

Preface to the Electronic Edition

Toward a Theory of Cinematic Style: The Remake was written in the days before personal computers and word processing—that is, 1979-82, the Stone Age of dissertation preparation. The typewritten version of it languished in a box in my closet for close to twenty years. In the fall of 1999 I enlisted the help of Wen-Ling Kuo to create an electronic edition. She dutifully scanned all 349 pages—using Adobe Acrobat to create a Portable Document Format (PDF) version. After scanning them, Acrobat's Optical Character Recognition (OCR) engine was run to convert the scanned images into usable text.

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NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

TOWARD A THEORY OF CINEMATIC STYLE: THE REMAKE

A DISSERTATION

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Toward a Theory of Cinematic Style: The Remake
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The history of cinematic stylistic analysis has been marked by evasions, mysticism, intellectual apprehension and other scholarly ills and evils. The influx of semiotics into cinema studies (ostensibly dealing with the "how" rather than the "what") has offered some mostly unrealized potential for remedying this state of affairs. Still, no one has particularized how style operates in the process of cinematic signification. This study, therefore, constructs a model of film style's position within the semiotic process. (Style as elicitor of emotion or as "signature" of the auteur does not enter into the discussion.)

After surveying the writings on style in literary studies, art history and film analysis, I provisionally conceptualize a signifier, a signified and a sign for style in narrative film. Specifically, the stylistic signifier is the patterning of technique. The stylistic signified (the "meaning" of style) is produced by this patterning. The stylistic sign, then, is the correlation of signifier and signified--in other words, the signified

as apprehended through a specific signifier (as conceptualized by Roland Barthes). This stylistic signified may be grouped into three large categories: (1) style as abstract graphic, (2) style as narrative expression (either "echoing" or undercutting the denotation) and (3) style as thematic expression (signifying an idea or concept).

Working from these premises, the styles of a film and its remake (Imitation of Life [John Stahl, 1934] and Imitation of Life [Douglas Sirk, 1959]) are analyzed. These films share a similar denotation, differing most significantly in terms of style. Hence, a close comparison can illustrate the material of style and its functioning.

Absolute conclusions elude this study. One cannot predict how a particular viewer will interpret the style of a particular film. One can, however, trace the route by which he or she arrived at that stylistic interpretation, a posteriori. This is the purpose of the present model of stylistic semiosis in the cinema.

PREFACE

In any endeavor such as this, one inevitably exploits the resources of one's friends and colleagues. I consider myself particularly fortunate to have been encouraged by several persons who were both generous with their time and genuinely concerned with my project (and at critical times when my own interest flagged), Chuck Kleinhans (chairperson), Stuart Kaminsky and Paddy Whannel, my original committee members, provided early guidance by commenting on a substantive preliminary paper. Jack Ellis graciously joined the committee after Professor Whannel's death--a loss we all still feel.

Blaine Allan, Dave Kehr and Patrick Leary also read early drafts. I owe much of the following's lucidity to them; the obscurities remain my own.

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Final preparation of the manuscript entailed the work of many, and the proper payment of few. Christine

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My support was not all technical or scholastic, however. The Lyon family (Elliott, Miriam, Michael and Julie) warmly accepted me, sight unseen, into their home in Evanston, providing many convivial holiday dinners.

Finally, I must thank Valentin Almendarez for insisting that I watch Sirk's Imitation of Life on WGN late one winter's night. He is right: life is melodrama.

For all of the teachers in my life--especially,
Chuck Kleinhans, Michael Silverman, and Penelope and
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INTRODUCTION

Thoughts on style dot the history of cinema theory and critical practice. At times style has even become the major topic of discussion. One can picture Eisenstein at Kuleshov's Workshop, castigating the teacher for his "brick-by-brick" editing practice, or Godard and Truffaut mounting their assault on the "Tradition of Quality" through a flanking maneuver, defending Nicholas Ray on the basis of his visual style. The haphazard and sometimes volatile development of stylistic writing has left a significant gap: no one has explained what style is. Some have described a particular instance of it, but none has provided a systematic theory of what style is and how it works. Obviously, there are reasons for this theoretical inadequacy. Style, as Peter Wollen has pointed out, is one of those concepts whose meaning seems self-evident, but when one attempts to articulate that meaning it becomes suddenly insubstantial. The pages that follow attempt to make style's functioning concrete, or, at least, to investigate some of the conundrums surrounding it.

There are many things that a theory of style could provide which I have excluded from the present paper. I have not tried to assign responsibility for any particular

stylistic element. In direct contrast to the auteur critics, I do not pursue a theory of style to validate their contention that the director is the person responsible for a film's style and that that style is therefore an expression of his or her personality. That endeavor seems to me to be doomed from the outset, coming afoul, as it does, of the intentional fallacy. Neither does the following theory of style propose a structure for the evolution of style. I feel this would certainly be a worthy project, but its scope is much too large for the present paper. A comprehensive theory of stylistic evolution must entail the systematic analysis of thousands of films' styles. Finally, I have chosen to ignore consideration of style as elicitor of emotion, as "mood-setter." This last approach to style dominates the slight consideration that style is granted by journalistic critics, but it is much too elusive for a systematic theory.

What then does this theory of style explicate?

I have limited myself to a theory of style as a producer of meaning. Which is to say, style in every film text creates meaning. There are no films without style and there is no style that is completely meaningless or decorative --as one may think of the style in Rococo paintings. These are my basic axioms. From them I construct a theory of how style produces meaning in narrative film. My procedure is, in part 1, to turn to the related fields

of literature and the visual arts and briefly explore the conceptual models they have applied to style. Part 2 arises from Roland Barthes's model of the sign as the associative total of signifier and signified; this part comprises the heart of the study. It begins with chapter 3, which defines the stylistic signifier--detailing the substance of style, its material. Chapter 4 explains what meaning (signified) has been derived from style. This involves a two-part action: first, chronicling the interpretations of style to date, and, second, classifying them into a taxonomy. Chapter 5, then, proposes a theory of stylistic signification: how the stylistic signifier represents its signified. Next, part 3 provides a sample application of my thoughts on style--analyzing a film and its remake: Imitation of Life (John Stahl, 1934) and Imitation of Life (Douglas Sirk, 1959). I have chosen a film and its remake because of their unique relationship. Here one has theoretically the same story rendered in two different styles. A close textual analysis can reveal how style affects meaning.

The reader will note that I have drawn significant terminology from the realm of semiotics. "Signifier," "signified," and "sign" form the core around which semiotics (the "science of signs") is constructed. One cannot use these terms naively, however, for they carry the baggage of decades of scholarly controversy--dating from the days of semiotics pioneers Charles S. Peirce and Ferdinand de

Saussure. I can do little to resolve debate on a global scale but, proceeding cautiously, I will provide some precise understanding of semiotics concepts as they may be applied to style. The use of specific semiotic expressions, however, does not indicate a full-scale endorsement of today's cine-semiotics. In particular, Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis--contemporary semiotics' Scylla and Charybdis for the unwary reader--find little application in this theory of style.

PART I: STYLE AND THE RELATED ARTS

CHAPTER I

STYLE AND THE VISUAL ARTS

The concept of Style is central and fundamental to art history.

--Arnold Hauser
The Philosophy of Art History

... the history of the plastic arts is now widely understood as essentially an evolution of style.⁹

--Lincoln Rothchild
Style in Art

Much of the writing of art history concerns itself with the question of style. As Arnold Hauser points out, it is both central and fundamental to the history of art. However, the student of semiotics will profit from very little of this huge volume of literature for a variety of reasons. To begin, art history frequently elides the crucial distinction between "style" and "form." Both terms are used interchangeably to refer to the organization of "line, shape, and surface texture and color,"³ the major components of the visual arts. Commonly, art historians assume a definition of how style signifies without properly examining the logic of their basic tenets. This lack of self-criticism will suffice for the bulk of art criticism but its omission limits the aid art history can provide to a theory of cinematic style. Worse still, some art historians ground the history of

style in their personal aesthetic judgements. Such evaluative, rather than descriptive, pronouncements cripple art history with the subjective prejudices of the author. Heinrich Wöfflin wishes to avoid these personal judgements in his Principles of Art History--one of contemporary art theory's most influential books.

Writing in Germany in 1915 (first English translation, 1932), Wöfflin provides art history with a codification of the descriptive terminology employed by art historians. His thesis extends beyond mere description of a single painting's style to an hypothesis of stylistic evolution--the "problem of the development of style in later art" (emphasis mine), as he subtitles Principles of Art History. My own interest in Wöfflin resides in his five polarities--polarities which lend structure to the description of line, shape, and surface texture and color. He arrays them as follows:

Linear	Painterly
Plane	Recessional
Closed	Open
Multiplicity	Unity
Absolute clarity (or Clearness)	Relative clarity (or Unclearness) ⁴

Since the time of their original publication, Wöfflin's paradigm has undergone numerous attempts at clarification or expansion,⁵ For my purposes, however, his original five precepts will serve ably as a comparatively rigorous application of a spoken/written language to an imagistic

one. To start, therefore, I must gloss the elements of Wöfflin's original conception. From there, I proceed to consider how his descriptive methodology operates on a more theoretical plane.

The linear/painterly antinomy forms the keystone of Wöfflin's structure and will be further expanded by Margaret Finch (see p. 12). In sum, the linear promotes well-defined edges and clear boundaries; the painterly obscures those edges and blends one shape into another. The remaining polarities may be explained thus. In planar composition the image is arranged on a horizontal plane or planes, parallel (in illusion) to the surface plane; in contrast, the recessional is composed in depth and "recedes" into the back of the image. A closed composition limits the image to that which is contained within the frame. Illusionistically, that which is represented does not appear to continue beyond the bounds of the frame. An open composition, in turn, draws the spectator's eyes outward, beyond the frame. Loosely speaking, closed composition is centripetal (converging toward the center); open composition is centrifugal (moving away from the center). Multiple composition organizes individual details within an overall design, but these details maintain their individuality. In a unified composition, the details merge into an indivisible whole. Finally, clearness in a painting

is represented by the use of design, color and light to define specific forms within the composition. When these features of a painting assume their own values (that is, the emphasis of design, color and light over shapes) then a painting is said to be unclear.⁶

Most uses of Wöfflin polarities do not explain how these different stylistic aspects affect the significant processes--the signification of meaning in painting. Instead, his polarities have been taken up as helpful descriptive terminology and used to delineate the sequence of style--as in Wylie Sypher's Four Stages of Renaissance Style. Even as descriptive aids, however, Wöfflin's categories are far from scientific. Each pairing describes little more than tendencies in art: a composition tends more toward linearity or painterly-ness. They are, hence, not absolute quantities that can be certified as existing or not existing in one, isolated composition. To translate it into the terms of Gregory Bateson's communication theory, as Bill Nichols does in "Style, Grammar and the Movies," painting is an analogical communication that Wöfflin has attempted to interpret into a digital mode,⁷ with limited success. Nichols explains, "The two forms are not in opposition and the general function of the digital is to draw boundaries within the analog--as with the on/off switch to a thermostat operating within a temperature

continuum, or phonemes arbitrarily carved from a sound continuum."⁸ Wöfflin's schema does not provide for absences or the possibility of negation. He names the continuum ("linear/painterly"), but neglects to provide the "on/off switch" or the visual equivalent of phonemes. A composition cannot be "not linear"; it can only be "less painterly," and Wöfflin does not provide the gradients to measure the degrees of "painterly-ness." His polarities depend upon an ill-defined consensus of a norm, or at least a point of comparison. This norm shifts continuously in even the scholarly mind and effectively nullifies all attempts to describe paintings beyond a certain degree of precision. Since there are no absolutes--or even clearly marked degrees-- the reader must trust the judgement of the scholar in his or her assessment of the composition. Thus the interpretations of a work of art cannot be subjected to a commutation test; the assumed norm underpinning each scholar's work will vary enough to place in question the objectivity of the exercise. Consequently, the writing about the painting becomes almost as paradoxical, unverifiable and analogical as the painting itself. However, even though I must criticize Wöfflin's lack of precision, he does provide a vocabulary for theorizing about the visual arts.

The theory of art has addressed itself to the issue

of style in four basic ways:

1. Style's relationship to "reality" and/or truth
2. The sequence (or order) by which it evolves
3. Its point of origination (within the mind of the creative genius or the conventions of the day--i.e., the question of authorship)
4. Its effect upon the spectator

Here Wöfflin's descriptive terminology comes to theoretical use and here also my consideration of style in art history begins in earnest.

Of the four areas above, the one which has proved to be the most troublesome for film is the relationship between the artwork and reality. At the time of this writing, debate continues within the pages of Screen and elsewhere over just this question of realism.⁹ Photography is assumed to have freed painting from the need to copy reality but nothing has yet delivered photography and the cinema from the bounds of realism. (I will return to the issue of cinematic realism later.) Until the advent of cubism--and before --most art scholars assumed that the visual arts functioned in the service of progressively more accurate mimesis (the art work as mirror of reality). Deriving originally from Plato, mimesis suggests (among other things) that the best style is the style that is noticed the least* Although the work of art must be fashioned so that it is

a symmetrical, "organic" whole, the craft that went into this unity ought not be visible. Style in the mimetic work is the difference between the art object and its referent (that to which it refers). "Between us and actuality the artist or writer places a special style or technique of representation," contends Wylie Sypher. And, to the realism proponents, this barrier between the spectator and reality must be held to an absolute minimum.

To understand how mimetic art progresses toward greater and greater realism I turn not to Wöfflin, but to a revised Wöfflinian approach in order to introduce my second, interconnected area of style and art history: "the sequence by which style evolves." Margaret Finch, in her survey of art history's view of style, works with a three-part continuum: "linear-and-planar, linear-and-plastic, and painterly" -- rather than simply opposing "linear" and "painterly." This continuum, she argues, mostly supplants the rest of Wöfflin's polarities and expands the possibilities for his structure beyond sixteenth- and seventeenth-century oil painting (in which he specialized). "Linear-and-planar" corresponds to the simply "planar" explained above and is often shortened to that by Finch; "painterly" remains essentially the same as Wöfflin's original definition. Most importantly, Finch adds "linear-and-plastic" (or just "plastic") and defines

it like this:

The word, plastic, means capable of being molded. In art, it refers to the concern for three-dimensional volume and implies particularly those qualities associated with modeling in clay or carving in stone. Most simply plastic is the equivalent of sculptural.¹²

Although plastic is most easily applied to sculpture, there is a linear-and-plastic equivalent in the two-dimensional arts. This occurs when the forms within a composition appear to have a full, bulging shape.

Finch notes that style often develops in a sequence: planar-plastic-painterly. This sequence can be viewed in a single artist's work or in the work of many artists over the course of centuries:

It [art history] tends to move from a tenuous linearity, to a firm plasticity, and to resolve in time into the painterly synthesis of light and color. The reasons for this sequence are complex and not fully understood; the pattern is not inevitable not even desirable. Merely, it sometimes occurs.¹³

Significantly, this sequence is often thought of as a movement toward greater naturalism.¹⁴ For example, a painterly composition (Monet's The Grand Canal, Venice), with its use of light to define shape, is reasoned to be more lifelike than the "flat" shapes of a predominantly planar image (St. Benedict and St. Desiderius). She hastens to add, however, that this increased naturalism must not be interpreted as increased sophistication or aesthetic acumen. The artists of these particular periods merely

worked within different artistic conventions. Further, from 1500 to 1900 painting does not develop in constant progression toward the painterly, but instead jerkily follows the contortions of history, filled with peripeteia and quirky turnabouts.

The type of art history considered to this point (designed to cope with predominantly mimetic works) has floundered in the twentieth century. At the start of this very bewildering epoch a radical "-ism" twisted the art historian's calcified assumptions about art, and, of course, style. "Cubism," John Berger suggests, "changed the nature of the relationship between man and reality."¹⁵ In this novel relationship, the work of art is "a new object and not simply the expression of its subject."¹⁶ Cubism freed painting from the need to represent something else and prepared the art world for the free-floating signifiers that are the Abstract Expressionist works. The position of style in this artistic revolution attained newfound importance and autonomy. Whereas previously some critics viewed style as a necessary evil--an aesthetic detraction from the truth--and other scholars considered it the unavoidable conventionalization of the true essence of the work, the content, style became the raison d'etre for the post-Cubist work of art. "How" had come to supplant "what."

Regardless of the changes in art itself, the art historian's project remains one of assigning responsibility for the art work and associating works based on the criterion of a critic-determined resemblance. "Style," for the art historian,

may be defined as those distinctive characteristics that enable the observer to link an art work with other works. There are fundamentally two types of style; these are an individual's personal style, and the style common to a group of artists. In other words, the distinctive traits in a work of art enable the observer to link an art work with other works by the same artist or with other works by a different artist.¹⁷

Thus Finch's Style in Art History approaches style as a method of marking; a signal that can be used to develop theories of artistic evolution and similarity. The historian within the art critic values style not for what it means within the limits of the work's signification but for what it means in terms of signifying who created it, or where and under what influence the work was produced. Since she considers style to be "distinctive characteristics that enable the observer to link an art work with other works," she does not limit style to the shaping of the artistic material ("line, shape, and surface texture and color" **B**). She begins, "All characteristics in works of art pertain to one of the following: form; subject matter; meaning." Form, subject matter and meaning align themselves with the "how, what and why" of an art work, respectively. Since Finch and, she argues, most art

historians are more concerned with the genesis of the work-- what or who the "distinctive characteristics" signify--than with the work itself as a semiotic text' style is allowed a much broader meaning than usual. Content ("subject matter") and artistic intentions (part of "meaning") are not merely the effect and the cause, respectively, of form; the umbrella of style shelters all and allows the art historian to conjecture about the correspondances between the work of a particular artist, time or place. In other words' style, in Finch's schema, encompasses all the historian chooses to emphasize about the art work's genesis, its denotation and its structure. Style is composed of "any factor established a relationship among works."²⁰

This global consideration of style provides numerous options for the art historian who must construct patterns of association from the mass of artistic products accumulating over the centuries. Style as both subject matter and intention is available for consideration. The bulk of art history, however, focuses on style as the ordering of formal elements. Indeed, to speak of "subject matter" in abstract art is difficult to say the least. As a result, consideration of form is central to art history. Finch herself comments: "As a matter of fact, one may usually find identifying characteristics--style--by studying the form of an art work."²¹ The other remaining "identifying

characteristics" (those of subject and meaning) "may also contribute in some degree to the style of a work" 22 but form is its major determinant. She finally illustrates this point by providing the reader with a selection of crucifixions, ranging from the thirteenth century (Cimabue) to the sixteenth (Paolo Veronese), that illustrate the evolution (or "sequence") of form while the subject remains constant, although the meaning shifts slightly. (The reader here may note that this exercise corresponds with the present analysis of a film and its remake.)

In my consideration of Finch's interpretation of sequence,¹ touched upon the issue of artistic conventions. This controversy, the third area of art history outlined above (see page 11), also pertains directly to film study, for in a collaborative art such as the cinema, the question of artistic responsibility swells to Herculean proportions. To understand the problem in the guise of art history, I will proceed from that most basic of issues, realism, and examine its conventional nature. In Art and Illusion, E. H. Gombrich explains how the work of art depends more upon the artistic conventions of the time than the artist's supposedly unmediated interaction with reality: "There is no neutral naturalism. The artist, no less than the writer, needs a vocabulary before he can embark on a 'copy' of reality."²³ Gombrich asserts that each artist inherits

a "schemata" that he or she applies to his or her rendition of nature. The artist appropriates nothing directly from nature without fitting it into a conscious or unconscious schemata--or, to put it another way, without translating it into the vocabulary of the particular art form. The key phrase in his argument becomes; "making" (the process of artistic creation determined by conscious or unconscious schemata) comes before "matching" (the comparison of the object with objects of the phenomenal world).²⁴ He reminds us that even monocular perspective, which we in the Western world accept as "natural," is itself a convention of two-dimensional representation. Other forms of perspective exist (Egyptian, Chinese) and monocular perspective (which is the convention of perspective employed by the "normal" camera lens--that is, not "telephoto" or "wide-angle") is not simply equivalent to the way humans view reality. The artist's belief that he or she merely matches visual reality with an artistic image misapprehends the process of artistic creation, according to Gombrich. As Marshall McLuhan remarks, "The old belief that everybody really saw in perspective but that only Renaissance painters had learned how to paint it is erroneous."²⁵

Gombrich's main concern in Art and Illusion is to establish the conventions of representation--to argue that "there is no neutral naturalism." This accomplished, he

turns his attention to the expressive potentialities of the medium. "It is because art operates with a structured style governed by technique and the schemata of tradition that representation could become the instrument not only of information but also of expression,"²⁶ Gombrich concludes. Which is to say, representational art does not just communicate information about a referent but that it also expresses an attitude toward that referent. Style, it follows, embodies that attitude as well as serving the needs of naturalistic representation. This artistic, expressive attitude toward the signified is not less conventionalized than, say, monocular perspective and may perhaps be more so. For example, in a discussion of the tradition of post-Renaissance easel painting, **John** Berger focuses upon one stylistic convention: the tactile materiality of objects rendered in oil paint. This quality, he interprets, results from the wish of the painting's sponsor to express the joys of material possession--an attitude particular to the rising bourgeois class. Thus a conventional attitude (pride of ownership) became codified into a stylistic convention (this type of oil painting). Berger, like many art historians, does not interpret art as being entirely codified, however. In his view, some artists break through the conventions to represent unmediated expression. Rembrandt, a favorite

of Berger's, subverted the tradition of oil painting in his portraits of the rich burghers of his town--citizens who were responsible for keeping the artist in poverty for the major part of his life. These dark canvasses de-emphasize the materiality of the subject's wealth. Berger argues that Rembrandt's style militates ironically against tactility and thus exists above the conventions of bourgeois oil painting. Berger believes Rembrandt and a limited number of other painters (Rubens, for example) are politically progressive because they are innovative stylistically. They have mutated Gombrich's "schemata of tradition" (the conventions of oil painting) to facilitate the expression of a particular concept. In this way, the history of expression progresses.

My final category of art history's consideration of style, the effect of style upon the spectator, possesses a heritage of critical thought dating back to the ancient Greeks --a heritage riddled with ill-defined notions of "good taste," the "aesthetic experience," and religious transcendence. While it would be foolish to deny that style plays an essential role in determining spectator response to art, the numerous generalizations about the effect of a particular painting have not proved to be a systematic aspect of art history. Consequently, I will not dally long on these issues. Even though David Hume may aver that

"The general principles of taste are uniform in human nature,"²⁷ a huge bulk of empirical examples illustrates the lack of uniformity in taste and turns his statement into folly. Historical, cultural and personal characteristics delineate the boundaries of taste. To date, aestheticians have not systematically accounted for the determinants of taste. The aesthetic experience resists codification: "There can be no rule according to which anyone is to be forced to recognize anything as beautiful"²⁸ (Immanuel Kant). Finally, some authors believe a painting's style should transport the spectator to an elevated spiritual state. As I am attempting a systematic, semi-scientific consideration of style, the religious dispute need not take up space here. In passing, I should note that a study of transcendence in film style has already been written by Paul Schrader.²⁹

CHAPTER II

STYLE AND THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

Style in literature and literary study does not occupy the privileged position that it has within art history. The student of literature would not normally say, as Lincoln Rothchild does of art, that the history of literature is widely understood as essentially an evolution of style (see p. 6). Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky may announce that the self-reflexively convoluted Tristram Shandy typifies all novels but there are few who would grant that stylistically self-conscious work the impact accorded Cubist paintings. Moreover, literary scholars do not conflate style and form as art historians tend to do. In the case of the novel (the literary mode closest to narrative film), form usually pertains to narrative structure; style names the particular organization of the words and the choice of specific figures of speech to signify that narrative. When a literary critic speaks of the ordering of events or a character's placement within a specific situation, he or she discusses literary form (narrative structure). When he or she, the critic, ponders the use of particular rhetorical devices and the organiza-

tion of the work's language, then it is a matter of style or what Monroe Beardsley terms "texture."¹⁷ I do not suggest that this is a distinction adhered to by all literary writers, but it does provide a starting point for the separation of style and form. It also eliminates a large body of literary theory (that is, writings on form rather than style) that is not entirely germane to the present paper.

As in art history, thoughts on style in literature can be sorted into a limited number of broad categories; I will name four such groupings. First, I must consider the "appreciation" of style. Even at this late date in literary analysis, some writers continue to write of style solely as a matter of taste, an object of evaluation. The second and very common approach to literary style speaks about style as a "defining characteristic" of a work, much as Margaret Finch writes of style in art history (see p. 15). To the literary historian, style is only what enables him or her to link a literary work with another literary work. Acknowledging that linkage, the responsibility of a stylistic trait is assigned to the author, the period or the subject. Within my third category are the more serious considerations of style. These writers explore "stylistics"-- the study of style, proper. Included within this category are two specific critical attitudes:

the schools of the French stylistique and the German Stilforschung. A fourth analytical category of literary style (bearing some correspondences to stylistique) has matured in the course of the twentieth century: structuralism and semiotics--the study of all sign systems--subsumes linguistics and literary study within its perimeters. Consequently, I will not consider it as a specifically literary approach to the question of style. Rather, I will outline certain elements of semiotics within the context of film study below (chapter 4). Even though I limit myself to the first three approaches above, I do not presume to fully detail each of them; they deserve--and have received--entire volumes. I will only introduce the reader to these concepts in a fashion that may prove useful to cinematic study.

In most circles, questions of taste are not deemed suitable for serious scholarly endeavor, but as recently as 1955 F. L. Lucas could produce a book entitled Style² that attempts to teach good taste. He devotes chapters to "Good Humour and Gaiety," "Good Sense and Sincerity," and "Good Health and Vitality." Lucas, it must be granted, designed his book for a very elementary reader--one who is concerned with learning conventional, respectable taste. A certain manner of taste can be learned, of course, but there is little to recommend one culture's or one person's

set of preferences over another. As easily dismissable as Lucas is, his type of thinking can be located in more sophisticated work. As with art history, today's literary theorist struggles toward description and understanding rather than evaluation. However, he or she often begs the question, "Why explicate one work rather than another?" Practical considerations (an author's personal predilections or availability of source material) do not constitute theoretical justification. Even the seemingly objective criterion of selecting the most influential works cannot survive close inspection. If that were criticism's principle yardstick, then only widely imitated texts would be deemed worthy of study--a very narrow sample indeed. Some critics amend "influential" to refer to those works that most affected the "progress" of the art form, but they stumble into yet another critical trap. The history of literature is not morphological to the progress of technology. Literature is built upon the past but it does not "progress" (become increasingly better and better) into the future. Further, a critic's estimation of a work as "influential" or "progressive," and therefore worthy of attention, is grounded upon his or her subjective belief in the inherent value of the specious concepts of influence and progress in literature. By relying on an inherent, a priori value system, one's vision is colored with personal

taste. Such writings tell us much about the specific critic but they provide us with little information about the literary texts themselves.

The incursion of value judgements into the history and theory of literature becomes particularly evident in the writing on style, for style is the least tangible aspect of a literary work. Style's ineffableness encourages unsupportable generalizations and inconcrete paraphrases. Literary critics and film critics commonly share an overwhelming attention to content that tends to slight style as simply a "mood-setter" that either does or does not appeal to a spectator's sensibilities. It seems somehow beyond discussion. And what little discussion it does engender is often based on the critic's personal response to the style. The community of literary scholars must constantly work to limit personal prejudice in writing about works of art; afterall, criticism's object of inquiry is the artistic text, not some previous critic's response to it.

The second literary approach to style resembles Margaret Finch's observation about art historians (see p. 15): "Style may be defined as those distinctive characteristics that enable the observer to link an art work with other works. There are fundamentally two types of style; these are an individual's personal style and the style common to a group of artists." In literature, then, style serves

as the defining link between the works of an artist and his or her period--say, Coleridge and the Romantics--or the works within one particular author's oeuvre. The latter attitude (style as the defining characteristic of one author's work) informs the assumption that the author's personality is expressed through the works' styles. Naive critics assume that the spirit expressed in an author's production represents, without mediation, the real man's or woman's personality. In truth, an artist's personality is distorted by a multiplicity of factors before it finds expression in an artwork. Artistic conventions, cultural taboos, and conscious or unconscious mendacity all deform the artist's personality along the route to artistic expression. Still, many critics persist in the notion of style expressing personality. This belief pervades so much of today's critical thought that the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics can declare, "Style as personality is now a truth universally acknowledged . . ."3 Style as personality, however, is one "truth" that semiotics challenges. (This will become more apparent below.) Further, some critics sidestep this "personality fallacy," as it might be called, by conjecturing a possible fictive personality as it is revealed in the writings (sometimes termed "the author's voice"). Personality for them is not the presumed character traits of the real artist but an accumulation

of character traits culled from the artistic texts.

In Finch's discussion of art'history, style characterizes an author's and/or a period's work. As I look to literature, it becomes evident that style can also define a type of subject matter or genre in a way that is de-emphasized in art history. During the Renaissance, for example, it was believed that three basic types of style were suited for three specific types of literature. Thus "high" style marked the epic and the tragedy; "middle" style was used for verse epistles and "common poesies of love"; and "base" style was reserved for satire and the pastoral.⁴ Hidden within the question of the historical linkage of works by a prescribed style is the aesthetic problematic of any particular style's suitability for any particular subject. This relationship of style to subject is usually written about metaphorically; "mechanical" style is opposed to "organic" style. Mechanical style decorates a work rather than melding with its content. "Organic" style emerges from the core of the work's content. The mechanical/organic antinomy has lost much critical ground lately, to the point that Susan Sontag could comment, "Everyone is quick to avow that style and content are indissoluble, that the strongly individual style of each important writer is an organic aspect of his work and never something merely 'decorative.'"⁵ Organicism would

appear to have conquered literary theory. Sontag continues, "In the practice of criticism, though, the old antithesis [style/content] lives on, virtually unassailed."⁶ Part of the confusion arises from the use of metaphorical terms ("organic," "mechanical") for critical constructs. Criticism's use of metaphor is not necessarily a suspect operation; indeed, criticism could barely survive without it. Yet, it is of paramount importance that the critic comprehend the non-objective nature of metaphoric mechanisms. In the instance of style, it develops in this fashion: a division between style and content is presupposed and then the relationship between them is intuited. Based upon the critic's subjective perception, the style/content relationship is labeled mechanical or organic; there is no non-subjective phenomenon that can be named by these terms--when applied to literature. (Which is to say, style cannot be literally organic or mechanical.) These signifiers ("organic," "mechanical") are linked to their referent (the style/content relationship) by an arbitrary, metaphoric and subjectively determined bond. Thus, the judgement of style as organic or mechanical is mired in a swamp of personally defined critical terms. The solution to this problem demands a fresh approach: critics must reexamine the style/content relationship and acknowledge style as ever always a signifying function. Style never "decorates";

it always signifies, expresses content. As Sontag implies, mechanical art does not exist. Style's significance may not always be translatable into words but it will always possess meaning.

The literary historian, however, need not judge the suitability of a particular style to a particular content. His or her task is the relatively simple one of identification of similarity. Which now brings up the question of which is more important to the historian: the style of the author or the style of the subject. To return to the Princeton Encyclopedia: "Is an epic by X more like a satire by X or an epic by his contemporary Y? The New Critics tend to emphasize the continuity of author; the others of subject."⁷ In the final analysis, the perspective taken by the critic determines what a particular stylistic characteristic marks--author, subject or period. The linkage of works of art is a critical activity, not one inherent in the texts themselves. The critic can only propose theoretical constructs that must then be applied to the body of literature itself and judged (if need be) through a utilitarian criterion: How well does this hypothesis help us understand a particular literary phenomenon? In the end, all that such exercises provide is a context within which we may fit the work. The "continuity of author" is no less or more valuable than

the "continuity" of subject.

This promotes an unfortunately bleak view of the process of interpretation and, more generally, of critical activity. Criticism's choice of which defining characteristics to highlight and which context to place them in (author, subject, era) shifts with such alacrity that the reader cannot help but adopt an ironic perception of literary history; and come to question any claims to absolute truth. If one context is as valuable as the next, then all knowledge about a work becomes more or less true--none is absolutely true. At this juncture I have arrived at what philosopher of history Hayden White calls "the ironic apprehension of the irreducible relativism of all knowledge,"⁸ "Truth" is only a particular relation of one piece of knowledge (i.e., interpretation of reality) to another; it is not an attribute of amorphous, unformed actuality itself. White sees this to be the general cast of historical thought since the end of the Victorian age. He comments on this "ironic" view of the world:

In its apprehension of the essential folly or absurdity of the human condition, it tends to engender belief in the "madness" of civilization itself and to inspire a Mandarin-like disdain for those seeking to grasp the nature of social reality in either science or art.⁹

White notes the debilitating power of irony, but he offers no way to elude it. As he himself admits, his Metahistory is itself ironic. Much of contemporary literary history

must also be placed in this mode of view--including the history of style in literature. The unassailable truths (God, absolute beauty) that humanity may have possessed in a (fictitious?) infancy have withered during the twentieth century into half-truths, truths of relation. This regrettable and perhaps non-reversible state of affairs underpins the drive toward precision to be found in much semiotics. Semiotics often works with very small segments of the text, collecting information that may seem trivial to some and distilling that information into modest knowledge about the text itself. This knowledge may escape the relative truthfulness of textual knowledge sensed by the conventional critic.

I have attached the label of "stylistics" to my third category of literary approaches to style. Stylistics has split into two camps: the German Stilforschung and the French stylistique. Within the tradition of Stilforschung the critic first intuits the spirit of a work and then uses that intuition to discuss its expression through stylistic devices. He or she thus draws upon an unexaminable, semi-mystic source (intuition) to create his or her interpretation of the work. With its heavy reliance upon the critic's subjectivity, Stilforschung forms the most extremely personal pole of stylistic interpretation. The stylistique critic works at the other

end of the spectrum. Like the Russian Formalists, he or she delineates the specific details of the text itself-- offering as little interpretation as possible. In contrast to the German mysticism, stylistique resists interpretation of the text's meaning. From stylistique the reader may learn how a text is organized but he or she may never know what that organization means--a problem also faced by many semioticians. The split between stylistique's descriptive powers and Stilforschung's interpretive attempts should trouble any responsible critic. It brings into sharp relief the complex relationship between description and interpretation. Can interpretation be performed with any semblance of objectivity? Is description ever free of interpretation (the choice of what to describe begins the process of interpretation)? Although criticism has constructed a stylistique/Stilforschung dichotomy, the issue is far from a tidy one.

PART II: STYLE AND FILM

CHAPTER III

THE STYLISTIC SIGNIFIER

For a theory of film style to be effective it should, above all, be systematically and consistently constructed. Even simple premises must be examined as they are being established; little can be taken for granted. Some early questions I must answer, therefore, are: How might one describe the material of style? What is style composed of? What is the substance of the stylistic signifier? But before addressing even these basic queries, I need to clarify my general approach to the cinema. Style obviously does not exist in a vacuum and thus I need to articulate some of my general assumptions about the medium before presenting specific thoughts on style.

It is axiomatic to this study of style that the cinema is a system of communication. Every narrative film communicates a story which can further communicate a theme or themes. Indeed, empirical evidence suggests that every film (narrative or not) communicates some meaning or other. Even anti-narrative and anti-illusionist works of the avant-garde cinema seem to gather meaning--if only in their opposition to conventional filmmaking. Guided by this film-as-communication axiom, I draw upon semiotic theory

to provide us with a model of cinematic communication. One simplified model of the communication act that I have come to rely upon is diagrammed in figure 1.

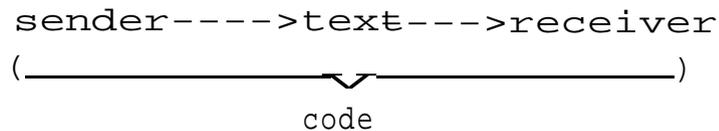


Figure 1. A Basic Model of Communication

(The reader may recognize this as a modification of Roman Jakobson's model of the speech event.)¹ The sender emits a text which the receiver then sees, hears, feels, smells or tastes. The text is governed by a code which both the sender and the receiver understand, whether they consciously recognize it as a code or not. The telegraph, an elementary example of such a model, has a sender tapping out the text (a series of dots and dashes) according to the Morse Code and the operator's language (that is, English, Chinese, French, and so on--although some signals are universal, for example, "distress"). The receiver who knows the code thus understands the text's meaning through a process of decoding. A text or a code need not be so formalized, though. The way a man wears his hair, for example, communicates a variety of meanings--according to the "code" of personal appearance. We know something about him because of the way his hair signifies within a culturally

determined code. And so it is with the cinema, although the cinema is much more complex due to the pluralism of its codes and the codes within it (the code of personal appearance is an extra-cinematic code which is present within a film and communicated through cinematic codes).

A comprehensive communication theory ought to account for all four of the terms of my model: sender, text, receiver, code. However, I have chosen to limit the scope of the present investigation. In the pages that follow, I will attempt little explication of the filmic sender (the film industry--blending technology, creativity and economics) or hazard specific hypotheses about the filmic receiver (the spectator). Instead, I have chosen to concentrate on the filmic text, the movie itself, because at least here we have the available evidence of the existential text. The cinema lacks both an adequate model of audience response and accurate knowledge of the workings of the industry. Interpretation of the text is not much more sophisticated but at least it can be verified or repudiated by examples from the film itself. Of course, the text can only be separated from sender and receiver in theory. When I write, below, of the meaning communicated by the text and begin to explore the cinematic codes, I will necessarily wander into the counterposed realms of sender and receiver. I do so with great hesitation, however, preferring

to tread the more solid ground of textual interpretation. In sum, style, as I approach it here, will be considered as a textual phenomenon, not as the supposed expression of a director's personality (as the auteurists approach it) or as the shaper of a viewer's ostensible emotions (as most journalistic critics write of it).

Technique in the Cinema

What characterizes film technique? How may one describe, classify and possibly interpret these techniques? Cautiously, I will start with the cinema's physical, existential presence. There would be no cinema if there were no light reflecting from a flat surface. (Yet one must qualify even this seemingly prudent statement: rear projection and television screens emit light, but it is not reflected.) Historically, of course, the cinema began with just this simple premise: the Lumiere brothers (and other inventors in the United States and abroad) bounced light off a white surface and birthed the cinematographic medium that had been gestating for decades (some would say since Plato's "cave"). Sound quickly attended the image; it must not be forgotten that even pre-1927, "silent" film was always accompanied by usually live music of varied sophistication and instrumentation. Even though sound is not necessary to the cinema (one could show any film silent and still achieve a "state of cinema"), it has become

codically linked to the image in all contemporary mainstream film. Barring Chaplin's stubborn adherence to silent film conventions and occasional oddities such as the no-dialogue The Thief (Russel Rouse, 1952; which does have music and sound effects), the post-1927 commercial cinema is never wholly without sound for an entire film.²

Custom dictates', therefore, that projected image accompanied by sound comprises the cinematic signifier, the text.

Moving toward the particular, convention further demands that the signifier present the illusion of figures in some sort of a setting. Which is to say, non-figurative, "abstract" imagery has been relegated to the avant-garde or "independent" cinema and animated short subjects. Portions of mainstream film may be abstract, especially "dream sequences," but the film as an entirety may not. Style, which I have neglected in order to establish basic terminology, reenters my discussion as the structure of the techniques that fabricate narrative, illusionist cinema. Techniques themselves are not style but their patterning is. Thus to understand and, at this juncture, to describe style I will proceed from an understanding of technique.

First of all, technique should not be confused with technology. All of the mechanical, electronic, and chemical elements which create the succession of celluloid slides projected on a reflective surface (and form sound

impulses for an optical or magnetic reader) comprise cinematic technology--which must now be extended to include the computers at use in film labs, sound recording, and so on. Technique is formed by technology, but any one specific technique cannot be isolated as resulting from one specific technological instrument.³ A low camera angle is facilitated by an "angle maker"--the head of a tripod--but obviously it could not exist without all of the cinema's other technological instruments: the camera, machines for producing film (incorporating chemical technology), film-processing machines largely run by computer--not to mention editing equipment and lens-grinding apparatus. Edward Branigan capsulizes the technology/technique distinction in the course of constructing a cinematic metahistory:

Often included in the category of technology is what might be called technique. The difference between the two is that between a process, or apparatus--such as a camera dolly--and a procedure involving that apparatus in a text--such as a dolly-in or a close-up shot.⁴

Thus the art of the cinema draws technique from technology--but not on a one-to-one basis. Some techniques (e.g., the close-up) have no single technological correlative.

Within any movie there are two types of technique: the "filmic" and the "profilmic." The profilmic is quite simply all that which is filmed by the camera. This includes actors, objects, sets--whatever "material" is

positioned before the lens. Certain profilmic techniques are absorbed into the cinema--for example, set design and lighting techniques, or what some writers designate "mise-en-scène." Filmic techniques intervene between the profilmic material and the final product, the completed movie.⁵ For example, a low camera angle, in league with other filmic techniques, "uses" the mise-en-scène to create a film image. Contemporary semioticians, however, do not accept a theory of the sign that relies upon so much fore-knowledge of the referent (i.e., that to which the signifier refers, in the cinema, the profilmic material). Even so, I believe the profilmic/filmic distinction can be salvaged for use in the cinema and is particularly important to the study of style, but the semiotician's distrust of a referent-oriented sign theory must first be sketched.

