawa, Mizoguchi, Naruse, Ichikawa,

Imamura, and Oshima have generated worldwide critical attention, and justly so. Interest in Japanese cinema has been growing steadily in Western countries, and this new book by Donald Richie should enhance that interest among nonspecialist readers.

Donald Richie, more than any other person, has been responsible over the years for creating a deep interest in Japanese cinema in the United States. His books on Ozu and Kurosawa and the history and aesthetics of Japanese films, as well as numerous lectures, seminars, and workshops, have contributed significantly to the popularization of Japanese films among Western audiences.

Richie's new book has been brought out in the Images of Asia series published by Oxford University Press. This series is designed to offer a broad range of titles covering diverse dimensions of society and culture in East Asia. Each book in the series includes an introductory text, written for the nonspecialist reader by an acknowledged specialist on the subject, with extensive illustrations both in color and black and white. It is only natural that Richie should have been invited to write the book on Japanese cinema for this series.

In the opening paragraphs of the book, Richie says: "The history of the cinema in Japan is not very different from its history in other countries. Nonetheless, when faced with the product of a culture so disparate from our own, we can and often do misinterpret. Our appreciation of a Japanese film may be only partial because we are unaware of the cultural assumptions made by the director. This introduc-

tion to Japanese cinema attempts to define some of these assumptions within a brief history of Japanese film. At the same time it indicates how early Japanese cinema accommodated influences from elsewhere and how Japanese film, like much of Japanese contemporary culture, became an amalgam of the native and foreign, welded into a new entity." This statement places before us very lucidly Richie's intention in writing this book.

Japanese Cinema – An Introduction consists of four chapters. The first, titled "From the Beginning to the Early 1920's," deals with the origins of Japanese cinema with particular reference to the foreign and local forces that shaped it. Richie's observations on Japanese theater and film are quite useful.

The second chapter is devoted to a discussion of Japanese cinema from 1923 to the late 1930s. The great earthquake of 1923 destroyed much of Tokyo and Yokohama, and its impact on the making of Japanese films has been well brought out in this chapter.

The third chapter is concerned with a discussion of the outstanding films made in the 1940s and 1950s. Richie, very briefly but pointedly, examines the relationship between government policy and filmmaking during this period.

The fourth chapter demonstrates how a new kind of Japanese film emerged in the 1960s and how the trends generated in the 1960s were expanded, challenged, and subverted in the following two decades.

A central theme that runs through this book is the creative interplay between national identity and internationalization, Westernization and indigenization. This thematization enframes much of the discussion contained in this study. As Richie states at the end of the book, "The history of Japanese cinema, is, then, much like the history of Japan itself. Both are stories of a general adoption and a gradual adaptation to native needs. A century has passed since the beginnings of the cinema in Japan. And as the age of the film turns into an age of the video-tape and a new era of economic expansion opens for Japan, this cinema, originally an import from the West, remains an amalgam, one which is much enriched by foreign influences and which at the same time represents the traditionally Japanese."

Japanese Cinema – An Introduction can be recommended as a useful guide to the rich storehouse of Japanese cinema intended for the nonspecialist reader. The book contains a useful glossary and bibliography and twenty-six black-and-white and seven color photographs.

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The *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* fills a long-time need for a publication which addresses the theoretical issues associated with performance and performance texts. The *Journal* publishes twice each year in the Fall and Spring. *JDTC* publishes a variety of scholarly works and commentary:

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