Within semiotician Umberto Eco's influential theory of semiotics there is no room for what he terms the "referential fallacy." Eco criticizes Charles S. Peirce's fundamental typology of signs ("iconic, indexical, symbolic")⁶ because it grounds its classification on the relation of sign and real life object, or, in Eco's terminology, "sign-function" and "referent." An iconic sign, in particular, is characterized by the isomorphism of signifier and signified: a photograph of the Statue of Liberty resembles the visual structure of the real Statue

of Liberty (the referent). Without developing Eco's entire critique of iconicity⁷ it is important to realize that he believes "semiosis" (the operation of signification) exists only where there is the possibility of "lying":

Every time there is a lie there is signification.
Every time there is signification there is the
possibility of using it in order to lie.⁸

In verbal language, for example, one may "lie" and refer to a dog with the word "cat." As the word is a conventionalized representation of the object, bearing no necessary link to the object, the word may be used to misrepresent an object without the receiver recognizing the difference. For example, a man walks down a street, sees a dog and then later communicates to someone that he saw a "cat" on the street. Since the signifier, "cat," is not naturally linked to the cat-object in the referential world, it may be used by a sender to lie.

How may a photograph, and by extension, the cinema, "lie" about its referent? The "lying" potential of the cinema is not immediately apparent but may be exemplified by a few photographic "lies": the Statue of Liberty (the referent) may be photographed from an extreme high angle to make it appear, in perspective, smaller than it is or, conversely, from a low angle to make it appear larger. The referent may be framed so that it appears to have lost an arm. Perspective may be manipulated so that figures in

the foreground appear to be as large as the referent when they actually are not. In short, all of the techniques that distinguish a two-dimensional photograph from a three-dimensional object may be used to lie about that object. Within the context of a theory of style and an understanding of technology and technique, the reader should realize,

Every attempt to establish what the referent of a sign is forces us to define the referent in terms of an abstract entity which moreover is only a cultural convention.⁹

This is simply Eco's way of asserting that the link between signifier and signified is determined by cultural convention. In other words, meaning is not natural, but cultural.

Technique in film retains the ability to lie even though it may appear to be always truthful. What seems to be a profilmic technique (that is, an element of reality, the referent) may indeed be a filmic one (an element of the apparatus of the signification process). For example, imagine a close-up of a young girl with a soft halo of light surrounding her and subtle mottling on the background. Although this appears to be the product of profilmic lighting techniques, it could also be the result of "optical printing"--a "false" creation of an iris effect. Even the astute viewer might be "fooled" into thinking that the optically fashioned darkness he or she witnesses is actually the latest lighting technology at work. My

recourse to the filmic/profilmic distinction of technique is not rooted in a desire to actually know what happened on the set of any particular production or of trying to ascertain, usually in vain, precisely how one technique or another was achieved. I use filmic/profilmic as a meaningful distinction of techniques as they are marked in the text.

Technological terms have acquired a specific currency within our culture. They have become the conventionalized signifiers for particular elements within the cinematic text. There remains the possibility, therefore, of lying: what is named a lighting effect may very well be the work of the optical printer. But most importantly, I define the referent (the technology that actually produced any particular technique) "in terms of an abstract entity which moreover is only a cultural convention" (Eco). When I write of "cinematic lighting" (a profilmic technique) I am really referring to "qualities of light and shade in film that are conventionally assumed to have been formed by specific lighting technology, but which may in fact not have been so produced." The signifiers I have chosen to represent particular techniques name qualities of the text, not how those qualities were produced in reality. In effect, it is another instance of trusting the tale and not the teller, of confining one's critical activities to the

verifiable text rather than the actual activity that went into producing it. The profilmic/filmic distinction need not rely upon the existential difference between camera technique and the technique of material before the camera lens but upon the conventionalized understanding of that difference, signified by specific clues in the text.

In sum, for mainstream narrative film, style is the patterning of filmic and profilmic technique--not technology. The division "filmic/profilmic" is one I make for convenience's sake and names textual qualities, not the actual filmmaking process but a conventionalized abstraction of it. To facilitate systematic consideration of the stylistic patterning of technique, I have created a taxonomy of technique, indicating its technological base. This taxonomy may be outlined so:

I. IMAGE

A. Space (mise-en-scène)

1. Single frame (composition)

a) Profilmic

(1) Set design

(a) Carpentry, construction tools

(2) Costume

(b) Sewing machines, weaving tools

(3) Lighting

(c) Lamps

b) Filmic

(1) Visual quality

(a) Film stock

i) Black-and-white, color

(b) Lenses

i) Wide angle to telephoto

(c) Filters

c) Filmic/profilmic relationship

(1) Framing

(a) Camera gate relative to object

- (2) Focus
 - (a) Lens-to-filmplane distance relative to object
- 2. Succession of frames (illusion of continuity)
 - a) Profilmic
 - (1) Movement of figures within frame
 - b) Filmic
 - (1) Pans and tilts
 - (a) Axial movement of tripod head
 - (2) Tracks, dollies, "steadicam," hand-held
 - (a) Change of camera position
 - (3) Slow or fast motion, reverse action, "freeze frame"
 - (a) Alteration of film transport speed or direction through projector relative to its speed or direction through camera
 - c) Filmic/profilmic relationship
 - (1) Zoom shot
 - (a) Zoom lens
 - (2) "Pull" or "rack" focus
 - (a) Change in lens-to-filmplane distance relative to object
- B. Time (editing)
 - 1. Succession of frames (discontinuity)
 - a) Cut
 - (1) Splicing block, scissors, and so on
 - b) Fade
 - (1) "In-camera," optical printer
 - b) Dissolve
 - (1) See "Fade"
 - c) Wipe
 - (1) Usually optically printed
- II. SOUND
 - A. Speech
 - 1. Profilmic
 - a) Dialect, pace, inflection, and so on
 - 2. Filmic
 - a) "Direct" sound recording, "post-production" sound
 - (1) Microphones, tape recorders, and so on
 - B. Music
 - 1. Profilmic
 - a) Rhythm, pitch, tone, choice of instrument
 - 2. Filmic
 - a) See "Speech, Filmic"
 - C. Other sound
 - 1. Profilmic
 - a) Ambient sound (recorded on location)
 - 2. Filmic
 - a) Post-production effects
 - (1) Microphones, tape recorders, studios

The underscored terms in each category are types of techniques: from "set design" to "post-production sound effects." The entries directly beneath them are the technologies responsible for them.

I hesitate to present this taxonomy to the reader; a chart such as this will often be viewed as a fait accompli and it is far from that. It does, however, provide some digital structure to this analogical topic. By selecting style-as-technique as the subject for my inquiry,¹ I have neglected style-as-director's-personality and style-as-emotion, both of which are worthy of theoretical attention. I could provide several empirically based rationales for this choice, but ultimately there can be no theoretical justification for privileging style-as-technique. I can only say that I have chosen to do so based upon my personal experiences with the subject. The reader must judge for him-or-herself as to the efficacy of this assumption.

Style and Techniques of the Image

The above outline schematically classifies technique in the cinema, but it is far from self-explanatory. The following sections will flesh out this outline, beginning with the film image.

On a level of abstraction removed from actual film production at "Hollywood/Mosfilm/Cinecitta/Pinewood" (as

Godard calls the mainstream film industry) the cinematic image is merely space (black-and-white or color forms) presented over time. The abstraction, space/time, is structured into cinematic mimesis by technique--which is in turn the product of technology. Technique, in this regard, becomes the organizing principle of the base cinematic materials, space and time. Technique makes space and time significant. Where, then, does style enter the picture?

. . . in any one film, certain techniques tend to create a formal system of their own. That is, a film will tend to repeat and develop specific techniques in patterned ways. This unified, repeated, developed, and significant use of specific film techniques we shall call style.¹⁰

This passage from David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's Film Art resonates throughout my consideration of style, for they suggest that style is a pattern, a relation, of techniques that produces meaning. Thus the work of technique and style is very similar, conceptually: both order a "lower" material to produce meaning. Technique patterns space and time, and style, in turn, takes technique for its material. Following this reasoning, I have divided the techniques of the image into those of space (mise-en-scène) and those of time (editing). "Mise-en-scène" "cinema's grand undefined term"¹¹ (Brian Henderson), applies to all of the visual elements of the shot and not simply the profilmic material (which is how Bordwell and Thompson use it).

Mise-en-scène exists in both the still, single frame and in the succession of frames in intermittent motion that creates the illusion of moving pictures. I have chosen (a priori assumption) to discuss cinematic composition in terms of technique, both profilmic and filmic. Writing of compositional (single frame) style, the critic is tempted to employ the tools of art history, for example, Heinrich Wöfflin's descriptive polarities (see chapter 1 above). Indeed, one could easily think of examples to fit his scheme: the linear compositions of Underworld USA (Samuel Fuller, 1961) in contrast to the painterly qualities of McCabe and Mrs. Miller (Robert Altman, 1971). He, too, analyzes the style of the art object through an interpretation of the technologically based technique. His central dichotomy, linear/painterly, stems from techniques of oil painting --ways in which oil paint (technology) is applied to the canvas. This is not dependent upon the artist's intentions --or even the actual technology behind his or her technique --but upon the manifestation of technique in the text. Wöfflin illustrates the usefulness of interpreting style through technique, but his actual dichotomies are of only limited interest to the film theorist. After all, he is addressing the product of a wholly different technology. The cinema will need to find its own vocabulary to describe its style.

Style is the pattern and not the material itself. This patterning of materials is especially evident in cinema's mise-en-scène. One can see that, profilmically, style is the architectural structure and texture of walls in set design (which can of course be extended to exterior "sets"--that is, location shooting), the directionality and power of lighting, the structure of cloth and its construction into costumes. All these three-dimensional qualities are translated into two dimensions by the filmic qualities of the camera lens, the film stock and the filters--techniques of "visual quality." In considering these techniques, I note in passing that the stylistic use of particular technologically-rooted techniques does not blindly follow technological progress: even since cheap, feasible color stocks have been available (since at least the early 1960s), films have still been made in black-and-white (notably The Last Picture Show, Peter Bogdanovich, 1971 and Manhattan, Woody Allen, 1979). Technology determines technique (a dolly shot = a shot made by the use of a dolly), but the potential for stylistic manipulation remains open. The mere presence of a certain form of technology does not ensure its usage. For example, the zoom lens has been available since at least 1932 and Love Me Tonight (Rouben Mamoulian), but it did not come into fashion until the 1960s. The final terms within single frame composition,

"framing" and "focus," are structured in the same way that the other techniques are but their material is less tangible than that of the profilmic techniques. Framing is defined by the position of the camera relative to the object of the shot: a filmic/profilmic relationship that is marked in the text by the position of the frame. Framing's pattern is the variation of that filmic/profilmic relationship. The style of a film's framing, thus, is the alteration of the camera's location and directionality. In sum, compositional style is the arrangement of light and dark areas (space) within the frame--an overall pattern determined by the text's deployment of technique.

Describing the style of movement in cinema is more difficult than that of composition. One might begin describing the movements of figures within the frame (profilmic technique) with the vocabulary of dance and theatrical blocking. This proves to be inadequate, however, because the cinema never has figure movement without the "one-eyed" viewpoint of the camera. Dance and theater play to an entire audience; although the moving camera shares its change in perspective with sculpture and architecture, there are no theories of how the spectator moves toward a sculptural or architectural work, to my knowledge. The only descriptive terminology left to the critic seems to be cinematically technical, derived from the technological. Hence, "panning"

and "tilting," "tracking" and "dollying" derive from the technology used to create them. This is reflected in the language: one usually says that the "camera pans" not that the "image pans." (One etymological qualification: "pan" stems from "panorama shot," so coined because it provides a broad view of its object. However, "pan" soon came to be conventionalized as the movement of the camera, rather than the image that that movement produced.) Style, as I am seeking to define the term, names the patterning of technique that is known through cultural conventions. Thus, it is a moot point if, for example, a smooth camera movement in towards the object was produced by a dolly riding on tracks or a free-standing camera operator using a "steadicam." If it fulfills the textual conventions of a tracking shot, then it will be labeled "tracking shot" within my scheme. Once again, it is the manifestation of technique within the text which concerns me, not its true-life formation. This leaves for style the structuring of these techniques within the text.

The manipulation of cinematic time through editing has found its most vocal proponents in Kuleshov and the other Soviets. The joining of one shot to another takes on a myriad of functions for them, including metaphoric meaning and the shaping of emotions. However, the actual techniques available for transition from one image to another are

surprisingly few. On this technical level they number four: cuts, fades, dissolves (really overlapping fades) and "wipes." It is only when one reaches the higher level of editing styles, rather than techniques, that one becomes involved with questions of, for example, shot length and rhythm, and conflict caused by the abutting of one graphic design with another. These are examples of how a technique, the cut, may be used stylistically to create meaning or elicit emotion. Technique has only limited meaning before it is placed into a stylistic context. It thus serves as the material patterned by style to produce upper level meanings. Eisenstein's five "methods of montage" (discussed below), to choose one final example, are five editing styles using one editing technique, the cut. The way Eisenstein uses the cut, the pattern he creates with the cut, is the stylistic structuring of the material, technique.

Style and Cinematic Sound

Historically, theories of cinematic sound focus on the relations of sound to image. Bordwell and Thompson, for example, discuss sound in terms of the way it shapes interpretation of the image.¹² Further, when sound first struck the cinema, causing great theoretical controversy, Eisenstein was one of the first to welcome it--arguing for sound in "counterpoint" to image.¹³ The above taxonomy of technique consciously avoids techniques for integrating sound and

image for the simple reason that to do so involves extending beyond description to interpretation--which I am not yet prepared to do. One might think it possible to simply describe how sound and image interact (indeed, this is Bordwell and Thompson's assumption), but when applied to actual film practice, the descriptive process can become foggy. It is a qualitative leap from the description of the perception of sound and image to their correlation as supportative or contrasting.

A simple hypothetical example can illustrate this distinction. Visualize a man seated in a chair in an empty sound stage facing the camera directly. Behind him is a blank wall. He is moving his lips, evidently talking. The soundtrack consists solely of a male voice, speaking in synchronization ("sync") with the movement of his lips. This, one could say, is an example of sound supporting image. With very little modification, our example could also be made to illustrate contrasting sound and image. This could be accomplished by maintaining the same visuals and changing the sound to the noise of a clothes dryer spinning around. Apparently this would exemplify sound working against image. However, the correlation of sound to image cannot be so simply assumed. If I develop my example still further, the reader can see how seemingly disjunctive sound can be made to confirm the image. The man before the wall moves his

lips and we hear him say that he is about to go to the laundry to wash his clothes. As he continues to move his lips, the sound of the dryer cuts in. Since a very minimal narrative has been established, the sound of the dryer is no longer fissured from the image. It has come to be recuperated into the signification, "man about to do laundry." We might then have the next visual cut to a scene in a laundry. Throughout the 1960s, filmmaking one can find examples of sound being cut two or three seconds ahead or behind image.

In addition to the diegetic correlation of sound and image (which takes us above the level of perception and into interpretation) there are more rudimentary problems with the easy assumption that sound supports image when we see a man speaking and hear a male voice. We have relied upon a presumed knowledge of the referent, drawing on our understanding of the profilmic material (the actor's face and voice) to decide whether the sound belongs or it does not. Filmmakers can toy with viewer expectations such as these. Independent filmmaker Dana Hodgdon's Truthfully Speaking (1975) repeatedly "lies" to the viewer about which face matches which voice--in fact, that is all the script is about: men facing the camera and discussing the ownership of a series of voices. Without having been there at the time of filming or having extratextual knowledge of the

voice/face the viewer has no way to authenticate which voice is true and which false. Sound and image are never innocent or natural signifiers in the cinema; they are always artificial (that is, capable of "lying"--see Eco, pp. 41-44 above).

Eliminating the sound/image relationship from the technique taxonomy, I severely limit the value a theory of style holds for cinematic sound. A theory of cinematic style can add very little to the already established disciplines that study style in profilmic sound. The reason for this is simple; film sound is not as dependent upon technology as film image. Sound exists in the phenomenal world in much the same form as it finds in the cinema. In writing of the image above, I emphasize the importance of filmic qualities and the relationship of the filmic and the profilmic. Sound, in contrast, depends more upon profilmic qualities. Thus, my consideration of it will be brief.

Speech (the first sound category) in the narrative cinema is comprised of a variety of linguistic, not technological, techniques that are filtered through a limited technology necessary to sound reproduction (microphones, magnetic tape, and so on). To describe the patterns of profilmic speech techniques is the occupation of the linguist. The scientific study of speech, distinct from

written language, will not be the concern of the present paper, but it should be noted that linguistics suffers many descriptive inadequacies similar to those to be found in the study of cinematic style. The "filmic" techniques of speech (and this applies equally to music and noise) in the cinema are only those associated with sound recording. Obviously these are not qualities that usually come to one's mind when thinking of cinematic techniques. They are, however, the qualities added to speech in the process of bringing it to the screen. Thus, they are techniques of the cinematic apparatus. Indeed, the so-called limitations of sound recording may be used to artistic effect. "Bad" sound (distorted, weak, noisy, and so on) may be consciously used within a narrative to signify, for example, a documentary-like situation. Citizen Kane, an audially dense film, uses feedback in the sequence within the newsreel when Kane (Orson Welles) is speaking to a large audience through a public address system. David Holzman's Diary (Jim McBride, 1968) frequently uses documentary sound conventions to "fool" the viewer into thinking he or she is watching a real film diary. When done skillfully, the viewer cannot detect the difference between sound recorded under "unfavorable" conditions and its synthetic creation. More typically, there are clues to signify to the alert viewer that a sequence has recorded sound directly in the filming process

or "dubbed" it in during post-production. For example, in many made-for-television films, direct sound recording is signified by deviation in the ambient sound level when a character stops talking. Two characters speaking on a busy street corner will have the ambient sound at one level when they converse and then it will drop when there is a pause in conversation. This alteration in volume signifies "direct sound recording"--in an abstracted, conventionalized sense, remembering Eco's referential fallacy. There remains the possibility for a sound engineer to use this convention to "lie." He or she could simulate the change in levels in the studio. The resultant tape would still signify "direct sound recording" in my scheme. Thus the seeming natural relationship between sound and image is, in fact, yet another opportunity for semiosis--for the process of signification.

Summary

Cultural convention has determined that much of the cinema is defined in terms of technology. Indeed, many have assumed that the cinema is the most technological of all the arts--excepting perhaps video and television. It is not surprising, therefore, that in attempting to describe style I am drawn to a technological root: style patterns technique, and technique is produced largely by technology. Based on this assumption, and acknowledging that there are

other approaches to style (especially, style-as-emotion), I begin this theory of cinematic style with a taxonomy of technologically-based technique. This taxonomy serves to classify the stylistic material--its substance. I may now articulate what the stylistic ordering of technique communicates (chapter 4) and how that communication is accomplished (chapter 5).

CHAPTER IV

THE STYLISTIC SIGNIFIED

The concept of "style" is part of the stock-in-trade of every critic; we use it repeatedly in common parlance. Yet it is one of those concepts which is rarely questioned or defined, but insinuates itself into our discourse without any prior examination of credentials. It is a resolutely ideological concept, with almost no theoretical standing whatever. In this respect it is like the concepts of "love" or "sanity"; it appears to meet a need, but when looked at closely it seems to evaporate, to have no real meaning at all. It is simply an operative concept, which we use without any knowledge of what its gaseous composition may be. ¹

--Peter Wollen

Style in narrative film has found many different interpretations over the past 85 years. The writings on cinematic style may not be as profuse as those in the other arts (surveyed in part 1), but, having digested much of the preceding work in related fields, film style analysis is fast approaching intellectual parity with work in literature and painting. As I turn my attention to the existing material on what film style means, on what it signifies, I must adapt a two-pronged approach. My first tack is diachronic-- a history of stylistic interpretation. The writings on style do not possess a manifest destiny toward which they constantly evolve, each author building on the previous one's work, but neither do they exist in a vacuum.

Much of Bazin's impetus, for example, was to mount a counterattack upon the Soviets and the German Expressionists.

More important, however, is the need for a synchronic understanding of the ways that style has been interpreted-- a taxonomy of the stylistic signified to accompany the taxonomy of technique above. It is surprising to me that, with the myriad instances of stylistic interpretation, there are actually very few ways that style has been interpreted. The classification of the stylistic signified in narrative film is remarkably simple, and will be presented toward the end of the chapter.

I indicate above what I assume to be the stylistic signifier. Before exploring the stylistic signified,¹ I need to lay some more groundwork as to my base assumptions about meaning in film. I have said that the present study will focus on narrative film. What, then, is "narrative"? I rely here on Bordwell and Thompson's definition of narrative as "a chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time."² The order of these events (signifieds) are what I specify as "form." Form is thus distinguished from style because it is an element of the signified while style patterns the signifier. In this respect I am closer to the literary model than that of art history. In literary study, "form" is most frequently used to mark the shaping of narrative events and "style" is reserved for the choice

of specific rhetorical devices and the shaping of the text's language. In contrast, art history routinely equates "style" with "form." By relying on the literary model, I preclude interpretations of form from the present chapter in order to better explicate the development of stylistic interpretation.

The Beginnings of Film Theory: Russia in the 1920s

Although I have already excluded the Russian Formalists from my consideration of style in literature, it is impossible to ignore their contribution to Lev Kuleshov's ideas on cinematic style. (Indeed, Kuleshov knew many of the Formalists intimately. Formalist advocate Viktor Shklovsky and he co-scripted the Kuleshov-directed By the Law.) The literary Formalists worked first of all to determine "literariness"-- the quality that converted simple writing into the art of literature. Correspondingly, Kuleshov struggled to determine the essence of the cinema--to tease out the cinematic. Early in his career (during the teens and the 1920s) Kuleshov struck upon the much-discussed technique of "montage" as the cinematic essence. Film is not film, he contends, until the celluloid is cut up and placed into a particular order. Then and only then does the film acquire meaning cinematically. In retrospect he comments, "let the material be wretched; the only importance was that it be well organized."³ From this position

evolved the "Kuleshov Experiment" in which the expressionless face of Russian actor Mozhukhin is intercut with different suggestive objects (a bowl of soup, a child playing, a coffin). The audience interpreted Mozhukhin's static expression as, variously, hunger, joy, sorrow. Thus the shot's effect is determined by its position within the context of the other shots. Kuleshov noted the variety of meanings a single shot could evoke. He posited that the cinematic signifier is arbitrarily linked to its signified; the same signifier (the actor's face does not change expression) can represent different meanings dependent upon its context. Ronald Levaco, in his book-length study of Kuleshov, explains it thus:

. . . . Kuleshov defined the shot as a "shot-sign" which could be syntactically integrated, as a "word-equivalent," into a film comprised of other shots. From this followed the obvious analogy of (film) sequence and sentence (which Kuleshov used early on) and his subsequent, now famous dictum that a film is built "brick by brick" (the repudiation of which Eisenstein swaggeringly handled in three or four short paragraphs of his essay "Za kadrom," published in 1929).⁴

Hence Kuleshov, the cinema's first true theorist, comes to emphasize relation over substance. The base material (a shot) is placed in specific relation to other material elements (other shots) through the use of a particular film technique--the cut. To paraphrase Bordwell and Thompson, a certain technique (the cut) has been used by Kuleshov to create a stylistic system (montage). (A stylistic system,

afterall, is nothing other than a pattern of relations.) Thus Kuleshov grounds his theory of the cinema in style, the organization of specific techniques into a formal system.

Most famous of the students in the "Kuleshov Workshop" was Sergei Eisenstein. Just one year younger than Kuleshov, Eisenstein was with the Workshop only briefly before leaving to develop his own formulation of montage. His colleague V. I. Pudovkin was also an active student of montage theory, but as Pudovkin mostly just followed Kuleshov's lead I will concern myself principally with Eisenstein's reworking of Kuleshov. The phenomenally eclectic Eisenstein drew upon a great many sources in the course of his career as both filmmaker and film theorist. In his own words, he sought "a definition of the whole nature, the principal style and spirit of cinema from its technical (optical) basis."⁵ His great passion during the 1920s and the stylistic trait for which he is best known is montage. Eisenstein cultivated Kuleshov's montage theory into a concept that ultimately contradicted Kuleshov's teachings. Kuleshov and the still loyal Pudovkin advocated building meaning brick by brick into a solid narrative structure. Eisenstein railed against Kuleshov's "creative geography" (shots taken from different regions and cut together to make them appear to be one area) and similar editing

exercises. He demanded that film must be a collision, a conflict of opposites--even within a single shot. In his infatuation with opposites the reader may note the influence upon Eisenstein of other writers: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx. It is to Hegel's dialectic as adopted by Marx that I must first turn before explicating Eisenstein's montage theory.

Keeping in mind that style is a formal system or pattern of relations, I will simplify Eisenstein's understanding of the dialectic into the following formula: Thesis + Antithesis = Synthesis. A thesis, confronted with its antithesis (its opposite), will yield a synthesis that is qualitatively different from the first two entities. This synthesis, in turn, becomes the thesis in a new dialectic, and so the chain continues. Although this formula slightly misrepresents the dialectic I retain it to provide the reader with a sense of dialectical structure. It must be remembered, however, that the synthesis is never the simple sum of the thesis and the antithesis, but, rather, is of another order and is born of the thesis/antithesis juxtaposition (their relation). Furthermore, each thesis contains within it the germ of its antithesis. And so a continuing progression is guaranteed; there is no stasis.

Eisenstein weds dialectics with Kabuki dancing, Japanese ideograms and a wealth of other modes of thought into

a particular theory of the cinema. Dialectics "dynamizes" (Eisenstein's term) the cinema--infuses it with a powerful dynamic unlike any other art. In "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form,"⁶ he argues that motion in the cinema, the very basis of the medium, results from a dialectical conflict of one frame mentally superimposed over another. In other words, he suggests a dialectical reading of the persistence of vision theory: Thesis (frame one) + Antithesis (frame two) = Synthesis (movement). The conflict of two frames yields an entity that is of a different order than its constituent parts. There is no movement in either of the two frames. Movement arises from their conflict--their relation. Even the particular framing of a shot is considered by Eisenstein to be a conflict: between "organic form" (the shape of nature) and "rational form" (the selection process of the camera frame):

. . . the limit of organic form (the passive principle of being) is Nature. The limit of rational form (the active principle of production is Industry. At the intersection of Nature and Industry stands Art.⁷

Placed within the structure of the dialectic it becomes:
 Thesis (organic form/Nature) + Antithesis (rational form/Industry) = Synthesis (Art). Or, Thesis (actuality) + Antithesis (camera frame) = Synthesis (photographic/cinematographic art). At a very basic level, therefore, Eisenstein conteststthose who would dismiss the cinema as mere duplication of actuality. As noted in chapter 1, the

cinema has existed under the shadow of mimesis even after the visual arts have largely eluded its grasp. Eisenstein employs dialectics in his justification of the cinema as art--not mimetic, mechanical reproduction.

Dialectics can thus be used to justify a theory of motion and framing in the cinema, but that is not all Eisenstein was to use it for. He further extends dialectics and argues that it also underpins the principles of composition. This he arranges in a table so:

1. Graphic conflict
2. Conflict of planes
3. Conflict of volumes
4. Spatial conflict
5. Light conflict
6. Tempo conflict, and so on⁸

Each of these categories names a paradigm of compositional conflict. "Conflict of volumes," for example, is the technique of juxtaposing within the frame figures of relatively large and small volumes (he uses a shot of a large woman standing next to a diminutive one as illustration). Without detailing the rest of these conflicts, it must suffice to say Eisenstein sees the arrangement of forms within a composition to be one of violent collision rather than Aristotelian harmony. Considering the scope of Eisenstein's erudition it is strange that he did not align his dialectics of composition with the polarities Wöfflin proposed for art history (see pp. 8-9). Afterall, the two men were contemporaries of one another. Wöfflin's

Principles of Art History was published in 1915, in German, and in 1932, in English. Eisenstein began publishing in the 1920s and this essay (on compositional conflicts) appeared in 1929.

To this point my discussion of Eisenstein and dialectics has centered on elements that exist within the single shot. In "Methods of Montage" he applies dialectics to shot-to-shot interrelationships. These methods, presented in ascending order of complexity, are named by him as: (1) "metric montage," (2) "rhythmic montage," (3) "tonal montage," (4) "overtonal montage," and (5) "intellectual montage."⁹ Not all of these are dialectical in Eisenstein's scheme. Metric montage, the most rudimentary editing pattern, does not qualify. "The fundamental criterion for this construction [metric montage] is the absolute lengths of the pieces," explains Eisenstein, "The pieces are joined together according to their lengths, in a formula-scheme corresponding to a measure of music."¹⁰ In short, tempo (a musical analogy) is created by cutting shots in a strict pattern of lengths without taking into consideration the substance of the image: one foot of shot A is followed by two feet of shot B, then one foot of shot A', then two of shot B', and so on. Rhythmic montage takes metric montage one step further. The shots are still cut in a fairly strict tempo, but the movements within the individual

shots are also taken into consideration as one is editing. Consequently, rhythmic montage provides for a more intuitive cutting pattern--allowing shots that are difficult to "read" (with a wealth of activity within the frame) more time than other shots.

In tonal montage, movement is perceived in a wider sense. The concept of movement embraces all affects of the montage piece. Here montage is based on the characteristic emotional sound of the piece--of its dominant. The general tone **of** the piece.¹¹

Here Eisenstein's reasoning becomes unclear. Tonal montage, he contends, is based on the "dominant emotional sound of the pieces."¹² Can a piece of film have a quantifiable tone in the way that music does? How may we articulate the "tone" of a shot without recourse to the worst type of aesthetic rationalizing ("taste")? Clearly a theory of the cinema cannot be grounded in metaphors as remote as this. Even if it were possible to elucidate what a piece of film's "sound" is, there can be no doubt that emotions do not possess, make or elicit "sounds," as he implies. His metaphors have become too detached from their meanings. Although he attempts to refine tonal montage into overtonal montage, Eisenstein only succeeds in making his musical metaphor more and more tenuous. Overtonal montage is "distinguishable from tonal montage by the collective calculation of all of the piece's appeals,"¹¹³ concludes Eisenstein. What this means in terms of the viewer's

perception of the film remains obscure.

These four methods of montage are seen to develop out of one another through an organic dialectic. Eisenstein states his own case the best:

Within a scheme of mutual relations, echoing and conflicting with one another, they [these methods of montage] move to a more and more strongly defined type of montage, each one organically growing from the other.

Thus the transition from metrics to rhythmic came about in the conflict between the length of the shot and the movement within the frame.

Tonal montage grows out of the conflict between the rhythmic and tonal principals of the piece.

And finally--overtone montage, from the conflict between the principal tone of the piece (its dominant) and the overtone.1 t

Dialectic thought continues to structure his approach, but the speciousness of the musical metaphor becomes increasingly apparent as his argument develops.

Peter Wollen, in his chapter on Eisenstein in Signs and Meaning in the Cinema, integrates his (Eisenstein's) penchant for musical metaphors into his broader view of the artistic experience.

when he discussed the relationships between the different senses and different lines of development, he introduced the idea of counterpoint and later of polyphony (. . .). This stress on the "synchronization of the senses," and on analogies with music set the stage for the full-scale reflux of Symbolism which overwhelmed Eisenstein's thought during the 1930s.¹⁵

Thus Eisenstein elides visual and aural perception into a greater unity, a "synchronization"--or so he attempts. The success of his endeavor can only be judged by the individual

spectator.

The fifth method of montage, intellectual montage, departs from the musical metaphor fabricated above. Here Eisenstein presents a method of montage that is concretely dialectical. In intellectual montage, shot A and shot B are cut together to impart an idea. Probably the most famous example of intellectual montage in one of Eisenstein's films occurs near the end of Strike (1924). A violent skirmish between striking workers and police is intercut with shots of cattle being slaughtered. The viewer intellectually compares the two series of images--assuming, obviously, that contiguity leads to comparison. This comparison, then, generates the concept: workers are treated as if they are cattle. Eisenstein creates a film metaphor ("treatment of workers" = "treatment of cattle") that might be fit into the dialectic so: Thesis (beating of workers) + Antithesis (slaughter of cattle) = Synthesis (workers are treated like cattle). Here one can clearly see how the juxtaposition of two entities creates a third. Further, the substance of the synthesis (an intellectual concept) differs qualitatively from the substance of the thesis and antithesis (images). This I take to be the cornerstone of Eisenstein's dialectical theory of film--a dialectic which is, strictly speaking, neither Hegel's or Marx's. Ironically, the method of montage that is most clearly dialectic is the one

that would fade from film practice the soonest. A few instances of intellectual montage occur in the 1930s (e.g., cutting from gossiping women to chickens clucking in Fritz Lang's Fury, 1936), but generally the technique fell from favor with the coming of sound.

Even within Eisenstein's own film production following The General Line (1929) one is hard-pressed to find examples of his 1920s theories of montage. As Wollen notes, Eisenstein's work of the 1930s and 1940s aligns with early Symbolist thought; it aspires to synesthesia in the arts: sound, color, motion, montage, and so on, brought together to evoke a single emotion on a higher, unified plane.

Wollen continues,

The result of this overwhelming Symbolist reflux was that the monistic ensemble gradually became no more than an organic whole and the dialectic was reduced to the interconnection of the parts. At the same time Eisenstein became interested in ideas of harmony, mathematical proportion, and the golden section as part of a search for Classicism. As far back as The General Line his cameraman Tisse recalls, "we resolved to get away from all trick camerawork and to use simple methods of direct filming, with the most severe attention to the composition of each shot.¹⁶

Collision was no longer the governing force: "the dialectic was reduced to the interconnection of the parts." The later Eisenstein, thus, is not too far removed from a Wöflinian conceptualization of composition. The dialectic has been tamed and recruited into the service of the conventional aesthetics that would rule Russia under the

aesthetically conservative guise of Socialist Realism-- beginning officially in 1934 with the Congress of Soviet Writers. Rather than a revolutionary overthrowal of bourgeois aesthetics, the dialectic became simply a different term for the age-old concept of tension in art, a "search for Classicism" (Wollen) clothed in new jargon.

As should be evident throughout my presentation of both Kuleshov's and Eisenstein's theories of the cinema, they both concentrate on stylistic devices. Montage, whether it be "brick-by-brick" or brick against brick, is not a material entity, but rather, a pattern--a shaping of the base material of the cinema, the shot. Eisenstein also developed patterns of organization within the shot: the illusion of motion and the parameters of composition. These patterns, once again, are elements of style. They shape and order filmic material (three-dimensional forms mechanically reproduced on a two-dimensional field). None of these stylistic devices belong to the category of narrative form, proper. Remembering that narrative is a chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time, narrative form is the ordering of those events, the structure of the "chain." Montage, as Kuleshov and Eisenstein developed it during the 1920s, is the shaping of the film material (sound and image) to create the individual "links," the base narrative events or "syntagms"

(as they will later be termed by semioticians). It has been said that Kuleshov and Eisenstein led the search to discover a film "language." By 1915 the expressive elements of film technique had matured (many writers choose to use D. W. Griffith's Birth of a Nation, 1915, as an historical marker); technique had been made into language. Which is to say, film technique was recognized as possessing expressive potentialities equal to the syntax of the spoken and written word. Film was no longer denigrated as the mere mechanical reproduction of reality.

The Formalist Tradition: Rudolf Arnheim

The Soviet film theorists mark the beginning point of a film theory tradition termed, variously: "formalist," "formative," "faith in the image," and "film as language." Although Kuleshov and Eisenstein did furnish essays on film form (narrative for, that is), their principal contribution has actually been to a theory of film style. Consequently, they might more properly belong within a tradition termed "stylist" or "stylistics" (as in literature). To lobby for a change in name at this late date will only confuse matters further. As a result I will here refer to the Soviets as "formalists" --with an understanding of the slippery nature of that term. Into this category fall theorists who emphasize the relation of film materials to themselves-- what Brian Henderson designates "part-whole theories."¹¹⁷

A part-whole theory studies the "relations between cinematic parts and wholes": "relation to self, relations within self."¹⁸ In other words, part-whole theories focus on the patterns formed by the relationship of material elements--for example, the shot-to-shot relationship in Soviet film theory. This type of theory demands the text be regarded as an aesthetic unity removed from reality. It suggests the structure of the film text be "foregrounded" (as a currently popular term has it); that the viewer be made aware of the film form and style. When a part-whole theory explores the relations of the cinematic materials caused by film technique (as do Kuleshov and Eisenstein) it addresses questions of style. When such a theory shifts to the relations of narrative events it develops into a theory of form. The second type of film theory (Henderson divides the whole of film theory into two groups) pertains to the artwork's relation to the real. I will consider relation to the real theories (especially Bazin) and their understanding of style below. In order to adhere to my chronological structure I must first present the contributions of one more formalist, or part-whole theorist.

Eisenstein and Kuleshov defended the cinema as an art form from doubting Thomases in the neighboring arts. Such defenses recur in the history of film theory. One of the greatest needs for aesthetic justification arose

immediately following the industry's adaptation to sound film in 1927-1928, which was interpreted as yet another concession to vulgar realism. So it was that in 1933 Rudolf Arnheim felt compelled to write,

It is worth while to refute thoroughly and systematically the charge that photography and film are only mechanical reproductions and that they therefore have no connection with art--for this is an excellent method of getting to understand the nature of film art.¹⁹

Arnheim then proceeds to catalogue the ways in which film differs from reality:

1. "The projection of solids upon a plane surface"
2. "Reduction of depth"
3. "Lighting and absence of color"
4. "Delimitation of the image and the distance from the object"
5. "Absence of the space-time continuum"
6. "Absence of the nonvisual world of the senses"²⁰

In so doing, Arnheim posits a relationship between the artwork and the real; his theory is based upon a comparison of the real and filmic reproduction of it. However, this does not mean he is a realist or that he belongs within Henderson's second category of film theorists. Arnheim's main concern in presenting the relation of a film text to the real is to show how the cinema is divorced from actuality. Once he precipitates the difference between the two, he then explains how those differences are used to

artistic effect. Thus, he sketches out the six differences above and proceeds to explicate the "Artistic Use of Projections Upon a Plane Surface," "The Artistic Utilization of Reduction of Depth," and so on. Arnheim's insistence on the "artistic use" of the differences between the film product and the real (between "copy" and "model," as he puts it) bring him into the camp of the formalists. He contends,

In order to understand a work of art . . . it is essential that the spectator's attention should be guided to such qualities of form [as outline above], that is, that he should abandon himself to a mental attitude which is to some extent unnatural. For example, it is no longer merely a matter of realizing that "there stands a policeman"; but rather of realizing "how he is standing" and to what extent this picture is characteristic of policemen in general.²¹ (Italics mine.)

And, I would add here, how this picture is characteristic of the policeman within the context of the film. At this point Arnheim paraphrases the Russian Formalist credo of making the spectator aware of the spectacle he or she is watching--to notice the literariness or the artiness. He castigates 1930s commercial filmmakers because they simply "tell the people stories"²² and he demands that an artistic film make the spectator aware of its art-ness. Similarly, one Russian Formalist favored a metaphor of art as a road--a road on which one feels the cobblestones.

Arnheim's formalism extends beyond the Soviet's

montage-oriented theories. Indeed, he comments,

It was the Russians who first realized the artistic potentialities of montage; and it was they who first made an attempt to define its principles systematically. At the same time they have often carried their enthusiasm for it too far. They are inclined to consider montage as the only important artistic film feature--as witness their frequently excessive use of it. Indeed the impression is sometimes left that they consider a single uncut strip of film simply a piece of reality--as though an edited film were, so to speak, cut nature.²³

Contrary to what Arnheim writes, not all the Soviets considered unedited film to be a "piece of reality." As I have indicated above (see pp. 65-68) Eisenstein feels the unedited film shot is the collision of "organic form" and "rational form," and conceives of a dialectical approach to composition (as a series of collisions), Eisenstein's work of the 1930s and 1940s, in particular, evidences his concern with composition and the individual shot's expressive potentiality. Although, in fairness to Arnheim, his major theoretical pieces antedate Eisenstein's less montage-oriented films (see especially Ivan the Terrible, Parts One and Two, 1944 and 1958). The early Kuleshov and Pudovkin, however, are liable to charges of underestimating the importance of the uncut film strip and its significant divergences from the real.

Arnheim verbalizes a great many more possibilities for stylistic manipulation of the film material than the Soviets. Not only can--and must--the filmmaker shape the space/time continuum (as in montage), but he or she must

also consciously order each of the factors that distinguishes cinema from the real: projection of solids upon a plane surface, reduction of depth, lighting and absence of color, and so on. For Arnheim style may be used for a variety of expressive purposes. It may signal the emotions of a character (as with the German Expressionists), suggest a concept (following Eisenstein's intellectual montage), create a mood or simply float freely--a beautiful object to be valued for its beauty. All of these are attitudes that we may trace through the history of visual arts and literature. In many respects, he represents the post-Cubism aesthetician's approach to the cinema. He does not limit the cinema to the reproduction of natural objects and the creation of "naturalistic" events, but interprets it as an art form removed from some of the strictures of reality and structured by rules of its own. For Arnheim, the cinema is not a reflection of reality, but, rather, a refraction. Film bends and distorts actuality in order to express ideas, emotions, beauty, but, backtracking significantly, he does not believe this distortion should be done to "excess" (witness his admonition of the Soviets). Arnheim falls into the trap of assuming that his value judgements are based in objective criteria. The Soviets are criticized for artistic excesses without Arnheim acknowledging that his own assessment is determined

by subjective taste. Indeed, many of the "artistic" examples he selects from the silent cinema might be judged too coarse by contemporary audiences (see his description of scenes from Chaplin's The Gold Rush, 24 1925). All artistic expression distorts reality, as Arnheim correctly maintains, and all judgements of the suitability of the distortion level are governed by personal taste--for which he neglects to account.

The Realist Challenge: André Bazin

As I indicated above, film theorists of the 1920s and 1930s were compelled to defend their art form as an art, to emphasize just how film differed from reality and was much more than just a mechanical reproduction of it. This strident formalism thus came to represent the cinema's theoretical orthodoxy. The 1940s and 1950s witnessed an assault on that position's dominion over film theory. During the period immediately following World War II André Bazin published a number of essays (he was never to complete any book length studies-- as with Eisenstein) proselytizing for a realist cinema. He, along with Siegfried Kracauer,²⁵ comprise the major realist threat to cinematic formalism. Returning to Brian Henderson, Bazin develops a theory based upon the cinema's relation to the real rather than the orientation of the parts to each other and to the whole. How then does style (the ordering of parts within a whole)

fit within Bazin's theoretical parameters? Does he share Robert Leenhardt's belief that "the proper role of the mise-en-scène [visual style, in this context] of the production will be to give the impression that there is no mise-en-scène"? ²⁶ The answers are not simple ones, but they do coalesce around the legacy of mimesis--a spectre that haunts photography and the cinema.

As indicated in "The Ontology of the Photographic Image,"²⁷ Bazin believes the cinema's aesthetic justification is tantamount to that of the still photograph. This seemingly reasonable base assumption is one that the Soviets, with their emphasis on montage and juxtaposition, would deny outright. Bazin's belief (and it does retain a residue of his religiosity) in the veracity of the photographic image arises from his "faith in reality" (as he terms it) --which is to be opposed to the Soviet's "faith in the image."²⁸ In photography, "For the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a non-living agent. **1129** As we have just seen with Arnheim, however, this "non-living agent" possesses a great deal of artistic potential. Its intervention between object and reproduction, model and copy, is not a neutral one, as Bazin supposes here (although he will later contradict himself). The mere selection of which direction the camera will be facing and the trans-

position of the color spectrum into a limited field of blacks and greys (as most films were in Bazin's time) begins the process of artistic choice. Furthermore, Bazin assumes the camera lens itself is completely objective, adhering as it does to "the first scientific and already, in a sense, mechanical system of reproduction, namely, [Renaissance] perspective."³⁰ Even this rudimentary "scientific" system of the camera lens has been recently called into question; some writers argue that its reliance upon Renaissance perspective is an ideological decision.³¹ In their view, one-point perspective supports the specifically bourgeois mode of thought coming into being with the rise of the merchant class in sixteenth-century Italy. Renaissance perspective provides one among many "ways of seeing" (John Berger's term) the world--none of which is, strictly speaking, objective. Each way of seeing is inscribed with the ideology (the unspoken social codes and beliefs) of its epoch. As E. H. Gombrich writes, "There is no neutral naturalism." The many ways in which the cinema manipulates reality (whether due to societal codes or subjective epiphanies) are ably catalogued by Arnheim. They erode Bazin's basic axioms.

Building upon the false premise of the objective nature of the mechanical instrument Bazin contends, "The aesthetic qualities of photography are to be sought in its

power to lay bare the realities."³² (Italics mine.) In properly realistic films, "reality lays itself bare like a suspect confessing under the relentless examination of the commissioner of police."³³ To emphasize "reality" and "the realities"--as Bazin does--militates against the aesthetic and with it, style. He paradoxically argues that the best photography (and film) is that which "lays bare" reality, but that at the same time the power to do this is an aesthetic (and hence artificial) attribute. In short, he calls for an unaesthetized (if I may be permitted this term) reality that is portrayed through aesthetics: an "aesthetics of reality," as he names Italian Neorealism. Dudley Andrew, in his study of Bazin, offers this 'interpretation of Bazin's use of the term "style":

His [the director's] style is part of an instinct that first chooses what to watch and then knows how to watch it--more precisely, how to coexist with it. Under the subtle pressure of this approach relationships within reality become visible, bursting into the consciousness of the spectator as a revelation of a truth discovered.³⁴

The laying bare of reality thus is interpreted as the revelation of "relationships within reality"--what might be called the "style" of reality, remembering my original definition of style as relational patterns that are organized to produced meaning. Bazin believes these patterns are to be found and revealed in reality rather than created by an aesthetic operation. The duty of the

director is to reveal, not to shape--or so Bazin writes at this juncture.

Unfortunately, Bazin never completed a comprehensive study detailing his theory of the cinema. (His untimely death in 1958 left studies on Jean Renoir and Orson Welles only partially finished--to be completed eventually by his colleagues.) Limited to the essay form, his work lacks the systematic approach to difficult theoretical questions that one finds in, say, Kracauer's Theory of Film. Thus while Bazin extolls the virtues of unmediated revelation in several pieces, he comments in Orson Welles: A Critical View (published posthumously), "All great cinematic works doubtless reflect, more or less explicitly, the moral vision, the spiritual tendencies of their author."³⁵ "Great cinematic works," therefore, are not merely the revelation of "the realities," but they express the artist's specifically moral vision. And more importantly, he continues, "indeed, as in the novel, it isn't only the dialogue, the descriptive clarity, the behavior of the characters, but the style imparted to the language which creates meaning."³⁶ (Italics mine.) "Style . . . creates meaning": the phrase is significant enough to bear repeating. It marks a contradictory impulse in Bazin's thinking: the desire to interpret the film text as both an expression of the artist's metaphysical attitude and a mechanical

revelation of the truths evident in the relationships within reality. Andrew attempts to explain it thus: "Bazin's true filmmaker attains his power through 'style,' which, like the person, is not a thing to be expressed but an inner orientation enabling an outward search."³⁷ For Bazin, "Style and conscience are mysterious powers (even like light) which, though literally insubstantial, are capable of revealing and transforming the substance of the world."³⁸ Only through mysticism can style both reveal and transform reality (the "substance of the world"); common logic will not support such thinking.

Arnheim, the Soviets and cinematic formalists in general advocate a style which transforms the appearances of reality into a signifying text. Simple realists struggle for a self-effacing style, one which best facilitates the revelation of "the realities"--whatever they may be. Bazin, however, clasps both attitudes into a mystic embrace: "Bazin suggested that the filmmaker's style is like a magnetic force which selects from the sand and dust of life those iron filings possessing the proper polarity and arranges them in a field,"³⁹ comments Andrew. Although the metaphor is an ingenious one (and originally Bazin's, not Andrew's), it does not resolve Bazin's contradictory beliefs. Metaphorically, iron filings (the "truths of reality") possess no significance prior to the arrangement by a magnetic

field (style). Bazin seems to be indicating that their significance derives from the pattern into which they are formed. This, however, is not the statement of a realist. The realist would emphasize the unformed "iron filings" over the patterning by the "magnet." According to the logic of his trope, the materials of reality do not acquire meaning until set within a stylistic aesthetic pattern-- exactly what a formalist might conclude. Bazin thus emphasizes the pattern at a time when he theoretically should be concentrating on the material being shaped.

Bazin was not a filmmaker (as were the Soviets), but his familiarity with a vast number of films adds substance to his theoretical writings. To be fair to Bazin, therefore, I must assess his more concrete perspective on particular films and filmmakers. "The Evolution of the Language of the Cinema"⁴⁰ forms the foundation of his view of cinema history. Bazin divides the pre-1941 (that is, before Citizen Kane) cinema into two major groups: (1) the Soviet montage artists and the German Expressionists, and (2) the "classicism" of French and American film of the mid-1930s. The Soviets have been explained in detail above. Cinematic expressionism crossed over from the artistic movement that held sway in Germany in the years before World War I. Expressionism in the visual arts customarily dealt with themes of madness, but more importantly, the style of such artworks expressed

that psychosis. Perspective is distorted and with it any sense of harmony or well-being. Expressionism surfaced in the cinema well after the artistic movement had begun to wane. Robert Weine's The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920) and a very few other examples illustrate Expressionism's brief appearance in German film (although directors such as Fritz Lang and Edgar G. Ulmer did import expressionistic stylistics to the American cinema of the 1940s).⁴¹ In contrast, classicism created the "illusion of objective presentation"⁴² (Bazin) by confining style to narrative logic's dictates. This logic determined conventions of filmic story-telling such as "invisible editing" (incorporating, for example, the "180 degree rule"), shallow depth of field to emphasize certain aspects of the story, techniques of sound recording that serve only to advance the story, and so on. In short, all aspects of film technique are subordinated to the construction of a clear, unified, linear diegesis (narrative) with empathetic characters. Style must not disrupt the narrative flow.

Bazin felt that neither of these two cinematic attitudes was the correct one. This led him to develop a realist theory of the cinema based on the long take and the shot in depth (deep focus). Writing in the late 1940s and 1950s, Bazin witnessed a fashion of longer takes and deeper focus than ever before--heralded by Citizen Kane. He glanced

backwards and traced the occurrence of these techniques in pre-1941 films by specific directors. Erich von Stroheim, F. W. Murnau, Robert Flaherty and Jean Renoir are repeatedly singled out as prescient filmmakers because of their willingness to use deeper focus and/or longer takes than their contemporaries. Bazin reasoned that deep focus introduces a limited ambiguity into the watching of a film. With more in focus and more transpiring on the screen, the spectator can center his or her attention on a multitude of different options. Consequently, he or she takes a more active role in deciding how to watch the film. Also, "Thanks to the depth of focus lens, Orson Welles restored to reality its visible continuity,"⁴³ contends Bazin. (Here he is somewhat mistaken. Depth of focus is not dependent solely upon the lens, but also upon focal distance and aperture opening.) By this Bazin means that deep focus preserves the spatial continuum; we see the space as we perceive it in actuality instead of being manipulated through shallow focus and, more importantly, montage. Coordinated with the preservation of spatial continuity is the unity of the temporal continuum achieved with the long take. Thus in a realist film of long takes and deep focus the spatial and temporal continuums are represented as they are perceived in actuality. Both montage and classicism alter these continuums--the latter less so than

the former, but with no less artificiality.

In sum, Bazin does advocate the use of particular film techniques (long take, deep focus), but the question which must be asked is, does the mere useage of specific techniques constitute style, or must these techniques also posses their own signifying function?⁴⁴ For Bazin the answer is twofold. Specific film techniques do constitute style when it is a matter of style creating meaning, but they do not when style is revealing the realities. The ambiguity (an anti-style, realistic trait) that Bazin saw to be inscribed in filmic signification by deep focus is offset by the fact that the pattern with which a director such as Welles uses deep focus can create meaning on its own; a deep focus style film does not just reveal the realities, it also transforms, shapes them. Deep focus does not merely restore "visible continuity" (Bazin) it can also be used to juxtapose objects and events in depth that might be juxtaposed through montage by an Eisenstein.

Take as an example the famous snow scene in Citizen Kane (see figures 2-4, pp. 90-91). A young boy (Buddy Swan) is framed in medium shot playing in the snow. The camera tracks back, revealing that it is position indoors and the boy is being filmed through a window (figure 2). There are three figures in the room: his mother (Agnes Moorehead), his father (Harry Shannon) and a banker (George



Figure 2. Citizen Kane, Frame 1



Figure 3. Citizen Kane, Frame 2



Figure 4. Citizen Kane, Frame 3

Coulouris). As the three discuss the future of the boy he continues to be seen through the window and heard shouting Civil War oaths (figure 3). At the conclusion of the discussion the camera moves toward the window again, following the characters, until it cuts to a reverse shot of the woman looking out the window (camera placed outdoors, figure 4). Welles thus creates a visual counterpoint of the boy's carefree play and his impending entry into the world of wealth and business. Meaning is imparted--the conflict of innocence and worldliness--through the organization of one element of the base materials (the positioning of the characters in respect to the camera). The characters' bodies (Bazin's metaphoric "iron filings") are placed into a specific pattern (by a narrative "magnet"), which in turn expresses a major theme of the film (the loss of innocence). Welles accomplishes this through the artificial, aesthetic device of framing and blocking. Bazin would retort that this meaning would be communicated to any person sitting in the room at the position of the camera--without the aid of the cinema. Granted, the preservation of space and time (through deep focus and long takes) does resemble human perception more than the constant interruption of space and time through editing, but the blocking of those characters within a specific framing is still a contrived pattern that results in meaning--meaning that does not exist in the characters

themselves, but in their relationship to one another. The conflict between the world of finance and the world of snow sledding is not apparent in one character or the other, but only in their juxtaposition--just as with Eisenstein's cattle and workers. At the same time deep focus resembles human perception and preserves space, it also presents the artist with greater potential for manipulation. Consequently, the thematic meaning communicated by Welles is just as aesthetically controlled as in Eisenstein; some distinction between the two does persist, however, in the effect on the spectator. Eisenstein's montage shocks the viewer into recognition of the meaning--or such is his stated intent. Welles coaxes the spectator into intellection. Though one cannot guarantee the mood a film will provoke in any particular viewer, it seems safe to assume that the emotions elicited by Eisenstein and Welles will bear little resemblance. Just how they will differ requires an as yet non-existent theory of audience response for explanation. In any event, the fact that meaning is expressed through artistic device cannot be denied. Bazin himself acknowledges that "découpage" in depth is "no less abstract" than Eisensteinian montage, but still he contends, "the additional abstraction which it integrates into the narrative comes precisely from a surplus of realism."⁴⁵ How can there be a "surplus of realism"? Unfortunately, Bazin does not

answer this question for us. And his assumption that this precisely explains Welles' aestheticism characterizes his faith in oblique metaphors to explicate difficult concepts.

Bazin's realist aesthetic has earned him a sizeable niche in film history. Ambivalences in his attitude aside, he constituted the first formidable challenge to the early formalists. As well as proselytizing for his own brand of realism, he also pioneered an understanding of the parameters of the classical Hollywood cinema. The differences between formalism, Bazinian realism and classicism may be summarized in chart form in terms of their use of the absolute base cinematic materials: space and time (see figure 5, p. 95). Figure 5 does not account for a realist or formalist consideration of sound largely because of the gap in the original material. German Expressionism and the major writings of the Soviet montage filmmakers existed within the silent film era. The emphasis of Bazin and classical theorists on film as a visual art stems from the cinema's beginnings as a silent medium. Even today writers on film frequently confuse visual stylization with specifically cinematic skill (for example, in the writings of Jean-Luc Godard). Additionally, the chart does not address the question of realistic narrative or content-- what is often termed "naturalism." Although there are

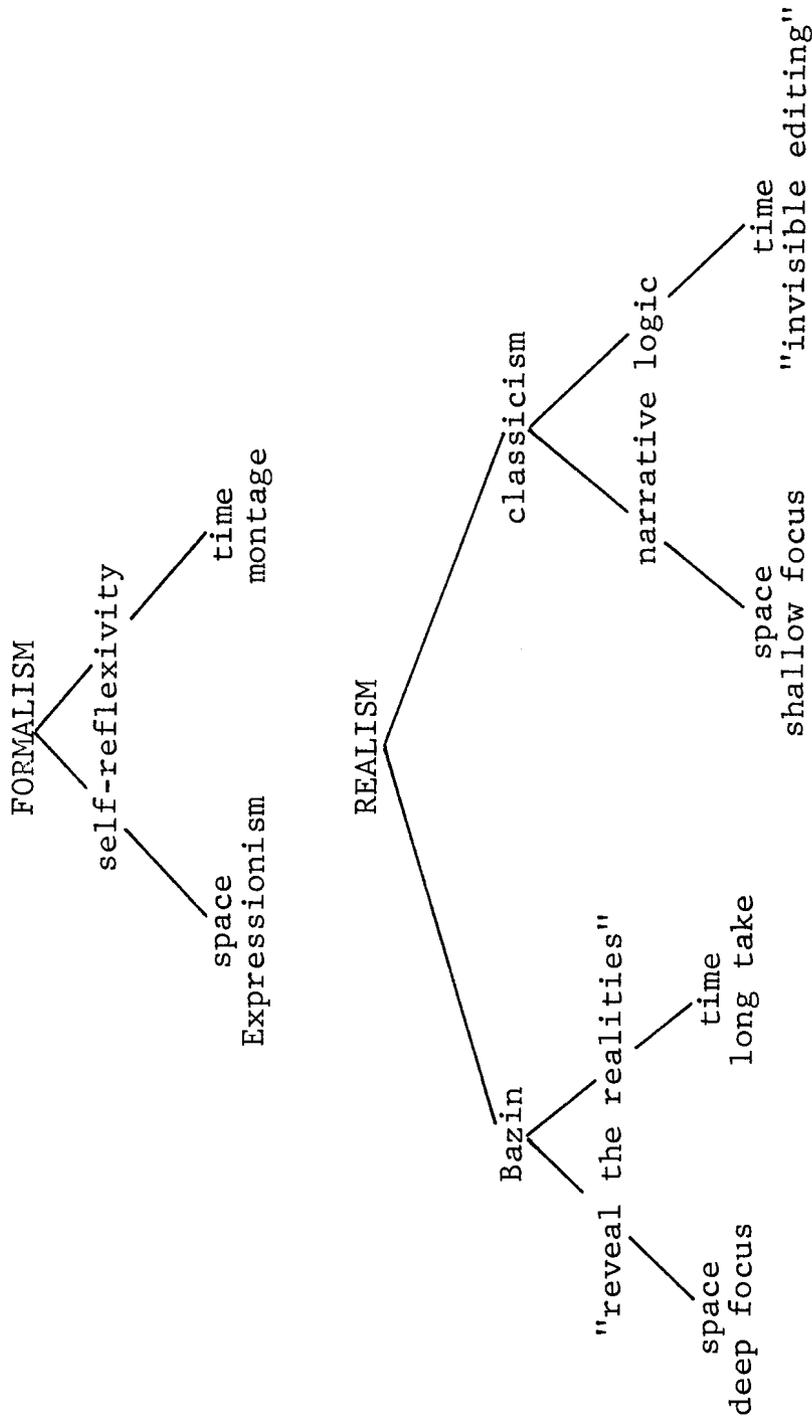


Figure 5. Schematic Representation of Formalism, Bazinian Realism and Classicism in Terms of Space and Time

obvious arguments as to what constitutes realistic subject matter (see Bazin on the Italian Neorealists, John Grierson on documentary, and so on), they exist on the periphery of stylistic theory and will not concern me here.

The Continuing Influence of Bazin:

Auteur Criticism

Bazin's influence does not end with his own sizeable output of thoughts about the cinema. In April 1951 he established Cahiers du Cinéma (hereafter "Cahiers") and unknowingly launched an offensive on the critical establishment that would outlast his own lifetime. "La politique des auteurs" was just gathering momentum and sparking international debate at the time of his death in November 1958. Within a study of style a chronicle of the growth, development and surprisingly sustained controversy of auteur criticism would hardly be warranted.⁴⁶ It must be restated, however, that the "auteur theory" (as it has been mistakenly translated) is not actually a theory of the cinema, but instead must be used as a critical methodology for organizing film history. A theory seeks to explain the essence of its subject (as do Bazin, Eisenstein, Arnheim, et al.); a critical methodology organizes empirical phenomena. The auteur theory assumes one man,⁴⁷ the director, is responsible for the artistic decisions in a film. The film therefore expresses his personality and view of the world. From this

root assumption, cinema history can be written in terms of directorial careers--as Andrew Sarris does in The American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929-1968 (the influence of which would be nearly impossible to overestimate). The old schemata of film history produced a lumpy mixture of star biography, studio history, popular sociology and "good taste." Auteur criticism streamlines it into a grid of the careers of particular directors--the auteurs (genuine film "authors"), to be separated from the more common metteur-en-scène (mere translators of the written script into film). Lists were drawn up delineating the various levels of auteur proficiency and the critical skirmishes began in earnest.

Although auteur criticism is not a conscious theory of the cinema, it does contain within it some very important assumptions about style in film. Introducing a piece of Sarris' work in Movies and Methods, Bill Nichols observes, "Sarris argues . . . that directorial personality, the mark of the auteur, resides in style, the treatment of mise-en-scène, or the how more than the what--the what, or subject-matter, being what brought attention to certain directors prior to the arrival of the auteur theory in the 1950s."⁴⁸ These assumptions may be traced through Bazin to, perhaps eventually, Jean-Paul Sartre. Andrew notes, "We can recognize in Sartre's essay [on Citizen Kane] his practice

of inferring a worldview and a political position from stylistic techniques normally considered embellishments." 49

Bazin, as I have discussed above, felt that "All great cinematic works doubtless reflect, more or less explicitly, the moral vision, the spiritual tendencies of their author" (see above, p. 84). Bazin's belief in spiritual expression coupled with Sartre's view of style leads to the auteur position that contends style expresses the author's personality (his spiritual, political, moral perspective). Auteur writers such as the early Godard, Francois Truffaut, among others, took refuge in style-as-personal-expression as they rediscovered the American cinema. "Over a group of films a director must exhibit certain recurring characteristics of style which serve as his signature. The way a film looks and moves should have some relationship to the way a director thinks and feels,"50 according to Sarris (writing in 1962). Often auteurs such as Howard Hawks and his fellow action film directors were said to transcend inexorable genre material through style: "a director is forced to express his personality through the visual treatment of material rather than through the literary content of the material."51 (Italics mine.) This gave birth to pronouncements such as Fereydoun Hoveyda's "Sun Spots":

The mise-en-scène can put real content into an apparently basic subject; Hawks' Rio Bravo for example. It is in fact usually the rather mediocre directors who

choose more grandiose themes in an attempt to conceal their own inadequacies. Unfortunately for them they only emphasize the poverty of their own mise-en-scène, for example, Kramer in On the Beach or Cayatte in Les Amants de Verone.⁵²

British auteur critic V. F. Perkins, writing in Movie (in many respects the English-language equivalent of the auteur-period Cahiers) defends director Nicholas Ray in exemplary fashion:

. . . the majority of his films will make little sense to anyone who goes to the cinema simply to hear a good script well read. One must respond to the textures of Ray's films before one can understand their meanings. One must appreciate their dynamics before one can see, embodied in their turbulent movement, an ethical and poetic vision of the universe and of man's place in it.⁵³

As with Sartre, and much of criticism since the Renaissance, cinematic style (a film's "textures" and "dynamics" for Perkins) is not just an aesthetic embellishment, rather, it expresses the world view of the director. It embodies the "true" meaning of the work that other critics, in their reliance upon the dialogue, have overlooked. Auteur criticism, at its inception, did not simply vindicate the director as author, it deified the man in charge of the film's visual style. Today's writers are not as awestruck of the film director. As Jeanine Basinger, a practicing auteur critic, wrote recently in the context of a study of Western director Anthony Mann, "The contribution of auteurism to the understanding of film is that it has stressed an examination of form (or style) in conjunction

with content."⁵⁴ The auteur as Romantic deity--a contemporary Lord Byron surrounded by a "cult of personality" (Bazin)--has been replaced by a genuine desire to understand the thematic and stylistic motifs within a director's work.

Since Truffaut's original manifesto, auteur criticism has adopted many guises. 1950s and early 1960s auteur critics were preoccupied with an attack on the so-called "Tradition of Quality" (in France). Their strident aesthetic militancy left many unfortunate theoretical lacunae. Godard could proclaim that Mann reinvented the Western film and that his (Mann's) films are art and the theory of art, but his (Godard's) specific meaning is never clear to readers with any hope of precision.⁵⁵ Godard, as with many of his New Wave brethren, writes as if his essays are dispatches in an ongoing cultural war⁵⁶--quick, emphatic and with occasional lapses of theoretical rigor. Later writers such as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (and Luchino Visconti), Peter Wollen (on John Ford in Signs and Meaning) and current writers for Monogram, Movie and Film Comment approach their subjects with a great deal more caution and discipline--although there are occasional relapses. "In time, owing to the diffuseness of the original theory, two main schools of auteur critics grew up: those who insisted on revealing a core of meanings, of thematic motifs, and those who stressed style and mise-en-scène,"⁵⁷ writes Wollen (1969).

Obviously, it is the mise-en-scène critics whose writings are most germane to the present study. Thematic critics often yearn to give style its due, but feel it eludes interpretation; that it is more mood than meaning. Robin Wood's comment about Red Line 7000 (directed by an auteur critical favorite, Howard Hawks, 1965) is illustrative:

What I really like about Red Line 7000 is the vital tension that is expressed throughout in the great complex of action, gesture, expression, speech camera movement, camera placing, and editing that is cinema. Nowhere in Hawks is one aware of "direction" as something distinct from the presentation of the action; there is no imposed "style."⁵⁸

Wood feels uncomfortable coping with film style as anything but establishment of atmosphere. What he "really likes" about Hawks is Hawks' lack of "imposed 'style'"--what I would call his avoidance of "stylization." In sum, Hawks is the epitome of the classical director. Wood finds Hawks' seemingly natural style to be beyond interpretation and consequently he approaches Hawks thematically--occasionally drawing upon visual detail for support.

The mise-en-scène critics are best represented today by David Bordwell, Fred Camper, Manny Farber, J. A. Place, L. S. Peterson, Kristin Thompson and occasional contributors to the late 1960s and 1970s Monogram, Movie and Film Comment. What are the claims these men and women propose for style? Do their interpretations differ substantially from other critics? How so? The answers to these questions lie in

in a close examination of one representative cinematic analysis, Alain Silver's "Kiss Me Deadly: Evidence of a Style," reproduced in appendix A. Silver's piece provides a solid interpretation of the Robert Aldrich-directed film within an issue highlighting directors of "Old Hollywood": Josef von Sternberg, Ernst Lubitsch, and Nicholas Ray. (Parenthetically one might note that auteur criticism generated serious interest in Ray and Aldrich where previously there was little. In contrast, Sternberg and Lubitsch were well-respected during the height of their careers--the 1920s and 1930s. They have been re-established since the 1950s by the crusading auteur critics.) Silver represents a strain of auteur criticism that concentrates on the director's film-work divorced from his actual life and personality. As with the "New Criticism" in literature, Silver works with the film text and other texts by Aldrich rather than assuming that the real Robert Aldrich is being directly expressed through the films. In a sense he fits within Henderson's "part-whole" type of film theory. He considers and auteur's career to be a complex whole made up of individual parts (the films themselves). Silver defines relations between these parts rather than correlating them to the real life of Robert Aldrich, as the second type of film theory ("relations to the real") would suggest.

Initially, Silver approaches Kiss Me Deadly in terms of three different contexts: genre (film noir), original source (Mickey Spillane's novel) and director (Aldrich). Although the main thrust of Silver's essay is not to assign responsibility for the film, he inevitably weights his interpretation toward Aldrich's input. For example, ". . . the hero of Kiss Me Deadly is more typically related to other characters in Aldrich's work than in Spillane's."⁵⁹ Also, "Most of Kiss Me Deadly's visual devices are derivations from the generic styles of World for Ransom or Vera Cruz"⁶⁰ --two other films directed by Aldrich. Silver's cautious auteur bent saves him from rash assessments of Aldrich's worth; it also informs his detailed interpretation of Kiss Me Deadly.

Before addressing the particular stylistic devices operating in Kiss Me Deadly⁶¹ Silver capsulizes the film's thematic in a flurry of metaphoric prose:

. . . it typifies the frenetic, post-Bomb L. A. of the Fifties with its malignant undercurrents; it records the degenerative half-life of an unstable universe as it moves towards critical mass. When it reaches the fission point, the graphic threat of machine-gun bullets traced in the door of a house on Laurel Canyon (The Big Sleep) is superseded as a beach cottage in Malibu becomes ground zero.⁶²

Kiss Me Deadly is not just the representation of a world in decay and imminent destruction; it is a film in which the manner of expression, the "way of seeing," has also become twisted--as with the German Expressionists. Style

has become an active agent. For Silver, it fulfills three basic functions: (1) narrative "punctuation," (2) metaphoric marker ("figurative usage"), and (3) provoker of audience response. In collaboration with J. A. Place (co-author of "Some Visual Motifs of Film Noir")⁶³ he structures style into nine elements:

1. Angle
2. Framing
3. Mise-en-scène
4. Lighting
5. Depth of field
6. Opticals
7. Camera movement
8. Duration of shot
9. Montage⁶⁴

Each of these terms should be self-explanatory, with the following exceptions. "Opticals" refers to effects achieved with an optical printer-- a photographic device used mainly to make titles, fades, "wipes," dissolves, and so on.

Mise-en-scène is here used to name the setting and the position of the character within it. I have used it previously to signify all the aspects of the visual style, including what Silver terms, "angle," "framing," "lighting," etc.

"Montage" acquires a wider meaning within Silver's piece. He uses it to signify all editing--not just the editing fashionable in 1920s Russia. In isolation one of these nine techniques does not in itself constitute style. Style instead is the shaping and ordering of these techniques in concert: "in any one film certain techniques tend to

create a formal system of their own" (Bordwell and Thompson). The formal system, in turn, serves the three functions above: narrative punctuation, metaphoric marker and provoker of audience response,

Silver examines particular techniques in terms of these functions--though he stresses that they cohere into a unified formal pattern expressing the central thematic of rupture, alienation, and impending chaos and death, Style's duty as narrative punctuation is to echo the relationships of the narrative, For example, "Mise-en-scène combines with framing and depth of field to further define Hammer's relationship to his environment and other characters."⁶⁵ Visual motifs suggest the linkage of similar characters.

Specifically, the x-shaped pose which Christina assumes as she flags down Hammer's car (. . .) is recalled in the painted figure seen on the wall of her room as Hammer examines it (. . .). That figure, bisected by lamplight, is reflected in turn in the image of Hammer tied to the bed at Soberin's beach house (. . .).⁶⁶

This visual linkage, Silver posits, marks a transfer of identity: Hammer becomes a victim of the same villains as Christina, just as his position in the frame comes to resemble hers, Style expresses narrative on a level less manifest than the content proper, Beyond character relationships, style is also seen to establish characterization--another element of the narrative, Silver

writes of "stylistic corroboration" of a character's emotions, commenting,

Side-light is used conventionally to reflect character ambivalence. . . . The half of his face cast in shadow is emblematic of an impulse to abandon the search generated by the sudden death of his friend, an impulse which accounts for the sense of loss and indecision which he manifests in the rest of the film.⁶⁷

Again German Expressionism's influence can be sensed; style is seen to express the interior state of the character represented, or, in Silver's words, technique "externalizes character emotion."⁶⁸

Silver touches on a crucial issue when he comments, in passing, that character ambivalence is conventionally signified by side-lighting. There is no natural or necessary bond between side-lighting (signifier) and ambivalence (signified), but rather it is determined by convention. Similarly, convention plays a large part in the interpretation of visual style as narrative expression. A model of this critical process might be constructed thus: The critic recognizes a narrative structure (the similar victimization of Hammer and Christina). Concurrently, he or she notes a visual pattern (the similarity of body positions). Then, a correspondance between the signifier (body position) and the signified (character linkage) is intuited. Bodies in similar positions need not necessarily signify linkage. Indeed, just the opposite could be

communicated: the dissimilarity of the two figures (in aspects other than position, such as dress, sex, size, color of clothing, and so on) could be signified. Their similar body position emphasizes the contrasts between the two. Eisenstein, with his faith in conflict, might be led to such a "reading" --in direct contradiction to Silver's interpretation of sameness through juxtaposition. Style is here being used as a metaphoric sign; its meaning is dependent upon the context into which it is set and the cultural codes which determine the reading of the sign.

If style's relationship to narrative is a metaphoric one, what then is "figurative usage" --what I have called the metaphoric function above? Style is used figuratively when it signifies the thematic directly--skipping, as it were, the narrative. Rather than expressing the relationships of characters, style comes to signify a concept or idea. Returning to Silver's piece on Kiss Me Deadly, consider this passage:

in the high angle long shot of Hammer outside Lily Carver's room, the dark foreground of stairway and balustrades are arrayed concentrically about his figure and seem to enclose him. Usages such as this contribute to Kiss Me Deadly's figurative continuity of instability (inversion) and menace set up in the opening sequences.⁶⁹

Commonly, writers on film noir discuss the lighting and setting in terms of how it seems to "close in" on the character, to enclose or entrap the protagonist. The

entrapping nature of the shadows and objects within the frame is then interpreted as representing film noir's arch fatalism. For example, in the segment from Silver quoted above he articulates a sequence in which the protagonist is surrounded by darkness. Although he can physically move through those shadows (after all they are no thicker than light) they do appear to block his path. The viewer must connect signified (psychological entrapment) and signifier (darkness arranged in a pattern surrounding the protagonist). The connection between the two is not a necessary one. Thus the style (pattern of blackness) of Kiss Me Deadly possesses the potential of metaphoric significance (fatalism): the darkness is to Hammer's physical presence as the vicissitudes of fate are to his life--both appear to hem him in.

The figurative usage of style is greatly favored by auteur critics and is sometimes carried to mystical extremes. This can best be illustrated by a series of characteristic quotations.

In Carmen Jones, [director Otto] Preminger expounds his theme through the relationship between the camera movement and the decor.⁷⁰ (Paul Mayersberg)

Hollywood's formal dynamics--its vigor, concision, pace--have been so many ways in which melodrama from its beginning has externalised (made public, made articulate) the energy and anger of its beleaguered and proletarian heroes (Cagney, Bogart, Douglas, McQueen transforming that formal drive into social comment.⁷¹ (Mark LeFanu)

A work of art cannot be reduced to an idea because it is the production of a being, of something which cannot

be thought. Better: its idea is in its very technique.⁷²
(Fereydoun Hoveyda)

To over-simplify, perhaps, [Max] Ophuls' camera movements suggest a mellow "fatalism." Everything ends where it begins. The world is a maze of ironies, of impermanence, of nostalgias. If Ophuls' camera moves it is à la recherche du temps perdu.⁷³ (Raymond Durgnat)

The style of a film-maker, like that of any consistent artist, constitutes the materialisation of a vision. That is the form which shapes his art carries with it the implication of a certain content one apart from, although often closely related to the w&k's ostensible "subject," and which is unique to the individual artist.⁷⁴
(David Grosz)

How does one recognize Nicholas Ray's signature [in The True Story of Jesse James]? Firstly, by the compositions, which can enclose an actor without stifling him, and which somehow manage to make ideas as abstract as Liberty and Destiny both clear and tangible.⁷⁵ (Godard)

For there are perhaps only three kinds of Westerns in the sense that Balzac once said there were three kinds of novel: of images, of ideas, and of images and ideas, or Walter Scott Stendhal and Balzac himself. As far as the Western is concerned the first genre is The Searchers; the second, Rancho Notorious; and the third, Man of the West. I do not mean by this that John Ford's film is simply a series of beautiful images. On the contrary. Nor that Fritz Lang's is devoid of plastic or decorative beauty. What I mean is that with Ford it is primarily the images which conjure the ideas whereas with Lang it is rather the opposite, and with Anthony Mann one moves from idea to image to return--as Eisenstein wanted--to the idea.⁷⁶ (Godard)

The metaphoric potential of cinematic style--both in terms of its expression of narrative (function number one) and its expression of ideas (function number two)--can give rise to a wealth of confusions and/or interpretations. Raymond Durgnat, in his occasionally insightful consideration of style in Films and Feelings, illustrates the multiplicity

of interpretations a stylistic device can suggest:

Suppose a film ends with the camera tracking back from the lovers embracing alone on the beach. This may mean "how tiny and unprotected they are" or "how frail and futile their love" or "the whole wide world is theirs" or "this is the moment of destiny" (for plan views can suggest a "God's-eye-view") or "good-bye, good-bye," depending on which emotions are floating about in the spectator's mind as a result of the rest of the film. Hence style is essentially a matter of intuition.⁷⁷

Thus the non-necessary nature of film metaphor is crystalized.

As with journalistic reviewers, the auteur critic frequently comes afoul of the affective fallacy when considering the third function of cinematic style, the response of the viewer and how style influences it. The critic assumes what the response of the spectator will be even though the film's actual affect can seldom be guaranteed. (In point of fact, what such critics articulate when they speak of filmic affect is usually their own personal response.) Most newspaper reviewers base their career upon the similarity between their reaction to a film and the reaction of the newspaper's readership. If the reviewer's response differs frequently and radically from the readers' then that reviewer will alienate the readers and lose their respect and faith. Early auteur critics were in a slightly different position with regard to their readers. They had adopted a polemic, a politique, that argued for the artistic worth of their directorial canon. Assisting this polemic was an orientation toward style's affect that implied the true emotions of some

works could only be felt by a sensitized, limited coterie-- what Andrew Sarris criticizes as an elitist, "you-see-it-or-you-don't attitude"⁷⁸ (and then later, contradicting himself, "What is it the old jazz man says of his art? If you gotta ask what it is, it ain't. Well, the cinema is like that.")⁷⁹ As I quoted Perkins above (p. 99), "One must respond to the textures of Ray's films before one can understand their meanings." Perkins thus implies that only a very few have properly responded and even fewer properly understood Ray's style and its effect. Further, only the truly great auteur, according to the auteur critic's standards, can elicit sublime emotions through stylistic devices. As Godard writes, "Only a master of the cinema can make use of a dissolve to create a feeling which is here [in Kenji Mizoguchi's Ugetsu Monogatari] the very Proustian one of pleasure and regrets."⁸⁰

In recent years the ardor of auteur criticism's polemic has paled considerably. The effect of cinematic style no longer carries the baggage of early auteur critic's moral ruminations. Contemporary director studies, such as Silver's, continue to make assumptions about the effect of cinematic style, but they couch it in terms of how style guides viewer perception, as well as channeling emotions. Silver, in fact, writes of emotion as if it were actually contained within cinematic sound and image, rather than being elicited

by them. He comments on "visual tension" and "narrative tension," but not of the spectator's tension. In his view, the film expresses tension but it does not necessarily elicit it. The closest Silver comes to speaking directly of character emotions is when he hypothesizes,

Basically, the withholding of a cut in each sequence introduces a tension into the shot based on a viewer expectation that a cut normally occurs every ten to forty seconds. The longer the cut is withheld, the more imminent the viewer senses it to be, until the cut does occur or the sequence ends and the built up tension is released.⁸¹

Here Silver assumes how the audience will feel as the result of a specific stylistic decision. Throughout most of the article, however, he writes of stylistic tension as a form of artistic pulsion that drives the narrative onward. Clearly this is an aesthetic notion distant from Godard's presumptions of Proustian pleasures and regrets. Indeed, it is more closely allied to the detailed textual work of Raymond Bellour and Stephen Heath.

The bulk of authorship studies, however, continue to rely upon a hazy notion of viewer response that is at its most vague when dealing with stylistic matters. Consider Jeanine Basinger's comment regarding Anthony Mann's early film work: "He often cut back and forth between an intense close-up and a long shot, thus alienating the audience and creating in them the same sense of helplessness and confusion as the characters."⁸² The tone here, as throughout Basinger's

book, is instructional rather than abrasive and combatative (as with Godard), but her point might still be contested. One could query, will today's audiences, weaned on the hyperactive editing of television commercials, feel "helplessness and confusion" simply because of a cut from long shot to close-up and back again? As with much auteur criticism's claims from stylistic effect, Basinger assumes a viewer will concentrate on the film text with a film student's intensity. It is not important to quarrel with Basinger's understanding of the film viewer, however, but instead to question the entire process of guessing (and, unless a comprehensive study of audience response has been undertaken, it is little more than "guessing") viewer response. Attention must be focussed on the film text itself, I would argue, until a comprehensive model of the viewing situation can be evolved.

As a concluding comment upon the auteur critics I would remind the reader that they operate on a level of journalistic criticism; their writings are better informed than the daily newspapers' film reviews, but they are still concerned principally with questions of taste. Thus their interpretations of film style are laced with judgements of value--as is implicit in most of the auteur quotations above. The "auteur theory" provides a method of ranking directors and directions (through seemingly endless lists).

Its attitude toward style is one of elevating certain techniques (for example, Sarris' affection for the moving camera, Godard's for CinemaScope) without necessarily acknowledging the subjective judgements underpinning such elevation. Further, although auteur criticism claims to bring a new awareness of style to cinematic writings, the fact remains that, quantitatively speaking, more auteur criticism deals with narrative and thematics than with style. The enthusiasm for visual criticism that one finds in the early Cahiers group lacks the rigor of a solid theoretical framework. Consequently, ephemeral concepts such as cinemas of "images, of ideas, and of images and ideas" (Godard) can only appear to be quaint residues of Romanticism-- hopelessly out of place in an examination of the cinema that wishes not to rival the artwork in its expressive ambiguity, but to interpret it with some degree of objectivity.

Contemporary Trends in the Writings
on Cinematic Style

Contemporary film theory has been subject to a variety of influences--notably, Marxism, feminism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Russian Formalism, Brechtian dramatic theory, and linguistics. Portions of each of these contribute to the present-day

conception of semiotics and its relation to the cinema.⁸³

Within the pages of Screen semiotics has come to represent a radical film theory--seeking to comprehend the codes of conventional filmmaking so that they might be understood as an ideological apparatus. Writers such as Ben Brewster, Pam Cook, Stephen Heath, Claire Johnston, Colin McCabe, Christian Metz and Peter Wollen, among others, have adopted a convoluted polemic, or perhaps I should say, a polemical attitude. All of these scholars cannot be grouped within one unified polemic, there is no manifesto of cine-semiotics binding them together. They bitterly disagree as to how the cinema must be changed, but they all concur that mainstream, "classical" cinema is evil and must be understood and destroyed, although some are less radical than others. Within the context of a theory of style, semiotics has conjured new theoretical problems and asked old questions in new terms.

In an article published in Screen (Spring 1976) Peter Wollen declared,

Style is a producer of meaning--this is the fundamental axiom of a materialist aesthetic. The problem is to develop the efficacy of style beyond that of spontaneous idiosyncrasy or a mere manner of writing, painting or filmmaking, fundamentally subordinate to the sovereignty of the signified. I am talking about style in the sense in which one would speak of the style the ordering of signifiers, at work in the writing of Gertrude Stein's Tender Buttons or James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake.⁸⁴

Style produces meaning and this meaning must undercut the

implicitly bourgeois coherence of narrative in classical film, contends Wollen. Comparing this statement with his observation of seven years previous (with which I begin this chapter, p. 60) one can note the heightened aesthetic militancy of his work. Whereas in the 1969 Signs and Meaning he articulates several conventional attitudes toward style within an appendix,⁸⁵ the 1972 edition replaces that appendix with a survey of modernist film--particularly the most current work of Godard. Accompanying the appearance of the revised Signs and Meaning was a highly influential piece in Afterimage: "Counter Cinema: Vent D'Est."⁸⁶ "Counter Cinema" --as with the Screen article quoted above--demands a revolution in film practice. Wollen argues that this revolution must be accomplished by altering the function of filmic style. The passive style of the signifier, "subordinate to the sovereignty of the signified," must be replaced, he demands, with a style that is defiantly difficult to understand. In this new cinema, style and narrative form must make the spectator aware of the processes of signification, of the production of meaning, rather than present the viewer with a narrative spectacle with which he or she can empathize. This new awareness, Wollen believes, should lead the viewer to a fresh understanding of the work of ideology and the class struggle within contemporary bourgeois society.

I initiate this segment with an outline of Wollen's critical progression because he is the single most important figure working in film semiotics (and writing originally in English). Signs and Meaning is the broadest read film theory book in the United States, "counter cinema" presented the critical justification for the provocative post-1968 work of Godard, and his (Wollen's) filmmaking⁸⁷ has inspired fresh questions of the intersection of Marx, Freud, feminism and semiotics. I do not mean to suggest, however, that Wollen epitomizes the ideal semiotician, or even the most representative one, but his remarks on style mark a groundswell of theoretical thought that demands style be "foregrounded"-- that the spectator be made aware of it. (One could trace this attitude back to the Russian Formalists, with a detour through Brecht.)⁸⁸ The disruption of narrative by style was lent new urgency by the post-1968 Godard (that is, the films made after Godard's radicalizing experience in the May/June riots in Paris and outlying suburbs). Wollen's attitude toward style, thus, has become a politically strident one. Style, for him and similar thinkers, is a political act.

Although Wollen **claims** great political advances for "counter cinema," the sense of estrangement from the narrative that style ostensibly causes is actually just another form of irony--nothing more or less. This can best be

understood in light of Thomas Elsaesser's definition of irony.

When I say irony, it has to be understood not only in its limited sense of puncturing inflated pretensions and making assertions tongue-in-cheek, but also in a more technical sense. It names all the strategies of displacement, distanciation, detachment--verbal, visual, structural --whereby a statement, a message, a communication, image or action may be qualified, put in question, subverted, parodied or indeed wholly negated while preserving visible that to which it refers itself ironically.⁸⁹

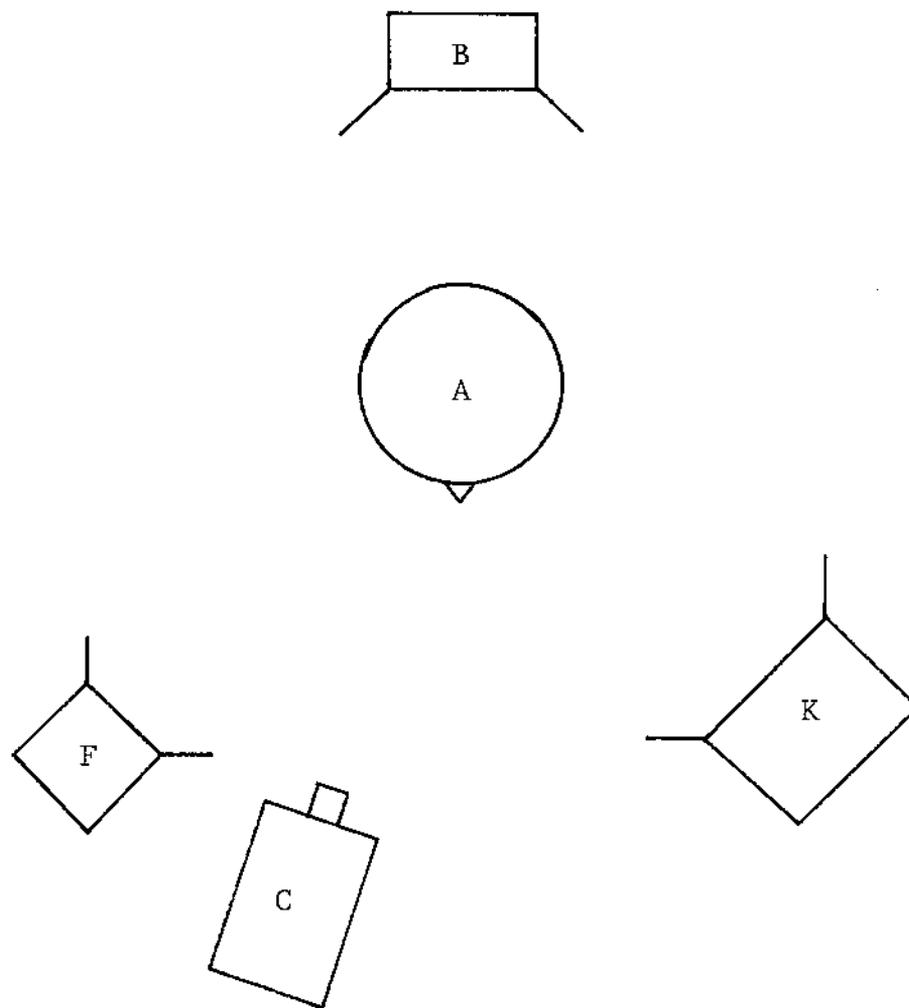
Thus, the humorless didacticism of the late Godard, Frank Tashlin's parodies and John Ford's post-World War II films⁹⁰ are all examples of films governed by irony; distanciation is not a quality limited to politically progressive cinematic texts. Beyond that, irony is even thought to be the principal twentieth-century mode of perception--according to historian Hayden White. Importantly, irony is a stylistic device that elicits a certain response from the viewer. This response qualifies the signified rather than reinforcing it. Which is to say, irony uses style to promote a sense of "displacement, distanciation, [or] detachment" (Elsaesser). Rather than name a specific type of film technique (say, Kuleshov's montage) irony labels the stylistic shaping of that technique to occasion spectatorial distanciation. Abrupt cutting may distanciate the viewer of Kuleshov's By the Law (1926), but it is unlikely that it possesses that effect in, for example,

a Coca-Cola television commercial. Just as style is a particular use of technique, irony is a particular use of style. The possibility of irony brings into clear relief the power style wields in regards to the processes of signification. In a sense, it is capable of "overthrowing" the meaning communicated by the denotative signifier. Previously I have considered only writers on cinematic style who discuss it in terms of how it supports the narrative. In the light of the ironic potential (and especially Wollen's extreme ironic position) it becomes clear that a theory of style cannot rest upon assumptions of style as simply as diegetic echo. It is a problem to which I will return below.

Departing from Wollen-- who uses but does not fully embrace semiotics --I turn to a survey of current semiotic writing on style. One would think that style would be a favored topic for cine-semioticians. Semiotics, afterall, is concerned with the articulation of formal systems that produce meaning and, as semioticians Rosalind Coward and John Ellis write, ". . . meaning is only produced by a systematic arrangement of differences."⁹¹ Style, recalling Bordwell and Thompson's working definition, is but a system of "unified, repeated, developed, and significant" film techniques. Film techniques only acquire meaning when they are placed in a context of similar but different usages. By way of example, consider again Silver's observation

regarding side-lighting in Kiss Me Deadly (pp. 106-107, above). In classical cinema characters are conventionally lit by three main light sources: "key," "fill," and "back." This set-up, as viewed from above, is diagrammed in figure 6 (p. 121). The key light is the main source of illumination. The back light highlights the subject's outline and thus distinguishes it from the background. The fill light softens the contrast caused by the harsh key light, filling in the shadows somewhat.⁹² This three-point lighting technique dominates most Hollywood filmmaking; it is repeated time and again with little or no variation. However, Kiss Me Deadly (and many other films noir) does vary this technique. It is shot in "low key" (that is, high contrast) and the positions of the light sources are shifted--resulting in the high contrast, side-lit image of Mike Hammer (appendix A, frame 31). This image acquires special stylistic significance because of its departure from the norm--without totally discarding conventional lighting. This image retains the strong key light, but has no back or fill lighting. This variation from the norm, this "difference," is then interpreted by Silver as "character ambivalence."

Semiotics' evident propensity for stylistic analysis has generated strikingly little stylistic work within film studies to date. For example, Metz's groundbreaking



K = key light
F = fill light
B = back light
C = camera
A = actor's head

Figure 6. Three-Point Lighting Scheme

Film Language (now generally regarded as an inferior collection of essays in comparison to the later English-language release, Language and Cinema) provides a syntagmatic analysis of Jacques Rozier's Adieu, Philippine (1962)--breaking the film down into narrative sequences and classifying them according to Metz's "grande syntagmatique," the "large syntagmatic category."⁹³ Style, for Metz, lurks about in the penumbra of semiotic research.

. . . when it reaches the level of the "small" [stylistic] elements, the semiotics of the cinema encounters its limits, and its competence is no longer certain. Whether one has desired it or not, one suddenly finds oneself referred to the myriad winds of culture, the confused murmurings of a thousand other utterances: the symbolism of the human body, the language of objects, the system of colors (for color films) or the voices of chiaroscuro (for black and white films), the sense of clothing and dress, the eloquence of landscape.⁹⁴

Wollen's frustration with style--with which I began this chapter--resonates through this quotation. Once again style thwarts interpretation. When Metz offers the reader his Adieu, Philippine analysis he concentrates exclusively on denotative narrative aspects, but concludes by suggesting how style may be hinted at by the film's choice of syntagm:

To summarize, it appears that the frequencies, the scarcities, and the absences [of particular types of syntagm] identifiable in Adieu, Philippine allow one to confirm and to define further what one's critical intuition has told one about the style of this film, which is so typical of the cinéma nouveau (with its apparent freedom of form, its distaste for devices that are too obviously rhetorical, and the apparent "simplicity" and "transparency" of its narrative), and even--within this "new cinema"--of the tendency which might be called the

"Godard cinéma-direct": importance of the verbal element, therefore of the scene; global "realism"; but also a veritable renaissance of montage under new forms.⁹⁵ (Italics mine.)

(In this passage and elsewhere, Metz uses "form" to refer to what I have tentatively named "style" in the present paper, that is, the significant shaping of film techniques.) Metz writes about style ineffectually and only in passing. He believes that its significance may be intuited by the critic but that in the final analysis the semiotician is safer interpreting denotative narrative form through the classification of syntagm and the study of their structure.

Beyond Metz, semioticians that follow the lead of Russian Formalist Vladimir Propp or structural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss concentrate upon the study of narrative form. The actual embodiment of the narrative, the ordering of the signifiers (style), is inessential information. Lévi-Strauss for example, studies dozens of substantially different renderings of a single myth and regards them as simply the same narrative. For him, the myth's "substance does not lie in its style, its original music, or its syntax, but in the story which it tells."⁹⁶ Finally, the recent collective text by the editors of Cahiers (a new Cahiers, divorced from la politique des auteurs) that "rescans" (their term) John Ford's Young Mr. Lincoln (1939) pays little attention to the shaping of the cinematic signifiers, the style of the film. Instead they choose to concentrate on making

such films "say what they have to say within what they leave unsaid, to reveal constituent lacks . . ."97 ("the unsaid" = eroticism and bourgeois ideology). The revelation of constituent lacks is a procedure of the signified, not the ordering of the signifier. Metz, Propp, L&i-Strauss, the Cahiers group--as well as many of their predecessors and followers--reveal the same timidity toward style as auteur critic Robin Wood when he acknowledges that what attracts him most to Hawks cannot be articulated (p. 101).

Semiotics' reluctance in stylistic matters has not deterred all analytical attempts. One group of mostly French and British authors approach style as the determining factor in the viewer/text relationship. For example, Daniel Dayan, following Jean-Pierre Oudart, writes of the "Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema"⁹⁸--the so-called "system of the suture." Dayan's controversial position (see "Against 'The System of the Suture'")⁹⁹ provides a model of "filmic enunciation, the system that 'speaks' the fiction."¹⁰⁰ Although one cannot help but damage Dayan's argument in paraphrase, I shall here attempt it. Dayan argues that cinema is based upon the stylistic technique of shot/reverse shot. He does not posit that a specific meaning is attached to this device, as, for example, Silver sees fatalism attached to surrounding areas of darkness. Rather, shot/reverse shot is the device by which the spectator is

"sutured" into the narrative. It is this device, in particular, that promotes the "imaginary" (Jacques Lacan's sense)¹⁰¹ unity of spectator and film. The spectator achieves this unity through a series of give and take with Oudart's "l'absent" (the "absent one"). The absent one is a theoretical structure--a figure that controls the image, is itself determined by the ruling ideology, but is not to be understood as anything as concrete as the director or cinematographer. The absent one is bourgeois ideology--"absent" because true ideological knowledge must be repressed in order to preserve the illusion of bourgeois homogeneity (this, from Louis Althusser): "the code must be hidden by the message."¹⁰² If ideology were to be directly presented in the text it would cause fissures, rupturing the viewer/text imaginary unity. In shot/reverse shot cinema a gap between the viewer (or "subject") and the screen is caused by the subject's sense that the absent one possesses the view (that is, the image on the screen) in shot one. The reverse shot, however, provides the subject with the field of the absent one (the "point" of the "point-of-view" shot) and the subject's look dominates it. The subject thus retrospectively controls shot one and the sensed gap between subject and text is sutured. However, the subject has actually falsely perceived his (Lacanian psychoanalysis presumes a male subject) dominance of the image. His look

is still governed by now safely hidden ideology, In more technical language, Dayan hypothesizes,

What happens in systemic terms is this: the absent-one of shot one is an element of the code that is attracted into the message by means of shot two. When shot two replaces shot one, the absent-one is transferred from the level of enunciation to the level of fiction. As a result of this, the code effectively disappears and the ideological effect of the film is thereby secured. The code, which produces an imaginary, ideological effect, is hidden by the message. Unable to see the workings of the code, the spectator is at its mercy. His imaginary is sealed into the film; the spectator thus absorbs an ideological effect without being aware of it, as in the very different system of classical painting.¹⁰³

Dayan's attempt to analyze style as an ideological function operating in the text through psychoanalytic devices allies him with Metz ("The Imaginary Signifier")¹⁰⁴ and Jean-Louis Baudry ("Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus"), among others. For the purposes of clarification, I have chosen to synopsise Dayan and not Metz or Baudry. There are, of course, substantial differences among the three, but they do concur insofar as their approach to style concentrates--in these particular articles--not so much on what style means (the task of mise-en-scène auteur critics), but the position in which style places the spectator. Consequently they are subject to the same criticisms that are often leveled against auteur critics' assumptions about the effect of any film: Dayan/Metz/Baudry assume one particular type of subject

(male, inscribed with bourgeois ideology) and fit all cinema spectators within that profile. To my knowledge, they have no empirical evidence to support these assumptions. Consequently, their hypotheses regarding the topic are no more valid than conventional assumptions about viewer response--though they certainly are more complexly stated. Clearly, the road is open for some concrete experimentation exploring the spectator-to-spectacle relationship.

A second exception to semiotics' general emphasis on the signified is the detailed textual analysis performed in Stephen Heath's extended piece on Orson Welles' Touch of Evil (1958)¹⁰⁵ and Raymond Bellour's brief consideration of Howard Hawks' The Big Sleep (1946).¹⁰⁶ Both of these men are familiar with the psychoanalytic concepts touched upon above. In contexts other than these articles they have written of psychoanalytic devices structuring the narrative. Heath comments on his own use of psychoanalytic terminology: "This Oedipal logic does not exhaust all of the narrative effects in a film but it is, as it were, the set of a film's narrative mapping, the matrix of its movement of exchange, the constant point of symbolic blockage (demonstrated by Bellour in his study of North by Northwest)."¹⁰⁷ In this respect, Heath and Bellour address themselves to a film's narrative form--the ordering of signified narrative units. They slight or neglect

altogether the shaping of the signifiers through style. Consequently the bulk of those writings holds no pertinence for the present paper. However, in applying themselves to Touch of Evil and The Big Sleep, Heath and Bellour, respectively, fill in this large critical gap with specific attention to the arrangement of the signifiers and the question of style.

In essence, Heath attempts an analysis similar to the one Cahiers performs on Young Mr. Lincoln. He argues that Touch of Evil is a collection of systems of exchange--"the way some things/people stand in for others"¹⁰⁸--mapped out by psychoanalytic mechanisms. Each of the film's sequences is categorized according to Metz's grande syntagmatique. Then they are systematically analyzed, proceeding through eight critical operations:

1. A description of the syntagm
2. Its position in the narrative
3. "Partitions" --the way in which characters are divided into significant groups
4. "Exchange"-- symbolic linkage of one character to another
5. "Repercussions" --recurring visual motifs and their significance in terms of "exchange"
6. "**Light**"-- lighting and its metaphoric significance
7. "Music"
8. "Author"-- "The sole interest here is in the author as an effect of the text and only in so far as the

effect is significant in the production of the filmic system, is a textual effect."¹⁰⁹

Supplemented by frame enlargements from the film itself, Heath presents an interpretation of the film that surpasses Cahiers in its attention to style's role in signification. Where Cahiers relies upon narrative interpretation, Heath substitutes the equation, "narrative + style = Touch of Evil"¹¹⁰ and balances his article between narrative and style. Heath criticizes the idea of style as merely "the decorative inscription of Welles as 'artist' in Touch of Evil, according to the convention that 'individuality' equals 'style' which equals 'deviation from the norm.'"¹¹¹ Style is not simply the mark of the individual genius, separating him or her from artistic convention. Style instead exists in even the most conventional text and produces meaning in its own right. In Heath's analysis, numbers one through four deal with the signified and its interpretation--the "meaning" of Touch of Evil--and numbers five through seven address stylistic questions:

In a sense, the synopsis produces an initial message of the film (a level of denotation) as condition of a secondary message, the film's "theme" or, precisely, its "meaning," and the specific modes of realisation then come back into the argument at this stage as "style" (. . .).¹¹²

In other words, numbers five through seven are the "modes of realisation" of numbers one through four, but mostly

they "realize" "partitions" and "exchange"--in which the thematic meaning of the narrative is to be found.

To summarize Heath's dense Touch of Evil exegesis would require more space than is feasible here, but it is important to understand something of how he uses style in his argument. Touch of Evil is predicated on, among other things, an exchange system by which Susan comes to stand in for the blonde woman who is exploded during the exposition:

The elements of partition at once become terms of exchange: Mexican/American :: Mexican/American or Vargas/Susan :: Blonde/Linneker: Vargas is to Susan as Linneker to the blonde, therefore if Linneker is torn to bits in the explosion, Vargas must be torn from Susan by the force of contagion; Susan is to Vargas as the girl to Linneker, the other--the foreigner--to the man, therefore if the girl is an explosive sexuality that kills Linneker (by metonymy--the very motion of desire), Susan is an uncontrollable demand from which Vargas must separate himself in order to maintain his position (. . .).113

The motive force of the film is desire, the repression of desire's rupturing power. In particular, the object of desire, the blonde, is eliminated at the beginning. Over the course of the film, Susan is placed in the same position as the blonde. This exchange (Susan for blonde), Heath argues, is articulated largely in the use of light. The manner in which Susan is lit--especially the sequence in which a flashlight is directed at her--places her in the position of the blonde because Susan is made into a spectral

image, a thing to be looked at and desired. Touch of Evil, however, cannot contain the realization of desire that is Susan and consequently the text works to destroy not just her, but her image--through style. Style, in the organization of the film's lighting, signifies a pattern of exchange outside of the denotation:

. . . which is to say that the narrative has only cinema--the distance of fetishism--as a knowledge of sexuality: Susan, character, is Zsa Zsa, star, film image; Susan's access to desire is thus the passage of character to actress, to Janet Leigh star, pin-up (. . .); desire in position.¹¹⁴

Style thus plays a much more active role in Heath's analysis than is evident in Cahiers on Young Mr. Lincoln.

Although Heath's work on Touch of Evil recognizes style more than the Cahiers piece, it is important to note that Heath's consideration of style hearkens back to its figurative usage by the auteur critics. Granted, Heath obscures the similarity by his interest in style's positioning of the subject (the viewer) and the psychoanalytic system which he constructs from both the film's narrative and its style, but it remains that his observations on style are the creation of metaphoric, arbitrary connections. To say that Susan's presence in a flashlight beam represents her development into a scopophillic image is no less metaphoric than the intuiting of fatalism from film noir lighting. Heath lends the process Lacanian terminology, but he does not alter significantly the basic metaphoric

mechanism.

Raymond Bellour is the writer who has most influenced my own methodological orientation toward style. The reader will note several points of contact between my analysis of films below and Bellour's piece on The Big Sleep (although I do not share his faith in psychoanalysis). In that article Bellour pays close attention to the workings of style in a short, twelve-shot segment. Using frame enlargements, he breaks the sequence--which he classifies a Metzian "scene"--into seven categories:¹¹⁵

1. "Framing"--long shot, medium shot, close-up, and so on
2. "Stationary" versus "Moving" camera
3. "Angle" of camera
4. "Characters" --presence or absence
5. "Speech"-- which characters speak
6. "Time" --shot duration
7. "Elements of narration"--key narrative action

He then examines the first six in terms of how they favor one character and then the other--developing patterns of repetition ("micro-repetition")¹¹⁶ within the sequence. The sequence works to bring the two characters together stylistically, paralleling their narrative movement toward one another. However, once this stylistically harmonic state is achieved an imbalance is immediately introduced into the sequence. In other words, the sequence begins

to conclude with the two characters placed in an equal, harmonic position but is then imbalanced by an additional shot. This imbalance, Bellour reasons, is the pulsion that drives the narrative forward (which he explains in psychoanalytic terms). Thus the classical cinema is seen to be an interplay of balance and imbalance, constantly driving the narrative forward.

As with Heath, Bellour eliminates consideration of authorial intentions in his stylistic analyses. Style is not interpreted as a decorative flair that the director "adds" to the narrative. Instead, it is understood as the motive force in film narrative units or syntagm. Bellour's detailed investigation of the The Big Sleep sequence gains authority by virtue of its limited field of inquiry. He does not broadly generalize about the entire film, which would substantially dilute his argument, but rather posits a cautious interpretation of stylistic mechanisms within a brief syntagm. While I see this close analysis to be one of Bellour's principal virtues, it severely restricts the scope of his conclusions. As with the literary stylistique critics Bellour favors description over interpretation (my own personal predilection, too). He balks in his "elements of narration" section when he tries to fit the The Big Sleep segment into the context of the entire film. What is needed, therefore, is a model of

filmic description that provides clearly marked avenues for interpretation to travel.

Representation of the Stylistic Signified

Having completed a diachronic, historical survey of interpretations of style, I may now summarize the preceding material and construct a synchronic outline:

- I. Style as Technology or Technique
- II. Style as an Abstract, Non-Representational System
- III. Style as Metaphor
 - A. Expressing the denotation
 - B. Modifying the denotation
 - C. Expressing the thematic

Like the taxonomy of technique (pp. 45-46), this outline cannot lay claim to total objectivity. Indeed, I have simply intuited it. However, it is systematically constructed. It moves from the root source of style (technology) through the physical sound and image of the text (an abstract, not necessarily representational object) to, finally, a more ephemeral, conceptual level (the metaphoric, the thematic). This classification scheme derives from the communication model I present above (see figure 1, p. 36). Technology is an aspect of the cinematic sender; the abstract system is an element of the text itself; and the thematic depends largely upon the interpretive powers of the receiver. Thus

each of the stylistic interpretations particularized in the above outline fastens itself to one term of the communication model. Each interpretation is one type of cinematic meaning, and each belongs to a different context: technological meaning (of the sender), abstract meaning (of the text), and thematic meaning (of the receiver). In sum, style signifies-- or at least bears traces of--elements of its existential production (sender), and of the state of its signifier (text), as well as offering possibilities for conceptual interpretation (receiver).

Style as Technology or Technique

I use Edward Branigan's differentiation between technology and technique above (p. 40). The former, I indicate, is the actual machines and sciences (chemistry, computers, and so on) that produce the cinema. The latter follows from and is created by technology, and names the effect of technology in the text: for example, the technique of the dolly shot as opposed to the actual dolly that facilitated it. At rather infrequent intervals, writing on the cinema has been drawn from style (the patterning of technique) back to the technology originally responsible for that technique. Historically, this type of interpretation has prevailed with the implementation of each major technological change. When sound was first introduced on a widespread

basis, reviews centered on how the sound technology was utilized-- often at the expense of the film's acting, direction (of the visuals), and so on. In the 1950s there was similar discussion revolving around Cinerama, CinemaScope and other wide-screen technology as well as further developments in sound technology (stereophonic sound was introduced to the public) and the short-lived "3-D" process. The presence of technology so intruded into the film texts of the time that songs were even sung about it (see "Stereophonic Sound," sung by Fred Astaire and Janis Page in Silk Stockings, Rouben Mamoulian, 1957). Technology was acknowledged as having an active effect upon cinematic aesthetics. Cinematographer Leon Shamroy's remark on CinemaScope typified the reaction of many: "It wrecked the art of film for a decade."¹¹¹⁷

Customarily, technology is taken for granted by the spectator. The "invisibility" of technology is determined by a principle of normalcy. A technological norm obtains in every cinematic product: at base, a camera of some form or another generates a celluloid strip of chemically formed images that can be projected in intermittent motion and create the illusion of movement. Since every film possesses these characteristics they assume a near-zero value of signification; within our culture (a very important qualification) they have no meaning. Thus the technology under-

lying stylistic technique is interpreted as such only when it differs from the interpretant's time-based, ideologically limited conception of the technological norm. Such is the case with the adoption of "new" technology by the film industry. The spectator will consider this technology significant because it differs from the norm to which he or she is accustomed.

One of the most hotly argued questions of contemporary film aesthetics revolves around the technical (not technological) norm that has come to be known as Hollywood classicism. In the 1950s André Bazin articulated the concept in his highly influential piece, "The Evolution of Film Language" (first collected in book form in 1958, in Qu'est-ce que le Cinéma?):

As for form, the photographic and narrative styles [of 1930s filmmaking] were perfectly clear and they conformed with their subject: a total reconciliation of sound and image. When one re-sees films like William Wyler's Jezebel, John Ford's Stagecoach, or Marcel Carné's Le Jour Se Lève today, one senses an art that has attained a perfect balance, an ideal form of expression. Conversely, one admires dramatic and moral themes which, although not entirely creations of the cinema, were raised to a certain nobility, to an artistic effectiveness that they would not have achieved without it. In short, these were all characteristics of "classic" art in full flower.¹¹⁸

Bazin argues that the cinema approaches classical, organic unity of content and form; style is welded to content through (culturally assumed) conventions of dramatic or narrative logic. Style

is rendered imperceptible by its very logicality. The spectator's mind naturally accepts the camera angles that the director offers him because they are justified by the disposition of the action or the shifting of dramatic interest.¹¹⁹

Technique and technology both submerge into narrative logic-- as is graphically illustrated in figure 5 (p. 95). Bazin believes the classical cinema's "spectator's mind" is led down a diegetic path without noticing, the cobblestones of technique upon which he or she treads (to paraphrase Viktor Shklovsky).

Bazin's formulation of classical film style initiated a debate about its virtues and limitations that continues to the present day. He himself, it must be remembered, was not a proponent of classicism. Leaving the task of its defense to the industry that created it, Bazin developed his own theory of realist cinema. More recently, Peter Wollen and others have attacked classic Hollywood realism as capitalism's tool--taking their cue from Bertolt Brecht and the Russian Formalists of the 1920s. I detail the assault on classicism above (see pp. 114-119), and it is not my intention to fully reprise that debate here. However, it is important to understand that Wollen believes classicism "hides" technique as a result of the machinations of bourgeois ideology. "Transparency" is opposed to "foregrounding" (bringing technique to the spectator's consciousness), by Wollen. He argues, "Traditional cinema is in the direct

line of descent from the Renaissance discovery of perspective and re-formulation of the art of painting, expressed most clearly by Alberti, as providing a window on the world."¹²⁰ Easel painting--as a "window on the world"--aspires to the complete effacement of technique and technology so that content may "show through" the window unmediated. Style becomes transparent; the spectator cannot see it. It is left for the radical, "counter cinema" (Wollen's term) filmmaker to construct films which foreground technique in order to bring to the spectator's attention the work entailed in the filmic chain of signification.

Style as Abstract, Non-Representational System

The second major form of stylistic interpretation abstracts technologically based cinematic techniques into non-representational entities. Since its inception the cinema has been channeled toward representational functions; consequently, its interpretation in non-representational terms has received comparatively little attention. First, it is necessary to lay some theoretical foundations. Cinema, the reader will recall, has been conceptualized above as consisting of space (mise-en-scène), time (editing) and sound. Each of these three components may be abstracted, that is, divorced from their customary mimetic roles and

interpreted solely in terms of their constituent properties. Space becomes the interplay of black-and-white or color forms; time becomes the juxtaposing and ordering of those forms; and sound--the most common abstraction (music)--becomes non-diegetic music and noise, with no meaning beyond rhythm, tone, harmony, and so on. I leave the study of abstract sound to musical theorists and linguists, the abstraction of cinematic space and its interpretation is my principal concern in the following segment.

When interpreting a film the spectator must initially "read" the projected, two-dimensional graphic design that is the cinematic image. Consequently film as an abstract graphic is the level at which the viewer first encounters the image. Most film "readers" use these designs as representational signifiers, understanding them with such alacrity that the cinema seems to be artless mimesis. A shot of a cat sleeping on a rug represents its signified ("cat on rug") with greater immediacy than a written description of the same. There is another, less verifiable, meaning that some viewers interpret from the cinema image. Borrowing from the tradition of art criticism, writers have interpreted the cinema image as graphic design without taking the next step in the signifying chain and reading the graphic design as narrative mimesis. Instead, the design is interpreted in terms of the power of forms:

how the eye presumably travels over the image, tensions and calms that are developed by the relationship of one form to another, and so on. This type of interpretation ignores technologically based film technique and minimalizes film's representational abilities. Rather than cine-technology and the techniques it generates, this type of interpretation addresses the techniques of contemporary art--in particular, the non-representational forms of the Abstract Expressionists. As an example, consider P. Adams Sitney's comment on Peter Kubelka's Adebar (1957)--a film he considers part of the "graphic cinema":

The result of Adebar's laws is a form remarkably similar to [Robert] Breer's Form Phases, where a design is frozen, slowly changed into a new frozen position, then jumps to a different static form and changes. Both films employ reverse field variations in some of the cuts between static holds. This similarity results from similar attempts at purifying the achievements of the early graphic cinema. Furthermore, both forms point to an aesthetic of the single frame as the crux of an investigation of the threshold between stillness and movement.¹²¹

Such interpretations are often devoted to the so-called avant-garde cinema (also known as, "graphic cinema," "experimental film," "independent film," "visionary film," and so on). Ballet Mécanique (Fernand Léger, 1924), Art of Vision (Stan Brakhage, 1965), Lapis (James Whitney, 1963-1966), among others, invite comparison with modern artistic movements. This invitation can be made specifically by the artist in textual or extratextual statements or can

simply be the presumption of the viewer. Robert Breer, for example, is quoted by Sitney as acknowledging, "It's true that my films had their roots in European experimentation [in painting] of the Twenties."¹²² Sitney uses this as partial justification for his linkage of avant-garde film and contemporary painting. More specifically, Sitney comments:

The heirs of Mondrian and Kandinsky accepted their [the Surrealists'] geometry but rejected the Neo-Platonic and theosophic framework in which it had been first expressed. In America, on the other hand, the Surrealist aesthetic merged with Cubism to influence the most Romantic school of twentieth-century painting, the generation of Pollock, Still, Newman, and De Kooning. Robert Breer's aesthetic was formed in Paris just after the war, within the sphere of post-Mondrian abstractionists.¹²³

Sitney's interpretation of Breer is based on extratextual knowledge of Breer himself. As with much writing on the avant-garde film, Sitney takes refuge in the artist's statements.

The aspect most important and most characteristic of this type of interpretation is Sitney's recourse to analogies with twentieth century, non-mimetic art. Once again I return to John Berger's "moment of cubism"--the rupture in art history that turned painting from naturalism to self-reflexivity. Indeed, many art historians feel that the cinema and photography helped to bring about this break. The oil portrait of a cherished family member became extrava-

gant in the era of "snap photos"--and besides, the mimetic details were never as accurate in painting as in even the crudest photograph. Moving pictures were also to have a profound effect on the established art world. Painters in pre-World War I Europe--Picasso, Fernand Léger, Giacomo Balla--were fascinated by the possibilities of movement. Cubist and Futurist art aspired to represent the dynamics of the twentieth century urban environment. In paintings such as Nude Descending a Staircase (Marcel Duchamp, 1912) and Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash (Giacomo Balla, 1912) the illusion of motion was promoted by representing the object in multiple positions. They envied the cinema and its ability to more forcefully convey an illusion of movement (remembering that the cinema is actually a succession of still frames). Standish Lawder, an avant-garde filmmaker and an art historian also, capsulized the unusual cross-germination of easel painting and the cinema in a book devoted entirely to the subject, The Cubist Cinema:

It is easy to see that the image écranique of the cinema with its multiplicity of viewpoints, its restlessly moving image formed quite literally from the patterning of light, has a close correspondence to the flickering surfaces of Cubist and Futurist paintings of the immediate pre-war years, paintings which explored, like film, the phenomenon of movement, both with the Cubists' concern for vision in motion and in the Futurists' obsession for capturing the sensation of objects in motion.¹²⁴

Or as Roger Allard commented more succinctly in 1911, the

Futurists "all have movie cameras in their stomachs."¹²⁵ Their enthusiasm spread from attempting motion on canvas to actually creating films to represent their ideas. These films range from graphic forms in motion (the work of Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling) to partially recognizable objects used for the purposes of graphic design (Léger's Ballet Mécanique, 1924). The films of Richter, Eggeling, Léger and others have been interpreted stylistically in terms of their deployment of graphic forms, not in terms of mimesis. This then is one major impact of modern art on the cinema. Just as Cubism has loosed oil painting from the bounds of representation--and thus anticipated the Abstract Expressionists--so has it facilitated a film style distinct from the mainstream of naturalist representation-alism. As Richter and his colleagues' films are not stylistically conventional, they do not suggest a conventional interpretation. Their interpretation necessitates a modern understanding of post-Cubist painting--that is, if the films are to have any meaning for the spectator. The style of these films has most often been interpreted in terms of the organization of the signifier--without deriving a mimetic or diegetic signified from that signifier. Style is interpreted for the sake of style. Not surprisingly, these interpretations often rely upon the vocabulary of the art historian--the post-Cubist art historian.

Interpretations of the cinema as abstract art have gravitated toward the cinematic avant garde. However, such interpretations extend beyond the realm of the avant garde, too. Today narrative film is also written about in the vocabulary of formal criticism. Articles appear in Artforum¹²⁶ and Afterimage detailing the formal schema of films such as Eisenstein's October (1927). Ignoring the narrative intentions of a filmmaker, this type of interpretation concentrates on formal design to the exclusion of all else--the diegetic function of that design, the emotional impact of it on the spectator, and so on. While this type of interpretation (and it is not a very popular one) may appear to be an injustice to the spirit of a narrative film, it does develop into a valid interpretive exercise if placed into a proper context. Simply to quantify the number of times Eisenstein cut from a diagonal composition to a horizontal one would be sterile and misguided. For such an exercise to be of value in understanding film it would be necessary to contextualize it by linking it to a thematic (for example, Eisenstein cuts from horizontal, rural shots to vertical, urban shots to emphasize the country/city conflict), an emotional effect (for example, Eisenstein's montage agitates the audience as part of a build-up to a fevered, revolutionary pitch), and so forth. In sum, the study of a film's style as an accumulation

of non-representational forms is of value only when it passes through description of those forms to an interpretation of them within any of a number of contexts.

Style as Narrative or Thematic Metaphor

I have devoted substantial space to the idea of style as metaphor in the writings of auteur mise-en-scène criticism (see pp. 96-114). Reviewing that argument, in interpreting style as a metaphor the spectator derives meaning from style based upon the stylistic signifier's context (the syntagmatic chain) and the cultural codes governing "symbolic" signs (a paradigmatic relationship). There is no necessary or natural logic compelling a signifier to be interpreted in a specific metaphoric fashion.

To repeat: the three basic ways in which style has been interpreted metaphorically are:

- A. Expressing the denotation
- B. Modifying the denotation
- C. Expressing the thematic

As I indicate above in terms of the mise-en-scène auteur critics, style supports denotation in metaphoric fashion. To interpret it so is a process of first noting a formal design and then particularizing a narrative element.

(Though of course this could also happen in the reverse order.) Finally, a relationship between the two is intuited,

remembering that that intuition is shaped by culturally determined codes as well as the viewer's own distinct personality.

In similar fashion, a film's formal system may modify the denotation. Once again the viewer will intuit a relationship between a formal pattern and a narrative event. In this instance, however, the relationship is one of conflict rather than support. As illustration, consider this comment by Susan Sontag:

In Winter Light and The Silence, the beauty and visual sophistication of the images subvert before our eyes the callow pseudo-intellectuality of the story and some of the dialogue.¹²⁷

Bergman's stylistic design, which Sontag feels is both beautiful and visually sophisticated, clashes with his low level of narrative skill. In this case the result is a positive one, in Sontag's judgement. More importantly, it indicates how one may be detached from the denotation by the operation of the visual design, of style. On a broader scale, this detachment is known as irony. Repeating Elsaesser's understanding of irony: "It names all the strategies of displacement, distanciation, detachment . . . whereby a statement, a message, a communication, image or action may be qualified, put in question, subverted, parodied or indeed wholly negated while preserving visible that to which it refers itself ironically."¹²⁸ Style as

a formal system that modifies the denotation is one such strategy. Although Sontag's remark generalizes broadly about Bergman's films, she could presumably speak much more specifically about sequences that are undermined (and aesthetically "saved") by stylistic design. In many so-called modernist films the visual design seems to "overwhelm" the signified and draw attention to itself as visual design rather than carrier of mimetic meaning. Last Year at Marienbad (Alain Resnais, 1961) is probably the most famous and, within the bounds of feature film production, the most extreme undercutting of narrative in favor of visual design. The denotation in that film is modified to the point of non-existence. The narrative opens several enigmas that are never closed--as a result, it almost seems, of the incessant tracking about the halls of the mansion and the careful manipulation of light and dark visual schemata. Interpretations of this film frequently focus on its stylistic system and surrender to the impenetrability of the narrative. This form of interpretation differs from the stylistic interpretation of avant-garde film principally because the interpretant assumes a narrative presence that does not necessarily obtain in experimental films. Marienbad's narrative is obscure and perhaps overly remote, but most spectator's assume it exists--if only in fragmentary form--somewhere

within the stylistic arabesques. (Such an explanation does not apply, usually, to Art of Vision.) The culturally determined desire for narrative arises from a constellation of spectator expectations--some controlled by the text and some extratextual. In the case of Marienbad, the viewer intuits not just the relationship between style and story, but the story itself.

The final classification of style as metaphor is as it expresses the thematic. I discuss this above in reference to Alain Silver's piece on Kiss Me Deadly. Through essentially the same semiotic process governing style as narrative metaphor, style can be read as signifying a thematic or "figurative" (Silver's term) signified. This interpretation relies on the intuition of a relationship between a stylistic pattern and a concept or idea rather than a narrative event or relationship. This distinction is a fine one when examined closely; after all, narrative is an "idea," too. But the concept remains an operative one because style as theme grows out of style as narrative. For example, one of the major thematic points that Silver makes is that the visual style of Kiss Me Deadly creates an ambience of fatalism and nuclear doom. In order to communicate this idea, however, there must be a character, a narrative element, placed in this ambience. Ideas expressed in narrative film are always expressed through the characters

and characters always serve a narrative function. There can be no story without characters and there can be no characters without a story--even if it is an open-ended one such as Marienbad. Thus, Silver's consideration of style as thematic metaphor grounds itself in the relationship between the character's physical presence on screen and their placement in the mise-en-scène. Mike Hammer is enclosed by a dark, low-key mise-en-scène that Silver interprets as "threatening" (darkness does not necessarily signify "threatening") and, continuing his intuited relationship of character and style, further interprets as expressing the idea, fatalism.

Summary

So it can be seen that the history of writings on cinematic style reaches back to the very beginning of film theory. For as long as film has been recognized as an art form, men and women have endeavored to understand how that art is patterned. It is curious, therefore, that this outpouring of thought on style has produced very few interpretive types: (1) style as technology or technique, (2) style as an abstract system, and (3) style as metaphor. These three classifications of stylistic interpretation must now be connected with the understanding of the stylistic signifier presented in chapter 3. In short, my next project is to construct a theory of the stylistic sign.

CHAPTER V

THE STYLISTIC SIGN

Style creates meaning.

This has been the litany of my investigation so far. But how does it create meaning? What are the processes of stylistic signification? If the patterning of film technique is style's signifier and if the interpretation of style (as technology, as abstract system or as narrative/thematic metaphor) is its signified, how then does the spectator get from signifier to signified? How is that meaning produced? In short, what is the stylistic sign?

To begin to answer these questions I must tread highly dangerous ground. Semiotics is flooded with schemata such as I am about to suggest that purport to diagram the structure of the sign. Indeed, it is at this most elemental level that one of the biggest splits in semiotic study occurs; two camps huddle around either de Saussure's or Peirce's model of the sign. Why, the reader might rightfully query, do we need yet another model of signification? The answer, as I see it, is twofold. First, de Saussure and Peirce created broad, open-ended constructs to deal with the infinite semiotic systems. Obviously they could not foresee the special needs of narrative film, which was

still in its infancy when they were devising their respective semiotics. Second, the semiotics models with which I am familiar (and I do not here claim exhaustive knowledge) are not designed to deal with style and, in particular, with style in film. In many respects style exists slightly outside the bounds of conventional semiotic theory, skulking about somewhere in the neighborhood of connotation. Metz takes a few tentative steps toward a theory of style in Language and Cinema when he touches on "codes of expression" vis a vis "codes of content."¹ In commenting briefly on these codes Metz remarks:

Such a study [into codes of expression/content] could not even be begun here. We only wish to situate these codes, as from the outside, in relation to others (. . .); to mark their place in some way.²

To date, Metz's work on the cinema has dealt almost exclusively with "problems of denotation in the fiction film" (a chapter title from Film Language) and vacillated on the function of style in that denotation.

The evanescent, connotative nature of stylistic signification in film has deterred most semioticians. Indeed, I am not certain that a theory of style can be made "respectable"; that it can be made rigorous enough to withstand the scrutiny of semiotic methodology. I do believe, however, that a model of stylistic signification must be attempted--if only to indicate where the greatest problems lie.

The Barthesian Model
of the Chain of Signification

When one first begins semiotic study it appears that the significatory world is divided into two convenient groups the signifiers (words, images, sounds, and so on) and the signifieds (concepts, referents). A stop sign signifies the command to stop. The word "dog" signifies a canine animal. The signifier/signified dichotomy is true enough, but incomplete. It fails to allow for meanings beyond simple denotation. Within certain cultures a stop sign orders one to stop and it also represents "law and order"--a structured system of governing that includes the operation of motor vehicles. "Dog" represents the physical fact of a dog, but it also can signify faithfulness, loveliness, and so on. There is an unending chain of meanings that begins with even the simplest significatory act. Almost no signifier escapes it.

Recognizing the complexity of the signification process Roland Barthes notes,

We must be on our guard, for despite common parlance which simply says that the signifier expresses the signified, we are dealing in any semiological system, not with two, but with three different terms. For what we grasp is not at all one term after the other, but the correlation which unites them: there are, therefore, the signifier, the signified and the sign, which is the associative total of the first two terms.³

Sign unites signifier and signified to produce the total, global significance of the semiotic act. This significance

is not just the signified, but also the meanings that it carries by virtue of its particular signifier. "Dog" (a signifier) floats freely on the level of interpretation; these three letters have no natural meaning. To someone who speaks no English, "dog" has no meaning whatsoever (beyond, of course, "an English word"). Once weighted with the proper signified, set within the context of the English language, "dog" participates in a semiotic act. It becomes a sign: a signified apprehended through a signifier. Practically speaking one cannot know a signified any other way, but on an analytical level the distinction can be made. With the "dog" sign established we are drawn to the second level of signification. "Dog," when placed in the context of, say, American culture of the late twentieth century, signifies loyalty, trust. This, it must be stressed, is an ideological signification. It is only possible within the bounds of a particular system of ideas, and arises from the correlation of "dog" and the concept of a dog. The "dog" sign (signifier and signified) has become a signifier on this second, ideological level of signification. It has come to signify loyalty--a second level signified. Barthes names this second level, "myth." I have reproduced his graph of this tripartite conception of the signification act in figure 7 (p. 155).

The first level signified enters a certain field of

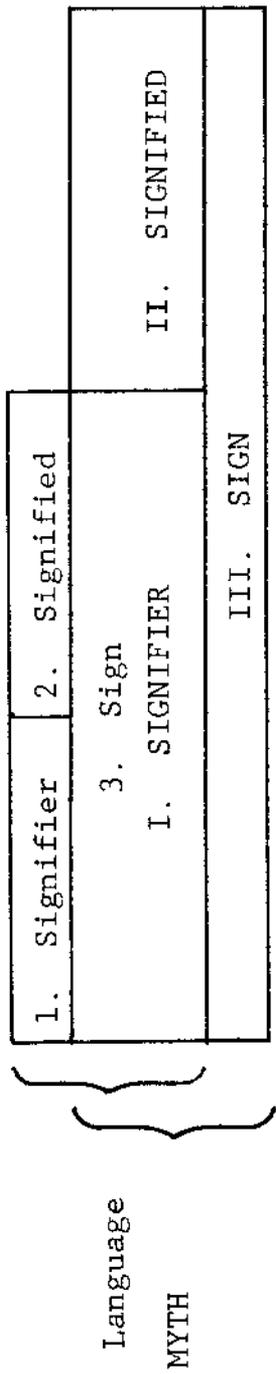


Figure 7. Barthes' Model of the Signification Act

associations because it is represented by a specific signifier. The correlation of this signified with this signifier is marked by the term, "sign"-- the "associative total" of signifier and signified. The sign itself, then, represents possible ideological or mythic signifieds. Thus it is a signifier on this second level. It, too, is correlated with a (second level) signified to produce a "higher" associative total, a second level sign. This chain, determined by the mythic structure of a particular culture, can continue without end; each sign becomes the signifier on another level. One must remember, of course, that terms such as "higher" and "second level" are being used metaphorically. In the actual act of signification, the reader does not consciously work his or her way up a staircase of meanings. Rather, those meanings exist simultaneously. Mythic signifieds comprise the ideological underpinnings of a culture, including unrecognized, common-sensical understandings of human nature. Indeed, some cultural theorists such as Marxist Louis Althusser maintain that ideology is specifically the unspoken ideation of a people's approach to the material conditions of life.

Barthes' diagram suggests several possibilities for the study of stylistic signification. Most important among these is that style may not be a first level attribute; its significance may well arise on a higher

semiotic plane. Barthes' first level signifier is the material of the particular semiotic system under consideration. It could be words, stop signs, paintings, and so on. These materials possess a certain significance within their language system (de Saussure's "langue") that results in meaning. What semiotic structure, then, imbues the sign, as second level signifier, with significance? Barthes' model supplies an answer--if I may be allowed to enrich its original scheme. I suggest that style, patterning the base material to produce meaning, is just this structure, although Barthes does not so specify it. For it is style that makes the choice of one signifier over another similar one significant, and thus it is the basis for the "associative total" of meaning that Barthes notes. Style informs all comparisons and associations in the signifiatory act.

The concept of style as choice (or the potential for choice) is commonly found in literary studies and linguistics. The selection of one particular word rather than another, or the selection of one sentence structure over another is said to comprise the style of a particular writer. The final choice made gathers meaning by the reader's association with potential substitutions. For the study of literature this can have two implications among many. First, it can be used to second-guess the writer's intentions (the intentional fallacy). Second, ignoring authorial inten-

tions, it can be used to indicate the potential substitutions comprising a paradigm of similar words that the reader carries with him or her as the result of previous experience. I use the term, "paradigm," to refer to a pattern of association--a "vertical" structure intersecting the "horizontal" movement of the text. Paradigms shape the reader's interpretations of a given signifier (a word, in this instance) through the process of comparison with the other members of the paradigm, whether or not the reader is cognizant of this process of comparison. For example, in the simple sentence,

Betsy scratches an itch.

the author has chosen from a broad variety of roughly, but not exactly, equivalent words--a paradigm of "words similar to scratches." In chart form they would look like this:

	scores	
	gashes	
	scrapes	
Betsy	<u>scratches</u>	an itch.
	rasps	
	wounds	
	lacerates	
	defaces	

The reader, whether or not he or she can verify the author's intentions, apprehends a first level signified here as "a woman scratches an itch," but the choice of signifiers allows for a second level of meaning. Placed in the paradigm,

"words similar to scratches," the choice made bears meaning in associations with the alternatives. This meaning, then, is the second level signified of Barthes' diagram; a material element (the "scratch" sign, as signs are the material of the second level just as words are the material of the first) has been placed in a pattern (the "scratch" paradigm) that creates "additional" meaning for it. Finally, it should be noted that word choice is obviously not the only type of stylistic choice made in literature. A writer also selects sentence structure. My example above could have been written,

An itch is being scratched by Betsy.

This structural shift, as in the example of word choice, also carries semantic freight with it--determined by the paradigm of syntax. Once again, the potential for choice establishes interpretive paradigms--associative patterns that provide a second level of meaning for the reader. This "potential for choice" determines the style of the text.

A Model of Signification in Narrative Film

Although Barthes wrote occasionally on film, his model of signification (as I have amended it with the concept of the paradigm) need not necessarily find full application in the cinema. Indeed, I am immediately wary

of studies that propose to transcribe the theories of one art into another--as some film semioticians have done. Barthes' model holds out more hope than others, however, because he devised it to deal with the cinema's close neighbor and ancestor, the still photograph. In the following segment I have precipitated out of "Myth Today" the elements most applicable to film without feeling constrained to mold the cinema to the shape of Barthes' model.

I concur with Barthes to the extent that signification must be viewed as a multi-level process of meaning. It cannot be calcified into the simplistic structure of signifier/signified. Beyond that, however, the first level of signification in the cinema is much more productive than Barthes' diagram allows. There is much meaning that the filmic spectator receives before reaching the level of myth--recognizing again that "before" is being used metaphorically and that the act of semiosis is not a durational one. The reason for the cinema's semiotic potency lies in the unusual nature of the cinematic sign. For, from the very first frame, a narrative film incorporates all three of Peirce's types of signs: indexical, iconic, symbolic.⁵ Furthermore, the cinematic sign (a shot) is not just the basic unit of meaning, but actually contains many signs within it and becomes what is known as a syntagm (the basic

unit of narrative, in film). To have a sign capable of becoming a syntagm seriously complicates the establishment of basic axioms for a cinematic semiotics. The establishment of a basic unit of meaning for the cinema is not part of the task of the present paper, but it is important to recognize that the shot is much more meaningful (possesses more meanings, indeed) than many other signs. As early film-as-language theorists quickly realized, the: shot "says" much more than the word. For example, a shot of a dog on a porch is not equivalent to the phrase, "a dog on a porch," but rather indicates more: "a brown dog, on a specific porch, sitting in the sun," and so on. If a linguistic correlative must be found, the shot is probably closest to a paragraph. Thus the cinema requires a model of signification that allows for, in a sense, three signs (indexical, iconic, symbolic) from one signifier (light and shadow on a screen).

In keeping with Barthes' spatial representation of the process of signification, I have developed my own diagram of cinematic signification in order to cope with the cinematic sign's exceptional semiotic fecundity (see figure 8, p. 162). To allow for the multivalence of some of the signifiers I have discarded Barthes' contiguous rectangles in favor of rectangles connected by bars--which themselves represent aspects of the act of signification.

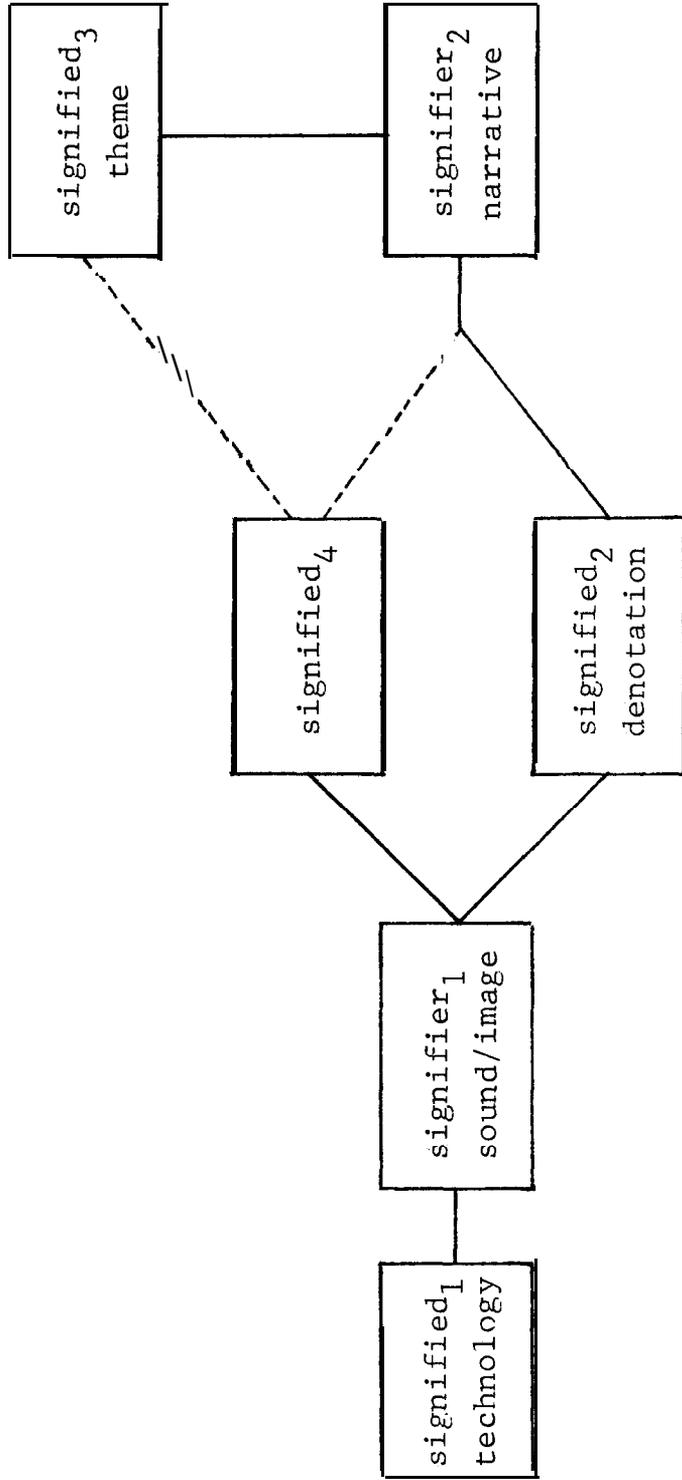


Figure 8 A Model of Cinematic Signification

Additionally, I have rotated his axis ninety degrees, onto a horizontal plane. My reason for so doing (which will become clearer as I proceed) is to parallel the simple communication model I have had recourse to before (see figure 1, p. 36). Here, sender = cinema technology, text = the film image, and receiver = the film viewer.

A shot is the cinema's first level signifier--what I will call "signifier₁." This is the simple physical level of the text: light (sometimes colored) and shade on a reflective surface, usually accompanied by sound. Signifier₁ has three immediate signifieds:

1. Signified₁ = technology = indexical sign
2. Signified₂ = denotation = iconic sign
3. Signified₄ = the stylistic signified = symbolic sign

Each of these exists below the level of myth and yet is not accounted for in Barthes' diagram. Allow me to discuss them one at a time.

Cinema, as most viewers know, is a technological art form. As such it bears the traces of technology in its signifier. With only rudimentary knowledge of cinematic technology, we literally see technology's work in the form of film technique. Technique, the reader will recall, is distinguished from technology in that it is an element of the text. (This relationship is further discussed in chapter 3.) There is an existential link between signifier₁

and signified₁ (technology), which qualifies it as an indexical sign. The former was caused by the latter just as Friday's footprint was caused by Friday's foot in Robinson Crusoe (Peirce's example). Consider as an example the recent Russian film Five Evenings (Nikita Mikhalkov, 1978). With the exception of the last few minutes the entire picture is in black-and-white. However, it has been printed on color film stock. Consequently, the film has a slightly bluish tint to it--a tint that signifies to the experienced filmgoer that the black-and-white original footage was printed on color stock. Thus bluish tint (signifier₁) signifies a specific use of technology (signified₁). As discussed in chapters 3 and 4, technological meaning does not frequently concern the average viewer; it becomes "visible" only in times of major technological change (especially, the coming of sound). Its very consistency encourages the viewer to take it for granted. Its assumed existential link--whether actual or not--sets it within the category of the index.

Peirce's controversial iconic sign is defined as one in which the signified bears a structural correspondence to the signifier. A street map, for example, translates the directionality and shape of three-dimensional roads and surfaces into two-dimensional lines and forms.

(Importantly, Peirce's iconic sign, or icon, is not to be

confused with the art historical study of iconography which concerns itself with imagistic symbolism.) The narrative film image is also iconic in one respect: it signifies the existents of a story, which is to say, its characters and settings, through a two-dimensional image that structurally resembles a three-dimensional visual field. The structure of this resemblance is governed by the code of Renaissance perspective. Usually in the case of iconicity the analyst must assume knowledge of the signifier's referent (the real life signified) and it is here that critics of the concept are most acrimonious. But in the case of narrative film the viewer recognizes, a priori, that the figures on the screen are not real life, but just a plausible representation of it. He or she suspends disbelief enough to enter into the drama, acknowledging at some level that it is a lie. Even so, the representational cinematic image contains the residue of mimesis; it does structurally resemble the visible field it signifies: people, locations, objects, and so on. Although the cinema is conventionalized and coded, it is not so much so that one does not immediately recognize a film of a dog on a porch as signifying a dog on a porch. Even without familiarity with the code of the cinema one can still understand it--unlike, for example, the English language.

"Signified₂," therefore, is what is generally known as the content of a narrative film: characters in action in a setting. This is what Metz details when he studies denotation, for signified₂ is the first level in the chain of narrative signification--the telling of a story. This marks the position of the "story" elements that will be formed into "narrative." This distinction arises from literary study that posits a "story" level in fiction--that is, characters in action without structure and emptied of further significance from the story. Watching these events on film the spectator organizes the denotation (signified₂) into narrative, a second level signifier--which I label signifier₂. As in Barthes' sign, signifier₂ (narrative) is the associative total of signifier₁ (sound/image) and signified₂ (denotation). Signifier₂ is denotation rendered in a specific way and it is this ordering of the denotation, of story elements, that I can "form." (Form patterns story events; style patterns technique, but more on this below.) What is it, then, that narrative (signifier₂) signifies? As indicated by Barthes' diagram, we have reached a mythic or ideological plane. This next signified is the theme of the film--signified by the structure of the narrative, which sets one character against another, one character against him/herself or one character against a setting. The ordered conflict of the existents in narrative produces

the theme. This upper plane of signification I label "signified₃."

To recap this narrative signification structure: The sound/image of various shots or even just one shot (signifier₁) iconically signifies a series of events involving a variety of existents (denotation, signified₂). This series of events, ordered by form, creates narrative (signifier₂) which signifies the film's theme (signified₃). One accessible example of this structure would be Jean Renoir's Grand Illusion (1938). Signifier₁ is the physical text of the film: black-and-white images, accompanied by music, noise, and French, German and English dialogue, and presented over time. These images signify the existents, men reacting with one another in the setting of several prison camps during World War I--which is the denotation, signified₂. These events are shaped by form into the conflict between specific men who are significantly identified as being of different classes: aristocracy (de Boildieu and von Rauffenstein--played by Pierre Fresnay and Erich von Stroheim, respectively), bourgeoisie (Rosenthal--Marcel Dalio) and proletariat (Maréchal--Jean Gabin). This forms the narrative, signifier₂. The death of de Boildieu, in the context of other narrative events, suggests a theme (signified₃): the aristocracy is tumbling and the bourgeoisie is on the rise.

The Work of Style in the
Signification Model

It is one of the axiomatic givens of the present study that style does produce meaning. I have theorized that this meaning is separate from both technology and denotation-- though it may bear relationships to these two. Thus, the stylistic signified must be positioned next to signifier₁ (the base source for all signifieds) and distinct from signified₁ or signified₂. I have named this position "signified₄." It must be remembered that style itself is not contained in the physical text (signifier₁), nor is it an element of meaning (signified₄). Rather, style is the organization of technique (an element of the text) to produce meaning. Consequently, style is represented by the bar between signifier₁ and signified₄. Better still, the stylistic sign includes signifier₁, signified₄ and the bar in between. This brings us back to Barthes and his contention that the sign is the associative total of signifier and signified. Signified₄ enters a specific plane of associations by virtue of its representation by the patterning of technique in signifier₁. Its total significance is unlike any other meaning communicated by signifier₁. Finally, as the stylistic signified is neither existentially caused by its signifier (as in an indexical sign) or structurally similar to its signifier

(as in an iconic sign), it must be classified as a symbolic sign and thereby completes Peirce's trinity. As in all symbolic signs, the stylistic signified is determined by culturally determined conventions and the individual psychology of the viewer. This does not mean, however, that the stylistic signified is not governed by certain semiotic structures. These structures may be described in the following ways.

Stylistic meaning enters into a complex, three-pronged relationship with other elements of the signification process:

1. The text (signifier₁)
2. The denotation (signified₂)
3. The theme (signified₃)

These relationships are somewhat clumsily indicated by the bars from signified₄ to the appropriate rectangle.

There is little direct meaning that style produces from the physical text without it being associated with narrative and/or theme. Devoid of those conceptual frameworks, style's production of meaning (signified₄) exists as the description of techniques in tension, occurring over time. Much as signified₂ is but the bare bones of denotation, so signified₄ is just a description of audio-visual tensions--such as I discuss above with regard to the avant-garde cinema. A frame enlargement

from A Man's Castle (Frank Borzage, 1934) illustrates my argument (see figure 8, p. 171). The initial stylistic "meaning" from this shot can be approximated verbally as: soft-focus image dominated by rounded forms (the hat, its shadow on the figure's forehead), contrasted at its lower extreme by the graph-like design of her dress and the broad path of white caused by the collar. The similar tone of the figure's head and hat, and the (painted) background blends her into it. Overall, the composition is very painterly (Wöfflin's term for paintings in which shapes are blurred into one another--as opposed to "linear" compositions, see pp. 7-9). At this level of "reading" the signifier is merely a pretext for abstract design. Some films, usually through extra-textual media such as press releases or the artist's comments, seem to court this description of stylistic forms--see, for example, the avant-garde cinema, John Ford's The Informer (1935), or Michelangelo Antonioni's The Passenger (1975). We call these films "stylized"; signified₄ occupies a dominant position in the interpretation of the text. The classical Hollywood film, in general, avoids obvious stylization, but that does not mean its output cannot be interpreted in terms of graphic tensions--such as my example from A Man's Castle, a mainstream classical film from classicism's so-called golden era. Interpreting classical film in terms



Figure 9. A Man's Castle

of graphic tensions only requires a more determined analyst. Consciously or not, all stylistic interpretation demands this initial step; for signified₄ forms the basis for all the upper level meanings.

I note above, parenthetically, that "form patterns story events; style patterns technique" (p. 166). This statement somewhat misrepresents form's functioning, however. In truth, form and style work together to produce narrative in fiction film: signified₄ and signified₂ conjoin under the orders of style and form, respectively, to create signifier₂. Returning to A Man's Castle, we can see that the visual style of the shot mentioned above creates a pattern that may be metaphorically associated with softness and vulnerability--one of the principal characteristics of this existent element, Trina (Loretta Young). I must emphasize that this is a type of metaphor; fuzziness of image does not necessarily or "naturally" signify vulnerability or even softness. My use of the term, "metaphor," stems from Roman Jakobson's distinction between it and metonymy. In distinguishing poetic language from prose language, he contends that all verbal communication is aligned along two axes, the metaphoric and the metonymic.⁶ Poetry is associated with the "vertical" axis of metaphor--of association and presumed choice (paradigmatic). Prose, in contrast, exists on the "horizontal" axis of metonymy--

of contiguity and combination (syntagmatic). (This use of "metonymy" should not be confused with its more common meaning as a figure of speech in which a part comes to represent a whole--for example, "crown" signifying an entire kingdom.) In the present example, soft focus signifies vulnerability metaphorically, by association, and so I mark the connection between signified₄ and signifier₂ with a broken bar. This semiotic "looseness" between signified₄ and signifier₂ is what allows for the phenomenon of irony. Since stylistic meaning is not necessarily or naturally linked to the denotation it may indeed conflict with or undercut it. (See the discussion of irony at several points above.) To return to the example at hand, A Man's Castle's signified₄, in conjunction with the form-ordered denotation, produces the narrative of a young, homeless woman set in conflict with a gruff, itinerant man (Bill--Spencer Tracy). In sum, signified₄, governed by style, and signified₂, governed by form, cohere to form a higher level signifier, signifier₂. The correlation of these three terms, rather than the customary two (signifier and signified) produces an "associative total" (Barthes) that might well be termed the "narrative sign." The story of Trina and Bill (level of denotation) becomes a narrative capable of signifying a theme (signified₃). A Man's Castle's theme might be expressed as the tension between lives of

poverty and uncertainty (and a degree of freedom), and those of relative comfort, but stultifying stability. Bill represents the former, Trina the latter. By bringing the two of them together into a narrative, a concept (theme, or signified₃) is generated. The pattern of this "chain of events in cause/effect relationship presented over time" (Bordwell and Thompson's definition of narrative) is what I have been calling form; the reinforcement of this chain through the pattern of textual technique is style. The reader will recall the segments above detailing previous interpretations of style as a narrative metaphor (see chapter 4). In the context of my diagram, form is the bar between signified₂ and signifier₂; the second level of style (style₂) is the bar from signified₄ to signifier₂; and the narrative sign is the constellation of all three terms and the bars connecting them.

The final avenue of stylistic meaning is represented by the broken line from signified₄ to signified₃--so marked because, as with the connection between signified₄ and narrative, its significance varies considerably from one spectator to the next. (Eco would call the relationship "undercoded.") In chapter 4 I recorded some of the ways style has been interpreted thematically. In each instance the patterning of technique (style) in a specific film is seen to signify a concept, rather than amplifying the

actions of the characters--as I discuss immediately above. I posit that the relationship between signified₄ and signified₃ is also a metaphoric one. The paradigmatic nature of metaphor structures the relationship between signified₄ and signified₃. These two signifieds are associated by the viewer's recognition of similarity and difference-- similarity on a conceptual level (plane of the signified) and difference on the level of signification (plane of the signifier). This is perhaps best understood when considered in terms of film noir (a highly stylized genre) rather than A Man's Castle, in which metaphoric potentialities are only hinted at in the shot of Trina used above.

Night and the City, directed by Jules Dassin, serves as an exemplar representative of film noir's use of visual style. As Carlos Clarens comments, ". . . Night and the City (1950) summarized his [Dassin's] film noir period, simply because it pushed the premises and the style to excess."⁷ In the film, Harry Fabian (Richard Widmark) is often placed within constrictive, angular shadows--much as Mike Hammer in Kiss Me Deadly. The viewer interprets light as a realm of freedom of movement and blackness as imprisonment. "Shadows on a low ceiling form a cage-like pattern and brick walls suggest an inescapable prison of the soul,"⁸ remarks Clarens. In reality, of course, the

human body can move as easily in dark as in light. No matter, signified₄ could be entrapment according to the conventions of lighting--a stylistic convention. The narrative (signifier₂) also represents constriction and entrapment, but through a series of actions (story) organized into a narrative in which Fabian struggles to break free of his economic enslavement. Thus signified₂ and signified₄ are linked by the similarity of concept at the same time difference is marked by the mode of expression. A visual pattern is the signifier for signified₄; narrative structure serves as the signifier for signified₂. As in all metaphoric acts of signification, the viewer/reader/spectator "vertically" associates two dissimilar signifiers by producing a similarity in the signifieds.

The Paradigms of Cinematic Style

Many of the preceding pages deal with the interlocking concepts of metaphor and paradigm. Before concluding this theory of the stylistic sign I return to these terms once again to summarize some of what has been said before and extend it further to facilitate the project of the following chapter--that is, the stylistic analysis of a short segment of the two versions of Imitation of Life (John Stahl, 1934, and Douglas Sirk, 1959).

Jakobson argues that paradigmatic and syntagmatic

axes operate in every semiotic system. In the cinema the syntagm is the smallest narrative unit and is "intersected" by an unlimited number of paradigmatic associations. It is important to realize however that paradigms do not simply cross a film's diegesis in tidy vertical lines as in figure 10 (p. 178). Here the horizontal line represents a chain of syntagms (the denotaton, signified₂) while the vertical lines suggest different paradigms that intersect the film's denotative progression. Consider by way of example the first sequence from The Killers (Don Siegel, 1964), more specifically, the opening shot: a close-up of Lee (Clu Gulager). He wears very dark sunglasses in which Charlie's (Lee Marvin) body is dimly reflected. Within the paradigm "eye-glasses" (a vertical line above), sunglasses derive meaning from association with other types of frames and lenses. They conceal the character's eyes, make him seem more threatening and, in the 1960s, were often linked to automaton-like characters (cf. the "man with no eyes" in Cool Hand Luke, Stuart Rosenberg, 1967); which are meanings derived from an implied comparison of Lee's sunglasses with other eyeglasses--an implied choice by the director from among a set of alternative eyeglasses. As the film progresses, however, they are also retroactively associated with themes of blindness and sight. The first sequence, in fact, is a killing in a school for the blind. The paradigm of eyes and

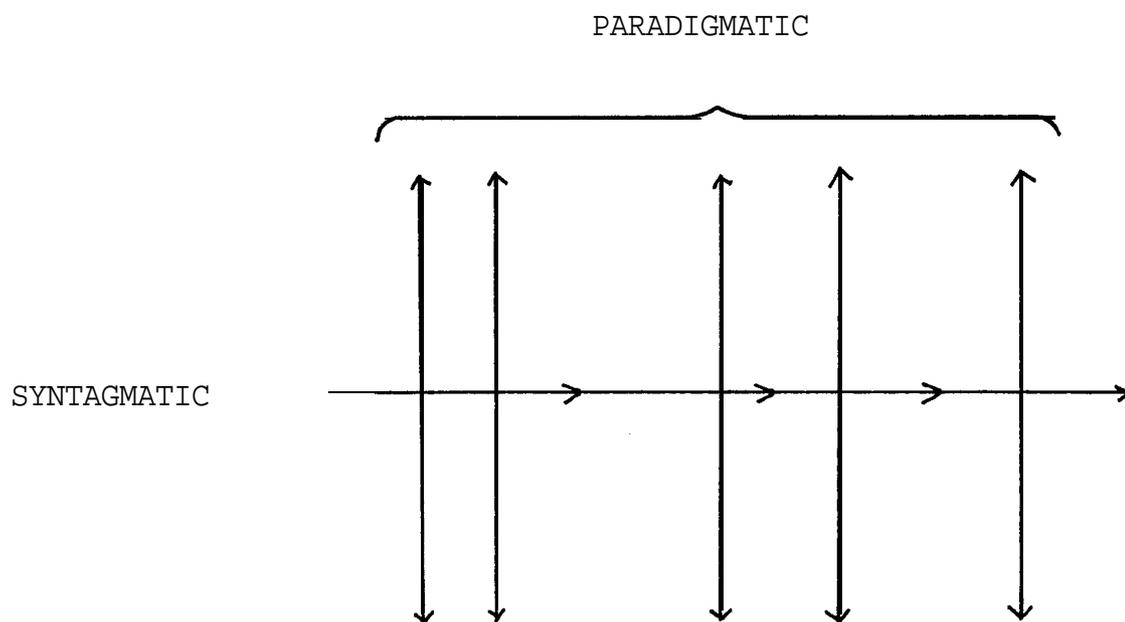


Figure 10. A Model of the Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Axes

their coverings develops over the course of the film. It is thus a paradigm limited to this particular text, and an element of the film's narrative form (signifier₂). Since a paradigm is any structure of organization based on type (or possible substitution/choice) they can be found both within and without texts. A diagram of the paradigmatic/syntagmatic axes should more properly look like figure 11 (p. 180) in order to accommodate the vectors of meaning that intersect at one particular point (for example, Lee's sunglasses) in the text--meanings that derive from both textual and extratextual association.

A paradigm, therefore, marks the associative code by which the viewer interprets the cinematic signifier. Consciously or not, the viewer is constantly making comparisons between signifier₁ and all the other potential alternatives. This poses a very thorny problem for linguistic and literary study: how is the analyst to know what constitutes similarity? And if one cannot know precisely the boundaries of similarity, then how can one pose a paradigmatic relationship between a particular word and its unspoken alternatives? In short, can synonymy exist? In my linguistic example of paradigmatic structure above ("Betsy scratches an itch") I make some common sense equations for "scratches" that are listed in Roget's Thesaurus, but which cannot withstand the rigor of linguistic analysis. Does "wounds" equal "scratches"?

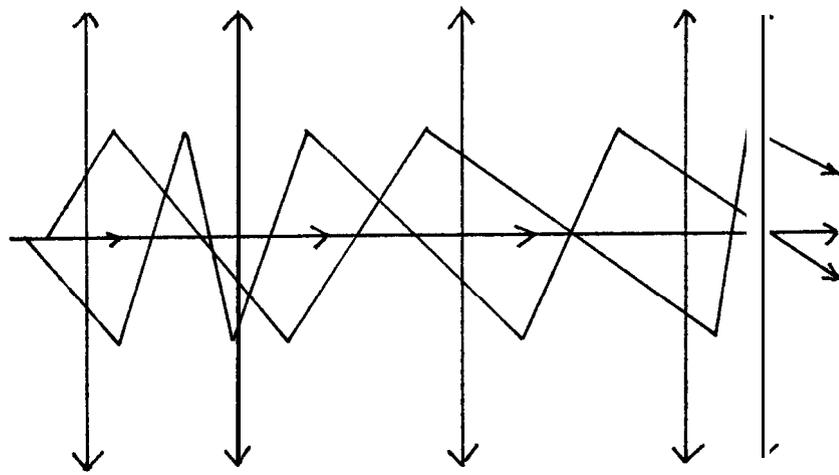


Figure 11. The Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Axes:
Revised Model

Would a synonym for "wounds" also serve for "scratches"? If not, why not? What criterion makes certain words close enough to warrant comparison?

For the film theorist some of this confusion is obviated by the cinema's roots in technology. For technology delimits the cinema's stylistic paradigms. In this instance, similarity is determined by the necessary, indexical technological base of technique. For example, the lighting in Citizen Kane and that in Singin' in the Rain (Stanley Donan and Gene Kelly, 1952) are in one sense "synonymous": they coexist in the paradigm "lighting" and share the commonality of light and shadow reflecting off of a surface. They differ, then, in the amount of light and its directionality--but the core similarity of lighting's technological base remains. Each of the categories of technique articulated in chapter 3 comprises a paradigm of cinematic style. Each circumscribes choice in a way that is not to be found in literature. The particular choices from these categories, these paradigms, articulates the style of a film. Or, in other words, these choices of technique--both filmic and profilmic-- form the pattern that is cinematic style. We interpret the style of a film through the mechanism of the paradigm. It may be diagrammed as in figure 12 (p. 182). Watching a film we note the particular choices from each of these paradigms--beginning with the

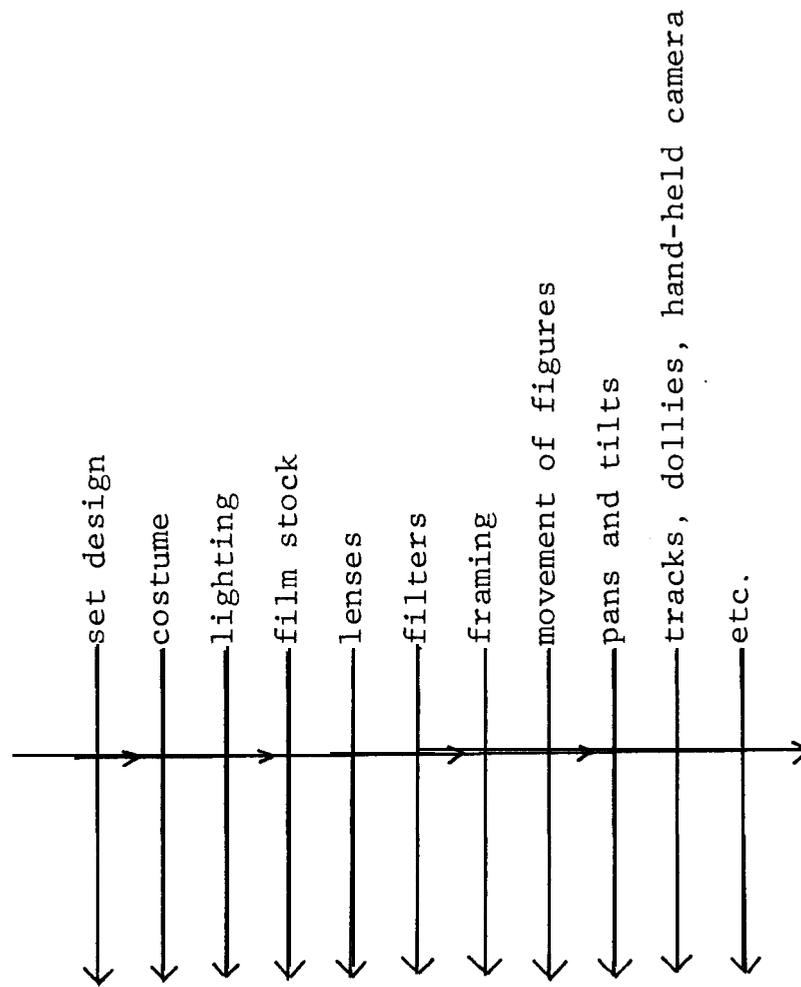


Figure 12. Paradigms of Technique

first frame of the first shot. These paradigms, then, are the structures that govern the production of meaning, of stylistic meaning, by the techniques residing in the signifier. They structure the bar between signifier₁ and signified₄ in my model of cinematic signification.

The cinema's paradigms, therefore, know some boundaries. This slight advantage over literature is undercut, however, by the amount of variation found within each cinematic paradigm. To continue to use lighting as an example, classical cinema's "three-point lighting" can be endlessly varied by the amount of light and the relative positioning of these three light sources. Furthermore, even the most rigid of classical films does not cohere to the limitations of just three lights. Indeed, the studio sets used banks of overhead lights for the simplest of scenes. The cinema's stylistic paradigms have convenient technological limits and establish the potential of synonymy, but their degree of variation within those limits is nearly impossible to discuss with complete systematicity. Perhaps Christian Metz's reticence to cope with style was well-founded.

Compounding these problems is that these component paradigms within mise-en-scene do not exist isolated from each other, although they have been so separated in the course of this analysis. In this respect the elements of the cinema are much more tightly integrated than discreet

words. The shot could never be, say, lighting technique without framing, focus, a setting, and so on. It may be best to say, therefore, that "mise-en-scène" marks a "large paradigmatic category" (after Metz's "large syntagmatic category") and that small paradigms can be particularized within it--many of which are distinguished by their roots in technology.

The inability of the theorist to quantify or qualify the variation within a paradigm or articulate the interface of those paradigms makes stylistic analysis elusive. The present chapter can only hope to chart the perimeters of style, unable as it is to specify the territory within them.

PART III: APPLICATION

CHAPTER VI

STYLE AND IMITATION OF LIFE

I have illustrated an approach to a theory of style above by using a variety of films--selecting examples to best highlight any one particular issue or problem. For a general theory of cinematic style to be of value, however, it must help explain all films.¹ To provide a more consistent understanding of the material in chapters 4 through 6 I will now work through my scheme for comprehending style (see figure 8, p. 162), using two exemplary American films: Imitation of Life (1934) and its remake, also entitled Imitation of Life (1959). In one sense, I choose these two for their characteristic nature; they accurately represent the Hollywood filmmaking practice of their respective eras. Both were products of a studio (the same studio, in fact) and both bare the stylistic, diegetic and thematic marks of the so-called "studio system." It might be said that they adhere to the codes of the classical cinema--although by the time of Sirk's version (1959) the "codes" were showing signs of deterioration and rupture. The study of these two particular films' styles may perhaps lead to broader conclusions about filmmaking in Hollywood; however,

such a study would have to be supported by the systematic analysis of thousands of films and thus lies outside of the scope of the present work. More germane to the argument here is the putative synonymy shared by a film and its remake. They both have ostensibly the same denotation; it has just been rendered in a different style. Theoretically, then, we might compare the two films, have their denotations "cancel" each other out and be left with an isolated stylistic element. We may then gauge just how much style does effect, possess, signify (etc.) meaning--which is the main concern of the present study. In short, I must once again confront the puzzle of synonymy.

One working hypothesis would be, simply: films may be similar to the point of synonymy. In the instance of the commercial cinema's remake, the structure for comparison, the paradigm, has been provided for us by the producers of the film. They certify that it is rooted in the same source-- a denotation that they own usually exclusive rights from which to create significations (that is, films). Customarily (as we find in both versions of Imitation of Life) these rights are announced in the credits of the film. Thus, we apparently do not face the problem the linguist has in defining its paradigm. In my example above (pp. 157-159, "Betsy scratches an itch") I point out the difficulties in deciding what words fit within the

paradigm, "words similar to 'scratches.'" In contrast, the 1934 and 1959 versions of Imitation of Life are, in a sense, automatically grouped together by virtue of their source in Fannie Hurst's novel. However, in order to construct this paradigm we would have to rely on extra-textual material (the producer's dubious guarantee that it comes from the same diegesis). To do so always places the viewer at the mercy of the studio. Frequently the name of the original source is used without much care for the novel or play behind it. The analyst must always question whether the films themselves support this comparison. It would be naive and incorrect to assume a priori that a remake will be synonymous with its original filming. Cinema studios are remarkably cavalier about their willingness to "improve" a story in order to bring it up to date. The studio assumes, rightly so, that few filmgoers will have seen the original and be distressed about alterations. Locations may be shifted, characters eliminated or added, narrative emphases altered, and so on.

Two examples should suffice to illustrate the point. First, when Warner Brothers decided to remake Four Daughters (Michael Curtiz, 1938) as Young at Heart (Gordon Douglas, 1954) they changed it into a musical' and brought a dead character, Mickey Borden (John Garfield), back to life at the *dénouement*. Warner's reputed reason for saving Borden,

played by Frank Sinatra in Young at Heart, was that Sinatra had been dying at the end of his recent movies. He was wary of being typecast as a tragic figure, reportedly.³ Another well-known modification of a film in a remake is in the first two versions of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's play, The Front Page. In The Front Page (Lewis Milestone, 1931) Hildy Johnson is a man (Pat O'Brien) and in His Girl Friday (Howard Hawks, 1940) Hildy becomes a woman (Rosalind Russell). The 1974 rendering returns to the male casting. There can be little doubt, therefore, that a remake need not possess the same denotation as its predecessor (and, parenthetically, that the original film version need not possess the same denotation as its literary source).

Faced with this conclusion, the aspiration toward a theory of style would seem to gain little from inquiries into remakes. If a remake's meaning, indeed whole sections of its diegesis, differ radically from the original, then it will be impossible to comprehend the influence of style upon that meaning. However, the problem is more one of scale than of method, I believe. Granted, the style of entire films cannot be compared systematically; the semantic shifts are too great. But the investigation into one syntagm, one short sequence, can yield substantive results. Both versions of Imitation of Life have scenes with very similar denotation. By examining one pair of these scenes

I will provide the reader with a concrete example of how the model of stylistic signification operates. My basic assumption is that limited synonymy exists in these two scenes; which is to say, they seem to present similar meaning in a different style, through assumed choices on the level of technique. The similarities/differences between these two examples will be used to explain figure 8 (p. 162). My project is not just to show how two films compare and contrast, but to illustrate more generally what it is that that scheme graphs. The observations I make should be applicable to the style of all (narrative) films, and not just remakes,

My method, then, will be to lead the reader through an application of the chart of cinematic signification to one short segment, dealing first with the John Stahl film (1934) and then Douglas Sirk's reworking (1959) of the same "property," Fannie Hurst's book.⁴ Appendix B consists of a detailed, shot-by-shot description of the two scenes, accompanied by frame enlargements of each shot. Supplemental frame enlargements from both films are provided in appendix C. All references to "frames" are drawn from these appendixes. The reader may find it helpful to keep both the chart of cinematic signification and the frame enlargements before him/herself while considering the following analysis. Additionally, appendix E contains the chapter from Imitation of Life, the novel, that corresponds

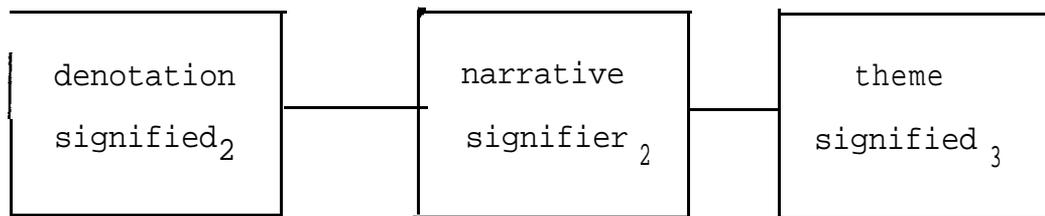
to the chosen sequence from the films. Although I believe the chart of cinematic signification may be profitably applied to any sequence in any film my selection of segments from the two Imitation of Lifes is not arbitrary. As indicated above, the project of the present chapter is to illustrate how two scenes may possess a similar denotation (signified₂), but express it through a dissimilar text (signifier₁)--and how that change in text may disturb the rest of the signification chain. I posit that one segment, among several, that seems to fulfill this qualification is the sequence in which the black woman's light-skinned daughter is discovered to have been passing for white at her school. Before I can proceed with a detailed analysis of this sequence, however, it is necessary to provide the reader with some contextual information.

Imitation of Life:

Denotation, Narrative and Theme

Style's elusive character has steered most writers on the remake away from it and toward simple consideration of plot modifications. Indeed, the author of the one book-length study of remakes, Michael B. Druxman, specifically notes that he prefers to "confine [his] remarks to the actual story and character changes that are present in the new renditions."⁵ Although it is scholastically

inadequate to fail to deal with style, it would also be improper to neglect to provide an understanding of the narratives of the two films. Obviously, any interpretation of a narrative film's style is going to bear heavily upon the analyst's assumed interpretation of the narrative itself. This interpretive operation results from the signification chain:



For the purposes of analysis I have isolated these "content" elements from the entire chart, although in semiosis they could not be so separated.

The essential similarity in both films' denotation (signified₂) is that of a lone white woman with a daughter trying to survive in a society that oppresses people--and particularly women--through a variety of apparatuses, most of them financially based. Each film couples this woman and child with a parallel black woman and her light-skinned daughter, the two of them also economically depressed. The black woman supports the white one as they struggle toward, and finally attain, success. Knit into this denotation are two other denotations: (1) The white woman loves a man with whom her daughter also subsequently falls in

love. (2) The black daughter denies her race and her mother --eventually causing her mother's death from sorrow. These three interdependent stories (the success story; the romance story; and the racial issue story) interact with each other and with themselves to create each film's narrative (signified₂). Before suggesting what the narrative of Imitation of Life is, and subsequently its theme, I must first indicate some of the major differences between the films. These differences deny the possibility of the existence of one narrative for the two films--even though there are correspondences on the denotative level. Narrative depends largely upon the form of the story events. Although the events of both films are at some points quite similar, their position in the narrative structure (their position determined by form) seldom is.

The most obvious denotative change is that of the names. The 1959 version retains only one name from the 1934 version, which, incidentally, adhered to the book in its choice of character names. The names, followed by the actors who played them, are presented in chart form in figure 13 (p. 194). (The Pullmans/Merediths are the white characters; the Johnsons are the black characters.) The one character who maintains his name from 1934 to 1959 is Stephen Archer (played by Warren William and John Gavin in 1934 and 1959, respectively).

1934		1959
Bea Pullman (Claudette Colbert)	=	Lora Meredith (Lana Turner)
Jesse Pullman (Rochelle Hudson)	=	Susie Meredith (Sandra Dee)
(as a child: Baby Jane)	=	(as a child: Terry Burnham)
Delilah Johnson (Louise Beavers)	=	Annie Johnson (Juanita Moore)
Peola Johnson (Freda Washington)	=	Sara Jane Johnson (Susan Kohner)
(as a child: Dorothy Howard)	=	(as a child: Karen Dicker)

Figure 12. Imitation of Life Character Name Changes

Within the context of each of the denotations there are significant alterations. Most importantly, the success story sees substantial changes in the careers the white women pursue. In 1934 Bea Pullman makes her success as the "Pancake Queen" (as one character terms her); by first opening a pancake restaurant and then packaging the mix she becomes a millionaire. In 1959 Lora Meredith achieves her success in the theater, becoming a sought-after star of stage comedies. Similarly the romance story also differs. Steve meets Bea after she has become a success, and inadvertently calls her the Pancake Queen to her face. 1959's Steve enters during the very first sequence on the beach (where Lora also contacts Annie). Lora scorns him in favor of her career: "I'm going up and up and up, and nobody's going to pull me down!" They are reunited only after she's become a celebrity. Furthermore, when Bea learns that her daughter is also in love with Steve she halts their romance and returns to the world of business, without revealing to the daughter that she knows of the daughter's infatuation. Bea promises to come to Steve sometime in the future, but the film ends with her arm-in-arm with her daughter, speaking of Jesse's childhood toys (the "quack-quack"--her rubber duck), with Steve nowhere in sight. In the later film, Lora confronts her daughter, Susie, with knowledge of the "crush." Susie

responds by criticizing Lora's maternal abilities: "Annie's always been more like a real mother to me," and "You've given me everything, but yourself!" When Lora offers to give up Steve, Susie replies, "Oh Mother, stop acting. Please don't play the martyr!" Steve and Lora's discussion of their future together is interrupted by Annie's death and never resumed, as the film ends with the funeral procession. In 1934, after the funeral Bea explains to Steve, "We can't go on as we planned." The racial attitude story varies the least from one film to the next. One major distinction, however, is the locations to which the daughter runs when she rejects the mother. In 1934, Delilah and Bea locate the runaway Peola in a seemingly respectable restaurant, working as a cashier. Sara Jane (1959) chooses instead to perform in nightclubs ("Harry's Club" and "Moulin Rouge"). Additionally, Sara Jane has a more active interest in men than Peola. She is beaten by her boyfriend, Franke (Troy Donahue), when she will not answer his questions about her mother's race. There are several more denotative modifications that could be particularized (for example, the difference between the men that first catalyze the protagonist's career: the strange but asexual Elmer Smith in contrast to the licentious Allen Loomis, played by Ned Sparks and Robert Alda, respectively), but they would only delay the main

project of this chapter, a stylistic analysis.

How do these denotations/stories signify--that is, what are their narratives (signifier₂)? And finally, what do they signify--what are their themes (signified₃)? To answer these two key questions I must address the films individually first, and then comparatively. I will take them chronologically.

Imitation of Life (1934), as with all narrative films, is a construct. The "people" in them are also constructs--"characters" rather than real life acquaintances. As characters, then, they may represent or signify something to the viewer--something, that is to say, beyond simply "a person." Bea Pullman, for example, can come to represent all women fighting for economic security. She acquires this signification by virtue of her position in a narrative/plot. Narrative form structures character positions. It is not just Bea "by herself," as it were, that turns her into a sign, but her relationship with other characters--in other words, her position relative to them.⁶ She is presented in tacit comparison to, on the one hand, a symbol of nurturing, magic, and near fanatical religiosity (Delilah) and, on the other hand, symbols of business (unseen businessmen, the nagging Elmer, a huge "Aunt Delilah Pancakes" sign advertising her company's wealth: "32 million packages sold last year"). The structuring

of these representative figures--through narrative form--produces an idea, a theme (signified₃). Hence the narrative/plot operates as a second level signifier, using as its "material" the original denotation of the film; as in Barthes, first level signified becomes second level signifier. In sum, signified₂ becomes signifier₂ through the work of form.

The case under consideration fits within the critical model of 1930s domestic melodrama that has developed over the past fifteen years. "Central to the woman's film," notes Molly Haskell regarding the melodrama, "is the notion of middle-classness, not just as an economic status, but as a state of mind and a relatively rigid moral code."⁷ One of the principal tenets of this "moral code" is the inviolability of the nuclear family and a woman's devotion to it. Bea substitutes a career for her deceased husband--who, she explains, she did not love anyway. It was a marriage of economic necessity, as is her "marriage" to Aunt Delilah's Pancakes. In later melodrama (cf. Mildred Pierce, Michael Curtiz, 1945) women are punished for trips into the business world, but the depression-era Imitation of Life endorses Bea's action, perhaps as a representation of New Deal economic optimism. Family (represented by Delilah) and business are merged in an unusual alliance. Frequently it is assumed that if a woman works then she

must neglect her children, but not so here. Bea is close to her daughter, Jesse, even through she works. The real threat to this happy structure is Steve Archer. Delilah's death in martyrdom to her daughter promotes Bea's recognition of maternal duty: Steve must be sent away. The film then returns to Bea and Jesse, united at the end as they were at the very start. Bea has made the right decision, according to middle-class values. Whatever threatens the family must be expunged. Considered in this light, Imitation of Life becomes a structure of conflicting representative figures (signs) affecting the protagonist as she journeys through the denotation. Her choosing to deny herself for her daughter suggests that the film as a whole supports and feels comfortable with the "relatively rigid moral code" Haskell articulates. This then would be the main theme, or signified₃, of Imitation of Life--in other words, its overall message: women must suffer.

The book jacket of the 1959 edition of Imitation of Life sums the novel as a "penetrating portrait of a woman who dreamed of success, achieved it, and then had to ask herself the question, 'Is success enough?'"⁸ In 1934 the answer to that question would be, no, it is not enough, but it can provide security. Bea does not have to choose between family and business, but between lover and family/business. The business itself is built upon the

maternal Delilah. The 1959 film would also answer the question negatively, but its theme (signified₃) extends the questioning of success much further. Indeed, as America entered the unsettled 1960s conventional notions of success were valued less and less.

The denotative shifts noted above (pp. 192-196) cannot help but change the narrative, since the denotation constitutes the material of the narrative. Indeed, Imitation of Life (1959) calls into question many of the values affirmed by the earlier version. Bourgeois life no longer seems as attractive as it did in 1934. Several films of the late 1950s ridicule or attack outright all the various ideological apparatuses of the capitalist, middle-class state (see Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?, Frank Tashlin, 1957 and No Down Payment, Martin Ritt, 1957). The theme of Sirk's Imitation of Life is not the value of success and the validity of maternal sacrifice, but the corrupting influence of ambition and the incompatibility of romance and prosperity. One can see this expressed by the narrative in the following fashion.

First, the avenue Lora chooses to chase success is represented by the decadent Allen Loomis. He lectures Lora, "Me, I'm a man of very few principles and they're all open to revision." And then later, "Once you've made it you can be idealistic for all of ten seconds before you

die." Unlike Stahl's version where the business is a family venture, based upon Delilah's pancake formula, Lora's profession is equated with an ugly, cheap sexuality--echoed by Sara Jane's sordid experiences in show business, which are the only full performances the viewer sees. Both Lora and Sara Jane's performances are contrasted with the spiritual singing of Mahalia Jackson at the funeral. Lora claims she'll make it "her way," but she does endure a seemingly loveless romance with her playwright, David Edwards (Dan O'Herlihy). She herself admits at one point, "Funny isn't it? When you make it, then you find it doesn't seem worth it. Something's missing." What is missing is Susie and Steve. His introduction early in the film makes him a metonymy for her earnest, pre-fame days. Her pursuit of a career and the denial of both Steve (who proposes, saying, "I want to give you a home") and her daughter, Susie, signifies her rejection of family--a rejection the film cannot endorse, however. The crisis point arrives when Lora tells Susie of her plans to wed Steve. The unspoken tensions of the film are finally articulated when Susie charges, "Annie's always been more like a real mother to me." Previously Lora has admitted to Annie that maybe she has not been a good mother. Recognizing that the theater has distracted her from her duties as nurturer, Lora vows to return to Susie. This is complicated

however by the competition of the two women for one man, Steve. The 1930s solution to this problem, rooted in the ideology of the suffering woman, no longer satisfies the fissured social structures of the late 1950s. In 1959 the mother may choose the lover over the daughter, but she cannot do so without first exorcising her guilt by offering to reject the lover. In any event, Imitation of Life (1959) does not resolve this problem, as Annie's death halts all development of the narrative and there is no post-funeral sequence, as in 1934. The fact that Susie denies her mother's offer of self-sacrifice ("Stop acting. Please don't play the martyr!") indicates that Bea's sacrifice would be parodistic, only a "role," in 1959. So it is that the film, in the final analysis, makes the choice for Lora--and that choice is not the surrender of the lover.

The white mother is featured as the protagonist of each film and thus I have presented her concerns as the main theme of the film. However, it would be misleading to neglect the racial aspect. Indeed, it pertains directly to the segment I have chosen for stylistic analysis. Although the white mother is the protagonist, it is the black mother who occupies the emotional center of each film. Both times she is represented as the conventionally typed role of the "mammy." Specifically, she falls within the subtype group of the "aunt jemima," as indicated by

Donald Bogle.⁹ "Often aunt jemimas are toms blessed with religion or mammies who wedge themselves into the dominant white culture," comments Bogle. Delilah--who is only called "Aunt Delilah"¹⁰ in the context of the pancake mix--is just such a woman. In fact she is so typical that she is reified into an image, a symbol, of what she is--or rather, of what she is to white culture. Bea coaxes Delilah into an aunt jemima posture to exemplify to the painter what she wants for her shop's sign. Delilah's image then appears in the shop window and finally develops into a huge neon sign that boasts of the number of packages sold.

The mammy/aunt jemima character type stands first and foremost for nurturing--the raising and caring for children and adults--and all its accoutrements. The nurturing abilities of the black matron assume superhuman characteristics in the cinema and other popular culture media. Her powers extend beyond that of white women. As Delilah protests when Peola threatens to leave, "I'm your mammy. I ain't no white mother!" White women, she implies, are not as strongly bound to their children, and the film supports this. Delilah's grief will eventually bring her to death. It is difficult to imagine Bea self-destructing in the same manner. The mammy fits well within the bounds of the melodrama for she is the apotheosis of its protagonist--devoted, beyond rational thought, to her

children. Within Imitation of Life she functions to remind Bea of the duties of motherhood--which Delilah exemplifies through martyrdom. This then is Delilah's position in the narrative: to bring the dilemma of the protagonist into sharp relief.

In recent years, since perhaps World War II, the mammy/aunt jemima type has been criticized as a negative image of the black woman. Writers on blacks in white culture have commented on the exploitative nature of this character type. Specifically, a mammy character is not just a symbol of nurturing, but she also promotes the exploitation of black women as nurturers of white characters that hire her and use her. Characters like Delilah are presented as being satisfied, even pleased, with this inequitable arrangement. When Bea tries to get Delilah to accept some of the profits from their corporation, Delilah sees it only as a rejection of her and her mothering abilities. She pleads with Peola to stop her rebellious ways and to accept things as they are, to accept their inferior economic status in favor of their elevated spiritual position. The aunt jemima accepts her earthly oppression, secure in the knowledge of heavenly reward. Religion becomes one of white culture's principle means of pacification, and characters like Delilah, with her demand for a massive funeral, endorse it. Peola rejects

this acquiescence, however, demanding the material, worldly rewards that white men and women enjoy. If Bea is the linchpin of the main theme of the film articulated above, then Peola serves the same function on the level of the theme of racial identity. Her choice between black culture (Delilah) and white culture (the restaurant job, envy for Bea's party) informs that theme. Significantly, her mother's death brings her back to "her place" within black culture. As we are informed in the final scene, she has elected to return to the teacher's college and supposedly quieted her desires for first class citizenship. This narrative, therefore, signifies the correctness of her action and expresses the theme of black submission to the white status quo.

In 1959 the cinema's attitude toward blacks had shifted considerably, but Annie is still recognizable as a mammy/aunt jemima figure. She is much more worldly than Delilah, but her function in the narrative is essentially the same as her earlier counterpart's. She remains the woman who must sell her special nurturing talents in order to survive. Much of Sirk's version is eaten from within by irony. Even though the black mother as mammy remains, it is not without some internal tension. Once again the key to understanding the film's theme resides in the actions of the black daughter, Sara Jane, in this instance. Following the fare-

well scene between Annie and Sara Jane in Sara Jane's hotel room (the last time Sara Jane will see Annie alive) a dancer friend of Sara Jane's remarks facetiously, "So, honeychil', you had a mammy!" Sara Jane responds, "Yes, all my life." The dancer's snide use of the term indicates its fall from favor since the 1930s. Sara Jane disregards the intended irony, however, in her response. The viewer also disregards the dancer's tongue-in-cheek attitude when he or she accepts Annie as the true mammy; just as in 1934, she cannot bear to "unborn" her own child. Sara Jane's repentance at the end ratifies the sacrifice of the mammy figure ("Momma [not 'mammy'], I did love you," she screams), but all the tensions are not ameliorated as in the 1934 rendition. Peola has been forgiven her rebellious travesties and, we are told, will return to her white-culture delimited role. Sara Jane, although grief-stricken at the funeral, may give up her show business career, or, she may just as plausibly retain it. The funeral concludes the film and thus some doubt remains as to Sara Jane's future activities--just as doubt remains about the resolution of the Lora/Steve/Susie dilemma.

Thus, in both films the black mother equals "mammy" and is placed in contrast to the white mother (the extremely white Lora: blonde-haired Lana Turner is frequently dressed in white and pastels, as is her blonde

daughter, Sandra Dee). Their contrast generates the theme of motherhood and its tribulations. At the *dénouement* the film endorses Delilah/Annie's ultimate sacrifice and implicitly challenges Bea/Lora to equal it. Bea does; Lora may or may not. Thematically, these events suggest the stability of the middle-class moral code governing in 1934, and the disturbance of it in 1959. Therefore, I propose a major thematic shift between 1934 and 1959. Haskell characterizes this development well when she discusses the unresolved discord in 1950s American society (as represented in the cinema) which results in "the paradox-- the energy, the vulgarity, the poverty of values, the gleaming surfaces and soulless lives, the sickness of delusion, the occasional healthy burst of desire--of America, of the fifties, of the cinema itself."¹¹ The themes of the original film version of Imitation of Life are not wholly discarded in 1959, but they are twisted and ruptured, reflecting the paradox Haskell describes. This abbreviated consideration of thematics ought to indicate that the signified₃ of each film, though drawn from the same literary source, differs radically. I have intentionally left much unsaid regarding an interpretation of the films' themes. The above sketch, however, should provide the reader with enough narrative and thematic information to facilitate his or her understanding of the

following stylistic analysis.

Imitation of Life:

A Segmental Analysis

The first step in a stylistic analysis is a description of the sequence's denotation. This is not only for the benefit of the reader who has not seen the film recently, but, as Stephen Heath notes in his piece on Touch of Evil:

In a sense, the synopsis produces an initial message of the film (a level of denotation) as condition of a secondary message, the film's "theme" or, precisely, its "meaning," and the specific modes of realization then come back into the argument at this stage as "style" (. . .) . . .12

The synopsis, then, verbally describes signified₂--the "initial message" of the film. In the present case the synopsis common to both films is: A white teacher conducts a class in a school room. A matronly black woman interrupts the class, asking to take her child home in the inclement weather. The teacher denies the presence of the woman's child and explains that there are no black children in the class. The daughter hides behind her book. The mother sees her child and calls to her. Class and teacher express shock. Daughter runs from the room declaring her hatred for her mother. Mother follows.

Even on a denotative level Stahl's and Sirk's events differ. Most obviously the season has been altered for the second film. Sirk's version takes place during Christmas

time. The teacher accordingly speaks of different Christmas customs. In Stahl's version the teacher reads the class Little Women. Additionally, Sirk extends the sequence slightly by framing it with short segments outside the school. Stahl begins the sequence with the door to the classroom. Sirk presents Annie's entrance into the building itself. Stahl concludes with an interior view of the doors to the school with the daughter and mother exiting one at a time. Sirk presents a significant interlude between them in a Christmas tree lot across from the school. Then the film moves to their home. Granting these significant--and signifying--changes there is still enough denotative similarity to make a stylistic comparison fruitful. Once again it illustrates that films credited to the same original source may differ substantially.

Having approximated the segment's signified₂ above I must also indicate its placement in the narrative structure (signifier₂), and consequently its relationship to the films' themes (signified₃), or what Heath terms its "secondary message." This syntagm is associated, obviously, with other syntagms in the film in which the daughter denies the mother and/or denies her race. This association creates a paradigmatic structure, a paradigm of syntagms. (Appendix E lists all of the syntagms within this paradigm--a total of eight in the 1934 version and twelve in 1959.)

In both films this paradigm concludes with the funeral and it is there that the final statement arise: the black daughter must acknowledge her mother and compromise her desires (although, as mentioned above, Sara Jane's compromise is not specified). In 1934 this paradigm begins with an incident where Jesse unwittingly distresses Peola by calling her "black." Delilah tries to comfort her child, but Peola only retorts, "It's you, it's because of you. You make me black." The black daughter's rejection of her race in 1959 begins somewhat earlier: her first night with the white family. Sara Jane quarrels with Susie over a black doll that Susie had offered her. Each of these scenes functions to create an imbalance in the text, a problem which must be resolved in the course of the film, and each functions thematically to initiate an idea in the viewer's mind. Perhaps it could best be set in an interrogative form: "Is it right or wrong for the daughter to reject her race?"

Placed in an associative structure the classroom syntagm (signified₂) becomes part of the global representation of one of the film's major themes (signified₃): racial conflict. It contributes to the narrative structure (signifier₂), daughter versus mother, in which the mother comes to represent selflessness (she comes out in the rain for the sake of her daughter's health). The daughter's

desire to be white is transcribed into a desire not to be her mother's daughter, instead of being presented as a justifiable outcry against black persons' inferior status in white status. All her race hatred is directed toward the symbolic figure of her mother. As she says in the 1959 version, "Why do you have to be my mother? Why?!" By placing the daughter's estrangement from her race in these terms the films, in a sense, predetermine their ending. For it is one of the strongest tenets of the bourgeois moral code that Haskell mentions that children must not disown their parents, or, if they do so, that they must be punished. The racial question becomes a mere premise for Peola/Sara Jane's shame for their mother. Such shame is not permitted in the commercial cinema of either 1934 or 1959 and thus the daughter must repent before the films' conclusions.

The classroom syntagm's specific contributions to this theme are:

1. To characterize the mother as willing to sacrifice for her child
2. To represent the daughter's initial refusal of her mother's sacrifice (which will be altered only by the mother's death)
3. To construct the mother as an object for the daughter's race hatred, instead of the white exploiters
4. To place the daughter's self-hatred/race-hatred in a

public forum; her desire to be treated as white by society drives her to deny her mother (as she will later deny her in the restaurant, in 1934, and at Harry's Club, in 1959)

Thus the denotative events of this syntagm (light-skinned black girl reviles mother in classroom) are shaped by form into a narrative structure (the paradigm outlines above). This narrative element represents one theme, among several, of the film. Or, in the terminology of my scheme: signified₂ is patterned by form to become signifier₂ which represents signified₃.

Imitation of Life: Style and Meaning

To this point I have discussed half of the signification chart with regards to Imitation of Life, exemplifying signified₂, signifier₂, and signified₃. Now it is time to apply the remaining terms in order to gauge their efficacy in marking the semiotic processes involved in the understanding of stylistic meaning.

First, and most obvious perhaps, is signifier₁--the film text itself. This is simply the projected images of the two films, accompanied by amplified sound. The two film texts I have chosen represent the technology that created them; signifier₁ represents signified₁. I remind the reader that signified₁ is not the actual technology

of the "referent" (Eco's sense) that created a particular technique (technology's mark in the text). Signified₁ is technology as it is signified in the text, according to a certain code of technology. One particular technique equals an assumed technological element. Some of the major technological signifieds of the 1934 Imitation of Life are: studio-built sets, studio lighting, black-and-white 35mm film stock, "normal" lens (that is, approximately 55mm focal length), a camera on tripod, 1.33:1 aperture plate. All of these signifieds are indexically represented in the image. Correspondingly, 1959's technological signifieds include: studio sets, studio lighting, color 35mm film stock, "normal" or perhaps slightly wide angle lens, camera on tripod, camera dolly (shot eleven only), 1.33:1 aperture plate (but composed to be projected at 1.85:1). The informed viewer receives these "meanings" from signifier₁, but usually they go unnoticed. Technology is frequently assumed to have zero degree of signification by the average viewer. Only when there is a major technological development (sound, color, 3-D, and so on) does it become a factor in the everyday viewer's movie experience. Furthermore, the advent of a new technological device often instigates a group of remakes. Hence one can see that a flurry of remakes followed the introduction of sound (see The Secret Hour, 1928, silent, and A Lady to Love, 1929, sound) and,

in the 1950s, more remake activity attended the developments in color and wide-screen (consider Alfred Hitchcock's remake of The Man Who Knew Too Much in 1956--originally filmed in 1934).

In noting some of the technological differences between the two versions of Imitation of Life I still have not begun the analysis of style proper. I discuss the relationship of technology, technique and style above, but a brief review seems in order. Technology facilitates many, but not all, techniques in film: pans, dolly shots, zooms, and so on. Techniques then are the various uses of technology and other base materials. The types of techniques are charted above (see outline, pp. 45-46) and include: set design, costume, lighting, visual quality, camera angle, framing, focus, and so on. Techniques are not style, however, but their patterning is. Thus techniques are the material ordered by style, and they do not become semiotically significant until so shaped. The types of technique form the basis of stylistic paradigms. The viewer associates the lighting techniques, for example, of the film he or she is watching with the absent, substitutable instances of lighting techniques in other films. The present film's use of said techniques will gather significance by virtue of that unspoken comparison. These types of technique generate the structure by which we may stylistically compare Stahl's

Imitation of Life with Sirk's.

Every shot, every image, has some stylistic significance. In theory, every image, every frame, should be analyzed. In practice, the analyst balks at the enormity of such a project: 24 analyses for every second of film. "As this is probably a life's task and there aren't too many medieval monks around to work such a programme, some compromise is required,"¹¹³ notes David Lusted in the course of a project similar to mine. My compromise is this: I have selected images, images that seem to be particularly fertile for interpretation (selected through an intuitive process), and I provide the reader with some additional frame enlargements (chronologically presented in appendixes B and C) so that he or she may extrapolate from the work I begin. I hesitate to perform this selection operation, however, because it immediately violates my basic principle of systematicity. There is no systematic way to explain why I have chosen some images for interpretation and neglected others. Instead, I have come to rely on intuitive analytical powers developed over the course of years of cinema study--although the time taken to learn them does not grant them systematicity. Unless one decides arbitrarily to analyze, say, only the first and last frames of each shot, one is no longer merely describing imagery, but has begun selection and hence interpretation. It is a

critical dilemma for which I can see no easy resolution. Be that as it may, I believe the stylistic interpretation which follows may illustrate for the reader how some interpretive mechanisms operate, although I stop short of explaining why certain interpretive choices are made.

Stahl's and Sirk's sequences begin differently so that it is not until Stahl's shot three (frame 4) and Sirk's shot two (frame 16) that a single shot's denotation becomes very similar: a white teacher leads a class (with one major denotative difference that Stahl's teacher speaks of Little Women and Sirk's of Christmas customs). The major distinctions between the two films are stylistic ones, and it is here that my analysis properly begins. Using the technique typology outline (pp. 45-46) we can see specifically what differences there are. Under the rubric, "space (mise-en-scene)," I first address the articulation of space in the single frame--its compositional qualities. These are the aspects of a single shot, before considering editing. As I begin to compare these compositional elements I note first of all that the profilmic materials are actually quite similar. The set design, costume and lighting do not vary much from one film to the next. Filmic "visual qualities" differ most in the choice of film stock: black-and-white for 1934, color for 1959. The use of lenses in both segments is "normal" and the camera angle is level.

The filmic/profilmic relationship informs the principle stylistic variation between the composition of the two shots. In 1934 the camera faces the teacher almost head-on so that the map, blackboard and desk form lines parallel with those of the frame. The dominant compositional form, therefore, is rectangular and "static." In contrast, the 1959 version aims the camera directly into the corner, placing the set at oblique angles to it and situating the lecturing teacher at the extreme right. Even though the sets themselves are not that dissimilar, the way they are filmed--the choices someone (director or camera operator, perhaps) made--are quite distinct. Otherwise, the shots are not discernably different: there is little movement in either (whether of camera or of figures within the frame), no zoom shots or rack focus. This, therefore, concludes my technique-by-technique illustration of the technique typology, as far as these two shots are concerned.

The stylistic meaning (signified₄) of each of these two shots is the accumulated significance of style's patterning of its material (techniques). This is probably best understood in terms borrowed from art history. It is not without hesitation, however, that I do so. For, just as Heinrich Wölfflin and many other before me, I am quickly trapped within impressionistic interpretations of the image. As of yet I know of no "digital" mode of

understanding for the "analogical" film image. Consequently, I am left to fumble with the analytical tools developed by art criticism-- although indeed I have rejected their evaluative aestheticism.

Shot three of Stahl's Imitation of Life (frame 4) is compositionally dominated by the stability of its rectangular forms. The teacher is centered in a constrictive structure of rectangles within rectangles, filling the upper portion of the frame. The children, in contrast, form a barely differentiated mass of heads, which, though arranged in rows of desks, is not very well ordered (Peola is the girl with the bow in her hair). On the other hand, shot two of Sirk's Imitation of Life (frame 16) composes the image dynamically and with less stability. The teacher is placed off to the right rather than center-frame, setting the composition off balance. The lines formed by the blackboard recede into the background where the tree is located. (Sara Jane is situated in the left foreground.) Thus the first level of stylistic meaning as I have articulated it here is comprised of tensions and stasis within the image. One can already begin to note differences between Stahl's and Sirk's treatments of the same denotation, and we may assume that these differences indicate the province of style. These are some of the areas of presumed choice that produce style. Before proposing the semantic importance

of the stylistic changes I need to continue my analysis with a pair of shots involving movement--the "succession of frames (illusion of continuity)" of the typology outline.

Consider for example, Stahl's shot nine (frames 10.1-10.3) and Sirk's shot eleven (frames 25.1-25.5). Continuing my way through the typology of technique it becomes apparent that the most significant difference between the two shots is under "Succession of Frames": both "Profilmic" and "Filmic." In 1934 the camera remains relatively stationary (dollying slightly), and pans and tilts with Peola as she walks down the aisle in medium shot. In 1959 the same denotation is conveyed by tracking with Annie (frame 25.1) until she reaches Sara Jane's desk and places her hand on Sara Jane's book (frame 25.2), whereupon Sara Jane circles around her mother, comes very close to the camera (frame 25.3) and runs off frame right (frame 25.4). Annie follows her out while the camera remains behind (frame 25.5). O n c e again, Sirk's use of technique is more dynamic than Stahl's--if "dynamic" can be used to signify "visual power" and not imply that Sirk is better than Stahl. The viewer is "closer" to the characters in Sirk; indeed, Sara Jane comes much nearer the camera than would have been thought prudent in 1934 (see frame 25.3). The significance of Sirk's intricately moving camera is particularly difficult to assess systematically. Even its representation with still frames can be

misleading. However, it is safe to suggest that, similar to compositional forces in the still frame, camera movement does generate a certain dynamism, and that this dynamism comprises signified₄, stylistic meaning. In the shot under consideration, signified₄ can be articulated as first privileging the movement of Annie's figure, sharing her directionality and rhythm. This movement is then halted by the static element, Sara Jane (frame 25.2), who then explodes in a movement in the opposite direction as the mother's and at an accelerated tempo (frames 25.3 and 25.4, accompanied by the first music of the sequence). In a sense, frame 25.3, with its extreme closeness of camera angle, signals the shift in stylistic dynamism from one figure (Annie) to another (Sara Jane). As with the static shot two above, stylistic meaning is the interplay of elements of the film material--figures and shapes in conflict.

So far I have confined my comments to style within the individual shot. However, as my typology of technique indicates, there is also style in the transition from one shot to the next and in a way a film uses time (the duration of a shot). Both the 1934 and 1959 films use the technique of the cut for shot transitions within the segment--although Stahl dissolves both in and out of the sequence and Sirk fades in and dissolves out. Both Stahl and Sirk depend upon a style of cutting known as "invisible editing," based on

a certain conception of narrative logic. Conventionally, this narrative logic suggests that a sequence open with an establishing long shot, followed by medium shots and close-ups that are coordinated by character looks. Stahl disturbs this structure slightly by opening with a detail (the door, frame 2), but quickly establishes the location in the following shot (frame 3) of the entire classroom, which may be categorized as a conventional establishing shot. The following medium long shot establishes the space of the teacher (frame 4) and further defines the area of the classroom. Once Delilah enters (frame 7.1) the shots are cut according to looks--or the blocked looks of Peola. Thus shots six (frame 7.2), eight (frame 9) and ten (frame 11.3) are cued by the looks of Delilah and/or the teacher. Shots five (frame 6.2) and seven (frame 8) are motivated by Peola's blocked, but still assumed look. The cut at the end of shot nine is not motivated by a character look, but rather matches by virtue of the action of Peola exiting the room (frames 10.3 and 11.1). The editing in the 1959 version is similarly orchestrated on looks and other cutting conventions (which one can find codified in numerous editing handbooks). Shots one (frame 15.1-15.2), two (frame 16), three (frame 17), and four (frames 18.1-18.2) fall into a familiar pattern of establishing long shot, medium long shot, cut-in, and re-establishing medium shot. This is an

editing pattern that the viewer expects and assumes is natural, although it is little more than an artificial, structured continuity in point of fact. Similar to the Stahl segment, shots five, six, seven and eight are all cut on the looks of Annie and the teacher, or the barred looks of Sara Jane. Shot ten, the last cut wholly within the classroom (the next cut takes the viewer into the cloakroom), is cut on matching action--thus preserving the continuity between shots. The rest of the sequence proceeds in similar fashion--depending upon conventionalized editing patterns to preserve the "invisibility" of cutting.

Insofar as the editing in these two segments remains invisible so it is not stylistically significant. The narrative logical aspect of editing is part of the structuring of technique that creates denotation, signified₂. One could say--with caution--that classical editing is an element of grammar and not style.¹⁴ Both grammar and style generate meaning out of the ordering of technique, but their meanings differ: one resides in the position of signified₂ (denotation-- the interaction of characters) and the other in signified₄ (stylistic meaning--in narrative film, the interaction of figures, not characters). Since both operate through the same mechanism (the ordering of technique) I separate them only by way of the meaning they produce. Many writers assume the editing patterns here described

to be "natural"-- an outgrowth of human perceptual tendencies, psychologically true. This view is to be found in numerous guidebooks on cinematic technique--including, with some modification, Karel Reisz's influential The Technique of Film Editing. More recently this assumption has been called into question. "Invisible" editing has become visible and said to represent, in mitigated fashion, bourgeois ideology. In so doing, these writers discuss what is commonly assumed to be a grammatical trait as if it were stylistic--signifying in its own right.

I outline above the particulars of the grammatical aspect of the editing in the segments from Imitation of Life. Stylistically, the editing may be described so: in the 1934 version, the cutting first integrates the Peola figure into the mass surrounding it. The order of the shots defines a space (time and space are always interrelated) and sets Peola within it. By cutting between her mother and Peola the editing sets up an antagonism between them (similar to the compositional tensions mentioned above) that is catalyzed in shot ten (frames 11-1-11.3) when the two of them appear within the same frame for the first time. Hence it is the sequence of the shots, their cutting, that makes shot ten significant. In this respect the Sirk version differs little from Stahl. Once again, editing maintains the separation of mother and daughter figures

until the rupturing effect of shot eleven (frames 25.1-25.5). Despite the substantial compositional distinctions between the films, Stahl's and Sirk's editing style are practically isomorphic, although at the same time it must be noted that Sirk cuts much more frequently and uses shots of a shorter duration. Using only the portion of the sequence where the denotation overlaps we can see that where Stahl presents ten shots (numbers two through eleven) in 104 seconds, Sirk's film uses eleven shots (numbers two through twelve) in 71 seconds. This results in an average shot length of 10.45 seconds for Stahl and 6.45 seconds for Sirk. The meaning of rhythm remains elusive. Doubtless, the rhythm of the editing affects viewer emotions--much as musical rhythm affects emotions. But emotion is not meaning. As the present paper focuses on stylistic signification--semantics, not emotions--I have little to say about the segments' rhythmic style.

The style of particular shots in the two different films and the way they are edited together can be associated and compared as I have done above--creating a limited paradigmatic relationship. As illustrated in figure 11 (p. 180), however, there are paradigmatic associations within texts, too. For that matter, there are paradigmatic associations within single sequences. One such paradigm is the compositional filmic/profilmic relationship within

Stahl's and Sirk's respective sequences. In my opening discussion of shot three (Stahl version) I emphasize the static nature of the composition, stabilized by the rectangular forms. This compositional trait can also be recognized in shots one, four, six, eight, ten and eleven (frames 2, 5.1-5.2, 7.1-7.2, 9, 11-1-11.3, 12.1-12.4, respectively). Four of the shots are from practically the same angle: Delilah and the teacher in medium shot, with Delilah placed within the door frame and that frame dividing the space between her and the teacher (see frames 7.2, 9, 11.1-11.2). Further, the rectangular motif peaks in shot eleven (frames 12.1-12.4) where Delilah and Peola are trapped within a surfeit of rectangles as they exit the school building. Most of the Stahl sequence is structured around static rectangular forms--with the significant exception of Peola's walk down the aisle (frames 10.1-10.3). This will become more significant when I discuss style's relation to narrative and theme, but for now it is sufficient to note that that shot differs substantially from the remainder of the sequence. Sirk's sequence also betrays a common compositional premise, but it is not rectangular shapes. Where Stahl shoots people and objects head-on and places them within right angles, Sirk's camera creates a plethora of oblique angles and off-balance compositions, frequently with an object close to the

camera to disrupt an harmonic composition further. This is first indicated in the opening shot of the sequence (frames 15.1-15.2). Rather than adopt the eye-level view that convention dictates, Sirk shoots the school building from a low angle so that a bright red fire hydrant looms disconcertingly large in the foreground and the school facade is off-kilter. The shot into the corner of the school room has been discussed above. It is repeated from a closer, lower angle viewpoint in shot four (frame 18.1) and shifted within the shot as the teacher walks to the door, with the camera following, in order to admit Annie (frame 18.2), the red-bowed wreath mirroring Annie with the red boots. The short shot of Sara Jane and then Annie in the cloakroom (frames 26.1-26.3) is also filled with oblique angles-- created this time by lighting techniques--which sharply contrasts with Stahl's rectangles. Finally, the extra scene outdoors (which does not appear in Stahl) is dominated by a massive, crimson Christmas tree sign (frames 28.1-28.2, 29 and 31.1), that creates a most unconventionally off-balance image. Sirk's use of oblique angles and imbalanced composition is accentuated by camera movement and blocking--especially the filming of Sara Jane running past the camera in shot eleven (frame 25.3) and its stylistic echo in shot seventeen (frame 31.2). The "comfortable" medium shots of Stahl become "too-close" close-ups in

Sirk, with the characters almost bumping into the camera.

Thus I believe the two sequences under consideration are each consistent stylistically. They possess a specific "intra-shot stylistic paradigm," as it were, a pattern of stylistic association from one shot to the next. The oblique angles in frame 26.1, for example, draw added significance because of the oblique camera angles of frame 15.1. The next obvious step is to illustrate how this paradigm may extend beyond the limits of one sequence. Just as I was drawn outward from the segment's denotation to other, associated syntagms, so is the style of the two sequences from each version of Imitation of Life linked with the style of other sequences within the same film. There are several shots from the Stahl film that are dominated by rectangular and/or symmetrical compositions; these include:

1. Delilah making pancakes for Bea (frame 33)
2. Peola's return to the living quarters after being called "black" by Jesse (frame 36)
3. The incorporation scene (frame 37)
4. Bea informing Elmer of her decision not to see the business (frame 43)
5. The movement of the casket into the hearse (frame 45)

This is usually due to the profilmic construction of the sets and the camera's position relative to them. Consistent

with the classroom composition, rectangular windows (filmed head-on) dominate the shots in Bea and Delilah's homes.

In parallel fashion, the oblique angles of Sirk's segment are reprised in the following segments, among others:

1. Lora in her original apartment (frame 49)
2. Steve in the new house (frame 50)
3. Sara Jane delivering the food at the party, on her head (frame 51)
4. Frankie's entrance at his rendezvous with Sara Jane (frame 52)
5. Sara Jane's denial of her mother immediately after the beating (frame 53)
6. Susie's bedroom as she talks with Annie about love (frame 54)
7. Sara Jane's dance act at Harry's Club (frame 55)
8. Another mirror shot: Sara Jane sends her mother away for the last time (frame 56)
9. Steve and Susie talk of Annie with Lora huge in the foreground (frame 57)
10. The church window at the funeral (frame 60)
11. The procession as seen through an unidentified frosted window (frame 62)

As in Stahl, it is the profilmic material that determines

much of the way Sirk's film looks. Rather than evenly lit apartments with dominating right angles, Sirk's living quarters cramp the characters within peculiar architectural angles and odd lighting.

The viewer associates the similar stylistic aspect of these shots, thereby relating them to each other. From this association, this paradigm, he or she constructs a more general stylistic meaning (signified₄) for the entire film. In Stahl it may be articulated as compositional equilibrium and in Sirk, just the opposite, the constant threat of stylistic rupture. Style does not exist in a narrative or thematic vacuum, however, and I turn now to its relationship with signifier₂ and signified₃, after a brief digression into a subject that I mostly neglect in the present paper: style in cinematic sound.

Sound in film consists of dialogue, music and noise. As dialogue and music both have entire disciplines devoted to the study of their style (linguistics and music theory, respectively) and since both exist in film in much the same way that they do in real life (profilmically) there is little a theory of cinematic style can provide that would add to the previously established work. However, I do entertain a few random thoughts about some of the more obvious aspects of sound style in the segments from both Imitation of Lives.

The most evident stylistic device in the speech of the the Stahl version is the use of black dialect for the mother figure. For example,

Mother: Good afternoon, Ma'm, it's raining so hard
I brought rubbers and coat to fetch my little
girl home.
Teacher: I'm afraid you've made some mistake.
Mother: Ain't this the 3B?
Teacher: Yes.
Mother: Well, this is it.
Teacher: It can't be it. I have no little colored
children in my class.

Significantly, the mother comes to "fetch" her daughter home. Also, the use of "ain't" and "the 3B" rather than just "3B" contrasts with the schoolteacher's grammar-perfect speech¹⁵--heightened by her carefully articulated reading from Little Women just before the exchange above. Delilah's style of speech, the way she talks as much as what she says, signifies her incompatibility with the teacher. Clearly, Delilah does not fit in. In similar fashion, Fannie Hurst uses stage and literary conventions of Negro dialect to indicate Delilah's radical difference from the white characters. In the portion of the book that roughly corresponds to the above filmed version we find the mother talking with the central, white mother about a bag she (the black woman) is waving over her prostrate daughter (in the book the daughter faints from the strain of being discovered):

Dar's shamweed in dat bag, and asfidity. Shame, mah baby. Lift de curse from off mah baby. Lawd, git de wild horses drove out of her blood. Kill de curse--shame de curse her light-color pap lef' for his baby. Chase it, rabbit's foot. Chase de wild horses trampin' on mah Chile's happiness. Chase 'em, shamweed. Chase 'em, rabbit's foot.¹⁶

In the book her superstitions border on lunacy and her dialect on gibberish. Stahl tamed down the dialect just as he made the mother less fanatically religious. Still, Stahl does use Delilah's style of speech to show that she does not belong in the classroom. In Sirk's version she is even better educated. The exchange above from Stahl becomes this in Sirk:

Mother: I hate to trouble you, Miss, but I brought these for my little girl.
 Teacher: I'm afraid you've made a mistake. I don't have any little colored girl in my class.
 Mother: But they said 3B. This is 3B, isn't . . . Why, there's Sara Jane.

The mother's dialect here is practically indistinguishable from the teacher's. Thus, in Sirk speech does not actively contribute to the stylistic tensions articulated in the image above.

The 1959 version does make use of a sound element totally missing from the 1934 segment: music. Music is a semiotic system dominated by its signifier and the patterning thereof. Which is to say, most music does not signify anything--beyond vague notions of emotion. Music is also the art form with the most carefully designed

method for describing the patterning of its techniques, the structure of its style. Appendix D provides the reader with the precise musical notation for the sequence under consideration. In more general terms, the music of the segment--which does not begin until Annie reaches Sara Jane--contains two dominant features: the rhythmic piano and the arpeggio that initiates the music. Both of these come to be associated with Sara Jane, signifying her textual power--as will be discussed in the context of style and the narrative immediately below.

Imitation of Life:

Stylistic Meaning and Narrative

Style, I posit, works in conjunction with form to create narrative. Narrative is distinguished from denotation in the way that it tells a story; the form of the events and the style of the text conjoin to produce a second level signifier, one that represents the film's theme. How then does the style of each of these two sequences relate to the narrative?

Unlike music and abstract painting, narrative film contains characters, represented by two dimensional photographic images of people. These two-dimensional signifiers are set within the stylistic systems alluded to above--composition, movement, editing, and sound. Thus the viewer

may interpret the stylistic tensions as representing intra-character tensions. In the 1934 Imitation of Life the compositional separation of Delilah and the teacher by the door-jamb (frame 9) suggests the cultural barrier between them--which is further emphasized by styles of clothes, the "conflict in volumes" (Eisenstein's concept) of the women's physical builds, and Delilah's style of speech. Also, the style of cutting between the two older women and Peola (shots five through nine) emphasizes the separation and perhaps antagonism between mother and daughter. Peola's position within the class (frames 4 and 10.1) suggests how she can blend into white society. Most importantly, the denotative crisis in this sequence (Peola's humiliation and the discovery of her "passing") is signified by a break with the style of the remainder of the sequence. Whereas most of the shots before and after use a stationary camera, in shot nine (frames 10.1-10.3) the camera follows Peola as she is literally expelled from white society. Within shot nine she moves from a member of the group (frame 10.1) to a spatial outsider (frame 10.3). Thus her denotative ostracism is paralleled by the stylistic meaning, which situated compositional forms (not yet characters) in dynamic relationship. Additionally, style marks her ostracism as significant, by using a camera technique unique within this sequence.

Similarly, the style in the Sirk version establishes a conflict between mother and teacher and, subsequently, mother and daughter. Sirk, however, expresses it more dynamically. At first style works to privilege Annie. The teacher must leave her established space (frame 18.1) and come to Annie (frame 18.2). Then, throughout the course of their conversation, Sirk eschews the use of shot-reverse shot in favor of an over-the-shoulder shot that always faces Annie (frames 20.1-20.2, 22.1-22.2, 24.1-24.3), validating her perspective by cutting on her look, as if she controlled the text. Her position as sacrificial mother coming for daughter motivates this **privilege** thematically (see below) and her crossing in front of the teacher (frame 24.2) establishes once and for all her textual dominance over the teacher. However, Annie does not reign over the entire sequence, for the interlude with the teacher is only prefatory to her direct encounter with Sara Jane in shot eleven (frames 25.1-25.5). Sara Jane had usurped the teacher's counter-shot earlier, establishing her diegetic power. Now, in shot eleven, her full import emerges, and is emphasized by the unusual nature of this shot: it is both the longest and the most visually intricate, with the camera performing arabesques around the characters. It also marks the beginning of the sequence's music. Her startling appearance in close-up as she runs for the door (frame 25.2) will be reprised at

the conclusion of the sequence (frame 31.2) and by this repetition signals Sara Jane's dominance over the text. In sum, shot eleven, like Stahl's shot nine, is a diegetic fulcrum upon which the sequence balances. It is marked as such by its stylistic characteristics--unique within the segment. In this one shot the textual power of the characters shifts from Annie to Sara Jane. The latter's diegetic disruption finds expression in the disturbance of the text's style, both image and sound.

This brings me to the question of irony, for, in Sirk's version, there is some variance between the ostensible denotation of the segment and the powerplay of the style. Irony, the reader will recall, is the undercutting of meaning through style. In Sirk the mother suffers to help her daughter and the daughter is improperly ungrateful. Our sympathies should logically reside with the mother, but the style works against her--establishing the daughter as the more powerful diegetic force. Other sequences are also overlaid with irony. For example, one would expect Lora's country house to be bright, airy and spacious, a shift from their cramped quarters in the walk-up apartment (frame 49). But instead, the place is a constrictive maze of peculiar angles (see frames 50, 51, 53, 57 and 58). Rather than validate Lora's success and its accoutrements the film's style questions her life. This, then, is cinematic irony--an instance in which the bar

from signified₄ to signifier₂ modifies the bar from signified₂ to signifier₂, where style works against form. Irony's functioning is not known by every viewer, but I still posit its existence.

Thus style indicates to the viewer what some of the power struggles of the narrative are. Compositional tensions parallel narrative conflict. This narrative conflict, then, opposes symbolic figures (characters) which produces the second level of meaning in the film, the theme.

Imitation of Life:

Stylistic Meaning and Theme

Now I come to the final relationship in the model of stylistic signification: the broken bar between signified₄ and signified₃. Much of this has been alluded to above and hence the material below is largely summary. As I explain previously (pp. 174-176) this bar marks the metaphoric relationship between stylistic meaning and theme. These two terms connect when the viewer recognizes a similarity on the level of signified at the same time that the signifiers differ.

One such interpretation a viewer might posit relative to this sequence from Imitation of Life (1934)--and indeed is reflected in the entire film--is an equivalence between the static, calcified compositions of Stahl's style and the rigid moral structures of white society that limit the

options of black persons. Just as Peola is entrapped within a culture that categorizes her as a second class citizen, so is the image of Peola caught in a web of strongly drawn horizontal and vertical lines (see especially frame 12.2). Her mother is also snared within these restraining rules, and her soft, rounded bulk conflicts with the hard angles in the schoolroom. This interpretation is supported by the similar shots enumerated on page 227. The shot most significantly relevant to this thematic is in the sequence in which Elmer proposes to make Delilah part of the Aunt Delilah Pancake corporation (frame 37). Just as Delilah does not understand the incorporation papers and the benefits it may accrue her, and just as Delilah is symbolically "other" from the world of economics (representing, as she does, the spiritual world and extreme mother-love), so is she an anomaly in the tidily constructed home of the white mother. Furthermore, white culture exploits not only her physical labor, but also her own appearance. She is reified into a corporate trademark (see frames 34, 35 and 46) without ever comprehending that world. Similarly, the white mother, Bea, is also confined within this economic and moral structure. Her one chance for escape is Steve. This is suggested stylistically, too. Bea and Steve's most romantic moments are shot in the garden in front of a bridge rather than within the confines of the house (see frames

38, 40 and 47). The style of the film marks Steve as a man outside of conventional societal regulations by setting his most diegetically significant sequences in the garden, not the house that pancakes built. In constructing these metaphoric meanings for style, the viewer posits a similar signified (= entrapment) that is represented by two different signifiers, one stylistic (= characters placed in rectangular compositions) and one narrative (= Peola and Elilah's interaction with the rest of the characters).

I have noted above that the later version of Imitation of Life expresses a different thematic from the earlier one. Correspondingly, the thematic interpretation of style in 1959 differs, too. Sirk's off-kilter angles, unnaturalistic lighting and extreme camera movement (among other stylistic elements) are the visual equivalents of the repressed cultural tensions of the 1950s, of the paradoxes that Haskell notes. This finds its expression in the ironical sequences alluded to before. Just as social values are no longer concrete, so is the text's denotation threatened by style. The viewer can see this specifically in the stylistically related shots listed above (see p. 228). Just as Sara Jane is the most disruptive diegetic element (see shot eleven of the classroom scene, frame 25.3) so is she represented in the most violently dynamic compositions: frames 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, and so on. Thematically, the most interesting of these is Sara Jane's

final denunciation of the mother before Annie dies. Sara Jane had ostensibly left her mother in order to enjoy the advantages of white culture, but this scene illustrates just how illusory white, bourgeois values are. The denotation indicates this strongly by the seediness of her employment (see also frame 55), but style echoes this meaning by the peculiar camera angle of Sara Jane and Annie (frame 56), doubling Sara Jane's image as if to signal the duplicity of her appearance (looks white, though actually black) and the superficiality of white values. After all, if white-culture success is represented by the ultra-white Lora and Susie (see frame 58), themselves living an "imitation of life," the viewer can only wonder about its values. Imitation of Life (1959) may be read as a vision of a world bereft of the social certainties of 1930s Hollywood filmmaking. And just as the conventional thematics have come untethered, so have conventional stylistics.

CHAPTER VII

SOME CONCLUSIONS

... one suddenly finds oneself referred to the myriad winds of culture, the confused murmurings of a thousand other utterances: the symbolism of the human body, the language of objects, the system of colors (. . .) or the voices of chiaroscuro (. . .), the sense of clothing and dress, the eloquence of landscape.¹

Is the systematic study of cinematic style a baffling and ultimately impossible undertaking, as Metz indicates? Is style "essentially a matter of intuition"² (Durgnat) and therefore immune to structured analysis? The answer, as I believe the preceding pages indicate, is both yes and no. The manner by which we understand style can be traced, but the interpretation of any one stylistic phenomenon by any one viewer cannot be guaranteed. A student of physics can hypothesize the laws of the physical universe that govern falling leaves, but he or she would be hard put to predict where leaf "A" from tree "B" will land. The variables are too great. So it is with style. I cannot hope to predict where a viewer's interpretation of style will come to rest, but, a posteriori, I can understand how he or she came to it. This is best understood when considering my analysis of Imitation of Life, which brings the strengths and weaknesses of the present theory of style into high relief.

The first Problem one encounters when analyzing style--and one for which I can suggest no solution--is a descriptive one. Cinematic style is an analogical communication for which I can offer no digital interpretation. One may describe style in polar terms (as do art historians Wölfflin, Sypher, et al.) or, as I have, use technical terms; but at the present time there is no systematic descriptive vocabulary for cinematic style. Thus, in writing about Imitation of Life, I am forced to use terms like "oblique angles" to give the reader some indication of the style. Frame enlargements are a useful addition to image analysis, but they cannot indicate a shot's compositional tensions--which still must be intuited by the analyst. In order to systematically describe style we should be able to quantify film technique, but, as Barry Salt has found in his statistical analyses,³ the cinema seems to resist such quantification. What this means, practically speaking, is that two different analysts will produce two different descriptions of a film's style--even before the interpretive process proper has begun. I describe the "peculiar" angles in the 1959 version of Imitation of Life, but an analyst accustomed to German Expressionist films and their "distorted" black-and-white chiaroscuro might overlook the angles entirely, but be startled by the presence of color. As long as there is no systematic, digital mechanism for describing style, it will continue to be a

largely subjective exercise to analyze it.

If the description of style is subjective, then so too is its interpretation. I have limited this subjective potential by grounding the above model of stylistic interpretation on cinema's technological base. The techniques of the cinema (both filmic and profilmic) determine the paradigms by which we interpret style. In these paradigms reside Metz's "confused murmurings of a thousand other utterances." Tacit comparison with previously viewed films ("utterances") shapes the spectator's interpretation of the style of any one particular film. It is this paradigmatic association with other stylistic phenomena that my theory of style cannot hope to comprehensively articulate. The practical consideration of just how a text will be interpreted is customarily relegated to the study of pragmatics, and, indeed, I have avoided it in the present study. Umberto Eco, however, argues that structuralism has too long shunned the functioning of the addressee (reader/viewer):

To postulate the cooperation of the reader does not mean to pollute the structural analysis with extratextual elements. The reader as an active principal of interpretation is a part of the picture of the generative process of the text.⁴

The "role of the reader,"⁵ or the viewer, should eventually become a part of a theory of style. I have elected not to include it in the present approach to style in order to better focus on the topic at hand. Thus, I present a

sample interpretation of style--as narrative/thematic metaphor--but I do not suppose that every viewer will so interpret the films. Indeed, the interpretation of Sirk's version as an ironic comment on 1950s American society is a highly controversial one (as recent quarreling between British and American film scholars indicates). Interpretation is a subjective process that semioticians have always acknowledged as highly problematic, but are just now beginning to grant some recognition as a scholarly pursuit.

Clearly much work remains to be done on cinematic style. I have but made a beginning. Questions of the role of the reader aside, the greatest challenge remaining for those wishing to do stylistic analysis is to construct a history of cinematic style. Cinema studies has relied on vague notions such as "classicism" for too long. (What film completely adheres to conventional classical rules?) We need an understanding of stylistic evolution built upon the solid, empirical study of thousands of films. As it stands now, stylistic analysis enters the film history books through the back door--occupying a writer's attention only when he or she discusses film noir, Orson Welles, European directors, and the early development of film "grammar." Without a history of style cinema studies is forced to rely on hazy, impressionistic memories of the style of any particular era, director, studio, cinema-

tographer, and so on. We have no proper context in which to place any specific film we may be working with.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

¹Arnold Hauser, The Philosophy of Art History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), p. 207.

²Lincoln Rothchild, Style in Art: The Dynamics of Art as Cultural Expression (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1960), p. 20.

³I take my base understanding of style in the visual arts from Margaret Finch, Style in Art History: An Introduction to Theories of Style and Sequence (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow, 1974), p. 3, which refers to style in painting. Although I am certain the principles of sculpture and other plastic arts may contribute to a theory of style I will limit this short discussion to the two dimensional arts (painting, drawing, and so on)--the artistic field most closely allied to the cinema.

⁴Heinrich Wölfflin, Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art, 7th German ed., trans. M. D. Hottinger (New York: Dover, 1932, 1950), pp. 14-16.

⁵See Wylie Sypher, Four Stages of Renaissance Style (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1955); and Finch.

⁶Wylie Sypher continues this polar reasoning into:

Rest	Motion
Cyclic	Broken
Exact	Abstract
Visual	Haptic
Nearseeing	Far seeing
Geometric	Free
Intensified seeing	Relaxed seeing
Dark	Light

(Sypher, pp. 19-25). He explores terminology for the directionality of a composition: "Horizontal-Vertical-Oblique-Spiraling" (Sypher, p. 25). And he also ruminates on the distinctions among "Points-Lines-Planes-Volumes" (Sypher, pp. 26-28). Thus one can see that Wölfflin's pioneering work does not begin to exhaust the possibilities for

describing paintings.

⁷ "Analog communication involves continuous quantities with no significant gaps. There is no 'not' nor any question of 'either/or': everything is 'more or less' (. . .). Digital communication involves discrete elements and discontinuities or gaps. It allows for saying 'not' and 'either/or' rather than 'both/and' (. . .)." Nichols, "Style, Grammar and the Movies," in Movies and Methods (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 624. Nichols' original sources include Gregory Bateson, Steps to an Ecology of the Mind (New York: Ballantine, 1972); and Anthony Wilden, System and Structure (London: Tavistock, 1972).

⁸ Nichols, p. 624.

'Stephen Heath, "From Brecht to Film," Screen, Winter 1975/1976, pp. 34-45; Colin MacCabe, "Principles Realism and Pleasure," Screen, Autumn 1976, pp. 7-27; Colin MacCabe, "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses," Screen, Summer 1974, pp. 7-27; Raymond Williams, "A Lecture on Realism," Screen, Spring 1977, pp. 61-74. Furthermore, the films of Jean-Luc Godard have sparked much work on realism and "illusionism"--for example, Chuck Kleinhans, "Two of Three Things I Know About Her," in Sexual Stratagems: The World of Women in Film, ed. Patricia Erens (New York: Horizon, 1979), pp. 72-81.

¹⁰ Sypher, p. 8.

¹¹ Finch, p. 7.

¹² Ibid., p. 13.

¹³ Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁴ Finch provides examples from painting, sculpture, and architecture to illuminate this point. They may be arrayed in a table thus:

	PLANAR	PLASTIC
Painting	<u>St. Benedict and St. Desiderius</u>	<u>The Tribute Money</u> (Masaccio)
Sculpture	<u>Rameses II and his Son</u>	<u>Sculpture for the Blind</u> (Brancusi)
Architecture	Sant' Andrea, Mantua (Alberti)	Original design for St. Peter's, Rome (Bramante)

Continued.

PAINTERLY

Painting The Grand Canal, Venice (Monet)

Sculpture Man With the Broken Nose (Rodin)

Architecture San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Rome (Borromini)

¹⁵ John Berger, The Moment of Cubism and Other Essays (New York: Pantheon, 1969), p. 15.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 30. To Berger's comment I would also add an observation by Marshall McLuhan: "Cubism, by seizing on instant total awareness, suddenly announced that the medium is the message"--Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 13.

¹⁷ Finch, p. 1.

¹⁸ See p. 6.

¹⁹ Finch, p. 2.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 19.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²² *ibid.*, p. 4.

²³ E. H. Gombrich, Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation, 2nd ed., (New York: Pantheon/Random House, 1960, 1961), p. 87.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 320.

²⁵ McLuhan, p. 288.

²⁶ Gombrich, p. 376.

²⁷ Quoted by Monroe C. Beardsley in Aesthetics From Classical Greece to the Present: A Short History (New York: MacMillan, 1966), p. 191.

²⁸ Quoted by Beardsley, p. 214.

²⁹ Paul Schrader, Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

CHAPTER II

¹Monroe C. Beardsley, Robert W. Daniel, Glenn Leggett, Theme and Form: An Introduction to Literature, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1956, 1962), p. xxxv.

²F. L. Lucas, Style (London: Cassell, 1955), p. 45.

³Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, 1974 ed., s-v., "Style."

'Ibid.

⁵Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation (New York: Dell, 1966), p. 15.

⁶Ibid., p. 15.

⁷Princeton Encyclopedia.

⁸Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1973), p. 38.

'Ibid.

CHAPTER III

¹Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in Style in Language, ed. Thomas Sebeok (Cambridge, Mass.: M. I. T., 1960), p. 353. Jakobson diagrams "the constitutive factors in any speech event, in any act of verbal communication," thus:

	CONTEXT	
	MESSAGE	
ADDRESSER-----		-----ADDRESSEE
	CONTACT	
	CODE	

Without entirely developing the reasoning behind Jakobson's diagram, it is important to note that his "addresser," "addressee" and "code" correspond directly to the "sender," "receiver" and "code," respectively, of the present diagram. "Text," in my scheme, however, does not find singular correspondance in Jakobson's. Its seeming equivalent, "message," exists on the level of signified and finds its signifier

in the "contact" between addresser and addressee. Text, as I am using it, marks a signifying phenomenon, not a signified. In the cinema it is the physical aspect of a film: light and shadow on a reflective surface, usually accompanied by sound.

²Given the impact of sound in film, the dearth of critical thought on the matter ought to embarrass the scholastic community. Jonathan Rosenbaum polemicizes in an audial manifesto, "Sound Thinking" (Film Comment, September/October 1978, pp. 38-40), that immediate attention should be paid filmic sound. Although this critical gap is not easily filled, I will provide some limited thoughts on sound and cinematic style below.

³In the context of the present paper I will use "technological" as the adjectival form of "technology," and "technical" as the adjectival form of "technique."

⁴Edward Branigan, "Color and Cinema: Problems in the Writing of History," Film Reader, #4, p. 19.

⁵The basic concept is not a new one. Within the context of film theory it dates back to the 1930s and the writings of Rudolf Arnheim, outlined below.

⁶Peirce summarizes the triadic nature of the sign at several points in his Collected Papers. For example, "The icon has no dynamical connection with the object it represents; it simply happens that its qualities resemble those of that object, and excite analogous sensations in the mind for which it is a likeness. But it stands unconnected with them. The index is physically connected with its object; they make an organic pair, but the interpreting mind has nothing to do with this connection, except remarking it, after it is established. The symbol is connected with its object by virtue of the idea of the symbol-using mind, without which no such connection would exist."

Charles Sanders Peirce, Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, eds, Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, vol. 2: Elements of Logic (Cambridge: Harvard, 1932), pp. 168-169.

⁷The question of iconicity is not pertinent enough to a theory of style to pursue it fully, but I would like to note that Peirce recognizes that iconicity need not depend upon objects in the referent--as Eco contends he does. Consider this statement by Peirce:

"An Icon is a sign which refers to the Object that it

denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses, just the same, whether any such Object actually exists or not." (Italics mine.) Peirce, p. 143. Obviously, the issue is open to much further discussion.

⁸Umberto Eco, A Theory of Semiotics (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1976)-, p. 58.

'Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁰David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Film Art: An Introduction (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 74.

¹¹Brian Henderson, A Critique of Film Theory (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1980), p. 49.

¹²Bordwell and Thompson, p. 189.

¹³Sergei Eisenstein, "A Statement on the Sound-Film by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov," in Film Form, ed. and trans Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1949);pp. 257-260.

CHAPTER IV

¹Peter Wollen, Signs and Meaning in the Cinema (Bloomington, Ind. : Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 163.

²Bordwell and Thompson, p. 74.

³Lev Kuleshov, Kuleshov on Film, trans. and ed. Ronald Levaco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 43.

'Ibid., p. 7.

⁵Eisenstein, p. 49.

'Ibid., pp. 45-63.

71bid., p. 46.

81bid., p. 54.

'Ibid., pp. 72-83.

"Ibid., p. 72.

'1Ibid., p. 75.

¹² Ibid., p. 76.

¹³ Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

¹⁵ Wollen, p. 53. Here "Symbolism" does not refer to the simple use of objects to refer to concepts (as an Ingmar Bergman film is vulgarly thought to contain "symbolism"-- for example, an insect-rotted wooden Madonna representing the corrupted heroine in The Touch, 1971), or to the semiotician's (Jacques Lacan's) "Symbolic," but to a collection of late nineteenth-century artists and writers who revelled in the metaphysical and proposed a unification of the arts and the senses.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁷ Brian Henderson, "Two Types of Film Theory," in Movies and Methods, ed. Bill Nichols, pp. 388-400.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 390, 396.

"Rudolf Arnheim, Film as Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p. 9.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 9-34.

²¹ Ibid., p. 43.

²² Ibid., p. 133.

²³ Ibid., p. 87.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 144-146.

²⁵ I have chosen not to deal comprehensively with Kracauer in the present paper. The particulars of his argument differ from Bazin, but in his consideration of style he is too similar to warrant separate discussion. His attitude toward film may be summed up in his comment, "Film . . . is uniquely equipped to record and reveal physical reality [*italics mine*] and, hence, gravitates toward it"--Siegfried Kracauer, Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 28.

²⁶ Quoted in Dudley Andrew, Andre Bazin, forward by Francois Truffaut (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 31.

²⁷Andre' Bazin, What is Cinema? vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 9-16.

²⁸Ibid., p. 24.

²⁹Ibid., p. 13.

³⁰Ibid., p. 11.

³¹Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," trans. Alan Williams, Film Quarterly, Winter 1974/1975, pp. 39-47.

³²Bazin, p. 15.

³³Ibid., p. 27.

³⁴Andrew, p. 109.

³⁵Andre Bazin, Orson Welles: A Critical View, trans. Jonathan Rosenbaum, with a forward by Francois Truffaut (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 81.

³⁶Ibid., p. 81.

³⁷Andrew, p. 35.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 35-36.

³⁹Ibid p. 114. The original sources of the metaphor are André Bazin, What is Cinema? vol.,2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p.31; and André Bazin, Qu'est-ce que le cinéma? vol. 4 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1961), p. 98.

⁴⁰Bazin, What is Cinema? vol. 1, pp. 23-40.

⁴¹See Lotte H. Eisner, The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt, trans. Roger Greaves (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965, 1969, 1973).

⁴²Bazin, What is Cinema? vol. 1, p. 39.

⁴³Bazin, What is Cinema? vol. 2, p. 28.

⁴⁴Bazin is somewhat more precise regarding the question of narrative form. It must be stripped to a bare minimum. The narrative should be an elliptical one with the spectator's

mind "jumping" from event to event rather than being "led," as it is in both montage and classicism. Bazin favors the metaphor of a narrative as a river ford: the spectator must leap from event to event as if from stone to stone. The conventional narrative might best be thought of as a footbridge, carrying the spectator from the opening credits to the final fade-out.

⁴⁵ Bazin, Orson Welles, p. 80.

⁴⁶ The best account, though ten years dated, is to be found in Wollen, pp. 74-115. John Caughie's recently published reader of auteur-related material is particularly valuable for the beginning film student: John Caughie, ed., Theories of Authorship (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

⁴⁷ Since auteur critics focus on Hollywood industry directors and since the industry has allowed only a sprinkling of women directors, very few, if any, women have been accorded auteur status--although Dorothy Arzner and Ida Lupino have come close. Consequently, I have chosen to use the masculine pronoun to refer to auteur directors. The absence of women auteurs reflects the penchant of early auteur critics for the action film and "masculine" topics. Or, as Pauline Kael queried with no little acerbity, "Can we conclude that, in England and the United States, the auteur theory is an attempt by adult males to justify staying inside the small range of experience of their boyhood and adolescence--that period when masculinity looked so great and important but art was something talked about by poseurs and phonies and sensitive-feminine types?"--Pauline Kael, "Circles and Squares," in I Lost It at the Movies (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965, 1965), p. 319.

⁴⁸ Nichols, p. 238.

⁴⁹ Andrew, p. 124.

⁵⁰ Andrew Sarris The Primal Screen: Essays on Film and Related Subjects (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 50.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Fereydoun Hoveyda, "Sun Spots," Cahiers du cinéma, October 1960, from a translation distributed by S.E.F.T. for a weekend seminar (June 1975), no translator credited.

⁵³ V. F. Perkins, "The Cinema of Nicholas Ray," in

Movie Reader, ed. Ian Cameron (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 68.

⁵⁴Jeanine Basinger, Anthony Mann (Boston: Twayne, 1979), p. 12.

⁵⁵Jean-Luc Godard, Godard on Godard, ed. and trans. Jean Narboni and Tom Milne and with an introduction by Richard Roud (New York: Viking, 1972), p. 117.

⁵⁶The metaphor is Michael Silverman's.

⁵⁷Wollen, p. 78.

⁵⁸Robin Wood, Howard Hawks (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1968), p. 11.

⁵⁹Alain Silver, "Kiss Me Deadly: Evidence of a Style," Film Comment, March/April 1975, p. 25.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹For the reader unfamiliar with Kiss Me Deadly it may be briefly synopsisized thus: brutal private eye Mike Hammer (Ralph Meeker) stumbles on to a case-of international espionage when a woman, Christina (Cloris Leachman), hails his car in the middle of the night. Her cruel death at the hands of Dr. Soberin's (Albert Dekker) henchmen sets Hammer on a quest to find the "Great Whatsis" --which he finally locates in a seaside cottage and turns out to be a nuclear device. The film ends with its explosion.

⁶²Silver, p. 24.

⁶³In Movies and Methods, pp. 325-338.

⁶⁴Silver, pp. 26-29.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 27.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 28.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid. At this point I would direct the reader's attention to a provocative article regarding style and its relationship to narrative: Richard Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia," Movie, j/24, pp. 2-13. In his analysis of the musical film Dyer criticizes the mise-en-scene critics of

Movie. He argues that they "treat the non-representational [colour! texture, movement, rhythm, melody camerawork] as a function of the representational [narrative signifiers] simply a way of bringing out, emphasizing, aspects of plot, character, situation, without signification in their own right." (Dyer, P. 4.)

⁶⁹Silver, p. 26.

⁷⁰Paul Mayersberg, "Carmen and Bess," in Movie Reader, p. 49.

⁷¹Mark LeFanu, "Pageants of Violence: Problems on the Staging of History," Monogram, #6 p. 12.

⁷²Hoveyda, p. 4.

⁷³Raymond Durnat, Films and Feeling (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 57.

⁷⁴David Grosz, "First Legion," in Douglas Sirk, eds., Laura Mulvey and Jon Halliday (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Film Festival, 1972), p. 41.

⁷⁵Godard, pp. 60-61.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 117.

⁷⁷Durnat, 29.

⁷⁸Sarris, p. 41.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 48.

⁸⁰Godard, p. 71.

⁸¹Silver, p. 29.

⁸²Basinger, p. 51.

⁸³For a more thorough introduction to these concepts the reader is directed to Rosalind Coward and John Ellis Language and Materialism: Developments in the Theory of the Subject (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).

⁸⁴Peter Wollen, "'Ontology' and 'Materialism' in Film," Screen, Spring 1976, p. 20.

⁸⁵Wollen, Signs and Meaning, pp. 163-165. In a second

appendix he even performs the arch-auteur critical act of ranking directors in lists; the "pantheon" consists of Charles Chaplin, Fritz Lang, John Ford, Samuel Fuller, Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock, Ernst Lubitsch, Max Ophuls, Josef von Sternberg and Orson Welles (ibid., pp. 166-167).

⁸⁶Peter Wollen, "Counter Cinema: Vent D'Est," After-image, Autumn 1972, pp. 6-16.

⁸⁷Penthesilea and Riddles of the Sphinx, made in collaboration with Laura Mulvey.

⁸⁸In table form the seven "deadly sins" of mainstream cinema are opposed to the virtues of "counter cinema" thus:

Narrative transitivity	Narrative intransitivity
Identification	Estrangement
Transparency	Foregrounding
Single diegesis	Multiple diegesis
Closure	Aperture
Pleasure	Unpleasure
Fiction	Reality

(Wollen, "Counter Cinema," pp. 6-16.) The evident inspiration for this polar critique of the cinema is Bertolt Brecht's preface to "The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny"-- Bertolt Brecht, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," in Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 33-42.

⁸⁹Thomas Elsaesser, "The Cinema of Irony: Introduction," Monogram, #5, p. 1.

⁹⁰J. A. Place, The Non-Western Films of John Ford (Secaucus, N. J.: Citadel, 1979), pp. 7-17.

⁹¹Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, p. 3.

⁹²For further elaboration see J. Krin Malkiewicz, Cinematography: A Guide for Film Makers and Film Teachers, revised ed., assisted by Robert E. Rogers, with illustrations by Jim Fletcher (New York: Van Nostrand-Reinhold, 1973), pp. 86-131.

⁹³Christian Metz, Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema, trans. Michael Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 108-146.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 142.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 181.

⁹⁶Quoted in Terence Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 34.

⁹⁷Nichols, p. 496.

⁹⁸In Movies and Methods, pp. 438-450.

⁹⁹In Movies and Methods, pp. 451-468.

¹⁰⁰Nichols, p. 439.

¹⁰¹The "realm of the imaginary" is the state of the subject at birth. He believes that all he sees is part of himself. This imaginary unity of the subject and his viewing field is ruptured during the Mirror Phase, at age 18 months, approximately. At that point he enters the realm of the "Symbolic" --realizing that he is not in unity with what he sees, and that one thing can stand in for another. For a concise description of this mechanism see Colin MacCabe, "Presentation of 'The Imaginary Signifier,'" Screen, Summer 1975, pp. 7-13.

¹⁰²Nichols, p. 447.

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 448-449.

¹⁰⁴Christian Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," Screen, Summer 1975, pp. 14-76.

¹⁰⁵Stephen Heath, "Film and System, Terms of Analysis, Part I," Screen, Spring 1975, pp. 7-77; Stephen Heath, "Film and System, Terms of Analysis, Part II," Screen, Summer 1975, pp. 91-113.

¹⁰⁶Raymond Bellour, "The Obvious and the Code," Screen, Winter 1974/1975, pp. 7-17.

¹⁰⁷Stephen Heath, "Screen Images, Film Memory," Edinburgh '76 Magazine, pp. 34-35. The Bellour piece to which Heath refers appears originally in French in Communications 23, pp. 235-250. An English language paraphrase of it accompanies Heath's article: Kari Hanet, "Bellour on North by Northwest," Edinburgh '76 Magazine, pp. 43-49.

¹⁰⁸Heath, "Film and System, Part I," p. 37.

¹⁰⁹Ibid. pp. 37-38.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 70.

- ¹¹¹Heath, "Film and System, Part II," p. 111.
- ¹¹²Heath, "Film and System, Part I," p. 11.
- ¹¹³Ibid., pp. 36-37. The actors playing the pertinent characters are: Janet Leigh (Susan), Charlton Heston (Vargas), Joi Lansing (The Blonde), unknown (Linneker).
- ¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 66.
- ¹¹⁵Bellour, pp. 7-17.
- ¹¹⁶Raymond Bellour, "Cine-Repetitions," trans. Kari Hanet, Screen, Summer 1979, p. 70.
- ¹¹⁷Leslie Halliwell, The Filmgoer's Book of Quotes (New York: Signet, 1973), p. 30.
- ¹¹⁸André Bazin, "The Evolution of Film Language," in The New Wave, ed. and trans. Peter Graham (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1968), p. 33. Graham's translation provides a superior English language alternative to Hugh Gray's in What is Cinema? vol. 1.
- ¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 26.
- ¹²⁰Wollen, "Counter Cinema," p. 9.
- ¹²¹p. Adams Sitney, Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 333-334.
- ¹²²Ibid., p. 320.
- ¹²³Ibid., p. 319.
- ¹²⁴Standish D. Lawder, The Cubist Cinema (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp. 19-20.
- ¹²⁵Ibid., p. 7.
- ¹²⁶Two issues devoted to film, edited by Annette Michelson, were published (September 1971 and January 1973).
- ¹²⁷Sontag, p. 15.
- ¹²⁸Elsaesser, "The Cinema of Irony," p. 1.

CHAPTER V

¹Christian Metz, Language and Cinema, trans. Donna Jean Umiker-Sebeok (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), pp. 245-251.

²Ibid., p. 250.

³Roland Barthes, Mythologies, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), pp. 112-113.

⁴Ibid., p. 115.

⁵I recognize the limitations of Peirce's triadic classification of the sign, but I feel it can be used if applied with caution. As I indicate above some of the harshest criticism for Peirce is grounded in his repeated use of the referent as criteria for definition. In contrast, I have limited the notion of the referent to the referent-as-it-is-revealed-in-the-text, for lack of a more succinct way to phrase it.

⁶Linda Williams has attempted to transpose Jakobson's concept to the cinema. Her basic premise is that classical film is metonymic and modernist films such as Un Chien Andalou and Last Year at Marienbad are metaphoric. See Linda Williams, "Hiroshima and Marienbad: Metaphor and Metonymy," Screen, Spring 1976, pp. 34-39; and Linda Williams, "The Prologue to Un Chien Andalou: A Surrealist Film Metaphor," Screen, Winter 1976/1977, pp. 24-33.

⁷Carlos Clarens Crime Movies: From Griffith to the Godfather and Beyond (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980), p. 211.

⁸Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

¹I should note once again that I have chosen, for reasons mentioned above, to limit my study to narrative film. This does not mean that I think documentary or "experimental" film is less important. I have found (in work conducted elsewhere) that the conceptual models presented here may well apply to non-narrative modes, but I put that aside now as a topic for further research.

²This is not uncommon. See The Philadelphia Story (George Cukor, 1940) and High Society (Charles Lang, 1956), Ball of Fire (Howard Hawks, 1941) and A Song is Born (Howard

Hawks, 1948), The Matchmaker (Joseph Anthony, 1958) and Hello, Dolly (Gene Kelly, 1969).

³Michael B. Druxman, Make It Again, Sam: A Survey of Movie Remakes (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1975), pp. 59-62.

⁴In the context of this paper I use "Stahl" and "Sirk" not to refer to actual persons, but to the entire creative ensemble (producer, scriptwriter, cinematographer, and so on) responsible for the films. I recognize that my use of the directors' names is a residue of auteurism, but it does provide the reader with a convenient way to identify the two different versions of Imitation of Life.

⁵Druxman, p. 10.

⁶Characters may also be placed in relationship to a semiotically fertile ~~setting~~ setting (for example, in many Westerns, or The Out of Towners, Arthur Hiller, 1970) or a conflict within themselves (for example, Persona, Ingmar Bergman, 1966). Most commercial cinema, however, is best considered in terms of how characters interact with each other. This is probably due to Hollywood's emphasis on strongly plotted films.

⁷Molly Haskell, From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973, 1974), p. 159.

⁸Fannie Hurst, Imitation of Life (New York: Permabooks, 1959).

⁹Donald Bogle, Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films (New York: Viking, 1973), p. 9.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 9.

¹¹Haskell, pp. 171-172.

¹²Heath, "Film and System, Part I," p. 11.

¹³David Lusted, "The Searchers and Study of the Image," Screen Education, Autumn 1975, p. 17.

¹⁴The cautionary note must well be sounded because it may be that the style/grammar distinction is only an unwanted vestige of the language model.

¹⁵That black dialect in the cinema is a highly coded

language is indicated by the fact that popular black actress Louise Beavers, who plays Delilah, had to learn the accent in order to get work in film. Reportedly, she was from Ohio and did not come by the dialect naturally--as was the case with many black actors and actresses. See Bogle, p. 63.

¹⁶Hurst, p. 183.

CHAPTER VII

¹See p. 122, above.

²See p. 110, above.

³Barry Salt, "Film Style and Technology in the Forties," Film Quarterly Fall 1977, pp. 46-56; Barry Salt, "Film Style and Technology in the Thirties," Film Quarterly Fall 1976, pp. 19-32; and Barry Salt, "Statistical Style Analysis of Motion Pictures," Film Quarterly, Fall 1974, pp. 13-21.

⁴Umberto Eco, The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 4.

⁵Ibid.



APPENDIX A

"KISS ME DEADLY: EVIDENCE OF A STYLE"

Appendix A consists of a photocopy of Alain Silver's article, "Kiss Me Deadly: Evidence of a Style" (Alain Silver, "Kiss Me Deadly: Evidence of a Style," Film Comment, March/April 1975, pp. 24-30). I have chosen this method of reproduction in order to provide the reader with the frame enlargments that accompany his piece. Obviously a photocopy of a photograph only approximates the original, but I believe the following reproductions are clear enough to be of value to the reader --especially if he or she is not familiar with the film itself.

Film Comment's 8 1/2" x 11" pages have been reduced by 75% in order to facilitate inclusion here.



APPENDIX B

IMITATION OF LIFE: SEGMENT DESCRIPTIONS

What follows is a shot-by-shot description of the corresponding sequences from the two versions of Imitation of Life that are analyzed above. Augmenting this written description are frame enlargements from the two films. The location of each specific frame is indicated in the written description. Frames with the same first digit (for example, frames 8.1-8.3) are taken from the same shot. The parenthetical figures after the shot number indicate the shot's length in feet and frames (taken from a 16mm print: 40 frames per foot). All frames are from the sequences discussed above, except for frames 1, 13, 14, and 32. Frames 1 and 13 are from the shots immediately preceding and following, respectively, the sequence from the 1934 version. Frames 14 and 32 are from the shots immediately preceding and following, respectively, the sequence from the 1959 version.

The reader should recognize that any frame enlargement is only an approximation of the original film. Moreover, the frame enlargements from the 1959 version are particularly misleading--due to the restrictions imposed

by the need to microfilm dissertations. This has led, unfortunately, to the use of black-and-white frame enlargements from this volatile color film.

Furthermore, I direct the reader's attention to appendix C, which contains supplemental frame enlargements selected from characteristic moments in the two films.

Imitation of Life (1934)Shot One (3/03)

Medium close-up: door to classroom, children visible through window on door (frame 2). Peola is barely visible in row three.

Shot Two (4/34)

Long shot: same angle, with door "removed" (frame 3). The children are sitting in three diagonal rows, ending at vertical windows with a poster between them. Teacher: "We'll read a chapter until the rain lets up. Then I think you'll be able to get home. Shall it be Little Men or Little Women?"
Class: "Little Women!"

Shot Three (2/06)

Long shot: teacher, reverse angle (frame 4). Peola's head (marked by a light bow on her black hair) is below and left of center. Teacher is center-frame, surrounded by rectangular forms: the blackboard (on which are musical notes and words), a map of the United States and portraits (presumably of presidents). Teacher: "All right. Little Women."

Shot Four (9/39)

Medium shot: reverse angle of door from shot one (frame 5.1). Delilah enters frame right, talks to a woman, knocks on the door and moves toward the handle. Teacher (reading): "Jo was very busy in the garret. The October days began to grow chilly. The afternoons were short. For two or three hours the sun lay warmly in the high window" (frame 5.2).

Shot Five (2/12)

Close-up: Peola, children in background in soft focus (frame 6.1). She puts book in front of her face. Forehead, hair and ribbon are still visible (frame 6.2).

Shot Six (15/25)

Same framing as shot four (frame 7.1). Delilah enters the room. Teacher enters from frame left. They talk. Camera centers them, following Delilah slightly.
 Delilah: "Good afternoon, ma'm. It's raining so hard I brought rubbers and coat to fetch my little girl home." Teacher: "I'm afraid you've made some mistake."
 Delilah: "Ain't this the 3B?" Teacher: "Yes ."
 Delilah: "Well, this is it." Teacher: "It can't be it. I have no little colored children in my class." Delilah: "Oh, thank you." (Pause. She starts to walk out, looks, sees Peola.) Delilah: "There's my little girl." She points off left. Teacher and she look off left (frame 7.2).

Shot Seven (1/03)

Same framing as shot five (frame 8). Peola's eyes are barely visible over the book. Delilah: "Peola."

Shot Eight (8/03)

Same framing as shot six (frame 9). Teacher: "Oh. "
 Delilah: "My poor baby. Teacher, has she been passing?" Teacher: "Passing? Why,.yes. Peola . . ."

Shot Nine (9/20)

Medium long shot: Peola in row of girls with book hiding face (frame 10.1). The frame is filled with students. Teacher: ". . . you may go home."
 Peola rises, eyes downcast. Children stare at her: "I didn't know she was colored." She walks up center aisle (frame 10.2). Camera pans right, tracks back, tilts up, slightly anticipating her movement (frame 10.3).

Shot Ten (4/08)

Same framing as shot six (frame 11.1). Peola walks through mother and teacher (frame 11.2). Peola (to mother): "I hate you. I hate you. I hate you."
 Delilah: "Peola. Peola, honey." Delilah exits after her (frame 11.3).

Shot Eleven (4/38)

Medium shot: glass-paned doors (two) leading to the outside (frame 12.1). Peola enters right, runs diagonally to doors at off-center and exits through them (frame 12.2). Delilah follows (frame 12.3).
Delilah: "Peola. Peola, honey." (frame 12.4)

Imitation of Life (1959)Shot One (3/02)

Long shot: Annie runs up steps of school (frame 15.1). Camera tilts up to center "Public School" on facade (frame 15.2).

Shot Two (3/33)

Long shot: interior classroom, shot straight toward corner where stands a trimmed Christmas tree (frame 16). Sara Jane is in lower left. Teacher: "Santa Claus has many names in many different countries. In Holland he is called Sinterklaas . . ."

Shot Three (2/18)

Medium close-up: Sara Jane surrounded by students (frame 17). Teacher: "In France, saint Nicolas. In Sweden . . ."

Shot Four (5/22)

Long shot: similar to shot two, but closer, frame right and lower. Teacher points at blackboard (frame 18.1). Teacher: ". . . he is known as jultomten. In Germany he is , . ." Knocking interrupts her. Students look right. Teacher moves right, camera pans right, dollies in to a medium shot as teacher opens the door for Annie; pans past Christmas wreaths (frame 18.2). Annie holds red boots in hand. She is in dark blue with kerchief. Teacher is dressed in lavender. Teacher: "Oh, can . . ."

Shot Five (7/25)

Medium close-up: same angle as shot three (frame 19.1). Teacher: ". I do something for you?" Sara Jane looks around, sinks in her **Chair**. Annie: "I hate to trouble you, Miss, but I brought these for my little girl." Sara Jane holds book in front of her face (frame 19.2).

Shot Six (4/05)

Close-up: Annie, over the shoulder of teacher (frame 20.1). Teacher: "I'm afraid you've made a mistake. I don't have any little colored girl in my class." Annie's eyes search the room. Annie: "But they said 3B. This is 3B, isn't . . ." She looks off left, boots held at the bottom of the frame (frame 20.2).

Shot Seven (0/21)

Medium close-up: same framing as shot three (frame 21.1). Sara Jane, behind book, peeks around it (frame 21.2).

Shot Eight (0/39)

Close-up: Annie, same framing as shot six (frame 22.1). Annie: "Why there's Sara Jane." Annie smiles. Teacher turns fully around and looks off left (frame 22.2).

Shot Nine (0/19)

Medium close-up: same framing as shot three (frame 23.1). Sara Jane, looking out from behind book, holds it up again.

Shot Ten (3/18)

Medium close-up: Annie and teacher looking off left, as in shot eight (frame 24.1). Annie: "There's my baby." She moves left, exchanges positions with teacher (frame 24.2). Camera pans left, dollies back. Teacher: "You mean Sara Jane Johnson?" Annie: "Yes, ma'm, I'm Mrs. Johnson." Teacher looks horrified. Annie exits frame left (frame 24.3).

Shot Eleven (7/23)

Medium shot: Annie and teacher, a Christmas wreath between them. Annie's movement continues from shot ten (frame 25.1). Camera pans left, dollies parallel to her movement left, up the aisle. Camera precedes her, lowers and pans left to Sara Jane in close-up profile (her book is opened to a picture of a cow) (frame 25.2). Annie pulls the book down. Annie: "Sara Jane, baby, I brought you your . . ." Music begins. Sara Jane slams the book down, moves right, in front of camera (frame 25.3) as it pans with her to a long shot of the room. Sara Jane runs to the door in the background right (frame 25.4). Annie: "Sara Jane!" Teacher, by door: "We didn't know!" (frame 25.5)

Shot Twelve (6/02)

Medium shot: Sara Jane goes through a pile of coats, chooses her own (frame 26.1). Annie (off-frame): "Sara Jane! Wait! Sara Jane!" As Sara Jane exits, Annie enters. Annie: "Baby, wait" (frame 26.2). They both exit right foreground. Cut as Annie exits (frame 26.3).

Shot Thirteen (3/09)

Long shot: exterior of building. Snow falls (frame 27.1). Sara Jane runs off frame right, Annie runs after her (frame 27.2).

Shot Fourteen (8/26)

Long shot: the school's facade, shot through a Christmas tree lot (frame 28.1). Annie: "Sara Jane, wait (music swells). Now, let me do this." They walk into medium shot: Annie kneels to help Sara Jane with her rain gear. Annie: "Now, put your coat on. What do you want to do, catch pneumonia?" Sara Jane (struggling with her coat): "I hope I do . . ." (frame 28.2).

Shot Fifteen (4/20)

Medium close-up: same angle, Annie's back to us (frame 29). Sara Jane: "I hope I die." Annie: "Honey, nothing's hurt. You shouldn't have let them think . . ." Sara Jane: "They didn't ask me. Why should I tell them?" Annie: "Because . . ."

Shot Sixteen (1/22)

Medium close-up: reverse angle (frame 30). Annie:
" . . . that's what you are, and it's nothing to be
ashamed of."

Shot Seventeen (3/20)

Same framing as shot fifteen (frame 31.1). Sara
Jane: "Why do you have to be my mother? Why?!"
Sara Jane exits right, close to the camera (frame
31.2). Annie rises up (frame 31.3). Dissolve to
the next sequence.



frame 1



Frame 2



Frame 3



Frame 4



Frame 5.1



Frame 5.2



Frame 6.1



Frame 6.2



Frame 7.1



Frame 7.2



Frame 8



Frame 9



Frame 10.1



Frame 10.2



Frame 10.3



Frame 11.1



Frame 11.2



Frame 11.3



Frame 12.1



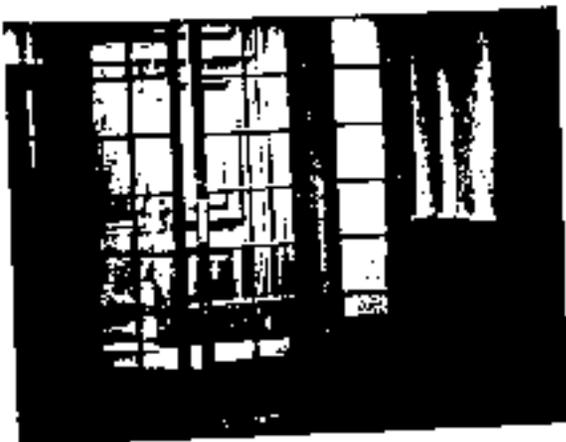
Frame 12.2



Frame 12.3



Frame 12.4



Frame 13



Frame 14



Frame 15.1



Frame 15.2



Frame 16



Frame 17



Frame 18.1



Frame 18.2



Frame 19.1



Frame 19.2



Frame 20.1



Frame 20.2



Frame 21.1



Frame 21.2



Frame 22.1



Frame 22.2



Frame 23.1



Frame 24.1



Frame 24.2



Frame 24.3



Frame 25.1



Frame 25.2



Frame 25.3



Frame 25.4



Frame 25.5



Frame 26.1



Frame 26.2



Frame 26.3



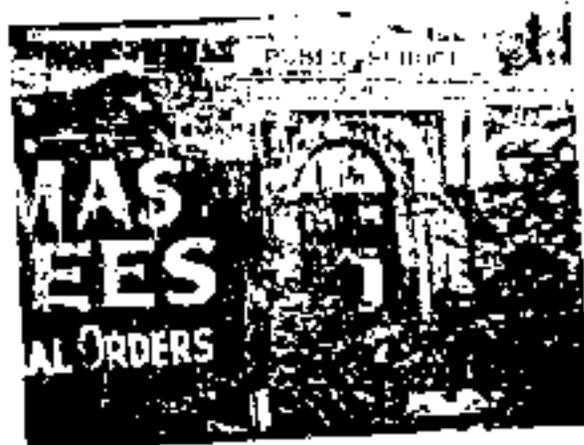
Frame 27.1



Frame 27.2



Frame 28.1



Frame 28.2



Frame 29



Frame 30



Frame 31.1



Frame 31.2



Frame 31.3



Frame 32





APPENDIX C

IMITATION OF LIFE:

SUPPLEMENTAL FRAME ENLARGEMENTS

Frames 33-48 are from the 1934 version of Imitation of Life. Frames 49-62 are from the 1959 version.

These frames were chosen largely at random to illustrate the respective visual styles of the two films. They are here arranged chronologically.

Frame 33



Frame 34



Frame 35



Frame 36



Frame 37



Frame 38



Frame 39



Frame 40



Frame 41



Frame 42



Frame 43



Frame 44



Frame 45



Frame 46



Frame 47



Frame 48



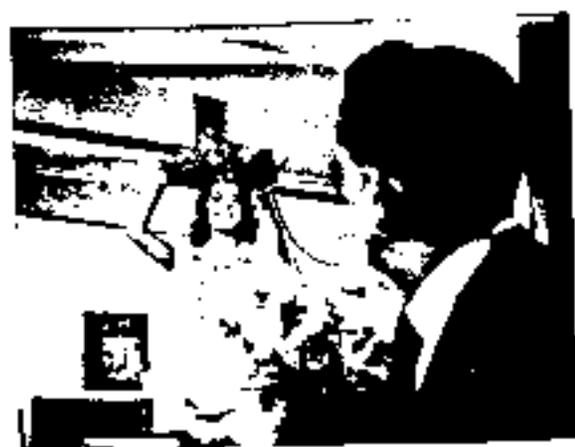
Frame 49



Frame 50



Frame 53



Frame 52



Frame 53



Frame 54



Frame 55



Frame 56



Frame 57



Frame 58



Frame 59



Frame 60



Frame 61



Frame 62



APPENDIX D

IMITATION OF LIFE: SEGMENT MUSICAL SCORE

Appendix D consists of a transcription of the "background" music from the segment of Sirk's Imitation of Life analyzed above. (The corresponding Stahl segment is without music.) Abbreviations have been used for the character names: "A" = Annie, "T" = Teacher, "SJ" = Sara Jane. This transcription was made from close analysis of the film--without consulting Frank Skinner's original. Thus it is somewhat approximate.

Andante ♩ = 96

Oboe

Soprano
Voice

Violin
1

Violin
2

Viola

Cello

Piano

Wind
Sax

Dialogue A: Sara Jane, baby, I brought you your . . .

(A) Moderato ♩ = 116

Oboe

Soprano Voice

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Piano

Wind Storm

The musical score consists of eight staves. The Oboe, Soprano Voice, and Wind Storm staves are currently empty. The Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello staves contain a melodic line starting with a half note, followed by a quarter note, and then a long slur covering the remainder of the staff. The Piano staff contains a rhythmic accompaniment starting with a half note, followed by a quarter note, and then a series of eighth notes. A circled 'A' is placed above the first measure of the Violin 1 staff and below the first measure of the Piano staff.

Dialogue Sara Jane! T: We didn't know. A: Sara Jane! Wait!

Oboe

Soprano Voice

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Piano

Wind Storm

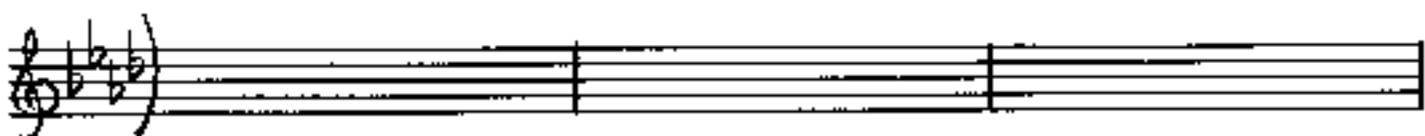
The musical score consists of eight staves. The Oboe, Soprano Voice, and Wind Storm staves are mostly empty. The Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello staves contain a melodic line with a fermata over the first two measures and a circled 'B' above the third measure. The Piano staff contains a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The Wind Storm staff is empty.

Dialogue

Sara Jane!

Two empty musical staves are provided for the dialogue.

Oboe



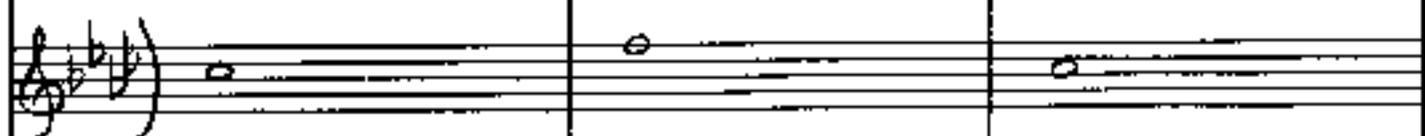
Soprano Voice



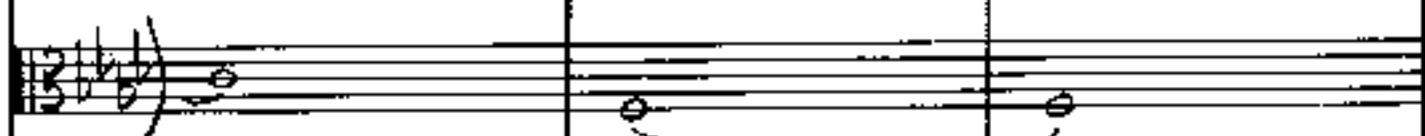
Violin 1



Violin 2



Viola



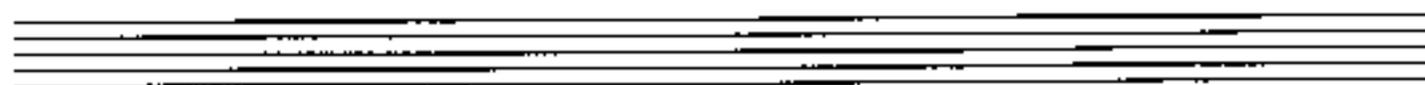
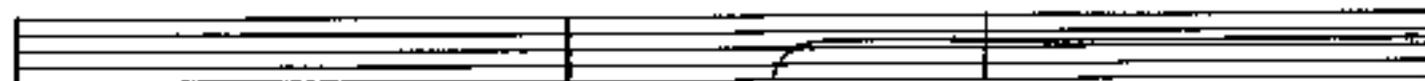
Cello



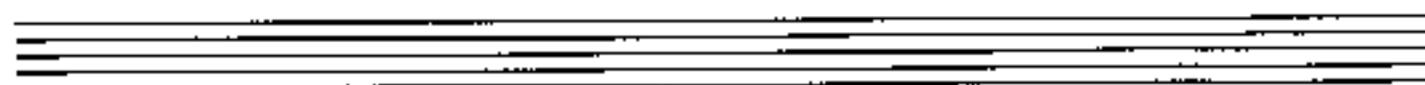
Piano



Wind Storm



Dialogue Baby, wait.



Oboe

Soprano Voice

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Piano

Wind Storm

Dialogue

Sara Jane, wait.

©

Oboe

Soprano
Voice

©

Violin
1

Violin
2

Viola

Cello

©

Piano

Wind
Storm

De' elogue

Now . . . now,

let me do it.

Oboe

Soprano Voice

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Piano

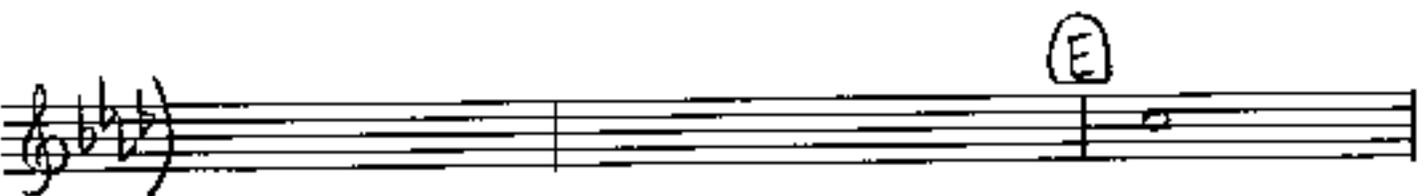
Wind Storm

Dialogue Now, put your coat on.

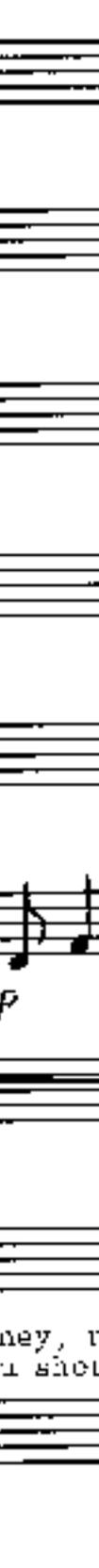
What do you want to do,
catch pneumonia?

SJ: I hope I do.
I hope I die.

Oboe



Soprano Voice



Violin 1



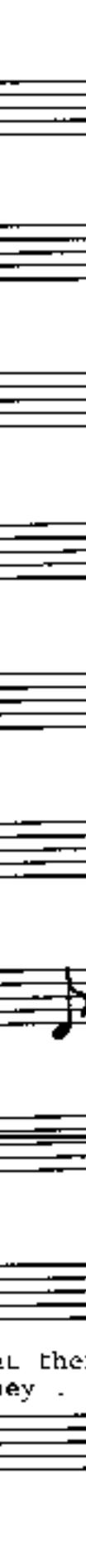
Violin 2



Viola



Cello



Piano



Wind Storm



Dialogue A: Honey, nothing's hurt. I've let them think . . . didn't ask me.
You shouldn't . . . SJ: They . . . Why should I . . .



Oboe



Soprano
Voice



Violin
1



Violin
2



Viola



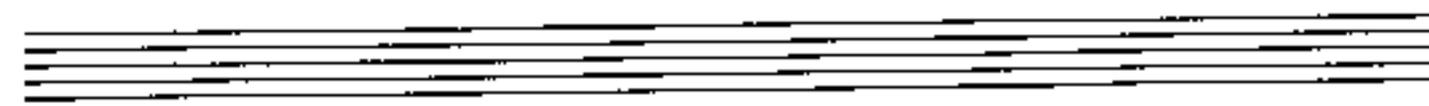
Cello



Piano

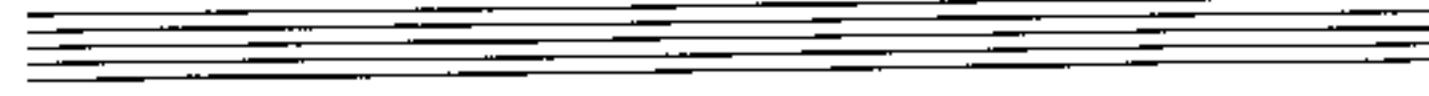


Wind
Storm



Dialogue

tell them?	and it's nothing to be ashamed of.
A: Because that's what you are	SJ: Why do you have to . . .



Oboe

Soprano
Voice

Violin
1

Violin
2

Viola

Cello

Piano

Wind
Storm

Dialogue he my mother? Why?

APPENDIX E

IMITATION OF LIFE: FANNIE HURST'S ORIGINAL

Both films entitled Imitation of Life give screen credit to Fannie Hurst's novel of that name. Both also take liberties with the original. Such is the case in the segments of the two films particularized above in chapter 6. The portion of the novel that served as the basis for those segments comprises appendix E. See Fannie Hurst, Imitation of Life (New York: Permabooks, 1959), pp. 180-184--chapter 32.

Without anyone knowing it, except the strange little crypt herself, Peola, at eight, had "passed."

By one of those feats of circumstance that seem to cerebrate and conspire, one Peola Cilla Johnston, entered into a neighborhood public school one morning by B. Pullman, as she paused long enough in her morning rush to enroll the child, was actually to pursue two years of daily attendance, unsuspected of what she chose not to reveal.

In a public-school system where the northern practice of non-segregation was common, it must have been a simple, if coolly calculated, little procedure, for the eight-year-old Peola to take her place without question among the children, never by word or deed associating herself with the handful of Negro pupils in the class.

Only in a city whose density of population could make possible so fanciful an anonymity could this child's small ruse have been possible. Be that as it may, for over a period of twenty-eight months, living within a three-block radius of a public school made up of district children, the fact of Peola Cilla Johnston's race remained unbeknown to schoolmates and teachers alike.

As Delilah, with her face fallen into the pleats of a troubled mastiff, reiterated over and over again: "If I'd 'a'only known all dem months dat my chile was a-cheatin' on color! Swear to de good Lawd who is mah Saviour, Miss

Bea, I'd 'a' turned in mah grave if I was dead. Cheatin' on color befoh all dem teachers and chillun. Cheatin' on color jes' because de Lawd left out a little drop of black dye in de skin dat covers up her black blood. How kin I git mah baby out of crucifyin' herself over de color of de blood de Lawd seen fit in His widsom to give her. Lawd, have mercy on mah chile's soul, Miss Bea! She cain't pass. Nobody cain't pass. God's watchin'. God's 'watchin' for to catch her."

The manner of the upset of Peola's little apple-cart came ultimately by way of an incident treacherously outside calculation.

A sudden freak rainstorm, little short of cloudburst, precipitating itself into the midafternoon of a day that had begun in sunshine, played such havoc in parts of the city that streets were flooded, cellars and subways inundated, and at certain intersections traffic paralyzed, stood hub-high in water.

Alarmed as she viewed a wind-swept, tree-ravaged section of Central Park, Delilah, in a cape that gave her the appearance of a slightly asthmatic rubber tent, set out for the schoolhouse with galoshes and mackintosh for Peola.

"I starts out for her, hurryin' to git dar before school closin'. Her pap died from bronchitis he cotched in jes' such a storm. When I seen dem trees twistin' and

heard water roarin' down de streets like Noah's flood, I started footin' it fast as mah laigs would carry me for mah chile, knowin' her pap's weakness in de lungs. . . .[original ellipsis]

"Miss Bea, all of a sudden, standin' dar in de door of her schoolroom askin' for mah chile, sweat began to pour on me lak it was rain outdoors. Dat Peola's little face, sittin' down dar in de middle of all dem chillun's faces, was a-stickin' up at me when I asked teacher for mah little gal, lak a little dead Chinaman's. Mah baby turned seventy years old in dat schoolroom. . . . [original ellipsis] Lawd help her and Lawd help me to save her sinning little soul. . . ." [original ellipsis]

This was strangely and really quite terribly true. The straight-featured face of this child, Peola, had the look to it of hard opaque wax that might have stiffened in the moment of trance and astonishment following the appearance of Delilah in that schoolroom, into something analogous to a Chinese masque with fear molded into it.

Bea Pullman, walking into the typhoon of hysteria that followed the arrival home after the thunderbolt which had smashed a small universe to smithereens, heard the first commotion while riding up in the elevator.

Facing Delilah in the center of the kitchen, her dark lips edged in a pale little lightening of jade green,

was fury let loose sufficient to blast the small body that contained it.

Low-pitched fury, grating along on a voice that was not a child's voice.

"Bad mean old thing. Bad mean old devil. They didn't know. They treated me like white. I won't ever go back. Bad mean old devil. I hate you!"

"O Lawd! Oh Lawd! saw a brown spider webbin' downward this mornin' and know'd mah chile was a-comin' home brown-- O Lawd! . . ." [original ellipsis]

"Go away--you! Yoo--yoo--yoooooooo!"

The words out of Peola's fury became shrill intonations of the impotence of her rage, and finally with her two small frenzied fists she was beating against the bulwark of the body in the rain-glossed rubber cape, beating and beating, until her breath gave out and she fell shuddering and shivering to the kitchen floor.

"May de Lawd," said Delilah, stooping to pick her up as you would a plank, and standing there with her stiff burden outstretched like an offering, the black chinies of her eyes sliding up until they disappeared under her lids, something strangely supplicating in the blind and milk-white balls--"may de Lawd Jehovah, who loves us black and white alike, show mah baby de light, an' help me forgit dat mah heart at dis minute lies inside me lak a ole broke

teacup."

"Oh, my poor Delilah!--"

"Poor Delilah ain't no matter, Miss Honey-Bea. It's poor Peola."

They wrapped her in warm cloths, with memory of methods used in a previous attack similar to this, and chafed her long, slim, carved-looking hands, and, despite dissuading from Bea, there was a smelling muslin bag, with a rabbit foot attached, that Delilah kept waving before the small quivering nostrils.

"Dar's shameweed in dat bag, and asfidity. Shame, mah baby. Lift de curse from off mah baby. Lawd, git de white horses drove out of her blood. Kill de curse--shame de curse her light-colored pap lef' for his baby. Chase it, rabbit's foot. Chase de wild white horses trampin' on mah chile's happiness. Chase 'em, shameweed. Chase 'em, rabbit's foot. . . ." [original ellipsis]

"Delilah, that's terrible! That's wild!"

"It's de white horses dat's wild, a-swimmin' in de blood of mah chile. Drive 'em out, Lawd. Drive 'em out, shameweed. If only I had a bit of snail water--"

"Delilah, take away that horrid-smelling bag. Try this brandy--force the spoon between her lips--"

But in the end the services of the physician, with offices on the ground floor of the apartment building, were

hastily enlisted.

"This child is in a state of nervous collapse. Has she had a shock?"

"Yes, Doctor. A little upset at school."

"Look at that eye," he said, rolling back the lid.

"Rigid."

Poor Peola!

"You have a highly nervous little organism here to deal with, madam. You know that?"

"We do, Doctor."

"Public school?"

"Yes . "

"Remove her. Let her have instruction at home or at least where she will receive individual instruction. Get me a bowl of good hot water, Mammy, so I can immerse her feet and get some circulation started."

"Get the one from my room, Delilah."

"Is this your only child, madam?"

"Why, Doctor, this is the daughter of the woman you just sent for the hot water! Peola is colored."

He screwed the top onto his thermometer, slid it into his waistcoat pocket, and reached for his bag.

"I see. My error. Sometimes difficult to detect the light types. Keep her in bed overnight. She'll be all right for school in the morning."

In the doorway he encountered Delilah with the bowl of steaming water.

"Innything else I kin do, Doctor, for to make her free of de spasms?"

"Spank her out of them when you see them coming. Gently, of course. Then dose her with castor oil. She may not be so inclined then to go off into them."

"Ain't you gonna put her into dis heah footbath I brung you, Doctor?"

"A night's rest will fix her up. Good evening."

"Miss Honey-Bea--what--how?"

"Dear, dear Delilah! . . ." [original ellipsis]

But it was out of the wretchedness of this was born one of the few desires Delilah could ever be inveigled into expressing.

"Miss Bea, I'd love it, when mah chile gits well, for to send her away to school like Miss Jessie. Not no boardingschool, of course, but dar's a colored school teacher in Washington I used to work for could tell me whar I could find a private learnin'-school for mah baby. . . ." [original ellipsis]

Two weeks later, as boarder and pupil, Peola was installed in the home of Miss Abbie Deacon, daughter of a colored professor of mathematics at Howard University and herself a teacher in the public schools.

APPENDIX F

IMITATION OF LIFE: RACE-DENIAL PARADIGM

I argue above (see chapter 6) that one may construct a "race-denial paradigm" in Imitation of Life. This paradigm groups scenes that are associated by their pertinence to the black daughter's denial of her race. Appendix F illustrates this (critic-determined) association by listing the appropriate scenes--in order of their appearance in the films. I begin with the 1934 version.

Imitation of Life (1934)

1. Peola enters the pancake shop crying because Jessie has called her "black." Peola sobs to her mother, "It's you! It's because of you. You make me black."
2. The classroom sequence described above.
3. The explanation scene following the classroom scene.
4. At the anniversary party for Aunt Delilah Pancakes Peola expresses bitterness about Bea's success and Peola's limited opportunities because of her race.
5. In a scene following the party Delilah suggests that Peola go to an all-black school.
6. Peola is discovered working as a cashier in a restaurant, having left school. Delilah asks her to come home and Peola refuses, saying to the manager, "Do I look like her daughter? Do I look like I could be her daughter? She must be crazy."
7. Immediately after the above sequence, Peola returns to the house, but just to say she is leaving for good: "You don't know what it is like to look white and be black!"
8. The funeral procession. Peola accepts her mother and her race, shamed into it by guilt: "I killed my own mother!"

Imitation of Life (1959)

1. Susie and Sara Jane, their first night together, are playing with dolls when Sara Jane creates an incident by refusing to play with a black doll.
2. Lora notices a bandage on the arm of the sleeping Susie. Annie explains that Sara Jane did it; she wanted to prove that "Negro blood" was not different from white blood.
3. The classroom sequence described in the text.
4. Immediately afterward, Annie tries to explain to Sara Jane that, "It's a sin to be ashamed of what you

are." Sara Jane claims that she is "as white as Susie."

5. At Christmas time Sara Jane asks if Jesus was white or black. The sequence ends with her saying, "He was like me--white."
6. After Sara Jane has been out with her boyfriend, she and Susie talk. Susie asks if he is "colored" and Sara Jane bristles at the question.
7. When asked to serve some hors d'oeuvres at a party of Lora's, Sara Jane adopts an "uncle tom" manner--shuffling and saying, in dialect, "Fixed y'all a mess of crawdads . . ."
8. Frankie, the boyfriend, beats Sara Jane when she refuses to admit that her mother is black.
9. Immediately afterward, Sara Jane arrives home and denies her mother. Lora chastises her.
10. Harry's Club: Sara Jane is a dancer there instead of working in the library as she has told Annie. Annie gets her fired and suggests a "teacher's college." Sara Jane declines and walks off as her mother collapses on the steps outside Harry's Club.
11. Annie comes to Sara Jane's hotel room in Los Angeles in what turns out to be their last meeting before Annie dies. Sara Jane tells Annie she must pass her by if she sees Sara Jane on the street. Sara Jane's Friend: "So honeychil', you had a mammy." Sara Jane: "Yes, all my life."
12. The funeral procession. Sara Jane returns: "Momma, I did love you!"

APPENDIX G

IMITATION OF LIFE: FILMOGRAPHY

Imitation of Life (1934)

Directed by John M. Stahl; produced by John M. Stahl for Universal-International; written by William Hurlbut, from the novel by Fannie Hurst; cinematographer, Merritt Gerstad; art director, Charles D. Hall; musical director, Heinz Roemheld; edited by Philip Cahn and Maurice Wright; special effects, John P. Fulton.

Principal cast: Claudette Colbert (Bea Pullman), Warren William (Stephen Archer), Rochelle Hudson (Jessie Pullman), Ned Sparks (Elmer Smith), Henry Armetta (The Painter), Louise Beavers (Delilah Johnson), Fredi Washington (Peola Johnson), Baby Jane (Baby Jessie), Alan Hale (The Furniture Man), Dorothy Howard (Baby Peola).

Imitation of Life (1959)

Directed by Douglas Sirk; produced by Ross Hunter for Universal-International; written by Eleanore Griffin and Allan Scott from the novel by Fannie Hurst; cinematographer, Russell Metty; art directors, Alexander Golitzen, Richard H. Reidel; music, Frank Skinner; "Imitation of Life," by Paul Francis Webster and Sammy Fain, sung by Earl Grant, "Empty Arms," by Frederick Herbert and Arnold Hughes, sung by Susan Kohner, "Trouble of the World," sung by Mahalia Jackson; edited by Milton Carruth; special effects, Clifford Stine; costumes, Bill Thomas; Lana Turner's gowns by Jean Louis.

Principal cast: Lana Turner (Lora Meredith), John Gavin (Steve Archer), Sandra Dee (Susie Meredith at 16), Terry Burnham (Susie at 6), Susan Kohner (Sara Jane Johnson at 18), Karen Dicker (Sara Jane at 8), Juanita Moore (Annie Johnson), Dan O'Herlihy (David Edwards), Robert Alda (Allen Loomis), Troy Donahue (Frankie), Maida Severn (Teacher), Mahalia Jackson.

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